

Witch 1391

Chapter 1391: Obstructing the Miracle

Kingdom of Dawn, Cage Mountain, Command Post.

A large strategic war map was erected in the center of the meeting room with the trajectory of a pin labeled "Floating Island" mapped out. Everyday, members from the General Staff and the Intelligence Agency would report with new findings, and this was the information the First Army's upper echelons paid most attention to.

The thick red path on the map indicated the path, yet it did not travel along the ridge of the continent southwards straight into Everwinter, but corrected its path midway into the Fertile Plains. The Deity of Gods was also constantly descending and was now less than a kilometer above ground.

According to the trajectory, the floating island would cross over the Impassable Mountain Range in four days and enter the Kingdom of Wolfheart.

Due to its immense size, one would see the hazy outline of the floating island just by using a telescope while standing on a mountaintop. It resembled a thick dark cloud, adding a sinister haze to the continent that had just survived the Months of Demons.

The pre-war meeting against the demon's Deity of Gods was convened.

Although the higher ups had reached a consensus, the First Army was incapable of stopping the floating island. But to flee at the mere sight of the behemoth was not the style of the army either. No matter what, they needed to probe the strength of the floating island and attempt an assault. Faced against an enemy that they lacked sufficient information on, the most effective way to understand the enemy was to fight head on.

Before receiving the Majesty's final decision, all they could do was make thorough preparations, which became the army's top priority.

As it turned out, the enemy was also giving them the opportunity to do so.

"According to our latest observations and indication from the data, the demon stronghold's altitude has already dropped by over two thousand meters, which is about half the height of the ridge of the continent." Edith slapped the report in her hands. "Compared to their previous altitude, the mentioned drop is somewhat abnormal. The General Staff has concluded that the floating island requires a consumption of magic power to maintain its hovering altitude, and it is directly proportional to the altitude. And the height they are currently at hinges upon a relative position with the ground surface; therefore, resulting in the phenomenon we observe."

Although the information provided by His Majesty named the demon's floating island as the Deity of Gods, Edith preferred to call it a stronghold, or a mobile fortress. At the very least, it did not cause the subordinates to have the misconception that they were going against a god when missions were assigned.

A majority of the First Army's upper echelons had completed their middle-level classes, but even so, this required them to spend time to comprehend the conclusion provided by the General Staff.

"In other words, once they pass through the Impassable Mountain Range, this thing will rise up again?" Brian asked.

"If our speculation is right." Edith shrugged her shoulders.

"The reason isn't important." Iron Axe spoke up. "What is important is the fact that it is floating just a few hundred meters above the Impassable Mountain Range now. Van'er, what's the situation on your side?"

"The measurements team have confirmed the numbers." Van'er walked to the map. "There are two flat and suitable platforms for the cannons between Metalstone Ridge and Cage Mountains. As long as that thing doesn't change its course midway, we will be able to bombard them. Equipped with the new Longsong Cannons, we might even be able to hit the Demon City."

In the rapid upgrading and replacement of weapons, improvements were naturally ushered into the 152mm Longsong Cannon; for example, the convenient mass production of the barrels, as well as suitable carriages to tow the various components. Out of all the improvements, the core alteration happened in the chamber, as well as the arrival of brand new ammunition.

After Anna's role on the final precision processing for the new cannons switched to mass production, there was a resulting drop in the overall quality manufactured, and these manifested in the precision and durability of the cannons. But the new cannons relied on larger charges and more advanced gunpowder formulations, allowing the firing range to reach the eighteen-kilometer mark, almost achieving a severalfold increment. And the Witches involved in the production line also improved, the current loss of two to three cannons was no longer a matter worth getting angry over.

"I reckon that the demons are heading for the Kingdom of Wolfheart. Although the floating island is capable of producing Red Mist, the Red Mist will dissipate the moment they move; therefore, if the enemy truly plans on occupying a piece of land, they have to build up a large number of Red Mist storage towers," Iron Axe added. "With the help of the mobile Obelisks, their construction will no longer be hindered. Since Everwinter and Kingdom of Wolfheart will soon be connected as one, I believe that the success rate of our assault on the predicted route will be high, and the only thing worth considering is the effect."

Evidently, this plan was completely different from the previous idea of bombarding the Fortress-like Monstrous Beasts. The initial target was clear, which was to destroy the Monstrous Beast before the enemies were aware of it. So long as they were able to hit the targets with the cannons multiple times, they would immediately reap huge benefits. But they could already predict the results from bombarding the floating island. Even if they were able to touch the Demon City, the damage dealt would be limited. Against a stronghold that had Devilbeasts all around, eighteen kilometers was definitely not a safe benchmark. Considering the additional distance between the edge of the island to the center, it was necessary for the cannon team to be even closer to the floating island.

"I think it is worth a shot, Commander-in-chief." Van'er thought for a moment before replying, "Once the floating island enters the Kingdom of Wolfheart, only the Aerial Knights will be able engage the

enemy head on, while the First Army can only provide support. So this is the only opportunity that the cannons can play an important role. Even if we are unable to cause substantial damage, we can, at least, make our stand clear—we humans will not submit to them!”

Iron Axe turned and looked at the Pearl of the Northern Region. “What are your thoughts?”

Edith remained silent for a long time and only nodded her head after a few long minutes. “I have no objections.”

“In that case,” Iron Axe took a deep breathe, then turned and ordered the participants of the meeting, “proceed according to the assault plan we discussed. Time is of the essence, I want to see an immediate result.”

“Yes!” they chorused.

The outcome of the discussion was quickly summarized. The two suitable spots for the cannons were designated with one being the true location and the other being a fake. The latter position was closer to the mobile stronghold, and meant to mislead the enemy. Hummingbird was responsible for the true location, where the cannons would be moved to the mountains at Hermes and they were ordered to have the cannons destroyed before retreating to prevent the enemies from having the opportunity of capturing the weapons.

Aside from the First Army, the Aerial Knight Unit and the God’s Punishment Witch Army were tasked to protect and provide support.

With a goal, what followed was going into detail the process and the actual implementation. The Army was already familiar with the entire process. Even without the excessive urging, the various departments got busy.

Back in the General Staff office, Ferlin could not help but question the minister, “My lord, was there anything... inadequate during the meeting?”

Edith stopped in her tracks. “Why do you say that?”

“Because you spoke lesser than usual...”

“I see.” She raised an eyebrow. “I was merely pondering over a question, the demons call the floating island as the Deity of Gods, so obviously they hold great expectations for it. But from the looks of it, it is just a platform used to supply Red Mist and we haven’t seen or noticed anything out of the ordinary. That is why... I believe that the floating island might be hiding something we have no knowledge of, and perhaps, it is not as simple as we think.”

“Then why didn’t you raise that up?” Ferlin said, perplexed.

“Because it will only increase unease and will not help much. Since we know nothing about it, we will not be able to issue an appropriate response or plan as well. It is not right for me to propose something based on mere speculation, and the assault team will provide us with the answer... regardless of what it is.”

Upon hearing these words, Ferlin felt goosebumps run down his back.

Without any fluctuation in her tone of speech while her face remained as calm as ice, Edith continued, “The Army’s current priority is to ensure thorough preparations for the future, and trial and error is part of the preparations.”

Chapter 1392: Coordinated Combat

The climate at the top of the Impassable Mountain Range was always a beat slower than at the foot of the mountains.

In the past, Cat’s Claw never understood the meaning behind the sentence, but now, having witnessed it for himself, he finally understood what it meant.

Following the end of the Months of Demons, the majority of cities and towns entered the thawing phase, where gradual trickles of rain and the breaking of ice could be heard all over, and new green sprouts appearing in the moist soil by the roadsides. But on the top of the mountains, everything was preserved as they were. Covered mostly in the pure white snow with a few ice stalactites which were taller than an average human hanging by the edge of the cliffs, those traveling on the small paths below were constantly in fear that the thick and solid “needles” might suddenly fall on them.

If not for Hummingbird and the God’s Punishment Witches, it would had been impossible for them to move the heavy weapons to the designated location in time.

But what made Cat’s Claw afraid was the target for the mission—the demon’s mobile fortress.

It was just too gigantic.

Although they were clearly separated by over twenty kilometers, there was no need for a telescope to see the floating island. The floating island practically occupied half of the northern sky in complete disharmony with the surroundings be it its outline or presence. The stones exposed outside were pitch black and there were edges that protruded out like blades. It was in stark contrast with the reviving Fertile Plains beneath it.

Red Mist lingered in the air above the island, where the concentration was highest around the center of the island and diffused out slowly. A few wisps were left lingering at the periphery of the island, and they cascaded down and followed the topography in torrents. When viewed from afar, the Red Mist looked like red ribbons being hung all around.

This enormous object gave Cat’s Claw extremely huge pressure.

In the past, this distance of twenty kilometers signified absolute safety, as both sides would only see each other as small and fine black specks on the large terrain, leaving it close to impossible for either side to discover or fight each other. But at this moment, the distance felt almost within reach, Cat’s Claw felt that he could be pulverized by the floating mountain at any given moment.

Compared to the enemy’s fortress, humanity’s position and cannons appeared to be somewhat insignificant.

The headquarters might had taken this into consideration, which was why they had gathered the officers who had been following the battling army.

He retracted his gaze back to the concealed sentry and breathed out a misty cloud.

Deep and slow breaths helped alleviate his nervousness and anxiety; it was something His Majesty Roland taught repeatedly.

“What’s wrong, you afraid?” Jop bent his back and leaned in.

“Bullshit!” Cat’s Claw glared at him. “How can I ever be afraid!?”

“It’s not something to be embarrassed about.” The latter held a telescope and looked out from an lookout meant for easy observation. “To be honest, this reminds me of the scene when the Artillery Squad was faced against Longsong Stronghold’s cavalry charge.”

Cat’s Claw was startled.

Naturally, he would never forget the experience of his first war. Similarly, it had occurred soon after the Months of Demons and he had been similarly up against aggressive and overbearing enemies. He had almost smashed the artillery shells onto his own feet multiple times while transporting them in the battlefield. Before becoming a part of the army, he had never expected that he would find himself standing perfectly straight against a cavalry charge and even confronted them head on, instead of being frightened to the point of kneeling down to beg or turning to run.

This was despite his legs trembling back then, thinking he was done for.

But this time, the enemy had turned into a floating island.

When his memories overlapped with reality, Cat’s Claw found his pulse moderating back to normal.

“I recall everything now. At that time, you were so afraid that you were stammering.”

“Heh, don’t comment about me, even Commander Van’er was nowhere better.” Jop’s eyes remained fixed on his target. “But at least, we never forgot to fire, and that was enough.”

Cat’s Claw nodded his head in agreement.

Indeed, there was nothing wrong in being afraid, so long as they accomplished their duties and responsibilities. Regardless of whether their enemies were noble cavalryman or a floating island, the only thing they were required to do was to launch the cannons.

“Wait, there’s movement on the fortress!” Jop suddenly lowered his voice, “Devilbeasts, the demons are making a move!”

“That fast?” Cat’s Claw’s heart tensed up, they had not reached their effective firing range. If they were discovered by the demons, their operation would most probably end in failure.

“They are mobilizing a huge force... Heavens.” Jop gulped a mouthful of saliva. “I think there’s more than a hundred of them!”

He immediately raised his telescope higher to see countless black dots flying out of the Red Mist and assembling into a formation at the edge of the floating island. Cat’s Claw was extremely familiar with this scene. The enemy was obviously marshaling their forces and was on the verge of launching an attack. But there was something amiss with the demon’s gathering point...

The two looked at each other and reacted at the same time. "They discovered our fake encampment!"

Compared to their true camp site, the other camp they had set up ahead of time had a few cannons. However, the cannons there were counterfeits made with logs and paint, and no camouflage nets were used. At that moment, it looked as though the plan was showing results!

According to the plan, the enemies from the sky would be dealt with by the Aerial Knights.

Without a doubt, their comrades' combat abilities were far more outstanding, luring the enemies, and providing them a long period of concealment.

"Who knows if they have noticed the enemy's movements..." Cat's Claw muttered. As the floating island carried its own Red Mist, there were no Witches arranged to travel with the assault force, preventing the Artillery Squad from having a means of communication with the main troops. Compared to Lightning and Maggie supporting the entire battlefield, their field of vision at that moment had undoubtedly narrowed by a large margin. But after considering that such circumstances would occur more frequently in the future, Cat's Claw could only get used to the change quickly.

"Relax." Jop clenched his fists and said, "You have to remember who is leading the Aerial Knights!"

...

"This is Maggie, I've noticed strange maneuvers from the demons, cool!" The Exploration Group's report sounded in Tilly's cockpit. "Direction, three o' clock east; quantity, a 103. The lineup has large Devilbeasts among them, and there's more than one, cool!"

"Roger that." Tilly conveniently poured magic power into the other Sigil of Listening. "The enemies are moving, do not disregard the probability of Eye Demons. Seagull, continue circling the area and await further instructions."

"Understood." Andrea was the one to reply her. "Are you engaging?"

"Uh-huh," Tilly replied casually. "Help me ask Shavi, controlling a plane feels good, right?"

"Your Highness... When are you coming back, I-I keep feeling like it can drop at any moment!" Shavi's sobbing could be faintly heard in the Sigil of Listening.

"Focus!" Wendy's voice interrupted her. "Control the stick just like in training. I will help you with the rest."

After receiving the Phoenix, Tilly immediately sought for a successor. Compared to working behind the scenes, she hoped to personally take revenge for Ashes. In the end, Shavi took on this heavy burden and had even established a new record of having the shortest timing to transition from training to real flights. Of course, besides her "enthusiastic guidance," Wendy's even more proficient control over wind played a crucial role. So long as the plane was not recklessly operated, it was difficult for the glider to have any problems with Wendy's support.

"Uhm... the situation is more or less like that." Andrea slapped her forehead and said, "Aside from a few issues on Hill's side, the others are as per normal."

"Very good, then I'll be off."

“Tilly!” Andrea’s voice suddenly sounded.

“I’m listening.”

“Remember... be careful.”

Tilly smiled. “Yes, as should you guys.”

She extended her hand, opened the switch for the transmitter-receiver, tuned the frequency to the public channel and picked up the radio. “Everyone, pay attention. The Devilbeasts have appeared. We will proceed according to plan and intercept them—the sky belongs to us!”

Although the ‘Fire of Heaven’ only had two sets of transmitter-receivers, it was enough to split among the three squadrons and execute a scissor-styled intercept.

“Second Team Captain, Good, copy that.”

“Third Team Captain, Hinds, copy that.”

“Now, attack!” Tilly stepped on the gas and brought the team of 25 ‘Fire of Heaven’s to split off from the Seagull’s trajectory. They flew at high speeds towards the northwest.

Chapter 1393: Trump Card

Under the guidance from the transmitter-receiver, they were able to take up formation perfectly despite being separated by a thousand meters.

Three columnar teams with a total of 75 ‘Fire of Heaven’s arrived at their designated intercepting positions almost at the same time and soared towards the Devilbeast formation from three directions; their trajectories resembling a crisscrossed scissors. In an instant, they tore through the enemy’s line up!

The largest aerial battle to date in the Battle of Divine Will began above the Impassable Mountain Range of the Kingdom of Wolfheart.

In an instant, the ferocious roars of the demons resounded along with the booming engines across the mountains.

The Devilbeasts which were struck plummeted downwards in a spiral fashion. Regardless of how strong the riders were, they were helpless as they plummeted along with their mounts, ultimately turning into a blue spot on the ground.

After the clash, the original formations of both sides no longer existed.

In accordance with the flight manual, the Aerial Knights quickly broke away from the enemy’s pursuit. They made use of their speed superiority and created a distance between them before turning and executing their next round of attacks.

“Fire at will, fire at will!” After issuing the command, Tilly took the lead by relying on the Phoenix’s potent propulsion and charged out of the battlefield. Most probably due to her striking plane color, a few Devilbeasts tailed her, but it was something she had already anticipated.

The more enemies attracted to her, the less pressure her comrades faced.

So long as they were able to pull the distance, the Aerial Knights would become even more suited for an aerial battle compared to the Devilbeasts!

“Your Highness, be careful! There’s a big one eyeing you!” Good’s reminder sounded out from the receiver.

“Relax, I’ve noticed it.” Tilly turned and swept a glance. “Pay attention to your position. I’ll call for support if I require it!”

As the Phoenix’s various functions far surpassed that of the Fire of Heaven and Fire of Heaven Mark II, she had never allocated a wingman for herself. Aside from her confidence at controlling the plane, there were no biplanes capable of keeping up with her. Therefore, flying solo and fighting alone allowed her to paradoxically display the performance of her plane.

Tilly rode with the wind and took the initiative to complete a climb while the Devilbeasts in pursuit did their utmost to flap their wings in a bid to close the distance. But when both parties came face to face again, the enemies remained completely oblivious that they had turned from the hunter to the hunted.

While swooping down with the Phoenix, Tilly firmly pressed down on the fire button!

Under the favorable firing range, she did not even need to check the aim of the machine guns on both wings.

Four dazzling beams of light spewed out from the plane, forming a beautiful arc due to the displacement in the air that flew straight into the Devilbeasts—

Having raised the issue of the 8mm general-purpose machine guns wielding insufficient firepower while sweeping against ground units, Roland prioritized the production of larger-caliber weapons. As a dedicated plane manufactured using the various top techniques possible, the Phoenix naturally was the first to benefit from the weapons. Inside its massive nose, four 20mm autocannons were arranged symmetrically, capable of unleashing 3000 shells per minute, allowing to deliver an unprecedented level of damage.

Although her target was not a ground target like the Spider Demons or Mad Demons, the Devilbeast was a size larger than its peers, clearly indicating that its owner had to be a Senior Demon.

Against an enemy with such power, the best method was to destroy it before it could release all its powers!

The Devilbeast which had spearheaded the charge was instantly penetrated by the autocannon shells that drew strands of blood upon entering its chest. It was an extremely eye-grabbing sight to behold. When the beams of light approached the Senior Demon, the latter unleashed a furious howl. Layers of blue shields immediately appeared and surrounded him into a ball, as though draping a firm armor around himself.

But just moments later, the “armor” produced sparks from the impact of the shells and weakened at a rate visible to the naked eye. It shattered and disintegrated. Following that, the huge thrust sent the Senior Demon flying out of control as it plummeted towards the ground. If the Senior Demon did not

have any magic stones capable of flight or life-saving sigils, it was impossible for him to survive the fall from that height.

The Devilbeast that lost its master panicked and attempted to flee the battlefield, but Tilly clearly wasn't giving it such an opportunity. She unleashed another clip of shells after adjusting her aim.

At this time, both parties were less than 10 meters away from each other. The remaining blood and flesh from the hail of bullets splashed all over the Phoenix's windscreen.

The sight of the bloodstains made Tilly smile, her heart filled with unmatched joy.

The sky was her platform of revenge, and she thirsted for more.

The pitiful whine from the large Devilbeast before its death attracted a new group of enemies. The demons had realized that the red iron bird had outstanding speed and power greater than the other iron birds, and was undoubtedly their biggest hindrance. From how the Devilbeasts were equipped, there were at least two or more Senior Demons in the battlefield.

In the Union's era, they were considered Commanders or the core of an assault team in the Demon Army. But in present times, they had been dispatched as ordinary troops. In some sense, it was enough to reflect the robust strength of the Demons.

But there was not an ounce of fear in Tilly's heart.

Instead, she felt a flame burning in her chest.

In the process of regaining an offensive position, her eyes remain fixated on the Senior Demon, with the other glaring back at her. Tilly could clearly feel the increased caution in their movements as they no longer showed their contempt and belittlement.

She licked her lips and suddenly pushed down the control stick.

"Come on!"

...

"Truly... a delight for the eyes." Mask stood on the plains above the city's exterior as he watched the battle from afar and let out a chuckle.

Silent Disaster turned and looked at him in surprise.

"You must be curious, why am I so interested in those lowlives?" Mask turned his head, the numerous masks producing ear-piercing sounds that were a result of friction.

"No..."

"I guess it won't hurt telling you... the one to determine the superiority or inferiority of a race are not those incompetent beings, but the outstanding individual that controls knowledge! I am not admiring those lowlives who control the iron birds, but the human that understands the principles behind the iron birds—" Mask spread out his hands. "Even though they are of the same race, the disparity between the two are stark. The former are lowlives, while the latter... is what's called human! To be able to combine

a pile of dead metals together and create something capable of moving like biological beings, don't you find that it in itself is such a fascination? I really want to have a taste of such a human brain!"

"..." Speechless, Silent Disaster turned his eyes back to the battlefield.

"But that is something to consider for the future." Unable to elicit any resonating response from Silent Disaster, Mask sighed wistfully. "What we need to do now is to disperse these annoying lowlifes—"

He took out a pocket-sized core and imbued it with magic power. The core's center immediately blossomed with ripples. Following that, the ground beneath his feet started trembling!

A giant stele tore out from the ground as cracked soil and black rocks slid from the top to the ground, producing crackling sounds. The other end of the stele remained buried underground while the stele pointed straight into the sky. After the dispersion of dust, the true form of the stele was revealed. With its translucent walls, one could see the Symbiotic Demon within, with meridian channels and blood vessels spread throughout the entire stele. Continuous flow of magic power streamed through the stele in endlessly, making the stele look like a living creature.

There was more than one such stele.

As though a command was received, even more steles started appearing on the Deity of Gods.

"I will use the Battle of Divine Will to prove that knowledge surpasses brute force, and so-called magic power is only a part of knowledge!" Mask stood in the shadows of the stele and raised the dazzling core in his hand. "—And I, Nassaupelle, am the most praiseworthy Senior Lord in the race!"

Chapter 1394: The Stars amongst the Mountains

"Hell... what are those things?"

Lightning, who was constantly observing the Deity of Gods and circling nearby, immediately noticed the bizarre changes.

"Coo... did they dig up those stone pillars that were buried in the ground?" Maggie stared at the steles for a long time before answering.

From above, the darkish colored steles resembled erected pillars, but to be erected halfway was too strange. Furthermore, the way they spiraled around the floating island in an orderly encirclement evidently served a purpose.

A strong sense of unease surfaced in Lightning's heart.

She immediately activated two Sigils. "This is the Exploration Group! We have captured strange sightings occurring on the floating island! Repeat, something strange is happening on the target!"

"Phoenix, copy that over." Tilly's reply came quickly. "I have also noticed clouds of dust on the surface. Please continue observation, I will inform the Aerial Knights to maintain a high level of alert."

"This is Seagull." Andrea spoke up. "Can you describe the situation in detail?"

“Uhm...” Lightning organized her thoughts and deliberated over her words. “Some of these big and black pillars rise out from the edge of the island. They look almost similar to the towers in Demon City. I can’t gauge their actual sizes, but they are definitely huge—”

At that moment, she was suddenly stunned.

One of the steles flickered with a blinding blue light which looked like it was emitted from within, illuminating the crystal outer walls brightly in the process. Following that, something shot out of the steles at lightning speed and headed straight for the skies!

“Those pillars are hollow inside, cool!” Maggie exclaimed.

“Huh? What’s hollow?” Andrea still failed to understand.

Lightning yelled out at the top of her lungs, “Fleet, scatter!”

The thing shot past the two at rapid speeds, drawing a long parabola before entering the battlefield. This time, she saw it clearly. The thing that had been ejected was also a stone pillar which looked identical to the “needles” produced by Spider Monstrous Beasts, but were multiple times larger! At the same time, the stone pillars were covered by an obvious layer of magic power, glistening at high speeds.

Faced with the sudden attack, both parties panicked momentarily. They turned and dove down in succession in hopes of avoiding the incoming projectiles in the shortest time possible.

Up in the vast sky, both the ‘Fire of Heaven’s and the Devilbeasts were just insignificant dots. The long distance of over ten kilometers took the stone pillar time to cover. From the beginning to the end, the stone pillar only managed to collide into an injured and slow Devilbeast and sending its shattered remains plummeting to the ground.

Just like that? Lightning was startled.

They are shooting those enormous projectiles at such a distance, but they neither explode nor split into a rain of stone needles. Are they truly hoping that such an attack can bring down all the ‘Fire of Heaven’s? Isn’t this akin to using a wooden stick to kill mosquitoes?

But before she could sigh in relief, Maggie used her claws to turn her head towards the direction at where the pillar had landed.

“Look there, cool!”

When Lightning’s gaze landed on the the fake formation of cannons, she immediately understood the situation.

The Demons’ target had been the artillery formation right from the beginning!

The stone pillar smashed right into the formation and erupted into a dazzling blue light. The mere strike on the mountain top evoked a tall mist that reached several meters tall. The heavy sound produced was in no way inferior to the firing of an artillery gun. Due to the immense size, the stone pillar did not stop abruptly, but rolled for almost a hundred meters, destroying everything that stood in its path.

In an instant, the formation was reduced to ruins.

Lightning gasped.

If it had been the real assault formation, wouldn't it had been a disaster?

"Lightning, please reply, what is going on down there?" Andrea asked anxiously, "Is Tilly in danger?"

"No, the planes are all safe, but you best not disturb her now." Lightning turned her eyes back to the aerial battle. After the passing of the stone pillar, both sides once again took up battle formation, their battle obviously unresolved. Her expression became serious when she turned back to the fake formation on the ground. "But the ground units... I'm afraid they are in big trouble!"

It was clearly not an ordinary stone pillar.

Amid the diffusing snow mist, the blue light dimmed down before disappearing completely. Right then, the surface of the stone pillar peeled off and revealed its interior flesh-like composition.

She faintly caught sight of things crawling out of the stone pillars.

"Did you see that?" Lightning smacked her own forehead.

Maggie raised her head and stared for a long while. "Yes... they are Spider Demons, cool! Small Spider Demons, cool!"

...

Cat's Claw and Kop witnessed the entire scene of how the fake position was destroyed. Although their viewpoint was limited and they were unsure what the thing that fell was, the snow that rose up and the reverberating echo on the other mountain was extremely clear. The calculated eighteen kilometers distance away from the mobile fortress which was assumed to be safe was no longer so. The Demons were capable of luring their enemies in, and at the same time, striking them down.

"Captain, the enemies have entered our firing range!" Concealed at another location, the observer's reminder came out, "We did not catch any deviation in the floating island's movements, the three cannons can open fire now!"

Cat's claw bit his lips and looked at Jop.

The choice to fire at that moment was undoubtedly a huge risk, but if they chose to retreat, the entire plan created by the Headquarters and the Aerial Knight's valiant battles would have been useless.

"There are times when we do not have to consider if our actions are effective or not." Jop nodded and spoke slowly.

There's nothing wrong about being scared.

It was the same with failing.

The most important thing was to fulfil the duties as a soldier.

And their duty was to unleash the cannons.

Cat's Claw took a deep breath, got out from the cave lookout to the sentry post, and blew on the operation whistle!

“Everyone get into positions immediately, we will complete our bombardment before the enemies can even respond! Move, move, move! Everyone get moving, let the Aerial Knight see who is the real trump card!”

The empty position that did not have a soul in sight was instantly swarmed by a large number of personnel. The snow white camouflage sheet was pulled open, revealing the cold and gleaming cannons beneath. Unlike the wooden replicas, these steel-cast weapons of war had an overbearing oppression regardless of where and when they appeared.

Without the need for Cat’s Claw’s urging, everyone completed the loading of the charges and the ropes in preparation for the firing. The entire process went naturally and smoothly, completely unlike the time when they fought against the Longsong Calvary.

That’s right, Cat’s Claw was not the only person that had grown.

The troops had become a force capable of influencing the fate of humankind.

“Report, No. 1, 2, and 3 cannons are ready!”

Cat’s Claw looked at the domineering floating island and spat out a mouthful of saliva.

“Open fire!”

Deafening booms sounded out immediately as they ignited above the mountain top.

The mouth of the barrels spewed flames that became dazzling stars amongst the mountains!

Chapter 1395: Close Proximity Interception

There were no test fires or adjustments to the coordinates. The only thing the assault force had to do was to shoot as many artillery shells as they could in the shortest amount of time!

Everyone fully displayed all the techniques grasped from their daily training.

Although the charges had been packaged into smaller quantities that resulted in a reduced launch speed, the artillery elites were able to maintain the standard of four shots per minute with the three cannons. The small disparity between the cannons created a sense of continuity in the firing, producing repeated rumbles that echoed through the mountains like a midsummer thunderstorm.

“They have opened fire, coo!” Maggie could not help but hug Lightning’s head.

“Yeah.” The latter tersely replied, but she was worried for the First Army. She knew that they had seen the destruction of the decoy location, but even so, the assault force still chose to execute and complete their mission. Evidently, they had steeled themselves. Lightning knew she had to fulfill her responsibilities, to complete the investigation thoroughly.

Despite the few cannons, the power projection produced was in no way lacking. The enemies never expected for the Deity of Gods to be hit by the human’s counterattack. When the scattered artillery shells landed around the city, countless demons could be seen scattering in panic. It was evident that

aside from the large troops garrisoned within the mobile fortress, there were a large quantity of Inferior Demons.

Aside from that, Lightning caught sight of human figures within the Red Mist.

This confirmed the theory proposed by the General Staff—the demons had a motive in moving and controlling the humans. But there were no regrets or remorse; Graycastle’s announcements and evacuation had continued for more than half a year, the majority of those who insisted on staying in Everwinter were the dependents of the nobles, and the nobles were the ones firmly opposed to Roland. They would rather take up arms against their own kind than to resist against the demons’ rule.

In Edith’s words, they only had eyes left for the little bit of self-profit, and would even sell out their race’s future just for it.

The continuous advancement of the Deity of Gods allowed the artillery formation’s shells to approach the center of the city, but due to the concentration of the Red Mist, Lightning was unable to observe the results.

Lightning had the choice to call for Sylvie’s help, who was currently on board the Seagull, but doing so would most probably alert the Eye Demons hidden in the city. Once their vision interlocked, the Seagull’s position would be revealed. Even with the assault force’s continuous attack, Lightning’s unease did not dissipate, but instead felt that the demons’ long prepared attack would not end like so quickly.

In her hesitation, the Deity of Gods suddenly rotated slowly.

Another erected stone pillar took aim in the direction of the artillery formation—

Lightning’s heart sank; her worries had come to life. It was impossible for a few Longsong Cannon and Seagulls to stop the enemy from shooting. With the Aerial Knights stuck in combat against the Devilbeasts, the artillery unit were definitely unable to avoid their impending doom.

“Maggie, I’ll leave the investigation to you.” She gritted her teeth.

“Coo?”

Without any further explanation, Lightning tossed the pigeon on her head high up into the air and charged downwards, accelerating to the speed of sound halfway into the flight. The ground units were not equipped with a Sigil of Listening, leaving her the only one capable of warning them!

She covered the distance of thousands of meters in an instant. As for the gigantic stone pillar, it was shot into the sky with dazzling magic power in tow!

“Everyone—get to cover quickly!” Lightning swept through the formation and screamed at the top of her lungs. “The enemies have noticed this location and the stone pillar is almost here! Quickly find some place to hide!”

“It’s Miss Lightning...” Cat’s Claw immediately blew into the whistle. “Everyone, leave your positions now! This is an order, evacuate your positions now!”

The gunners immediately turned and ran towards the bunkers at their fastest speed upon receiving the order. At that point of time, the shadow of the stone pillar was already cast upon the center of the formation.

After the successful evacuation of every gunner in sight, Cat's Claw ran for the closest sentry point, but at the same moment, the dazzling blue pillar smashed dead center into the Longsong Cannons with an immense might! The powerful impact caused the entire peak to tremble, while the cannons that took the direct hit instantly turned into scattered components.

This time, the stone pillar did not roll around and instead formed a large hole in the ground—this was the cause for the collapse of the trench and underground bunkers.

“Cough, cough...” Cat's Claw coughed while climbing out of the snow pile. The violent tremors that surged from his feet through his entire body was definitely unbearable. He even felt as though his organs had shifted at that instant. Fortunately, nothing seemed to be wrong with him aside from his trembling hands and legs.

“Give me a sitrep on the casualties and pull out according to plan.” Cat's Claw yanked a soldier over and ordered, “Spread the word!”

“Yes, sir!”

“Jop, where are you? Cough... there's sound there!” Just as Cat's Claw attempted to call for Jop, the clear sound of a machine gun entered his ears.

What's going on?

Are the enemies attacking the peak?

Even before Cat's Claw could make any sense of the situation, Lightning's warning came out from above.

“Be careful, the pillar has demons hiding in it! They are the real concealed attack!”

Demons... are hiding in it?

Cat's Claw promptly drew the rifle from his back, disengaged the safety mechanism, and ran towards the appointed retreat venue. The Artillery Squad was mostly at the rear and had little to no opportunity of using their guns, but under the consideration of the risk entailed with the close proximity of this mission, not only were every soldier of the squad equipped with rifles, they were equipped with a pair of flintlocks for protection.

The first to react was obviously the experienced gunmen that had gone through actual combat with the flintlocks.

When spray of thrown-up snow settled slightly, Cat's Claw found a few machine gun squad members already in a crossfire, blocking the region that connected the bottom of the mountain to the center of the formation.

The enemies were never-seen-before, miniature Spider Demons.

The Spider Demons crawled out of the opened stone pillar and pounced towards the defensive line against the hail of bullets. The Spider Demons were less than half the height of a human and were extremely similar to the heavy-armored Spider Demons that previously appeared at the Northernmost Port. Their heads and front legs were covered in considerably thick Blackstone slabs that were capable of withstanding a few bullets while still moving agilely.

Aside from that, they were capable of shooting stone needles like ordinary Spider Demons as a form of long-range attack, but they required the opening of the stone armor on their heads, giving the soldiers an opportunity to deal fatal strikes.

Cat's Claw and the flintlock team regrouped and participated in the interception with their rifles. Although the number of monsters hidden within the black pillar was uncertain, the mountain road was the only path of retreat. Soldiers capable of moving naturally converged towards this point. Be it the rescuing of others or the waiting for reinforcements, they had to defend the crucial checkpoint.

"Pay attention to your barrels, do not hold onto the triggers!"

"Ammo, we need ammo here!"

"Anti-Demon Grenades ready—fire in the hole!"

The repeated shouts and gunfire formed a hubbub, while many Spider Demons on the site had stopped moving completely.

Cat's Claw reloaded with a new magazine after emptying one. He noticed that although the Monstrous Beast in front of them were far more capable of experiencing hits than Mad Demons, they were unable to move an inch against the intense firepower. The Blackstone armor on their bodies were incapable of completely negating the penetration of the bullets and soon cracked from the barrage of bullets. If one bullet was not enough, then ten or a hundred bullets would do the trick. It was not difficult for the elite assault force who were equipped with superior weapons to accomplish that.

Besides the tempest of bullets was sufficient to suppress their enemies completely. The main defense of the miniature Spider Demons were concentrated on their heads and forelimbs. If they engaged in their high speed bursts, their weak and defenseless interiors would be exposed, so the Spider Demons were forced to advance forward against the curtain of bullets, which gave the anti-demon grenades excellent opportunities and sufficient time to be cooked and thrown.

After grasping the clear traits and patterns of their enemies, the humans employed the machine guns to seal the enemy movements and threw grenades to finish them off. This became a highly effective and time-saving battle strategy.

But the Spider Demon's largest weakness were on their backs—

A girl with short and golden hair swooped down and flew through the Spider Demons like a specter, opening fire ferociously at their heads with her dual pistols. Perhaps to ensure their agility, the Spider Demons' backs were left almost completely defenseless like Mad Demons. Her pistol bullets easily ripped through the thin epidermis and blasted their backbones and brains into a paste.

Every time she made a move, the defensive line would erupt into enthusiastic cheers.

The majority of the soldiers were all too familiar with the nimble figure.

She was Miss Lightning, the one they were most proud of!

Chapter 1396: Silent Disaster

The demons' attack were completely suppressed.

Although the black pillar's size was astonishing, it was impossible for the complex inner structure to hold an infinite number of small Spider Demons. Additionally, the assault force was equipped with a complete set of weapons, with over 20 general-purpose machine guns, causing the spray of bullets produced at such short distances to be described as air-tight.

Under the suppressive fire, the number of people gathered at the retreat point quickly surpassed 300, which was close to the total headcount of the assault force. A small number of casualties was a result of the evacuation. After being separated by the large stone pillar that landed right in the middle of the formation, those further from the mountain trail undoubtedly bore greater pressure, aside from the threat of the Spider Demons. They faced the risk of the dangerous bullets fired by the others. They were only able to keep their bodies low and while attacking the enemies, run along the flanks.

Fortunately for them, the popularization of tracers increased the machine gun squad's suppression and precision efficiency to the point that they became leagues better than they were before. With the guidance of the tracer flames, the gunners were able to accurately choose their targets, unlike the past situation whereby their bullets deviated off the battlefield without them even realizing.

But the crux of the battle was undoubtedly Lightning's timely warning. If they had continued firing when the stone pillar struck, the casualties and death would not have ended there.

Therefore, when she floated downwards gently, she gained the unanimous and warm applause from the crowd.

But Lightning's tensed expression did not relax one bit. "Where is the commanding officer?"

"I am the person responsible for this operation, Cat's Claw." Cat's Claw walked forward and gave a bow to the young lady. "Everyone here managed to survive all thanks to you."

"You need to regroup and evacuate immediately." Lightning spoke quickly, "The blackstone pillar that destroyed the decoy location contains the same Spider Demons, and they are all heading over here now. Another thing, there are still many projectile installations on the floating island, so the enemy can shoot out another pillar at any moment!"

Upon hearing the information, Cat's Claw's heart jumped in fright.

They had already completed their mission to bombard the enemy and according to the plan, the next order of move was to withdraw and evacuate, but their manner of retreat was now completely different—Cat's Claw initially thought to clear out the remaining enemies before pulling all their comrades—dead or alive—out of the Impassable Mountain Range. But the situation had turned far worse than he had anticipated.

The two designated positions were not far from each other and even had a connecting route along the mountainside. If Lightning's report was accurate, the longer they stayed on the mountain, the higher the probability of encountering the Spider Demons midway.

The narrow mountain trails were unlike the lands smoothed out by the Witches. With barely enough space to hold two rows of soldiers, they had to factor in the snow and slope, which prevented them from forming an effective defensive perimeter. There were only two choices left—to take the troops down the mountain immediately regardless of the number and occupy the junction at the mountainside before the Spider Demons arrived, or to call for the reinforcements to intercept the enemy.

The problem laid in Lightning's words, the 'many projectile installations.' If the position of the reinforcements was exposed, they would be treated as another important target and suffer from yet another bombardment. After all, the reinforcements were over 800 strong, and resembled more of a main force. Therefore, the most reliable method was to inform the reinforcements to hold back, while they had to rely on their own strength to fight against the enemy.

No matter how reasonable this logic was, to truly make such a decision was not an easy thing to do.

With the whereabouts of 23 men unaccounted for, either injured, incapable of moving, or still seeking for an opportunity behind the stone pillars, they would be left to survive on their own if the troops left.

And Jop was nowhere to be seen...

For a moment, Cat's Claw mind turned adrift.

"Captain!" Someone by the side called out to him.

He was immediately brought back to his senses. That's right, I am the person responsible for these troops. Regardless, he needed to consider the completion of the mission, which was to bring back as many First Army soldiers out of the Impassable Mountain Range.

"Contact team, inform the reinforcements to maintain their concealment." Cat's Claw gritted his teeth and gave the order. "The rest of you, we will now evacuate this position immediately and meet at the junction at the mountainside!"

He took out a cowhorn and blew into it, producing the signal for retreat—

Under his command, the flintlock troops which assumed the role of defenders divided themselves up, protecting the scattered soldiers who were running down the mountain until the last person left.

"Miss Lightning, can I request you for something?" After giving the orders, Cat's Claw looked at Lightning. "For the soldiers who temporarily aren't able to make it here—"

"Don't worry, leave it to me." Lightning already knew what he wanted to say from his complicated expression.

"I'll leave it to you!" Cat's Claw gave another bow, before organizing the Artillery Squad down to the next gathering point.

...

Is this the product you are so proud of?

Silent Disaster tilted his head and looked at Mask. Although the former did not speak, Nassaupelle felt as though he could hear the mocking words and the laughter of the other party.

The lowlifes' resistance was far more ferocious than he had anticipated. Even after shortening the distance between them, the "Extinguisher" Symbiotic Demons failed in disposing off the resistance. The situation left it quite embarrassed—especially after Mask had declared that knowledge was supreme.

To have bestowed the new Symbiotic Demons the name of 'Extinguisher' meant that Nassaupelle wanted to use it to prove that their existence were sufficient to overpower the human's fire forks, fire bolts, and fiery rain capabilities. But not only did the humans successfully obstruct the first wave of Extinguishers, they were able to form a defensive perimeter at the mountainside in preparation to fight the second wave.

This outcome was truly difficult for Nassaupelle to swallow!

He knew that his work was far stronger than the Primal Demons not only in terms of attack and defense, but that they were also not restricted by the Red Mist. Furthermore, they had no fear for their own lives and could never tire out until the complete consumption of their magic power. To him, they were considered perfect weapons of war. If it had been invented a few hundred years earlier, Nassaupelle believed that the Union would never have escaped. Ignoring the Fertile Plains, even the islands south of the Land of Dawn would be easy to conquer!

Yet, when it was first introduced into battle, the Extinguishers barely performed better than the Primal Demons. How could it not annoy him?

"We have plenty of Symbiotic Demons on the Deity of Gods, I want to see how long these lowlifes can resist!" Senior Lord Mask raised the magic core in his hand again.

But Silent Disaster grabbed and stopped him.

"Do you want to tell me that the magic power is limited—" Nassaupelle spoke resentfully. The thing he hated most was individuals that relied on force to "interfere" with his plans, and not the inability to comprehend rationality and reason. He knew that the Blood Conqueror was as such, same for the Sky Lord, but he never expected for Silent Disaster to be the same as well.

The reason why the improved "spear-wielding" Symbiotic Demons had the ability to throw such astounding weights was completely a result of the strong magic power provided by the improved obelisk. Every shot consumed a large amount of magic power; thus, shooting consecutively in short intervals would influence the Deity of Gods' flight. Aside from that, the huge consumption would substantially age the God's Stone mine beneath the obelisk, decreasing the lifespan of the Deity of Gods. "—But if we do not get rid of these lowlifes, wouldn't we be boosting their morale? Don't forget the lowlifes which Hackzord had brought up here. They are observing the battle as well. For the sake of the race, we have to annihilate them completely at all cost!"

"Allow me," Silent Disaster replied in a concise manner.

In response to Silent Disaster's inclination to do battle, Mask was stunned. "You plan to set out with the spears? I have experimented multiple times. When that thing falls to the ground, the force is sufficient

to crush all living specimens in one's body. Even after wrapping the live specimens up, it is extremely difficult to ensure their lives; only some Symbiotic Demons are capable of withstanding the huge impact."

"But you haven't tried it with me, no?" Silent Disaster walked towards the stele that was accumulating magic power without turning his head.

"Hackzord isn't around. If anything happens, I can't save you!"

Silent Disaster waved his hand, as though he did not take the warning to heart.

Mask had no choice but to activate the magic core as he controlled the spear-wielding Symbiotic Demon to open its outer shell.

Right as Silent Disaster entered the stele, Mask called out.

"Hey, don't die."

Silent Disaster raised an arm, to reveal a white cloth—it resembled the corner piece of a robe.

Mask frowned; very few in the race placed emphasis on decorative items, but the thin and white cloth reminded him of the usual getup of Valkries in the Presiding Holy See.

"I will not die until all the humans are dead." he replied before disappearing into the stele.

Chapter 1397: The Bloody Battle in the Mountains (1)

"Be careful, the following descent will be much faster. If you are afraid, close your eyes."

After Lightning's warning, she carried a Graycastle soldier and flew to the edge of the mountaintop. The instant their feet were off the ground, the duo plummeted tens of meters in a breath before slowing to a stable speed.

By the time his feet were on the ground again, the soldier's face was palish white. "Thank... thank you, Miss Lightning, I... ugh—"

"Take a few deep breaths, your body will recover in a bit."

With that, she flew back up the mountaintop and continued her search for stranded survivors.

Cat's Claw's guess was proven to be true. After the sudden attack of the stone pillar, a few soldiers were left stranded on the other side of the field and scattered by the assault of the Spider Demons. Although a few were successful in getting past the blockade and joined up with the defense force at the stipulated location, many others were pinned down. Some were unwilling to abandon their wounded comrades, and some engaged in bitter struggles against the Spider Demons, to the point of not being able to withdraw despite hearing the retreat signal.

Now, with the bulk of the troops retreating in batches, Lightning's appearance gave them hope.

Although the upgrade and adulthood did not increase her strength, it was enough to save the men by being able to fly ten meters off the ground.

The only problem was her ability to carry one person at a time. Additionally, the substantial descent off the cliff that was not a problem for Lightning who was used to flying alone, but the act of carrying a soldier each time was a plummet in every sense of the word.

The gunshots at the artillery position gradually ceased. Clearly, regardless be it the demons or the members of the assault force, there were few left. Lightning successfully found about ten soldiers and placed them on a small path on the back of the mountain.

“Phew, I think that’s the last one.” After dropping the last survivor, she heaved a sigh of relief. “You guys can find your own way down the mountain, right?”

“Thank you for your help!” Everyone saluted at attention, and someone asked. “Do you know the location of the main troops?”

“They are currently on the other side of the mountain, positioned to fight against Spider Demons coming from the north.” Lightning gave a rough explanation of the situation, “There’s no way to do a detour here; just go straight down the mountain, quickly get to Metalstone Ridge before the floating island passes the Impassable Mountain Range.”

“I see... we understand.” Everyone’s expression became heavy, they were able to survive due to the heroic sacrifice of their comrades. Mixed emotions and indignation surfaced on their faces from the fact that they were unable to contribute while the others were still engaging the enemy.

But no matter how regretful they felt, they knew that they could not be a burden on the main force.

“Oh right, Miss Lightning.” Just as they were about to separate, the soldier who vomited hesitated before speaking. “When the stone pillar fell, the tremors collapsed the concealed structure for Cannon No. 3. I saw a few soldiers hiding around there while running, I’m not sure if there would be survivors in there...”

“Cannon No. 3’s shelter, got it.” Lightning nodded. “I’ll take a look.”

After watching the group turn and retreat down the mountain, Lightning soared into the air and returned to the artillery formation.

Meanwhile, Maggie’s voice came out of the Sigil of Listening with a new warning.

“Be careful, coo. The demons are going to release the third stone pillar!”

“Can you judge its target?”

“Unsure, but I don’t think it is the mountaintop, coo!” Maggie’s voice suddenly trembled. “It’s coming, coo!”

Lightning soared back into midair, only to witness the black pillar drawing a long arc towards the Impassable Mountain Range.

The demons did not aim for the assault force, which meant they were most probably targeting the troops retreating down the mountain. The terrain there was extremely complicated, and the casualties suffered by the humans would only increase substantially if the Spider Demons breached their meager

defenses. The only good news was that due to the undulating terrains around the path that acted as shelter, it was improbable that the demons had accurate aim to land the stele right on top of the troops.

She immediately made the decision to return and support the assault force at the mountainside.

Right at this moment on the Seagull, Sylvie suddenly opened her eyes. "Heavens..."

"What happened?" Andrea exclaimed in surprise. To avoid being discovered by the demons, Sylvie had kept her eyes closed, the theory being that it would remain so long as she was unable to see the situation beneath the clouds.

"There is an extremely powerful magic power feedback!" she muttered to herself in disbelief, "It is speeding towards the Impassable Mountain Range!"

Magic power feedback? Andrea was startled.

The term made her recall Ursrook's curse—in the last battle of Taquila, the other party had made use of a decoy to release magic power to deliberately lure the ambush team.

But the decoy magic power source was completely different from the original. It was possible that Sylvie would not be able to distinguish the fine details across a distance of over ten kilometers, but under the current circumstances, she was likely capable of determining if the source was genuine or not.

In other words, the anomaly captured by the Eye of Magic was most probably a genuine Senior Demon.

Although it wasn't clear why the enemy had chosen to reveal their identity at such a moment, the people onboard the Seagull knew that they could not sit idly since it had taken action.

Right from the beginning, their targets had been the most difficult demons which appeared on the battlefield.

Andrea had long waited for this very moment.

"It's our turn to perform now!"

But Sylvie continued staring at the floor of the cabin with beads of perspiration trickling down her forehead. "Is that really a demon... How is it possible for its magic power to be that strong..."

"Uh... how strong?"

"Far stronger than Ursrook—" Sylvie bit her lips. "I'm afraid that only Leaf in her Heart of the Forest state can compare to that..."

"What did you say?" Andrea was stunned.

She had witnessed the rich magic power Leaf possessed when she occupied a corner of the Misty Forest. To call it vast was still an understatement, but it was an outcome achieved by relying on external forces. But for a single individual to wield such a power? "Hey, hey... are you exaggerating a little bit too much?"

Wendy immediately activated all the Sigils of Listening. "Your Highness Tilly, Lightning, Maggie, this is Seagull! Sylvie detected an enemy approaching the mountain range. From the magic power feedback,

the enemy is most probably a Higher Ascendant-ranked Senior Lord! Do not engage, I repeat, do not engage!”

“Then what do we do?” Shavi asked timidly.

“Do I have to answer that?” Andrea clenched her fists. “Only such enemies are worthy of receiving the bullets formed by our sisters’ blood, sweat and tears.”

...

“Boom—!”

The third stone pillar passed through the gap between two mountain peaks and swept through the dried up and rotten trees, devastating everything in its path until it ultimately rolled down a hill into the valley. The long and brown path formed by a mix of soil and branches drew a huge contrast against the snowy background.

Cat’s Claw let out a sigh of relief.

He felt that giving the orders for a quick retreat was the correct decision—the time interval between the third stone pillar and the second was far longer, and there were only a few enemies left on the mountainside. At present, the time they fought for gave them enough time to face the new enemies.

Besides, the stone pillar had landed coincidentally between them and the reserved troops. Not only did the difference in height provide the shooters better conditions for firing, the distance of over a kilometer made it relatively easier to distribute the firepower, unlike the two sudden battles from before.

But Cat’s Claw found it a pity that they were not equipped with the 75mm cannons, which could be aimed directly at the giant stone pillar. To be able to destroy the disgusting bugs the moment they revealed their heads would have definitely allowed them to expel the anger in the soldiers.

Chapter 1398: The Bloody Battle in the Mountains (2)

“Captain, they are climbing up!”

“Fire only when they get closer; we do not have as many bullets as the machine gun squad to spare!”

Cat’s Claw found a suitable roosting location and raised his Van’er rifle. While waiting for the enemies, he kept an eye on the position of the floating island. He was unsure if it he was seeing things, but the floating island appeared to rise in altitude. Previously he could barely make out the edges of the island, but all he could see now was the craggy bottom.

But one thing was for sure, the floating island had taken this period of time to close in on the Impassable Mountain Range and its gigantic shadow had covered a corner of the mountains. Upon thinking about the probability of them having to fight under its shadow, Cat’s Claw felt stifled, as though a heavy rock was crushing his back.

We have to get rid of those damned demons and leave this mountain before the floating island arrives.

Probably sharing his thoughts, the machine gun squad finally let loose the moment the Spider Demons entered a range of five hundred meters, spewing out tongues of fire from their muzzles at the targets on the slope.

In that moment, the valley became heated.

Cat's Claw pulled the trigger when the enemies reached the 150-meter mark, the distance he was most confident of.

"Fire!"

The muzzles of all the guns stirred up a flurry of snow instantly.

Although none of them were professional marksman, the majority of them had modified their weapons under Van'er's influence. In semi-automatic mode, so long as the Van'er rifle didn't jam, it could unleash a metal rain not inferior to a machine gun squad's.

Faced against the tough miniature Spider Demons, the meaning of having concentrated firepower reached a whole new level. If it were the ordinary troops of the First Army equipped with standard issue, it would have been difficult to stop the large quantity of fearless Spider Demons.

Suddenly, a black light shot out from the forest like a huge ripple that instantly penetrated everyone.

It disappeared as fast as it appeared, the entire process taking less than a second. If not for the shivering of the comrades next to him, Cat's Claw would have thought that it was all an hallucination of his.

"Did... you just see something?"

"It looked like some black ripple?"

Cat's Claw touched his own body but sensed nothing different. The defensive line did not suffer from any damage, proven by the endless stream of gunshots.

"It most probably came from that weird stone pillar." A comrade reloaded a new magazine and spoke, "Those things are extremely bizarre, they are clearly rocks on the exterior, but they have flesh and blood inside."

Cat's Claw no longer pursued the matter. Compared to the harmless black light, killing the approaching Spider Demons was more important. But he quickly discovered that the snow vista before him had become darker, as though the sun had been blocked.

Damn it, has the floating island already entered the mountainous region?

He raised his head, but was stunned by what he saw.

The fortress was still in its original place, but the sky had changed.

The bright and clear day turned dark and gloomy while golden streams of light shuttled through the dark clouds, as though it was being accumulated. The speed of the sudden change completely surpassed that of any meteorological phenomenon, causing an extreme unease to arise in his heart.

Everyone detected the change above their heads.

In the short span of 10 seconds, the dark clouds had gathered and blocked out all light.

Tens of thousands of lights continued to gather and faintly blossomed in strength.

Why does it feel that we have seen this scene before...

Cat's Claw suddenly drew out a bugle horn. Right before he could even blow into it, countless lightning bolts smote down through the clouds in a circular radius and continued expanding out, instantly falling right onto the assault force's defensive perimeter!

The continuous gunshots stopped abruptly.

...

"Is that—the Sigil of God's Will?" On Seagull, Wendy gasped in disbelief.

"Even if it isn't the Sigil, I'm afraid it is a similar type of magic stone," Andrea replied with a serious expression on her face. "Lightning, are you alright?"

"I'm fine." Her voice came out through the Sigil of Listening. "The enemy should have noticed my presence."

"Stay there, it is no longer your battle." Andrea warned. The black ripple that emerged was obviously aimed for Lightning, it was an extremely familiar sight to the Witches that had participated in the ambush at Taquila. It was the special ability Magic Slayers had.

The large-scale emanation of the Magic Slayer's power was definitely a bane against Lightning's agile-type powers. Once affected, the simple change in her speed and inertia would lead her to be trapped. The enemy had no doubt considered severing her ability, causing her to drop like a rock before engaging her.

The unfortunate thing was that Lightning took Wendy's warning and did not charge forward impulsively. This allowed her to shake off the black ripple with the rest of her energy.

"Get Maggie to inform the reinforcements that the assault force might be in trouble." Andrea looked towards Sylvie. "Have you found the target?"

The latter took a deep breath. "It has already charged up the slope at an extremely fast speed. I haven't sensed any Eye Demons nearby for now, but I don't think we have attracted its attention. But the defense line was struck by lightning, I'm afraid they no longer have the means to obstruct the Spider Demons any longer."

That meant that the soldiers were almost in range of the Monstrous Beast's stone needles.

But she was too occupied to take that into consideration.

According to Sylvie's instructions, Andrea found the Magic Slayer's figure through the aiming lens with much difficulty, but at the same time, her heart sank. Its speed was not only fast, it was so fast that it could be considered as flickering erratically! If one was just slightly slow to catch up, they would have lost its shadow. To seize the opportunity for a shot, they had to be extremely close. Otherwise, the enemy would still be able to avoid her bullets while in flight even if she used her ability.

The other thing that attracted Andrea's attention was during the First Army's battle, the completely armored Magic Slayer did not have any blue barrier around its body—this was not something that just speed alone could explain.

During this period of observation, the dark clouds did not dissipate. Gold light converged once more and descended down—

The enemy had unleashed the second God's Will!

This verified Sylvie's warning.

The Magic Sayer held an unfathomable magic power capacity.

There was no time to hesitate!

Andrea suppressed the doubts in her heart and shouted to Wendy, "We need to go down, just like how we ambushed Hackzord the other time. As long as we can narrow the gap, I can ensure that the enemy will have no chance of escaping!"

"How close?"

"As long as it's not within the Magic Slayer's reach, the closer the better!"

"That's difficult..." Wendy sighed. "It wouldn't be a problem if Her Highness Tilly is the pilot, but Miss Shavi is the one piloting now. Not only do I need to control the strength of the wind from multiple directions, I have to pay attention to the enemy, it's really not an easy thing to do..."

"You're saying it's impossible?" Andrea's heart trembled slightly.

"It's not impossible, but it requires extreme concentration and an all-out effort—" Wendy closed her eyes, then spoke slowly, "Well, I guess even though I'm old, doing it once occasionally shouldn't result in too much of an impact."

Andrea was startled, then the corner of her lips curled upwards.

She recalled Lightning's remark—everyone would think of Wendy as an amiable senior, but under that gentle and soft appearance was in fact, a firm and determined heart.

If not for that, she would never had used her precise power to break the God's Stone of Retaliation in front of Cara and save Nightingale.

"Shavi, push down your control stick!" Andrea shouted, "We're attacking!"

Chapter 1399: The Bloody Battle in the Mountains (3)

The strongest advantage of the Seagull was the silence it possessed despite the increase in flight speed. It was most suited at ambushing enemies from behind.

After passing through the clouds, the glider bypassed multiple mountain peaks like an apparition and quietly approached the battlefield from behind. At this moment, the assault force's defensive line had

been completely breached and the soldiers were forced to hold their own ground and retreat while fighting. If it had been any other troops, they would have long scattered after losing an overall command.

But the First Army's situation was no longer as optimistic as before. Upon losing their advantage in terms of firepower, the price to pay to kill the Spider Demons which also had long-ranged attacks increased severalfold. What's more, they had their monster-like black-armored demon counterpart.

Relying on the aiming lens, Andrea could clearly see the appearance of the enemy. Apart from the veined patterns that covered its body and the exaggerated and bizarre armor, it held an extremely large halberd. His entire image resembled one of a heavy-armored soldier. But the agility it exhibited far surpassed that of charging cavalry. Additionally, it was capable of changing directions at will, as though the armor and weapon on it were weightless.

For Andrea, it was the most difficult type of opponent.

"How far are we?"

"1900 meters..." The anxiousness in Sylvie's voice became more apparent. "How is it, can you land the shot now?"

"No." She licked her dry lips. "Closer."

During this entire process, Andrea quietly activated her ability multiple times. The silver lines in her vision split from one, to two, until it filled her entire vision. This meant she had more than ten ways to fire and hit the target, so long as the target was "cooperative" enough. The moment she pulled on the trigger, the final destination of the bullet would be certain. But no one could predict the enemy's movements within those few seconds while the bullet traveled its trajectory.

If it was an ordinary firearm, she could fire continuously and use quantity to eliminate the probability of failure. But the sniper rifle in her hand was a large caliber rifle with a long interval for fire, and she was unable to use the precious God's Stone of Retaliation bullets as a gamble.

Thus, the safest method was to decrease the bullet flight time as much as possible, to force the target to be as 'static' as possible between the gun's firing and for the bullet to hit the target.

"1500 meters!" Sylvie could not help but grab onto her clothes tightly.

"Seagull is changing directions, take note of the inclination!" Wendy reminded.

This distance was enough for the naked eye to differentiate the glider from a large bird of prey. Although they were above an intense battlefield, no one paid special attention to movements in the sky. But the Witches were extremely tensed and felt their hearts in their throats. They slowed their breathing despite knowing that the enemies could not determine the source of the sound.

"1300 meters!" Sylvie shouted.

"Closer!" Andrea had her finger on the trigger. A single second was enough for the majority of her targets, but since the enemy was a Senior ranked Demon, she hoped to minimize all errors and prevent any accidents from occurring.

"1100 meters!"

“Shavi, pay attention to the gear angles, I’m almost at my limit!”

“900—”

Right at that moment, Andrea unleashed her ability.

Countless silver lines had practically crammed her entire vision and finally converged into one dazzling light pillar. At this short distance, the influence of the wind and gravity was practically negligible.

“What you see is what you get,” she muttered softly, and pulled the trigger.

Almost at the same time, the Magic Slayer sensed something different from the First Army soldier’s reactions. It suddenly turned and discovered the glider sweeping above its head. The moment the muzzle unleashed its fire, the God’s Stone of Retaliation bullet was already flying towards it. No matter how skilled and nimble it was, it was already too late for it to dodge!

Following a loud “bang”, a shockwave exploded from the Magic Slayer’s body. The powerful force sent it flying, while the dark clouds in the sky dissipated like ice and snow melting under the scorching sun.

“Did we succeed?” Wendy asked anxiously.

On the contrary, Sylvie’s face was pale white. “No... I’m afraid that the bullet missed.”

“How is that possible.” Andrea clenched her teeth and used an enchanted gauze on her shoulder.

“When firing, I clearly saw that it had not noticed the shot—”

Sylvie was at a loss for words, her ability was unable to penetrate the barrier conjured from the God’s Stone of Retaliation; thus, she was unable to ascertain what happened in that instant. But she clearly saw that when the black light from the God’s Stone of Retaliation bullet closed in onto the Magic Slayer, the space around the surroundings distorted, as though something had stood between it and the bullet. After the abrupt explosion of the black light, everything occurred as per normal, and the bullet shot straight into the target’s chest.

“Stop arguing, what’s the situation of the target?” Shavi interrupted.

“It’s... getting up,” Sylvie answered bitterly.

Through her Eyes of Magic, Sylvie saw clear scars left on the black armor, most probably from the shattered God’s stone, the most distinct being the damaged helmet. Half of the Magic Slayer’s tall and spire-shaped helmet had been smashed into pieces, revealing the chilly lower features beneath it.

Regardless of the reason of this development, the Magic Slayer’s ability to stand indicated the outcome.

“Sylvie, help me to reload!” Andrea screamed.

“We are already out of God’s Stone bullets...”

“Then use ordinary ones.” Andrea insisted. “Since the Magic Slayer is able to use its ability under such circumstances, it doesn’t matter whether the bullets are made out of God’s Stones or not. All that matters is we shoot at it!”

“The sky is getting dark again!” Shavi whined. “When will this guy ever stop?”

Sylvie pushed the half-arm long 'bullet' into the chamber. "But it has already noticed us, if we try again—"

"That is why I must take this shot!" Andrea roared. "If we run from this, I'm afraid we won't make it out of the clouds!"

The Magic Slayer that was standing raised its halberd as its eyes glowed a sinisterly red. sinister red lights.

The rumbling of thunder spread across the entire valley.

"Reloaded!"

"Wendy, stabilize the direction!" Andrea aimed at her target as the silver lines once again connected the target with the muzzle. She ignored the piercing pain in her shoulder and fired without hesitation.

As though having sensed danger, the Magic Slayer leaped to the side and swung its halberd!

This time, Sylvie finally saw the true appearance of the distorted object—

They were light and transparent, similar to a cicada's wings, but definitely not actual cicada wings. Formed using magic power, they were sharper than any blade and spiraled spontaneously around the Magic Slayer.

Even when the bullet was already a miss, they reacted instantly. Some cut directly at the bullet's trajectory while the rest formed a wall of blades around the Senior Lord.

An explosive shockwave appeared once more and caused a snowy mist to form, while the distorted golden light struck down from the skies onto Seagull's left wing.

The glider instantly lose balance and spiraled towards the bottom of the mountain—

...

After an hour, the Deity of Gods's shadow shrouded the Impassable Mountain Range.

Following the opening of the gates beneath the island, a large quantity of Red Mist cascaded down like a waterfall and rushed through the ravine in both the east and west directions.

Silent Disaster removed his broken helmet and immersed himself in the comfortable and moist atmosphere.

Although there were remaining human troops resisting, it no longer affected the general situation. After noticing the appearance of new enemy troops, Mask fired another three spears. The humans would had never expected for Deity of Gods to have hidden firing pathways located at the bottom of the island, and these steles which were shot directly wielded even more lethality. After being crushed by the three spears, the humans had difficulty reorganizing and launching an effective counterattack.

Following that, the Symbiotic Demons searched for the defeated humans endlessly until they were all killed.

The iron birds attempted to cover the retreating humans once, and one particular red iron bird gave him trouble. Not only was the Deity of Gods unable to shoot down this target, the enemy's gunfire expended a lot of the island's magic power. In terms of its speed and mobility, the red iron bird was far stronger than the others. But it did not seem to be suited for prolonged battles, and was ultimately repelled by him and the Bogle Beasts.

There was no doubt that victory belonged to the demons for this battle.

Chapter 1400: One's Conduct

"You're still alive?"

Mask's voice sounded out from within Silent Disaster's mind. It was the consciousness reverberating through the Birth Tower.

He lowered his head and glanced at the dark white torn piece of robes in his hand. *"I said it before, I will not die until all the humans are destroyed."*

"Very good, but do not forget, I am the determining factor for this victory, Nassaupelle! Without the new Symbiotic Demons and Deity of Gods's combined attack, even if we had squeezed three thousand Primal Demons, they would have been useless in this craggy foothills..."

"I don't disagree."

"..." Not expecting Silent Disaster to reply so straightforwardly, silence occurred for a brief moment. *"In all, if the King asks about the Western Front, I hope you remember what you've said. Another thing, Hackzord did nothing in this battle, and you have seen it for yourself, although he has his reasons, contributions and achievements should be distinguished clearly."*

"I agree."

"..." The other party maintained his silence again. *"I never considered you to comprehend reason. Well, let us go to where those lowlifes have erected their fiery rain, I will let the Deity of Gods meet up with you there."*

"You want to retrieve their weapons?"

"That's right," Nassaupelle replied, delighted. *"They are the spoils and proof of victory, and precious objects that I can collect while on my journey of probing the profound secrets."*

...

While ascending the mountain, the Deity of Gods closed the gates before slowly descending.

Silent Disaster had to admit that Senior Lord Mask's contributions was irreplaceable in the battle. With the floating island being wider than the Impassable Mountain Range, anyone standing beneath would feel as if the mountain would be crushed. But in fact, at the moment the floating island touched ground, it would become still and just like if a thousand catties were stacked on an egg, the latter would not end up cracking.

After the battle, the transport of supplies and reorganization of forces became extremely easy.

Although the Deity of Gods did not touch the ground, they used suspended platforms capable of ascending and descending for the transportation of goods in and out. With their height advantage of over a hundred meters perpendicularly, it deterred any potential enemies far more than what a moat could ever do.

It could be said that attacking the Deity of Gods from the outside was an impossible task.

While waiting to converge, Silent Disaster suddenly heard a sound from the ground beneath his feet.

The position had been abandoned by the humans, and even if there were survivors, the Symbiotic Demons would have killed them.

He followed the source of the sound and arrived at a collapsed cave.

This was likely a hidden fortification dug by the humans that had collapsed due to the impact of the stele, turning the hidden space within to become a cage. The faint sounds were likely from there.

If nothing was done, whatever was beneath would definitely die.

Silent Disaster crouched down and lifted away the collapsed ceiling with one hand.

He himself was unclear why he was doing so. Perhaps it was the hope of gathering more information, or Mask's interest in the people from Graycastle had affected him. Not long later, Silent Disaster excavated a cave entrance capable of fitting one person.

The dark passageway was not long and after passing two turns, Silent Disaster arrived at the end and found the source of the sound—the end of the passageway was a rather spacious room with an oil lamp at the entrance. Under the dim and yellow light, a male human sat with his back against the wall as he gasped for air with difficulty. On the floor were numerous bloodstains formed from a result of dragging.

Silent Disaster noticed that what remained of the male human's legs were just chunks of skin and flesh, most probably severed off after he was trapped under the collapse of the hidden fortification.

But he should know the structure of this place, even if he abandoned his legs, he should know that it is impossible to escape. If so, why did he go through all these struggles?

"A pity..." The male raised his head and looked at Silent Disaster. "The one I eventually waited for is a demon."

"Speak, of the things—you know. Otherwise, death—will be something you desire." Silent Disaster spoke rather stiffly. Unlike Valkries, ever since he gained sentience, he spent most of his time fighting the Sky-sea Realm and was unfamiliar with the human language.

But the other party seemed to be oblivious to his question.

"Previously, I was wondering... how nice it would be if the person who comes is a comrade. But if a demon came... wouldn't I be sitting here and waiting for death." He chuckled weakly. "Fortunately, there were some charges kept here. With a detonator, I can still fulfill my final duty. But who would have thought that a big fish would come..."

Without a clue on what to ask, Silent Disaster thought to himself emotionlessly. *I should hand him over to Mask instead.*

Right when he was prepared to step forward to knock the man out, a rope rolled out from the human's hand quietly.

The other end of the rope was attached to a heavy object, and the rope that lost its restriction whizzed upwards quickly. It was at this time that Silent Disaster discovered many pancake-like objects piled in the corner, with black viscous liquid dripping from the low ceiling. Beneath them were metallic blocks, which was also where the most bloodstains were found.

No... this human's struggles weren't for the escaping of this place.

The oil lamp hanging on the door allowed the man to see whatever came immediately.

The action of him holding onto the rope ensured that be it him losing consciousness or him being killed, it would trigger the setup.

He had dragged his mutilated body around, crawling up and down in this small room, just because of his unwillingness to resign to his own fate, and instead create an opportunity.

Silent Disaster immediately turned to retreat using his fastest speed!

The man smiled.

"Long Live... humankind!"

Exceedingly dazzling light blossomed from every corner of the room and instantly turned the dark room to be as bright as day!

After a loud rumble, the sunken cave suddenly swelled up, as though a gigantic fist was charging out from the inside, and threw out a large amount of gravel and snow into the sky.

...

"What happened?"

Mask looked at Senior Lord Silent Disaster who was carried up the Deity of Gods with a frown on his face as he asked his assistant.

"Lord, it's still unknown. The only thing known is that there was another explosion at the mountaintop... The Lord must have fallen into the lowlifes' trap."

Nassaupelle snorted. "How pathetic. If it had been any other Senior lords, I'm afraid they would had died."

At this moment, Silent Disaster looked as though he had been trampled by an Outpost Symbiotic Demon, with his shattered armor and flesh mixed together. The remains of his face that strikingly resembled a female human was left with its outline, and his magic power almost emptied.

"Doesn't this mean that your theory is right?" the assistant lowered his head and said.

“That’s right.” Nassaupelle smiled. “Even the strongest body has a limit. Instead, the Symbiotic Demon’s evolutionary body is the ideal path. To be replaced when damaged, to grow without limits. That is the body we ought to pursue!”

He no longer cared about the unconscious Senior Lord and turned to walk towards the Birth Tower. “Throw him into the Red Mist Pond for soaking, we have no need of him in the next phase either way. Those lowlifes will never expect that the easily obtainable Kingdom of Wolfheart was never the Deity of Gods’s goal. Swallowing the entire kingdom is the fastest way of obtaining the legacy shard.

“Pass my command, adjust course for Hermes Plateau at full speed ahead!”