

## Witch 511

### Chapter 511: Whispers at Nightfall

Nightingale lay by the window and watched the city under the night sky.

Dim shadows spread under the darkness and outlined the silhouette of King's City's wall. Under the light, the three walls showed some minor differences. The nearest palace wall was a light gray color, lit up by burning resin torches. At a glance, it looked like a jeweled belt with overlapping areas of light and dark.

Far away was the inner city wall, which was gray mixed with black, and it looked like a long snake that surrounded the city. Even after King's City had a new ruler, the Inner City still kept its splendor. It was the first time that Nightingale saw a place busier and livelier than Border Town. This short, yet fierce war did not have any effects on the noble and the rich, so they still joyfully indulged themselves at night.

However, beyond that, the sky was suddenly darker as if all the light was blocked by the inner city's wall. The darkness covered everything including the most splendid bluestone city wall, where Nightingale saw only some stones sparkle from the moon's light. The Outer City just looked like most of the cities she had seen before. These cities fell into silence after the night came. In the vast darkness, the Inner City's light seemed a bit dull but it did not stop people from dancing and singing. For some reason, Nightingale suddenly thought about how human beings were cornered into this part of the continent, and the vast Land of Dawn was being devoured by the darkness bit by bit. There were demons and evil beasts that lurked about but most people had no idea and still partook in what little entertainment they had.

"Phew, I'm beyond tired." Wendy's voice interrupted Nightingale's thoughts, as the red-headed witch rubbed her shoulders and lay down next to Nightingale by the window.

Nightingale asked, "Have they fallen asleep already?"

"Yes. They finally got tired after all the commotion they've stirred up today." Wendy yawned. "I don't know where their energy comes from. They flew around on hydrogen balloons the entire day and still they demanded to hear a story before going to bed." Wendy finished.

"You should thank His Majesty for that." Nightingale laughed. "If he didn't punish them to do three sets of exercises, I'm afraid they'd go out to explore the night instead of listening to your story." Nightingale turned around to look through the gap between the balcony and the bedroom and saw Maggie leaned over Lightning. Maggie's white hair almost covered Lightning's entire body. "Those two seem to really hit it off." Nightingale expressed.

Since the rooms in the royal palace were more spacious and each living room was accompanied by two bedrooms. The witches that followed Roland on this expedition lived in four-person rooms with each other. These rooms were the most splendid places in the whole Kingdom of Graycastle. The carpets and bedding in the guest rooms were all made of excellent materials, some of which Nightingale recognized, like velvet and silk. Other things were made of materials she had never seen before.

"Yes." Wendy also smiled gently. "I heard from Lady Tilly once that Maggie used to turn into a pigeon and slept while squatted on the roof. Any little noise would wake her and she only kept pigeon form to

escape any possible dangers. Now, she finally can have a peaceful sleep just like a normal little girl." She paused for a while and then continued, her voice filled with emotion, "We're very lucky."

Nightingale did not answer her... She did not need to. All the Witch Cooperation Association's witches who survived would feel the same way. When they struggled between life and death, it was the Lord of Border Town who reached out to them and promised them a new world. Now, not only did their sisters see hope, but they also found that this new world was within reach. After the Holy Mountain, they pursued for hundreds of years, became a reality, their gratitude and recognition could not be expressed within a few words.

They fell into a long silence until the midnight bell rang from far away, and Wendy said, "Do you... want to go back and have a visit?"

Nightingale asked confused, "Go back to where?" She still was not fully awakened.

"Silver City, your hometown," Wendy pointed south and said, "It's only half a day's journey from here. If you let Maggie carry you, it won't even take an hour. You, you do have a little brother living there, right?"

Nightingale did not think she would bring this up, and after a little hesitation, she shook her head and explained, "While we restore the city's order, there are potential enemies everywhere. So I can't leave His Majesty now. Besides, when everything in the Kingdom of Graycastle is settled, I'll have many opportunities to visit Silver City. There is no hurry."

"I thought you'd emphasize that you've already removed yourself from the Gilen family, just like you did in the past," Wendy said relieved, "You seem like... you don't hate your little brother anymore?"

"Without his betrayal, I wouldn't have met you, let alone His Highness." Nightingale smiled. "You always say to me, 'Getting rid of the past nightmares doesn't mean separating yourself from the past.' Now I finally understand the second half of the sentence. It's okay as long as I live a better life than before."

"Well... it seems like a good proverb pieced together." Wendy raised her brow. "I didn't know you had such literary skills."

"So I won't sneak out secretly, and you can go to sleep in peace." Nightingale uttered as she held Wendy's hands. "It's late."

"Uh-huh." Wendy huffed as the two of them crawled on the big bed, and Wendy summoned a slight breeze to blow out the candle. "Good night," Wendy mumbled.

Nightingale replied, "Good night."

After Nightingale was sure that Wendy was asleep, she got up from the bed, went into the Mist, and walked to Roland's room.

Next, it was her time.

Darkness was on her side.

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The next day, Roland received both good news and bad news from Iron Axe. The good news was that after one night's interrogation, High Priest Ferry finally admitted Hermes' plan of secretly replacing Wimbledon III and issuing the Royal Decree on the Selection of Crown Prince.

The bad news was that the church had plotted this war for a long time, so they could weaken the military potential of the Kingdom of Graycastle and occupy it more quickly. They actually occupied many areas, like the two provinces in the southeast of the kingdom. If Roland had not traversed time to become Prince Roland, this plan would probably have destroyed the Kingdom of Graycastle already.

"Did you hear all of that?" Roland asked Theo, who stood beside him. "Go spread the news, especially about the church's true intentions and Timothy's collaboration with them. The more details you disclose, the better. I want every citizen of the city to know what they have done."

Theo answered, "Yes."

Then Roland turned to Iron Axe and ordered, "Send out another paddle ship to bring Barov and Kyle Sichi here."

Iron Axe seemed embarrassed, which was uncommon for him. "It's no problem to fetch the director, but the chief alchemist... Will he really agree to leave the lab and waste his precious time on the road?" Iron Axe questioned.

"I'll write to Kyle." Roland frowned. "There's a saying that if you don't come back and visit your hometown when you get rich, it's like wearing a black suit in the middle of the night. What's the point if people can't see it? When a man learns impressive skills, he shouldn't mind showing it off. When Kyle was in Redwater City, he always competed with the Alchemist Workshop in King's City. As they say, two of a trade never agree. Now Kyle has a chance to beat his rival, so I don't believe that he won't come."

This is also a good opportunity to enlist all the alchemists in King's City in one swoop and make them serve me."

## Chapter 512: An Old Friend and a New Friend

There was no doubt that King's City was a huge treasure trove.

Although it was a rather backward city, and those magnificent buildings meant nothing in Roland's eyes, it was still the most brilliant pearl in the Kingdom of Graycastle.

In terms of population, the number of noblemen here far exceeded that of other cities—the first thing anyone who lost their rank and land would do was to come to King's City to seek new opportunities. If landless nobles and knights canonized by the royalty were counted, then the population was even bigger. For example, nearly 20% of the citizens in the Inner City were noblemen. Most of them received primary education and could read and write, making them all potential officials who deserved training in Roland's eyes. After all, without land and property, they would not resist the new policy too much, and their excellent insight would allow them to accept new things quicker.

In terms of industries, King's City also hosted the best men of all trades. Besides the merchant and craftsmen unions, it also had the biggest alchemist association and the only astrologer association.

Roland coveted these talents and summoned Barov and Kyle Sichi to utilize these men as much as possible.

In terms of wealth, the value of all the collections in the palace was ten times that of Duke Ryan, with gold royals, jewelry, and golden handicrafts filling up several storehouses. This, combined with the properties of the other ministers who fell from power along with Timothy, totaled an astonishing number. If their properties were all confiscated, then the City of Neverwinter would be well taken care of for two or three years. However, Roland did not plan to take away all of the treasures, since it would waste too much time. Besides, he would need a lot of wealth to take over King's City and maintain its stability. Neither keeping the money stacked up in the basement nor using it freely was meaningful, so it was best to circulate it.

If possible, Roland would love to spend half a year to process all these resources. But compared with King's City, which lay far in the middle, it was more important to take Fallen Dragon Ridge and the Southernmost Region, which lay next to the Western Region.

Soon after Iron Axe left, one guard reported, "Your Majesty, outside the palace, a businesswoman called Margaret wants to see you."

Roland's eyes lit up. "Bring her to me."

When the businesswoman walked into the hall, he smiled and arose from his seat to welcome her. "We finally meet again."

"I didn't expect we would meet in the palace of the Kingdom of Graycastle this time." Margaret raised her hem and curtsied to Roland. "You always surprise me, Your Highness... no, now I should call you Your Majesty."

"It doesn't matter, the enthronement hasn't been held, so I'm not the king yet." Roland waved his hands.

"You're not anxious about this, and you do behave in a kingly way." Margaret covered her mouth and smiled. "From now on, there will be business opportunities everywhere in King's City. As an old friend, you should take more care of me."

"Of course, even if you didn't come to me, I'd find you." He laughed openly. "You may not know this, but Border Town and Longsong Stronghold are going to be integrated into one big city. The steam engine company has opened several more production lines, and the yield will triple. It'll also produce more new commodities, and I promise they'll be unparalleled in the Four Kingdoms."

"I've already seen how creative you can be, so we can talk about these things later in great detail." Margaret nodded. "But that's not why I'm here today. I want to ask another favor from you."

"Oh?" Roland asked with great interest. "Tell me."

"Could... we move to another place to talk?" she glanced around the room and asked quietly.

"If the Chamber of Commerce's financial resources can't solve this problem, and now we have to be secretive about it... Has she really encountered so much trouble?" The prince thought for a moment. "Then let's go to my study."

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The study, located on the top floor of the Tower of Crown, belonged to King Wimbledon III originally, and it was also where Prince Roland wanted to be the most when he was a child—this was the only place where he could see his reticent father. However, the reason that Roland picked this place was only that it was too high to have any secret passages, and there was only one set of winding stairs leading to the top of the tower, making it easy to defend and hard to attack.

"Can you talk about it now?"

There were only him and Margaret left in the room, plus Nightingale, who had already hidden herself.

"Sorry, Your Majesty, I swore to someone that I'd tell this to only you..." She bowed respectfully.

"Thunder wants to see you."

"Thunder?" Roland was shocked. "You mean the most famous explorer in the Fjords? Didn't he... just die in a shipwreck?"

"A real explorer may believe in the three gods, but he wouldn't go to them so easily." Margaret shook her head. "He doesn't want to reveal his whereabouts, especially to Lightning, which is why I need to tell you in secret. Thunder had planned to contact you through Tilly, but he didn't expect that you'd occupy King's City so soon, so he changed his plan at the last minute." The businesswoman halted for a while. "He also said that he found some unbelievable things in the east of the Shadow Islands that you'd definitely be interested in, and that they may have something to do with the ruins from hundreds of years ago."

"Wait... is he in King's City now?"

"Yes, he arrived here yesterday. He made this decision after meeting with me."

"You don't seem surprised by his coming back from the dead." Roland was surprised. "Have you known about it for a long time?"

Margaret nodded.

"So the reason that you came to Border Town to do businesses the first time wasn't that I sent the guards out, but to find Lightning, right?"

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you this from the start," she said while holding her hand to her chest. "Lightning wore a Magic Stone, so Thunder could find where she was. He sent me there just to make sure that she was safe. After learning that Lightning was settled in your domain, he decided to hide his information to keep his daughter far away from being an explorer."

"That's it." Roland understood it instantly. "I didn't ask for more details about Thunder's death at the time, and Margaret did speak the truth in some sense, so Nightingale couldn't detect her lies but could only tell that she had no bad intentions towards witches. So there was a reason for this 'coincidence'. Without Lightning, my steam engine trade wouldn't have found business routes so quickly."

"Now King's City is still a mess, so I can't leave the palace," Roland said, after a minute's consideration.

"If Thunder wants to meet me, you can bring him here. I promise I won't divulge his information to Lightning."

"Thank you for your kindness, Your Majesty." Margaret looked very grateful and she bowed again. "I'll deliver your reply to him as soon as possible."

Soon after the servants sent the businesswoman away, Roland heard his guard's report when he got back to the hall. "Your Majesty, a nobleman outside the palace claimed to be your old friend and made a fuss about coming inside."

It surprised him a little. He knew the lower noblemen who were not influenced by the spring offensive would come here to snoop, but he did not expect they would come so soon. Logically, they should have waited to see the policy trends, and they should not come forward so proactively before Timothy was beheaded... He also used to be a prince, so how could he be on good terms with a lower nobleman?

"What's his name?"

"Sir Yoroko, Your Majesty."

Chapter 513: "Magic Hand" Yoroko

"Pfft... ahem." Roland almost choked on his own saliva. A pale-looking, slightly oversized man with stubby fingers and a curly Mohawk appeared within his mind. Roland had almost forgotten about him, but he quickly realized who he was once the name was mentioned. His appearance was as clear as if they had parted just yesterday.

The visit was not a surprise; Prince Roland had once been so close with Yoroko that he would have given him the shirt off his back. Prince Roland had been out of his mind and was self-loathing after being fiercely rejected by Tilly, realizing that he would never fit into Gerald, Timothy and Garcia's circle. Yoroko's appearance was basically his salvation. Not only did he bring Roland along to the brothel, allowing him a taste of the pleasures of a noble, but he also introduced him to a gang of evil associates to boss around, giving him the prestige that he would never have in the palace. Even though these things were not righteous, he had been Prince Roland's best friend, at least at that time.

Roland wanted to reject Knight Yoroko, but these memories made him realize that he would not do that if he were still Prince Roland. Not to mention that he needed someone to attract the rest of the nobility to serve him. After a little contemplation, he finally decided to meet the popular "Magic Hand" of King's City.

"Bring the knight to my study," he ordered, "and remember to confiscate his God's Stone of Retaliation."

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Returning to the Tower of Crown, Roland soon met the "old friend" he was waiting for.

"Oh my God! Your Majesty... I didn't expect you to come back so quickly and defeat your demon older brother so easily!" Prince Roland used to address his siblings as a clan of demons, and Yoroko had gone along with this statement in private. His image was very similar to what Roland could remember. Yoroko dashed forward and gave Roland a warm hug as soon as he opened the door and walked into the study.

Roland reluctantly patted his back like he used to and said, "I didn't expect you to come so soon either."

Despite the fact that Yoroko's average appearance did not relate to his title of "Casanova", his round chin always gave people a sense of inexplicable intimacy. Considering his neatly-shaved beard, the clean-as-a-pin attire, the perfect smell of his cologne, and his legendary techniques, it was no surprise that so many ladies fell for him.

"I'm different from them! Those cowards are still worrying about Timothy's remaining power, but I know that you would never let him off so easy!" Yoroko grinned and asked, "Since you're back, would you like to have a drink tonight at the Golden Lane? Do you want me to make an appointment with Mrs Rother or Miss Kingfisher? Ever since that one-night stand, they've been missing you."

Roland suddenly felt a chill from behind his back, an ice-cold gaze pierced through his body, casted directly towards Yoroko.

The knight felt the change too. His voice abruptly ceased, and he started to look around in doubt. "How come it suddenly got so cold in here?"

"What one-night-stand? I had nothing to do with them," Roland immediately objected. "Whatever they're feeling has nothing to do with me!"

Even if it did, it would only have something to do with Prince Roland.. It was totally different from his true self, so what he said was still the truth. Nightingale should not be able to tell the difference.

As expected, the chilling sensation reduced drastically following his response.

"Oh? Is that so?" Yoroko stroked his chin, "But you obviously spent a night with them!"

"It was way past curfew time, and I wasn't able to return to the palace. Otherwise, I would have had to sleep on the street," Roland emphasized. "Anyway, I didn't do anything that night, understand?"

There was a glimmer of doubt on Yoroko's face, but his initial smile soon returned. "Well in that case, forget about them. Let's meet some new ones today. You probably have no idea, but a classier brothel opened up right opposite the Golden Lane. I heard that the quality can be compared to private reserves of the nobles, and they only allow entry by invitation. I haven't had a chance to try it out myself yet. I'm sure there'll be no problem for you. What do you think?"

"No, I'm not going anywhere at night. I'm staying in the palace. "

"Oh, I understand," Yoroko raised his brows and said. "There are quite a few beautiful attendants in the palace as well, so you should enjoy them first. In that case, I'll teach you my famous skills so none of them will forget about you." He sighed and said, "You used to be so eager to learn from me, but I thought it would be useless for you back then, even if you mastered the stunt. Now that you're about to become king, I'm afraid you'll have more lovers than I do. So, the stunt should be able to come in handy for you. After all, human energy is limited."

"Stop." Roland was close to covering Yoroko's mouth with his hand. He dared not let Yoroko continue. It was utterly a complete collection of dark histories. He did not want to bear the responsibilities of the awful things Prince Roland had done, especially not in front of Nightingale. "Listen, friend... I'm different now."

Yoroko was stunned, but replied, "Of course. You're now the king, Your Majesty..."

"I don't mean that," Roland interrupted, "but you can also interpret it that way. As a king of the country, I definitely can't be as ruthless as I used to be, understand?" He recalled Prince Roland's way of intimate conversation, hooked his arm around Yorko's neck, and said, "Speaking of which, just tell me what you have in mind. I don't believe that you came here, simply to reminisce about the past. You don't have to hide anything from me."

As expected, Yorko laughed and said, "In that case, I'll be straightforward. Your Majesty, can you please grant me an official position?"

"What?"

"What about making me your minister? I don't need to be in a key position, such as Treasurer or Minister of Justice. Just let me manage the patrol team, like Steelheart Knight." He patted his bulging stomach and said, "I can assure you that the Rats would be obedient under my watch."

Roland could not help but silently roll his eyes. How dare he mention that? The reputation of King's City would be ruined if he held the Minister of Defense position. He would bring the patrol team to fool around and summon the men to beat up other Casanovas if he had any conflicts. It was scary to even think about it.

However, it could be good publicity if Yorko was given a suitable position. He would have a chance to be promoted during the throne alternation as long as he was willing to serve Roland. After all, Yorko had a clean background; he basically did not have any bad habits other than the fact that he could not control his sexual desire. The key question was what kind of position was suitable for someone like him.

Roland contemplated for a while and said, "I see. There's no problem with granting a simple official position, however, I'll still have to discuss the specific details with the City Hall. After all, it's an official job." He patted the "old friend" on his shoulder and said, "I'll send someone to inform you after I decide."

Chapter 514: The "Hypothesis of the Spirits"

Nightingale appeared from behind him once Yorko left the study.

"Who are Mrs. Rother and Miss Kingfisher? What's the famous stunt?"

"Uh, this is a really tough question to answer." Roland walked towards the window and pretended to be contemplating, but he was actually preventing Nightingale from seeing his expression. "Just two ladies whom I was acquainted with. I don't know them very well, and I don't even know their real names. This is the way of interactions among the nobles. They're always hypocritical. Everything's simply for show most of the time and they forget all about it after that."

"But he said both of them are missing you dearly."

"Ahem... about that, they're not missing me, but my gold royals, status, and power. After all, I was still a prince back then. So they lost contact with me after I was assigned to Border Town. They would not be so cold to me if they really missed me, would they?"



Nightingale could only differentiate the truth of the statement, but she could not directly determine the truth of the matter. Thus, Roland decided to use the art of misleading and dispelled Nightingale's doubt with winding statements. Not to mention that he indeed had nothing to do with this nonsense, so he was not at all stressed about it. "Regarding the famous stunt... It's a little bit more complicated. Simply put, Yorko can make a woman fall for him with the skills within his hands, as he is named the 'Magic Hand'. I used to be curious because I knew nothing about it, but I don't need any of these skills now, do I?"

He turned around and looked at Nightingale. However, she quickly avoided the eye contact, and a faint blush appeared on her cheeks. "I, I guess," she said.

"Phew... I should be safe now." Roland silently sighed in relief. Even though he could always ask Nightingale to wait outside in the beginning, it would not only hurt her trust but also put him in potential danger. After all, Sylvie was still inspecting the entire palace, and the gem list was still missing; it was better to be safe than sorry.

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After dinner, Roland finally got to meet with Thunder, the great explorer from the Fjords.

His body was solidly wrapped up, with his head in a hood and a gauze wrapped around his neck. The guards would probably not have let them pass with the way he was dressed if Nightingale had not personally picked him and Margaret up.

Thunder took off his coat and gauze after creeping into the study. He respectfully bowed to Roland and said, "I've heard of your name from Margaret and Her Highness Tilly a while ago. My respected Roland Wimbledon, Your Majesty, thank you for taking care of Lightning."

"I'd like to thank you for taking care of Tilly as well," Roland excitedly answered, observing him from head to toe. "I heard that you've helped her a lot since she moved to Sleeping Island."

Thunder had the typical short blonde-colored hair of Fjords locals, just like Lightning. He was brown-skinned and had a stocky body, rugged-looking appearance, and thick sideburns that were conjoined with the stubbles covering half of his face and his chin. His tone was full of energy, and he clearly spent most of his time on the sea. He was completely different from when he first walked into the room without making even the slightest noise.

"Don't mention it. She was a great help to my adventures. If it wasn't for her help, I'm afraid that the fleet would have been limited to exploring the Shadow Islands." Thunder smiled and said, "And, of course, I wouldn't have been able to reach the sea that I've never seen before and witness the existence of Sealine."

"Sealine?" Roland curiously asked, "What's that?"

"A wall that's formed by the sea water that still allows the boats to cross over freely." Thunder narrated what he had seen in detail. "It's also what brings me here."

Roland was shocked to hear that sea water could overcome gravity and form into ladder-like height differences, allowing boats to sail vertically upwards and cross over smoothly. It sounded incredible! He

felt a great wave of emotion in his heart; it would be difficult for him to believe any of these if he had not heard them from the most famous explorer, Thunder.

It implied that the gravity here was distorted, forming a unique gravitational field. However, Roland was not able to make any conclusion at this time, as the principle of gravity formation was still unclear. Since magic power was everywhere in this world, he could only guess that perhaps magic causing the formation of Sealine.

However, he could faintly feel in his heart that the answer was more profound than he could imagine.

The planet looked very similar to Earth at a glance, so he quickly referred to the theories he learned as scientific enlightenment and guidance. This was not a surprise, since the existence of human beings and carbon-based organisms led to a rough judgement: The law of substances here was basically similar to the previous universe.

It was not metaphysics. The existence of life could be traced back to the speed and direction of atomic spin; it was so precise that none of the machines in the world could be compared. Any change in the constants would cause life to fall apart. Just like a wise man once said, "Life is just like a set of flush in hand, so it'll no longer be there once the cards are shuffled."

He even speculated that the past world might also contain magic, but it had never been discovered due to the lack of witches as terminals.

"I heard that you can make steam-powered boats without sails that are faster than any sailing ship," Thunder continued after Roland completely processed the news. "Therefore, I'd like to ask for your help to build such a ship for me, so that I can sail against the current and the sea wind. Money is not a problem. Please feel free to state your price."

Roland said after a while, "Regarding this matter, gold royals are indeed not a problem... No worries, I'll put the best technology into the ship construction and charge you only the cost of production."

"Your Majesty, no, you don't have to..."

"Listen. It's no longer your personal matter. Exploring the unknowns of the world is as significant as changing the fate of mankind," Roland interrupted and said. "I'll fully support your adventure with only one condition—remember to update me at once with any new discovery."

The discussion of the follow-up details continued for another half an hour. However, Thunder probably noticed that it was very difficult for Roland to settle down and concentrate, so he left after setting the next appointment time. Afterwards, Roland continued to sit in front of the desk, frowning and feeling unsettled.

"What's the matter?" Nightingale anxiously asked. "You look pale."

"Nothing..." Roland shook his head and sighed. "I just have a bad feeling about this."

"What feelings?"

"Do you know about the spirits?"

"Uh, do you mean those tiny, glowing, heavenly individuals that could bring moisture and recovery to all things on earth in the epic biography?"

"No, I'm talking about the creatures with pointed ears and human-like bodies, who are elegant, long-lived, and generally prefer to live in the forest."

Nightingale contemplated for a moment and said, "I've never heard of them."

"I've only read about them in a storybook," Roland slowly explained. "These fictional species basically spread their footprints through the entire continent. However, they were forced to hide in the deep forest after the rise of mankind, putting them on the verge of extinction. As intelligent as they were, they were far less in number compared to the latecomers. Facing the Coalition of mankind that was a hundred times larger than they were, the spirits appeared to be totally defenseless, trapped themselves within the deserted mountains, and became increasingly outdated. Their technology was eventually taken over by mankind, and they ended up as pets... What do you think?"

He continued without waiting for Nightingale's answer, "We're just like the spirits now."

As a member of mankind himself, Roland had totally neglected this, but now he shuddered at that thought. Although mankind was indeed a thriving race comparing to the spirits, it did not mean that they would always thrive the most among the intelligent creatures. Nowadays, mankind was actually the minority, and they were at a disadvantage in terms of numbers. They were trapped by the demons in a corner of the continent and were totally oblivious to the outside world.

He decided to fully support Thunder in exploring the new maritime space for this reason as well. If mankind was not more foresighted and did not actively assess their situation within the world they were in, they could only be eliminated like the spirits.

"Both Battles of Divine Will wasted nearly a thousand years. Hopefully, it's not too late for all this," Roland thought to himself.

Chapter 515: The Magic Painting

"Good morning, Miss Soraya!"

As Soraya stepped into the bicycle factory, Jilly came up and said, "You're so early."

This made Soraya feel a bit embarrassed because she had stayed up late last night playing Fight the Landlord with Mystery Moon and Lily which made her wake up half an hour later than usual. When Wendy was not around, everyone became slightly lazy, of course... except for Anna and Agatha. Whether it was work or learning, they had always set a great example for the other sisters, especially Agatha. She always arrived early and stayed late.

Soraya asked Jilly, "Is the material ready?"

"Yes, please follow me," Jilly replied

As a student in the first graduating class, Jilly became Soraya's assistant after graduation. Her main job was to inform Soraya of her daily schedule. A year ago, Soraya would have never believed that ordinary people and witches could work together in harmony.

"Are those the finished bicycles?" Soraya asked since she suddenly noticed that the factory was a bit different today. The steam machine was not in operation and everyone stood around and stared at a row of brand-new vehicles.

"Yes, these are the first batch of products," Jilly said with a smile. "20 bicycles in total. It's not easy to make, especially the chains and wheels. The rate of the finished products was less than 50%." She finished.

"It's not easy indeed," Soraya thought. The factory was built last autumn, but since then, it had experienced all kinds of difficulties, such as the equipment not being ready, a serious shortage of human resources and so on... It was clearly less prioritized when compared to the steam assembly plant and chemical plant next door. Both of the neighboring plants operated in three shifts and people were working at all times. However, the bicycle factory only operated during the daytime. Once, even Jilly complained that her friend, who had worked for the chemical plant, had a salary three times more than hers, but she had never seen a single bicycle made.

Now Jilly finally obtained a bicycle of her own.

As Soraya walked into her office, she saw that the ground had already been paved with a layer of white paper that was about 40 square meters. The white paper made the floor look as if there was snow on the ground.

"Sorry to disturb you, the part we need to process today is the inner tire," Jilly explained to Soraya and then bowed.

"Okay," the witch nodded and said, "You may go on with your work."

"Well, please call me if you need any help." She laughed. "I'm just around the door."

Seeing Jilly leave excitedly, Soraya knew that she could not wait to ride the bicycle.

Soraya smiled and shook her head as she took off her shoes and stepped on the tiled paper floor.

Soraya usually painted the inner tires, outer tires and bicycle frames based on the demand of the bicycle factory. Soraya's painting speed was faster than the factory's production speed, so there were a lot of such things in stock. Given that magical powers grew every day, it was a waste not to use it, so Soraya came to the factory every three days to finish her painting tasks.

She recalled the color the inner tire should be painted and lifted her hand to summon the Magic Pen.

As a film material that contained gas, it must be light, soft and ductile enough and could be fused at high temperatures. From past experiences, she chose shaving coating method for it. After hundreds of tests, she found that sky coating was too flexible and ripple coating too thermal-resistant. When she was collecting raw materials, she noticed the wood shavings left by the carpenters and finally found the ideal painting materials.

Unlike Lucia, she was unable to break down materials into elementary substances and then mix them at any proportion. She had to understand the materials' characteristics by painting it out and she was unable to remember thousands of materials and their properties. Therefore, the simplest way for her to remember was to make a color card. She would choose the appropriate coating from the color card when needed.

Of course, as the paint used for the inner and outer tires were common, Soraya was able to draw without referring to the color card.

The Magic Pen gradually widened to six meters as Soraya was standing at the center of the brush. Actually, the magic pen could expand at most to ten meters, but in that condition it could easily get out of control. So, she would rather spend more time drawing with a smaller brush to ensure the quality.

...

Within two hours, the 40 square meters of paper was coated with a layer of wood shavings. Of course, the paint was not real wood shavings. It was just like her steel painting was not real steel, but a material that was breakable like glass. A thing could never be extremely hard and extremely ductile at the same time.

Inside the wood shavings, Soraya engraved her name as a signature. This is a tradition among artists. Initially, Soraya signed at the lower right corner of the coating, but later, she found out that after the coating was cut, her name would only appear in one inner tube. So, she decided to sign everywhere. By doing so, no matter how the cutting was, people could always see "Soraya's work". At first, Soraya panicked when His Highness noticed it. She thought she would be punished, but instead, his Highness praised her as a watermark inventor.

Although she did not understand the meaning of watermark, Soraya still felt happy for a few days after being praised by His Highness and decided to continue to sign her name on her work.

After the painting was completed, the next process was to burn the paper at one side of the coating to obtain the raw materials for the inner tire. It then would be sent to the cutting room to be cut into strips which would be welded into tires by hot iron. All these tasks were performed by dedicated workers, and Soraya just needed to prepare the raw materials for them.

The painting she made today almost consumed one third of her magic power and reminded her of the importance of training. Training would greatly upgrade her magical powers. In the past, this workload would make her exhausted, but now after she said goodbye to Jill, she still had energy and power to go to the North Slope Mine alone.

After entering the mountain, there was a sentry stationed almost every 100 meters as well as a bunker and watchtower set up at the entrance. Even the lord's castle was not so tightly guarded.

As Soraya entered the yard, the soldiers saluted her. She saw Anna thoroughly focused on cutting some strange parts as usual. At this sight, Soraya suddenly felt a bit ashamed of herself and at the same time felt some admiration for Anna who was so talented and still so hardworking. Anna was also the favorite witch of His Highness.

"Hey, Sister Soraya, you're here." Lucia announced and smiled as she heard Soraya's footsteps.

Anna also put down the parts in her hand and waved at her. "Please, here are some copper wires to be painted," Anna requested.

"No problem." Soraya smiled and walked towards them.

#### Chapter 516: The Music of Recovery

What Soraya did was to cover the cut copper wire with a layer of hard anti-corrosion coating so that it could be used for the City of Neverwinter's Three Supplies Project.

This process was easier than coating the inner wire, as the thickness did not require much accuracy.

After choosing the color card, Soraya turned the Magic Pen into a round tube. Once scanned from top to bottom, the "pigment" will become solid on the metal surface. It was a trick she learned from Anna—to make better use of magic power by changing its form.

However, there was still a big gap between them because Anna's ability to control magic was almost perfect. Soraya witnessed the Blackfire as it was cutting metal ingots. It seemed like a performance instead of a task... The three types of Blackfire were in different forms, and they cut through the metal from different angles, making a number of parts that were all the same size, or directly created a complete machine. It was easy to remember the characteristics of the black fire at different lengths. It was, however, hard to control the many types of it and make them work together while maintaining the different characteristics of their magic power. In order to do that, there should be no difference between magic power and limbs, and the magic power might need to be more flexible.

"Is it... a vine?" Lucia asked as she stared curiously at the colors painted by the Magic Pen.

"Exactly, this is a 10-year-old grapevine." Soraya explained, "It's hard and difficult to break, very close to His Highness' requirement."

"10 years old... Is that necessary?"

"Of course." She could not help laughing. "Young vines are obviously softer and less resistant to corrosion and heat. It's not just about their ages. Materials, such as wood, paper, and cloth have different properties in wet and dry conditions. That's why I need to use color cards to record them."

"If this is true, there'll be more color cards than metal formulas!" exclaimed Lucia.

"Not really," Soraya thought for a while and said, "'Elementary Chemistry' states that the characteristics of a material might undergo huge changes while its composition has subtle changes. But, the color card of wood has no noticeable changes when it's mixed with 10% or 15% water."

"Wow, you record the whole world with just a pen." Lucia was amazed. "This is really an enviable ability."

She smiled but did not answer. She was thinking of Anna, who really had an enviable ability. If the Magic Pen was recording the world, then the Blackfire was creating the world. Most of the changes in the town were related to Anna. Several of the machines at the corner of the courtyard displayed proof of that. As long as they were connected to the steam engine, they were able to produce strong bursts of power.

The workers became an add-on to the Blackfire through a machine. In a sense, Anna's creation enabled the ordinary people to have power close to the witches'.

Today's job was considered done after coating five bundles of copper wire—Soraya's working life was very consistent. She would go to different places to complete partial coatings every day. Since her painting speed had improved, only about half of her magic power would be exhausted by midday.

When a witch consumed all her magic power, she would feel tired or even faint. Therefore, they would usually retain 30% of their power during the daily training—Typically, as additional training to consume more magic power, she would continue to collect color cards and capture new colors. Still, Soraya became less productive because Wendy and His Highness were not around. For that reason, she decided to join Mystery Moon and others in Fight the Landlord game later.

She thought that this was definitely not slacking off. It was just a temporary entertainment.

...

Time always flew fast while playing a game. The whole afternoon passed within a wink. After dinner, Scroll announced some unexpected news.

"Today's evening course has been canceled and changed to Echo's ability test."

"Well, hasn't she done her ability test before?" Lily wondered and said, "Why does she have to do it again?"

"This is great," said Mystery Moon almost immediately while covering Lily's mouth with her hand. "I've never tested anyone else's abilities!"

Lily stared angrily at Mystery Moon till she stopped covering her mouth and muttered softly. "The point is the class has been dismissed. Why don't you feel happy...?"

"Teacher Scroll, what should we do?" asked Ring, the only non-witch in the hall.

"You just need to focus and listen," replied Scroll with a smile.

"I fancy not everyone needs to attend the test." Agatha stood up. "If not, I'll go back to my room."

"That won't do." Scroll shook her head. "You're one of the reasons for the test."

"Me?" She asked frowning.

All of the witches looked at Agatha, including Soraya.

"Yes. You're too stressed and your body won't be able to bear it if you consume all your magic power every day."

"In Taquila, senior witches do the same," said Agatha carelessly, "Are you not aware of the brutality of the Battle of Divine Will? It'll never stop until the opponent collapses. I believe that the Union is willing to sacrifice all its members if they're able to find the path to victory."

"But His Highness said before, simply forcing yourself will reduce your efficiency. Resting is necessary for doing things, both studying and working," Scroll said softly. "I have told him your situation, so the test is an attempt."

"Test what?"

"The recovery skill of Echo."

The phrase surprised the witches. "Can she heal the wounded like Nana?"

Soraya doubted it. Echo's ability was to simulate all kinds of sounds. She was useless in the Witch Cooperation Association. She would not have been despised by Cara if she could heal others.

Scroll paused for a moment. "I don't know the exact reason. It's His Highness's idea." She looked outside. "Are you ready? Let's begin."

Echo walked to the hall and ascended the podium. She was a little nervous. Everyone was holding their breath and waiting for her to exercise her ability.

The music rang softly, like a clear spring ringing in everyone's ears.

Then she sang a melodious song in her own voice instead of simulating one.

Suddenly, Soraya felt that everything around her had changed. The stone castle gradually faded into the darkness and her body was surrounded by warm springs... It was as if she were enveloped by a white mist, and upon her was a sky full of stars. The cool breezes blew through her warm body. She could not help humming out loud and was completely relaxed and immersed in this very comfortable spring.

At the end of the song, Soraya slowly opened her eyes after a long time. She understood the meaning of "Recovery" without any explanation. There was no increase in magic power, but the fatigue of the day was swept away. Her body became active and strong.

Chapter 517: The Real Alchemy

...

When Kyle Sichi returned home, he immediately saw a dark envelope on the dinner table.

"What's this?" He looked at his wife Cerra, who was busy at work in the kitchen.

"Oh, by the way, City Hall's officials came around this afternoon." His wife wiped her hands clean and placed an appetizing bowl of meat broth onto the table. "They said His Highness wants you to go to King's City, and a boat will come in two days to escort you there."

"Isn't he going there to confront his brother? Why would he want me there? What a complete waste of time," said Kyle with a frown. "It'll take at least a week's journey. His demands are really going too far."

"He's your prince, Lord of the City of Neverwinter, dear," said Cerra, shaking her head with a smile.

"Also, City Hall's officials said that he wrote you a personal letter to show how important this trip was."



That's quite an honor, isn't it? You should keep this letter safe after you finish reading it, so we can probably pass it on as a family heirloom."

"Family heirloom? If only it were the complete edition of 'Intermediate Chemistry'." Kyle curled his lip. "Let's discuss this after dinner... He'd better have a good reason."

After his simple meal, he ducked into his study and opened the envelope.

A small strip of paper as long as a finger fell out. This was obviously a secret letter sent by a carrier pigeon, which was then placed in an envelope by the City Hall officials.

Kyle used one hand to press the paper and the other to fumble around the table for his monocle and placed it on the bridge of the nose. Due to reading over a long period of time under faint candlelight, his vision was getting worse day by day. Luckily, his life in the town has been improved a lot, and he could light five or six candles at a time in his office, but he did not know when his house could be installed with the kind of bright lights that lit up the chemical plant.

There was only one short sentence on the strip of paper:

"Do you still remember the Alchemist Workshop of King's City? Now it's your chance to show them what the real alchemy is."

Kyle gasped.

The Alchemist Workshop of King's City was the ultimate dream position for all aspiring alchemists who searched for the truth of all things, and he was no exception when young.

Only his wife knew that he had once applied to the Alchemist Workshop of the King's City. He had planned to gain admission using the "gold-dissolving liquid" that he had invented by himself at the age of 20. However, Kyle's formula unexpectedly failed during the review process, and he could not produce the smoking brown acid liquor even after two attempts. The reviewing alchemist Retnin was outraged and accused Kyle of intentionally wasting the Workshop's valuable ingredients. He denied Kyle a third try and even ordered the guards to seize his purse and kick him out.

Outside the Workshop, Retnin coldly tossed five silver royals from the purse to Kyle, saying that he should buy a trip back to Redwater City, while the rest of the purse was compensation for the Workshop's loss. He left as soon as he was done talking, leaving Kyle with only rejection and a great shame. This left a gaping scar in his heart, and he never told anyone about it except his wife.

Kyle returned to Redwater City full of rage, but he continued to pursue alchemy and spent all his time in his workshop, trying to find a new formula to prove the Alchemist Workshop of King's City wrong. Finally, after ten years, when he was 30 years old, he developed a second formula. For this reason, he was promoted as an alchemist in Redwater City. It took him another six years to become the chair.

Kyle had always viewed the Alchemist Workshop of King's City as his greatest enemy, and he interacted with them a couple times in his work, as well. But their alchemists were always extremely haughty and did not recognize any other alchemist organizations except their own. They believed that Redwater City's alchemists were only as good as their apprentices and students and did not deserve the title of an alchemist. Their supposedly newfound alchemy formulas were mostly discovered by the Alchemist Workshop of King's City dozen years ago.

The Workshop chair even said other cities did not need to build alchemical workshops because this line of work required a great amount of money and manpower, which regular lords could not afford at all. If people needed the help of alchemists, they could seek it directly from King's City. If the lords invested tens of thousands of gold royals into their own workshops, they would probably make no progress with the end of a bunch of useless men.

Embarrassingly, Kyle knew that only the Alchemic Workshop of Redwater City saw the workshop of King's City as a competitor, but the latter did not care about him at all. He was overjoyed by his success in the double-stone acid-making method and the production of crystal glass because he could produce large amounts of valuable acid with the former, and the latter was the most highly demanded alchemic product on the market. Even the proud Alchemist Workshop could not ignore his two accomplishments.

In an unexpected and theatrical turn of events, Roland Wimbledon of Border Town found him and opened his eyes to a whole world of possibilities with "Elementary Chemistry".

From then on, Kyle realized that everything he had learned was meaningless. The alchemy itself was a backward practice and doomed for extinction, while a new path of exploration lay ahead of him—this time, the relationship between all things was no longer murky, but clear and organized. His past squabbles were also pointless, and he let go of his vendetta with the Alchemist Workshop of King's City and the formulas that had taken him so much effort to develop.

It's reasonable to do so.

However, when His Highness mentioned this word again, Kyle Sichi's heart still raced, and an indescribable excitement crept back into his heart.

Kyle's mind recalled the cold figure, the muddy silver royals, the door that slammed shut, and the outrageous claim that there was no need for other alchemic workshops except the Alchemist Workshop of King's City to exist.

"Now it's your chance to show them what the real alchemy is."

Kyle scanned the strip of paper one last time, stood up, and walked out of his office. "Cerra..."

He paused in the middle of his sentence and noticed that his wife was bending over, packing his clothes into an open bag in the living room.

"What's this?"

"It's for your journey to King's City. I knew that even if His Highness didn't write you a letter, you'd still go," said Cerra with a smile. "Do you still remember the stories you told me? There are things that you're owed in that city."

Kyle stared at her blankly for a while and then burst out in laughter.

"Take good care of our home. I have to pay a visit to King's City."

Chapter 518: The New Journey of Magic Hand

It was a bright and sunny day in King's City, making it perfect for a sentencing day.

A cannon would sound on the square every hour, signaling that another formerly "prominent and important" figure received his deserved verdict.

Their convictions had actually already been decided, so this process was mostly used as a propaganda for the citizens. It especially condemned the church and Timothy for conspiring against the king and stealing the throne. After a week of preparation, the evidence collected against them proved their guilt without a doubt—of course, Roland did not actually give them a chance to argue for themselves.

Only a few of the nobles were sentenced to hanging. Besides Timothy, his henchmen, the Prime Minister, and judge, all the other sentenced men were the church believers. Even the church of King's City was completely uprooted, and Roland made sure that everyone who was involved in spreading the demonic plague got what they deserved.

These scumbags will surely be met by cheers from the audience when they're brought to the gallows.

"Are you not going to watch it in person?" asked Nightingale, standing by the window.

"Iron Axe and Theo will take care of everything," replied Roland without even raising his head. Public trials helped excite and unite the subjects in Border Town, but they would not have the same effect here. The people would not automatically side with Roland as soon as he killed Timothy, just like they did not side with Timothy after King Wimbledon III and Gerald died.

He did not have enough support among the citizens here.

He was also concerned about his own safety. Sylvie eventually found the gem list Roland remembered, which Timothy had hidden in a secret compartment in his closet. However, there were twelve more names than the gems there, four of which were hidden in King's City. It meant that they had all received Timothy's orders. Although they were not necessarily the assassination orders, Roland still kept his guard up. Execution grounds were too disorderly and unsuitable for him to visit, and he had no interest in watching executions.

He had much more important things to deal with.

For example, the army.

The casualties in capturing King's City were finally calculated, revealing that the First Army lost 33 men, which was their worst loss so far. Although they killed a much larger amount of enemies than that, Roland still noticed many flaws in their street battle tactics, especially in house demolition—most of the First Army's casualties were caused when enchanted soldiers surprised them by leaping out from civilian houses. If his soldiers could use rifle grenades or blasting cartridges to demolish suspicious houses in their way, there would definitely be lighter casualties.

His other concern was the size of the army. The First Army could take on the entire Kingdom of Graycastle with its 3,000 men, but it was not enough to conquer everything in his sights. He would have to leave at least 500 men behind to maintain order in King's City, and after conquering Fallen Dragon Ridge and the Southernmost Region, the army would be too small to maintain a peace war. He needed to expand his army.

Roland wrote down the plans for death benefits and army expansion and handed them to his guards. He ordered them to take the plans back to the City of Neverwinter, where the City Hall would carry them out.

After that, the prince directed his attention to the lower-level nobles.

They did not have any substantial political power, but they were all well-educated and desperately wanted to be promoted. All the great nobles in King's City had already been cleared out. They were either exiled from the territory or sent to the Neverwinter mines, leaving many vacancies in the office. In order for King's City to run normally, the most effective tactic was to have these lower nobles work for him.

Barov had years of experience in King's City and definitely knew some of these men, so he would be in charge of organizing a temporary ruling system.

These men were willing to serve him, so giving them greater responsibilities would increase their eagerness. Yoriko was Roland's first try.

Over the past few days, he finally decided where he should assign his "old friend".

...

Yoriko shouted as soon as he entered Roland's office, "Oh God, you really killed all of the church scoundrels! I would never have guessed that they spread the demonic plague, and I couldn't even believe my ears when High Priest Ferry confessed to it. What a disgrace to the deities! Right now, the crowds on the square are praising your name and saying that you saved them six months ago."

Roland smiled. Theo had ordered the Rats to spread this news to corroborate the refugee camps from six months ago. It seemed that it was quite effective. However, Yoriko probably made up the part about praising his name to flatter him.

He did not question his words and handed a delicate lambskin letter to Yoriko.

"Take a look at this."

Yoriko opened the letter, glanced at it, and widened his eyes. "You're, you're making me the ambassador of the Kingdom of Graycastle?"

"Yes, and a permanent one," said Roland with a nod. "You'll have an official letter of appointment, scepter, and seal, and you'll reside in the City of Glow in the Kingdom of Dawn. What do you think?"

This position had taken a great amount of consideration—as the famed "Magic Hand" in King's City, Yoriko had a bad reputation, just like Prince Roland did in the past.

No one wanted to be made a cuckold, including the nobles. While their wives cheated on them with other men, instead of simply catching them in the act, the husbands also meddled in brothels and bars—but it was all in secrecy.

If Yoriko was given an important position, or if Roland openly gave the Magic Hand a job in the City Hall, it would have an unimaginable influence... All the nobles and merchants would be worried that their

wives would begin to openly pursue Yorko, and the women that Yorko had slept with would all try to take advantage of him. Roland did not want this to happen.

His best option was to place him in a foreign country. Kingdom ambassadors were different from traveling emissary delegations, and they had similar authority as Earls, so even foreign kings treated them with respect. This was an important-sounding title that was perfect as a promotion. He also did not have to give him any land, and he would not worry any of the other noble.

Let him go bother the Kingdom of Dawn. I heard that their noblewomen are exotic and outstanding, so he might be able to make a new name for himself there.

Yorko obviously also realized this point. He knelt down without any hesitation and replied excitedly, "I accept... my lord!" He was so eager as if he was worried that Roland would regret his decision.

"Then it's decided," said Roland with a smile. "Before you leave, I'll have a ceremonial officer to train you."

Besides Yorko, he also needed to send some of his own men to the Kingdom of Dawn, so he could keep an eye on his neighbor and also form an alliance with them to fight the church.

#### Chapter 519: The Secret within the Stars

Roland shook his head with a smile as he watched Yorko excitedly bowed and left.

He did not mind helping the people who had helped Prince Roland in the past, as long as they did not have any bad intentions.

"Where's Wendy right now?" He turned around and asked Nightingale after taking care of this matter.

"She's probably on the top of the tower practicing her ability. Do you want me to summon her?"

"Yes, and get Sylvie, Lightning, and Maggie as well... we're going to visit the astrologers," said Roland.

"And we'll be flying to them."

"I understand." Nightingale's eyes lit up.

"Even if someone wants to attack me, they can't pose a threat against a hydrogen balloon, so this is the best way to travel."

Roland had learned via carrier pigeon that Kyle was on his way, so he postponed his visit to the Alchemist Workshop. He was very curious about the Astrology Association, the other main academic organization in King's City.

Roland also had a great point of confusion that needed to be confirmed.

...

The Astrology Association was located on a mountain in the northern area of the outer city, and it was only the second in height to the twin towers of the palace. The Astrology Hall had a pretty unique design

and it looked like a hexagonal stone tower with a flat top from above. It had a wide base and narrow top, and its silhouette was precisely symmetrical.

Roland knew what symmetry implied in that era.

Without advanced measuring and positioning methods, it was nearly impossible to build such a large yet perfect stone structure, a process even more difficult than building a giant city wall.

The guards had left earlier and surrounded the stone tower. As the hydrogen balloon released the air and slowly landed on the tower roof, its passengers were immediately greeted by Brian, Sean and Alva Taber.

"Your Majesty, this area has been completely sealed, and I promise that not a single rat will escape!"

"We have also confiscated all the astrologers' God's Stones of Retaliation, allowing Miss Sylvie to use her magic power, so you can interact with them freely."

"Good job. Stay alert." Roland nodded in approval and shifted his sight to the row of men in gray robes standing behind the guards. They were all aged over 30 years old, and they kept peeking at the hydrogen balloon in panic. They were obviously still rattled by his sudden appearance from the sky.

Roland turned to Alva. "Who's in charge around here? Tell him to come see me."

"Yes, my lord!" Alva spoke briefly with two old men in robes, and one of them cautiously walked to Roland with him. "Your Majesty, this is King's City's Chief Astrologer, Astrologer of Dispersion Star."

"Your Majesty Roland Wimbledon, your honored presence makes all the stars shine brighter."

"Why don't you use your real name?" asked Roland, raising an eyebrow.

"It's a tradition of the Astrology Association," explained Alva hastily. "Every astrologer dreams of naming themselves after a star image... and only people who discover new star images are allowed such an honor."

"So you discovered... the Dispersion Star?"

"Yes, Your Majesty," said the old man with his hand on his chest. "It forms a Dispersion Star ring with three other Dark Stars, and it represents death and rebirth."

"What about them?" Roland pointed at the other men in gray robes.

"These eight are star image masters of the Astrological Station, so they all made their own discoveries." Dispersion Star respectfully described them one by one. "They can explain the meaning behind anything from changes in the stars to dusk and dawn... of course, so can I."

"I'm not here to have my fortune explained."

The old man paused in shock. "Then... Your Majesty, may I ask why you're here?"

"I'm here to explore the stars." Roland shrugged. "Let's continue this conversation indoors. By the way, bring the diagrams of all the star images you've discovered. You have records for these, right? Mark the brightest stars and connect them with a thin line—yes, those things."

...

Stacks of parchment piled up on the table in the hall, some tinged with yellow due to their age.

Roland took a deep breath and used a pen to draw a "spoon" and "hourglass" on a piece of paper, and connecting the bright stars with lines according to the stars diagram.

"Your Majesty, what're these?" asked the scholar confusedly.

"They're two star images." He picked up the paper and showed it to the group of astrologers. "Have you ever seen images like these before?"

They all shook their heads.

"Search for similar images in all of these parchments," ordered Roland. "Everyone, takes a pile, and be sure to look at every single one."

His great confusion was: "Am I on a different side of the same planet?"

It's not surprising that this place also has a sun and a moon. The sun is just a regular fixed star. There're billions of fixed stars in the Milky Way, and there're billions of galaxies like the Milky Way in the universe, so it's not unlikely that there's another fixed star system in the infinitely large universe.

However, I'm not sure about species' similarities. Biological evolution occurred by the coincidental outbreak, so there could be completely different organisms produced in the same environment. Whether it's demonic beasts or demons, I don't think they evolved from the same natural world as earth's."

He decided to use star images to address this confusion.

Fixed stars had life spans of billions of years, and their location barely ever changed, so they had always been used to determine the direction or hold symbolic meaning. Roland only remembered two star images: the commonly-known Big Dipper, and Orion. If he could find them among the constellations, he would be able to determine his location.

After an hour, no one had found the constellations.

Roland also used this time to ask Astrologer of Dispersion Star about a few of this world's most famous star images, but he had never heard of any of them. The Kingdom of Graycastle astrologers also did not know of the Zodiac star images.

In general, the Bright Stars on these star images were far denser than the star images he knew, which meant he was closer to the center of the galaxy. This was because fixed stars were closer together towards the galaxy's center.

Then it's very likely that I'm not on Earth.

This answer slightly disappointed Roland. He sighed and glanced around the hall. "How many members are there in the Astrology Association?"

"Your Majesty, there're 9 astrologers, 156 apprentices, and 67 handymen and masons," replied Astrologer of Dispersion Star.

"I plan to shut down the Astrological Station. Pack your bags and return to the City of Neverwinter with me."

The words instantly changed the expression on everyone's face. Alva said in a terrified tone, "Your Majesty, how, how could you..."

"I don't believe in astrology. I only believe in personal choice," said Roland nonchalantly. "And I'm the King of Graycastle, so I can shut this down if I wish to. You'll learn the truth about star images in the Western Region, and you won't see them as the meaningless pathways for fate anymore."

"With all due respect, Your Majesty Wimbledon, you can't do this." The Chief Astrologer slowly rose and said, "We have to watch the stars at all times without interruption—this order was passed by your ancestors."

Chapter 520: The Star of Extinction

"Ancestor?" Roland blurted out, "What the hell?" He noticed everyone staring at him astonished. Roland cleared his throat and said, "No, I mean... who knows if it's true."

Then he felt his left shoulder being gently pinched.

"Your Majesty, it's true, and I can prove it," the Chief lowered his head and said. "But you are the only one who can see it."

When the rest of the astrologers heard what the Chief said, they got up and left the room on their own. Roland thought for a moment and nodded to the witches and the guards, saying, "I'm fine. You guys go as well."

He would still have Nightingale with him as a last line of defense in case of any emergency.

The Chief Astrologer, Dispersion Star, entered a chamber next to the hall. After a long time, he returned to the long table with an iron box in his hands. He respectfully placed it in front of Roland.

"What's this?"

"It is the instruction left by your ancestor. He'd expected that this kind of thing would happen."

"You mean closing the Astrological Station?" Roland asked surprised.

"Yes, Your Majesty, and such a thing did happen before," the Chief said with a wry smile. "Although astrology and alchemy are both called the academics of sages, they are different. Alchemists can bring big profit to the kingdom while we have little output. Besides, the Astrology Association consumes many gold royals every year to purchase high-quality crystal and hire craftsmen. In order to prevent frugal future generations from dismissing the Astrology Association, your ancestor engraved the instruction and demanded that nobody interfere with it."

Roland opened the box. Unexpectedly, what he saw was a stack of gold sheets. It seemed that the Wimbledon Family had been willing to spend heavily on preserving this instruction.



He laid out the gold sheets on the table and counted. There were eight of them. Each one was about 3 millimeters thick and 2 palms wide, heavy in his hands.

What the Chief Astrologer said just now was engraved on the first sheet. "Nobody should interfere with the members of the Astrological Station in looking at the night sky, where lay mysteries which can show the fate of the world."

The latter part of the words caught Roland's attention and he became lost in thought.

In fact, this association itself was very strange. If the astrology really worked, King Wimbledon III must not be replaced by the church without any preparation. Instead, he should kill the High Priest first. Just now even the Astrologer of Dispersion Star himself had mentioned the Astrological Station had 'little output'... that meant he did not regard the divination as a product. Now he seemed helpless, totally different from the first time Roland had met him when he had looked like a church scoundrel.

As for the ancestor who had expended considerable funds and manpower to establish such an association and engraved instruction on the gold sheet at all cost to deter post-generations from closing it (for it had no practical use), Roland did not believe that he was simply an astrophile keen on studying things outside of the planet while his kingdom was so underdeveloped. Obviously, the astrologers must hold a task that had nothing to do with divination, but was very likely related to the latter part of the sentence.

He checked the other gold sheets again and again, only to find records of the basic star observation methods and the history of the Astrology Association. The last sheet even recorded the principle of enlarging crystal lenses and referred to a supreme commander. It seemed that the ancestor of the Wimbledon Family had also been Chief Astrologer of this association at the time. Roland recalled the Wimbledon Family history but could not think of anything related to the description on this sheet.

He picked up the first sheet again, pointing to the latter part of the sentence. "What does this mean?"

"I don't know," the chief shook his head as he spoke.

Roland felt a pinch on his right shoulder before the Chief had barely finished his words.

He could not help chuckling, saying, "Listen, the man is more flexible than the rigid rule, and this order left by an ancestor was probably correct while he was alive, but the times have changed, and I don't want to be bound by this rule from hundreds of years ago. I'm the king of the Kingdom of Graycastle, and I can do what I want. Do you understand?"

"What? No, you -" The chief stared at Roland.

"You yourself know it clearly. You're only wasting money. You remain ignorant about the mysteries of the fate of the world. Besides, when my father was murdered by the church, you couldn't even give him a warning. Why should I keep you here to stare at the sky? You can't exchange the stars for gold royals. So, please pack up and come with me to the Western Region."

Hearing Roland's words, Dispersion Star, who already had an unfavorable opinion of Prince Roland, who had been intractable and unscrupulous in the King's City, suddenly looked dour.

After a long time, the chief said reluctantly, "You'll probably regret knowing this secret."

"How do I know if you don't tell me?" Roland smiled. It was really advantageous sometimes to intimidate others by pretending to be like the foppery Prince Roland. With these old men, this was the only way to get an answer for it was impossible to ask Iron Axe to grill them.

"We've been undertaking a mission that lasts for hundreds of years. It began when the first lord Wimbledon arrived in this region." The Chief calmed down and said, "This secret can only be revealed to the successor of the royal family when he becomes King, and has reached the age of 30."

"Why?"

"Because your ancestor thought that the successors might be too confused and panic if they knew it ahead of time and lead to the decline of the Kingdom." He hesitated for a moment and confessed, "In fact, we're looking for the Star of Extinction."

"What's that?" Roland asked in surprise.

"A scarlet star, or the Bloody Moon. When it comes, the world will fall into a disaster beyond redemption."

The prince suddenly felt a shock and began to wonder. The coming of the Bloody Moon had been mentioned not only in the ancient book of the remains but also by Agatha of the Union. Why did a secular association also pay attention to this? Did the Astrology Association have inextricable links with the Union? "Please be specific!" Roland demanded.

"What I know is all from the former Chief," Dispersion Star said in a deep voice. "It's said that there's a red star floating in the night sky. When it comes out like the crescent moon, the world will be destroyed. What we're going to do is to find it before it becomes a crescent moon. If its orbit can be found, we can predict the doomsday in advance. This is also the intention of the horoscope."

"Become a crescent moon?"

"Actually, it's natural that you don't know the star image," the chief explained. "The stars are always following a fixed path, such as the sun and the moon, and they appear at a fixed time. When they disappear, it doesn't mean they're gone. They just temporarily move to a position where we can't see. We call this path Orbit. In fact, most stars have an orbit of their own."