

# The First Order

## - Chapter 1181 – 1190

### Chapter 1181: A new combo!

Just a moment ago, Qian Weining had said they could not let any third party know about their conversation tonight. In the end, two people jumped right out from behind the curtains. It was such a surprise.

Faced with Qian Weining's query, Chen Jingshu did not admit nor deny it. In any case, she preferred letting Qian Weining have his suspicions.

If it were really as Qian Weining had said, that someone were out to kill him, Ren Xiaosu felt that the Northwest's branch office could also ease the entry conditions as required. After all, Comrade Melgor needed to have his own supporters.

That night, Melgor and Chen Jingshu went back separately. Meanwhile, Qian Weining was requested by Ren Xiaosu to stay in the room.

Ren Xiaosu only did this to prevent Qian Weining from suddenly going back on his word and ratting him out.

As such, Qian Weining stood in the room for the entire night and watched helplessly as Ren Xiaosu slept soundly.

Leave? He did not dare to.

Sneak attack Ren Xiaosu while he was asleep and hand over the young man to his patriarch for credit? He did not dare to do that either.

During the night, he still continued to have that lingering sense of fear. He somehow felt that he was facing an extremely dangerous being, even though he did not know why the other party could exude such a strong oppressive aura at his age.

The next morning, everyone put on their red robes and headed towards Winston Cathedral when they heard the bells chime. Yesterday afternoon, the Knights of the Hymn had informed the entire city there would be a memorial service held at the entrance of the cathedral today.

For ceremonies as grand as these, almost all of the residents of Winston City were required to attend. Everyone was dressed in their red robes as they streamed towards the cathedral like a red torrent.

Ren Xiaosu stood several hundred meters from the cathedral and said in a low voice, "Are the Winstons aware of your trade caravan's mission?"

"Yes," Qian Weining answered next to Ren Xiaosu. "Sir, ever since we left Vaduz City, it was the Knights of the Hymn who helped clear the bandits out of our way."

"Mhm, don't be too surprised if something happens later." Ren Xiaosu said with a grin, "Today, we'll be holding your pledge of allegiance ceremony. Remember, don't attempt to escape. You know the consequences."

Qian Weining was stunned. "Sir, what do you mean by that?"

"You'll find out in a while," Ren Xiaosu said.

Ren Xiaosu did not have Melgor, Chen Jingshu, or anyone else come along with him this morning. Instead, he instructed Chen Jingshu to assist Melgor in hiding. If she discovered anyone heading straight to the relay station to carry out a search, they were to stay hidden while they waited for him to go to their rescue.

When Ren Xiaosu told Melgor about this, Melgor more or less guessed that something big was about to happen in the city.

No one from the House of Berkeley showed up yet outside the cathedral. The person presiding over the ceremony was the Winston family's patriarch, and standing next to him were 10 other sorcerers and 36 elites of the Knights of the Hymn.

The Winston family's patriarch looked at the residents. "A few days ago, someone manipulated the power of the Devil and secretly attacked the devout followers and chosen ones in Winston City. We've followed the instructions of the gods and found the devil responsible for the attack and killed him."

After that, someone came out from the back of the cathedral carrying a wooden box. When the box was opened, Archmage Kayle's head was revealed.

The head had been cured with quicklime prior, so it looked exceptionally pale.

Everyone was getting riled up by the sight of the severed head. However, the Winston family's patriarch slammed the scepter in his hand to the ground. The dull thud felt like it pounded on everyone's hearts and left the crowd silent.

The Winston family's patriarch said vehemently, "You all might have heard about what happened in Vaduz City. The gods had issued a decree to the House of Berkeley to

take on the heavy responsibility of exterminating the northern devils. Now that devils have reappeared in the world, our House of Winston, as servants of the gods, will naturally follow them into war!”

Ren Xiaosu curled his lips. The people in the Kingdom of Sorcerers really liked babbling too much, and all the nonsense they spouted was really just to serve their political cause.

They had obviously taken revenge on the wrong person, but in the end, they still came up with some reason claiming to have killed some devil.

Archmage Kayle had really died a wrongful death. When he left Ghent City, he was supposed to go and personally punish Ren Xiaosu and Melgor. In the end, it became a journey that took his life.

At this moment, the Winston family’s patriarch signaled to the sorcerers around him. The ten sorcerers by his side held their Eyes of True Sight and cast a spell in unison.

A faint curtain of fire enveloped the Winston family’s patriarch. When the residents saw this “miracle,” they exclaimed. But Ren Xiaosu nearly laughed out loud at the sight of this. How was this a “miracle”? The patriarch was clearly trying to protect himself from getting slapped.

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When the Winston family’s patriarch saw that the fire curtain was fully cast, he breathed a sigh of relief. He smiled and said to the residents, “After we killed the devil, the gods have bestowed upon us a new spell as a reward. My dear people, the gods have shown us their favor again.”

Truly, this group of sorcerers were really shameless. It was clearly a spell they had kept hidden for a long time, yet they suddenly brought it out and claimed it was a reward from the gods.

It seemed like he only dared to say that because he felt it was impossible that he would get slapped in the face while hiding behind the curtain of fire.

When the residents heard they were favored by the gods again, they started cheering. Ren Xiaosu thought that if there had been a mandatory nine-year education system in place in the Kingdom of Sorcerers, these people would surely not get deceived by such nonsense.

The Winston family’s patriarch cheered loudly, “The gods are with us—”

Before he could finish speaking, the jaws of the residents watching him dropped to the ground. Everyone could only watch helplessly as a Shadow Door suddenly opened up behind the curtain of fire. The legendary right hand of God had descended once again.

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*Slap!*

The Winston family's patriarch was slapped so hard he spun around on the spot twice!

"I wish you happiness," Ren Xiaosu said softly.

At the next moment, the Winston family's patriarch burst into tears. The residents were shocked. "Does God have such a strong slap?"

"The archmage got slapped so hard he cried?"

"Listen to yourselves. If God doesn't have a strong slap, how can He be God?!"

Ren Xiaosu suddenly felt that his new combo was super overpowered. Whoever got slapped had to cry! It wouldn't even be their choice!

It had nothing to do with whether they could put up a strong front or not. It purely depended on how "happy" Ren Xiaosu wanted them to be.

Qian Weining slowly turned his head and looked at Ren Xiaosu in disbelief. At this moment, he suddenly realized why he could not stop crying back then. He also realized where those four slaps at the front of Vaduz Cathedral had come from.

The Winston family's patriarch was also dumbfounded. He believed he was a very strong person. Even if he got slapped, he shouldn't be crying, right?

But he couldn't stop crying at all!

The Berkeley family's patriarch, who had been standing inside the cathedral all this while, sneered when he saw this. He slowly walked out of the cathedral with the Knights of the Inferno behind him.

Michel Grantham Berkeley looked at the Winston family's patriarch and said disdainfully, "Do you have to cry?"

The Winston family's patriarch was speechless.

Right after, the Berkeley family's patriarch said angrily to the Knights of the Inferno, "Flush out the perpetrator!"

Ren Xiaosu looked at Qian Weining and said with a chuckle, "You can report me, but I can't guarantee your safety. Of course, you can also keep quiet and become one of us from now on."

Next, it could be predicted that the Knights of the Inferno would conduct checks on everyone present to track down the culprit.

Qian Weining immediately understood what Ren Xiaosu's so-called pledge of allegiance was. Ren Xiaosu did not need him to kill anyone or do anything at all. As long as he remained silent, he could never return to the Knights of the Inferno.

Because the Knights of the Inferno would not accept a tainted knight like him.

After this event, it would not matter whether Qian Weining was loyal. He could not turn back anymore.

## **Chapter 1182: A different kind of happiness**

The House of Berkeley seemed prepared for everything that might happen at today's memorial service. When the patriarch gave the order to search for the culprit, the Knights of the Inferno immediately surrounded the crowd.

The soldiers were armed with pikes and had split themselves into hundreds of smaller groups to seal off all the intersections near the cathedral.

There were tens of thousands of residents who came to attend the memorial service. This was an extremely large-scale event, and the long lines of red even extended several streets away.

The people crowded together in the streets and watched in panic as the knights surrounded them.

Surprisingly, the Knights of the Inferno who had surrounded them had also brought many city census officials with them.

They set up exits on both the east and west ends while keeping the other areas surrounded. No one was allowed to enter or leave the encirclement.

Meanwhile, every resident who wanted to leave from the east and west exits would have to pass the census officers' checks.

Although technology in the Kingdom of Sorcerers was backward, the census system was still very strict even in the ancient times before The Cataclysm. This was the foundation of a backward system for managing citizens.

For example, if a trade caravan wanted to head north, they would have to bring along documents signed by the census officer. Only then could they successfully check into relay stations or hotels.

Of course, that was the rule, but the executors might not necessarily follow it so strictly.

In the early years, when the census system was first perfected, everyone was quite meticulous about the process. Decades on, people started turning a blind eye whenever such checks were not carried out. No one took it seriously.

“Name, address, and citizen registration number!” A census officer checked them one by one. After the residents gave their details, another census officer behind would immediately flip through the register and search for the information.

But the ideal, while commendable, had harsh uses in reality. The Berkeley family’s patriarch had brought these census officers over because he wanted to screen for those with ulterior motives.

In the end, the census officers were embarrassed to discover they had neglected their responsibilities too much in recent years. Six out of ten of the residents were not on the register.

The decline of a nation was definitely not as simple as technology waning. For example, the issues that existed in the Kingdom of Sorcerers were: cumbersome bureaucracy, negligent and lazy administrative bodies, a backward production system, and an out-of-date regulatory system.

When the Berkeley family’s patriarch realized this problem, he sneered at the Winston family’s patriarch, “In the past, I thought you were a talented leader who could take charge of things on your own. But now, I realize you’re actually an idiot who can’t even handle administration. It’s no wonder your House of Winston’s Knights of the Hymn are lacking in combat readiness. I don’t think you’re only weak in politics, but you also fail at organizing military matters.”

Disregarding everything else, the six counties in the south controlled by the House of Berkeley were truly much better than the other counties. At the very least, the census officers would definitely not dare to muddle through their work like this!

The Winston family’s patriarch said as he continued crying, “Patriarch, I’ll definitely sort out our political and military affairs from now on...”

The Berkeley family’s patriarch was extremely frustrated by the other party’s crying. He said coldly, “As the head of the House of Winston, how can you cry like this when you were just slapped? What use do I have for you?”

“Patriarch, I don’t wish to cry either,” the Winston family’s patriarch said sadly.

The Berkeley family's patriarch was so angry he laughed. "How can a man be successful in this world when he's so fragile? As the head of the house, how shameful are you to be crying like that? Even your Knights of the Hymn are better than you!"

With that, the Berkeley family's patriarch called over a member of the Knights of the Hymn and made him take off his helmet. Then he slapped the soldier across the face, bringing the knight to tears.

The Berkeley family's patriarch was speechless.

The Winston family's patriarch was speechless.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu was staring intently at the Berkeley family's patriarch. To be precise, he was staring at his palm. Whoever the other party slapped would definitely end up "happy"!

The process might be different, but each had its own kind of happiness!

Meanwhile, the Winston family's patriarch felt a little comforted when he saw the knight with tears streaming down his face. At least, he wasn't the only one crying.

The Berkeley family's patriarch looked at the knight in front of him with a livid expression. "Trash! An incompetent soldier is just one soldier, but an incompetent commander would raise a group of incompetent soldiers. That's what your Knights of the Hymn are! You, come here!"

The Berkeley family's patriarch looked at his Knights of the Inferno. It seemed like he wanted to use them to set an example for the Knights of the Hymn.

Nearby, the soldier from the Knights of the Inferno who was singled out took a step forward determinedly. He even cast a disdainful look at the crying soldier from the Knights of the Hymn and the Winston family's patriarch. It was as though he refused to be associated with such fragile people.

When the Berkeley family's patriarch saw this, he was comforted. He said to the Winston family's patriarch, "Let me show you what my Knights of the Inferno are like."

After that, the Berkeley family's patriarch gave the knight a slap. Then the knight who had just walked up also burst into tears.

The Berkeley family's patriarch was speechless.

The Winston family's patriarch was speechless.

The Winston family's patriarch furtively looked up at the tear-streaked Knights of the Inferno soldier. It was as though he were thinking, *'Is that it?'*

Many of the residents who had gathered nearby and were unable to leave became worried for their own safety. Meanwhile, they secretly observed what was happening at the entrance of the cathedral.

Someone even muttered, "The Berkeley family's patriarch has quite a strong slap too...."

"Didn't they say the Knights of the Inferno are extremely fearsome? Why are they so weak as well?"

"Shh, watch your tongue, or you'll be hanged!"

The Berkeley family's patriarch flew into a rage. "Are the Knights of the Inferno under my command also a bunch of weaklings?"

Everyone around them kept quiet out of fear. The Winston family's patriarch hung his head so low it almost reached his own crotch.

The Berkeley family's patriarch looked around and said angrily to the Winston family's patriarch, "Come here, slap me... never mind!"

The Berkeley family's patriarch wanted to ask the Winston family's patriarch to slap him to see if he would cry as well. But he managed to salvage his rationality in the end.

He saw himself as a lord of his generation. Therefore, no matter how angry he might be, he knew he shouldn't do something that might end up damaging his own reputation.

Moreover, the Berkeley family's patriarch also felt a little worried. What if he got slapped and started crying as well?

In the crowd, Ren Xiaosu, who was watching the commotion, felt a tinge of regret. If a slap really landed on the face of the Berkeley family's patriarch, it would be super interesting.

Next to him, Qian Weining was also watching the happenings. He felt like laughing and crying at the same time.

He wanted to laugh because this steward was way too wicked. Qian Weining was a member of the Knights of the Inferno himself, so he knew full well those soldiers trained hard all year round. Even if their skin peeled from getting sunburnt, none of them would cry from the pain. In that case, Ren Xiaosu must be the one responsible for it.

To be honest, when Qian Weining recalled his pathetic state previously and looked at his former colleagues at the entrance of the cathedral, he felt that he had never met anyone more despicable than Ren Xiaosu in his life.



As for wanting to cry, it was because Qian Weining was in a state of panic now. He really wanted to persuade Ren Xiaosu to stop messing around. If he kept it up, there could be big trouble.

Qian Weining sneaked a peek at Ren Xiaosu and realized he was smiling at him.

Ren Xiaosu asked in a whisper, "Aren't you going to step forward and report me?"

Qian Weining clenched his teeth. "I've already pledged my loyalty to you, sir. You don't have to test me anymore. Let's leave already..."

"Alright then." Ren Xiaosu squeezed his way towards the east exit. "Did you bring your Knights of the Inferno ID with you? If you didn't, we can't leave."

"Yes, yes, I brought it!"

## Chapter 1183: Friend from afar

Qian Weining and Ren Xiaosu quietly walked towards the exit.

Things went better than expected. When a member of the Knights of the Inferno came over to stop them, Qian Weining just pulled back his hood and gave him a glance. Then that knight dismounted from his horse right away and saluted Qian Weining before letting them through.

Ren Xiaosu laughed. "So your face can act as a pass too? Looks like Vice President Qian's standing in the Knights of the Inferno is very high."

Qian Weining was a paladin in the Knights of the Inferno, which was equivalent to a regimental commander or brigade commander in the Central Plains, so how could the rank and file not know him?

However, Qian Weining acted with great respect towards Ren Xiaosu at this moment. He smiled bitterly at Ren Xiaosu and said, "Sir, you don't have to call me Vice President Qian. Just call me Little Qian..."

"Alright then." Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, "Don't worry, someday, you'll realize how correct the decision you made today is. Let's rendezvous with Mel first and then leave the city immediately. As long as we get out of this troublesome place, won't we be free to do whatever we want?"

Initially, Qian Weining felt a little bitter when he referred to himself as Little Qian.

But when he heard Ren Xiaosu calling Melgor "Mel," he immediately felt much better.

This was the strange thing about humans. No matter how miserable your lot was, as long as you realized someone else was going through the same as you, you would instantly feel much better.

And then, you'd just accept whatever your fate.

Meanwhile, Ren Xiaosu's thinking was that with Mel and Little Qian serving him by his side now, one of whom was a member of the Magi while the other was a member of the knights, it felt like the foundations for his team of henchmen had been formed.

Now that Ren Xiaosu was considered a big shot, he'd definitely need some subordinates or something.

These subordinates might not necessarily be of any substantial help to him, but they could still liven up the atmosphere at critical moments, just like the servants of Great Immortal Zhenyuan<sup>1</sup>.

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The memorial service in front of the Winston Cathedral had been turned into a farce. After the Winston family's patriarch finally stopped crying, he was immediately sent west by the Berkeley family's patriarch to deal with the House of Voss.

The Voss family was a vassal of the House of Tudor. The Knights of Tudor in the north were approaching, and all the various forces were starting to get restless.

In the afternoon, a strange group of people suddenly arrived outside the sealed city gates. The Knights of the Inferno on duty on top of the city walls looked down in surprise. There were large steel monsters parked down there, and their origins were unknown.

Someone reported the matter to the Berkeley family's patriarch to ask for further instructions.

As a result, the Berkeley family's patriarch personally headed out of the city to welcome the guests. He even ordered his men to lay out the red carpet for them.

Only the true core members of the Berkeley family knew this was the friend from afar their patriarch had mentioned, and the steel monsters were the military trucks from the Central Plains.

The other party had taken a huge detour via an unknown route and even went past extremely dangerous areas just so they could deliver these truckloads of weapons to the Kingdom of Sorcerers.

At the back of the military trucks, everything inside was covered with green canvas tarps, so no one knew what was hidden underneath.

There were dozens of trucks lined up in a long convoy outside the city gate.

These weapons were gifts brought by that friend from afar.

This was not the first time this group of people from the Central Plains had come to the Kingdom of Sorcerers.

The gate of Winston City opened and the Berkeley family's patriarch calmly rode out on a white horse. He smiled at the young man wearing a pair of sunglasses at the front of the convoy and said, "My friend, long time no see!"

The Berkeley family's patriarch dismounted from his horse and gave the young man a welcoming hug.

The young man took off his sunglasses and embraced the Berkeley family's patriarch with a smile. "Your Excellency Lord Michel, I came bearing the gifts that I've promised you. We can head straight to the remote mountains tonight to witness their power. In the face of these weapons, the Knights of Tudor will become a laughingstock in the Kingdom of Sorcerers."

The Berkeley family's patriarch walked to the back of a truck and gently lifted the canvas tarps. A smile appeared on his face when he saw the dark and menacing weapons underneath. Even the lubricants used to maintain these armaments had seemingly become fragrant.

However, the Berkeley family's patriarch, who was wearing silver armor and a red cloak, looked exceptionally out of place with these modern weapons.

The Berkeley family's patriarch did not wait until the evening to test out the armaments. Instead, he ordered his men to bring over 20 prisoners. Then he removed their shackles and made them run for their lives. "Run! Those of you who can escape today, our House of Berkeley will proclaim innocent in the name of God."

After those prisoners ran several hundred meters away, the young man from the Central Plains calmly had someone bring over a heavy machine gun and fixed it to the ground.

Even the machine gun tripod was hammered into the ground with nails.

The young man took out a box of ammo belts and attached one to the machine gun. Then he firmly closed the cover.

The prisoners had already run far. Looking out from the city gate, the prisoners' backs were like tiny leaves in the distance.

But when the young man pressed the trigger at the back of the heavy machine gun, the palm-sized machine gun bullets shot out and left the 20 prisoners riddled with holes from a distance of nearly a 1,000 meters.

The Knights of the Inferno who followed the Berkeley family's patriarch out of the city looked at one another. In the face of these instant-kill combat weapons, they couldn't escape even if they were riding on warhorses!

In fact, some veterans from 17 years ago had said that extremely powerful weapons had already appeared at Fortress 178. Back then, when the Kingdom of Sorcerers went on an expedition to the east, they had to fill the holes opened by these weapons with the lives of their soldiers.

From that day onward, the Magi no longer mentioned anything about the eastern expedition.

And now the younger generation of knights finally understood how terrifying the supposed Central Plains weapons were.

This was a disaster for their cavalry. Or rather, it would be disastrous for their entire Kingdom of Sorcerers' military if they had to face the firearms and explosives of the Central Plains.

The Berkeley family's patriarch looked at the dead prisoners from afar with a solemn expression. No one knew what he was thinking.

But he quickly started laughing.

"Come on, I'm going to hold a grand banquet for my friend from afar tonight," the Berkeley family's patriarch said in a clear voice. After that, he pulled the young man by his arm and walked towards the city. "Mr. Wang, are the other weapons this powerful as well?"

Wang Wenyan smiled and said, "The rest won't be any worse off than this."

The Berkeley family's patriarch suddenly thought of another matter. "By the way, Mr. Wang, you should be very familiar with the Central Plains. I would like to ask you about something."

Wang Wenyan said, "Patriarch, please ask away."

"Do you know if there's anyone in the Central Plains who can drive a train? Or someone who can instantly wrap himself in heavy armor? Unlike technology, that train seems to appear out of thin air and feels more closely related to our sorcery." After the Berkeley family's patriarch spoke, he realized Wang Wenyan had stopped in his tracks. Furthermore, his expression was extremely solemn.

## Chapter 1184: You should be glad

This was not Wang Wenyan's first time in the Kingdom of Sorcerers. The last time he was here was when Wang Shengzhi rescued Ren Xiaosu by the river.

At that time, he had been traveling with Wang Shengzhi. When they arrived at the valley, he crossed the Northwest's borders alone and continued advancing towards the Kingdom of Sorcerers.

People like Wang Shengzhi and Qing Zhen had always preferred to take a prospective view of things.

Therefore, before the Central Plains' Wang Consortium established trade relations with the Northwest, Wang Shengzhi had to be prepared and figure out how to keep their northwestern neighbor in check.

Just as P5092 had said, the Northwest's greatest danger right now was facing a pincer attack by the Magi and the Wang Consortium.

Regardless of the Kingdom of Sorcerers' strength, Fortress 178 was not capable of fighting on two fronts. Therefore, this problem had to be resolved.

Of course, Wang Shengzhi would have thought of this as well. Moreover, the Qing Consortium's consolidation of the valley bandits had also given him some inspiration. In the end, the Wang Consortium formulated a new strategy.

If Zhang Jinglin were willing to take over the Central Plains and complete the unification of the entire Alliance of Strongholds, there would be no need for this step.

But if Zhang Jinglin were unwilling, the war between the Wang Consortium and the Northwest would be unavoidable.

Wang Wenyan had come to the Kingdom of Sorcerers again with the mission to form a mutually beneficial relationship with the House of Berkeley. Only by sending weapons here to help with the unification of the Kingdom of Sorcerers could it become a threat to Fortress 178 once more.

Meanwhile, it was obvious the Berkeley family's patriarch was only making use of the Wang Consortium. He might already be harboring murderous intent for the Wang Consortium at this moment.

Wang Wenyan was not bothered by this. With his power to turn into black mist, no one could kill him unless Wang Yun were present. This was the reason Wang Wenyan was still secretly active in diplomacy.

However, when Wang Wenyan heard about the train that appeared out of nowhere and the armor that could be instantly activated, he immediately wanted to turn around and return to the Central Plains.

He was only here to deliver weapons, not to get killed!

“Your Excellency,” Wang Yun said in a low voice, “I have something else I need to attend to. Why don’t we meet again another time?”

The Berkeley family’s patriarch’s face stiffened. He was not dumb, so he immediately asked, “Why does Mr. Wang want to return to the Central Plains the moment I mentioned this person who can control a train? Who is he exactly? I’m sure you know, Mr. Wang, so please enlighten me.”

Wang Wenyan hesitated for a moment before taking a deep breath and said, “Lord Michel, why don’t you tell me what he’s done in the Kingdom of Sorcerers first?”

The Berkeley family’s patriarch related to him the incidents in Winston City, such as the massacre at Winston Manor, the two steam locomotives that brought down the buildings, and how strong the other party was.

Wang Wenyan said with a sigh, “It’s indeed him. Your Kingdom of Sorcerers has been dealing with Fortress 178 for more than a 100 years. The person who conducted a killing spree in Winston City is the next commander of Fortress 178.”

The Berkeley family’s patriarch narrowed his eyes slightly. “Oh, I see. I just didn’t expect the Central Plains to have changed so much. There’s actually powers that transcend the mundane now.”

He looked at Wang Wenyan and said with a smile, “Mr. Wang, why haven’t you mentioned this to me before?”

Wang Wenyan replied with a smile, “Such incidents have only occurred in recent years, so it wasn’t worth mentioning.”

The emergence of superhumans was definitely worth mentioning. After all, the strength of some superhumans these days was extremely terrifying. Take Ren Xiaosu for example. He could even kill the leaders of the consortiums with such ease, so how could that not be worth a mention?

But the Kingdom of Sorcerers was only a tool to the Wang Consortium. No matter how stupid Wang Shengzhi, Wang Wenyan, and the rest of the Wang Consortium were, they

would only provide them with weapons. They would definitely not sell out the Central Plains.

Once Fortress 178 was taken care of, the Wang Consortium would, sooner or later, deploy their troops to the Kingdom of Sorcerers to exterminate this deep-seated problem.

Wang Wenyan and the Berkeley family's patriarch smiled at each other tacitly. The Berkeley family's patriarch suddenly said, "By the way, Mr. Wang, I have another question. Have you ever heard of anyone with the power to slap people's faces through a Shadow Door?"

"Huh?" Wang Wenyan was stunned for a moment before saying, "Lord Michel, based on the description you gave, that's still the future commander of Fortress 178..."

The Wang Consortium had already identified Ren Xiaosu as a key figure to watch. Meanwhile, Ren Xiaosu had been observed in battle in the various strongholds on so many occasions that the Shadow Door was no longer a secret.

The Berkeley family's patriarch was livid. In that case, the farce at Vaduz Cathedral and the incident this morning were all orchestrated by this person. Was he deliberately targeting the House of Berkeley?

The Berkeley family's patriarch frowned and said, "Mr. Wang, do you know why that person is always going against our House of Berkeley?"

Wang Wenyan thought for a moment and said, "Based on my understanding of him, I think he might have nothing better to do."

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The Berkeley family's patriarch was speechless. How could there be someone so bored in this world?!

But what Wang Wenyan could not figure out was why Ren Xiaosu did not directly stab the Berkeley family's patriarch to death. Since he could activate the Shadow Door and slap his face, it shouldn't be difficult for him to stab him in the back, right?

A moment later, Wang Wenyan, who was pondering with his head down, suddenly looked up. He realized Ren Xiaosu intended to sit back and watch the civil war in the Kingdom of Sorcerers take place before coming out to clean up the mess.

If the Berkeley family's patriarch died right at the start, the civil war would not happen.

A person like Wang Wenyan was extremely quick-witted. Otherwise, he would not be able to single-handedly take charge of the Wang Consortium's fieldwork.

“Lord Michel,” Wang Wenyan said in an unusually solemn tone, “I personally think that even though a civil war is imminent, I hope you can understand one thing. Your eventual opponent is definitely not the House of Tudor and the House of Norman. It’s the future commander of Fortress 178.”

The Berkeley family’s patriarch said with a frown, “Is Mr. Wang so afraid of him?”

“I’m not only afraid of him.” Wang Wenyan shook his head and said, “Let me put it this way. The moment I heard he had come to the Kingdom of Sorcerers, my first reaction was to run away! It’s not that I’m a coward, Lord Michel, but if you knew what he did in the Central Plains, you’d be glad that your Vaduz City and Winston City are still standing on these lands.”

“That person actually has such a reputation in the Central Plains?” the Berkeley family’s patriarch asked calmly.

Wang Wenyan sighed, “If you call that a reputation, I guess you’re right.”

“What’s his name? Mr. Wang, can you provide me with a portrait of him so I can issue an arrest warrant?” the Berkeley family’s patriarch asked.

“His name is Ren Xiaosu. I can provide you with a portrait, but I sincerely suggest that the House of Berkeley don’t go after him.” Wang Wenyan said, “What you guys should do now is think of how to make the Houses of Norman and Tudor go after him instead.”

“Wait, Ren Xiaosu?” A paladin next to the Berkeley family’s patriarch wondered, “Isn’t that the name of Melgor’s steward?”

## **Chapter 1185: A parting shot**

“Melgor’s steward?” The Berkeley family’s patriarch frowned.

“Yes, Patriarch.” The paladin answered, “But they departed Winston City after the memorial service this morning. We let them through to head to the House of Norman in the north per your instructions.”

“To think we allowed him to get away.” The Berkeley family’s patriarch’s expression darkened. It was almost dark, so it was probably too late to chase after them.

The Berkeley family’s patriarch knew that Melgor had recently recruited a steward who was a young man around the age of 18 or 19.

However, he had no interest in that steward previously, so he did not pay much attention to him.



When Wang Wenyan heard that Ren Xiaosu had already left Winston City, he heaved a sigh of relief. "It's good that he's gone. Let him go to the House of Norman."

If Ren Xiaosu were still in Winston City, Wang Wenyan would really not dare to step in.

"Earlier, you said it'd be best to have the Houses of Norman and Tudor go after him instead? What did you mean by that?" The Berkeley family's patriarch said, "If our House of Berkeley wants revenge, we don't have to do it under the guise of others. He's only a young man."

"Lord Michel." Wang Wenyan said with a smile, "As long as you can find a way to have the Houses of Norman and Tudor go after him, it could help you solve more than half your problems. A large number of the House of Norman's sorcerers might end up dying before you even clash with their knights."

In Wang Wenyan's opinion, none of the forces that had gone after Ren Xiaosu ended up OK.

Someone had also suggested to Wang Shengzhi to kill Ren Xiaosu because everyone felt that young man would become a potential threat in the future.

But at the time, Wang Shengzhi rejected the suggestion. On one hand, they were still on friendly terms, so there was no need to sour the relationship and become enemies directly. On the other hand, Wang Shengzhi had asked Zero if there was a reliable way to kill Ren Xiaosu. In the end, Zero's answer was no.

Since even Zero, who was unparalleled in computing, answered in such a way, everyone temporarily put this thought aside.

Many people and organizations were interested in studying Ren Xiaosu. As the current field intelligence director of the Wang Consortium, Wang Wenyan was probably the one who understood Ren Xiaosu the best.

The Wang Consortium had been paying close attention to Ren Xiaosu ever since he joined the Northwest's Razor Sharp Company and destroyed the Zong Consortium. To be honest, Wang Shengzhi could not have expected at that time to have saved someone who would turn out to be such a pivotal being to the entire Alliance of Strongholds.

Wang Wenyan was also there at that time. If he knew Ren Xiaosu would be so difficult to deal with in the future, he would definitely have suggested they throw him back into the river.

As it turned out, the plot to seize the satellites in Luoyang City, as well as the one to bring down the superhumans in the Pyro Company's Sacred Mountains, were both

disrupted by Ren Xiaosu. Fortunately, the Luoyang City plan succeeded in the end. Otherwise, things would not have turned out so well for the Wang Consortium.

The Berkeley family's patriarch could not understand why Wang Wenyan was so afraid of Ren Xiaosu. In the Kingdom of Sorcerers, even people like the Tudor and the Norman families' patriarchs might not be feared by everyone.

Therefore, the Berkeley family's patriarch subconsciously thought that Wang Wenyan was making a fuss because he had not seen powers that truly transcended the ordinary.

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After all, in the Kingdom of Sorcerers, there was still no clear understanding of superhumans from the Central Plains.

The Berkeley family's patriarch was a publicly acknowledged genius sorcerer. He started practicing sorcery at the age of three and became a well-known archmage by the age of 17, mastering the exclusively inherited spell Song of Flames.

Even if he had to face the Houses of Tudor and Norman now, he might not be afraid of them.

An egocentric like him would not think that the so-called future commander of Fortress 178 could be stronger than him. The Berkeley family's patriarch felt that while the other party had a superpower that transcended the mundane, he was still young and could not have trained for more than a few years.

What he did not know was that Ren Xiaosu did not need to train at all. The superhumans in the Central Plains were completely different from the Magi.

But even though the Berkeley family's patriarch was an egocentric person, he was not rash. A rash person could not come up with such a meticulous plan for a northern expedition. He thought for a moment and said, "I'll think of a way to create an opportunity for him to feud with the Houses of Norman and Tudor. Since Mr. Wang says he can save me a whole lot of trouble, I'll be looking forward to it."

Wang Wenyan said with a smile, "It's best that you think this way, Patriarch. Now that he's set off for the north, it should be the Houses of Norman and Tudor who are troubled. We should celebrate."

"Haha." The Berkeley family's patriarch tugged Wang Wenyan by his arm and stepped into the city. "Then, my friend from afar, we must drink to our hearts' content tonight!"

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At this moment, Ren Xiaosu was leading the way at the front of the trade caravan. Mel and Little Qian, or the “mulchy duo,” followed close behind him like they were his right- and left-hand men.

Chen Jingshu, An’an, and Chen Cheng had also come along, together with the two sheeple.

After Qian Weining left with Ren Xiaosu, he made it clear to his subordinates that the House of Berkeley had wanted to send them all to their deaths, but that he had proactively joined Ren Xiaosu, a member of the Norman family, for protection. He proposed to his men to follow Ren Xiaosu with him and seek their own survival.

If any of them did not want to join the Norman family, they could leave on their own after a day of travel. Hopefully, no one would go and snitch on him since they used to be comrades.

To Qian Weining’s gratification, all 191 of his comrades were willing to follow him and join the Norman family.

At this moment, Qian Weining was still under the impression that Ren Xiaosu was sent by the Norman family.

However, the two sheeple were a little dumbfounded. Didn’t Lord Melgor abduct Ren Xiaosu from the Central Plains? How did he end up becoming a member of the House of Norman?

Ren Xiaosu asked casually while riding on his horse, “Since you used to be a high-ranking officer in the Knights of the Inferno, you should know about a lot of things, right?”

Qian Weining said respectfully, “Sir, if there’s anything you wish to know, just ask. I’ll tell you everything.”

“I’m really curious why the Berkeley family’s patriarch dares to take on two of the top sorcerer clans. What’s his backing?” Ren Xiaosu said, “Even if he can spark the Norman family into taking revenge, my guess is that they won’t fully go along with his wishes. If I were the Norman family’s patriarch, I would just team up with the Tudors first to destroy the Berkeleys before making my move on the Tudors.”

Qian Weining thought for a moment and said, “Actually, the Berkeley family’s northern expedition still had another ten years of planning to go before it was ready. Because a few clans north of Ghent City still have hesitations about starting a war. The Berkeley family’s patriarch isn’t fully confident he can take on the Tudors and the Normans either. In his own words, if he were to fight either of their patriarchs, he might only stand a 60% chance of winning.”

Ren Xiaosu was a little surprised. A 60% chance of winning? That was already quite high.

Qian Weining continued, "But a year ago, a guest from the Central Plains visited the Berkeley family and promised to bring weapons that Fortress 178 used 17 years ago. As such, the Berkeley family's patriarch made changes to his plans at the last minute."

"A guest from the Central Plains?" Ren Xiaosu was stunned. Why were there more and more people from the Central Plains coming here? He did not have to guess to know the so-called guest had to be from the Wang Consortium. Otherwise, who would have the free time to interfere with the matters of the Kingdom of Sorcerers?

Ren Xiaosu asked, "So did the plan get pushed up to now? Why do I get the feeling that the Berkeley family is in a hurry?"

"It truly is quite rushed." Qian Weining explained, "Actually, the plan was still several months away, but Archmage Kayle of the House of Tudor suddenly planned the attack on Winston City and the conflict between the two sides suddenly erupted. So the plan was pushed forward again...."

Although Qian Weining had defected, there was no need for Ren Xiaosu to tell the guy everything.

Therefore, in Qian Weining's opinion, the only reason he joined Ren Xiaosu was because of his House of Norman background. He did not really think Ren Xiaosu was that powerful.

Currently, only Mel, Chen Jingshu, Chen Cheng, and An'an knew about Ren Xiaosu's strength.

Ren Xiaosu chuckled and said, "It's good that they brought it forward. Everything is just in time."

Qian Weining suddenly asked suspiciously, "Sir, you didn't have anything to do with the attack in Winston City, did you?"

"No," Ren Xiaosu flatly denied it. "How can it have anything to do with me?! Do I look like such a fearsome person to you?"

Qian Weining immediately felt relieved. It was not that he looked down on Ren Xiaosu, but that the incident in Winston City was too terrifying, so no one would really link it to a young man like him.

He only asked because he felt it was a little too much of a coincidence that something like this had happened so soon after Ren Xiaosu arrived in Winston City.

Melgor, who was deeply aware of the truth, looked at Qian Weining with a sympathetic gaze.

Only 20% of the things Ren Xiaosu had said along the way were true. Melgor had to hold back his laughter the entire time as he listened to Ren Xiaosu play Qian Weining for a fool.

However, Mel could not laugh anymore when he realized Ren Xiaosu had done the same to him before.

At some point, Mel even felt a sense of sympathy for Qian Weining when he looked at him. Thinking about it, he realized he was not much better than Qian Weining.

When night fell, Qian Weining called for everyone to set up camp.

Ever since Qian Weining could no longer turn back to his former life, he became really enthusiastic about his work. He was afraid he would lose Ren Xiaosu's backing now that his future with the House of Berkeley was cut off.

While seated at the campfire, Ren Xiaosu felt that something was off the more he thought about it. He asked Qian Weining, "Have you not met that person from the Central Plains before?"

Calculating the time, the period when the Central Plains guest first came to the Kingdom of Sorcerers coincided with Wang Shengzhi's trip to the Northwest. In other words, Wang Shengzhi was already planning how to keep the Northwest in check back then.

This worried Ren Xiaosu a little. Wang Shengzhi and Qing Zhen were the same. If either of them became your opponent, you would have to be on full alert.

Otherwise, you would end up like the Pyro Company, the Kong Consortium, and the Zhou Consortium.

Qian Weining answered, "Sir, that guest from the Central Plains is very mysterious. Very few people have seen his true appearance, but I do know something. He should have just arrived in Winston City in the past two days."

"Why do you know that?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

"Because all the Knights of the Inferno that were transferred away from me were posted to the armory. The higher-ups said they were to tidy up all the warehouses within two days." Qian Weining said, "Earlier, the Berkeley family's patriarch said the Central Plains guest would be bringing gifts with them. I think the warehouses that were tidied up might be used to store those 'gifts.'"

Ren Xiaosu's eyes lit up. "Little Qian, I've always felt that you were too scheming previously, so I didn't want to recruit you. But from the look of things, our cause really does need smart people like you!"

Qian Weining blushed. "Sir, you flatter me."

Mel glanced at Ren Xiaosu. *'You say that he's scheming when he's the enemy. Now that he's become your subordinate, you call him smart. How two-faced! What's with your double standards!'* Of course, he did not dare to say that out loud.

Ren Xiaosu thought for a moment and said, "Y'all can set up camp here first. I'm going to make a trip back to Winston City."

Mel was taken aback. "What are you going back to Winston City for?"

"I want to go back and see who that person from the Central Plains is and what they've brought here." Ren Xiaosu said in seriousness, "This will be very important for our later plans."

Qian Weining asked, "Are you worried the House of Berkeley will try and get the better of the House of Norman with those 'gifts'?"

Ren Xiaosu hesitated for a moment before saying, "Mhm, you've guessed it! Alright, y'all sleep tight tonight. I should be back before dawn." After that, Ren Xiaosu got up and walked off into the darkness.

Meanwhile, Wang Wenyan, who was drinking happily with the Berkeley family's patriarch, suddenly felt a chill run down his back.

Ever cautious, Wang Wenyan instinctively looked around but did not find anything unusual. He spotted an open window in the banquet hall and thought it might have been the wind blowing in, so he did not think further about it.

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The crescent moon in the sky shone brightly. In a place without industrial pollution, the stars above resembled a seascape. The sight of the night sky was wondrous and spectacular.

However, this scenery was nothing shocking to those who lived in the era of the wastelands, because the starry sky above their heads had always looked like this since they were born.

Ren Xiaosu had read something in the library in Stronghold 88. Rumor had it that humans before The Cataclysm could rarely see the sight of a starry sky. Some people

even had to make trips to the highlands or polar regions just so they could catch a glimpse of the starry sky.

The people living in the era of the wastelands were not that obsessed with the starry sky. Perhaps the more common something was, the less it would be cherished.

Under the starry sky, a Knight of the Inferno was riding furiously on his horse. He exited from the north gate of Winston City and rushed north towards Ghent City.

The knight was not wearing any armor. Instead, he was dressed in a cotton-padded civilian outfit that resembled that of a ranger's.

He was carrying a long leather tube on his back, which was commonly used to store documents and letters in the Kingdom of Sorcerers. The leather tube was waterproof, so even if it rained, it could ensure that its contents would not get wet.

Within a week of Archmage Kayle's death, the Houses of Winston and Berkeley had already withdrawn their military forces from the north of their territory down to the south.

The terrain in the north was unfavorable, and many of the cities did not even have walls. Therefore, it seemed that the Berkeley family's patriarch intended to use Winston City as the opening battlefield, with Vaduz City behind it as the defensive line.

In this way, the House of Berkeley's supply line could be shortened greatly, while the Houses of Tudor and Norman would have to travel a long way to get to the battlefield.

The Berkeley family's patriarch was planning to bide his time, which was a wise decision to take.

Under the cover of night, the Knight of the Inferno had a determined look on his face. However, he vaguely saw something approaching in front of him in the moonlight.

A moment later, the knight suddenly halted his horse. Then he turned it straight around and galloped back towards Winston City.

Within five minutes, a steam locomotive gradually caught up and drove alongside him.

Ren Xiaosu was leaning against the window at the front of the train and wondering, "Why did you run away when you saw me?"

The knight was left speechless. He thought to himself, *'I would be a fucking idiot not to run away!'*

He did not say a word as he clamped his legs tightly around his horse's abdomen and whipped the horse's rump ruthlessly.

But no matter how hard the warhorse ran, it could not shake off the steel monster by its side.

Ren Xiaosu asked from the front of the train, "Why do I get the feeling that you know me... What's that on your back?"

The knight still did not say anything.

Ren Xiaosu sighed and said, "Why don't I take it and have a look for myself?"

After that, Ren Xiaosu suddenly dispelled the steam locomotive and lunged at the knight. He landed a knifehand strike on the other party's neck in midair and knocked him unconscious.

He removed the leather tube from the back of the knight and opened it. Ren Xiaosu was surprised to find a portrait of himself rolled up inside!

The portrait did not include Mel, Little Qian, Chen Jingshu, or An'an. It was just him alone.

Ren Xiaosu frowned. "Seems like that guest from the Central Plains is an old acquaintance!"

Before this, even though a lot of things had happened in Winston City, it was at most Mel who came under suspicion for being the person responsible for the chaos. No one had suspected Ren Xiaosu.

And now, although he did not know where the Knight of the Inferno was heading with the wanted portrait on his back, its existence alone was enough to prove that someone was aware he was the instigator.

Who could have deduced that so quickly? It had to be someone who knew about the steam locomotive and the Shadow Door, or in other words, that guest from the Central Plains.

In that case, who could sketch his appearance based on memory? It would have to be someone who had personally seen him before and paid a lot of attention to him.

Although Ren Xiaosu had caused a lot of trouble in the Central Plains, he did not leave behind much pictorial evidence of his operations.

"All the more reason to go back to Winston City now." Ren Xiaosu chuckled. He wanted to see who had the balls to not leave immediately after finding out he was in the Kingdom of Sorcerers.



And that person even fucking sketched a portrait of him for someone from the Kingdom of Sorcerers!

But where was this portrait going to be sent to? Ren Xiaosu looked north. "Is that where the Tudor family is? How horrible. You want the Tudor family to come and find trouble with me so I can help you deal with them?"

Ren Xiaosu did not know much about military strategy, but when it came to figuring out an enemy's conspiracies, his guesses were almost always correct.

He put the portrait away into the palace. "The artist is quite good. Maybe I'll find someone to color it and give it to Xiaojin as a present. I wonder if she'll like it."

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The banquet in Winston City was still going. The Berkeley family's sorcerers were currently toasting each other at another one of the Winston family's manors. To welcome Wang Wenyan, the House of Berkeley even invited many socialites from across the city to liven up the event.

The Berkeley family's patriarch raised his champagne flute and said to Wang Wenyan, "Our scout has already set off with the intel. When it's time, I'll use our double agent who's been lying low for many years to relay the information so the House of Tudor will remember Ren Xiaosu's name and face."

Wang Wenyan replied with a laugh, "Patriarch, the preparatory work for this war has gone much better than expected. I'll be waiting for your good news then. The next batch of weapons will arrive in ten days. Patriarch, as you know, it's very difficult for us to send the weapons over. We still have to carefully avoid Fortress 178's detection."

"To friendship." The Berkeley family's patriarch smiled and took a sip of the golden champagne. It was bubbling in the glass, making it look exceptionally delightful.

Wang Wenyan downed the champagne in one gulp and suddenly asked, "What are our chances of winning against the Houses of Norman and Tudor?"

"We only had a 60% chance of winning previously. With our new friend, we stand an 80% chance of winning." The Berkeley family's patriarch was dressed in a tuxedo. He was already in middle age, so his face was a little wrinkled. However, the lines on his face made him even more charming and mature as a man.

It was even more true when a confident smile appeared on his face.

Wang Wenyan asked, "Your Excellency, the Houses of Norman and Tudor are not easy to deal with. From what I know, those two patriarchs wield the black Eyes of True Sight and also possess the most powerful spells."

The Berkeley family's patriarch did not seem to have any intention of discussing this with Wang Wenyan. It was better to keep some matters that could affect the outcome of the war to himself.

A new song started playing in the banquet hall. The Berkeley family's patriarch smiled and beckoned for a few socialites to come over in a bid to change the topic. "Let me introduce someone to all of you. This young man is our House of Berkeley's new friend. Aren't any of you going to request a dance with him? You mustn't miss out on such a good song like 'One Step Away.'"

After that, the Berkeley family's patriarch turned to Wang Wenyan and said with a smile, "These are all the nicest girls from Winston City. My dear friend from afar, you must cherish these beautiful times."

But just as he finished speaking, the Berkeley family's patriarch saw Wang Wenyan looking behind him with a stiff expression.

In that instant, the Berkeley family's patriarch instinctively knew something was not right. His combat awareness was extremely good, so he dodged to the side almost instantly. At the same time, he reached for his belt to retrieve his Eye of True Sight.

But it was too late to do anything now.

"Fuck!" The Berkeley family's patriarch felt a huge force hitting his waist. Then he got kicked three meters away.

The ballroom was paved with smooth marble tiles. After the Berkeley family's patriarch hit the ground, he couldn't stop himself from sliding across the floor.

The Berkeley family's patriarch did not even have a chance to take out his Eye of True Sight.

No matter how hard he usually trained, he had no resistance against the absolute strength facing him.

This was how pathetic it was if a sorcerer allowed anyone to get close to them. Even a once-in-a-lifetime genius like Russell was not spared, let alone a mere patriarch of the House of Berkeley.

Speaking of strength, the patriarchs of the House of Tudor, the House of Norman, and the House of Berkeley were actually quite lackluster compared to Russell.

While he slid across the floor, the Berkeley family's patriarch suddenly saw a young man in a suit swinging his saber at Wang Wenyan!

The unparalleled aura made it seem like the saber could split the world apart. The Berkeley family's patriarch swore he had never seen such a terrifying saber attack in his life before.

It was not about how fast or powerful the slash was.

It was how Ren Xiaosu, who had sneaked in wearing the suit Yang Xiaojin had tailored for him, had slashed the saber with such a big motion that his suit burst apart.

The motion created such a visually stunning sight!

But unfortunately, Wang Wenyan was much more agile than the Berkeley family's patriarch. Before the blade could reach him, he had already turned into black mist and flown backwards, landing a dozen meters away.

The screams of the socialites erupted in the banquet hall. Some people hurriedly went over to help the Berkeley family's patriarch up while the others immediately took out their Eyes of True Sight from their waist belts and prepared to attack Ren Xiaosu.

Usually, most sorcerers would not even bring their Eyes of True Sight to an event like this. After all, their formal wear was close-fitting, so there was nowhere for them to keep their Eyes of True Sight. As such, they would leave it with their stewards outside the banquet hall for safekeeping. There was no worry their stewards could steal their stones.

However, the House of Berkeley was slightly different. They advocated martial arts and also insisted that all sorcerers must carry their Eyes of True Sight with them like how a knight kept their sword by their side at all times.

But before they could recite their incantations, a figure wearing a white mask jumped down from the chandelier on the ceiling and decisively knocked out all the sorcerers one by one.

This hasty battle flared up in an instant. Old Xu was so fast no one could finish reciting an incantation in the face of its quick attacks!

No one knew when these two people had sneaked in, nor did anyone know what they wanted.

Only Wang Wenyan was extremely shocked. He had drunk about seven or eight glasses of champagne and probably two glasses of wine, so he was a little tipsy.

But when he saw Ren Xiaosu appear, he broke out into a cold sweat and immediately sobered up! This face had the effect of sobering him up!

Didn't they say that Ren Xiaosu had already left Winston City? Why did he suddenly turn back?

"Why have you come back?" Wang Wenyan gulped.

"Are you surprised?" Ren Xiaosu asked with a smile, "I heard that an old friend had come to the Kingdom of Sorcerers, so of course I needed to come and see him. Why are you here alone? Where's Wang Run? Didn't he come?"

Wang Wenyan replied, "It's only me."

"What are you doing here?" Ren Xiaosu asked with a smile, "What new plans does the Wang Consortium have? Why didn't you drop by Fortress 178 when you passed by? Isn't that a little rude?"

Old Xu had already ended its battle on its side. Other than the Berkeley family's patriarch, there were no other sorcerers left standing in the banquet hall. All of them were lying on the ground.

Actually, Ren Xiaosu quite liked the Kingdom of Sorcerers. Ever since he came here, all his opponents needed an extra step of taking out their Eye of True Sight before they could attack. It was just like how the Central Plains soldiers had to draw their pistols, only that it happened at a slower speed here.

Therefore, many of the sorcerers were knocked unconscious by Old Xu before they could even take out their Eyes of True Sight.

In the Central Plains, most of the soldiers were trained to draw their guns quickly. Ren Xiaosu reckoned that after today's commotion, the Kingdom of Sorcerers would have to start making its sorcerers practice arming themselves with the stones quickly after they completed their stress training.

In the ballroom, the socialites were cautiously hiding in a corner. The Berkeley family's patriarch had already taken out his Eye of True Sight and was about to recite an incantation. But midway through it, Old Xu punched him in the chest and interrupted his casting.

The Berkeley family's patriarch gritted his teeth and tried to recite another incantation as he retreated. However, Old Xu caught up and thumped him in the chest again.

The Berkeley family's patriarch was close to vomiting blood. He was both anxious and angry, but no matter how hard he tried, he kept getting interrupted by Old Xu each time he wanted to recite an incantation.

At this moment, a sorcerer lying on the ground slowly opened his eyes and quietly assessed his surroundings.

The sorcerer had been knocked unconscious just now, but it seemed that Old Xu's hit was not precise enough, so he regained consciousness very quickly.

The sorcerer was not in a hurry to get up. Having undergone combat training before, he reached for his waist belt and quietly held his Eye of True Sight in his hand.

He looked in the direction of his patriarch and White Mask. He was waiting for an opportunity when both of them were standing still so he could quickly recite the Earth Bind spell. He wanted to use this opportunity to save his patriarch.

The Berkeley family's patriarch had noticed this from the corner of his eye. He was gratified. The clan members he had nurtured over the years had truly lived up to his expectations. They were truly much better than the members of other sorcerer clans.

If it were the members of other sorcerer clans, they would probably start shouting and running around in a panic the moment they regained consciousness. How could they be as calm as this young man from his own clan?

The Berkeley family's patriarch even thought of promoting the young man in the future. By the way, who was he again?

The Berkeley family's patriarch was a little unsure if this was his son or someone else's son. After all, he had too many children. That young man was also a fringe figure in the family and did not look familiar to him.

He didn't care that much. Once the Earth Bind spell took effect, the Berkeley family's patriarch would launch a counterattack.

As he was thinking about it, the Earth Bind spell was dispelled as soon as it wrapped around Old Xu.

Meanwhile, Ren Xiaosu was stunned. What was that just now? Why did it disappear before he even exerted any strength? Whatever! And he continued beating up the Berkeley family's patriarch.

The Berkeley family's patriarch was really quite dumbfounded. He could not understand what kind of monster was facing him. How could he be so fast?! How could he be so strong?

He finally understood why Wang Wenyan said the future commander of Fortress 178 was going to be his eventual opponent.

He also realized why Wang Wenyan said that as long as the Houses of Norman and Tudor went after this person, they would surely be in deep trouble.

If someone like that were to get in close proximity, it would be a disaster for any sorcerer.

No matter how many times you had practiced your spells or meditated, as long as you could not recite a full incantation, you were no better than the average foot soldier. There was practically no difference at all.

The Berkeley family's patriarch was filled with hatred. Only 10% of their sorcerers attended the banquet tonight. If more of them had come, they would not have been so easily overpowered.

However, since the other party was capable of taking his life easily, he wondered why he didn't just kill him?

Although it was a little humiliating to say that, the Berkeley family's patriarch was very sure the other party was indeed capable of killing him. It was just that he did not want to do so.

The Berkeley family's patriarch was also a brave person. Knowing that reciting a full incantation was no longer possible, he threw his gold Eye of True Sight straight to Ren Xiaosu and roared, "If you want to kill me, do as you please! Why do you have to humiliate me?!"

As expected, only after discarding his Eye of True Sight did Ren Xiaosu give him a chance to finish his sentences.

In the end, the Eye of True Sight he threw to Ren Xiaosu parabolically was thrown back at him by Ren Xiaosu who then said, "Obediently stand aside. You just focus on fighting the war well with the Normans and Tudors!"

The Berkeley family's patriarch was stunned. After being in charge of a top sorcerer clan for many years, this was the first time he was being treated as a tool.

So the enemy did not kill him because he wanted to keep the House of Berkeley alive to deal with the Houses of Norman and Tudor?!

The Berkeley family's patriarch intended to say something, but Ren Xiaosu no longer cared about him and turned his attention to Wang Wenyan instead. He said, "The Wang Consortium is planning to attack the Northwest soon, right? That's why they're so eager to unify the Kingdom of Sorcerers so that they'll have the strength to pin us down."

Wang Wenyan did not say anything. It was as though he did not want to answer this question.

Ren Xiaosu sighed and said, "Why do y'all have to start a war no matter what? Can't we get along peacefully?"

Wang Wenyan said, "I only came to travel and see the world."

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"You're traveling with your Wang Consortium's firearms and explosives in tow? How can there be such logic in the world?" Ren Xiaosu emotionally said, "I know you're a diplomat of the Wang Consortium, so you definitely won't admit to your intentions. But I want to remind you that the fate of tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, or even millions of people depends on the decisions that y'all make now."

Wang Wenyan shook his head. "The people of the Alliance of Strongholds have suffered for too long. Only unification can change that."

"I don't deny your point of view." Ren Xiaosu said, "But what if the Wang Consortium's current approach is way too radical?"

"How can there be no sacrifices and bloodshed for a revolutionary cause?" Wang Wenyan said coldly.

"It's other people's sacrifices and blood you're talking about." Ren Xiaosu's voice also turned cold. "I've always thought that it would be right to unite the Alliance of Strongholds, but you shouldn't have betrayed your compatriots while the expeditionary army was coming south! It's true that the Pyro Company is your enemy, but they've stuck to their cause and bled for the Alliance of Strongholds. They should've died on the battlefield, not in a mire of conspiracy."

"Is there a difference?" Wang Wenyan said, "If the outcome is good, what importance is the process?"

Off to the side, the Berkeley family's patriarch said with a livid expression, "What are you two rambling on about?!"

Ren Xiaosu glanced at him before Old Xu dragged the Berkeley family's patriarch aside.

The Berkeley family's patriarch was speechless.

At first, he thought the other party was here to assassinate him. But later, he realized it was not the case. Then he thought the other party wanted to plunder the Berkeley family's Eyes of True Sight, but that was not the case either.

In the end, he thought he could at least interject a little, but he realized the other party did not even intend to give him a chance to speak.

There was no negotiation, no criticism, nothing at all. By dragging him aside, it was basically telling him to stay quiet and mind his own business.

But his House of Berkeley was supposed to be the protagonist of this city!

Ren Xiaosu smiled at Wang Wenyan and said, "Are you trying to stall for time? The Knights of the Inferno must have already surrounded us with their troops. The other sorcerers of the Berkeley family are also on their way over. But are you confident that you can stop me?"

"You can't make me stay either," Wang Wenyan said coldly.

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Before those words trailed off, Ren Xiaosu launched his feet off the ground. The Winston socialites, who were hiding in the corner, only saw a blur before the young man, who used to be standing in the middle of the ballroom floor, arrived in front of Wang Wenyan.

The faster Ren Xiaosu moved, the slower they felt they were. It was as though they were at the bottom of a pool several meters deep. Everyone's movements were slowed down due to the resistance of the pool water, and only Ren Xiaosu was moving at normal speed.

It was as though they were creatures living in two different dimensions.

The Berkeley family's patriarch did not say anything more. He only had one question on his mind: Were all the people from the Central Plains so powerful, or was it only this young man in front of him?

He looked at Old Xu standing not far away from him and rubbed the ruby ring on his right thumb with his fingers while in deep thought.

But in the end, the Berkeley family's patriarch seemingly gave up on one of his plans. He got some new ideas instead.

Just as Ren Xiaosu was about to reach Wang Wenyan, Wang Wenyan's figure dissipated like smoke.

Ren Xiaosu slashed at him with the black saber. But even though the black saber was the sharpest weapon in the world, it could not cut through anything without form.

"Your power is really great for escaping." Ren Xiaosu sighed. He had to admit he didn't have a good way to deal with Wang Wenyan.

Unless Wang Yun also came to the Kingdom of Sorcerers, Wang Wenyan would not be captured.

Wang Yun, who could control the air, was Wang Wenyan's natural nemesis.



The black mist did not linger in the banquet hall. It flew out through a gap in the windows like a thin veil and blended into the night.

1

Without saying any harsh words, the battle ended just like that.

“How boring.” Ren Xiaosu sighed. He looked at the Berkeley family’s patriarch and reminded him patiently, “Fight well, or I’ll twist your head off.”

The Berkeley family’s patriarch was speechless.

Ren Xiaosu swaggered out of the manor with Old Xu in tow. At first, his pace was calm and composed. But two steps after reaching the outside, he started making a mad dash for fear the people behind would come after him.

Everything happened quite conveniently for Ren Xiaosu tonight. He had taken advantage of the other party’s banquet to launch a surprise attack on them. If they had been prepared, Ren Xiaosu would have been in a very difficult situation if one or two archmages managed to recite a fatal incantation on him.

This was especially true when the Berkeley family’s sorcerers were all gung ho warriors.

On the same night, a grand pursuit began in Winston City. However, the Berkeley family’s patriarch knew full well the Knights of the Inferno could not capture Ren Xiaosu.

After Ren Xiaosu left, the patriarch stood in the banquet hall for a long time before suddenly giving an order. “All sorcerers who were present tonight must keep this matter a secret. While the honor of our clan is secondary, we have to keep things under wraps so the Houses of Norman and Tudor won’t find out about Ren Xiaosu’s strength!”

Wang Wenyan’s whereabouts were no longer known, but the Berkeley family’s patriarch deeply agreed with what he said. They needed the Houses of Norman and Tudor to feud with Ren Xiaosu. Only then would the scales of victory tilt towards the House of Berkeley.

For this reason, he even had the Knights of the Inferno lock down the entire manor. Other than the sorcerers of his own clan, everyone who witnessed the attack tonight would have to be placed under house arrest here until the war was over.

The Berkeley family’s patriarch was a self-proclaimed ambitious man of his generation. If he easily flew into a rage when faced with such a situation, he would not be qualified to start this upcoming civil war.

As the head of a top sorcerer clan, he had long learned to ignore personal success and failures and only think on the side of interests.

In this war, the involvement of the Central Plains forces would undoubtedly increase the variables. But if they could leverage it well, the House of Berkeley would stand to benefit from it.

When the Berkeley family's patriarch thought of this, he made a decision.

But at this moment, a loud rumble came from the distant walls. As the sound of explosions and chaos mixed together, the Knights of the Inferno outside the manor began to stir.

All of this sounded like... the walls of Winston City had collapsed again!

The Berkeley family's patriarch said, "What the fuck..."

After Ren Xiaosu's attack on Winston City, Wang Wenyan disappeared somewhere.

He completely concealed his whereabouts instead of reappearing after Ren Xiaosu left.

Wang Wenyan did not tell Ren Xiaosu the truth. He said he had come alone, but he could not have driven dozens of trucks to the Kingdom of Sorcerers by himself.

Therefore, the Wang Consortium's troops who came to the Kingdom of Sorcerers with him were still around. They would serve as instructors to the House of Berkeley and guide the Knights of the Inferno to complete their military modernization.

Another section of Winston City's walls had collapsed, but the House of Berkeley's reaction this time was very unusual. They did not go after the enemy and instead began a new round of internal reshuffling.

The Berkeley family's patriarch ordered that from today onwards, all sorcerers of the clan must put on their armor at all times and fight alongside the Knights of the Inferno.

Every six sorcerers would form a group and join the Knights of the Inferno.

This arrangement was not to increase the combat strength of the Knights of the Inferno. Its main purpose was to keep the sorcerers hidden among the knights to prevent anyone from carrying out a targeted strike on them.

Ren Xiaosu's appearance had rung alarm bells for the Berkeley family's patriarch and made him understand something. So there was really someone in the world who could take on sorcerers very easily.

The entire combat system of the Magi was simply too vulnerable in the face of the other party.

The Berkeley family's patriarch also understood that the young man named Ren Xiaosu was trying to make use of the civil war in the Kingdom of Sorcerers to weaken the power of the Magi.

This humiliated him a little. It was one thing for him to initiate a war, but it was another thing for him to be forced to start one.

But what made him feel the most helpless was that he really could not stop.

Sure, the Berkeley family's patriarch could send someone to approach the Houses of Norman and Tudor and tell them, "Stop fighting. A really terrifying enemy has arrived in the Kingdom of Sorcerers. If we continue fighting, we'll only benefit outsiders. Look, our House of Berkeley was nearly wiped out overnight."

But would those two clans believe him? Like hell they would!

Just like the Berkeley family's patriarch himself, if he had not seen how ferocious Ren Xiaosu was, he wouldn't have believed Wang Wenyan's words either.

Moreover, the machinery of war had already been set in motion. The Knights of Tudor and Knights of Radiance had already set off for the south. Who knew if what the House of Berkeley claimed was just a conspiracy?

"Your House of Berkeley started the war and even killed Archmage Kayle of the Tudor family. And now, you're saying that you want to stop fighting? Dream on!"

Therefore, all the Berkeley family's patriarch could do now was to hurry up and prepare for battle. Then he prayed that things would really turn out as Wang Wenyan had hoped—that Ren Xiaosu would be the one to deal with the Houses of Tudor and Norman.

At dawn, Ren Xiaosu returned to where Mel and the others had set up camp.

Everyone had woken up early. When they saw Ren Xiaosu, they asked anxiously, "Why did you only just get back? Is everything alright?"

Ren Xiaosu shook his head and said with a smile, "Don't worry, the Berkeley family's fine. I held back."

When Qian Weining and the others heard him say that, they were shocked. What kind of logic was that?

Nearby, Mel rebuked, "I'm asking if you're alright."

"All the more then." Ren Xiaosu turned to look at Qian Weining. "According to the plan, are we going to look for the Norman family?"

“Yes, sir.” Qian Weining said respectfully, “According to intel, the Knights of Radiance and the Knights of Tudor have set off on separate routes. At this moment, the Tudors are heading south via the East Route while the Normans are heading south via the West Route. Should we head towards the House of Norman or take a detour?”

“Eh?” Ren Xiaosu looked at Qian Weining with a faint smile. “It looks like you learned something last night. You’re aware that I’m not from the Norman family?”

Qian Weining hurriedly lowered his head even lower. “Mhm, but I’ve already pledged my loyalty to you. To us knights, as long as you don’t betray us, we’ll serve you loyally for the rest of our lives.”

It was no secret that Ren Xiaosu was from the Central Plains. On top of that, Li Chengguo and Liu Ting, those two big-mouthed sheeple, were also traveling with the group, so Qian Weining did not even need to deliberately pry for more information.

Therefore, since Ren Xiaosu was from the Central Plains, he must have nothing to do with the Norman family.

When Qian Weining first found out about this, he felt that he had been deceived. However, Melgor told him last night, “There’s no need to dwell on it. Perhaps you’ll get a greater surprise following Ren Xiaosu than the House of Norman.”

Mel was already firmly committed to the Prosperous Northwest’s cause. He even helped Ren Xiaosu to assure others.

Ren Xiaosu looked at Qian Weining and said, “Have you already found out what my intentions are?”

“Sir, of course you’re thinking of sitting back and letting the tigers fight among themselves. That’s most in line with your situation.” Qian Weining said respectfully, “After this civil war, the Kingdom of Sorcerers should not be able to invade Fortress 178 for the next 20 years.”

“That’s not enough.” Ren Xiaosu shook his head and said, “20 years does not satisfy my requirement.”

“Then how long do you wish for?” Qian Weining was stunned. He felt it was already a very long-term advantage to gain 20 years on an opponent.

Ren Xiaosu answered, “I’m hoping it’ll be forever.”

This goal might be a little unrealistic, but he had to aim for it to be able to make any progress towards it.

“But I still have something else to do first.” Ren Xiaosu thought for a moment and said, “So I can’t be in a hurry and get involved in this war for the time being.”

“Sir, what are your plans?” Qian Weining asked.

“We’ll avoid the knights of the Norman and the Tudor families that are heading south.” Ren Xiaosu said, “Let them fight on the battlefield in the south for a while first. Meanwhile, we’ll head straight for Ghent City!”

The clue pointing to Russell’s descendants had already appeared. Ren Xiaosu was anxious to find out about his own background. Based on the quest progression given by the palace, he might be able to learn the truth with this quest in Ghent City.

“Is there a way to bypass their main forces and head north?” Ren Xiaosu asked Qian Weining.

“Yes.” Qian Weining thought for a moment and said, “There’s a mountain path the House of Berkeley discovered some years ago. Although it’s a little remote, it’s enough for the horses to pass through.”

“How did you discover that path?” Ren Xiaosu asked curiously.

Qian Weining said, “We caught some smugglers in the past and found out from them that they used that route to transport goods on their mules to avoid taxation. Later, after the House of Berkeley finished rounding up the smugglers, that path was left deserted.”

“Alright, we’ll take that path then.” Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, “Little Qian, I’ll add all of these to your list of contributions later. When the time comes, you’ll be rewarded accordingly.”

Qian Weining hurriedly lowered his head and thanked Ren Xiaosu. However, he was not in the mood to think about being rewarded right now. He only hoped to survive these chaotic times. Therefore, Ren Xiaosu’s claims of rewarding him did not particularly sound appealing.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu took out five Eyes of True Sight from the palace. The Eyes of True Sight lay quietly in Ren Xiaosu’s hand and made Qian Weining stare blankly at them.

2

Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, “This is everyone’s future. Motivated now?”

It felt like the world had suddenly fallen silent.

In the early morning, the campfires that had just been extinguished by Qian Weining and his men were still emitting white smoke. Some of Qian Weining's men gradually stopped chewing on the biscuits they had baked over the fire, falling into a dazed trance.

When Ren Xiaosu held the Eyes of True Sight in his hand, they looked like Ferrero Rochers manufactured by a Central Plains candy company. To be honest, Qian Weining had never seen such a shocking sight before.

What was an Eye of True Sight? It was something Melgor's father had spent all his life pursuing for naught. It was the dream of 90% of the people in the Kingdom of Sorcerers, regardless of gender or age.

An Eye of True Sight represented the mark of a sorcerer, and the Eyes of True Sight in Ren Xiaosu's possession was enough to bribe most people in the Kingdom of Sorcerers, including Qian Weining.

In the entire Kingdom of Sorcerers, not many people could resist the temptation of an Eye of True Sight.

"Sir..." Qian Weining hesitated. He wanted to ask where the Eyes of True Sight came from and whether they were genuine.

But based on everything that had happened in Winston City, he already knew the answer in his mind, so there was no need to ask.

Qian Weining had reason to believe the 61 Eyes of True Sight the Winston family had lost should be in Ren Xiaosu's possession now.

Ruthless! This was a truly ruthless person.

Qian Weining's palms started sweating. He knew what these Eyes of True Sight meant to him and his comrades standing behind him.

However, he also realized how far the Houses of Berkeley and Winston would go to get those Eyes of True Sight back.

But those concerns and worries were no match for the temptation in front of him.

After leaving Winston City, Qian Weining had also changed into civilian wear. Due to the hot weather, he had already unbuttoned several buttons on his shirt. Therefore, everyone could clearly see him swallowing saliva, with his protruding Adam's apple bobbing up and down.

"Sir, do you mean to reward us with them?" Qian Weining said with some difficulty.

“That’s right.” Ren Xiaosu smiled and put the Eyes of True Sight back into the palace. “Starting from today, Lord Melgor will be teaching y’all how to meditate and some simple Magi vocabulary after we set up camp tonight. At that time, you can practice with the Eyes of True Sight. However, before you’re truly capable of casting spells, I’ll keep these Eyes of True Sight on your behalves.”

When Qian Weining heard this, he was stunned for a moment. “As long as we can cast spells, you’ll give us the Eyes of True Sight?”

“Of course.” Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, “There’s no need for me to lie to y’all. Let’s go. Let’s get to Ghent City as quickly as possible. I still have important matters to attend to.”

Qian Weining started getting excited. “Alright, let’s set off immediately!”

It wasn’t until this moment that Qian Weining and his men were truly willing to risk their lives.

Although he had pledged loyalty, it was mainly for self-protection. But it was different now. They had a new goal, and that was to become sorcerers!

Along the way, Chen Jingshu trotted her horse over to Ren Xiaosu and whispered, “Do you really plan to share those Eyes of True Sight with them?”

“Of course.” Ren Xiaosu answered calmly, “I can still get my hands on a lot more in the future anyways.”

Chen Jingshu’s breathing stopped for a moment. She roughly understood what Ren Xiaosu meant when he said he could still get a lot more in the future.

One Eye of True Sight meant the birth of one sorcerer. In that case, every time Ren Xiaosu obtained an Eye of True Sight, it meant the magus order would lose a sorcerer.

If it were in the past, Chen Jingshu would think that Ren Xiaosu was crazy. But now she could only remain silent because Ren Xiaosu had proven all his claims.

Ren Xiaosu looked at Chen Jingshu and said, “If we want to build up our supporter base, we’ll have to treat them with both kindness and respect. Besides, if they learn the language of the Magi along the way, they won’t have the energy to think too much.”

“But you don’t have any meditative visualization diagrams.” Chen Jingshu said, “That means they can’t master high-level spells.”

“It’s fine as long as the Norman and the Tudor families have them,” Ren Xiaosu replied with a smile.

When they set up camp again that night, the food was quite sumptuous.

Ren Xiaosu directly had Melgor summon four sheep, each larger than the previous one.

Mel thought to himself that Ren Xiaosu was really treating his summoning spell as a life hack.

Chen Jingshu, An'an, and the others were quite surprised to see this. "Is that the long-lost summoning spell?"

"Yes," Mel admitted reluctantly.

Chen Jingshu and the others hesitated for a while before saying, "That's pretty practical..."

Mel was speechless.

Ren Xiaosu suddenly realized Li Chengguo and Liu Ting were circling around the fourth sheep that had been summoned. He was a little puzzled. "What's up? Do y'all know each other?"

Li Chengguo and Liu Ting's expressions immediately changed. "What do you mean by that? It sounds like you're insulting us!"

They were afraid Ren Xiaosu would bring up their unbearable past again, so they quickly hid away and whispered among themselves.

When Ren Xiaosu saw the two sheeple's reaction, he wondered if he had guessed correctly!

He sized up the fourth sheep and was surprised to see the number "178" branded on its rump by someone using a soldering iron.

Ren Xiaosu was shocked on the spot. Mel had actually summoned a sheep from Fortress 178?!

This was a fucking loss of collective assets!

However, this event proved something else to Ren Xiaosu. Whatever that was summoned by the summoning spell was indeed a creature from this world. There were no other realms around.

In any case, Ren Xiaosu did not believe there were also sheep with the number "178" branded on their rumps in other universes!



Then what did he encounter when he activated the stellar gate previously? That creature must also exist somewhere in this world.

Was it a mutated life form? Ren Xiaosu couldn't be too sure.

Before it turned dark, Qian Weining and the others quickly started a cooking fire and set up their tents. Then they sat neatly in a block formation in front of Melgor.

Mel looked at the hundred-odd men in front of him and felt his scalp go numb as they stared at him with piercing gazes.

He looked at Ren Xiaosu pleadingly. "I've never taught so many people before..."

"What's there to be afraid of?" Ren Xiaosu urged, "You're going to be a big shot in the future, so how can you not cope with a small situation like this?"

Off to the side, Chen Jingshu said, "Why don't I teach them instead?"

"No." Ren Xiaosu turned her down and said, "It has to be Mel who teaches them."

Ren Xiaosu also had his own ideas. In the future, he was going to promote Mel to become the head of the Prosperous Northwest's branch office. How could he leave it to others since he was trying to nurture his own supporters?

After he was done with the Kingdom of Sorcerers, Qian Weining and the others would become Mel's students. With this relationship, they would definitely be of some use.

If Chen Jingshu deliberately recruited Qian Weining and his men during the teaching process and caused them to defect to the Assassin Sanctuary, Mel would become a mere figurehead.

Who knew what the inner workings of the Sanctuary had become after 200 years? What if they had gained a great desire for power?

Qian Weining had had his men sit cross-legged on the ground, not minding that it was dirty.

This group of soldiers from the Knights of the Inferno were all sitting straight. Ren Xiaosu simply distributed the 60 Eyes of True Sight to them, as well as a notebook and pen for everyone.

Ren Xiaosu reminded them, "Make sure to take notes during the lessons. You can review during the day while you're riding on your horses! Li Chengguo, Liu Ting, from today onwards, you two will act as the class representatives. Remember to check everyone's lesson notes!"

Li Chengguo, Liu Ting, and Mel were all dumbfounded. They felt as though they were being put up to something they couldn't handle.

However, Ren Xiaosu did not care what they thought. After delegating their tasks, he went off to a secluded spot to study his own spells.

After confirming that no one was around, Ren Xiaosu took out his black Eye of True Sight and recited softly, "Prosperous Northwest!"

That dazzling stellar gate gradually appeared. The astral particles were spinning, and the spell once again opened a doorway for Ren Xiaosu to some other place in this world!

Initially, Ren Xiaosu was worried the roars of the ferocious monster would come from behind the stellar gate again. But this time, it was totally quiet on the other side.

Ren Xiaosu peered through the stellar gate that was half a meter wide to the other side. But perhaps due to the angle, he was unable to see anything.

At this moment, Ren Xiaosu didn't even dare to breathe too loudly. After all, there was no spiritual contract with the summoned creature. If it were to suddenly attack him, he might not be able to withstand it.

"Hello, anyone there?" Ren Xiaosu asked in a whisper.

He didn't know whether the other party did not hear it or if it could not understand. In any case, there was no movement on the other side of the stellar gate.

The stellar gate with a diameter of only half a meter was still too small for Ren Xiaosu to clearly see what was on the other side.

Moreover, the ground behind the door appeared to be charred and covered in dark red jagged rocks.

He could not even spot any proper vegetation within his field of vision.

If he could get a glimpse of any plants, Ren Xiaosu's master-level wilderness survival skill would allow him to roughly determine the location of the other party.

In fact, nature was capable of talking. There were tropical plants in the tropics and temperate plants in the temperate zones. Even the altitude of mountain ranges and the abundance of water were factors that determined the distribution of plants.

But right now, Ren Xiaosu could not see anything at all, so he was unable to determine any useful information.

“Should I expand the stellar gate?” Ren Xiaosu muttered to himself hesitantly.

If he wanted to expand it, he would have to use the Proficiency Stones.

One Proficiency Stone cost one gratitude token. Way back when, it wasn't easy to earn gratitude tokens, so Ren Xiaosu felt a pinch whenever he used them.

Therefore, he hoped to properly choose a powerful spell to use it on and not waste his resources on weird spells.

Ren Xiaosu had seriously thought about it before. The most powerful land beasts he had come across so far were probably the six-meter-long brown bears that the expeditionary army had brought with them and the Wolf King that followed Yan Liuyuan.

But even if he could tame these two types of ferocious beasts, it would not raise Ren Xiaosu's strength by much.

The Wolf King was really quite powerful, but the reason was that it had a large pack backing it. Therefore, it would be meaningless for Ren Xiaosu to summon a lone beast like the Wolf King.

Rather than spending the Proficiency Stones on such a summoning spell, it would be better to directly use it on Meteor Shower.

But every time Ren Xiaosu thought of that enthusiastic but ferocious roar he heard when he activated the stellar gate, he could not help but want to take a gamble on the spell.

“I'll use 10,000 Proficiency Stones first!” Ren Xiaosu said decisively. He now had 92,000 gratitude tokens, and only 90,000 of them could be used. He wanted to save the remaining 2,000 for Yang Xiaojin's usage of the black bullet.

He carefully traded for the Proficiency Stones and said to the palace, “Use them all on the Prosperous Northwest spell!”

The voice from the palace in his mind, “Confirm usage of 10,000 Proficiency Stones on the Prosperous Northwest spell?”

“Yes!” Ren Xiaosu answered.

A moment later, the Proficiency Stones piled up like a small mountain in front of the palace's vending machine dissipated one by one. It was as though the white limestone balls had been crushed before disappearing into thin air.

Ren Xiaosu could feel the changes within his body, and it was as though there was suddenly an added sense of wonder in his mind. The summoning spell he was initially not that proficient in seemed to have become engraved in his bones.

The brass typewriter in the palace suddenly started typing. With every tap of the brass keys, words appeared on the pale yellow leather parchment: Prosperous Northwest (Proficiency: 10,119)

Ren Xiaosu was clearly taken aback. He had only used the summoning spell twice throughout, so why wasn't his proficiency at 10,002 instead?

Wait a minute, could this also include the number of times he had uttered "Prosperous Northwest" before?

It seemed that other than this speculation, there was no other explanation for it.

Ren Xiaosu did not know whether to laugh or cry. If he had known this earlier, he would have said the words "Prosperous Northwest" every day. He might've saved even more gratitude tokens then.

But according to Mel, there was actually no qualitative change in practicing a spell several hundred times. If those few hundred practices were reflected in the stellar gate, it would probably only increase in size by a few centimeters? That was why there was no obvious difference in the size of Ren Xiaosu's and Melgor's stellar gates.

Ren Xiaosu was very curious about something. If the Great Hoodwinker could master the "Prosperous Northwest" spell, how many stellar gates could he open? After all, the Great Hoodwinker had been going on about the Prosperous Northwest for most of his life. Thinking of this, Ren Xiaosu decided to set aside a better Eye of True Sight for the Great Hoodwinker.

However, he was unsure now if he were the only one affected, or if everyone else were also like this. Ren Xiaosu felt that everything related to superpowers always seemed a little special when it came to him.

The stellar gate suddenly expanded from half a meter wide to three meters.

Ren Xiaosu stared blankly at the brilliant stellar gate and was surprised to see a huge creature lying on the charred ground and resting.

But even though the stellar gate had expanded to three meters wide, Ren Xiaosu was still unable to get a clear view of the creature's head. Even at three meters, he could only see half of it!

The creature that looked like a lizard had dark red scaly skin. As it breathed in and out, a fiery glow could even be seen.

So it turned out the dark red color he had seen just now was not jagged rocks at all but the skin of this shocking creature!

Ren Xiaosu swore he had never seen anything so terrifying before in his life. If this thing's head was about six meters long, how fucking big would its body be?

He gently touched the stellar gate but realized his hand could not pass through it. Instead, it was blocked by an invisible force.

From the look of things, the stellar gate was a one-way portal. Only the summoned creature could pass through it from the other side; he could not pass through it himself.

While Ren Xiaosu was thinking about it, that terrifying creature's eye suddenly opened. Within that amber eye, a vertical pupil that resembled an abyss was visible.

The eye stared intently at Ren Xiaosu, but there was no roar, nor did it make any further moves.

Ren Xiaosu was so shocked he immediately took four to five steps back and closed the stellar gate at the same time.

"Is that really not a fucking creature from another realm?" Ren Xiaosu muttered to himself with lingering fear. He thought that even after The Cataclysm, the radiation should not have produced something that terrifying, right?

Besides, wasn't there a big issue with his summoning spell? Mel had summoned a creature of the same size as the stellar gate, so why did something several times larger than Ren Xiaosu's stellar gate appear behind the portal?

As he thought about it, he suddenly felt that the creature looked a little familiar. However, he could not remember where he had seen it before.

3

This feeling was really too strange.

...

In the night sky, a huge falcon was quickly approaching the campsite where Qian Weining and the others were. Its sharp gaze was fixed on the humans around the campfire below.

A 100 kilometers away, tens of thousands of the Knights of Tudor had set up camp. There was a brazier placed every ten steps or so in the vast camp. The warm orange light flickered in the darkness, and from time to time, armored patrolling soldiers would shuffle back and forth.

In the camp, the canvas-sewn tents served as temporary barracks for the soldiers. There was even a strange fishy smell inside because many areas of the tents had goat oil applied to them.

In the center of the camp, five or six large tents stood out from the rest. Every time the patrols passed by, they would look over in awe.

That was because each of those tents housed a true archmage in them.

At this moment, several sorcerers were standing solemnly in the main tent of the Knights of Tudor's camp. More than a dozen tallow candles in the tent were burning and emitting a strange fragrance. It smelled like an expensive spice was mixed in with the candles.

The sorcerers were dressed in exquisite black sorcerer robes with a white falcon's head embroidered on their sleeves. The embroidery was extremely lifelike.

There was a transparent ice mirror in front of them that was as tall as a person, and the image on it was of Ren Xiaosu's camp. The mirror was formed from ice and was still giving off cold air, making it look exceptionally mysterious and eerie. The image on the mirror's surface was a bird's-eye view, quietly overlooking everything on the ground.

A middle-aged sorcerer looked at Qian Weining and the others in the mirror and suddenly wondered, "What are they doing?"

All of the sorcerers were staring intently at the mirror. They saw Qian Weining and his men sitting upright on the ground and hands scribbling something.

"Notebooks, pens, and that young sorcerer is talking nonstop about something." One of the sorcerers said curiously, "It's like they're researching some kind of secret."

"It feels to me like they're listening in class." A sorcerer frowned.

"Haha, attending classes on a battlefield in the wilderness?" Another sorcerer laughed and said, "Who would have the free time to give classes in a place like that?"

"Then what are they doing..."

The sight transmitted back by the falcon stunned the sorcerers. No one knew what Qian Weining and the group were doing.

The archmage, who was the leader of the group, said coldly, "Don't worry about what they're doing for now. Based on our previous intel, they should be the group that just departed Winston City. The person who relayed the intel said they're heading to the House of Norman, but I don't think they're going the right way. They're about to encounter our knight regiment's vanguards."

“Yeah, what are they doing there?” the others wondered.

Initially, the falcon was soaring in the sky as a scout for the advance guard. But in the end, it discovered this small group of troublemakers blocking the advance guard’s path.

“Fly a little lower.” The archmage ordered, “Let’s see what they’re doing. Also, confirm if Melgor is in the group. Melgor is someone the patriarch has ordered to be killed. We thought we wouldn’t encounter him if they went to the Normans’ side, but we didn’t expect them to send themselves to their death.”

“Yes, my lord. I’ll make the falcon fly a little lower,” a sorcerer next to him said respectfully.

But a sudden turn of events occurred. A loud explosion boomed like a sudden clap of thunder in the darkness. The long and narrow sniper bullet arrived in the blink of an eye and forcefully shattered the falcon in the sky into pieces of ice.

Ren Xiaosu sneered as he looked at the falling ice pieces. This was probably the House of Tudor’s doing again. In his opinion, the House of Tudor liked the falcon too much. If it were any other bird that flew past in the sky, he wouldn’t have opened fire on them.

However, based on the other party’s speed of flight and his current marksmanship, his shots were simply too accurate.

Over at the Tudor camp, the falcon constructed from sorcery shattered along with the mirror in the main tent.

All of a sudden, the sorcerer who cast the spell felt a splitting headache as though something was violently rolling around in his mind.

“What happened?” The chief sorcerer said with a solemn expression, “What broke your spell?”

“I don’t know. There were no signs at all, nor did I see who did it. No one at the camp even looked at me.” The sorcerer covered his head and panted.

“Just as the patriarch said, there’s something fishy about this Melgor.” The archmage waved his hand. “Help him down to get some rest. Also, Hall, lead a team and join up with the advance guard in case the opponent has any alternate plans.”

“Yes, sir.” After a middle-aged sorcerer answered respectfully, he turned around and gestured for a few people to walk out of the main tent together. There were stewards and servants outside who had already prepared their warhorses for them. Hall even brought along two particular sorcerers who specialized in the Wind Bind spell to speed up the assembly.

Ren Xiaosu had just returned to the camp at this moment. The gunshots from earlier had alarmed Mel and Little Qian. Everyone looked at Ren Xiaosu and asked, "What happened?"

"I think we're right in the path of the Knights of Tudor's marching route," Ren Xiaosu said nonchalantly.

When Mel and Little Qian heard this, they immediately panicked. "What? The Knights of Tudor? Then we had better quickly escape."

"Escape? What for?" Ren Xiaosu raised an eyebrow. "This is as good as having Eyes of True Sight come knocking on our door, isn't it?"

Mel retorted, "Have you subconsciously replaced sorcerers with Eyes of True Sight whenever you encounter them?"

"What else?" Ren Xiaosu chuckled. "Qian Weining has 192 men on his side, while we only have 64 Eyes of True Sight to go around. We're still a long way off from equipping everyone."

Qian Weining was stunned for a long time. He suddenly felt that the first group of sorcerer knights in the Kingdom of Sorcerers could be appearing soon.

## **Chapter 1188: Massacre**

The reason Ren Xiaosu's group chose this mountain path was because it had been gradually forgotten after the smugglers were rounded up.

However, this matter should be considered the other way around. You might want to take the most secretive path on the battlefield, but the enemy's infiltrating troops would also have the same thoughts.

Under normal circumstances, if an experienced military commander was present, they would tell Ren Xiaosu, "Don't be arrogant and try to take any secret paths."

That was because military troops would definitely be more precise than smugglers when it came to mapping out an area. If it were a path that was even known to smugglers, the enemy's troops would definitely know it as well.

No matter how decadent an army or dynasty was, one should not automatically assume them to be fools.



Of course, if P5092 were here, he would give Ren Xiaosu a completely different answer. “Just take whatever path you want. No one can stop you anyway, so you can do as you like. Who knows, you might even find an unexpected gain....”

This was probably the difference between understanding and not understanding Ren Xiaosu.

Qian Weining looked at Ren Xiaosu. “Sir, do you think the enemy will approach via the mountain path as well?”

“I think so.” Ren Xiaosu nodded. “Otherwise, the falcon wouldn’t have flown over here. Before The Cataclysm, some hunters trained their falcons and sent them out to scout the way ahead before a hunt, in case they encountered ferocious beasts like brown bears. I think the Tudor family’s falcon should also have been used as such.”

1

“If they’re the advance guard of the House of Tudor, there should be at least 600 knights coming this time. At least half of them should be light cavalry armed with crossbows as their main weapons. The rest are lancers who are used for charging into enemy lines.” Qian Weining forced himself to calm down and said, “More importantly, such infiltrating troops will be paired with five sorcerers.”

He was a knight of the Berkeley family, and the Berkeley family had been the imaginary foes of the Houses of Tudor and Norman for 60 years. Therefore, as a qualified knight of the House of Berkeley, he would have to know how his enemies operated in war.

But now, there were only 191 knights led by Qian Weining. Including himself, the total strength was just 192.

And they may have been armed, but they did not have any armor.

If they encountered the enemy under such circumstances, Qian Weining felt that their group would stand no chance.

Therefore, Qian Weining was actually still feeling a little flustered on the inside. He looked at Ren Xiaosu, hoping to get some direction from the new master he had pledged his loyalty to.

Ren Xiaosu glanced at Qian Weining. “Continue with your study session. Stay focused.”

Qian Weining replied, “Huh?”

“Don’t worry, they won’t be able to get here.” Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, “Y’all might have some idea about my strength now, but I still have to leave a deeper impression on y’all. This is the foundation of our trust.”

Qian Weining and his men looked at each other. Considering that the enemy's cavalry was about to arrive, Ren Xiaosu actually told them to focus on studying instead.

Qian Weining felt really weird, like he had suddenly become detached from the real world.

At this moment, it was Melgor who sighed and said, "Come on, everyone, continue learning the language of the Magi from me. I was just as terrified as you guys initially. But look, I'm used to it now."

Ren Xiaosu cast Mel a lauding look. Meanwhile, Li Chengguo and Liu Ting lowered their heads and looked like they had accepted their fate.

"Sir, are you going to deal with that cavalry now?" Qian Weining asked curiously.

"Me?" Ren Xiaosu shook his head. "There's no need for me to do anything."

All of a sudden, Ren Xiaosu became even more mysterious in everyone's eyes. Everyone suddenly remembered the rumors in Winston City that there were a total of three people who attacked the Winston Manor. One of them wore a white mask and was not afraid of sorcery.

But up til now, White Mask never once appeared before them.

When it was time for Qian Weining and his men to begin their lesson, Ren Xiaosu went off to the side to roast some mutton and ate it leisurely as though nothing were happening.

Suddenly, Ren Xiaosu sat up straight. This action startled Qian Weining and his men who were already worried about the situation. "Sir, what's the matter?"

"Oh, it's nothing." Ren Xiaosu dismissed Qian Weining's concerns. Then he looked at Li Chengguo and Liu Ting and probed, "Did you two see the number '178' on that sheep's butt? From what I know, all the sheep that belong to Fortress 178 are branded on their rumps with this symbol. It's so they can be differentiated from other herdsmen's livestock. In the early years, there were always cases of shepherds stealing sheep."

Li Chengguo and Liu Ting's expressions changed greatly, but neither said anything.

Ren Xiaosu held back his laughter and asked, "Do you two... know about this?"

"No!" Li Chengguo stood up in panic. "How could we possibly know that?!"

Nearby, Liu Ting nearly cried tears of humiliation.

Qian Weining, Chen Jingshu, and the others were a little confused. However, Melgor immediately understood what Ren Xiaosu was suggesting. He hesitated for a long while before saying to Li Chengguo and Liu Ting, "I'm sorry, I didn't know about this before. It's been hard on you two...."

Qian Weining and his men were dumbfounded. Why were they suddenly talking about something like that instead of discussing how to deal with the enemy cavalry?

They were completely unaware that Li Chengguo and Liu Ting had spent some time being sheep, and that they had been part of the flock owned by Fortress 178.

...

On the northern mountain path, an 800-strong advance guard was quickly infiltrating their way over to Ren Xiaosu's camp.

Dull clops came from the horses traveling on the mountain path. Their hooves were all covered with a thick layer of cowhide, and each horse had a wooden stick placed in its mouth to prevent them from suddenly neighing as they advanced.

This cataphract unit was the elite of the House of Tudor. Even though they were marching at night, their formation remained very orderly throughout.

Every once in a while, the soldiers riding at the front would slow down a little and have their other comrades take their place to lead the slipstreaming efforts.

The idea of slipstreaming was to reduce the wind resistance for the warhorses at the back of the group. By taking turns, the leading horses would not end up dying of exhaustion.

As the crossbowmen rode on, they kept their right hands on the handles of their crossbows at their waists in case anyone suddenly ambushed them.

Among them, six sorcerers were being protected by the knights. Meanwhile, there was also a group of sorcerers riding dozens of kilometers behind them who were sent by the main camp to provide support.

With such combat strength, there was no need to take Qian Weining's group of 200 or so people seriously. Even with a sorcerer like Melgor in the group, it would still not be enough.

During the march, over a dozen soldiers in the cavalry formation kept short copper whistles in their mouths. When the whistles went off, it sounded like larks were chirping in the group. Only the members of the Knights of Tudor could understand the meanings of the signals.

The whistling was so sharp it could not be concealed by other sounds even in battle, so the Knights of Tudor used this method to relay their orders.

Especially in a chaotic, large battle, the whistles the officers used to relay their orders to each other would no longer sound like the gentle chirps of a lark but the shrill calls of a falcon.

A bird cry suddenly sounded from a copper whistle at the front of the quiet advance guard. As the whistles were relayed towards the back, the entire advance guard on horseback came to a stop in their tracks.

Everyone looked quietly and solemnly at the road in front of them. The several hundred of them went from extreme motion to extreme silence, making it an incredibly spectacular sight to behold.

Everyone looked ahead and saw a figure wearing a white mask standing in their path and slowly drawing a black saber out of thin air.

The commander of the Knights of Tudor blew the copper whistle in his mouth. They did not directly charge at Old Xu but gradually closed in instead.

The cavalry resembled a long dragon during their quick advance earlier. With fewer people traveling side by side, they were able to pass through the mountain paths faster.

Now, they had compacted their formation for a better defense.

There was only one enemy, but the St. Tudor Knight in the advance guard felt the other party wouldn't have blocked their path by himself if he wasn't confident.

The other party clearly knew how many people they had and their combat strength, yet he still stopped them here.

There was a sense of danger. The St. Tudor Knight could feel a strong sense of danger.

At this moment, the stars were shining brightly above their heads as the crescent moon hung in the sky like a silvery saber.

As they changed their formation, the St. Tudor Knight hurriedly blew his copper whistle. In an instant, a group of crossbowmen who were retreating pulled their triggers while on horseback and fired forearm-length bolts at Old Xu.

But for some reason, everyone's vision blurred. By the time they could react again, they had lost sight of Old Xu!

The St. Tudor Knight was shocked. That was too fast!

A second later, a black saber seemingly burst out of the darkness and slashed diagonally upwards across the St. Tudor Knight's warhorse and his body.

The warhorse was beheaded, while the knight was cut in half at his waist. Blood splattered out into the night sky, but no one could tell if it was horse or human blood.

...

Qian Weining and the others recited after Mel, "A, B, C, D, E, F, G..."

But before they could finish reciting the alphabet in the language of the Magi, they suddenly saw the sky in the distance get illuminated.

"Was that sorcery?" Qian Weining jumped up in shock.

Following, it continued flaring over there like someone had set off fireworks in the sky.

However, Qian Weining and his men's line of sight was blocked by the hills, so they could not see what was going on at all.

"Those spells should be cast quite far away from us, so we can't hear any shouting," Qian Weining judged based on his experience. He raised his index finger and narrowed his eyes, matching the ratio of the mountain's height to his index finger. He continued, "I can confirm they should be about three kilometers away from us."

After that, Qian Weining looked to Ren Xiaosu. He wanted to ask him what they should do.

However, he saw Ren Xiaosu with his eyes closed like he was already asleep.

"Should we wake him up?" Qian Weining asked Melgor.

Before Melgor could answer, Ren Xiaosu said, "Carry on studying. Y'all can take a break in another half an hour. We'll continue on our way tomorrow morning."

After that, Ren Xiaosu ignored the group.

Qian Weining sighed in his head. Perhaps, this was what a real big shot was like. He could remain this calm even in the face of any danger.

However, he was also sure of one thing. Their group was indeed being secretly guarded by someone, but he could not be sure how many people it was.

On that very night, not a single knight came charging into their camp. The hill two kilometers away acted like a barrier that shielded the massacre going on behind it.

Qian Weining did not sleep well the entire night. The first battle last night had ended very quickly, but a second battle broke out not long after.

Honestly, no normal person could sleep well in such an environment. Ren Xiaosu could only fall asleep because he was abnormal!

In the morning, Qian Weining, Melgor, and the others walked out of their tents with dark circles under their eyes. They rolled up the tents made from waterproof canvas and bundled them on the backs of their horses.

Ren Xiaosu greeted them in high spirits, "Morning! Why do all y'all look so listless?"

Qian Weining hesitated for a long time before suddenly asking, "Sir, what happened last night? Are we safe?"

"Yes, of course we're safe." Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, "As for what happened, y'all can see for yourselves later."

Mel, Little Qian, Jingshu, An'an, and Chen Cheng became curious.

What happened last night had left everyone speculating. If they did not find out the truth, they would probably die of suspense.

After a quick breakfast in the morning, everyone set off immediately. After they navigated through a winding mountain path, the scent of the blood-filled ground in front of them stunned everyone.

Even the warhorses were unwilling to proceed any further.

Broken crossbows were scattered all over the ground, and blood was splattered across the mountain rocks like someone had drawn a grand landscape painting on them.

Qian Weining was very experienced in combat, so he only had a brief look at the battlefield and concluded, "There's at least 800 dead here!"

Upon closer look, he also saw more than a dozen bodies dressed in sorcerer's robes. The sleeves of the black sorcerer robes were even embroidered with the logo of a falcon.

The only difference was that the originally clean falcon was stained dark red with blood.

Overnight, the advance guard the House of Tudor had sent south were all dead, as were the two groups of sorcerers.

Even as experienced soldiers of the Knights of the Inferno, they still felt a little uneasy when they saw this scene. More importantly, they did not even know who did it.

“Sir.” Qian Weining’s trusted aide, Yao Bo, went up to him and whispered, “I’ve had a look. Other than the hoofprints and the Knights of Tudor’s footprints, I only found one other person’s footprints...”

Yao Bo was well-known in the team for his investigative and ambush skills. He was very observant and good at analysis.

The Knights of Tudor were all wearing standard-issue boots that were very easy to identify. So it was not difficult to distinguish the shoeprints on the battlefield.

“You mean to say that the deaths of these 800-odd people were all caused by one person?” Qian Weining asked.

“That’s right.” Yao Bo said in a low voice, “Moreover, I went around to check out the surroundings just now. After the Knights of Tudor were defeated, there should have been several dozen people who tried to escape. But after they split up and fled for a few hundred meters, they were caught and killed one by one from behind.”

If dozens of people who had escaped separately could get caught and killed one by one, how fast would the pursuer have to be?

There was no way of dissecting this detail any further!

Moreover, what was most unbelievable to Qian Weining was that at the moment of the massacre, he was still learning the language of the Magi a few kilometers away. He even had his lesson notes checked by Li Chengguo, the class representative.

A scene of violence and a scene of peacefulness were only separated by a hill. It was as though they had taken place in two different worlds.

As for Ren Xiaosu, when Qian Weining looked to his new master for instructions last night, his master simply said it was fine, and it really did turn out fine. He had wiped out the Knights of Tudor’s infiltrating troops in the blink of an eye.

For a moment, Qian Weining felt both respectful and afraid of Ren Xiaosu.

Ren Xiaosu urged his horse forward. “Come on, Little Qian, lead the way.”

Qian Weining went up to Ren Xiaosu and asked in a low voice, “Master, should we completely avoid the House of Tudor?”

Qian Weining had been addressing him as “sir.” But he suddenly changed the way he addressed him. As a matter of fact, this massacre had left an extremely deep impression on him.

“There’s no need to completely avoid them.” Ren Xiaosu said, “It’s best if we can get the Tudor family to send some people after us. That way, we’ll be able to collect more Eyes of True Sight for y’all.”

Qian Weining sighed. This was a truly ruthless person.

Mel walked his horse alongside Ren Xiaosu. “Why are you in such a hurry to get to Ghent City? And why did those bounty hunters suddenly listen to your orders? You’re from the Central Plains, so you shouldn’t have known each other before this.”

“It’s probably because I have some ties with the organization that the bounty hunters belong to,” Ren Xiaosu simply explained. “And the reason why I want to go to Ghent City is to find out the truth of my origins.”

In addition, he wanted to see what the reward for this mission was.

He had already found three out of four clues required for the quest, so he was looking forward to the day it would be completed.

“Origins?” Melgor asked curiously, “Don’t you know where you came from?”

“I don’t.” Ren Xiaosu smiled. “I woke up from a dark dream and forgot all about my past. Alright, there’s no point in talking about this now. What I’m curious about is what your childhood sweetheart looks like.”

Melgor thought for a moment and answered, “She’s... very dazzling.”

“You’ve told me before that the Tudor family thinks that she’s a rare genius in sorcery, so they arranged for her to get married to one of their family members.” Ren Xiaosu said, “Just how talented is she?”

“When she went to buy an Eye of True Sight with her money at 17, she got an Eye of True Sight in the first stone she opened. Speaking of luck, she’s truly someone blessed by the gods.” Mel sighed and said, “When she tried learning sorcery, the person responsible for teaching her realized she could already cast spells in the real world after only practicing it a 100 times in her inner world of meditation.”

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. “Is that what they call ‘gifted’?”

“Yes.” Mel nodded. “Moreover, this talent is reflected in various aspects. For example, her inner world of meditation is extremely large. Apparently, there’s a sword in the shape of a cross as majestic as a mountain in it. This means she has stronger willpower. If others can practice their spells five or six times a day, she can practice 30 times. If it takes others 10 to 20 years to become an archmage, she might be able to cross that threshold within three to four years.”



Ren Xiaosu was amused. "Then she's much stronger than you."

Mel rolled his eyes at him. "Can't you encourage me a little?"

"Don't feel bad. I'm not saying you're worse than her," Ren Xiaosu said with a smile.

"Oh?" Mel's interest was piqued. "I'm not worse than her?"

"Of course. You have me to help you." Ren Xiaosu comforted him, "This is more effective than her working hard her entire life!"

Mel snickered.

"By the way, how did she get engaged to a member of the Tudor family?" Ren Xiaosu asked.

"Originally, she was supposed to be posted to the border as a junior sorcerer like me. But when the Tudor family discovered her talent, they immediately approached her family to propose a union." Melgor said, "At that time, my family was already in decline, and her family was afraid to provoke the Tudor family, so they accepted the proposal."

"No wonder the Tudor family wants to kill you. So it's not a matter of jealousy, but rather, they want this genius sorcerer to become a true Tu family member," Ren Xiaosu said with a nod.

From the look of things, Melgor was even more like a protagonist now. The person he liked was noticed by other clans due to her talent, so Melgor, together with his biggest benefactor, went back to kill them all.

Next to him, Melgor ridiculed, "They're called Tudor, not Tu."

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"That's not important."

...

In Winston City, the Berkeley family's patriarch was standing quietly on the red carpet in the cathedral. He was adorned in his shiny silver armor.

Someone brought a brazier before him. The flames in the brazier were extremely enchanting, like it was performing a crazy dance.

The House of Tudor was well-known for their Ice Rend spell, while the Berkeley family was known for their Song of Flames spell. It was as though these two clans were

naturally incompatible and had never stopped waging smaller conflicts against each other over the years.

The House of Berkeley even supported the House of Winston so that they could deal with the House of Voss, which was backed by the House of Tudor.

Both clans had mastered mystic techniques related to ice and fire and continued researching them separately on their own paths.

The Berkeley family's patriarch was holding his gold Eye of True Sight in his hand. The flame in the brazier in front of him gradually turned into a humanoid. The tips of the flame were the other party's hair, which continued swaying uneasily, making it look strange and mysterious.

The person in the brazier opened his mouth and said, "The advance guard of the Knights of Tudor have been killed. The enemy is continuing northwards and moving into the Knights of Tudor's area of activity."

"What were the losses of the House of Tudor?" the Berkeley family's patriarch asked.

"They lost 12 sorcerers, and one of them was even a rookie archmage who had just been promoted. Even their 12 Eyes of True Sight are gone," the person in the flames answered.

This brazier-and-flame method was how the House of Berkeley transmitted their messages.

This method of transmission was relatively convenient. As long as a fire could be started, they could communicate with each other. Moreover, compared to the House of Tudor's method, the greatest benefit was that this could be done at no cost of their sons.

The Berkeley family's patriarch was in an extremely good mood.

His friend from the distant Wang Consortium had not lied to him. As long as the House of Tudor provoked that young man, that young man would weaken the Tudor family's strength for him.

Humans were just this strange. Although the Berkeley family's patriarch had also suffered greatly at the hands of Ren Xiaosu, when he realized the House of Tudor was also beginning to get affected, he was able to move on from his anger. He even hoped that his enemy, Ren Xiaosu, would live longer and not bump into the Tudor family's patriarch so early on.

In this way, Ren Xiaosu could continue hurting the House of Tudor.

In the eyes of the Berkeley family's patriarch, even though Ren Xiaosu was powerful, he would not be a match for the Tudor family's patriarch if he were prepared.

He said to the person in the flames, "Be careful to hide your whereabouts. Let me know as soon as you have any news. Additionally, if there's a chance for you to influence the House of Tudor to see this group of people as foes, I'll place you into the family tree. After your death, your soul can return to the Heavenly Kingdom."

The man in the flames became excited. "That would be an honor for me."

The Berkeley family's patriarch decided to end this talk. "Flame be with you."

"Flame be with you."

After that, sparks burst out of the brazier, and the figure inside disappeared.

The flames returned to their previous agitated state as though nothing had happened.

## Chapter 1189: Chess piece

"All these people of the Kingdom of Sorcerers keep looking at us," Luo Lan suddenly whispered to Zhou Qi as they walked on the streets of Winston City.

The Great Hoodwinker, Luo Lan, and the rest had traveled all the way north, passing through York County and Vaduz County before arriving at Winston City. That was because the Great Hoodwinker had received the latest intel that Winston City had collapsed and that the future commander had appeared here.

After getting this info, they rushed over almost immediately. But when they got to Winston City, everyone was a little lost and did not know how to locate Ren Xiaosu.

After Luo Lan arrived in the Kingdom of Sorcerers, he even complained to the Great Hoodwinker that his intelligence operations were terrible. How could he not have any spies here in the vast Winston City?

Meanwhile, the Qing Consortium had done a very good job in this aspect. The Qing Consortium made sure they had spies planted in all of the strongholds in the Central Plains so there would always be someone to link up with them.

The Great Hoodwinker replied snappily, "We've only thought of counterattacking the Kingdom of Sorcerers in recent years. Before the Northwest got unified some years ago, and before Zhang Jinglin came back to take charge of the big picture, who could be bothered to plan so far ahead? Dealing with the Zong Consortium was already enough to keep us busy every day."

Therefore, the intelligence work the Northwest did in the early years was mainly targeted at the Zong Consortium. Other than that, it was very difficult for them to have any spare manpower to make plans in the Kingdom of Sorcerers.

Now that they were finally able to carry out intelligence gathering, it was only natural they would place their focus on Ghent City instead of a small place like Winston City.

Compared to Ghent City and Vaduz City, Winston City really was just a small town.

At this moment, everyone's gaze was focused on them as they walked through the streets.

Not only were the residents of Winston City gazing at them, but also the Knights of the Inferno who were patrolling the streets.

However, the Knights of the Inferno seemed a little confused by the sight and were too scared to approach them at the moment.

"We're really the center of attention." Zhou Qi said with a sigh, "Who was the one who came up with the horrible idea to enter the Kingdom of Sorcerers without changing clothes?"

"Me," P5092 answered calmly.

Before entering Winston City, the group had wanted to steal some clothes from a farm outside Vaduz City. However, P5092 said there was no need to do so.

As such, the group looked extremely out of place on the streets of Winston City in their eye-catching blue windbreakers.

Due to the backward textile manufacturing and dyeing technologies, the colors of clothing in the Kingdom of Sorcerers were still very dull.

Sorcerers liked wearing black sorcerer's robes, not because they liked to act mysterious, but because black was one of the noblest colors they could choose from.

Furthermore, Luo Lan and the others were not only wearing eye-catching windbreakers but also carrying large metal boxes in their hands and bulging hiking backpacks half the height of a person.

The residents of Winston City looked at them as though they had encountered an alien civilization.

P5092 said, "We're not here to integrate into their society. We're only here to look for Future Commander. It's better to join up with him first."

“Was that why you chose to make such a sensational appearance?” Zhou Qi asked helplessly.

“Mhm, if Future Commander is still in this city, he’ll find out about our arrival very soon.” P5092 said, “We don’t have an intelligence HQ in this city, so rather than slowly searching for Future Commander, we might as well amplify our group’s presence and let him find us instead.”

“But aren’t you afraid the people here in the Kingdom of Sorcerers will attack us?” Zhou Qi retorted.

P5092 shook his head calmly. “What’s there to be afraid of? If Future Commander is here, he can handle them all by himself. If he’s not around, we’ll just retreat. Without firearms and explosives, there won’t be many people who can stop us. If conflict breaks out, Luo Lan’s martyred spirits can set up a machine gun post to cover our retreat while we leave directly.”

“You make it sound so easy....”

“You and Luo Lan are carrying heavy machine guns with you in the boxes, and Ji Zi’ang and Wang Yun specially brought heavy machine gun ammo with them. Do we still need to be afraid of cavalry?” P5092 explained, “Don’t worry, I had Wang Yun and Ji Zi’ang map out the entirety of Winston City from the top of the walls last night. I’ve roughly worked out more than a dozen ways to evacuate safely.”

The group had abandoned their vehicles and decided to travel on foot soon after leaving the borders of Fortress 178. Initially, everyone wanted to travel light, but P5092 requested they bring heavy weapons with them. It was as though he had foreseen such a situation.

Fortunately, they were all supernatural beings, so carrying a heavy load was not a problem for them in the slightest.

Luo Lan thought for a moment and said, “But are we going to expend all the ammo at this place after lugging these weapons such a long way?”

P5092 replied, “Don’t worry, as long as we can find Future Commander, it’s equivalent to finding an armory. We won’t lack any ammunition then.”

The Great Hoodwinker added, “Mhm, when Future Commander was at Stronghold 144, he took at least 20 heavy machine guns with him, to say nothing of the bullets. Those aren’t even worth a dime in the Northwest. Not only that, he also took eight thermobaric bombs with him. When he went to the Zhou Consortium last time, he even asked for a bunch of firearms from the Zhou Consortium and obtained several dozen boxes of grenades.”

Luo Lan gasped. "It's one thing for you all to go to the Zhou Consortium to snatch their people, but you even went to them to ask for their ammo? And the Zhou Consortium actually gave it to you guys?"

"What can they do? Since Future Commander asked, they couldn't possibly refuse, right? That Zhou guy is really afraid of death." The Great Hoodwinker chuckled.

"So what should we do next? Stand here and wait for Xiaosu to come and find us?" Zhou Qi asked.

P5092 glanced at the Great Hoodwinker. "Let's get started."

Zhou Qi was confused.

'What do you mean by "get started"? What on earth are you guys planning?'

In the end, everyone watched as the Great Hoodwinker placed the metal box in his hand on the ground. After removing the safety catch, he took out an RPG launcher and a charge.

"That's the cathedral in the middle of Winston City. Aim for the roof. Future Commander will definitely see it if he's here," P5092 commanded.

Zhou Qi was stunned. Luo Lan was as well.

Zhou Qi and Luo Lan's jaws dropped. They were lost for words. Luo Lan thought he was already arrogant enough. But in the end, someone even more arrogant than him appeared?!

Nearby, the vigilant Knights of the Inferno felt that something was off. They quickly went to close off the city gates, seemingly planning to trap the Great Hoodwinker and company inside Winston City.

They would then wait for the patriarch's orders.

"Great Hoodwinker, wait a minute!" Zhou Qi tried to stop him. "Should we really not reconsider this?"

The Great Hoodwinker shrugged. "P5092 became the commander after we entered the Kingdom of Sorcerers. I'm just taking orders here. It's useless to say anything to me."

P5092 turned to look at Zhou Qi and said in seriousness, "Every operation has its purpose. What we need to do is find Future Commander. Doing the most correct thing in the simplest of ways—that's what it means to be in command."

“I can understand what you’re saying, but why does it confuse me a little when you combine those words with your actions?” Zhou Qi was astonished.

...

The Winston family’s Knights of the Hymn had already set off to the west where they would build a defensive line to prevent the House of Voss from interfering on the main battlefield.

Someone predicted that the Winstons and the Vosses might get plunged into a bloodbath before the Norman and the Tudor families’ campaign even started on the main battlefield.

In the past 200 years, although the House of Winston was backed by the House of Berkeley, they still had some autonomy.

But when the civil war began, starting from when the Berkeley family’s patriarch first stepped into Winston City, it signified the Berkeley family’s takeover of the entire south of the Kingdom of Sorcerers.

Even the large Winston clan could only become horses tied to the front of a war chariot.

As for where the chariot would head, that would entirely be dictated by the one controlling the reins and whip.

Winston Cathedral had been turned into a temporary military command center. All military and political orders would be reported here and passed on to the Berkeley family’s patriarch for approval.

Meanwhile, the Berkeley family’s patriarch remained standing in front of the burning brazier and gathered information from outside the city that was constantly being fed back.

As the flames flickered, the statues of the sorcerers around the cathedral seemingly swayed with the light. It was as though they had come alive.

“It’s finally time to reap the fruits of our predecessors’ labor.” The Berkeley family’s patriarch said amid the silence, “It’s time for the corrupted Houses of Tudor and Norman to hand over their black Eyes of True Sight.”

He held his gold Eye of True Sight and slowly recited an incantation. The figure in the brazier gradually became clearer before saying respectfully, “Patriarch, what are your instructions?”

“Spread this information to every corner of Ghent City. Tell everyone that the junior sorcerer, Melgor, is leading his group there. The House of Tudor has already tried to intercept him several times but to no avail,” the Berkeley family’s patriarch said calmly.

The information did not mention anything about the Central Plains, nor did it mention Ren Xiaosu’s name

Meanwhile, the Tudor family’s reputation would get tarnished by this news. The clan that had been established for over 200 years would definitely do everything they could to make Melgor disappear from history.

At that time, the Central Plains forces behind Melgor would definitely clash head on with the House of Tudor.

So after all the careful consideration, the Berkeley family’s patriarch felt he could finally look forward to Ren Xiaosu’s performance.

The only regret he had was wrongly assuming that Melgor was from the House of Norman, so he made the expensive blunder of handing Melgor a gold Eye of True Sight to create animosity between the House of Norman and the House of Tudor.

In the end, that gold Eye of True Sight was given away for nothing!

However, the Berkeley family’s patriarch immediately came up with another plan.

He summoned another spy through the brazier. “Go and inform the House of Norman that Melgor has Donnelly’s gold Eye of True Sight!”

After passing on this info, the Berkeley family’s patriarch even wore a smile on his face. He wanted to see how the young man from the Central Plains would react when surrounded by two of the top sorcerer clans.

This Central Plains force might look powerful, but in the palm of Michel Grantham Berkeley, he would only end up as a chess piece.

At this moment, an explosion boomed above the head of the Berkeley family’s patriarch. The roof of the cathedral was blasted open in broad daylight!

This shot landed squarely on the top of the cathedral’s tower and, along with it, wiped off the Berkeley family’s patriarch’s confident smile.

The explosion was so loud it even caused reverberations within the cathedral. The Berkeley family’s patriarch could feel his ears ringing. His hearing became muffled as though someone had covered his ears with thick cotton padding.



Large chunks of bricks started crumbling down. The ancient structure, without the support of steel rebars, started swaying hard from the huge impact.

The exquisite statues standing upright in the cathedral crashed to the ground one by one. The Berkeley family's patriarch could only watch helplessly as the arm of his father's statue got broken off and its body smashed to pieces by more falling rubble.

Dust and rubble rained down from above. Fortunately, the will of the Berkeley family's patriarch was still quite firm. He roared angrily as he recited an incantation and completed it before the rubble could hit him.

Dozens of flaming, golden-winged Garudas flew upwards from behind him and shielded him from any falling objects.

The Flaming Garuda was an exclusive spell of the House of Winston. However, the Berkeley family's patriarch had asked for the incantation and meditative visualization diagram to be given to him long ago, something which the Winston family's patriarch did not dare to disobey.

As expected of the Berkeley family's patriarch, he was truly a genius sorcerer. He stood in the cathedral and controlled the Garudas without any fear of the aftermath of the explosion.

A group of the Knights of the Inferno risked their lives and rushed into the cathedral. They wanted to weave their spears above the patriarch's head to prevent him from getting injured by the falling rubble.

However, the Berkeley family's patriarch pushed them aside angrily. "What happened?! Who attacked the cathedral?"

A knight commander reported, "Patriarch, someone just reported that some unknown people have arrived in Winston City. From their attire, they don't seem local. They're probably from the Central Plains."

The aftermath of the RPG bombardment of the cathedral gradually stopped. The Berkeley family's patriarch strode out and said, "Surround them. Those people from the Central Plains have gone too far! Prepare the horses and assemble the knights. I want to personally punish those arrogant bastards!"

Immediately, a group of the Knights of the Inferno surrounded Luo Lan and the others while another group started gathering in front of the cathedral.

But before they could fully assemble, the Berkeley family's patriarch suddenly saw a section of the city walls turning to sand.

The greenish-gray brick wall turned into a fine pile of running sand. Someone had forced open up a breach in the walls.

Heavy machine gunfire could be heard. That dull rattling sounded like a taunt from Purgatory.

Before this, the Knights of the Inferno had sealed off all the exits of the city. Even the city gates were tightly shut as they were afraid Luo Lan and the others would escape.

In the end, none of the visitors from the Central Plains turned out to be normal people. It was as though none of them liked using the main entrance and insisted on destroying the city walls to leave!

In just two weeks, the walls of Winston City had been destroyed for the third time!

The Berkeley family's patriarch looked in the direction of the city walls with a livid expression. A Knight of the Inferno rode on horseback over to the entrance of the cathedral and shouted, "Patriarch, I don't know what method that group used to destroy the city walls. They have some terrifying Central Plains weapon that prevented our cavalry from getting close. Before we could form an encirclement, they'd already escaped through the opening in the walls."

"Then what are you all doing? You let them leave just like that?" the Berkeley family's patriarch asked in disbelief.

"They left behind some golden human silhouettes to control their weapon. After those people left, the golden silhouettes ran off like rabbits too. We couldn't catch them at all! But the moment we rushed after them, they immediately turned around and used their weapon to suppress us again. Patriarch, our knights have suffered too many casualties!" the Knight of the Inferno said anxiously.

"How many?" the Berkeley family's patriarch asked.

The Knight of the Inferno hesitated for a moment before saying, "Based on rough estimates, our Knights of the Inferno suffered more than 500 casualties. That weapon is extremely powerful and can break a person's leg if it hits them. I'm afraid they can't fight in battle anymore. But more importantly..."

"Don't hem and haw." The Berkeley family's patriarch said angrily, "Speak up."

"More importantly, three of our sorcerers have died, with two of them being your sons," the Knight of the Inferno said, bracing himself.

The three sorcerers had only gone over to provide temporary support. They had wanted to launch a counterattack with their spells after closing in on the intruders, but the range of the heavy machine gun was too great.

Generally speaking, the range of normal spells was only a few hundred meters, and up to about a 1,000 meters maximum. For example, Lesser Fireball could only reach about a 100 meters away, while Flaming Garuda was effective up to a 1,000 meters.

In fact, this range was quite good. It was definitely enough even in a large-scale war, and mobile units would get suppressed by such spells.

But for heavy machine guns, even the shortest effective range among the common ones was at least 2,000 meters.

Therefore, before the three sorcerers could even get close, they were already riddled with holes by the heavy machine gun bullets.

The Berkeley family's patriarch was covered in dust as he rode on his horse. He clenched his teeth and stayed silent for a moment before saying, "Did they say or do anything before they attacked?"

"When those people first entered the city, they did ask the residents about some things." The Knights of the Inferno soldier answered, "They seem to be looking for their future commander."

When the Berkeley family's patriarch heard this, he felt helpless. Wang Wenyan had told him before that Ren Xiaosu was the future commander of Fortress 178. Therefore, these people were here to look for Ren Xiaosu!

The Berkeley family's patriarch could not understand something. Did these people from Fortress 178 take the wrong medicine? Why were they all behaving so lawlessly?

He had only just treated the Central Plains forces as chess pieces a while ago, but before he could gloat for a couple minutes, the other party had already run over and demolished his cathedral!

*'What's the matter? Can't you let others be happy? Are you people from the Central Plains so bored you have to come all the way here to wreak havoc in the Kingdom of Sorcerers? Did the city walls offend you or something?'*

Their enemy from the north was almost in their face, yet the city walls got damaged three times in a row to the extent of being unrepairable.

How the fuck were they supposed to fight the war?!

"Retreat, retreat south to Vaduz City," the Berkeley family's patriarch said coldly.

"Patriarch, aren't we going to pursue those people?" the Knight of the Inferno asked.

“No.” The Berkeley family’s patriarch sneered and said, “They’ll definitely continue heading north. Leave them to be a pain in the ass to the Houses of Tudor and Norman.”

“Father, are we just going to let them leave after they’ve destroyed our walls?” a young sorcerer nearby asked.

This sorcerer possessed a red Eye of True Sight and had been standing guard outside the cathedral all this while. It was obvious he was one of the favorite sons of the Berkeley family’s patriarch and might even be one of the candidates to be the next patriarch.

The Berkeley family’s patriarch explained to him, “If we chase after them at this time, we might end up getting caught in an encounter battle with the Knights of Tudor who’re heading south. You have to remember, we mustn’t be impulsive on the battlefield. All decisions must be undertaken with victory in mind.”

“I understand. Thank you for your instruction, Father.” The young man nodded. “It’s indeed a little disadvantageous for us to head out of the city at a time like this and get engaged in battle with the House of Tudor.”

“Mhm, it’s good that you understand.” The Berkeley family’s patriarch was a flexible person. He seriously considered things and said, “It’s too late to repair Winston City. We can’t fight the Tudors in a damaged city, so retreating back to Vaduz is the wisest choice.”

The young man asked, “If we retreat, won’t it be equivalent to ceding the Winston family’s territory? Would they be willing to accept that?”

The Berkeley family’s patriarch sneered, “We’ll just have to help them regain it in the future.”

To be honest, the Berkeley family’s patriarch also felt very bad about it. Even before they could catch a glimpse of the Knights of Tudor, they had already been forced to retreat by a baffling group of people.

What the hell!

But just as the House of Berkeley was retreating south, the patriarch suddenly made another plan. He sent one team each to the Houses of Norman and Tudor, but no one knew what mission the two teams were tasked with.

...

At the same time Winston City’s walls were destroyed for the third time, Ren Xiaosu killed another two waves of pursuers from the Knights of Tudor before disappearing into

the wilderness with Qian Weining and company. They had completely disappeared from the sight of the House of Tudor.

The legend of Melgor had already spread like wildfire in Ghent City. Some people said he was a low-key genius sorcerer who had single-handedly wiped out 800 knights of the House of Tudor.

Some people also said he was an illegitimate son of the House of Norman who had received the teachings of the top sorcerers and had mastered the Norman family's Boiling Airburst spell to perfection.

There were also people who said Melgor had feuded with the House of Tudor while vying for a wife with their clan member and was deliberately sent to the border by them. However, due to a great opportunity he encountered there, he became an archmage within two years.

Melgor had returned to Ghent City this time to stir up a bloody storm with the House of Tudor.

In any case, all kinds of rumors were floating around, and all of them even had some basis in fact, so it was not entirely groundless speculation.

Right now, almost everyone in Ghent City was aware the House of Tudor had spent a lot of manpower and resources in their attempt to capture Melgor. However, they had no success so far.

Moreover, Melgor was surrounded by hundreds of knights loyal to him.

Of course, everyone preferred the grassroots version of the different rumors floating around.

A junior sorcerer challenging an elite aristocratic family by himself. This story of a grassroots comeback was simply beloved by the residents. Everyone dreamed of becoming a sorcerer one day, so those in the Kingdom of Sorcerers who harbored such dreams hoped they could be like Melgor one day and become someone the top families were helpless against.

While they drank and danced in the taverns, they would get all excited whenever someone brought up this matter.

Amid the commotion, Melgor stood at a sewer outlet outside Ghent City and turned around to ask, "Are we really going in?"

The sewer outlet in front of him was as tall as a person. From the outside, it was so dark he could not see the end of it.

The place smelled foul, and there were even rats scurrying across the floor. They were not afraid of humans at all.

Chen Jingshu looked at Melgor and answered, "Ghent City has already been placed under martial law. If you want to sneak into Ghent City quietly, you have to go through here. Don't worry, you'll discover another world if you go in from here. It's even more lively and prosperous than the surface of Ghent City where you used to reside."

## Chapter 1190: Ignorant

It was completely dark in the wide sewer pipe, with all light seemingly sucked away deep into the tunnel.

It was no wonder Melgor was scared. Even a battle-hardened veteran like Qian Weining had to take a while to get mentally prepared and take a deep breath before going in.

Chen Jingshu was calm only because she knew where the sewers led.

Ren Xiaosu realized the entire bounty hunter organization probably played an important role in the underworld of Ghent City. Their members were well-acquainted with this place.

He looked at the entrance of the sewer and asked curiously, "Wait a sec, this sewer system was built with modern technology. Although it's become really run-down, such technology shouldn't exist in the Kingdom of Sorcerers."

The concrete on the walls at the entrance of the sewer was severely corroded, and even the steel rebar inside had become exposed.

This was the first time Ren Xiaosu had seen a reinforced concrete structure in the Kingdom of Sorcerers. It was just as novel as when he first came across the ruins of human civilization back in the Jing Mountains.

Therefore, the entirety of Ghent City was actually built on the foundations of a Pre-Cataclysm human civilization. This surprised Ren Xiaosu a little.

But he was even more surprised the sewers could be preserved for so long.

Theoretically, reinforced concrete could last very long with no upper limits to its lifespan.

But in actuality, as long as the structures were exposed to the open air, they would naturally be affected by oxidation and the elements. Once the steel rebar within the concrete structures became corroded, their deterioration would only speed up.

Therefore, the construction process of this Pre-Cataclysm sewer system must have been very advanced. Otherwise, it would not have lasted until 200 years later.

Chen Jingshu looked at Ren Xiaosu and asked, "Is this construction process used everywhere in the Central Plains?"

"Basically, all the strongholds were constructed this way." Ren Xiaosu nodded. "At least, they're more practical than basic brick structures."

Chen Jingshu said, "Actually, back when The Cataclysm happened, most of the Kingdom of Sorcerers' citizens came to live in this underground city. They turned what were originally bomb shelters into their new homes and eked out a living down here."

Everyone around her listened quietly. Even Qian Weining was hearing about these events for the first time. This was the past the magus order did not really want to talk about anymore.

Chen Jingshu continued, "After The Cataclysm, the sorcerers brought everyone back to the surface and rebuilt their homes. At the beginning, everyone still got along quite well. But after Russell died, the magus order started exploiting the common folk even more. As a result, disagreements appeared among the different groups of Post-Cataclysm humans."

When everyone was living in the underground, they only united to withstand the cruel period of The Cataclysm. At that time, even though there was also injustice, life was at least considered bearable with the presence of Russell and the new magus order he led.

As Russell was extremely charismatic, everyone was willing to see him as their leader and trusted him to handle matters impartially.

Russell had even temporarily established a post-disaster committee and an underground court, so even the sorcerers who broke the law and bullied ordinary folks would get punished back in those times.

And what was even more ruthless was that if a sorcerer broke the law, their Eyes of True Sight would get confiscated.

Without their Eyes of True Sight, the sorcerers were no different from normal people.

At that time, the old aristocrats wanted to rebel against Russell because of this. But they were no match for him before The Cataclysm, let alone after.

The old aristocrats could not even afford to support themselves anymore, so they couldn't even raise as many sons as before. Without a large number of progeny to sustain their usage of bloodline spells, they were absolutely crushed by Russell.

As such, the reason why everyone wanted to kill Russell so badly after returning to the surface was that they knew that as long as Russell was around, the old aristocratic clans could never make a comeback.

At that time, Russell had already started planning for the establishment of the magus school. If he succeeded in shattering the class differences between sorcerers and normal people, the bloodline succession of those sorcerer aristocrats would naturally collapse.

In order not to hand over their exclusive spells and ensure the continuation of their bloodlines, the aristocrats instigated Russell's servant, Voss, to poison him.

With Russell's death, the new magus order disbanded, and most of those who remained died under the encirclement of the old aristocracy.

After the exploitation system was reestablished, some people could no longer stand being bullied, so huge disagreements arose with the old aristocratic clans.

To not get killed, they returned to the underground world and continued living inside that gloomy world.

It was also at that time that the Sanctuary members returned to the underground with them.

Chen Jingshu looked at Ren Xiaosu and said, "The times spent hiding in the underground were tough. At the beginning, the old aristocratic clans kept coming down to encircle us on many occasions, so everyone had to avoid their pursuit. Fortunately, the underworld was large enough, so it was not easy for them to track us down. Later, everyone realized it was actually not too bad to live underground, and the supplies gradually grew more abundant. The surface and the underground have become two independently run societies."

"Then why did y'all suddenly come back up now? I think y'all should be planning something big, right?" Ren Xiaosu asked, "What made y'all take the risk to come out here, even if it means losing your lives?"

"The infrastructure underground is falling apart." Chen Jingshu said, "Based on our estimates, the underground will probably collapse in another 20 years at most. We have no means to build or reinforce the structures, so we can only return to the surface."

"Oh, so before returning to the surface, the problem of the old aristocratic clans has to be dealt with first? Otherwise, y'all will still die when you return to the surface." Ren Xiaosu nodded and said, "But it's too late. The sorcerers living on the surface have become a force to be reckoned with."



“We have to look for a chance at survival somehow, right?” Chen Jingshu said with a sigh, “We all know it’s difficult, but how will we know where our chance of survival lies if we don’t fight for it?”

“You’ve found it now.” Ren Xiaosu chuckled.

Chen Jingshu said calmly, “Are you trying to say you’re our chance at survival?”

“You can even answer without my cue now. That’s an improvement.” Ren Xiaosu said, “Without any external help, y’all can’t defeat those sorcerers even if you continue developing for another 200 years. You can’t pull off such a huge task by relying on those glib degenerates of the sorcerer clans. So you can only rely on external help.”

Next to him, Chen An’an said stubbornly, “We’re very strong too, alright?”

“Too bad y’all don’t have any extensive combat experience. It’s unrealistic to always place your hopes on the internal transformation of the sorcerer clans. Why would those sorcerers with vested interests honestly help y’all out?” Ren Xiaosu said, “So you need to galvanize your working-class comrades to rise against... Forget it, I’m not saying anything else, or something bad could happen.”

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Chen Jingshu was startled to hear that. “Then what makes you think you’re our only chance? I don’t think you have much combat experience either, right? You’re in an unfamiliar place, so who’re you going to work with? Besides, I know you won’t be staying in the Kingdom of Sorcerers for long. You don’t have the time and energy to do all that.”

Ren Xiaosu smiled and said, “However Russell did it in the past, I’ll do the same now.”

The Russell approach he was referring to was to beat up the old aristocrats before achieving a high degree of “consensus” with them.

However, Ren Xiaosu would be more ruthless than Russell. Although he was not good at political debate, he excelled in murder.

Russell did not kill the sorcerers of the aristocratic clans because he was also a member of the Magi, but Ren Xiaosu was not. Right from the beginning, he did not have any compassion for the Magi. There was only a blood feud between them.

Qian Weining and the others listened to their conversation from next to them and fell silent.

Just yesterday, Qian Weining had thought Ren Xiaosu purely wanted to kill sorcerers. But now he realized Ren Xiaosu was actually challenging the entire Kingdom of Sorcerers.

Although the two methods might look similar in process, the outcome and difficulty were completely different.

Ren Xiaosu turned around and smiled at Qian Weining and his men. "Don't be scared. Even if I fail, y'all can still follow me to the Central Plains. That's the backup plan I've left for y'all."

"Master, you don't have to worry. As long as you don't betray us, we'll surely follow you to our deaths." Qian Weining hurriedly expressed his loyalty.

Chen Jingshu went to the side and chopped down some tree branches. Then she had An'an bring over some canvas tarps and wrap them around the branches so they could set them alight.

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. "What are you doing?"

"Lighting torches, of course." Chen Jingshu said, "After we enter the sewers, follow me closely. If you take the wrong path while carrying a torch, you could end up walking into a dead zone and get poisoned to death by the toxic fumes or trigger an explosion and blow yourselves up."

"Dead zone? Explosion?" Ren Xiaosu said dumbfoundedly, "Are there traps in the sewers? Who set them?"

Chen Jingshu said, "It might've been laid by the people who built this underground city. The explosions always happen very suddenly, but no one knows why."

Ren Xiaosu did not know whether to laugh or cry. "How's that a fucking trap? It's obviously your torches igniting the accumulated methane in the underground that caused the explosions."

When this huge underground city was initially designed, the problem of ventilation must have definitely been considered. But after such a long time, with the ventilation systems no longer working and the collapse of some parts of the interior, it would certainly cause a methane buildup in some areas. If anyone went near those spots with a naked flame, it would definitely trigger an explosion.

Therefore, those were not traps deliberately set up by anyone.

Ren Xiaosu said, "Anyways, there's no need to light torches."

He brought out a dozen powerful flashlights from the palace and handed them out. Then he pulled out a tritium lamp stolen from the Qing Consortium some time ago and used it as an illumination device.

Chen Jingshu, Qian Weining, and everyone else held their flashlights with confused looks on their faces. "What's this?"

"Press the button." Ren Xiaosu demonstrated it to them. A beam of light shone into the sewers and suddenly illuminated the area dozens of meters ahead. It became bright as day in the sewers.

Chen Jingshu was shocked. "What the hell is this!"

Ren Xiaosu suddenly got the impression of a high-level civilization crushing a low-level civilization.

He patiently explained, "This is what technology is. It's a device that uses electricity as a power source to provide illumination. If a flashlight is only turned on to the minimum brightness, it should be able to run for several days."

Qian Weining looked intently at the flashlight in his hand as though he had found a treasure. "Master, you're actually letting us use something so precious?"

Ren Xiaosu did not know whether to laugh or cry. "What's so precious about that? It's standard issue for combat troops in the Central Plains! Y'all really don't have much knowledge about the Central Plains, do you? And under the rule of the magus order, you have no grasp of technology either."

"Is the Central Plains really that amazing?" Qian Weining sighed emotionally. He got an urge to go there to have a look.

Ren Xiaosu laughed and said, "If a powerful flashlight can surprise you guys like this, I wonder how shocked y'all will be when you see things like cameras, tap water, and TVs. Don't worry. Even if I need y'all to remain at the Prosperous Northwest's branch office in the future, you can still visit the Central Plains often."

The Kingdom of Sorcerers was only about a 1,000 kilometers from Fortress 178. It was not really that far away with modern transportation. If he drove the steam locomotive at full speed, it would only take them ten hours to get there.

Chen Jingshu looked at the tritium lamp in Ren Xiaosu's hand. "Then what's that you're holding?"

"This is called a tritium lamp." Ren Xiaosu said, "It uses radioactive material as a light source. If it's not broken, it can last for 20 years or even longer."

“Wow! 20 years?!” everyone around him exclaimed.

Ren Xiaosu felt like he was facing a group of curious toddlers.

He quietly sized up the group of curious toddlers before taking out a pair of military binoculars and handing it to Qian Weining. “Here, try it. This thing will allow you to see very far.”

“Wow! It’s so clear!” Qian Weining exclaimed, “What’s this magical thing? How can it be so amazing?!”

Chen Jingshu took the binoculars from him and discovered that she could even see details hundreds of meters out with them.

“So this is the technology of the Central Plains?” Chen Jingshu muttered.

Everyone passed around the binoculars and fiddled with them. In the end, they all let out a heartfelt exclamation after giving it a try.

“I like how ignorant y’all look,” Ren Xiaosu chuckled.

This comment made Chen Jingshu and the others feel bad, but they could not come up with any excuses.

Ren Xiaosu glanced at them. Then he took out a pistol with a silencer attached and fired it at a sparrow flying across the sky.

The sparrow’s feathers scattered as it fell straight to the ground.

“Wow, it’s that powerful?” everyone around him exclaimed again.

Ren Xiaosu had Qian Weining bring over the sparrow. “Have a look at the sparrow’s wound.”

Qian Weining checked and was surprised to find the sparrow’s body had been penetrated by the bullet and became badly mutilated.

He said in shock, “Master, is this the weapon of the Central Plains?”

Qian Weining was 31 years old this year, so he had not participated in the war 17 years ago. However, he had still heard of the weapons of the Central Plains.

But at that time, he was still a little skeptical when he heard others describing firearms to him. Only at this moment did he realize how ruthless this weapon was.

“We’re at the edge of Ghent City, so I can’t show you how powerful the other weapons are yet. Pistols are the least powerful type of firearm we have.” Ren Xiaosu explained, “But its feature is that it’s much more accurate and powerful than the bow and arrow. Moreover, it’s so fast it’s almost impossible to dodge.”

Chen Jingshu said, “This thing is much more powerful than a concealed crossbow.”

People like Chen Jingshu and Qian Weining could immediately appreciate the difference between firearms and bows. Meanwhile, Melgor, Li Chengguo, and Liu Ting were stuck at a level of understanding that could only be described with “how powerful!”, “wow!”, and “fuck!” They knew this thing was powerful, but they did not know just how powerful it was.

Ren Xiaosu placed the pistol in Qian Weining’s hand and said, “I’ll take y’all out for shooting practice in the next few days if there’s an opportunity. After you’ve familiarized yourselves, I’ll equip each of you with a gun and a 100 bullets.”

Qian Weining was moved. “Master, you’re giving us this thing too? You’re way too generous!”

“Ahem, since y’all have pledged your allegiance to me, of course I can’t keep things to myself,” Ren Xiaosu said.

Chen Jingshu hesitated for a moment before saying, “Can you sell me one? I’ll pay for it. Is a 100 gold coins enough?”

Honestly, Ren Xiaosu was really tempted to negotiate an arms deal with the Kingdom of Sorcerer at this moment. A normal pistol could actually be traded for a 100 gold coins here? He could fucking make a killing with this!

However, Ren Xiaosu did not accept her offer. Instead, he just gave Chen Jingshu a pistol. He put it in her hands and said, “I can give you it for free, but don’t use it before I teach y’all how to shoot. Accidents can happen easily. Also, you must remember that this weapon can be extremely dangerous. Don’t ever point it at your allies.”

The reason why Ren Xiaosu thought of issuing guns to these people was that he suddenly felt that he might have taken some unnecessary steps before.

He had thought of establishing the first group of sorcerer knights in the kingdom. Having such extremely strong spell bombardiers as combatants was like having bomber planes. Just the thought of that was extremely powerful. Besides, such a force would not cost any money to maintain nor would it waste any ammo.

But later, Ren Xiaosu thought that pistols, automatic rifles, and bullets were not expensive anyway. In that case, why not just turn these people into modern troops first before they become sorcerers?

With automatic rifles and heavy machine guns, wouldn't it be a piece of cake for them to take on the cavalry of the sorcerer clans? If they could find favorable terrain to fight on, it shouldn't even be a problem for a 100-odd people to defeat several thousand horsemen, right?

Moreover, Qian Weining revealed a unique skill while traveling north: precise range estimation!

This might sound like some mysterious skill, but it was actually just using one's thumb as a reference point to gauge the enemy's distance.

In other words, Qian Weining was born to be an artilleryman. With some training, he could carry a long-range mortar everywhere on the battlefield. Even if those were physical attacks, it shouldn't be much different from sorcery, right? Besides, such attacks were much more powerful than what junior sorcerers could conjure.

Even Ren Xiaosu could not say he was not threatened by artillery fire based on his present level. At most, he could only avoid the trajectory of the artillery. If a shell really landed on him, he would still die.

If it were something that even Ren Xiaosu was afraid of, sorcerers would be scared all the more.

Therefore, before establishing the sorcerer knights, it would be better to establish the first modern army in the Kingdom of Sorcerers. He already had a supply of firearms anyway.

"C'mon, let's go in," Ren Xiaosu said.

Chen Jingshu held up her powerful flashlight and led the way. Their footsteps made splashing sounds as they stepped in the dirty water in the sewer. The splashes sounded particularly loud as they reverberated through the sewer pipes.

Ren Xiaosu looked at the sewer walls and saw some strange scribbles on them. Some were written in Chinese while others were in the Magi's tongue. The vivid writing resembled some kind of special spiritual slogans.

He could not understand the Magi's tongue, but he knew Chinese.

The walls were written with words like "freedom" and "resistance" and were accompanied by some flamboyant, weird patterns.

Ren Xiaosu asked, "Who wrote all that?"

“The residents of the underground, of course.” Chen Jingshu said, “It’s just random graffiti to vent their emotions. I heard that people used to like drawing graffiti on walls before The Cataclysm.”

“I heard the House of Norman killed everyone in the underground during their search for Donnelly?” Ren Xiaosu asked.

“They nearly did.” Chen Jingshu said calmly, “They killed almost half of the underground inhabitants. But after more than a 100 years away, they were no longer familiar with the situation underground, so they did not discover the new hiding places we found. It was also that incident that made us determined to return to the surface and not wait to be slaughtered here.”

Ren Xiaosu used the tritium lamp to illuminate the walls on both sides. He suddenly felt that the graffiti had a strange, chaotic sense of beauty.

As they walked deeper in, the view in front of them suddenly opened up. An even wider underground world appeared in front of everyone: A canal so large tanks could drive through them, a picturesque patchwork of asymmetrically laid-out steps, deformed steel above them.

The corrosion on the steel was so thick Ren Xiaosu even suspected they would crumble with just a slight touch.

Chen Jingshu followed his gaze and looked up as well. Then she explained, “Those things above our heads were probably pipelines during the Pre-Cataclysm times. No one has touched them in a long time.”

Ren Xiaosu sighed in amazement. This place was like an abandoned underground factory with a strong sense of mystery.

And for the vivid graffiti that could be seen everywhere, most of them had now turned into portraits, such as angels with withered wings, the back of someone, or crows and tigers.

There was no clear artistic style to the drawings here, and it seemed as though people drew whatever came to their minds.

Chen Jingshu said, “Actually, there’s a hidden secret behind these drawings, some of which include route directions. Only a small number of people living in the underground can understand them, and they’re the leaders of the underground.”

“So you can understand it because you’re also one of the leaders?” Ren Xiaosu asked curiously.

“I’m not, but Chen An’an and Chen Cheng’s father is,” Chen Jingshu replied.

Ren Xiaosu wondered if his weapons would be enough to equip an entire resistance force if the underground inhabitants really staged a rebellion.

Chen Jingshu and the others had never seen modern weapons before. That was why they felt they had to get enough sorcerers to overthrow the Magi. After all, normal people could not fight against the sorcerers.

However, Ren Xiaosu felt that this matter was not that complicated.

Modern firearms and explosives were good enough to kill gods, let alone a group of pseudogods.

Ren Xiaosu touched the paint on the walls and said, "This is no ordinary paint. It's made from ground up minerals, right? That's why they can maintain such bright colors in the underground."

Normal pigments could not be preserved for a long time, especially when exposed to foul air. But mineral pigments were different. They could last much longer than normal pigments.

Upon hearing Ren Xiaosu's question, Chen Jingshu's expression changed. She even chose to avoid answering.

Ren Xiaosu continued, "So y'all must've discovered these colorful minerals when you continued excavating a larger space in the original underworld, right? These things wouldn't have appeared in the original sewers. The reason why the Norman family failed to exterminate all y'all was that they didn't know y'all had dug up other spaces, such as a lower second, third, or fourth level underground."

Chen Jingshu frowned. "I've somewhat underestimated you."

"Don't look so surprised." Ren Xiaosu said with a smile, "When my companions arrive, they'll blow your mind even more."

Soon after, when they advanced another few hundred meters forward, a voice suddenly rang out in front of them, "Who is it? Identify yourselves!"

"Monday, the gods fall," Chen Jingshu replied with a secret phrase.

Qian Weining, who was standing behind Ren Xiaosu, took a few steps forward and stood warily in front of his new master. He shone his flashlight over and was surprised to see a young man whose face was covered in tattoos.

Chen Jingshu explained to Ren Xiaosu, "Those with tattooed faces can no longer return to living in the cities on the surface. They're the guardians of the entire underground world."



Ren Xiaosu suddenly felt that the underworld of Ghent City resembled a product of the era of the wastelands more than anything he had ever seen.