

Winter 411

Chapter 411: New Weapons

The new meeting room in the industrial district of Red Tide Territory, located in the central area of the entire Artisan District, is a core venue specially designed for major technical discussions, with a structure of mixed stone and wood construction, supported by heavy beams and columns holding up the arch-shaped roof.

In the center, a solid wood conference table stretching five meters long resembles a command platform of a battlefield, laid out with the latest weapon designs and metal samples.

Surrounding it sit the core craftsmen of Red Tide Territory, dressed in uniform leather robes, emblazoned on the chest with the "Sun Gear Emblem" personally designed by Louis, symbolizing the honor of this industrial corps.

They respect this lord not just because of his power, but because of the designs he proposed.

Those structures and functional concepts they never dared to imagine are enough to make an old craftsman re-examine the ancient art of craftsmanship from start to finish.

Flamethrowers, Magic Explosion Bullet launchers, special armor...

These whimsical ideas on paper have now, one by one, entered trial production and iteration in the workshops.

Mike stands at the forefront, with a serious expression, starkly contrasting his usual jestful demeanor by the furnace.

Beside him stands a slightly nervous youth, with traces of furnace residue not yet wiped clean, but his eyes are extremely lively.

Upon his appearance, Louis immediately recognizes him.

He is precisely the key focus announced several times over the last two months by the intelligence system—Hamilton.

Possessing a rare combination of mechanical and alchemical talent, if properly nurtured, he is very likely to become the "Northern Territory's first craftsmen."

Louis originally planned to remind Mike to pay attention to this child later, unexpectedly...

Mike not only noticed him but had already promoted him to his side.

"Indeed, you old fellow have insight." Louis inwardly chuckled.

As everyone awaited the start, an alchemist clad in a robe with blackened edges from an explosion yawned and entered.

"Sorry, sorry, the furnace blew a bit... but I'm still here." He wiped his eye discharge with his sleeve and sat in the corner, yet no one dared to underestimate him.

He is one of the founders of the Alchemy Workshop, Hillco, a dangerous guy with a mind full of explosives and wild ideas.

Bradley, as usual, stood at Louis's left rear, with one hand holding a notebook and the other wearing a silver-edged monocle.

As the conference co-host, he supplemented data or process arrangements anytime, ensuring the meeting was efficient and flawless.

As everyone took their seats, the atmosphere tightened.

Mike stood up, clapped his hands together, and announced loudly:

"According to Lord Louis's orders, we have prioritized the preliminary trial modification of traditional weapons. Today, the first batch of results is officially reported."

Following his command, several craftsmen carried a box covered with heavy burlap into the meeting room, the heavy clashing sound of metal upon the floor reverberating, making the air seem to tremble slightly.

The first to debut was—Cold Iron Greatsword.

The craftsman carefully uncovered the burlap, displaying the gleaming cold sword before everyone.

The sword exceeds one and a half meters in length, with a wide blade yet not cumbersome, the cold iron material polished smooth and even, with the handle and guard reconstructed using ergonomics for precise weight distribution.

The sword tip employs a micro-arc angled design, enhancing armor-piercing efficiency.

Mike added, "This sword uses the third batch of Cold Iron ingots, with forging time increased threefold, enhancing overall strength while maintaining toughness. We've repeatedly quenched the blade to ensure it won't chip during battle."

Next was the Cold Iron Spear.

"Made of the same material, the spearhead embedded with fine toothed barbs, once pierced... it does not pull out, or if pulled, it tears flesh."

Bradley looked slightly shocked: "...This forces opponents to sever limbs on the battlefield for survival?"

"Indeed so. Not for cruelty, but for efficiency and intimidation."

Next were the round shield and tower shield.

Two tower shields stood on the conference room floor, embedded with cold iron frame bone, the surface covered with fire-resistant coating and leather, the decoration simple yet imposing.

"We installed special slots inside the tower shield, adaptable for petroleum or frost powder to form temporary elemental resistance. This is experimental; if effective, it can be mass-produced."

What pleased Louis more was the consistency in quality control.

He carefully reviewed the sample forms and various records, then personally picked up the greatsword and tested the blade's elasticity and shock rebound.

Finally, he nodded, "Very good, this batch of Cold Iron is forged quite uniformly." He turned to Mike, "Can you guarantee all weapon outputs maintain this quality?"

Mike heavily slapped his chest, rust flying: "Rest assured, Lord Louis, not achieving quality control is letting down the treatment you provide us craftsmen."

His tone carried not flattery, but genuine sincerity with a touch of pride.

This is no empty talk.

In Red Tide Territory, craftsmen's benefits are already the most advantageous set in the entire Northern Territory: daily hot meals, rotation system, high-tier worker injury compensation, apprentice promotion mechanism, priority housing and education... even the craftsmen's children's educational allowances.

Louis swept his gaze around: "Then proceed with mass production directly. We don't lack raw materials, maximize the speed."

Upon hearing this, the craftsmen responded in unison, morale high, with several young apprentices unable to hold back from applauding in celebration.

In other territories, such weapon production capacity is a luxury; in Red Tide, it is reality.

And even making more is no problem.

Can't sell them all? Impossible.

Louis had already calculated everything; currently, the Northern Territory is entering a new period of Pioneer Nobles' settlement, new noble territories urgently lack military equipment.

And even if they don't come to buy, Calvin Commerce Association can sell these weapons all the way to the Southern Territory.

Chapter 412: New Weapons (Part 2)

Not to mention... According to daily intelligence reports, over in the Star Forging Territory, there's a type of metal—Burning Ember Sunken Iron, which possesses an extremely strong capacity to conduct Fighting Energy.

If it could be mixed with Cold Iron for trial manufacturing, it might be possible to craft a batch of combat equipment specifically for the knight class, forming the prototype of the Red Tide Elite Knight Order.

But that is for later; the most important thing now is to keep pushing forward with this meeting.

Louis came back to his senses and scanned the industrious craftsmen gathered around the conference table: "I've noticed all your efforts during this period. You've done very well."

Just a simple sentence, yet it flowed like a warm stream from above into the hearts of everyone present.

A compliment from the Lord himself!

The craftsmen's eyes turned slightly red, and a lump formed in their throats, as their long hours of silent dedication in the furnace and flames seemed visible and acknowledged by the great Lord at this moment.

"It's what we ought to do, for Lord, for this land," Mike said softly, with a gleam in his eyes.

Many veteran craftsmen also nodded firmly.

"...Lord really holds us old rough folks in high esteem."

"Haha, I'm happy to forge iron for Red Tide my whole life."

"Lord Louis is the backbone of us working folks."

A wave of enthusiasm surged along both sides of the conference table, even Bradley couldn't help but nod slightly.

At this moment, Louis smiled faintly and discreetly drew out a roll of blueprints he was carrying and spread it open at the center of the table.

Everyone immediately fell silent, their gazes converging on it.

On the blueprints were not intricate urban designs, but rather sketches of mechanical structures, with clean lines and clear annotations, evident of being drawn by Louis himself.

Standing at the head, Louis steadied the corner of the blueprint with one finger while gently pulling away a translucent sheet overlay with the other hand.

"The first item: a foldable wooden and iron barricade, paired with a Burning Ember Oil Fire system."

The paper gleamed with light, the complex yet meticulous design depicted on the blueprint.

A three-section interlocking folding structure resembling a beast's exposed spine, every spike angled precisely.

Inside, a dense network of pipelines leads to an oil reservoir and terminal nozzle, ultimately connecting to a central trigger ignition core.

"Requiring only two people to operate, it unfolds in three seconds, ignites in ten, instantly establishing a line of flames.

For use at mountain passes, valleys, and narrow roads, capitalizing on the terrain to abruptly halt the Barbarian Race's charges," Louis introduced steadily.

As soon as he finished speaking, Mike slapped the table with a boisterous smile on his face: "With a thing like this, the Barbarian cavalry may charge fast, but they'll roast their bellies!"

A metal craftsman in the back row, wearing goggles, frowned and muttered, "But with such thin oil pipes, won't an outside petroleum shot make it all explode?"

"It's feasible, we've already tested similar structures on the flamethrower," someone countered.

"Exactly." Mike stroked the rough stubble of his chin, nodding with a smile, "This thing, we can build it."

Louis glanced at Mike: "You seem confident."

Mike grinned and pointed to the other craftsmen: "If you had asked me a month ago, I would've said it was hard to say. But since you've had us make the new flamethrower structure, rework the pipeline compression and ignition core... Now? Piece of cake."

He paused, his tone becoming solemn: "I swear on my sledgehammer head, not only can we build it, but we can mass-produce it too."

Seeing Mike's chest-thumping assurance, Louis smiled and nodded: "Excellent, then the first item is assigned to you."

Without stopping, he drew out a second roll of blueprints, unfurling the large scroll with both hands this time.

"The second is this."

With a "rustling" sound, the blueprint covered half of the conference table, the thick parchment densely inked, a uniquely contoured, heavy-lined massive vehicle body leaping off the page.

It resembled both a carriage and some kind of mechanical beast, sparking a murmur among the craftsmen.

"Is it... a vehicle? Or a tower?"

"Why does it look like a porcupine studded with rivets? Is that the front or a gun muzzle?"

"With this size, it would take at least ten war horses to pull it..."

Frowning, Mike poked at the blueprint with his finger: "You're not thinking of deploying this on the battlefield, are you?"

"Not thinking, absolutely essential." Louis slightly smiled, a sharpness in his tone he couldn't quite suppress, "This is the 'Steel Beast', our Red Tide Territory's land-based armored tactical platform."

As he spoke, he unfurled the detailed cross-sectional diagram on the right side of the blueprint, "Reinforced with a magic steel skeleton, encased in heavy armor, can advance fully sealed, equipped with firing ports and armored hinges, allowing teams to perform long-range striking and defensive operations."

"Not only can it escort supplies, but also push the front lines, suppress enemy forces, block valleys..."

The conference room fell silent, all the craftsmen wide-eyed, staring at the shield wall installations and vertical slide rails embedded on the vehicle's side.

"...Isn't this thing a fortress, rather than a carriage? What are those holes on the side for?"

"Fully sealed propulsion? What kind of monster would be used to pull it then?"

Someone started to frown: "In our territory's current magical beast reserve, there doesn't seem to be a type capable of pulling such a heavy vehicle... If forced, the cart might fall apart first."

Louis turned to that person, his tone confident but not heavy: "You don't have to worry about that; I'll handle the magical beast issue."

Everyone was taken aback, indicating that Lord Louis had made preparations.

Before they could fully absorb this information, Louis had already encircled a spot on the side of the "Steel Beast".

"Someone just mentioned they couldn't understand the purpose of these apertures on the vehicle," he said, pulling out another smaller blueprint and quickly spreading it on the table.

"This is the formation-breaking hook spear, a specialized device for use with the Steel Beast."

The blueprint detailed a long-handled weapon, the front end shaped like a three-pronged hook, with saw-toothed barbs on the side, and a reverse blade-like protrusion.

"This is no ordinary weapon. It can hook horse legs, dismantle shield walls, specifically designed to disrupt enemy formations and destroy cavalry charges.

Mounted on the side retractable arms of the Steel Beast, it actively harvests heavy enemy units during advancement, pairing with my designated shield array advancing mode to forcibly tear open the Barbarian infantry-cavalry mixed formations."

Louis then picked up another small-sized paper roll from beside him, lightly unfurling it onto the table corner.

"Finally, there's this." His tone was calm, yet it drew everyone's attention back.

The blueprint displayed an arrow-like projectile—the Magic Explosion Bolt.

The arrow body appeared slightly thick, with its tail illustrated with a detailed decomposition structure diagram:

The head embedded with a thumb-sized magic energy crystal core, etched with micro-explosion patterns on its outer ring, triggering detonation within milliseconds upon impact.

"Magic Explosion Bolt." Louis named it calmly, "Embedded with a small Magic Explosion Crystal, fired by a heavy crossbow, detonating instantly upon hitting."

His fingertips tapped a corner of the blueprint, "Though small, the explosion can penetrate half an inch of steel plate. It's very suitable for hitting dense arrays or taking out distant enemies."

At his words, the craftsmen couldn't help but gasp.

"Explosive... arrows?" someone murmured, "Never thought such a thing was possible?"

"No wonder the 'Steel Beast's' top was specifically designed with long-range slots, this really is an internal weapon..."

The crowd buzzed with discussion, evidently, this was a form of weaponry they'd never imagined.

"Can this thing... be built?" Mike furrowed his brows, instinctively looking toward the other end of the table where the head of the Alchemy Workshop, Hillco, sat yawning, with smudges of ash on his face, "Hillco?"

"What did you say?" The man looked up, his bleary eyes sweeping over the blueprint, then lazily scratched his head.

"Oh, this thing, no big deal." He stretched, grinning in a carefree yet unusually confident manner.

"We already have existing Magic Explosion Bullets, Lord Louis had mentioned it to me before, so I made some in advance. You just need to tell me how big you want the explosion, and I can control the precision of the explosion point, whether you want small explosions, directed explosions, or delayed explosions after penetration."

"But speaking of which..." He squinted at the blueprint, "Do you really plan to equip this inside the Steel Beast?"

Louis nodded: "It's one component of its long-range weapon system. Firepower strike is needed not just for field battles, but also urban combat and valley blockades for rapid disruption and precision assaults."

Mike couldn't help but grin: "You're planning to pack an entire tactical squad inside, with tactical accessories all pre-arranged?"

Louis gave a gentle nod, a satisfied smile in his eyes: "That's it for now. As long as you can make it, I'll get it onto the battlefield."

Chapter 413: Steam Engine and Knight Special Forces

After the new weapon conference concluded, Louis didn't immediately leave the workshop district.

Following Mike's guidance, he quietly bypassed the crowd outside, walked through a rusted corridor, and entered a secret workshop hidden behind the Red Tide Forge.

At the center of the workshop stood a strangely shaped device.

A cylindrical iron tank about two meters tall occupied the core space of the room.

The shell was cast from an alloy of cold iron and alchemical copper, covered in black heat-resistant paint. It didn't look delicate, and even the seams were sealed with thick alchemical glue to prevent leaks, rough yet exuding a raw industrial power.

"This is what you mentioned before...the 'steam power engine.'" Mike patted the iron tank with a hint of pride, "We call it 'Iron Tank No. 1.'"

Louis looked at it, a hint of realization flashing in his eyes.

It was during a casual chat months ago.

He had casually talked about the steam engine from his Earth memories, but he didn't know the specific structure of a steam engine, it was merely a passing comment.

Yet Mike had actually turned it from concept into reality.

Even though this thing in front of him was just a strange tank, it symbolized a completely different development path for this world.

Louis smiled and nodded: "...Let's give it a try."

Mike immediately called several craftsmen.

The two of them first opened the furnace door at the bottom, removing the ash with an iron shovel.

Afterward, carefully placing fuel bricks refined from Qi veins at the bottom of the furnace, dry wood and ventilating grass stalks were laid out, and finally a pinch of red phosphorus powder was sprinkled.

"Whoosh—!" The flame rose instantly with a blue edge, and the furnace temperature rapidly ascended.

Another craftsman brought a barrel of clean water, pouring it into the iron tank's side water storage chamber.

Meanwhile, a young apprentice pumped a leather blower, high-temperature air rushed into the furnace, with a "boom," the flame rose like a dragon.

Mike compared the equipment status against a handwritten checklist while shouting commands: "Main valve locked, lubricant normal, flywheel clip no problem, piston guide track no cracks!"

He even personally circled around "Iron Tank No. 1" to ensure there were no abnormal vibrations.

With his command, "Hiss—!" a high-pressure white steam burst out.

The craftsmen cooperated to turn the flywheel, the piston began to slowly reciprocate, driving the flywheel.

"Boom... boom... boom"

The rhythm gradually accelerated, like a steel heart awakening.

The main control valve slowly opened to the second notch, with a muffled sound "bang!"

The piston suddenly pushed forward, steam rushed in, and the whole machine began to operate rhythmically.

"Click, click, hiss—" Amidst the sound of metal clashing, the belt drove the connecting heavy hammer arm to slowly rise and fall, the air permeated with the scent of coal cinders and metal steam.

As sunlight penetrated through the gaps in the workshop, that plume of white steam seemed to drape the whole room in a veil.

People watched the roaring operation of the machine, amazement and curiosity showed on their faces.

It had no magic glow, nor rune arrays or spell echoes, just the collision of metal and the roar of steam. Yet it was this steadiness, this pure power, that made them feel a strange and wondrous shock.

However, this "magic" was only limited to that.

In a world where magic was everywhere and miracles were frequent, machinery driven solely by heat wasn't enough to astound beyond belief.

After all, compared to those flying magical beasts and spell-floating towers, this thing was at most just a "moving iron barrel."

For a moment, the craftsmen looked at each other, unsure of how to evaluate it.

Finally, an older blacksmith gathered the courage to ask: "Lord...what exactly is this thing for?"

Louis looked around, raising his hand to lightly tap the thick metal shell of the iron tank, the sound deep and rich, setting the tone for the upcoming declaration.

"What you see isn't just this machine." He spoke calmly, "Today, it just turned a flywheel.

But tomorrow, it can drive iron hammers, move axles, pull entire freight trains. And it won't tire, won't fear wind and snow, won't need feeding, nor depend on magic."

While speaking, he pointed to a pile of old wooden wheels in the corner of the workshop:

"One day, on the roads, you will see not horse-drawn wagons, but 'iron beasts' powered by it—future armored vehicles and cargo convoys, all powered by built-in steam engines."

As his words fell, Bradley's eyes lit up, adding: "If it can be mass-produced...even just used in workshops, the productivity could be multiplied several times!"

A blacksmith hesitated for a moment, then quietly asked: "Can it be connected to the forging hammer? Would that mean we wouldn't need to hammer it down by hand anymore?"

Louis smiled slightly, nodding: "That's exactly my first step, to make steam engines the power core of the workshop."

With those words, the craftsmen immediately erupted.

"If it can drive looms, the weavers wouldn't need to step on foot pedals all day!"

"Forging wouldn't be so laborious anymore!"

"If we could install it on the wooden carriage...could that mean we could create a self-running battle vehicle?"

The crowd gathered around the iron tank, excitedly watching the flywheel's rotation, as if witnessing a divine artifact transcending time.

Even in a world possessing magic, they were deeply drawn to this 'non-magical' power.

Even the always aloof Hillco revealed an unusual expression of surprise, softly saying: "Strange...this actually relies entirely on heat energy, without a trace of magic flow. This mechanical approach...is truly rare."

He bent down, carefully observing the details of the iron tank's flywheel movement, as if examining an unanalysable artifact from the Otherworld.

In this transcendent world, various magical devices do indeed exist.

Chapter 414: Steam Engines and Knight Special Forces (Part 2)

They are powered by a magic energy core, combining alchemy and rune formations, with great power and wide-ranging uses. However, their deadly weaknesses are their exorbitant cost, scarcity, and difficulty in maintenance.

These magical artifacts often rely on high-tier mages for production, the core materials being extremely rare, and maintenance requires professional magicians. Each piece is a "custom product," difficult to replicate on a large scale.

Even a simple magic-powered machine can cease operation due to insufficient power supply.

The steam engine is different.

It doesn't require magic, just the burning of ordinary fuels like charcoal and coal, to release immense thermal energy to drive the machine.

With a structure composed of iron, copper, and wood, any blacksmith workshop can create and produce them en masse according to diagrams.

As long as there is sufficient water and fuel, it can operate non-stop day and night, undeterred by the cold winter, knowing no fatigue.

More crucially, it belongs to the common people, any literate artisan can operate and repair it with simple training, without relying on mages, free from the oppression of nobility.

And a single steam engine can replace dozens of laborers, it can pull hammers, drive wheels, power pumps, and run looms.

It could even, in the future, construct an entire industrial city that operates without magic.

Louis looked at the gradually enthusiastic gazes in the workshop, and he found his answer in his heart: the steam engine may not be more "miraculous" than magic, but it is more replicable and more suitable for this territory.

This will be the true starting point of technological independence for the Red Tide Territory, although it is not mature enough yet.

He withdrew his gaze, looked at Mike, and showed a satisfied smile: "You've done very well, continue to refine it completely."

"Yes!" Mike immediately agreed, then chuckled softly, "But it's not my credit."

He pushed a boy of about ten forward from behind.

"It's him—Hamilton. This kid is sharper than all of us, many of the precise structural calculations were first sketched by him."

Louis looked down to see, it was indeed the genius mentioned by the intelligence system.

Hamilton's face turned red, and he said softly: "I just... made a small contribution."

Louis smiled and nodded: "No, having such talent at a young age is already no small feat."

Saying this, he turned to Hillco: "I think this child's talent is not low. If you don't mind, would you consider taking him as a half-apprentice?"

Hillco blinked, a bit unresponsive.

"Me? Alchemy? ...Ah... Of course, it's possible. But whether he can learn depends on if his brain is capable enough."

Louis turned to Hamilton, bent down, and asked: "Do you wish to learn?"

Hamilton looked at Mike.

Mike smacked the back of his head: "What are you standing there for? This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, quickly thank Lord Louis and Lord Hillco!"

"Thank you, Lord Louis! Thank you, Lord Hillco!" Hamilton bowed deeply, his voice trembling.

After leaving the Artisan District, Louis hurriedly headed to the Red Tide Territory's administrative building. He had more important matters to handle.

According to the agreed time, he entered the Tactical Chamber. The walls were adorned with the emblem and honor board of the Red Tide Knight Order, the atmosphere in the hall was solemn, and Lambert had been leading the subunit commanders waiting for quite some time.

Seeing Louis and Bradley arrive together, everyone immediately stood up and saluted, their eyes filled with respect and nervousness.

"Three months have passed, I want to hear about your latest achievements." Louis stood firmly, his tone calm.

Lambert stepped forward, standing tall and steady, his tone stable: "Report to the Lord, the Red Tide Knight Order's three subunits have completed reorganization, currently maintaining a size of four hundred to four hundred and fifty personnel each.

The main combat team of Red Tide has stabilized at over five hundred personnel, a cooperative combat mechanism has been established, all knights perform daily tactical drills and rotation assessments, significantly improving combat harmony and adaptability."

He paused and continued: "Additionally, the honor board system has been implemented across the order. Every mission and victory is recorded and evaluated; rewards and penalties are clear, morale within the camp is unprecedentedly high, and the number of volunteers for combat has visibly increased."

As his words fell, Louis nodded slightly, a hint of satisfaction flashing in his eyes.

Lambert continued to report at a steady pace: "According to your strategic deployment, the Red Tide Knight Order has begun establishing multiple special combat units to execute key tasks such as reconnaissance, assault, and fire suppression."

He first brought out the first scroll diagram:

"Frost Howl Group, integrated into the 'Frost Howl Unit.' The mounts are giant snowfield wolves bred by the territory, faster than warhorses, capable of crossing forest snow and mountain paths.

Equipped with light lance and foldable wooden iron chevaux-de-frise, capable of high mobility in blockade and counterattack. The primary missions are quick strikes on enemy camps and decapitation of command."

Those giant snowfield wolves were personally captured by Louis as cubs.

Now they have grown into toothy war beasts, after breeding and training, even spawning a new wolf pack.

And the largest, fiercest wolf "Leng Feng," Louis did not tame as his personal mount.

Not because it was uncontrollable, but because... it was simply too uncomfortable.

The wolf's back didn't have the comfort and stability of a horse's, its running was bone-jarringly bumpy.

He chose to let Leng Feng serve as the "Wolf Leader" of the entire wolf rider combat unit, leading its offspring to charge and kill enemies, which worked even better.

After all, speed was sufficient, ferocity was intense, and it could take orders; this is what the battlefield truly requires.

Lambert unfolded the second diagram: "Flame Breath Unit. The flamethrower knights, using improved backpack-type alchemy flame sprayers, fueled by naphtha oil and fire scale ointment, can form continuous firewalls at short range.

Originally a weapon against the Nest, now adjusted for human tactics, specifically used to breach enemy shield formations, clear obstacles, and incinerate Barbarian Race siege equipment.

And the Red Frost Unit. Magic Burst Bullet knights, equipped with shoulder-fired short-range launchers, firing magic burst bullet arrows, with both penetration and explosive effects, specialized in large enemy formations and magical beast groups.

Preliminary outfitting is complete, mass production is on track, filling the biggest gap in the Red Tide Army's firepower support."

He looked up at Louis: "The above three units are the currently formed special combat units, and there are two more units still in training."

Louis nodded frequently, clearly very satisfied in his eyes.

These special forces are the core of the tactical reform he personally envisioned and promoted, now showing initial success.

Then Lambert reported the key achievements of this reform: "The special forces and main combat team have completed multiple rounds of actual combat drills.

In simulating Barbarian Race charge formations, the average time required was half of before to complete the rout task, significantly improving cooperative combat efficiency.

The honor board and reward system have inspired strong internal competition, and currently, thirteen knights have acquired the qualification of being stationed and self-sufficient at the border fortresses.

Regarding new equipment, cold iron weapons are sufficient, flamethrowers are adapted for knight usage, and magic burst bullets stabilize at a production rate of thirty per week, entering the practical phase."

After hearing this, Louis spoke with certainty: "Very good, the Red Tide Territory's Knight Order is becoming the Northern Territory's sharpest blade."

Upon hearing this sentence, the knights immediately felt a jolt in their hearts, their expressions full of excitement and pride.

Some unconsciously straightened their spines, while others clenched their fists, their combat boots lightly tapping the ground.

This was not a simple compliment, but a recognition, a sincere acknowledgment from the great Lord himself that their efforts, training, scars, and sweat were not in vain.

Some young knights murmured lowly: "The Northern Territory's sharpest blade..."

Some looked passionately ahead, as if they had already envisioned that day of charging through the battlefield, achieving illustrious battle honors.

Louis slightly leaned forward, his gaze sharply sweeping across the entire room: "The next step——"

His tone was firm yet powerful: "Collaborate with the Artisan Division to advance the deployment of Iron Armor Beast combat vehicles in actual combat, as well as the crossbow magic burst arrow knight compilation plan."

He paused momentarily, his gaze passing over Lambert and several officers: "Furthermore, dispatch a knight team to Mai Lang Territory to capture the Steel Frenzy Bull. That is our ideal power core for the 'Iron Armor Beast'."

The room stirred slightly, everyone present had heard of that beast's name, yet none backed down.

"Lastly, prepare for a real combat border cleanup drill. Next quarter, I want to see your new tactics, special units, and equipment innovations all realized on a real battlefield. Can you do it?!"

All the knight commanders resonated throughout the chamber: "Yes!!!"

Chapter 415: Visa's Confusion

Since the day she met Sif, Visa's heart was in turmoil. She originally thought she was ready to die, prepared to end everything in silence.

But at that moment, seeing the girl she had sworn to protect appear in enemy territory, standing among the enemy's ranks, her faith collapsed.

In the following days, she stayed in the depths of the dungeon, not speaking, not eating, just sitting against the wall with a vacant look, believing she would soon be executed.

Until that day, the door opened.

She looked up and saw an interrogator walk in, speaking in a flat tone, "You now have two choices. One is to be executed by us, the other is to become Lady Sif's guard."

Visa didn't answer immediately. She bowed her head and pondered for a while, eventually nodding slightly.

She wasn't living for herself but to fulfill an old vow.

The Cold Moon clan was destroyed, and Sif was the only bloodline left.

Visa wanted to protect her until the end, as a bit of repayment to the old chieftain.

This decision was naturally ordered by Louis himself.

He considered everything thoroughly; Sif's mental state had been unstable recently, and she needed someone familiar by her side.

Of course, the most important thing was that the Daily Intelligence System had an intelligence report stating that Visa was one hundred percent loyal to Sif.

As for the other captives, after extracting all the intelligence, they were directly disposed of.

That night, the wind outside the tent lightly rustled the curtains, and the candle flame flickered.

Visa stood outside the room for a long while until the personal guard nodded in indication, only then did she enter. Her footsteps were light, yet she could still feel the slight trembling of the figure inside the tent.

Sif sat at the table, her back to Visa, with a few maps spread out on the table and a pot of cold tea beside her.

Visa didn't speak, first standing for a moment, then slowly kneeling down, placing one knee on the ground, and lowering her head: "I... am unworthy to call myself a warrior of the Cold Moon. But if you still acknowledge me, I am willing to use this life to protect you."

After speaking, she did not raise her head again nor wait for a response.

She knew what she had done wrong, serving under Titus, living after the Cold Moon perished, yet doing nothing.

She neither saved Sif nor avenged the clan, and even once worked for the murderer.

Kneeling now was not to beg for forgiveness, but to perform one last duty.

The room was suffocatingly silent, with only the slight sound of the firelight flickering.

Sif slowly stood up and walked in front of her.

She lowered her head to look at the woman who had once wielded a spear to protect her in her youth, shielding her with a blanket against the wind at night.

At that time, Visa was like an immovable shield, her most reliable guardian.

But now, that image had been shattered amid blood and fire.

"Do you know?" Sif's voice was so soft it was almost inaudible, "That day I saw you, I almost went mad. I thought... you had abandoned the Cold Moon as they did."

Visa slowly lowered her head, her knees almost touching the ground, her voice barely audible, "I didn't. I just... took the wrong path."

Sif closed her eyes for a moment, letting out a long exhale.

There were so many things she wanted to ask, so many things to say...

But in the end, she just gently nodded, as if finally releasing a breath, also as if making a very difficult decision.

"Follow me."

Visa looked up, a bit of disbelief and a hint of struggle in her eyes.

She understood that this was not forgiveness, nor a rekindling of old relationships.

It was just an order, a permission, that you could still stand by my side, but you could never return to the past.

But Visa stood up.

After this moment, she was no longer a warrior of the Cold Moon.

She was Sif's shadow, the blade to atone for the clan's sins, the guardian of the last memories of the Cold Moon in this new world.

She responded in a low voice, "Yes."

Sif said nothing, just returned to the table and sat down, as if nothing had happened.

.....

From afar, Visa looked at the outline of the city, but she couldn't see it clearly then, only feeling its bustle, but too far away to sense reality.

But this time was the first time stepping in during the daytime.

She followed Sif's convoy, entering the main street of the Red Tide through the city gate.

Sunlight shone on the neatly paved stone road, rows of dome-topped houses lined up neatly, the streets wide, the pedestrians orderly.

The vendors' shouts, the blacksmith's hammering, the children's laughter intertwined into a kind of unfamiliar clamor to her.

She saw an old man with a broken leg sitting at a street corner, drinking hot porridge, with a child beside him handing him a meat pie.

This was an unimaginable scene in her memory.

In the Northern Territory, in the world of the Barbarian Race, wounded soldiers could only be left to fend for themselves in the snow, and the elderly survived by robbery.

But here, there were no frozen beggars, no starving scavengers, at least none she saw.

At lunchtime, someone handed her a steaming bowl of demon beast meat stew, along with rye bread.

She intended to refuse, but the aroma reached her, and her body acted faster than her reason.

She took a sip, the warmth flowing into her stomach, making her feel suddenly alive again.

At that moment, she was stunned.

Not because the food was delicious, but because she felt lost.

For a long time, she survived on dried meat and cheap liquor, filled her stomach with plunder and slaughter, while ordinary residents here could eat stew and bread on the streets, a feeling of indescribable uncertainty rising in her heart.

She didn't know that the Northern Territory could live like this.

Walking on the street, she saw that the roadside drainage ditches were designed neatly and meticulously, no longer like the tribe's sewage flowing all over the place.

Chapter 416: Visa's Confusion (Part 2)

The streetlights were already up at night, and outside the public bathhouse, the hours of operation and free notice were still posted.

She hesitantly entered a bathhouse.

When the hot water splashed over her body, the sweat stains, dirt, and blood scabs were gradually washed away.

Standing in the mist, she suddenly felt as if her skin didn't belong to her.

This comfort, this clean feeling, was so unfamiliar.

She touched her arm, the thought that she couldn't go back suddenly emerged.

"Our nobility can only wipe their faces with ice water in winter. Yet, the poor here can soak in hot baths."

She suddenly understood that those "imperial civilities" she used to look down on were not just for show, but a way of life.

Later she slowly figured out that Sif stayed in the Red Tide Territory not by coercion, but stood openly at the center of power, becoming one of the two wives of Red Tide Lord Louis.

This news plunged her into deeper confusion.

She used to think the Imperial Nobility were nothing but plunderers cloaked in golden armor and sweet words.

They were selfish, hypocritical, and accustomed to using power to oppress, regarding the Barbarian Race only as slaves and tools.

But Louis... this Red Tide Lord exuded something different everywhere.

She saw when he rode through the main street, craftsmen, children, and elders gathered on the sides, calling his name, not with fearful shouts, but with genuine echoes.

The children excitedly chased after his horse, as if he were not a lord, but a long-lost relative.

This scene left her in a daze, reminding her of Titus, the cold Frost Fierce leader.

When he rode by, no one dared to raise their heads, only heads bowed in silence.

They called his name because not doing so would get them whipped, and following behind him were slaves in chains, not cheerful children.

"Our leader rules by fear," she silently thought to herself.

She never doubted the ways of the Barbarian Race until she saw another choice with her own eyes.

But what shocked her the most wasn't the hot water of Red Tide, nor the order in the streets, nor Louis' prestige among the crowd.

But Sif's smile.

That day, after a military meeting concluded at sunset, she silently stood by the exit and saw Sif step onto the podium, telling a not-so-funny joke to the soldiers below.

The soldiers laughed heartily, and so did Sif.

That smile had no hatred, no guard, and none of the cold hardness required to maintain dignity back in the clan. It was relaxed, even a bit mischievous, like an ordinary person.

At that moment, Visa suddenly felt a tightness in her chest.

She had thought: if ever given a chance, she'd take Sif back to the Northern Wilds, regroup, call back the remnants, rebuild Cold Moon, and make the clan's name resound once more across the Icefield.

But now she was bewildered.

If they returned to the Northern Wilds, would it mean once again burdening her with hatred, fighting alone against the cold winds? Would it mean teaching her to face death with cold eyes, treating life as numbers, and hiding her smile?

She didn't know which direction to offer her life to.

Past beliefs had shattered, and a new life had yet to find a foothold.

She could only stand silently a short distance away, as if that bit of laughter was the farthest distance between her and the past.

.....

At the construction site on the northern defense line of Red Tide Territory, the air was filled with the mixed scent of lime, grease, and sawdust.

Masons stood on the scaffolding, chiseling gray-white mountain stones, creating a rhythmic clinking sound.

When the cold iron beams were hoisted into place, there was a dull metallic echo, vibrating the ground lightly.

This segment of the defense line began construction last fall and has been ongoing for almost a year.

The northern main defensive wall was 60% complete, with the remaining parts still consisting of unfinished stone bodies and exposed wooden scaffolding.

The formed wall structure was blue-gray, and some arrow towers had been erected preliminarily, standing four to five meters high, with heavy cold iron beams embedded in the stone layers, like a gradually forming steel barrier.

Louis, draped in a black and red Lord's Cloak, stood at the edge of the construction site, gazing at the unfinished wall line.

He stayed silent, his gaze slowly drifting along the wall's outline as if measuring a future frontline.

Bradley came forward to report the latest progress: "The main structure uses local mountain stone as the framework, complemented by cold iron beams running through, with the exterior treated in lime and waterproof grease. Post-completion, it is expected to withstand siege rams, hot oil, and fire attacks.

"Arrow towers every sixty meters, with shooting apertures and a double crossbow platform on the tower tops. The final wall height will reach six to eight meters, with a thickness between two and a half to three meters.

"In the sunlight, the wall surface appears gray-white, mixed with cold iron rust stains, resembling bone armor emerging from the mountain."

After listening, Louis glanced around, his lips moving slightly, and said lightly, "You've done well."

Hearing Louis' affirmation, Bradley smiled lightly, "Thank you, Lord, but it was you who personally set the blueprint's direction; I just followed it. What truly makes this wall stand is your foresight beyond ours."

Louis smiled softly, not denying it.

They took a few steps forward, moving to the edge of the still unfinished wall parapet, looking down at the defensive moat below.

Surrounded by a circle of craftsmen, all listening to this top lord and territorial manager's conversation, occasionally offering their suggestions.

"The defense is still insufficient," Louis spoke, his gaze still scanning the walls.

"I agree," Bradley nodded, "especially in terms of climbing and fire attacks. The Barbarian Race has favored night raids and arson in recent years; too smooth a wall makes clearing it problematic."

"Then polish the exterior wall, embedding it with cold iron nail plates. Climbers get their hands cut."

"Hmm, the gate needs processing too. I'll have the armory prepare fire retardant grease and add another layer of iron plating."

"And the moat?" Bradley probed.

"Bury chevaux-de-frise with flipping spike cages. Once there's movement, release them from the city head."

...

They spoke, simultaneously marking on the blueprint with their fingers, their discussion dense yet restrained.

The topic eventually landed on "fire ports."

Atop the city wall, preserving casting ports for throwing oil jars, or directly using flamethrowers to repel wall-climbing enemies.

"How is your preparation coming along?" Louis suddenly asked, his tone light but observably not casual.

"I already called personnel from the soldiers, setting up a dedicated team for training to throw fire jars, and some apprentice knights to control the flamethrowers."

Though their voices were not loud, each sentence spread, and the craftsmen discreetly remembered every word.

Standing on the edge of the crowd, Visa remained silent, only listening quietly.

Not being an engineer, she couldn't quite understand the blueprints, but when she continuously heard these technical terms, it felt heavier than a knife.

Hearing words like "fire prevention," "chevaux-de-frise," "fire oil ports," she thought of the countless times her clan used these means in raids—night raids, arson, and charging with Magical Beasts.

Those were tactics she was familiar with.

And now, someone was methodically blocking them.

She instinctively glanced at Sif.

The girl, dressed in a Red Tide Army winter cloak, stood to the side, saying nothing but listening attentively.

An indescribable mixture of emotions flooded Visa's heart.

After hesitating for a moment, she still spoke softly, her voice not loud but causing all heads to turn:

"The Northern Clan now likes using giant Magical Beasts to clear paths. They use them to ram gates, tear down grappling hooks, and trample chevaux-de-frise... Magical Beasts aren't afraid of arrows, but they fear noise."

She paused before adding, "Consider installing some noise-making devices. Not for harm, but to scare. Even if they startle for a second, causing a beast to go berserk can disrupt their rhythm."

Bradley raised an eyebrow, "You mean... Magic Explosion Bullets?"

Visa shook her head, "We don't have those things over there; they're homemade. Sometimes it's just a big iron tank stuffed with gunpowder, a pull of a rope, and it deafens you."

"Low cost, not very powerful, but effective against Magical Beasts. Especially those trained from young with whips by the Barbarian Race; they're scared of unfamiliar sounds."

After listening, Louis slightly raised his eyebrows but didn't rush to speak: "A very good suggestion, let Hillco handle it."

Sif, standing quietly beside them, turned her head to look at Visa, saying nothing but with a gaze holding a bit more affirmation.

Chapter 417: Autumn Harvest

In the early autumn afternoon, the sun gently draped over the valley, the air mingling with the scent of ripe young wheat, carrying a hint of moist earth and the lingering aroma of smoke.

The distant mountain ridges still retained traces of summer's greenery, but most areas had turned golden.

Louis and Emily rode together in an elegantly decorated carriage, its body reinforced with cold iron, adorned with dark red patterns and the Red Tide Emblem, steadily moving along the newly built dirt road.

On both sides of the carriage, several teams of Red Tide Cavalry escorted them, each knight had a standard military sword at his waist, their cloaks fluttering, expressions solemn, with steps matching the horse's hooves, forming a well-trained iron army.

Battle flags unfolded in the wind, the sun of Red Tide flying wildly in the wilderness.

The carriage crossed a gentle slope, and the entire valley suddenly sprawled before the two.

Vast fields of wheat undulated under the sunlight.

The young wheat was already ripe, the heavy heads bowed down, swaying with the breeze, like waves of gold surging.

By the potato fields, a group of workers wielded pickaxes, turning over the thick tubers, rough cloth bags piled up row after row, extending all the way to the nearby wooden granary.

The greenhouse area presented another scene.

Those geothermal greenhouses arranged neatly, under the sun gleaming faint white, like silver waves stretching to the horizon.

Agricultural workers pushed out full wheelbarrows from the sheds, packed with freshly harvested wheat and just-picked vegetable leaves.

The "swish swish" of scythes cutting through wheat stems, the "bang bang" of threshing, children laughing and playing on the ridges, the road was filled with a mix of different sounds.

The carriage rumbled over the gravel road, creaking, but it was drowned out by the busy and orderly sounds.

Emily was originally leaning against the car window, chatting softly with Louis, occasionally trembling with laughter at Louis's Imperial Capital jokes.

But as the carriage slowly turned past the hill, the entire Mai Lang Valley was revealed, she suddenly paused.

She gazed at the endless green wheat, the golden light trembling in the sun, as if the wind indeed blew from the ground, making the entire field ripple in waves.

She fell silent for a moment, a complex brightness appeared in her eyes, even the corners of her eyes tinged with a bit of red.

"Northern Territory..." she gently spoke, as if afraid to shatter this miracle before her eyes, "When has there ever been such a scene?"

She didn't wait for an answer, just quietly watched, her fingertips tightly gripping the window ledge.

She knew Louis would do it, but when this hope presented itself so vividly in front of her, the shock still surged like a tide.

"He did it." She silently thought, her heart warming, "He truly did it."

Emily turned to look at the man beside her, Louis leaned against one side of the carriage, his elbow resting on the window ledge, his cloak half undone, looking much more relaxed than in the governance hall or battlefield.

Yet in his expression still remained the familiar determination, that trust which could make people entrust their lives, the innate responsibility, could never be concealed.

Louis seemed to sense her gaze, turned his head, and a smile lifted at the corner of his mouth.

"Stunned?" he said, his eyes with a hint of teasing, "These are enough to feed you, right?"

Emily gave a soft chuckle, ignoring him, gently inhaled, turned back, and her gaze fell outside the window once more.

Never expected there would be so much food, inch by inch, spread across the lands of the Northern Territory.

The carriage continued to move slowly, entering the main road that ran through the valley.

Seeing the sun emblem, along the road the farmers rose upon hearing the horse's hooves.

"The Lord is here!" Someone shouted loudly, their voice filled with uncontrollable excitement.

In the next instant, the shout seemed to ignite a wave of heat along the entire road.

"The Lord! The Lord!"

The cheers spread like a tide, extending in waves along the avenue to the distance.

They were once people with nowhere to go, refugees fleeing famine, struggling to survive the snow and ice in the Northern Territory, but now they had land, homes, and a proper job to feed their families.

The fields they created themselves, those heavy waves of wheat, made them proud as if their own children had grown up.

And the "Lord" they were cheering for, was seated in that carriage, his steadfast and stable back resembling the foundation they now relied on.

Emily looked at the scene outside the window, holding Louis's hand tightly, her heart warmed.

In the distance, a newly built wooden granary towered high, beside it stood a bulletin board, pasted with "Autumn Harvest List" and mobilization notices.

The carriage steadily stopped in front of the Mai Lang Governance Hall by the granary.

The new Mai Lang Governance Hall was built on high ground in the center of the valley, with open views, surrounded by endless wheat fields and granaries.

The outer walls of the hall still bore marks of newly laid stones that had not completely weathered, the blue-gray stone patterns reflecting a faint light under the sun.

The hall wasn't luxurious, but spacious and sturdy.

The long table was made of local workshop raw wood boards, not exquisite, but neatly arranged, piled high with cultivation records, field distribution maps, and grain warehouse expansion blueprints.

Agricultural Official Mike, Overseer Green, village chiefs, workshop leaders, and Knight Captain were already present.

In front of each person was an oil paper-wrapped sketchbook and pen, their expressions tense, as if this was not just a harvest, but a battle.

At this moment, footsteps sounded at the hall entrance.

A Red Tide Knight was the first to push the door open, straightened up to salute, then retreated inside.

He didn't speak, just swept a glance around the hall.

Chapter 418: Autumn Harvest (Part 2)

Everyone immediately stood up, almost in unison shouting, "Thank you for your hard work, Lord!"

Louis looked at them, his gaze swept across familiar faces without any airs, just nodding lightly.

"You've all worked hard too," he said, his tone steady, even carrying a hint of casual warmth.

Having said that, he walked to the main seat, pulled out the chair and sat down, rested his elbow on the tabletop, and his tone shifted, crisp and decisive: "Let's begin. In spring, we fought against the Permafrost. Now we must win this harvest battle."

As his voice fell, the hall was left with only the sound of pens scratching on paper.

Louis leaned over the map, drawing several lines, his tone steady like nails being driven into wood: "From today onwards, the three-shift rotation continues, with Early Cultivation Village, Noon Cultivation Village, and Night Cultivation Village participating in the relay without a single day's interruption.

Every evening, announce the progress list. Any village that falls behind must adjust personnel themselves to fill the gap, no excuses allowed. Open-field wheat fields must be harvested first, making sure to finish before the first frost. Keep the greenhouse crops ready for the next planting window."

He looked up and scanned a few Grain Guardians Knight Captains and said, "Starting tonight, checkpoints and patrols are required on main roads, around granaries, and grain transport routes. Knights will patrol in shifts, prepare torch signals on the high platform at the valley mouth, and signal by fire if there's any issue."

He then turned to Green, his voice lower but more weighty: "The harvest will be entirely included in the Red Tide winter storage system, we must endure this winter. All grain flow must be made public."

Louis continued, "Post notice lists in each village, code the grain bags, so that 'every bag of grain can be traced back to its destination'."

His tone was calm, yet like a knife cutting into the root of the problem, without any ambiguity.

"The granary reinforcement project will continue as usual, the expansion work starts today, and the drying firehouse must begin firing ahead of schedule to prevent rain and snow from destroying the wheat."

Emily sat at the side of the main seat, quietly watching Louis.

This was not the first time she'd seen him host an administrative meeting.

But every time she watched, she couldn't help but reassess this man.

He wasn't wearing battle armor nor a cape, just a simple and neatly kept dark grey long gown, with sleeves tied cleanly.

Yet as soon as he stepped into the council hall, the slightly noisy room quietened down like a bowstring pulled taut.

Without imposing pressure, without extra words, yet his mere presence was enough to make everyone serious.

He stood there, quietly flipping through wheat field drawings, granary catalogs, and workers' registers.

Emily gazed at his profile, a feeling quietly rose in her heart.

Not admiration, nor gratitude, but a kind of appreciation from the bottom of her heart.

He always manages to grasp the situation at the most critical moments, giving assurance to everyone.

After Louis finished speaking, everyone in the conference room stood up to respond, promising to complete their tasks.

Only then did he nod, stood up, and gazed around them, his voice not loud but warm-hearted: "Go now! Let the song of harvest resonate throughout Mai Lang Valley!"

The bell outside just rang, seemingly in response.

Everyone filed out in order, some immediately deploying personnel, while others hastily rode back to the village community.

.....

On the second morning after arriving at Mai Lang Territory, Louis himself personally arranged for the "Scythe Ceremony" to kick off.

In such a long and arduous harvest battle, orders and systems alone are nowhere near enough.

Most people in Mai Lang Territory were once refugees from famine, survivors of dilapidated villages, or people dragged into ruins by old wars.

They need the great Sun to give them a little spiritual boost.

Sunlight poured onto the wheat field in the center of the valley, golden waves rolling, stretching endlessly.

On the edge of the field, hundreds of village representatives had gathered early, forming a circle, their clothes neat, eyes filled with excitement and respect.

Colorful flags were planted in the fields, flapping loudly in the wind, like decorations prepared specifically for this day.

The elderly Agricultural Official held the cold iron scythe in both hands, walking to the center of the field and respectfully raising it in front of Louis.

The blade glistened silver under the sunlight, cold and sharp but without any intentions of harm.

Louis took the scythe, spoke no word, just quietly rolled up his sleeves and walked to the wheat field.

Everyone held their breath, watching as he twisted his wrist, the cold iron scythe swung down decisively, and the first bundle of golden wheat stalks bowed to the ground.

Immediately, thunderous cheers erupted from the entire scene.

"Long live the Lord!"

"Mai Lang will be bountiful!"

The cheering echoed intermittently, like waves surging from the fields to the distant valley.

Louis stood up, slowly scanning the crowd, his voice not loud but clear and powerful: "In spring, we declared war against Permafrost. Today's harvest is not my victory, but the victory won by your hands! Let this golden tide tell all of Northern Territory! Hunger is no longer fate!"

His voice carried far with the wind, unfurling across the entire fertile land alongside the shadows of clouds.

After the ceremony, the villagers each returned to their villages in high spirits, recounting the scene of Louis cutting wheat enthusiastically.

"Let me tell you, with just a swing of the knife, the wheat fell as if obedient!"

"The Lord used the golden scythe to cut the wheat! Clean and swift, without a single wasted word, standing there like a mountain! No, like a god descended from heaven!"

"A single phrase 'Hunger is no longer fate', listen to it! Who can say such words?!"

Thus, this scythe ceremony became a legend in the valley within half a day.

One telling ten, ten telling a hundred, a hundred telling a thousand, a thousand telling ten thousand... the storytellers kept adding embellishments until what was an ordinary ceremony turned into a miracle, igniting the whole of Mai Lang Territory.

Everyone thought, the Lord himself went down to the field, can we afford not to work?

Scythes swung one after another, the sound of cutting wheat "swish swish" resounded through the valley like war drums rising and falling.

Carriages flowed nonstop, cutting paths along the field ridges, delivering carts of wheat bundles to temporary granaries.

Women wrapped headscarves and sleeves, bent over to cut wheat in the fields, humming long-lost harvest tunes; children rolled and played among the hay, laughter piercingly bright.

Even the elders stayed busy, at the drying grounds husking, bundling, and turning wheat, feeling secure even if just sitting aside helping to watch the fire or pass water.

On the side of the geothermal greenhouses, the female workers carefully clipped off bunches of greenhouse fruits and vegetables, their sweat shimmering in the sunlight.

Youth carried straw baskets and burlap bags on their shoulders, moved continuously, joy on their faces brighter than sunshine.

Louis rode through the valley, inspecting each wheat field, greenhouse, and drying ground.

For instance, he keenly noticed that the east slope was moving a bit slower, immediately turned his horse, directing nearby village communities to dispatch personnel: "Group two, ten people, go over there immediately to assist, that field must be cleared before sunset!"

Afterwards he arrived at the temporary granary, personally checked several bags of freshly stored green wheat, pinching its moisture with his fingers, then squatted to check the ventilation channels and anti-mouse traps.

By the drying furnace, he removed his gloves, personally testing the furnace temperature, and instructed the craftsmen: "The heat is too damp, keep it burning for a while longer, do not let the green wheat spoil."

To the Grain Guardians, he simply said: "Tonight add more people on patrol, not a single grain shall be wasted."

Everywhere he went, he offered suggestions, making his presence felt.

The sun slanted westwards, the entire Mai Lang Territory had become a non-stop roaring harvest machine.

The sound of scythes cutting wheat, wheels grinding dirt, laughter and shouts intertwined into an autumn song.

Louis stood on the ridge, gazing out at the entire valley: wheat fields like waves, people like tides, granaries like forts, children doing somersaults on haystacks, the smell of smoke and wheat mixing with sunlight flying on the wind.

Thus, the golden season of early autumn slowly approached its end in the swing of scythes.

Every inch of the valley's farmland was carefully harvested, every bag of grain accurately recorded, and every cartload of harvest securely stored.

The previously empty new granary was now completely full, even the ventilation channels had been maneuvered to stack burlap bags.

Green had to adjust the new granary's position three times, even setting up rows of grain shelters at the valley mouth.

"We've... harvested too much." He muttered somewhat absentmindedly yet smiling like a child.

This season's Mai Lang not only filled the granaries but also instilled a long-lost sense of security in everyone's hearts.

Chapter 419: The Northern Territory Miracle

Outside the warehouse in Mai Lang Territory, workers shouted as they carried bags of wheat grain into the warehouse door.

Footsteps, rope sliding sounds, and the dull thuds of cloth bags hitting the wooden frames echoed through the valley, interspersed with laughter and shouts.

On the drying ground in front of the warehouse, piles of golden wheat looked like small mountains, reflecting warm light under the sun.

The valley was dyed in gold, the valley bottom resembling a huge bowl being gradually filled, as the autumn wind swept through, carrying the aroma of wheat.

Louis stood at the top of the slope, squinting at it all, unable to hide the joy in his eyes. He then said to Green beside him, "Green, call all the representatives, we'll hold the autumn harvest summary meeting right here."

Soon, Mike, Green, and representatives from various village communities, workshops, and patrol riding teams gradually arrived, forming a semicircle as per custom.

A canvas was spread on the spot in front of the wheat stack, wooden stakes and stone slabs pressed at the corners, serving as the meeting table.

Green stood at the front, his face still sweaty but he tidied his clothes, standing straight.

He looked at the wave-like grain mountain, took a deep breath, and raised his voice to say, "Reporting to the Lord and representatives, as of today, Mai Lang Territory's autumn harvest is 80% complete. Here are the preliminary statistical results."

Then he unfurled the sheepskin ledger in his hand, his tone brimming with undisguised pride, "A total of 115,000 tons of grain harvested."

He then pointed line by line at the ledger page, "Green wheat, 51,000 tons, is our main staple, taking the largest proportion. Mostly from flat grounds on the southern slope and fields beyond the greenhouse.

Rice, 19,000 tons, sourced from middle layers of the greenhouse and foot terrace fields. Mixed beans, 9,000 tons, all produced from dry lands and side fields of greenhouses."

He turned a page and continued, "Root crops, 23,000 tons, mainly cold potatoes, white-root turnips, and sweet carrots.

Dried vegetables and oil seeds total 11,000 tons; over 7,000 of oil seeds and over 3,000 of dried vegetables, primarily produced inside greenhouses and warm hills, enough for winter oil extraction and pickling.

Finally, fodder and miscellaneous crops, 5,000 tons, prepared for livestock winter feed and spring tillage."

Green closed the ledger, his tone softening, but each word felt like a stone dropping to the ground:

"It's estimated that the total edible grain reaches 95,000 tons. Enough to sustain 100,000 people of Red Tide for an entire year. Plus, there are several tons of surplus grain designated for military storage or emergency use.

The portion of grain already stored in public warehouses is about 33,000 tons, accounting for four and a half of the required amount, with two out of five warehouses already sealed.

The drying furnace, ventilation walls, and other facilities have undergone several rounds of inspection without any issues. As long as the snow doesn't come too early, the harvest is certain to be completed entirely, bringing this autumn harvest to a perfect conclusion."

Finally, Green surveyed everyone present: "This is the first truly meaningful whole-area harvest since the foundation of Mai Lang!"

As his words fell, the crowd was initially silent, as if the entire valley was holding its breath to listen.

The wind blew a corner of the wheat stalk, fluttering against the heavy ledger page in Green's hand.

Village community representatives gazed at that page, at the series of dry yet glowing hot numbers.

They were not unfamiliar with these grain varieties, already prepared mentally, having estimated the yield to some extent in their minds.

But at this moment, the numbers presented in such precise, stark form felt like a hammer constantly pounding into their chests.

This silence lasted a few seconds.

An old village elder's Adam's apple moved, finally unable to resist murmuring, "...Is there really that much?"

His voice seemed like the first pin to break the stillness, immediately followed by an almost uncontrollable burst of emotion among the crowd.

"Ten thousand households' one-year rations..." someone murmured, repeating as if in a dream.

"We truly did it!"

"This is the grain we grew!"

"God bless, long live the Lord!"

"This warehouse is about to burst! Hahaha!"

Laughter and shouts intertwined, and someone even excitedly wiped their face, as if wiping away tears or sweat.

Village community representatives patted shoulders, a few old village chiefs simply squatted down, holding their heads and laughing, "Lived most of my life, first time seeing so much grain!"

Someone shouted towards the valley, "Mai Lang will prosper!"

Others immediately followed, "Long live the Lord! Mai Lang will prosper!"

Their voices echoed louder and louder over the golden fields, drawing attention from the working farmers, who also looked over.

Sitting in the main seat, Louis didn't speak, only gazed at these people slowly, his mouth curved into a slight smile.

He was maintaining the dignity of the Lord, but his heart was also very excited.

Not to mention in this barren and cold Northern Territory, even across the entire Empire, no territory could produce stacks of grain piled to the valley's top within a year.

This was a complete reversal.

It was the result of a whole set of systems, a whole line of thinking, forcefully pressed down.

It wasn't due to good luck or a blessed grain year.

From the first hoeing day in spring, Louis had been watching the timing, closely monitoring the rhythm, winning battles step by step.

Such a thing had never been done in the Northern Territory; let alone accomplished. But he did it and succeeded.

The villagers were also very aware that everything brought by Louis pushed this land forward since the day he stepped onto it.

He established rules and regulations, organized land ownership, integrated labor distribution, turning the previously scattered and chaotic refugees into a real production team.

He brought a nearly mad pragmatic approach.

Like constructing channels to divert water, promoting high-yield crops, changing farm tools from old wooden hoes to more efficient iron roller plows...

Even the timing of sowing and irrigation was segmented by timeliness, as precise as military logistics.

Chapter 420: Northern Territory Miracle_2

Spring plowing, irrigation, reforming agricultural tools, three-shift crop rotation, anti-frost harvesting... each step seems like the tracks laid for this harvest.

In the past, farmers could only rely on the weather, but now they work on large-scale farms, with a whole section of crops laid out behind them according to wind direction and soil temperature.

Even winter is no longer lifeless; the geothermal network brings warmth into the greenhouse, and places that couldn't grow a single sprout now see cabbages and carrots harvested twice a year.

They are no longer solitary boats led by fate but have truly used their hands and wisdom to pry open the future of the entire land.

Everyone clearly sees that all of this is because of a man named Louis, hanging like the sun above the Mai Lang.

To these people, his light shines upon every path between fields, warming this Northern Territory ravaged by cold winds.

His warmth burns away the hunger of winter nights, allowing people to rediscover the boundaries of vitality and dignity in the wilderness.

Just as the Mai Lang undulates in the morning light, his presence shapes the rhythm of the harvest, just like the lush crops under the midsummer sun, which is the order he has brought.

In their hearts, Louis offers not just a field of wheat but a ray of hope, making them believe that even in icy, barren land, golden wheat waves can bloom.

After a ten-minute thunderous cheer, the excitement still reverberated in the air as if it hadn't fully dissipated, but the meeting had to go on.

Louis coughed lightly, and the crowd paused their enthusiastic cheers and returned to their seats in a semicircle.

Papers were spread out again, pen tips fell once more, and the tone shifted from passionate to pragmatic.

Green opened the plan written by Louis and began to speak again: "Let's continue with the finishing work, handling excess crop material."

He turned to the second page of the record: "Green wheat stalks, bean vines, these should be bundled and stored as winter fodder and firewood; first distributed to livestock cooperatives, and the rest should be centrally stacked in the space behind the warehouse.

Don't discard the sick wheat and moldy beans. They can be used for brewing, feeding livestock, or fertilizing the fields. Someone should sort them, categorizing them into bins, as the brewery and fertilizer team are ready.

As for potato peels and rotten roots, they should all go into the compost pit. After a month, they will be just right for digging out as organic fertilizer in winter and spring."

He paused, gesturing toward the direction of the wheat fields: "Next is land plot renovation and rotation planning.

The harvested plots should be frozen as soon as possible. Cover with withered grass, tamp it down, and protect against frost cracks.

For those high-yield fields on the southern slope, I suggest plowing them once, mixing in wheat bran and bean stalks to nourish the soil. Planting again in spring won't have bad results.

Along the riverbank, the water level is stable, and next year we can try a round of rice planting or reed cultivation for weaving. Keep it in mind."

As he finished this, the village chiefs were already whispering among themselves on how to assign tasks for their respective lands.

Green looked toward another blacksmith representative: "And the farm tool inventory."

That person nodded in agreement: "We have already sent people to count in each village. There's a list of broken sickles, plowshares, and hoes. All repairs should be uniformly sent to the blacksmith and woodworking workshops, working overtime.

And grindstones, this harvest is too big, and grinding must keep up. We're short-handed on our side, so we may need to bring in a couple of teams from the Red Tide Workshop to help."

Louis nodded: "I'll arrange for people to come over."

Then Agricultural Director Mike stood up, holding his leather-bound sketchbook with yellowed edges, first coughing once, then chuckling to himself:

"Currently, here in Mai Lang, we've constructed a total of twenty-four geothermal greenhouses. We're also planning to build six more before next spring, and these greenhouses combined should ensure that the people have vegetables to eat during winter."

As he said this, a bit of pride was evident in his tone as he gestured to the rough drawings of the greenhouse area and continued:

"The first crop, from early winter to midwinter, will have greens, mustard greens, bok choy, lettuce, spinach, and some chives that grow quickly and are filling. There are also carrots, winter radishes, small onions, and taro yam, a batch enough to provide soup vegetables for the whole winter.

The second crop will focus on soybeans and lentils, which can improve soil fertility and make it convenient for the next season's grain planting. The experimental greenhouse has reserved areas for seedlings, and seeds for tomatoes, cucumbers, and herbs are ready."

"As for guarding the greenhouses, the team has increased to twenty people, rotating two groups each night. Mice, wind leaks, and icing should all be manageable."

After finishing these remarks, he put away his notebook, glanced at the seated Louis, then looked around at everyone with a shy smile: "Um...that's about it."

A round of enthusiastic applause followed in the assembly hall.

It wasn't the perfunctory encouragement but genuine acknowledgment from the heart.

Everyone present was someone who had risen from the mud, knowing best what a leaf of cabbage means in the winter.

The winter greenhouse planting plan is not just about providing the people with a few bites of green vegetables during winter but is an entire path connecting the future.

The construction of the geothermal greenhouse has freed Mai Lang from the absolute dependence on seasons in traditional agriculture, truly taking the first step towards "year-round farming."

It signifies that even if the mountain is sealed with snow and the ground cracks, life can still grow in the greenhouse, and harvest can emerge from the soil.

Rapid-growing vegetables and root crops ensure the daily table, while rotating legumes not only enrich the soil but also provide valuable green manure for spring planting.

More importantly, those tomatoes, cucumbers, and herbs now have the possibility of being tried and grown beneath the North's ice layers.

After the applause subsided, Green stood up, still holding the ledger, and spoke slowly: "There is one matter. You have all heard Lord Louis mention it before, but now with the grain harvest confirmed, it's time to implement it."

He raised his hand pointing to the distant stack of wheat bags piled like a small mountain, his voice slightly rising:

"Currently, our storage facilities in Mai Lang, even with three newly built temporary warehouses, are strained. According to the plan set by the lord in the spring, we will collectively transport 65% of the grain to Red Tide Territory."

He paused, looking at the crowd.

"Red Tide has more stable terrain, a more complete storage system, and can connect directly to various transfer stations, whether for external support or wartime allocation, it's more secure and efficient.

Mai Lang itself will retain 35% of the grain for daily rations, communal distributions, emergency reserves, and seed storage, all subdivided according to standards."

No one below objected; several village chiefs even nodded.

After all, this was something that Louis himself had decided upon before the spring plowing began.

Louis sat in the main seat, listening quietly to the entire report, not showing any exaggerated expression.

But the glimpse of light in his eyes was something everyone clearly saw as satisfaction and acknowledgment.

When everyone had finished speaking, he nodded slowly, his voice not loud but enough to make everyone perk up: "Everything's well arranged, the harvest was a victory; the work ahead is to make this victory even greater."

Everyone subconsciously straightened up, as if someone had given their spine a support.

As these words finished, they all instinctively straightened their backs, their faces gaining a few more degrees of pride.

Louis paused, suddenly revealing a relaxed smile: "Of course, celebrating is a must."

His eyes swept over the representatives of the village chiefs: "Go back and organize, each village holding a Harvest Day celebration feast, showcasing the achievements, don't hide them. You must let everyone who worked and sweated know that this land remembers their names."

"Also, once the final yield is finalized, rewards will be distributed according to the Spring Plowing Performance Chart. Model workers, top ten households, a permanent high-quality private plot for each acre, additional grain shares, tool rewards, or promotion opportunities; outstanding laborers, each village prioritizes their recommendation for the management team."

"That's all," Louis stood up, dusting off his robe, "meeting adjourned."

As he stepped out of the canvas meeting venue, the golden waves of wheat swayed gently in the wind, seemingly paying tribute to the harvest and decisions made.

Behind him, everyone stood up, their smiles impossible to hide, walking out one by one.

This was a departure after a victorious battle but seemed more like the beginning of a new Chapter.