

Sixth Ring Wizard

#Chapter 1: Shenlan - Read Sixth Ring Wizard Chapter 1: Shenlan

Chapter 1: Chapter 1: Shenlan

Even in summer, the nights in Dur Valley are always so cold.

The small house where Herag lived had several holes in the wall, and the cold wind was desperately trying to get in through them, making it impossible for him to sleep.

He got up in the dark, pulled some straw from the bed, and stuffed it into the holes, making the wind a bit less fierce.

After tidying up, Herag lay back on the bed, but found he still couldn't sleep.

Because he was hungry, and his stomach was growling noisily.

"How did I end up in this godforsaken place?" he sighed helplessly, touching his stomach.

At times like these, he longed for the days when there was water, electricity, and the internet.

When hungry, all it took was opening the phone, ordering takeout, and a delicious meal would arrive at the door shortly.

But here, there was only one meal a day, with a piece of black bread and a bowl of potato soup served at noon.

The black bread was hard, gnawing on it was as difficult as gnawing on a rock.

Only white bread was soft and chewy, but only the noble lords could enjoy it.

They, the servants of the castle, could only eat black bread.

Old Henry, who was in charge of tending the flowers, told Herag that soaking the black bread in potato soup would make it tastier.

After learning this trick, the black bread was finally somewhat less difficult to chew.

But at thirteen, his body was in a rapid growth phase, and a black bread and a bowl of potato soup each day clearly wasn't enough.

It was neither filling nor sufficiently nutritious.

But such conditions were already beyond many people, as he lived in the noble Baron Buck's castle, responsible for tending to the horses.

One meal a day was enough to keep him from starving, while outside the castle, many hovered on the brink of life and death without a home.

The castle was safe, with a stable food supply; as long as he didn't anger the noble ladies and gentlemen, his life wasn't in danger.

However, as someone who had received a modern higher education on Earth, Herag wasn't resigned to being a stable hand for a lifetime.

"Shenlan's chip self-repair is complete."

Herag was taken aback when he heard this familiar voice, doubting whether he was hallucinating.

Shenlan was the name of his genetic chip, which in his previous life everyone had, for analyzing, processing, and storing data, playing a significant supportive role in people's daily lives and work.

"Anomalous environment detected, performing localization compatibility."

"Localization compatibility complete, Shenlan is running normally."

The successive chip prompts echoed in his mind, and Herag confirmed he wasn't hallucinating.

"Shenlan, check current body status."

"Herag Merlin: Strength 0.4, Agility 0.5, Constitution 0.4, Spirit 1.2."

Looking at his body data, Herag was speechless.

This was a case of severe malnutrition.

Now with the genetic chip, he already had a rough plan in mind going forward.

Early the next morning, Herag was awake.

Before dawn, he took a lantern to the stables, placing horse feed into the troughs one by one.

The horses in the stable were awake and looking eagerly at Herag, snorting plumes of hot air.

The horse feed was composed of hay and some beans, better than what the servants ate.

Herag honestly refrained from stealing the horse feed, remembering that his predecessor was executed for often doing so.

After handling his chores, he went to the back garden, where Old Henry should be watering the flowers.

The back garden had many kinds of flowers, mostly species not seen in his previous life.

"Shenlan, begin recording all unknown flora and fauna information from now."

"Understood, task has been archived, beginning execution."

Herag knew the importance of data, they would come in handy one day.

Old Henry was an elder in the castle, who had been tending flowers all his life.

As usual, he carried a bucket, watering the flowers attentively and cleaning up the fallen leaves and debris in the flowerbeds.

"Kid, what are you doing here so early? Got something on your mind?" Old Henry noticed Herag, sneering at him from the corner of his eye.

"Just coming to chat with you," Herag said with a cheeky grin.

Old Henry scoffed, "Just spit out whatever you want to say. I don't have much time left on this Earth, can't help you too many times."

Old Henry's presence in the castle was quite low, having no children, only Herag would often come to chat.

In his heart, Herag was already like a grandson.

Understanding Herag too well, he knew Herag definitely needed something when he came so early.

Herag chuckled, "Old Henry, you still have that bow, right? Let me borrow it for some hunting, if I catch something, I'll share the meat with you."

"Bow?"

Old Henry glanced disdainfully at Herag's scrawny body, questioning, "Can you even draw the bow? And have you learned archery? Don't waste my arrows."

"Just lend it to me, I promise, when you're off to see the gods, I'll find a nice spot on the hill for you and erect a memorial stone," Herag promised earnestly.

If a servant died in the castle, they'd be casually buried somewhere, no tombstone.

Old Henry hesitated, wavering slightly, finally conceding, "The bow's hanging on the wall inside, go grab it, but don't break it."

"Thank you, Old Henry!" Herag shouted and ran inside at once, afraid Old Henry might change his mind.

Herag took the Longbow off the wall; the bow was spotless, showing Old Henry maintained it well.

He had heard Old Henry was a great archer, though now old, he hadn't seen him draw the bow again.

Herag with his skinny body carrying the bow looked a bit odd.

The quiver contained only seven arrows, but for Herag, that was enough.

"Herag, where are you off to?" asked the guard at the castle gate.

"Hunting!" Herag declared boldly.

The guard couldn't help but laugh, "Haha, you're not even taller than the bow, don't shoot yourself out."

The other guard laughed, "Bring me back a Red-vented Bulbul; they're delicious when roasted. If you catch one, I'll give you ten Copper Coins."

"You said it, prepare the Copper Coins." Herag replied earnestly.

"Hahaha!" The two guards found his serious expression amusing.

Herag left the castle carrying Old Henry's bow, heading down the long slope outside the gate, and passed above the winding Green Grass River. A drawbridge was down, with a carriage passing by.

From a distance, he recognized it as Baron Buck's carriage, uncertain of its destination.

Opposite the castle was a dense forest, which was Herag's target this trip.

The forest was said to harbor fierce beasts, challenging even for powerful Knights.

Herag dared only roam the forest's edges, not daring to venture deeper, as he was still too weak.

"Shenlan, activate detection, stay alert to surrounding movements, and watch for potential dangers."

"Environment detection activated."

A green light scanned across Herag's view, changing the forest in his eyes greatly.

Vegetation glowed green, and animals emitted a faint red glow, making it easy to discern lurking creatures.

A small circular map appeared in the upper right corner of his view, with red and green light dots scattered across it.

"Begin the hunt!"

Chapter 2: Chapter 2: Red Finch Hunter

Herag clearly felt that the moment he stepped into the forest, everything around him went quiet.

The animals in the forest noticed this intruder, and the chirping birds and insects went silent.

Herag lightened his steps, adjusted his breathing rate, and began to search for his target prey in the view.

Soon, a gray rabbit appeared in front of him.

Herag bent his bow and set an arrow: "Shenlan, activate auxiliary aiming."

"Calculating wind speed..."

A blue auxiliary line appeared in his field of vision, and Herag adjusted his shooting angle, aiming at the rabbit.

Whoosh!

The rabbit twitched its ears but didn't have time to jump away before its head was pierced.

Herag cautiously observed the surroundings, confirmed there was nothing unusual, then went to pick up the rabbit.

He lifted it and weighed it in his hand, estimating it to be about five or six pounds.

He pulled out the arrow and wiped it on the rabbit's fur, then placed it back in the quiver for continued use.

"My control over my body is still too weak."

Herag felt that his ability to control his body was still inadequate, lacking stability when shooting arrows.

A few minutes later, Herag found his target again.

In the tree to the northeast, there were two birds, a pair of Red-vented Bulbuls, pecking at each other as they preened their feathers.

Herag held his breath, calmed his mind, silently drew his longbow, and the arrow glinted coldly as he aimed at the amorous Red-vented Bulbuls in the tree.

Whoosh!

One arrow, two birds!

The arrow pierced through the heads of both Red-vented Bulbuls, stringing them together like candied fruit.

The Red-vented Bulbuls were small and had little meat.

The wild animals here were particularly abundant, you could say they were overpopulated, so naturally, no one raised concerns about animal protection.

The afternoon passed, and Herag had a bountiful harvest.

Three rabbits, seventeen Red-vented Bulbuls, and two fish.

If it weren't for his body giving out and no longer having the strength to draw the bow, he could have continued hunting.

As evening approached, the setting sun cast its glow over the jungle, and Herag heard strange beastly roars deep in the forest.

He immediately became aware of the danger and quickened his pace to leave the forest.

At the castle gate.

"You caught all this?" a Castle Guard asked, wide-eyed and incredulous.

"Of course, here are the Red-vented Bulbuls you wanted, pay up!" Herag said with pride.

The guard swallowed as he eyed the string of Red-vented Bulbuls around Herag's neck and awkwardly felt his pockets, saying, "I'll just buy five."

"Alright," Herag didn't expect him to buy them all anyway; any profit was good profit.

Servants in the castle didn't receive salaries and only got some bonus money on certain holidays.

The guard naturally received a salary, but it wasn't much.

Herag returned to the castle with his bounty in tow, drawing a lot of attention along the way.

"Where did this kid find all this?"

"I heard he hunted it himself."

"I'd rather believe the animals ran into a tree and died themselves."

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"Old Henry, look at what I've got!" Herag flaunted the rabbits and fish in his hands.

"This..." Old Henry immediately noticed the arrow wounds on the game, doubting his own eyes.

"These rabbits and fish are for you, consider it as repayment for borrowing your bow and arrows. Use it to replenish your strength, better delay meeting the gods; they'll be there anyway," Herag laughed as he placed the rabbits and fish down.

Old Henry did not refuse, just nodded quietly, seemingly recalling something as he looked at the bow and arrows.

"Can I borrow the bow and arrows for a few more days?" Herag asked.

Old Henry seemed a bit dazed and responded sluggishly, "It's yours now."

"Huh? It's mine?" Herag knew that this longbow was Old Henry's prized possession, and now it was given to him just like that?

Old Henry waved his hand, "You take it. I can't draw it back anymore, it's always good for an old friend to be put to use."

After returning to his small room, Herag set to work skinning the rabbit; there was also a pile of Red-vented Bulbuls to process.

By the time he finished, it was night. A rabbit and individual Red-vented Bulbuls were roasting over the fire, while a fish was kept in a basin to be eaten in the coming days.

There were very few seasonings in this world. Herag found some commonly used spicy wild herbs in the forest and scooped some salt from a jar to roughly season his food.

Rabbits needed a longer time to roast, while the Red-vented Bulbuls, having little meat, cooked quickly.

Herag took a bite of a Red-vented Bulbul and found that it didn't have the sour taste he expected. Instead, it was exceptionally fragrant and crispy, proving the guard right about the deliciousness of the Red-vented Bulbul.

"Detected food compatible with Constitution, continually consuming 150 Red-vented Bulbuls can increase Power by 1 point."

Seeing this chip notification, Herag was startled.

What does 1 point of Power mean? With it, he would transform from weak to mighty directly.

This world was indeed extraordinary; in his previous life, there was no such food that could significantly change one's constitution after consumption.

There were Official Knights in the castle, and it was said that one Official Knight could easily handle dozens of ordinary people.

Baron Buck was even a Great Knight and was rumored to possess Extraordinary Power.

Herag had never seen this firsthand, and having only arrived a few days ago, he had always thought these were just exaggerated rumors.

But now, he began to have more ideas.

After feasting on the Red-vented Bulbul and rabbit, Herag for the first time felt the sensation of being full.

"The feeling of being full is indeed great." He lay contentedly on his bed and soon fell into a deep sleep.

Early the next morning, after finishing his tasks, Herag once again strapped on his longbow and headed into the forest.

This time his goal was clear: only hunt Red-vented Bulbuls.

At the same time, he paid attention to various plants in the forest, many of which didn't exist in his past life, and he couldn't identify them.

Every time he encountered a new plant, he would cut off a bit and smear it on the back of his hand to observe for any reaction. If there was no abnormal reaction, he would place it on his lips to let Shenlan analyze its composition.

After a few days, Herag actually discovered a plant that could enhance Constitution.

"Detected compatible food: named Red Leaf Fern, continually eating ten pounds can increase Constitution by 1 point."

In seven days, Herag ate 200 Red-vented Bulbuls and fifteen pounds of Red Leaf Fern.

"Check current physical status."

"Herag Merlin: Power 1.4, agility 0.6, Constitution 1.4, Spirit 1.2."

After consuming 150 Red-vented Bulbuls, any additional didn't have an effect, seemingly due to his body developing resistance.

The Red Leaf Fern was extremely unpalatable, bitter especially; Herag forced himself to eat it to become stronger.

He also found that after gaining one point each in Power and Constitution, agility automatically increased by 0.1, but Spirit showed no change.

Herag clenched his fist, sensing the explosive power dormant within his body.

During this time, Herag gained some fame because he returned with a full harvest every time he went hunting.

As a result, he earned a title, Red Finch Hunter.

Every time he returned from the forest, a string of Red-vented Bulbuls hung on him, which led to the name.

"Herag boy, come out quickly!" Old Henry's long voice called from outside.

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: Earth Breathing Technique

"What's the matter?" Herag opened the door and saw Old Henry, with a young man in heavy armor standing behind him.

Herag recognized him; it was Knight Emil, the Guard Captain of the castle.

This was a big figure in the castle, and it seemed he had some business with him.

"Are you Herag?" Emil looked Herag up and down and asked.

"Yes, Sir Emil," Herag answered honestly.

"Shenlan, check Emil's body data."

"Emil: Power 2.1, Agility 1.6, Constitution 2.2, Spirit 1.1, containing unknown energy within the body."

For the first time, Herag had a tangible understanding of a knight's strength.

Although Emil's stats seemed just a bit higher than his own, in actual combat, it was not just a little, but an all-around enhancement.

An increase in power by one point could translate to an actual combat capability increase of several times, which was an entirely different concept.

Emil also possessed some unknown energy within his body; Herag guessed that this was probably the knight's power.

If this unknown power was further added, the combat energy would be enhanced by an uncertain amount.

"I heard your archery is good. Show me," Emil said simply and straightforwardly.

Old Henry sent an encouraging look from the side, and Herag didn't delay, immediately returning to the house to fetch his longbow.

Emil looked around and pointed to a tall pine tree in the distance: "The highest pine cone, can you shoot it down?"

"Yes," Herag said confidently.

"Let's begin," Emil said.

Herag drew his longbow, activating the auxiliary aiming.

He now had enough strength, and the longbow was drawn to its fullest.

With a whoosh, the pine cone fell to the ground in the distance.

Emil nodded with satisfaction: "It seems you are a born Divine Archer, qualified to join the Guard Team. Follow me to the training ground."

Herag clearly had no right to refuse, and obediently followed Emil, while Old Henry grinned broadly with happiness.

The castle training ground was a wide, flat area, bustling with Guard Team members in training.

As Emil brought Herag over, many people naturally noticed.

However, with Emil present, they dared not ask much; they continued their training with even more effort.

Emil took Herag to an empty space and turned to say, "Herag, do you know why knights are strong?"

Herag did not know, and could only shake his head.

"Because of the breathing techniques," Emil said solemnly.

"Breathing techniques?" Herag heard the term for the first time.

Emil continued, "Yes, breathing techniques allow us to harness and mobilize hidden power within. Through cumulative practice with these techniques, not only can our bodies grow stronger, but we might also awaken a Life Seed. Those who awaken a Life Seed can be called a knight."

"Can I awaken a Life Seed?" Herag asked.

"Not necessarily, only a very few lucky ones have this potential. Most people can never become knights in their lifetime," Emil said.

He looked at Herag and continued, "Your archery talent is impressive, I will teach you the Earth Breathing Technique next. I hope you can grow quickly to relieve Lord Baron's worries."

"Thank you, Sir Emil, and gratitude to Lord Baron." Herag pounded his right fist on his chest in a standard gesture of allegiance, something he was skilled at.

"Yes! Remember, you must be grateful to Lord Baron for all of this," Emil was satisfied with Herag's attitude.

"Shenlan, begin recording all of Emil's movements, especially related to the Earth Breathing Technique," Herag mentally commanded.

"Recording started."

Emil began teaching the Earth Breathing Technique and said in a deep voice, "Breathing is something everyone is born with. The Earth Breathing Technique has a unique rhythm that allows a vital energy to be born within you, circulating through your body along a specific path, slowly strengthening your muscles, bones..."

"Earth Breathing Technique recording completed."

Emil explained the cautions and then said, "Try it once."

The Earth Breathing Technique requires many strange movements, coupled with a unique breathing rhythm for practice, making it difficult for beginners to perform the movements correctly, or grasp the breathing rhythm.

"Shenlan, activate Earth Breathing Technique auxiliary practice."

Shenlan quickly projected every movement in front of Herag, who mimicked them to begin the first movement.

"Move your right hand up by a centimeter, your left hand down by half a centimeter."

After Herag performed the first movement, Shenlan promptly corrected him and provided precise deviation adjustments.

Following the chip's guidance, he adjusted his movements appropriately.

Emil watched Herag with some surprise and admiration but said nothing.

The Earth Breathing Technique consists of fifteen movements, each challenging.

With the chip's assistance, Herag painstakingly completed the entire set of movements and was so exhausted afterward that he could hardly stand upright.

"Effective training detected, repeating the set of movements one hundred times can increase Power by 0.2, Agility by 0.5, and Constitution by 0.3."

"A hundred times, it doesn't seem like much," seeing the chip's prompt, Herag felt more motivated.

Persistence is not difficult; what's challenging is to strive without seeing progress. Herag could see the immediate feedback, making the cultivation full of motivation.

Emil remained silent throughout, only speaking once Herag completed a round of the Earth Breathing Technique: "You have great talent! I'll be keeping an eye on you."

With his busy schedule, he instructed Herag to persist in his cultivation before continuing with his duties.

"Shenlan, how long does it take to complete a hundred times of practice?"

"Based on the current physical state, practicing twice a day is possible. After seven days of practice, body adaptability will enhance, allowing for estimated practice six to seven times daily, and is expected to complete a hundred practices in twenty-three days."

This progress was faster than Herag expected.

After that day, Herag's status underwent a change.

He was promoted from a lowly servant to a guard of the castle's Guard Team, receiving a monthly salary of five Silver Coins and being given a set of Armor and a Longsword.

His daily meals improved to two meals per day, with meat every three days, but this wasn't very important to Herag, who could hunt for meat himself.

Emil took him seriously, and during this period, he was exempt from any tasks, needing only to focus on practicing the Earth Breathing Technique.

Herag hunted in the forest daily and then returned to practice the Earth Breathing Technique, repeating this cycle.

Twenty days later.

"Stage one of the Earth Breathing Technique training completed. Current physical state: Power 1.6, Agility 1.1, Constitution 1.7, Spirit 1.2."

"Stage two of the Earth Breathing Technique can begin; repeating the practice a thousand times can increase Power by 0.4, Agility by 0.5, and Constitution by 0.5."

Seeing the chip's prompts, Herag couldn't help but smile, his hard work over the past few weeks wasn't in vain.

His life had become fulfilling—besides hunting, practicing, and eating, sleep was the only activity—tomorrow he had a new class; Emil was going to teach him Swordsmanship.

Herag currently had robust physical qualities but lacked effective means to counter enemies; archery was only useful for long-range encounters.

In this era of cold weapons, it was more about close combat in melee encounters.

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Chapter 4: Chapter 4: Swordsmanship

In the training grounds of the castle, there is a clearing specifically designated for swordsmanship training. Beside the clearing, there is a wooden rack with a collection of gleaming longswords.

The guards usually train with real swords, but they are not sharpened, ensuring a certain level of safety.

Herag and Emil each held a longsword, standing opposite each other.

Emil personally taught Herag swordsmanship, which showed how much he valued him.

He said to Herag, "Swordsmanship is for killing the enemy. My swordsmanship does not have the fancy moves of Palace Swordsmanship, there are no unnecessary sword forms."

"Slash, chop, stab, lift, block!"

"These five words are the eternal unchanging basics of all swordsmanship. As long as you master these basics, the rest is the cultivation of combat experience."

Emil took a deep breath, lifted his longsword, and suddenly lunged forward with a slash, the sword wind stirring up a cloud of dust.

His movements were quick; if not for the chip's assistance, Herag wouldn't have been able to clearly see Emil's actions.

"This is normal speed. Next, I'll slow it down a bit. Pay attention to the details of my movements. When you first learn swordsmanship, don't pursue speed. Just make sure you perform every move correctly."

Emil slashed forward again, and this time Herag could see his movements clearly by relying on himself alone.

"You try it," Emil said after demonstrating.

"Shenlan, activate swordsmanship training assistance."

A small blue figure appeared in Herag's vision, demonstrating the key points of the slashing move.

He adjusted his movements according to Shenlan's instructions and sharply slashed forward with his sword.

"Too much force from the wrist, you should use more arm strength," Shenlan immediately provided a hint, correcting Herag's force application method.

Emil also noticed the problem and said, "The move looks good, but you should use more of your arm strength. Try again."

Herag recalled the feeling just now, found the right point of force, and slashed forward aggressively again.

"Very good! Next, I'll teach you the other moves." Emil rarely showed a smile.

The entire afternoon, Herag practiced basic swordsmanship, and his learning speed even earned praise from the usually stoic Emil.

Herag never considered hiding his skills; he came from humble beginnings and could only show his worth completely to have more resources invested in him.

"Keep up with your practice during this period. Later, I will provide some opportunities for you to gain experience. One cannot become a knight without seeing blood."

In Emil's heart, he was already nurturing Herag as a preparatory knight.

"Thank you, Master Emil! Thank the Lord Baron!" Herag expressed his gratitude.

After finishing a day of practice, Herag had just returned to his cabin when Housekeeper Ivan delivered his salary.

"Housekeeper Ivan, there are five extra silver coins," Herag opened the pouch and found more pay than before.

"It's not extra, Mr. Herag. Captain Emil reported your situation to the Lord Baron, who specially increased your salary," Ivan, an elderly man with graying hair, said with a kindly smile.

"Oh, I see..."

Emil hadn't mentioned this to Herag, perhaps because he considered it a trivial matter.

After receiving his salary, Herag carried a jar of good wine he had bought to the back garden.

"Old Henry, I brought you some wine!" He entered the garden and saw Old Henry lying on the chair, resting with his eyes closed from afar.

"What wine?" Old Henry moved his nose but couldn't smell anything.

Herag placed the wine next to the chair and said, "I have no idea; I asked someone who went to town to buy it for me."

"Let me see." Old Henry was invigorated at the sight of wine, got up, picked up the wine jar, and unscrewed the lid for a sniff.

"This is Marco family's wine from the town, really good stuff," Old Henry said, immersed in the aroma.

"By the way, my salary went up too. Now, I earn a whole ten silver coins a month, I'll split half with you!" Herag took out five silver coins and handed them over.

Old Henry scoffed, "What do I need money for at my age? I can't bite meat anymore, and girls in town dread that I might keel over. When you're old, spending money isn't quite as enjoyable as when you're young. You're still young, take the money and enjoy yourself; all I need is wine."

Hearing Old Henry's words, Herag remembered an ancient verse from his previous life: "To buy osmanthus and bring wine, it is not like the youthful wanderings."

Suddenly, he thought of something and asked, "Old Henry, do you know how long Official Knights like Emil can live?"

"How long? Not too many knights die of old age. Let me think... I think those I've heard of lived to be about a hundred, a bit longer and healthier than ordinary people," Old Henry recalled.

"What about Great Knights like the Lord Baron?" Herag continued to ask.

Old Henry took a sip of wine and replied, "Great Knights are still human, they're about the same."

"Only around a hundred, huh..."

Herag originally thought knights, wielding extraordinary power, could live much longer than typical humans. He was surprised they only lived slightly longer.

"Old Henry, are there any people more formidable than knights?"

"More formidable?" Old Henry pondered for a moment, "Of course, but those are just legends. They say Wizards are stronger than knights, but Wizards are very mysterious, and no one knows if they truly exist."

"Wizards..." Herag silently committed the term to memory.

By the time Herag returned to his cabin, it was already late at night. He had been drinking with Old Henry all night.

After helping the drunken Old Henry to bed, he still left those five silver coins behind.

He was someone who remembered and repaid kindness.

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Half a month later, in the castle training grounds.

Herag donned a suit of armor, standing in a line with six other guards, awaiting Emil's orders.

"A group of bandits has appeared at the Pumpkin Farm. It's our duty to protect the safety of the territory's people, and Lord Baron has ordered us to eradicate the bandits..." Emil was explaining the mission's details.

Over the past half month, Herag had been diligently practicing the Earth Breathing Technique and basic swordsmanship, and today he finally had the opportunity for real combat.

"Though it's just a group of ordinary bandits, you can't be careless. A stab from a blade can still kill!" Emil spoke of some precautions.

Herag listened intently, feeling that the other six weren't taking it seriously.

Eradicating bandits was a common task—a lord's duty, as well as a chance for the lord to demonstrate strength and intimidate others.

This era was chaotic, with frequent conflicts between territories.

Every so often, Herag would hear about a territory being annexed, or about a famine occurring somewhere.

The bandits had to be cleared quickly once they entered the territory, or others would think you're an easy target, attracting more and more bandits.

This time, Emil personally led the raid, along with seven castle guards, forming the expedition team.

Riding on horseback, Herag still felt a bit inexperienced. Fortunately, his memory included knowledge about horse riding. With Shenlan's assistance, he quickly learned how to control the horse.

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: Jade Mountain Range

Three days later, in the Jade Mountain Range.

Herag and his group rode horses along the mountain path, with a carriage loaded with supplies trailing at the end of the line.

A light rain had just fallen in the mountains, and mist lingered among the peaks.

It was now sunset, and Emil rode at the forefront, scouting for a suitable campsite.

Herag was in the middle of the group, continuously refining a map within his field of vision.

Every place they passed, he had Shenlan record. Combining it with the existing map, a more complete map was gradually taking shape.

The Pumpkin Farm was an important agricultural site within Baron Buck's territory, growing various crops and located to the west of the Jade Mountain Range. Baron Buck's castle was on the right side of the Jade Mountain Range; they needed to cross it to reach the Pumpkin Farm.

"Let's spend the night in this cave."

Emil found a fairly spacious cave ahead, with some kind of animal fur inside, and dried animal dung at the entrance.

It was clearly a bear's lair, but Emil and the others didn't care, considering bears only as pelt suppliers.

The horses were all tied in the nearby forest, left to graze and rest on their own.

The carriage was parked in front of the cave, forming a simple defensive fortification.

The group began to get busy, and a campfire was quickly lit at the cave entrance.

Herag was in charge of fetching food from the carriage, like cured meat, potatoes, and tomatoes.

A large pot was soon hung over the fire, and the food was thrown in all at once.

They had been eating this kind of stew outside for days.

A rack was quickly erected beside the campfire, where the guards hung their wet clothes to dry.

"Oh! Jimmy! Take those damned socks of yours away! How many times do I have to tell you, no drying socks while cooking! Do you want to eat cured meat with the smell of stinky socks?" Big Beard, a guard named Hagen, sniffed the air, turned to see a pair of stinky socks hanging on the drying rack, and immediately bellowed.

"Hehe." Jimmy sheepishly took down the socks and hung them outside the cave.

Seeing that the time was about right, Herag walked over to the pot and lifted the lid.

A rich aroma burst forth, filling the entire cave and wafting into the gradually darkening forest outside.

"Dinner's ready!" Herag shouted, and the guards lying or sitting in the cave hurriedly came over with their metal lunchboxes.

None of them made a move, just staring at the meat in the pot, waiting for Emil to take the first bite.

Emil used a fork to spear some meat and vegetables into his lunchbox, scooped a little soup, and then sat by the cave entrance, eating while staring into the unknown outside.

Once Emil began eating, the rest couldn't hold back any longer; they scrambled to grab the meat from the pot, which was soon gone.

Herag was well-experienced and quick, aided by Shenlan, in getting his share of meat.

After dinner, there was no entertainment; the group chatted around the campfire for a while before going to sleep.

They could only partially remove their armor, keeping their weapons and armor close by to ensure they could enter combat readiness at a moment's notice.

Herag was on watch tonight, sitting by the campfire, constantly keeping an eye on their surroundings.

With no dry wood available due to the rain, Herag fetched some stored dry firewood from the carriage.

The campfire had to stay burning all night to ensure any nearby wild animals would shy away from the flames, reducing potential problems.

Late at night, it started drizzling in the mountains again. Herag glanced at the time in his field of vision: 1 AM.

Based on usual observations, Shenlan's chip had discovered that this world also had about a 24-hour day.

Herag adjusted Shenlan to the twenty-four-hour scale familiar from his previous life.

The cold wind blew into the cave, causing the campfire to crackle, the flames dancing with the gusts.

The chilly wind drove away Herag's drowsiness as he stared into the pitch-dark forest outside; Shenlan's small map showed no abnormalities.

Originally, Shenlan's map could cover a range of ten meters, but after Herag's physical qualities greatly improved, it could now display plants and animals within a hundred-meter area.

Meanwhile, a group of people was stealthily approaching the cave through the distant woods.

The sound of the falling rain masked their movements. Coupled with their cautious approach, they were hard to notice under the cover of darkness.

Once they got closer to the cave, the leading three signaled, and their troops split, with two teams flanking from both sides to approach, while three others continued advancing from the front.

Herag sat at the cave entrance, steadfast at his post, with Shenlan's map open in his vision.

"Hmm?"

He suddenly noticed a red dot appearing on the small map, in the woods to the left of the cave, followed by eight more red dots entering its range.

At the same time, another group appeared on the right, also numbering nine.

Herag immediately drew his longsword, quietly alerted them, "Enemy attack!"

Emil, sleeping deepest within the cave, had awakened even before Herag drew his longsword, quickly donning his armor.

The others also reacted swiftly, all on their feet.

"There are teams rapidly approaching from both sides, and three individuals advancing directly towards the cave entrance!" Herag quickly briefed them on the situation.

Emil didn't ask how he knew, instead, he walked to the campfire and kicked over the large pot, instantly dousing the flames.

Turning back, he said, "Everyone follow me and break through from the right side!"

Their horses were in the woods to the right, and without knowing the strength of their opponents, getting away on horseback was a good option.

Herag and the others nodded in unison, following Emil out of the cave.

"Damn it! Don't let Emil escape!" one of the lead three, a man carrying a large sword, roared.

Clearly, their actions had alerted those outside; the extinguishing of the campfire had revealed their presence.

Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh!

A volley of arrows rained on the cave, mostly blocked by the carriage.

Meanwhile, Emil and the others faced attacks from the right-side woods, but no one was hit due to the darkness.

Herag noticed that the group remained hidden in the woods, avoiding a direct confrontation, all equipped with bows and arrows.

"They're over here! Quickly, come!" the opposing side started calling as soon as they spotted Emil and his group.

Checking Shenlan's map, Herag saw another group closing in, with the leading three approaching at breakneck speed.

Such speed indicated official knights; they had to break through from the right side swiftly.

"Shenlan, activate aiming assist."

Herag hid behind a tree, dodging arrows while drawing his bow and aiming at the enemies in the woods ahead.

Invisible to others, he could see everything clearly with Shenlan's assistance, even spotting those hiding behind trees, giving him a significant advantage despite the darkness.