

## Witch 41

### Chapter 41 The appearing of the first demonic beasts

As Brian had said, once it began to snow in Border Town, it would not stop soon.

In one night, the town had been covered in a layer of white glaze. During the early morning, the snowfall had eased off. Only a few snowflakes occasionally dropped from the sky, but the weather was still gray. When he thought about how he would not see the sun for several months, Roland thought the idea was still a bit inconceivable.

This was simply illogical, he thought, though it was already very weird that magic was a common thing in this world. However, how could demonic beasts have an impact on the sky? Unfortunately, he didn't have any weather satellites to look at this world's cloud formations.

Walking on the road in the direction of the western city wall, Carter couldn't help but exclaim, "The town is deserted, there were still a bunch of people who followed the nobles who withdrew!"

"That's good, at least they will not hold us back." answered Roland as his breath fogged up in the cold air, "I have arranged for Barov to hold a census during the winter."

"What is a census?"

"It is a statistic produced from going door to door, counting the number of people who stayed behind, asking them for their names and what kind of a job they have. All of this will then be registered." Roland explained, "As a result, during the war we will know how many human resources we can deploy, and after the war, pension can be implemented quickly and efficiently. "

"Uh... What?" Carter blinked confusedly and then laughed, "Your Highness, you are really not the same as before."

"Oh?"

"In the past you would say something, and I wouldn't understand it. You would do some unfathomable and mysterious things, but after all, they did not confirm with the identity of the prince. And now..." Carter paused and seemed to consider his next words, "whether it was those strange training regulations or the novelties of the alchemic workshop, the results were surprisingly effective. Perhaps this is what my grandfather meant when he said, 'extraordinary people are extraordinary, because they can always see possibilities which ordinary people overlook'. I have a feeling that there really is a possibility for you to become King."

"...Yeah," suddenly Roland got a warm feeling within his heart. Is there any better feeling than when other people recognize your hard work? For a short time, he felt full of strength and felt that the gray sky wasn't as depressing as it was before.

As the prince arrived at the wall, the militia, who had already cleared away all the snow, bowed to pay their respects.

Roland thought that they should also learn to salute, and he asked "How was the situation last night?"

“There were no traces of demonic beasts,” replied Iron Axe, “Your Highness, according to past experiences, we will still have a relatively stable time period after the first snowfall. During this period, the number of normal animals is still be larger than the number of demonic beasts, and if there are demonic beasts they will be of the weaker species. “

Roland nodded, “You still have to continue to be vigilant.”

The regional rear walls had been transformed into barracks, so if there was no danger, most people could stay in the camp to rest and save energy. Roland implemented a rotation system, taking into account the low winter temperatures. Each team would only need to perform two hours of patrolling before they would be replaced.

All these measures were set by Roland. He had asked Brian how it was in Longsong Stronghold and learned that they had no rotation system against the demonic beasts. The new recruits would be assigned to watch the movements of the demonic beasts and had to stay on watch the whole day. So consequently they would slack off, to the point that situations where soldiers deserted would occur. During the winter there were twenty to thirty people who were hanged because of dereliction of duty or violation of military orders.

If they found traces of demonic beasts, it would become a mess because they didn’t assign people to their own defense sectors. Thinking of the level of the art of war during this time, Roland already had a clear understanding of it. They paid extreme attention to personal honor and valor, and even emphasized plundering. Even knights would be in the front lines when charging into a city, nevertheless they didn’t need to plunder too much.

Roland once more patrolled along the wall and saw that everything seemed to be going smoothly, but Roland found out that he had ignored a problem.

That was the roadblocks.

These obstructions were currently still clearly visible and would lead the demonic beasts towards the right section of the wall, but if what Brian said was true and the snow would fall for two to three months without any interruption, it could come to the point that the demonic beasts wouldn’t see any obstructions and would attack all of the six-hundred yard long wall. His militia force was clearly too small to attend to such a large battlefield.

Sending soldiers down to clear the snow was a bad idea, because a few species like the demonic wolves were extremely agile, so he would definitely lose soldiers.

Perhaps he would have to rely on the power of the witches.

For example, he could let Nightingale take Anna out of the city to melt the snow with her fire and then sneak back – just like how she had brought Nana in and out of the Pine Family’s home.

At this point, he heard a call from an observer on his left side.

“Look in front!”

Roland and Carter both looked towards the position the observer had referred to. There, a group of small shadows crawled out from the snow, moving slowly in the direction of the wall.

The hunter who was in control of this defense section turned to Roland and asked, "Your Highness, you say whether or not..."

"Handle the situation according to the former drills, so judge the situation for yourself to determine whether you should blow the horn," Roland ordered, "at this point, you are more experienced than me."

The soldier hesitated, but he eventually pulled the string off his crossbow, and stood further down the wall to observe.

Roland nodded his head in satisfaction. For now, when the number of demonic beasts that would attack Border Town was still unknown, it would be most important to maintain order on the wall. After all, they could quickly organize their defense according to the steps drilled into them from before.

Gradually, the shadows came closer to the wall. When they were 50 yards away from the wall, Roland was finally able to clearly make out their appearances.

Probably a variant of foxes?

Their fur was grayish black and their eyes were red. When they were at the walls they were panting heavily.

"It looks like it wasn't long ago that they were turned into demonic beasts. They aren't a threat," said Iron Axe while aiming with his bow.

"You mean they were infected by the Breath of Hell which was expelled in the West?"

"It doesn't happen only in the West," Carter came over and answered, "the Gates of Hell can open anywhere in the mountains, there is no place safe from it in the mountains. In the North, there is an especially large path which is often under the attack of the demonic beasts. There, it seems that a part of the never ending Impassible Mountain range was cut off. For more than a decade, this path was the main direction of attack from demonic beasts."

The maniac monsters only lingered for a short moment at the base of the wall before they raised their heads and released grim growls towards the crowd on the wall while preparing to leap. However, Iron Axe released his bowstring, and his sharp arrow accurately penetrated the neck of one of the demonic beasts, firmly nailing it to the ground.

Roland noted that the blood which flowed out from the beast was black.

It was the same kind of erosion for the demonic beasts and witches, but why could the witches still save their consciousness and be saved after their awakenings, when the animals would always turn into maniacs while their bodies mutated? If I have the opportunity, I need to go and take a look behind the Mountain of Despair, thought Roland. In the Prince's memory, it was a place where no human being could set foot, it was the place where the Gates of Hell opened. However, because no one had ever visited it, most of the knowledge of it came from ancient books, and he had no way to verify the rumors, so he had some doubts about the Gates of Hell.

Chapter 42 Accidents

"What happens when a demonic beast bites a human?" Roland asked. "Will they become the same like the demonic beast?"

Roland hoped it wouldn't turn into a medieval version of Resident Evil. After all, with their current level of technology they had no way to extract the virus and produce the required antigens.

"Of course not," Iron Axe gave Roland a kind 'How can you ask such a question?' look, "They would turn into a corpse."

"What about their meat, can we eat it?"

Carter exclaimed loudly, "Your Highness! How can you think about eating the meat of demonic beasts, they are contaminated with the Breath of Hell, ah!!"

Roland looked at Iron Axe, who nodded and said, "Your chief knight is right, I have cut off meat from some demonic beasts to feed to my dogs. The result was that my dogs died shortly after eating the meat."

"That happened? That's really a shame." Roland sighed, during this time, the food sources were scarce. If they were able to eat the demonic beasts the winter months would turn into months of simple harvest. Think about it, the whole forest of animals would turn mad and run in the direction of Border Town, so the militia would even be able to save hunting gear!

After he walked along the whole wall, he decided to pay a visit to Nana.

Roland had requisitioned the residence of a noble who recently left Border Town and used it as a field hospital. Of course, he claimed it as a school for foreign medicine. But just in case, it was near the city walls and was one of the best guarded places in Border Town.

When the former owner of the residence returned to Longsong Stronghold he had taken all his property with him, and the other inhabitants of Border Town were always ready to give up their homes. So, the housing was quite large, but they couldn't have many murals, carpets, porcelain vases, or other kinds of decorations. If it wasn't fairly clean, it would just look like a house that was vacant for a long time.

Roland turned the first floor into one big room. Only the stairs to the upper floor and a small hallway were left. Then, he put ten beds into the room. With this, his hospital was finished. It was quite a simple shape, there were no nurses and no doctors, even the ten beds were unlikely to be used at all – after Nana's treatment the patients weren't required to lay in the beds, her treatment immediately bore fruits.

During the day, Nana would normally stay on the second floor of the hospital and Anna would come by when she herself had nothing to do. Sir Pine and Brian were responsible for the first floor, and two guards were stationed at the entrance.

However, Roland did not expect that the first patient of the field hospital would be a worker from the Northern Slope Mine instead of a soldier from the militia which defended the walls.

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Nils felt his hands trembling.

When he heard the hoarse scream of iron again, he tried to pick up his pace once more, but even with his fastest speed he couldn't fly.

This was all because of his negligence, he thought. Damn, how could he forget the repetitive warnings of his senior knight?

If he had known earlier, he wouldn't have grasped his chance to work with the big guy!

Since the big guy was installed at the mine gate during the night, the miners' work became a lot easier.

Originally, the most tiring part of the job was to drag the ore out of the mine when the mining basket was filled with stones. Generally, two people would push from the back and the rest would pull from the front. After years of usage, the originally uneven tunnel ground became flat due to the transporting of the baskets. The pad at the bottom of the iron ore basket also required frequent replacement.

A week ago, the chief knight commanded that the senior knight and his men to transport a lot of strange-shaped parts made out of metal up to the mine, and then in the next few days they assembled them into a furnace. Nils had absolutely not foreseen that this furnace could move by itself when fueled with fire. It could not only move, but it also had extraordinary strength.

The senior knight had said that it was His Royal Highness' invention and was seemingly called the steam engine.

First, a basket had to be fastened with a rope to the steam engine, then a fire had to be lit before the big machine would begin to hum. Then, the winch began to turn and the basket was quickly hauled towards the mine entrance.

Incredible!

The senior knight had selected a person responsible for the steam engine after several test runs . When Nils was selected, he was very pleased with himself, since he had waited a long time for such a good opportunity. After all, he just had to stand in front of the machine! He would no longer have to dig out stones or minerals, and he would never ever need to push a basket. That last mine collapse still left him spooked.

The words the senior knight told him were still in his head.

He said it wasn't a difficult task. The big guy would do all the work, all he had to do was to pull the green lever first and then the red lever second. The senior knight also said that the green lever was linked to the intake valve, while an exhaust valve was linked with the red lever so that the steam would pass through the pipe into the cylinder. After the basket was pulled to the mine entrance, he would have to do the reverse if he wanted to stop the machine. First, he had to lift the red lever and then the green lever. With, this the steam would be discharged from the side of the boiler. After each cycle, the oven needed be supplemented with water until it was full – although he didn't understand what a valve and a cylinder were, Nils still promised to do everything step by step.

However, the senior knight stressed two points that were most important. First, the order could not be wrong. To start the engine, the green lever was first before the red lever. To stop, the green had to be closed after the red. If he made a mistake, it could lead to the destruction of the machine. The second point was that when he was discharging the steam he had to constantly remind the miners to step back until the red lever was completely lifted.

The first point Nils had engraved into his head, even with closed eyes he wouldn't make a mistake. But with the second point he had some problems.

Today, he was shutting down the machine as usual. He noticed that other miners were no longer around. He felt that he would be a fool if he shouted a warning when no one was around, so he was totally absorbed in pulling the red lever. The red lever was a bit hard to pull, and out of exhaustion he had to bare his teeth during the pull.

He hadn't expected Titus to appear in front of the stove when he pulled the lever – Nils hadn't seen him due to the steam engine's big size and because of the loud noise it created, he hadn't even heard the footsteps. The white steam which was exhausted from the boiler directly rushed into Titus' face!

Nils was stunned out of fright, he only saw Titus suddenly falling to the ground and rolling around, holding his face and screaming his life out – Titus screams were so heartbreaking for Nils that they directly attacked the core of his being.

Soon, other miners gathered around, opening Titus' hands by force to take a look at his wounds, only to see that his face only vaguely reminded them of a human face. Blood was oozing from his cooked and raw face and his eyes were turned into white pearls. All the people present were sure that Titus couldn't be saved.

Nils' soul slowly came back to his body. Titus had always taken care of him, due to his young age, and the work Nils was assigned was less than that of the other people, but the wages Nils got were never less than that of the others. And now, this accident only happened due to his negligence.

Between his grief and anxiety, Nils suddenly remembered what the senior knight also said. If one of the miners were accidentally injured, he should be brought to the safe area near the walls. There was a newly opened medical center there.

Although Nils knew that such a serious injury was an incurable wound and that the size of the injury was too big, even if herbal medicine could help a little, it couldn't stop the deterioration of Titus' health. Then, Titus would get high fever and would soon fall into a coma. But nonetheless Nils still took Titus into his arms, regardless of the confused looks he got from the nearby people, bit his teeth together, and ran.

If he did nothing and Titus died, Nils was afraid that he could never forgive himself for the rest of his life.

Chapter 43 Be strong

“Sister Anna?”

When Nana heard thunderous footsteps coming from the stairs, she ran to the door and took a quick look, but she was soon disappointed because she found out that the person who was coming was His Royal Highness, the Prince.

“Anna should still be working, but she will probably come by later.” said Roland when he arrived at Nana's side.

“Work?” Nana had recently often heard this word out of the mouth of the Prince, “You mean she is burning this gray mud powder?”

“For now, yes.”

Nana pouted as she went back to the table. I also have a job, she thought. My job is to stay here and wait to treat the soldiers who are injured while defending the town.

Roland asked with a gentle smile, “How is it? Do you feel bored when Anna isn’t here?” as he took a chair to sit by the fireplace.

“Well,” Nana supported her chin with her hand so that she couldn’t nod and give a true answer. It wasn’t that she didn’t want to treat the injured, but ... the sight of the injuries was just so horrible.

She could still remember when she had to treat Brian, it was the first time she had to treat a human. The man was covered all over in blood that it seemed like he had bathed in blood. A reddish-brown blood clot had solidified in the pit of his stomach, his mouth resembled the look of a dried fish, and he was disgorging white fluids and red blood. Then... Nana had fainted.

It was downright disgraceful.

Nana raised her head to secretly glance at Roland. She saw that he had leaned back in his chair and was snoring. The Prince seemed to be tired, she thought. His jobs were building the walls, training the soldiers, and protecting the town from the invasion of the demonic beasts.

When he came to request her help, although she first hesitated for a long time, in the end she did not refuse.

“You will encounter some things that make you want to live on, even if you will have to struggle to live on.” – Nana didn’t understand what this meant, but when she closed her eyes, Anna would appear within her mind – with her pair of bright blue eyes, just like a lake, surrounding her slowly. This was the reason she agreed to Roland’s request.

She wanted to be as strong as her sister, Anna.

Suddenly, footsteps could be heard from downstairs again and Nana immediately jumped off her chair. She wanted to go to the door to see if it was Anna who came this time, but suddenly she was stopped by an invisible hand.

“Just wait a minute, there is more than one person.”

Nana patted her chest in dissatisfaction, “You scared me, sister Nightingale.”

Soon the door was open, and this time it was Brian, who was stationed here, who entered, “Miss Pine, please come down. You have a patient who got burned.”

This was work for her, right?

Nana took a deep breath, “I will come down.”

She walked downstairs while two guards were busy with carrying an unconscious person towards a bed. Standing beside the bed was a short man with a face full of anxiety. Brian walked up to the patient and neatly tied the patient’s hands and feet to the bed. When he was done tying, he closed up the area with previously prepared curtains and then led the little man out of the room.

When Roland came down he asked while rubbing his eyes, "What happened?"

"Your Highness, North Slope Mine sent a seriously injured person, he looks like he was scalded."

The Prince walked over to Brian, "He was burned by the steam engine, right? Was there a problem with the engine? Did you send him to Nana?"

"He is in the medical room." Brian pointed to the direction of the door.

"I need you to look into this case." when he finished speaking, Roland walked towards the medical room.

Nana slowly stepped near the injured man, only looking at him carefully within her peripheral vision. When she saw his face, his facial features had turned into paste, forming a round ball. What should have been red skin was dehydrated and inhumanely white, it just looked like a rag was laying on his face. At his neck were blisters as big as small eggs, some of them had even been broken, and the mucus oozing out from the blisters mixed together with the blood in the pillow. In the flickering shine of the fire, his appearance was more horrible than the devil in her nightmares.

She took two steps back and closed her eyes. When she opened them again, she saw her father watching her, full of concern.

"Are you okay?"

Nana nodded, thinking of the words Roland had told her – "You only need to treat the injured the same as you treat the little animals." She once again moved towards the bed and stretched out her hands.

An incredible feeling emerged within her body and gathered within the palm of her hand. She saw a ray of light being emitted from the fluorescent green liquid flowing out of her hands as it fell on the injured face. For her, this fluorescence light was obvious, but to others it seemed to be invisible. Then, the wounds began to change. The scorched skin was constantly shed off and new skin began to regrow at a visible speed.

The wounded man's groans of pain gradually diminished until it stopped, and his breathing eased. It seemed like he just fell into a deep sleep.

Nana exhaled, relieved. This time her own performance was surely better than last time, and she thought, I should have made a great progress with my training, right?

"My God, is this what His Highness meant when he spoke of your healing ability? This is the first time I've seen you do this." asked Sir Pine. Then he exclaimed, "Good girl, you're awesome!"

"It is the power of the gods," Brian said in the same tone of awe, "It was also Miss Nana who healed me when I was heavily injured, I really owe her so much."

Ah, he is such a fool. Nana had to cover her face because of shame, doesn't he know that it was sister Nightingale who smuggled him out and saved him on that day?

"When did that happen?" asked Sir Pine, full of wonder, "Why didn't I know of it?"



“Oh... Their powers have nothing to do with God, they belong to the witches themselves.” Roland opened the curtain and stepped inside, coughed once and changed the subject, “How are his injuries?”

“He has basically recovered,” Blaine excitedly said, “It’s like he was never hurt! Your Highness, with the help of Miss Nana, during the Month of the Demons, everyone who is fighting has a chance to survive!”

“As long as they don’t die on the spot, there will be no problem with saving their lives,” the Prince confirmed, indicating Brian that he should stop since the man woke up, “Your name is Titus, right?”

The man who was named Titus had a look full of confusion and asked “I ... What happened? Am I dreaming?”

“You’re not,” Roland said. “You’re still alive.”

“Are you ...! I have seen Your Highness at the square!” The man suddenly woke up like he was hit by lightning, jumped up from the bed, and fell to his knees, “Your Royal Highness, was it you who saved me?”

“It was the daughter of the Pine Family who saved you. She is a witch and has a healing ability.”

Nana’s mind froze, he directly said that she was a witch, would she be okay? Sure enough, the look in the man’s eye changed immediately, “A woman... she is a witch? Your Highness, aren’t they the devil’s ...”

“Don’t speak such nonsense!” When Sir Pine heard him speaking such words about his daughter, he angrily cried, “My daughter has nothing to do with the devil, but she even saved your life instead, man! Do you think the Devil would reach out to you with a helping hand?!”

“No, no! Please forgive me for being impolite,” Titus pulled his head immediately into a deep bow, “Thank you for saving my life, Miss Pine.”

Nana suddenly felt inexplicably uncomfortable. If she could, she would immediately rush out of the room, but a voice in her mind repeatedly reminded her, “be strong.”

Later when Titus was sent away, Sir Pine worriedly asked, “Will this really be alright, Your Highness? In this way, I’m afraid, my daughter will no longer be able to lead a normal life.”

“You have to think on the bright side, Sir Pine,” comforted the Prince, “We have to take advantage in this kind of situation, so that we will be able to break the deadlock. With this, Nana will may be truly free in the future. Otherwise, in the following years, she will one day be exposed. Until then, I am afraid she can only live a life in seclusion. “

... Real freedom? Nana didn’t know what this meant, because even now she felt very free. But His Highness said when they would achieve it, sister Anna would also be able to leave the castle just like herself. Maybe they could even return to teacher Karl’s college, right?

Chapter 44 Hidden answers

It was already late when Roland went back to the castle. It was snowing heavily again.

He went directly into his bedroom, took off his coat and shook off the snow that got caught in its collar. Then, he hung it on a rack next to the fireplace.

“Your Highness, don’t you think that you have progressed much too quickly?”

Nightingale’s voice came out of nowhere, and then she became visible to the prince.

“You mean the situation with Nana?” Roland poured each of them a glass of wine. Although the wine was more bitter than he was used to, slowly he had become used to its taste.

Nightingale took the cup offered by the Prince but did not drink – she was waiting for the prince to give a longer answer.

“There will never be a more appropriate time than now,” said Roland. He drank his cup of wine all at once, only to fill it up once more afterwards. “I planned to let Nana play a big role with her ability during the Months of the Demons. So, it would have been impossible impossible to conceal her identity as a witch anyway. She can instantly cure fatal injuries! This is nothing close to what ordinary herbs or bloodletting can do, everyone will want this.”

“Border Town is in the most western part of the kingdom. Here, so far away the center, the church’s influence is very limited – if I were them, I wouldn’t be willing to spend so many Gold Royals for a place which could be abandoned at any time.” Roland continued, “We even don’t have a small town church. The missionary left with the nobility to Longsong Stronghold earlier. Knowing all this, what do you think Border Town is? It is an island, totally cut off from the outside world.”

“... This was your plan since the beginning?” Asked Nightingale, surprised.

Roland nodded, “The never ending snowfall will close the road to Longsong Stronghold, and the entire town will be in my hands. We have at least three months to reverse the “witches are evil” point of view. With only mouth-to-mouth propaganda, the effect will be very limited. So, we must rely on real life experiences in order to quickly eliminate the hatred caused by ignorance and misunderstanding.”

That was the reason why he wanted to let everyone think Nana was the cause of Brian’s rescue. He wanted to create a different image of Nightingale.

There existed a legend of a nurse who made an all-out effort to look after wounded people, resulting in the plummet of the wounded mortality rate, from 42% to 2%. Thus, the fighters conferred her the title of “Lady with the Lamp”, and the popularity of the whole nurse profession had been elevated to the rank of worship.

Nana’s ability to heal had more to offer than only heal the injured, as long as someone didn’t die on the spot, she could restore him completely like he was never injured. This would be more important and boost the morale more than any weapon upgrade he had presented.

At the same time, thanks to her family’s decline within the aristocracies ranks, her father had to deal deal with hunters and farmers often during the weekdays. Because of this, he had a very calm and kind attitude towards the normal civilians, and he even allowed Nana to visit Karl’s Collage and learn with them. This kind of act was absolutely unthinkable for even the lowest of Barons, they would never agree if their children had something to do with the peasants – in their eyes, these people were the so-called untouchables.

“This ... can we really do this?” Even Nightingale, when facing such a big monster like the Church, felt extraordinarily small and weak.

“If we never try to change, we will never know the answer.”

Roland did not expect that he would be able to change the view of all the inhabitants of Border Town, but he at least hoped to plant seeds within the hearts of some and get a small team of supporters. Later, he wanted to relay on these seeds, to let them grow and let them spread.

Within three months, many changes could be achieved.

Nightingale thought about it and then whispered, “Why do you want to step out of the masses and help us witches?”

In order to use their power for the production of resources, make himself more powerful, and have a better chance in winning the throne – of course, all these answers were not suitable to say aloud. Even so, Roland was a mechanical engineer, he had played a good variety of dating games, so he could even be seen as a veteran who knew a lot. So with the experience of having lived for more than forty years in two different worlds he knew that this time he had to face a crucial question and give the right answer.

So he thought carefully about his next words and said slowly, “I haven’t told you yet, but I do not care about the background of any inhabitant of Border Town. I hope that one day, in my territory, even witches can live a life as free as any other person.”

This time Nightingale was silent for a long time, and the only sound left was the crackling of the burning firewood. Her face, highlighted by the flickering flames, was like an otherworldly picture.

When she spoke again, Roland had enough time to free himself from the beautiful illusion. “You really don’t have to accomplish all this.” Her voice was small but gentle, “Please forgive me for lying to you before ... My sisters in the Witch Cooperation Association have been living the life of refugees for far too long. They do not expect so much, their only goal is to have a place where they can live in seclusion. Even living in this castle would be enough.”

“How would that be different from living your life within a cage?” Roland shook his head, but then he suddenly came to an understanding. His eyes became wide open when he looked full of shock at Nightingale, “What do you mean ... Are you saying that you are willing to bring your sisters back here?”

Nightingale sighed and avoided looking directly at the prince, “When I do this, you will become the enemy of the Church.”

“Their arm has been stretched too far and has become too thin.” Roland didn’t mind the future road, due to the slogan “the power of the King is granted by the God”, the Church and the mortal power will conflict sooner or later. As for Border Town, they only have to live through the next months, then they will not be able to do much to us. Here we are thousands of miles away from their seat of power. What do you think will happen when the Bishop of Longsong Stronghold holds a military trial to come to crusade me? My father would never allow this to happen, this would be a much too great of an attack against his Royal power. “

“...” Nightingale didn’t know how to answer, she gave him her salute and left. When Nightingale was out of the room, Roland let himself fall onto the bed, and took in a deep breath to relax. There were some

things he didn't tell her. For example, he didn't tell her that the center of the church's power was a thousand miles away. In accordance with the world's news circulation speed, they would probably only be able to react in late spring. In addition to the distance there was also his identity as a prince, so a big possibility would be that they would only send envoys to ascertain the situation.

As a result, Roland thought that they would only arrive after half a year. By then, he himself would already have a solution to break their strength.

Thus, the biggest risk of his plan wasn't the church, but rather the witches themselves.

This point was only known by himself.

Although at the moment the witches were at a disadvantage, the current situation would not last forever. The power of the witch did not rely on blood heritage, so there was no pattern to who would awaken, it was all random. This meant that they could not be eradicated, so their number could only increase.

The Church relies on their God's Eye of Retribution, and for the moment they can still maintain their advantages over the witches with it, but it can only offset their magic. However, the witch awakening not only gives them a wide range of ability, but also boosts their physical power and mental reaction speed. Even their appearances would become more beautiful than ordinary people.

They essentially could be regarded as a "New Mankind."

The more brutal the oppression becomes, the more intense the resistance will be. How much damage would be caused to Graycastle if the witches started and lead a riot? Because the Church gave birth to the hatred, once they lost control, it would be likely that the hatred would turn against all the residents of the Kingdom of Graycastle.

Roland didn't want to see that happen.

So, he needed to start from Border Town, and lay down the structure to contain both sides. Later, he would need to extend the structure to Longsong Stronghold, and in the end to the whole kingdom.

He was creating a world in which common people and witches could coexist.

#### Chapter 45 Conspiracy (Part 1)

During the night of the new moon, the silhouette of Gerald Wimbledon could be seen near the walls of the City of Graycastle.

After his few months of stationing at Hermes came to an end, he was now finally back, he thought. The long journey left him totally exhausted, but he was still vigilant of his surroundings. He reined his horse to stop and motioned his deputy to go and inquire about the situation.

If everything went as planned, the Scholar Ansgar should have had all of the guards replaced with guards loyal to Gerald. When his deputy gave the signal, the replaced guards would let down the side door of the drawbridge.

Gerald was wide-eyed, and was staring forward, out of fear that the guards would overlook the signal.

The truth was that he hadn't waited very long, but for Gerald it felt like time froze and he had to wait forever. When his eyes had already ached to their breaking point, he finally saw a short flicker in the distance – two short flickers at the bottom of the wall, and then three times above the wall as the answer, signaling that everything was going as planned. Gerald had to take a deep breath before giving his troops the signal to march forward.

Seeing this, he already believed himself to be only a step away from the throne.

Gerald rode shoulder to shoulder with his deputies through the side door in the wall.

Behind him were more than twenty men of his cavalry following him. No one spoke a word, the only sound which could be heard was the pulling of the reins to move the horses slowly forward.

The walls of the City were built out of stones from the Fallen Dragon Mountain. Under the illumination of the torches, the brown and dark-red stones made the wall look like it was overflowing with blood. The entire wall was twenty feet wide, and during the construction of the biggest wall in the world at that time, more than a thousand hard laborers, masons and slaves had to die.

In the minds of the people this city was known as an impregnable fortress, but now Gerald and his men were easily crossing the walls, conquering the city with units from within. Somehow, he had to think of the Church's new Holy City; would their more ambitious and absolutely impregnable walls also fall due to treachery from within?

"Your Highness, I have already waited a long time for you here." Gerald could hear Ansger's voice through the gates. There, the scholar was already waiting for him with a small troop. Seeing Gerald appear, Ansger quickly dismounted and bent down to bow.

Gerald pushed his distracting thoughts aside. He was probably too excited, making it impossible for him to restrain his emotions, but he let his imagination run wild, "You have done well! Did you also replace all the palace guards?"

"I was going to, but then an unexpected problem appeared in the plan. Your Silver Knight who had already agreed to help was unexpectedly transferred to the south exit three days ago. Until now, we haven't had time to switch the new guards with our guards."

Gerald frowned, this meant that he could not take twenty soldiers with him into the palace. Gerald himself wouldn't be stopped, but the guards would never let this many armed people into the Royal Palace.

"Let it pass, split the team into two parts and come with me to the Palace door. Keep the door under good guard and don't let any outsiders hinder me on my way," he hesitated for a moment to make up his mind. Although the plan had changed, the situation was still under his control. Naturally at night guards would stand outside his father's chamber, but as long as someone could distract them for a moment, he was sure to cut them down with his sword.

Inside the city.

Everything looked the same as it had been when he left. Although he was now walking through the city at night, he was still able to recognize every street. This was his territory, there existed no doubt. Everyone jumped off their horses and marched rapidly forward in the direction of the palace. When they

arrived at the door, his more than twenty soldiers spread out according to the new plan, lurking outside the palace. It was just like Ansgar had said, except the guards were surprised as to why the Prince wanted to speak with the King so late at night. However, after hearing Gerald's bluff about having to discuss important matters, they directly opened the door and let him enter.

After all, he was the eldest son of the King and the first heir to the throne.

Ansgar and Gerald went together through the garden and the halls of the Palace. In front of the Palace was the residence of Wimbledon III. Ansgar raised his torch and waved side-to-side with it. Immediately after that, a guard appeared out of the shadows and knelt on one knee, pleading, "Your Highness, please come with me."

Gerald became irritated, he smelled blood.

Didn't Ansgar say that they had replaced all the palace guards? He looked through the shadows of the flames and took a good view at the man, he was indeed a familiar person – a knight who supported Gerald in the fight for the throne. This gave him a little peace of mind.

"What happened, had someone entered the castle?"

"It happened earlier this evening, Your Royal Highness. His Majesty had summoned a maid for this evening, but she came exactly at the moment of the changing of the guards." the other replied, "Please be assured that we have handled the situation well."

He summoned a maid? His father had not touched a woman for a long time – since the death of his mother. Gerald was a little surprised, but now he had not the time to entangle himself in such a trivial matter. So, he nodded and said nothing more about it, and instead went into the castle, followed by his guards.

Even with his eyes closed, Gerald could find his way through the castle. He had lived here for more than twenty years. Where there was a secret passage, where there was a secret door... everything was crystal clear for him. However, the purpose of this trip was to persuade his father to path the throne to him without bloodshed. So surreptitiously sneaking into the palace was meaningless, he had to get rid of the guards stationed outside of his father's chamber. Then, he could let his father fully understand his situation, so that they could sit down and talk seriously about the ownership of the right to inheritance.

If he could not convince him ...

Gerald Wimbledon took a deep breath and gave a hand signal for his followers to stop, then pulled out his large sword and took it in his hands.

At the end of the corridor was a bronze door, which was the only entrance into the Palace. The door to the bedroom was at the end of the corridor behind the bronze door. Usually two or three guards would be stationed here, but this would be the first time in the history of the Palace that the entrance to the King's bedchamber would be unprotected.

Gerald first opened the door enough only for small slit, then he slid in with the side of his shoulder, quickly entering the room and taking a battle-ready position with his sword – but inside the room it was totally quiet, and there was nobody speaking. At the same time, an intense smell of blood entered his nose.

The thought of premonition flashed through his mind. Then, he directly ran towards his father's chambers.

There, Gerald saw a staggering scene.

His father Wimbledon III was sitting in his bed only wearing his nightgown, and his upper body was leaning on a pillow. His robe was open, and in his chest stuck the hilt of a sword. Blood trickled down his belly and soaked the quilt.

Standing beside his father was actually his brother, Timothy Wimbledon.

"How ..... how is this possible?" Gerald stood in place, totally startled.

"Just like you, brother," Timothy sighed, "I really didn't want to do it."

He clapped his hands, and a large number of armored soldiers rapidly entered the room, surrounding Gerald, "This was a chess game and I wanted to finish it in accordance with the rules. Brother, do you know why I couldn't? If you have to blame someone, blame Third Sister; from the beginning she didn't intend to follow the rules, but of course ... you did. Otherwise, why would you rush back to the King's City after hearing Scholar Ansgar's prediction? Seriously, if you didn't come, I really would have been helpless."

"Ansgar!"

Gerald grit his teeth and looked at Ansgar, enraged. Out of fear, Scholar Ansgar stepped backwards. While raising his hands he said, "I didn't lie to you when I said 'The Star of Apocalypse has begun its arrival. It metaphorically hunts everyone who has stepped away from the right path, but it also has the meaning of downfall.'"

Gerald now fully understood. From the beginning, he had fallen into a well-designed trap. The smell of blood in front of the castle was probably not left by a maid, but instead it was his Silver Knight who was removed instead of transferred like they had said. However, his biggest point of despair was that Scholar Ansgar, who had taken care of him for longer than a decade and had taught him how to read and write, had chosen the second prince in the end – just like his father.

"Timothy Wimbledon," He was a son like Gerald himself, but Timothy alone got all the attention of their father. He got the best territory allocated to him, so it was totally unexpected that he would be the one to strike first! "You're the devil from hell! "

For a short moment, anger flashed within Timothy's eyes, but it soon disappeared "Do you really think so? Dear brother, if you were unable to change our father's choice, did you really intend to stop there and go back? Do not cheat yourself."

TN: I changed Astrologer Ansgar into Scholar Ansgar

Chapter 46 Conspiracy (Part 2)

" ... " Gerald didn't know how to reply. The only thing left for him to do was to drag his own brother to hell with him. However, after some time he calmed down and asked, "Do you think you can get rid of me by telling your lies?"

“Get rid of you? No, that wouldn’t help me at all dear brother. I was helpless, I had to do it.” Timothy’s tone remained calm, as if he was only stating facts, “If I had honored father and waited five years, I was afraid that I would have had to face 3rd sister’s pirate fleet. You know what she has been doing recently, right?”

Gerald shook his head and felt a stabbing pain within his heart when he realized how great the distance between himself and 2nd brother had become. He remembered that his brother was very clever from an early age but wasn’t good at riding, shooting or fighting. As long as he had an opportunity to deliver a slash to Timothy, he could behead him – “She set up her own army, brother. Really, I admire her. She had even begun to organize it before father gave the order to fight for the throne, this was something even I didn’t expect. We got along so harmoniously during our childhood, so how could it have developed like this? Why do we have to kill each other for the throne?” Then, he took a step towards Gerald and asked, “Take yourself for example. I’m afraid that you now want to split me in half with your sword, right?”

” ... “

“I know you do, brother, since you told me before that when you want to kill you get a frightening look in your eyes.” Timothy sighed, “I will bluntly tell you, I had to end this fight for the throne beforehand. Otherwise, if I had waited for five years I would have had to face Garcia’s fleet. She has already controlled Clearwater for several years, and has made it a city suitable to handle business and the recruitment of soldiers unlike Valencia, the City of Golden Harvest, which is only good for business and not suitable for rearing soldiers.”

“I need an army strong enough to withstand 3rd Sister’s fleet, which isn’t something I can achieve when I can only depend on a trading city. Gerald Wimbledon, tomorrow you will be sentenced to trial because of the assassination of the king and your absence from your territory. I, on the other hand, will travel back to Valencia during the night so that I will be there before the news of father’s death spreads. I’ll be deeply heartbroken, and will accept the throne only because I, as the 2nd Prince, am the duty-bound inheritor. Anyway, I will become the King while you will be sentenced to death by the guillotine.”

“You ...!” Gerald roared, enraged, and attacked his brother. However, the distance between him and Timothy was too far, so his sword was intercepted by two Knights who then slashed at him in return, and a sword pierced his calf. Gerald lost his balance due the sudden injury and fell on the ground. The guards tightly swarmed around him and pinned him to the ground so that he could not move.

“You want to hold a trial? Do you think so lowly of me? I will tell everyone about what happened! I will let all people know what kind of monster you are!”

“Of course I will not allow you to do that, brother,” Timothy patiently declared. “The Alchemic Workshop has invented a drug named “Forgotten Language”, it uses the modulated poison of the sand lizard from the southern border and is mixed together with milk. After drinking it, you won’t be able to emit any sound. Rest assured, you won’t feel any pain, but the flavor is mellow and it’s befuddling. If you have to blame someone, then blame our 3rd sister, the genius. If it wasn’t for her, I wouldn’t be forced to do this.”

Timothy waved his hand towards the Knight Commander, who gave his salute and lead Gerald out of the Palace. The other guards also left so that the last remaining people were Scholar Ansger and Timothy.



“Your Highness, since your taking over the throne is already settled, I will call you Your Majesty from now on,” said Ansgar as he bent down.

“You have done well. When I sit on the throne of Graycastle, I will honor our agreement, but ... but after I saw how miserable my brother was today, I think some provisions should be added to our agreement to ensure my safety.”

The scholar’s look changed immediately, “Your Majesty, you mean -“

“Rest assured, I just do not want to be betrayed.” Timothy pulled a small pill from his pocket, “This must have been so much for you to handle. Maybe you should take this pill, it will dissolve after seven days. This should be enough time for me to travel to Valencia, getting the sad news and then to travel back to Graycastle. Later, when I become King, you will become the Chief Astrologer like we had agreed, but I do not want the others to offer you a higher price.”

“Your Majesty ... You have to be joking,” Scholar Ansgar’s face became pale and his look became pained. But in the end, he grit his teeth, and eventually swallowed the pill.

“Smart choice.” said Timothy as he nodded with satisfaction, “You may go.”

.....

When the palace was deserted, the prince’s face darkened.

He grabbed the porcelain that was placed on a small table beside the bed. Several sounds of porcelain shattering could be heard. So, the guards who were stationed outside immediately rushed in. “Your Highness?”

“Get out!” He shouted.

“Yes,” the guards quickly lowered their heads and went out, closing the door behind them.

Damn, this wasn’t how I had planned it!

Timothy hadn’t planned to kill his father. With Wimbledon III’s favor, he only wanted his father to take notice of Garcia’s actions and stop her. His older brother Prince Gerald, on the other hand, would be a pawn within Timothy’s hand.

Timothy had thought that this plan couldn’t go wrong. By controlling Gerald’s mentor, Scholar Ansgar, Timothy could manipulate his brother from the dark – Within the Astrologers Association, Scholar Ansgar’s status wasn’t high, but when Ansgar wrote some letters to Gerald, the 1st prince was quickly hooked. All this went exactly like Timothy had planned. His elder brother was strong in battle but he wasn’t good at thinking, but he still wasn’t willing to hand over the throne.

With each letter they exchanged, Scholar Ansgar would increase the ambitions of Gerald, guiding him along the path Timothy had prepared. When the last letter with the astrological predictions was sent, Timothy secretly returned to the side of the King, informing him that the 1st prince may come to pressure him into abdicating the throne. There was no doubt that once this matter was confirmed, the King would immediately imprison the prince out of rage or even sentence him to death or exile instead.

Then, King Wimbledon would have to focus on his other children, and when he saw that Garcia was actively developing her military forces, she would inevitably become a second eyesore for him.

But ... who could have thought that when Timothy had revealed the news, the King would only smile, pull out his personal dagger and directly stab himself in his chest!

Everything happened so quickly that Timothy had no chance to intervene, he could only watch his father die.

He slowly sat down beside the bed. In the first moments after the incident he thought that this was all an illusion. His father's final smile was just like a nightmare, causing his hair to stand on end. Timothy went through the whole thing over and over again, even inspecting his father's body, but he still couldn't find a single clue as to why his father had killed himself.

He also thought about the idea that it was simply a double, but he couldn't find any flaws in the situation in front of him. Even the remnants of his father's old wounds were exactly the same as he remembered.

Seeing that Gerald had arrived to meet the king, he calmed down. With this he could push the blame for King Wimbledon III's death onto the 1st Prince, and then he could use his own identity as the 2nd Prince to inherit the throne. After a smooth coronation, he would no longer be restricted to his own territory. Then, he could mobilize forces throughout the whole Kingdom to pressure Garcia, forcing her to give up the Harbor of Clear Water.

It seemed that the ending was better than it could have been, but Timothy still felt deeply uneasy ... As if he was led by an invisible hand, who was already able to control the war of Graycastle's upper nobility, but Timothy himself knew nothing about it.

However, at the moment he could do nothing else besides claiming the throne, so he had no choice. Timothy Wimbledon swore to himself that if he ever found out who was the cause, he would let them know what happened when they angered a King!

#### Chapter 47 Market Circulation

For the last week, it was fairly calm for Border Town.

Iron Axe and Brian both said that the strength and number of the demonic beasts would gradually grow with the progression of the Months of the Demons. So, taking advantage of the situation where the pressure on the line of defence wasn't strong yet, Roland once again sent a boat with ore to Willow Town.

Since the steam engine was put into use for mining in the North Slope Mine, the number of miners had been reduced by half, but the production had steadily improved. Now, it had been restored to the level of production from before the collapse. Using a machine to do the job saved a lot of manpower.

Meanwhile, under Roland's orders the mine production systems had undergone a preliminary reform. The former fixed payment for each day was changed into a variable pay. He let Barov put together a statistic about last year's average amount of ore produced daily. With this he could set a standard and everyone who mined more could increase their pay. An increased number of gemstones would result in

a big reward. This move effectively increased the workers' enthusiasm for mining, so the mine became a bustling area.

Roland naturally wanted to do more with his ore, now that he had more ore in hand.

In addition to the plan to put a second steam engine into production, he also intended to manufacture a number of manual lathes.

This lathe can be seen as something historical, it was commonly seen as an essential machine for implementing other tools. The anvil can be regarded as the most primitive tool – it was used for manual fixing and creating.

It was better used to create, because using it to fix was really too inconvenient, thereupon people would often try to fasten their product or place it in a recess on a table to fix their processed parts. For example, the early matchlock and flintlock gun barrels were placed into a recess on the anvil to be pounded out by hand.

Later, manual creation became too slow to meet demand, so they needed tools to increase production speed. The lathe could be used according to different purposes, the tools could be fixed according to each need, and the manual and machine processing could be used together. So, the lathe could effectively improve the strength of pure manual labor and could be changed for every weak point.

Roland also considered a manual milling machine.

Although the milling machine had various functions, he wanted to mainly use it in order to process involute gears, so its architecture could also be simplified correspondingly. With a slot for a fixed tooth plate and a rotatable steel disc, customized cutting gear could be easily manufactured with Anna's help – by grinding off and polishing the top layer after it got heated to a red hot state, erasing the slag on the iron, and then immersing it water to harden it, it would become a highly rigid custom disc.

After the key problems were solved, Roland immediately gave Carter the order to hire two carpenters, who would build him a milling machine. Meanwhile, Anna continued to manufacture other metal parts in the castle backyard.

Roland had to say, that with Anna's help, metal processing had become as easy as forming clay, especially after she had mastered the retrieval of her flame. At the moment she was pretreating small items, forming their rough shapes within her hands. Seeing Anna take an iron ingot in her hand, melt it without further help and shape it into the form she wanted caused Roland to sigh in wonder.

If he hadn't been able to employ a witch, Roland thought, achieving his production program would be delayed by more than a decade.

Two days later, the first simple milling machine appeared in the backyard.

This time Roland wasn't idle, drawing the gears could be regarded as his job. He designed a set of gears to be used for speed control and stabilizing the steam output. The corresponding tooth plate's design was already normed, and Roland could only wait until the milling machine was completely assembled before they could start with the production of the gears.

Using gears wasn't a new thing, most of the mines in this world used a winch mechanism to drain the water, which was built out of wooden gears and pulled by animals. The Chief Knight finally felt satisfied – last time, His Highness had done so many unfathomable things, but this time he could understand what the Prince tried to achieve.

Roland also gathered three blacksmiths with their apprentices, who would learn how to use the milling machine together. After all, he could not personally operate the machine every day, so it was necessary to train a group of professional workers.

After everyone respectfully bowed, Roland began to demonstrate how to use the milling machine to process the gears.

Roland didn't mind acting as a teacher in front of everyone. In fact, what else could one do in this era? Plus, while doing this there was no one who could criticize his manners, so he could operate the machine without any pressure.

The Chief Knight was in charge of pouring hot lard into the machine as lubrication – naturally in this age there were no oil lubricants. Replacing it with lard was a bit of a waste, but it was still better than nothing. After drenching the disc, the lard would fall into a pot which was placed under the machine. With this, the lard could be reused several times.

Roland first placed the lower milling stone in accordance with the design he had engraved beforehand. Then, he set the tooth gear above it so that the tooth gear, the milling stone, and a wooden wheel were in one line. The wooden wheel was driven by a pedal and its power was transmitted to the lower millstone by a leather belt.

Then, he put his hands down to gently stabilize the disc handle, until the lower millstone and the slowly-moving tooth gear were at a 90° angle.

Because the material of the tooth disc was iron and the lower millstone was out of steel, cutting out the teeth marks was not very difficult. Due to the hot lard the yard was soon filled with a tasty smell, but because the blacksmiths and their apprentices hadn't had meat in a long time, they had to swallow their saliva when smelling it.

After the demonstration, the contract was soon signed. Border Town's commerce was still in the initial phase, but calling it an industry was out of the question. No matter if it were the steam engine or the lathe, there would be no phenomenon where the people would run to the store, striving to be first or fearing to be the last to buy them. In this day and age, most people were not aware of the enormous significance they represented, as well as the potential commercial value they possessed. As such, Roland could only take the initiative to promote the use of these machines.

Roland specifically wrote in the contract that the blacksmiths who used the milling machine were required to process at least one set of gears each week. The required materials would be provided by the castle and the processing cost was set at 10 silver royals. At the same time, the blacksmiths had to pay a weekly fee of 2 gold royals. The milling machine was not given to them for use free of charge, but was rented out to them instead.

After entering the Months of the Demons, the blacksmiths would usually have a lot less to do. So, this time when they had the chance to make money and it was even under an order from His Highness, there

was naturally no blacksmith who had any objections. Meanwhile, Roland told them that this was only the first milling machine. In the future he would produce several, one after another, and if they were interested in one, they could apply for it in the Town Hall.

“Your Highness, why didn’t you directly write a processing fee of 8 silver royals in the contract?” asked Carter, puzzled, after the blacksmiths had left the backyard.

“Although these two figures are the same, they don’t contain the same meaning,” Roland explained, “This is probably Border Town’s first commercial leasing contract, so I had to set an industry norm.”

The Chief Knight rubbed his forehead. The 4th Prince seemed to be talking rubbish once more, but Carter was already used to it. As long as he pretended to listen carefully, His Highness would continue to explain it.

“A good beginning is always important in order to form a virtuous circle. I am the only one who currently needs to buy the gears, so I have to provide the tools while they provide the manpower. They will also get paid. In the future when there are others who have a demand for gears, they will realize that having their own tools will be better than renting the machine and earning the remuneration provided.” When Roland spoke up to here, he paused for a moment and then said, “In this way, when they see something new, they can first rent the machine and decide later if the market is big enough for buying their own machine, and if not they will just continue renting the machine. This is a virtuous circle.”

#### Chapter 48 Assembly

While Roland, full of interest, was talking about implementing a fair trading system, the sound of distant horns could be heard!

The patrol team would only blow the horn in the case that they couldn’t cope with the current situation, alerting the town to assemble soldiers.

Roland and Carter looked at each other surprised, and then immediately walked out of the castle backyard, where the guards already had already prepared horses. Roland directly mounted his horse and rode with Carter and his men in the direction of the walls.

When they arrived at the wall, they saw that all members of the militia had already climbed up the wall and had taken their places, setting up a forest of pikes. Seeing this gave Roland a feeling of relief – the eggs hadn’t been a waste after all.

Looking North-West, Roland could see a group of black shadows approaching Border Town. He reckoned that their numbers were over twenty.

Iron Axe left his defending position and trotted over. After giving a salute he said, “Your Highness, this group of demonic beasts nearing us seem to be slightly strange.”

“Strange? Are you saying that they would normally not act as a group?”

“That’s not it,” Iron Axe explained, “if they were to pack animals before the fall, then they would still retain that habit – such as the wolf species. But this kind of species doesn’t belong to this kind, they normally wouldn’t act this way, they seem to be on a mission. Earlier the hunters had already seen the beasts killing each other.”

The demonic beasts were only a mutation of their former kind, their actions would mostly be similar to their original habits, but at the same time their desires would become stronger. In a sense, the intelligence of a demonic beast was lower than that of a wild animal, because of their manic temper they even crossed dangerous areas that they would normally never cross.

Roland carefully observed the group of demonic beasts. He could see really big and small beasts and could distinguish at least two different kind of beasts, one kind wolf and the other bison. Species which would normally kill each other had suddenly learnt that they had to work together to accomplish something.

Because they still had to pass through some obstacles and traps set up by Iron Axe, they slowly crowded together in front of the center of the city wall.

Van'er felt his hands become damp with sweat, his grip holding the pike had become somewhat slippery. Taking advantage of the fact that no one was looking at him, he secretly wiped his hands on his clothes.

The Hunter Captain repeatedly said, "You have to relax; take deep breaths." Van'er repeatedly tried to do this but still could not stop his accelerated heartbeat. He had already lived in the West for more than a decade, and he had always heard of the evil doings of the demonic beasts. Since the beginning of the Months of the Demons, the occasionally arriving demonic beasts were all shot down by the hunter squads, so he slowly lost his fear of the demonic beasts. He even thought of himself as a brave and battle-hardened soldier, but today, facing so many demonic beasts for the first time, Van'er's legs still trembled.

He reminded himself that he was chosen by His Highness as a vice captain, so Van'er tried to show a calm appearance, and kept the defense position.

The group of demonic beasts was now close enough that he could make out their appearances. Running in the front was one demonic beast of the bison species. On its head it had two arm-thick horns, it looked just like a black ram. The hair growing on its back seemed to cover it tightly like a cloak. When it was only thirty feet away from the wall, Van'er could feel the ground trembling. He licked his dry lips, and waited for the Captain to issue the command to thrust.

Then a loud bang could be heard.

The bison demonic beast actually didn't reduce its speed, but hit its head straight against the wall, totally crushing its head and splashing black blood everywhere, painting the wall black.

Van'er didn't even have the time to breathe, the bison was immediately followed by two wolves which jumped up off of the dead bison's back.

"Thrust out!"

Hearing the Captain's command, Van'er subconsciously thrust out with his pike – even though the wolf species wasn't rushing toward him. The effect of this thrust was clearly not as good as their thrusts during their training. Some thrust their pikes many times in succession, and some people who saw the wolves jump thrust their pikes only once, while others did not react for a long time even after hearing the command.

As a result, only one wolf was driven back and the other jumped through a gap in the pike forest and landed on the wall.

“Keep the formation!” yelled the Captain once more.

Although Van’er would have liked to turn into a bird and look at the situation where the wolf had jumped on the wall, Iron Axe had emphasized many times during their training that when something broke through and came behind the front row, taking their attention, the front would turn into the most dangerous area. So he stared straight at the next group of attacking beasts with his eyes, and gripped the pike as strongly as he could.

The elite hunter squad was clearly better trained than the normal militia.

Even before the wolf had landed, the hunters had already pulled out their cutlasses. Iron Axe was the quickest of all. He jumped directly in front of the wolf, only one step away, raised the butt of his gun, and firmly smashed it on the wolf’s waist, hitting the wolf when it was still in the air so that it span many times in the air.

Whether it was the strength or the defense, after the demonic beasts’ mutation both were significantly improved. Such an attack clearly had not caused too much damage to it. The wolf could still stand up immediately after its crash, and bare its sharp teeth.

Unfortunately for the wolf, Iron Axe’s muzzle had already arrived at its head.

Bang! – the demonic beast’s skull exploded and its brain matter flew everywhere. Without its brain, the wolf took one frail step backwards and collapsed while twitching.

“The beast is dead, continue to hold your positions!”

“My stomach ah -!” Someone loudly screamed in despair.

Van’er could see it in his peripheral vision. He saw a comrade leaning against the wall, tightly clutching his stomach, with blood-stained hands.

“His intestines are flowing out.”

“The other wolf had rushed the wall up again and had clawed directly at him!”

“Help me ...”

“Damn, someone take out some cloth to press down on the wound!”

It was a chaotic scene, other demonic beasts, like a wild boar, also rushed towards the wall. Despite its rough skin and flesh, the boar was so close that it had become a hedgehog due to the crossbow arrows shot by the hunters.

“Everybody don’t panic!” Roland thought, If Nightingale were here, she could have saved them from some trouble. Then he shouted, “Have you already forgotten what you learned during your training? How do you treat injured people? Handle it according the regulations!”

Hearing the prince's shout, Van'er immediately woke up and remembered his duty. As a Vice Captain responsible for a segment of the wall's defense he was responsible for organizing a rescue whenever someone was injured.

He ordered two of his subordinates, "You two, hurry and carry him towards the medical center, quickly!"

According to their previous experiences, the subordinates believed that this person would not survive. However, His Royal Highness had once said, it's one thing to do something and not be successful, but doing nothing is forbidden! As a Vice Captain of the militia, Van'er needed to give priority to the implementation of orders and regulations.

When the wounded comrade was carried away, order was finally restored on the wall. This wave of demonic beasts was seemingly large, but only a few could threaten the members of the militia on the wall.

The hunters shot the rest of the demonic beasts down one by one. Seeing this, Van'er could finally breathe relieved. Even though the whole battle had only lasted half an hour, he felt empty, and had no strength left.

However, at this moment, the person responsible for lookout of the demonic beasts shouted again, "My God, what is that ...?!"

Van'er could also see the new beasts.

Although it was still a long distance away from the wall, its outline was still clearly visible. This beast was really a monster! Van'er swore, even if ten oxen were piled up in front of this monster, they couldn't compare.

Only the experienced Iron Axe could immediately identify the newcomer.

He had to take a deep breath to calm himself down. There was no doubt that this was a hybrid species, the militia was in trouble.

#### Chapter 49 Mixed Species

Roland rubbed his eyes in disbelief, what the hell was this? Was this still within the scope of the biological variability of a demonic beast? What he saw was hard to describe with words, even monsters in horror films were not this absurd.

From afar, it looked like a giant turtle with two heads, but from close up, it was actually two wolf heads.

Roland thought, was this a test specimen from Dr. Frankenstein? It was almost as tall as the city walls, its body was 7 yards long, and it had a total of six legs which were stumpy and shaped like a rhinoceros' legs. However, one foot was the size of at least one adult torso. The head ... unlike the two-headed monsters in various monster films, they weren't yelling at each other, biting each other, or trying to show who was the boss. Instead, they were just hanging down, and their eyes had a wooden glaze. It was like a zombie which was brainlessly moving forward.

However, the demonic beast's most striking feature was the shell on its back. The shell's surface was dark-brown and covered with algae, and it had a special hardness. It was just like a turtle shell, covering



the turtle from the front to the back. If this monster could also shrink back into its shell like a turtle, it would be really hard to get rid of it.

However, Roland didn't worry, a demonic beast this big had to be slow, so it was destined to be a target. Even if the firearms couldn't penetrate its shell, it was still possible to shoot the heads that were sticking out. If it intended to hide in its shell, then they would have to turn it upside down with explosives.

"Your Highness, this is a hybrid species," Iron Axe nervously leaned over and explained, "Now I can understand why the demonic beasts of different species work together. They seem to be under the control of the hybrid demonic beast."

So it was like a lion which commanded sheep? Roland nodded. "So this is a completely different beast than the one you met last time?"

"It is also my first time seeing this kind of hybrid species. Although it looks bizarre, you can't get careless. As long as it's a mixed species, it will always be hard to deal with it."

"It will soon enter the range of our archers, so try to first kill it with bows and crossbows." ordered Roland.

At this moment, since it was still lightly snowing and a strong wind was blowing from the North, the weather wasn't suitable for archery. However, two hunters of Iron Axe's personal squad were still confident that they could kill the beast.

They climbed up the watchtower, tested the wind and then fired their arrows into the air.

The two arrows seemed like they had grown eyes. They rose to the highest point and then, under the influence of wind and gravity, fell at an almost vertical angle onto their target.

Just as envisioned, the arrows bounced off the shell. In Roland's brain it even sounded like a ricochet.

Seeing this, the hunters hurriedly inserted their next arrow on their strings, and let loose a second wave.

Finally, this volley received a result. This time, the impact area was in the front part of the monster, so one arrow precisely entered into the head of a wolf while the other arrow was entered the neck of the other head.

However, the demonic beasts didn't roar in anger or speed up its charge, it just stopped for a short pause, tucked its head into its shell and then continued to slowly move forward.

This change left everyone stunned.

With this the demonic beasts just looked like a tank, its body was as low as possible above the ground so that even a better shooter wouldn't be able to land an arrow.

"Take your guns," Roland ordered.

Now, the target was only fifty feet away from the wall. Even if the guns weren't carved rifled flintlocks, he didn't worry that they would miss.

Carter and Iron Axe immediately went near the edge of the wall, laid the barrels of their guns on the horizontal frame of the wall, aimed, and fired.

While a burst of white smoke was drifting away from the rifles, Roland could clearly see the bullet hitting the shell and splitting away some debris, even opening a small hole within the shell. However, the mixed species seemed to be unaffected, as it continued to maintain its original speed.

It seemed that this layer of armor belonged to the strength category of biological carbon's intensity, thought Roland. Unfortunately, the lead balls were still too soft, so they were easily deformed and were not suitable to penetrate thick armor. So, those four rifles alone to break the mixed species' armor was quite unrealistic, so the only option left was to use explosives.

Iron Axe agreed with the Prince's judgement, he immediately ordered his deputy to get the explosives as fast as possible, because the demonic beast had already reached the walls. They didn't feel the earth tremble like it did when the demonic beast stomped toward the wall.. Instead, it unexpectedly began to smash its shell against the wall again and again, just like a high-frequency rotary hammer. Suddenly, stone chips began to fly everywhere and a number of cracks spread along the bound cement at a rapid speed.

Rough walls were highly resistant to compression, but the tensile and shear resistance performance of the walls were very poor. That meant that the wall's ability to withstand the shock of vibration was almost zero. The people standing on the walls could feel a strong vibration, and soon, a shrill sound of friction was delivered to the ears of all the people standing on the wall. With this, the wall had begun to give up under the mixed species' attack.

However, its impact hadn't stopped. Instead, it started to move again, and soon the whole front half of the beast's body was embedded into the walls.

The militia standing on the part of the wall with the cracks had already fled, and the invisible Nightingale grabbed Roland by his waist and jumped down with him from the top of the wall – if at this moment someone was staring at the prince, he would see the prince's feet hanging above the floor, just like a ghost.

When Van'er arrived carefully carrying a package of explosives, he was surprised to see that there was already a nine foot-wide hole within the wall, and the demonic beast had already stepped through the wall but was still maintaining its previous speed of slowly moving forwards.

"Hurry!" Iron Axe shouted, "light it and put it at the foot of the demonic beast!"

Although Van'er's hand were shaking, his mind unexpectedly became clear and every detail of his training with the explosives emerged within his mind. It was a different version of explosives than used during the training. To reduce costs, the explosive was now placed inside a wooden box filled with debris from the mine. At the same time, the ignition design was also optimized, it used a flint and copper wire type ignition. If this failed, the kit also contained normal ignition leads. He hurried to tear away the oilcloth and opened the bag, where he then got to see a copper string. When he exhausted all of his body's strength to pull the string, he could hear a sizzling sound coming out from the box and white smoke began to rise up – this was the sign of a successful ignition.

To slow down the burning time, the lead wire was soaked in salt, only needing the time of 10 breaths to explode. When Van'er saw white smoke rising up from the box, his world turned quiet around him. He

had already witnessed the power of this thing, if it exploded in his hands, he was afraid that not even any pieces of his own body would be left.

Nine breaths.

Van'er could hear his own heartbeat, as if it wanted to give him a countdown. Step by step, he went in front of the demonic beast, placing explosives under the beast.

Five breaths.

Now that it had built up so much pressure, nothing could stop the explosion now.

Three breaths.

Van'er turned and ran.

Two breaths.

Once breaths – he could only hear a muffled sound. Van'er felt the shockwave and the world became noisy again.

He turned around and could see a lot of white blasted up from under the shell – that was the snow shot into the air from the explosives, at first glance it looked like a diffused misty flower. The demonic beast finally stopped, but before it fell, it crashed into the ground, as if it couldn't afford to hold up its heavy carapace any longer. Then, black blood surged out from under the carapace, soaking the ground around it.

“Oh oh oh -!”

Seeing this, the crowd suddenly burst out in cheers.

Van'er fell down to the ground, only now discovering that his clothes were soaked with sweat.

It was finally over.

When everyone thought this, the sound of the horn resounded throughout Border Town again.

Once more, a horde of demonic beasts was marching toward Border Town, trying to destroy it.

Chapter 50 Wall of Flames

“Do you feel better now?”

Anna patted Nana on her back to comfort her. Anna's stomach was also turned upside down, but in the end she was still able to swallow it down.

When the wounded man was carried in, he was still conscious and was constantly repeating, “Help me, help me ...” seeing the expression of despair and begging within his eyes left the people around him feeling heartbroken. Seeing the man's intestines hanging outside from his belly, Nana couldn't hold back and threw up.

Even so, she still insisted on treating him. After placing the intestines back into the belly of the patient, Nana laid her hands above the wound, closed her eyes and began to heal the patient's wounds.

“Ah ...” After the healing Nana let out an exhausted sigh, leaned against Anna’s shoulder and whispered, “Today was the first time that the horn was blown, do you think that His Highness is alright?”

“I do not know,” Anna shook her head, she wanted to go over there to see the situation at the walls with her own eyes, afraid that Roland could be in trouble. She was even a little envious of Nightingale, her ability to act without being noticed was very convenient.

At this moment, a booming sound could be heard from the direction of the wall and everyone could feel the earth slightly trembling.

Brian jumped off from the bed he was sitting on and began walking somewhat restlessly through the room.

“Young man, you have to relax.” said Sir Pine, while calmly wiping his sword, “A knight isn’t allowed to lose his cool before he enters a battle, this will only make bad things worse. Moreover, this situation is still far from bad.”

“I’m very sorry, Sir,” replied Brian, ashamed, “I just thought that there had to be a desperate battle on the wall, but I’m here, wasting my time, so I find it difficult to feel at ease. After all, it is my duty to defend the town.”

“Perhaps.” Sir Pine shrugged his shoulders, “But it’s not your responsibility to guard the town. After you heard that His Highness will canonize you as a knight after winter, you should first understand that the first principle of the Knight is allegiance. Now, he needs you to protect Anna, so now your responsibility is here. “

“You ... when you put it like this,” for a moment Brian hesitated but then he seated himself on the bed again again.

But soon they heard the horn blow a second time – it was even more rapid than the first time. It just felt like thunder would roll over everyone’s heart.

Sir Pine frowned.

“Anna!” Exclaimed Nana, shocked.

Sir Pine turned around and saw that the witch was running directly toward the door. Brian immediately went to catch up with her, placing himself in front of her.

“You said you want to guard the walls? Now is your time,” said Anna in a calm and autocratic voice, “as long as you follow me on my way to the wall, you will not be contradicting His Royal Highness’ command.”

Hearing this, Brian was really shocked, but he raised his head to look quizzically toward Sir Pine.

What an amazing girl, thought the Baron, there was nothing wrong with what she said. In addition, His Highness does not require her to stay in the medical school. He had also heard from Nana that Anna could summon flames. So if the current situation was really tight, letting a witch join the battle would maybe be the deciding factor in reversing the situation.

Coming to this conclusion, he nodded, “Protect her well!”

“Yes Sir!” Brian yelled loudly and suddenly felt his blood burning.

Seeing the two leave, Nana asked, “Father, will you not go with them?”

“My battle is here, at your side, my good girl,” said the Baron with a smile, “Whether it be the demonic beasts or the devil himself, I will never let any of them hurt you!”

The distance between the Medical Center and the wall wasn’t far, so Anna and Brian could trot all the way along the stone path toward the east wall. When the two were finally close enough to see the outline of the wall around the central watchtower, they saw that the situation has become very problematic.

A great hole was opened within the wall. Roland was being shielded by his personal guards, but several people were still on their way down. A demonic beast shaped like a bear came sprinting towards the militia. It was unstoppable, and when it hit the soldiers stationed at the front they were all sent flying.

When someone saw Anna with her strange attire running towards them the person yelled at her, “Hey, it’s dangerous here, you have to leave immediately!”

Anna turned a deaf ear towards him and went directly towards the hole instead. After the demonic beast had fought its way through the militia, it turned around and rushed towards Anna. Brian stepped beside Anna, ready to protect her. He lowered his body and slashed out with his sword – but the crazy demonic beast had no intention to dodge, and hit the edge of the sword with its front legs. The sword was immediately sent flying, but at the same time, the momentum was so strong that the beast’s front legs were cut open, and were even broken.

It rolled around on the ground, screaming and looking like a dehydrated fish that was struggling to breathe. No one dared to come near it because they were afraid of getting hit. However, Anna walked beside the demonic beast, put both of her hands on the ground, and suddenly the demonic beast burst into flames. The beast turned into a ball of coal.

When flames suddenly erupted within the crowd, Roland saw that Anna personally had come. He was immediately bathed in cold sweat.

I hadn’t planned for you to show yourself like this!

He had originally intended to let Nana lay down the groundwork. After most people had accepted the presence of a witch, he had planned to announce Anna’s presence in public.

However, now every previously made plan was destroyed, so he immediately turned and said, “Don’t worry about me, go and protect her!”

Anna must not be lost. She was an important figure in the industrial development of his town, so if she were injured it would bring an immeasurable loss.

“I know,” said Nightingale, “But please also pay attention to your own safety.”

Anna went to the front walls with the fracture. When Roland’s guards saw the girl in strange clothes coming towards them, they immediately stepped aside and let her through. Now, she stood among the soldiers, and spread her arms wide to shield them. Sending vines of flame from her hands, she let them climb up the wall along the destroyed section.

Everyone's mouths were gaping open when they saw this scene. They dared not to believe their eyes when they saw a wall of flames rising up and slowly filling the gap in the wall. This wasn't an illusion. All of the guards had to step back because of the high temperature. The surrounding snow was rapidly melting, and formed clouds of white mist which then rose up.

The demonic beasts also feared the flames. They immediately fled to the sides, and only occasionally one or two of them would try to break through the wall of fire, but no demonic beasts could step through the wall of flames.

"Everyone get back on the walls!" Roland loudly shouted, trying to grasp the opportunity, "Get back into the formation! Hunter squad, fire at will!"

Then, he himself grabbed Carter's gun, laid it on the wall, and began to shoot down the demonic beasts.

Seeing the Prince himself attack motivated all the people present. After all, in this age, seeing nobility or the Royal Family taking the lead role and fighting alongside the militia was seldom seen, so seeing this greatly enhanced the morale.

The crowd began to chant the slogan, "Guard Border Town! Fight for the Prince!" while at the same time maintaining the line of the defense and holding their formation.

The fighting continued until the sky began to get dark. Only then were all the demonic beasts in front of the wall killed.

Slowly, the wall of flames began to disperse and Anna, totally exhausted, wiped the sweat off her forehead.

Then, Roland saw an incredible scene.

Roland's personal guards laid their fists on their heart, and bowed in the direction of Anna. Then the militia, as if they were infected by the mood of the guards, also gave their salute. Incredibly, no one shouted or cursed her with evil words, they only watched her silently. After the war, all of Border Town was quiet.

Seeing a kind of incredible power which was never seen before for the first time was indeed terrifying, but this power was used in their favor. When seeing it used for the confrontation with their greatest enemies, their fear gradually disappeared, replaced by trust and gratitude.

Roland's heart went crazy while walking towards Anna, but when he was by her side he found her totally pale. She was walking unsteadily, and was on the verge of collapsing.

"Are you okay?" He worriedly asked her and held her by her shoulder. Anna saw the Prince safe, gave him a forced smile, and then fell down in his arms.