

Magic Era 191

Chapter 191: Merlin Family's Summons

And that wasn't all...

Afterwards, groups of Alchemists would go to the Gilded Rose, and the old butler wasn't one to balk at having more Alchemists, so by the time Lin Yun returned, the Gilded Rose had over two hundred Alchemists...

Just based on the quantity, they were now comparable to the Alchemist Guild...

Naturally, the old butler knew that these Alchemists couldn't be given heavy responsibility. They weren't familiar with the setup of the Gilded Rose, and they had yet to prove themselves trustworthy, so the old butler made them work in an assembly line. They seemed to be busy every day, but they were kept doing repetitive work without being able to get close to the core skills of the Gilded Rose.

"The Alchemists of Thousand Sails City value themselves so little?" Lin Yun was dumbstruck when he heard all of this.

"Haha... No one forced them to work for the Gilded Rose..." William laughed while looking quite gleeful.

He wasn't being arrogant; the Gilded Rose's reputation had already overshadowed many old forces like the Viper Nest. Along with the old butler being known for giving generous salaries, all kinds of Alchemists trying their best to join the Gilded Rose.

Let alone working in assembly lines, even if they had to work as apprentices, they still wouldn't frown...

"And what about the chamber of commerce's mercenary group?"

William had been waiting for a long time for Lin Yun to ask that question...

And now that the question had been posed, a proud smile appeared on his face...

But after hearing his words, Lin Yun had no choice but to admit that William had all the rights to be proud. William had done a very good job with the mercenary group.

The Great Mages that Lin Yun had been waiting for appeared, and not in a small number.

That group of 5th Rank Mages had stayed in the Bone Plane for half a month before, and in the past month, several hundred thousand Soul Fires had been turned into mana by the Black Death Rune. The benefits for a mage were simply unimaginable...

From what William said, the mana had already congealed into a liquid state. When leaving his tent in the morning, he would feel the damp atmosphere, and just breathing in would rouse his mana. Meditating there for a day was like meditating for a month in Noscent.

Moreover, Lin Yun had tailored a set of Meditation Law for them.

The speed at which that group of 5th Rank Mages had advanced could only be described as incredible.

There were already about thirty Great Mages now.

Following Lin Yun's instructions, these Great Mages had already returned and started accompanying the Gilded Rose's caravans.

These were all Lin Yun's arrangements. The Black Death Rune and the Soul Fires were a shortcut targeted at Mages, and once they became Great Mages, the mana accumulation wouldn't be as important as before. At that time, carving Magic Conducting Runes was more important.

And the Black Death Rune and the Soul Fires didn't help much with carving Magic Conducting Runes.

Naturally, Lin Yun had also made arrangements for the Magic Conducting Runes of those Great Mages. He was just waiting for everyone to leave the Bone Plane before teaching them methods to carve Magic Conducting Runes. In the future, the Gilded Rose would have a mercenary group with peak Magic Conducting Runes.

After making sure everything was fine with the Gilded Rose, Lin Yun locked himself in the alchemy laboratory once again, controlling the Gilded Rose's development remotely while continuing his simulation with the Book of Death's characters.

Time passed, and the day of the expedition to Vaughn's Treasury drew nearer.

Lin Yun completed his work for the day but was stopped in the lobby by William just as he was about to return to check on the Obsidian Flower's growth.

"Cousin..." William started to say something, but he hesitated.

"What's up?" Lin Yun was surprised, as he knew that his cousin wasn't one to be modest. 'Did he eat something that went bad? Why did he come to find me and then just look at me as if he is constipated?'

"Well, Cousin... Grandfather, that is, your grandfather's brother... Uhm, oh right, he is the Head of the Merlin Family..."

"Get to the point!" Lin Yun felt a vein twitching on his forehead...

"Ah, to the point, to the point..." William's expression became a bit grim as he suddenly pushed on, "In short, the Merlin Family sent someone to deliver me a message. The head of the family personally wrote the letter and he hopes that you can take a trip to Okland next month. The Head will arrange for you to enter the Merlin Family Ancestral Land and formally announce your return to the Merlin Family..."

As he said all that, William's voice became quieter and quieter...

William had been in Thousand Sails City for a while now, so how could he not know that his younger cousin had no interest in joining the Merlin Family?

But not relaying the information wouldn't do either. It was a letter written by the head of the family, and even if he was already part of the Gilded Rose, he was still a member of the Merlin Family in name. Since the head of the family personally wrote him a letter, William truly didn't dare to refuse to pass it along.

“Oh, and I have to say this first, I have no intention of acting as their representative. You can go if you want to go, and if you don’t want to go, you...” William started to say, unwilling to become the target of Lin Yun’s anger.

“I’ll go, why shouldn’t I?”

In the end, before William could finish his sentence, Lin Yun had already agreed.

“Ah?”

“What? I said I’ll go...” Lin Yun already had nine Magic Arrays, so as long as he could spend a bit more time, he would reach the peak of Great Mage realm. He was already looking for an excuse to go to the Merlin Family’s Ancestral Land.

But he hadn’t expected that the Merlin Family actually cooperated, giving him a pillow when he wanted to sleep...

If he missed this opportunity, then he would have to force his way into the Ancestral Land at some point.

As for returning to the Merlin Family, Lin Yun didn’t care about that.

He had never been worried about what William considered to be a very thorny problem.

If the Merlin Family was willing to show him enough sincerity... Then he wouldn’t mind returning to the Merlin Family. It was only a matter of meeting a few relatives. Of course, if the Merlin Family wanted to make him hand over the Nether Iron Vein and the Gilded Rose, then after leaving the Ancestral Land, if he just left while ignoring them, would they try to get him back?

“Boss, the Alchemist Guild sent someone to deliver a letter, please take a look.” Just as he was trying to leave the Gilded Rose, Remy rushed over with a sealed letter.

“Oh?” Lin Yun opened it, and as expected, it had been written by Lys himself. There wasn’t much written in the letter, just a few sentences that roughly explained that the troops gathered for the exploration of what they thought to be Vaughn’s Treasury were almost ready and that if Lin Yun had time, he should visit the Alchemist Guild for a meeting, where he could learn of all the forces coming along.

“Cousin, come with me.”

“Me?” William froze.

“Yes, you.” Lin Yun nodded as he turned to go.

Lin Yun called William along because he remembered that there were two Magic Tools in Vaughn’s Laboratory that were suitable for William.

And at the moment, only William and Faleau were trusted and powerful enough to assume heavy responsibility.

Faleau was in charge of the core skills of the Gilded Rose, and his future development path would be in the field of alchemy, while William would be one of the two leaders of the mercenary group. William

was also far stronger than Faleau, so Lin Yun planned on taking William along to the joint exploration of Vaughn's "Treasury" to give him the chance to get those two Spiritual Magic Tools.

But those two Spiritual Magic Tools had strange personalities. Even Lin Yun couldn't guarantee that William could gain the acknowledgement of these two Spiritual Magic Tools.

Everything depended on William Merlin himself...

Half an hour later, Lin Yun took William and entered the Alchemist Guild.

Molin wasn't the one who welcomed Lin Yun this time.

Bassoro and Granger went out to meet Lin Yun in person and politely invited him to the reception room at the top floor. There were already many people sitting there, and Lin Yun could recognize most of the famous people in Thousand Sails City there. Sasu of the Silver Moon Mercenaries, Saus of the Viper Nest, Monchi of the Monchi Family, Solomon of the Sage Tower... Seeing the two new arrivals, many people took the initiative to greet them, and Lin Yun also nodded in response.

"Merlin, come here, let me introduce you..." Lys had been sitting next to the fireplace while discussing with a middle-aged man. Upon seeing Lin Yun, the leader of the Alchemist Guild promptly got up to welcome him.

"Come, come Merlin, let me introduce you. This is Master Alchemist Fran from the Mercury Tower, one of the disciples of Artisan Nolan."

"Hello, Master Alchemist Fran." Lin Yun smiled as he politely extended his hand.

"Mafa Merlin, I know of you, Seth's disciple..." But Fran remained sitting motionlessly, without any intention of extending his hand to Lin Yun and not concealing the sneer on his face. "Looks like you didn't study under Seth for long, you didn't even learn basic courtesy. Even Seth would treat me very respectfully."

Chapter 192: Two Reasons

"Oh?" Lin Yun slowly withdrew his hand and his smile gradually faded away from his face as he looked at Fran.

"Merlin, Merlin, there is something I need to tell you..." When Lys saw that situation, he was suddenly startled. He hurriedly moved in between the two while secretly pulling at Lin Yun's sleeve, pleading with his eyes.

"..." When Lin Yun saw Lys acting like this, he felt a bit embarrassed, as he didn't wish to cause trouble for Lys. Leader Lys had always been nice to him, so Lin Yun couldn't reject him.

Thus, his cold expression slowly eased up.

"Come, come, Merlin, I have a few words to tell you..." After managing to persuade Lin Yun, Lys didn't dare to let the two talk to each other any further so he dragged Lin Yun to an empty corner of the room.

“Merlin, do me a favor, don’t lower yourself to argue with Fran, he... He has some mental issues.” Lys didn’t say more as he criticized Fran.

‘He certainly must have some mental issues, or else he wouldn’t cause trouble for Merlin... How can we have a joint exploration if a Master Alchemist dies before it even starts?’

It wasn’t recent news, so almost every member of the expedition knew of Merlin’s destructive power...

‘This Fran is really... The Mercury Tower sent you over for technical support, not to let you kill yourself... Why would you try to rush to your death?’

“Okay, I understand, Leader Lys. I’ll let you handle this.” Lin Yun understood Lys’ situation. A Master Alchemist from the Mercury Tower had come, and a disciple of Artisan Nolan at that. Regardless of what Lys thought, he had to keep this guest safe.

This was why Lin Yun didn’t make things difficult for Lys. He smiled and looked for an excuse to leave when he saw Solomon waving at him, which was exactly what he wanted. “Leader Lys, please excuse me,” he said, tilting his head at Solomon.

“Oh, okay...”

Lin walked through the reception room to reach a small area with a few chairs spread in a circle. Solomon was sitting at the head seat, and Lin Yun recognized the Viper Nest’s Bell, the Black Horn Auction House’s Cadgar, the Silver Moon Mercenaries’ Barry, the Crystal chamber of commerce’s Darian... All were peak mages of Thousand Sails City and Lin Yun understood with one glance that this was a gathering of peak mages with Solomon at the core.

When he saw Lin Yun coming over, Solomon pulled up a chair and set it next to himself. “Merlin, come sit here.”

“Okay.” Lin Yun greeted the mages he was familiar with while sitting next to Solomon.

But Solomon’s actions startled some mages, making them have seem thoughtful as they greeted Lin Yun.

Only Thousand Sails City’s peak mages could sit in that circle. The weakest of the weakest was on the level of the Viper Nest’s Bell. Even Ryan Monchi, who had become a Great Mage at his young age, wasn’t qualified to sit there. It reflected power and status.

It looked as if Solomon was only getting a chair, but the fact that he let Lin Yun sit next to him was like expressing that this young mage already had the qualifications to be next to him... Or the strength.

In the past, those mages wouldn’t have thought that way.

But it was completely different now.

In recent days, Mafa Merlin’s achievements had spread far and wide. Now, few people would think of him as only the son of Locke Merlin, because in their minds, Mafa’s recent achievements far surpassed those of his father, Locke Merlin.

The sudden rise of the Gilded Rose had already become legendary in Thousand Sails City. There would be someone in nearly every tavern narrating the story of the Gilded Rose while adding some extra details, recounting everything as if they had experienced it themselves.

But to these major forces of Thousand Sails City, what really mattered had always been Lin Yun's own strength.

At first, they only knew that this young Great Mage had single-handedly charged into the Poison Fog Canyon to take back a few Apprentice Alchemists belonging to the Gilded Rose, while also using a method that could only be described as rude and unreasonable to force Sauss to open a trade route for him.

Many people were shocked back then, but afterwards, they only felt that this young Great Mage had a promising future, more promising than Ryan's.

That was all...

But they soon felt that something was wrong...

Because it didn't take long for them to learn about the 9th Rank Great Mage from the Watson Family being beaten back by him, forcing everyone to pay more attention to him. That was a 9th Rank Great Mage, someone that might soon become a High Mage if given a bit of time, yet he had been sent running back with his face swollen. Didn't that mean that Mafa Merlin had strength near that of a High Mage?

But before they could react, the Watson Family sent a High Mage!

They had all been sure that Mafa Merlin would be in trouble.

But that High Mage was also sent back to Okland by Merlin, and this cause huge tremors to spread among the major forces of Thousand Sails City. They started warning all their subordinates to be careful when dealing with the Gilded Rose, and that they definitely couldn't annoy Mafa Merlin, because he was at least strong enough to defeat a High Mage.

Then, Cadgar, Monchi, and Sauss brought them even more eye-opening information.

Star Sage Jouyi himself acknowledged that Mafa Merlin already had the strength to take down a 9th Rank High Mage with him if backed into a corner!

The 2nd rate and 3rd rate forces of Thousand Sails city might only feel that Mafa Merlin was strong, but the true peak forces already knew that the strength of that man far surpassed the Great Mage realm to the point that no one knew his true limits. They only knew of the estimate that he could contend with a 9th Rank High Mage.

Thus, Solomon letting Lin Yun sit together with him only startled them for a bit. When they recovered, the tones they used when addressing Lin Yun were more enthusiastic and deferential.

"What happened, Merlin, why do you seem to be in such a bad mood?" Even though Lin Yun had been a bit far away, Solomon's eyesight was very good and he noticed quite a few things.

"It's nothing, just that Master Fran being unfriendly." Lin Yun didn't hide it.

“Haha, Fran?” Solomon threw a glance at Fran before saying, “It’s pretty normal for Fran to be unfriendly towards you...”

“Oh?” Lin Yun wrinkled his brow. It seemed that Solomon knew some hidden information.

“There are two reasons.” Solomon leaned against his chair to get into a more comfortable position before raising one finger. “The first reason is that there has been news coming from Okland saying that the Merlin Family already publicly revealed your existence and planned on finding a suitable time to let you return to the family.”

“The Merlin Family...” Lin Yun frowned. He didn’t care much why Fran was targeting him. Fran was only a 5th Rank High Mage, and no matter what he tried, he would be far from being a threat.

‘No, when we are in the Vaughn Laboratory, I should find a chance to get rid of him.’

In fact, the moves from the Merlin Family baffled Lin Yun.

The Merlin Family was a millennium-old family, how could they be in such a rush that they would let William Merlin try to convince him while openly announcing the news? Did the Merlin Family care about him that much?

Or was it for another reason?

“Fran doesn’t get along with the Merlin Family, this is an open secret in Okland.”

“No wonder...”

“Furthermore, Fran had originally applied to be the one in charge of breaking the arrays, but because the price he was asking was too high, he was turned down by Lys...” Solomon couldn’t help chuckling as he stopped there. “Do you know what Fran asked for? Half of the harvest from the entire trip to Vaughn’s Treasury...”

“...” Lin Yun originally thought that asking to have loot priority on magic materials was biting off more than he could chew, but he had never expected that someone would be even hungrier. ‘Half of Vaughn’s Laboratory, are you not afraid of bursting from being too full...?’

“And there you are, a descendant of the Merlin Family taking his deal from him, it would be strange for Fran to greet you happily...”

“So it was like this.” Lin Yun nodded with a smile and quickly threw Fran to the back of his mind.

But that wasn’t the case for Fran, on the other side of the reception room.

At this time, Lys and Fran were sitting next to the fireplace.

“Lys, I have to say, you made a big mistake. I wondered who it was, but it turns out to be that Mafa Merlin who studied under Seth. You were actually convinced by a kid... You’ll regret it after reaching Vaughn’s Treasury...”

“Haha, Nolan, the price you asked was far too great, I couldn’t convince the others...” Lys was still smiling, but he had already cursed Fran and all his ancestors in his heart. ‘Damn, I actually wanted to believe in you, but who would accept the price you demanded?’

'All of Thousand Sails City's major forces dispatched their troops and spared no effort to come to Vaughn's Treasury, yet you wanted to pop in, break the arrays, and leave with half the harvest! And you want me to explain that to the others?

Chapter 193: Setting Off

"You'll have to agree sooner or later," Fran sneered, before leaning against his chair and closing his eyes to rest.

"Haha..." Lys let out an awkward chuckle, but didn't leave the fireplace immediately. It was partially because of Fran's status as a disciple of Artisan Nolan, which made it so that wherever he went, he had to be respected.

Moreover, Lys was also unsure...

Merlin indeed had shown shocking skill when it came to alchemy, to the point that even Lys himself as a Master Alchemist was awed by him.

But Merlin was truly too young... He wasn't even twenty. Even if he had started studying the intricacies of alchemy at his birth, he could only have accumulated twenty years worth of knowledge. No matter how talented Merlin was, there would inevitably be some shortcomings when it came to his experience.

And cracking an array relied mostly on experience with other arrays.

It was due to this worry that Lys became so indecisive, feeling indignant about Fran's greed while having no other choice but to keep the snake at hand in case he was needed.

After all, who would dare guarantee that Merlin would definitely break the array? If Fran wasn't there and Merlin had issues cracking the array, wouldn't the joint exploration come to a halt?

Thus, Lys could only appease both sides, trying not to offend either.

"Oh right, Fran..." Lys hesitated a bit before saying, "I know of your grudges with the Merlin Family, but I hope that you can take the whole picture into account and not come into conflict with Merlin before the end of the joint exploration..."

"Conflict?" When Fran heard that, he slowly opened his eyes and looked at Lys for some time, before smiling. "No, no, there will naturally be no conflicts...."

"No, Fran, you don't understand, Merlin is different from other Great Mages..." Lys was a bit anxious, as Fran clearly wasn't listening to his words.

At this time, Lys very much wanted to tell him that there would naturally be no conflict since Merlin was someone that Star Sage Jouyi himself acknowledged as having the power of a 9th Rank High Mage... A 9th Rank High Mage facing a 5th Rank High Mage... It was like a stone facing an egg, would there be any conflict?

Unfortunately, Fran didn't pay any mind to his advice and just leaned back in his chair with his eyes closed while waving his hand at Lys. "Well, Lys, I'm a bit tired. I'll rest for now, wake me up when we have to leave..."

...

By nightfall, the leaders of the expedition had gathered. Now, the nine most powerful forces of Thousand Sails City were here. When gathered, they could be compared to powerful external forces like the Merlin Family.

At this time, these groups were coming out at full power.

Two of the three big shots of the Sage Tower had appeared along with seven Great Mages, and they promised to bring along about fifty Mages. The Silver Moon Mercenary Group was even fiercer. They brought three Expert Swordsmen, one High Mage, six Great Swordsmen, and two Great Mages, along with the whole elite Edge Rift expedition team.

The Alchemist Guild had an even more luxurious arrangement. They had one Master Alchemist and three Great Alchemists, and if the external help, Fran, was added, the line up was even more dazzling than the Sage Tower's.

The other forces such as the Viper Nest, the Black Horn Auction House, the Crystal chamber of commerce, and the Monchi Family, brought even more elites, not leaving any room for error.

It was actually the Gilded Rose who only brought two people.

One was Lin Yun, and the other was William.

But no one would dare to say that the lineup of the Gilded Rose was shabby.

The status of the Gilded Rose was too special in Thousand Sails City.

Before it had time to develop, many forces had hoped for it to go bankrupt because that would open up the alchemy market, and they all wanted a part of the profits.

But who would dare think so now?

If the Gilded Rose went bankrupt, the equipment and supplies of every organization would slowly decline over time. Others might not know, but the Silver Moon Mercenaries definitely knew that if it wasn't for the Gilded Rose supplying them with useful consumables, the casualties in their Edge Rift campaign would have at least doubled!

Even the previously hostile Monchi could only behave and reach out his hand with embarrassment from time to time, seeking some technical support.

Nothing could be done about it, as the best alchemy skills of Thousand Sails City were in the hands of the Gilded Rose. If Monchi didn't want the Twin Moons Splendor to go bankrupt, he could only reach his hand out for help and bear the humiliation. Even if he was cheated pretty badly by the old butler, it was always better than having to go bankrupt.

It could be said that although the Gilded Rose was only an alchemy store, it was counted as one of the top forces of Thousand Sails City.

And it was getting stronger and stronger...

In the past, these people could exclude the Gilded Rose from their ranks on the basis that it was weak.

But the weakness of the Gilded Rose seemed to have been fixed recently.

Many people discovered that Great Mages had started to appear within the Gilded Rose, and it wasn't just one or two, but a few dozens!

When this news spread, many leaders felt numb...

With this, along with the rumor of Lin Yun's shocking strength, most of them didn't dare to provoke the Gilded Rose.

It could now be said that the Gilded Rose had already become one of the major forces.

"Cousin, take a few Great Mages with you when leaving..." In the end, Lin Yun felt a bit embarrassed and whispered to William.

"Understood."

After the nine major forces learnt of the overall lineups, they continued with their meeting for a whole night.

An exploration of this scale was quite serious, the nine major forces of Thousand Sails City bringing out such power, along with the helper from the Mercury Tower, Fran. With the complicated relationships between everyone and the benefits to be divided up, too many things needed to be determined before setting off.

Such as the allotment of duties, the distribution of profits, and organization of the forces... Even smaller matters such as who would serve as scouts, who would be on watch duty on which nights, and who would serve as the main force depending on which circumstances. These were all decisions that needed to be taken care of before leaving, or else these would end up being timebombs that could explode during the exploration of the Vaughn "Treasury", sending them all to the afterlife.

When it came to benefits, everyone would talk without caring about others' feelings.

Even two forces who had a friendly relationship would still argue for a long time to send one more or one less person on watch duty.

Soon, the meeting sank into a slog of endless quarrels.

But fortunately, this had nothing to do with the Gilded Rose. After breaking the arrays, they would have loot priority over magic materials. The duty and the benefits of the Gilded Rose had already been negotiated beforehand. Thus, Lin Yun and William took a nap during the meeting, ignoring the squabbling between the other eight groups.

Lin Yun woke up at dawn of the next day.

“Eh, the ruckus is over?” Lin Yun got up from the bench in the corner and saw the exhausted expressions of all the leaders, their faces pale and their lips dry. Many of them looked quite haggard.

They had pulled an all-nighter and spent all that time arguing, so how could they not be in such state?

“Yes, it’s all over.” The one who answered was Solomon. Although the old man looked rather pale, some happiness could be heard within his voice. He should have gained a good harvest during the night.

“Looks like you were able to secure some decent terms?”

“How about I tell you on the way?”

“Ah?”

Lin Yun found out that every leader was leaving the reception room, one after the other.

As he left with Solomon, Lin Yun got more information. Everyone had to leave before noon to reach Edge Rift before nightfall. They could temporarily use the Silver Moon Mercenary Group’s camp there.

Three hours later, over a dozen carriages took everyone out of Thousand Sails City, leaving a huge cloud of dust behind them as they rushed in the direction of Edge Rift.

Lin Yun sat with William. After getting on, he asked William a few questions, and after ascertaining the extent of his magical abilities, Lin Yun gave him a Meditation Law Set before closing his eyes to continue his unfinished work.

Lin Yun had already lost count of how many attempts he had made...

Failure, failure, never-ending failure... But Lin Yun didn’t give up, continuously transferring all his runes to try simulating the mysterious characters of the Book of Death again and again, never losing focus despite meeting failure repeatedly.

Although the trip was boring, how could it compare to this never-ending chain of failures?

Lin Yun’s mind was fully immersed in this simulation to the point that he didn’t even notice that the sky had already darkened outside the carriage...

Pushing through these countless failures, Lin Yun finally saw the first opportunity for success. Several thousand runes rushed forward, forming a strange distortion as a figure that was 70% to 80% similar to the unlimited character was condensing.

Lin Yun was overjoyed and hurriedly focused on controlling the rune.

But he suddenly heard a loud sound above his head.

And with a rumble, the world seemed to shake.

Chapter 194: Draconic Beastman

“Fuck!” Lin Yun reflexively cursed and didn’t even think before casting a Flame Burst.

Lin Yun was already a peak 9th Rank Great Mage, and even for his rank, he was very powerful. It could be said that his strength had doubled after reaching his current state from the 5th rank. Even if High Mage Hoen appeared again, he wouldn't be Lin Yun's equal. From this, it could be imagined how powerful the Flame Burst that Lin Yun just cast was.

A rumble echoed as the dazzling flames of the spell spread, even causing the earth to shake.

"Who is it!?" Lin Yun then heard an utterly discomfited voice. "Fuck, whoever just tried to hit me with a sneak attack, fuck off!"

Lin Yun suddenly frowned. He opened the door to the carriage and got off.

At that time, Lin Yun discovered that the large group had already reached Edge Rift, and a camp was standing before him. From the symbols on the tents, it could be seen that this was the Silver Moon Mercenary Group's camp. Both sides of the camp were lined by precipitous mountain walls. Only one carriage could advance on the straight, narrow path, and that voice had come from the path ahead.

Lin Yun looked and found out that it was a young Mage in his late twenties. He was covered with black scorch marks, as if he had just been burnt. From the rampant mana fluctuations that he was releasing, it could be seen that he was only a 7th or 8th Rank Great Mage.

After thinking about the character that he had finally almost managed to simulate, Lin Yun glared at the flustered mage, emitting unconcealable killing intent. After having experienced countless defeats, he was disturbed by this person just as he was getting closer to success. It was obvious how angry Lin Yun would be.

Even if he would end up taking fewer detours in his later simulations after having that experience, how could he hold back the anger of being disturbed at such a critical moment?

Unfortunately, that young Great Mage didn't know that he had already stepped on a path leading to disaster.

"You people from Thousand Sails City, how could you be so shameless? If you want this Variant Beastman, then come get it through negotiation, why use such a despicable sneak attack?"

"Ah?" Lin Yun froze when he heard that. He cast a Mage Eye and found out that there was a monstrous-looking beastman not far from the young Great Mage. It looked thin and fragile, seeming far too different from the usual fierce beastmen. If not for the iconic dark red skin, Lin Yun would have never guessed that this was a beastman.

The strangest part was that this Variant Beastman was emitting an aura... It had the faint trace of Draconic power!

'Draconic Beastman?'

After feeling the faint Draconic power, Lin Yun immediately recognized it as a Draconic Beastman, one of the rumored descendants of the offspring of a Dragon and a beastman. Moreover, they couldn't emit such Draconic aura unless it was a first generation with the purest bloodline.

Draconic Beastmen were very rare.

They were born with two innate martial abilities. The Beastman bloodline granted them outstanding defenses as well as innately powerful mana, allowing them to easily reach a level comparable to that of an Expert Swordsman once they reached adulthood. If they received some martial inheritance, it wasn't impossible for them to enter the Sword Saint realm.

And their Draconic bloodline gave them shocking spellcasting abilities.

Moreover, this spellcasting ability was completely different from that of mages. This was Draconic Magic inherited from their bloodline. It was far simpler and more direct than human magic. They didn't need to study magic or remember incantations. They only needed to rely on their innate Draconic Bloodline to compare with human mages.

It was unexpected for an already captured Draconic Beastman to appear in Edge Rift.

'But didn't the method to nurture Draconic Beastmen first appear a few hundred years later, among the corpses of the ones who claimed to be descendants of Devils, after the Gaugass Battlemages were eliminated by the Black Tower?

'Could the way to nurture Draconic Beastmen have appeared earlier?'

This possibility startled Lin Yun.

But he quickly understood that he was just scaring himself.

"I must warn you that the blood of this Variant Beastman is a magic material that my teacher, Fran, personally requested. Try to steal it and see if you can handle the rage of a Master Alchemist!"

"Magic material?" Lin Yun didn't know whether to laugh or cry. 'Using the blood of a Draconic Beastman as a magic material, only an imbecile like Fran would make such a mistake.'

Half of the blood of a Draconic Beastman came from a Beastman, and half from a Dragon. It was very unstable when used as a magic material. In the entire Andlusa kingdom, perhaps only those few Artisans could control the blood of Draconic Beastmen...

As for Fran...

Maybe in his next life...

Lin Yun wasn't interested in saying anything else and directly extended his hand, releasing an immense magic power that pulled the small Draconic Beastman through the air and softly land in front of him.

Lin Yun checked it and noticed that this Draconic Beastman had been seriously injured and was unconscious. There were traces of wounds from magic attacks everywhere on his body, some burns, some frostbites, and even if they weren't fatal, they still totaled several dozens. With one look, it could be seen that he had been tortured.

After thinking about it for a bit, Lin Yun took a dagger from his pocket and made a light cut on a finger of that Draconic Beastman. A few drops of red blood fell in a test tube Lin Yun had quickly readied. Not one drop of blood was spilled.

'Sure enough, it's a Draconic Beastman' Lin Yun didn't have time to examine the blood within the test tube before the incision made by the dagger quickly healed.

Lin Yun knew that this was the powerful self-healing ability from the beastman heritage. This race living in the extreme north naturally had stronger bodies than humans.

"You dare!" After the Draconic Beastman flew away from him, the young Great Mage's anger was palpable. He didn't even stop to consider whether or not a mage that could instantly grab the "Variant" Beastman from over a dozen meters away was someone he could deal with...

The young Great Mage only knew that this was the person who had attacked him and also wrecked the task his teacher had given him.

Blinded by his anger, the young Great Mage raised his magic staff and spat out an incantation, making three Frost Spikes sail through the air, leaving a trail of frost behind them while emitting a piercing sound.

"Oh?" The instant the Frost Spikes appeared, Lin Yun looked up at them, seeming unperturbed.

But the mana fluctuations around him were seething.

The young Great Mage seemed shocked, because he clearly saw those three lightning-fast spikes stop in mid-air.

"Did you know that the Earthquake you just cast disturbed me and made me lose the opportunity to break through?"

"It did?" The ease with which he stopped the spikes had already startled the young Great Mage, but he wasn't willing to yield. "Disturb you? I don't have the time to care about that!"

"I see..." Lin Yun shook his head and remained silent.

Then, a sharp sound echoed once again...

The three Frost Spikes rotated in mid-air and flew back at an unimaginable speed. This speed was too fast, to the point that no one was able to react. The young Great Mage didn't even have the time to scream before the three Frost Spikes pierced his chest...

"You... You..." The young Great Mage stood there in a daze, blood flowing out of his wounds like water from a fountain, disbelief etched in his face, before falling down on the ground.

"Mafa Merlin!" Fran had just gotten down from his carriage.

And as a result, the drama continued.

"Mafa Merlin! You... You killed Rieser!" Rage was burning in Fran's eyes.

This was Fran's most valued disciple, in his late twenties, yet already an 8th Rank Great Mage and also a Great Alchemist on the verge of becoming a Master Alchemist. Fran had even planned on using most of his harvest from Vaughn's Treasury on this disciple to quickly let him enter the High Mage realm and Master Alchemist realm.

Fran knew that he himself wasn't innately gifted. It was already quite fortunate that he had managed to become a Master Alchemist, but he would never be able to become an Artisan. He had placed all his hopes on this disciple of his.

But now, one day away from reaching Vaughn's Treasury, his most valued disciple had been killed.

The three Frost Spikes piercing his chest also severed Fran's inheritance. For Fran, this was hatred he would never be able to quell!

"Turns out he was a disciple of Master Fran... I'm sorry, I didn't have the time to care about that..." Lin Yun softly answered.

"You didn't care about that!?" Fran stopped, his red eyes glaring at Lin Yun, wishing he could tear him into pieces at this instant.

"Yes, I just told this Great Mage Rieser that his Earthquake spell disturbed me and made me lose the opportunity to achieve a breakthrough. He answered that he didn't have time to care about it." Lin Yun didn't back down and matched his gaze.

"Even if Rieser disturbed you, how could you kill him for an insignificant breakthrough opportunity?" Fran answered in his rage.

Chapter 195: Time Hand

"An insignificant breakthrough opportunity?" Lin Yun was so angry that he let out a somewhat manic laugh as he said this.

Even Lin Yun couldn't comprehend the characters of the Book of Death or the power they contained.

After cracking the unlimited character, Lin Yun understood that he had been walking on a thorny path filled with danger. At the end of that path was a world that no mage had ever seen before, whether in the past or the future...

Lin Yun didn't know what that world would look like, nor did he know if he would be able to step into that world...

But he knew that the key to reaching it was merging the mysterious characters with his Magic Arrays.

Lin Yun had just seen a shadow of that critical key, but he had been interrupted by the hot-headed Rieser...

And that opportunity was dismissed as "insignificant" by Fran...

Lin Yun really wanted to ask, 'If that opportunity was so insignificant, then can you give me a few of them?'

"Variant Beastman?" As Lin Yun didn't know whether to laugh or cry, Fran's sight fell on the Draconic Beastman, and his original anger turned to greed. "Turns out you killed Rieser for that Variant Beastman, you are quite vicious, Merlin..."

“...” Lin Yun was speechless.

“You are quite daring, Mafa Merlin, killing is one thing, but lying to cover it up...”

The fleet of carriages had already stopped. Many of the leaders had heard the argument between the two and were coming out from their carriages to nervously watch this scene.

“Everyone, everyone from Thousand Sails City, look at this! This is Mafa Merlin from the Gilded Rose, the one who claimed to be able to crack all the arrays from the Vaughn Treasury, but he did such a nauseating thing on the way! For a Variant Beastman, he killed my disciple Rieser, and still dared to blame him for disturbing his breakthrough!” Seeing the opportunity, Fran raised his voice.

“Leader Monchi, you come say something. Does this kind of person have the qualifications to join this exploration?”

Fran managed to find Monchi among these leaders.

Fran knew of the bad relationship between Monchi and the Gilded Rose. The Twin Moons Splendor and the Gilded Rose were enemies that couldn't co-exist. By calling Monchi out there, Fran wanted to pull him to his side.

Fran felt that as long as Monchi wasn't a fool, he should know which side to choose.

Doing this was equivalent to extending an olive branch. As long as he was willing to grab it, he would have the opportunity to develop a relationship with the Mercury Tower. With that, defeating the Gilded Rose and gaining a monopoly on the alchemy market of Thousand Sails City wouldn't be impossible.

Unfortunately, Monchi didn't share the same opinion.

He was already cursing Fran and Fran's ancestors in his mind. ‘Bastard, did I kill your father or your son? Why would you try to draw me into this? Thousand Sails City's nine forces are here, you could have chosen anyone, so why did you choose me? Do you hate me?’

‘...It's no good, I have to save myself, I can't fall in that bastard's trap.’

“Erm, Master Fran, those of us from Thousand Sails City all know how Mafa Merlin conducts himself, it is strange for something like that to happen. Did you carefully investigate?” Monchi put in a good word for Merlin while feeling as if his heart was bleeding.

In reality, Monchi very much wanted to agree with Fran and try to kick Mafa Merlin out of this expedition and make him a public enemy in Thousand Sails City.

But he didn't dare.

The Monchi Family couldn't afford to offend him.

The average person might think that the Gilded Rose was just an alchemy store and that no matter how wealthy and powerful it was, it wouldn't be able to influence Thousand Sails City.

And as one of the oldest families of Thousand Sails City that had been through a dozen generations, how could it be that the Monchi Family couldn't afford to offend a mere alchemy store?

But Monchi clearly knew that this was beyond the Monchi Family.

The rise of the Gilded Rose was too abnormal.

It could be seen from the attitude of the Sage Tower.

At the start, the Sage Tower would never haggle over prices with the Gilded Rose, and whatever price the Gilded Rose offered would be the price they paid.

But now, the two sides would often argue to the point of being flushed with anger over just dozens of golds. Table flipping and glass breaking would be a frequent matter. Monchi even heard rumors that there were even some instances of them almost coming to blows.

Some said with certainty that this was a sign that the relations between the two groups had worsened and that it was time for the Monchi Family to counterattack!

Unfortunately, Monchi knew that this wasn't their relationship worsening, this was only the Sage Tower changing their attitude.

In the past, the Sage Tower had acted like a big brother helping its little brother. 100,000 golds, 80,000 golds, it didn't matter to the Sage Tower. But it wasn't the same now, because the Sage Tower was already considering the Gilded Rose as a major force like themselves. Since they had the same status, they had to do things in a strict businesslike manner even for dozens of golds... No, even for a small handful of golds!

Since that was the attitude of the Sage Tower, how could the other forces dare to provoke the Gilded Rose?

The current Gilded Rose had already joined the ranks of the top forces of Thousand Sails City.

It was especially clear to Monchi after he saw Star Sage Jouyi's simulation of that battle between Merlin and High Mage Hoen. He no longer dared to have any designs on Merlin after that...

"Leader Monchi, you are colluding with Merlin!" Fran became hostile faster than the turn of a page. Seeing that Monchi wouldn't stand with him, he berated him out of self-righteousness.

"..." Monchi's mood plummeted as he thought, 'Fran, so that's how it'll be... Since you can't pull me in, you are smearing my name! Good, you aren't the only one that can use this move!'

"Master Fran, I just heard people say that it was your disciple Rieser that made the first move. Are you saying that if a disciple of a Master Alchemist of the Mercury Tower is in the wrong, Mafa Merlin cannot defend himself?"

"Nonsense!"

"Whether it's nonsense or not, wouldn't you understand if you asked others?"

Seeing that he couldn't get anything out of him, Fran coldly snorted and aimed at Lin Yun once again. "Mafa Merlin, regardless of the reason, it's a fact that you killed Rieser. As Rieser's teacher, I have to avenge him. I'll give you two choices. Kill yourself as an apology to Rieser, or fight me in a fair fight."

"..."

When they heard Fran's words, everyone from Thousand Sails City felt like spitting...

'Choice? What kind of choice is that! A High Mage challenging a Great Mage, and you dare to use the words "fair fight" ...'

Fran seemed to know that the words "fair fight" were inappropriate and thus immediately started moving his mana before he could be ridiculed.

"Time Hand, that's Time Hand!" the Viper Nest's Bell couldn't help exclaiming the moment he saw those mana fluctuations.

Indeed, Fran's mana fluctuations formed some sort of visible aura and a faint hourglass could be seen condensing above his head. This was the sign of the Mercury Tower's strongest Magic Conducting Rune, the Time Hand.

Let alone Bell, even Solomon couldn't help frowning...

"Mercury Tower's most powerful Magic Conducting Rune" wasn't an empty title. When he was still in the Cloud Tower, Solomon had already seen its might. Even if it wasn't really related to the Time Law, its frightening casting speed was enough to give any mage a headache.

It was even said that a mage with Time Hand could cast spells twice as fast as a mage without it.

Fran might be a 5th Rank High Mage, but with this special Magic Conducting Rune, his true power might be comparable to that of an 8th Rank or 9th Rank High Mage.

"Merlin..." Solomon glanced anxiously at Lin Yun.

Solomon was planning to step in and help out. With his strength as a 9th Rank High Mage, there wouldn't be any problem. At that time, he could force Fran to stop causing problems for Merlin and this conflict would end here for now.

"Rest assured..." But before Solomon could say any more, Lin Yun shook his head. "But that's the Time Hand," he continued. How could Solomon be at ease?

"I know, Time Hand." After saying this, Lin Yun slowly walked forward. "Master Fran, you should have come out to stand up for your disciple faster, and honestly, you talk too much..."

"Good, good, good..." Lin Yun's tone thoroughly angered Fran. The 5th Rank High Mage fumed as his mana fluctuations rose up, and the hourglass above his head quickly rotated as a spell was immediately cast.

It was fast, very fast.

Everyone felt the power of Time Hand. Fran was able to cast spells far too quickly, at a speed even beyond their expectations. Lava Bursts were cast one after the other, turning an area of a few dozen meters into a field of magma and flames. He immediately followed this by making Frost Lances fall like rain as if they didn't need casting, sealing Lin Yun's way out.

Only sharp sounds could be heard in the air as over a dozen Frost Lances were shot at almost the same time...

None of the mages present were weak, with the lowest ranked mage being a 5th Rank Great Mage. But seeing Fran's heaven-defying casting speed made all these people pale in surprise. This was the might of one of the peak Magic Conducting Runes, and it was overwhelming...

Chapter 196: Two Choices

In contrast, the response on Lin Yun's side could be said to be quite conforming with the norms. A Freeze spell froze the flowing magma while two lights, one red and one blue, coiled around him to form an Ice Fire Shield, which appeared just in time to intercept the Frost Lances...

But how could a possessor of Time Hand stop there? Just as the Frost Lances shot out, Fran was already starting his next incantation for Fire Dragon Roar, one of the most time-consuming incantations among the 6th Tier Spells, specialized in breaking through all protective spells. Let alone an Ice Fire shield, even a Runic Shield might not be able to hold, depending on the difference between the mana of both sides.

But the incantation of Fire Dragon Roar was too long...

Although every mage knew that the spell was very useful for breaking magical defenses, no mage would choose that spell in a duel, because time wouldn't allow for it. The enemy could use the casting time to cut the caster's throat with a simple Wind Blade.

But Fran didn't seem to have an issue showing the might of Fire Dragon Roar.

This was the advantage brought by Time Hand.

While the Ice Fire Shield crazily rotated to block the Frost Lances, one-third of Fran's incantation was already finished, and the Runic Shield he had prepared hadn't even been needed yet.

In other words, the Fire Dragon Roar was almost certain to be completed.

At this time, Solomon was ready to cast a Counterspell to stop it. When Fran completed his Fire Dragon Roar, he would use his power as a 9th Rank High Mage to forcibly suppress the mana and extinguish the Fire Dragon Roar. Otherwise, Merlin wouldn't be able to block the spell, even if he had ten Ice Fire Shields.

Fran chanted faster and faster, and the surrounding fire elements were roused, making the air around gradually start burning. All the onlookers stopped breathing, knowing that the spell would be completed in a split second.

When Lin Yun's Ice Fire Shield intercepted the last Frost Lance, he seemed to be on the verge of collapse.

But strangely, despite his Ice Fire Shield being nearly broken, Lin Yun didn't seem to panic when he heard Fran's incantation. He gently held his Spiritual Magic Staff and began a quick and hurried incantation.

'How could he try to chant a spell at this time?'

A few Great Mages who were watching inwardly scolded, 'The Fire Dragon Roar is almost complete, yet you are just leisurely chanting a spell. Using Fire Elemental Incarnation would be a good choice as it would at least raise your fire resistance, increasing your chances of surviving the impact...'

'Hold on, this incantation, these mana fluctuations, why does it feel like déjà vu?'

"Fire Dragon Roar!" Solomon was the first to react.

Indeed, Lin Yun was actually chanting the incantation for Fire Dragon Roar.

'Crazy!'

At this time, Solomon didn't care about his status and immediately got ready to cast his Counterspell.

But just as he was about to cast it, he felt something wrong. Why was the casting speed of these two so different?

'No, no, Fran with his Time Hand isn't the faster one.'

Solomon's eyes widened in surprise as the dazzling flames soared up and turned into a flaming Dragon that burned at a heaven-destroying temperature. He bared his flaming fangs as he pounced forward.

That was Lin Yun's Fire Dragon Roar!

It was as if time froze. Everyone stood there in a daze, looking at the flaming Dragon suddenly appearing, looking at the raging flames knocking against the Runic Shield, watching the gorgeous magical runes surging...

In the end, they watched as Fran was sent flying like a cannonball.

All the onlookers were frozen stiff, standing still like statues, disbelief written all over their faces. It truly felt like they were in a dream. No one had expected that this battle would end up with such a dramatic outcome.

A Great Mage had cast Fire Dragon Roar...

Moreover, he had cast it at least twice as fast as Fran, despite the latter possessing the Time Hand Magic Conducting Rune.

What kind of situation was this?

It wasn't just the people of Thousand Sails City that couldn't understand. Even Fran, who had experienced everything himself, couldn't understand.

The Runic Shield had absorbed most of the damage from the Fire Dragon Roar, but to Fran, who didn't have a strong body, just one-tenth of that power was something he couldn't handle.

Over half of his mage robe had burnt due to the high temperature, and the powerful impact had broken half of his ribs. It could be said that Fran was quite helpless now. The only thing he could do was watch as the young Great Mage slowly walked over...

"You... How could that be..." Fran wanted to get up, but he immediately spat blood due to his injuries.

“Master Fran, take a rest. Talking too much isn’t good for you.” Lin Yun walked over to Fran and stepped on his head, pressing it into the sandy soil.

Fran let out painful yelps as he tried to struggle for his life. But what force could he muster with his serious injuries? Besides making him look like an ostrich, struggling didn’t have any meaning...

“But you were right about one point. I didn’t learn any courtesy from studying under Seth...”

After saying that, Lin Yun didn’t care about the dullard anymore and directly returned to his carriage with the Draconic Beastman.

“Cousin, give me two Health Potions.”

“Eh...” William promptly fished two potions from his pocket, but after seeing the state of the weak Draconic Beastman, he couldn’t help asking, “But his injuries are so heavy, would Health Potions have any effect?”

“Don’t worry about it.” Lin Yun wasn’t worried at all. This was a Draconic Beastman, holder of two bloodlines, the Beastman bloodline and the Draconic bloodline. His recuperative ability was something humans couldn’t imagine.

And sure enough, after receiving the two Health Potions, the Draconic Beastman moved a bit. His fingers twitched twice before his eyes slowly opened.

But then, a roar echoed.

Before William could react, the Draconic Beastman had sprung up, his dark red arm moving like a viper as he grabbed William’s neck.

“Who are you?” These words were spoken in Beastman Language.

“Let... Let... Let go!” William’s face was pale. The dark red arm was like a pair of iron pliers slowly tightening, making it difficult for him to breathe. “Cousin... Cousin, save me...”

“Let him go.” Lin Yun spoke in Beastman Language.

“Tell me who you are or I’ll kill him!” The Draconic Beastman remained unmoved as his grip tightened on William’s neck, an ominous glint flashing in his eyes.

“Forget it...” Lin Yun gave up on communicating because the Beastman was too agitated, so he raised one finger, casting a Flame Shackle.

In a flash, the Flame Shackle tightened around the arm of the Draconic Beastman, making the latter shriek from the shockingly high temperature. Just as he let go of William, he struggled with all his might to try to break free of the binding of the Flame Shackle.

But how could he break free from a Flame Shackle cast by Lin Yun?

The Flame Shackle was like a python. The more the Draconic Beastman struggled, the tighter it became.

The Draconic Beastman had just woken up from being unconscious, so he was originally at his weakest. There was no need to mention the result of being bound by a Flame Shackle cast by Lin Yun. It was only

a short time before he fell to the ground, with burn marks appearing on the dark red skin. Besides grunting in pain, he didn't have the strength to do anything else.

"I told you to let me go..." William massaged his neck and kicked the Draconic Beast to alleviate some of his bad mood. 'Damn, that's the outcome of doing a good deed? If I had known earlier, I would never have taken out those two bottles of Health Potions...'

Lin Yun waved his hand and scattered the Flame Shackle. "Okay, William, give him two more Health Potions."

"Ah?"

"I need to ask him some things."

"Okay..." William begrudgingly took another two Health Potions from his pocket.

After drinking the potions, the injuries caused by the Flame Shackle disappeared from the Draconic Beastman's body, but this time, he didn't make any aggressive moves.

The power that the human mage had displayed had already left a deep shadow in his heart. He even had a feeling that if he tried to resist once again, that mage would kill him without hesitation.

"Listen, I'll ask you a few questions. You only have five seconds to think. If I don't obtain a satisfactory answer or if I feel that you are lying, I'll gift you with two choices: lay down on a refining table as I dissect you, or be turned into magic materials."

"What if he doesn't understand Common Language?" William curiously asked.

Lin Yun thought for a moment before answering, "Then he is useless."

Chapter 197: The Rats Among Beastmen

The Draconic Beastman slightly drew back, fear showing in his eyes...

"Okay, first question, your name."

"Xiuban, Sir, my name is Xiuban Uranus!" The Draconic Beastman indeed knew Common, but his accent was quite heavy so it was hard to understand him.

"Uranus? So it truly was a Highland Beastman," Lin Yun mumbled to himself. Uranus was a typical name used by the Highland Beastman family. They lived in the Dark Highlands for generations and their dark red skin and pale stature were the most obvious signs.

"Sir, you... you know about Highland Beastmen?" The Draconic Beastman was clearly shocked.

"Of course I know..." Lin Yun's lips twitched. 'How could I not know about Highland Beastmen, I even know that you guys are called the rats among Beastmen. For countless years, the two major powers of the Dark Highlands used nearly every derogatory term to describe you: scoundrels, despicably shameless, the ones who take advantage of the situation, the adulterous ones, the petty filth... Such an ear-piercing reputation, how could I not know...'

“Second question, why are you in Edge Rift.”

But as a result of this question, Xiuban suddenly started wailing...

“Sir, please help, please help...” Xiuban held onto Lin Yun’s legs while rubbing his teary face on the brand new robe. He wept as he complained, “I... I was caught by these Sharp Edge Trolls, Sir, help me, help me! Those damn Sharp Edge Trolls killed my seven younger brothers and eight younger sisters... It’ll be my turn soon. Thankfully Sir appeared. If you can send me back to the Dark Highlands, our tribe will be grateful to you...”

“Will they now? Wouldn’t they use stone axes and stone spears to show their appreciation?” Lin Yun kicked the Draconic Beastman. “Say, Where is the Edge Rift’s Troll’s Ancestral Tool?”

“Ancestral Tool?” Xiuban froze when he heard those words and immediately retreated a few steps, a vigilant expression on his face. “What Ancestral Tool?”

“Looks like you don’t want to talk...” Lin Yun smiled. He didn’t ask anything else as he took out a potion from his pocket. “Drink it.”

After grabbing the bottle, the Draconic Beastman subconsciously asked, “What is it?”

“Sleeping potion, one bottle can make you sleep for eight hours. During these eight hours, you won’t feel any pain, even as I dissect you.”

“...” The Draconic Beastman held his breath, his hands shaking as he threw the potion back as if it wasn’t a potion, but rather a viper.

“I’ll ask again, where is the Troll’s Ancestral Tool. I have a dozen of ways to force you to drink this potion if your answer is still unsatisfactory.”

“On... On me.”

“Good.” Lin Yun smiled with satisfaction and extended his hand. “Hand it over.”

“This is something that it took me a lot of effort to get...” Xiuban unwillingly fished a necklace from his pocket. The necklace was made out of the teeth of various kinds of beasts. There seemed to be thirty to forty of them, and when Lin Yun held that necklace, he seemed to hear a rumbling sound, as if countless beasts were running in a forest, as if the souls of countless beasts were howling in grief.

Lin Yun knew that this was the power of this necklace. He shook his head and put the necklace away in his pocket while kicking Xiuban to the side. “You spent a lot of effort stealing it...”

“Finding it is different from stealing...” The Draconic Beastman mumbled.

But Lin Yun wasn’t paying attention to him at this time. He poured mana into the Soul Walker. “Lord Shawn, I’ll hand it over to you.”

“Who did you cheat this time?” Lord Shawn’s half material, half immaterial silhouette gradually appeared in the carriage. His voice sounded even lazier than before, completely different from that time in the prince tomb.

In Shawn's words, this was the indolent temperament that would naturally develop by being a superior lifeform.

When he signed the contract with Lin Yun, Shawn was still unwilling. He had felt that in any case, a Great Mage would never be able to support a True Spirit Magic Tool.

But he had never expected that the ability of that Great Mage would far exceed what he could have imagined. From their contract till now, he had never cut Shawn's mana supply, and he even cut a deal not long ago in which he had obtained a few dozen Spirit mana crystals.

It was then that Shawn finally believed in the words the Human had used at the start; he would truly have the chance to recover to his peak in this Human's hands. And although he was still showing the same arrogance as before, when Lin Yun asked him to write a contract, he would always do his work properly.

Of course, Shawn was dissatisfied right now, because the one being deceived this time was a mere Beastman!

'Damn, Beastmen have low IQ, why does he still need Lord Shawn?'

Lord Shawn thought for a bit before taking the piece of paper from Lin Yun's hands. He stretched out his claws and quickly wrote a very harsh servant contract.

Lin Yun took the contract and looked at it. He had no choice but to admire Shawn's progress.

"Xiuban, is it..." Lin Yun forced a friendly smile while placing the slave contract in front of Xiuban. "We Humans are different from you Beastmen. We believe in fair trade. I just saved you from the hands of a vile mage earlier, so in exchange, you will sign this slav... ahem, sign this contract..."

"Si... Sir, please let me off..." Xiuban started shaking when he saw the countless runes on the paper.

'How could I sign something I don't understand?'

"Of course, if you don't agree, nothing can be done about it. You can give up some organs in exchange. I've always wanted to research the difference between the hearts of Beastmen and Humans. Oh, right, the kidneys are also an option, I might be able to crack the secrets of Beastmen's low fertility. You might become a Hero among Beastmen then, as someone who gave up their kidneys to help an entire race prosper. This is a huge contribution too..."

Xiuban paled when Lin Yun started talking about organs. And when he mentioned kidneys, Xiuban almost went crazy..."

"I'm signing!"

...

The sky slowly darkened. Lys had already sent someone to notify them that the troops would rest and reorganize in the Silver Moon Mercenary camp. But William and Merlin were mages, so they were used to replacing sleep with meditation, and thus the two didn't leave the carriage and only underwent deep meditation.

But before going into deep meditation, Lin Yun let out the Upper Rank Flame Spirit, Syudos.

As for Xiuban...

Xiuban proved that the Highland Beastmen were indeed the rats of the Beastmen, they were truly untrustworthy.

At first, Xiuban was still apprehensive and hid in a corner of the carriage, afraid that this sinister Human would find a way to torture him, but after almost an hour, Xiuban found out that Lin Yun's eyes had remained closed all along.

Xiuban suddenly recalled something. 'Could it be the meditation state the Elders talked about?'

He then started thinking back on their words. To a mage, meditation was like entering their own spiritual world. Although Xiuban didn't know what a spiritual world was, it seemed that it should be a state where they wouldn't be disturbed.

With that in mind, Xiuban decided to probe things a bit.

At first, Xiuban pretended to be careless and touched the door to the carriage, making some slight noise. But after a few times, Xiuban found that this sinister Human Mage truly didn't react. He inwardly smirked and got up, taking two steps in the spacious carriage.

'Haha, still no reaction!'

At that time, Xiuban grew more courageous...

The Draconic Beastman sneakily moved to the door before quietly opening it...

The air of freedom was truly great, and the outside world was very vast....

Xiuban felt that this was his best chance to flee. The sinister Human Mage and that slow companion of his had definitely entered some sort of meditative state. If he didn't flee now, then when would he?

As for the flames the Human had released...

Xiuban knew about it, as he had seen many Human Mages cast this kind of illumination in the Dark Highlands, it should be called Light, or maybe Bright?

In any case, it was a harmless spell...

The carriage's door was pushed out little by little. Xiuban's feet were on the ledge. With just a light jump, he would be able to breathe the air of freedom. Thinking of this, the Draconic Beastman got impatient. One foot rushed towards the ground...

But it was followed by a scream...

In that split second, Xiuban felt his soles burning. With one look below he could see that the ground had turned into lava. Fortunately, the Draconic Bloodline Xiuban considerable resistance to fire, making it so that the lava was only burning him rather than anything worse.

The Draconic Beastman was horrified and quickly lifted his foot.

But there was not enough time.

Just as Xiuban let out a blood-curdling scream, the ball of flames that he had thought was a Light spell had already transformed into Flame Shackles, quickly coiling around and bundling the Draconic Beastman.

Chapter 198: Whipping

“Want to run?” Syudos didn’t know how much he had struggled after being suppressed by the Blood Binding. At first, he was still able to breathe in the Magic Arrays, but when Lin Yun advanced to become a 9th Rank Great Mage, Syudos’ temper completely disappeared...

The power of nine Magic Arrays completely pressured Syudos to the point where he couldn’t stand up anymore. He could only let Lin Yun flatten him, and thus, Syudos spent his days in the dark, unable to resist.

Today was the first time Lin Yun released Syudos, and he finally had the opportunity to feel some happiness by making someone else suffer, so how could Syudos be kind to Xiuban?

“Good, even I can’t get away, so how could you dare run?”

The Flame Shackle flashed and coiled around Xiuban. The shockingly high temperature made Xiuban scream.

“I only wanted to breathe the air outside! I swear I didn’t think of running!” The Draconic Beastman looked as if he was drowning, waving his hands wildly.

But no matter how much he struggled, how could he escape Syudos? He was a genuine Upper Rank Flame Spirit. His Human Incarnation form already had the strength of a peak 9th Rank High Mage. And now that he was appearing in his Flame Spirit form, his power was on the level of an Archmage.

Xiuban was a 9th Rank Great Swordsman at best, and one who hadn’t received any martial training. In Syudos’ eyes, he was no different from an ant.

“Lord Syudos said that you wanted to run, you don’t dare to acknowledge it?” The Flame Spirit was unable to restrain his anger and directly dangled Xiuban on the carriage, hurling raging Flame Shackles at him.

After whipping him over a hundred times, Syudos had vented some anger and felt better as he watched the blood dripping down from Xiuban’s lacerated flesh. “I shall see if you still dare to run!”

“No more... I don’t dare...” The Draconic Beastman sat down in a corner of the carriage after being freed from the Flame Shackles. He was in a very pitiful state while inwardly cursing, ‘Fuck, I’m not crazy enough to go for another beating...’

“Count yourself clever,” Syudos coldly snorted before transforming back into a ball of fire floating in the spacious carriage.

But Xiuban didn't dare to think that this was a harmless Light spell anymore. Syudos' lesson had almost caused the Draconic Beastman to lose his life. He didn't dare to move for the rest of the night, and each time he looked at that ball of flame, he would feel a chill in his heart.

Lin Yun recovered from his state of meditation at dawn. He took a glance at the Xiuban in the corner and saw the countless burnt marks. Lin Yun naturally understood what had happened.

"Slept well?"

"Slept very well, very well..." The Draconic Beastman's tears flew down, and he had no choice but to squeeze out a stiff smile.

"Looks like you got along with Syudos..." Lin Yun smiled and withdrew the Upper Rank Flame Spirit. He then took out a palm-sized hand-crossbow from his pocket. "I still have to research that beast-tooth necklace and can't return it to you for the time being, so you can use this hand-crossbow for now..."

"Ah?"

"Ah what? Don't mess with it, it's poisonous..."

"You are really giving it to me?" Xiuban naturally knew that it was poisonous. One of the reasons the Highland Beastmen were known as the Rats of the Beastmen was that apart from their legendary poor ethics, they were very good at using poison. From the most common Fighter to the immoral Elders, they were all experts with poisons. As for the Witch Doctors who were regarded as the souls of the Highland Beastmen tribes, they had been exposed to poison since birth. Every drop of their blood would carry intense toxicity.

How could Xiuban, who had been born in a Highland Beastmen tribe, not recognize that this hand-crossbow used poison?

The problem was that the poison was too toxic...

Xiuban only needed to smell it from a distance to know that the toxicity of that hand-crossbow could instantly kill a magic beast over level twenty. The most frightening part was that this hand-crossbow itself carried very powerful magic properties. It could be considered as a perfect combination of poison and magic enchantment. There was even some spirituality coming from the hand-crossbow. Just by holding it in his hand, Xiuban felt incredibly powerful.

Xiuban even felt that he could defeat an Expert Swordsman without any problem.

"Wh... Why?" A shocked expression appeared on Xiuban's dark red face.

"Country bumpkin, do you know what contract you have signed?" Lin Yun didn't have time to say anything before Lord Shawn's voice was transmitted out loud from his ring. "You actually signed a total of seven clauses. Don't even ask about the details, you only need to know this, you already sold every part of your body to Merlin. In other words, ever since you signed that contract, you became Merlin's personal belonging. How could Merlin not be generous when it comes to protecting his personal belongings?"

"..." The Draconic Beastman's face paled. He looked at the hand-crossbow, then at the calm Merlin.

“Private belonging is a bit too excessive, there is a better way to put it...” Lin Yun conscientiously thought for a bit, before asking the Draconic Beastman, “Do you think being a pet sounds better?”

“...”

After breakfast, the expedition left the Silver Moon Mercenary camp. They walked on the rugged path for two days. The path from Thousand Sails City to the Four Seasons Canyon would take five days. During that boring journey, the leaders of the nine forces would visit each other to chat.

And Lin Yun’s carriage was the one that was disturbed the most.

Besides Solomon, Cadgar, and other acquaintances, some unfamiliar leaders also used various excuses to board Lin Yun’s carriage, talking about nonsense such as the weather that day, before politely returning to their own carriage, wasting time like that for two days in a row.

But it was also strange.

Lin Yun, who was always stingy about time, was like a completely different person for these two days. He would politely receive these people every day, entertain them, and politely see them off. Because Lin Yun knew that these people came to show their attitude towards him. If he didn’t see them, they might actually feel insecure and wonder if they had done something wrong. They might even worry about the Gilded Rose’s retaliation. And if they were courageous enough, they might take a risk out of desperation even if they ended up suffering from it.

Thus, for these two days, regardless of whether he was busy or not, Lin Yun took some time to chat with the other leaders for a bit. The contents of the discussions didn’t matter. What mattered was that they were building relationships.

After two days, almost all the influential people had come to talk with Lin Yun. The only one who hadn’t come was Fran.

Nothing could be done about it, as Fran simply couldn’t come. That Fire Dragon Roar had almost killed Fran. Although potions had been used to recover his injuries, psychological wounds couldn’t be healed so easily.

On that day, Lin Yun had stomped Fran’s head into the sand in front of everyone.

Fran was like a zombie after suffering from such humiliation. If it wasn’t because of his desire to still explore the Vaughn “Treasury”, Fran would have already rushed back to the Mercury Tower instead of remaining with the joint exploration team and being pointed out by people.

After leaving the Silver Moon Mercenary camp, Fran remained in his carriages for two days on the basis that his wounds had yet to recover. Lys thought that this couldn’t continue, so after dinner, he took a potion for curing burns and visited Fran.

“Hey, I did advise you...” Lys looked at Fran and saw that his injuries had already recovered and understood that he had only been hiding in the carriage out of shame.

But hiding wasn’t a good solution.

'We will soon arrive at the Four Seasons Canyon, if you don't come out of the carriage as the help sent by the Mercury Tower, how are you supposed to get a share?

'Moreover, who was to blame? You are the one who wanted to seek revenge for Rieser, you are the one who wanted a fair fight, and you even made the first move. Who else can you blame other than yourself? Blame Merlin for being too strong? Blame Merlin for being able to cast spells so quickly? Blame Merlin for stomping your head on the sand? Aren't you the one making trouble for no reasons?'

"It's okay, Lys, you don't have to say anything else, I won't let Mafa Merlin get away with this." As Fran recalled the humiliation of that day, his eyes filled with hatred. Even as he looked at Lys, a faint hostility could be seen.

The other reason Fran didn't return to the Mercury Tower was his desire to retaliate. Fran even looked forward to the joint exploration team arriving at the Four Seasons Canyon and entering the Vaughn "Treasury" in advance...

He believed that this was the best place to enact his revenge.

'Aren't you powerful, Mafa Merlin? Let's check if that is truly the case in the Vaughn Treasury. The treasury of the last Artisan of the 3rd Dynasty, that is a field for alchemy. I don't believe that I, Fran, someone who became a Master Alchemist a decade ago, won't be able to handle you, Mafa Merlin...

'I'll let you know how serious the consequences of insulting a Master Alchemist are...'

Chapter 199: Low Odds

"Hey..." Lys couldn't help sighing again. Fran clearly didn't want to let it go. If he couldn't change his mind, the two would fight sooner or later. Moreover, the fight would most likely happen in the Vaughn "Treasury", which would implicate Lys as well...

Lys and Fran were old friends. They already knew each other when they were just Great Alchemists, so how could Lys not know of Fran's temperament? If he was in a good mood, then he would clearly differentiate between gratitude and grudges, while if he was in a bad mood, he would definitely retaliate with interest. That day, Merlin had stomped his head into the ground in front of many people. This was incredibly humiliating, and with Fran's temperament, he would definitely fight Merlin to the last breath.

Usually, Lys would try to persuade Lin Yun and have the young Great Mage apologize to Fran, effectively making the problem disappear. This would be the perfect option...

The problem was that Lys didn't dare to do so...

Lys clearly knew that Merlin wasn't the type of person to lower his head.

He had paid attention to this young Great Mage for a while, and from the guild's hearing concerning the Hope Potion to this joint exploration, Lys had never seen that person yield. He didn't even give others the opportunity to yield, crushing them completely and slapping their faces and destroying their reputation, without making a single miscalculation. It was to the point that Lys himself wondered if his next step would be to slap an Archmage...

Moreover, Lin Yun's importance in the joint exploration was a lot higher than Fran's. Let alone breaking the arrays, the key was that Merlin's combat power was terrifying. The fight against Fran two days ago clearly showed that point. Merlin's current fighting prowess might be already comparable to Solomon's.

So comparing all this, it was naturally more worthwhile to make Fran lower his head...

After all, aside from the fact that he was a friend of Fran, this Master Alchemist was serving as a backup in this joint exploration. If Merlin met difficulties breaking the arrays, Fran could supplement the effort, that was all.

Unfortunately, Fran never expected that his position in Lys' eyes had been demoted to being a mere reserve unit.

"That Mafa Merlin was definitely prompted by his family to humiliate me. I must let Teacher Nolan know of the sinister intentions of the Merlin Family after going back..."

"Fran... As far as I know, Mafa Merlin doesn't have a close connection with the Merlin Family..." Lys couldn't stand it anymore. The 9th Rank High Mage of the Cloud Tower took his disciple, Leon Merlin, to the Gilded Rose, but Sauss, Solomon, Monchi, and Cadgar had personally seen the state of the relationship between Mafa Merlin and the Merlin Family. It was far from being as harmonious as it might appear to others on the surface.

But Fran wasn't convinced...

"Lys, you only scratched the surface of their relationship..."

"..." Lys nearly spat blood. 'He used Mana Shackles on his own relative, who is scratching the surface!'

Lys felt that he really needed to warn Fran, or else he might soon meet his end.

"Fran, listen to me. Although you are a 5th Rank High Mage who possesses Time Hand, your chances of success against Mafa Merlin are very low..."

"That's a joke..." Fran sneered, his laugh filled with contempt and disdain.

In fact, Fran didn't feel as if he had lost, he only felt that he had been careless...

In that earlier fight, he surely wouldn't have been defeated if he hadn't been so reckless in his attempt to make his opponent despair. Because he'd felt that victory was within his hands, he had relaxed. Otherwise, he definitely wouldn't have been defeated and humiliated.

He only lost because he'd never expected Mafa Merlin's casting speed to be so fast, even faster than the speed granted by Time Hand!

If it happened at another time, another location, he definitely wouldn't be that careless.

He was an esteemed 5th Rank High Mage, with his mastery of Time Hand, how could he lose against a Great Mage? Such a joke...

"You think I'm joking? Mafa Merlin's strength is deep and unmeasurable. You didn't come to Thousand Sails City before so you didn't hear that although Mafa Merlin became a Great Mage just this year, he can only be described as unbeatable. He already defeated two High Mages, and moreover, a 9th Rank

High Mage from the Sage Tower called Hoen came, and Star Sage Jouyi himself concluded that they would both end up dead if they fought each other..."

"Hoen?" Even with Fran's self-confidence, he couldn't help frowning when he heard the name.

Hoen's name was very famous in Okland, as he was one of the 9th Rank High Mages with the greatest chance of advancing to Archmage. He had been fighting in the Pale Plane for the past few years, and only came back to Noscent two months ago because he was appointed as the Head of the Magic Department by Jouyi.

Although Fran was very confident in his strength, he had to admit that when compared to Hoen of the Cloud Tower, he was indeed inferior.

'Is Mafa Merlin really that powerful?' he wondered.

"Moreover, I heard Solomon say that Star Sage Jouyi cared a lot about Mafa Merlin. If you really make a move against him, I'm afraid that the Cloud Tower..."

"Star Sage?" Fran's heart suddenly tightened. 'The Star Sage is involved too?'

That was the strongest Archmage of the kingdom, and he could become a Heaven Mage anytime. If that kind of person was backing Merlin, then let alone Fran, even ten of him combined would be screwed.

"Anyway, you think about it carefully. We have been old friends for over a decade, I don't want you to bring a disaster onto yourself..." After Lys saw Fran's expression, he understood that his words had finally worked. Thus, he didn't say anything else about Merlin, and instead he just made small talk for a bit before leaving the carriage.

Fran's expression wasn't good after Lys left...

'Could it be that I really don't have the chance to retaliate?'

Fran closed his eyes as he leaned against the carriage. He kept seeing the same images over and over again, a foot heavily stomping on him as well as the sniggering of all the leaders of Thousand Sails City. Just thinking about it made Fran feel endless humiliation.

But Lys' words echoed once again in his mind...

Being able to hold his own against a 9th Rank High mage, as well as being supported by the strongest Archmage of the kingdom.

This was enough to make Fran afraid to act.

It would be fine if it was just Merlin that held some power. He could still use the Vaughn Treasury's arrays as traps and reverse the situation. But after handling the youth, he would have to face the retaliation of the strongest Archmage, Star Sage Jouyi. Fran would never be able to resist.

'Hold on, Cloud Tower, Star Sage Jouyi...' Thinking of this, Fran's eyes brightened. Mafa Merlin had the Cloud Tower and Star Sage Jouyi as backers, but that didn't mean that Fran didn't have backers of his own.

Behind him stood the Mercury Tower and his teacher, Nolan.

In terms of strength, the Mercury Tower wasn't that much inferior to the Cloud Tower, and the status of his teacher was not necessarily worse than that the Star Sage...

'But how could I make Teacher step forth on my behalf...? Teacher isn't the Star Sage...'

The way the Star Sage handled things never followed any rules or customs. He spent over two decades worth of his time in order to crack the Fanrusen Formula. Because of the injuries of his disciple, Solomon, he invaded the Black Tower. If it had been another Archmage, would they have done the same?

At least, he was sure that Nolan wouldn't...

Being in the Mercury Tower for decades, Fran was very clear about his teacher's temperament. Fran knew that unless there was a very compelling reason, his teacher wouldn't take the initiative to get him out of a predicament.

'A reason... I have one!'

Fran quickly fished out a magic letter and a quill from his pocket and started writing a message to his teacher in great haste.

In the letter, Fran claimed to have obtained some information regarding Vaughn Treasury. All the information clearly indicated that Vaughn Treasury wasn't an actual treasury, but rather, a laboratory left behind by the Artisan. This laboratory not only held all of Vaughn's alchemy knowledge, but there were also the True Spirit Magic Tools that Nolan had been eager to get his hands on.

But the exploration of the laboratory was too troublesome, and the alchemy arrays within already far exceeded his abilities. Thus, he was hoping that the Mercury Tower would send some support.

Fran knew that his teacher had been looking for these True Spirit Magic Tools for a very long time but had never found them. As long as he used that reason, even if his teacher didn't appear personally, he would at least send his senior disciple, Karon.

'What would a mere Mafa Merlin be in front of Brother Karon? He is a genuine Archmage, as well as someone Teacher personally nurtured. Even if something happens to Mafa Merlin and Star Sage Jouyi wants to retaliate, Teacher would definitely react.

'As for Brother Karon finding out that it wasn't a laboratory after coming, well, nothing could be done about it, I can only claim that my information was mistaken... At most I'll be reprimanded, but compared to the humiliation Mafa Merlin made me suffer, this isn't much.'

The hastily written letter was quickly sealed, and after Fran's incantation, light flashed from the ring on his right hand, making the letter instantly disappear.

This was the Mercury Tower's unique communication method. Fran's ring was an Inheritance level Spatial Magic Tool. Although it didn't really use the Spatial Law, it was still very useful for transmitting messages.

Chapter 200: Suyass

At that moment, Nolan, who was in the middle of doing data calculations in a study room at the top floor of the Mercury Tower, suddenly frowned before chanting a spell. A piece of paper appeared out of nowhere and softly fell on his desk.

'Vaughn's laboratory?' Nolan quickly read through the magic letter, and his frown deepened.

Fran would have never expected that the random excuse he had found would actually be the truth. He was just trying to trick his teacher and hadn't really thought things through.

But who was Nolan?

He was one of the three Artisans of the kingdom. Not only had he reached the peak in alchemy, but he was also far more knowledgeable than Master Alchemist Lys when it came to understanding the hidden history of alchemists. The Vaughn Treasury was a good example. Nolan had many sources that Lys couldn't possibly have access to.

In fact, Nolan already had some clues...

He was certain that the true Vaughn Treasury was most likely at sea, because when going through historical materials, he found out a very interesting piece of information. In Vaughn's last twenty years of life, he went out to sea four times, and every time he didn't return for an entire year. How precious would the last twenty years of life be for an Artisan? If not for some crucial matter, how could Vaughn take four long trips to sea?

Moreover...

The naval fleet of the 3rd Dynasty had been mobilized intensively during that time, advancing without an apparent goal in the endless sea to do some military exercises.

Coincidentally, Robinson, the commanding officer of the naval fleet, was a close friend of Vaughn's. The two of them walked out from a small village and kept helping each other through countless dangers before one of them gained command over the naval fleet while the other became an Artisan and the court's Chief Alchemist. Their friendship could be described as deep enough to trust each other with their lives.

A single doubtful point could be said to be a coincidence, but a few doubts together would point out a path. The Vaughn Treasury was most likely in the sea...

This was why Nolan sent only Fran after being contacted by Lys for help about the Vaughn Treasury.

Because Nolan didn't believe that Vaughn Treasury was buried in the Four Seasons Canyon.

But what if it was a laboratory?

That was quite possible. In those days, Vaughn had lived in seclusion in many places before he became the court's Chief Alchemist. The Four Seasons Canyon was one of these places. With Vaughn's habits, it wouldn't be strange for him to leave a laboratory there.

But whether it would contain Spiritual Magic Tools was uncertain...

Those were treasures that every alchemist yearned for. Nolan doubted that the short-tempered Vaughn, the mage that would casually blow up a whole region, wouldn't bury that Spiritual Magic Tool with himself.

But it was still necessary to dispatch someone to check.

"Tell Karon..." Nolan originally wanted to send Karon, but he just remembered that Karon had left for the Golden Forest Plane to suppress a rebellion. It would take another two days for him to come back, so Nolan had no choice but to change his words, "Tell Suyass to come."

"Yes."

A Great Alchemist who was attending to him in the study promptly bowed and left. It didn't take long before a knock resounded on the door.

"Come in." A tall middle-aged man entered. It could be seen from the trace of graying hair at his temples that he was in his fifties, yet there was not a single wrinkle on his handsome face. His dazzling blonde hair and mysterious grey irises gave him a dashing appearance that didn't fit well with his age.

"Teacher, you looked for me?" Those who knew Suyass knew that he would only show such a respectful attitude in front of Nolan.

"Yes, read this letter first." Nolan nodded and the letter slowly flew out to the middle-aged man.

"Fran?" After reading that letter, Suyass frowned.

Of Nolan's five disciples, the most outstanding one was undoubtedly Karon, who had been sent to quell the rebellion in the Golden Forest Plane. A dozen years ago, Karon had already entered the peak Master Alchemist realm. Nolan himself predicted that within ten years, Karon would inevitably become the 2nd Artisan of the Mercury Tower. On the magic side, Karon was already a 5th Rank Archmage, and in the entire Mercury Tower, his strength was only inferior to Nolan's.

It could be said that within a few decades, there would almost certainly be a 2nd Nolan-level figure in the Mercury Tower.

At the same time, Karon was the only fellow disciple that Suyass respected. Apart from Karon, Suyass didn't pay any attention to the other disciples under Nolan. Not even Grant, who also held the title of peak Master Alchemist and Archmage. From Suyass' point of view, Grant's achievements were only due to him being Nolan's disciple for a longer time. With time, Suyass wholeheartedly believed that he would sooner or later overtake Grant, even leaving him far behind.

However, among the few fellow disciples, Fran was the one that Suyass despised the most.

He completely looked down on him...

Fran had become a disciple before Suyass, but he had remained a mid-level Master Alchemist for years, and when it came to magic, he was a pitiful 5th Rank High Mage. Even if Fran controlled the most powerful Magic Conducting Rune of the Mercury Tower, the Time Hand, he would still collapse in a single blow in front of Suyass.

Moreover, Suyass despised Fran's behavior. Greedy, selfish, narrow-minded... It was because of that deplorable attitude that Fran's progression had halted for a decade. Whether it was magic or alchemy, they both remained unchanged at a lamentable level.

Suyass never hid his disgust for Fran. He would frequently berate him and Fran would endure. Fran wasn't that polite with Karon, but when facing Suyass, he was like a mouse seeing a cat, immediately running two or three hundred meters away after seeing him, afraid that the words of his junior brother would put him in an awkward situation.

As he read that letter, Suyass' first reaction was, 'Fran got in trouble and is trying to make his teacher clean up the mess.'

But after reading a bit more, Suyass' expression eased up.

"Teacher, you mean..." After reading the whole letter, Suyass folded the letter and respectfully asked Nolan for instructions.

"There shouldn't be many problems with Fran's discovery. There might exist one of Vaughn's laboratories in the Four Seasons Canyon. If that is the case, Fran might not be able to handle it on his own. After all, it's Vaughn we are talking about. The arrays inside far exceed Fran's level..." Nolan paused there. "Thus I want you to give some help to Lys' exploration. As for the final harvest, distribute it according to the previous agreement. But if you really find some clues about Vaughn's Spiritual Magic Tool, you can discuss it with Lys. The Mercury Tower is willing to use other ways to trade for it..."

"Understood, Teacher, I'll go immediately." After Suyass answered, he left the study right away and used Flight to rush towards the Four Seasons Canyon...

After Suyass' departure, Nolan once again returned to his calculations...

The sky had darkened while Nolan spent an hour computing. It was only then that Nolan suddenly raised his head.

'Wait, Thousand Sails City...' After closing his eyes to rest them a bit, Nolan suddenly remembered that young Great Mage that stole the spotlight in the Magic Hand's gathering. 'Wasn't he from Thousand Sails City?'

This discovery caused Nolan to frown.

This gathering of the Magic Hand had left such a deep impression on Nolan. The shocking performance of that young mage even made Nolan unable to assess the potential of that young mage. Unfortunately, he had made his move too late, letting Jouyi discover him first. Now, all he could do was to try to maintain a good relationship as best as he could.

Therefore, in the auction over the last Meditation Law Set, he made that young Great Mage owe him. This favor might lead to something...

'Damn...' Thinking about it, Nolan regretfully shook his head. 'I'm getting too old, my memory isn't what it used to be... Had I recalled earlier that that young Great Mage was from Thousand Sails City, I wouldn't have sent Fran or Suyass...'

He was very clear about the personalities of these two disciples...

Fran was a greedy, selfish and narrow-minded person, and he had some grudges against the Merlin Family. If he learned that that young Great Mage was a Merlin, a conflict would inevitably happen.

Suyass wasn't like Fran, but his character was also problematic. He was too prideful and too straightforward. If Fran hadn't fallen in conflict with the young Great Mage, nothing would happen, but if something did happen between the two, then it would definitely blow up...

Although Suyass always looked down on Fran, to defend the reputation of the Mercury Tower, Suyass would unhesitantly help Fran out of his predicament...

As he thought about this, Nolan was unable to sit still...

This would end badly. Nolan could clearly see how important that young Great Mage was to Jouyi. Just for his sake, Jouyi had been close to falling out with the Magic Hand. If Suyass injured Mafa Merlin, or worse, killed him... the consequences would be unthinkable.

"Go, go get Karon to come back immediately. Tell Grant that he is to take over quelling the Golden Forest Plane's rebellion."