

## Witch 1221

### Chapter 1221: The Non-existing Bloody Moon

As far as Roland knew, the Chief Astrologer was a man of honor and responsibility. Although he had not made any particularly extraordinary contributions to the astronomical research, he had founded the Arithmetic Academy and trained many students. He also assisted with the statistical analysis. In a sense, he extended the influence of the Astrology Association and expanded this old organization into one that could rival the Society of Alchemists.

Dispersion Star had come to apologize multiple times for his negligence and failure to predict the premature appearance of the Bloody Moon. However, as Roland had been too busy with various events lately, he had dismissed him. Nobody ever anticipated that the Bloody Moon would appear so early, and Roland had never intended to rely on the Astrology Association to predict the Bloody Moon. He used their service simply because these scholars knew arithmetics.

The word "must" alarmed Roland. Dispersion Star would have never used such an almost impertinent word had this not been an emergency. Therefore, Roland immediately headed to the Arithmetic Academy in the south of the city after he hung up.

The so-called observatory was only an attic of the Arithmetic Academy. The astrologers used this little attic as their temporary observatory before they moved to the top floor of the Miracle Building. Since the construction of the Miracle Building had taken longer than planned, Roland had made them a large telescope and transformed the attic into a revolving observatory so that they could continue with their astrological work.

Dispersion Star and the other astrologers had been waiting for Roland for a while. They soon went to their knee as they saw Roland come in. "Your Majesty," they chorused.

"Please rise," Roland said as he waved his hand casually. "Let's jump into the business. What did you find?"

"Your Majesty, please follow me," Dispersion Star said solemnly as he led Roland to the attic at the top.

Roland immediately saw that the floor was littered with drafts and drawings. He believed they were the calculations of the orbits of various stars. In fact, Roland only knew very little about astronomy. After having obtained basic knowledge of physics and mathematics through two years of studying, these astrologers had now surpassed him.

Dispersion Star followed Roland into the attic, leaving the other astrologers outside. The moment the door was shut, Roland noticed that the old Chief Astrologer was wearing an extremely grave expression as if he were about to make his last will.

"Roland..." Nightingale muttered as she tugged his sleeve.

Roland nodded in comprehension. He knew Nightingale would protect him if he was in danger, but he was curious as to why the discovery alerted the astrologers so much.

"Your Majesty, we've been observing the movement of the Bloody Moon these days, as well as its change," Dispersion Star finally spoke after a moment of silence. "Since we failed to predict its appearance, we would like to make amends for our previous faults. We wanted to calculate its size and where its star district is. That's the duty of the Astrologers Association. However, the discovery horrified us."

Horrified? Roland's brows contracted. This was not the word he expected to hear. "What do you mean? Get to the point."

"Yes, Your Majesty," Dispersion Star obeyed in a low voice. "The Star of Extinction is probably a hoax. The Bloody Moon... doesn't exist."

Roland was stunned. He turned around and looked through the window involuntarily. The crimson sphere was still aloft in the air, as sinister as ever.

"Are you saying that the thing over there... doesn't exist?"

"I couldn't believe it either when I made the conclusion. On the contrary, I found it quite amusing. However, gradually, we started to take it seriously," Dispersion Star said after a sigh, and his voice became more confident. "Yes, Your Majesty, it doesn't exist. According to the materials passed down to us and your books, we're positive that the giant star over there doesn't affect other stars."

"When we drew the star chart and calculated the orbits of the other stars in the star district where the Bloody Moon is situated, we found not a single star deviate from its course, which means that the Bloody Moon doesn't affect those stars at all, nor does it affect us."

"In addition, there's no change in its own movement either. Before, the Bloody Moon was stationary in the sky, which indicates that it was moving at the same rate as us. But now, it's still stationary, despite that it's so close. That doesn't make sense."

Roland immediately understood what the old scholar meant. "If we remove it from the sky..."

"Then it'll explain everything," Dispersion Star replied while nodding. "Only when it isn't there will everything on the earth look normal. In other words, wherever the Bloody Moon is, it won't make a difference to our world."

Roland fell silent.

Now, he understood why the Chief Astrologer had been hesitant. The legend of the Bloody Moon and its relationship with the Battle of Divine Will were solely hearsay stories from the ancient Taquila witches without any solid proof. As the headmaster of the Arithmetic Academy, Dispersion Star had also heard about those witches. If it turned out that the witches were all lying, the discovery would probably jeopardize the healthy relationship between the witches and the king.

But Roland completely trusted the witches. He enjoyed helping Celine conduct research and taking the God's Punishment Witches to the Dream World. Even if they lied, Roland would still like to be with them.

At least, the demons did exist.

"Are you positive?"

"Your Majesty, I wasn't until I received a letter from one of my friends in the old king's city this morning," Dispersion Star said as he produced a piece of paper from his pocket and spread it open. There was a drawing of the Bloody Moon. "As he observed the moon from a different location, the calculation might be a little different. My friend used to be a noble, but he's very interested in astronomy. Therefore, I asked him to calculate the star district from another location. His calculation is very different from ours. It isn't even a minor error. That means that the Bloody Moon is stationary everywhere. It's not only stationary in relation to this area but to the whole continent!"

Roland's heart skipped a beat.

"Your Majesty, it isn't possible that a physical object remains stationary in relation to everything!" Dispersion Star proclaimed slowly.

Roland suddenly remembered the red speck in the Dream World. It was always the same no matter how he viewed it.

In the Dream World, it had a different name.

Erosion.

Chapter 1222: The Promise of the Divine Will

"Your Majesty, Your Majesty... Your Majesty?" Dispersion Star's voice startled Roland.

"Er..." Roland rubbed his forehead and said, "Does anyone else know about it?"

"Only astrologers named after a star know it. The students in the Arithmetic Academy don't know," the old scholar said as he knelt down.

Roland now understood why the astrologers were all wearing a stern expression as though they were facing a death sentence. Apparently, they believed that Roland would kill them to prevent their betrayal of the horrific truth about the Bloody Moon, for the real purpose of founding this Astrology Association was to explore the Star of Extinction, which was a secret that only the royals were entitled to.

These astrologers were expert in political games, so they naturally knew the consequence of their discovery. Roland was impressed with their caution and loyalty. He shook his head and said, "You did a great job. Don't tell anyone about it. Keep up with the good work. Continue to manage the Arithmetic Academy and forget about astrology. Compared to something that doesn't exist, helping with Neverwinter is apparently more important."

With these words, Roland left the attic, leaving the stunned scholar behind.

"Let's head back to the castle," Roland said in a low voice.

He walked in an even more brisk manner than when he had come and almost broke into a trot.

"Do you think the astrologers are telling the truth?" Nightingale asked as she revealed herself.

"I don't know... I just have a hunch," Roland said. "It doesn't mean that the Bloody Moon doesn't exist. Perhaps, it's something else..."

"Something... else?"

"For example, a pit."

Roland had never given much thought about the Bloody Moon. It was giant because it was close to the earth. For example, the Jupiter observed on io took up two thirds of the sky. People here called this object a moon simply because it was round with a soft glow.

If this was an Erosion, then it could be a square or a polygon.

Nightingale asked in confusion, "Are you saying that the sky is cracking?"

"It may be even worse than that, but I have to find it out first."

"How?"

Roland cast her a glance and answered, "By dreaming."

...

Although it was not yet his typical sleeping hour, nobody had forbidden Roland to enter the Dream World during the day. This time, he did not inform any of the God's Punishment Witches but only asked Nightingale to guard him.

"We'll meet upon the appearance of the Divine Will."

Roland had had no idea what the Divine Will was. Now, he suddenly came to the realization that the messenger was not referring to the time in the Dream World but that in the real world.

It was incredible that the messenger knew the true nature of the Dream World and even had knowledge of the real world. The messenger could probably even sense the change in both worlds. All Roland's suspicions seemed to have been confirmed when Dispersion Star had said "the Bloody Moon doesn't exist". Both the "Battle of Divine Will" described by the executives in the Prism City and the anonymous book led Roland to the same conclusion.

"What are you going to eat for breakfast?" Zero asked him, with a toothbrush between her teeth as she stood in front of the sink.

"I'm not having breakfast today. You can eat alone!" Roland shouted without looking back. He pulled on his coat briskly and rushed out on his slippers.

The alley below the apartment was alive with people. The breakfast booths where deep-fried doughs and buns were sold were surrounded by students and young professionals. The residential area was teeming with the raucous voices of yelling vendors and the sizzling sounds of the deep-fried doughs.

The only place that seemed to immune to all these noises was the Rose Café.

The coffeeshop was like a loner slinking outside the mainstream community. When Roland took out the key and opened the door, he could see the vendor across the street cast him a pitiful and scornful look that people typically afforded to an idiot.

Roland took a deep breath and went straight to Room 302. The shop was on the ground floor, but Roland insisted the room number to be 302. It was a little strange, but he did not care about it.

Since Roland had been busy dealing with the incidents in Neverwinter, he had kind of forgotten about the Dream World for a while. Therefore, when he pushed open the door, he felt, surprisingly, a little nervous.

Roland did not care about whether the messenger would be able to get into the closed shop. As the messenger could send a message to him through the champagne glass, he certainly possessed some extraordinary power. Perhaps, the messenger would pop up somewhere out of nowhere abruptly.

Roland took a deep breath and put his hand on the doorknob.

The shop was empty.

Apart from a table and four chairs, there was no further furniture. Certainly, there was no hiding spot either.

A little disappointed, Roland slowly walked to the table and sat down.

Was he wrong?

Then he realized that the messenger was not an apparition after all, who could travel from one place to another in a split second. Perhaps, he should wait for while.

But Roland became more and more uncertain.

Could the messenger really find this place that had just opened a month ago? What if he was waiting at another place?

Could the note be a hoax that had nothing to do with the Divine Will in the real world?

Roland had not a shred of evidence to his theory.

Apparently, it would not be that easy to solve the problem.

When Roland was about to leave the shop, suddenly, the bell rang.

Clink and clang.

"Welcome to — " Roland's words rested on the tip of his tongue. The God's Punishment Witches did not come with him this time, and Garcia would not visit his store very often either. No customer should come here considering the absurd prices listed outside. When Roland opened the door, he saw a familiar figure outside the shop.

Roland had seen her twice.

He had met her during the orientation for new martialists in the Prism City.

He had also met her in the Reflection Church in the old Holy City of Hermes.

Roland remembered this face.

"I didn't expect that you would open a coffeeshop here and name it 'Rose Cafe'. I thought you didn't find that note."

Lan said.

Chapter 1223: Lan

Roland was a little surprised to see Lan, although he had somehow predicted that she would come. He asked, "Who are you exactly?"

"A person who needs help," Lan said while looking around. "I understand you have a lot of questions for me. We can sit down and have a chat. Let's sit over there by the window."

"Don't we need to go to Room 302?" Roland asked as he watched Lan take the seat.

"The reason I asked you to meet me here is to avoid curious ears. Since nobody's here, just take a seat you like," Lan said casually. "By the way, as this is a coffeeshop, can I have an ice coffee?"

"I thought you were disclosing a big secret to me, so I've been very cautious, making sure that nobody will overhear us."

"A secret will only become a secret when the eavesdropper recognizes its value. I monitor the Erosion underground every day and do need to take a break from time to time," Lan said gracefully. "One ice coffee, please."

Roland gazed at her for a second and then grumbled, "I only have instant coffee here."

"That's fine."

Roland was a little frustrated to see Lan act as if she were the owner of the shop. He added some milk to the coffee and put two ice cubes in it. His eyes were glued to Lan during the whole process.

"Rest assured. I won't disappear," Lan said while shrugging.

"I don't know about that," Roland said, his eyes fixed on Lan resolutely. "I once asked Garcia to contact you and went to the Prism City twice, but you vanished. Why didn't you talk to me? Why did you just leave me a note?"

Lan lapsed into a short silence before she answered on a sigh, "Because we weren't ready yet at that time, child."

Weren't ready? A little astonished, Roland pursued, "You mean you've been waiting for me to find out about the Bloody Moon, well, the Erosion myself?"

"You're quite smart. I now expect more from you."

"Expect what from me?" Roland grunted. "You don't look like a person who needs help."

"Then what should I do to convince you? Do I have to beg and cry for your help? Or you want a reward from me?" Lan said while shaking her head. "No, I don't think you'd trust me even I did so. That'll only push you away."

Roland wanted to joke around, saying "You never know", but somehow the words abandoned him. Lan was much older than Garcia. She was the Chief Disciple of the Defender of the Martialist Association, the senior of his senior. If she was really the person in the Reflection Church, she was probably 700 to 800 years old, a historical figure, so to speak. At this thought, Roland put up a more serious look.

"Alright..." Roland said as he sat down across the table, and went over the questions he had in his head. "Were you a member of the Union?"

"I have nothing to do with your world," Lan replied. "I was born here and will also die here, although it's won't happen until many many years later."

"But I saw your portrait in the Reflection Church — "

"That's nothing," Lan interrupted Roland. "It's just a historical record that doesn't really say anything."

"But what are the odds that you and the person in the picture look exactly the same!" Roland argued while knitting his brows.

"If you think further, there are many coincidences in the history. Compared to dwelling on something in the past, you'd better focus on the present."

Roland knew Lan might be pretending. Without Nightingale, he could not tell whether she was telling the truth or not. There was no point in keeping arguing with her, so he immediately changed his question.

"So, what's magic power exactly?"

Lan's lips curled into a smile. She said, "You probably have already known it. Nothing in this world could explain it because it doesn't belong here. Low lives don't have the capability to understand higher animals. What we know now is that we can use it. Therefore, you could view it as 'a power we obtain by accident'."

From Lan's words, Roland judged that magic was like the Force of Nature, or perhaps simply another form of the Force of Nature. Because of magic power, the Dream World became the way it was. Roland thus asked, "So the book, 'Raison d'être', you mentioned in your speech during the orientation in the Prism City, and your deduction were all true?"

The most two pressing questions Roland had now were the nature and origin of the Erosion and the reason for the endless Battle of Divine Will.

"Not really, but you could think that way," Lan said quickly.

"I want to know the truth."

"It's beyond the scope of your understanding, and it's impossible to describe it in your language," Lan said after sipping the coffee. "Plus, everything I do is under God's watch. If I give away any information that'll potentially endanger Him, both of the two worlds will be destroyed. Hence, please remember that the truth is what you understand."

Roland twitched his lips in amusement. Lan could have directly told him that she would rather lie than tell the truth.

"He can destroy the two worlds?"

"That's why we call Him God. It's the closest word to describe Him in your language."

"What does He want?"

"To keep the Battle of Divine Will going."

"What's your relationship with God?"

Lan fell silent and then replied hesitantly, "I betrayed Him."

"Betrayed?"

"Yes. The war will continue, and I don't want to be stuck here forever. A new cycle means another round of loss. God will eventually exhaust His power. By that time, both worlds will be devastated."

Roland stared directly into Lan's eyes before he asked, "So, why did you come to seek me?"

"I need your help, child," Lan said and gazed at Roland. "I want you to stop the Battle of Divine Will and put this cycle to an end."

"You mean to win the war?"

"No, that'll start a new cycle," Lan said while shaking her head. "I want you to stop everything and replace God!"

Roland was astounded. He had never anticipated that.

He took a deep breath and said, "Sorry, I'm afraid I can't help you."

"Why?" Lan asked. Her expression finally changed.

"I don't know whether you're telling the truth. You admit that you could only give me some evasive answers to avoid raising God's suspicion. Sometimes, one single word could mislead a person. What if you lie to me? You betrayed God once, and you can certainly betray me," Roland said while spreading out his hands. "I'm not good at taking risks. So, look for someone else to replace God."

"If you could help me — "

"Don't," Roland interrupted. "You said there was no reward. You told me a reward would make things worse."

Lan fixed her eyes onto Roland for about 10 minutes before she conceded, "No, I changed my mind."

"I'm determined," Roland said as he rose and poured himself a coffee. "An empty promise doesn't mean anything, although it sounds pretty nice."

"You should at least let me finish."

"I've told you — "

"I can bring Ashes back to life."

"Crash!"



Roland was aghasted. The glass in his hand slipped through his fingers, fell on the floor and broke into pieces.

#### Chapter 1224: The Remedy

"How do you know her?"

Lan said placidly, "Although I was born here, it doesn't mean I know nothing about your world. Have you heard of the 'Realm of Mind' or the Origin of Magic?"

Roland immediately thought of Kabradhabi's statement. His hand that was going to reach out to the broken cup on the floor paused in the air for a second. Then he suddenly threw himself over the table and asked Lan in a low voice, "Is she in the Realm of Mind?"

"Of course not, but she left a mark in the Realm of Mind. Anyone who has sufficient power will leave a mark in the Realm of Mind." Lan paused for a second before she resumed, "I know what you want to ask about. You want to know how to bring her back to life and then do it yourself. You also want to know how to stop the Battle of Divine Will. However, I have to tell you that we don't have much time."

"What do you mean?"

"People will eventually fade out of the Realm of Mind. This process is irreversable. Even if you know the method, you probably won't have enough time to suit the action to the plan, and this isn't the worst scenario yet."

"What's the worst scenario?"

"The Dream World has intruded God's mind, and He won't let things keep going like this. "In other words, when God believes that nothing could put things back on track, He'll destroy the two worlds. The situation is even more pressing than you think, and that's why I made up my mind to persuade you," Lan said slowly. "Child, help me, and you'll be also helping yourself."

"Sounds quite convincing," Roland commented sarcastically. "But you just said that the truth was what I understand. In other words, you can be lying to me right now, including the part about bringing Ashes back to life."

Lan heaved a deep sigh and leaned against the chair. "You can think that way as well, as I don't want to give you false hopes. I did so because I do want you to trust me."

Roland fell silent.

For Roland, it was a tough choice to make.

Lan's argument was quite solid. Roland had indeed heard a lot about the threat to the Dream World from the magic creature. He was certain that these magic creatures aimed to destroy this world. After hearing Lan's explanation, Roland believed that those creatures were actually God's "underlings".

However, he could not trust Lan completely without confirming the validity of the information himself. All the information that Lan had just related to him regarding the potential harm to God was just her

version of the story. It might be totally wrong, and Roland could not jump to the conclusion based on false information.

However, he had not enough time to verify himself.

Under such circumstances, the only way was to take risks.

Roland closed his eyes and remembered that Tilly had cried her eyes out that night. He had noticed that the painful loss had dimmed the light in her eyes, as though a gemstone once dazzling was now incubated in a light sheet of dust. Some people maintained that such a change marked spiritual maturity. Only when one truly lost something would he began to cherish what he used to have. Roland dismissed such an absurd theory. A mature person would never allow himself to lose what he cherished and certainly would not let himself wallow in pain.

If he could bring Ashes back to life, he would do everything he could to attain his end.

Roland suppressed his excitement and put up a perturbed look as he sat down again across the table.

"I can't trust you just yet. I need to hear how you're going to bring her back to life?"

"It doesn't conflict with what I want you to help me with. In fact, they're actually the same thing," Lan said slowly. "First of all, you have to get into the Realm of Mind in both worlds simultaneously. Otherwise, we won't be able to proceed."

Roland asked in surprise, "Two worlds? Hang on, are you saying that the so-called Origin of Magic does exist?"

"That's right. It's not something intangible but a physical entity. It's entirely different from the hollow created by the Erosion," Lan replied while nodding. "In fact, it's at the north end of the Land of Dawn, and we call it the Bottomless Land."

Roland's heart skipped a beat. He had heard this word somewhere else.

"But the demons have taken over the north. You know demons, right? They're my enemy in this Battle of Divine Will."

"I can't help you with anything regarding the other world. God forbids me to interfere with the Battle of Divine Will. You must find a way out yourself," Lan said flatly. "Beat them and get to the Bottomless Land. If you fail, then it'll be over."

That was why Lan said even if he knew the method, he wouldn't have much time to achieve his goal.

Roland pondered for a while and then said, "Alright. I'm going to wipe the demons off the face of the Land of Dawn anyway. Then how to get to the Realm of Mind in the Dream World? It's not a real world after all, so it won't be that hard, right?"

"Before I answer you, I want to ask you something," Lan said as she looked through the window. "Do you really think that this world is a fake one?"

Roland stiffened for a second and also rested his eyes on the people outside. There were fewer people now on the street after the rush hour. Many vendors were taking a rest, and some were ready to head back home in contentment. Others were reading newspaper while smoking cigarettes.

Now, the students and young professionals were all gone. The elders started to come out and head to grocery stores. When they passed the Rose Café, they cast contemptuous glances at the shop and exchanged murmurs with a derisive air.

Roland knew that if he went out there and argued with them, these elder people might retort fiercely. The verbal altercation might also attract many curious, gloating onlookers. Roland certainly did not want to become the center of an improvised show.

He found it hard to admit that this world was real.

"How to define reality?" Lan murmured absent-mindedly. "Must a living being have a physical body? If this entity has consciousness and emotions, isn't it enough to be alive, even though it's in the form of energy?"

"Well, I think it is."

Lan turned around and said, "Then protect this world. Once it's destroyed, everything here will disappear. It'll be a greater loss than anything in the other world. If you lose this Dream World, then you'll be shut out from the Realm of Mind forever."

"Is the entrance to the Realm of Mind in this city?"

"Actually, you're in the Realm of Mind right now," Lan corrected him. "This is the Realm of Mind."

Roland's eyes were wide open.

In other words, his body was still in Neverwinter, whereas his mind was at the Bottomless Land in the north of the continent thousands of miles away?

Chapter 1225: The Remedy (II)

"Is this also the result of magic power?"

"Yes. There are so many types of magic power that I just can't explain every single one of them. It's a power that transcends the four fundamental forces, the ultimate solution to the great unification, if that makes sense to you," Lan explained mildly. "Nevertheless, it doesn't mean that you can enter God's territory and interfere with the Battle of Divine Will. This world is an independent one. It's protected by a thick membrane. That's why I can sit here and talk to you."

For some reason, Lan's explanation reminded Roland of bubble blowing. Among those floating bubbles, one of them housed the Dream World. He then asked, "Then how do I penetrate it?"

"The same way the magic power enters our world — through the Erosion."

"Er... could you tell me more about it?"

"You should have already noticed that this world has changed a lot," Lan resumed, and Roland could feel his heart beat frantically in his chest. "At first, it was just a reflection of your mind, but there are now many things you've never seen before. The change started when you began to collect the Forces of Nature."

"You even know that?" Roland exclaimed in surprise.

"I've been wandering about in the Realm of Mind since I was born, so I can sense even the most subtle change." Lan continued, "Listen, child. Both the Dream World and God's territory are driven by magic power. We call it the Force of Nature. When you continue to collect them, this world will expand and overlap with God's territory. That's the reason why Erosions appear."

Roland had heard about this theory during the orientation. He thus said, "As far as I know, the Martialist Association has collected many cores of the fallen Force of Nature. If you want to collect as many of them as you can, why not just support the the Fallens?"

To Roland's surprise, Lan did not object his proposal but simply summoned a bitter smile.

"Unfortunately, I'm just the Defender's student. I can't take you to the central hub in the Prism City."

"You don't mind turning against the Association?"

"If it could stop the Battle of Divine Will, I won't. Once the Battle of Divine Will ends, there'll be no Erosion in the Dream World, so in a way, I'm still helping the Association. But that child... She'll be very disappointed, for she has put so much faith in you."

Lan suddenly put up a very regretted look as she said these words.

Was she referring to Garcia?

Roland was a little surprised that Lan had such a deep affection toward Garcia. As a God's servant, she should have lived hundreds of years, and nothing should have been able to perturb her mind.

Was she acting or was she actually too involved in her role?

"Well, this isn't the only way." Roland wanted to get some coffee to ease up the tension in the air when he suddenly realized that the cup was already broken. He thus withdrew his hand and said, "You also said that I have to enter the Realm of Mind in the two worlds simultaneously, right? Perhaps, by that time, we would have had enough cores. The only problem is that how I am supposed to know that the Dream World has already overlapped with God's territory? We can't really enter God's territory from the Erosion in the Prism City, can we?"

"Of course not. The hollow created by the Erosion there is the area of nothingness in the Realm of Mind. It's completely a different thing," Lan said while nodding. "As for when the Erosion will affect God's territory, you'll know when that day comes. However, this will also mark the beginning of the destruction of the two worlds. Therefore, you must find a way to the Bottomless Land before that."

"And then?"

Lan shook her head.

It appeared that Lan could not disclose any more than that, otherwise she would bring harm to God. Nevertheless, there was also a possibility that Lan chose to hold the information back intentionally. Roland had now a basic understanding of what he should do. In fact, he had planned to drive the demons out of the Land of Dawn and earn some extra income by killing the Fallen Evils a long time ago, so Lan's information did not really change much of what he was doing. The only change was that he now probably had to fight both the demons and the Fallen Evils at the same time.

Roland was not certain what he would encounter at the Bottomless Land. Lan did not say anything about that. If this was a trap, the only part where Lan might lie to him was when she asked him to replace God.

Roland did not think God would surrender after he penetrated the Realm of Mind. Since everything sounded so vague to him, he had to proceed with extra caution.

Another question that bothered Roland was that why she chose him.

As far as Roland could see, Lan could totally pick someone else to help her. Although Lan looked like human, Roland was certain she was not any ordinary woman. Human beings had been defeated once. Given that, she could completely pick a demon or someone in the Sky-sea Realm to achieve her goal.

According to Lan, the north of the Land of Dawn where the Bottomless Land was situated had been taken over by the demons. Kabradhabi had also confirmed that the enemy in the Sky-sea Realm was quite overpowering. The demons apparently had a hard time keeping their land. These two races were obviously far more powerful than the mankind. In a sense, they were almost halfway through the mission.

Roland was not yet that arrogant as to believe that he was the only person who could leave a mark in the Realm of Mind.

At least, Zero had that power too. Dimly, Roland had a feeling that the Battlefield of Soul was a demonstration of the power struggle in the Realm of Mind.

The Dream World originated from there.

He thus asked, "I bet... that I'm not the first person you sought help."

Lan replied immediately, "Yes, I turned to someone else for help as well over the past thousand years."

Roland felt his chest constrict. He pursued, "Also including demons?"

"I don't know much about the other world. After I left the Divine Land, I lost my power of connecting with other servants, but I can tell you that I'm not the only traitor."

"Who's the last person you talked to regarding this matter? Zero?"

"The Dream Courier, Alfina. She lived 869 years ago."

The name was unfamiliar to him. Roland asked, "None of my preceders succeeded?"

Lan sighed, "You probably think it's pretty easy for us to talk face to face like this, but the fact was that they didn't even manage the first step, which was to stabilize themselves in the Realm of Mind and

establish effective communication. Also, I had to phrase the matter in a way that made sense to them. In other words, they had to understand what I was saying. Only in that way would the message be successfully delivered. The more they understood, the better reply they could formulate. This rule applied to both you and the demons."

"Like you have to share the same mindset?"

"Exactly. In fact, you're the first person with whom I can effectively communicate. Although I don't know where you obtained so much knowledge, far more than what this era actually needs, I'm glad I found you."

"Well..." Roland said hesitantly. "What if I fail?"

Lan said after a moment of silence, "I'll continue to wait until the next person appears. I'll wait until someone frees me, or until... God kills me."

### **Chapter 1226: The Prison of the Heart**

"What will the world look like when God is gone," Roland asked tentatively. "What will you gain from this? Are you able to leave the Realm of Mind and become a physical entity?"

"To be honest, I don't know," Lan said with a smile. "But anyhow, it's better than being imprisoned here forever. At least, there are hopes."

Roland gazed at her for a while. There was not the faintest hint of uneasiness on Lan's countenance. She acted as if just making a very simple decision.

It appeared that he could not get anything more out of her, unless he brought Nightingale into the Dream World. Their subsequent conversation did not go anywhere either. Every time Roland asked about God, Lan kept her mouth clamp shut and reiterated that she could not help him with the Battle of Divine Will.

Lan told Roland that she could do nothing more than living here as a martialist and delivering him messages. According to Lan, there were various rules that governed the Realm of Mind. Even God might not be able to change those rules at His will. Because of such restrictions, Lan had finally found a chance to look for the person who could terminate the Battle of Divine Will.

Nevertheless, she would not be able to gain total freedom until the war was stopped. All the rules and restrictions still applied to her, and her work could be subotaged anytime.

When Roland walked Lan out, he asked one last question.

"By the way, you said you didn't expect me to open a coffeeshop here. Is there another Rose Café somewhere in this city?"

"Yes," Lan said while smiling faintly. "It's in the Prism City."

"But I've asked Garcia..."

“The coffeeshop is in the central part of the city. It’s only accessible to the executives of the Martialist Association. At that time, I already knew that the Association would license you, so you would be able to get there via your hunting license. However, you don’t have the slightest interest in the Association, which really surprised me. You’ve never been to the Prism City since you got your license.” Lan paused for a second before she resumed, “Also, for your information, the central hub where we store the cores of the Fallen Evils is located at the bottom level of the city. Normally, only the Defenders and their seniors have access to it.”

Now, Roland finally understood why he could not find the Rose Café. It was actually a coffeeshop exclusive to the executives of the Association.

“So where shall we meet again next time? I mean if we plan to meet again, which coffeeshop? Now there are two Rose Cafés.”

“This one would be better,” Lan said as she looked up at the towering apartment building. “Garcia should be living here, right? It’s not a bad idea to visit her every now and then. I would probably... like it here a lot.”

*“Probably? She doesn’t know her likings?”* Roland thought to himself, his brows raised, but he remained silent.

Then they parted, and Roland saw Lan gradually disappear from his sight.

Roland leaned against the shop door while revisiting their conversation.

Both the Dream World and the real world seemed to be more understandable now. Words like magic power, Divine Will, the Realm of Mind, the Land of Dawn, and the Fathomless Abyss all became more concrete and made more sense to him.

While Roland was lost in thought, suddenly, he felt a queer quaver steal through him!

Roland looked up abruptly and saw a distorted, transparent wave sweep over the entire alley and soon ripple across the whole area.

What had happened?

He was surprised that the residents in this community seemed to be unconscious of the change, for they were still talking and laughing as if nothing had happened.

Roland almost thought that he was hallucinating.

But he knew, based on his past experience, that this was a change only visible to him. It was a fluctuation of power that he sensed when he collected the cores of the magic creatures. Roland clenched his fists. It was quite a pleasant sensation, but he somehow felt a little unsettled this time.

Did something impact the Dream World?

Lan was gone, and he had not obtained a phone exclusive to Association members from the Prism City. Otherwise, he could have asked her about it.

Roland thus closed the coffeeshop and returned to the apartment.

He had planned to disconnect the dream and go back to reality. However, when he entered Room 0825, he saw Zero's sneakers at the doorstep.

Roland wondered why Zero had not gone to school yet. He had been with Lan in the coffeeshop for over an hour.

To his dismay, he found the little girl lie on the floor. There were two broken glasses not far away.

"You gotta be kidding me..."

Roland strode over to the little girl and clasped her wrist.

He felt the pulse.

Then he noticed that Zero looked feverish, her eyes shut and her brows contracted, as though she was suffering a great pain.

Roland's hand reached onto Zero's forehead. It was burning.

Did she have a fever?

From where she fell, Roland judged that Zero probably had lost her balance when she was trying to clean the coffee table.

*"Damn it. She was alright this morning."*

But Roland was relieved that there was no Fallen Evils involved. The moment he had seen Zero fall on the floor, he had thought that God had come to seek revenge.

Roland thus held Zero in his arms, sped down a flight of stairs, and climbed into the mini van.

At this moment, Zero gained her consciousness. She opened her eyes and muttered, "I... broke the glasses... on the table."

"I saw it."

"S-sorry, I'll... pay you. I don't... want to go back to the countryside."

*"Is she so sick that she's out of her mind?"*

Roland put Zero in the passenger seat and fastened the seatbelt. "Stop talking," he said.

Then Zero suddenly stretched out her hand and spoke again when Roland was about to turn on the engine, "Don't go..."

Roland had never seen Zero, who always spoke to him in a defiant and almost trenchant manner, look so fragile and helpless. He somehow thought of what she had written in her diary. Perhaps, the fever brought about the most tender part of her personality. Roland did not know how her families used to treat her. At these thoughts, Roland heaved a sigh and said, "Don't worry, you still owe me rents. I won't let you go."

After receiving the confirmation, Zero closed her eyes, but she did not relinquish her grip.



It was already afternoon when Zero was hospitalized. Although the cause of the fever remained unknown, Zero looked a little better.

The doctor did not come until late evening.

“Are you really a martialist?”

“Yes, what’s the matter?” Roland asked.

“This isn’t funny,” the doctor grunted. “The girl isn’t sick at all. She’s simply awakened. Some people will indeed feel not very well when they’re awakened, although it’s not very common. Didn’t the Martialist Association tell you about that?”

“What?”

“Awakened! What a mess. If there weren’t a martialist in the hospital, I would have thought it’s some rare disease,” the doctor said dismissively. “You can go now. Take her home.”

...

So Roland brought Zero back to the apartment building.

He let out a deep sigh as he stared at the white-haired girl curling up in his arms. As a former Pure Witch, it appeared that she was destined to have magic power. Fortunately, Zero was now living in the Dream World, so she would probably not make the same mistake as she had done in her previous life.

Darkness had now pressed in. The long corridor outside was bathing in a soft, warm glow. A few bugs flew toward the light source. When Roland approached Room 0825, he found, surprisingly, a familiar figure. It was Garcia. She was sitting at the doorstep while leaning against the door.

“*What’s going on today?*” Roland wondered. “*Everyone seems to come look for me.*” He had told Nightingale that he would only have a short nap. Now it was probably time for dinner in the other world.

“Hey,” Roland greeted Garcia as he crouched down. “What brought you here? Did you lose your key and want to stay over?”

However, Garcia neither responded nor sneered as she usually did, and Roland realized that something was wrong.

All the words rested on the tip of his tongue when he saw Garcia’s face.

It was glazed with tears.

“A large number of Fallen Evils attacked the Prism City. Someone who escaped told me that my master... my master stayed behind to protect others and was killed by the Fallen Evils...”

### **Chapter 1227: The Fall of Prism City**

Roland was stunned.

If he remembered correctly, Garcia’s master was called Lan.

Which meant that the lady who had met him in the Rose Café this morning was... dead?

How could it be possible?

Even though Lan was bound by the rules in the Dream World, she was, after all, the Defender's student and should have the capability to deal with Fallen Evils.

The Prism City used to be a mine, so the main part of it was built underground. It was constantly guarded by the Awakened. How could the Fallen Evils breach the city so easily?

There were so many things that Roland failed to understand, but he managed to calm Garcia down. "Get in first."

Garcia rose feebly as if all her strength was gone.

Roland put Zero in her bedroom and gave Garcia a glass of water. The latter gradually regained her composure, although her eyes were still kind of out of focus, but she, at least, stopped crying.

Roland then noticed that there were six unread messages and a dozen phone calls. He scrolled down and realized that they were mostly from Garcia.

"Oh, sorry... Zero suddenly got a fever, so I had to go to hospital and left my phone here," Roland said in embarrassment. "What happened in the Prism City? How did you know that your master was killed?"

It took a long time for Garcia to find her voice. After what seemed to be an eternal silence, Garcia finally broke out inarticulately, "I received an urgent message from C02 around noon, saying that something happened to the headquarters. He requested support from martialists from all over the world."

Roland remembered that C02 was the liaison officer for that joint mission he had attended a while ago. Now, he understood why Garcia had called him so many times, so he asked, "But nobody went there?"

Garcia should have immediately gone to the Prism City.

"Nobody was able to, because the Erosion in the middle part of the building suddenly expanded," she muttered. "Nobody knew how it happened, and the video camera didn't catch it either. C02 told me that by the time the Association realized it, the Erosion had already slashed the Prism City in half, and all the connection between the upper and lower floors were disrupted."

"*The Erosion expanded?*" Roland's heart pounded against his ribs like a frantic bird. If the Bloody Moon was actually the hollow created by the Erosion, it should have been able to appear anywhere, including the underground area. If the emergence of the Bloody Moon marked the beginning of the Battle of Divine Will, then could the expansion of the Erosion be another form of Bloody Moon?

"When did it occur? Do you know?"

Garcia nodded slightly and said, "Around 9:00 in the morning."

That was almost the same time he had seen that wave!

Was it a warning from the Dream World that the Erosion had begun?

"Then what about the Fallen Evils?"

“They... they came out from underground...”

Half an hour later, Roland finally had a full picture of the incident.

Noticing that the Erosion had reached the middle part of the building, the Martialist Association immediately decided to send reinforcements. The Prism City wedged into the ground like a giant awl. Although it was well fortified, there were also several drawbacks in its architectural structure. For example, they must constantly maintain the ventilation system to make sure that people on the lower floors could breathe easily. Apart from that, all the life essentials, such as water and food, had to be transported from the upper level to the bottom. Therefore, when the supplies were cut off by the Erosion, the staff at the bottom level might be in peril.

The most pressing task for the Association now was to find out how large the Erosion was and then reconnect the upper and lower level. The architects who had built the Prism City had indeed also thought about the possible disconnection and thus equipped the building with a few evacuation exits so that people could quickly escape the building in an orderly manner upon an emergency.

Since the Martialist Association figured out that the disruption was caused by the Erosion rather than an enemy attack, they soon withdrew the reinforcement request. At that time, the Defender and his students were all there in the building, and what the Association actually needed was the engineering team and paramedics, so the martialists did not come to rescue at once but waited for further instructions.

However, something out of expectation had happened.

While everyone was going down through the evacuation exits, Lan and her team at Exit No. 04 were suddenly attacked by the Fallen Evils.

Later, somebody noticed that many Fallen Evils used to be their colleagues on the lower level.

It was quite shocking and incredible news. Nobody knew what had happened at the lower part of the building a few hours after the disruption. What they saw was a group of monsters with fallen cores transformed from ordinary staff members and martialists.

Most people at the lower part of the Prism City were elites of the Association. What had made them betray the Association within half a day remained as a mystery. However, the moment they had chosen to merge with the fallen cores, they were no longer human. Even Roland was astonished at the turn of the event, let alone the rescue team at the scene.

That was why Lan’s team had been caught offguard.

It was a miracle that a few people managed to escape when the whole team was outnumbered and overpowered. However, the team leader Lan did not make it. Some Fallen Evils attacked her when she was trying to close a door.

At these words, Garcia started to sob again.

Roland handed her another glass of milk. After a moment of hesitation, he asked what concerned him most. He knew it was not a good time to ask a question like this, but he must know the answer.

Roland took a deep breath and said, "These are all what the survivors reported to the headquarters, right? Did anyone actually see it when your master was killed?"

Garcia would have retorted ferociously had she not been so perturbed and devastated. She croaked, "My master... my master blocked the switch that controls the door... Then she was torn to pieces by the Fallen Evils... Many people in her team saw it..." Her voice again perished into a suppressed sob.

"... I'm sorry," Roland sighed.

He did not know what would happen to a dead person in the Dream World. Would she return to the Realm of Mind or completely disappear? If God did control almost everything in the Realm of Mind, neither would be a happy ending. Without the protection of the Dream World, Lan, as a traitor, would definitely be punished severely.

Roland had a very good reason to suspect God, for this attack seemed to be targeting Lan.

And Lan was not the only person God intended to eliminate.

He wanted to tear down the whole Dream World.

"If you lose this Dream World, then you'll be shut out from the Realm of Mind forever," Lan's voice reverberated across his head.

It appeared that there was going to be a Battle of Divine Will in the Dream World as well.

His enemy, however, was neither the demons nor those in the Sky-sea Realm.

He would be confronting God directly.

...

"Hold on..."

She heard loud noises. Sometimes the noises were so far away, but sometimes they were suddenly so close.

What had happened?

She felt excruciating pain. It seemed that her leg was broken. She had never suffered so severe injuries before, not even at the upgrade ceremony.

For a split second, she thought of death.

"Ah, right, I'm dying," she thought. She felt that her body gradually turn cold, her mind drifting off. She felt hard to concentrate.

"Hold on..."

The voice drew nearer.

Was there somebody out there?

Strange... she had heard this voice somewhere before.

“Someone’s still alive here. Can anybody help me remove this stupid stone?”

“She’s hurt badly. Quick, move!”

“One, two, three!”

Suddenly, the weight on her was lifted, and she was transferred to a soft bed.

“Hold on. You’ll be OK,” someone talked to her from above. “The Association has sent for the best doctor and medical equipment. You’ll be fine once you get to the hospital!”

*“The Erosion expanded?”*

“By the way, you came from Cargarde Peninsula, right? What’s your name?”

“My... my name?”

“Yes, do you still remember it?”

She used all her strength to reply.

“... Valkries.”

### **Chapter 1228: God’s Emnity**

At the entrance to the Prism City.

The whole square was lit up, and the roar of machines rented the air. The rescue had lasted for nearly 16 hours, and the Defender, Rock, was waiting in the temporary tent for the latest news with a steely look on his face.

It was rumored that nothing could unsettle him. However, this was a mistake. Lan’s death actually shocked him a great deal, and he blamed himself for not fighting the Fallen Evils. Yet he knew it was not advisable to lament the loss now. The first thing he needed to do at present was to find out what was going on at the bottom level of the building.

After Exit No. 4 was under attack, Exits 01 and 05 were also surrounded by the Fallen Evils. Fortunately, the rescue team there learned Lan’s lesson and eradicated the enemies at a minimal cost, but the casualty rate was still astonishing. Like what had happened at Exit 04, all the Fallen Evils were transformed from the staff members at the bottom level. The death toll had reached 320, which was almost the total number of the staff members on duty.

Clearly, it would not be long before the Fallen Evils took over the entire bottom floor.

Rock did not know why those people would merge with the fallen cores within just a few hours of the breach. The Prism City was equipped with the most advanced emergency system. Even if the bottom floor was completely cut off, they could still sustain themselves for a while. They should have known that the Association would never abandon its members. As long as the exits were not blocked, they would soon be able to escape.

However, Rock currently had no time to give it much thought. He was only concerned about the status of the central hub. There were more than 3,000 fallen cores stored in the central hub. If those cores were released to the public, the consequence would be disastrous. There would be far more than 300 Fallen Evils as they were facing now.

“Mr. Rock.” Just at that moment, a man in a suit came into the temporary headquarters and whispered to him.

“Are we really so unlucky?” Rock’s face clouded over. The rescue team had just told him that the Erosion had suddenly expanded. There were two groups of touring martialists from Cargarde Peninsula currently in the Prism City. Since the Erosion had destroyed the middle part of the building, the floor closest to the Erosion slid into a hollow, and the two touring groups thus fell.

Based on the current situation, these tourists might not be able to survive.

“What should we do?” the man in the suit consulted. “Some celebrated martialists from Cargarde are among them. If we fail to handle this crisis properly, we may be caught in some diplomatic problem.”

“Try to find them and save as many as we can. How do I know what we should do? It’s something beyond our control.”

“But the Defender from the peninsula may not listen to you...”

Rock lapsed into a short silence and said, “I see. Just hush this thing down. I’ll ask the director of the Sky City to assist us.”

As soon as the suit man left, a liaison officer came up to Rock.

“We’ve heard something from Exit 01! They’ve opened up a passage and are now going down!”

“Connect them to the main screen,” Rock said in a low voice.

“Got it!”

After a brief noise screen, Rock saw what was going on at the front. From the shooting angle, he judged that the video footage was transmitted from the head-mounted camera that the team leader was wearing. The lighting down there appeared to be quite good, although a few lights were flickering. The emergency electric motor seemed to be working, so the elevator was still functioning. This could indeed save the rescue team a lot of time.

However, nobody cheered up at the scene. Everyone rested their eyes on a peculiar “red spot”. The red spot was in an irregular shape, but it was perfectly embedded in the concrete like a piece of asymmetric artwork.

Rock knew this was definitely not a coincidence. Everything contaminated by the Erosion would disappear, including the Force of Nature.

It was this red spot that separated the Prism City into two parts.

“Forget about the headquarters,” Rock instructed. “Go down to the bottom level and make sure that the central hub is intact.”

The rescue team, after receiving the order, immediately went down. Fortunately, they did not encounter any Fallen Evils on their way. Rock did not see a lot of traces of fight either. The building was dead quiet. Everything was in a perfect order, as though the building was simply abandoned.

When the rescue team reached the central hub, everyone in the temporary headquarters gasped.

Rock clenched his teeth.

Another Defender named Furious Flames was slashed in half, its upper body clinging to the steel gate around 10 centimeters thick, all his clothes reduced to ashes. In the center of the steel gate was a huge, irregularly shaped hole, which seemed to be drilled out under high heat.

Apparently, Furious Flames had attempted to stop the invaders from entering the central hub but had failed.

This was definitely not the work of Fallen Evils.

It took the rescue team a while to open the gate. All the cores were gone.

There was a dread silence in the headquarters. Everyone dazed at the screen, horror-struck.

Rock clenched his fist even tighter. He knew that the staff at the bottom would not take the fallen cores for no reason. He ordered solemnly, "Get the surveillance footage. I want to see what kind of monster it was!"

His sonorous voice jerked the audience out of the trance. Since they had immediately switched over to the contingency power, the surveillance system still worked well. Despite a few broken cameras, most of the video footages was still there. The technical support soon inserted the spare hardware, and the video was transmitted to the big screen. All the executives in the headquarters was taken aback by what they saw.

The moment the Erosion had expanded, several blood clots had escaped from the red hollow and hit the floor. These clumps of blood wriggled and gradually transformed into human-shaped monsters. One of them had the ability to melt everything down. It instantly penetrated the floor and reached the bottom level. Another monster was even more terrifying. It immediately impaled a few martialists and turned them into puppets, making them look like inferior Fallen Evils controlled by the Force of Nature.

Within half an hour, the bottom level was breached. People who were alive all merged with the fallen cores in a daze and became their enemies' puppets. After that, the monsters "devoured" the rest of the fallen cores and created a passage in the central hub before they vanished from the camera.

It was Rock's first time witnessing such an incredible power. The fact that the Erosion generated new Fallen Evils horrified him.

He somehow thought of the joint mission last time, where the survivors had told him about the monster coming from the "man-made Erosion".

It appeared that the Erosion, which they used to believe could engulf everything, had changed.

Also, he sensed the blatant animosity from the Erosion from the way those monsters attacked the central hub and the people.

But Rock believed that as long as all the martialists worked together, they would eventually find a solution to eliminate these enemies, no matter how powerful they appeared to be. The most important task now was to raise the morale and not let the fear conquer them.

“Everyone, just as you’ve seen, this isn’t an accident. The Erosion is invading this city!” Rock announced as he straightened up. “It sounds quite strange but that’s the truth. Let me make it clear. This is a war! They aim to take this world! I’ll contact all the other Martialist Associations immediately, and we should unite together and exterminate the enemies!”

At these words, Rock paused for a second and then said, “Like my student Lan said, the Battle of Divine Will has begun.”

### **Chapter 1229: The Red Mist**

At around 4:00 in the morning, Garcia finally fell asleep.

She had talked more than what all she had said to Roland in the past few months altogether since their first encounter. It was more like a monologue than a constructive conversation. Most of her rambling was about how she had met her master after she had cut ties with her family.

The only thing Roland could do was to refill her glass and be a good listener.

Roland also discovered that Garcia’s dedication to protecting this world was mostly a product of Lan’s education. Although Lan had been very strict with her, Garcia had always looked up to her and viewed Lan as her goal and role model.

From what Roland saw, Lan must have liked the Dream World.

But he was not sure whether her method would work.

There were only two bedrooms in Room 0825, one of which was Zero’s. Roland pondered for a while and decided to put Garcia in the master bedroom and spent the night in the living room himself. He did not think it a good idea to rummage Garcia’s pocket for the key to her own apartment while she was asleep, for he had the slightest intention of creating any unnecessary misunderstanding.

Roland was certain that based on his past experience, this was the best way to handle this kind of situation.

In the meantime, he also realized that he had to return to the real world now.

Roland looked through the window after he settled Garcia down and gazed upon the city night. He could spie glitters of lights dazzle in the distance. The flickers were even brighter than stars in the sky. It seemed to be a very peaceful, sweet night, but Roland knew that this world, like the other one, was full of danger. The “Bloody Moon” that represented the Erosion had revealed its horrendous nature. The only difference was that the one in the real world hung in the sky while the one here lurked underground.

Roland shut the curtains and departed from the Dream World.



He dazed for a while before opening his eyes. However, instead of the ceiling, he gazed into two sparkling eyes.

The two stared at each other for a while until Roland heard someone scream above him. Then the person peering down at him immediately disappeared, as though everything was just his imagination

“Ahem, well, I was just checking whether you had waken up or not, as you’ve been sleeping for quite a while, and I was a bit worried,” Nightingale said as she revealed herself from the desk. “Plus, why did you suddenly open your eyes. You scared me!”

Roland was speechless. How could he give her a headsup telling her that he was about to wake up?

“Anyway, you’re awake now, so I’m going to bed,” Nightingale said as she yawned dramatically. “By the way, Anna came to see you at 10:00 today, but she left when she saw you were still asleep. She asked me to tell you not to force yourself.”

“Hang on, what’s the time now?”

“Just a little over 12:00,” Nightingale replied as she walked toward the door. “Well, good night.”

As soon as Nightingale withdrew, Roland felt sleep creep over him. He had been roaming the two worlds for the last two days, and now he really needed a rest.

Roland stretched himself and was about to go to bed when he suddenly caught a glimpse of something unusual.

He slowly raised his head and almost shrieked at what he saw!

Two pale faces hung down from the window. As they were tightly pressed onto the glass, the faces were a little distorted. Roland saw four large eyes gazing into his. He jumped with a start!

Then he noticed that the two faces looked quite familiar to him.

Hang on, why did they look so familiar?

Roland’s heart did a kind of drum drolling in his chest. He squinted at them for a while and suddenly realized that they were Lightning and Maggie!

Why did they come here at this hour?

It was midnight.

Realizing they were exposed, the two girls drifted down from the roof.

“When did you get here?” Roland asked after Lightning and Maggie got in. He put up a straight face and said, “Why didn’t you notify me first?”

It wasn’t until then that Roland noticed that both of them were unkempt and muddy as if they had not taken a shower for half a year. They had indeed come back from a long journey.

“Your Majesty, we arrived here around an hour ago, coo,” Maggie replied, but Lightning soon stopped her.

“No, we just got here, and we didn’t see anything.” With these words, she glared at Maggie and added, “Did we?”

Maggie nodded fervently and said, “Coo... yes, I got it wrong.”

Roland twitched his lips, amused by their poor acting. Even Nana would not believe their words. He did not actually mind them watching him sleep, so he asked, “Did you travel at night? Why not use the Animal Messenger? Did —”

He suddenly had a bad feeling.

“Yes, Your Majesty,” Lightning said solemnly. “About half a month ago, we found traces of demons at the ridge of the continent!”

Roland was now completely awake. He pursued, “Then? Did you see any outposts there?”

“Not for now,” Lightning denied as she shook her head, produced a rumpled map from her pocket, and laid it open on the desk. “We couldn’t go really far in there, so we met up with the Taquila witches at the Snow Ridge. It took them a while to set up the magic core, and we were finally able to confirm something.” Lightning then pointed at the rapture marked in the center of the map and said, “There are God’s Stone mines there, and they’re almost as big as the one in the Holy City of Taquila!”

It was pretty clear what the demons were up to.

Roland knitted his brows. Edith was right. The demons did have a plan B. Even if Taquila fell, they could still invade the Four Kingdoms from another location. Although the Impassable Mountain Range was treacherous, it would be better to invade from there than waiting for another 400 years.

Fortunately, human beings discovered the demons’ intention in advance. According to Agatha’s intelligence, the demons would need some time to grow the Obelisk. They would only be able to produce a small amount of Red Mist before the Obelisk grew up.

“We also obtained another piece of news when we left the Snow Ridge,” Lightning resumed hesitantly. “At that time, Maggie and I had already passed the Kingdom of Everwinter, so we couldn’t hear it very clearly over the Sigil of Listening.”

“What did you hear?”

Maggie clapped his hands over her ears as if holding a telephone receiver.

“The liaison witch told us that they found Red Mist in the north of the mountain range, cool!”

### **Chapter 1230: An Emergency Meeting**

Barov was waken up by his servant.

During the wartime, the staff of the Administrative Office stood vigil in turns so that they could notify Barov immediately in case anything out of ordinary happened.

Edith no longer worked in the Administrative Office, but she still had certain influences on Roland. Barov always tended to seek counsels of the General Staff before making a plan. The presence of such a genius rival constantly reminded Barov to work hard.

Nevertheless, this was not the only reason Barov was so dedicated to his work.

In fact, he enjoyed being busy, as being busy represented power. It meant that Neverwinter needed him. Also, His Majesty would trust him even more if he succeeded in his undertaking.

Barov slid off the bed and pulled on his clothes. "Speak up. What's the matter now?"

"Sir, this is an order from the king. He calls a meeting at the boardroom in the castle. All the ministers should be there at once."

"Right now?" Barov asked in surprise as he looked out of the window. Without a doubt, it was in the dead of night.

"Yes. The telephone operator didn't say much. Do you want to send someone to the castle first to make sure..."

"No, that's fine," Barov said quickly. The call was from the Administrative office, so it was not likely miscommunication. Since he was the only person who had installed a telephone at home, he must inform the other ministers verbally. "Ask the servants to notify the other ministers. Remember that everyone needs to be informed. If you ever miss one, it's on you!"

Barov would have hesitated for a while had the order been issued by the old Prince Roland. However, now, Prince Roland had become a competent king. If he decided to call a meeting at this deadly hour, it must be about something of extreme urgency.

"Yes... yes, sir," the servant said in the earnest. "Are you going to the castle alone?"

"No, I'm going with the Pearl of the Northern Region," Barov returned. "I'll notify Edith Kant myself."

...

"Your Majesty, almost everyone is here," Nightingale said as she put on a coat for Roland. "Do you need a cup of tea?"

"Yes, please," Roland said while nodding. "Sorry to wake you up..."

"That's nothing," Nightingale said while smiling. "I'm not tired at all. I was just pretending."

"Pretending?"

"No, no," she denied quickly, a little flustered. "I mean I did yawn, but it was because my eyes were dry. I'm not tired at all. By the way, is Anna coming?"

"Let her rest," Roland said while shaking his head. "She doesn't need to worry about such things. Plus, she's been working so hard lately."

To further improve the Cube-powered motor, Anna had been working in the laboratory at the North Slope day and night. At the same time, she also had to work on the biplanes.

“You’re working hard as well,” Nightingale said as she handed the tea to Roland. “You didn’t sleep at all in the Dream World, did you?”

“Don’t worry. I’m used to staying up late...” Roland said smilingly. It was common to sleep at irregular hours in his previous world. This was actually not the worst. He simply needed to take a rest later to make up the hours he had lost. “I won’t be able to sleep well if I don’t finish my work.”

Roland thus drained the cup and sighed, “Let’s go.”

...

The boardroom lapsed into a dread silence after Lightning told them what she had discovered during her journey. Everybody was completely awake and wearing an extremely grave expression.

Agatha looked toward Roland apprehensively and said, “Your Majesty, we...”

“This isn’t your fault,” Roland comforted. “The rapid increase in the number of Senior Demons and Spider Demons has already indicated that our enemy is now very different from the one 400 years ago. Apparently, they also progressed.”

There was no point in blaming the Taquila witches for providing inaccurate intelligence, as the event was unforeseen. Indeed, the soldiers in Neverwinter and the Taquila witches had reached a mutual understanding on the strength of the demons in the third Battle of Divine Will.

“Although the Exploration Group is not 100% sure about the ‘presence of the Red Mist’, the Red Mist did reach the crest of the Impassable Mountain Range. I believe that we’ll hear from the front within a week. Now, the problem is that what we should do in the event that the demons do have the ability to activate the Obelisk in a short period of time. Before we discuss this matter, I want to make sure how much Red Mist an activated Obelisk could produce.”

Agatha said hesitantly, “After the Union discovered the special demon at the bottom of the mine, we speculated that the Obelisk is probably a type of giant Magic Stone. If the small Magic Stone embedded in the demons is transformed from a Chaos Beast, then the Obelisk would be from raw ores. The Obelisk does have unique properties, but its size also depends on the mine where it’s growing from. However...”

Roland knew why Agatha was hesitating, but he urged, “That’s OK. Speak up. It’s better than nothing. Plus, everything is subject to change during a war. If our prediction is a little different from the reality, then we can make adjustments accordingly.”

“Alright...” the Ice Witch said while nodding in great relief. “Based on the Union’s experience and Lightning’s information about the location of the mine, the Red Mist produced by an Obelisk transformed from a God’s Stone mine the same size of Taquila could probably reach here...”

She then conjured an icicle and pointed it at the map.

“This is... the Archduke Island?” Edith asked thoughtfully.

“That’s right. If we move the great rapture to the Taquila area, then the borderline would be around the Impassable Mountain Range area,” Agatha explained. “Of course, the Red Mist won’t reach there all of a sudden. It needs time to permeate the surrounding area, and the whole process may take a few days.”

The farther it goes, the slower it'll travel. Therefore, it'll be another few months before the Red Mist covered the area within a radius of 100 kilometers."

It appeared that they had done a good thing to seize Taquila in advance. Had they failed or been a little slower, say, they had just completed the railway construction now, the Red Mist would have not only invaded the Four Kingdoms from the Impassable Mountain Range but it would have also hindered the operation of the First Army. The Red Mist was fatal to the witches. Even though the army had advanced weapons, they would not be able to carry out military operations effectively while being interfered with by the Red Mist.

"With that being the case, we must hurry up," Roland said as he looked toward Edith. "Does the General Staff have any plan?"

"Of course we do," Edith said confidently. She was the first person to see through the demons' intention. "Although the demons are faster than we thought, from the perspective of military strategy, erecting the Obelisk at the ridge of the continent was actually their last resort. The ridge of the continent is a good hiding place, but the demons could not launch an attack effectively from there. This affords us time to remedy the situation. The General Staff believes that if the demons do appear in the Kingdom of Everwinter, our defensive line will definitely not in Graycastle but here."

She tapped the map.

It was the Cage Mountain in the Kingdom of Dawn.