

Witch 1381

Chapter 1381: Extreme Racing

After passing Cage Mountain, the trio headed west towards the Impassable Mountain Range.

In less than half an hour, Maggie was the first to admit defeat.

At an altitude of 1500 meters, the Phoenix easily relied on its two engines to fly at 400 km/h. While Maggie's petrel form could also attain that speed, she could only sustain it for a short while. Against the brand new Type-14 Engine that did not tire out, shaking Maggie off was something bound to happen.

"How was it?" Tilly asked with her hand to her lips.

"... I-I can still fly... Cool!" Maggie gasped for breath.

"You've done your best. I'll take it from here."

Lightning took her unyielding companion into her embrace and took over the second stage of the competition.

The human and plane began a new pursuit in the dusky sky.

The scenery below got smaller; the mountain range that separated the human kingdoms gradually turned into a wriggling black line. Tilly noticed the Red Mist flowing at the ridge of the continent towards Everwinter and Kingdom of Wolfheart like a turbid screen. The land within the screen had been completely filled with the Red Mist, but as long as one was in the sky, one could see the true appearance of the world.

"Is this your limit?" Lightning's voice sounded. "I can fly even faster!"

With regards to flying speed, Lightning's abilities were truly unparalleled. Even the Sky Lord that had the ability of opening portals had lost to her.

But winning was not the most important thing for Tilly.

Being able to pilot the enormous yet nimble plane and pushing its performance to its limit was enough enjoyment for her.

She retracted her gaze and smiled. The nose of the plane tilted upwards as the plane flew even higher.

Lightning followed along, but maintained her lead of about 100 meters.

According to the introduction in the manual, Phoenix had been optimized using the technology from the Dream World and all the crucial points were personally made by Anna, and thus possessed a base and quality far surpassing that of the Fire of Heaven. The maximum speed attainable for horizontal flight was 550 km/h with the capability of flying over 1500 kilometers. The dual star-shaped engines on both wings were equipped with turbine systems, allowing the Phoenix to fly at an altitude of 3000 meters without having its performance drastically affected. All of these were features the mass-produced planes were incapable of achieving.

But they were not the Phoenix's biggest feature.

The airframe composition had been strengthened by Doris and Candle, and it could be said that in terms of durability and strength for the materials used, they were the highest-end compositions integrated by both technology and magic power.

Tilly was aware that the propeller held the most advantage at slow speeds and its efficiency to propel forward would drop if its speed was increased. Therefore, to think of catching up to Lightning just based on the power of the propellers was an impossibility.

She needed to rely on other forces.

After increasing her altitude far above the clouds, Tilly accelerated to its limits and pressed the control stick downwards.

The engines immediately unleashed a resounding boom!

After the abrupt turn, Phoenix swooped down.

To maintain her lead, Lightning adjusted her direction and dropped at a rapid speed, but to avoid affecting one another, she maintained a horizontal distance of a kilometer away from Tilly. The vertical 100 meters distance did not change—At that altitude and speed, the 'light membrane' formed by her magic power became extremely distinct as radiating ripples formed a layer of protection around her, preventing her from suffering from the cold winds or the change in pressure.

In that state, the rate of magic power consumption Lightning expended was undoubtedly far higher than her regular flights.

Even when testing her abilities, Roland had mentioned the reason why Lightning should never maintain her supersonic speeds for extended periods of time was not because of the high consumption of magic power the flight required, but that the consumption rose sharply under an extreme state for the synchronization of magic power and her body.

As a result, she rarely went at sonic speeds during her patrols.

Squandering magic power was an extremely dangerous matter for any Witch.

Of course, Tilly was nowhere better. The thin air at high altitudes made it difficult for her to breathe. The gales formed by the engines working at full force caused the cockpit to rumble and tremble incessantly. Without the protection of magic power synchronization, she could only hold out with her body alone.

According to the distance covered, the Phoenix had approached a speed of 800 km/h.

This was a speed far beyond its limit.

Although Lightning was consistently staying ahead of the plane's nose, she no longer had the time to use the Sigil of Listening.

That's right, Tilly was relying on gravity.

She had discovered it while piloting the biplane. When she accumulated sufficient altitude and converted it to speed in an instant, she was able to easily break through the limit of the plane.

But the risks brought about by such speeds could not be overlooked. They ranged from not being able to pull the plane up again to disintegrating in midair.

If Tilly did not rely on her perceptive capabilities to sense the critical point, she would never have dared to employ such a move in its maiden flight.

But even so, the chance of catching up to Lightning was miniscule.

She recalled Roland's words, restricted by the propeller blades, it required an extremely enormous price for a piston engine to surpass the speed of sound. In other words, the gains did not make up for the losses, to the extent that propellers were replaced by jet engines as soon as the latter was produced. However, Lightning was able to break through the sound barrier at any moment, so the disparity between the two were not at the same level.

Therefore, she required external help.

Following the descent from a high altitude, they rushed towards the dense and dark clouds that sat at an altitude of 2500 meters as though they were colliding into it.

The Phoenix whistled through the dark clouds and formed a 'fog pillar'!

At that moment, the plane's speed surpassed 900 km/h and the tremblings from the airframe extended to the wings. Tilly could feel the sharp wings cut through the viscous airflow; the resistance from the high speed caused air to no longer act ethereal, but more of a thick and dense wall.

Lightning disappeared from her vision.

Tilly knew that her opportunity had come.

She focused her attention on controlling the plane. The propulsion force supplied by the propellers at that speed was almost equivalent to resistance. Any ordinary person would consider the matter about pulling the nose back up and not dive down any faster. Only Tilly was able to maintain precise control under the violent trembles and raise the plane speed up a notch.

Although the increase of speed was not huge, but it was enough for her to close the distance with Lightning.

When the Phoenix was closing in on its limit, she flew out of the clouds!

The vast and endless land appeared before her once again.

Lightning emerged at the same time. Compared to her previous 100 meters lead, Lightning was actually flying alongside the plane. After realizing it, the latter immediately broke the sound barrier, but soon reduced her speed once more. She turned and flew close to the cockpit.

"As expected of Your Highness." Lightning's expression showed no signs of dejection; instead, she had a look of admiration. "You actually thought of using the clouds."

"If it had been slightly thinner, I would never had been able to catch up to you." Tilly pulled the plane horizontally and laughed.

Right from the beginning, Tilly's plan was to have Lightning get used to a stable acceleration and finally use the cover of the dark clouds to overtake her. Although it was only for an instant, the Phoenix was indeed capable of closing the gap.

"Wait, where are we?" Maggie dug her head out of Lightning's bosom.

"Uh..." Tilly looked around, only to discover unfamiliar terrain below them with the Impassable Mountain Range left far behind them. They had been too immersed in the competition and never noticed how far they had flown northwest. "I'm guessing somewhere in the Fertile Plains?"

"Likely." Lightning took out a telescope. "But it is a part of the Fertile Plains which we have never stepped into. If we consider the route, our east should be the boundary between the Kingdom of Wolfheart and Everwinter, while the ridge of the continent should be—"

At this point, her voice trailed off.

"What?"

Tilly followed her gaze and froze.

Hidden behind the clouds and mist was a faintly discernible mountain range, far taller and majestic than the Impassable Mountain Range. But having heard of its' existence from Agatha and the Exploration Group, Tilly was not overly surprised at the first sight.

What shocked her was the top of the mountain range.

Dark and gloomy red clouds covered the summit, endless streaks of lightning flickered within, like a storm formed by fresh blood.

Without a doubt, it was not a natural phenomenon.

The red clouds gave Tilly an extremely uneasy feeling.

Chapter 1382: What One Sees

Cage Mountain, Command Post.

"Ringmaster, there's another similar report..." Clown took a piece of paper and walked towards Hill Fawkes.

Although their circus troupe had disbanded many years ago, the comrades from his past were still used to calling him Ringmaster.

"Where was it sent from?" Hill glanced over the paper. "Can we trace it back to its source?"

"The messenger's position was last known location was in southern Everwinter; there are a total of three cities there. But there are no other leads aside from that."

Hill frowned, then suddenly stood up. "Inform Lord Iron Axe and Her Excellency Edith. We might have trouble."

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Fifteen minutes later.

Edith placed the report down and gently rapped the table. "... You mean to say that this happened at the same time in different parts of Everwinter?"

Hill nodded his head. "Although we were unable to pinpoint the exact cities where the orders were carried out, it is safe to assume that it occurred at a wide scale from the distribution of the reports' origins."

In the past few days, the Intelligence Agency had received identical encrypted letters successively.

The letters indicated that the nobles were forcefully migrating the citizens.

And they were moving north.

The similarities were identical, and it was impossible for the reports that came from different locations to be mistaken or forged. In other words, the nobles of Everwinter were carrying out a single, unified operation.

Although the encrypted letters briefly mentioned the term 'migration,' it was not a small matter. A city's sustainability had a limit, and being underpopulated or overpopulated could lead to a paralysis of a city. Aside from that, a huge migration had many other considerations—for example, the food supply, the temporary residence en route, the riches brought along, etc... something that Neverwinter had deep experience in. It could even be said that the nobles that ruled the cities did not have the capabilities to execute a large scale migration successfully. They were not robust enough in terms of strength and supplies to support the entire operation, so the migration was deemed to be a failure.

Indeed, a majority of nobles did not care about the lives of the ordinary citizens, but that was only if the citizens were individuals. A feudal lord's taxation and rule was inevitably linked to the ordinary citizens; if there was no one to rule, it did not matter how much strength and authority had. Once the citizens realized that they were unable to benefit from the migration, they were bound to lose the hearts of the people. Let alone the large mass of population congregating together, the chance of a rebellion occurring was much higher; thus, no matter how domineering or unreasonable the nobles were, they were incapable of executing such an astonishing large-scale migration.

Additionally, it was not just the nobles but the entire northern regions, which clearly indicated that it was directed by some other power.

In the entire Everwinter, only the Demons were capable of doing so.

"But why are they doing that?" Edith muttered to herself in doubt. "If they are thinking of impairing Graycastle's war potential, they can just kill off the citizens... With their Spider Demons, the nobles can't stop them even if they were unwilling."

"Maybe the demons think that... they are still of some use." Morning Light guessed.

"If they are useful, there isn't a need to do a force migration." Hill shook his head. "Everwinter has the least cities out of the Four Kingdoms, even King's City can only accommodate up to three hundred

thousand people without prior preparations. Let's not even talk about their route isn't having King's City as its destination."

"The largest City in the north is..." Edith looked at the map.

"Snow Reflection Castle, with the Impassable Mountain Range behind it. It is only half the size of King's City." Ferlin immediately added in the relevant information. "Due to the uniqueness of its topography, it has a very low permanent population, and also the first place where the Red Mist was reported to appear."

"If the demons are planning to migrate everyone there, then there's no difference killing them off directly," Hill commented.

"And the enemy will definitely not make any superfluous movements." Edith nodded her head in agreement. "I believe that there has been an unforeseen change that we have not noticed, which is why the demons are implementing this inexplicable operation."

"What can that change be?" Iron Axe queried.

"I don't know..." Edith said slowly, "But I believe it cannot be any good news. Inform the front lines, tell them to raise their alertness."

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"Those red clouds... could it be that a demon obelisk is situated there?" Tilly muttered.

"No," Lightning replied with a heavy expression. "From this distance, we should not be able to see any Red Mist..."

"Can't see? Why?"

"Because Red Mist flows downwards!" Maggie was the one to answer. "I have witnessed the sight of Red Mist pouring down from the edge of the Impassable Mountain Range; they looked like waterfalls!"

"That's right, I'm not sure if it is due to the Red Mist being heavier than air that leads to them gathering easily at low altitudes, but one thing is for sure. When Red Mist comes out from the ridge of the continent and infiltrates Everwinter, the mountain peaks would not be red," Lightning added.

"You mean to say they flowed down the mountain?" Tilly frowned.

That was the reason for Lightning's argument that it should had been impossible to see any Red Mist— They were a few hundred kilometers away from the tallest mountain range of the continent. If the Red Mist didn't rise up, it would had been completely obstructed by the mountain range.

"Not only that," Lightning confirmed. "I followed the Impassable Mountain Range north a month ago and approached the edge of the Red Mist before. But at that time, the ridge of the continent did not have that red cloud. It... doesn't seem to have come from the great rupture."

A shiver ran down Tilly's back. She noticed that the red clouds at the mountain peak were not a single layer, but formed a huge body. More accurately, it looked as though the a huge cloud pillar was pouring down from the clouds.

She stared at the peculiar sight in the distance and only spoke up after a long silence, "There is a way for us to view it clearly."

Lightning raised her head and looked at the dark clouds above them. "I think so too."

The higher one flew, the further one could see.

As long as they could see the entire ridge of the continent, they had the chance to see the truth behind the red clouds.

"If that is so, then we should try it out—" Tilly accelerated to the plane's maximum and raised the nose of the plane. Lightning followed alongside her, and synchronized her magic to overlap with Tilly.

Through their cooperation, the altitude meter of the Phoenix deflected to its extreme.

After rising up to a height of 7500 meters, the land formed an obvious curvature. Dark clouds became disjointed and was no longer one body, revealing the pale blue at the periphery of the world.

Beads of perspiration appeared on Lightning's forehead, the high altitude had caused a burden even for the protective barrier around her. Through the screen, Tilly discovered that the frame of the plane had a layer of frost. If not for the reduction of the discomfort with Lightning's synchronous magic power, Tilly could not imagine the state of the plane.

"We're almost there." Tilly could feel the weakening of the propulsion supplied by the engines. "We should find an opening around here."

"Leave it to me!" Maggie poked her head out and transformed into her hawk form.

Half a minute later, she found the optimal view point. Through a small crack in the clouds, they were able to see the outline of the continent's ridge.

When the scene above the Red Mist entered their vision, the three of them did not dare believe their eyes.

They saw a floating island.

Chapter 1383: Sending a Message over a Thousand Kilometers

"Are you sure about what you saw?"

When Iron Axe heard the news, a rarely seen look of surprise appeared on his face. He exchanged looks with Edith and saw the shock in each other's eyes.

In fact, Tilly hesitated to inform their findings to the First Army's commander without verifying the truth first. After all, it was something close to a miracle. If the Demons were truly capable of achieving such a feat, it would definitely dampen the morale and confidence of the higher-ups, and people with weak wills would even think of surrendering.

"We didn't make a mistake, that's for sure, coo." Maggie patted her chest. "Lightning and I have been to the ridge of the continent before, and such a mountain didn't exist then, coo!"

Lightning nodded. "We are currently unable to verify if it is something the Demons are responsible for, but one thing is for sure. It appeared there within the past half month."

"I see..." Edith pondered for a moment and spoke, "If that is the case, then everything makes sense."

"You believe us?" Tilly was shocked.

She originally believed that Edith would take some time to digest the information before being able to arrange and conduct surveillance operations for verification. Who would have thought that the Pearl of the Northern Region had accepted their words immediately. After all, even though the three of them had personally witnessed the scene, it took them a very long time to reach the consensus that it was no hallucination.

"You have to blame Roland for that." Edith sighed. "If it was three years ago, I reckon that I would have treated your words as lunacy... but now, I think that anything is possible. If I had continued staying in that tiny place, I will never have realized how much the world has changed."

"Aside from that, the demons' unusual activity confirms this point." Edith paused for a while and narrated the information received by Hill Fawkes. "None of the cities owned by nobles are able to accommodate so many people, but a floating island might."

"Demons... are accepting mankind?" Lightning was stunned.

"This isn't the first time. Didn't Agatha mention it before that in the first Battle of Divine Will, some humans actually formed an 'alliance' with the demons to fight against the Witches." Edith shrugged her shoulders. "At that time, they were afraid of Witches. Now, the only variable that has changed in our situation is that they are now afraid of His Majesty Roland. Since they are unwilling to accept change or to be part of the change, there is a limit to what they can do."

"They didn't heed the warnings about the Battle of Divine Will..." Tilly clenched her fists subconsciously.

"No..." Edith revealed a strange smile. "Even if the nobles acknowledged it, they might still make the same decision. It might take a several years or decades before the end of the war, but the reality is that His Majesty has removed the power of the nobles and took their lands away from them. To some people, this makes no difference as taking their lives. Since one is immediate death and the other a delayed death, they will rather choose the latter."

"Enough of this." Iron Axe interrupted them helplessly. He knew that once the Pearl of the Northern Region entered her state of mockery, it would be difficult to stop her. Besides, it was easy for her to offend others and even himself. "Back to the matter at hand, how should we go about handling the floating island?"

Edith's expression returned to normal. "No, we can't do anything about it. If it had been at the ridge of the continent the entire time, we'll be fine. But if that thing truly came from elsewhere, we are in deep trouble. For Her Highness Tilly to be able to see it from a few hundred kilometers away, its size far surpasses that of anything we can imagine. Do you think that we can destroy part of the Impassable Mountain Range by relying on the Fires of Heaven?"

"We need to inform my brother as soon as possible." Tilly spoke up.

"I concur." Edith nodded her head. "This no longer concerns plans and strategies, the only one capable of thinking of our next step is His Majesty Roland."

"It is a pity that the new communications iron towers are still under construction; otherwise, we would have the ability to converse with His Majesty immediately." Iron Axe walked over to the work desk and picked up a pen and paper. "Regardless, we should first send a flying messenger before doing anything else."

"There is no need for that, let me handle it." Tilly stood up. "With the speed of Phoenix, I can arrive at Neverwinter in the afternoon if I set off tomorrow morning. It is far faster than any messenger. Also... I was thinking of thanking him for the new gift."

With that, she turned to Lightning and Maggie. "We will have to trouble the two of you to continue the investigation to the west of the Impassable Mountain Range."

"Leave it to us," the two replied earnestly.

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The next day, Tilly flew alone on the Phoenix east towards the sea before following the shoreline southwards. In less than four hours, she landed in the Aerial Knight Academy in King's City.

On this day, many witnessed the sight of a red shooting star shooting across the sky.

After leaping off her plane, she sprinted into the castle. Seeing her gray hair, no guards dared to block her path.

Upon opening the office doors, Roland blinked his eyes in surprise. Obviously, he did not expect her to appear.

"Uh... is there a problem with the plane?"

Tilly stopped in her tracks as a hint of guilt appeared in her heart in that instant. *Did I force him so much that the first thing he asks when seeing me is about the plane?* "No, the personal plane... I mean the Phoenix is far better than what I had anticipated. About that... thank you, Brother."

"Phew." Roland heaved a sigh of relief, but his expression immediately became serious. "Then the reason you're back is because... you have important information for me?"

"That's right, while piloting the Phoenix on its maiden flight, I accidentally discovered demon movements." Tilly then recounted the experience the three had in detail.

After listening to the entire story, Roland frowned. For an object to be seen from such a great distance away, aside from being unobstructed, the other factor was size. Take for example the moon and the stars. At a distance of over a hundred kilometers, even the Impassable Mountain Range would appear to be a thick line, the ridge of the continent would only appear as a dusky 'hill.' To be seen from such a distance, the object was definitely not small.

The demons already have the ability to move an island into the sky?

One had to know that it was impossible even for modern day technology.

If it was truly a solid island, any weapons would have little to no value. This was determined by physical characteristics. Any large weight object capable of floating signified an astonishing amount of energy.

Magic power is truly unreasonable...

But Roland deeply understood this point after he met Anna. Now, it was imperative that they verified the information regarding the behemoth.

He thought of an exceptionally suitable person.

Entering the Dream World, Roland picked up the phone and dialed Valkries number.

Chapter 1384: Taking a Step Forward

“I’m heading out.”

“You’re going to the Martialist Association?” Valkries walked out of her bedroom in a nightgown and saw Fei Yuhan packing her luggage at the front door.

“Yes, we are nearing the final battle, I have to hurry.” The other party stopped abruptly. “Will you be coming later?”

Looking at Fei Yuhan’s all-out expression, Valkries was distracted for a moment before nodding her head. “If there isn’t anything else.”

“In that case, I’m off.”

The doors opened and close and the chilliness in the air quickly dissipated. Valkries lowered her head and looked at her opened palms. She then gradually curled it up into a fist.

Damn it, what am I doing?

In the month that she had been in the Dream World, she had completely integrated herself into this society. Not only did she become a member of the Martialist Association, but she had also gone alongside a few others to fight against the Fallen Evils.

To prevent the world from being destroyed, they had to go against God. That might had been the reason for her to participate, but Valkries knew in her heart that it was a method of suppression. The true issue she had to face was not in the Dream World, but outside of it—she was unwilling to accept the fact that she could not do anything about being trapped in here, and thus participated in the battles to make it seem as though she was exerting some efforts to resolve the Battle of Divine Will.

It was fine if the battles were just cruel and difficult, after all, they were fighting against “God”. But the fact remained that the Fallen Evils only occurred in places unseen to the masses. The cities remained calm and peaceful. When there were no missions, everyone spent time having tea in the afternoon, or gathering together to have supper at night.

This was in stark contrast to what she was used to.

What made her feel worse was the fact that she was getting used to such a life...

The sweeter the soft peninsula bread was, the more intense the guilt and shame she felt in her heart. The future of her race was unknown, and to win the Battle of Divine Will, many had given their all; yet, she was enjoying her freedom and carefree life. This contrast made Valkries feel miserable, so much so that there were times she felt the urge to vent her anger on the people around her.

The more painful truth was that her rationality still existed without having any distortion or changes due to the immense pressure. Her clear consciousness told her, saying that such actions would not shatter the Dream World, nor would it help her race in any way. It would even bring about worse circumstances to her already terrible situation.

At the same time, the reason why the Nightmare Lord had stopped herself from doing so was that she realized she did not loathe Fei Yuhan as much as she thought.

Although the female human had eavesdropped on her conversation with Roland, that was a reasonable choice as she wanted to grasp her own fate. Additionally, Fei Yuhan's response towards the fact that she existed in the Realm of Mind and revealing all that she had done in the past was something remarkable.

She was pure, full of curiosity, determined, and clear on her objectives... These traits caused Valkries to associate her to the "Transformer", Heathalese.

The brilliance of a few was sufficient to transcend the gap between races, like how the Transformer was accepted into the Cloud School.

This was ultimately her reason for not leaving.

But this brilliance not only lessened the pressure on her, but left her even more lost.

In fact, Valkries was faintly aware of the method to truly benefit her race, but her emotions prevented her from confronting it. Once the step was taken, there was no possibility of turning back, and all the pressure and risk would be hers to bear. As such, it was difficult for her to make a decision.

In terms of confronting destiny, she was far inferior to the female human.

Right at this moment, her phone rang.

The caller was Roland.

Valkries hesitated for a moment before accepting the call. "What's the matter? If you're calling to give me a one-sided report of the battlefield, without obtaining Hackzord's confirmation, I will never—"

"I just wanted to ask, what's up with the floating island?"

The other party's first sentence stunned her.

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Rose Café.

Fatter listening to Roland, Valkries leaned back into her chair, exhausted. She gently exhaled and muttered, "Deity of Gods..."

"Deity—what?"

She stared at him silently, hoping to see a reaction from his eyes, but the outcome told her it was not some premeditated scheme; Roland himself was genuinely unaware of the thing he had discovered. The exposure of the Deity of Gods was a complete coincidence, something that happened all the time, but would not greatly affect the situation as a whole. As the trump card of the entire race, the higher-ups most probably wanted the humans to witness the marvel achieved from magic power. After all, informing the other party of its existence would make them fall into despair and fear.

But Valkries thought further.

The Deity of Gods was the ultimate weapon meant to contend against Sky-sea Realm. For it to appear at the Western Front clearly meant one thing.

The situation on the Western Front had fallen into a difficult situation.

If not for that, The King would had never agreed to use the Deity of Gods to defeat the humans.

It was a route condemned for death.

Only if the Western Front had suffered such a huge loss would the higher ups mobilize the Deity of Gods to reverse the situation. That was the only reason that could lead to the Witches being able to see the Deity of Gods. This meant that everything that Roland had previously reported was true, which was a confirmation of his sincerity.

Unless Roland had learned about the existence of the Deity of Gods from another Senior Lord.

But the probability of that happening was minuscule. If the other Senior Lords were willing to collaborate with him, there was no need for him to pull off such an elaborate act with her.

The pain in Valkries caused her to clench her fists.

But her rationality prevented her from lying to herself.

She felt as though her legs were standing at the edge of a cliff with only a single-log bridge to walk. The conflict of emotions were nearly swallowing her up. Right when the earth-shattering pressure was on the verge of overwhelming her, Fei Yuhan's words to the people suddenly appeared in her mind—

Back then, she had opened the doors to the conference room slightly and heard that unyielding refute.

“To fear the future and give up on forging ahead is simply the mentality of cowards, even if we know that defeat is the eventual outcome, we should do all we can to turn that around!”

To do everything we can... and forge ahead...

Valkries stared into Roland's eyes for a long time before shutting them.

“The thing you saw is called the Deity of Gods.” She repeated, “It is the trump card that my race had prepared to ascend the Sky-sea Realm, and also the legacy handed down by assimilating the underground civilization. A few hundred years ago, my race already escaped our dependency on the Red Mist—the Red Mist restriction that you know of. One of the most direct answer we had was to be able to produce a tower capable of producing Red Mist and moving freely, but that was hard to accomplish.

Just moving a massive tower itself was a problem in itself, much less moving the entire God's Stone mine underground."

"Until Mask gained a complete grasp over the underground civilization's magic power technology and brought the foundations to the next level did we see the light of hope. I am unclear of what changes occurred to the Mask, but in essence, he is able to refurbish Birth Tower into a gigantic magic power core, and increase the effects of the core. As long as there is an abundance of magic power, it leads to a large-scale phenomenon, one almost equivalent to that of a miracle. Thus, the King bestowed it a name— the Deity of Gods."

Valkries chose to take that step.

Chapter 1385: Establishing a Basic Agreement

Now, it was Roland's turn to be stunned.

Her long silence made him assume that his queries would have been futile. He never expected the Nightmare Lord to immediately explain the origins of the floating island in such great detail, which resulted in him being slow to react.

"What's with your expression?" Valkries opened her eyes and said unhappily. "I am not betraying my race, but merely acknowledging Heathtalese's way of seeing things. The Battle of Divine Will cannot ensure the continuation of my race but ensure that we continue becoming chess pieces for God, so... stopping God is the correct thing to do."

Uh, that's clearly my own position, right? Roland subconsciously scratched the back of his head. Transformer from a thousand years ago was unable to stabilize the connection to the Realm of Mind, so how could she have obtained so much information? But even if he was slow to react, Roland was aware that he could only continue listening to her.

"That's right, you've finally understood this point." He immediately composed himself and spared no effort to assume a magnanimous appearance as he initiated a handshake. "Although God has already taken notice of us, I believe that it isn't too late—"

Valkries did not respond to his handshake.

"Before that, I would like to ask you a question."

"What?"

"If the end was what the Oracle had mentioned, what are your plans on handling the relationship between our races?"

Nightmare Lord's expression became solemn. Roland realized that the question would determine everything. Her raising of this pivotal question proved that she had begun considering the possibility of a collaboration, and genuinely thought of a way out for her race. Roland even faintly sensed that if she did not accept his answer, she might forcefully separate herself from the Dream World—even if it meant death.

“To be honest, I haven’t thought through it.” After a moment of silence, Roland spoke up.

Valkries frowned and replied coldly, “So everything you said before was on a whim, and you never believed that I might cooperate with you?”

“No, I did consider it before, but this matter is too complicated.” He chuckled bitterly; his answer did not meet the mark, but he was unwilling to fabricate a sweet-sounding excuse. Valkries was not a fool and he was never one to be good at making excuses. Instead of outsmarting himself, he preferred speaking the truth. “The war between humans and demons has lasted for a thousand years. This animosity cannot be removed in a short time frame, and it is close to impossible to recreate the Dream World in reality. The only way I can think of temporarily is to separate both races, to have your kind to leave the human world forever.”

“Where to?”

“That is the question we have to consider in detail. But the world out there is so huge, I’m guessing that there will be a place for the demons to call home.”

The two stared at each other for a long time and Valkries only broke the silence after the high temperature of their coffee simmered to a cool. “If you had reacted instantly and assured me that you would be taking care of everything, the probability of this being a trap would have been extremely high. But now, I feel that that is what you truly mean to do.”

“Uh... not having thought of something was the correct answer?”

“You can say that.” Nightmare Lord exhaled. “I admit that this is a long, narrow log bridge. Which way we go is unpredictable. But even if hope is bleak, I have to make an attempt because only I am capable of doing this in my entire race.”

Roland noticed her hands clenching tightly when she spoke those words.

Obviously, she was not as strong willed-as the words that came out from her mouth.

At the same time, he knew that it was definitely not an easy decision. To the majority of people, being lost in the abyss was the norm. When an outcome cannot be fathomed, giving up on advancing or retreating was a form of exoneration.

“Don’t be too pleased.” Valkries gave him a look. “The God that planned the Battle of Divine Will will not sit idly and ignore you. If the entire world was created by God, I don’t think you have any chance of winning. There is a chance that the final outcome would have both races completely destroyed, without leaving any trace of us behind.”

“I agree.” Roland replied frankly. He extended his hand towards her once more. “That is why we are all on the log bridge together.”

This time, the Nightmare Lord extended her right arm and held his.

“Then, on to the Deity of Gods.” Seeing that they had come to an agreement, Roland picked up the phone, ordered a brand new cup of coffee to go for Valkries and turned to her. “Do you have any way to contact Hackzord? Let’s try to get him to move the floating island back, or we might as well allow the

First Army to enter and garrison in it. It would be good too as it does together with my party's heading for the Bottomless Land."

"It's too late." Valkries shook her head.

"What?"

"My previous idea of having Hackzord enter the Dream World was a hope to obtain information about the real world and to convince him of this probability. I never expected the situation to deteriorate so badly. He believes in Ursrook's suggestion and likely was the one to plead with the King to have the Deity of Gods requested. As it is, the situation has developed to a point of no return."

"You mean..."

"Are you thinking that the Sky Lord alone is capable of controlling our race's trump card? Once the Deity of Gods reaches the Western Front, it is impossible to recall it back, much less Hackzord, I think even I will not be able to convince the King and the other senior lords." Valkries shrugged her shoulders.

"Furthermore, the mobilization of the Deity of Gods will definitely bring a large amount of pressure. If you want Hackzord to recall it, I'm guessing the probability of success to be zero. In other words, I am the only one to be able and willing to cooperate with you—at the moment."

"At the moment?" Roland acutely grasped the subtle meaning behind her words. "You have other ways to influence Hackzord?"

Valkries did not deny anything. "I understand him. It is impossible to get him to disobey the King under an unclear circumstance while bearing all the risks, but it is not difficult to remind him to avoid danger. Typically, Hackzord is most concerned with keeping himself safe..."

The corner of Roland's lips twitched. Those words when put nicely was that Hackzord was a cautious demon, and in a bad way, a coward.

"I will write a letter and get him to leave the Deity of Gods. That's the only thing I can do. As long as you can deliver the letter, there is a 80 to 90% chance of him listening to me. But if the flames of war has already erupted, you have no other way other than to defeat the Deity of Gods." Valkries enunciated her words carefully. "Only by shooting it down will Hackzord realize that the Battle of Divine Will will not end well, and the probability of me convincing him will definitely increase."

"So he has to live, until the Deity of Gods is... destroyed, that is also the basis of our collaboration." She shifted her gaze, preventing Roland from seeing her expression. "If you can't do that, then treat it as though I've said nothing."

Chapter 1386: The Breakthrough Point

After waking up, Roland immediately called for Tilly.

"I have detailed information with regards to the floating island. It is indeed a product of the demons, and they call it the 'Deity of Gods.'"

Tilly was stunned; it had only been a few hours after bringing the news, where did Roland's information come from?

"In short, I have some special means." Roland was naturally aware of her doubts, but the matter regarding the Nightmare Lord being trapped in the Dream World was a complex matter to explain, and he decided to skip the explanation. "The information might have discrepancies, so you can only use it as a reference. We will still have to depend on you to verify the actual situation."

After that, he gave a simple outline of the Deity of Gods.

"So it's actually a floating city?" Tilly asked in shock.

"Yes." Roland nodded his head. "But far bigger than a real city."

According to Valkries, when the magic power core merged into the obelisk that produced red mist, it would produce a shocking result. Although she did not partake in the construction of the Deity of Gods, she knew the plan inside out. To stabilize the core parameters, the demons went through multiple trials, one of them occurring about a century ago in Tapunise City which ended with the almost total destruction of the city. The violent magic power ripped the stratum and caused structures to collapse and shatter while being razed. Countless inferior demons were flung into the air and turned into mashed meat after falling to the ground.

To seal off information leak, the King ultimately termed it as a magic power accident. Although the damage was disastrous, the plan did not stop, and instead increased in pace. One of the reason was the approaching Battle of Divine Will, the other being the demons urgent need to cast off the restrictions of the Red Mist. The disaster allowed the higher-ups to realize the possibility of the plan.

The Deity of Gods was their final result.

Magic power penetrated over a few thousand kilometers into the ground and raised the land spanning dozens of kilometers, forming a stable foundation. When viewed from above, it would be that of a floating island. But from below, the view would be a wide top and narrow bottom, like an inverted mountain peak. After multiple revisions to the magic power of the core, the Deity of Gods had the abilities to float and move in the sky.

It was due to this feature that the demons viewed it as the only way to counter the Sky-sea Realm. Upon taking over the human's territory, the demons would gain time to rest and reorganize, and to build even more Deity of Gods to ascend the skies, bringing a massive army of Mad Demons to attack the Sky-sea Realm.

The information caused Roland to realize that the improvements made by the other race in the 400 years were not to be belittled. Although they took completely different technological paths, they were nowhere weaker than the humans.

Magic power was undisputedly a force with utmost potential, evident from the Deity of Gods. Be it ripping the earth apart and tossing thousands of structures into the sky or pulling an entire piece of land into the air, both required an astonishing amount of energy. The demons succeeded through experience. However, quantity would usually lead to qualitative changes. If these experiences were transformed into a system with scientific theory, their strength were bound to soar.

This was the same for humans.

Roland felt that it was crucial to develop the scientific reasoning behind magic power after the war. Even though he had no knowledge of magic power at all, it could lead and guide the future generations in the field of research.

This was the essence of science.

As long as something existed, it would be something that could be observed and experimented.

“Although I’m clueless of how you obtained your information, it does sound like it.” Tilly spoke up after listening to him. “Then, how do you suggest we deal with the Deity of Gods?”

“Firstly, it isn’t afraid of firepower, so the First Army should preserve its forces. Secondly, the Aerial Knights will be crucial in our next battle,” Roland said slowly. “There is a way of defeating it, but the probability of success is unknown.”

Even if they used the Glory of the Sun against the moving island, the end result might not be as expected. That had long been proven in history. In Operation Crossroads, the first nuclear weapons tests that were trialled detonated with a yield of around 23 kilotons, one in the air and the other underwater. The former was unable to destroy its intended target—a 300-meter long vessel, and the latter’s destructive scope did not exceed a thousand meters. These examples proved that when facing large targets, even the devastating power of nuclear weapons were greatly discounted.

Besides, the Deity of Gods was far larger than ships.

It was equivalent to using grenades to bombard the Impassable Mountain Range, even throwing a hundred of them would only result in chipping of a corner.

Although having sufficient quantity was the answer to resolving all problems, it was impossible simply due to their lacking yields. After taking into consideration Neverwinter’s technological advancements, the limit was a scale of ten kilotons.

As a result, Roland had to develop another plan in conjunction with the need to use the Glory of the Sun to complete the attack.

The core of the Deity of Gods was undoubtedly the obelisk. According to Valkries’ explanation, it was situated in the middle of the city. For the convenience of accumulating the Red Mist, the Inferior demons surrounded the obelisk and constantly dug deep pits—which was also their main jobs as magic-incapable demons. Being more dense than air, the red mist gradually fell to the bottom and formed the Red Mist Pond which gradually expanded into a lake over the years.

This made Roland recall the Demon City seen in a memory fragment—countless towers erected in a ring around a cliff, where crystallized Red Mist could be found in the middle of the pit. It was probably through an accumulation of a millennium for the development of the lake to reach such a shocking depth, where the immense pressure forced the lower layers of Red Mist to increase in density to the point of liquefying and later solidifying into crystals.

The city refurbished into the Deity of Gods was an old city, where a Red Mist Lake similarly resided at the bottom of the obelisk, which was obviously the breakthrough point.

The 'Red Mist' mentioned by Valkries verified their speculations and experiments—the Red Mist was essentially a mist composed of microscopic biota, appearing in such a way due to their extremely small size and virtually undetectable even with magnification. At the same time, these minuscule organisms wielded magic power able to dispel and devour any external magic power not from demons. That was the reason why Lily had failed in controlling the Red Mist.

The Red Mist possessed numerous biological traits, such as a fear for fire. Under high temperatures, the Red Mist would attempt to escape, resembling a decomposition from a macroscopic view. When temperatures rose to a certain degree, the Red Mist would ignite, no different from all carbon-based lifeforms. With a combustion point of around 800–900 degrees, it could be said that they had an outstanding combustion point.

The only difference was that they were extremely small. Therefore, it would give rise to explosive effects when mixed with air. Iron Axe had once burnt the Kingdom of Wolfheart's capital, City of Tusk. Now, what he needed to do was burning up the entire sky.

The combustion of the Red Mist would rapidly decrease energy and exhaust the oxygen around; thus, the beginning temperatures had to be sufficiently high. In theory, having a large quantity of incendiaries would produce the same effect, but that required a fleet of bombers to transport hundreds, if not thousands, of buckets filled with gasoline up the Deity of Gods to achieve that.

As for the Glory of the Sun, regardless of its yields, the core temperature was a fixed number that could not be discounted.

The only problem that had to be resolved was getting through the large army of demons and Devilbeasts protecting the area and fly above the obelisk to achieve an accurate drop.

"As long as we have a way." Tilly's expression calmed down. "Regardless of the probability of success, everyone will unite and achieve it. Leave it to us, Brother. I will bring the good news back to headquarters."

Her trust caused Roland's chest to swell up with warmth.

He paused for a moment. After calming himself, he picked up the quill pen and a piece of paper. "Right, I have something I need you to pass to Miss Edith Kant."

After placing the pen down, he did not put the letter into an envelope; instead, he handed it over to Tilly.

The latter swept her gaze past it and could not help but frown. "The words here are..."

"Demonic characters." Roland replied indifferently.

Chapter 1387: Wireless Transmission

"It's really ugly." Tilly curled her lips.

Roland laughed out in embarrassment—if the written language of the Four Kingdoms were considered to look like distorted earthworms, then the demonic language was more complicated, some of their

characters even resembled witchcraft symbols. Adding that Roland had relied completely on memory to copy it down, with his strokes and lines not proficient, it made the entire feel of the language look even more messy. Who knew if Hackzord would ever make out what he had written.

He had raised his doubts to Valkries, but received a harsh retort from her.

Valkries believed in the feasibility of a human copying the demonic characters, since it proved that she was not lost in the Realm of Mind and also reveal her own predicament by being able to pass information through Roland. If they had used her handwriting instead, it could easily spook the cautious Hackzord—if she could send letters, why not just leave the Realm of Mind directly?

“What does the letter say?”

“It is to get the Sky Lord to try his best to avoid engaging in all out war, so I need the General Staff to think of a way to send this to the demons.”

“Brother, are you alright?” Tilly looked at him in shock. “How is it possible for the senior lord of the enemy to listen to your words?”

“In any case, trying it out will not require too much time or effort...” Roland feigned an indifferent expression. “What if it succeeds?”

In fact, Roland had posed the exact question to the Nightmare Lord. Her reply was that a Senior Demon’s lifespan often exceeded several hundred years, where their habits and traits would go through countless changes; therefore, their written words would leave behind their individual prints. These prints were far more reliable than any coat of arms or insignias.

To Roland’s understanding, the general idea was about the same as immediately associating Internet slang to the youngsters born after the 90s.

“Alright.” Tilly put the letter away helplessly. “Since it’s your request.”

Right as she was prepared to leave, the North Slope Lab phone on the office desk suddenly rang.

Roland picked up the received. It was Anna.

After listening to her, Roland revealed a smile and said to Tilly, “Don’t rush back today. Stay the night in the castle. Coincidentally, I have something new to pass to you.”

...

In the workshop, Tilly saw the ‘revolutionary’ new product mentioned by Roland—two square-shaped wooden boxes.

Calling them boxes was not an exaggeration; not only were there obvious lids and openings to the boxes, the entire thing was about 30 cm long and could be carried in one hand. The dimensions of the two boxes were far from all the revolutionary machines that caused the public to exclaim in admiration, and even lacked the grandeur to be hailed as ‘revolutionary.’

The only difference between the two boxes and other boxes was that their front side were riddled with rows of bright and metal-plated buttons and knobs.

“This is...”

“It is a mobile and wireless transmission device,” Anna explained. “It is the equivalent to a shrunken iron cable tower, the advantage of it is that it can directly receive sound and of course, its larger distance capability.”

“I see... Wait a minute.” Tilly was stunned as she looked at Roland. “Is this the new communication device you mentioned previously?”

Although he had long prepared her for it, she never expected for the final product to be so elaborated! She had anticipated the device to occupy a large part of space when equipped on a plane. After all, the massive size of the iron tower project had been exhibited, to shrink it to the size of a ‘Fire of Heaven’ was already an inconceivable idea.

Roland saw her doubts and opened the lid of the box.

Crisscrossing wires and components appeared before her. Although she did not understand the box at all, Tilly realized that the box was completely different from the past machineries created.

“It can be considered the world’s first real electronic equipment. Although the electric motors, lights, telephone, and telegraph before this uses electricity currents, they are in essence using simplified electrical energy transformation to work,” Roland explained. “But this possesses an independent electric circuit system and uses electric currents to work. This is equivalent to replacing the gears, screws, and bearings with electric components. This size is also considered relatively large.”

“Are you blaming my craftsmanship for not being up to standard?” Anna gave him a look.

“Ahem... Of course not.” Roland immediately coughed twice. “It’s the Design Bureau who produced design plans which aren’t exquisite enough.”

“It was all thanks to Sister Anna for working late nights daily, for the prototype to be created so quickly,” added the assistant, Lucia. “Primarily, the vacuum tubes require the vacuums to be maintained and many components needed to be stuffed in. It would had been impossible without the help of her Blackfire.”

The core of the transmitter-receiver was the vacuum tube that was capable of amplifying, detecting, and vibrating. It was also the mark of humanity entering the Electronic Age, and Roland naturally knew how difficult it was to attain it. The shiny scrap metal that piled up outside the North Slope lab was proof. Furthermore, he could hardly guide them in matters of electrical engineering as he did before. A large part of the project relied on Anna to slowly proceed by trial and error herself.

The fact proved that his previous concept of the shortwave transmitter-receiver delegated to the team was only a beautiful fantasy. In the future, Anna would be concentrating her efforts on the large bombers. Being able to find the time to create the vacuum tubes for the Aerial Knights was already considered a miracle.

“Can I try it out?” Tilly asked impatiently.

“Of course you can.” Anna laughed and nodded.

Not long later, the three separated themselves to the inside and outside of the experimental lab and talked. Instantly, the room was filled with a lighthearted atmosphere.

Under the extremely clean electromagnetic surroundings in this era, the scope of the transmitter-receiver prototype easily surpassed two kilometers, and that number rose even higher in the air. Although the transmitter-receiver would suffer from disturbance when the spark-gap transmitter was used to relay messages, aside from extremely urgent information, the messengers could choose to send out telegrams at fixed time intervals. By staggering it with the Aerial Knights' movements, the chances of conflict between the two remained nonexistent.

In Roland's eyes, the success of the wireless transmitter-receiver was far more important compared to the new 20mm autocannons—real time communications substantially broadened and allowed for coordination between the pilots to execute aerial tactics. With precise coordination, the fleet's fighting strength was basically being enhanced by a notch. It could also be said that only when the Aerial Knights become capable of accomplishing this would they be hailed as a real air force.

Tilly obviously saw this point and after ending the experiment somewhat unwillingly, she urged for her special plane to be equipped with even more wireless transmitter-receivers.

Early next morning, she carried the two prototypes and boarded the Phoenix.

When the scarlet figure disappears into the white horizon, the rays of dawn suddenly penetrated through the scattered clouds, dispersing millions of gentle and warm light.

The Month of the Demons that had persisted for close to four months was finally over.

At the same time, the Bloody Moon perched at the top of the sky disappeared without a trace, as though it had never existed.

But Roland knew that the war was not over.

Several hundred years ago, the demons grasped the opportunity when the Bloody Moon shone on the lands to build their obelisks, quietly awaiting for the pillars to grow into towering monuments. Only after stabilizing their foothold did they officially begin their assault.

A battle of destiny would typically reveal its ferocity only at that moment.

Now, humanity was once again standing at the same precipice.

But this time, they were completely different.

He believed that this time, history would not repeat itself.

Chapter 1388: Conflict

Above an empty continental ridge, the Deity of Gods.

Sky Lord took large strides into the tower and entered the reformed karst cave underground.

Before being chosen as the official city for the Deity of Gods, it used to be a famous city known throughout the Blackstone region, with a history of close to a millennium. It was not the Sky Lord's first time visiting this place; the complex structure of the karst cave was no challenge for him, and the only thing that annoyed him was Mask—Nassaupelle.

"My lord, my master is undergoing an important test inside. Do you have anything you need to be passed on to my master?" At the entrance to the experimental venue, a Junior Demon obstructed Hackzord's path. As Mask's chamberlain, it obviously chose the same path as Mask, with two heads forcefully merged together with a magic stone; therefore, it looked extremely deformed and ugly.

"Scram!" Hackzord was not in the mood to waste his breath on him and raised his hand, sending the chamberlain fumbling across the ground.

If it were a battle-type Junior Demon, he might have taken more into consideration. However, Mask had gone down the Path of Reconciliation quite thoroughly, and the magic stones he merged into his body was not suited for battle, so one could imagine the power a Junior Demon which followed in its footsteps had.

After realizing that the Sky Lord was suppressing his rage, the chamberlain tactfully kept quiet.

Hackzord pushed the heavy stone doors open and entered the experimental venue without looking back. For him to not have destroyed the doors and appear before Mask in one step before taking action was already the greatest respect he could give.

Behind the doors was an extremely spacious cave.

Innumerable magic stones were embedded into the walls of the cave, resembling stars of the night sky. Beneath his feet were a dense pack of Inferior Demons—many times more than magic stones with the majority being in worm form. They were like cattle being trapped within fences, accepting the repeated stimulation from the magic power core.

Hackzord could not help but frown.

Even though the Inferior Demons were the most useless of all demons since they could not do any manual work due to the lack of limbs and their extremely low intelligence prevented them from being tamed, it was by an accidental discovery that they had the highest success rate of merging with other lifeforms, making them the ideal parasites. It was surmised that it had something to do with their extremely simple meridian channels.

Of course, not every worm-based Inferior Demon was capable of surviving to the point of resonating with the Growth God's Stones. The dead became feed for the next batch of Inferior Demons, and those successful became qualified weapons.

Naturally, Sky Lord did not sympathize with these lower lifeforms which were incapable of communication. Compared to their past usage of being useless, they were now at least capable of providing help to the race. What he was unhappy about was Mask's twisted interests.

The transformation process could easily be conducted inside a sealed cave, yet Mask had intentionally set it at the most eye-catching location—on a thick and solid pillar connected by four large suspension bridges leading to four different locations, with thousands and thousands of Inferior Demons being

trapped beneath. Every time someone was required to enter the heart of the experimental venue, they were forced to “admire” Mask’s work of art.

The twisting and curling Inferior Demons whined as they endured the pain, the pungent smell of their excrement as well as the rotting husks of the failed experiments assaulted Sky Lord’s olfactory senses. The entire cave was immersed in this foul atmosphere. No ordinary demon would ever like staying in such a gloomy cave with such negativity; yet, Mask had purposefully set up his experimental lab above the stone pillar. Hackzord suspected that the Mask’s head had been damaged through the numerous merges which resulted in him becoming impervious to reason.

After crossing the suspension bridge, he found Nassaupelle at the top floor of the transformation building.

Upon seeing Mask, the Sky Lord immediately felt his rage burn. Mask was measuring the remnants of the Iron Birds towed back by his subordinates with a few human nobles lying at the side, their conditions unknown. The only surviving human was in Mask’s hands, his face warped from extreme fear. There were even wet stains on his robes.

“Nassaupelle!” he roared in range, “Who gave you the permission to touch my Humans? Even if you wanted them for your experiments, you have to get my approval first!”

It was not surprising that he couldn’t restrain his anger. He had painstakingly migrated the nobles to the great rupture and to the Deity of Gods to prevent Graycastle from tapping greater potential for the war. At the same time, it could also replenish the city’s need for manual labor. It was truly killing two birds with one stone. Who would have thought that right after this batch of humans were brought to the Deity of Gods, a worried noble from Everwinter came to him, informing him that a few of his companions had been dragged away by guards and their whereabouts unknown.

This had undoubtedly destroyed the stable order that he had built up with great difficulty.

The worst thing was instead of grabbing ordinary citizens, the culprit had intentionally grabbed the nobles—the latter were crucial in controlling the masses. Without the nobles to control, the time and effort required for Hackzord to control the tens of thousands of people would increase severalfold.

“Master Hackzord... quickly save me!” The conscious noble immediately yelled out amid a sobbing tone, as though he had seen his savior.

“Ah... so it’s Sky Lord,” Mask turned and said indifferently. “I have to say, this is clearly a misunderstanding. Indeed, I enjoy merging the best attributes, but that does not include lowlifes—I have already merged with their most outstanding counterparts six hundred years ago.”

He removed a mask from his head, revealing a distinct female face—one that most probably belonged to a Witch, but was now part of him.

There were more than ten of such masks all over his head. One could only imagine the horror of Mask’s appearance if he ever took them all off. According to Nassaupelle, the brain was where intellect formed and was the most important compared to the other body parts. With more brains, one would obtain even higher thought efficiency. Therefore, he believed a powerful race should have two heads, to satisfy the alternation between thinking and resting and to maximize the use of time.

But in Hackzord's eyes, only the hideous demonic beasts and the Sky-sea Realm monsters would look like that.

An almost indiscernible purple light flashed past and instantly sliced the mask in Mask's hand into two. Blue blood trickled down as a line of blood gradually blossomed on the female human's face.

Nassaupelle probably did not expect Hackzord to attack and the stance he had was immediately pegged lower. He dropped the noble in his hand and held onto his wounded face as he retreated a few steps back. "Sky Lord, h-have you gone mad? You dare make a move on a Senior Lord for a lowlife? Do not forget, I am the creator of the Deity of Gods, I am the one to give our race hope to win the Battle of Divine Will, could it be that—you want to betray the King?"

Glee filled Hackzord's heart when he saw the other party's panicked expression.

After gaining the position of the Western Front Commander, Hackzord had never encountered anything that pleased him. The Nightmare Lord was lost for no good reason, the army failed to breakthrough the humans' defenses, and now, he was painstakingly fighting for the race's victory, but had to be hindered by Mask. It was preposterous!

It was impossible for Nassaupelle to be unaware that the humans were brought to the Deity of Gods by him. To snatch the humans behind his back was clearly a brazen act of defiance. After the succession of failures, Hackzord had been looked down by others.

But they were not in the King's Presiding Holy See, and the Mask was no Magic Slayer. If Hackzord did not put him in place, the most probably consequence would have Mask stepping over him.

So what if having more brains was an advantage?

In the face of true power, no matter how huge the brain was, it was all useless. Hackzord wanted Mask to know who was the true Commander of the Western Front.

"If you are truly loyal to the King, you should know what you can do and what you ought not to do." Hackzord withdrew the Distortion Door that was as sharp as a blade and said coldly, "After all, these humans are extremely useful for me and the race. I want you to remember that."

After the stare-down, Mask was the first to stand down. "It was an oversight on my part... I will remember to seek your opinion the next time."

"That's good." Hackzord nodded his head. He did not have plans to force the other party. After all, ascendants proficient with magic power cores were required to control the Deity of Gods, and they were all basically under Nassaupelle. At the same time, the war required Symbiotic Demon weapons that required the Mask to create. It was impossible for Hackzord to do anything to the Mask; otherwise, he would be the first to be killed by the King.

"My, My lord... Sob, it is great to see you..." The noble immediately crawled to the Sky Lord's side and hugged his thighs.

"We will speak about this later." Hackzord glanced at him before turning back to the Mask. "Since you're not trying to merge with them, why did you bring the humans here for?"

Mask took the remains of an Iron Bird and smiled. "I merely wanted to question them on how to utilize the core of this thing."

Hackzord traced Mask's gaze, and his eyes landed on an intricate weapon set up at the head of the Iron Bird.

Chapter 1389: Mystical Secrets

"Core?"

Hackzord walked to the machinery, knelt down, and picked up a loose metallic piece. He quickly discovered that the thing in his hand was far more intrinsic than it appeared. There were hidden structures within the bumpy outer shell which could not be fathomed at a glance. He randomly picked up a cylinder-shaped object and discovered that the inside contained more than a hundred parts, far more complicated than a flintlock. "You mean to say..."

"Those iron birds require this thing to fly," Mask confirmed.

"Wait, you're saying that those things that can fly faster than Bogle Beasts are in fact powered by this pile of inanimate things?" Hackzord frowned. As the Senior Lord to once face the iron birds, he knew very well that their ability to fly did not come from the flapping of their wings, but by the blades at their heads that buzzed like a bird.

In some sense, it was similar to a windmill, but unlike the windmill that moved only when wind was present, the blades themselves automatically produced wind. The only question that perplexed Sky Lord was how the blades were capable of sustaining the high-speed revolutions. It was definitely impossible for it to rely on human strength alone; thus, Sky Lord had subconsciously concluded it to be some sort of magic power seal or a system related to magic stone releasing power. These were the only reasonable answers for the iron birds to sustain flight without Witches.

But now, Mask was telling him that a pile of dead and inanimate metals were responsible for allowing the Iron Birds flight?

"Inconceivable, right? I thought so as well." Upon touching on a subject that interested him, Nassaupelle immediately turned enlivened. He extended his thin finger and dug into an iron bucket, handing one over to Sky Lord. "Want to have a go at it?"

Hackzord looked at the finger completely stained in black and said coldly, "Do you want to have a taste of a broken finger?"

"Ahem... Some things leave better impressions when personally experienced." Mask retracted his finger and placed it into his mouth. "A portion of it is charred, with some fragrance to it. Its likely a vessel for holding fire."

"Fire can't move an iron bird."

"That depends on what fire it is—if the ignition is intense enough, it might even be capable of doing that!" Mask refuted, "You've seen how those lowlifes use the fire forks, I've taken them apart and studied them carefully. They are basically using combustion, but at an extremely fast rate to induce

something like an explosion! If the reaction is able to push out the bolts out of the iron crossbows, it should be able to push the blades.”

“The explosion from the fire forks is instantaneous. If it is as you have said, it means that incendiary material needs to be constantly added into the iron bucket. Furthermore, the speed must be at thousands of times a second to achieve the rotational speeds of the blades. In theory, it is simply impossible.” Sky Lord attempted to dampen Mask’s enthusiasm.

“That is what I have yet to figure out,” Nassaupelle admitted straightforwardly. “That is why I called these lowlifes over to listen to their thoughts. Who knew that their stupidity is on an equal level to that of Inferior Demons. I initially thought that they were intentionally hiding from me. After utilizing a few methods, I realized that they are truly oblivious to it!”

At this point, Mask gestured enthusiastically. “Can you believe it? The creator of these things are actually of the same race with these lowlifes! The principle stored within this machinery is right in front of them; yet, they are completely clueless about it, even claiming that it’s just a cheap trick of a depraved Witch. In my agitation, I used a little too much strength—”

“My, My lord...” The noble’s face turned pale from Nassaupelle’s glare. He immediately retreated to a wall and trembled incessantly.

“I can know understand why you do not treat humans as lowlifes. But I have to say, this group of humans you’ve brought back are still lowlifes, the lowest of the low!” Mask turned and looked at Hackzord. “Right, I heard that the iron birds and fire forks were created by Graycastle? Can you capture a few Graycastle smiths for me? I want to see if there is a difference between their brain compositions. If there is, merging with another human brain might not be a bad idea...”

“Enough!” Hackzord cut him off. “I am not here to listen to your nonsense! When we obtain their legacy shard, all your doubts and questions will naturally be answered. The crucial thing is winning this war. There is still a week before the Deity of Gods enters human territory, I do not want you to add to my troubles. Create more Symbiotic Demons, that is your only mission. Do you understand? And, do not—ever—touch—the humans.”

Mask calmed down, then extended both his arms out. “... Of course.”

Skylord stared at him for a long while before pulling the surviving noble up and left the room.

After a long while, Nassaupelle shook his head.

“You’re aren’t that great either, Hackzord.

“The key to unraveling everything is to figure out the mystical secret, but you remain uninterested in it.” He fished out a brand new mask from his robes and covered his Witch face. “Magic power isn’t the only force that regulates this world, much less the Battle of Divine Will. Even if we gain everything from the legacy shard, not everyone can reach the peak together. That is the reason why I am here creating Symbiotic Demons, and you are the one busying yourself on the battlefield.

“You do not have the faintest idea of the meaning contained within these metal objects...”

The Senior Lord, Mask, turned and stared at the remnants of the iron bird as he muttered to himself.

Humanity's usage of explosives to propel a large object enlightened him at an unprecedented level, he realized that it was a conversion of energy. Although he had frequently seen the conversion of stable energy into unstable energy, it was his first time experiencing the use of violent energy conversions, like combustion, to achieve a stable energy conversion. There had to be an intrinsic connection between combustion and flight which caused the conversion of energy to happen.

Since the two were reversible, could they be the same intrinsically?

What about magic power?

In the past, the race never had the faintest interest in thinking about the manifestation of magic power. They took it for whatever it was... But now, having considered it, could magic power be a form of energy conversion as well?

For example, if the magic power used to sustain the Deity of Gods was changed into explosive energy, how powerful would the effect be?

It was as though a brand new path had emerged in front of Mask.

If I can grasp this mystical secret, Sky Lord, no, even the King... will be nothing.

Knowledge, knowledge is the most powerful force in the world.

I want to know... I want to find out the mystical secrets of the humans!

Nassaupelle raised his head and unleashed an uncontrollable, odd laugh.

...

When he heard the faint laughter behind him, Hackzord left in disgust.

"My lord... it was fortunate that you came!" On his shoulder, the noble wore a look of misery; he was a sobbing mess. "The others had holes drilled into their heads by that monster, and I was almost the next one—"

"I know, rest easy, everything is over."

He placed the noble down to the ground but prevented him from leaving. Instead, he grabbed and lifted the noble by the collar, over the suspension bridge.

"Wait a minute, M-my Lord, Sky Lord, what are you doing?" Seeing the horrific and squirming worms below, the noble panicked. "No... No!"

Hackzord did not reply. With a throw, the noble screamed and fell to the bottom of the hole more than ten meters down. Sensing the incoming "food", the Inferior Demons flocked towards the noble, swaying excitedly as a response for the gift.

What Hackzord needed was a stable and controllable workforce.

After witnessing the experimental fields and Mask's true appearance, the noble was no longer one.

Even Hackzord felt that Nassaupelle was no different from a monster, much less the humans.

Instead of allowing the human to return to spread the news about his tragic encounter, Hackzord decided to shut him up permanently.

Although this choice would result in some trouble, it was definitely better than a mess he couldn't clean up in the future.

Hackzord returned to the temporary human residence. Marwayne was the first to welcome him. "My Lord... what happened to the people captured..."

"I've checked and verified the situation. They were captured because they were secretly communicating with Graycastle. As the one responsible for intelligence is someone else, I received the news late." Hackzord patiently appeased the man. "But it was fortunate that I was in time, according to your culture, those men weren't sentenced to death but detained in Sky City. After the war is over, they can pay a ransom or some other price in return for their freedom. Aside from that, I have other good news. The remaining nobles have passed the test, so no such thing will occur again."

"I see..." Marwayne let out a long sigh. "So that's the reason. Thank you, my Lord. Thank you for your care and concern."

"It is nothing, as long as all of you strive hard to accomplish the missions I have given, there will be a piece of the human world for all of you."

"Of course, of course." Marwayne suddenly took a letter out from his robes. "Right, My Lord. When you were in the inner city, someone passed me this letter. They said it was specifically addressed to you. Although there might have been a mistake, it was already sent here, so I figured that it's best for you to take a look."

"Oh?" Hackzord opened the letter, and his pupils constricted immediately!

Chapter 1390: Right Thing To Do

The words written on the letter were without a doubt the Demon race's written language, but they looked to be extremely distorted, as though someone had painstakingly copied it out.

After scanning through it, he realized its peculiarity—be it the vocabulary or the sentence structures, they clearly contained distinct, ancient styles of expression and was absolutely not something the race used at present.

A sense of déjà vu arose within Hackzord.

After focusing his mind to recall, shock surged through his entire body, right to his heart as he trembled!

"Where did this letter come from?" Sky Lord grabbed Marwayne and roared. His surge of emotions caused him to momentarily fail to maintain his aloof temperament in front of the humans.

Marwayne did not dare to wipe the saliva off his face, and instead focused on scurrying over to the assembly grounds of the humans.

"Quck, go!" Hackzord roared right in his face.

Marwayne did not dare to wipe the saliva off his face, and instead focused on scurrying over to the human assembly place.

Damn it!

Hackzord knew that he had lost his composure, but he was unable to control his emotions.

The words written were clearly from the Nightmare Lord, Valkries!

Although the standard of the copied text was clumsy to the extent of Hackzord momentarily being unable to figure out the original owner of the words, he knew for sure that it was from Valkries after reading it a few times. The words and style came from a thousand years ago, phrases commonly used by the race's enlightened. It also included some inkling of the way the humans narrated matters.

The number of higher ascendants that survived from the first Battle of Divine Will till now were countable with one hand, and aside from Nightmare Lord that once studied at the Cloud School for an extended period of time and integrated human intonation into her words, there were no other possible beings.

Valkries... could it be that you have somehow retained your consciousness?

But how could it be possible?

You have been trapped inside the Realm of Mind for so many months!

If realizing this alone was inconceivable, even more inconceivable were the contents of the letter—

The Battle of Divine Will is merely a trap that repeats itself?

The Realm of Mind is the Bottomless Land located at the extreme end of the continent's Ridge?

The Deity of Gods isn't safe?

The few short sentences contained massive amounts of information. It made Hackzord fall into a stupor. There were too many questions floating in his head, yet there was no answer to any of them.

How did Valkries preserve her consciousness in the sea of surging magic power?

How did she even send the message out?

Was this letter truly from Valkries?

Should I report it to the King?

"My Lord, Sky Lord... the person you were looking for, I've brought him here..." While Hackzord was still reeling in puzzlement, he heard Marwayne's cautious voice beside him.

He turned and glared at the two coldly. "I want to know everything regarding of how this letter came to be. Tell me everything you know."

15 minutes later.

After listening to the detailed recount, Hackzord finally understood that it was impossible to trace the letter back to its origin from the human. The secrets contained within the letter was actually handed

over by a migrating citizen to a noble, and the migrating citizen only had the intention to gain a few gold royals and took up the role as a “messenger,” completely unaware of the importance of the letter. Even if he pressed on, none of it would bear fruit.

Ignoring the veracity of everything, to use such a crude method to send a letter of such great importance meant that the other party was extremely daring, or that the person Valkries entrusted might not be human?

“That’s all for you.” Hackzord waved his hand. “Do not reveal anything about this letter to anyone else. If there are any other of such letters in the future, make sure they are in my hands in the fastest time possible. Understand?”

“Yes, yes, we will definitely do so!” The two nobles immediately bowed, expressing that they wouldn’t fail his orders.

After sending the humans off, Sky Lord looked towards the north and sank into contemplation.

Unknowingly, he actually found himself heaving a sigh of relief.

The pressure that had been on his shoulders since the Nightmare Lord’s disappearance had somewhat lessened quietly.

Maybe it was because no one could ignore the influence the Nightmare Lord had over the race...

Regardless of the situation, Hackzord was mentally leaning towards the conjecture that Valkries was behind the letter. The style of an individual was difficult to mimic, and even if a human had grasped the written language of the demon race, it would be impossible for them to forge such a letter. As to why the Nightmare Lord did not write the letter personally, the only explanation was that she was still stuck in the Realm of Mind and could only rely on a human to send the message.

And the reason of why she chose a human to do so was not too difficult to understand.

The reason for her one-way journey was to unravel the secrets of the humans, to pursue the legacy shard that belonged to them. Taking into consideration that some Witches might have gained the ability to interact with the Realm of Mind, the clues started to add up.

The more Hackzord pondered about it, the more he felt that he was right.

But the biggest problem is... whether Valkries has managed to convince that Witch and pull the Witch into her plan, or Valkries is being forced by the enemy to write the letter?

In all honesty, Hackzord did not believe that the Nightmare Lord would surrender to humans.

But the Realm of Mind was different.

To drift across the sea of magic power without rest and constantly receive invasions of other consciousness, it was extremely difficult to remain clear-headed in such a situation. If she had been hypnotized under such a state, it was hard to say what the outcome would be.

The difference between the two situations was like day and night.

If it happened to be the latter, Hackzord would, at worst, fall into their trap.

But if happened to be the former, wouldn't it mean that the entire race had taken the wrong path?

And the one leading them was not Hackzord, but the King of the race...

So why did Nightmare Lord choose to hand the letter over to him, and not the Creator of the Deity of Gods?

Hackzord trembled involuntarily and forcefully culled his train of thoughts, prohibiting himself from pondering about the question.

He opened a Distortion Door and appeared high in the sky with one step.

The human kingdom's natural barrier, the "Impassable Mountain Range," resembled a gray wriggling line at the edge of the continent.

In another week, the flames of war would once again erupt.

The Deity of Gods beneath his feet was like an enormous stronghold, moving towards the battlefield tenaciously. Hackzord could not imagine how the humans would resist his race's conquest of their lands under the circumstances when the fire forks and fiery rain would be rendered useless.

It was supposed to be a war that had to be a success.

But Valkries believed that the Deity of Gods was not safe...

Even if Hackzord treated the opinion that Divine Will was just a sham and far from the truth, this warning was too close to the heart.

He was unwilling to believe that the enemy could pose a threat to the majestic and powerful structure formed of magic power. But upon reflecting his past failures, Hackzord realized that all of them stemmed from the "impossible."

Furthermore, the warning came from the Nightmare Lord—

Hackzord believed that even if the letter was a trap, it could do little to him. With the Deity of Gods and Silent Disaster holding the front, he only needed to ensure a stable supply of resources in the rear.

A side with zero risk, and the other fraught with latent dangers, the choice went without saying.

But Hackzord thought further.

He turned his gaze to the north.

According to the letter, the legend of the origins of magic power, of where everything began, laid in the Realm of Mind, which was situated at the ends of where his eyes could reach.

So long as he found the Bottomless Land, he could immediately verify the authenticity of the letter.

The ridge of the continent was the crucial location for the demons attack on the humans, and for him to appear there would not be strange.

And while searching for the Bottomless Land, it was impossible for him to be affected by the Deity of Gods.

Even if the King questioned him after the event, Hackzord would still have an excuse.

Or perhaps, it might be the right thing to do.