

## Witch 1291

### Chapter 1291: Reunion

Roland met Wendy and Tilly in the parlor.

He briefly related the situation at the front and said, "This is pretty much it. We probably can't wait anymore."

"The First Army needs the witches' help," Wendy said darkly. "I'll let everyone know. They've been waiting for this day for a long time, and I believe that they're now ready."

"Finally," Tilly said while twitching her lips. "I still have a few chapters to go for the Flight Manual. I've been longing to fight a real battle at the front. Also, where's my fighter? You gave me your word, brother."

Roland did not tacitly switch the subject as usual because his voice suddenly abandoned him.

"Your Majesty?" Wendy, who noticed something wrong, asked. "Are you OK?"

Roland managed to calm himself down and nodded slowly. He said, "You know that the Bloody Moon has appeared. This is the final battle of the human race, but no one knows how long this battle will last. Perhaps, it's going to be a year or even 10 years. You probably won't come back until the battle ends. If..."

He could not continue anymore.

Nobody could foresee the result of the Battle of Divine Will. Last time, Ashes had sacrificed herself on the Fertile Plains. This time, how many people would survive? Many witches were only in their 20s. They should have enjoyed their university life in the other world. However, they had to fight for their fate here.

This war concerned the entire human race, so everyone must do their best to win. Witches, being also human, were indeed no different than ordinary people. Roland knew that perfectly well, but he had already established an attachment to these girls. He had been living with them for years since the Witch Union had been founded. It was thus hard for him to issue the order because once they were off for the battle, it was probably the last time he would see them.

"If somebody else sees you act like this, they'll laugh about you," Tilly said, grinning. "You still haven't got used to being a king after so many years? Well... I actually like the way you are now."

"Excuse me, Your Majesty," Wendy said while rising to her feet. Before Roland could realize it, she had approached him and given him a hug.

"Do you feel better now?" Wendy said gently, "We all know what you've done for us. Even if you don't say a word, everyone will be willing to come forward and protect you. You taught us to fight for things we want. Winning the Battle of Divine Will is essentially the same as protecting the Holy Mountain. I trust that the other witches all agree on that."

The warmth soothed Roland a great deal. Wendy was right. Everyone knew that this day would eventually come. There was no point in hesitating now. Since all the witches were here to fight, they had made up their mind a long time ago. If he said something like “I don’t want you to go to war” or “you can stay behind if you want”, that would sound pretty lame.

The only thing they needed to do is to try their best.

“Thank you.”

Wendy smiled and returned to her seat.

“Well then,” Roland said after taking a deep breath and stared at the two people. “The Witch Union and the Aerial Knights, prepare for the war.”

“As you command, Your Majesty.”

“Leave it to me, brother.”

...

The news that the witches would go to war in the Kingdom of Wolfheart was immediately spread throughout the whole Castle District. Within half an hour, Lightning had packed up. Her luggage included a backpack that contained ammunition and sigils, a waist bag full of spices and salt, as well as Maggie perched on her head.

As usual, they were normally the first ones to set off. They would be the scouts and guides for the army coming after. However, this time, when Lightning went to bid farewell to Wendy, Wendy stopped her.

“You don’t have to be in such a rush,” Wendy said as she took over Maggie. “In fact, someone told me that he wanted to see you before you go.”

“Me?” A little surprised, Lightning asked, “Who’s that? Auntie Margaret?”

“Well...” Wendy hesitated while covering her mouth. “You’ll see. By the way, he’s waiting for you in the yard.”

“He’s already here?” Lightning said while shrugging. “Alright.”

“Coo — coo!” Maggie followed but Wendy held her back. She thus watched Lightning disappear from the doorstep.

“Sorry, you’ll have to stay with me for a while,” Wendy said smilingly while stroking the pigeon’s head. “I think it’d be better to leave her alone at this moment.”

...

Lightning walked out of the castle and off to the yard after passing the corridor. She immediately saw a flowery figure standing there.

“I see... You’re Mr. Sander Flyingbird,” Lightning grumbled. “What can I do for you?”

However, when Sander turned around, Lightning was rooted to the ground.

Although he was still wearing the same flamboyant clothes, he had a completely different vibe. Despite that they had not seen each other for years, Lightning still remembered what her father looked like.

“Father?” Lightning asked in disbelief.

“Sorry, I’ve been avoiding you,” Thunder said with a bitter smile. “I don’t want my daughter to live like her mother, so I decided not to see you...”

“When did you know that I was here?” Lightning interrupted.

“Not long after you arrived at Border Town.”

“Did Auntie Margaret tell you that?”

Thunder nodded.

“So, you’re accomplices, and so is His Majesty...”

“Don’t blame them. I asked them to keep the secret for me — ” No sooner had Thunder finished than Lightning hurried to him and raised her arm.

Thunder closed his eyes and waited for the punch.

But the pain did not come as expected.

A moment later, Thunder opened his eyes in surprise and saw his daughter pat his forehead gently, with a smile lingering upon her lips.

“In other words, you know everything about my exploration in the Western Region of Graycastle?”

“Er...”

“I found the Holy City of Taquila, a 400-year-old witch, and the ruins of the underground civilization, and I also repelled the demons’ advance unit...” Lightning said while disengaging herself. “What about it? I’m as good as you, right?”

Thunder was stunned for a moment before he burst into a laugh. “You’re indeed my daughter, but I somehow feel both sorry and happy for this reunion.”

“I understand that you’re glad. But why do you feel sorry?”

“Because you grow so fast,” Thunder said airily. “I thought you would hate me and cry in my arms. It appears that I worried too much...”

Had she not experienced the battle at Taquila, she would have probably cried out. However, she had now grown up. She would not shed a single tear before she ended this war as Ashes had asked her to. “So, you’ve been worried that I’ll hate you. That’s why you didn’t tell me? Then why do you reveal your identity now?”

“Because I decided to come with you to the north and fight the Battle of Divine Will,” Thunder pronounced slowly. “You’ll know it eventually, so it’d be better that I tell you now.”

“Really?”

“Yes. I’ll fight over the sea and at the ports. I’ve discussed this with His Majesty.”

“That’s great,” Lightning said while grasping Thunder’s hand. “Since we still have time now, let me introduce you to the team members of my exploration team. You’ll fight together with them as well!”

“It appears that you’ve made some good friends...”

“Of course. But they’re all somehow related to animals. Was I not very good at dealing with people when I was little?”

“Like the pigeon called Maggie?”

“Yes... er, no, Maggie is a witch.”

“Ahem, as far as I know, a person loved by animals is also loved by people. Don’t worry about that.”

“That’s good to know.”

The father and the daughter thus headed together toward the castle. They chatted merrily as though they had never separated.

#### **Chapter 1292: A Person in Need and A Person Who Needs**

“Farrina, breakfast is ready.”

Joe stopped at the bedroom with a plate in his hand that contained a loaf of bread and a small piece of cheese.

Over the past two months since the appearance of the Bloody Moon, the couple had lived a simple life. Joe prepared three meals every day before he went off for work to the Administrative Office. Farrina seldom went out. Most of time, she stayed in the house doing nothing. Occasionally, she would ask about the situation in Hermes. This was the only time the couple actually talked.

Joe did not know what Farrina was thinking about, but he felt pleased just to be with her. He would not expect anything more than that at this time.

However, Farrina did not respond as usual.

“Farrina, are you up?”

Joe knocked on the door, wondering why she did not answer the door.

“Well, it’s time to eat.”

“Farrina?”

Still, nobody replied as if the room was empty.

Joe’s expression immediately changed, and he instantly thought of the worst scenario.

*“Crap, isn’t things going better slowly?”*

He put down the plate and tried to break and enter.

With a loud bang, the door was forced open.

It was not the worst, fortunately. No rope was hung on the roof. No traces of blood could be seen on the bed. Joe was a little relieved. At least, he could now ascertain that Farrina was still alive, which meant that he could still make things right.

However, his heart immediately sank to the bottom.

He could see everything in the little bedroom at one glance. Farrina was nowhere to be seen. The wooden bed, the table and the windows had all been cleaned. Everything looked tidy and neat.

It was as tidy as the first day they had moved in.

Joe strolled over to the table. There had been books about the church, and the Graycastle Weekly spreading across the table yesterday. But now, there was nothing left.

She was gone.

Joe felt sadness prevail him as he realized the fact that Farrina had left.

Apparently, this was not an impulsive decision.

She had even wiped the corners of the table, but she did not leave him a single word.

Did she not want to trouble him anymore?

Joe slumped onto the chair at the table numbly.

Where would she go? Hermes? Her native town? Would she end her own life in an untraversed forest?

Joe naturally wanted to look for her, but he had no clue where Farrina could be. The chance of finding her was pretty slim. Since Farrina did not leave him any hint, it was obvious that she did not want to be found. What could he do even if he successfully found her?

Joe felt empty at the thought that Farrina would not be in his future life anymore. His brain seemed to stop working as though it refused to function.

In the end, nothing had changed.

“Morning, Joe.”

Why had he not noticed it earlier? Why was he simply content with the life he currently had?

“Joe?”

He just cared about himself but had never asked Farrina what she actually needed.

“Joe!”

A hand reached out to Joe and forced him to turn around.

“What are you mumbling?”

Joe blinked.

It was Farrina.

She was frowning and studying him attentively. "Are you OK?"

"You... didn't leave?" Joe said as he grasped Farrina's arm in disbelief. "Or you decided to stay?"

"Huh?" Utterly bewildered, Farrina did not wrench away from him. "What are you talking about? I just went to the Administrative Office."

The two stared at each other for a while until Joe broke the silence in embarrassment, "Then... why did you go to the Administrative Office?"

"To inquire about the requirements for a driver," Farrina answered in a serious tone. "I saw on the Graycastle Weekly that they're hiring truck drivers in Neverwinter. I want to give it a shot."

"Truck... what?" Joe asked in confusion.

"I don't know what it exactly is either, but it should be similar to a carriage based on its description. I'm good at riding and maneuvering carriages. Perhaps, this is a chance for me."

A chance? Joe suddenly felt unsettled again. Still clasping Farrina's hand, he asked, "Why do you suddenly want to become a truck driver?"

Farrina remained silent for a while before she spoke, "I thought the matter over and now I understand. First of all, the initial purpose of building the church was to save the world and the human race. This isn't just the church's version of story. Roland Wimbledon also admitted that. The church failed because of the betrayal of the executives."

"And then?"

"Then the next question is whether the King of Graycastle is really fighting for the human race as he promised. I've seen the Bloody Moon that represents the Divine Will in Neverwinter, the wealthy subjects, and the witches who look no different than normal people. All of these fit the story Roland Wimbledon told us. The only question left is the existence of the demons that try to destroy our civilization."

"But His Reverence Tucker Thor did mention the demons in his will," Joe muttered.

"That's right, but I have to see it myself. I have to see that Roland's army is fighting the demons from hell with my own eyes," Farrina said while nodding. "I don't want to make the same mistake again. I now only trust my own eyes."

"Do you want to go to the Kingdom of Wolfheart?" Joe asked, his eyes wide open.

"Yes," Farrina admitted flatly. "I can't join the First Army because I used to be a church member. Therefore, an alternative way is to become a truck driver and send supplies to the front. I'll know the truth there."

That was why she went to the Administrative Office to make inquiries of the qualifications for a truck driver.

Joe asked cautiously, "What if it's true? What if it isn't?"

"If everything is true, I'll spend the rest of my life atoning for my sin," Farrina answered without the slightest hesitation. Apparently, she had thought it over. "Although I never arrested a witch, it doesn't mean that I can get away with what the church has done. As a member of the Judgement Army, I was also an underlying of the traitors." She paused for a second and then resumed, "If it isn't, then I'll return to Hermes to see whether I can do something for the new church..."

This was the final decision she had made.

Joe gradually released her. He could not find a single reason to stop what she was doing. Farrina bravely confronted her mistake while at the same time still making an attempt to fulfill her promise to Tucker Thor. She had a clear plan for the future. It seemed that she was stronger than he had thought. Apart from supporting her, Joe could do nothing. He did not want to stop her because that would destroy her totally as a person.

Nevertheless, it would be the same result for him.

Once she became a driver and left for the Kingdom of Wolfheart, she would not continue to stay here, which was the reason she cleaned the room.

Farrina was still leaving him anyway.

"I..." Joe took a deep breath, fearing that he would not be able to contain himself.

"By the way, I hope you could do me a personal favor," Farrina said quickly. "They need two drivers for one truck. I want you to come with me."

"Huh?" Joe was stunned.

"To be honest, I haven't dealt with people for a long time, and I'm not sure if I can achieve my goal on my own," Farrina said while averting her eyes, abashed. "But you can turn me down. You have a stable job here and earn good salaries. I know I shouldn't have asked for that, but..."

"But what?" Joe asked immediately.

It took Farrina a few seconds to stare into Joe's eyes and say, "I need you."

This was the very sentence that Joe had once said to Farrina, but it was his first time hearing Farrina reply back.

Now, the person in need became a person who needed others, and the person who used to need others still remained the same. Joe no longer felt empty. Instead, he felt contented and fulfilled.

"Have some breakfast first. It's cold now," Joe said while heaving a deep sigh.

"Oi..."

She did not have to ask him this question actually.

Joe had traveled here from the Kingdom of Wolfheart with her, and he would certainly drive the truck for the army with her as well.

"We can apply for the position after we finish eating," Joe said with a smile.

## Chapter 1293: An Uncertain Future

At the airport in the Aerial Knight Academy.

The morning dawned with the roar of engines, and 10 biplanes slid out of the hangar one after another in the morning light. Sun rays gilded their sleek bodies.

“Are you planning to bring the trainees to the battlefield?” Roland asked Tilly as he stood before the “Seagull”.

Tilly nodded and replied, “If everything goes well, I can finish the last part of the Flight Manual within a month, but I don’t want my students to waste their time waiting for me in that one month. I can teach them theories everywhere, and they could probably fly at the front. After all, the airport was at the very rear compared to the battlement of the First Army.”

It was true. Apparently, Tilly had not forgotten her role as the headmistress of the Academy. Feeling a little more self-assured, Roland said, “Give more flying opportunities to the students. Don’t keep the plane just to yourself. The goal is to teach the others how to fly.”

What Roland truly wanted to say was “don’t act recklessly”.

There were a lot of opportunities for Tilly to avenge. She did not have to do so immediately.

“Hmm,” Tilly said while casting Roland a glance. “I will, if you hand me my plane as promised. I promise that I won’t fight for the ‘Fire of Heaven’ with the students.”

Roland was speechless.

Tilly giggled as she saw Roland at a loss for words. She moved her hair out of her face and said, “Don’t worry. I know what you’re thinking. Let’s make a deal. In a month, I’ll give you a group of real aerial knights, and you give me my plane. Before that, I assure you that I won’t provoke the enemies. How does that sound?”

Roland rather hoped that Tilly did not throw herself into a bitter battle at all, but he knew that there was no guarantee that one could stay safe all the time during a war. Only an army that had gone through the pain of battle could win. Therefore, he simply nodded and said, “Stay safe.”

“Of course, I’m waiting for you to bring Ashes back, brother,” Tilly said, her face splitting into a lovely smile.

For a split second, Tilly’s smile melted into the cool morning air of the Kingdom of Dawn and was engraved upon Roland’s heart.

“Your Majesty, it’s time to take off,” the guard reminded him.

“Then I’ll be off,” Tilly said as she turned round, climbed up the stairwell and disappeared behind the cabin.



“OK...” Roland mumbled as he turned away from the runway while constantly looking backward. Although they had held a farewell party last night, he still felt sorry to see them leave. Through the window, he could see many witches wave at him.

Like the expedition to Taquila last time, Wendy, Andrea, Sylvie, Echo, Leaf and the other witches were now heading to another war, only that this time, it would be a more difficult and time-consuming one.

“Everyone will come back safe and sound,” Nightingale said quietly. “I have a feeling.”

Roland nodded but remained silent.

“All clear. We can take off anytime.”

“Green flag for all!”

“Go!”

As the supervisor of the ground staff swung his arms, Lightning rose into the air followed by Maggie who had transformed into a Devilbeast. As there were no GPS coordinates in this era, and they were traveling to a foreign country, Lightning and Maggie served as the guide for the fleet.

Roland noticed that Thunder was smoking his pipe while waving at his daughter, looking proud and self-complacent.”

Behind Tilly was the “Seagull”.

Compared to the noisy biplanes, the “Seagull” was graceful and swift in the air.

Everyone in the crowd, at this point, started to bid farewell to their friends and families.

Both the Witch Union and the Sleeping Spell were concerned about this particular plane.

In the breezes created by magic power, the “Seagull” soon rose after sliding on the runaway for a short distance.

The last that took off was the Aerial Knights.

The 10 biplanes were the main air force of Neverwinter, out of which six were “trainer aircrafts” without any weapons, but Roland understood that the plant was assembling the new planes strenuously. Soon, these man-made iron birds would give the demons a heavy blow and defend the area above for the First Army.

The “Fires of Heaven” flitted across the runway one by one and rose at the edge of the wall before they spread out in a line and disappeared from the end of the horizon.

To help the Aerial Knights quickly get used to the pace of the battle, Roland had asked the construction team to also build four airports in the Redwater City, the City of Evernight, the City of Glow in the neighboring country, and Thorn Town while they were paving the road. These airports could facilitate the transportation across the south and the north and provide fuels for the planes. Since the biplane weighed less than 1,000 kilograms, it could land on any smooth-surfaced areas.

When the pilots became proficient in operating the plane, they could travel across Graycastle and the Kingdom of Dawn, and reach the Kingdom of Wolfheart by the sunset, provided that they commenced their journey early in the morning. This was definitely a tremendous speed by the standards of this era. That was also the reason that Roland paid special attention to the air force. Once a mature air force was built, human beings would enter a new phase of warfare.

Of course, as this was going to be the longest trip they would ever make in this history of time, Tilly created a pretty flexible schedule in case an emergency occurred. The army, according to her plan, would stay one night in the City of Evernight and then head to the Cage Mountain the next morning. In that case, they would be able to fly during the day.

The crowd looked on at the sky in the north after the fleet slid out of their sight.

So did Roland.

He hoped that the new air force could help the First Army get out of their dilemma.

They were really... flying!

Manfeld goggled at the giant birds that disappeared behind the slope of clouds, feeling excited.

“Hey, what are you doing there? We’re boarding the ship,” someone called at him from behind.

“I, I’m coming,” Manfeld said while shaking his head, trying to come back to the present. He trotted back to the team but could still, somehow, hear the ringing roar of the iron birds.

Although Manfeld had witnessed a lot of incredible things in Neverwinter in the past one month, it was his first time seeing the “Fires of Heaven” take off at such a close range. He felt exhilarated at the scene that he beheld.

He was again shocked, but he also felt something else this time.

For example, happiness.

Within a second, he had fallen in love with this job.

Just as the settlement clerk Matt had said, Manfeld successfully passed the screening process conducted by the human resource department of the Administrative Office and obtained a Neverwinter resident identity card. He had also received a property and quickly got used to the life here. It took him not long to find a foothold in this new city. Now, he could either choose to become a clerk in the Administrative Office or a policeman like Sharon who helped maintain public order.

He hesitated for a while and submitted his application to the Aerial Knight Academy.

Manfeld knew that official Aerial Knights would, in the end, join the army. They would be subject to a strict screening process and might also be killed in action. However, he was determined.

He was glad that he made the right decision.

Nothing could be more honourous than becoming an Aerial Knight, for they were the warriors who pledged fealty to the king, who fought against the tyrants and protected the weak.

He could not wait for this day to come.

Therefore, Farrina, Joe and Manfred, as well as numerous other people all headed to the war in the north.

They were from different kingdoms, different regions, but they were now acting for a common cause.

Compared to the first and second Battles of Divine Will, mankind had never been so united.

Their fate had been tied to the Battle of Divine Will.

And they were all fighting for the human race.

### **Chapter 1294: An Isolated Island**

She slept in the sea when she got tired and resumed her trip after she woke up. When she was thirsty, she drank rain water and ate fish when hungry.

Joan did not know how long she had to live like this.

At first, she had been trying to track time. However, after she had missed one or two days, she gradually lost the track of time and finally gave up. She had no idea how long she had been swimming aimlessly in the ocean. Perhaps, it had been more than half a year now.

Joan almost burst into tears at this thought. In fact, she had cried numerous times, but her tears merged with the seawater and became a part of the ocean.

She was so tired.

So tired indeed.

Even when she was asleep, she could not totally relax on the surface of the water, otherwise ospreys and other animals would come to eat her. Even if they could not gulf her down, their pecks were sharp and painful. Also, she could be seen by Sea Ghosts and those ship-like monsters.

Joan had actually encountered them many times during the past few months.

Every time she had been scared to death.

Fortunately, she had always managed to shake them off, despite that sometimes she got additional wounds during the escape.

There were many cuts in her beautiful scales that His Majesty spoke highly of. The skin exposed in the air turned white. As she had been in the water for so long, some wounds started to decay. What was worse, some parastic worms had found her as their new host and nested in her wounds. It was excruciatingly painful to pull them off the body.

Now, her body, which had never been pretty, became even uglier.

She missed the soft bed in Neverwinter and Wendy's arms.

She also missed the peaceful life there.

Although there were a lot of fishes in the ocean, she had to eat them raw. She used to do that all the time, but now, she somehow could not get used to the fishy smell lingering between her lips.

She wanted to eat the barbeque chicken wings made by Lightning.

Then Joan again cried. She kept swimming as her tears trickled down.

How long did she have to swim before she returned where she came from?

She swam much faster than most fishes.

She was even faster than His Majesty's "Snow Wind".

The time she spent in the water could allow her to have five round-trips from Neverwinter to the Shadow Islands. However, why could she still not see her destination?

His Majesty said that Earth was round. Could he have lied to her?

If His Majesty had indeed lied, she would swipe his face with her scales if she got such a chance in the future!

But she had to first get to Neverwinter...

Joan took a deep breath and encouraged herself. She reminded herself that she must not give up and must return to her friends!

Joan began to produce a series of "Ya" sounds over the sea.

A moment later, she heard her echoes, "Ya, ya."

A little shocked, she traced the echoes. It was a gloomy day today. A thin veil of mist permeated the surface of the ocean, and she could only see things within a few kilometers, just like the Shadow Islands when water went down. Since there was nothing at the front, Joan swam in that direction for another half an hour or so and finally spied something black loom against the mist.

It looked like... a rock on the surface of the water.

Joan's face lit up.

She knew that many tiny little things on the ocean were actually huge. Like the rock floating in the water, it must be enormous as well. Since it reflected off sounds, it could be a giant mountain. If there was a mountain, there should be lands.

Was it a part of the Impassable Mountain Range?

Joan suddenly had a lot of strength. She picked up her speed and swam as fast as she could toward the black silhouette. Water splashed all over her.

As she got closer, she saw the black "rock" more clearly.

It was indeed a mountain, but at the foot of the mountain was not the port of the Western Region but a flat island. The rear of the island was connected to a vast land. Since the land was so far away, she could not see it clearly.

But anyway, this was a land, which was better than nothing.

Joan pulled herself together and stepped onto the beach.

It was not until then that she noticed that this island was probably even larger than the biggest Searing Flame Island at the Fjords. Except for that verdant mountain, it was as flat as a pancake.

In fact, the island was actually a meadow.

Unlike the deserted islands she knew, this island seemed to be protected from the erosion of wet sea breezes and harsh weather. Grass grew underneath her feet, and occasionally, there were a few flowers. Joan did not understand why a secluded island like this, which could be easily destroyed by a seaquake, could be so vibrant and full of life. As the island was surrounded by the mist, it gave her a feeling that she was on a fairyland.

Joan turned her flipper into legs and walked slowly toward the center of the island.

Gradually, she saw some stone tablets. At first, she paid no notice to them, but later on, she found these tablets, although different in size, were neatly laid out.

The closer she was to the center of the island, the more tablets she saw. In the end, the tablets formed various circles that became denser and denser, as though they were encircling something.

She somehow had seen a similar scene before...

Joan crouched down at one tablet and studied it carefully. There were patterns on it, but she was not sure whether they were arbitrary patterns or some unidentifiable and indecipherable messages. To Joan's surprise, these stones looked quite old, but they were not dusty at all as if someone was cleaning them on a regular basis.

Was someone living on this island?

After walking for another few minutes, Joan was suddenly frozen to the ground.

In front of her lay an immense pit, whose diameters might be several kilometers. The pit was not only fathomless, but its mouth was smooth as well. Apparently, the pit was not caused by the collapse of the ground. The tablets encircled the pit and formed rings of "ripples".

Joan dimly thought of something. She stared up at the sky and saw the Bloody Moon peep through the hazy mist. For some reason, she felt that the Bloody Moon in the sky would fit perfectly in the pit on the ground. They looked almost identical. She even had a strange idea that the Bloody Moon would probably fill up the hole if it fell off.

"Hello." Just then, a beautiful voice came from behind and startled her.

"Ya — " Joan screamed and stepped a few paces back before she slumped against a tablet.

The owner of the voice seemed to be frightened too, for she was silent for a while before she asked tentatively, "Well... are you alright?"

Joan then discovered that it was actually a very pretty young woman. She was wearing a white dress, two strands of black hair cascading to her chest. Her graceful act of demeanor really impressed Joan.

The woman looked a little confused as well. For a moment, she was not sure whether she should come forward to comfort Joan or keep observing her.

“Ya, ya.”

Joan wanted to ask who she was, but she could only produce some inarticulate sounds. As she had not talked to anyone over the past half a year, she again lost her communication ability.

Incredibly, however, the woman understood Joan. A little sorrowful, she replied with a smile.

“Me? I’m just a guardian who’s trapped in here.”

### **Chapter 1295: Guardian**

Joan’s face lit up.

She was the second person she had met who understood the mermaid’s language other than Maggie.

Nevertheless, Joan was not quite sure whether Maggie truly understood her. She simply produced some “coo” sounds, which were even harder to comprehend. As such, they could only communicate short words and phrases.

Who was this guardian then?

Joan continued to make “ya” sounds. “Are you guarding the large pit? Where am I?”

“This isn’t a pit but a bridge,” the guardian said smilingly.

*“I saw bridges before. They aren’t like that,”* Joan thought to herself and walked cautiously toward the pit. She took a peek at the edge of it and found the wall of the pit was covered in mud and vines. There was no road leading to the bottom.

“Not everyone can pass this bridge, only the ones with keys,” the woman explained. “You don’t have the key, so you can’t see the bridge.”

*“I see,”* Joan thought. By why did the bridge builder do something like that? Why did he not let everyone pass? Even if they did not have the key, people could still walk around and pass it.

The guardian summoned a bitter smile and said, “Yes, they could, but this is what I have to do. I’m here waiting for the person who has the key and grant him the access to the bridge.”

Joan studied her for a while and then spoke.

“You aren’t chained.”

“What?”

“Since you aren’t chained, why don’t you leave the island?” Joan said as she pointed at the mist. “I saw there was a continent not far away. It shouldn’t take long to swim there. As you aren’t chained, I can get you out of this island.”

The woman was stunned for a second before she shook her head with a smile. "Never mind me. You're injured. Were you under an attack?"

Joan did not understand why the woman suddenly changed the topic, but she answered immediately, "the monsters in the sea scratched me."

"Come here and lie down. I have some medicine and can take care of your wounds," the woman said while waving her hand.

For some reason, Joan believed that the woman was a nice person, although she had just met her.

After she lay down, the guardian produced a jar of medicational cream and spread it over her hand. She then spread the cream over Joan's wounds. Instantly, a cooling sensation crept over Joan and refreshed her like a breeze that dispelled the hot air in summer.

"Ya..."

"It feels good, eh?" The guardian tore her dress and wrapped Joan's wounds after she applied the cream. She asked, "By the way, where are you going next?"

"Going home," Joan muttered. "I want to return to my friends."

"Then you can't go toward the black shadow. Although there's a continent there, it's not somewhere you should go."

"Do you know where Neverwinter is?" Joan asked hopefully.

"Hmm... perhaps it's on the opposite side of the black shadow, but it's still quite dangerous to get there by land. You'd better swim there."

"Really?"

"Yes. But you'd better take a good rest. I can feel that you're shutting down."

It was not until then that Joan suddenly felt that sleep broke over her. She finally succumbed to the fatigue that she had been resisting for half a year.

Joan indeed felt very relaxed beside the guardian.

*"Just take a rest for now."*

Joan slowly closed her eyes.

The woman stroked Joan's hair and said quietly, "I'm not chained, but people can be restricted by something other than chains. Sometimes, words can be more powerful than chains."

"I... don't quite understand."

"That's fine, because I don't understand it either."

The woman's voice gradually became distant and soft, and Joan started to lose her consciousness.

"Perhaps I can ask somebody to answer your question... I'm not smart, but someone is smarter than me, for example, Miss Anna and His Majesty..."

“Really? Then, I thank you.”

“We’ll meet again... right?”

“Yes, if we’ve got a chance...”

Joan completely fell asleep.

When she woke up, it was already dark.

*“Oh no, how long have I slept?”* Joan sat bolt upright but she could not find the guardian. Joan looked around in panic but could not see anyone around her.

Apart from that, the tablets were all gone as well. She could only see the huge, empty pit in front of her, the meadow, and the mountain with a flat top as if everything she had seen before was but an illusion.

*“Was that a dream?”*

*“No, it isn’t.”* Joan immediately realized that her wounds had been taken care of, only that she did not feel the cooling sensation anymore.

Joan unwrapped her wounds but did not find any residue of the cream on her scales. Her wounds had healed up.

While Joan was sitting there, puzzled and confused, she heard a strange roar in the distance.

She then noticed that the mist around the island had dissipated, and now she could see the black shadow clearly.

It was a mountain, but it was a little too high, as though it was leading to Heaven.

The mountain was also extremely large. From a distance, the mountain was even wider than the Fjord Islands put all together. There was not a single tree on the mountain but inky, impenetrable darkness. A haze of Red Mist enveloped the top of the mountain and spurted out crimson liquid from time to time!

Then Joan saw where the roar came from.

At the foot of the mountain were swarms of monsters coming toward the continent. They piled up on the beach and ejected venom. The black soil underneath collapsed, and huge rocks fell into the sea. The whole ocean was boiling! Although these monsters were tiny compared to the gigantic black mountain, they were, little by little, eroding it!

Yet they encountered resistance.

In the area that the monsters could not reach, thousands of Sea Ghosts collided with another kind of monsters. It took Joan a long time to realize that the other kind of monsters were what everyone described as demons!

The Sea Ghosts that scared the sailors so much appeared to be incredibly weak in this battle. There flew in all directions, failing to break into the demons’ defensive line. Despite their constant failure, they continuously crossed over the ship-like monsters and rushed toward the bank.

Joan covered her mouth in surprise.



“Although there’s a continent there, it’s not somewhere you should go.”

“You should go to the opposite side of the black shadow.”

Joan suddenly thought of the woman’s words.

She looked around. Across the black mountain lay just the vast ocean. There was no sign of lands. Joan hesitated for a short moment and began to run in that direction.

She sensed a great danger as she saw the two parties fight. Her instinct told her that she must leave. Another reason was that she believed that the guardian would not lie to her.

Joan thus plunged into the water and left the earth-shaking roar behind.

### **Chapter 1296: A Visitor from the Sky**

“Father, do we really have to do so much for them?”

Hawn Quinn watched the busy workers at a clearing outside the City of Glow and asked a little indignantly.

Before the two people was a rectangle square, its length about 1,000 meters and width around 500. After the construction team of Graycastle came to the Kingdom of Dawn, the nobles started to use the new measurement.

Unlike the square built with beautiful slabs in the king’s city, this square was built with grayish, plain cement. Although not visually appealing, it was fairly easy to build. It had only taken them less than a week to excavate the ground and build the base.

All the workers for this project were from the Quinn Family, which showed how important this project was.

“Hmm,” Horford Quinn, the current King of Dawn said while casting his son a glance with some interest, “what are you referring to?”

“King Roland probably asked you to do too much,” Hawn said while counting on his fingers. “He asked you to build a bridge and a road. These are both big projects. You summoned all the family workers to work on the construction. Then who’ll take care of the domain? The castle has to be refurbished as well.

Of course, Hawn was unhappy about something else too.

His father was too obedient to the King of Graycastle.

He even prejudiced his own interests.

The cement was apparently a very promising alchemical material. If their family could have a monopoly over that, they would gain huge profits.

Just because that King Roland had instructed in his letter to “produce as much cement as possible”, Horford had summoned all the great nobles to the palace and told them how to produce cement. With

the help of those nobles and various chambers of commerce, soon several cement plants were built. As a result, the Quinn Family did not profit much from this new technology.

When it came to the road construction, however, the situation reversed.

The great nobles all refused to cooperate, which left Horford no choice but to do it on his own.

The Quinn Family took care of all the construction work, from the recruitment to the collaboration with the Graycastle construction team. Despite that they had accumulated huge wealth after taking over the country from the royal house of Moya, they had spent a great deal on this project. Hawn's heart ached when he saw the gold royals in the treasury decrease every day.

Road construction was different than a business investment that could bring in more money. The road connecting the Northside River and the Cage Mountain could not bring anything. The two areas were not even under the jurisdiction of the Quinn Family! Even if the road did, somehow, flourish the local business, only the lords along the road would profit from it.

From what Hawn could tell, King Roland definitely wanted to build something more, for example, this strange, useless square. If they keep squandering money like this, his family would soon encounter a financial crisis. In fact, many distant branches of the family had started to complain about Horford's action.

What annoyed Hawn most was his father's attitude toward the Graycastle men.

He not only made inquiries of every project but also summoned the construction team to the palace frequently and asked whether they had any needs. Hawn was particularly resentful after he learned that these "officials" were all civilians rather than nobles. His father was a king, and it extremely irritated Hawn to see they sit equal at the same table.

And today, when Horford heard that Graycastle would send their ambassadors, he immediately went out to the city to greet them. This was so incredible. As a ruler, he could have definitely met the guests in his castle. What royals would greet the guests outside the castle in person?

Hawn suspected that Horford did all this because of his daughter, Andrea. Everything started after his daughter left.

"What can I do?" Horford said, shrugging. "Nobody else is willing to work. I can't let them do what they want. You've seen how powerful Graycastle is. Do you think without the support of the Wimbledon Family, I'd still be able to be the king of the country?"

"No, father... I'm not asking you to resist Graycastle," Hawn explained while waving his hand. "You just need to ask others to work for you, and Roland Wimbledon won't say anything about it. You can negotiate with the local lords for the funds. A business deal is a sort of negotiation. You told me that a good businessman has to stay calm to get the maximum benefit."

"But the Battle of Divine Will isn't a trade."

"That's right, but..." Hawn broke off and bit his lip. Finally, he bursted out, "But you don't look like the King of Dawn at all but a minister working for King Roland Wimbledon!"

Hawn expected to see his father throw a fit, but the latter simply stared at him for a moment and smiled airily. He said, "Why do you think there are only four kingdoms on this continent instead of three or five?"

"Well..." Hawn was totally unprepared for the question. "Because... because we're the strongest four families?"

"More precisely, we're the strongest in our own domains." Horford said, "Our power can't extend throughout the whole continent. The so-called border is actually the furthest we could extend our power to. However, the balance between the four kingdoms has been broken. Roland Wimbledon could completely take over all of the Four Kingdoms if he likes. If that's the case, why can't I submit to his ruling?"

Hawn retorted fiercely, unable to help himself, "Father! The Graycastle army is powerful, but they can't control the whole continent! You're exaggerating..."

"You aren't realizing the change in Graycastle, child," Horford sighed deeply. "Perhaps, Roland couldn't in the past, but now he has extended his power beyond his own territory. You didn't really look into what he has done, so of course you don't believe that he has that ability.

"How... how did you know?"

Horford answered with a smile, "Andrea replied to my letter."

Hawn's heart sank.

When he was about to talk more sense into his father, somebody shrieked.

Then there was a loud, dull buzz coming from a distance.

Hawn looked in that direction, slightly surprised at a line of black shadows in the sky that was streaming toward the City of Glow.

Were they migrating birds?

However, he soon realized that he was wrong. The black dot expanded immediately, and it became larger than any birds he had seen. It was still expanding.

Hawn's eyes were wide open. They seemed to be artifacts!

All the workers dropped their tools involuntarily and started to scream.

Many cavarans that passed by also stopped and looked up at the sky.

"That's incredible... He really did that," Horford commented while smiling faintly. "My guests are coming."

Hawn, at this point, was completely aghasted. Were these huge birds the transportation tools invented by the Graycastle men?

How could it be possible?

**Chapter 1297: Arrive at the Front!**

Yet Hawn soon realized that what he had thought was impossible was real.

The huge birds hovered above the square and then dropped. Hawn could now see clearly the pilot up there who was also peering down. The artifact was even larger than a carriage. Hawn could not understand how such heavy items could fly like a bird in the sky.

The other spectators also wondered the same question.

When the iron birds fleeted across the square, many workers knelt down and prayed.

This must be a miracle.

“Your sister Andrea is also there,” Horford Quinn commented. “Her letter is just dated yesterday.”

It took Hawn a long time to understand the implication behind the word “yesterday”,

All his hair on his back stood on its end as he realized what it meant.

They arrived here in just one day from Graycastle thousands of miles away?

Now, when Hawn thought of his father’s words that “the balance has been broken”, he realized how ridiculous his previous idea was.

The man-made iron birds landed quietly one after another. When Andrea walked off the plane, Horford could not wait to come up to greet her.

...

A banquet was held in the palace to receive these Graycastle witches. Although no nobles were invited, the news that the guests had descended from the sky immediately spread throughout the entire City of Glow.

So many people had witnessed that spectacular scene.

After lunch, Horford finally found an opportunity to speak to his daughter alone.

He was pleased that Andrea would at least call him father now.

“Are you leaving in the afternoon?” Horford asked a little regretfully.

“We must be at the Cage Mountain by the sunset and meet with the First Army,” Andrea said with a nod. “The ‘Seagull’ could have arrived there in one day had this not been our first time traveling abroad. If that was the case, we would probably not have had time to eat.”

Horford was utterly shocked when he heard that the Graycastle men could travel from one country to another within one day. Although he had learned about this amazing transportation tool from his daughter’s letter, he still could not quite take it. He had lectured Hawn earlier regarding the changes in Graycastle, but in fact, he himself was not fully convinced either. Horford sighed internally and said while stroking his beard, “You did that on purpose, didn’t you?”

Andrea smiled for the first time. She asked, “You knew?”

"I just think the planes shouldn't have hovered so long in the air before they landed," Horford said resignedly. "In that case, everyone in the southern city would hear the noise. Well, it's indeed a good warning to those nobles who are thinking about stirring up trouble."

"This is one of the reasons. The other reason is that we need to establish confidence among the public," Andrea explained while shrugging. "I've heard that there are demons and Devilbeasts lurking around the Kingdom of Dawn. If the residents here know that the Graycastle army also has the ability to fly, they would not easily get panic."

"It does kill two birds with one stone. Is this also the idea of that Pearl of the Northern Region?"

"No, it's Princess Tilly's idea."

Horford noticed that his daughter was pretty proud of her princess when she mentioned the latter's name as if she was sharing the honor. It appeared that she had made many good friends in Neverwinter. Horford nodded and switched the subject. "By the way, are you really not interested in taking the throne?"

"Why did you say that again?" Andrea said while raising her brows. "Haven't I told you that I'm not interested in being the queen of the Kingdom of Dawn? Are you not satisfied with Hawn?"

"He's a good noble and also a pretty talented businessman. I believe he would be a good earl," Horford replied while shaking his head. "But Hawn, like all the other nobles, cared too much about personal gains. Many people in the family don't understand why I'm doing all this. They don't comprehend that what I'm doing now is to further secure our dominant position in this country."

After Horford had become the King of Dawn, the Quinn families had all somewhat changed, including his adopted son. Hawn would have never said such things as "you don't look like the King of Dawn but a minister working for King Roland Wimbledon" in the past. Someone must be insinuating him into making such impertinent comments, or Hawn had already regarded him as the next king.

The word "His Majesty" was a fascinating word, but the power it brought could equally bring disasters. He did not want Hawn to end up like Appen.

Also, another reason that Horford had not told Hawn was that the other two families would probably not acknowledge an adopted son as the ruler of the state.

In fact, the Luoxi Family and the Tokat Family supported Horford largely because of Andrea.

"That's your problem," Andrea said indifferently.

"If you don't want to take over my position, then I have to share the throne with the other two families," Horford said in a sorrowful tone.

"You don't mind?"

"That's nothing," Horford said half-jokingly. "It actually saves me a lot of trouble. After the war, I can probably move to Neverwinter and stay with you. I can have a peaceful life before I die."

Horford was serious. If Roland Wimbledon won the Battle of Divine Will, would the Four Kingdoms continue to exist? Horford did not think so. The Quinn Family had risen to power simply because they

took advantage of the war. If he let Andrea take the throne, Roland would probably leave the Kingdom of Dawn as it was. However, if someone else became the king, that would, perhaps, become another different story.

Just as he had said earlier, King Roland had broken the balance between the four kingdoms.

Andrea looked at Horford for quite a long time. He could tell that his daughter was not as determined as before. After a long silence, Andrea said, "I have to go."

"Take care of yourself," Horford said. It took him a great deal of efforts to suppress his urge to stroke his daughter's head. "I'll come to the front if available."

"... You too," Andrea replied as she turned around and withdrew from the study.

Horford took a deep breath. He leaned against the chair and closed his eyes.

He did not forget the decision he had made last year.

He would like to spend the rest of his life correcting the mistake he had made.

Four hours later, the fleet landed safely at Thorn Town at the foot of the Cage Mountain.

Within just two days, they had traveled between four cities and covered a distance of more than 1,000 kilometers. This unprecedented operation would definitely become a part of the history.

Iron Axe, Brian and Edith were all waiting for them at the airport. After a brief discussion, the witches entered the headquarters located at the top of the mountain. From the grave expression of the General Staff clerks, the witches judged that the First Army was not in an optimistic position.

Iron Axe spread open a large map on the long table and nodded at everyone before he said, "Now, let me tell you about the current situation."

### **Chapter 1298: The Arrival of the Demonic Months**

Iron Axe and Edith had made numerous predictions of the war at the frontier.

They both concluded that before all the troops assembled and brought all the weapons, the First Army should focus on the defense. Even if the main force arrived, they had to adjust their operation strategies accordingly and looked for an opportunity to eliminate the demons at one shot. If they were trapped in the Red Mist area, their situation would become very precarious.

"According to the intelligence collected by the Taquila witches, the Red Mist produced by the Obelisk would eventually cover more than half of the Kingdom of Wolfheart," Iron Axe said as he pointed at the red curve on the map. "Therefore, we shall extend our defensive line. In consideration of the time for alerts and preparation, we shall set up our outposts in these four cities along the curve, which are the Metalstone Ridge, the Gust Castle, the Sand City, and the Sedimentation Bay.

These four cities formed a polygonal chain that spanned across the Kingdom of Wolfheart on the opposite side of the Red Mist area.

“But the First Army currently doesn’t have enough force to defend the four cities all at once, so they have to pick the more important ones to build their strongholds. The most important two cities are the Sedimentation Bay and the Sand City. They support each other and are situated at the crest of the Red Mist area, only 50 kilometers away from the demons’ battlement. If we lose them, the demons could directly attack the Cage Mountain.”

“Especially the Sedimentation Bay,” Morning Light added. “It’s the port closest to the Cage Mountain. We rely on it to send our supplies. Losing the Sedimentation Bay means that it’ll take the army much longer to assemble. We can’t let that happen.”

“Just tell them the truth,” Edith said flatly. “If the demons take the Sedimentation Bay, then we’ve half lost the Battle of Divine Will. Fortunately, the demons are also short of supplies. Since they erected the Obelisk on the ridge of the continent, it isn’t easy for them to transport the Red Mist.”

Perhaps, Edith was the only person who did not mind saying the word “lost”. Iron Axe coughed in embarrassment and said, “Anyway, let’s suppose that the demons encounter the same problem as us and are now busy creating a “shortcut” in the mountains. Whatever their reason is, the First Army mustn’t miss this opportunity. Before the road construction is completed, we must hold onto the two cities.”

He paused for a second and then resumed, “There are around 3,000 soldiers stationed in the Sedimentation Bay and the Sand City. They’re now building trenches and strongholds. I’ve also built a reserve unit that contains 1,000 soldiers to defend the rear of the two cities as potential reinforcements. Nevertheless, this isn’t enough. I hope Miss Sylvie could serve as a scout to alert us like what we did in the past in the Sedimentation Bay. Miss Lightning and Maggie could help with the other city.”

“Got it.”

“No problem.”

“Coo!”

The three witches chorused.

“As for the Metalstone Ridge and the Gust Castle, I’ve sent a unit of 500 to defend them. These two cities are relatively far from the Red Mist area, so the demons would not likely attack them. Even if they do, they would normally send the Devilbeasts,” Iron Axe continued as he saluted to Tilly. “I hope Your Highness could help with the defense in the air.”

Tilly nodded and answered, “Don’t worry. The Aerial Knights are designed to fight the Devilbeasts.”

“The last is the Archduke Island,” Iron Axe said as he pointed at a large island in the east. “It’ll be eventually covered by the Red Mist, but strategically, we still rely on it. Since it’s not connected to any lands, it’s easier to defend. The Mad Demons need to travel two to three kilometers to cross the channel to land. The Spider Demons can’t cross the ocean. Although the flying Devilbeasts could travel anywhere pretty fast, they can’t attack effectively. Therefore, the Devilbeasts won’t create too much trouble to the construction of the blockhouses.”

“As long as we have the Archduke Island, the Sedimentation Bay would be quite safe. Likewise, the island is a perfect place for us to attack the demons. If we use cannons in the city, our fire would cover the entire beach, as well as the land within a radius of 10 kilometers.”

“But it’s covered in the Red Mist...” Agatha said apprehensively.

“The General Staff has considered about it,” Edith interjected. “That’s why we sent 500 people there. Even if the demons attack us fiercely, the army and the fleet at the Sedimentation Bay would still have time to retreat. There’s no sign so far that indicates that the demons have a powerful fleet that can fight on the ocean.”

“Er... can I say something?” Wendy asked.

“Go ahead.”

“I lived in a monastery in the old holy city for more than 10 years, so I know the several roads in the Kingdom of Wolfheart and the Kingdom of Everwinter leading to the Hermes Plateau. The roads in the Kingdom of Everwinter are mostly in the Impassable Mountain Range. Could the demons use these roads to attack Hermes? There are many God’s Stone mines there.”

There was instantly a heated discussion.

Without a doubt, once the demons erected the Obelisk at the center of the Four Kingdoms, the result would be more fatal than when they did that on the Fertile Plains. The Red Mist could tumble down to the land below from the plateau and permeate the whole continent. By that time, the human race would have nowhere to go.

“That’s a possibility, but it’s hard to achieve,” Edith commented in approval. “During the last two Battles of Divine Will, the demons could only erect one Obelisk. First of all, their army can’t cross the Impassable Mountain Range and reach the Hermes Plateau. These paths were all accessible to the public. We just need to build a few outposts if we want to monitor them. Once exposed, the demons would be in a very disadvantageous position.”

“Therefore, even if the demons intend to attack the New Holy City, they could only do it secretly like what they did to the Misty Forest. One or two units won’t be able to set up the Obelisk so quickly in Hermes. Plus, the Coldwind Ridge is just one step away from the Plateau. It’s highly unlikely that they’ll build an Obelisk under our noses.”

“I see. You’ve already thought about that,” Wendy said, profoundly relieved. “Then it’s OK with me.”

“That’s the basic plan for the First Army at the front,” Iron Axe concluded. “We’re now trying to see where the demons are coming from. To tell you the truth, as we don’t have enough information and are short staffed, the First Army have had a hard time recently. I’m really glad that everyone came to support us. With your help, we could, more or less, solve these problems. Once we have enough people and intelligence, we can fight back!”

The next was to assign work to the witches.

Leaf and Lotus would stay at the Cage Mountain on the border and set up numerous traps.



Andrea and Shavi would head to the Sedimentation Bay. They were combat witches, so they naturally were sent to the front.

Hummingbird and Molly would support the logistics to help unload supplies at the port.

Echo would be responsible for raising the morale of the army.

While everyone was busy preparing for the war, fall had passed.

The sun did not rise as usual on the first day of winter. Instead, flurries of snow drifted down from the sky.

This was the first Month of Demons after the appearance of the Bloody Moon.

### **Chapter 1299: A Swift Attack**

Outside Thorn Town at the Cage Mountain.

“A, atishoo —”

Good sneezed as he entered the hangar against rushes of snow and gusts of wind. He placed the heavy ammunition case beside the plane and slumped onto it. “I hate winter. It reminds me of those old days when we were refugees.”

“Nobody likes the Months of Demons, but I have to say that true winter hasn’t come yet,” Finkin said while twitching his lips as he opened his wooden case. “You should feel happy that we aren’t far from the sea. The Months of Demons aren’t that bad on the coast. Before His Majesty became the lord of the Western Region, everyone feared that they would not survive the night. Their houses might collapse at night, and they would then be buried in snow if they stayed in. They could not even run for life.”

“Well, are the Months of Demons in Neverwinter really that terrible?”

“That’s right. The situation didn’t change until His Majesty built concrete houses. Why do you think His Majesty named the new king’s city ‘Neverwinter’?” Finkin said while shrugging. He took out the ammunition from the case and put it into the cabin.

The “Fire of Heaven” was equipped with two machine guns, one at the front and the other in the middle. Although they were both new general machine guns, their loading methods were quite different. The machine gun at the front was half merged with the plane, so they used a cartridge to load shells. The ammunition case was, therefore, made of metal. When they load shells, they had to remove the whole thing.

The machine gun in the middle was fixed to a rotating gun rack. Its operation method was exactly the same as Mark I used by the Gun Battalion, only that they used a saddle-shaped drum magazine that could accommodate 100 shells to load the weapon. The machine gunner at the rear loaded ammunition manually once the shells ran out.

To ensure that every time before the operation, they had sufficient ammunition, they needed to reload the weapons after the plane landed, no matter how many times they had fired. Normally, the ground

staff would take care of this matter, but Good preferred to do it himself. He did not want to miss a single opportunity to touch the plane, even if it was just a fleeting second.

Just then, a loud wave of cheers erupted outside the hangar.

Undoubtedly, some students had passed the exam and landed on the runway.

Even if it was now snowing, Her Highness did not stop the training.

She was even busier than usual.

Apart from teaching the new students, she took them to patrol the northwestern area of the Kingdom of Wolfheart twice a day. At night, they discussed flight theories and issues they had come across during the day. She hardly took a rest.

Under her influence, everyone studied hard, and they actually did even better than in Neverwinter. During the past one week, not a single trainer aircraft had crashed.

After installing the new ammunition case to the storage room at the front of the plane with his partner, Good walked up to the window and let out a sigh.

“What’s the matter? Are you homesick?” Finkin asked as he followed Good.

Good shook his head and said, “I’m just worried about...”

“About the war and your sister back home?” Finkin interjected while smiling slyly. “I remember her name is Rachel, right?”

“I’m worried about that I’ll be replaced!” Good exclaimed indignantly as he glared at Good.

“Why?”

“We only have four fighters, one of which is Her Highness’ ‘Unicorn’. In other words, I have to be one of the top threes to operate the Fire of Heaven,” said Good as he turned around and watched the training field at a distance. “Our strength lies in war experience, but we haven’t seen a single demon yet. If there are one or two gifted students among the new people, we would probably fall behind.”

Surprised at Good’s concern, Finkin said in a resigned tone after a long silence, “Oi, oi, you’re worrying too much. We’ve earned a lot of experience by shooting real bullets. Didn’t Her Highness say that even the Gun Battalion needs a couple of months to practice, wasting thousands of bullets before they throw themselves in a real war?”

“But we don’t really do well in shooting, do we?”

“Well...” Finkin was at a loss for words.

Although the Aerial Knights had never met a single demon so far, they had fired on the plane numerous times. Tilly did not ask them to bring back the ammunition but asked them to use up all the bullets. They were told to pick a random target and practice as if it were a real battle. The target, sometimes, was a balloon in the air or a big tree on the top of the mountain.

Good discovered that he was much less talented in shooting than flying. Also, he had heard that many new students had quite outstanding performance during the training, one of whom was called Manfeld. His gift was soon acknowledged by the instructor in just a few days.

Therefore, his worry was not completely groundless.

He could improve his flying techniques by constant practice, but there was no shortcut for shooting.

Suddenly, a sharp alarm broke over the airport.

It pierced the air like a firecracker!

Good and Finkin exchanged dark looks, and their manners instantly tightened.

Once the alarm went off, all the training was suspended. The runway was cleared. The official Aerial Knights must immediately gather at the headquarters at the airport.

It was their first time hearing the alarm since their arrival at Thorn Town.

They thus ran to the headquarters at once.

Soon, there were more than 30 people in the temporary headquarters.

“We received a message from Iron Axe just a minute ago that a troop of demons had appeared 200 kilometers to the north of the Gust Castle,” Princess Tilly said as she pointed at the map. “The message was delivered by the animal messenger, and in the letter, Iron Axe has pointed out that there are also refugees nearby. The demons may aim at these refugees. It would take the garrison at the Gust Castle more than two days to travel there. It would be too late if we wait for them.”

“This is what the Aerial Knights can help with. Nobody can cover such a long distance within two to three hours except the ‘Fire of Heaven’. The demons would have never thought that they would share the sky with us one day! Now, heed my command. Aerial Knights, advance!”

“As you wish, Your Highness!” everyone shouted together.

Good clenched his fists. He had been waiting for this moment for a long time!

By the time they returned to the hangar, the ground staff had finished the preparation work for the takeoff.

Good strode over to the pilot cabin, quickly turned on the engine and spinned the lever. As the motor was set in motion, black smoke spiraled up from the head of the jet. The plane finished its first cycle as it roared.

Once the engine was on, the piston would continue working.

Good put on his goggles, waved at the cheering crowd and pushed down the lever.

Around seven or eight minutes later, four biplanes streaked across the runway and rose into the air in the snow before they headed off to the north.

**Chapter 1300: A Ferocious Fight**

It was definitely not easy to fly in winter.

Although the Aerial Knights were wearing hats made of wolf skins, fur scarves and goggles, the area unprotected by these gears was still exposed to the biting coldness.

The windshield was located at the front of the “Fire of Heaven”. When the wind changed its direction or when the plane set off, flurries of snows would be carried into the cabin by the wind from all directions.

However, Good understood the rationale behind this design.

Above him were the huge wings, so his vision was pretty narrow. If he wanted to observe the situation below, he had to poke his head out of the cabin. In fact, the most thing that Finkin did was to poke his head out. Unlike regular soldiers who simply needed to draw out their weapons on the battlefield, the Aerial Knights had to first locate the enemies. It was extremely hard to find their target in the sky.

The “Fire of Heaven” became as tiny as an ant at a height of 1,000 kilometers, let alone the people on the ground.

That was probably the reason why each plane was operated by two people. Four eyes worked better than two.

“Any luck?”

Good turned around and asked.

Around an hour ago, the fleet had passed the Gust Castle. If the demons were pursuing the refugees, they should be around this area according to the map. To expediate the search process, the four planes spread out and formed a fan-shaped formation around the central axis in the north.

This was also the standard search method written on the Flight Manual.

Theoretically, as long as they did not deviate from the course, the four planes could cover the area within a radius of 200 kilometers. Nevertheless, due to the harsh weather condition, the planes had to stick together, which largely reduced their search area.

“Nothing!” Finkin yelled while holding his telescope. “Could demons have already caught up with the refugees and killed them all?”

“Then there should be many bodies down there!”

“Alright, I’ll take another look... I hope the snow won’t cover them up,” Finkin mumbled. “Mate, could you drop a little bit?”

Good lowered the head of the jet a little and cast a glance at the compass and the altimeters.

These were the only two parameters on the “Fire of Heaven” that they could rely on to know their current location.

In spite of this, there were also clear instructions on the Flight Manual that they must not trust these two parameters too much. “Due to the limitation of the technologies, the devices could go wrong,

especially when the plane is flying through an area that is experiencing a series of drastic changes in weather, altitude and geographical landscape. Make sure that you look out of the cabin every now and then, unless you want to be that key person who prompts a new round of technology revolution — by Tilly Wimbledon.”

“I can only drop another 300 meters. No lower than that. This isn’t the Western Region of Graycastle where the land is flat — ”

However, Finkin interrupted him, “Two degrees to the right! Someone’s moving there.”

Good’s expression changed. He quickly adjusted the direction.

He could hear nothing except the howl of the wind and the roar of the engine. Therefore, Finkin was not referring to sounds but something visible to their eyes. It would be indeed very suspicious if someone chose to come out under this weather condition.

A moment later, Good found many black dots against the vast, white mountain range covered in snow. Instead of a few scattered dots here and there, they actually formed a great number of lines. From above, these lines resembled thin threads of hair in the snow.

“Are they... footprints?”

Finkin answered his question in excitement. “That’s right. I believe that’s whom Her Highness asked us to look for! There are people on the mountain, and there are so many! God, the demons are going after those refugees. I saw hundreds of bodies! Based on their body builds, they should be Mad Demons, and there are 30 to 40 of them!”

“Notify the others!” Good said immediately and pressed down the lever. “Let’s go first!”

Three green flares were discharged and sizzled into the air, forming a glaring constast with the Bloody Moon in the midair.

The plane plummeted, and the two parties were increasingly close to each other. When the plane was only 400 to 500 meters away from the crest of the mountain, Good finally saw the fleeing refugees struggling to run for life in the snow. They rushed down the mountain, and many people almost tumbled down the mountainside, looking desperate.

The Mad Demons, on the other hand, slowly closed in from behind. They were not particularly chasing or slaughtering them, but rather, they were enjoying the pleasure of the hunting game.

All Good’s blood rushed to his head.

He recited the shooting instructions internally and aimed at the Mad Demons at the top of the mountain. After the target was aligned, he pressed the firing button.

The machine gun instantly fired furiously!

This was also the easiest way to shoot a target on the “Fire of Heaven”. When the plane was only 200 to 300 above the ground, he did not need to worry that the bullets would deviate from the course as they dropped. The bullets would travel in the direction the jet headed during the whole process. Even Good, inexperienced as he was, could hit the target!

The bullets rained down at the Mad Demons in the snow and created a straight “borderline”!

It was not until then that the demons finally noticed the descending giant bird. They howled as they drew out their bone spears and threw them at the “Fire of Heaven”, without the slightest intention to retreat.

Just then, the “borderline”, without any warning, scattered the demons.

It was line of life and death.

The metal bullets whistled through the air and penetrated the Mad Demons, dotting the white snow with streaks of blue blood. Red blood mist spurted out suddenly from the back of the Mad Demons that got hit. Their arms and legs were instantly broken. For a moment, limbs and flesh flew in all directions, exhaling piles of snow. The Mad Demons were thus temporarily stopped.

Then there came the demons’ bone spears. Unfortunately, the spears could not harm the “Fire of Heaven”. Even if the weapons did reach the aircraft, they were too weak to cause any damage. It was almost impossible to spear the biplane traveling in the air at a high speed.

But the “Fire of Heaven” was still attacking

While Good was repositioning the jet, Finkin started to fire.

Finkin aimed at the crest of the mountain and fired ferociously. He did not follow any shooting rules or calculate the trajectories but simply shot based on his own instinct.

The demons finally realized that the strange bird in the sky was not some hybrid demonic beast or monster but a weapon created by human beings! However, their understanding could not change the situation. There was no hiding place, and the chance of escaping the furious “Fire of Heaven” became extremely slim.

During the past Battles of Divine Will, human beings had been so afraid of the Devilbeasts that flew high and fast up in the sky. Now, the demons were equally scared. Perhaps, they were more frightened than men.

A moment later, Good began to plunge toward the demons again.

At that time, the other two planes also appeared.

Under the attack of the three planes, the demons fled as fast as they could, but the planes pursued them relentlessly, in an attempt to kill more.

Neither Good Nor Finkin realized that they were the first few people who would still chase the enemies when they were outnumbered. Even the previous evacuation unit of the First Army had not taken the initiative to go after the demons. Now, they were facing 40-50 Mad Demons, but they only got three planes manned by six people.