

Stay At home 691

Chapter 691 Representative of the Elven Race

Mag, who stood beside Anna, was also peering out of the window. Light rain had begun to fall soundlessly onto the square outside, and there was no one to be seen on the streets.

Probably not. After all, he strongly implied that this trip was going to be extremely perilous for him, Mag thought to himself. However, he forced a carefree smile onto his face as he looked at the concerned Anna, and said, "It's alright, he must've been delayed by an important matter along the way. Even if he doesn't come back today, he'll be back in the next few days."

"Really?" Anna looked up into Mag's eyes, attempting to gauge the authenticity of his words.

"Of course." Mag nodded firmly. In reality, he didn't even believe his own words. Blour might not be the most reliable person that he knew, but he could tell from Blour's parting words that day that he had set out on a rather dangerous journey.

"Alright, then I'll wait for him for a while longer." Anna turned her gaze away from Mag and continued to look outside.

"Alright." Mag nodded, and he also stood beside Anna in front of the window.

After coming to this world, Mag had met a lot of people. Even though many of them couldn't even be considered to be friends of his, he still couldn't bring himself to be completely unconcerned for them.

The rain gradually began to increase in intensity, and visibility outside the window was slowly worsening, but the sorely awaited sound of knocking on the door still didn't arrive.

Mag glanced at the clock on the wall, only to find that it was already 12 am. He heaved a faint internal sigh as he stroked Anna's hair, and said, "Go to sleep now. He'll come back for sure."

"Ding!"

The sound of a bell rang out from outside.

"It's Uncle Blour!" Anna's eyes lit up as she rushed over and pushed open the restaurant doors.

The rainwater was swept in by the wind, splattering all over Anna's body. The bell hanging by the door was tinkling from the wind and rain, yet there was no one standing outside.

Anna stood at the restaurant's entrance with a blank expression on her face as tears and rainwater slid down her cheeks.

"He'll come back." Mag gently closed the door before carrying Anna upstairs in his arms.

He changed her into a set of dry clothes and dried her hair before gently placing her on the bed. Amy and Ugly Duckling were already sound asleep beside her.

Mag tucked Anna in under the blanket, and said in a gentle voice, "Go to sleep. Perhaps he'll be back when you wake up tomorrow."

Anna blinked her red eyes as she looked at Mag, and asked, "Uncle Mag, am I a cursed elf? Anyone who's close to me is destined to suffer a terrible fate, right?"

"Of course not. Anna is a good girl, not some cursed elf." Mag shook his head with a gentle reassuring smile.

"Thank you, Uncle Mag." Anna slowly rolled over and faced away from Mag.

Mag stood beside the bed and looked at Anna with a sympathetic expression. Just what kind of horrendous experiences could bring such a small child to develop such dark thoughts about herself?

...

In the Wind Forest, at the foot of the Tree of Life.

Irina was planting flowers around the base of the Tree of Life when Firis rushed into the cave. She was panting heavily as she said, "Princess, after the deal from three days ago was canceled, there has been no news about it since. Perhaps they were intimidated by you. However, however..."

Irina put down her small watering can and nodded with satisfaction as she looked at the two exuberant flowers planted in the soil. Only then did she turn to Firis with furrowed brows as she urged, "Out with it! However what?"

"However! I heard that they're trying to get you to attend the king of the Roth Empire's birthday banquet in 10 days as the representative of the elven race," Firis finally finished her sentence.

"Really?" Irina was rather surprised to hear this.

Firis nodded, and confirmed, "The news is already circulating around. Apparently, this was a suggestion raised to Her Majesty by Mistress Helena."

Irina furrowed her brow with a contemplative look on her face, and she murmured, "What is that old witch, Helena, plotting now? She's proposing for me to attend the banquet? She's definitely not doing this with any good intentions."

"I also think she's plotting something nasty. Princess, you have to be careful." Firis nodded with a grave expression.

Irina's expression became even more serious as she speculated, "Could it be that the old witch knows that she's too hideous to represent the elven race, so she's asking the young and beautiful princess to travel to Rodu?"

"Princess, your thought processes are just as inexplicable as ever." Firis buried her face into her palm. She felt as if the princess had a different reflex arc compared to everyone else.

"I wanted to make a trip to Rodu anyway. It's time I gave those bastards some payback for what they did three years ago." Irina chuckled coldly as she said, "Firis, you keep an eye on things here and report to me immediately if you receive any more news."

"Yes, Princess." Firis nodded firmly.

...

Within a cave that resembled a starry night sky, the black-robed Hetty looked up at Helena with a perplexed expression, and asked, “Mistress Helena, why would you propose for Irina to represent our elven race and travel to Roth Empire? There have been rumors circulating in the past few years that the queen is displeased with her. If we get to her to represent the elven race and attend the king’s birthday banquet, then those rumors will have no legs to stand on. Surely that’s not a good thing for us.”

“Hasn’t she always been itching to go to Rodu? I’ll grant her that wish.” Helena stood on a tall platform and looked down at Hetty as if she were appraising a black rat, and she said, “Those people aren’t as pathetic as the likes of you. They’re not that easy to kill, and if they’ve been forced into a corner, they’ll definitely strike back.”

...

On the seventh day, there was no news about Blour.

On the eighth day, there was no news about Blour.

...

On the 14th day, there was still no news about Blour...

Anna was no longer asking Mag if he had heard anything about Blour. However, she would sit at the restaurant’s entrance for half an hour every day as if she were waiting for something.

At times, Sally would also sit with her at the entrance, and the two of them would wait together in silence.

Mag had made a trip to the elven embassy and met the elven ambassador, Yngwie. However, Yngwie told him that he also hadn’t heard any news about Blour.

Even though he didn’t want to admit it, it appeared that Blour really wasn’t going to be able to come back.

...

During lunch, Mag announced, “I’m going to Rodu with Amy tomorrow to cook for the king on his birthday banquet, so the restaurant will be closed for five days. Babla, you can continue to live in the restaurant with Anna. I’ll leave you with the keys and some money. If you don’t want to cook, you can go eat at another restaurant. Miya, you can continue to open the ice cream shop or close it for five days as well to give yourself a little holiday; it’s up to you.”

Chapter 692 Take-Off! Target: Rodu!

Early in the morning, a horse-drawn carriage departed from Mamy Restaurant and traveled toward the northern part of the city.

Amy held Ugly Duckling in her arms with an excited look on her face. She turned to Mag, and asked, “Father, are we really going to Rodu today? Teacher Luna told me that it’s a city with only humans living in it, and that there’s a lot of super tasty food there.”

Mag nodded with a smile, and replied, "That's right, it's a large city, and it's predominantly inhabited by humans. However, when it comes to tasty food, I can cook whatever you want to eat, and I guarantee you that it'll be better than anything that anyone else makes."

A conflicted look appeared on Amy's face as she proposed, "But I want to eat lots and lots of super tasty food; will you be able to cook all of it for me, Father? How about I take you out to eat in Rodu and when we find something delicious, you can make it for me."

"Do you still have a secret stash of money, Amy?" Mag turned to Amy with a smile. Hadn't she given all of her money to Luna a few days ago?

"Yes, I still have a copper coin. I picked it up on the way home with Master Krassu yesterday. I offered him half, but he didn't take it, so it's all mine now." Amy opened her little hand to reveal a shiny copper coin sitting on her palm.

"Meow~"

Ugly Duckling sidled over to Amy and licked her little hand while looking up at her with a fawning expression.

"Don't even think about it, Ugly Duckling. You're not allowed to eat anything at night from now on, and you're not allowed to have meat, either. If you keep getting fatter like this, the entire carriage is going to get crushed by you." Amy looked down at Ugly Duckling with a firm expression

"Meow~"

Ugly Duckling lowered its head in a pitiable manner.

"Did Master Krassu say anything during your lessons yesterday?" Mag asked with a smile.

"He praised me; he told me that I'm comparable to him when he was my age." Amy nodded, and hesitated momentarily before continuing, "But I feel like he was belittling me by saying that."

"You didn't tell Master Krassu that, did you?" Mag asked with an amused expression.

"I didn't say it to him." Amy shook her head before murmuring, "But as I was saying it to myself, he overheard me, and he coughed up some blood from one of his old injuries."

"You're lucky that's all that happened to him." Mag shook his head with a smile. Anyone who wanted to teach his daughter had to have a high tolerance threshold.

Amy's eyes suddenly lit up as she said, "Oh, right, Master Krassu also said that he'll be going to Rodu tomorrow as well. He asked me to come with him, but I refused."

"Krassu is also going to Rodu?" Mag was rather surprised to hear this.

"That's right. Master Krassu must be worried that I'll fall behind with my lessons, so he's coming to Rodu with me. Master Urien is much better; he never even gives me any homework."

"Come to think of it, the lessons in the next few days are all with Master Krassu. It seems that our breaks always coincide with his lessons. His luck always seems to be worse than Urien's." Mag shook his head with a smile. If Krassu was also going to Rodu, then this trip would be made a lot safer. There was no

way that Krassu would allow any harm to come to Amy, so Mag wouldn't have to worry about Amy, and could focus on doing his own things.

The horse-drawn carriage traveled for almost an hour before stopping at the city gates.

Mag got off the carriage while carrying Amy in his arms, and the coach driver began to unload their luggage.

"Wow, look, Father! There's a really big bird over there!"

Before Mag even had a chance to look for Cayrols, Amy was already pointing to her left with an excited expression on her face.

Mag turned toward that direction, and discovered a black bird with a wingspan of over 30 meters lying on the empty plot of land beside the city wall. Even in that position, it was still around three to four meters tall, making it appear as if it were a parked plane.

The bird resembled a falcon, but it wasn't as sharp and wild. The top of its massive head was completely flat as if it had been chopped into a level surface by a colossal cleaver.

Its blue eyes appeared to be quite gentle, and its head was lowered as it dined on a type of fist-sized beans.

This was a common type of flying steed on the Norland Continent, the Flathead Falcon. It wasn't extremely fast, but it was quite gentle and docile, and could carry an immense amount of weight during flight. It was the number one transportation steed for wealthy individuals.

Mag wasn't unfamiliar with this type of massive bird, but he was still slightly stunned upon seeing one in person.

There were many seats and luggage crates fixed on the bird's back and wings, and a ladder had been slanted onto its body, being used by the manual laborers down below to carry luggage onto the bird's back.

Cayrols stood beside the large bird, wearing a smile on his face as he conversed with what appeared to be two officials from the city lord's castle. Upon catching sight of Mag and Amy, he waved a hand to acknowledge them before returning to his conversation.

Beside him was his son, Ryan, who wore a dejected look on his face. He faltered slightly upon seeing Mag, and an enraged look appeared on his face as he clenched his fists.

Mag could naturally see what Ryan was doing. He had no recollection of the ambassador's son, nor was he aware why this Ryan seemed to resent him so intensely. He made a mental note to himself to be wary of this man, but he didn't really pay him much heed. He had seen many snobbish young masters like him in his past life, and all of them enjoyed bullying the weak, but cowered in the face of confrontation.

Mag was about to carry Amy over to the massive bird when a horse-drawn carriage stopped near him. The curtain on the carriage was drawn open, and a woman in a gray cotton dress emerged from within.

"Ms. Luna?"

“Teacher Luna!”

“Mr. Mag, Amy!”

The three of them exclaimed almost in unison.

Mag was looking at Luna with a hint of surprise on his face, while Amy wore an elated expression.

Luna disembarked from the horse-drawn carriage, and explained, “Mr. Mag, I heard that you’re going with Ambassador Cayrols to Rodu, so I requested a flying steed to travel to Rodu with you. The debate about the decimal system has reached a crucial juncture, so please make the time to see my grandfather when you get to Rodu.”

Mag looked into Luna’s genuine eyes, and nodded with a smile as he said, “I’ll have to trouble you to introduce me to your grandfather, Ms. Luna.”

“Thank you.” A smile appeared on Luna’s face.

“Yay! Teacher Luna is also coming with us to Rodu!” Amy jumped down from Mag’s arms with a joyful smile, and she held onto Luna’s hand with one hand while holding onto Ugly Duckling with the other.

Cayrols’ conversation with the two officials of the city lord’s castle drew to a conclusion, and the officials began to make their way over to the city gates before stopping beside Mag. One of them was Dicus, and he smiled as he extended a hand toward Mag. “Mr. Mag, I wish you a safe and enjoyable journey.”

“Thank you.” Luna shook Dicus’ hand with a smile on his face.

“Mr. Mag, Ms. Luna.” Cayrols nodded at Mag and Luna before turning to Mag with a smile as he said, “You really are a hot commodity, Mr. Mag; even City Lord Michael told me that I have to bring you back to Chaos City in five days.”

“I’m flattered that the city lord thinks so much of me.” Mag smiled, but didn’t offer an explanation.

Cayrols didn’t pry into the issue any further, either. He glanced down at his watch before nodding as he said, “It’s about time for us to set off now.”

“Alright.”

Mag carried Amy and climbed up the ladder with Luna onto the bird’s back. All three of them were led to front-row seats that were close to the bird’s head.

“Ugly Duckling, we aren’t even flying yet, why are you trembling?” Amy sat beside Mag with a disdainful expression as she looked at Ugly Duckling that had buried its head into her arms and was trembling uncontrollably. “You’ll never become a white swan like this!”

“Come on, Ryan, let’s go. The Moreton Family hasn’t given us a definite rejection, so I’ll contact them again once we get back to Rodu. As a man, you have to realize that patience is crucial when trying to accomplish something important.” Cayrols patted Ryan’s shoulder before boarding the massive bird.

Ryan’s eyes lit up, and he also climbed onto the bird’s back.

After all of the passengers and luggage were securely in place, Cayrols announced, "Take-off! Target: Rodu!"

The massive bird spread open its wings and rose directly into the air!

Chapter 693 The First City

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A semispherical magic barrier was erected, shielding all of the people and luggage on the bird's back.

The massive bird flapped its wings and continued to rise higher into the air. In the blink of an eye, the buildings down below had all been reduced to tiny spots. One was able to see the entirety of Chaos City from this vantage point.

"Wow! Flying is so fun!"

Amy, who was very excited, and not fearful in the slightest as she looked down, yelled, "Father, look! That's the Aden Square, and in that corner is our restaurant! It looks like a little box from up here!"

In contrast, Ugly Duckling was a lot less calm and collected. It had put its front paws over its eyes, and buried its head deep in Amy's arms as it trembled uncontrollably, leaving only its backside sticking up into the air.

Mag had made numerous trips on planes in his past life, so he naturally wasn't afraid, either. However, this was his first time flying on such a massive bird, and there was undisguised excitement on his face.

This bird obviously wasn't flying as quickly as a plane could, but traveling through the air was naturally far quicker than traveling on land. According to Cayrols, they should reach Rodu around dusk.

Mag took a glance at Luna, and found that her expression was also quite calm and collected, indicating that this wasn't her first time on a flying steed.

Stupid hillbillies. Ryan pursed his lips with disdain as he glanced at Mag and Amy. They were getting so excited just from riding on the most ordinary flying magic beast; he simply couldn't understand why his father held Mag in such high regard.

He then turned his gaze toward Luna, and his eyes roamed over her body surreptitiously while he slowly nodded to himself. This Luna is also quite beautiful. Compared to all of those girls who wear heavy makeup and spend hours deciding which items of clothing they should wear every day, she's like a breath of fresh air, and she's quite alluring in her own way. If that Gloria turns down the marriage proposal, I can consider getting Father to visit her family with a marriage proposal.

Mag could see everything that Ryan was doing, but he wasn't overly concerned about Luna. He could tell from the way that Cayrols was treating Luna that her family was most likely more powerful than Cayrols's family. As such, Ryan surely wouldn't dare to do anything to her.

As Chaos City faded from view, Amy turned her attention to the trembling Ugly Duckling, and scolded, "Ugly Duckling, you can't keep hiding like this. You're a duck, and you're going to become a white swan in the future; how can you be scared of heights?"

Ugly Duckling still had its front paws firmly clasped over its eyes, and it didn't utter a single sound as it buried its head even deeper in Amy's little arms.

"If you can't fly, then you can't be referred to as a white swan. If you're not a white swan, then I won't be able to eat roast goose!" Amy looked at Ugly Duckling with a serious expression as she reasoned, "Hence, I have to train you so that you get used to flying in the sky."

Mag turned to Amy with an intrigued expression, wanting to see how she was going to train Ugly Duckling to get over its acrophobia. This was not a phobia that could be easily remedied.

Luna was also looking at Amy with a curious expression. Her weird and wacky thought processes often had Luna caught between tears and laughter, but she could come up with some very interesting ideas from time to time.

Ugly Duckling hadn't let out a single sound the entire time, but that did nothing to divert Amy's attention away from it. She pried Ugly Duckling's front paws away from its face, only to reveal its tightly shut eyes, and a smile appeared on her face as she said, "Ugly Duckling, we're currently very, very high up in the sky. There are white clouds around us, and everything on the ground below is very tiny. We're flying high and fast, high and fast, high and..."

"Meow~"

Ugly Duckling was trembling even more violently. Even though it still had its eyes closed, it felt as if it could see everything down below through Amy's verbal description, and it was even more horrifying.

"Now, listen to me: slowly open your eyes. When you open your eyes and look down, you'll find out that it's not actually very scary. Come on, slowly open your eyes, slowly..."

Ugly Duckling's eyes remained tightly shut, yet Amy's patience had run out. She picked it up by the scruff of its neck, and her voice cooled as she threatened, "If you don't open your eyes, I'm going to toss you off this bird!"

"Meow!"

Ugly Duckling opened its eyes almost immediately. It cast its gaze downward, and its body stiffened before its eyes rolled into the back of its head, and it fell completely unconscious.

"Ugly Duckling? Ugly Duckling! It's still breathing, thank heavens. What a coward." Amy squeezed Ugly Duckling's cheeks with a displeased look before placing it back on her legs with a resigned sigh.

"Amy, don't force other people to do things against their will. That's basic courtesy," Luna said to Amy with a smile.

"Alright, Teacher Luna." Amy nodded obediently before looking down at Ugly Duckling with a serious expression as she said, "Ugly Duckling, you're a duckling, not a person."

The flight spanned an entire day.

The Flathead Falcon's extraordinary stamina was on full display, and it only took a single half-an-hour break during the course of the journey. Just as the sun was beginning to set, a grand and lavish city appeared before everyone's eyes.

Rodu was the capital city of the Roth Empire, and also one of the most important cities to the human race on the Norland Continent, with a history of over 10,000 years.

During the war among species that took place around a century ago, Rodu acted as the central hub of the human military, and when the war concluded, the king at the time decided to make Rodu the capital of the Roth Empire. Since then, it had gone through several major expansions, and was now known as the largest city on the Norland Continent.

The city walls were over 100 meters tall and up to 30 meters thick, with countless magical runes carved into their surface. Even the massive forest trolls wouldn't be able to easily bypass it.

Regardless of whether it was measured in terms of land area or population, Rodu was undoubtedly the number one city on the Norland Continent.

"Wow, Teacher Luna, is this Rodu? It's so big!" Amy's eyes widened.

"Yes, that's Rodu, my home city." Luna nodded, and she also wore an excited look on her face. It had been over a year since she had last returned home, and this city was just as adorable to her as she recalled.

In contrast, Mag's emotions were quite complex as he looked at the city.

He had access to Alex's memories, so he was naturally extremely familiar with this capital city of the Roth Empire. This was a city that symbolized the prosperity of the human race, and was a place that he had once vowed to protect. He'd come to this city when he was only 15 years old, and he gradually rose to the top of the Roth Empire's official hierarchy. However, it was also in this city that he had completely fallen from grace.

The Flathead Falcon landed in front of the city gates, attracting the attention of many of the commoners who were lining up to enter the city. Everyone then disembarked from the bird's back.

A horse-drawn carriage was already there, waiting for Luna. She turned to Mag with a smile, and said, "Mr. Mag, I'll go back home and inform my grandpa of your arrival. After you cook for His Majesty during his birthday banquet, I'll organize a meeting between you and my grandpa; is that alright?"

"Sure." Mag nodded with a smile. He didn't have anything else to do in this city anyway.

"Alright, then it's goodbye for now, Mr. Mag, Little Amy." Luna patted Amy's head with a smile before getting onto the horse-drawn carriage.

Chapter 694 Alex, Long Time no See

"The city walls are so high! They're even higher than the walls at Chaos City. I feel like... I feel like..." Amy stood beside the city wall and attempted to look up at the top of the wall. The higher up she looked, the more she had to tilt her head back, and she eventually lost her balance, causing her to fall backward.

Mag caught Amy with a smile as he said, "You won't be able to see the top of such a tall wall."

Back when he had first left Rodu, Amy had only been a few months old, so she definitely wouldn't recall her time spent here.

"Father, let's hurry up and go eat some good food." Amy looked at Mag with anticipation shimmering in her large blue eyes.

Mag looked down at Amy's expectant expression, and he was almost compelled into agreeing to her request, but he still shook his head in the end as he said, "We won't be able to do that today."

Cayrols strode over to them and pointed over to a nearby horse-drawn carriage with a small tower design on the curtain, saying, "Mr. Mag, please get onto that horse-drawn carriage. I'll get the coach driver to take you to His Highness' manor. His Majesty's birthday banquet will be taking place on the day after tomorrow, and His Highness would like to verify your cooking skills in person."

"Alright." Mag nodded calmly before carrying Amy onto the horse-drawn carriage, but his heart was already thumping in his chest.

This second prince was almost entirely responsible for Mag Alex's fall from grace, and even after so many years had passed, this second prince still wasn't willing to give up on killing him.

Now, he was about to go visit the second prince at his manor—he felt as if he were a lamb walking into a wolf's den.

However, risk and reward came hand in hand. Mag was taking a huge gamble, betting that his sworn enemy wouldn't be able to recognize him even if they were to stand face-to-face in close proximity with each other. If his disguise could pass even this rigorous test, then he wouldn't have to worry about his cover being blown ever again.

Mag was extremely confident that he would be able to accomplish this.

That was because he was Shen Mag, not Mag Alex.

He just had to be himself, a candidate to become the God of Cookery, and no one should be able to draw a connection between him and that dragon-slaying warrior who had once stood at the pinnacle of the entire Norland Continent.

Amy turned to Mag with a curious expression inside the carriage, and asked, "Father, whom are we going to see now?"

Mag looked back at Amy with a smile, and said, "We're going to meet the second prince of the Roth Empire now. Make sure not to give him a nickname when we see him. Even if you do think of a nickname, you can't say it to his face. Otherwise, I might be taken away by bad people."

"Alright." Amy could tell that Mag wasn't joking, and she nodded firmly in response. However, she then quickly drew her wand with a solemn expression, and said, "Don't worry, Father, if any baddies try to take you away, I'm going to beat them up!"

Mag shook his head, and said, "I know you're very powerful, Little Amy, but we have to be more careful here in Rodu. We can't let too many people here find out how powerful you are. There are many powerful baddies in this world, and they might take you away from me, do you understand?"

Amy nodded with a serious expression, and said, "I do. I'm going to become more powerful so I can protect you, Father."

"Good girl." Mag smiled as he patted Amy's head, and a surge of warmth flowed through his heart. He vowed, "Don't worry, I'm going to do my best to become more powerful as well."

The horse-drawn carriage stopped outside the lavish manor, and Mag disembarked while holding Amy's little hand. Mag looked at the familiar scene laid out before him, and was struck with a sense of nostalgia.

The intricately carved white stone pillars, the string of western round-domed buildings, the immaculately maintained garden, and the fountain at the very center of the courtyard; aside from the second prince, there was only a handful of people who could own such a large manor in Rodu, where land was worth its weight in gold.

Amy pointed at the fountain, and exclaimed, "Father, look! That frog is blasting water so high into the air from its mouth!"

Mag turned his gaze toward the direction that Amy was pointing in, and discovered that it was clearly a golden dragon in the fountain, but Amy was too short, and could only see the top half of the dragon's head, which made it look like a frog. With that in mind, a smile appeared on Mag's face as he lifted Amy up in his arms. "That's actually a golden dragon."

"A golden dragon that looks like a frog? It's so ugly." Amy was looking at the golden dragon in the fountain with a disdainful expression.

Mag took a closer look at the golden dragon sculpture, only to find that it was indeed quite hideous. It didn't possess any of the prestige that a golden dragon should have, and if one were to only look at its head, it did bear a strong resemblance to a frog.

The middle-aged man who was guiding them toward the manor turned around with a tense expression, and said, "Shh, don't say such things, little girl. This golden dragon sculpture was erected by His Highness based on a painting drawn by His Majesty. If someone else hears you saying that, you could get beheaded."

"Really?" A fearful expression appeared on Amy's face. However, she then turned toward the fountain with a conflicted look in her eyes, and reaffirmed, "But it really is ugly."

"Alright, let's not talk about that anymore," Mag said as he raised his eyebrows. This was the creation of a prince who was terrible at sculpting based on the artwork of a king who was a terrible artist. It was rather amusing that they were showing off their flaws as if it were something to be proud of.

Along the way, Mag saw several more strange-looking sculptures. It was a new discovery to him that the second prince, Josh, had such a hobby.

However, compared to the third prince, who was able to carve extremely life-like sculptures from the most mundane pieces of wood, Josh was very much an amateur hobbyist.

The middle-aged man was most likely a butler at the manor, and as he led Mag and Amy into a large hall, he turned to the two of them, and carefully cautioned, "Please wait here for a moment. His

Highness will come to meet you when he's ready. Do be careful when you're speaking to His Highness; especially you, little girl, make sure you don't say anything you shouldn't say."

Amy nodded obediently, and replied, "Alright, I promise not to tell him that his golden dragon looks like a frog."

"Thanks for your hard work." Mag nodded with a smile. He could tell that this butler was a kindhearted person... unlike some of the other people here in the second prince's manor.

The butler nodded before turning to leave. He actually shouldn't say so much, but that little girl was very adorable, and he simply couldn't bear to see her come to harm, so he offered the two of them some cautionary words in case they said something that was not to the second prince's liking and were punished as a result.

Mag began to survey the large hall they were in. The room was quite spacious, with six chairs and a table positioned at the center of the room, as well as a bookshelf that was filled with all types of books situated by the wall. There was a small round table beside the bookshelf, upon which were placed all types of desserts, and on the table beside the main seat, there was a black claymore.

"Tian Du!"

Mag's heart rate abruptly began to accelerate upon seeing this sword.

Right at this moment, the sound of footsteps began to approach the hall, and a warm male voice sounded. "Alex, long time no see."

Chapter 695 There Sure Are A Lot of Colleagues Here

Mag's gaze only lingered on the claymore for an instant, and he pretended as if he hadn't heard the words that had been spoken by the man standing at the entrance of the hall. He strode over to the small round table nearby, and picked up a yellow piece of pastry. He took a small bite of the pastry, upon which his brows furrowed slightly.

"Father, does it taste good?" Amy's attention had also been immediately drawn to the desserts on the table, and she made her way over to Mag with curiosity and anticipation etched on her little face.

Mag swallowed the pastry in his mouth before shaking his head as he gave his evaluation. "The fragrance of the osmanthus flower is too pronounced, and the flavor is too sweet. Eating one or two of these is bearable, but any more than that will make you feel sick."

Amy then pointed at the biscuits on another plate, and asked, "Then what about that one? The biscuits that look like little moons."

Mag picked up one of the thin biscuits before taking a bite. The biscuit snapped with a crisp crack as he bit into it, and the sweet fragrance of pumpkin wafted into his mouth. However, the flavor wasn't very rich, and was quite refreshing instead. Mag's eyes lit up as he praised, "This pumpkin biscuit is quite good. It's thin and refreshing, and has just the right level of sweetness."

This was indeed the best snack food that Mag had tasted after arriving in this world. It was just right for him, and he was starting to look forward to seeing what Rodu's gastronomic industry had to offer.

"I also want to eat the tasty pumpkin biscuit!" Amy exclaimed as she clapped her little hands together.

"Alright, here you go." Mag smiled as he passed a biscuit to Amy.

Is he Alex or not? Josh stood in the doorway and examined Alex with narrowed eyes. This man shared the same name as Alex, and also had a half-elf daughter who was around three to four years of age. He couldn't just ignore such a coincidence.

However, Alex was a man who loved swords as much as his own life, yet when the Tian Du sword had been placed right in front of him, he displayed no reaction to it. Instead, he seemed to be far more interested in the desserts on the table nearby, and he also showed no reaction to the name Alex.

If there was one person in this world who knew the most about Alex, it wasn't Irina, nor was it Sean. Instead, it was Josh, the man who had once regarded Alex as a friend, but then as a sworn enemy.

If even Alex knew how to conceal his emotions and how to act for the sake of survival, then he wouldn't end up ambushed and killed in the streets of Rodu three years ago.

There were some people who were loved and revered by everyone in the entire world, but those people were destined to be detested by those who were in charge of the world, so they had to die.

Furthermore, Alex didn't like sweet foods.

Looks like it's all just a coincidence, after all. Josh's gaze lingered on Amy for a while before he walked into the hall. He said, "Are you Mr. Mag?"

"I am indeed Mag. I was invited by Ambassador Cayrols to come to Rodu and cook during His Majesty's birthday banquet, and I've come here today to pay my respects, Your Highness." Mag turned to Josh and nodded as he replied in a manner that was neither haughty nor humble.

Amy was currently happily munching on the plate of pumpkin biscuits, and had no spare capacity to pay any heed to anyone else.

"How do you know that I'm the prince?" Josh asked with a smile, but there seemed to be a palpable sense of pressure emanating from his body.

Mag looked directly into Josh's eyes, and smiled calmly as he replied, "Mr. Cayrols sent me here to visit Your Highness, and the butler from earlier told us to wait here for Your Highness. As such, I could only assume that you were the prince."

"Interesting." Josh withdrew his gaze before walking past Mag and sitting down on the main seat. He stroked the black claymore on the table beside him with a finger on his left hand, and smiled in a slightly sinister manner as he said, "Cayrols has nothing but praise for you, but I'll have to taste your dishes first before allowing you to cook for His Majesty. If you can't even satisfy me, then there's no point in getting you to cook during His Majesty's birthday banquet."

"I'd be honored to show you my skills, Your Highness." Mag nodded with a calm and confident expression.

Josh nodded, and said, "Good. The kitchen is back there; I'll get someone to lead you to it. The ingredients that you asked Cayrols to prepare have all been placed in the kitchen for you. Cook me the dishes that you're planning to make during the birthday banquet, and I'll make the final verdict."

"Sure. Come on, Little Amy." Mag made his way over to Amy and gently picked up her little hand.

"Coming!" Amy hurriedly tipped all of the remaining biscuits on the plate into her little pocket before leaving with Mag as she continued to feast on the biscuits.

His height and figure are similar to Alex's, but his facial features are completely different. No matter how much he alters his appearance, there's no way that he can change the look in his eyes, yet his eyes are also completely different from Alex's. However, Alex can't cook at all, so I'll be able to verify everything after tasting his cooking. Josh looked on at Mag and Amy's departing figures as he stroked his chin, deep in thought.

Mag was feeling very relieved after exiting the halls. This second prince really was a cautious man. In order to test him, Josh had deliberately placed the Tian Du sword in the room, and then set a multitude of traps for him with his words, waiting for him to slip up and blow his own cover.

The Tian Du sword was Mag Alex's prized claymore, and countless giant dragons had fallen by its blade. It was one of the most renowned swords on the entire Norland Continent, and had witnessed the glorious rise of the legendary Mag Alex.

If Alex had been the one standing in Mag's shoes earlier, then it was very likely that he would've blown his own cover.

Thankfully, Mag had mentally prepared himself in advance. Even though the responses he gave weren't the best replies he could've provided, they were still more than passable.

The servant up ahead led Mag to a large and spacious kitchen, where a group of chefs in identical white chef's suits was busy cooking, and the sound of dishes being prepared rang out incessantly.

Even though it still wasn't time for dinner in the second prince's manor, there were many people living in this massive manor, so it took a long time just to prepare ingredients.

At this moment, many of the chefs were inspecting the corner beside the entrance to the kitchen with curious looks in their eyes. A rectangular box, two strange-looking pots, and two large bags had been placed on the cooking bench there.

Many of the chefs had heard the news that the second prince had found a chef from Chaos City, and was asking him to cook for the king.

This news had created a massive stir among all of the chefs in the manor.

All of the chefs that were hired to cook at the second prince's manor were exceptional chefs in Rodu, and Rodu was the capital of delicious cuisine on the Norland Continent. Every chef felt as if they were one of the best chefs in the world.

It was an extreme honor to be able to cook for the king, yet a chef from Chaos City had taken that honor ahead of them. That was a city that had only been around for about a century, and had no history of good food; how could there possibly be a chef from there who was better than them?

The servants who had brought all of this stuff into the kitchen had told the chefs here that these were all things prepared for that chef from Chaos City. Everyone was very intrigued, and wanted to see if this chef could actually back himself up.

As soon as Mag walked into the kitchen, he was struck by a sense of pressure and antagonism. A smile appeared on his face, and he said, "There sure are a lot of colleagues here."

Chapter 696 The Awakening of the Sharp Tongue

Ever since Mag had opened his restaurant, he had truly been made to comprehend what it meant for people working in the same occupation to be enemies.

As such, he wasn't fazed by the antagonistic eyes cast toward him at all. It didn't take a genius to know how much rage and resentment would be boiling in the hearts of these chefs.

None of that mattered to him anyway. He was a man who could see the bigger picture, and he certainly wasn't going to pay any heed to these ignorant chefs.

The butler who had led Mag to the kitchen smiled, and said, "Mr. Mag, here are all of the things that you asked for, as well as all of the ingredients that you requested. If you need anything else, feel free to tell me."

Mag carefully examined the items on the cooking bench to verify that everything he had requested was ready, and he nodded as he said, "That should be all for now. Thanks for your hard work."

There was no such thing as a gas stove in this world, but Beate had displayed his intelligence to the world by devising a magic stove that derived its heat from a magic formation. The stove was able to provide consistent flame temperature, and the heat was easily adjustable.

All of the chefs in the second prince's manor were naturally using this type of magic stove, while Mag had bought one off the streets, and had taken a long while to grow accustomed to using it.

Prior to coming here, Mag had asked the system to convert the oven into a magic oven as opposed to having to rely on electricity. There was clearly no reliable source of electricity here in Rodu, so that would've been a major problem.

Mag asked Amy to take a seat on a little stool nearby while she ate her biscuits. He then pulled out an apron and chef's hat from one of the bags on the cooking bench before putting them on.

"Is that the chef that His Highness sourced from Chaos City? He's so young; is he even able to cook anything good?"

"The chefs of Chaos City can't compare to the chefs in Rodu. If you ask me, any of the chefs in this kitchen is a far better chef than him."

"He's not that old, but he sure is a cocky little brat. Look at all the stuff he asked the servants to prepare; is he looking down on the kitchenware in our manor?"

The chefs weren't saying anything, yet the sous-chefs and student chefs were all discussing spiritedly among themselves.

Mag merely smiled upon hearing these barbed words. These were the most elementary playground insults, and they certainly weren't going to hurt him. Instead, he was struck by the urge to laugh.

Most of the chefs in the kitchen were already middle-aged men, so they weren't as eager to air their views as the young sous-chefs and student chefs were, but many of them were looking at Mag with disdain in their eyes. The most renowned chef in Chaos City, Head Chef Beate of Ducas Restaurant, had studied cooking in Rodu.

Of course, they would be able to tell whether Mag was the real deal once he began cooking. They were all esteemed chefs, and had to maintain their poise and dignity. Otherwise, if they were to also deliver verbal insults toward Mag, they would be stooping to the level of the student chefs.

However, they were going to air their opinions once Mag's dishes were ready, and they were going to thoroughly enjoy stomping him into the ground during that process.

Mag pulled out his condiments one by one and placed them in the positions that he was accustomed to. He then reached into the water tank beside him, and pulled out a kirin carp that was still swimming about energetically.

He knocked the fish unconscious with the hilt of his blade, and proceeded to remove its scales with a long and thin knife. He then sliced several gashes into the fish's body, pulling out some small fishbones in the process. In what seemed like the blink of an eye, a small pile of tiny fishbones had accumulated on the cooking bench.

A portly chef turned to his student with a derisive sneer, and said, "Heh, do you all see that? That's the worst way to prepare a kirin carp. The scales of the kirin carp are the most delicious parts of its body, and it's what makes the kirin carp so beautiful. Not only has he removed all of the fish's scales, he's also sliced so many unsightly gashes into the fish's body. The entire fish is going to fall apart during the cooking process, and the end result will not only be hideous, but also very unpleasant to eat."

As he was the chef that was the most proficient at cooking fish in this entire kitchen, Matthew's evaluation was naturally regarded to be correct, and all of the student chefs immediately began to suck up to him.

"So you're saying the rank fish scales are the most delicious part of a fish; no wonder you can't cook a good fish." Mag placed the cleaned fish into the marinating condiments before pursing his lips as he scoffed, "The most rank part of a kirin carp's body is its scales. Furthermore, they seal off the flesh of the fish, preventing other flavors from seeping in while trapping the rank odor, making the fish completely bland and tasteless aside from an overwhelming rank flavor. As for the cuts I'm making in the fish, this is to let in more flavor as well as to remove the fishbones. There's no point in telling you this, though; it's a technical skill that not everyone can master."

Mag's voice wasn't very loud, but the entire kitchen immediately fell silent. Contemplative expressions appeared on the faces of the chefs, while the student chefs were trying to gauge the chefs' reactions before saying anything, in fear of saying something wrong if they were to speak too soon.

Matthew's face immediately became flushed with rage and humiliation. He didn't think that Mag would dare to rebut him in front of so many people. He pointed a trembling finger at Mag, and retorted, "T-

that's nonsense! I've cooked fish for over three decades! When I first started cooking fish, you were still in your diapers! Do you think I have less experience than a brat like you?"

"Perseverance and dedication are indeed qualities worthy of respect. Stubbornly following the wrong path for over 30 years is also very much commendable." Mag nodded with a smile.

"You... You..." Matthew was trembling with rage, but he couldn't find a counter to Mag's insult. In the end, he swept his hand through the air with clenched teeth, and spat, "You've got a very sharp tongue; let's see if you can back up that big mouth of yours!"

Mag wasn't someone who would allow others to push him around. The fat chef looked as if he wanted to kill Mag, but he couldn't do anything, and Mag was feeling very content upon seeing this.

He felt as if his sharp tongue from his past life was awakening from its dormancy again.

During the fish marination process, Mag prepared the ingredients for both the steak and the braised chicken. When he opened that bottle of wine, Mag could clearly sense that the eyes of everyone in the kitchen had lit up.

The fish was being grilled in the oven, the chicken was being braised in a pot, and the steak was being seared in a pan. Mag was cooking three dishes at the same time.

The aromas of beef and red wine wafted throughout the kitchen along with the scent of the braised chicken that was escaping from the pot. Only the aroma of the fish had been completely sealed off by the oven.

However, everyone had already fallen silent.

Nothing could make people eat their words more effectively than actions. All of the people in this kitchen were either chefs or aspiring to become chefs. They had all been cooking for a long time, yet they had never encountered a dish that was making it difficult for them to repress their drool, making them want to inhale its aroma with all their might.

However, Mag had managed to achieve this.

"It smells so good! I've never smelled such a fragrant dish. Both the chicken and the beef smell simply extraordinary," a student chef couldn't help but praise, and everyone nodded in agreement with this sentiment. Many of them were unconsciously getting up on the tips of their toes, trying to catch a glimpse of what Mag was putting into his pot and pan to create such an alluring aroma.

"Hmph, even if he can cook a good beef dish and chicken dish, his fish may not be on par," Matthew harrumphed coldly, but his fists were already clenched with anxiety.

"Ding!"

A crisp notification sound rang out from the oven, and Mag plated the steak before opening the door of the oven.

Chapter 697 A Small Offering

Matthew was a renowned chef in Rodu. Back when he was working as the head chef of Moissan Fish Cottage, many customers would line up every day just for a chance to taste his signature fish dish.

His fish feast was the go-to option for all wealthy customers who visited the cottage. Many years ago, the second prince recruited him as a chef after eating his fish feast, and he became the designated chef for all of the fish dishes cooked in the manor.

As such, Matthew was extremely confident. Even the veteran chefs in the royal palace couldn't make fish that was better than his, and the second prince had told him in person that his fish was even more delicious than the fish cooked in the royal palace.

However, Matthew was completely rooted to the spot when Mag opened the door of his oven.

A strong spicy aroma intermingled with the fragrance of grilled fish swept through the entire kitchen. The scorching spicy scent made everyone reflexively narrow their eyes, yet the aroma of the grilled fish was making them salivate uncontrollably, and they wanted to open their eyes wide to see what kind of grilled fish was being revealed.

This was a very unique aroma combination. Even though the spiciness was making their eyes water, the aroma of the fish itself wasn't overwhelmed in the slightest. Instead, it seemed to have only been magnified, and was the purest aroma of fish without any of its signature rank odor.

How could this grilled fish smell like this? The intense spicy aroma hasn't masked the scent of the fish at all! How has he managed to do this? Matthew felt as if there were an earthquake rumbling through his heart. The fish that Mag was cooking had completely revolutionized his concept of how fish should be cooked. It was completely different from how he would cook fish, yet the aroma emanating from the dish was far superior to the aroma of even his best fish dish.

"My eyes are stinging! But it smells so good!"

"The spicy aroma is so painful, yet so alluring! I really want to taste this fish."

"The fish cooked by Chef Matthew is quite delicious, but it seems to be lacking in terms of aroma compared to this one."

The student chefs discussed quietly among themselves as they salivated incessantly.

It's stinging your eyes? That's what it's supposed to do! This is the three times insanely spicy grilled fish; it would be strange if your eyes didn't sting! A faint smile appeared on Mag's face.

The second prince was a sworn enemy of his, and even though he couldn't topple the second prince yet, it wasn't in his nature to leave Josh without a memento.

"His Highness is here!"

Right at this moment, a loud voice sounded from outside, and the young man in a set of lavish blue robes made his way into the kitchen.

"Your Highness."

Everyone in the kitchen immediately extended respectful salutes toward Josh.

“This aroma!” Josh paid no heed to everyone else as he stared intently at Mag, who was wearing a pair of oven mitts as he pulled the grilled fish out of the oven. Josh’s eyes narrowed as he exclaimed, “Is that fish?”

Mag smiled as he removed the lid from the pot that contained the braised chicken, allowing its delicious aroma to also waft through the air. “Yes, Your Highness. This is one of the dishes I’m preparing to cook during His Majesty’s birthday banquet. The other two dishes are the black pepper steak and the braised chicken and rice.”

The aromas of the steak, braised chicken, and grilled fish intermingled with each other, creating a captivating symphony for one’s nose.

Josh had tasted countless delicacies cooked by the most exceptional chefs all over the continent, but he was still struck by the urge to salivate as he looked at those three dishes.

This was incredible to him.

No food had ever held such allure to him, but he could sense the yearning in the pit of his stomach, urging him to taste those dishes.

Josh nodded with a calm facade as he said, “The aroma is indeed quite extraordinary, but I’ll need to taste it to see if they’re actually as delicious as they smell.”

“It may smell good, but that doesn’t mean it tastes good. There’s no way that such a spicy fish could be edible,” Matthew murmured to himself. He had recovered his confidence and composure.

As a chef, he had an extensive knowledge of condiments, and using spices to mask the rank odor of fish certainly wasn’t some kind of well-guarded secret. However, a good chef would never allow the flavor of the spices to overwhelm the main ingredient. Otherwise, the dish would be a complete failure.

The other chefs also nodded in agreement. Setting aside the black pepper steak and the braised chicken for now, the spicy grilled fish smelled extraordinarily alluring, yet they also suspected it to be a gimmick. It was very difficult to imagine just how many chili peppers would’ve had to have been used to create such a powerful aroma.

Mag didn’t pay any heed to what the chefs were saying. Instead, he turned to Josh with a smile, and said, “Please take a seat outside, Your Highness; I’ll bring out the dishes right away.”

There was a small dining hall outside the kitchen for the chefs to use every day.

“Sure.” Josh turned and made his way out of the kitchen.

Mag filled a bowl with braised chicken, and then filled another bowl with moonlight rice. Both bowls were placed onto a platter before he turned to a young student chef, and instructed, “Please bring this braised chicken and rice dish out to His Highness.”

The student chef hesitated momentarily, but he still accepted the platter in the end before carefully carrying it out of the kitchen.

Mag then plated the steak and asked another student chef to carry it out into the dining hall. After doing all that, he carefully carried the spicy grilled fish on his own and made his way out of the kitchen.

“Let’s see what His Highness has to say about these dishes,” an elderly chef said as he led the way out of the kitchen.

“Let me see if that grilled fish is even edible.” Matthew harrumphed as he also made his way out into the dining hall.

Aside from the student chefs who still had to prepare ingredients, everyone else filed into the dining hall outside as well.

Mag placed the steaming spicy grilled fish on the table in front of Josh, then smiled, and said, “Your Highness, I suggest you have the braised chicken and rice first. The spicy grilled fish is quite strong in flavor, so it’s best to taste that one last.”

Josh picked up a piece of chicken with his chopsticks. Everyone else in the dining hall was also staring at that portion of braised chicken.

The golden pieces of chicken were all completely even in size, without any imperfections or blemishes. The potatoes were soft, yet still maintained their structural integrity. The asparagus was crisp and green, while the different-colored bell peppers embellished the dish like works of art. The thick golden broth of the braised chicken was catching and reflecting the light, yet it didn’t appear to be greasy in the slightest.

The entire dining hall was filled with the rich aroma of chicken and shiitake mushrooms, and one couldn’t help but salivate just from looking at it.

The evenly sliced cubes of chicken had perfectly absorbed the flavor of the condiments and broth, and a piece of this delectable chicken was currently on its way into Josh’s mouth.

The cube of chicken was enshrouded in delicious broth, and the incredible flavor instantly set Josh’s taste buds alight, completely entralling him in the process.

After biting through into the cube of chicken, he discovered that the texture of the meat was extremely tender, and the flavor of the condiments and shiitake mushrooms had completely seeped into the meat, elevating its flavor to a whole new level. Even after swallowing the mouthful of chicken, a fragrant aroma lingered in his mouth.

Josh’s eyes had completely lit up, and he couldn’t help but praise, “Both the flavor and texture are outstanding!”

He picked up a spoon with his left hand, and drank a spoonful of the broth. The flavors of the condiments and shiitake mushrooms were even more pronounced in the chicken, and as it slid down his throat, he felt as if every single pore all over its body had opened up; it was a warm and extremely comfortable feeling.

He then scooped up a spoonful of rice, and felt as if he were looking at a spoonful of translucent little moons that were exuding a faint fragrance. He placed the spoonful of rice into his mouth, and found that the texture was slightly chewy, while the flavor became even richer after biting into the miniature moons. Furthermore, the aroma was only becoming more delicious as he continued to chew.

A bite of chicken, a mouthful of rice, a spoonful of soup; the cycle repeated itself over and over again, and Josh simply couldn't stop eating!

Chapter 698 Care For Some Three Times Insanely Spicy Grilled Fish?

As they were chefs of the second prince's manor, everyone was well aware of how picky the second prince was with his food. Even the most renowned chefs in Rodu couldn't ensure that the second prince would finish the entirety of their dishes. In fact, it often proved to be the case that their food would be left completely untouched by the second prince.

As such, the image of the second prince basking in the delicious braised chicken and rice had all of them completely flabbergasted.

Is that braised chicken really that delicious?

The same question popped up in everyone's mind.

Matthew's expression had darkened significantly. It was quite apparent that Mag's braised chicken and rice was very much to the second prince's liking. In that case, even if the fish he made was borderline inedible, there was still a very good chance that the second prince would hire him as a chef in the manor. After all, most of the chefs here were only responsible for cooking one dish each anyway. As long as they could make one dish that the second prince enjoyed, all of the other dishes would be taken care of by the other chefs.

He was trying to show off his professional knowledge in front of his student chefs by insulting Mag's cooking, but he hadn't thought that Mag would have such a sharp tongue. It now appeared that Mag's cooking skills were also at least on par with that sharp tongue of his, which was naturally quite an unpleasant discovery for Matthew.

The kitchen of the second prince's manor wasn't an easy place to work at. If there was a more exceptional chef out there, any of the chefs here could easily be replaced. It was a very simple yet very cruel system. However, working in this kitchen was a great honor, and it was also quite a leisurely job; Matthew didn't want to be replaced and kicked out by this Mag.

Matthew's student chefs also wore tense expressions on their faces. If Matthew were to be fired, they would also be kicked out of the kitchen. A job at the second prince's manor was extremely difficult to come by, and they didn't want to lose their opportunity.

Everyone looked on in silence at the sight of Josh enjoying his meal, and the sound of loud gulps rang out from time to time.

The bowls of chicken and rice were finished in the blink of an eye. Josh was rather taken aback as he put down his spoon as if he were surprised that he had finished the dish so quickly and had been left wanting more. He looked up and gave Mag a thumbs-up as he praised, "That was incredibly delicious."

He had initially suspected that this Mag might have been Alex, but those suspicions had been completely erased.

If even Alex could cook such delicious food, then anyone would be able to pick up the Tian Du sword and start slaying giant dragons.

This Mag was a good chef, but there was no way that he was a good knight as well.

He had seen many exceptional chefs; their dedication to their craft meant that they were unable to focus on improving in any other area.

Only with sufficient dedication and effort could someone reach the pinnacle of their craft. This was a notion that rang true for the vast majority of people.

As such, it had to be a coincidence that Mag shared the same name as Alex.

Furthermore, just this braised chicken and rice dish alone was enough to convince him to allow Mag to cook during the king's birthday banquet.

"You're far too kind, Your Highness." Mag nodded with a smile. If it weren't for the current circumstances, Mag would rather feed all this food to a dog than offer it to Josh.

A stir immediately ran through the entire dining hall. The second prince had never offered them such glowing praise for any one of their dishes. It was quite clear that he was extremely pleased with Mag's braised chicken and rice.

Even if he can cook a good chicken, that doesn't mean that his fish will be any good. Matthew forcibly calmed himself down, yet his clenched fists had unconsciously tightened even further.

Josh then turned his attention to the steak. Seeing this, Mag suggested, "The best way to consume the steak is to slice it up using the knife, then dip it into the black pepper sauce before consumption."

Josh picked up his knife and fork, and then took a gentle whiff of the steak. A smile appeared on his face as he said, "I can smell a hint of wine in this steak. I've never heard of wine being used in cooking before; let me see how this tastes."

Mag's first dish had received brilliant praise from the second prince, and everyone was very curious about what kind of appraisal Josh would give to the second dish.

"It's obviously super delicious," Amy murmured to herself as she tried to stop herself from drooling at the sight of the grilled fish on the table. Even though the little pumpkin biscuits had been quite tasty, Mag's cooking was obviously far more delicious.

The knife glided through the tender steak, and red wine seeped out along with red meat juices. The aroma of wine in the air became even more pronounced, and Josh's eyes immediately lit up.

He wasn't an avid wine enthusiast, yet the king would always send a crate of wine from the Buffett Winery to his manor whenever a new batch arrived. As such, he wasn't unfamiliar with wine, and he could tell the difference between good and mediocre wine.

Just from the aroma of this wine alone, he could tell that it was not inferior to the wine from the Buffett Winery. That was making him even more eager to taste this steak.

After dipping the piece of steak in the black pepper sauce, Josh placed it into his mouth before chewing into the tender beef. Rich meat juices and red wine spilled out from the beef, and the unique fragrance of the black pepper further enhanced the flavor of the steak. As he slowly chewed on the morsel of beef,

its delectable flavor washed over his palate, and he was struck by an unprecedented sense of bliss and satisfaction.

Josh's eyes were already closed as he slowly chewed on his beef, and a blissful smile had appeared on his face.

He had already forgotten how long it had been since he had tasted food that evoked such bliss and joy within him.

There was no need for him to say anything; everyone could see what Josh thought of the dish from his body language. It was quite clear that the second dish was also very much to his liking.

This was the type of expression that every chef wanted to see on the faces of their customers. The sense of accomplishment from seeing customers completely enthralled in their food was completely incomparable.

And now, this expression had appeared on the face of the notoriously picky second prince. It was difficult to imagine just how delicious this piece of steak was.

The entire steak was quickly finished by Josh, and the blissful smile on his face stiffened upon hearing the sound of his cutlery striking the empty plate before him. He looked up at Mag with an approving smile, and said, "Father will definitely love this dish."

The sound of sharp breaths being drawn immediately rang out across the entire dining hall. Everyone looked on with stunned expressions on their faces. They had thought that the second prince would be intent on testing Mag, but who would've thought that he would give Mag such an evaluation on just the second dish? It was quite apparent that Mag had already passed the test with flying colors, and would be allowed to cook during the king's birthday banquet.

Even after eating the entirety of the braised chicken and rice and the black pepper steak, Josh was still feeling ravenous for more. He turned his gaze toward the spicy grilled fish, and an intrigued look appeared on his face as he said, "This fish smells quite spicy, but I'm very curious to see how this fish tastes different compared to a normal fish dish."

Oh, it's going to be different alright. Care for some three times insanely spicy grilled fish? Mag wore a calm smile on his face, but he was internally rubbing his hands together with anticipation.

It's definitely not going to taste good at all! Matthew's fists were tightly clenched, and cold sweat had already beaded all over his forehead.

The first two dishes had earned splendid praise from the second prince, and everyone else in the dining hall was also very intrigued by this final dish. The entire fish was covered in red chili peppers, and there was almost nowhere for Josh to dig his chopsticks into.

Thus, he picked aside some of the chili peppers, extracted a morsel of fish with his chopsticks, and then dipped it into the bright red juices below before placing it in his mouth.

"Oh!"

Josh's face immediately became completely flushed, and there was even white smoke billowing out from his nostrils. He felt as if he had been thrown into a fire pit!

Chapter 699 I'll Make Sure Your A*shole is in Constant Agony!

The scorching spicy flavor wreaked havoc in his mouth like a ball of fire. He felt as if he was tasting a mouthful of molten lava, and the taste buds on the tip of his tongue immediately went numb. Josh had never tasted anything so spicy before. For an instant, he even suspected that he had been poisoned. His body temperature spiked drastically, and sweat was pouring all over his body as white steam continued to puff out of his nose.

“Your Highness, are you alright?!”

“Hurry up and get a doctor!”

The chefs in the dining hall immediately erupted into a panicked frenzy. Some were rushing off to fill glasses of water, while others had already run off to seek help.

As expected, it's completely inedible! Matthew was feeling extremely relieved and vindicated upon seeing this. Even though the second prince had been full of praise for Mag's first two dishes, as long as the fish he cooked wasn't to the second prince's liking, Matthew's place in the manor's kitchen wouldn't be threatened.

Josh was finding this level of spiciness to be simply unbearable, yet just as he was about to spit out the morsel of fish, the rich flavor of the fish itself suddenly blossomed in his mouth. The imagery evoked within his mind was akin to that of rainfall on a parched desert as the succulent fish melted in his mouth.

This incomparably delicious flavor was blossoming within the unbearable heat, repressing the scorching aura and bestowing new life upon his numb tongue and taste buds. In fact, their sensitivity seemed to have been enhanced, and every single taste bud of his was yearning to experience more of the fish's delectable flavor.

Josh swallowed the morsel of fish, and it slid down his throat like a red-hot lump of lava. The heat then spread throughout his entire body, making him feel as relaxed and comfortable as if he were lying in a hot bath.

Just a small mouthful of fish had taken Josh on a complete flavor rollercoaster, showing him the joy of experiencing pain and pleasure simultaneously. This was the most unforgettable mouthful of any food he had ever had.

His throat was still scorching hot and his tongue was becoming numb again, but it was as if his hand no longer obeyed his commands as it picked up his chopsticks again before plucking another morsel of fish into his mouth.

The delicious flavor of the fish could repress the intense spicy flavor, yet each and every mouthful of fish he ate further compounded the scorching spiciness wreaking havoc within his mouth. Despite that, he simply couldn't stop eating the delectable fish, and he descended into a vicious yet blissful cycle.

“Wait... His Highness seems to be enjoying this fish,” an old chef immediately yelled out to his student chef, who had already rushed over to the entrance of the dining hall to search for a doctor.

Josh's face was completely flushed, yet his chopsticks continued to shovel fish into his mouth. The old chef looked on at this rather farcical sight with a complex expression on his face. He had never seen the second prince enjoy any dish to this extent.

"H-how could this be?!" Matthew stumbled back as his face turned deathly pale. Thankfully, one of his student chefs quickly reacted and caught him before he could fall.

When Matthew had just been hired to cook in the manor's kitchen, the second prince would often eat his fish. Now, he would still cook the same fish every day, yet the prince would take a bite or two out of it at most. It was most often the case that the fish would be carried out, and then carried back into the kitchen, having been completely untouched.

He would often console himself by blaming it on the weather, thinking to himself that the recent weather was blunting the prince's appetite for fish. However, the fact that Josh was currently eagerly shoving morsels of grilled fish into his mouth clearly indicated that this was not the case. Upon arriving at that realization, Matthew was struck by a crushing sense of sorrow and dejection.

It appeared that it was time for him to pack up his things and leave.

All of the chefs in the kitchen also wore similar expressions on their faces. Even though the fish was clearly unbearably spicy, the second prince was still feasting on it in such an enthusiastic manner; that was enough to indicate just how delicious the dish was. The second prince had always had immaculate table manners, and they had never seen him eat in such a frenetic and uncivilized manner before.

Just who is this man?

All of the chefs turned to Mag with curiosity and bewilderment on their faces. The disdain that they had directed toward Mag earlier completely disappeared.

There was an unspoken hierarchy in the world of chefs. At the very top of this hierarchy was naturally the chefs of Rodu, followed by the elven race, and after that came the chefs of Chaos City.

In the eyes of many of Rodu's chefs, the cooking skills of Chaos City's chefs were only barely superior to that of orc chefs. That was why such a massive stir had been created when rumors spread of the second prince inviting a chef from Chaos City to cook for the king.

However, Mag had completely shattered the preconceived notions they harbored toward the chefs of Chaos City.

Josh was indeed completely unable to stop. On one hand, this was because the grilled fish was exceptionally delicious, and it seemed to possess some kind of magical power that prevented him from putting down his chopsticks.

Of course, more importantly, this was because the fish was simply far too spicy. As soon as he stopped eating, his throat and mouth would feel as if they'd been set on fire, and only another mouthful of fish would douse the flames, but after he stopped, that burning sensation would return with even greater severity.

This was an indescribable sensation.

What was even more amazing to Josh was that this fish had no troublesome little fishbones, thereby allowing him to feast on it without any inhibitions.

As such, there was even less excuse for Josh to pause during the consumption of the fish, and only after eating an entire side of the fish did Josh finally grit his teeth and put down his chopsticks. He waved a hand at a nearby servant who was holding a glass of water, and he chugged down the entire glass of water in one go before releasing a long exhalation.

When he had first sat down for his meal, his lavish robes had been immaculately clean and his hair had also been exemplary. In the aftermath of his meal, his long robes had been completely drenched with sweat, and were clinging to his body. His hair, meanwhile, had also become extremely disheveled, and was plastered to his forehead, making him appear as if he were an escaping fugitive rather than an esteemed prince.

“On the way here, Mr. Cayrols had informed me that Your Highness was a fan of spicy foods. Hence, I added some extra chili peppers to the grilled fish. Was it to your liking, Your Highness?” Mag pinned the blame on Cayrols and put on a nervous yet expectant expression, but he was feeling extremely satisfied internally.

That’s what you get for taking Amy hostage three years ago! If I get the chance in the future, I’ll make you taste the four times, five times, even six times insanely spicy grilled fish! I’ll make sure your a*shole is in constant agony!

Josh felt as if he were slightly dehydrated from his profuse sweating, and all of his limbs felt sluggish and feeble. It was the exact same feeling as after emerging from a sauna, except his mouth, esophagus, and stomach were still on fire.

A contemplative look appeared on Josh’s face upon hearing this. If any other chef had reduced him to such a disheveled and unsightly state, he would definitely have them executed. However, the fish that Mag had cooked was undeniably delicious, and he derived far more joy than pain from eating it.

As such, he couldn’t really criticize the dish. After all, it was fairly common knowledge that he enjoyed spicy food, and Mag was only trying to cater to his tastes. With that in mind, a smile appeared on his face as he said, “The grilled fish that you cooked is the most delicious and spiciest fish dish I’ve ever had.”

“You’re far too kind, Your Highness. If you like it, I can cook it for you every day for the next few days.” For once, Mag was being genuine with his words. He was indeed more than willing to cook spicy grilled fish for Josh every day.

“You can go and have some food with your daughter now. I’ll organize a place for you to stay at, and you can focus on preparing for the birthday banquet in two days.” Josh rose to his feet before exiting the dining hall.

Chapter 700 Stop Cooking Fish, Try Cooking Chicken Instead

“So it’s decided? Just like that?”

“What else did you expect? Have you ever seen His Highness eat so much in a single meal? Those three dishes must’ve been amazing!”

“I heard that he defeated Head Chef Beate of Ducas Restaurant in a cooking contest in Chaos City. As expected, he really is an extremely good chef.”

As soon as Josh left, the slightly oppressive atmosphere in the dining hall was immediately lifted. Everyone had thought that this was going to be a complex judging process, and all of the chefs had already prepared themselves to weigh in with opinions of their own.

However, Josh finished almost all three dishes by himself, and then made the executive decision to allow Mag to cook during the king’s birthday banquet. He hadn’t inquired anyone else’s opinion, and the process went completely differently from what everyone had expected.

“Father is so awesome!” Amy looked up at Mag with admiration shimmering in her eyes.

“Let’s go eat as well.” Mag patted Amy’s head as a huge weight was lifted off his shoulders. He had vented some of his rage for Josh by feeding him that three times insanely spicy grilled fish. Furthermore, judging from Josh’s reaction toward him, he seemed to have completely convinced himself that Mag wasn’t Alex. As such, he had completed half of the objective that he had set out to achieve by coming to Rodu.

“Can we eat your cooking, Father?” Amy asked with an expectant look on her face.

“Of course. I made enough braised chicken and rice for three people, and I can cook another steak for you.” Mag smiled as he held onto Amy’s little hand and made his way toward the kitchen.

“Yay!” Amy yelled with elation.

“Meow~” Ugly Duckling let loose an urgent cry as if it were desperately trying to tell them something.

“You’ll get your share as well,” Mag consoled with a smile.

“Ugly Duckling, if you pretend to fall unconscious like you did earlier today, you’ll be getting no food from now on.” Amy prodded Ugly Duckling’s head with her finger as a disdainful look appeared on her face.

“Meow~” Ugly Duckling pouted in a pitiable display as if to argue that it hadn’t been pretending to be unconscious.

“Even if you really did faint, you’ll still get no food!” Amy added.

“Meow...” Ugly Duckling lowered its head in a sheepish manner.

Mag appraised the interaction between Amy and Ugly Duckling with a smile on his face. Even though a pair of white wing-like marks had appeared on Ugly Duckling’s back, it was getting fatter every day, and it really didn’t look like it would ever be able to fly.

Just the imagery of a round ball of an orange cat flying with a pair of tiny white wings brought an amused smile to his face.

Mag and Amy exited the dining hall, and the deathly pale Matthew quickly rushed over to the table. He picked up the chopsticks that the second prince had used before plucking a morsel of fish into his mouth.

Hot! Hot! Hot! Matthew's mind was entirely dominated by thoughts of how spicy the dish was as soon as the morsel of fish entered his mouth. He felt as if the intense spicy flavor had been condensed before spreading through his mouth and exploding with reckless abandon. The scorching flavor struck him with a sense of dizziness and asphyxiation, and his face immediately turned as red as a tomato as steam began to waft into the air from the top of his head.

This was definitely no ordinary chili pepper. No matter how many ordinary chili peppers were used, there was no way that such an insane level of spiciness could be achieved. He had only tasted a small piece of fish, yet he felt as if he had almost suffocated.

Matthew couldn't understand how such a horrendous fish could elicit such scintillating praise from the second prince.

Right at this moment, pure flavor of the fish burst through the sea of fiery heat, blossoming like an oasis amid a scorching desert.

Matthew had been born in a fishing village, and he learned how to cook his first fish dish from the mayor when he was just 12 years old. He was taken to Rodu by a wealthy merchant at 15 years of age, and worked as a student chef at the Moissan Fish Cottage for 10 years. He learned how to cook a full fish feast from the old head chef there, and he went on to become an even more exceptional chef than his master had been. At 26 years of age, he became the head chef of the Moissan Fish Cottage, specializing in all types of fish dishes, and making the Moissan Fish Cottage the most renowned fish restaurant in the entirety of Rodu.

It could be said that he had been cooking fish exclusively for 30 years.

He had once thought that no one knew more about cooking fish than he did, and that there was no way anyone could cook a more delicious fish than he could.

However, all of Matthew's beliefs were completely shattered in this moment. The skin of the fish was charred and crispy, while its flesh was succulent and tender. Its delicious flavor spread through his mouth, and not even the suffocating spiciness could prevent the flavor of the fish from shining through. Instead, the spiciness only worked to enhance the fish's flavor.

"Master, perhaps this is the unachievable flavor that you were aspiring to create your entire life..." The chopsticks slipped from Matthew's grasp and clattered to the ground while tears streamed down his face.

The entire dining hall had descended into complete silence, and everyone wore complex expressions. Even though all of these chefs were constantly competing with each other, the exemplary cooking skills that Mag had displayed today struck everyone with a sense of peril and urgency. If the second prince were to hire Mag as a chef in his manor, all of the other chefs here would most likely have to reconsider their future.

"Don't worry, I won't be staying here. I've only come to Rodu to cook for His Majesty, and I'll be returning to Chaos City in five days. I still have to go back to my restaurant there," Mag said in a nonchalant voice as he carried two portions of braised chicken and rice and two portions of steak into the room. He placed the dishes onto a table before indicating for Amy to sit across from him.

Everyone's eyes lit up upon hearing this. They were all rather surprised, but they also heaved an internal sigh of relief in unison. If Mag were to stay at the manor, all of them would most likely be unemployed in the near future.

Matthew wiped the tears away from his face and made his way over to Mag's table.

His face was still quite flushed, and he was staring intently at Mag, making Mag feel rather uncomfortable as he pulled the portions of braised chicken and rice closer to himself in a cautious manner. "There are only two portions of braised chicken and rice; I didn't make any extra portions."

"I'm going to eat a portion, and Father is going to eat the other portion, so you have to go cook for yourself," Amy said with a serious expression as she shielded her bowl with her little hands.

"My name is Matthew, and I apologize if I offended you earlier. After tasting your spicy grilled fish, I was made aware of the wide gulf between our cooking skills, and I'm greatly ashamed for what I said earlier. I hope you may forgive me, Mr. Mag." Matthew bowed deeply to Mag as he spoke.

Mag heaved a sigh of relief and released his bowl upon seeing this. All was well as long as this fat chef wasn't here to steal their food. He nodded, and replied, "It's good that you can learn from your mistakes."

Amy also released her bowl and picked up her spoon before digging into her braised chicken and rice.

Matthew hesitated momentarily before continuing, "Mr. Mag, I have a question; how were you able to cook such a delicious fish? I've been dedicating myself solely to the craft of cooking fish for three decades, yet the flavor of the fish I cook continues to be quite lackluster. Would you be able to tell me why that is, Mr. Mag?"

You've been cooking fish for 30 years and you don't even like your own fish? What a tragic life! Mag pursed his lips upon hearing this. If a chef didn't even like his own cooking, how could he expect his customers to enjoy it?

Mag thought about this for a moment before giving an earnest suggestion. "I suggest you stop cooking fish, and try cooking chicken instead. Perhaps you'll suddenly make a name for yourself and earn way more money than you did while cooking fish."