

## Witch 701

### Chapter 701: A Hundred Years of Evolution

"Wow! I didn't know that Maggie had such great power!" Amy exclaimed.

"Coo, coo!"

"She does?" Lightning expressed some dissatisfaction. "She's just older than us. When I reach adulthood, I'll surely develop even stronger, new abilities!"

"Oh... then, can you tell me what new ability Miss. Maggie gained once she reached adulthood?"

"She transformed into a flying monster for the first time. In that form she's massive and fierce looking, her body even shadows the sun when she soars through the sky. That form isn't lovely at all."

"Coo..." Lightning dropped her head in despondency.

"A flying monster... I'd love to see that!"

"Me too!"

The group of witches surrounded Maggie and Lightning. No. 76 felt anxious and thought to herself, "These imbeciles are all amateurs. They don't seem to understand at all. Who cares about a Senior Witch looking cute or dreadful? Isn't the point supposed to be about the relationship between your evolution of power and the Magic Cyclone, as well as about how to become a Senior Witch?" No. 76 struggled to maintain her smile and she felt her mouth as it started to twitch.

Sensing that the subject of the conversation had been diverted from the point, No. 76 had no choice but to speak, "Maggie appears to be exactly like any normal pigeon... how do we know that her power already went through an evolution?"

There was a possibility this question could expose her identity, but No. 76 didn't care much about that at this point.

No. 76 decided to take the chance regardless. "Perhaps they knew a way to discern the difference between the Day of Awakening and the solidification of adulthood. Even so, they may have confused a derivative skill as a High Awakening, sometimes a lucky person received multiple derivative skills. "

"We differentiate it by the magic power," Wendy answered No. 76's question, "if we say that a normal witch's magic power is like a cyclone or a thin mist, the magic power will cohere and become a bright new form, after the evolution. For instance, Maggie's magic power now takes the form of stretched white wings, very different from the foggy mist in her past."

"Her description of the reconstruction of the magic's cohesion is exactly the same as the definition presented by the Union."

Wendy's words eradicated the last of No. 76 doubts. If Wendy wasn't lying, then Maggie was indeed a Senior Witch.

Although No.76 didn't have the ability to observe magic power directly, Wendy's confidence in her words, and the accuracy of her theory, showed that she had a comprehensive knowledge regarding the magic evolution.

"I see how it is," No. 76 tried to conceal her inner excitement as she pretended not to understand the issue, "Your power... is like that too then?"

"I haven't cohered my magic power." Wendy said frankly, "Compared to Anna, I still have a lot to learn."

"So, she became the manager of the whole union as an 'Original Witch' and even befriended the higher ascendants?" Observing the intimate and amiable look of the pigeon, No.76 suddenly had a thought, she had indeed slept for too long. This world was drastically different from the Taquila era that she had known.

The witches of the Kingdom of Wolfheart didn't sense No. 76's complex emotions, except for Annie. The three witches were playing with Maggie and laughing.

As the group climbed the mountain, No. 76 deliberately slowed down and dropped to the back of the group.

She moved her hand, which bore a ring of Five-Colors Stone, up to her eyes and pretended to rub her eyes so she could observe Lightning and Maggie through the gleaming Magic Stone.

Since Lightning and Maggie were using their powers, two conspicuous orange lights appeared before No.76's eyes.

The beams of light above Lightning's head were similar to that of Annie's. They were about a finger width wide. Maggie's beams of light were thicker and about the width of an arm. This aligned with the theory that the Key to gaining a Senior Witch status was more complex.

When compared to the beams of the light from last night's infiltrator, their beams of light were much thinner, not to mention the gigantic, wall-like beam of light that had been in the Castle District.

"None of them are the Chosen One."

No. 76 felt an uneasiness in her heart as she remembered the name of the two.

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After they had entered the North Slope Mine, the noise surrounding them became louder and louder. The witches were surprised to see that the mine was still in full operation, despite the snow and frigid winds. The busy miners could be seen everywhere on the street.

To their surprise, none of the miners wore ragged prisoner's cloth. Instead, the miners were all wearing thick leather coats with different colored cloth belts wrapped around their heads. The cloth seemed to represent different work. The ground near the entrance of the mine was covered with iron bars of the same width. Four-wheel carriages moved on the iron bars, but there were no drivers or horses.

Colorful banners were hanging down from the orbit. There were big letters on the banners—labor is the most glorious act, use your own hands to win the future, ten years of working and a hundred years of housing...The scarlet banners, white snow, and black railway composed the main colors of the mine.

"Before His Majesty became Lord of Border Town, the seasonal ore from Border Town would only exchange for a few hundred gold royals. During the winter, workers were unable to produce any ore due to the Months of Demons. Locals couldn't even feed themselves with the money they could get." Wendy slowed her pace and turned around, "After His Majesty arrived in the Western Region, and saved a witch named Anna, the door to cooperation between witches and humans was thus opened."

"Do you see those black steel machines? They are hand-made by Anna. They can dig tubs, drain water without the drive of magic power, and can be operated by anyone. With this equipment, the production of the mine increased more than ten times. People's salary now, not only filled their stomachs but also allowed them to buy new cloth or homes. The obvious profits allowed the town's people to accept the existence of witches."

"You guys asked recently what the witches job is. The answer is to create a better life." Wendy stroked the red hair on her forehead and said proudly, "If you guys joined the Witch Union, we could build this city together and fight for this big family. The citizens will firmly remember your names in the future."

They could tell that even Annie, who was usually very composed, had been shaken by Wendy's words. Her hands that held the wheelchair flexed and fully showed her emotions. The rest of the people seemed dazed after they heard the words 'family of witches.' To refugees like them, there was nothing more enchanting than a cozy place to live.

Only No. 76's heart was filled with doubts. "The key point of the change in Wendy's story was not the witches, but the black machinery. A local citizen would be a lowerclassman, even among the common people. How had they known how to build those machines? An awakening would only bring a boost to the person's magic power and physical strength, however, it would not bring them unseen knowledge."

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Wendy's next sentence almost caused No. 76 to have a heart attack.

"Since we have reached the North Slope Mountain, let's go see Miss Anna." Wendy smiled softly, "She is not only the busiest witch in the union but also the only genius that has gone through two evolutions."

Chapter 702: Someone Impossible to Meet

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Passing through a mountain path guarded by numerous guards, No. 76 could see the red brick wall looming in the snow forest.

Judging from the outposts set along the path, No. 76 was sure that she would not have been allowed to enter such a restricted area if she had acted alone. Senior Witches were finally treated in a way befitting their position. At least, such a massive display of guards would not be disgraceful to these promoted people.

Although she did not understand why a witch so gifted would build her home on the North Slope Mountain Ridges.

Furthermore, No. 76 still was not fully convinced about what Wendy had said. Anyhow, it sounded too incredible to her that a witch could experience awakenings twice so soon after she had come of age. She knew that even though the number of times a witch awakened did not represent one's strength or ability, yet the perseverance, intelligence, and perception one required to achieve awakenings twice were much more than she could imagine. Even in the entire Union, there were hardly any witches who was as exceptional as this one. She was really surprised to meet such a witch in the kingdom of the common people.

As they walked close to the walls, No. 76 noticed something strange.

"Is this really where the witch lives?" Looking over the top of the walls, No. 76 could only see a few roofs put up with canvas. There was no castle or stone tower here, not even a one-story house.

"Here we are." Wendy knocked on the gate of the yard, "The backyard of North Slope Mountain is the research and development center of all kinds of mechanical equipment in Neverwinter. Apart from studying, Anna often spends her time working here. To ensure her safety, His Majesty has blocked the entire mountain path to prohibit unauthorized people from entering."

"It's only an institute..." No. 76 frowned secretly. "The guards on the path don't belong to Anna but are sent by the king. It looks like he's watching her rather than protecting her."

"Sister Wendy." A lively little girl opened the door. "I've been waiting for you for a long time!"

"Good girl, where's your sister?"

"She's doing a machine tool test with Sister Anna."

"This is...?" Amy asked.

"Lucia's sister, Ring White." Wendy introduced, "She's now a probationary clerk for the Witch Union and hasn't awakened yet."

"How are you?" The little girl greeted politely. "Please come in."

"Lucia White also spends a lot of time here working with Anna and she's responsible for the research work on metal materials," Wendy said as she led everyone inside the yard, "By the way, her ability also evolved when she came of age, and the improvement of her magic power is quite dramatic, like Anna's. She's among the few witches who could drive a Sigil of God's Will."

No. 76 almost stumbled over the threshold as she heard this.

"Wait, what she's talking about?"

"Sigil of God's Will?" No. 76 could not believe her ears.

Luckily, someone soon asked, "What's a Sigil?"

"A Sigil of God's Will." Wendy repeated with a smile. "It's a weapon that requires a tremendous amount of magic power, most people find it hard to light the four Magic Stones on it. His Majesty has hung it on the wall of the castle's hall for everyone to test their magic powers. If you join the Witch Union in the future, you have the chance to experience it yourself. At the moment, only four members of the Witch

Union are capable of lighting the last Magic Stone on Sigil. Everyone is now guessing who the fifth will be."

"Hang it on the wall? Only four witches?"

No. 76 felt like she was listening to a fantasy. Even hearing the name of Sigil of God's Will was enough to surprise her, let alone caring about where they found it. In the Taquila age, the Sigil was the exclusive weapon for the Three Chiefs of the Union. Except for Transcendents who spent all of their time on training, there was no one who had the required magic power to drive the golden thunder.

"But here they actually have 'only' four witches who could activate the Sigil? Don't be ridiculous! Does the Witch Union possess even more Transcendents than the Union?"

"Moreover, from what Wendy said, both Anna and Lucia aren't Extraordinary witches now. Then how could they advance to become Transcendents?"

"What sounds crazier to me is the way that the king of common people deals with the Sigil of God's Will. Since there are witches who can activate it, he must have seen the tremendous power it could cast. Then why has he placed such a precious weapon in the hall for all the witches to play with? The Sigil is a war trophy for the slaughter of a Senior Demon. Does this guy not have any common sense?"

No. 76 suddenly felt a slight pain in her brain.

The information that Lucia was also a Senior Witch had numbed her.

No. 76 had seen three promoted witches in just one morning. All she wanted to do now was to ask someone why a border city ruled by common people would harbor so many Senior Witches. What was more mind-blowing to her was that they did not have any awareness of how to be a superior. For example, Lucia had been introduced by Lightning and had already integrated herself with the witches of Wolfheart. Anna was much calmer, but No. 76 could see from her face that she did not have any complaints about being managed by an Original Witch, Wendy. Through their conversations, you could see that Anna and Wendy had an affinity and trust between them.

When No. 76 could not hold back her curiosity any longer and be about to blurt out her questions, she heard someone finally mention this point.

"May I ask how many people in the Witch Union have evolved abilities that are new?" Broken Sword's question was as sweet as the sound of nature to No. 76.

But shortly after that, No. 76 was shocked by Wendy's response. She saw Wendy counting the number with her fingers. "Well... one, two, three... nine, ten, just ten."

"10..."

No. 76 was so overwhelmed she had no energy to be shocked.

If the information provided by 'Black Money' was correct, there were only about 20 witches that lived in the Western Region of Graycastle. In her plan, she merely viewed Neverwinter as her first stop, her target was Sleeping Island in the Fjords, as it was the place that had the most witches.

But she did not expect to find 10 Senior Witches here.

"Was this a mockery of the incompetence of the Union?"

Drawing a deep breath, No. 76 no longer stayed close to them but put the ring before her eyes, taking advantage of the time when they were showing their abilities.

The beam of orange light shining from Lucia was almost twice as wide as that from Maggie. And the beam of light from Anna was much more eye-catching, almost as wide as her trunk and was nearly the same as the uninvited guest who sneaked into the Foreign Affairs Building that night.

Undoubtedly, neither of them were the Chosen One.

It seemed that the 'wall of light beam' in the castle belonged to another person.

But was this possible? Was there any witch that was more exceptional than Wendy's genius, Anna, and had even experienced awakenings twice?

At the moment when No. 76 was wondering, the gate of the backyard was suddenly pushed open and a blue-haired woman came in.

"The anticorrosive results you asked for have arrived. These are the test samples." She placed several glass bottles in front of Anna. "Aluminium alloy sample No. 1872 had the best result like His Majesty had predicted."

"Thank you for your hard work, Agatha."

"Goodbye then." The witch, whose name was Agatha, nodded and turned away without paying any attention to the rest. Her demeanor gave No.76 an impression of the imposing manner that a superior would have in the Taquila age. But the moment Agatha turned around, No.76 felt like a thunderbolt flashed in her heart!

She realized that she had seen this person before.

Chapter 703: Coming from the Past

No. 76 knew her. She was sure about it. Even though over 400 years had gone by and she barely remembered the witch's name, the scene back then was still vivid in her mind.

She remembered the blue-haired witch dropped to one knee before the Three Chiefs of the Union, solemnly took over the cope and scepter which symbolized being a higher ascendant and accepted the personal blessing of the Quest Society's leader.

No. 76 was deeply impressed by the witch's figure when she turned to the audience and raised her scepter that as the youngest Senior Witch born in the Taquila age, her pride and confidence was deeply engraved on the minds of all the bystanders at the scene.

At that time, No. 76 merely served as an original combat witch for the garrison. When she looked up at her junior who was standing on the stage with boundless enthusiasm, she felt a sense of infinite admiration tangled with a hint of inferiority.

So the witch was Agatha.

In a split second, the dusty memory fragments were pieced together in No. 76's mind.

She even remembered in the later years that Agatha had been excluded from the central research group. Due to her errant behavior, she had violated the Quest Society's principle of never recruiting common people.

But Agatha refused to repent. Instead, she decided to establish her own research tower outside the city of Taquila.

Her status and distinction had saved her from the impediment of other people. If any Original Witch dared to go against the Quest Society openly, she would definitely be dispatched to the frontlines and be engaged in fighting bloody battles until she would end up as one of the casualties.

Back then, No. 76 was discontent with Agatha and considered her behavior quite out of place at that time when there was a war to fight. For the Quest Society, losing her meant losing a young and talented promoted person. For Agatha, being excluded meant she would be deprived of most of the resources and bases for exploring the mysteries of Magic Stone. Both of the consequences would be a loss to the Holy City of Taquila.

However, for No. 76 who had experienced the fall of the Union and had waited for more than 400 years, all her discontent had vanished. Now, her heart was brimming with happiness... and a kind of incredulous surprise.

The happiness came from the unexpected chance of being reunited with a Taquila witch here.

While the surprise was she that could not understand how a Taquila witch could survive until now.

It was obvious that Agatha had maintained her body, even her look, and her age of that time. It seemed everything about her was frozen since then without even a trace of aging.

However, the bodies of other survivors had long ago turned into ashes, leaving only their souls that were being kept through unique methods.

No. 76 fought the urge to stop Agatha and instead silently watched her walk away until the gate of the yard was closed once more. After that, she took a deep breath.

She already knew what to do next.

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When the light began to fade and the howling cold wind turned sharp as it usually did every night, Nightingale noticed a slight change of Sylvie's expression and so she asked, "Why? What did you find out?"

"No. 76 has left the Foreign Affairs Building by jumping out of the window on the corridor of the second floor," Sylvie replied.

"Has she?" Nightingale raised her eyebrow. "Those windows are sealed with iron railings, aren't they?"

"Maybe they were rusty. The whole window frame could fall off easily by shaking it." Sylvie stood before the French window, looking down at the city slowly hiding in the darkness. "She climbed over the wall and the guards at the doorway didn't realize anything."

"But she couldn't escape our attention." Nightingale could not help but raise her lip. "I'm right. She must be plotting something."

Since keeping Roland safe was more important, she called Sylvie to the office in the castle to keep a watch on the tour of the new-comers with her.

There was nothing strange about the behavior of the Wolfheart witches in the morning. After their lunch, No. 76 suddenly seemed quite uncomfortable. Sylvie could tell from her lip movements that No. 76 was tired because she had stayed up overnight. At last, No.76 listened to their suggestions and went to bed to get some rest. She skipped the tour in the afternoon.

Nightingale had thought it would be a quiet and peaceful day, but things changed unexpectedly when it was almost twilight. They noticed that No. 76 started to act.

"You've really guessed correctly," Roland said with great spirit, closing his book, "but an ordinary person who could avoid your lie detection does possess some extraordinary talent."

Nightingale coughed slightly. "Sooner or later I'll figure out how she did it after I seize her."

"No. 76 is moving south along a small street outside the Castle District. Wait, she stopped beside the street," Sylvie continued to report, "Looks like she is... waiting for someone?"

"She has neither magic power nor a weapon. It looks like she's here either for intelligence or is in collusion with others and planning something big." Nightingale analyzed with soaring spirit. "If it's the former, she would have lurked for a little longer. Judging from her hasty reaction, maybe she'll attack tonight."

"Attack? Attack whom?" Sylvie asked.

"Um... well, we'll figure it out later."

After 10 minutes, Sylvie's voice turned harsh. "Why? She's moving again... and is now she's targeting... Oh no, isn't that Agatha?"

"It's nothing unusual for her to be here since it's time for the workers to change shifts..." Nightingale frowned. "Are you sure No. 76 who doesn't have the God's Stone of Retaliation is targeting Agatha, a combat witch?"

"Agatha reacted! No... How's this possible!" Sylvie shouted incredulously. "No. 76 shows the response of God's Stone."

The information shocked Nightingale and Roland.

"Nightingale!"

"I'll be right there." Before Roland could finish, Nightingale had entered the Mist. "Sylvie, protect His Majesty in my absence."

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Agatha's hands were suspended in mid-air, and her heart sank abruptly.

It was a small street she was walking on, leading to the Castle District, few citizens would pass by usually, especially at nightfall. When she noticed someone approaching from behind, without the slightest hesitation, she turned around and summoned Ice to freeze the attacker's feet.

But, after Ice emerged in the mid-air, it lasted no more than one second, as if it never existed.

"It's... God's Stone of Retaliation?"

"No, if she wears a God's Stone, Ice shouldn't be able to get near her."

Just in front of her, a few seconds ago, the icicle she summoned was formed by magic power before it vanished.

"How could this be possible?"

But Agatha understood that it was not the right time to probe into that.

She was sure that the attacker had been well prepared as she had been following her in this quiet street and was capable of dispelling her magic power. But when she was ready to strike, what the attacker did shocked her.

She saw the woman place her elbows at a level position and press her overlapped fingers on her chest, before bending down deeply.

She had not seen this etiquette for a long time.

It was a standard etiquette that was performed when a member of the Union met a superior of the Taquila age.

"You're..." Agatha could not stop asking.

"My respects to you, Lady Agatha, the youngest High Awakened," the woman said slowly, "Can we find a place to have a talk?"

Chapter 704: A Cross-era Talk

No. 76 closed the door to cut off the noise in the tavern lobby and then walked back to sit opposite Agatha.

No. 76 knew it would be much easier to expose herself once she acted alone and left the witches of Wolfheart, but concealing her identity was no longer her priority now.

"I thought you'd take me somewhere out-of-the-way." Agatha looked around the cubicle. "I didn't expect you to bring me here."

"The tavern has always been a good place for exchanging information and keeping in contact, my Lady." No. 76 poured Agatha a mug of ale. "I hope you'll forgive me for failing to provide a more elegant environment for our talk. After all, this is only my second day in Neverwinter."

Now that No. 76 was no longer concerned about being exposed, talking in the tavern would actually make the other party less wary to some extent, for they would certainly feel safer in a place with so many people coming and going rather than in a dark alley. Neither of them feared the cold, but Agatha would not accept the request for a private talk in some desolate place from a complete stranger who appeared out of nowhere. Even No. 76 would not accept such a request.

Most importantly, since she had neither hostility toward Neverwinter nor the Witch Union, she need not consider herself as their enemy, her previous plan of hiding was only for the purpose of finding the Chosen One. Now that she had found a better way, there was no need for her to follow the original plan.

Common people and witches were now faced with a mutual enemy. The danger loomed ahead.

"How did you find me in only two days?"

"I tried to find out where you worked, the hours when you would return to the castle and the route you would take... I made the witches of Wolfheart ask Wendy about the first two things and I heard about your usual route from the residents." No. 76 was brief and to the point. "After I knew that you belonged to the Witch Union, I decided to take the initiative to contact you."

"I see." Agatha gazed at her keenly. "So there are other witches of Taquila who survived?"

"You could say that, but we're no longer witches." No. 76 knew that the only reason Agatha was willing to talk to her was that she had news about Taquila, so she did not conceal anything regarding this.

"There was no way to preserve the body for hundreds of years and so we could only adopt another method to extend our life. For example, the body you're looking at now belongs to a God's Punishment Warrior of the church."

"You mean... not only can you control the body but you also have the power to activate the domain of God's Stone?"

"Indeed, this was also the ultimate goal that Lady Alice was fighting for, a God's Punishment Warrior that was formed by combining a witch and a common person that could combat the demon. Even losing half of his blood would not kill the witch as long as the witch's soul was transferred to another body to form another perfect transcendent warrior."

"I knew her plan was not that simple." Agatha remained silent for a long time before finishing her ale.

"But judging from your tone, it sounded like the other survivors didn't agree with this method. And... Why did you come here?"

"Before I give you the answer, I'd like to ask you something very important," No. 76 said in a low voice.

"Go ahead."

"Have you already revealed the information about the demon, the Battle of Divine Will, and the Union to the Witch Union?"

Agatha nodded.

No. 76 suddenly showed a hint of excitement. "How did they respond? Did they believe you?"

"Not only did they accept the information, they've also started preparing for the third Battle of Divine Will," she replied, "In fact, a short time ago, the Witch Union confronted the demons and killed a Magic Slayer along with two Fearsome Demons."

No. 76 could not help but clench her fist. All the things had turned out as she had expected. Agatha had really revealed the information to the local witches. In that case, the Witch Union and Taquila have become natural allies, which meant that she no longer needed to hide her identity and could get straight to the point.

Although she was also curious about the victory of the battle between the witches of the Witch Union and the Senior Demons before the fall of Bloody Moon, there was something more urgent that she had to discuss.

Without hesitating, No. 76 told Agatha everything about the fight between Natalia and Alice as well as the plan of the Chosen One. "I've found the witch who can start the instrument of Divine retribution and annihilate the demons lives in the Castle District, and I hope you could help me to identify her."

Agatha was a little shocked. "Is there anyone who can really do that?"

"Lady Pasha told me so." No. 76 took off the ring and handed it over to Agatha. "As long as anyone summons her power, I can see the orange light that symbolizes the 'Key' through the colorful Magic Stone."

Agatha puckered her lips before taking the ring. She observed it for a moment and said, "I think you should talk to the Lord of Neverwinter."

"Of course, I'll tell Wendy everything... Wait!" No. 76 was surprised. "The Lord of Neverwinter? You mean... The local leader that is a common person?"

"Yes, Roland Wimbledon, a common person who looks ordinary and is even a little rash." Somehow, a faint smile appeared on Agatha's lips. "He's the actual core of the Witch Union."

No. 76 frowned and said, "I don't quite understand... what do you mean?"

"I was just like you at the very beginning." Agatha handed back the ring. "I realized later that without Roland, the Witch Union wouldn't exist, Neverwinter wouldn't be the way it is now, and Graycastle would never defeat the church. All of the achievements came from this common person. If you want to find and take the Chosen One with you, it's Roland you need to speak to, not Wendy."

"But..."

"Don't worry, he knows much more than you could ever imagine." Agatha chuckled. "You know what he told me after I woke up in the Frozen Coffin, when I was shattered and bewildered by the fact that the Union had disappeared long ago? He said that common people could defeat demons."

"This is too..."

"Arrogant, right?" She interrupted. "And I thought so in the first place. But in fact, I saw hope in him. That hope was something the witches of Neverwinter would believe in wholeheartedly. Hence, you

must earn Roland's approval if Taquila wants to work with the Witch Union to fight against the demons."

For a moment, No. 76 could not believe her ears. If it was a wild witch who identified with the rule of a common person, she would think it made sense. After all, more than 400 years had passed since that period when the Union ruled the mainland, and the witches were superior. But she could not understand why Agatha, an authentic Taquila witch, would have so much faith in a common person. Additionally, the faith was not merely about recruiting common people as assistants for her experiment.

Although she had been engaged in missions involving the secular regime before, she did not expect the mission to begin like this.

No. 76 put the ring away and remained silent for a moment before saying. "Please let me think about it."

After that, she rose to salute Agatha once again before leaving the tavern.

#### Chapter 705: The Hand

"You can come out now." Agatha looked at the empty corner of the room.

After she spoke, there was a faint shadow on the wall. Nightingale then came out of nowhere and blocked the dim candlelight.

"When did you discover me?" She sounded a bit surprised.

"When I took the ring from No. 76," Agatha said as she shrugged her shoulders and raised the jug, "would you like a cup?"

"If it's your treat." Nightingale sat down opposite the Ice Witch and said, "Can that magic stone sense magic power?"

"It's not magic power but an orange light beam, or perhaps I should say... the 'key'." She took out an empty cup, filled it readily and pushed it to Nightingale. "Your beam lit up half a room. It was hard not to notice it."

"Did she notice that too?"

"Most likely," Agatha nodded. "She didn't mind revealing her identity in front of her own kind."

"She and I aren't the same, just like Pure Witch and I aren't the same," said Nightingale, "did you believe what she said?"

"Yes, I did."

"But you didn't take her ring."

"Because I really want to help her and get her on the right path." Agatha also poured herself a glass of ale and then drank it all—the quality of the drink was rather poor, a far cry from Evelyn's fruity liquor and the strange-tasting Chaos Drinks. In spite of this, the sour bitterness still could not suppress her pleasure.

Agatha was elated.

At the very moment when No. 76 revealed her identity, the recurring sense of loneliness disappeared from her heart. It turned out that she was not the last survivor of Taquila, and there were other witches like her from the Union who had come to this era after crossing a time span of more than 400 years.

Although most of the Witch Union members were very friendly, and Wendy was very affectionate toward her, Agatha constantly felt lost—she knew there was a gap between her and the other witches caused by the accumulation of centuries, which could not be erased in a short time. She could not confide to the witches in this new era, so she tried to numb herself by burying herself in work.

The only exception was Roland Wimbledon. She felt a sense of comfort when she was alone with this weird common person. At first, she found it hard to understand. She realized later on that Roland had the same kind of undefinable estrangement as if he were out of touch with this world—the only difference was Roland hid it much better than her, and hardly anyone noticed it.

Finally, she was no longer alone.

It was for this reason that Agatha hoped No. 76 would make a request to visit Roland Wimbledon in her official identity as a Taquila witch.

She looked forward to the both of them standing side by side in the Battle of Divine Will.

She was already in love with the life here at Neverwinter, and naturally, she hoped that her own kind would feel the same way about this place.

Furthermore, Agatha had a small hidden desire.

She wanted to prove to the witches that what she had said was wise and correct—co-operation between the common people and witches was the best way to fight the demons.

"This was why you neglected her deliberately?" Nightingale looked perplexed, as this was the first time she saw Agatha's real thoughts.

"No. 76 will understand after she's been here for some time." Agatha curled her lips. "Wasn't I the same?"

This batch of survivors did not think of liking the church... They did not agree with the plan of the God's Punishment Army and were reluctant to use the witches as sacrificial materials. They even split up with Lady Alice over this. This was one reason why she decided to help them.

Afterwards, Nightingale was silent for a long time. Only when the rocking candle was burnt to its bottom, did she gradually disappear and return to the darkness. "I hope she will make the right choice."

"She will," Agatha smiled and said, "I believe that."

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No. 76 went back along the same path to the Foreign Affairs Building, where she bumped into Anna and the others, who had finished visiting the beverage plant.

"I woke up and felt much better," she said voluntarily before anyone had the chance to ask. "It was a bit stuffy in the room, so I took a walk in the yard."

"You should put more clothes on so that you won't catch a cold," said Broken Sword with concern.

Amy held her hand and said happily, "It's a shame you didn't come with us this afternoon! The Chaos Drinks made by Miss Evelyn were simply out of this world!"

"Chaos... Drinks?"

"Yeah, initially she could only change the taste of the drink. But after her ability evolved, she started to create delicious drinks that had unique tastes. I swear even the nobility in Wolfheart City would not have tasted something so amazing." Amy said excitedly, "Whether it was black tea, honey milk or fine wines, they would not be worth mentioning compared to her drinks."

Another Senior Witch... No. 76 had become numb. Although it was unclear what Wendy and Nana meant specifically by learning, there was no doubt that in the training of witches, the Witch Union was already more advanced than the Union. According to Agatha, it seemed that all of these were started by Roland Wimbledon, a mere common person, and that was what she could not understand.

Did common people understand magic power more than witches?

"I can testify," Hero echoed. "For a moment, I even thought that all the tribulations I suffered before had been worthwhile."

"If I could have such a drink occasionally, I'd never leave Neverwinter!" Amy stuck out her tongue.

"Then we should join the Witch Union," Broken Sword suddenly said, "as long as we're staying here, there's always the opportunity to drink it again, right?"

"I agree!" Amy immediately raised her hand.

"Yes... Me too." Hero nodded earnestly.

The three looked at Annie, so she said reluctantly, "I'll listen to you."

"Wait... You guys agreed to stay here just for a strange drink?" No. 76 could not help but feel startled.

"And Annie, didn't you say that we had to observe carefully and be cautious? We should at least decide after tomorrow's tour. If Wendy heard the reason that prompted them to make up their mind, she would certainly not know whether to laugh or cry."

All of a sudden, she felt envious.

Simple requirements and easy decisions. As long as there was a glimmer of hope, they could move forward without hesitation.

What about herself?

...

After everyone had fallen asleep, No. 76 quietly left her room again and climbed on the roof.

Against the howling wind and snow, she raised her ring in the direction of the castle, and narrowed her eyes to see afar—a light beam as wide as the city wall appeared again in front of her eyes. It still miraculously appeared in her field of vision, even without the activation of magic power and being out of the theoretical detection range.

She needed to find the chosen one for the Taquila witches. This was the main purpose of this trip.

Anyway, the chosen one's significance to the survivors and the meaning of the Chaos Drinks for Amy and the others was almost the same.

She made her decision.

...

When Wendy came to the Foreign Affairs Building the next day, No. 76 handed her a letter that she had written overnight.

"I am Phyllis, the Taquila witch from the Maze of Desperation. I have brought news of the Providence and the savior. I would like to request an audience to see the Lord of Neverwinter, to discuss our co-operation in the Battle of Divine Will." She did not avoid the Kingdom of Wolfheart's witch but solemnly said so in front of everyone.

Amy and the others opened their eyes wide in disbelief as if they had heard something incredulous.

"No. 76... what're you talking about?"

"You're a witch, too? That's great!"

"Phyllis... is that your real name?"

The three of them each responded differently, only Annie was silent.

Wendy did not seem surprised and did not report this situation to the castle. Instead, she received the document and smiled at her encouragingly. "Come with me, His Majesty is already waiting for you in his study."

Chapter 706: The Formal Meeting, the Before and After of the Dispute

Roland had learned about the situation of No. 76 from Nightingale. In fact, he was very interested in the distant history of Taquila and the intelligence about the Battle of Divine Will that the Taquila witch claimed to have. He had saved a lot of time and effort now that she had shown up by herself.

Other than Nightingale, Sylvie, and Scroll, there were also Leaf and two potted plants in the office to prevent accidents from happening. Once the plants' abilities were cast, even if No. 76 used the God's Stone, she would not be able to eliminate the crazed vines—as soon as she stalled her footsteps, Nightingale would be able to retaliate and defeat her.

Potted plants looked like decorations, and were harmless when not triggered by magic power. Therefore Roland also did not need to deploy a handful of guards to surround the room—he did not want his intentions to be revealed before even starting the negotiations.

When No. 76 followed Wendy into the office, Roland smiled and said, "Welcome to Neverwinter, do you need any tactical eyepieces?"

"..."

"..."

Everyone was expressionless. Nightingale even rolled her eyes and pinched his shoulder in the Mist. "Your Majesty, please don't talk nonsense at this time."

"Ahem, okay..." Roland cleared his throat and returned to his usual calmness. "So you're Taquila's No. 76?"

"My name is Phyllis, My dear King," with one hand placed on her chest she slightly bowed her head and said, "No. 76 is just my disguise as a common person, and since you have discovered my identity, the name has lost its meaning."

The formal salute with the chest gesture was used when the nobility met with royalty, or when ambassadors visited other countries. It was clear that Phyllis was not ignorant of secular etiquette. Roland did not mind the honorific title and slightly inappropriate wording. He was more concerned with actual interests, rather than verbal fame.

"Let's sit down and talk," he nodded. "I have so many questions to ask you."

"If I'm able to answer, I will," said Phyllis solemnly.

It was probably due to the fact that she hadn't spoken for such a long time to a "common person" like him, so her expression was quite rigid. She probably wanted to be polite and at the same time, not lose Taquila's arrogance of being the previous ruler of the world.

Roland was amused when he remembered Yoriko's description of Phyllis. When she was disguised as a maid, she blended into her role seamlessly. Now she had regained her formal status and she was still determined to maintain that pride even if the Witch Empire had disintegrated long ago. Without a doubt, the name of Taquila had long been part of their faith.

"The first is information about you. After all, if we want to work together against the demon, it is always better to know more about each other." Roland drank his tea, and asked unhurriedly, "To be honest, I have always been very curious how the Union was divided into two factions. Since you were all witches, why did the church pursue its own kind? Especially after knowing the existence of the perfect form of the God's Punishment Army, the doubts intensified. Could you enlighten me on the details?"

Phyllis probably did not expect him to ask this question first, and she hesitated for a moment before replying, "No one expected things to turn out like this before entering the ruin of the maze."

"Did you mean that this was related to the ruin?"

"Without the discovery in the ruin, the God's Punishment Army could not be created. The remaining witches would not be able to survive... but unfortunately, we discovered that too late." She sighed softly. "Other than finding the method of Soul Transfer in the maze, the fugitives also found something else... It was because of them that Lady Natalya and the Queen of Starfall City split into factions, and this led to their ultimate break."

"Something... else?" Roland frowned.

"I can't reveal more at the moment. I can only discuss more in detail after we have found the Chosen One—at that time, Lady Pasha will speak to you personally."

"Who is Pasha?"

"She's the successor to the Three Chiefs of the Union as well as the trusted leader of the survivors," explained Phyllis.

If he were not mistaken, the Holy City had already collapsed at that time. Whatever it was that caused a group of dying fugitives to even settle their problems by fighting amongst themselves had to be a weapon stronger than Providence.

"Couldn't the two sides coexist? Since the perfect form of God's Punishment Army didn't cost the witches' lives, it would have been enough to select volunteers to attend the incarnation ceremony. Why did Alice want to overturn the remnants of the Union?"

When these words were asked, Phyllis's face showed a rare bitterness. "Not cost the lives of the witches? No... Your Majesty, things were not as simple as you thought." The shell I used initially came from one of the God's Punishment Warriors who failed to transfer. Do you know how long it took me to adapt to that shell?"

"10 years?" Roland pondered.

This was also the time normally required to train a knight.

"Nearly 50 years," she shook her head and said, "when I became familiar with manipulating a body that I didn't own, the original shell of the God's Punishment Army was already aging."

The witches at the scene could not help but gasp.

"The magic power that melted into the blood destroyed most of the senses, including touch, taste and smell... so the God's Punishment Army didn't feel pain and hence didn't feel scared of being injured. But for us, it was the equivalent of subverting the past memories. Walking, talking and forming a fist all needed to be re-mastered... At the beginning, one couldn't even stand up and hold a cup required a huge amount of effort. It took decades of daily repetition to train the brain to remember these actions. If you counted weapon and combat skills, it would take hundreds of years." Phyllis paused and said, "So you can imagine what happened next."

Roland frowned for a moment before saying, "Alice needed a lot of empty shells."

"That's right. Once a witch didn't die, one of the God's Punishment Warriors who had lived for hundreds of years would be much more powerful than a newly converted warrior. In order to continue this power that had been accumulated during years of experience, she had to create more shells to let the souls live on. Even if the new shell took some time to adapt to, but compared to starting from scratch, this time could be shortened to a few years."

"And the shell's providers were just weak witches, therefore Lady Alice had to replace the Union so that she could become the absolute ruler of the witches. This was the only way that she could easily use some of the witches as sacrificial material." Phyllis closed her eyes. "Under the threat of the Battle of

Divine Will, she was almost close to success. Most of the Union's senior staff had acquiesced to her behavior... and if it weren't for the new discoveries in the ruin, the God's Punishment Army would have been the only way to survive."

#### Chapter 707: The Queen Of Starfall City's Path

"It sounded just like she had explained," Roland thought. Ashes once said that the difference between the God's Punishment Army and the Extraordinary was not their strength nor reaction, but their wisdom. If a God's Punishment Warrior had a witch's mind and were immortal, her combat experience which was accumulated over centuries would reach a horrifying level. Such fighters would be even stronger than the Extraordinary.

If he were fighting against the full version of God's Punishment Army in Coldwind Ridge, the result would most probably be reversed. The church only needed to split the whole corps into many squads to infiltrate the base of Kingdom of Graycastle. These squads could start battles through widespread harassment and he would not be able to guard against them.

So it seemed that the long adaption was not the main issue. As long as the soul could continue to transfer, it would be natural to keep the powerful veteran warriors.

Only one question remained. How many God's Punishment Warriors did Alice save before the Bloody Moon? The powerful shells also had a higher tolerance than normal people. They would enter the old age when they were about 100 years old. If one were involved in the incarnation ceremony at the age of 20, it could be used for seven or eight decades. Even without calculating the failure rate of the transformation and soul transfer, a witch could only create two shells. This directly restricted the number of the corps. If one wanted to create an army of thousands of God's Punishment corps, the number of witches consumed in the succession of 400 years would be terrible.

When he asked this question, Phyllis bit her lip and replied, "All."

Roland was startled, and suspected he had heard wrongly, "What?"

"Other than the Transcendents, she planned to transform all the witches into the God's Punishment Army, to withstand the final doomsday." She repeated.

"Wait a minute, how could this be done? If you wanted to overpower the Senior Demons, one had to be a very well-trained God's Punishment Warrior. But to get such warriors, wouldn't many shells needed to be reserved to transfer the souls?"

"That's right, but there was another way to preserve the soul, and that was to move it into other vessels first."

"Other... vessels?"

"We call it hibernation." Phyllis's words caused Roland to shiver. "During this period, the person hibernating did not need to consume anything, and felt nothing, until it would be awakened again. How else do you think we could survive that difficult period of the early days? After the fallout with Starfall

City, we did not have any usable shells of the God's Punishment Army, so we survived purely on hibernation. Of course, with the exception of some witches... such as Lady Pasha."

"What about her?"

"When you see her, you will understand." Phyllis did not elaborate. "In short, Lady Alice intended to train and form sophisticated God's Punishment Warriors in a century, and then let the souls hibernate in order to cut down on the consumption of the shells. As a result, Starfall City would be able to continually transform the God's Punishment Army. When the Bloody Moon arrived, all the souls would be awakened, and the number of the God's Punishment Warriors would far exceed the limits that the witch community could bear."

This meant that every witch alive on the eve of the battle would be transformed.

Wendy, Sylvie, and Leaf lost the color from their faces. Although he could not see the expression on Nightingale's face, Roland knew she would certainly look gloomy as well.

"And Alice herself... Was she also going to participate in the transfer of souls?"

"No," Phyllis sighed. "And that's what I later heard from Lady Pasha. Queen of Starfall City and her followers never wanted to extend their lives from the very beginning. They wanted to devote the rest of their lives to the recast of the new order, in order to ensure that the plan of the God's Punishment Army would not deviate from the intended track. Only when she was transcendent, would she have the strength and prestige to govern the Union... And only that flaming red hair would symbolize the neverending morale of Starfall City."

At this point, her eyes revealed a touch of extremely complex light, with fear, sigh, and respect.

Roland vaguely understood her intentions. They were both obviously in disagreement, yet he was still shocked by her spirit. In order to defeat the demons so that the witch group could continue to live, the Queen of Starfall City would be willing to pay any price and move forward without hesitation. Such an opponent would certainly be worthy of respect.

The gaps of the incomplete historical records had finally been filled. Perhaps the complete version of the God's Punishment Army was too cruel. Hence a split became unavoidable when something was uncovered in the ruins and the plan of God's Punishment Army no longer became the only viable solution to fight against the demons. After the split, the Union was severely battered. The Starfall City witches evolved into the church, and after Alice's death, they gradually swayed from the Queen's original path.

"Were the vessel, Soul Transfers, and The Chosen One all related to what was found in the ruins?" He asked.

Phyllis recollected her thoughts and answered, "You could say that."

"And you still can't disclose it now?"

"Only Lady Pasha can make this decision."

"How would The Chosen One be able to defeat the demons?" Roland frowned and said, "I can't possibly agree to work with you without knowing anything."

"I'm not sure about this either. The person in charge of researching... the instrument of Divine retribution is Celine." She said slowly, "We could first identify The Chosen One, and then continue this discussion. Confirming the candidate will pose no danger to the witches of Neverwinter. And Taquila would never harm its own kind in order to fight the demon. Otherwise, no one would follow Lady Natalya until the end."

"What do we need to do?"

"It's quite simple. Every member of the Union would just need to demonstrate their ability once." Phyllis raised her ring. "Through it, I can see the witches who have the talent of The Chosen One."

Nightingale had already briefly described to him the fact that the Magic Stone could cast a strange beam of light. Roland considered for a moment. "After finding The Chosen One, will Pasha be able to come immediately to Neverwinter?"

"It's impossible for Lady Pasha to leave the maze, but she will talk to you directly... with the help of some magical means." Phyllis replied, "She'll be able to sense my position instantly once I crush this Five-Colors Stone. So I can only call her after I have found The Chosen One."

"I got it," Roland nodded finally. "In the afternoon in the castle garden, you would be able to see all the witches of Neverwinter."

Phyllis looked a lot more at ease after she got his approval. She did the formal salute again touching her chest and bowed. "Thank you for your promise. After the defeat of the demon, your name will be revered just like Taquila. "

However, Roland did not care about how long his name would circulate. He promised her request because he had a strong curiosity about The Chosen One and what was found in the ruins, but the rest was due to Agatha's trust in him. Since she wanted to help these survivors, he also did not mind helping out.

Chapter 708: Testing the Light Beams

...

For the first time, Phyllis felt that waiting was like agony. She thought that after four centuries of training, time would be the last thing she would be bothered about. She did not expect to feel restless after just one morning.

If Celine's argument was correct, finding The Chosen One would mean the end of the Battle of Divine Will. The instrument of Divine retribution had the ability to destroy all the demons and her mission would then be over.

Without the shells made by the church, most of the survivors would fall into a deep sleep that they might never be awakened from; or they might fuse their souls with Lady Eleanor to contribute their last breath.

Every time she thought of this, she felt an indescribable confusion. Aside from the long-awaited relief, she also felt a trace of disappointment. A life imprisoned in the shell, even if it could be sustained, was

still a form of torture. Once the war was over, she could finally rest forever. But she also found it hard to imagine that once she closed her eyes, she would never again see the glorious world of Taquila.

The two conflicting emotions kept afflicting her until the afternoon came.

"Are you ready?" Wendy appeared in the castle hall.

"Always," Phyllis immediately stood up.

"Come with me."

Accompanied by Wendy, she walked through a promenade made up of olive trees in the castle backyard, into a small open space. It was surrounded by fences and covered by dense vines, so she could only see a glimpse of the overhead sky, and the "walkway" she saw when she came. The only way out from here was to follow the same path when she entered.

Phyllis instantly understood the reason for this. The witches under observation would appear one by one at the end of the promenade. This distance did not affect the observation, yet also guaranteed the safety of the Union members.

If she had any unforeseen movements, this promenade would definitely be a huge obstacle for her.

Phyllis did not feel repulsed and instead, she started to have a better impression of the king who was a common person—at least he did not regard the witch as an optional accessory. His behavior was completely understandable before he could fully trust her.

At the moment, her impression of the Witch Union was on the same level as the Holy City. A witch organization that was large and had various means would not be able to assert its influence if it suffered from secular suppression. Now they also had a strong footing in the king's heart, so the Witch Union was starting to look more like the Union.

Shortly after Wendy left, the first witch appeared quickly in her field of vision.

It was Agatha.

When the youngest promoted person of the Taquila age summoned a clear, pale blue ice crystal, Phyllis observed that the beam of light was like Maggie's, hence she was not The Chosen One she was looking for.

After the test was completed, Agatha did not leave the promenade but walked straight to her.

"My Lady?" Phyllis was a little surprised.

"I used to be a member of the Quest Society, and I'm very interested in things such as the Magic Stone. I hope you don't mind if I stay to observe?"

"Of course not," Phyllis shook her head first, then politely gave her a salute for the Senior Witches. "By the way, I haven't yet thanked you for your help. If it weren't for you, I wouldn't have been able to pick The Chosen One that quickly. "

"It was your own choice as well," said Agatha, waving her hand. "Let's continue watching."

"Okay."

One by one, the witches displayed their ability at the end of the corridor. She placed the ring between the two people. Other than observing the intensity of the light beams, Agatha also recorded the results.

During this period, Phyllis also found a lot of dazzling orange lights. For example, the width of the light beam of the witch named Soraya was more than that of her shoulders and she was even better than Anna or Nightingale. There was another witch called Evelyn, whose light beam had an alarming intensity which was almost twice that of Anna.

Echo and Summer were those who had stronger orange lights. Both also reached the same level of body width.

The most prominent member of the union was Leaf.

When she cast her magic, Phyllis thought for a moment that she had seen Lady Eleanor. Countless orange lights with as wide as fingers rose up to the sky, just like a fence connecting heaven and earth—these light beams came from each plant in the garden. They echoed the magic power of Leaf, like living creatures. The beam of light above Leaf's head was close to the edge of the Five-Colors Stone and did not pale in comparison to Lady Eleanor.

When her beam of light was cast, Phyllis felt her heart was about to jump out of her chest. She thought that Leaf was The Chosen One that all the Taquila survivors had been praying for. However, after forcibly suppressing her mood, she found that the beam was still a little bit away from the edge of the Magic Stone—the "key" would not change the orange light beams that it reflected, regardless of the distance of the target. As long as it was placed in front of the eye, the scene would reflect the real performance of the key.

Although the entire castle backyard was full of raised light beams, they were not that light wall she had seen before. The misty light beams were magnificent, but still did not connect.

Neither of them was The Chosen One.

After she let out a deep breath, Phyllis lowered the ring and waited quietly for the next witch to appear. She still did not see that thick light wall after it ended.

"You have seen all the members of the Witch Union," Agatha closed the notebook, "Is Leaf The Chosen One that you are looking for?"

"The Chosen One isn't amongst them..." Phyllis whispered after a moment's silence, "Although her beam of light is amazing... but it's still a long way from what I have observed at night."

She began to feel anxious again. "Why is this happening? Did Roland Wimbledon hide The Chosen One? Or did someone in the Witch Union not come today? Is Roland actually unwilling to unite with Taquila to fight the demon, or is he still wary of the Witch Empire that once ruled the entire continent?"

Many thoughts flashed through her mind, and she rejected all these ideas. "No, it doesn't make sense. It's impossible for him to hide The Chosen One without the Five-Colors Stone. And Lady Agatha will never collude with the common people to deceive me. I need to stay calm at this moment... Unfair accusations and doubts will only make things worse."

"At night?" Agatha frowned. "The witches generally didn't practice their abilities in the rooms, and you should have been at the Foreign Affairs Building at that time. Can the Magic Stone observe from such a distance?"

"I did see the light beams of The Chosen One... Not only was the breadth much more than I could imagine, but its distance was beyond the reach of the Magic Stone, which was truly a miracle." Phyllis said in a gentle tone, "I swear in the name of Taquila."

"I got it," Agatha nodded. "In that case, give me the ring."

"Your Lady, you mean..." She was a little surprised.

"I know Nightingale's character. She'll never let you enter the Castle District at night. If The Chosen One is really in the castle, I'll help you to find her."

Chapter 709: A Different Key

One night passed quickly, and Phyllis stayed up for almost the entire night.

She shut herself up in the room and silently waited for the result. Calm as she appeared, she made countless conjectures about the reasons for the disappearance of the Chosen One; she even suspected that Roland secretly imprisoned the witch as a plaything and concealed the truth from the Witch Union.

When Wendy and Agatha came to the Foreign Affairs Building the next morning, Phyllis showed a rare tiredness—mental consumption was overwhelming for the soul and she knew that her control of the body was declining. Even her hands and feet had lost their usual flexibility.

However, she knew that she would not be able to close her eyes anyway until she heard the result.

Through cutting off consciousness, she could temporarily get rid of the shackles of the body, but her soul would still remain awake. Unless her soul could be transferred to the magic container, otherwise hiding within the consciousness would just be a way of deceiving herself. Phyllis even faintly missed the "long sleep" now. "The result is..."

"We found the beams of light that you mentioned."

She did not expect the first words of Agatha to crush the burden in her heart. Phyllis blinked her eyes and whispered again for fear of missing the words, "like a light wall?"

"That's right, like a light wall. It does exist in the castle," Wendy said. "But we can't be sure whether he's the Chosen One you said."

In other words, she was not mistaken.

They found the owner of the orange light!

"No... it can't be wrong," said Phyllis, hearing a voice in her heart cheer. "Praise the deities! Praise the Holy City of Taquila!" "If she can emit such a beam of light, then she must be the Chosen One we're looking for! Is she a Senior Witch? What's her name?"

Instead of answering her, Wendy gave her an odd expression—it seemed that she was withholding her laughter and also feeling sorry for her.

"Well, this... I'm afraid that I'll have to disappoint you." Wendy covered her mouth and gently coughed.

"Could something be wrong with the Five-Colors Stone?" Agatha returned the ring to her and said, "I think you'd better contact Pasha quickly."

Something was wrong? What on earth happened?

"Hold on..." Phyllis suddenly felt as if she had been struck by lightning.

What did Wendy say before?

["But we can't be sure whether he's the Chosen One you said."]

He?

Phyllis could not believe what she had heard and gasped. "Is that orange light..."

"It's from His Majesty Roland Wimbledon," Agatha said with a shrug. "Besides me, Nightingale, Anna, Wendy... all the witches living on the second floor of the castle saw it. I also tested him with the Stone of Measuring and he had no magic power as usual."

"The weapon you mentioned to defeat the demons... must its manipulator be a witch?" Wendy finally could not resist chuckling. "It would sound good if His Majesty could become a hero who defeats the demons."

Phyllis's heart suddenly sank. "Although the instrument of Divine retribution doesn't require much magic power of the Chosen One, it doesn't mean that it can be activated without magic power. After all, it's a type of magic core, and the total amount of magic power of its manipulator determines how many times it can be used."

It's impossible... maybe something is wrong.

"But yesterday I didn't see the orange light above his head..."

"It's strange indeed. The beam of light disappeared after Roland woke up," said Agatha, stroking her chin, "and that's why you could only see it at night. Of course, we also asked His Majesty about it. His answer was that Zero's Soul Battlefield led him to another fictional world in his dream, just like an extra part of his memory."

"Zero? Soul Battlefield?" Phyllis asked hastily, "What's that?"

"The last Pope of the Church of Hermes," Wendy briefly explained the battle in which Roland defeated the church, "perhaps this caused the misjudgment of the magic stone ring. His Majesty was also quite surprised by the result. He also said that if you wanted to verify it, you could do so again at noon."

After a long silence, she gritted her teeth and said, "Yes, I want to see it again."

...

Agatha and Wendy did not deceive her. Under the supervision of the witches and guards, Phyllis once again saw the beam of orange light as wide as a city wall, and its source was the sleeping king of Graycastle.

At that moment, she felt all her energy was drained and a strong dizziness hit her. She trembled and fell on the floor, leaning against the door frame. She had already been mentally exhausted, and in an instant, the boundless darkness engulfed her.

When Phyllis regained consciousness, she found herself lying in bed. She saw darkness outside the window but did not see any stars or moonlight. The north wind hit the glass rhythmically and caused intermittent tremors of the window frame.

"Are you awake?"

A familiar voice emerged next to her ears.

She turned her head and found that Agatha was sitting at her bedside.

"How long was I in a coma?"

"For about half a day or so," said the Ice Witch, reaching out to smooth down her hair on her forehead, "your reaction really shocked Nightingale."

"Sorry, I'm fine now..." Phyllis whispered.

Though she tried to comfort herself, she did not feel better at all. She had finally found the so-called Chosen One, who turned out to be a common person. It was no less shocking than the fall of both Natalia and Alice.

The belief of Lady Natalya, the persistence of Taquila survivors... and plan of the Chosen One, were the reason all of them had been preparing for hundreds of years, yet it all finished in such a dramatic manner. Even though there were hundreds of witches on the Sleeping Island and Leaf's quality was close to the requirements of the Chosen One, she could predict that it would still be an insurmountable gap.

Perhaps their choice was not much better than that of the Starfall City.

"I don't quite understand how you view the Chosen One, but... even without such a witch, we have fought the demons for hundreds of years, haven't we? I thought witches who have survived such disasters would be able to handle any situation," Agatha said slowly.

"But we have failed twice, and we were forced to retreat from the Land of Dawn to the corner of the Wild. If we lose again..."

"Then let's defeat the demons," Agatha interrupted her. "I don't know what you have found in the maze ruins and why you devoted all your hope to it. However, I think if it's really effective, it shouldn't be a part of the 'ruins'. During these 400 years, the common people outside haven't stopped making progress, and there is more than one way to defeat the demons. Just like Roland said, common people could also defeat the demons by reasonably using the hidden forces of the world."

Phyllis looked at Agatha with tangled feelings. She was about to present her doubts but could not bring herself to do so in front of Agatha's confident demeanor.

"By the way, he added that there was more than one key to the deities, and that he had one as well. Maybe you should have a look before you contact the witches of Taquila."

"His... key?" Phyllis was shocked.

"Well, the key of 'art'," Agatha replied.

...

## Chapter 710: Elimination and Innovation

In retrospect of what happened in the morning, Roland still felt incredulous.

How could an ordinary time traveler suddenly become the Chosen One? Should he recite some poems now to express his surprise?

When he woke up in the early morning and Agatha reported the observation to him, he thought there was something wrong with his ears. Since the witches all confirmed this, he decided to agree with them for the time being. Meanwhile, he knew the Taquila survivor would certainly not expect this result, so he invited her to visit him during his afternoon nap, as a way to strengthen the trust and credibility between them.

He probably grew calmer since he became a king, or he was simply lazy... anyway, after lying on the bench in the office and reading a few pages of Advanced Mathematics, he fell asleep easily. When he was awakened, the first scene he saw was Nightingale pulling out her pistol and Phyllis falling down unconscious.

However, Roland did not believe that the so-called "Chosen One" was really chosen by the deities. It was just because the Taquila survivors had devoted too much hope to what they had found so that they regarded the witch who could activate it as their savior.

Undoubtedly, what they found in the ruins must be extraordinary, for it made the Three Chiefs of the Union oppose each other in times of the tremendous disaster. However, he doubted whether it possessed power comparable to the deities and could destroy the demons in one fell swoop. After all, if it was really as powerful as the creation of the deities, how could its creator quietly disappear in the underground maze?

Of course, he had to communicate further with the survivors for more details.

And the fact that his dream could be observed indirectly proved his assumption. The Dream World was indeed not entirely created by his consciousness. Its profuse details were far beyond the capacity of his brain. Someone else created the world based on the abundant material he provided.

He had assumed that the witches were the terminals of magic power transforming. Now it seemed that there was a barrier between the terminal and the magic power. This barrier caused the amazing changes of the magic power. It was like a mysterious black box which carried out the orders of the witches. In other words, the realization of the witches' ability was similar to his Dream World. The only difference was that he did not have the magic power to visualize it.

It reminded Roland of the relationship between the wizards and the Magic Net. The wizards could connect with the Magic Net through gestures, incantation, and reagents so as to acquire the power they needed. Comparing the barrier with the Magic Net, he could see lots of similarities between them.

After he defeated Zero, he unexpectedly gained access to the barrier, but nothing more. The complexity of the orders was probably determined by the difficulty of visualization, rather than the strength and usage of the ability. On the contrary, the closer the abilities were to the essence of the magic power, the easier its transformation would be. For example, the direct conversion of the magic power into light and heat was certainly much easier than creating things, but its power was absolutely earth-shaking.

This was also one of the major reasons why Roland was full of interest of the ruins. The beams of light presented by the Five-Colors Stone was a special means to "send orders" in his opinion. An artificial thing was used to replace the witches and forge orders... the study of the magic power reached a level beyond that of the Union. Besides the divine titles such as "the Chosen One" and the instrument of Divine retribution, it might mean the seeds of new technology.

This alone was enough to prompt him to communicate with the Taquila witches.

Considering the fact that "the Chosen One is actually a common person" might give a heavy blow to their confidence in the fight against the demons, Roland decided to invite Phyllis to visit the forces of the new era before going into further negotiations .

In order to achieve a better "persuasive" effect, he summoned Iron Axe to his office.

"How is the situation of the demonic beasts recently?"

"Your Majesty, there are just scattered demonic beasts. They can be easily solved by the patrol team on the city walls." The man of Sand Nation replied after a standard military salute.

"Well, I intend to stage a cannon exercise in the city wall area soon. It needs to be impressive, yet also minimize waste."

The commander-in-chief of the First Army pondered for a while and asked, "Are you saying... a false one?"

Roland could not help laughing. It seemed that Iron Axe had more and more knowledge of the gunpowder now. He said, "To be more accurate, it needed to be half true and half false. When you display accurate shooting, use real bullets; when displaying fire coverage, use embedded black powder. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Your Majesty." Iron Axe nodded immediately.

Empty ammunition was commonly used in exercises, for it was not necessary to waste the precious howitzers just to impress the audience. The embedded explosives ignited by electric wires could also create a shocking effect or even a better one.

Roland briefly outlined the idea in his mind. "I hope the final explosion is dramatic enough. For that you can prepare more black gunpowder."

"Your Majesty, this may affect the operation of the artillery battalion..."

Roland shook his head and said, "It doesn't matter. In fact, I intend to phase out the black powder weapons, such as the 12-pound field artillery, which is no longer suitable for the fight in the future."

Its heavy barrel, slow launch speed, and small power of the solid balls had restricted its further usage. The battle under Coldwind Ridge fully demonstrated the limited lethality of the field artillery, especially in the face of dispersed-attacking and quick-moving enemies. Most of the soldiers of God's Punishment Army were killed by machine guns and Longsong Cannons, while only about 100 unlucky ones were smashed by the iron solid balls.

In addition, it was so difficult to transport the cannons that they could not be used to coordinate with the infantry attack or urban warfare, which further restrained its usage. The revolving rifles could still be used for a while. After all, the gunpowder consumption of the bullets was much smaller; even if they used half of all the bullets, it would not have much effect on the total stock of the gunpowder.

With the help of the Dream World, Roland's new chemical reform plan was already in preparation. The steady increase in the production of double base gunpowder had enabled him to eliminate the black powder weapons.

Iron Axe's eyes brightened and he said, "Have you designed a new alternative weapon?"

Roland smiled and took a piece of paper out of the drawer and spread it on the desk. He explained, "It's a type of rigging-angle cannon which can shoot at short distance or long distance. It can be disassembled to be carried by several people, and has excellent power. It's also easy to manufacture and operate. What do you think of it?"

Iron Axe bent down to carefully read the drawing for a while before he said, 'Er... I'm sorry, Your Majesty. I can only figure out its appearance... it looks like an iron pipe, but can it really launch shells with such a thin wall?"

"Of course, the key is the specific shell. However, it's still much easier to manufacture than a 152mm howitzer."

"Does the new weapon have a name?"

"You can call it a mortar," Roland replied.