

## **Winter 881**

### **Chapter 881: Red Tide Knight Charge!**

A dark golden meteor streaked across the western sky.

August maintained his true dragon form, gliding through the air.

The massive dragon body sliced through the clouds, the turbulent airflow akin to an unending storm, flattening the forest beneath completely.

This was the border of the Southeast Province, already part of Louis's territory.

In August's perception, this was an undisputed reckoning.

He would crush his way from the Southeast, directly telling the newly risen Lord that mortals should never presumptuously covet his Empire.

But as he looked down at the earth, the dragon's eyes paused slightly.

Below, there were no panicked mortals fleeing in all directions, roads were empty, villages tightly closed, towns seemed preemptively evacuated.

This gave August a faint discomfort.

Since he awoke from the Ancient Tomb, dominating the continent with his true dragon body, his marching speed had long surpassed the limits of mortal understanding.

Even the most precise intelligence network could not complete such a large-scale evacuation in such a short time.

It was as if someone knew of his arrival in advance, a feeling that made him feel offended.

"Rats hiding in caves." The deep dragon language echoed in the air with undisguised disdain, "Do you think you can escape my judgment?"

He didn't continue to dwell, as mortal schemes are meaningless in the face of true power.

August accelerated with his wings, flying towards the Southeast Province's most solid fortress on the defensive line.

This was a fortress built specifically for resisting heavy siege machinery, its walls thick, structure complex, metal components spread across every joint.

In the old ages, this was a pass that could make any army pay a painful price, but, unfortunately, it was encountering a cross-era monster.

August suspended directly above the fortress, opening his enormous dragon mouth.

The ability given by greed activated.

An invisible heavy metal gravitational field instantly spread, covering several square kilometers.

The air emitted a low hum, the iron chains, rivets, and supports inside the walls began to tremble violently, producing a strained lament.

The next moment, a vast amount of metal dislodged, as if a massive invisible hand pulled it to the sky, transforming into streams of black torrents, madly rushing into his mouth.

Right then, signals lit up on the fortress's walls.

Knights hidden on the battlements appeared, their bodies with no metal, replaced by heavy magical beast leather armor, joints equipped with bone buckles and leather cords.

Lambert stood at the forefront, when the dragon overshadowed the sky, his heart nearly skipped a beat, his reason repeatedly washed by a fear stemming from instinct.

He forcibly steadied his breath.

"Fire!" Lambert sharply swung the command sword in his hand.

Behind the walls, the catapults and magic cannons simultaneously activated.

Heaps of gray-black powder were thrown into the sky.

These powders mixed with magnetic blood powder, magnetic storm dust, and directional disintegration crystal composites.

The wind rolled them up.

Under the pull of August's own gravitational field, these powders did not scatter, but quickly converged into a rotating invisible tornado, precisely attacking his dragon body.

August initially paid no attention, but soon felt it.

They penetrated through the gaps between scales into the body, resonating with the greed circuit in his blood.

He instinctively devoured them, sparing not a shred of attention to discern any anomalies.

Until the moment he gathered his abilities, the dragon's blood within him contacted with the absorbed powder.

The Magneto-explosion simultaneously ignited.

The dark golden dragon body suddenly shuddered, muffled booms like thunder exploded continuously inside him.

Tens of thousands of directional disintegration crystals detonated in his blood circuit, like countless high-speed rotating blades, madly cutting inside.

Even a true dragon cannot ignore such a level of internal explosion.

"Roar!!!"

The next instant, a painful and out-of-control roar tore through the skies.

Compared to the battle with Mammon, this pain was ten, a hundred times more intense, a sensation of his blood being torn apart.

Dark golden dragon blood mixed with shattered crystals spurted out from between the scales.

They fell to the earth.

Below, the land was corroded in an instant, rock layers melted, forming one massive pit after another, rolling with lava.

August tumbled once in the air, forcibly stabilizing his body.

In the dragon's eyes, for the first time appeared a clear fury, the dark golden dragon body slightly trembling.

But what truly made him intolerant wasn't the injuries.

The mortals he viewed as feed, as tools, as sources of blood energy, they actually turned and exploited his instincts.

And he had fallen for it, this was more infuriating than any wound.

"...Very well." The deep dragon language rolled out from his throat, with a clear tremor of loss of control, "Since so, I no longer have the need to toy with you."

The last shred of patience was completely crushed, true dragon power was unleashed, a suppression directly affecting life's hierarchy.

The air seemed forcibly pressed to the ground, space itself began sinking.

The closest knights, not even having time to scream.

Blood and flesh lost structure in an instant, the entire person like an invisible giant hand crushed, exploding from within, turning into a blood mist.

Slightly farther, the Extraordinary Knights knelt on the ground.

Their Fighting Energy circulated madly, barely maintaining consciousness.

Bone emitted a sound of strain, lungs compressed unable to complete a full breath.

Even the Peak Knights' condition wasn't much better.

They could still stand, yet each breath felt like swallowing scorching iron sand, the edge of vision rapidly darkened.

But this was merely an appetizer, the slaughter began.

With no tugging, August no longer selected targets and no longer cared about efficiency.

He quickly advanced along the battle line, yet each dive, each claw swipe, erased swathes of lives.

Walls crumbled, positions shattered.

August slowly raised his front claw, and the greedy gravitational field unfolded once again.

In the distance, those heavy tanks still experiencing the magic explosion bullet suddenly shuddered.

Treads and armor simultaneously emitted a piercing metallic shriek, and the entire vehicle was forcibly dragged off the ground.

In the next moment, the heavy steel was crumpled into a ball in mid-air.

The armor collapsed like wet mud, brief and shrill wails sounded from within, then completely fell into silence.

The iron ball hit the ground, smashing deep pits one after another.

The defensive line that mortals took pride in became meaningless in the face of the true dragon.

At that moment, another dark red torrent sliced into the battlefield from the flank.

The Half-Dragon Knight Order had arrived.

Their speed was slightly slower than the true dragon's, but no less deadly.

Dragon blood boiled within them, scales covered their joints, and sharp claws and long blades left blurred afterimages during their charge.

Then came an efficient and ruthless sweep.

Knights who hadn't been crushed by the dragon's might were dragged out, torn apart, and thrown away, one by one.

The entire battlefield quickly descended into chaos; this was a complete clearing operation.

Lambert watched familiar figures fall one after another.

This wasn't a retreat after a fierce battle; it was being crushed like ants.

Under the dragon's might, formations were meaningless, techniques held no value.

Knights who once charged side by side in arrays were casually wiped out, like dust flattened on the ground.

His throat tightened, yet no choking sounds escaped.

Because he remembered what Louis had said.

When that kind of thing appears, the only correct choice is one.

"Scatter." Lambert hoarsely shouted, "Everyone, retreat into the forest immediately!"

The knights paused for a moment; this wasn't a command they were familiar with.

Retreat meant defeat, meant leaving their backs to the enemy.

And in the face of this situation, scattering to escape almost equaled being hunted down one by one.

"Grey." Lambert didn't explain further; he growled again, "Take people away, disperse, as far as possible."

Grey stood in place, hands clenched tightly; he glanced at Lambert, then towards the still tumbling battlefield.

In the distance, the Half-Dragon Knights were entering the positions, cold and precise in their speed.

He understood that staying behind would only lead to more deaths.

Grey gritted his teeth and suddenly turned around: "Follow me!"

The knights began to scatter, abandoning their positions, diving into the forest, disappearing into the undulating terrain.

The dragon's might continued to oppress.

Some fell while running, some were caught up by the Half-Dragon people, unable even to let out a scream.

But more survived.

Lambert stood in place, not looking back.

Soon, there were fewer than a hundred left around him.

All were Mid-tier Extraordinary Knight or higher combat strength, the strongest Red Tide Knights.

And they all understood the significance of staying behind.

"Form up." Lambert drew his longsword, the blade already full of notches.

Silently, the knights stood behind him.

In the distance, the Half-Dragon Knights shifted direction, their attention firmly captured by this team.

From higher up, dark golden dragon eyes fell.

August saw them, as if seeing a few insects that refused to disperse.

Lambert took a deep breath, knowing full well what he faced.

Single combat strength of the Half-Dragon Knights far surpassed him, and the dragon in the sky was beyond measure.

But his hand did not tremble.

"Red Tide Knights." His voice was not loud, yet it pierced through the chaotic battlefield, "Charge!"

Not for glory, not for the Empire, only for one name.

"For Lord Louis!"

The knights simultaneously stepped forward, charging towards the Half-Dragon people.

The disparity in power was evident from the first moment.

Claws tore through armor, dragon-blood fighting energy crushed defenses, knights were sent flying, cut down, and forcibly trampled into the mud.

Lambert rushed forward, the dark golden shadow covering his view, his sight shrinking continuously until only what lay ahead, swing the sword, and press forward remained.

"Ridiculous humans!" August's dragon claw slowly lifted.

In that instant, Lambert appeared incomparably small, heartbreakingly so.

Just as the dragon claw was about to descend, time came to a halt.

Flying dirt and rocks froze in mid-air, rolling flames lost their form.

The movements of the Half-Dragon people were frozen, August's twisted fury was like a faded mural.

The entire battlefield turned into a static picture.

Footsteps sounded.

A figure walked out of the void, stepping into this frozen world.

Louis stopped beside Lambert.

He lowered his head to glance at the bloodied knight kneeling on the ground, still gripping his longsword.

Then he raised his head, his gaze traversing the frozen battlefield, landing on the insolent giant dragon.

"You've done well, Lambert." Louis's voice was gentle, yet provided such reassurance, "Leave the rest to me."

Chapter 882: Dragon Slayer

Time stopped at that moment.

The wind ceased to sweep across the ridges, the swirling dust suspended in mid-air, dragon breath transformed into solid flames, frozen at the moment before the burst.

Louis stepped out from the ripples in the void.

With each step he took, the ground beneath his feet changed.

Wilted stalks of grass stood tall again, charred earth cracked with fine lines, new greenery completing its growth in a very short time.

The battlefield was segmented.

The movements of five thousand Dragon-man Guard Army were all frozen at the instant Louis appeared.

Their charging stance halted in mid-air, claws yet to fall, the fierce gaze in their eyes fixed at the same angle.

Louis turned around, looking at Lambert who was still kneeling on the ground.

"You've worked hard, Lambert." Louis' voice was gentle, yet provided a sense of security, "Leave the rest to me."

The knights of the Red Tide stood still, without immediate action.

Their gaze wandered between Louis and the giant dragon that covered the sky, hesitant and uneasy.

This level of confrontation had long surpassed their comprehension.

Lambert bit down hard, forcing himself to stand upright.

He glanced at Louis, said nothing further, and simply waved heavily, the knights began retreating.

The constraint of time gradually loosened.

Augustus was the first to regain action.

The power of original sin surged within him, allowing him to barely break free from that layer of restraint.

He lowered his massive dragon head, looking at the mortal who suddenly appeared at the center of the battlefield, eyes filled with contempt.

In his view, this was merely another being trying to use unorthodox means.

He also noticed the retreating knights.

The dragon mouth slightly opened, several breaths of dragon instantly formed, rushing toward the distant crowd.

Louis raised his hand, these dragon breaths were forcibly wiped out in mid-air, as if erased by an invisible hand, leaving no aftermath.

The retreating knights were able to move away from the battlefield.

Augustus for the first time showed obvious alertness in his emotions, realizing that he was facing not an ordinary mortal.

"How brazen are these ants!" Dragon speech exploded, filled with undisguised violence.

"On the road to my ascension, you are merely another offering crawling under the shadow of dragon wings!"

Dark golden scales gleamed coldly in the air.

"This sky, the underground veins, even the souls of mortals, rightfully belong to the noble Dragon race!

You crawling creatures are only fit as fodder, engraved within the stomachs of the dragon descendants!"

Louis lifted his eyes, his gaze calm, untouched by the wild boast.

Five and a half powers of original sin weaved at his fingertips.

Dim light flows rotated slowly, like a star forming, but without any sign of losing control.

"The era belonging to dragons," Louis spoke, his tone flat, "extinguished a thousand years ago.

Augustus, things buried by history should obediently rot in the soil, you long for a return, but this world, no longer has a throne for the old emperor."

Louis' understatement completely ignited Augustus's anger.

He stopped probing, that half portion of arrogant power of original sin within released completely.

Dark golden pressure like a breached flood tore through the air, pressing toward Louis.

Mountains shook, earth veins wailed, a force enough to make the world submit.

Louis stood firm: "Time to end this farce."

The Primordial Heart in his body emitted a low and steady resonance.

The sound was not flamboyant, yet upon contact, Augustus's pressure lost its shape.

Moreover, a more pure, complete arrogance rose slowly from within Louis.

Under the resonance of the Primordial Heart, the pressure around Louis did not linger at a level of confrontation but started to reverse expand, like thoroughly covering Augustus's pressure.

Augustus quickly realized the abnormality, his dragon body quivered slightly, a reaction from the deepest part of the bloodstream.

It was a fear engraved in the creation instinct, an impulse of submission to a higher-level existence.

At this moment, Augustus felt tremors.

"How could it be..." The low growl rolled from Augustus's throat, carrying obvious disorder.

He couldn't accept, couldn't accept being suppressed by a mortal in position.

The humiliation brought by the reverse covering was far more lethal than any injury.

Arrogance was torn apart, reason collapsed along with it.

"Impossible! I am a noble Dragon, a sovereign above all eternity!"

Dragon speech shattered the sky, and dark golden scales vibrated fiercely.

"You filthy creatures, how dare you make me tremble?!" To reverse this intolerable reality, Augustus let out a mournful dragon roar.

"All those who bear my blood..." The dragon roar transformed into a decree, covering the entire battlefield, "are my sustenance!"

At the moment the command fell, five thousand members of the Dragon-man Guard Army simultaneously screamed.

Their bodies developed cracks, scales unfurled, and flesh crumbled in the uncontrolled resonance.

In the next instant, three thousand bodies simultaneously burst.

Scalding and condensed dragon blood essence was forcibly extracted, as if pulled by invisible hands, turning into three thousand streams of crimson light, following the bloodstained trajectory in the air, all merging into Augustus' spine.

The air was scorched, and space emitted a low tearing sound.

After devouring all the guard's essence blood, Augustus' body once again surged.

On the dark golden dragon scales, curse-like clusters of dark red crystals rapidly grew, covering every joint like blood scabs.

In the most primitive way, he forcibly tore through Louis' pressure.

The dragon wings unfurled, eclipsing the horizon.

At that moment, his power broke through the threshold, entering an unstable yet extremely violent ultimate state.

Suspended in mid-air, Augustus gathered blood-red dragon breath in his mouth, with space warping and deforming around him.

His voice, like rolling thunder, swept across the heavens.

"This is the fate of the dragon race! We shall return to our peak, turning this despicable world once again into pasture!"

Augustus' dragon eyes locked onto Louis: "Die!"

Louis' expression remained calm.

The haunting glow of the five sins slowly intertwined at his fingertips.

Then his hand waved gently, the motion casual, as if sweeping away dust that had accumulated on a tabletop.

"Augustus," Louis spoke, his voice not loud yet clearly spreading across the entire battlefield, "do you still not understand?"

The dark golden firmament lost its weight at that moment.

"This era no longer has an ark to carry the dragon race."

Primordial power was mobilized.

Inside the old emperor, the greedy core that supported the operation of all powers extinguished without warning.

Augustus' actions stiffened, and he clearly felt the laws that once absolutely obeyed his will were slipping from control, inversely pulling at his existence.

Gravity no longer supported his body, space no longer accommodated his scales.

The dragon body, as heavy as mountains, began to collapse at the most basic level.

From scales to flesh, from bones to blood vessels, they were peeled away layer by layer, turning into fragments that could no longer be gathered.

For the first time, fear truly occupied Augustus' consciousness.

"No... this is impossible..." The dragon speech lost its dignity, leaving only panic.

"What exactly are you? Such power... should not exist in this world!"

He struggled to piece together his body, but found even the act of struggling itself was failing.

"Spare me..." Augustus' voice was hurried and shattered, "I am willing to honor you as..."

Louis did not respond; he gave no time for the tyrant to repent.

Five fingers closed.

The Power of Five Sins instantly converged, coalescing into a pure white light blade.

Falling from the sky, it pierced down through Augustus' crown.

In the moment of contact, decaying dragon blood was completely purified, and the colossal dark golden dragon utterly disintegrated.

Scales, bones, flesh all turned into dust scattering across the sky, dissolving without a trace in the light.

No remnants, only a layer of ash slowly falling.

Louis descended slowly from the sky.

When his feet touched the ground, the soil, once scorched by dragon breath and torn by battle, began to undergo subtle changes.

Cracks healed, blackened earth came back to life, and new shoots of grass broke through the soil.

On the distant hillside, Lambert knelt on the ground, hands bracing the longsword, body trembling slightly.

The surviving knights supported each other, following him as they knelt together.

Blood slid down their armor, mixed with tears, dripping into the rejuvenating earth.

Further away, tens of thousands of citizens witnessed the demise of the giant dragon.

After a brief silence, shouts suddenly burst forth.

"Lord Louis—!" The voices gathered into waves, breaking through the clouds, shaking the firmament.

Above the ashes, the old era was thoroughly ended.

Chapter 883: Original Sin

Dark golden dust slowly falls like snow.

The dragon corpse that once obscured the sky has vanished, the vast creature dissolving rapidly, leaving only a large expanse of ash.

A faint warmth lingers in the air, yet no trace of the dragon's aura can be felt.

Louis stands at the center of the ruins.

At the moment the last piece of dark golden dust lands, a phantom figure gradually emerges in front of him.

The figure is incomplete, its silhouette seeming to have been repeatedly eroded by time, barely maintaining a human shape.

Louis raises his head and sees the face clearly.

He recognizes the face.

It is the face of the Grand Mage Noken who once, long ago, in the Primordial Land, implanted the Primordial Heart into his mind, known perhaps by another identity as Lin Ze.

But now, he is no longer the elegant and composed steward.

That body has been dead for many years, with what stands before him, a forcibly severed remnant of a soul.

Anchored by obsession, guided by prophecy, stubbornly enduring for a thousand years.

Louis merely watches him, without speaking immediately.

From the state of the remnant, he already understands everything.

Noken quietly looks back at Louis.

In the depths of hollow eyes, there is a faint emotion, not joy, but a kind of release, a final letting go.

A thousand years of planning finally come to an end, his mission complete at this moment.

Louis remained silent for a long time before he spoke softly, "You've worked hard."

The voice is not loud but extremely solemn.

Noken slightly bows his head, as though making a final farewell to this world.

In the next moment, his figure starts to thin.

Dispersing like smoke in the wind, without pain or struggle, disappearing quietly into the air, leaving no trace.

Louis stands in place, gazing at the void.

Only when the last trace of soul fluctuations completely disappears does he slowly turn away.

Above the ruins, mist still lingers stubbornly.

This belongs to the Dragon Emperor, the mist of greed and that half of arrogance.

Louis reaches out, and under invisible guidance, the two masses of mist converge, compressed into flowing light, carrying pure power.

He hesitates not, allowing the flow of light to pierce straight into his chest, merging with the Primordial Heart.

At this moment, the powers of the seven original sins finally complete their closure.

The resonance of the power of original sin and the Primordial Heart reaches full completion.

Louis' consciousness separates from the battlefield, plunging into boundless whiteness.

In the next moment, countless memories flood into his consciousness.

Fragmented and chaotic scenes, like a shuffled carousel, forcibly pieced together and reorganized in the depth of consciousness.

He witnesses wars, not of this life, but from far older times.

Dragon wings obscuring the sky, cities burnt by flames, human settlements reduced to pastures.

He remembers, his past self, the original mage.

A thousand years ago, in the epoch when humans were driven to despair, water and mountains exhausted, he stood up, leading the remnants of humanity against the dragons.

After numerous failures, he realized a harsh truth.

To truly counter dragon power, humans must wield a force not of the dragon's system.

Thus, he chose to embody the original sin.

Not due to corruption, but to create a foundation of power independent of dragons.

After the dragons were defeated, the world enjoyed a brief peace.

He established the Mage City, attempting to bind such power within reason and order.

Yet the original sin did not halt.

It continuously eroded his consciousness, devoured his self.

He keenly felt his existence sliding irreversibly into an abyss, the time left to him dwindling.

To avoid being completely consumed by original sin, and to prevent dragging the world into ruin during a loss of control, he made an extreme choice.

He chose to divide himself.

Sending the remaining rational self into reincarnation.

Separating emotional, cruel, unmanageable original sin and all memories for disassembly and sealing.

As all memories return to place, with the final piece embedded deeply into consciousness, Louis' figure gradually solidifies.

Opposite him, a shadow simultaneously forms.

Contours, form, face... exactly like him.

But Louis can see through that surface, it is not a complete entity.

But arrogance's cold smile, greed's claws, gluttony's maw, sloth's mire...

It is the collective embodiment of original sin he personally removed and sealed long ago.

Louis regards the shadow before him, eyes calm, as if he is facing an adversary known for a thousand years.

The shadow speaks first.

"Child," the voice identical to his own, yet reverberating with unease, "We meet again."

Behind the shadow, the white space slowly cracks open.

The scene unfolds.

It is the projection of the real world, the earth ravaged by August.

Collapsing cities, stacked corpses, crowds moaning amidst the ruins.

"Look." The shadow's tone was calm, yet full of allure, "Humanity is always struggling, desire never ceases..."

The shadow spread its arms, as if displaying a long-expected result: "This is the true face of this world.

The desire of this world is endless."

The shadow slowly approached, its outline expanding, eroding the surrounding whiteness.

"Even after a millennium, I still exist. Even if you kill a Dragon Emperor today, new crises will emerge tomorrow, and humanity will still self-destruct."

"Come." The shadow's voice turned deep and seductive, "Accept me, embrace me.

Once you and I merge, you will become the only, eternally supreme true God on this land."

The white space trembled with it.

The shadow's form constantly changed, transforming into countless outlines symbolizing desire: thrones, legions, mountains of corpses, and cheering crowds.

"You can eliminate all the world's pain at will and create an eternally peaceful utopia.

Isn't this what you have always pursued?"

Louis chuckled lightly: "It does sound like a perfect bonsai, but unfortunately, it's lifeless."

He raised his head, looking at the shadow that almost overshadowed the entire conscious space.

The shadow's expansion paused slightly.

"Your so-called utopia," Louis's tone was calm, "is a world without desire, without variations; it is nothing more than a huge tomb."

He took a step forward.

"And what you want has never been to help me become a God, but to make me a vessel for you to devour civilization."

Seeing his intention exposed, the shadow no longer maintained its facade.

It suddenly swelled, and the pure white space was completely engulfed, even the direction and boundary disappeared.

"Do you think you have a choice?" The voice pressed Louis from all sides.

"In your current state, you can suppress me for at most a few decades. When you die, I will still control the entire world."

"And to destroy me?" The shadow let out a low laugh, almost mocking. "A thousand years ago, you couldn't do it, and now it's the same."

I am a companion of the world's inception. As long as there are living beings, as long as there is desire, my lifespan is as long as the world's.

You cannot kill me, nor can you escape me."

Louis stared at the darkness. "You're wrong, I indeed cannot kill you, but have you felt it? You have grown weaker."

The shadow's voice fluctuated for the first time: "Weaker? No! War, famine, death... these all nourish me."

Louis shook his head: "Compared to a thousand years ago, humans have learned about the law, learned to cooperate, learned to use tools to fight against nature."

Louis slowly raised his hand, pointing into the void: "Every inch knowledge spreads, your shadow shortens by a fraction."

The so-called original sin, in essence, is chaos caused by ignorance, and I will scatter the seeds named rationality across this continent."

The shadow surged violently within the white space.

It no longer maintained a calm demeanor, its outline continuously collapsed and reassembled, as if pushed to the extreme.

"It only takes one disaster! Or a war that could devastate civilization!" The voice of original sin had lost its certainty, imbued with an almost hysterical sharpness.

"Order will be shredded, systems will collapse, humans will revert to beasts again!"

"By then, everything will return to the starting point..." Louis listened quietly, then spoke, "You still don't understand."

His tone wasn't intense, yet it felt like a hammer, nailing the roar of original sin in place.

"The accumulation of civilization is never cyclical." He took another step forward, the pure white space underfoot rippling in layers, "It spirals upward.

Disasters can destroy cities, but they can never erase the knowledge and logic already etched into the blood."

Louis raised his eyes, his gaze passing through the shadow as if looking at a far more distant place.

"History does indeed regress, but it never returns to the starting point." His voice gradually became clearer and more powerful.

"A thousand years ago, the dragons harvested humans like weeds."

"But today, my workers know how to use steel to ward off winter, my knights understand what they are fighting for.

Once knowledge is mastered by millions, it turns into an inertia engraved in the bones."

The shadow attempted to retort, only to find its form shrinking uncontrollably.

Louis continued: "Even if you destroy the Red Tide, as long as a single literate child survives, the speed at which civilization will recover will be a hundred times faster than the last time."

He paused for a moment, his tone lowered with a threatening edge: "One day, humans will trample over you."

The white space trembled, the outline of original sin revealed irreparable cracks: "These are just your fantasies!"

"The most important thing I taught the people," Louis slowly said, "was never how to use gunpowder, but to dare to apply their own reason.

And when a farmer starts to consider the logic behind next year's harvest, instead of praying to the void, the way the world functions has already changed."

His gaze returned to the shadow, as if stating a conclusion that had been proven countless times.

"The moment you merged with me, you were already dead. You are no longer a nightmare; you are merely an unsolved problem yet to be fully resolved."

Original sin let out a near-torn scream.

Louis didn't leave it any space to continue roaring.

He opened his arms, and the surging darkness, along with the essence of original sin that had yet to dissipate, was actively absorbed into his own body.

Deep in his consciousness, countless images flashed by.

Lights burning in the night school, machines roaring continuously in the factories, smiles when people received their wages...

The magic power accumulated within began to deplete at an astonishing speed.

This was the most dangerous and stable sealing magic mastered by the Primordial Mage—the Eternal Carrier.

Original sin rampaged in his soul, struggling, breaking down, being forcibly compressed.

Ultimately it lost its form.

Transforming into countless tiny and cold chains, they wrapped around the cornerstone of Louis's soul, circle after circle.

The white space returned to silence.

Original sin was temporarily sealed.

Chapter 884: Forty Years Later

At six in the morning, the residential areas of the capital gradually awakened to the lingering and steady chimes of bells.

When Yini opened her eyes, the night had just faded outside the window.

Soft sunlight lay over the marble floor, forming neat and tranquil patches of light.

Today is not an ordinary day.

It is the fortieth anniversary of the Republic of Red Tide, and the day she, as a representative of the Academy of Sciences, was invited to Red Tide City to attend the award ceremony.

Yini was born in the Northern Territory, her father was a captain in the Broken Blade Knight Order, who later joined the Red Tide ranks to become one of the first knights to lay down arms and transition into the new system.

This allowed her to enter a complete education system, from basic school, workshop internships, to the preparatory class at the Academy of Sciences, step by step to where she is now.

She didn't think of herself as having extraordinary talent, just that she understood earlier than others a simple truth: the world had begun to reward learning and patience.

Now she is one of the academicians in the field of magus-mechanics, chosen to be an awardee for the fortieth anniversary.

On the other side of the bed, her husband John was still asleep.

John is an engineer in the Red Tide Heavy Industry Department, responsible for the stable design of large energy transmission structures.

His parents were among the first serfs liberated in Red Tide Territory, now residing in a well-facilitated apartment area, occasionally debating over their grandchildren's school work.

Yini did not wake him, but quietly got up.

Opening the window, the city's outline stretched out completely.

The streets clean and straight, the traffic lights at intersections changing in an orderly manner, and in the low-altitude tracks, early morning transport crafts silently glided along fixed routes.

Neighbors had already begun their morning exercises, some jogging, others with children doing basic physical stretches in open spaces.

She quickly freshened up, changed into formal wear, and when she entered the living room, a familiar aroma greeted her.

Her mother, Mary, was already awake.

The seventy-something-year-old was standing at the kitchen counter, frying eggs, bread, hot milk, not missing anything, even setting out her favorite jam.

"Why did you get up so early?" Yini couldn't help but speak up, "I can handle it myself today."

Mary didn't look back, just laughed softly: "Can't stay idle. Besides, today is a big day."

She turned around, her gaze lingering on her daughter for a moment, as if confirming something, then nodded in satisfaction.

"Never thought that clumsy kid covered in mud back in the day could now stand on the award stage."

Yini was taken aback by the words, then burst into a smile.

After having breakfast, Mary began to help her pack.

"Did you bring your documents? What about the Academy badge? Where did you put the spare gloves? The wind is much colder in the Northern Territory than here, don't forget your shawl."

Yini took her mother's hand, saying softly, "I have everything."

She hesitated a moment, then asked: "Aren't you coming with me to Red Tide City? Lord Louis specially reserved a family seat for you."

Mary shook her head, smiling, while her eyes glistened slightly.

"I'm old, can't sit still in an airship." she said lightly, "Besides... it's better for you young people to go."

She looked at Yini, suddenly becoming serious: "When you get to Red Tide City and meet Lord Louis, say thank you on behalf of our family.

Tell the Lord that without him, our family might have long become mere nameless corpses in the wilderness of the Northern Territory."

Yini's throat tightened, she nodded, saying nothing more.

In her mother's generation, Louis was never just the head of the Republic.

"I will, Mother, I will tell him in person."

With a farewell to her mother, Yini opened her front door.

The morning air had a hint of chill, yet it was clean and steady.

She descended the stairs, encountering a community worker cleaning the street at the entrance.

The person pushed the cleaning cart, moving unhurriedly.

They nodded to each other.

"Good morning, comrade."

"Good morning."

Their tone was natural, with neither deliberate enthusiasm nor hierarchical reserve.

With time on her side, Yini didn't call for a special public car, instead walking through People's Square as usual.

The square's slabs had just been washed, the drainage ditches at the edges still bore water marks.

Workers finishing morning exercises were now either jogging or doing strength training on simple equipment, nodding to her in greeting as they passed.

A crowd had already gathered at the news bulletin corner of the square.

Yini noticed that among those gathered were not only researchers in academy uniforms but also many porters and technicians in work clothes.

Someone pointed to a section of text on the page, discussing the improvement plan for a new type of transmission structure in hushed tones.

The "Truth Gazette" was printed every early morning, and hit the stands by dawn.

Nine years of compulsory education had thoroughly ended the age of ignorance; literacy was no longer a privilege of the few but the starting point for every citizen.

As Yini passed by one place, she noticed through an open window the activity room inside.

Several elderly men were discussing moves around a chessboard, while others were wearing reading glasses, seriously flipping through basic arithmetic textbooks, and a schedule for the "Evening Red Literacy Advancement Class" was pasted on the wall.

They no longer prayed to fate in church, nor did they need to bow to any idol.

On a street corner, a retired veteran had set up a breakfast stand.

The grill crackled with sizzling affordable sausages.

He moved skillfully, handing grilled bread to queued customers, occasionally chatting with familiar faces.

There were no knights wreaking havoc here, nor any harsh exploitation.

He only needed to pay a very low stall fee to the community on time to continue his business, enjoying the retirement and healthcare benefits provided by the Republic.

This was the world he had fought for.

Rows of teenagers moved toward school in class formation, their ranks orderly yet filled with energy.

"I want to be an engineer at the Hamilton Steam Center in the future!"

"I want to go to the Southern Commune to research high-yield wheat!"

They argued intensely, but no one mentioned noble titles or knightly honors.

The definition of a hero had long ceased to be confined to the battlefield.

Yini understood well that this prosperity was not a gift from heaven.

Louis spent forty years weaving refugees, scattered like sand, into a tight-knit class collective.

He replaced the capricious imperial power with strict and stable rule of law.

Replaced the monopoly of bloodline and birth with a standardized education system.

People learned to hold their heads high while walking, not fearing the nobility, but respecting the truth itself.

This civilizational self-respect was the most precious legacy Louis left to this world.

.....

Yini arrived at the Central Air Harbor of the capital, standing by the viewing window of the Truth heavy airship.

Outside the porthole, the great silver airbag glistened softly in the morning sun.

The airship ascended smoothly into the air, the wind noise silenced by thick soundproofing layers, leaving only the low hum of the engines.

From a high vantage point, the old Imperial Capital appeared prosperous and intact, its neighborhoods laid out like a chessboard.

But in Yini's heart, this place was always just the management hub, not the soul's residence.

The true center was Red Tide City in the Northern Territory, though not the capital because of its geographic location, everyone knew it was the real starting point of the Republic.

Lord Louis had once ordered to preserve the original house and the simple Alchemy Workshop.

To remind future generations that modern life didn't fall from the sky.

The airship headed north, and beneath the clouds, the earth's contours gradually clarified.

Yini's gaze fell on a vast plain, her heart tightened slightly.

Forty years ago, that was a place once called "Dark Gold Wasteland."

The scars of the old Emperor's rampage had not yet fully vanished; the land, like scorched mineral slag, was barren.

But now the landscape had been thoroughly reconfigured, patches of white blades slowly rotated on the ground, reflecting light among the clouds.

These were magus wind turbines, numbering in the thousands, aligned with the wind, converting intangible airflow into stable energy pulses, transmitted through subterranean networks to neighboring urban workshops.

Yini's fingertips involuntarily clenched.

Twelve years ago, she was a senior responsible party for this civil project.

Those nights of calculations, experiments, and endless revisions, now transformed into this orderly operating white sea beneath.

This was her way of repaying the land and the Republic of Red Tide.

The airship broke through the perpetual northern cloud sea.

The clouds suddenly parted, and a colossal knight statue emerged from the sky.

This was a figure cast from meteoric iron, symbolizing the knightly spirit sacrificed to save the world.

The longsword pointed obliquely to the heavens, the cloak's lines frozen amidst the wind and snow, yet seemed to still flutter in the air.

Forty years of winds and frosts did not bow it down.

Inside the cabin, there were no announcements, yet the conversation naturally hushed, passengers rose to stand solemnly.

The elders caressed the sun emblem on their chests, while the young straightened their spines, their gaze crossing the porthole, looking toward the direction of the city.

Yini's vision blurred for a moment, she raised her hand to her chest, taking a deep breath.

Red Tide City was just ahead.

Chapter 885: Louis Calvin

When the morning sun fully rose, the Republic Heroes Memorial Square was covered in crimson.

Countless flags unfurled in the wind, interweaving shades of red, forming a surging sea of fire.

As the cries of nearly a million people converged above the square, the air seemed to be pressed down.

This will, gathered from the common people, was far more heart-wrenching than the roar of the Dragon Emperor from years past.

At the forefront of the square, seats were reserved for the honorees, and Yini stood here.

These individuals were the backbone of an era.

Yini's gaze fell on an elderly man among them.

Marshal Lambert sat in a wheelchair, his figure much smaller than in the memories.

The wide marshal's uniform on his frame seemed somewhat empty.

His hands rested quietly on his knees, skin filled with mottled wrinkles, like a map repeatedly folded by time.

But when he raised his head, looking towards the end of the square, his eyes were still sharp, just as they were when facing the dragon years ago.

Beside him sat General Weir.

Though nearing seventy, he sat straight, not as a result of forced posture, but as a natural instinct developed over many years.

The general's entire life was dedicated to one task: protecting Lord Louis.

Looking further back, young Hamilton sat with a straight back.

In his hand was a giant gear wrench with an exaggerated design, symbolizing the chief engineer.

Yini remembered the day the great Hamilton passed away, when the entire Republic fell silent.

The man had devoted his entire health to steam machinery, leading to his early death before the age of forty.

Now, this dedication was passed on to his apprentice and adopted son.

It was these so-called technology enthusiasts who turned the once inaccessible magic energy into a resource as common as the air.

Light entered the underground spaces closed for millennia, darkness no longer seen as fate.

On the other side, Ed was adjusting his collar.

His theory on high-pressure differential water circulation caused industrial costs in remote areas to plummet, giving newfound hope to lands once deemed destined to be barren.

Physician Green stood at the end of the scientists' line.

His name was repeatedly mentioned in the medical system; fifteen years of research brought hope for curing the Dragon Blood Syndrome.

Yini stood in her position, having observed ninety-nine honorees in the same row, of varying ages; she suddenly understood that the true strength of the Republic never lay in the power of one individual.

Knights would grow old, geniuses would exit the stage.

But as long as there were those who passed on experience to the next generation.

This torrent named Red Tide would not cease due to anyone's departure.

It would continue forward.

.....

The sound of ceremonial cannons echoed forty times over Red Tide City Square during the medal ceremony.

When the heavy castle gate slowly opened, the million-strong venue, after hours of clamoring, swiftly fell silent.

In the past decade or more, Louis Calvin had seldom appeared in public.

For the Republic's new generation, he was more present in the front pages of textbooks, city statues, and the daily circulated currency.

For those from the old era, he was a real and great person.

So, when that figure truly stood in the sunlight, the entire Red Tide City seemed to undergo a silent tremor.

"Lord Louis — long live!"

The first shout came from Marshal Lambert's hoarse voice.

"Long live Lord Louis!"

Then, millions of voices merged into a torrent, soaring into the sky.

The crimson flags surged in the square, people waved their arms, tears uncontrollably flowing.

Louis Calvin, waving with one hand, walked down the steps with a cane.

At seventy-two, his white hair neatly combed back, eye corners filled with marks of time, he wore a simply tailored Republic suit.

In Yini's view, this elder no longer resembled the youthful image in her mind.

More like a mentor patiently solving problems in a study or a senior concerned about the harvest on a field ridge.

He stopped in front of the wheelchair.

Marshal Lambert sat there, his figure appearing frail.

The body that once upheld the Republic's defense line now only had a rigid skeleton.

Louis bent down, personally pinning a fortieth-anniversary commemorative medal on him.

"Lambert." His voice was low, near the elder's ear, "Do you remember? When I was sent to the Northern Territory, I was just a child who knew nothing.

At that time, you stood behind me. If back then, you hadn't been willing to enter the Northern Territory with me, if you hadn't shielded me from the first storm, there would be no Red Tide today."

He straightened the slightly loose collar of the elder.

The legendary knight, who had never shed a tear on countless battlefields at ninety years old, now sobbed uncontrollably like a child.

Tears fell along his wrinkle-filled cheeks, he put all his strength to lift his hand for a knight's salute, but could only tightly grasp the wheelchair's armrest.

Louis merely gave his shoulder a gentle pat.

Then he moved forward, pinning medals on one contributor after another, engaging in simple conversation with them.

When facing the young engineers of the magic energy group, he paused for a moment, saying simply: "Don't let the wheels of progress stop."

The young people nodded vigorously, throats tight.

Facing the doctor who conquered the Dragon Blood Syndrome, Louis's gaze softened: "Life itself is the highest truth, thank you for allowing those who would wither to continue thriving."

No lengthy speeches, no ornate words, yet it made people stand tall.

When it was Yini's turn to stand before Louis, her hands trembled slightly uncontrollably.

The elder paused, not immediately pinning the medal on her, staring for a moment, as if searching for a well-preserved old memory.

"Yini..." Louis slowly began, his voice not high, "I remember you, and your father Smith, knight of the Broken Blade Knight Order."

Yini's throat tightened.

"One year, he asked me a question in the Northern Territory." The old man's tone was steady, words distinct, "He asked if this world would really get better."

Louis extended his hand, pinning the golden Sun Medal steadily onto Yini's chest.

"Today, with your laboratory, with those wind power towers standing out in the wilderness, you answered his question."

Looking at her with gentle eyes, Louis said: "Yini, you did excellently, you did not let down Red Tide, and Red Tide will not let you down either."

In that moment, Yini could no longer maintain any restraint.

The chief academician, known for her calmness in the Academy of Sciences, cried profusely under the gaze of millions.

And after bestowing medals upon the ninety-nine Red Tide Republic outstanding representatives, Louis turned, facing the surging sea of red.

He did not recount the past of slaying dragons nor review the hardships in the Northern Territory.

He simply raised his hand to point below the stage, towards those ordinary people wearing work clothes, school uniforms, and white coats.

"Comrades." His voice, amplified through the sound array, clearly spread across the entire city, "This world has never belonged solely to me, Louis Calvin.

Nor to those false gods long turned to dust, it belongs to every thinker and every laborer willing to work.

The essence of Red Tide has never been killing and conquest, but to allow everyone, regardless of origin, to stand tall and live with dignity under the sun, no longer as food for anyone."

He paused for a moment.

"Long live the people!"

As his words fell, thousands of fireworks simultaneously burst over Red Tide City.

The colorful lights illuminated the square, the statue in silver armor and red cape, and the snowy white hair of Louis.

"Long live Lord Louis!"

"Long live the Red Tide Republic!"

The shouts rose one after another.

Yini stood among the crowd, watching the elder slowly turn, walking into the shadows of the castle.

Chapter 886: The Sun Sets (Finale)

The three-day celebration of Red Tide City has finally come to an end.

Yini, with the heavy "40th Anniversary Contributor Medal," returned to her home in the capital under the twilight glow.

As she opened the door, the aroma of stewed meat greeted her.

From the kitchen came the gentle sound of a pot lid being moved, as John focused intently on the stove, wearing an apron.

"You're back?" He turned his head and casually wiped the water from his hands, "Sit down, the water just boiled."

As he spoke, his gaze involuntarily drifted to Yini's chest.

The dark gold medal twinkled slightly under the indoor lights, impossible to ignore.

Yini noticed and a proud smile tugged at her lips.

She deliberately puffed out her chest, as if showcasing a recently completed project in a lab.

"Take a good look, Comrade John," she said half-jokingly.

"Lord Louis personally put it on me. From today on, shouldn't tasks like washing dishes and taking out the trash be your responsibility?"

John was momentarily stunned but then quickly caught on.

With exaggerated formality, he stood straight and saluted humorously by placing his hand over his chest.

"As you command, great Academician," his tone overly solemn, though his eyes were filled with laughter, "It's an honor to work under your leadership."

Soon, laughter filled the living room.

The elderly mother came over holding a food tray, the father put down his newspaper, and the children fought for seats around the table.

Laughter rang out freely, with no need for anyone to lower their voices.

The magical radio on the wall played a lively waltz, its melody echoing through the room.

Suddenly, the music was abruptly cut off.

The speakers emitted not music but the voice of the Republic's chief announcer.

The voice struggled to maintain composure but was clearly tremulous and hoarse.

"The Republic Committee, Central Truth Council, General Staff Headquarters..."

A brief pause.

"An emergency announcement to all citizens of the Republic..."

Everyone in the room froze.

"Our great Sun, the vanquisher of the old era, the destroyer of false gods, the Savior of the world, the founder, and father of the Republic... Comrade Louis Calvin..."

The announcer's voice nearly broke here.

"Due to overwork, at 17:09 today, at Red Tide Castle... he completed his glorious life."

The final words were squeezed to a whisper.

"The Sun... has set."

John's father was the first to react.

The elderly man, once a lifelong slave, suddenly knelt, his forehead hitting the cold floor with a heavy thud.

His whole body curled up, his shoulders trembling violently.

To him, one of the first slaves liberated by the Red Tide, Louis was God.

He lifted his trembling hands, looking at the palms scarred by chains.

"Louis... is gone... without him... if those monsters come back, who will protect our children?"

Mary stood by, tightly clutching the broken Peak Knight medal left by Old Smith.

Her eyes were horrifyingly empty, yet tears silently soaked her collar as if she no longer had the strength to cry.

John stood by the window, gazing at the towering chimneys and the connecting factories silently silhouetted against the night.

Those were what he and countless engineers built, inch by inch, following Louis's blueprints.

He closed his eyes, his Adam's apple rolling vigorously, yet he couldn't utter a word.

Yini bowed her head, her fingers gently touching the medal on her chest.

The medal still retained warmth, residual from when Louis personally pinned it there days ago.

"Just three days ago..." her voice was almost inaudible, "on the reviewing stand, he looked so vibrant... he hasn't seen us..."

For her generation, Louis was a mentor, a guide, the voice that always had answers amid the thickest fog.

An overwhelming sense of loneliness slowly pressed down.

From now on, when truth is once again shrouded in mist, there will no longer be that gentle voice to guide her forward.

The children didn't understand any of this; they didn't know what war looked like, or the taste of famine.

They only knew the broadcast said the greatest person in the world had left.

The youngest child stood by the window, watching the streetlights gradually go out, gently tugging Yini's sleeve.

"Mom," his voice was light.

"The broadcast said... the Sun has set, but... will it rise again tomorrow?"

The entire capital seemed paused by some invisible force.

On the street, a magic car racing halfway came to a stop in the middle of its track.

The driver leaned on the wheel, shoulders heaving, sobs pouring out unrestrainedly.

The car doors were open, but no passengers disembarked, no one urged; instead, they joined in the crying.

Further away, the factories' roar ceased.

The deep, continuous hum that had lasted forty years ended entirely at this moment.

Thousands of workers in their uniforms left the workshops, standing in the shadow of the towering chimneys, not speaking, not directed.

They just knelt silently, their foreheads pressing against the cold ground, as if paying homage to a presence that could no longer respond.

The city didn't erupt in chaos, yet it changed within the hour.

In the People's Square, white flowers began to pile up.

Flowers were sent from every district, placed in the square's center, at street corners, in front of every statue of Louis.

Layers of white flowers rose quickly, soon submerging the steps, like a silent but surging tide.

The crowd stood outside the sea of flowers, sobbing quietly, staring blankly at the expanse of white, motionless.

The kind of grief that has no outlet, it is real and heavy, like a stone pressing on the chest.

As if everyone had lost a loved one.

The broadcast continued.

The voice was much calmer than before; it was the last recording left by Louis.

"I am just a passerby who brought the flame to you; it has now been passed into your hands. Take it to work, to learn, to love this world..."

.....

Crossing thousands of miles, reaching the northernmost tip of the continent, here is the end of the extreme cold.

And on this permafrost, where there are almost no traces of life, a black pyramid stands silently.

It is built of pitch-black stardust stone, the tower is not smooth, densely covered with primordial runes over every inch of its surface.

Dark red and ghostly purple light slowly flowed between the runes, this entire magic structure was in operation.

This building was not to commemorate anyone; its only purpose is isolation.

To isolate those original sins that, once out of control, are enough to send civilization back to barbarism.

When the capital's broadcast announced to the world the passing of Louis Calvin, this old man was standing under the pyramid.

Louis's cheeks, neck, and even the exposed back of his hands were already covered with twisting, spreading runes.

Those runes clung to his skin like living creatures, flashing with his breath.

This is the price; for forty years, he used himself as a seal to forcibly suppress, divide, and bind the seven deadly sins.

Each suppression was a silent exhaustion.

Now his breathing had become difficult, each inhale accompanied by an undeniable tremor.

The erosion by the original sins was close to critical; he was very clear he had reached the end of his life.

But he could not die a natural death outside.

Once the restraint was gone, the sealed powers would instantly retaliate against the world.

Sif and Emily, one on each side, held his hands tightly.

Time did not take away their beauty, only leaving marks at the corners of their eyes.

They did not cry out loud, but tears continuously fell, freezing into tiny crystals before reaching the icefield.

Though they knew long ago this day would come.

The children were kneeling in the snow.

They were no longer young, in their forties, bearing the responsibility of the Republic on their shoulders.

The eldest son, Orsus, bowed his head, hands clenched tightly, the eldest daughter, Orelia's gaze never left her father's face, full of reluctance...

Louis slowly raised his rune-covered hand, placing it on the children's heads, just like he did many years ago, stroking each one.

Standing before the pyramid were several officials, whose faces were pale from the cold.

Even so, none of them spoke to leave first.

The youngest among them couldn't hold back any longer.

He shivered in the cold wind, his voice tight with suppression: "My lord... please, give us one last piece of guidance."

The wind and snow swept over the pyramid's outer wall, the micro-glow of the runes flowed across the black stone surface.

Louis listened and chuckled softly: "You guys."

He slowly turned around, looking at the familiar but no longer young faces.

"You've held your positions for so many years, do you still need this old man to teach you how to walk?"

The officials were momentarily speechless, someone lowered their head, others nodded subconsciously.

The smile on Louis's face gradually faded.

"Then let me repeat for the last time what has been said countless times." His voice wasn't loud, yet it was exceptionally clear in the wind and snow.

"Remember, development is right, but you must always remember, all development is ultimately for the benefit of the majority, not for the private greed of a few elites."

He paused, his gaze sweeping over the crowd.

"At no time should people be treated as consumables to propel societal movement."

The wind and snow howled, Louis's tone became low and solemn: "If you forget this, if you let Red Tide become cold, rigid, and rotten..."

Louis turned his back on them, raising his hand in a casual gesture.

"I will walk out of this pyramid again, personally settle accounts with you. Go back, I can enter alone."

When the words fell, he lingered no more, taking steps toward the pyramid.

Weir stood in place.

This now Peak Knight, with children and grandchildren, the old general, stepped forward with reddened eyes.

"Lord Louis," his voice was hoarse, "let me stand guard outside."

Louis's steps paused.

He did not turn his head, only let out a long sigh in the wind and snow: "As you wish."

The black stone pyramid's door slowly opened with a deep rumbling.

Inside, there was no light.

It was an absolute darkness, as if capable of devouring everything.

Louis walked into that darkness alone.

The heavy door of black stone closed with it.

The rumbling echoed over the northern wilderness, not dissipating for a long time.

The runes on the tower body shone brilliantly for an instant, dark red and ghostly purple surging and intertwining, then quickly fell back into silence.

The snow and wind covered everything once more.

On the far northern wilderness, only endless snow remained.

And an aging knight standing like a statue in front of the pyramid's door.