

Witch 661

Chapter 661: The Star Cyclone

"Is this... magic power?"

The twirling cyclone on the man's forehead immediately reminded Roland of Nightingale's description about the form of magic power, but seeing it now for himself, he thought it was more like a galaxy. Several spiral arms were revolving around the nexus, the brightest point which was located in the center. Despite that it was only about a palm size, when he carefully looked at it, he could notice numerous details and felt some surging power in it.

"Are you a martial fighter?" The man suddenly opened his mouth to ask in a hoarse voice.

"No, I'm not." Roland was fully alerted.

"Yeah, I guess so." The burnt-face man turned his body toward Roland without moving his head at all. "You taste sweeter."

Roland looked for weakness in the man's body while saying, "if you were a girl, I might be a bit interested in hearing these words. Are you a man bit by the magic power... no, Force of Nature?"

"Force of Nature?" The burnt-face man snorted contemptuously. "They've no idea where this power came from and knew nothing about its essence."

"Don't talk as if you know everything." Roland retorted. thinking, "come on, this is my dream!"

The man opened his mouth which was full of bleeding blisters to say, "I can't tell, but I can feel it. It doesn't belong to this world. It's a gift from the deities. I thought the hijacker could attract at least one or two martial fighters to come here, but he surrendered too fast. Fortunately, my efforts finally paid off, as you came here..."

"Crack!"

Roland struck first to gain the initiative before the burnt-face man finished his sentence. This was a trick he had learned from his fighting experience in childhood. He could tell from the way the man acted and talked that he was a dangerous guy. Given that, it was not a wise choice to act after he finished talking.

He straightly punched the man on his forehead, as fast as a flash of lightning. As he found his strength had increased sharply, he did not punch with all his power. However, he still clearly felt the man's bones cracking under his fist.

His strike sent the burnt-face man up into the air.

Meanwhile, the warm flow inside his body began to surge, dancing with joy for such a good start.

The man landed and rolled on the ground until hitting a wall. When he staggered to his feet, Roland came up to launch another attack without any hesitation.

He believed his own judgement, as this was his Dream World.

Moreover, his opponent was obviously not a human being.

When his face bones were broken, he seemed to feel no pain and did not beg for mercy at all. No human being suffering such a sharp pain could react this way.

Roland felt that his mind was clearer than ever before.

The violent warm flow filled his body, but did not make him woozy.

He knew that at this moment, he should beat up the underdog, which was another trick he learned from his childhood fighting.

This time, he hit the man with all his strength.

He punched with no skills as if he was hitting a sandbag, keeping the burnt-face man constantly moving to defend. Apparently, the man did not expect this at all and started flailing as Roland's blows were raining down upon him. Roland soon started to feel that hitting the man was like hitting tofu, as his muscles were torn loose after his arms, sternum and ribs broke. If he were a normal man, he would be dead at this moment.

Roland scolded while giving the man a good thrashing, "You asshole! Turn your head 180 degrees. You thought you were making a horror movie?"

He was very upset by the fact that as the creator of this world, he had been scared by the burnt-face man when he had seen him in this alley.

"This... is... impossible... Why... I can't use it..." The man's voice changed completely and soon Roland could hardly hear anything he was saying.

"Use what?" Roland noticed that the cyclone on the man's forehead was twirling slower. He tried to reach out his hand to touch it and found that it became somewhat tangible. "You mean this cyclone of magic power?"

"No, don't touch it..."

Roland knew that he must do what his enemy did not want him to do. He held his head down and grabbed the cyclone. When the warm flow in his body began to boil, he tore it down.

Suddenly, the burnt-face man quieted down and collapsed to the ground, paralyzed and lifeless.

The cyclone turned from dark red to a bright color when it fell into Roland's palm. Now it was white in the center and blue on the outside, more resembling a galaxy.

It began to twirl again and quickly left his palm, turning in to a beam of dazzling light. It shot up into the sky, leaving a trail like a silver wire and disappeared after several seconds.

Meanwhile, the warm flow inside his body calmed down, giving him great satisfaction. He felt good from head to toe.

He had completely lost his mind.

He thought that this world might be more complicated than he imagined.

Looking at the dead burnt-face man on the ground, his mouth corner twisted and then he turned away heading for the exit of the alley.

It was dark when he returned to the towering tube-shaped apartment building. A swarm of flying insects attracted by the light in it were buzzing noisily in the corridor.

He fumbled to take out his key and inserted it into keyhole. Before he turned the key to open the door, he heard a burst of rapid footsteps behind it.

Zero opened the door with a frown, but he still saw some worry in her eyes.

"Where have you been?"

"Where have you been?"

They asked simultaneously.

"The cram school added classes today. We'll get a day off tomorrow as some teachers will come to check."

"I had gone to look for you."

"Look for me?" the little girl asked doubtfully.

"Yeah, you didn't come back on time." Roland laughed while rubbing her head and then walked into the apartment.

Three dishes and some soup were already placed on the table, but all the bowls and chopsticks remained neat and clean. Obviously, Zero had been waiting for him to come back.

That was why she had run to the door as soon as she had heard the sound at the door.

Roland sat at the table and said, "Let's have dinner. I'm starving."

Zero stared at him, asking, "Were you worried that I was cheated by some stranger? I'm not a kid anymore. Next time, you can just wait for me at home."

Roland could not help but roll his eyes at this, thinking, "Nowadays, junior high school students are so mature? I remember myself at this age, I was terribly naughty. When I still had some allowance, I would go to the game hall and when I didn't, I would go into the mountains to catch chafers. I would never come home until it was dark. How come this little girl behaves so well?"

He somehow felt a little embarrassed for himself at this thought.

"Oh, you've got a day off tomorrow?"

"Uhm, what?" Zero still seemed a bit annoyed but looked relaxed.

Roland said while eating, "Come to the library with me, I'll buy something for you on the way."

"Buy... What?"

"Well, I bought you some clothes last time, so this time, let's buy some dresses, shoes and pajamas... you have to get something new to replace what you are wearing now." He smiled. "I'll buy you a cellphone. We need to stay in touch in case something like this happens again."

Chapter 662: The Defensive Line

Having stayed in the Dream World for two days, Roland saw the grey slated roof of his castle again.

He stretched out his hands, repeatedly bending and stretching his fingers. Except for the strange heat current, he had the same feeling as he had in the Dream World. Luckily, he could take advantage of falling down to get rid of the Dream World, otherwise he could not even tell the difference between reality and fantasy.

" Could the brain simulate such a realistic world?"

Roland could not help feeling confused about that.

Especially the cluster of stars which was particularly like the Magic Cyclone. Even though he had never seen the real look of magic power, if the Force of Nature was shaped based on the magic power, everything in the Dream World should be fuzzy.

Plus the eccentric burnt-face man and the heat current that resonated with the cluster of stars... He suddenly was not sure about his previous presumptions.

He felt like his small brain could not contain such a complex and huge Dream World.

But if the Dream World did not exist in his subconsciousness, where was it?

After thinking hard for a long while, Roland could not find a satisfactory answer.

He shook his head and made up his mind to temporarily put these things aside.

Since he could not figure it out, he thought that he should focus on the more important things.

After he took Zero to the library, he learned a lot of useful design knowledge. Even if he just looked through a book, he could precisely reproduce its content.

One of the books also covered the proportioning and property of some alloys, which could greatly save the test time for Anna and Lucia.

Under such circumstances, it would be less difficult to create the third-generation machine tools used to forge higher precision parts.

Of course, he had to personally instruct the first operational workers.

People in different domains in Graycastle were continuously gathering together in the western region. Some people who had settled down here passed the universal education test and got jobs. Upon thinking of this, Roland felt extremely heartened.

This was a gradual process, but he had paved the way. When Graycastle was unified next year, Neverwinter might have an opportunity to be on the threshold of the industrialization age.

Once they entered the industrialization age, the domain would certainly undergo a tremendous change.

In the afternoon, Karl Van Bate, Minister of Construction, brought the news that Route 67 had been accomplished in less time than that of the Kingdom Main Street. Apart from a shorter distance, the workers had become more proficient in construction.

As they promised before, the batch of workers who had been developed by the Ministry of Construction had been affiliated with the border area.

"Your Majesty, if you don't have any other road-building plans, I'm planning to send them all to construct residential quarters." Karl said, "Though there will be extra salary expenditure, Neverwinter is in urgent need of residential quarters."

Roland also knew this condition. There were altogether about 5,000 people in the construction team, half of whom were busy building new residential communities in order to accommodate the large population which had been persuaded by City Hall to come to Neverwinter from the other cities. Over just one year, the town had been enlarged at least over three times, which did not include the new farming land to the south of Redwater River.

"The road-building can wait." He spread out the map of Border Area and pointed to North Slope Mountain, saying, "I'm planning to build a railway directly connecting the mine and the pier so as to load the coal which comes from the west."

"There is already a road..." Karl suddenly stopped and continued to say, "Are you saying a railway?"

"Yes, a railway or railway track." Roland nodded and said, "It's similar to the orbital transportation system of the mine, but it's made up of steel."

"I see," after a while of thinking, Karl said, "but a railway doesn't need many workers, either."

"It doesn't indeed need many workers to construct a narrowly hardened pavement." Roland smiled but did not point it out. Honestly speaking, he knew that Karl did not understand what he had said at all. In the mine, the coal depended on simple ropes, steam engines and horses to carry the loads outside. But that was not what he thought and it was for more than carrying coal.

What he wanted was trains.

Since its invention, the train had caused tremendous changes for land transport.

And this short-distance railway was an attempt.

It was not difficult to understand the principles of steamed trains, but a railway system was gigantic and complex. Even if Roland did not know how many years it took to test and improve before the train and its supporting facilities were put into practice, he thought that it must be a long process.

"Luckily, I can find the knowledge in the Dream World."

He had been so obsessed with the gigantic trains which stood for industrialization.

No matter how heavily they were loaded, the trains steadily travelled through forests and mountains as they puffed white gas. Black connecting rods drive many wheels to rotate, giving out a rhythmical clang

and shortening the vast land to an acceptable distance. Afterwards, no matter what changes had taken place in the driving force, the nature of trains has never changed.

Apart from the hardware facilities, a train also needed driving by a batch of railway workers who should be responsible for their own duties. So it was much more complex than simple steam engines and machine tools.

According to Roland's plan, the railway connecting with the North Slope Mountain and the pier was not only a technological test but a training base for developing the first-generation of railway workers.

"Send 200 people to pave the roadbed towards Misty Forest to the outside of the second city wall."
Roland decided.

Karl was anxious, "Your Majesty, but the railway will be exposed to the attack of demonic beasts."

Roland carelessly explained to him, "they have no interest in steel. The railway won't be finished before the Months of Demons. Besides, we won't hide behind the short mud wall next year. Don't you feel that the border area is becoming more and more crowded?"

"You mean..."

Roland pointed to the vast area to the northwest of the Impassable Mountain Range and explained to him, "we should expand the border area to the Barbarian Land where the resources are no less than Graycastle. A thin mud wall is far from enough to defend against the demons."

If the Battle of Divine Will broke out and the demons build the third Obelisk in Tuqaila, the outpost would approach the foot of the Impassable Mountain Range. Hence, it was doomed to fail if they just set defensive lines in the breaches of the western region. If the Witch Cooperation Association could follow a mountain path to the Barbarian Land before, so would the demons to enter Graycastle.

Even though the demons gave up the mountain path, his troops would struggle to deal with a group of flying Devilbeasts who flew through mountains to harass them each day.

"Only if the Impassable Mountain Range became the city wall, would Graycastle be safe."

If the Longsong Cannon were set up on each of the mountain tops, the area covered within the shooting range would be his new town.

There were no rivers in this area connecting to the inner land. If resources such as coal needed quickly transporting to the Barbarian Land, they could only rely on a railway.

"The defense plan of the future is a big project but I believe that you can do it."

It sounded fascinating for any mason to bring the Impassable Mountain Range into the territory of Graycastle. If a mason could build such a city, he would certainly be remembered by history.

"Yes, Your Majesty," Karl said with an excited look.

Chapter 663: The Spectacle

"In addition, I intend to build a landmark in the city of Neverwinter," Roland continued to say.

"Landmark?" Karl quickly composed himself after the excitement. "Do you mean an eye-catching architecture such as a monument or a clock tower?"

"You could also call it a spectacle." Karl was without a doubt a top figure in the Mason Guild of the king's city, judging by his quick response to such a new terminology. Roland nodded at first, then shook his head and said, "But I'm not going to build any useless landmark."

After the battle with the church, the First Army suffered serious losses. Although Iron Ax reported that the army's morale was still high, the casualties caused huge grief to the families.

In order to strengthen the confidence of the subjects, especially those who came from out-of-town, he came up with this amazing idea of the spectacle. Some spectacles in history were built entirely to satisfy the lust of the rulers without having any benefit to the builders. Even if this could highlight the power of the state, Roland would not build such a white elephant.

"I plan to build a residential building on the south bank of Redwater River, behind the industrial park."

Karl did not reply as he must have realized that this was no ordinary building.

Roland was very satisfied with Karl's calmness. "It'll have about 15 floors, with a height of three and a half meters per floor and an overall building height of more than 50 meters. In other words, it's close to the height of the four old city walls of the king's city—was that the biggest project you've ever been involved in?"

Karl gasped. "Your Majesty, this would be the Tower of Babel!"

"I wouldn't consider it the Tower of Babel. It's just an ordinary high-rise building." Roland said laughingly, "It just happens to be suitable as a landmark in this era."

The 15-floor height meant that it would tower over the castle. It would be visible as soon as one entered the city of Neverwinter. It would not only symbolize the power of Neverwinter but also make up for the shortage of housing now. After all, high-rise residential buildings had a higher plot ratio than cottages. This explained why more and more skyscrapers were built in the future.

"Could residential buildings really be built so high?" Karl seemed a bit skeptical.

"This is still far from the limitations of concrete." Roland thought for a moment and said, "I'll personally guide you through it."

Although a change of profession often meant a different field of knowledge, mechanics and structural principles were still interchangeable. Before coming up with this idea, he already considered many factors: the height might seem alarming, but in fact, it was not. For example, the Pyramid of Khufu which was constructed in 2,000 BC possessed a height of over 140 meters and relied only on the piling up of stones. China also had wooden pagodas with a height of more than 130 meters—as long as the foundation was sturdy enough, the height would not be an issue.

Provided stability would not be affected, future generations minimized the volume of the pillars and walls to reduce the cost of materials. Neverwinter already had a surplus of cement production, hence using it to build a concrete building was a good choice.

It would also be advisable to use a multi-podium and towering building design for the structure. Although that would mean occupying more land, it would also greatly enhance the structural stability and reduce the difficulty of construction.

More columns could be added if stability was an issue. Reinforced steel bars could also help with its quality. As long as the foundation was solid, it would be almost uncollapsible.

The last issue was the casting of the concrete—Roland had already considered it and decided that Maggie and Hummingbird would rise into the sky, while Hummingbird would carry iron cans and pour concrete from the air. This would almost be as efficient as using the pump.

Karl already had experience from building the Witch Building which had the same concrete structure, and this time it was just on a slightly larger scale. The bamboo tendons and the steel wires would also be replaced by reinforced steel. He was highly confident about this project since he also had the Witch Union as technical support.

"Time's up. Everyone, please put your pens down." Scroll knocked on the table.

"Phew..." Evelyn let out a deep breath. This meant that the second semester at Border Town... no, the city of Neverwinter, had finally ended. She ultimately managed to catch up with everyone else this year and participate in the final exam.

She kept her charcoal pen and looked around—Anna was still nowhere to be found. According to Wendy, Anna had already reached a mysterious realm. Ordinary people who read her books would only feel dizzy and fall into a deep sleep as if they had depleted all their magic powers.

Candle was also looking at her. When their eyes met, Candle even gave a thumbs up, to signify that she did well at the exam.

Nightingale, who was sitting at the back, still looked dejected. Since the reading and writing tests were scrapped, her scores fell drastically, which made Evelyn quite puzzled. As far as she knew, Nightingale came from a noble background and received her education much earlier than other people. She should have an easier time when it came to learning. Perhaps Nightingale's ability was too important, hence she was kept busy all day handling tasks for His Majesty, and this, in turn, affected her studies.

After all, Nightingale even fought alongside Lady Ashes as a combat witch. In Sleeping Island, she would be someone that Evelyn could only admire from a distance.

The others seemed both happy and sad. For example, Agatha, Lucia and Lily from the first tier always obtained high marks easily. Learning seemed to come naturally to them. Especially, Miss Agatha was already getting closer to Anna and Tilly. She was also a combat witch, thus making Evelyn extremely envious.

For the remaining few, one could guess from the expression on their faces that Honey, Hummingbird and Echo would come last if there were no mishaps.

Of course, this did not include the new members of the alliance, Paper and Summer—they were still not up to speed, and at the moment they were taught by Teacher Scroll alone.

But Evelyn was most excited about Maggie—looking at the guileless little girl, she could not help but want to laugh out aloud.

There are no multiple choice questions in the test!

Since the previous final exam results, Evelyn remained heartbroken. She thought she was already very close to her goal and did not expect to lose by one point to Maggie.

She even looked for Scroll to check if the results were wrong. In the end, she discovered that Maggie did very well for the multiple choice questions, which proved she failed miserably.

In the coming year, Evelyn spent most of her time on learning.

She was able to display her ability quite quickly. She only needed to go the winery two or three times per week, and it took her less than 10 minutes before she could cast all her magic power. Even when the bar was open later on, it still did not affect her performance.

She never once had a match with the poker trio. When she had spare time while working at the bar, she would always flip open her exercise book to consolidate what she had learned that night. She did not let even her favorite perfume collection affect her learning. Evelyn would go shopping with Candle at Convenience Market only when the new flavor of perfume started selling on the shelves. She did all this in order to achieve the goal she set for herself.

And this time, she was confident about winning!

Chapter 664: The Mystery Moon Detective Squad

Three days later, Evelyn got her grades for the final exam.

She scored an amazing 113 points out of 150. This was a very high score, judging from her usual standards.

Since Scroll accompanied His Majesty Roland to the Longsong Area for inspection work, Sister Wendy was the one who told her about the results. She even patted Evelyn on her shoulder and said encouragingly, "Good work. Her Highness Tilly would be very happy when she gets to know about this. Keep up the great work."

"I'll continue to work hard!" Evelyn nodded firmly and turned round to look for Candle. "How many points did you get?"

"91 points, which is still a pass," Candle answered, "Looking at your happy expression, you must have done very well on the test."

"Um!" Evelyn blurted. "113!"

"Really? This score is probably close to Lucia's!" Candle said excitedly, "Would you like me to find out?"

"I don't think so. They must have done better." Evelyn waved her hand. "I only want to know Maggie's result."

"Perhaps my next goal could be replaced by Lily or Lucia," she thought. She was aware her ability was indeed very bad, but she was born like that which was unchangeable. Learning, however, was something that could improve with efforts. Even ordinary people could excel in learning, and hence she did not want to lose to anyone.

She also wanted to be a learned and talented person like His Majesty Roland.

After class, Evelyn found Maggie, but Maggie's reply was unbelievable. "Cuckoo—I scored 117!"

How could this be possible?

She stood there motionlessly for a long time, feeling incredulous even after Maggie left.

"How could this be? Scroll must have made a mistake in her results." For a moment, Evelyn thought she heard her own voice. She blinked, only to realize that the one who had spoken was Mystery Moon. She happened to hear the conversation and had a similar puzzled look on her face.

"What's so strange about that?" Lily stared at Mystery Moon. "Don't doubt the ability of others, just because you fared poorly."

"But I was sitting right in front of her." Mystery Moon tried to justify herself. "When I collected the test, I saw that she drew honey jerky all over the blank paper."

"Are you sure?" Lily frowned.

"I swear on my electromagnetic force!"

"Hah... that's not in the least bit convincing at all." Lily shrugged and prepared to leave, but was pulled back by Mystery Moon.

"Wait a minute, what I said was all true! Maybe we should investigate."

"I'm not interested." Lily snarled. "If you have any doubts, you can check with Scroll when she comes back."

"That would defeat the whole purpose of exploring, ah," said Mystery Moon with an expression of mischief. "Evelyn, let's help you to find out the truth!"

"Don't count me in!"

"What happened?" Candle called out.

Evelyn hesitated and then revealed her confused thoughts.

"Hmm... what would you do if you wanted to investigate?" Candle touched Evelyn's head and said, "It takes a few days for Teacher Scroll to return, right?"

"Now that both His Majesty and Nightingale are away, don't think that I'll allow you to sneak into the office." Lily glared at Mystery Moon. "Don't think I'm unaware of what you plan to do."

"Steal the tests? I'm not that stupid." Mystery Moon shook her fingers. "I just want to find out where Scroll marks the tests."

"You mean..." Candle's eyes lit up.

"We just need to call Summer." She smirked.

Evelyn instantly understood Mystery Moon's plan. Summer could replay the illusion where Scroll was scoring the test for Maggie, and the mystery would be solved. "But... Teacher Scroll usually does so at City Hall. Won't it be inappropriate for us to be there?"

"What's wrong with that? In the city of Neverwinter, everyone can easily access City Hall, so there's no reason why we can't go." Mystery Moon shouted. "It's not His Majesty's office, so I think some people should stop worrying unnecessarily."

"I have to remind you," said Lily, "Most people only have access to the lobby of City Hall. The office of the Ministry of Education is on the second floor. Do you think those officials will let us enter?"

"Well, this..." Mystery Moon was at a loss for words.

"In that case, let's forget about it," Evelyn said. She did not want to bother the others. "I'll wait for a few more days."

"No, I have a way around it." Candle pondered as she touched her chin.

...

Candle's method was very simple, which was to involve Nana. According to her plan, since Summer would already be involved, it would not matter if they called another person as well.

And as it turned out, this method did work.

Evelyn was amazed by Nana Pine's popularity. As soon as Nana entered City Hall the next day, she was greeted warmly and stopped by no one. This was probably due to the popular image of the little angel, or the fact that her father was a well-known noble in the Border Area who had been personally praised by His Majesty. Anyway, she entered the office of the Ministry of Education effortlessly.

There was no one in the room.

Few teachers would come here unless there was a meeting.

"We're in!" Mystery Moon said excitedly, "Let's start backtracking!"

"Are you sure... this is alright?" Summer was a little hesitant. "Only officials are allowed to be here."

"Officials are no different from us. Hummingbird is even the vice minister of the Ministry of Construction," Mystery Moon patted her chest and said, "Don't worry, as long as we don't say anything, Scroll would certainly not mind that we visited her office."

"If I find out that you're lying, I promise I'll tell Scroll," Lily said coldly.

"I thought you said you weren't coming?"

"Hmm... I, I'm here to supervise you and prevent you from making a big mistake, got it?"

Looking at the both of them arguing, Evelyn suddenly felt that her decision might be a mistake.

Finally, Candle managed to persuade Summer. When the illusion appeared in the office, everyone held their breath.

It was pretty clear that the exact time when Scroll marked the papers had to be the day after the exam and before she left for Longsong Stronghold. Summer quickly found the exact scene with a quick flashback.

Everyone quickly squeezed behind "Scroll".

As long as the time had not lapsed for too long, Summer would be able to maintain the illusion for 30 minutes. Soon after, Evelyn saw Maggie's paper.

"Look, I wasn't lying!" Mystery Moon shouted.

"..." Lily could not help but frown.

There was indeed a large amount of blank space on the paper. Other than the easier fill-in-the-blank questions plus the question-and-answer type of questions in front, almost no words were included in the calculation section. Some of the items even had drawings of roasted meat underneath them. Even "Scroll" was shaking her head unwittingly.

It was very clear that this test could not have attained a score of 117.

"Could it be possible that Maggie was lying?" Evelyn thought.

Chapter 665: Chaos

"Scroll" quickly scanned through the entire examination paper, then wrote down at the front of the paper the total score of the three subjects: 17.

The result was missing an entire 100 points.

"Well... so the problem lay with Maggie?" Nana tilted her head.

"So, that's the result?" Mystery Moon was greatly disappointed. "So it wasn't Scroll who purposely gave a high score to Maggie in exchange for honey grilled meat—oh!"

Lily slapped the back of Mystery Moon's head, "Shut up!"

"Should we continue to watch?" Summer asked timidly. "We should leave as soon as possible so that we won't get ourselves found out."

"Let's wait for a second," said Candle. "Perhaps something went wrong when it was copied."

"There's no need. I already know the result so it's fine..." Evelyn shook her head. If it were the original method of writing, it would indeed be possible to confuse the figures in a compact arrangement. However, in the universal education popularized by His Majesty Roland, the figures were replaced by simple, easy-to-remember single strokes, so the chances of committing mistakes were very slim.

"I think it was Maggie who flew in from the window, making the jerky—stop!" Mystery Moon covered her head, "Don't do it. I will stop talking."

They saw "Scroll" check all the papers and begin to copy the scores onto a form. Maggie's column still reflected a score of 17 points.

"The problem really didn't lie with Teacher Scroll," said Candle relievedly.

"Can we go now?" Summer said anxiously.

Evelyn was about to reply, but "Scroll" suddenly stood up and looked toward the doorway. Six people immediately followed her gaze, then they noticed that the door was opened and a town hall apprentice appeared in the doorway.

"What are they talking about?" asked Mystery Moon.

There was no sound in the illusion, so they could only judge the conversation between the two by lip reading.

"It appeared to be Lord Scroll... His Excellency Barov... is sending for you?"

Then "Scroll" nodded, and followed the apprentice out of the office.

The moment the door closed, perhaps because of the air current, a cold wind suddenly picked up within the room. All the papers were blown and scattered messily all over the floor.

"Ah... the window," Lily mumbled.

Evelyn saw it too—the window that was previously closed was now open with a small gap. Scroll did not shut the window tight, and hence the open door generated an air current that forced the window to open. The autumn wind outdoors caused the window to swing back and forth, and open wider and wider. It was not long before a strong wind severely smashed it back to the window frame. Although the sound could not be heard, one could imagine the strong impact from the glass tremor.

Something unexpected happened.

An air current swept through the office again and caused the pen holder to fall on the desktop. The quill that was in the ink bottle suddenly flew up and landed exactly on that exam sheet.

After crossing an arc in mid-air, the tip of the pen dropped on the table, leaving a stroke on Maggie's column and turning the original 17 into a three-digit 117.

Probably someone heard the loud noise coming out of the office, so the door was pushed open again. That apprentice reappeared to have a quick look around, and then came in astonishedly.

She went to the window, shut all the windows tight, and then crouched to clean up the office for Scroll.

She did not leave until she was satisfied that all the documents had been re-organized and neatly placed on the desk.

"Was this what had happened?" Evelyn and Candle looked at each other.

It was neither Scroll's error in copying the marks nor Maggie's intention to lie but an accident caused by the unexpected wind?

Evelyn was then able to guess what happened next. Scroll received the order of His Majesty to make a trip to Longsong, so she passed the score sheet to Wendy. Wendy was not the person in charge of marking the exams, and even if she was puzzled by Maggie's performance, she would not question Scroll's judgment.

"Ha, under the insistence of Mystery Moon, the truth has finally been revealed," Mystery Moon looked up and said, "the culprit was... Teacher Scroll!"

"It was the wind!" Lily gritted her teeth.

"But if Scroll had closed the window tightly, the wind would not have been able to blow the tests, nor the quill, right?"

"How could you say this!"

"No," Nana said thoughtfully, "in that case, it would have been His Majesty Roland's fault. He built the City Hall here, and not only did he expand it, he also built two more stories. Without this additional second story, Scroll would not be able to mark the papers here."

"Uh... you're right, so the culprit was—His Majesty Roland?"

"Enough, all of you!"

"Excuse me... can I stop now?" Summer seemed like she was about to burst into tears.

"Sorry, that's enough," said Evelyn patting her shoulder. "Thank you, let's go."

"Hey, should we just leave like that? Maybe we can find the next quiz in the office?" Mystery Moon stood in front of everyone to stop them.

"This was the real reason you wanted to come here!" Lily rushed forward, "I will never let you make trouble!"

"I, I was just kidding!"

...

The investigation ended in a farce. After bidding farewell to Candle, Evelyn returned to the Witch Building alone.

Although the truth had come to light, her mood was not calm at all.

Somehow, the flying paper and the falling quill continued to emerge in her mind—both actions were erratic and yet at the last minute formed ingenious and perfect results.

The paper, the pen, the airflow caused by the door, and the time when the apprentice went in and out, all led to this result. Without any one of these conditions, the change of the score could not be achieved.

However, these conditions were unconscious and chaotic.

In that case, this could also be applied to mixing cocktails.

A variety of ingredients are added to the alcohol, but you can't taste each and every ingredient. They are fused in the liquid and affect each other, creating a new taste that can be accepted by people after numerous attempts. Sometimes, a rare combination that happens by chance could also create those unique tastes.

Evelyn could not help but think of the microscopic balls that His Majesty Roland mentioned —they continually make disorderly disturbances, each of which seemed irrelevant yet could portray marvelous traits.

She closed her eyes and felt that something in her heart was ready to burst out.

The world was full of chaos.

But the results were hidden in the chaos.

As if it were all meant to be.

Evelyn forced her eyes open and reached for the cup on the table.

Ripples appeared in the cold water, and then the color changed as if a drop of paint fell on them. The water gradually turned into a reddish orange, and a fragrance she had never smelled before drifted into her nose.

She hesitated for a moment, then started licking the liquid.

An indescribable sweetness suddenly covered her tongue—slightly bitter, with a strong mellow flavor, that was unmatched by any type of drink.

It was not only like a mixture of fruit juice and milk but also like a mixture of tea and honey. Evelyn could not accurately describe the flavor, but she was sure of one thing.

This was definitely not wine.

Chapter 666: The Good and Bad News

A week later, Roland returned to the Border Area from Longsong Stronghold.

As soon as he entered the castle, he received two pieces of good news. The first was brought by Barov. "Your Majesty, the astrologers of the old king's city arrived in Neverwinter three days ago. A total of 312 people came including artisans, apprentices, and their families. I've arranged nine astrologers to stay in the Foreign Affairs Building, while the others have been temporarily arranged to stay at the reception area.

"This group of people is finally here," Roland thought for a moment, and then commanded. "Let's hold a welcome party in the square this evening. I want the subjects of Neverwinter to know that there's now another school in the town."

As with alchemy, astrology had a high reputation among the general population. Usually, only the king's city would possess both schools of thought. Now that the Astrology Association was approaching the Western Region, Neverwinter would become more accepted as the new king's city.

However, Roland did not need this school of astrology divination. Instead, he really attached more importance to the astrologer's computing power. For this era, they were absolutely regarded as the forefront of the mathematicians. Both analyzing the calendars and estimating the orbit of the stars needed a lot of calculations. If they had relevant knowledge of middle and advanced mathematics, they could undoubtedly be better on the previous foundation.

He intended to set up a School of Mathematics to allow these people to devote most of their time to calculating, apart from the occasional observation of the Star of Extinction—in this era where there was no computer, many scholars working together to complete some complex operations was the most efficient choice. Whether it was for laying of railways in the future, constructing large ships, installing Longsong Cannon in the mountains or writing shooting manuals, these all required their help.

"Yes, Your Majesty." Barov nodded, and then asked, "I don't know if your trip to Longsong..."

"I encountered a lot of problems." Roland did not need to conceal anything in front of Barov, the City Hall Director. "The secondary City Hall of Longsong Stronghold has already started to show signs of dereliction of duty and corruption. Scroll has found many fake accounts, and two corrupt men were even arrested from the batch of officials from the Border Area."

At this sentence, Barov could not help but swallow his spittle. "Are they my disciples?"

Roland was amused by the cautious look on Barov's face. He shook his head reluctantly. "Even if they're your disciples, I wouldn't put the blame on you, so you can rest assured."

"Your Majesty is wise," Barov said hurriedly, "So are they the original people from the town?"

"Well, they were the second batch of graduates. After passing the assessment, they entered City Hall and then they were transferred to the Longsong Area with the entire team." Roland sighed. "As of today, it has only been less than a year."

At the moment, City Hall had cultivated a group of semi-leaders. One group came from the Longsong area, which followed the exact model of Border Town. Together with the locals Honeysuckle Petrov, Elk Rene and some minor nobility, they were a well-equipped group, just slightly smaller in numbers.

The other half was a small batch that went to Fallen Dragon Ridge. In addition to assisting Countess Spear to maintain the political situation, their secondary task was to establish a framework for the secondary City Hall.

There were also scholars from the Northern Region that came back with Edith Kant to learn about the management of City Hall. Together with these scholars, Roland could probably make up the other half in a short period of time.

He had already allocated these people to the Southernmost Region.

It was undoubtedly the local officials who could carry out Roland's will who were the rarest of talents.

Without them as the foundation, even if Roland conquered the entire Kingdom of Graycastle, he would not be able to centralize the kingdom's resources quickly—local governments were an important part of the centralization of authority. He could use the witches to promote science and technology, but he could not create a bunch of grass-roots officials from thin air.

The sub-aristocrats would never obey his orders willingly. In the eyes of the feudalists, the only important thing was the small acreage that they occupied.

Therefore, every person who had administrative experience was a rare treasure. After losing a few of them, Roland naturally felt depressed. Despite the inevitable corruption of the organization, he thought that they could persevere for more than a decade. He really did not expect to encounter such a problem in less than a year. The fact that the two corrupt people were born civilians also proved in some ways that once they had the power, they might be more likely to lose their way than the noble.

"Those who violate the law..."

"All have been dealt with severely." Roland conceded. "To set an example for everyone else."

This should help to maintain everything for a few years—Nightingale and Scroll's ability temporarily preserved the integrity of the organization. But he also knew that the situation should be resolved in an alternative method, otherwise, the witches could easily be at risk again. And this time the enemy would come from the internal departments.

"Summon every one of City Hall to gather in the castle hall tomorrow. I'll personally give them a briefing to talk about the importance of discipline and responsibility."

Of course, there were also rewards and punishments—they should know how to choose when faced with the pressures and prospects of the Battle of Divine Will.

"Yes, Your Majesty." Barov bowed.

Looking at the old director's back as he left, Roland was satisfied and had a sip of his tea.

He knew the reason for Barov's loyalty—Barov enjoyed the satisfaction that the power brought whilst chasing power, and also made good use of his power at the same time. Barov was undoubtedly a very suitable person for the new regime. Perhaps in the future of City Hall, only he could contend with Edith.

The second good news came from Wendy.

"Evelyn's ability has been evolved?" Roland was a little surprised when he heard the news.

As far as he could remember, Evelyn's magic indicators were very balanced and did not seem prominent. He was quite surprised that she actually became the first witch on Sleeping Island to evolve.

"Yes... Agatha has confirmed this, but..." Wendy bitterly smiled. "The evolved ability is so weird that I don't know how to describe it."

"Take her to my office," he said excitedly.

...

Evelyn went to the third floor of the castle, together with several glass bottles.

Roland noticed that each bottle was filled with different colors of liquid.

"Her magic power looks like a gray ball..." Nightingale whispered in his ear, "but the shape isn't fixed."

"What's the total amount of magic power?"

"The level of improvement is good. At the moment, she's between Soraya and Maggie."

Roland nodded and looked at Evelyn. "What's inside the bottles?"

"The drinks that I've made with my ability in these days." She seemed a bit dejected. "They taste different, and I absolutely lose control of the last result... The only thing in common is that they all can be drunk."

"Drinks?"

Roland's curiosity grew immense.

He found a few cups and poured himself a glass from each bottle.

When he first tasted the light blue drink, it was indescribably delicious, like a fruit juice mix, but also with a hint of refreshing coldness.

Just drinkable? This is way too good a drink!

Chapter 667: Chaos Drinks

The following cups of drinks were real eye-openers for Roland.

Some tasted like coffee, a bit bitter but with an intense exotic fragrance. Some tasted like soup, delicious and having the function to warm stomach. The unique one was that he could not find the corresponding taste in his memory. If he had to name it, Fire Dragon Wine might be the most appropriate.

The wine was not made of pitaya, but something like the imaginary dragon flame. The scorching impact of the first sip was like lava gushing into the mouth, and then a mouthful of a burned scent followed as if the tongue was roasted. The faint taste of succulent fruits finally came, mixed with the light flavor of the wine.

The longer it was kept in the mouth, the longer the aftertaste would remain. It absolutely would be the best drink of the winter.

It was likely that Nightingale saw Roland's intoxicated looks, she could not help but show herself, moistened her lips and asked, "Your Majesty, it really tastes so good?"

"You'll know after you try it." Roland handed her a cup of drink.

Immediately, Nightingale contentedly exclaimed, with her eyes bent into a slit.

"I've tasted it," Wendy said with the same look, "and it's really hard to resist such a delicious drink."

After they drunk all of the Fire Dragon Wine, Roland revealed a little reluctance as he let out a burp. "Is there more drink like this?"

Evelyn shook her head and said, "I can't copy the last drink... The new ability is totally random."

"Can't copy?" Roland was somewhat amazed. He finally understood what distressed Evelyn after Wendy explicitly stated the details of the test.

The ability could turn the fresh water, wine or other liquids into drinks. However, which drink would be the final product was uncontrollable. In other words, the final product each time was totally different.

The consumption of magical power to transform these drinks was much more than that of to transform alcohol. The magic power could only be cast once per day. The quantity of transformed drink was limited, which was equal to the capacity of a barrel. Roland had seen that kind of round barrel in the tavern, which could store about one cubic meter of wine in each barrel.

Until now, Evelyn had just cast the new ability five times, getting five drinks with different tastes.

Roland felt regret at the prospect, not knowing whether he would get the chance to drink Fire Dragon Wine again.

It was possibly the reason that Evelyn felt so depressed.

High awakening could be considered as a rebirth for witches, for they even had chances to upgrade from being a non-combat witch to a combat witch. Although Roland stressed that each witch was of incredible potential, Evelyn, who came from Sleeping Island, still could not change her mind.

Roland knew that Evelyn had no confidence in her brewing technique. She felt far more depressed despite the fact that her new ability upgraded a lot but did not change in essence. Most of the drinks were transformed from wine, and she could not even control what she could make at all.

He had no better ways to change her long-held belief, but it was a matter of time. Roland believed that their state of mind would change as the assistant witches in the city of Neverwinter showed their extraordinary talents.

He held no confidence in saying her ability was useless.

The pursuit of perfume ushered in the Modern Navigation Times, the Silk Road thrived as the porcelains and silk trade boomed, which all served as the evidence to people's demands and desire for luxuries. These drinks, however, would be the true luxuries. The delicious taste and unique experience would inevitably gain popularity among common people no matter which era they were in, and it even brought a refreshing feeling to this mundane world.

Moreover it was almost cost-free!

For example, it was no surprise that the weight of the Fire Dragon Wine could be converted into the same weight of gold royals if it was sold to the Fjords and other kingdoms.

Because there were always some rich merchants and nobles that could pay for it.

As for the war caused by the desire for luxuries... They should feel gratified that Roland did not scramble for these drinks. Waging war for luxuries to Neverwinter was nothing short of committing suicide.

Admittedly, Evelyn would bring him countless wealth.

And these drinks would not only be used for trade.

He had learned from the past experience that the matters widely popular with people could serve as a bridge for culture and ideology.

Besides, in these hard war times, it could boost morale for those soldiers who were fighting on the outer edge of the Impassable Mountain Range if they could have such drinks delivered from the city of Neverwinter.

He would never reject these kinds of drinks which could enhance cohesion and strengthen the subject's confidence to resist the Battle of Divine Will.

"In addition to the alcohol... in the future, it'll be the transformation of high-grade wines, I'll create a special drink storage building for you," Roland made a decision and said, "You can use your new capabilities to their full potential. I believe everyone who has a drink will be obsessed with it."

"Alright, alright... Your Majesty." Although Evelyn agreed, she was still nonetheless skeptical.

She did not realize her own worth.

Roland did not say aloud what he was thinking. He firmly believed Evelyn would see the changes brought by her power of chaos sooner or later. As long as she kept doing as he required.

"As for the names of these drinks, chaos drinks is okay," Roland said with a smile.

After the welcome dinner came to an end, Astrologer of Dispersion Star went into the study of His Majesty Roland.

He had successively worked for three King Wimbledons, and Roland Wimbledon was the fourth king he worked for.

But he was also the king whose thoughts were elusive.

Regardless of those rumors about his ridiculousness and flighty behavior from the king's city, the young ruler was somewhat different from the former kings and it was hard to understand what he was thinking. He was neither arrogant nor pretended to be imperturbable, as if, as if his thought was beyond common people's understanding, making him hard to catch up to.

That letter of reply was the best proof.

Dispersion Star had never seen any king who was so indifferent to the news about the Star of Extinction. Part of the content of the letter was greetings, part was to invite Astrology Association to move to the Western Region, declaring that he had the better astronomical telescope to meet the demand for star observation. The end of the letter unhurriedly mentioned that the city of Neverwinter also found new clues about Bloody Moon, and that he needed to discuss it with astrologers.

No surprise, no fear, he stayed calm and read the letter as if he just said "yes, I know" nonchalantly.

In fact, even when Roland first visited the observatory and learned of the existence of the Start of Extinction, he did not act very surprised.

Although it was the blessing that the subject had such a composed king, he still felt downcast because of the finding, also his lifelong pursuit, not arousing much attention.

The study was still brightly lit, and His Majesty Roland was writing something. There were piles of documents on the desk, Dispersion Star had not seen such a scene for a long time.

"My Revered Majesty, good evening," he bowed and said with gratification, "The Astrology Association shows its respect to you."

"Ah... you're here." Roland put his pen aside and beckoned him, saying, "Sit down, I've something to talk to you about."

Chapter 668: Dispersion Star Astrologer

"Is it regarding the prophecy of the Bloody Moon?" Dispersion Star sat down.

"Well, that's a part of it. Since you've touched on that point, let's start with the prophecy then." The young king rose to his feet and poured a cup of tea for the astrologer who was totally struck by such an act of condescension. Apparently, Roland was much more easygoing than Timothy.

"With respect to the prophecy of the Bloody Moon, it can be traced back to over 1,000 years ago when there was neither the Kingdom of Graycastle nor the Wimbledon Family."

"But Your Majesty, the records show that our history only dates back to over 450 years ago..."

"The missing part was indeed documented but was later deliberately concealed by someone." Roland switched to a more comfortable sitting position and said, "It's a long story, which I'll need some time to fully explain to you."

What the astrologer heard afterward was inscrutably astonishing.

The story brought him back to the uninhabited Barbarian Land and the Land of Dawn 1,000 years ago when demons and human beings had had a prolonged war of life and death. It talked about the symbolic meaning of the Bloody Moon, the witch empire, the origins of the Four Kingdoms, as well as that of the church... If it was not out of the mouth of the king, Dispersion Star would definitely condemn the speech and describe it as horrendous and absurd.

Nonetheless, from Roland's expression, Dispersion Star could tell the king was absolutely serious.

After Roland finished the speech, Dispersion Star felt suffocated. He had firmly believed that the doomsday was simply a God's punishment. The shaking seabed, the cracking earth, the underground fire and thunderbolts from the sky, as terrifying as they were, would not completely destroy human civilizations. As long as men got prepared in advance, a great part of cities could still survive these catastrophes.

According to His Majesty, however, the Bloody Moon was a signal of the commencement of the war from demons.

It seemed that the war between human beings and demons had lasted for a thousand years. Men had been defeated twice, and one more, they would be completely eliminated from the earth.

"Your Majesty..." Dispersion Star almost lost his voice. "Where did you learn these?"

Roland stuck out two fingers. "The witch empire and the church. They both have something to do with the establishment of the Four Kingdoms, including the Kingdom of Graycastle. I've actually encountered demons to the west of the Western Region. They were, veritably, of a foreign race, who have developed their own civilization and built their own armies."

"And... what's the smile of deities?"

"Nobody knows. Perhaps we'll only find out the answer after the Battle of Divine Will."

Dispersion Star fell silent. He was not sure whether he should believe this appalling narrative, but then he soon realized the story connected to the rise and fall of the Kingdom of Graycastle and the thriving of the Wimbledon Family. As the king of the realm, Roland had no reason to lie to him.

There was no point for him to do that.

Suppose everything Roland had said was true, it would then make sense why His Majesty trusted witches so much.

Suppose witches' power did not come from demons, naturally, they would no longer be men's enemies.

In this light, the rumors about the innocence of witches circulated in the old king's city were simply a tip of the iceberg of the truth. Without a doubt, it was pretty wise and cautious of His Majesty to selectively disclose the information and hold back the part that would potentially spark panic among the multitude.

The only thing that Dispersion Star failed to understand was how the Bloody Moon in the sky bore a relationship to the Gates of Hell.

"Your Majesty, what can I do for you?"

Dimly, Dispersion Star was aware that it was probably not out of any astrological reasons that the king had asked the Astrology Association to move to the Western Region several times. Roland apparently knew much more about the Star of Extinction than any astrologers. If Dispersion Star was not informed of this secret today, he would never possibly know what had happened 1,000 years ago.

"This is what I want to discuss with you next, which may be even more important than the secret I told you earlier," Roland answered with a smile and handed a book on the desk to him. "Take a look at this first."

Dispersion Star took the book and noticed the title on the cover was a combination of phrases he had never seen before.

"Analytic... geometry?"

The word was quite a mouthful. Surprisingly, it was printed in a blue color that could only be produced with very fine and expensive blue pigments.

"Take your time. It's fine if you don't understand. You'll need to learn a lot of things in the future."

Although the lighting in Roland's room was relatively decent even without a candle, it was still not comparable to daylight. As such, Dispersion Star felt reluctant to read the book right away, as late night reading could more or less cause eye damage.

As an astrologer, he should well protect his eyes.

Nevertheless, Dispersion Star did not want to directly decline the king's request and thereby infuriate him. So, he decided to just quickly skim it through and read more carefully tomorrow when there was adequate lighting.

His eyes, however, were glued to the contents after he read the prologue on the first page.

"To describe the orbits of objects with arithmetic formulas? To calculate the entire orbit with only a few key parameters?"

Next came several groups of intersecting straight lines, each of which constituted a coordinate system consisting of four planes. In each coordinate, there was a simple shape. Some were just diagonal straight lines, some a section of a curve, some ovals and others a combination of multiple curves. They looked nothing strange, but Dispersion Star's attention was soon caught by the arithmetic formula next to the circle shape.

"That should be an arithmetic formula," thought Dispersion Star.

The formula contained a plus mark and an equal mark, starting and ending with the same symbol. Dispersion Star did not have the faintest idea what the formula represented, but somehow he perceived the beauty of it. Every symbol possessed a unique charm and was in perfect harmony with the others.

Although each shape was distinct from each other and by no means display the same type of orbit (for example, a straight line and an oval), there was no noticeable difference between their arithmetic formulas.

An idea suddenly flashed across his mind uncontrollably.

"Is it possible that every shape in this world can be described with a corresponding arithmetic formula?"

The astrologer turned to the second page hurriedly in excitement.

...

By the time Dispersion Star closed the book, his neck was sore. Evidently, it had taken him more than an hour to read the whole book. Meanwhile, Roland appeared to be quite absorbed in his occupation. He was busy drafting the document on the desk and had not interrupted his reading.

"I'm sorry, Your Majesty. I..."

"Done?" Roland looked up and smiled at the astrologer. "I bet there's a lot you don't understand."

"Yes. I don't recall any court mentors have taught you those... those symbols and formulas..." Out of ten court mentors, nine were from the Astrology Association. However, what His Majesty had written had totally blown his mind. "They're very interesting, but I just can't have a good grasp on these complicated formula conversions."

"That's because you haven't learned equations. You've got to learn this in order to comprehend analytic geometry." Magically, the king produced a stack of books from the desk and presented them to the astrologer, the titles of which were either in blue or green. All of the titles sounded weird and mouthful.

Dispersion Star's hands started to tremble. "Can I take them back home?"

"Certainly." Roland nodded. "Actually, I want not only you but also all the astrologers and the students in the association to learn them." After a pause, Roland continued, "The second thing I want to let you know is that you don't need to worry too much about the Bloody Moon. Once you fully understand everything in the books, the Astrology Association can play an irreplaceable role in the war against demons. These books mean to simply enlighten you. There'll be something more profound and difficult coming next. By that time, you'll not only be able to calculate the orbit of a moving object, but also that of every tree and every stone on the earth, every star in the sky, everything that you see on this planet. How does it sound like? Are you willing to accept the challenge?"

"Yes, I'd like to, Your Majesty!"

Astrologer of Dispersion Star gave an affirmative answer immediately, now completely elevated from the dejection he had sunk in when Roland had ignored his discovery of the Star of Extinction.

He now foresaw thousands of stars moved along the paths he calculated.

The young king, in the meantime, smiled. The smile was so strange that it reminded Dispersion Star of a hunter who watched an animal slowly falling into his trap.

"Awesome. But please don't be discouraged. It's going to be hard, and it's perfectly normal that you come across some obstacles. I believe you'll eventually get the hang of them."

Chapter 669: Diplomatic Turmoil

No. 76 had gradually taken Denise's place since becoming Yorko's maid.

It did not mean that Yorko forgot about his old lover. The truth was that he had to spend some time taking care of his poor guide. In fact, Yorko had been totally shocked when No. 76 had been sent back by her superintendent Silvermask the other day. The punishment had been indeed as severe as "Black Money" had earlier claimed. There had been whip marks and bruises all over her body, and she had looked nothing like the girl he had met half a day ago.

Yorko was happy that he had made the request to retain No. 76 as his maid in a timely fashion. Otherwise, the girl would probably be wrecked by the battery. That was why Silvermask had said she could no longer be a guide, for customers definitely would not want a disabled girl to serve them.

Fortunately, No. 76 was not as fragile as most girls. She had a pretty strong body, especially her abdomen and back, on which several faint muscle lines could be detected. She had quickly recovered from the injuries after medication and was now able to run errands for the household, which, of course, also included some personal services.

For example, the service like she provided today.

"Sir, do you want me to massage your shoulders?"

After No. 76 cleaned the house, she drew close to Yorko smilingly. Although according to general rules, maids were not allowed to approach their masters without permission, No. 76 was apparently still employing the old method she had learned from "Black Money" to please her "guest". Yorko did not feel offended in the least. On the contrary, he liked the flirty way she communicated with him.

If No. 76 was simply a maid who strictly followed rules and obeyed his orders, it would be a little too boring to his taste.

"Come and sit here." Yorko put down the anecdote book in his hand and lay down on the recliner. No. 76 took off his shoes and sat on her knees so that Yorko could rest his head on her thighs comfortably.

She then started to slowly massage Yorko's shoulders with her five slender fingers. Apparently, No. 76 had received professional training, for she used much greater strength and applied more techniques than other ordinary massage girls, who usually flirted with Yorko in the guise of massage. The labor delivered by No. 76 really worked and made Yorko feel less stressed.

Yorko could clearly see No. 76's countenance when he lay on her thighs. After "Black Money" had sent her over, she no longer needed to wear that copper mask to conceal her identity.

Frankly speaking, No. 76 was never a beauty. Her overall appearance was just a little above average and certainly could not compare to witches. Nevertheless, Yorko liked her red, plumped lips in particular. When he looked up at her, he was always aroused by the faint smile lingering on her lips.

In comparison, her toned body was more appealing to Yorko. It was actually Yorko's first time to see a woman's body full of such incredible strength. Unlike corpulent noble ladies or scrawny peasant girls, No. 76 had well-proportioned limbs, beautiful skins, a prodigal projection of bosom and a flat tummy. When her body tensed up, Yorko could sense her bulging muscles underneath. As a man who always sought thrills, he was more drawn to a perfect body like this than simply a delicate face.

When Yorko was about to take the next step, the door was flung open.

It was Hill Fawkes.

Yorko let out a sigh of disappointment. It appeared his leisure time for today was over. He erected himself and asked, "I hope you aren't asking me to save some witches again."

Hill did not respond but simply eyed No. 76.

The girl soon took the hint and withdrew respectfully.

Yorko shrugged. "You're being overcautious. She's just a servant."

"You'd better remain vigilant these days when the current situation in the Kingdom of Dawn is yet to be optimistic."

"Denise is more reputable than No. 76, and she's from a more distinguished family. Why don't you keep your eyes peeled for her?"

"Because Denise Payton is a public figure, whose background was no hidden secret. You can get the information about her one way or another, but there's no way whatsoever for you to check the background of a guide trained by 'Black Money'." Hill seated himself opposite Yorke and placed a letter on the coffee table between them.

"But I feel I've already known what kind of person she is and where she's from now." Yorke smiled triumphantly. "Do you care to hear it?"

"Oh, really?" Hill's brows went up a fraction of an inch. "Surprise me."

Yorke grinned. He was satisfied to know that the guard appointed by his old friend appeared not be omniscient after all. "It takes a lot of time to train a perfect guide. It'll at least take 10 years to perfect her pillow skills and tone up her body. Those skills she obtained from years of training have already become a part of her, and it has become so natural to her to please and serve her customers. How old is she now?"

"Around 21 or 22... No more than 25."

"Correct. That means she was only a five or six-year-old kid when she started her training. Unless she's a monster who never ages or dies, she can't be a person outside 'Black Money.'" Yorke spread out his hands. "There's no conflict of interest between us and 'Black Money' anyway. They conduct much dirtier businesses than trafficking slaves and protecting witches, not to mention that we haven't actually managed to protect a witch yet." Yorke went on with self-mockery, "I don't think witches need protection from us."

Yorke was in a very complacent mood when he saw Hill Fawkes remain silent. His self-satisfaction, nonetheless, soon disappeared a minute after he opened the envelope and unfolded the letter.

It was an official diplomatic letter signed by King Roland.

The content of the letter made Yorke quiver in terror.

The King of Graycastle intended to stop the King of Dawn persecuting witches? Yorke was overwhelmed by the unexpected turn of the event. This was the capital of the Kingdom of Dawn, not the Western Region of the Kingdom of Graycastle!

Was his old friend under the impression that Appen Moya would listen to his counsel?

The series of threats following seemed to be even more ridiculous. Roland advised the King of Dawn not to go against the stream and warned him that the ruling of the church, which was starting to decay, provided the best example. He also stated that the Kingdom of Graycastle would not stand by and would take next step if necessary. Roland hoped that Appen could use his best judgement in all situations.

Although the letter was phrased very politely, Yorke believed everybody in the palace would be sensible enough to sniff out the threatening voice between the lines. Roland was obviously indicating that the Kingdom of Dawn would be his next enemy if their king refused to follow his suggestion.

How could he say that to the King of Dawn directly?

Yorke returned the letter to Hill sullenly. All his contentment faded into restlessness.

Hill was right. To His Majesty, witches were more important than the alliance. He wondered, however, what else these threats would bring about other than growing repugnance among great nobles in the Kingdom of Dawn. The letter could be nothing but another conversation piece.

"What should I do?" It appeared that he had no choice but to rely on Hill's counsel.

Hill took a quick glance at the letter and replied, "Do as His Majesty says. This is your duty as an ambassador. As to the consequence, I bet the worst scenario would be that Appen Moya expels you from the court in rage. You won't run into any danger."

"Then we'll be done with these nobles." Yorko said gloomily, "People in the city of Glow will regard us as crazy and laugh about it in their cups, and Roland will become their new topic of discussion... What will His Majesty benefit from such a bluff?"

"A bluff?" Hill neither agreed nor disagreed. "Do you really think it's a bluff?"

Yorko's heart suddenly stopped beating with a jerk. He looked at the guard in dismay. "No... that can't be..."

Hill said slowly, "Timothy Wimbleton also thought so before the old king's city fell. Based on what I know of His Majesty, he never wastes his time."

Chapter 670: The Sad Ambassador

Yorko requested to present himself on the court meeting the following day.

As the two kingdoms had just formed an alliance, his request was soon approved, and two magnificently armored knights escorted him to the palace hall.

Over the past two to three months, Yorko had made numerous vain attempts to see King of Dawn. He wished now, however, that King Appen could have ignored him like he had usually done.

Unfortunately, the reality was always cruel.

By the time he entered the hall, the court meeting was close to its end.

The young king was leaning against his throne, talking animatedly with the ministers. He did not sit up until Yorko bent his knees. "Please rise. I've heard you've brought a letter from Roland Wimbleton?"

"Yes, Your Majesty," Yorko answered mechanically. "He congratulates on your coronation and has expressed his earnest desire that the two kingdoms will establish a long-term relationship of cooperation and friendship."

Appen Moya smiled. "That sounds something new. Did he send any presents?"

"Well, of... course." The Ambassador revolved his reply rapidly in his mind. "The fleet carrying those presents are currently on the way. The letter was actually delivered by post horses."

"I remember when King Wimbledon III was crowned, my father sent a delegation of 200 people to celebrate his coronation. There were 11 wagons full of presents, including goldware, fine wines, silk as well as pretty maids. I'm very curious about what Roland would gift me as a return."

The ministers in the hall burst into a fit of laughter.

Yorke swallowed hard, completely having no idea how to shoot back an answer. He doubted the validity of the story and wondered why Roland had not said anything about presents in the letter. As an ambassador, he had a good reason to be ignorant of the matter. However, for Roland, he should have known the gift-giving etiquette.

"Did he say anything else?" Appen asked.

For a second, Yorke wanted to excuse himself. Yet when he weighed the consequence of such an act, he forced himself to stay put. The outcome of infuriating King of Dawn would be no more than being shut out by nobles in the king's city. If he disappointed Roland, however, he would probably be relieved from the position as an ambassador.

Yorke ground his teeth. "His Majesty... um... also hopes that you stop persecuting witches and treat them as free peoples. Otherwise, the Kingdom of Graycastle would have to employ force to settle the matter, just as what they did to the church."

The hall was deadly silent after he finished.

The ambassador felt sweats started to bead on his forehead.

After quite a while, Appen Moya broke off. "Did Roland Wimbledon really say that? Give me the letter."

A knight approached Yorke at once and snatched the parchment from him.

Yorke could sense the coldness in King of Dawn's tone even without looking at him.

He was almost about to wail at the thought of the lengthy condemnation and warns in the letter.

As he expected, Appen threw the letter to the floor straight away after reading it. The young king obviously had a hard time controlling his temper. He rose to his heels and growled in a red rage. "So this is the attitude of the Kingdom of Graycastle to its ally? Witches are innocent, so we have to set them free? Rubbish! Look at what those damn witches did to House Moya. They invaded the palace, killed the guards and took my father as their hostage to force me to yield to the church! If they didn't poison my father, he should have been right here, alive and well!"

"But he's dead, and it's his death has made you the king." Yorke left the remaining word unsaid.

"Your Majesty, please calm down. As far as I know... witches trained by the church are different from innocent ones, just as there're good and bad ones among ordinary people..."

"Shut up!" Appen hollered. "You don't have the faintest idea how vile these people in possession of demons' power are. Even God's stones fail to stop them! Tell me then. How could it be possible that such a community, which is literally bounded to nothing, submits to our ruling? The Kingdom of Dawn will be more peaceful without witches. I have to fulfill my obligations of protecting my people!"

Looking at Appen's purple face, Yorko realized reasoning would no longer work. The shadow of his father's death was still haunting him. Although Appen was of about the same age as Roland, he was almost as petulant as the old Roland back in the king's city, and perhaps even worse.

In merely a year after Roland had left the king's city, he had become the real sovereign of the state. Appen, on the contrary, was still acting the boy.

"I'll write a letter to the King of Graycastle and advise him to be vigilant about the Fallen. It's just ridiculous to threaten the Kingdom of Dawn because of those Devil's minions!" Appen paced back and forth indignantly. "It's true that the Kingdom of Graycastle is powerful. but don't forget who bestowed him such power! Without the support of local nobles, Roland couldn't garrison his troops in here! If he invades our royal domain out of such absurdity, he'll suppress his feudatories in the same way he treats us. By that time, neither my people nor nobles in the Kingdom of Graycastle will support him like they always did when he battled against the church!"

"Well, It appears that Roland has already weeded out the nobles." Yorko thought to himself. He did not really know how His Majesty had defeated the church, but he dimly remembered that Roland had not relied on any nobles when conquering the king's city. At that time, out of the entire Kingdom of Graycastle, few people had believed that Prince Roland Wimbledon would have eventually won the game of thrones. All the great nobles had later been rooted out during the trial, which was why he could get this job as an ambassador.

In the end, Yorko was ordered to leave the palace by Appen Moya just as Hill had anticipated.

Fortunately, none of the ministers in the court chimed in. They were simply too dumbfounded to utter a word. This was better than what Yorko had expected.

But Yorko was pretty sure that after they read the letter on the floor, they would dismiss it with a laugh.

As soon as Yorko returned from the palace, Otto Luoxi paid him a visit.

"King Roland really views this matter in this way?"

"Do I sound like I'm lying?" Yorko collapsed in the recliner. "Well, are you mocking me now?"

"No... I just think Appen's new policy is rather thoughtless. He does want civilians in the Kingdom of Dawn to have a peaceful life, but the hunting measures he takes actually terrifies people."

"Then you should talk him out of it."

"He doesn't listen..." Otto smiled bitterly. "He acts like a different person every time we talk about witches. You can't blame him though. If you witness what happened in the palace..." Otto bit his lip.

"No, nothing. The death of the late king greatly shocked Appen. Technically, he shouldn't have ascended the throne until he comes of age five or six years later. I've heard King Wimbledon III was also killed by the witch from the church? If only Appen can be as composed as King Roland."

Yorko gazed at Otto in surprise. He felt like Otto did not sound like the eldest son of one of the three major families in the Kingdom of Dawn but a noble from the Kingdom of Graycastle. Had Roland become so invincible that he could now make nobles in the neighbor country stand on his side?

"Anyway, I'll try to talk to Appen again. He doesn't even listen to Earl Quinn now."

Otto was about to take his leave after the tea when No. 76 suddenly darted into the room.

"Sir... the witch you purchased has come back!"