

Witch 1311

Chapter 1311: Loss

“My lord...” When Siacis saw the Sky Lord once more, he almost couldn’t believe his eyes.

The Sky Lord was soaked from head to toe, as if he had just been scooped out of a pool of water. He was exhausted, injured and one half of his armor was splattered with blue blood. It looked as if he had just experienced a dreadful battle.

The Parasitic Eye Demons that were supposed to be by the Sky Lord’s side had disappeared. Being vigilant creatures with the sharpest reflexes, Eye Demons were only useful if they were next to the grand lord. The current situation would only suggest that some great misfortune had befallen the Eye Demons.

The scene before his eyes would be more understandable if their enemy had been the Sky-sea Realm; however, their opponents were only the lowlifes—mere humans.

Hackzord was in no mood to explain it to him. He grabbed his subordinate in one hand and dragged him into the Distortion Door.

In the next moment, they had already returned to the region of Red Mist.

“Sky Lord, the soldiers on the island—” Siacis reacted to the situation very quickly. His expression couldn’t help but change for the worse. Even though the unexpected explosion in the city caused great losses in their vanguard troops, there was still a portion that luckily managed to survive. Leaving like this was equivalent to abandoning them all on Archduke Island.

The troops carried a limited amount Red Mist with them and they could only hold up for a few days at most.

“I’m already unable to open another door.” Hackzord’s response made the high-level psychic shut his mouth. The value of Primal Demons was far below a grand lord no matter what the circumstances; there was no need for discussion when deciding between the two.

“I’ll escort you back to the Sky City then.”

“First tell Totolock to get the humans to send our vanguard troops back with sailboats, as many as they can. As for those Symbiotic Demons, let them hide on the island for now,” the Sky Lord spoke through gritted teeth. “Once the Red Mist has enveloped the entire Archduke Island, the main troops must immediately launch attack on Sedimentation Bay and the other places. You two will be responsible for the warfare!”

“My lord, isn’t it a bit hasty to do so?” Siacis asked with surprise. “It wouldn’t be too late if we started once you have recuperated—”

“This is my command, so say no more!”

“Yes, I have overstepped my boundaries.” Siacis hastily nodded his head. “As you wish!”

Gazing at his subordinate's figure as he left, Hackzord viciously clenched his remaining hand into a fist.

How could he not be aware that what he was doing was hasty? But it was better than dragging it out with the humans. For the first time, the Sky Lord realized that time was not on their side. The humans' absorption of their legacies was faster than he had imagined; within a year, just relying on a few witches and some magically-inert males they managed to threaten a grand lord. What would it be like after a few more years then?

They definitely couldn't give humans any more time to catch their breath!

The Western Front must be steered back onto the right track!

Several days later, Hackzord finally returned to the bottom of the great rupture. The place had already become filled with rich and dense Red Mist. Just by virtue of his presence, he could feel his spirit being rejuvenated and the piercing pain in his palm lessening.

He went straight to the Red Mist Pond which was located at the bottommost point of Birth Tower.

Staring at the still motionless Nightmare Lord, the Sky Lord suddenly felt angry at everything. If she hadn't been immersed in the Realm of Mind all this time then he wouldn't be in such a difficult position!

It wasn't supposed to be like this!

If he was focused on simply moving the troops around, the advancement of the frontline wouldn't have been so slow, and if the Nightmare Lord lead the troops to battle, none of the Graycastle people who were meeting up with the fugitives would have escaped! Then, they would have launched a direct attack while the humans were still panicking, and he would have lead the troops from the west side in a pincer attack, capturing Hermes Plateau immediately—that was the real Western Front battle plan!

Furious as he was, when the moment came that he was really about to pull the Nightmare Lord out of the Realm of Mind, hesitation flickered across Hackzord's face.

In the end, the Nightmare lord was the person he always looked up to in the past.

He even... even once thought, that the Nightmare Lord would become sovereign of the race.

No, no, no... Hackzord shook his head. He was utterly loyal to the King; those were only his ignorant thoughts when they were participating in the upgrading process. In terms of ranking, Nightmare was essentially no different to Hackzord now.

At most... she just had a slightly deeper understanding of the Realm of Mind.

He made up his mind.

His actions might harm the Nightmare Lord's memory, making her furious and it might even cut off all the clues to the mystery of the humans' upgrading, but these things paled in importance as the battle on the Western Front.

At worst he would simply have to stand on Silent Disaster's side during the Holy See meeting, and admit that Upgrade Theory was correct. As for where that legacy shard came from, he could study that after

they won. As long he could swallow the humans' legacy shard, then everything they held in their hands at the moment would turn into a stair that advanced their entire race a step further!

With this in his mind, Hackzord inhaled deeply and made a violent pushing motion towards the Nightmare Lord.

The magical power in his palms broke off the connection between the Realm of Mind and the Nightmare Lord, pulling her out from the Fountain of Magic—

In theory, that was what was supposed to happen.

Yet Nightmare didn't open her eyes, her body fell down to one side like a empty shell in the Red Mist Pond.

Hackzord instantly felt as if fear gripped his throat!

He had never felt this much terror, even when his mind was almost destroyed at the loss of control over his magic during his upgrading process, or when he was ambushed by the Sky-sea Realm!

He stepped forward, lifted the Nightmare Lord up and tried to catch her consciousness, but only found emptiness...

Being alive but forever in deep sleep—this was the characteristic of being lost in the Realm of Mind. Yet once one had been submerged in that never-ending red sea, returning was impossible. Even if one could maintain lucidity for a moment, it would eventually be eroded by the surrounding surging and chaotic consciousnesses and become a part of them eventually.

Hackzord's heart dropped to his feet.

This meant that they had already lost the Nightmare Lord!

How could this happen?

With the Nightmare Lord's ability, as long as one was careful and didn't make any terrible mistakes, she shouldn't go to the extent of being trapped in the Realm of Mind!

What on earth did she encounter in her search?

The Sky Lord didn't dare to think any more about it. He got up and leaped upwards towards the top of the tower, he had even forgotten about his own injury.

He must inform the King of the news immediately.

The situation of the Western Front has changed dramatically!

"How is everyone recovering?"

At the Cage Mountain command post, Iron Axe asked Agatha in a concerned tone.

"With Nana here, what could go wrong?" Agatha put away her Sigil of Listening and smilingly shook her head. It was obvious that she was in a great mood. "According to Wendy, Maggie had already healed up

so much that she could skip and jump about on the first day, Lightning recovered completely on the second day and both are now doing frontline patrolling. My only regret is that I didn't participate in the ambush this time."

"We were taking a big risk after all... Moreover, in order to pack that huge flintlock, we even had to take apart all the seats on the "Seagull." We couldn't have taken another passenger." Iron Axe smiled as well. "I thought your only regret would be that we couldn't get rid of that high-ranking demon in one go."

"Winning against a grand lord with such a lineup is already an extraordinary victory." Agatha turned to the Pearl of the Northern Region and said with her hand to her chest. "I underestimated you in the past; reality has proved that that was indeed a mistake—except for His Highness, Roland, there are still many outstanding people among those with no magical ability that should not be taken lightly."

Edith calmly accepted her compliment. As the strategist behind the entire ambush, there was no need to be humble in that moment.

"Even though it's a pity that we let the bastard called Hackzord escape alive, we reaped a lot from this battle." She patted the documents in her hand. "At least we are now no longer clueless about our enemy."

Chapter 1312: Countermeasure

As a grand demon lord, the Sky Lord's strength could indeed be described as terrifying. The magical ability to open a portal through space allowed for instantaneous movement, and could simultaneously be used as a shield or a weapon. However, through careful analysis, one would discover that it was not without flaws.

"We can first be certain that this high-level demon can only open one passage at a time and the entrance of the passageway must be within arm's reach," Edith said. "Secondly, although it's difficult to ascertain the range of the portal, it must be at least over two kilometers."

"Sounds like the advanced version of Orbit's ability."

After spending a lot of time with Roland, Edith learned from him several strange pet phrases that he liked to use, for example: "advanced version", "special advanced version", "enhanced advanced version", etc.

"Just by looking at the range that indeed seems to be the case." The Pearl of the Northern Region nodded. "However the number of passages Orbit creates depends on the amount of magic she has. The Sky Lord, on the other hand, can only open a new passage once the previous one has been closed. He was in a very tight situation at the time so it's unlikely that he wasn't using his true ability. This information is vital because it determines the essence of our countermeasure against him—if the Sky Lord could use multiple passages at once, the situation would be a hundred times more complicated."

After the other two digested her words, she continued on and said, "Another important point is that even though he can easily expand and shrink the passage entrance and exit ways, Hackzord must be standing nearby the door in order to maintain them. According to Miss Sylvie's observations, he spent

several seconds closing the large Distortion Door when the explosion occurred on Archduke Island before flying to the south side of the island.”

“This means... the larger the door the door he opens, the slower it is to close it?” Iron Axe said thoughtfully.

“It’s very likely that this is the case.” Edith said, spreading her hands. “The final point is his Achilles heel—Hackzord isn’t a Magic Slayer; he cannot stop the movements of witches and doesn’t pose enough of a threat to people wearing God’s Stone of Retaliation. Even though his body is not weaker than that of Extraordinaries, he will be trapped in anti-magic regions if he engages in close combat. I certainly don’t think he will want to not sacrifice his own life in exchange for the lives of two or three mere humans.”

Edith paused. “To summarize, the Sky Lord’s main ability is to open a two-way passageway that is centered around himself, has a radius of several kilometers and can only be opened one at a time. No matter if it is the entrance or the exit, as long as both sides of the door are affected by a God’s Stone, the passage will break apart.”

“So if he appears once again, our countermeasure will be...”

“If he is located at the periphery of the battlefield and the exit of the door isn’t facing the battlefield, Miss Sylvie will directly bombard him with artillery,” Edith said systematically. “If the exit of the door is inside the battlefield, or if he uses the door to directly charge into the First Army’s formation, then get the soldiers to do nothing and leave it to the professionals.”

“Do nothing?” Iron Axe was a little surprised, then, as if he realized her meaning, he said, “...oh I see.”

“Indeed,” Edith revealed a smile, “In reality the Sky Lord’s most effective method of attack is using our own weapons against ourselves. If our soldiers can hold their attack, there is actually a limit to the threat he poses to our lineup—just as I said before; strategically, his ability is irreplaceable for maneuvering troops, but using it to attack is not a good idea.”

With the frontline of the First Army ignoring him, it was not like the grand lord could just charge into the ditch and engage in close combat with the soldiers. If he did that, then when the professionals—God’s Punishment Witches, arrived on the battlefield, his death would be inevitable.

“What if he counterattacks during the intervals between artillery fire?” Agatha asked after a moment of thought. “For example, he first opens a passage to the outside, making us think that he was gathering more troops, and when our artillery fires he opens a new large door and positions the exit inside our battleground, subjecting us to our own artillery fire.”

Just from being able to think of this was enough to prove that the Ice Witch had put a lot of work into Graycastle’s new weapons.

“This is indeed something that could work in theory; however, I don’t believe the Sky Lord will do that,” Edith explained. “Opening a door for only one person can be done in a blink of an eye, but expanding it so wide so that it would completely protect him would need time. The time difference between the two is very limited and if it fails, the result would be being blasted into pieces by the shells that have fallen behind him. To a grand lord, such a move is too risky.”

“All in all, I can take it that the Sky Lord is not as much as a threat to the frontline as we thought, right?” Iron Axe said while rubbing his chin.

“So far that is the conclusion that the General Staff have reached.” Edith gave a definite reply. “Of course, this only applies if Hackzord leads troops into battle by himself. If he was accompanied by other grand lords, then the threat he poses will instantly multiply dramatically.”

—Like bringing Ursrook along and directly charging into the middle of their battle formation.

Iron Axe and Agatha couldn't help but heave a sigh of relief. Luckily, Ursrook had already died in the Fertile Plains.

“But this doesn't rule out the possibility of a new Magic Slayer appearing; so if it's possible, it'll be best if we find a chance to rid ourselves of this problem.” There was a hint of murderous intent in the Pearl of the Northern Region's tone. “He will only be no threat to us when he disappears completely.”

Upon hearing this, Agatha couldn't help but feel impressed. Not only was a 'mortal' seemingly showing no fear towards a demon, but she was also plotting the death of a grand demon lord. What would have definitely sounded delusional in the past didn't sound strange at all to anyone at the current moment, as if it was the logical and obvious thing to do.

Over the past four hundred years, humans had indeed changed a lot.

Whether it be people or things.

Perhaps the Union's silence wasn't all together a bad thing.

At least, they didn't pass down the fear of the strong from their era to this era.

Now that she thought of it, there might as well have been many normal people possessing potential like Edith Kant in the Union's time, but the pessimistic views and fear that pervaded the race restricted their thoughts and willpower. Together with the estrangement intentionally created by the upper classes, the era was very bleak on the whole.

But this time, before humans had gotten the chance to taste real hopelessness, Roland Wimbledon curbed its spreading.

As she was feeling a surge of emotions, she once more recalled the moment when she woke up from deep sleep in the Frozen Coffin, and met Roland for the first time.

“Mortals can also defeat demons”. Everything started from those words...

“Hackzord probably won't fall for the same trick twice, do you have a good plan?” Iron Axe asked.

“As long as the First Army's movements are flexible enough, even if we don't set a trap, we still have the chance to get rid of him—for example, equipping 'Fire of Heaven' with a large caliber weapon that can shoot God's Stones.”

“True,” the commander in chief mused. “But that would need quite a lot of God's Stones. Don't tell me you have already thought of a way to process God's Stones?”

“How could that be possible.”

“Huh?”

Edith shrugged. “I’m the chief of the General Staff, not god. I’m alright at making suggestions but as for how to realize them, that will obviously be up to His Highness, Roland, to figure out. Relax, I’ve written everything in the battle report. In order for the frontline to achieve victory, he should be doing his best as well.”

The other two people couldn’t help but twitch their mouths.

It appears like His Highness’s white hairs... are going to increase again.

Chapter 1313: The Information Age

In Graycastle, Neverwinter.

The reports regarding the battle on Archduke Island as well as the situation in the Kingdom of Wolfheart were delivered into Roland’s hands two days later.

Compared to the past when it took a week to send a letter from the City of Evernight to Neverwinter, it was undeniable that their communication speed had made huge progress. Both short-distance, quick delivery by flying couriers and long distance delivery through twenty-four hour steam-powered boats were now a part of the messaging system. There were dedicated personnel and boats responsible for the delivery of crucial messages, and in some cases even planes were used. This time, the reports were delivered by Tilly.

“Good job.” Roland solicitously handed her a Chaos Drink. “Is the situation over there okay?”

“Wouldn’t you know if you just looked at the report?” Tilly took the cup and glanced at him sideways. “For you to act so considerate, do you have something you are guilty of? Could it be that you still don’t have a clue about my plane?”

“Pfft...” The sound of Nightingale stifling laughter came from behind him.

“How could that be, I’ve already selected the best model from many blueprints. When Anna can find some time, we will start the prototype production right away.”

“For Anna’s sake, I’ll let you off this time, Brother.” Tilly downed the drink in one go, wiped her lips and walked towards the exit of the office, “‘Seagull’ will be heading back soon so I’ll be returning to the Aerial Knight Academy first.”

“You’re not even going to stay for one day?” he asked, slightly surprised.

“I have no choice. Right now the only things on the frontline that can threaten the Sky Lord are ‘Seagull’ and Andrea. Also... I don’t want to miss a single opportunity to get my revenge.” Tilly waved at Roland with her back facing him. “Well then, I’ll be going now, Brother.”

Nightingale sighed softly as she gazed at the closed door. “Everyone... is working hard.”

If it was possible, I would rather they worked hard in other areas, not in warfare , Roland thought. However he didn’t say it out loud—because before the Battle of Divine Will ended, before the fate of

humans was determined, nobody could free themselves of this burden. Apart from shirking responsibility, there was no meaning in saying this now.

After a moment of silence, he unsealed the report.

After he finished reading all the reports, Roland at last understood the meaning behind Tilly's words. To be able to pass down the evacuation command in time and successfully ambush a grand demon lord whose movements were untraceable above the vastness of the sea was an incredible feat. Edith Kant and Andrea were undeniably the key contributors to the battle. But in the same way, the sender of the vital intel couldn't be ignored—victory would not have been possible without this person's selfless act.

"What do you plan on doing?" The issue had clearly caught Nightingale's attention.

"No matter what his original motive for sending out the secret letter was, his name and contributions shouldn't be forgotten," Roland said in a low voice. If this was in Roland's previous life, finding an unidentified informer after a long, drawn-out battle would be virtually impossible. The words on the epigraph of the gravestone would likely be: "Your name is unknown; however, your deeds are everlasting." Here, the existence of witches changed this. They allowed every single warrior who contributed to saving the fate of humankind have their name remembered in history. "After the First Army regains control of the Kingdom of Everwinter, get 'Black Money' to help Summer determine this person's name and background."

If the culprit who murdered him was still alive by then, they would not escape severe punishment by law.

Nightingale nodded. "If only we can quickly create the communications equipment that extends over thousands of miles that you spoke of."

"Unfortunately that is not one of my strengths." Roland couldn't help but rub his forehead. Recalling the circuit diagram that he had been forced to memorize made his head throb.

"Now you finally understand my feelings during an exam," Nightingale said with her hand to her mouth.

"Hard as it is, I'm at the very least not like a certain someone who simply falls asleep on the table and hands in an empty test at the end." Roland glared at her. "I've actually almost done creating the prototype."

Indeed, although extremely slow, the radio communications project had never stopped.

Like the piston engine, after considering numerous designs proffered by the Design Bureau of Graycastle, he decided to select two among them and have them worked on simultaneously.

These two were the spark-gap transmitter and the amplitude-modulated transmitter.

The spark-gap transmitter was the father of telecommunication. Its design was extremely simple and didn't need any electronic components. All that was needed was a transformer coil to step up the voltage to charge the capacitor until the voltage in the capacitor was large enough to ionize the air and produce an electric spark. This part was similar to a lighter, except the current discharged by the spark would not be wasted and instead, would oscillate rapidly back and forth between the plates of the

capacitor through the inductor and spark gap, creating electromagnetic waves. Finally, these electromagnetic waves would be transmitted through an antenna.

In other words, as long as one could control the switch of the power source, intermittent electromagnetic waves could be sent out, and by listening to the duration of the sounds, receivers could translate them into the corresponding signal. The beeps of varied lengths of telegraph codes originated from this principle.

Although it still sounded a little confusing, Roland took the most ingenious approach, which was to have the radio communications team at the Design Bureau of Graycastle to build a machine that worked with readily available materials, and then copy it.

For example, if you place a piece of oiled paper between two pieces of tin foil and then seal it with wax, it becomes a basic high-voltage capacitor.

The inductor would be even easier to make. It was nothing more than a coil of wire wound round and round an insulated pipe.

When not taking mass production or specifications into consideration, Roland could complete the device by himself. Although compared to the industrial products that came in a package the size of a fingernail in his previous life, these devices would appear bulky and crude, but the effects were basically the same. After the construction of the launch tower was completed, he would be able to perform the first wireless transmitting experiment of the era.

However, the shortcomings of a spark-gap transmitter were also very obvious.

Even if it passed the trials, he would have to design a code that matched the language of his kingdom if he wanted to use it officially. Training senders and receivers would also require a lot of time. Also the spark-gap transmitter had an extremely wide frequency spectrum so only one transmitter could work within a particular region. It wasn't suitable for the intelligence personnel to use on the frontlines.

Thus, his ultimate goal was still to use an amplitude-modulated transmitter (AM transmitter) that amplifies a signal using a vacuum tube.

The biggest advantage of the AM transmitter was that it could directly transmit voice signals.

In principle, radio and telephones were very similar in nature. Both transform the oscillations of sound into the changes in current or electromagnetic waves. After these travelled over long distances to the receiver's location, it would be turned back into sound once more. The only thing was that the frequency of the human voice was too low, causing the wavelength of the signal wave to be too long. The longer the wavelength, the larger the required antenna size—if the voice signals were directly transmitted, the length of the antenna would be over a hundred kilometers. This would be something impossible to create with their construction capabilities.

So in order to send out the voice signal, it would have to be carried by a higher-frequency wave.

This was where 'modulation' came in.

Once the new wave form created by the combination of the two was received, the receiver had to filter out the high-frequency waves through a series of demodulations and only keep the meaningful low-frequency waves in order to turn it into the final sound of the voice.

Once the AM transmitter succeeded, both the First Army and the intelligence community would be granted with real-time communications capabilities.

For war, the significance of this required no explanation.

Chapter 1314: Dilemma

Of course, the difficulty of producing the two types of radio communications equipment was not on the same level. The engineering team was still in the process of trying to create the evacuated tube, the core part of the AM transmitter.

Failed prototypes had already piled into a small mountain outside the lab.

Edith's suggestion of modifying 'Fire of Heaven' in her report excited Roland. On the technical level, it was not difficult to move a thirty-five millimeter sniper cannon onto a biplane. All they had to do was embed the entire body of the cannon below the belly of the plane and remove the shooting seats. If they limited the ammunition they carried to less than ten rounds, the weight would be balanced out. Other than that, nothing needed to be changed.

The problem was that if they wanted to acquire large-caliber God's Stone bullets, they had to first use witch or demon blood to melt and separate God's Stones in the mine until they formed God's Stones of Retaliation in the desired size and shape. Only then could they be subjected to further processing. If the stones were too big, the blades and lathes they had at hand wouldn't be able to do anything about it. If they were too small, the God's Stones would be too brittle. The process of selecting base materials expended large amounts of magic blood. Even if the Witch Alliance and the Sleeping Spell supported him, the amount they had would not be enough to satisfy the requirements of war.

The real solution to this problem was in the demons.

Either they found out the reason why demons could process such large God's Stone pillars...

...Or they used their blood for creating the bullets.

'Fire of Heaven' could now return to Neverwinter from the frontline within a day. With the additional help of Agatha's refrigeration ability, directly transporting fresh demon blood from the battlefield didn't seem impossible.

Roland silently recorded his idea onto the agenda.

...

When it was nightfall, Roland followed his custom of entering the Dream World.

In order to accelerate the advancement of the Design Bureau of Graycastle's projects, Roland had dramatically increased the amount of times he entered the Dream World in the past month, causing

time in the Dream World which had been falling behind the real world to catch up a fair amount. The city which had previously been in late summer now already had snowflakes floating about, as if this place and the outside belonged to the same world but just in different regions.

A typical morning in the neighborhood of his apartment was bustling with people. The expansion of Erosion and the great disaster in the Prism City didn't affect the residents at all; the two sides of the street were still full of breakfast food stalls with owners yelling about their sales without rest. People hurriedly moved about the street and the white snow that had accumulated throughout the night was already covered in footprints.

Even though Lan said that this world was also going to face a Battle of Divine Will, in comparison to the Red Mist-covered battlefield in the Kingdom of Wolfheart, this place was undeniably milder by a good deal.

Also, the long time he spent in the Dream World had not only caused the seasons to change, the demon world-traveller's attitude had also appeared to change significantly.

After observing for some time, Roland was basically certain that the demon who called herself Valkries was not actually a native from Cargarde Peninsula. Although the registration information restored by the Martialist Association verified it, there was no such person among the visiting group from the Peninsula. Yet, her behavior was difficult to explain with common sense.

Roland was not alien to the phenomenon of possessing a real identity but a greatly changed personality because he himself was an example of this. The best explanation was to describe her as a "world traveller".

In the beginning Valkries was able to maintain her guise of a normal martial artist, flipping through various different types of books and talking as little as possible. But with the passing of time, she became more and more agitated.

Especially after her injuries healed. Once, she secretly sneaked deep into the forbidden area of Prism City and stood silently and attentively in front of the Erosion rupture. According to Dawnen's report, at the time there was an evident expression of anxiety on Valkries' face, as if she was yearning for something. Dawnen even thought on multiple occasions that Valkries would leap into the Erosion, but in the end Valkries stopped herself from doing so.

It would be too much to claim that her actions were her mourning of her companions' deaths, because Valkries didn't stop for a single moment when the visiting group encountered danger; in fact, she was aiming for the Erosion from the very beginning.

If he thought about it from her perspective, it wasn't hard to understand the change in her attitude.

At the start, coming to this modern metropolis from the Demon city, she might had been able to keep her composure in order to figure out where she was. But the more time passed while her hope of returning still obscure as ever, it was unavoidable for anxiety to begin building. This might have been the real reason why Valkries sneaked into Prism city. She wanted to see if she could return to the world familiar to her through the chasm she arrived in.

Unfortunately, the memory fragment did not satisfy her desires.

No matter what, being able to disguise herself to this point was an incredibly difficult feat. After all, Valkries didn't know that her every move was being watched by Dawnen. If it wasn't for the small things that betrayed her when she was by herself, there was not a single flaw from the way she interacted with other martial artists that would give her away.

When Roland considered what would have happened if he were in her shoes, he thought that he definitely could not have achieved this.

Now that her identity had been confirmed, he had to think about what to do next.

At this moment, he received a SMS on his phone.

It was from Phyllis.

"Your Majesty, everyone is ready."

Roland put his phone back into in his pocket, turned and walked towards the living room.

Zero was busy carrying a bowl of egg noodles onto the meal table. Upon seeing Roland, she put her hands to her hips and said, "Uncle, you haven't forgotten what you promised me, have you?"

"What, you woke up so early because you were afraid that I would sneak off?"

"It's not the first time you've done that after all," she said, pouting.

"Relax, I definitely won't this time." Roland laughed, walked over and patted her head. "Let's eat breakfast first, afterwards we'll go next door, call Sister Garcia and then set off together."

Apart from New Years, the biggest event this winter was the Martial Arts Contest which occurred once every four years. To all the junior high school students throughout the city, whoever could watch it live on the arena would become the center of discussion. Zero, who usually had no interest for such contests, was no exception. After her ceaseless begging, Roland had no choice but to agree to take her near the arena to experience it live when the school's winter break came.

There were guards supervising today's competition and it was still in the round robin stage so it was unlikely for Fallen Evils to appear. Besides, Zero had to return to her hometown everytime the holidays came around, so he could hardly refuse the little girl's 'only request.'

Roland decided to confront that demon world traveller directly.

It was already the fourth month.

Although Valkries looked like she was focusing all her attention on the rowdy battle ring, her heart was somewhere else.

The past four months had given her a basic understanding of this world and human legacies. On some levels, she herself had become a part of accepting legacies. As long as she could return to reality, she would definitely be able to bring huge benefits to her race—however the major problem was, all this time, she hadn't been able to find a way to leave the Realm of Mind.

Valkries had an enormous heap of intel, yet she didn't have anyone to share it with. It was as if she was in a desert and finally found a bottle of water, only to find it firmly sealed, unable to be opened.

Whether she sent out a signal for help to Hackzord, or used her mind to sense traces of the King, she didn't receive any reply. Even if she stood in the gap of this domain and meditated, the Realm of Mind didn't respond to her call at all—it was her first time encountering such a situation.

Valkries couldn't help but feel a little hateful towards the Sky Lord.

Why hadn't he, even after all this time, tried to wake her up?

Chapter 1315: First Direct Contact

If the Western Front plan was successful, the Red Mist should have already spilled over the ridge of the continent and spread through the territory of the humans.

This meant that the Birth Tower in the great rupture was no longer a secret. No matter how slow the opponent was, they would have reacted already. So why was Hackzord still not doing anything? Could it be that the humans were so weak that he could face them all by himself?

However, when she thought about it, Valkries found it unlikely. If their enemy were as frail as that, Ursrook wouldn't have been defeated on the Fertile Plains.

She knew very clearly that having been separated from reality for too long, it had caused her to lose her ability to judge the current situation.

This feeling made the Nightmare Lord feel extremely uneasy.

There was also that human...

She looked over to the other side of the battle ring and saw that Roland was standing beside two females, showing much amusement and interest in the competition.

Damn him! Didn't he have better things to do?

If he knew how a way out, then he might just be her only chance—he was definitely the one taking the legacies and knowledge of humans out of this world; he must have some sort of passage to communicate with the outside world.

As long as he left the Realm of Mind, she would have a chance to grab that opportunity, after all, in the King's Presiding Holy See, she had often sensed the King's communication with the territory. It was because she had such an ability that she dared to follow the fluctuations of the legacy shard's power and enter the Realm of Mind to find Roland's trail.

Yet, he had always remained active in this world and there was absolutely not a moment when he could have done anything.

Could it be that human monarchs have so much free time that they still didn't need to do anything to manage their kingdoms' matters even after several months? They would rather waste their time on a

meaningless Martial Arts Contest than spend time reading a few more books. The only explanation was that the demons' frontline was not giving the humans enough pressure.

So this is still all Hackzord's fault!

In the midst of her mood swings, Valkries suddenly noticed Roland leaving the two females and walking to a corner by himself. Standing there was a hooded female as though she had been intentionally waiting for him.

Valkries pretended to casually walk out of the crowd, but her eyes never left Roland.

They discussed a few words before the female pointed in the direction of the exit. Roland appeared a little hesitant but nodded in the end.

Had the Association noticed something?

Valkries had originally decided to stop once and for all, but for some reason she felt a familiar aura from the female. This odd feeling prompted her to walk a few steps closer, so as to sneak at peek at them from a closer distance.

Just with this one glance, Valkries felt all her hair stand—under the dim light, she saw a face similar to that of Heathtalese, or... Lan, from the Martialist Association!

Could it be that Transformer had always been hidden in this world?

And the reason that Roland could appear as a male in this world was also because of her?

This news was too shocking. Valkries could no longer hold back the impulse in her heart and quickly followed them.

Roland and the person that Valkries suspected to be Transformer didn't walk in the direction of the arena's exterior after passing through the exit passageway; instead, they turned and entered an underground parking lot. The Nightmare Lord tried to make her footsteps as light as possible and kept a fair distance between them until they entered a civil air defense passageway.

As Valkries tailed after them, she discovered that the passageway was only a bit over ten meters long and didn't have any forks at all. On the other end of the passage was a sealed cement wall. There was even a "No Entry. Construction Incomplete" warning sign hung up on the wall. Even though it was a dead end, the two had vanished.

Oh no, it's a trap!

Valkries reacted instantly but it was already too late.

Before she could turn and retreat, Roland was already calmly standing behind her, blocking her only route of escape. Standing beside him were several females. From how they used their abilities, which was polar opposite to martial artists, Valkries didn't even need luck to guess.

Unquestionably, the females standing beside him were witches.

She finally realized where that feeling of familiarity came from. That was the miniscule difference between magic power and natural ability. If witches could enter the Realm of the Mind as well as

possess their original strength at the same time, then the exposure of her identity would have occurred sooner or later.

After all, Roland could surreptitiously conceal this many people to set up an ambush. That meant infiltrating her surroundings and observing her would be trivial—the reason was easy to understand if one thought about it. She focused all of her disguise on her superficial interactions. But against witches who had uncanny abilities, her guise would have been a joke. It was likely that her movements had already been seen through by the witches in the past four months.

“We meet once more, Miss Valkries,” Roland said serenely.

Valkries didn’t respond.

Saying anything at this time would only bring humiliation to herself.

Even if she still didn’t understand how he could get the witches to enter this realm, it was no longer important.

He had intentionally set an ambush in this secluded place. His goal was self-evident.

The only thing she could do now was die in battle.

The Nightmare Lord summoned all the magic power in her body and slightly leaned her body forward. In this situation where she was fighting against a group of witches without a magic stone or Magic Slayer power, she didn’t even consider the possibility of winning. It was impossible for her to surrender no matter what!

“Could I invite you to drink some Cargarde Peninsula coffee?” Roland spoke once more.

“—” Valkries came to a halt with her foot out. She stood frozen in her spot, her upper body still maintaining a slightly forward-leaning posture. The way she stopped herself seemed overly stiff.

“What... did you say?”

“I want to treat you to coffee,” Roland repeated himself. “Although it wouldn’t count as real coffee, it’s a special drink that is very similar.”

Valkries stared at him for a long time before voicing the confusion in her heart. “... Why?”

She couldn’t guess what this male was thinking at all—reality was different to this place, the coexistence of her race and humans was an imagined illusion. Since he had already confirmed her true origins, it wouldn’t make sense to let her off. If she was not going to be greeted by death, then it would only be an outcome worse than death.

“Because some things are better laid out in the open than hidden,” Roland said slowly, “especially when the ‘Battle of Divine Will’ is not the ‘Final Battle’ yet.”

The ‘Battle of Divine Will’... is not the ‘Final Battle’ yet...

Valkries couldn’t help but be surprised.

She never would have thought that she would hear something like this from a human.

It was only after a long period of silence that she regained her wary composure. “Where do you want to have the talk?”

“Not far from here, only a few minutes away.” Roland snapped his fingers, the sound of a car engine came from behind him. “Board the car, I’ve already booked a table.”

...

Roland didn’t lie to her.

The location he chose was a high-class restaurant situated inside a high-rise building. Sitting in front of the floor to ceiling glass windows, she could see the snow covered urban skyline. Soothing music filled the restaurant and the atmosphere was peaceful and elegant.

Valkries knew that choosing this place to discuss was Roland’s way of expressing his sincerity—if he had wanted to kill her, a public setting like this was certainly not a suitable execution ground.

Noticing the group of witches who were staring intently at them, she inhaled deeply after sitting down. “Why didn’t you just ask to meet me here directly?”

“That would waste too much time, I didn’t think you would agree straight away—when not being cornered, it’s easy for people to refuse and avoid, so it’s much easier to do it this way.” Roland shrugged. “Since we’ve already reached an initial understanding, then let’s get to our main point of discussion quickly. Honesty would benefit both of us. I am Roland Wimbledon, the King of Graycastle and one of the creators of the Dream World. You are?”

One of... the creators? Although she had already guessed that he wasn’t a simple visitor, his identity shocked Valkries greatly. This was her first time hearing that a territory in the Realm of Mind could be created by multiple people. But this may be why he couldn’t take complete control of this domain like the demon king could. Suppressing her impulse to ask who the others were, the Nightmare Lord slowly replied, “Valkries. That’s my name.”

“How about your title and rank? Like “Sky Lord” for example... could you be more specific?”

She paused for a moment. “Nightmare Lord, that is what I’m called.”

Roland spat out his drink.

This time it was Roland’s turn to be shocked.

Chapter 1316: History

“What’s so strange about it?” Valkries said coldly, “Do you think anyone can just casually stroll into the Realm of the Mind? Or... are you actually just proud of yourself for capturing a grand lord?”

Clearly, she hadn’t abandoned her pride even if she was in a sticky situation. Roland even had a feeling that if he pushed her too much she would directly lunge at the witches and into her death.

But her title really did surprise him—he had only asked for her title out of procedure; after all, most high-ranking demons had their unique title, and a demon who could conduct an upgrading ceremony

couldn't be just some no-name entity. He just didn't expect this demon's identity to be far more complex than he had imagined.

Roland originally thought that Valkries was a consciousness that coincidentally escaped from the memory fragment, but now another possibility had risen to the surface—she could have come from the real world!

The name, "Nightmare Lord," first appeared in Ursrook's documents, and it was followed by a greeting, proving that the "Nightmare Lord" was not a historical figure, and was still active in the higher-ranks of demons. Additionally, Roland had repeatedly watched the memory fragment numerous times, he hadn't heard any referral of her as a grand lord. If the demon language he learned from Kabradhabi was correct, this meant that the figure presiding over the rest at the time wasn't a grand lord yet.

Combining Vakries' statement that she "voluntarily entered the Realm of Mind" and the Pearl of the Northern Region's analysis of the situation at the frontline, Roland was becoming increasingly certain that his latter theory was right!

In other words, the Valkries sitting in front of him had waded through at least eight hundred years of history. Her strength and knowledge had to be extremely rare among the demon race. If one counted her aberrant reaction to Lan, things went back even further. This type of discussion far exceeded the spirit that was copied from a memory fragment; even if they had not exchanged words at all, it was still equal to ruling out a grand lord ranked demon from the front line. Just this point alone had huge significance!

"I need to correct your words. First, I haven't captured you—at least at the moment, you are free." Roland pretended to be calm as he spoke. "Second, intruding the Dream World is your subjective behavior, I don't think I have done anything wrong."

"..." Valkries was speechless for a moment. Only after a long time did she stiffly release a sigh. "You call this place the Dream World?"

Pride made her find any humiliation intolerable, but at the same time, made her unable to make any illogical protest—her speechlessness from before confirmed the Nightmare Lord's origin; she indeed came here voluntarily through the Realm of Mind.

"That's because I find myself in here every time I fall asleep. So in a certain sense, it is no different from dreaming."

"Absurdity!" Valkries growled. Opening up a territory in the Realm of Mind not only required talent, but it needed a high focus of spiritual energy and a will of steel in order not to lose oneself in the sea of magic power. In the end this magically-disabled male could do this just by taking a nap? That's too unfair!

"Hello, this is your order, please enjoy." At this moment, the waiter served their meals. The table was filled with various types of deserts and drinks, all of which looked mouth-watering.

"This is the truth." After the waiter left, Rolant spread out his hands and said, "Just as I said before, honesty benefits the both of us. I would not go as far as to lie to you about something like this. Moreover, what I just said wasn't the important point, the important point is the truth about the Battle

of Divine Will... and the future of all races. He picked up his chopsticks and made a gesture for her to help herself. "We can talk about this while we eat."

Valkries confirmed another point. This male was different to all the humans she had met before. Who talks about matters regarding the future of their entire race while eating? If it was another normal person, they would have most likely be extremely grave, as if they were facing a formidable enemy. But he didn't seem like he was intentionally messing with her, as if to him, his behavior was completely normal.

She raised that cup of murky Peninsula coffee and took a sip.

In an instant, thick aromatic liquid slid down her throat.

It was actually... not bad.

For some reason, she suddenly had a feeling that she had just lost.

No, she must take control of the flow! Valkries forced herself to set down her cup and said in a low voice, "Where did you hear that the Battle of Divine Will was not the Final Battle?"

Roland dug out Lan's photo from his wallet and put it on the table. "You've seen her before, right?"

As the picture of Lan which appeared in the video data left behind by the Reflection Church was likely one that happened before the establishment of the Union in terms of age, he intentionally got Ling to make herself look like Lan with makeup and see if the demon from the memory fragment made any reaction. Even though reality was a little different to what they expected, Valkries' shock at the time proved that she had indeed seen Lan.

After a while the Nightmare Lord nodded. "Who exactly is she?"

"A traitorous Oracle." Roland slowly described the secret discussion in the Rose Café to her.

After hearing those unbelievable words, even Valkries couldn't help but widen her eyes and stutter, "Could it be that... the Oracle that my mentor mentioned was her?"

"Mentor?"

"'Transformer' Heathtalese, she taught me many things..." After hesitating for a few moments, Valkries revealed Cloud School's past. "Her failure to upgrade caused the unstable School to lose their last measure of protection."

"So it was... due to this..." Realization dawned on Roland. The intel of the two races was combined into one for the first time in history. He finally pieced everything together with the missing puzzle piece in his mind to reveal the full picture.

"Your Majesty, did you think of something?" Phyllis asked.

"Do you remember the portrait hanging on the wall at the meeting where the vow of the three queens took place in the Union?" Roland took a deep breath, "I'm afraid the person in the portrait was the high-level demon called Heathtalese."

"What did... you say?"

“The Union would enshrine the portrait of that demon?”

“How... could this be possible?” The Taquila witches all revealed expressions of disbelief.

“If we thought about it according to the influence the Cloud School had in the first Battle of Divine Will, something like this happening isn’t actually very strange. Since the demon in the school can become a grand lord, then it would have been normal for witches or normal people from the higher-ups to come from the school. I’m guessing that before Heathtalese died, she always had suspicions about the Battle of Divine Will, right?”

In certain people’s eyes, such behavior was equivalent to standing on the humans’ side.

“...I cannot deny that.” Valkries closed her eyes, “She and the current king have had conflict, but the tides of war isn’t something that one or two people can resist.”

“It is the same for humans,” Roland said calmly. “The disbanded Cloud School is at most a cherished memory to people now, and when the outbreak of the second Battle of Divine Will comes, even this memory will cease to exist. That period of their history is not recorded in any scripts. It is highly likely that that the Three Chiefs destroyed all records—a past where they coexisted with demons would make people hopeful, especially when the situation is bad, it would only eat away at humans’ determination to resist, so the Cloud School must be forgotten as an undesired blemish!”

Chapter 1317: Battle of the Legacies

“Because you humans are short-lived and forgetful...” Valkries seemed to have found her sense of superiority once more. She subconsciously raised her cup of coffee again. “After another ten or twenty years, history will be replaced by lies. However, something like this is unimaginable for my long-lived race. You people seem to have completely forgotten that no matter how much comforting lies are, they are ultimately still lies.”

“That makes the two of us,” Roland said unyieldingly. “Didn’t you guys also intentionally ignore Heathtalese’s warning? Apart from the witnesses at the time, I’m afraid that none of the demons of the new generation know of this event, right?”

Valkries opened her mouth but couldn’t find a suitable reply. In the end she could only take another sip of coffee, which was almost the same as agreeing.

“It wouldn’t be a bad idea for us to make a guess.” He pulled the conversation back to the traitorous Oracle. “Perhaps the blurry silhouette that ‘Transformer’ saw a thousand years ago is the same person as Lan from the Dream World. Unfortunately your mentor couldn’t receive a definite hint as she was unable to form a stable territory in the Realm of Mind.”

“You believe the Oracle’s words?”

“I believe what I see with my own eyes—the world is being eroded by enemies who call themselves the servants of god, and the relics of past civilizations have certainly been discovered in reality. I don’t know where all the victorious civilizations went, but the truth is, they have never returned, don’t you find that very strange?”

“Perhaps there is a utopia that is more suitable for an advanced race to live in—”

“Like the Fountain of Magic, for example?” Roland said mockingly. “Upgrading is one path to become god; yet, once you have become god, there is no way of returning back to your hometown. What type of god is that? Also when you are close to the Fountain of Magic—which is the Erosion rupture, does it really make you feel wonderful and content? If that were the case, you would have jumped in ages ago.”

This bastard... ordered the witches to follow me on that journey after all, Valkries thought indignantly but couldn't refute his words. At the time when she stood before the scarlet red rupture, the only thing she felt was an extreme sense of danger.

“Even if you're right, what can you change?” The Nightmare Lord spoke in a low voice after a long period of silence. “It's all too late. If you were a member of the Cloud School and you made this guess a thousand years earlier, you may have had the chance to turn the tables. But when our race received the legacy of the third civilization, war could no longer be avoided.”

The third civilization... this was probably the underground civilization. Roland subconsciously spoke slower, “These so-called legacies... what on earth do you mean?”

Valkries looked stunned momentarily, then she laughed softly. “What? It turns out you guys have never received a legacy shard before after all.”

“Answer His Majesty's question!” Phyllis ordered in a low voice.

“We don't need some shard, His Majesty's knowledge alone is enough!”

“Only uncultivated monsters like you would start a war over a small stone!”

Just when Roland thought that the Nightmare Lord would refuse to answer the question, she spoke, “I will tell you—and then you will understand, why trying to turn the tables now is no longer possible. As soon as you taste the sweetness of a legacy, civilization will never forget the delightful sensation, they will only crave more.” She paused and looked at the witches next to Roland. “You are the best examples right now—if humans were to give up all the changes that the Graycastle king had brought about, would you?”

“You mean...”

“Correct, the legacy shard is merely a way to inherit.” Valkries' words confirmed all the hypotheses that Roland had made until now. “You acquire knowledge from here and pass it down to the humans, that is the same as the humans receiving the legacy of Dream World. But the effect of a shard is more thorough and complete—it isn't just specific to one individual, it applies to the entire civilization.”

Next, Valkries revealed what happened one hundred years after the end of the first Battle of Divine Will in the “Path of Reconciliation.” That was a war that the Union never knew of, the ‘Final War.’

“You probably know this, but once upon a time the third civilization left their mark on over half of the continent—if it was said that my clan occupied the Blackstone domain, while humans occupied the Land of Dawn and the second civilization occupied the Sky-sea Realm, then the third civilization would be the owner of the underground world. They were like earthworms, their bodies were extremely weak but they had a unique knack for magic power.

“Unfortunately, these guys had bad luck and touched something they shouldn’t have touched. When they were burrowing tunnels all over the mountains, they encountered a fissure in the stratum which penetrated directly from the Blackstone region to the Sky-sea Realm. It’s fine if you don’t understand, you only need to know that they inadvertently broke through the barrier that separated their den from the Sky-sea Realm. The latter took advantage of this and invaded the Blackstone region, slaughtering numerous and making them suffer one defeat after another.

“If we could have lended a hand, they might have had hope of survival. However to our race, it was also the perfect time to verify the legacy rumor. So the King, who at the time had not upgraded yet, lead a party and did a pincer attack from behind on the second civilization who were escaping among the chaos. At the same time, the King blocked the Ghost Ravine.

“The Ghost Ravine was located between two mountain peaks, it was about half the size of the Fertile Plains, and on the two sides ran a thousand-mile underground river and staggered ground. The bottom of the ravine was so varied that one moment it was an underground cavern and the next it was an open hill. As much as the earthworms were good at burrowing, they couldn’t hide their tracks completely.

“This war lasted almost ten years, the number of Primal Demons demons of our clan that perished in this war was more than in the first Battle of Divine Will under the hands of humans. The outcome in the end was that both the King and the Sky-sea Realm received a part of the legacy shard.”

Roland couldn’t help but hold his breath, even though he didn’t want to show how much he really wanted to know as it would please Valkries, this information made him momentarily forget to control his expression.

“And then?”

“There’s no more.”

“What—?”

“I meant the coffee.” Valkries licked her lips. “You were the one who said to talk while we ate, right?”

Roland was immediately speechless. They were already at this point and she was still trying to take hold of the conversation. Should he describe her as too competitive, or too proud? But he let his unspoken criticism remain unspoken and immediately called the waiter and ordered three cups of Peninsula coffee. “You can continue now.”

“Reconciliation wasn’t actually very complicated. the King placed the shard he acquired together with the legacy shard of our race, and the two combined into one—in that moment, we took over everything they once had: language, wisdom, magical skill... even life,” the Nightmare Lord said slowly. “The surviving ‘earthworms’ wilted away and died, whilst the power of our clansmen made a qualitative leap. It was as if a veil was lifted on magic; multifarious pieces of knowledge emerged in our minds. It didn’t matter if we wanted to accept it or not, but we couldn’t deny one point—our race was far more powerful than it was during the first Battle of Divine Will.

“From that moment, nobody doubted the gift from god. Just as I said, once this feeling is experienced once, it will never be forgotten.” She raised a new cup of coffee and said, “Now you realize what I mean by being too late, right? It doesn’t matter what you received from the Dream World; as soon as they

acquire the human legacy shard, this will all end up in the victor's hands. You want to use the traitorous Oracle's warning to stop this war? That will just be a waste of effort."

Something that even her mentor, Heathtalese, couldn't accomplish couldn't be done by a human male.

"Indeed..." Roland sighed. "But I have never planned on using the warning to stop the war."

"...What are you trying to say?" Valkries furrowed her brows.

"The only thing that can stop war is war itself." He said with his eyes locked onto hers.

Chapter 1318: A Fifty-fifty Decision

"Are you sure you can win?" The Nightmare Lord didn't avoid his gaze.

They stared at each other for a long time before Roland replied, "Of course I can win this war—give it another century, even if you hide in the Blackstone region, you'll still be wiped out by humans. But I can't wait that long, the Oracle's warning indicates that a crisis is imminent, I must arrive at the Bottomless Land as soon as possible and I need your help to do so."

"Wh... What?"

"Help me defeat the demons faster—i.e., your Western Front army." Roland crossed one leg over the other. "For example, tell me how you process God's Stones of Retaliation, the abilities of the King and the grand lords, the weak points of Spider Demons. This was also why I reached out to you personally. Anything you can think of—"

Bang! Valkries slammed her hand onto the table and coffee splashed out from the cups.

"Don't get too cocky, human male!" she said, forcefully suppressing her voice. "You can kill me, but don't expect me to kneel before you and beg for mercy, and even more so, don't think that I'll betray my race! Help you defeat the Western Front army? Dream on!"

"Insolence!"

"Do not show such rudeness in front of His Majesty!"

The witches almost yelled in unison and in an instant the two sides were ready to launch into a fight. The temperature of the mood seemed to drop to freezing point.

"What the hell are they doing over at that table?"

The muttering of other people in the restaurant at nearby tables could be heard.

"A couple's quarrel?"

"Uh... the numbers clearly don't fit."

"But speaking of which, the girls beside him are gorgeous!"

"That Peninsula girl is clearly better, okay? Damn that guy, who exactly is he?"

“So envious...”

In his mind, Roland silently rolled his eyes. The murderous intent was practically overflowing all around him; there wasn't an inkling of romance in it at all! “Enough, let's all control ourselves.” He pretended to unconcernedly wave his hand for Phyllis and the others to hold their attack, and then leaned back on the bench and looked down at the Nightmare Lord. “Don't you think that rejecting reality is betraying your race more?”

“Reality?”

“Correct!” Roland voice suddenly turned grim. “If the Oracle's warning was not a lie, then there are only two paths that lay in front of all civilizations: One is going through with the Battle of Divine Will to the very end. Two is end this never-ending war once and for all through the Realm of Mind! And as for the consequences of your choice, don't tell me you have no idea!”

Not giving her a chance to retort, he raised his voice a little, “After staying in the Dream World for so long, you should be clear how much I can raise the overall strength of humans. If a new legacy shard doesn't appear, it is impossible for you to face us with your race's current strength! If our war drags on for decades, how many people will your race have to sacrifice and how large of a price will you have to pay? Unless, that is what you wish to see?”

“Then they will be dying honorably on the battlefield—”

“No, they'll be dying for a meaningless lie!” Roland corrected. “And because of the existence of legacy shards, this war will never rest. Hatred and suspicion will spread the flames of war to the Blackstone region, until your race ceases to exist! The only person who can stop that from happening is me. Once I am gone, the eradication of demons will be inevitable. In comparison to losing one front line army, isn't it obvious which decision will benefit your race more?”

“...” Valkries' face was ashen, she didn't say anything.

“In reality, it's likely that we are almost out of time, if we miss the chance to end the war, then there will be no way out.” He uncrossed his legs, leaned slightly forward and said, “Are you still holding onto your original decision?”

After a long period of silence, the Nightmare Lord said coldly, “Human male, why should I believe you? According to the Oracle's words, once you become god, who can guarantee that you will let our race off? Just from the words you just said?”

“You have no other choice. On the one hand is the possibility of continuation, and on the other hand is certain doom, that's all.” Roland softened his tone. “The goal of war has already changed, what was impossible in the past is possible now, as long as you think about it from another perspective, then both races can live on.”

Valkries pressed her lips together and didn't speak.

Roland didn't wait until she did. “I know this is a difficult decision, so I don't expect you to reply immediately. You can go back now.”

She raised her head, not daring to believe her ears. “...That's it?”

“Otherwise? Should I tie you up and torture you or should I directly kill you? I’ve said so... at least at the moment, you are free.” Roland dug out his phone. “Oh yes, tell me your number so I can inform you about the war on the north side as soon as possible. This might help you make your decision—don’t forget, the future of the demons is in your hands.”

Although completely unwilling, Valkries handed over her phone number in the end.

Just when she was about to stand up and leave, Roland called out to her.

“I still want to ask you a question—Do you think that the Transformer from a thousand years ago did the wrong thing?”

Valkries’ figure halted for a moment, then left the restaurant without looking back.

“Your Majesty, are you really going to let a grand demon lord move about freely in the Dream World?” Phyllis asked worriedly.

“That’s not the case.” Roland shook his head. “Didn’t you gals notice? She is already not the grand demon lord she once was.” A demon who had lost their magic stone without dying immediately, but instead gained a corresponding identity could only mean one thing. “She is now already one with the Dream World.”

Roland was certain that humans would achieve victory, but doing so in one hundred years or in ten years was different. He needed to leave the demons in pain with the shortest amount of time possible and get them to completely lose the will to resist, cleaning out a path to the Bottomless Land. The Nightmare Lord was no more than a card in his hand—no matter what decision she made, she couldn’t change his decision.

But likewise, nobody would complain of having too many cards in their hand at such an critical juncture. If they could win over an ex-grand demon lord, then the pressure on their First Army would undeniably lessen.

After all, time was what he currently lacked the most.

...

“The winner iiiiiiissssss—Fei Yuhan!”

The entire arena burst into a thunderous applause.

She waved her hands at the tens of thousands of people in the audience, descended from the battle ring amidst the never-ending camera flashes, and entered the contestants’ lounge. This was a ‘competition’ where the outcome had been decided long ago. Even though the opponent didn’t intentionally go easy on her as according to the Defender’s orders, she still KO’d them within a minute into the match.

In the past, ascending the stage like this didn’t give her any pleasure at all. But this time it was different, because she saw Valkries, who had left for a long time, return to the arena.

A number of hours earlier, Valkries left the arena at almost the same time as Roland.

After she finished changing, Fei Yuhan boarded the Association's bus and waited quietly for Valkries' return.

The anticipation in her heart never rested, she had never experienced such a feeling.

When Valkries appeared in her view, she could even hear the thumping of her own heartbeat.

As Fei Yuhan had predicted, Valkries sat in the seat beside her.

"I won the competition today."

"Ah... congratulations." Valkries said a little absent-mindedly. For Valkries, this was rare behavior.

"Thank you. It's a pity you didn't sign up for the contest; otherwise, I would have been able to properly appreciate the strength of an outstanding martial artist from Cargarde Peninsula."

"You'll get a chance," Valkries replied.

"Of course, a chance will come." Fei Yuhan gave a small smile.

Even without carefully observing her behavior, she could tell that Valkries was paying her lip service. But since she knew that Valkries came from another world, and that world seemed to be extremely ancient and technologically behind, she could all together use more direct methods to attain information.

Once the people returning to the sanatorium had all boarded the bus, the bus's engine started.

When the bus entered the suburban area, Fei Yuhan quietly reached out her finger towards Valkries' handbag—she had bought this bag for Valkries as a hospital discharge gift and checked all over the bag innumerable times before she gave it to her. Thus, she knew the shape of the bag like the back of her hand.

There was an unfinished section between the main road and the new road of the city, but this didn't affect the traffic. At worst, there were some tremors in the ground that raised dust. In the instant when the tires rolled over the bumpy surface of the ground, a streak of condensed Force of Nature appeared at her fingertips and lightly stroked down.

It was as if it was a natural pullback.

An ordinary decorative flap from the bag dropped into her hand.

Hidden inside was a tiny recording device.

"Ultra long battery life, small and exquisite, filtered background noise, guaranteed quality." That was the advertisement that the online store made when she bought the sound recorder on the Internet. It was time to put it to the test.

Chapter 1319: Free Will

After she returned to the sanatorium room, Fei Yuhan locked the door from the inside and took out the recording device that was embedded in the decorative flap.

It was about the size of a grain that couldn't play sound by itself. She needed to insert it into a special reader to hear its recorded content.

After transferring the data into her laptop, she found the sound file recorded at the time closest to when Valkries left the arena and pressed play.

Bzzt... Bzzt...

"We meet once more, Miss Valkries." Roland's voice could be heard.

Here it comes.

Fei Yuhan upturned the corner of her mouth and boiled herself a cup of hot tea.

She was going to thoroughly enjoy the results of her long planning.

...

Before the owner managed to take a sip, the steaming tea slowly cooled down until it was ice-cold once more.

Even though she had a premonition ages ago, the things that she heard still far exceeded her expectations!

When she pressed the stop button, Fei Yuhan's discovered that even her fingertip was trembling slightly.

For a long-time famous martial artist, this could be counted as a loss of control over her body!

She finally knew why a hunter like Roland had cracked his wine glass that evening at the party—if this involved the secrets of god, it would have been unusual if he hadn't been perturbed.

The idea that the Dream World was created, civilizations battling for their survival, the continuity and connection between the two worlds, a guardian traversing the Realm of Mind... Could there be anything more unbelievable than this?

Originally, Roland's and Valkries' choice to discuss in a cafe disappointed Fei Yuhan a little, but the contents of their discussion were so shocking that after she finished listening she realized that even if the things they said were stated formally and seriously, others would still view it as nonsense.

Even so, Fei Yuhan didn't think what the two talked about was false. If Roland started putting on an act the day after she began secretly observing him, then that would have been too much of a stretch.

If this world was really manufactured by humans then she was most likely the first to discover the truth behind the scenes—

"Ha..." Fei Yuhan laughed softly.

This feeling was... so satisfying!

As for the Oracle's question of "fiction or reality", it did not concern her at all. Nobody knew better than herself that she was definitely a living, breathing being. Whether it was her gestures and actions, or every idea that emerged in her mind—everything came from her own will. It was the same this time, with her taking the initiative to pry into the outsiders' secrets.

So what if Roland was one of the creators of the world? If planets were created by cosmic energy and elementary particles, it would make little difference if the former was replaced with a person.

Fei Yuhan leaned back into her chair, letting her body quiver as she enjoyed this feeling of pleasure which she had not felt for a while.

Only after a long time did her excitement slowly ease back into calmness.

In theory, she should report to the Martialist Association regarding the intel about the gods seeking to destroy the world and the nature of the Fallen Evils. However, due to the immense scope and how it could basically rewrite history, she decided to observe for a bit longer.

After all, apart from the discussion between the two, she didn't have a single piece of solid evidence in her hands. She could also not rule out the possibility that they were both severely hysterical drug addicts. She had heard of urban legends that from the second year of junior high, people had the potential to gain telepathy and resonate with others of their kind. Even though the likelihood of such situations was very low, it wouldn't be bad to guard against it.

It was a good thing that Valkries had already formally established a communication method with Roland, that way the chances of spying on their secrets would increase.

Currently the thing that interested Fei Yuhan the most was the world that the two originally came from.

For example, the women who referred to Roland as "His Majesty".

If they could enter the Dream World, could she take a look at what the world was like on their side too?

...Take a look at the supposed... reality.

...

"Where did you run off to?" Garcia glared discontentedly at Roland. "What about your promise to watch the game with Zero?"

"Sorry... I had to report some things to the Association, I didn't have a choice either." Roland rubbed the back of his head. He was in the wrong in this matter, so he capitulated very readily. In order for him and Valkries to return at different times, he intentionally dawdled at the restaurant for a little longer and, when he left, it was already evening rush hour. This resulted in causing the two to wait at the arena's gate for half an hour longer.

"If it wasn't because I still have patrolling work to do, I would have ditched you ages ago," Garcia said angrily. "Take the little girl out to a nice meal to make it up to her."

She patted Zero's head. Zero nodded and trotted to Roland's side. When she reached there, she even gave Garcia a bow and said, "Thank you, Big Sister!"

"If he mistreats you, you must tell me."

"Okay."

This brat, pretending to be so docile in front of outsiders. Roland couldn't help but curse her inwardly. Yet, on the surface, he said enthusiastically, "Relax, leave it all to me. Oh yeah, do you want me to bring you some as well?"

"There's no need," Garcia waved her hand magnanimously. "You guys go first, I'm going back to the arena now."

"Sorry to trouble you today." After he bade farewell to Garcia, he shrugged his shoulders at Zero. "Let's go, there's a shopping mall ahead; you can eat whatever you want today."

"Kay," Zero said unenthusiastically.

Strange, wouldn't she usually leap at this opportunity to eat her fill? Roland was baffled. Why did she suddenly become so silent?

"What's wrong? Was today's competition boring?"

"No, it was a lot better than watching it on TV..."

"That's good then. Once you come back from the holidays, I'll take you to watch a few more live competitions. I am a member of the Association after all, it shouldn't be too difficult to get tickets."

They crossed the road along the sidewalk and walked side by side on the streets. The snow beneath their feet had already melted from all the people walking over it, their only presence was the small crackling noises under their shoes. But more snow floated down from the night sky, and it was dyed into brilliant colors by the ceaselessly flashing neon lights. If this continued, the city tomorrow morning was likely to become a plain of whiteness once more.

Slowly, Zero fell a step behind him.

Roland felt the corner of his clothes catch onto something.

He stopped walking and looked back in surprise.

The little girl was pulling at the corner of his clothes with her head lowered. She didn't say a single word.

"What's wrong..." Roland was stunned for a moment. "Uh, I was wrong for not accompanying you, but work..."

Zero shook her head. "I... don't want to go back."

"What?"

"I don't want to go back to my hometown, Uncle." She raised her head, bit her lip and said, "Can I continue living at your place for the two-month holiday? I'll find a way to pay the rent, I've scraped together money for buying groceries before, I'll definitely be faster this time, I promise I will pay you on time every time. I..."

Looking at the the small girl who seemed to had just mustered up her courage, Roland couldn't speak for a moment.

The memory of peeking at the writing in her diary emerged in his mind. He suddenly felt that he was in the wrong.

It was no secret that Zero's family was estranged. He could tell from her daily mannerisms and spendings on food and clothing that her family was very likely extremely harsh and strict to her. But Roland never intervened or intentionally tried to maintain their current relationship either.

Because she was the other creator of this world.

In order to let the Dream World keep functioning as it always had, maintaining inertia was undoubtedly the most stable method.

This was also why he didn't immediately get Zero to join the Association after she awoke.

Will changing the current situation increase the chances of awakening her other side? If she turned back into a Pure Witch, what changes will occur to this world?

He had always been guarding against something like that from happening.

But Roland had overlooked the feelings of Zero, a fifteen year-old girl.

"Do you really believe that this world is fictional?"

When Lan asked him this, he gave a negative answer. But his treatment of Zero contradicted his words.

"I... I can't..." The courage the little girl managed to muster slowly faded away and her voice became smaller and smaller.

"You should know that I'm not actually your legal guardian. If I let you stay in the apartment, it would be fine for one or two days, but after a period of time your family will definitely come knocking on the door. When that time comes, no matter how unwilling you are, it would be impossible for you to continue living here. I would get into quite a bit of trouble too."

The light in Zero's eyes dimmed.

"But there is a way that we can get around this." Roland said as he squatted down and brushed away the snow on her shoulders.

"Really?" She abruptly swung her head up.

"All you have to do is join the Martialist Association. The Association is an Awakened's legal hosting facility at all times; as long as you decide to stay, nobody can force you to change your mind, even if you are underage," Roland said with a smile. "This is the privilege of a martial artist... so, do you want to become a martial artist?"

"I..."

"But even if you do join the Association, you still have to attend school—don't think you can just drop out of school because of this." He raised his eyebrows. "Don't worry about competitions and stuff. If you don't like fighting, it's okay if you don't participate."

His last words seemed to lift a burden off Zero's shoulders. She breathed in deeply and nodded her head with vigor. "Then I'll join."

"Okay, when we get back I'll fill out an application form for you. After that, you can live wherever you want."

"Can I live in 0825?"

Roland extended a hand to her. "Of course."

The inertia had been broken.

What happened next may be unknown...

...but it would be a result of a decision made out of free will.

Under the snowflakes, the two blended into the sea of pedestrians and walked towards the city square which was alit under the night sky.

Chapter 1320: High-energy Experiment (Part 1)

When he woke up from the Dream World the following noon, Roland received a genuinely good piece of news.

The Ministries of Engineering and Construction had finally completed the setting up of the required site and the equipment necessary for the "Glory of the Sun" plan.

In theory, 52 kilograms was enough to reach critical mass required of spherical Uranium-235, so the purity of the element was not the biggest hurdle for them. Lucia had been busy the entire time so they had already accumulated over a hundred kilograms of pure Uranium inside the Research Institute of High Energy Physics.

However, just piling the Uranium-235 together was not enough to release the full power of the fission reaction unless a staggering amount of energy was added to it. If they did that though, its safety and practicality would drop dramatically; thus, they had catalyze its effects through special configurations.

The other important point in the plan was testing the explosions.

After all, theory and calculations were one thing, carrying it out was another.

When transitioning from an experimental device to an actual product, it was almost impossible to succeed in one go. According to the statistics, the failed trials of the various weaponry that Roland had developed for the First Army numbered all in the double digits, and this was with the help of blueprints and the witches.

The "Glory of the Sun" plan needed to be more special.

The creations, modifications, and trials of other weapons could be performed in the same place, but fission reactions could certainly not. No matter if it resulted in success or a failure, it would always result in a piece of land becoming a forbidden zone.

In fact, just searching and surveying the test site took almost a month.

Although the Fertile Plains was vast, it was obviously not a suitable test site for the explosion as Neverwinter was planning on further development in that direction.

There were many small islands in Fjords as well, but they were too far away. The pressure that sea transportation faced was already immense and it would be difficult to find more ships to transport the various equipment needed.

It seemed that the most suitable location would be the uninhabited desert in the south, but Roland took the fact that relics of the “Match Men” were once buried there into account and after prolonged hesitation, he rejected it in the end as he was concerned about its future development and utilization.

In the end, the explosion test site was allocated to the west of the Great Snow Mountain—the location of the ex-demon outpost camps.

Even though there was a possibility of encountering demons and demonic beasts over there, the risk was within an acceptable range. At the same time, whether it was successful or not, the test explosion would always leave behind a polluted area, which would actually increase the safety of the Neverwinter’s rear.

Only after they overcame these two hurdles would they be qualified for nuclear testing.

“Your Majesty, please bring me too.”

“And me as well!”

“I don’t think I need to say any more; as long as it’s a weapon that can kill demons, I need to take a look at it no matter what!”

“Uh...” Roland had also received entreaties from the Third Border City at the same time as he received the news. Looking at the three ‘huge faces’ squished together in the light curtain across him, he could not help but wipe the sweat from his forehead. “This is only a test for the experimental device, we’re still far from testing the real weapon.”

The “Glory of the Sun had never left the minds of Pasha and Celine ever since Roland explained it to the Taquila witches. However, he didn’t expect that even Alethea would join in; there was even a hint of adoration in her voice.

“If it’s really as you describe, that it would be enough to light up the dark clouds above the humans, then I hope I can see the birth of this device from the beginning to the end.” Pasha lowered her main tentacles.

“I contributed quite a bit to the creation of the core unit of the Glory of the Sun, you can’t just leave one of the planners behind, right?” Celine added.

“But there are no underground passages from the Great Snow Mountain to the experiment observation location...”

“No need to worry about that. There is no sun during the Months of Demons, we can be active outside for longer than usual,” Alethea hastily replied, as if frightened that a word of objection would come out

of his mouth. “And the passage that Fran burrowed last time is still there, we definitely wouldn’t catch anyone’s attention when we leave the city.”

Not knowing whether to laugh or cry, Roland exchanged glances with Anna. Anna smiled and nodded at him.

Since the three had supplicated him to this extent, it would be unreasonable to disagree.

“Then, I’ll get the construction team to leave spaces for you in the bunker. Remember to bring a few God’s Punishment Witches with you and travel safely.”

“Thank you, Your Majesty!” the three exclaimed delightedly.

Watching the scene before him, Roland felt some strange emotions.

In his previous life, nuclear weapons were often viewed as a device of self-destruction. Countless literary works and biographies described it as the sword of Damocles hanging over the head of mankind. But here, it was instead viewed as a ray of hope—in times of darkness, only strength could shield civilization and cut through the thorns.

He looked at Anna. “Let’s go.”

...

Fifty kilometers to the northwest of the Great Snow Mountain.

The snow here was a lot stronger here than Neverwinter; not only did it completely cover the land that had been eroded by demons, but it also made the construction of the bunker more difficult than usual.

Fortunately, through the help of the powerful God’s Punishment Witches, the construction team was able to settle down in this deserted place.

In order to guarantee construction quality, all the members of the construction team were the elite of the Northern expedition group. After they went through the bloody slaughter on the Fertile Plains, the harsh weather didn’t count as a very grim enemy. Moreover, they received a notice before they set off that this was the most serious top secret construction project from Neverwinter that involved the future of their homes and kingdom, adding on the huge compensation that the Administrative Office promised them. Every person was pumped with energy.

If it had been Graycastle in the past, no matter how much the nobilities forced them they would not be able to get their subordinates to establish a camp in this sort of place.

It took Roland and his companions almost two days to reach the test explosion site. After they entered the command post that was half-buried in the ground, the scenery in the room changed once more—a thick brick wall blocked out the wind and snow outside, the blazing fireplace crackled away, and the various project leaders held their oil lamps aloft, checking their tasks against the chart, appearing extremely busy.

Seeing his arrival, everybody stopped and saluted one after another, “Greetings, Your Majesty!”

“Continue on with your work.” Roland waved and then looked towards Karl Van Bate. “How’s the situation over here?”

“We haven’t discovered any traces of demons in the past month,” Karl replied. “They have probably abandoned this place completely. As for the demonic beasts, we see a couple dozen from time to time, but they don’t pose any threat to the garrison troops. The test explosion platform and simulation equipment have all been finished, if you have no other instructions, they meet all the requirements of the plan.”

“Where is the test explosion platform?”

“To the north, fifteen kilometers from here,” Karl said while pointing to the map. “You can’t see it from the command post. The snow has piled up too high here, even if it were three stories high, it would still be blocked by the snow.”

“No matter, we’ll naturally see it when it explodes.” Roland smiled, turned towards Anna and said, “Then let us begin the first test explosion.”

In order to verify that it could be used, the two had prepared at least three configurations for testing in the last six months. This one was the simplest one, the gun configuration.