

The First Order

- Chapter 1121 – 1126

Chapter 1121 Deciding fate

Before Melgor took the gold coin out from his sleeve, Ren Xiaosu had never seen the currency of the Kingdom of Sorcerers before. This was because he had no need for it.

In some myths, coins were a representation of fate.

It was not that coins had some kind of special meaning to them but that people had a habit of tossing a coin to decide their fate.

For example, a person might toss a coin to decide whether to go left or right or whether to have supper or not. There were even examples of people tossing a coin to decide whether to be a good or bad person. Such decisions were made on a whim.

The tossed coin would ring pleasantly as it spun in midair, and by the time it landed, some people's fates would be decided.

Ren Xiaosu held the gold coin from Melgor and smiled without saying a word. So it turned out the people he was looking for were both on this coin.

Wasn't this such a coincidence?

He flicked the coin high up into the air with his thumb. The gold coin glittered brightly as the busts of the Tudor and Norman family heads on both sides of the coin alternated under the golden glow of the campfire. When the tossed coin reached its highest point, it slowed down and continued spinning in the reverse direction. The coin that represented fate landed back in Ren Xiaosu's hand.

Curious, Melgor asked, "What are you doing?"

"I'm tossing a coin to decide fate," Ren Xiaosu replied with a smile. "Don't believe in such things." Melgor remarked, "How can you toss a coin to decide your own fate?"

When Ren Xiaosu opened his palm, the bust of the Tudor family head happened to be facing up. He smiled and said, "It's not my fate that I'm deciding."

Melgor hesitated for a moment and asked, "Then whose?"

Ren Xiaosu placed the gold coin back in Melgor's hand. "I'm using it to decide the fate of others."

As the campfire flickered, Melgor suddenly felt that Ren Xiaosu's demeanor and tone revealed a ruthless side he had never seen before.

In fact, the coins Ren Xiaosu had seen before usually bore the portraits of people who were already dead. For example, Qing Zhen's great grandfather's portrait was on the Qing Consortium's currency, while the Northwest's coins featured the fourth generation fortress commander's portrait. It was very rare for anyone still alive to be featured as portraits on coins.

Therefore, the practice of featuring a living person's portrait on coins in the Kingdom of Sorcerers really left Ren Xiaosu quite surprised.

But it did not matter. He could just turn those two people featured on the coins into dead people.

Ren Xiaosu's main objective on this trip to the Kingdom of Sorcerers was to carry out his Prosperous Northwest 3.0 plan.

So what was exactly the Prosperous Northwest 3.0 plan? It was to enhance the core competitiveness of the Northwest. On top of that, he wanted to deal with the threat of the Kingdom of Sorcerers once and for all.

Ren Xiaosu had had an in-depth discussion with P5092. P5092 expressed that sooner or later, a war would break out between the Northwest and the Wang Consortium. Although the Wang Consortium had already unified the Central Plains and completed a series of seemingly impossible feats, and Wang Shengzhi's name would definitely go down in the annals of history because of this, his ideals would not stop there.

Therefore, if Ren Xiaosu and the others wanted the Northwest to have a higher chance of winning in the upcoming war, solving the possibility of being attacked from both sides would be absolutely necessary. From the look of things, it seemed the Kingdom of Sorcerers had no intention of invading the Northwest in the near term. However, nothing was absolute in this world. What if the Wang Consortium were to send an envoy here?

Based on the Wang Consortium's past actions, this was a very strong possibility.

There was another possibility, and it was that the Wang Consortium's envoy might have already arrived in the Kingdom of Sorcerers.

Thus, Ren Xiaosu would have to do his best to destroy the Kingdom of Sorcerers' warring capabilities on this trip.

That night, the most cool-headed P5092 told Ren Xiaosu, “Ren Xiaosu, the moment you return to the Northwest, you’ll no longer be that refugee boy who can only drift along with the decisions of others. Commander Zhang has already started handing over the fate of the Northwest to you, and close to ten million Northwestern people also have expectations for you. Maybe you might be very carefree when you only have to think about what’s for your next meal or set up a stall in the market with Ms. Xiaojin like you used to, but that kind of life isn’t yours to live anymore. You’re destined to be the next leader of the Northwest, so you should understand what your duties are.”

P5092, who always kept a level head, said, “I’m not saying this because I want to show you I know more than you as your subordinate, but I’m certain the blood flowing within you is fully ready for this. Don’t reject it anymore and just accept your calling.”

As such, Ren Xiaosu went to Fortress 178 alone the next day to face the expectations of everyone in the Northwest and the responsibilities that came with it.

Fundamentally, his purpose in coming to the Kingdom of Sorcerers was to cause a massacre. The archmages were not innocent either because they all bore a blood debt numbering more than 200,000 Fortress 178 martyrs.

Of course, Ren Xiaosu would also not miss out on recruiting any candidates here who were suitable for the Prosperous Northwest.

Thinking of this, Ren Xiaosu smiled at Melgor. “Do you know what the Prosperous Northwest means?”

Melgor was taken aback. “The Prosperous Northwest? Never heard of it.”

“Never mind, you’ll find out soon.”

In the dark of the night, someone suddenly lifted the curtain door of the carriage where the young sorceress, An’an, was in. A figure dressed in black bolted out and headed stealthily in the direction the bandits had retreated.

When she arrived at the battlefield, she could only see a pile of melting ice and flesh.

An’an looked around the battlefield. When she saw the mysterious magic circle next to the bounty hunter’s corpse, she was bewildered.

Then she went around the entire battlefield again, and after finding no other abnormalities, turned and headed back to the carriage.

The middle-aged woman was waiting for An’an throughout. When she saw her return, she asked, “Did you discover anything?” “Those bandits were likely instigated by someone, and the instigator should be a bounty hunter from one of the big sorcerer clans. That bounty hunter silenced all the remaining bandits who made it out.” An’an

continued, "But just like how the mantis stalked the cicada unaware there was an oriole behind, the bounty hunter also got ambushed by someone else. Moreover, there were traces of Bloodline Summoning at the scene. That's what I found odd. A bounty hunter is only a fringe figure in the sorcerer clans, so how did he cast a secretive spell like Bloodline Summoning? Such spells are only taught to immediate clan members."

The middle-aged woman thought for a moment and said, "Although bounty hunters are usually fringe figures in the sorcerer clans, that's not an absolute. Some bounty hunters are actually not outsiders but illegitimate children of the family. You know that some archmages can have up to hundreds of children, so the possibility of fathering illegitimate children shouldn't be surprising. The laws of the Magi state that illegitimate children of the clans have no right of inheritance to become sorcerers, so a way around it is to sever their blood ties to their parents and become bounty hunters of the clan. Of course, such illegitimate children are generally doted on by the archmages. Otherwise, they wouldn't have specially taught them sorcery."

"That's a thing? Then some archmage must be rather agonized by the loss," An'an gloated. "Moreover, I suspect the bounty hunter was sent by the Tudor family, because the air temperature at the scene was relatively low. I also saw a large amount of residual ice." "The Tudor family?" The middle-aged woman pondered it for a moment before saying, "Who do you think they're targeting?"

"Melgor." An'an said firmly, "On the night Ren Xiaosu pursued me, he asked if I was sent by the Tudor family!"

"Then they have the same enemy as us." The middle-aged woman started laughing. "Who knows, they might even bring us some other surprises."

Chapter 1122 Flames of war

Initially, Ren Xiaosu thought the trade caravan would get even more demoralized due to the bandit attack. But to his surprise, not only did the people in the caravan not become depressed, they even cheered up quite a bit.

On the same night Qian Weining defeated the bandits, many people in the caravan started singing and dancing. It seemed like they were celebrating the victory.

Even the two sheeple joined in.

Ren Xiaosu asked Li Chengguo, "Aren't you worried that bandits will attack us later on?"

However, Li Chengguo, the silly dolt, answered honestly, "With a sharpshooter like Vice President Qian around, what's there to worry about?"

Qian Weining had become the revered hero of the entire caravan.

As a matter of fact, the people in the Kingdom of Sorcerers were a little more optimistic than those in the Central Plains. In fact, they were even a little ridiculously optimistic.

The revelry lasted for four hours. During these four hours, hundreds of people wanted to toast Qian Weining. Fortunately, Qian Weining remained sober and did not have a single drop of alcohol.

While the crowd was celebrating, Qian Weining went to look for Melgor alone. He glanced at Ren Xiaosu before saying to Melgor, "Your Excellency Lord Melgor, I have something I would like to discuss with you in private."

Melgor knew Qian Weining was trying to get him to send Ren Xiaosu away, but he shook his head and said, "Don't worry about my steward. If there's something, just say it in front of us. There's no need for avoidance."

Qian Weining hesitated for a moment before finally saying, "Lord Melgor, I suspect someone secretly helped us when the bandits came to attack. But before we figure out who that might be, please don't tell anyone about what I said."

Next to them, Ren Xiaosu glanced at Qian Weining and thought to himself, 'This vice president of the Chamber of Commerce is quite keen. He actually noticed...'

However, it was not easy for Qian Weining to share his specific thoughts in Ren Xiaosu's presence after excusing himself from the thousands of people in the caravan to speak with Melgor in private.

Meanwhile, Melgor wondered, "Someone secretly helped us? Vice President Qian, why do you say that?"

"Lord Melgor, you may not believe it if I tell you," Qian Weining said, "but I've got a good idea of just how good my archery is. With my skill, I can probably hit 80% of my targets, but I absolutely can't achieve a 100% kill rate!"

Next to them, Ren Xiaosu had a strange expression on his face. He thought to himself, 'How can you fucking say that you've got a good idea of your archery? Good idea, my ass!' While using Old Xu to help Qian Weining build his reputation as a sharpshooter, Ren Xiaosu was quite certain the vice president's shot accuracy during the night was not even fucking 10%.

At first, Ren Xiaosu thought Qian Weining actually had some self-awareness. However, he realized he had overestimated him.

Melgor thought for a moment and said, "Vice President Qian, it's already very impressive to have an 80% hit rate in the dark, so why are you belittling yourself? Look at my steward. He doesn't even know how to use a bow. He couldn't hit a target five

meters from him. You're much, much better than him." Qian Weining hesitated for a moment before saying, "That's true."

Ren Xiaosu sneered as he watched the two of them. However, he did not say a word throughout.

Melgor said, "Vice President Qian, who do you think might be helping us?" "I'm not sure." Vice President Qian looked at Melgor seriously. "Was it you, Lord Melgor? I think only sorcerers are capable of something like that."

Melgor shook his head. "It wasn't me. I didn't take any action while you all were battling."

"That's strange." Qian Weining lowered his head and pondered it for a moment. "Who would help us, yet hide their identity? What's their goal?"

Next to them, Ren Xiaosu said, "Vice President Qian, why don't you tell us honestly why you're heading to Ghent City and who your enemy is? That way, we can also help analyze the situation."

When Qian Weining heard this, he hesitated. At this moment, the two servants returned from the revelry. Qian Weining suddenly bade farewell. "It's getting late. Lord Melgor, you should rest early."

"Sketchy." Ren Xiaosu gave a fake smile and asked Melgor, "Who do you think that guy is actually on guard against?"

"I'm not sure. You also know that I've been away from York County for two years. Vice President Qian had only just arrived in York County at that time," Melgor said.

Ren Xiaosu thought for a moment and then asked, "How's the relationship between the archmages of the Berkeley family and the sorcerer clans in the capital? I remember you saying that the Berkeley family controls six counties in the south, with four of them considered top counties in the Kingdom of Sorcerers, right?"

"That's right." Melgor said, "But the House of Berkeley has always had their own territory. I've never heard of them having any dealings in the capital city. Their clan members rarely, if ever, go to Ghent City. When my family was still living in the capital, I heard the behavior of the Berkeley family's young'uns was quite antisocial when they were there."

"That's where the problem lies," Ren Xiaosu said upon some thought.

In times of chaos, ambitious people would smell the decadence of a dynasty and develop great ambitions.

Not long after Ren Xiaosu arrived in the Kingdom of Sorcerers, he saw many sights of people leading miserable lives. The sights even made him feel that Fortress 178 had pulled away from the Kingdom of Sorcerers in development.

If the dynasty of sorcerers was about to get replaced, authority would also be passed on. In that case, what role would the House of Berkeley play in these times of chaos?

The land of feudal vassals was a natural place for creating ambitious people.

Ren Xiaosu asked again, "How's the military readiness of the Berkeley family?"

"The Berkeley family's Knights of the Inferno have always been one of the top armies in the kingdom." Melgor said, "It's no secret. Moreover, the size of their army has been increasing over the years."

"Then I roughly understand." Ren Xiaosu said, "But I still have to find some evidence to see if it can confirm my thinking."

"What have you discovered?" Melgor asked.

Ren Xiaosu casually pointed to a young man and woman who were singing and dancing. "Qian Weining has probably seized more than a 100 longbows from the bandits. Yesterday, when he distributed 30 of them to those young people, I realized that they were all very experienced at using the bow. It doesn't look like it's their first time ever handling the weapons."

"Yes, the first time I handled one, I was about the same as you," Melgor said seriously.

Ren Xiaosu looked at Melgor in surprise. "That's brave of you."

"It can't always be you ridiculing me, right?" Melgor said with a smile.

Ren Xiaosu ignored the remark. Instead, he continued, "You told me that bows were prohibited weapons. In that case, where did those young people learn how to use them?"

"You suspect they're from the military?" Melgor said.

"It's not a suspicion but a certainty." Ren Xiaosu looked at the group of young people and thought that half of the 1,000-odd members who formed the trade caravan were probably from the military. What they were doing was pretending to be civilians and talking up the prosperity and dreams in the big cities before bringing the flames of war to those places.

Chapter 1123 Conspiracy

In the middle of the night, a few drunks were lying around the camp. Ren Xiaosu pretended to be asleep as he leaned against the wheels of a carriage.

No one was moving around anymore. Ren Xiaosu opened his eyes slightly and observed everyone before mentally noting those who were drunk.

If it were as he had deduced, that this trade caravan was likely made up of many soldiers from the Berkeley family, it would absolutely be impossible they would get drunk while on duty.

Therefore, the drunks could be ruled out first.

But after a round of observation, Ren Xiaosu was surprised to discover there were probably even fewer uninvolved people in the trade caravan than he had imagined.

Ren Xiaosu was a little surprised. Could it be that the Li and the Liu clans urging Melgor to set off quickly was also part of the conspiracy?

Then Melgor, that sweet idiot, did not think too much and directly agreed to their request?

Ren Xiaosu made Old Xu quietly circle the outside perimeter of the trade caravan. In the end, he was even more sure of his judgment. Seeing that the revelry had just ended, there were still people on duty next to the carriages loaded with wine barrels.

One of York County's main industries was winemaking. And the main goods the Chamber of Commerce was transporting to Ghent City this time were wine.

The entire caravan consisted of several hundred ox carts and horse-drawn carriages, with a quarter of them loaded with wooden barrels filled with wine.

An ox cart could carry six barrels of wine, the limit of what it could hold. Ren Xiaosu had strong suspicions there were other items in the oak barrels. Otherwise, why would people still be guarding them so warily in the middle of the night?

However, Ren Xiaosu contemplated it. Was Qian Weining the one leading this trade caravan, or could it be someone else?

The next morning, the trade caravan set off again. Qian Weining said they would arrive at the first relay station of the journey in the afternoon, Vaduz County.

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Along the way, Ren Xiaosu asked Melgor, "Is Vaduz County under the Berkeley family's control?"

Melgor nodded and said, "Yes, and it can be considered one of the important cities of the House of Berkeley in the south. Half of the Knights of the Inferno are stationed there. If you go farther north, that's the territory of the House of Winston."

"What's the relationship between the Winston family and the Berkeley family?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

"There aren't any true archmages in the Winston family, so they behave more like a subject of the Berkeley family," Melgor answered. "In the past, when the Berkeley family's young'uns went to Ghent City to seek knowledge, everything the youth of the House of Winston did revolved around them. If the members of the House of Berkeley got into fights with the other clans, the Winston family's young'uns would immediately band together with them."

"Anything else?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

"Oh, yes, someone said the Winston family has secretly pledged allegiance to the Berkeley family, but it's just a rumor," Melgor replied.

"I'm afraid not." Ren Xiaosu suddenly said, "Remember, you must not trust anyone other than me on this journey, not even the two sheeple, and especially not the knights that the Li clan sent to protect you, like Mox."

Melgor was puzzled. "Why?"

"I won't tell you for now. You're so dumb that it's easy for others to get information out of you," Ren Xiaosu said.

Melgor was speechless.

In the evening, when the trade caravan arrived outside Vaduz County, Ren Xiaosu frowned. "There weren't any city walls in Yorktown, so why does Vaduz have them?"

"These were built decades ago to prevent wild animals from endangering the residents," Melgor said nonchalantly.

However, Ren Xiaosu did not think that such strong walls were built to defend against wild animals.

The city walls of the Kingdom of Sorcerers looked quite different from those in the Central Plains. The main structure was more like a castle with many watchtowers and turrets erected around it. Its architecture resembled spears pointing into the sky.

The walls were laid entirely with gray brick. On top of the walls stood tough-looking soldiers who each held the House of Berkeley's heraldry, which bore the emblem of a lion on them, in one hand and rested the other on the hilt of a broadsword at their waist.

“What does the Kingdom of Sorcerers’ flag look like?” Ren Xiaosu asked.

Melgor spent a long time trying to remember it but could not recall anything. It was only a few minutes later that he finally answered, “It’s a picture of two crossed swords with an Eye of True Sight above it.”

“Didn’t your family used to live in Ghent City? Why didn’t you describe it more quickly?” Ren Xiaosu wondered.

“The kingdom’s flags in Ghent City were removed long ago. At first, the House of Norman replaced the flags in Ghent City with their own clan’s flag of a shield. Later, the House of Tudor wanted to replace the flags on top of the walls with their flag of a falcon,” Melgor replied with a shrug. “In the end, they decided neither clans’ flags could be put up, leaving it totally bare.”

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. He thought to himself, ‘Has the infighting in the Kingdom of Sorcerers already reached such an intense state?’

It was obvious the Norman family and the Tudor family were not on good terms. This was very good news for him.

When the trade caravan tried to enter the city gate, the soldiers on duty stopped them. The commander, wearing steel armor, ordered his soldiers, “Check their carriages!” Qian Weining rode forward and said loudly, “I’m Qian Weining, the vice president of the York County Chamber of Commerce. All the customs documents have already been prepared. The venerable Lord Melgor is also traveling at the back of the group. Do you all want to delay his journey?”

The soldier at the entrance looked at the rear of the caravan. Qian Weining pointed out Melgor’s carriage to the commander of the guard and said, “That carriage has the symbol of the Eye of True Sight on it. You can go over and pay your respects to Lord Melgor.”

After that, the commander of the guard walked towards Melgor’s carriage. As he walked, his armor rattled noisily.

He came to Melgor’s carriage and knelt on one knee. “Your Excellency Lord Melgor.”

Melgor lifted the window curtain and said, “You may rise. I’m only passing through Vaduz County this time. I have to continue heading north towards Ghent City tomorrow.”

“Understood.” The commander of the guard got up and waved to his soldiers at the gate. “Let them through! We don’t want to delay Lord Melgor.”

The trade caravan started moving again slowly. They were going to reorganize at the relay station north of the city. There were accommodations there, as well as horse feed and hay prepared for the livestock.

Ren Xiaosu watched all of this quietly from the sidelines. He suddenly understood why this group of people had urged Melgor to set off.

The bottom rung of society of the Kingdom of Sorcerers had a peculiar adoration and faith in the sorcerers. Regardless of how many customs documents a trade caravan prepared, it would not be as useful as having a sorcerer traveling with them.

With a sorcerer traveling with the caravan, it could even save the time required for carrying out goods inspection when passing through many of the cities. Even if the guards of some cities insisted on doing an inspection, they would not be too thorough.

So the sweet idiot, Melgor, was just being used as a pass.

Meanwhile, Melgor said proudly to Ren Xiaosu in a low voice, "So, what do you think? Now that you've seen the respect I command from the people, does it make you want to become a sorcerer even more? Don't worry, I'll definitely help you get an Eye of True Sight this time."

Ren Xiaosu rolled his eyes. If he had not come with Melgor on this trip to help him enhance his fate as the "protagonist," Melgor would probably have ended up dead without even knowing why.

Chapter 1124 Branch of the Prosperous Northwest

As an important county of the House of Berkeley, Vaduz was very different from Yorktown. At the very least, the roads in the entire city were fully paved with stone and not just left as dirt tracks.

As the trade caravan made its way through the city, the horses clopped on the ground as they walked with horseshoes on.

The golden rays of the evening sun glittered from the west. Ren Xiaosu could even see a flock of white doves swirling in the sky above the cathedral in the town center some distance away.

Beside the cathedral was an even more solemn-looking palace.

The building was entirely red in color, and on top of the tallest tower in the middle of the palace complex was affixed an Eye of True Sight gilded in gold. It was like the eye was watching the residents of the city.

Ren Xiaosu asked, "What's that place?"

“That’s the palace of the Berkeley family’s archmage, or you can just call it a Sorcerer’s Tower,” Melgor replied. “But he shouldn’t be here at present. He usually resides in Berkeley County.”

Ren Xiaosu praised, “Look at that Sorcerer’s Tower and how it compares to yours. Come to think of you, you actually had the cheek to tell me how magnificent your Sorcerer’s Tower was at the beginning....”

Melgor’s face turned red as he explained, “My Sorcerer’s Tower is already quite good. You haven’t seen the other Sorcerer’s Towers yet. Some sorcerers can’t even afford to build one after arriving at their fiefs.”

“If it weren’t for your childhood sweetheart sending you money through her servant, you probably couldn’t have afforded one either,” Ren Xiaosu muttered. “Speaking of which, the Tudor family should be even more powerful than the Berkeley family, right? Have you ever thought that it might actually be a good thing that your girlfriend gets to marry into their family?”

Melgor got anxious. “What do you know? How can there be any true feelings involved in a rich family like the Tudors? Just the number of spouses they have number in the hundreds. Marrying into such rich families might make materialistic sense for a better quality of life, but how can anyone possibly find happiness there?”

Ren Xiaosu sighed and shook his head. “Some people can’t even marry into their family if they wanted to. Hey, which clan does your girlfriend belong to?” “Her family is only considered average in Ghent City. Initially, they were not on good terms with the Tudor family. However, there was an archmage who said she was extremely talented and suitable to be a sorceress.” Melgor sighed and said, “Actually, I also know very well I can’t give her what the Tudor family can. So I didn’t even write her after I returned.”

“Why didn’t you?” Ren Xiaosu asked.

“I’m afraid I’ll set her back.” Melgor said, “Besides, I really don’t have the power to go against the Tudor family.”

“Mhm, it’s a good thing that you’ve learned to let go and grant others happiness.” Ren Xiaosu chuckled and said, “But you don’t have to be discouraged. With me around, you won’t be any worse off than the Tudor family.” “You’re blustering again....”

Ren Xiaosu suddenly started thinking. Should he still abduct Melgor back to the Northwest?

It was not that he no longer wanted to bring Melgor to the Prosperous Northwest, but that a new problem had arisen. He could not possibly abduct all of the people in the Kingdom of Sorcerers. In that case, no matter how many archmages he wiped out here, the kingdom would definitely still exist.

Perhaps those who gained authority here in the future would no longer be sorcerers. Then the citizens could start reviving technology as it was before The Cataclysm.

The Magi had deliberately suppressed the rise of technology. But at that time, the technological advancement of the Kingdom of Sorcerers would definitely become similar to the Central Plains. Everyone would start searching through their past civilizations and bring back its former technologies to the world one by one. At that time, what would Fortress 178's relationship with that Kingdom of Sorcerers be like? Would war break out once again?

So should he bring everyone suitable for the Prosperous Northwest back with him, or should he turn this place into a branch of the Prosperous Northwest?

Honestly, Ren Xiaosu was more inclined to the latter strategy

But here came another question. Who would be a suitable candidate to lead the Prosperous Northwest's branch? Should it be an ambitious person or a sweet idiot?

The answer was, of course, a sweet idiot.

As long as the person in charge of this branch was obedient, Ren Xiaosu did not actually care about how capable he was or how this place would develop. However, the amount of work he would have to put in for such a scenario to happen was quite significant. At the very least, he would have to "reach an agreements with all the sorcerer clans.

How many sorcerer clans did Melgor mention existed in the Kingdom of Sorcerers? It should be around 40 or so.

Melgor was bemoaning to himself that this steward of his was way too fond of bragging. However, he had no idea Ren Xiaosu was actually planning to turn the entire Kingdom of Sorcerers into a branch of the Prosperous Northwest.

Ren Xiaosu thought he probably couldn't accomplish this task all by himself. But if he were to borrow the strength of others, it might not be entirely impossible.

He turned his gaze to the carriage the young sorceress, An'an, and her companions were in. He happened to see An'an and Chen Cheng rush out of the carriage and enter a small alley off the road.

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"You can head to the relay station first. I'll join up with y'all tonight." Then Ren Xiaosu jumped down from the carriage and went after the young sorceress, disappearing from sight. Dazed, Melgor was left alone at the stables. He could not understand what had gotten into his steward again.

In the evening, it was quite lively in the city of Vaduz as the streets bustled with people. As Ren Xiaosu chased after the young sorceress, someone suddenly bumped into him in the crowd and caused him to lose sight of her.

Ren Xiaosu did not tussle with the person who had bumped into him. Instead, he continued searching in a general direction and headed deeper into the alleys. After half an hour of pursuit, the sorceress was no longer anywhere to be found. However, Ren Xiaosu already knew where he should head.

As he turned onto a flagstone path, he heard a slow metallic clanging.

He looked up and saw a blacksmith's workshop. The people inside were busy working on this relatively quiet street.

The short apprentice was operating the bellows with a sweaty face, while a burly blacksmith was hammering an iron billet on the anvil with a hammer.

Ren Xiaosu went into the blacksmith's workshop and said with a smile, "It's wrong of your people to steal things."

The bearded blacksmith said coldly, "I think you've come to the wrong place."

As he spoke, the blacksmith even continued swinging the huge hammer in his hand as though he was afraid no one would know how strong he was.

"Is Chen Cheng inside?" Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, "Can you get the two of them to step out for a moment? I have something to ask them."

However, the blacksmith didn't appear to understand. He looked at Ren Xiaosu coldly and said, "Kid, if you're looking for trouble, you've really come to the wrong place."

"Is that so?" Ren Xiaosu quickly made his move and gently "poked" the blacksmith's Adam's apple with his fingertip. The blacksmith's face immediately reddened as he coughed and fell to the ground.

The short apprentice immediately took out a glowing red blade from the furnace. Ren Xiaosu looked at him and said with a smile, "Relax, he's fine."

The apprentice said solemnly, "What on earth do you want?"

"The person who just bumped into me on the street stole the wrong thing from me." Ren Xiaosu said with a laugh, "I assume that y'all in the Kingdom of Sorcerers don't know what a GPS tracker is, right?"

The sorceress, An'an, and Chen Cheng walked out from the bowels of the blacksmith's workshop with dark expressions. "What do you want?"

When Ren Xiaosu saw the two of them, he laughed even more happily. In this pursuit, there was no doubt technology had decisively won.

Chapter 1125 A deal with the bounty hunters

With Ren Xiaosu's current strength and vigilance, it was impossible for normal people to steal anything from him without his knowledge.

So the moment someone bumped into him on the street, he took advantage of the situation and allowed the other party to steal his tracker.

The thief had taken possession of a small tracker from Ren Xiaosu, but he did not know what it was, so he could only take it back and hand it to whoever was pulling the strings.

This helped Ren Xiaosu successfully locate where Chen Cheng and the young sorceress, An'an, were hiding.

Chen Cheng and An'an were caught off guard by this. Their original plan was to steal Ren Xiaosu's wallet or belongings to learn more about his background.

But instead of finding out anything about him, Ren Xiaosu found their secret residence.

Vaduz was an important city, and the blacksmith's workshop these bounty hunters had set up in Vaduz was actually one of their more important "safe houses."

If any of their compatriots encountered danger, they could hide in the basement of the blacksmith's forge until the danger had passed.

There was enough food stored in the cellar, as well as a fresh change of identity prepared for them.

This safe house was what gave them the confidence to escape being tracked by the magus order over the years.

But now the safe house had been located by Ren Xiaosu. The blacksmith in charge of concealing the safe house had also been knocked out by Ren Xiaosu in a single strike. The burly man, who stood nearly two meters tall, could not even stand up.

Chen Cheng and An'an felt a sense of defeat. Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, "You don't have to look so surprised. After all, you've already learned from the sheeple that I'm not from the Kingdom of Sorcerers, right? I'm afraid that the Central Plains' pace of development is probably much faster than y'all expected."

An'an was first to regain her composure. "Why are you looking for us?"

“Wait a sec, let me correct you there.” Ren Xiaosu found a chair and sat down. “Y’all deliberately left the trade caravan knowing I was aware and deliberately led me away. I should be the one asking this question. Why’re you looking for me?”

Chen Cheng went over and helped the blacksmith up. Then he said to Ren Xiaosu, “Who exactly are you? What’s your relationship with Ren He, the rider you mentioned?”

Ren Xiaosu gave it some thought. “I only relayed the information to y’all because I wanted to know what my relationship with him is. So have y’all relayed my information to your other companions yet? Can you tell me about your organization and what y’all know?”

Chen Cheng and An’an looked at each other. Then the young sorceress said, “We don’t know who the person you’re talking about is, but we’ve heard of the name.”

“That’s good news.” Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, “Tell me in more detail.”

“But we don’t know the details yet. We only heard our father and his generation’s people mention it. If you want to know more, you’ll have to come with us to Ghent City,” An’an said.

Ren Xiaosu was stunned for a moment before smiling happily. “Are you trying to lure me to Ghent City to make use of me?”

An’an’s hands that were at rest by her sides suddenly balled up into fists. She always felt the young man in front of her could guess what she was thinking when she spoke with him.

This feeling was really uncomfortable. She was constantly put in a passive position.

“To be specific, we’re not trying to make use of you, but we need that person who’s protecting you. He’s really strong. We’re willing to use him as the foundation for our deal with you. Go to Ghent City and help us with a task, and we’ll tell you what you want to know,” An’an said calmly.

Ren Xiaosu thought back for a couple seconds before laughing. “Are you referring to the person who killed the fleeing bandits?”

So they were thinking about making use of Old Xu’s combat strength. However, what they did not know was that Old Xu was actually just one of his powers.

Ren Xiaosu did not want to explain either. He believed Old Xu, the pinnacle of close quarters combat, would greatly surprise all the physically weak sorcerers.

“Yes.” An’an’s voice turned cold. “It doesn’t matter if you’re unwilling to go to Ghent City, but I’m afraid you’ll have to find out for yourself what you wish to know.”

Ren Xiaosu looked at An'an with great interest. "I believe that y'all don't have any reinforcements here in Vaduz. Since I can locate your hideout and am brave enough to come here alone, where do you get the confidence to talk like this to me?"

An'an sneered, "We have two sorcerers over here. If you think you're so strong, why don't you try us?"

As soon as her words trailed off, Ren Xiaosu rushed Chen Cheng and An'an. He grabbed their necks with his steely hands and forcefully lifted them before slamming them against the walls of the blacksmith's workshop.

In that instant, the Eyes of True Sight Chen Cheng and An'an were furtively holding in their hands dropped to the ground.

Russell had written in the Introduction to Sorcery that when he faced the Central Plains rider, he did not even get a chance to recite any incantations.

If even a talented and experienced archmage like Russell was not able to fight back, there was even less of a chance that young sorcerers like Chen Cheng and An'an could.

Chen Cheng and An'an struggled with all their might, but no matter how hard they tried, they could not break free from Ren Xiaosu's control.

Just as the blacksmith and his apprentice were about to sneak an attack on Ren Xiaosu, Ren Xiaosu suddenly let go and took a step back, leaving Chen Cheng and An'an to fall to the ground.

Ren Xiaosu snatched the blacksmith's broadsword from his hand and snapped the blade with both hands. "You can't even hold your own weapon properly, so don't talk to me about your tactics. Tell your elders that I'll go to Ghent City. And if your goal is to pit yourselves against the sorcerers, let's just say we share a common interest. As for your intention to make use of me, it'd be better if you put that on the back burner."

Ren Xiaosu turned around and left the blacksmith's workshop, leaving the blacksmith, An'an, and the others looking at one another.

Before this, they had never come across an enemy as strong as this based purely on physical strength. As such, they were utterly defeated by Ren Xiaosu.

It was also at this moment they understood the young man was actually extremely powerful. "Why would such a person be willing to be a fringe sorcerer's steward? What's his goal in coming to the Kingdom of Sorcerers?" Chen Cheng said in a daze.

An'an looked unconvinced. She looked at the blacksmith and said, "Uncle Gris, please relay this news about him to Ghent City and tell Father and the others to be careful."

“Mhm.” Gris nodded solemnly. As someone who did physical work, he naturally understood how terrifying the power Ren Xiaosu had just displayed was. Everyone in the organization had to treat this variable that was about to arrive at Ghent City seriously

Ren Xiaosu, having left the blacksmith’s shop, heaved a sigh of relief. When he was just about to break the metal sword, he really was a little worried he couldn’t do it. Fortunately, the other party’s forging skills were not that good.

And thus, another problem came up. Ren Xiaosu had found the blacksmith’s workshop with the GPS tracker, but he did not put a tracker on Melgor. He had lost his way.

Chapter 1126 Tour guides

At this moment, the people inside the blacksmith’s workshop had not yet dispersed.

Chen Cheng was checking on the blacksmith’s injury. However, he realized Gris had already almost recovered. There was only a red mark at the spot where Ren Xiaosu had hit him earlier.

“Are you really alright?” Chen Cheng asked.

Gris nodded. “The opponent’s attack was very precise. I experienced breathing difficulties, chest tightness, and nonstop coughing when he hit me just now. But I quickly recovered. Believe me, it requires extremely good control over one’s body to execute such a move. Even the most powerful gladiator in Ghent City might not be able to achieve this.”

The blacksmith, Gris, used to be a gladiator in Ghent City. The gladiators of Ghent City tended to be divided into two groups. One group comprised servants and stewards from the sorcerer clans and represented sorcerers who were unwilling to risk themselves in duels. As such, they got these gladiators to represent them to compete for their clans’ glory.

Although it sounded nice, such duels were just to provide more excitement and entertainment for the gambling activities of the sorcerers.

The victorious sorcerer would walk away with half of the prize pool while the rest was used as a payout for those who placed a bet and won. This group of gladiators, who usually basked in the glory of their sorcerer clans, fought for their sorcerer masters in the duels. But once they lost, they would immediately lose favor with them.

The second group was made up of desperate residents who willingly became gladiators after they had nowhere else to turn. Perhaps they had lost all their money in gambling or were in dire need of money. In any case, they were willing to sell themselves to the arena.

They would keep fighting with other gladiators there until they died.

Gris was originally a blacksmith. In order to raise money to treat his father's illness, he turned to dueling as a gladiator. He was also one of the most well-known gladiators in Ghent City in the past. Later, he was rescued by the leader of the bounty hunter organization and arranged to oversee a safe house in Vaduz City.

Gris was very grateful to the leader of the bounty hunters and really enjoyed the peaceful life he was leading now.

However, that did not mean that his combat skills had gone to waste as a result. Actually, Gris believed that even if he were to return to the arena now, he could still win every duel.

In the end, Gris, who was ever so confident of himself, did not even have a chance of fighting back against Ren Xiaosu.

Gris said, "He easily shattered my confidence by overpowering me in combat which I'm most confident in."

Chen Cheng and An'an looked at each other. "Was it because you were caught unprepared by his sudden attack?"

"No." Gris said, "I'm very sure that even if I were prepared, he could still disable my fighting strength in an instant."

With that, Gris wrote a short note on a small piece of paper. After that, he went to the backyard and took out a messenger pigeon from the cage before tying the note to it. He said to An'an, "We can't release the messenger pigeon yet. We have to wait until the messenger pigeons in the vicinity of the cathedral get released tomorrow morning so that ours can blend in and not get noticed."

"Mhm." An'an nodded.

Gris suddenly asked, "What's with that young man? Where did such a powerful expert suddenly appear from?"

An'an curled her lips and said unconvinced, "Powerful? When the bandits attacked the trade caravan, didn't he also hide behind the wagon fort with Melgor and not dare to move?"

"Such a thing happened?" Gris wondered, "With his skills, it shouldn't be difficult for him to deal with the bandits."

“Strength is one thing, but courage is another.” An’an was fuming mad. When she got lifted up like a quail just now, it felt really humiliating. She knew full well she was just saying those words out of spite, but she couldn’t resist criticizing him.

A voice rang out outside the blacksmith’s workshop, “Are you talking about me?” “Huh?!” An’an turned around and was startled to see Ren Xiaosu standing outside the entrance. “Why did you come back?!”

It was way too embarrassing to get caught speaking ill of others behind their backs!

Ren Xiaosu could not admit he was lost, so he explained with a smile, “I was just worried that you two bounty hunters would get caught by the Berkeley family, so I specifically came back to escort the two of you. Feel touched?”

An’an retorted, “As if we’d believe you! You must be scared we’ll report you!”

“That’s really nothing to be afraid about.” Ren Xiaosu said, “Let’s go, I still have to rush back to eat.”

Chen Cheng and An’an looked at the broadswords held up at their necks and could only do as they were told. Seeing that an agreement had been reached, Ren Xiaosu returned the two broadswords to Gris.

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En route to the relay station, the chatty Chen Cheng suddenly asked, “What have the Central Plains become? I heard that it’s still very weak.”

“Weak?” Ren Xiaosu laughed. “Was that why Fortress 178, which you claim to be weak, emerged victorious against the troops of the Kingdom of Sorcerers 17 years ago?”

“Emerged victorious?” Chen Cheng was taken aback. “Wasn’t it the royal army that won?”

Ren Xiaosu sneered, “Who said that?”

“The royal family announced to the public that they had taught Fortress 178 a lesson in blood. But due to the benevolence of the royal family, they didn’t carry out a massacre,” Chen Cheng answered.

“How shameless of them to make up something like that,” Ren Xiaosu said. Fortress 178 had always been at a disadvantage in the past. After all, the military industry’s renaissance had only occurred in the past few decades.

However, after the military industry in the Central Plains was restored, the Magi were completely unable to take them on. Although the war 17 years ago was fierce and tragic, Fortress 178 did indeed emerge victorious.

To preserve their reputation, the magus order and the royal family of the Kingdom of Sorcerers chose to lie about the outcome of the war and say they had won.

Ren Xiaosu glanced at Chen Cheng and said, "The Central Plains won the war 17 years ago. It's become much stronger than y'all think. To say nothing of the military, just the state of the basic industrial and urban infrastructure alone already places them several tiers above the Kingdom of Sorcerers."

Chen Cheng yearned, "Our father also mentioned the Central Plains before. It would be great if we had the opportunity to visit that

place."

Ren Xiaosu said with a cheeky smile, "After I've figured out what exactly your organization does, I might be able to organize a tour for y'all to experience the Northwestern culture of Fortress 178."

An'an suddenly asked, "What's your identity in the Central Plains?"

Ren Xiaosu said with a grin, "Me? I'm just a normal volunteer working for the development of the Northwest."

"You're full of lies." An'an muttered, "By the way, why did you suddenly turn back?" Ren Xiaosu said in seriousness, "Since Vaduz is such an important city here in the south, I was really worried that something might happen to the two of you."

An'an asked suspiciously, "Or was it because you don't know where the relay station is?"

"Hahahahaha, how's that possible?" Ren Xiaosu laughed out loud. "How can I possibly make such an amateur mistake?"

Immediately, An'an was sure he had returned because he didn't know where the relay station was. He was using her and Chen Cheng as his tour guides!