

TECHNOLOGY 1071

Chapter 1071 - Witches!

--Hidden Fortress, Continent of Tenola--

.

The hidden fortress stood tall and ancient, as it completely integrated with its surroundings, becoming one with nature.

Moss, vines and all sorts of plants had fully covered the fortress walls in a tight grip, almost strangling the building structures.

And within the high walled fortress, we're several black-cloaked people walking around the central courtyard in circles while raising their hands high up in the sky from time to time.

And in the centre of these people were n.a.k.e.d, badly beaten up men who were gagged and left lying on the ground.

"Halimama... Halimama...~~

Kill! Kill! Kill!

Halimama... Halimama...~~

Stab, pluck, kill!"

As the cloaked people danced, they continued chanting some weird words, creating a very spooky scene for anyone who came across such a scene.

Suddenly, the dancing stopped, and the cloaked people bent down to pick up the sharpest butcher knives ever!

It was at this moment, that a deep wave of panic filled those who were already tied up and gagged.

But how could it be that easy?

Even if they did manage to wiggle themselves away from the circle, the fortress itself was heavily guarded.

So what chance did they have?

.

"Little puppets, where are you all going?"

"Yes. Yes. Don't try running away... Just stay right there and be grateful that you were chosen for today's ritual."

"Hahahahaha! Are you scared? Are you all scared now? Don't worry... We aren't crazy people. So what's there to fear?"

The cloaked people suddenly took off their masks, revealing the crazed faces of several young girls about 14~17 in age.

A cold light flashed through their eyes, and they raised their butcher blades high up in the sky.

"Halimama... Halimama~~"

You are my sacrifice!!"

With a fierce wave, they wasted no time, slamming their sharpened knives into their victims.

~Wham! Wham! Wham!~~

"Hmmmm~Hmmmm~"

The gagged victims mumbled in despair as the blades continuously met with their flesh.

But these young girls didn't care at all.

The more the men screamed for mercy, the more violent they became.

~pfff~~

Blood strayed on these girls, dyeing their entire faces red.

Opening their mouths and tasting the blood, their entire bodies shuddered in ecstasy.

"~Uahhh~~"

How divine...

The girls licked their lips and c.a.r.e.s.s.ed the blood on their faces tenderly.

Was this heaven?

.

They bit their lips wishing for more sacrificial blood to splatter on them.

Yes. This was the ritual that they had to perform once a month to give themselves heavenly powers.

They were Witches of Avodart, one of the strongest and hidden societies in Tenola.

They believed that the world doesn't need men.

They were a society that loathed men to the bone.

If they had their way, all men in the world would be locked up like pets, only taking them out once in a while for reproduction.

That was it!

The world they were fighting for was such a place.

A place where only women reigned and men were kept behind cages like the dogs that they were.

They also believed that eating a man's flesh would keep them young and beautiful, with much vitality.

Only when the man's flesh has a hidden disease would they age.

That was their own explanation for ageing.

One of the girls was about to cleanly cut off her victim's legs when the victim suddenly sat up with all his strength, accidentally touching her.

"Ahhh~~ Sisters! This smelly man has defiled my body by touching me."

"Oh no! You need to hurry up and wash up with the sacred Pond water, or else you will age 10 months faster after this."

The girl's face grew grim.

No! She didn't want to grow old. She was still going and beautiful.

What if her lover, sister Magaret, didn't like her anymore?

No way!

He gritted her teeth and quickly dashed towards the sacred pond a little distance from them while cursing that bloody victim for putting her through all this.

The sad part was that even with her gone, the ceremony would still continue, meaning that all the good body parts would be eaten by the others, leaving her with the least favourable parts that won't add much to her beauty after consumption.

What she wanted were the heart, eyes, tongue and a few other vital parts.

So by the time she got back, wouldn't they have been snatched away?

Why was life so unfair?

.

~Wham! Wham! Wham Wham!~

The sounds of the victims getting butchered echoed across the courtyard, tracing up towards one of the tall towering buildings nearby.

Looking outside the window were the 13 head witches of the place.

Like beautiful music to their ears, the witches couldn't help smiling in satisfaction at the gruesome sounds below.

"Sisters, isn't it truly marvellous when the young learn the ways of our sisterhood?"

Another woman with a poisonous potted plant in her hands nodded in agreement: "Yes. It appears that they do enjoy this pretty much. But rules are rules. They can only do this once a month to maintain their beauty."

"Hmmm... That's the tragic part. Now, why don't we go back to the matter of Princess Lucy?"

"Yes... Let's..."

With that, the ladies retook their seats around a shrine that seemed to have a single portrait of Lucy on it.

What an exquisite Portrait!

Head witch Jimila took off her hat, revealing her thick, vibrant red hair that could make many die in envy.

She was just 39 years of age.

And as law here, a Head Witch can only be between the ages of 30~45.

After 45, they were to be elders, forming a council that would aid the current Head Witch in decision making.

Today, Head Witch Jimila had found their new sacrifice for the upcoming Full Moon Festival, a year and 7 months from now.

That's right.

They had to leave and sail out fast, capturing her and bringing her back before the Sacrifice Date.

No matter what, Princess Lucy had to be sacrificed!

Chapter 1072 - A Past Sin!

All 13 witches looked at Lucy's portrait possessively.

"Sisters! We finally found her."

"Yes... There's no mistaking it. This is her!"

"Sisters! We finally found the b**ches daughter!

Now, we can get revenge!"

"Of course! I've waited a long time for this!

We, Witches of Avodart, are not one to mess with.

For the crimes of her mother, the girl must be sacrificed.

It's the only way to appease Goddess Avodart, the Goddess of Witchcraft and Sorcery."

Yes. That's right!

Lucy's mother used to be one of the most outstanding members of their community.

She had her first kill at the age of 4, and was slowly brought up in the way of their society.

Things were all fine and good, with the girl growing into one of the most outstanding children amongst the pact.

She was ruthless, cunning, fierce and very cold.

Even the higher-up Witches all had eyes on this girl whose expression never changes.

She was indeed outstanding... That is until she turned 13.

With her high kill count and skills, she was quickly becoming the favourite of the place.

And that's why they had no qualms sending her out on missions.

There was a particular mission, where she got sent out with two other 16-year-old girls.

Generally speaking, if someone saw these girls, especially a 13-year-old girl, they would lower their guards tremendously.

The fact that they were women alone had made uncountable men lower their guards.

And this was their biggest advantage as women.

That, and the fact that they could act like weak babies, cowering in fear... only to turn ruthless and kill in the end.

Why favour someone crying over someone who wasn't?

Manipulation was a woman's greatest advantage, and they used it as they pleased.

Of course, at the age of 7, all warrior witches were to have s.e.x with the men in the dungeons and learn the necessary skills to take any man 'there.'

But if one was one a talent like Lucy's mother, this could be prolonged at most before 15.

Bottom line, the majority of the ladies here did IT at the age of 7.

And those who died from it all were weak and seen as mistakes that somehow managed to get into their Hidden society.

The future they had society had thought out was a place for strong women only.

Those who couldn't make the cut would have to go!

.

As for Lucy's mother, her big change happened at 13.

This vicious killer girl had suddenly fallen in love with the target they were about to capture and assassinate.

She went out there along with 2 other 16-year-old girls for the mission.

And the more she watched the boy, the more pity she felt for the boy.

She also snuck out at night to see this boy severally.

But she was too naive.

The witch society had noticed her actions and quickly ended the boy's life right before her eyes.

While dying, he whispered something into her ear that they couldn't hear.

But whatever it was, made her stay silent in a daze.

Of course as punishment, they locked her up for 6 whole months for her to learn her lesson to get her emotions in order.

But after 2 months of receiving whip lashes, beatings and so on... she returned to normal, training in the cells and chanting the ways of the society too.

Everything seemed like it was back to normal... Or so they thought.

.

For her good behaviour, she was released a month and a half earlier than scheduled and even started being the genius they were all used to.

Heh.

But that was just her plan to lure them into a false sense of security.

They didn't know how she did it, but soon enough, countless soldiers stormed the plan one dark night, waging war against them.

Dammit!

The location of their fortress had been discovered!

And it wasn't just the fortress they were in that got noticed, but several others too.

In short, that year, they lost 11 fortresses out of the 16 they had.

It goes without saying that they also lost 7/10th of how many members they had left.

And it was all because of Her!!

The best had betrayed them!!

How did they know?

Because during the night when the people stormed in, while everyone had been struggling to fight and escape, the brat had been making her way towards those who killed that boy.

Yes... She wanted revenge.

That night, she did succeed in killing one of them... But, the other person managed to survive after getting stabbed and painfully dragged herself towards the secret escape route with revenge burning in her eyes.

And who was this person that got stabbed?

Head Witch Jimila!

That's right

She was one of the 16-year-old girls who accompanied Lucy's mother during that mission.

.

After the incident, the few surviving witches regrouped in the other fortresses that hadn't been discovered yet.

And with that, they immediately began their plan of reproduction, as well as changing some rules to ensure that nothing of this sort ever happened again.

The catastrophe of that year was one that no witch ever wanted to remember.

And it was all caused by a little 13-year-old girl.

They were so shocked that all the time that they thought she was locked up in the punishment cells, she had somehow managed to escape night after night.

So who knew what else she had been cooking up that entire time?

She was indeed a dangerous one.

Because they were scared that she wouldn't give up until her revenge was complete, they started looking for her instead.

But no matter how they searched, they never found her.

It was as if she had vanished from Tenola completely.

And they were right.

Who knew that she would be hiding in Arcadina?

She even got married, treated poorly and died just like that?

Ridiculous!

Jimila felt it was impossible.

The woman they knew was a cold-hearted beast and not this weakling they all read about.

Tsk.

She was dead.

So what?

Her daughter would pay the price for her sins!

Chapter 1073 - Welcome Home!

Just like that, unbeknownst to Lucy... her life was targeted.

She was to be a sacrifice!

But, she remained clueless.

And soon, the ships were just about to dock in Baymard.

Mission complete.

Over the days, even though the boy Rankin had been very silent, he had nonetheless gradually opened up, getting close to Lucy and the 2 soldiers who stayed with him in the cave the most.

The 5-year-old Rankin was utterly stunned by the crazy ship he rode on. Everything was so strange, new and bizarre.

He had heard of some of the strange things in Baymard before when his uncle (hidden guard) was still alive.

But he brushed those things off and did his best to mind his business, knowing that he might never see the place in his lifetime.

However, fate had a funny way of playing with people.

These Baymardians had rescued him out of the blue.

Baymardian had a generally good reputation that some would think of as foolish.

And coupled with the grand treatment they gave him, it just went to prove his point even further.

Landon looked at the young Rankin and carried him up, placing him on the high table beside him.

It was time for them to talk man to man.

That's right.

Landon was treating him like a man!

.

"Rankin. For now, you don't have to worry about telling us your identity.

You're only 5, and have a long way to go in whatever quest or mission you want to solve.

So it's okay for you to stay vigilant until you're sure of what decision you want to make.

There's no need to rush."

Rankin pursed his lips tightly before nodding his head gratefully: "Thank you, your..."

"No. Call me brother Landon."

"Yes... Thank you, elder brother Landon."

"Mmm..." Landon replied.

The system did say that this 5-year-old boy was the future king of Abian in Morgany.

And as far as he could tell, they weren't ready to hit Morgany yet.

Plus, the kid was just 5. So wouldn't it be wrong to put a 5-year-old on the throne to get into so much political turmoil?

Let him live a little, at least.

So he had all the time to assess if they, as Baymardians, and decide for himself whether they could be his allies or not.

From what Josh and the rest had overheard, the bit lost the only ally he had, which was also his guardian.

And the boy was as confused as can be.

Again, having him stay here would instill some great values into the boy on what real leadership should look like.

At least he would grow up in a safe environment.

.

"Little Rankin. Even though people are indeed looking for you, they should be thinking that you are now far away from the Pyno continent. But just in case, to avoid any troubles, even though you'll be staying in the palace, when it comes to official matters, you can only attend by watching in the crowd. We don't want you photographed or videoed on Royal public events. As for everything else, you can do as you like. You'll be staying in the palace, going to school, going out with friends and so on. Also, we'll give you a fake identity and assign a personal driver to you too. You'll be my little cousin from my mother's side. Remember, your parents passed away, and you were sent over to Baymard for studies. This is the identity you'll use when going to school or out in public. AND your new name, Is Portgas D. Ren."

" _ "

Wait? What?

Eh?

Why was his name going to be changed?

What were these photograph and video things all about?

So... his new name is Portgas D. Ren?

Okay?....

Landon chuckled when he saw the kid's helpless expression. As far as he knew, he had given the kid one of the coolest names ever!

Hello?... Change Ren to Ace, and you'll get Portgas D. Ace!

One Piece shall forever live on!

Well, the One Piece manga won't come out anytime soon... So even if it did, he could say that he took inspiration from this cousin of his when naming.

Heh. Didn't he have this much right as the author?

.

"So.. Elder brother Landon, I won't be living in the place alone?"

"No... There's little Momo, little Linda... Lucy, my mother, aunty Winnie, Lucius... oh... And soon, we'll have a new member of the family... a little girl, who will be your little 'cousin' as well.

For now, it's time we get back on deck. We should be arriving on the shores in just a few more minutes.

Come now, don't be shy... Grab my hands, and let's go down deck.

Little Ren, let me formally welcome you to your new home, Baymard."

Baymard?

Rankin's eyes quickly lit up as he tried to hide his excitement.

He hesitated for a bit before grabbing Landon's big hands.

Looking at his tiny 5-year-old hands when compared to Landon's, he was instinctively reminded of how little he was.

He had a lot of responsibilities and didn't know where to begin.

'Don't worry, mother. I'll do my best to grow up soon enough and save you!'

With that, the duo left the room and met with Lucy, who also held Ren's other hand.

They looked like they were a family of 3, with Ren being their child

...

"Your majesty."

"Your majesty."

"Princess Lucy."

"Princess Lucy."

Everyone greeted them upon arriving down at the deck.

Since he was still short, Landon carried him close to his chest while Lucy ruffled his hair playfully.

"Little Ren... Welcome home.

Welcome to Baymard!!"

Ren's mouth opened in excitement at the scene before him as his entire face froze speechlessly.

It's... It's... It's beautiful!

Chapter 1074 - Leaving Pyno!

Looking at the towering coastal figures he saw from a distance, Ren was very restless.

He was so restless that he wanted Landon to drop him down.

Seeing this, Lucy and Landon couldn't go giggling in amusement.

Ever since they rescued him, Ren had been trying to act so maturely.

But at this moment, he was actually acting his age.

As the ship closed in, Ren was utterly overwhelmed by the sight before them.

His eyeballs popped out, and their lips slightly quivered... as they looked at the magnificent structures on the shores.

How did they do it?

He had never seen anything like this!!

"I... I... Elder brother Landon, is it real? IS IT TRULY REAL?!!!"

Ren squeezed the ship's railings in excitement, wishing the ship would move faster.

To him, a new adventure awaited him in Baymard.

"Hahahhahah!" Lucy couldn't hold in her laughter anymore.

The little man was just too cute.

.

The moment the ship reached the shores... Ren, Lucy, and a few others were first dropped off before the Navy ship entered the Navy base.

Ten passed through Coastal Port security and entered Baymard, jumping around like a little squirrel.

Bus! Train! Car! Glass towering buildings!

These were just a few words he learnt today.

What was so weird and out of place was that Baymard looked like it wasn't experiencing Winter at all!

What was going on here?

Why were the roads not filled with snow?

Bear in mind that he was 5 years old now... So, yeah. That snow almost buried him growing up.

Boom!

A massive explosion went through his mind as he looked at the most beautiful place he had ever seen in his life!

Even the vehicle which he heard Lucy call a limousine was so comfortable and very spacious.

It was far more spacious than wagons.

And even though he had never needed a carriage before, he was sure that it would also be way more comfortable than that.

What was this material?

Ren's eyes throbbed in satisfaction as he rubbed his hands across the seat.

~Uggh...

.

Everything he had seen so far was just too amazing.

Not to talk of the tourist-related pamphlets Lucy showed him.

He saw something called a ski resort, Mall, go-kart racing, ice skating, bowling, visiting the cinemas, theatres, and so on.

Just looking at how much fun the people on the images were having, Ren really wanted to ask if he could go... but he didn't want to be a bother, so he pursed his lips dejectedly.

But how could Lucy, who spent her time teaching kids, not understand him?

Lucy rubbed his fluffy hair kindly: "Don't worry. We have everything planned. So you'll visit all these places too."

"Really?"

"Yes. Hmph. As your big sister, how can I lie to you?" Lucy said while raising her nose to the sky proudly, making Ren giggle too.

So this feeling was weird.

But he didn't hate it.

Instead, he felt very warm in his heart.

He looked outside the window and smiled.

It looked like staying here wouldn't be a bad idea after all.

This was now his new home!

...

Just like that, Renkin was taken into the place and given one of the available rooms next to Momo and Linda's room... Which was in its own wing.

Mother Kim and Lucius live in their own wing, which has 6 bedrooms, alone for privacy. And the child they are expecting will probably live in one of the rooms there.

As for Mother Winnie and Lucy, they lived in the same wing where little Momo, Little Linda... And now, little Ren would be staying.

Of course, Mother Winnie was presently engaged to one of Lucius's men.

That's right. She too found love.

It happened when Lucius used to hold meetings and invite his men over.

Mother Winnie and the widowed man had an instant connection.

They started by dating first, and it was only this past Spring, did he propose.

Obviously, whenever they chose to get narrows, Mother Winnie would probably move out.

As for her daughter, Linda... Funny enough, Mother Winnie and Linda had decided that if that did happen, she still preferred to be in the palace.

In her words, Landon needed an alarm clock like her.

Again, she didn't want to be the 3rd wheel in her mother's marriage.

And by the time her mother did choose to get married, she might be an official a.d.u.l.t by then.

After all, this coming March would make her 13... And in majority of regions in Pyno and around the world, 15 was the legal a.d.u.l.t age (14, in Deiferus.)

So as an a.d.u.l.t, she could move as she wanted.

.

Anyway, with Ren's matter settled, Landon who had just left the Navy after reporting several matters, was now making his way back to the palace.

That's right.

He had to once again say goodbye to his family, the overseers, hand official businesses to the many leaders around, shower, and leave with Lucia and her people.

That's right.

They were leaving Pyno tonight!

The sh.i.p.s were already loaded with enough ammunition, medical supplies for military doctors, enough food for the journey that had been properly stored and checked for food poisoning, etc.

In fact, everything was ready for take-off!

Landon first decided to check with Lucia and her men to see if they were ready or needed anything more... only for him to see a crying Lucia.

"~Ooooo... Brother Landon, I know I have to go back, but why do I feel like I'm leaving a part of me in this suite?

I've stayed here for so many months that I've practically turned the place into mine.

So leaving it is so sad... Ooooo~~~~"

(-_-)

....

It wasn't just Lucia who felt like this, but all of them.

Sometimes, when a place gives one too much peace and happiness, leaving it is under nostalgia.

They remembered their first day here, as well as all the fun moments they had visiting each other's rooms, joking about the hellish training here, telling late-night jokes and so on.

It was hard to explain... But to them, this would always be their second home.

Their rooms in particular were something they would never forget.

But now, it was time for them to move on.

Nonetheless, these Baymardians who weren't prejudiced against their appearance, held a special place in their hearts... Especially the Royals and even the maids and butlers who took care of them here.

This friendship was more than just an agreement.

They were friends for life!

No matter where or when, they would always be allies with these Baymardians!

Javis and Andrew looked at Landon warmly in gratitude while getting on their knees.

And one by one, everyone else got on their knees as well.

"Brother, not only did you agree to save our people... but while we were here, you also fed us, clothed us and gave us a roof over our heads.

Thank you!! We Zalipnians will never forget this gratitude!!"

Landon looked at them and smiled warmly: "Please... You all are my brothers. So why kneel? I promised to save your people. And save them, I shall. No! We will save them together! So raise your heads and stand up tall, for the enemy will not win in this war! Now... Let's go kick some ass!!"

Chapter 1075 - This... How could this be?!!

~Vrrrrrrrrruuuuu~

The sh.i.p.s were locked and loaded, as they sailed away from Baymard's shores, going towards a direction it never once ventured.

And even though it was winter, everyone's emotions were as high as could be.

The taste of adventure and the known was somewhat scary, but more than anything else... EXCITING!

Thanks to the merchants who had visited either Veinitta before or had even gone as far as Tenola, they were given maps of how to reach those territories beyond.

But, one shouldn't sleep on these Medieval navigators.

Sure... They didn't have the entire global field mapped out, nor did they understand latitudes or longitude, their ability to easily and know where they were going wasn't guesswork.

They could even venture out into new open waters and come back without getting lost, meaning they had mad skills!

Up first, they used the motion of the stars to get through.

Firstly, one should never forget that the world itself was rotating ever so slowly... even though these people didn't know that.

Likewise, stars typically moved across the sky ever so slowly from east to west.

But, as time went on, these sailors realized that there was one star that didn't move no matter what... (Which was the north star, A.K.A Polaris).

And around the North star were always a formation of dots in the shape of a cooking pot, which they called Pot (but back on earth, it was called the big dipper or plough.)

This Pot always rotated around in an anti-clockwise manner around the north star, sometimes appearing on the side, above or below the fixed north star.

But no matter what, its relationship or distance to the north star never changes, and it will always point the way to the North star.

So even though they didn't have the magnetic compasses that always north (using this same principle), they still found it easy to know where North was.

This was basic, easy, everyday knowledge to these medieval people.

If one wanted to be a sailor, a merchant, guards sometimes going out on battle and even a Monarch... And didn't know this basic information, then they were idiots to people in this era.

They didn't have to know too in-depth like the astrologists and all the rest who keenly studied them... but when it came to the North star, information like this could save their lives when shipwrecked.

.

This again showed why astrologists were highly favoured.

People had studied this for millenniums and knew the Pot's positions, for every season and every day of the year.

That was why people desperately studied the sky above... Including the moon's positioning too.

Of course, this went without saying that the sun and clouds were deeply studied for navigation during the day too.

But the stars, moon, sun, and general weather, weren't all that these sailors used to map things out.

They also used the position of certain wildlife species and even the sizes of waves to find the path from one region to another.

That's right.

They also studied wave patterns and knew which regions were tallest and which weren't.

It's not for nothing that some sea regions had been marked as Shipyard graves or given weird names too.

The waves there could destroy sh.i.p.s during spring, winter and sometimes fall.

So people mostly stayed away from those regions.

As for how they used birds, that was easier.

First up, one should know that many sh.i.p.s in this time period had caged birds stored away.

The birds were similar to Ravens but a little bigger and had silver wings that contrasted their black bodies.

They were a bit faster in speed when compared to Ravens and were called Waikens instead.

When they estimated that land should be near, or felt that there were maybe possibly neighbouring sh.i.p.s hidden far away, they would release one of the birds.

And if it circled their boat without purpose, then there was no other land or shops around for it to finally land back on.

But if it took off in a certain direction, then they got their answer.

It could be land, or... An enemy fleet.

Also, if foreign birds or strange wildlife landed on their sh.i.p.s, then they were definitely close to land!

.

Looking at the many maps before him, Landon couldn't help marvelling at the people of this era.

Sigh... Sometimes he wondered if modern people were just plain stupid or lazy.

Everyone here knew the basics of these things as if they were nothing.

But if he pulled anyone aside back in modern times, asking them about these, they would remain clueless.

It was truly fascinating how maps in this period were done.

When one mentioned a map, they would think of just one piece of paper or chart.

The first chart did draw out depictions of where land should be.

But, rather than having the blue ocean waters, what was shown were tiny dots in a dark background.

So this map would show them the way through the night sky? As well as the moon's positioning?

Awesome!

They even showed that around a certain period of days, if one were to look up in the sky, they should see several star formations too... Like the kneeling soldier or the famous winged angel.

That's right.

Constellations like Orion, a hunter shaped by a cluster of stars, and many other constellations, come out during specific times throughout the year.

This particular Orion constellation is visible in the evening sky from January to March, in the winter hemisphere... As well as in summer in the Southern hemisphere.

Only by thoroughly studying things can one know all this.

And that's why without satellites, latitudes or longitude, these people's maps couldn't just be one piece of paper.

.

Landon flipped the next page of the massive Map booklet to see the depiction of the sun's positioning and cloud formations throughout his travels.

There was another map showing wave patterns too.

Sigh... Who can honestly say medieval people were stupid?

Suddenly, Landon's expression turned grim after listening to something urgent from Jarvis.

~Cough. Cough. Cough~~

Landon choked on his coffee in disbelief.

This... This... How were they supposed to survive this?

Chapter 1076 - A Sailor's Worry.

Landon listened to Jarvis and felt it unbelievable!

What the actual hell?!

Landon's forehead began sweating like crazy when a crazy image popped into his head.

F***!

Jarvis and Andrew at the side looked at Landon bitterly.

"Elder brother Landon... Why don't we take another route then."

Landon shook his head vigorously: "No! We need to get to your people as fast as possible before it's too late. And that's the shortest route. But don't worry, we'll get through it all just fine!"

Jarvis and Andrew looked at each other briefly before nodding their heads vigorously.

Yes. If Landon said they could, then they would definitely be able to do so!

With that, everyone in the room breathed a sigh of relief after getting Landon's response

It's been 2 days since they had just set sail and were now ready to iron out a few things that came up yet again.

That's right. Mitchen came along, ready to haul up all the prisoners he could.

Hahahhahahah!

Ahhh... He felt alive to be back out on a high-class mission again.

As for the problem at hand, it was indeed a serious one.

.

Firstly, it was important to note that they had gotten 2 distinctive maps.

The first was organized and given to them by those merchants who had ventured out of Pyno, going as far as Veinita and Tenola before.

As for the second map, it was given by Lucia's team.

It was a map from Roma to as far as the waters around the continents of Zohl and Dania... that's all her people or the merchants there knew.

But even at that, because they experienced shipwrecks and all sorts of dangers when coming to Baynard, they had a lot of vital pieces of their map.

Landon didn't think it was a problem since he had the latitudinal and longitudinal map from the system in his brain.

But he had forgotten one crucial thing.

The modern type maps weren't as in-depth as the ones here... Or should he say they were missing something?

F***!

How could he have gotten that this was still another world with its own crazy creatures, which were typically enormous compared to those on earth?

That's right... Jarvis, who suddenly remembered vital information, instantly told them about the region called Devil's Gate!

.

What exactly was this Devil's Gate?

Well, it wasn't so much as the giant whirlpool or something like that.

No... It was more of the fact that millions of giant black sea creatures that looked like giant headless octopuses with thousand layered teeth all got to the surface, spreading miles away to do whatever it is they did.

These creatures were called Laypires!

And what made them scary was that an a.d.u.l.t warm was half the size of a regular wooden sailor ship.

So one could imagine how much force they had in them.

With one flick, and that ship would be going down.

Now picture a thousand of them?

And, the crazy thing was that these giant headless octopuses could climb on board and squeeze the sh.i.p.s, breaking them with their sheer strength.

Why they came out during the heart of winter was always a mystery to many, but Landon who had just gotten information from the system knew why.

Ah... So that's it!

Landon massaged his chin in understanding.

From what he gathered, sometime from February 18th to the end of the month, they formed a thick line across the waters, stretching for miles and miles.

And for years and centuries, they had done this same action repeatedly.

They didn't go any other place over the years, sticking to the same spots.

Why? Who knows...

Maybe the water there had something beneficial to them, or it was the marine life over there.

Hey. The ocean was something scary with several mysteries that no one might ever be able to solve.

So even though Landon knew why they came up to the surface, he didn't understand why they liked to form those specific lines, cutting people from either going towards or from Romain and Dania to the rest of the world.

Why they chose those locations, and neatly lined up there, was something they would never know.

Bottom line, it was mating time!

.

This situation reminded Landon of another weird situation that had also plagued scientists back on earth.

Back in Canada, in a place called Narcisse located in Manitoba... Every spring and autumn, the largest congregation of snakes ever recorded, can be found there.

During this period, tens of thousands of snakes come out from their holding spots and thick lines, weaving themselves together to form tapestries of themselves along an entire highway lane.

Of course, they were mating.

Now, people who have ever tried to disturb them didn't end up well.

And in this situation, he felt like it was the same.

These headless Octopuses called Laypires, were out here forming lines and mating.

But isn't that suicide?

Don't people know that when any creature, even man, is in high ecstasy, stopping them was asking to be killed?... Especially when these Laypires were in cloud 9.

So of course they would lash out when disturbed!

And that's why an uncountable number of sh.i.p.s had sunk deep below the seas around that period, giving the line the famous name... the Devil's Gates.

.

Making a mental note, Landon realized that maps here noted where all plague disasters or natural occurrences were, while the standard modern ones he was used to didn't.

Next time, he would have to get more information from the system and couldn't rely on just the longitudinal and latitudinal ones in his head.

Sometimes, Old school was the better option.

Thinking everything through, Landon instantly turned to his secretary hastily.

"Quickly! Get me the folder with travel schedules immediately!"

"Here you go, your majesty."

"Good... If we can pass the line before their mating period, then we'll be fine."

"Eh?... Your majesty, what mating period?"

"...I'll explain that later, for now... We have to fix this!"

Hopefully, this is the only bizarre occurrence, right?..."

" "

Chapter 1077 - A Change Of Plans!

Wasting no time, Landon started adjusting the scheduling, making the journey a little more tasking for those managing the sh.i.p.s.

Previously when planning the trip, there were days when they would only need to go at minimum speed, and there were days when it would go at its maximum possible speed.

So now, Landon replaced some minimum speed periods with several standard or max speed periods.

Of course he didn't replace all, but calculated and estimated how much faster they would have to get to pass the Devil's gates before February 18th.

Say no more.

They left on January 5th and expected to arrive sometime on March 10th.

Anyway, the system had told him that he needed to get there before the last week of March, so that was his plan.

Earlier on, he had taken into consideration the otherworldly wave patterns and formations that would slow his journey down or, worse, destroy the sh.i.p.s if he wasn't careful.

But what he forgot were the creatures within the place and several other factors apart from the waves.

And wouldn't you know it, Jarvis started mentioning a few more regions that he should take more of if he ever passed by them.

Landon felt lucky that they weren't passing underneath Veinitta, going between Tenola and Omania and Zohl to get to Romain.

Apparently, there is another strange occurrence there that has caused many sh.i.p.s to go down below... And that is the existence of thousands of constantly moving bottomless whirlpools.

That's right! Whirlpools!

Sigh... For this new world, Landon felt like the occurrences around were just too strange!!

Such things should be noted down for future reference, just in case they thought of moving there during the season.

.

Everyone blinked in understanding while listening to Landon, who was making a few adjustments.

They rubbed the tip of their noses in embarrassment.

"Well, your majesty, I can understand the thinking of these creatures," Mitchen said, almost sympathizing with the creatures instead.

"That's right. To be disturbed at that time is truly a disastrous thing... This... If it is so, then that does explain a lot of their actions." Andrew said after coughing shyly.

Maybe, throughout the entire year, this was the only time that they mated.

So think about it.

They had been holding themselves back all year for these times, and just when they were about to reach for the skies, people kept bothering them.

Even they would get pissed as well.

They could only say that those who did get dragged down the sea floors had bad timing.

Thinking of getting dragged into the deep bottomless sea, everyone shuddered uncontrollably.

Mommy...

.

Landon chuckled at their grim expressions before finalizing his adjustments.

One should know that by the time they reach the Devil's Gates, they should've already been 3/4 ways done with their journey.

Half of their journey should be done around the 5th of February, with Devil's gate earliest by the 19th or 29th.

That was just bad timing since the rare mating phenom occurred around the 18th.

But with his adjustments, they should be arriving there by the 14th instead... crossing over as fast as they could.

He only prayed that this would be enough.

At least, even if there were a few Laypires already on the surface, he was hoping that it wouldn't be a school or a thick cl.u.s.ter or tapestry of them already mating.

So arriving earlier would give them a few benefits here or there.

Nonetheless, if it did work out, this meant that they would also arrive at Zalipnia earlier than scheduled too.

This meant that they needed to tweak their plans a bit too.

Firstly, even though the Map provided by Lucia's team was incomplete, missing creature activity and cloud patterns... They still had the star constellation parts, weather, and wave details down.

They could prepare them to analyze their fighting conditions, like if they would be making a move in a blizzard or something of such sorts.

Even bullet shots were slightly different in such situations.

And at least they would know that the enemy wouldn't heavily rely on archers.

In short, they had to predict and look into several factors that may play essential roles on the day they expected to arrive.

Landon sighed from relief when looking at the new and improved scheduling in his hands.

Now, there were just a few more things he wanted to reconfirm again.

.

"Prince Andrew, Prince Javis, Princess Lucia... I modified the previous landscape per your corrections and inputs.

So tell us, is this a better or more accurate depiction of what the region we're sailing into would look like?" Landon said while Brian distributed a few doc.u.ments to everyone else.

(°o°)

This... This was exactly the same as how the place was set up!

His Majesty had even been able to point out where the roads would be and what regions were hilly, and so on.

Of course, over their stay in Baymard, they had contributed a lot, giving their inputs on the matter.

But had only seen drafts so far since every time they met Landon and others to talk about it, more information would get added, meaning more changes.

That's why seeing the real professional thing was just mind-blowing.

Awesome!

.

Everyone looked at their expressions and knew that the maps were accurate.

Landon was always on the go, so of course he couldn't do everything for himself, could he?

Over the years, they had learnt to rely on themselves.

So during meetings, Landon only added a few sentences here and there if necessary or whenever he saw it.

They worked so hard and made several more adjustments after their last meeting with Lucia's group.

And now, the results were evident.

Good.

With them arriving earlier than scheduled, as well as taking into account the weather around the seashores during that period, and several other factors... It was time to make some changes to their plan of attack.

Now, there should be no more surprises coming their way... Hopefully.

Chapter 1078 - A Divide?

Like so, Landon spent the entire month of January alongside the rest, looking through and checking things constantly twice a week.

Doing it every single day would tire them all.

So it was only done on Mondays and Fridays.

They also analyzed how they could use Zalipnia's environment to their advantage too.

An amazing thing about Romain as a whole was that 85% of it was all stoned.

That's right.

The majority of roads had all been done with stones, with the majority of the roads and streets being overly broad too.

Everyone couldn't go marvelling at how deeply organized this continent was when compared to Pyno.

Sure, Baymard might be grand, but the other Pyno empires were nowhere near what they heard about Romain.

Another key point to note was that even though the continent's landmass wasn't as big as Pyno's, Romain itself had 37 empires in it, with Zalipnia being the 5th largest one.

Already, Landon could see his work cut out for him, visiting all these empires to sign treaties.

It was also because there were many empires in Romain that the continent could flourish faster.

Why? Because these Monarchs were all competitive with each other.

Seeing that one person's empire was clean with proper stone roads... of course, others would've picked up the trend too.

And over the centuries, they stole from each other when it came to architectural inspiration, each king competing with the other.

.

The entire Romain reminded him of Egyptian civilization.

One Monarch would have a unique architectural mind-blowing building, and soon the neighbouring Monarch would get jealous and request for a great architect to design something for himself too.

Landon also found these people to be similar to Egyptians because they allowed women to rule too.

Plus, he found that unlike Pyno that had too many monster creatures roaming around... The majority of creatures living in the Romain were mild in temperament.

Sure, they might still be ridiculously huge, but they were docile, and at times used as house pets too.

Only 30% of the species there caused genuine issues to the people.

Sigh... Some places truly had it good.

While Pyno and several places were fighting their own beasts for the survival of humanity on their continent centuries ago, these places probably had almost no problems whatsoever.

Truly, life itself wasn't fair.

Just like that, Landon and his team continuously ran through their plans twice a week.

And apart from them, everyone else was either training in the training rooms, doing their scheduled 8-hour shifts of duties aboard, or relaxing.

This was how they spent the entire January.

It was already the heart of winter, yet some people couldn't go looking for trouble.

.

--The Royal Palace, Arcadina, Pyno continent--

.

The ever bright flames burned noisily within the fireplace, producing a crackling noise, constantly warming the entire room.

If it were before, the massive bed in the room should've already been placed close to the fireplace during winter as in the previous years.

But now, almost all royal rooms had a small box-like Baymardian battery-powered heater directly facing the bed, providing ample heat to those who were about to sleep.

And at times, many placed it directly beside the couches in their rooms when they wanted to eat or look over a few documents in their rooms.

Now, coupled with the overly warm beddings and even the room decors, winters were no longer what they used to be.

The more he read, the more he fell into a trance of some sort.

His entire posture turned frozen as the crackling sounds of the fire echoed throughout the room.

William finished reading the documents and calmly closed them before scoffing in annoyance.

He squinted his eyes coldly, seemingly lost in thought.

Heh.

As expected, like toads, some people still liked to jump about aimlessly, all the while forgetting whose pond they were in.

When he thought about things now, he felt like he was still someone fighting Alec.

He couldn't help but distort in dissatisfaction.

Tch.

That uncle of his died but didn't forget to send all his enemies his way.

Baron Cain... Just what are you up to?

.

"Death."

~Swish!

Like magic, death popping out from the shadows and kneeling before William.

"Young Master, your wish is my command."

"Hmmm... So this Baron Cain wants to unite the Western regions and break away from Arcadina?"

Heh. Not on my watch!

But, even though he does look down on me... or him to be this confident, means that he has a few tricks up his sleeves." William said coldly.

And even a few months before his death, Alec had still made sure to torment and seize most of Cain's forces.

So if Cain was still up and about the way he was, it meant that he had a hidden hand that they weren't seeing.

It could be something obvious or something totally out of their reach.

But they had to look through all possibilities fast!

"Death!... You will gather as many men as possible and head towards the Western regions targeted by this Baron Cain.

First, investigate thoroughly, and wait for backup.

I'll be sending a letter to Baynard requesting the Arcadian soldiers in training there to set off and be your backup.

Baynard itself is in the far Western region of Arcadina.

So they should reach you all shortly.

Remember, don't act until they arrive.

We have to win this war in one swoop!

I mean it, uncle!

No playing with prey!"

(°_°)

Death nodded his head playfully while looking at William helplessly.

Was he that bad?

Sure, he did want to play a bit, but he would always make sure to leave no traces behind, alright?

Sigh... His Young Master has grown very stingy throughout the years.

How did his Young Master become like this?

Chapter 1079 - Traitors!

With January gone, several things had been underway.

And now, with February here, many people were going crazy with excitement at the many new discoveries they witnessed.

.

-Capital City, Carona--

.

Within the new military training institute for Caronian soldiers who came back from Baynard, several people were currently standing around an open space excitedly.

At the same time, some hurriedly ran towards the scene instead.

Of course, some stood on nearby buildings surrounding the place, watching everything as if watching a movie.

"Oh my God! Can you hurry up?

We're going to miss the show with the way you're moving!"

"Dammit! I can't believe that we, too, will have such crazy new weapons!"

"Hahahahaha! Our empire will grow strong!"

"Dammit! Why do I feel like we've entered a new age?"

"Hahahahahaha! I can't believe we'll finally see what those guys have been working on all this time!"

"F***! I'm so excited that I haven't slept all night at all!"

"Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!!!"

~Din! Din! Din! Din! Din!~~

The sounds of everyone's heavy footsteps echoed out as they tried to find the best viewing locations possible.

Now, amongst the crowd, everyone's heart

And the moment their eyes came in contact with the stars of the show, everyone's heart trembled vigorously.

What were these?

Their eyes almost popped out of their sockets from shock and awe alone.

This... This... This was f**kin' awesome!!

Everyone pointed and made gestures at the scene, trying to find the best words to describe it all.

They had all heard bits and pieces about today's show, so how could they not look forward to it?

Today, the weather also agreed with them because there was snow falling from above

The roads had also been swept, and several things had been put in place, ready for today's audience.

The question now was if it would be able to satisfy everyone's appetite.

.

Penelope, Santa, Adrian, Carmelo and Duke Samuel walked alongside their guards between the crowd.

Everyone watched the royals step forward with beautiful black winter coats over their black strap-in velvet vests.

Their knee-length boots, alongside the swords dangling around their waists, showed from time to time as they advanced forth.

"Your majesty!"

"Your highnesses!"

"Your majesty!"

"Your highnesses!"

Everyone bowed deeply whenever they passed by them.

It was just that when they saw Santa swinging Penelope's hands like some who had just seen a woman for the first time, they didn't know what to say.

But then again, they were indeed used to it.

Who didn't know that Duke Benjamin was a little troublemaker?

From sneaking out of the palace and getting caught by the Queen to merely blowing up the fish bond with black powder, they felt like her Majesty could really pick'em.

Nonetheless, they had mad respect for Santa.

If one were just looking at his smiling face, one would easily get deceived by him.

They didn't know how he did it, but in just a few years, he had become one of the strongest combat masters in the empire!

He had a raw strength that was terrifying, especially when he found a stone with his b.a.r.e hands as if it were nothing.

Was this still the weak Santa that they all heard of back then?

As of now, the only people who could still put him in his place were his wife and the other royals.

That's why no matter how playful Santa was, for him to get this strong meant that he trained harder than anyone else.

This was true since the Queen liked to ground him, forcing him to train harder.

And soon, it wasn't long before this group of royals had finally climbed up one of the viewing platforms calmly.

And Santa suddenly let go of her hands, rushed forward, took out his handkerchief and started wiping the grandest seat there."

"Wife. Here. Sit... "

Penelope's lips raised unnoticeably.

"Thank you." She said while taking her seat.

Seeing this, Santa hurriedly sat by her swiftly as well.

"Wife! Now that I'm so good... can you not... ground me anymore?..."

Penelope leaned back, crossed her legs and looked at him calmly, which in turn raised Santa's hopes high: "No."

[Santa]: Help. What do I do if my wife is my boss?

.

Santa felt like crying.

Well, she was the Monarch and could do what she wanted. But, but.. Hasn't he been grounded enough?

Okay? So he ended up visiting the Military research centre and ended up accidentally setting 50 massive weapons on fire, as well as some documents on them.

But no one got hurt, and he was genuinely sorry, promising never to do it again.

Truthfully, he meant it.

So wasn't that what was truly important here?

What happened to forgive and forget?

It was already February 11th, so wasn't that more than enough?

Hadn't he learnt his lesson already?

So far, he was only permitted to go to the new and old Caronian barracks stations, as well as to stay in the palace.

That was it!

He even tried getting his father to intervene, but the traitor completely sided with Penelope, saying they should lock him longer!

Dammit! Whose father was he?

Penelope's or his?

Sigh...

Santa shook his head with tears in his eyes, looking like a lost puppy.

He wasn't that bad, right?

.

Carmelo, Adrain and Samuel rolled their eyes heavenwards while avoiding his gaze.

'Son-in-law, you better not look at me! Even I can't go against her once she decides on something.'

"Grand son-in-law, as the old saying goes... It's never wise for one to come between trivial disputes between married couples. So I'm out.'

'Eh? Why is this shameless nephew-in-law of mine looking at me like this? So after flirting around and feeding me with dog food, you now have the guts to seek help? Heh. Keep dreaming!'

(-_-)

Like so, Santa found himself surrounded by traitors while waiting for the show to begin.

Santa looked on and couldn't help pouting pitifully at his fate.

Why did it seem like the heavens were always trying to be against him?

Chapter 1080 - A United Front!

Penelope secretly glanced at Santa who was now resigned to his fate and chuckled.

Of course he couldn't get grounded forever.

In fact, it might even be today.

But why should she tell him now?

It was more fun to tease her husband like this.

Plus, the last mess he did indeed made the researchers feel like strangling him alive.

They almost disregarded that Santa and herself were Royals and nearly flew over the tables to strangle his neck thin.

Now, he was banned from going there without permission.

That's right!

Her permission wasn't enough.

Now, he needed to be treated like a baby when he had to visit.

In other words, he needed supervision.

They even went as far as pleading with her, Adrian, and the rest to put his name in the rules.

Yup!

There's a section of the rules that says [Duke Benjamin Hamilton can only be permitted under heavy supervision]

She didn't know whether to laugh or cry when it came to this matter.

What sort of his ace had she married?

But that wasn't all. They even had several clauses under that one rule.

What was so hilarious was that they wanted his picture placed by the rule too.

She had never seen such a situation before!

For someone's name to enter a rule or law book specifically meant they had caused not 1, not 2, not even 8 rememberable incidences.

It showed that he was a perpetual nuisance to them.

Penelope also found that this happened a lot, because even the kitchen staff complained a little too, which left her speechless.

This was also one of the reasons why she grounded him so much.

The problem was that Santa was a true born merchant through and through.

And when he saw something fascinating or thought of some crazy idea, he would feel itchy, wanting to touch, manipulate or see it... thinking he could convert it into another item, gadget or tool to sell... Even food was no exception too.

But now, he decided to do things himself.

And the next thing she heard, there was a mini-chicken expansion with chocolate, meat and flour flying everywhere.

How did he do it? She would never know.

But it seemed to be his talent.

Looking at Santa, she felt terrible.

Sigh... Alright. She would release him soon.

But for now, it was time to watch the show!

.

With the royals on their seats, the military research team marched forward on the empty field below.

And just at the back of the place were several open hills, streams and whatnot for occasions like these.

Of course, the entire region, including the nearby hills, and forest area, now belonged to the barracks and were heavily guarded too.

After all, with the training they had from Baynard, they needed ample space for their attack simulations and whatnot.

It comprised of a few hills, streams and whatnot.

Everyone stood either on the viewing Walls or on the empty fields outside the barracks.

As for the royals, they were seated on a wooden viewing stand constructed for this day.

Hahahhaha! Today was the big day.

The research team walked confidently towards the many machines lined up.

That's right!

And for the masterpiece that they had been painstakingly working on alongside other empires, they had named it the Slingshot or Catapult, to be exact!

.

One should know that ever since the Pyno Monarchs went for the U.N meeting in November last year, they all spent an entire week in Baymard, coming up with some new inspirations there.

And ever since Penelope & Santa got back around the last week of January, they instantly started creating the ballistic, as well as testing out their ideas on the Catapult.

Back in Baymard, Sirius, William, Astar, Henry, Landon, Santa, and all of them were the ones who thought of the idea... and Landon even came up with the perfect name for it, Catapult!

Well, it was better than their suggestions like Rock thrower or The flyer.

Plus, since they could catapult not just rocks, like items with black powder in them, calling it Rock thrower was a little wrong.

The surprisingly intelligent Prince Astar of Terique was the one who made them realize that other items could be thrown too.

What a genius!

Ever since they all got back from their trip, all Monarchs had sent their regular bi-weekly letter, communicating amongst themselves.

Of course, Penelope had only gotten Landon, Sirius and William's letters, but she knew that everyone else's would come soon.

Now, it was time for the entire Continent to protect itself.

Because from Landon's letter that had arrived when she was still on the way, there was a deadly Order in their midst called the T.O.E.P.

So they had to act fast and carefully!

.

February 10th!

The researchers all marched out with their c.h.e.s.ts raised high as they hurriedly stood by the meant contraptions proudly with megaphones in their hands.

It was just that when they glanced at Santa, they still wanted to beat him up.

If not for him, will things be this delayed?

The rowdy crowd grew silent as tension and anxiety filled the air.

The audience's eyes twinkled brightly while watching the crazy contraptions before them.

What could these things do?

The researchers all grinned pridefully.

"Your Majesty, your highnesses, your esteemed elders, and my comrades, protectors of Carona, I salute you all!

Today is a great day in our nation!

We, the military research team, were given several tasks by his majesty and our many superiors... and are proud to present our results to you all.

We worked alongside the other memories collectively to reach this stage.

So today, we will show you the might of our creations!

We will show you what we, as a continent, can do when united!"