

## Witch 901

### Chapter 901: The Witches From Afar (Part III)

"What do you want to know?" Azima said as she glanced at her.

"Scroll..." Wendy held her hand, looking pretty worried. If what Tilly said was true, these people did not come to Neverwinter voluntarily. Their visit was instead due to internal conflict among the witches from Sleeping Island. If this problem was not properly resolved, not only would the Witch Union be involved in the mess, but would also lose the newcomers' trust. The would have defeated the whole point of getting the new witches to come here.

"Don't worry," Scroll raised one of her eyebrows and then turned to the witch who wanted to return to the Eastern Region. "You miss your hometown, which means that you most likely weren't abandoned by your family. Like other refugees who fled to Sleeping Island, you were forced to leave the Eastern Region under the pressure of the church. Right?"

"So what?" Azima cut in.

"Let me tell you about the current state of the Eastern Region." Ignoring the red-haired witch's provocation, Scroll replied indifferently, "That area has not been fully recovered by the King ever since Garcia the Queen of Clearwater plundered Seawindshire and Valencia. The area was first devastated by the demonic plague spread by the church and was then ravaged by the army of Timothy. Farmlands in all surrounding areas are deserted, and people can't sustain themselves. Many of those people have become refugees."

The witch showed a troubled look but was not willing to relent. "If we don't go take a look ourselves, who knows whether you're telling the truth?"

"Two years ago, His Majesty Roland started to take in those refugees. Now the population of Neverwinter has exceeded 100,000, 70% of which are from other cities, with the majority of them being refugees from the Eastern Region and the Southern Territory," Scroll spoke calmly. "Your family members are most likely amongst them. Can you tell me where you lived before? Name a town or a village, a specific landmark, or a local specialty."

"Do you plan to find her family only with those clues? She wasn't born in a big city where each street and alley has its own name and where people in the same community knew each other!"

Scroll did not reply to Azima but instead gently pushed her hair behind her ear. She looked on at that witch encouragingly like a teacher patiently waiting for an answer from her student in the class.

"My village... didn't have a name," after hesitating for quite a while, the witch answered in a low voice. "There were no other villages nearby, and it was very far from Valencia, so far that if you want to sell wheat, you would have to sell them to a merchant traveling there at a meager price. This isn't official, but some people call the village 'Sixteen.'"

"Six...teen?" Wendy echoed involuntarily.

"Because when they returned from Valencia, it's the sixteenth village that they would pass by."

Scroll closed her eyes and asked slowly, "Let me see... There's a branch of Sanwan River winding behind that village, right?"

"There're numerous branches of Sanwan River in the Eastern Region." Azima grunted. "How can a village survive without a river to irrigate their farmlands?"

"But that branch is different." Scroll waved her hand. "It isn't wide nor deep enough for boats to pass, and even the riverbed would show in a dry season. That's why the villages nearby can't transport food and supplies by ship. But the branch converges into a huge lake at the sixteenth village, which will never dry up even if the river water dried up. Because of this, the wheat in the village always grows better than those in others. Am I right?"

The witch's eyes were wide open. "Have you been there?"

"I heard from somebody else," Scroll answered after a short silence. "The one who told me this is currently in Neverwinter, but he wasn't a resident of the Sixteenth Village."

"What do you mean?"

"You should ask him yourself." Scroll turned to the City Hall clerk responsible for the registration. "Bring Watt here. His ID number is 0024578, and he's a furnace worker. He should be recycling slags in Zone 2 at the North Slope right now."

"Yes, Ms. Scroll." The clerk left to carry out her order.

Half an hour later, the clerk and a ruddy man showed up in the residential area.

"I don't know him..." The witch studied him and shook her head, denying their acquaintance.

"What else do you have to say now?" Azima sneered. "There're so many people in the whole Eastern Region. How can you just randomly pick one..."

"Ah, are... are you Tillan's daughter?" The big man blurted out in excitement, paying no heed to Azima. "Thank God, you're still alive and have grown into a big girl!"

The witch was stunned. "The 'Tillan' you're talking about... Is she my mother?"

"Who else could I be talking about? You've got her eyes. Especially for the mole underneath the corner of your eye, it's identical to your mother's!" Watt cried. "But you're much prettier than your mother. Hold on, you don't remember me? Well, not that it's your fault. You were just a little girl when I left the village. When I returned, you weren't there anymore. She called you... Little Orchid back then, right? Tillan loved to call you names after beautiful flowers."

"That was just a nickname when I was little..." The witch was embarrassed. "My name is now Doris."

"I see. Well, that's a nice name, too. You know, when I dug trenches in the Sixteenth Village, people talked a lot about you. They all thought witches had abducted you, and..."

As Watt rambled on, Wendy started to figure out what had happened gradually. The big ruddy man had been a resident of a neighboring village next to the Sixteenth Village. Based on the naming rule, his village should be called the Fifteenth Village. As the two villages were geographically close to each other,

he had kept in touch with his neighbors. As he envied his neighbors for their water source, he had traveled to Valencia to learn trench digging. After he learned the skills, Watt had returned to his village and encouraged some villagers to help him expand the lake toward the Fifteenth village. He had thus lived in the Sixteenth Village for quite a long time because of this project.

"Are my parents and elder brother... still living in the village?" Watt had apparently convinced Doris. After Watt finally finished, she asked hastily, "Or they've come to the Western Region with you?"

At this moment, Scroll let out a short sigh.

The sparks in the ruddy man's eyes seemed to fade out at that instant. He replied in a sorrowful tone, "They didn't make it... The second prince's army robbed our food stock. By the time we got to the king's city, starving and thirsty, a huge plague broke out. The nobles in the city shut us out, leaving us crying for help at the foot of the city wall. A large number of villagers from the nearby lands had died due to the nobles' selfishness. By the time His Majesty's rescue teams arrived, there were just a few that were still alive." He paused for a second and said, "Your family members... weren't among them."

"No..." Doris cupped her hand over her mouth. She stood transfixed for a moment before she started to sob uncontrollably.

"I'm sorry, child." Watt instantly panicked. He wanted to comfort her but did not know what to do. In the end, he came up to the girl and patted her on the head. "Tillan called your name over and over again before she passed away. If she knew you were still alive and well, she would definitely be happy. So... don't cry anymore, girl."

Doris bit her lips fiercely and nodded slightly but cried even harder after that.

## Chapter 902: An Ominous Sign

Upset with the sudden change in the situation, Azima looked to the side and stopped talking.

The crowd was silent as Doris wept and wept. After Doris had finally calmed down, Scroll spoke up again. "I believe many of you are just like her. You've constantly been on the run and never had the chance to contact your families. Even if you found an opportunity to return, you would only find a hometown in ruins. This is why we want you to provide your personal information to the City Hall. With this information, we'll be able to send each one of you the latest news about your hometown once any of your fellow townsmen come to Neverwinter. Among those people may even be your relative."

"Besides, City Hall has already sent staff to gather the refugees from all around Graycastle and to bring them back to Neverwinter. It'll be a long process, but eventually, the news will spread and more and more refugees will come to Neverwinter. It'll be easier for you to obtain information about your families if you stay here. Of course, if needed, the staff can concentrate their search on the areas around your hometowns. His Majesty is fully capable of doing that."

"Are you serious?" Azima looked up and stared at Scroll. "Are the big shots in the palace willing to help us find our families?"

"If your 'big shots' refers to City Hall officials, I'm also one of the big shots," Scroll said with her hands laid out. "We run the city with a completely different system compared to the nobles. As long as you can pass the exam, even a witch can get involved in the administration and become an official of the kingdom."

These words stirred up a commotion in the crowd.

"As for the question you asked, the answer is yes," Scroll then continued with her explanation.

"Neverwinter never intended to stop you from leaving here nor would we want to limit your freedom. But I do have to warn you against leaving Neverwinter right now. The war rages on and famine ravages the country. Numerous towns and cities were left deserted. Not only would traveling outside be very dangerous, but it would also likely be an unnecessary venture. His Majesty is currently leading the army to recover his country. When he unites Graycastle and restores order in all the four regions, you can then head out to wherever you wish."

Scroll paused and picked up the registration form again. "So, do you still think it's not necessary to fill out these forms?"

This time, no witch objected.

...

On the way back to the castle, Wendy could not help but exclaim, "You were so brilliant, Scroll. I could hardly think of what to say during that moment. They must have been quite impressed by the Witch Union."

"I just took advantage of my position," said Scroll, with a smile. "There were only 46 witches in the first batch. We'll be very busy for the next few days."

"Well..." Wendy's voice sank to a whisper.

"What? Are you going to say you aren't suitable for the position of manager again?" Scroll stopped walking. "You have to know that His Majesty chose you because—"

"Because I've some qualities that the others don't have, right?" Wendy chuckled. "Rest assured. Since the last talk I had with His Majesty, I've already made up my mind. I was just thinking about how to welcome the arriving witches. Back then, I never thought twice about accompanying my sisters to find the holy mountain no matter how harsh the journey got. Things are much better now, and if I keep saying such nonsense, I would truly feel unworthy of the Chaos Drinks that I stole from Nightingale."

"Now that's more like it." Scroll said, relieved. "I almost forgot about the drinks until you mentioned them just now. I helped you a lot back there. Are you not going to buy me a drink for it?"

"How about tonight? I'll ask the kitchen to prepare some toasted mushrooms and fish fillets. Let's drink and hang out in my room, just like what we did the last time. If there aren't enough Chaos Drinks, we can borrow some from Nightingale. After all, she isn't here in the city right now; I can make it up to her later."

"That's settled then," Scroll said smilingly.

"By the way," Wendy examined Scroll's forehead with a curious look. "Do you really remember all the personal information of more than 100,000 citizens? Don't you get confused by all that information?"

"I don't know how to describe it." Scroll pondered for a moment. "At the beginning, when I wanted to remember something, I had to recall it from the bottom of my memory. For example, if I wanted to look for a name, I needed to recall the date when this person registered and then the exact page in the registration book. It was very troublesome, and I would get a headache whenever I overthought. However, I found that the contents of my memory became more organized over time."

"What does that mean?"

"It's as if all the details are sorted through automatically... and as soon as I start to recall something, I'll see all the relevant stuff right away." Scroll paused for a minute and appeared to be weighing her words. "And the strange thing is that I can read a lot of the related items at the same time, in detail. Maybe this is what they mean by practice makes perfect."

"I see," said Wendy, greatly impressed. "His Majesty once said that a person's memory was far more powerful than we could imagine. I found it unbelievable at that time, but now I believe that it's no exaggeration."

"Indeed, it's a wonderful feeling," Scroll nodded and said. "Now, whenever I begin to search inside my head, I'll feel omniscient. But I'm not sure whether I'm going to be able to remember everything after His Majesty unifies Graycastle and extends his new management system to all the domains."

Wendy was thrilled by this idea and thought, "What does that mean? So if Scroll is still able to remember everything at that time, then all the people's life stories will be kept in her head.

That means she'll be history itself."

When Wendy was about to say something, sounds of hurried footsteps came from behind them.

"Lady Wendy, I finally find you," a young City Hall clerk bowed to the two witches and said. "There's a guy who came to the hall and refused to leave. He insisted on meeting the head of the Witch Union. We've told him that we'd pass on his message, but he said that he has something he must tell you face to face."

"Why did he come? What's his name?" Scroll knitted her eyebrows and asked.

"His name was Posack," answered the clerk. "He told us the reason, but we think he might be mistaken. He said that he'd found a girl covered in blood when he was tending to the cattle. He thinks that she's a witch, but the girl was unconscious, so she couldn't respond to his questions. We've checked the work plan for today and didn't find any witch scheduled to work out of town. Do you have any idea as to what this might be about?"

"Posack, he's a local man and has a good record. He's even among the first batch of students of the Agriculture class. I believe he doesn't mean to make trouble for the City Hall." Scroll was puzzled and asked, "Might the witch be Leaf?"

"That's impossible. Under the protection of the Heart of Forest, no one can hurt her." Wendy immediately denied Scroll's guess. Roland had decreed that all the new domains he seized this year

should be sowed with Golden Twos. To fulfill this goal in time, he had asked Leaf to stay in the Misty Forest to continue cultivating the seeds instead of going to battle with the First Army. "If some enemies were to break into the region of the Misty Forest that she controlled, we would have heard something about it. Don't forget that there are a group of workers responsible for carrying wheat seeds and also border guards monitoring the northern side of Neverwinter. If there was an attack, we should have heard the alarm by now."

"So then he must be mistaken?"

"Anyways, let's meet the man first. We can still help the heavily wounded girl even if she's not a witch." With that being said, Wendy felt a hint of anxiety in her heart.

Am I forgetting something?

Chapter 903: "The Demons Are Coming"

In the city hall, the man named Posack was brought before Wendy and Scroll.

He was approximately 40 years old and looked like a typical farmer: swarthy and burly. There was still some dry mud and grassroots stuck onto his trousers.

"I, I know you..." The man rubbed his wrinkled hands and looked a little nervous. He bowed to Scroll and said, "You're the minister. My daughter learns how to read and write in your school. She's a really slow learner. I sincerely hope that you can bear with her faults."

"Don't be nervous," Scroll laughed and patted his shoulder. "I used to catch fish for living before I came here, but my harvest wasn't as steady as yours since the sea was too unpredictable. Furthermore, when it came to something like knowledge, it's never about a learner's background. No matter how clumsy the learner is, he or she will master the knowledge eventually given enough effort and time. Don't worry; your daughter will be able to graduate without issues."

Hearing that, Posack relaxed a lot and grinned. "I've given up my work on the farm for grazing in recent two years because His Majesty said the salary for the new industry will be higher." With these words, he bowed to Wendy. "You must be the manager of the Witch Union. I thought I didn't have the chance to meet you today."

Although Wendy was not as influential as Scroll among the ordinary people, she was still the head of the Witch Union, and thus had to make appearances at various major events. That combined with her bright red hair and thick body, it was not at all surprising for people to recognize Wendy. "Call me Wendy. I heard that you claimed to have found a heavily wounded girl who was covered with blood. What makes you think that she's a witch?"

"Because... an ordinary person can't have animals' body parts, right?" Posack scratched his head. "At first, I thought it was a rag smeared with blood and planned to tear it down and throw it away, but this thing turned out to be connected to a girl. I took a second look and found that it was actually an animal tail!"

An animal... tail?

Wendy felt her heart skip a beat!

She suddenly recalled that a strange witch had come to Neverwinter more than two months ago, but she only knew her from Nightingale's description since this peculiar girl did not join the Witch Union or have any intimate contact with the sisters. She had a wolf's ears and a long tail, but surprisingly, His Majesty had praised that this weird half-animal was very pretty. Wendy now remembered about this strange incident that had repeatedly been mentioned by Nightingale.

That strange witch is called Lorgar, and she's a princess of a tribe in the Southernmost Region.

Could she be the girl Posack found?

"Where's she?" Wendy urgently asked. "Take us to her right now!"

...

The farmer had not taken the injured girl home. He had left her in a temporary rest shed in the pastoral area.

Seeing the Wolf Girl in blood-stained clothes lying motionlessly on the bench, Wendy's heart sank to the bottom.

From the girl's currently disfigured and bloody ears, she was sure that this girl was Lorgar and wondered what in the world had happened to her.

It was not an exaggeration to say that she was drenched in blood. Evidently, the wolf girl got herself injured more than just a few days ago. In some parts of her body, the blood had already dried up and turned into dark brown stains, while in some other parts, the blood was still dripping out of her wounds. They could not see her injuries directly for she was wrapped in bandages from head to toe, but anyone could easily tell that she was seriously hurt.

"My lady, she's a witch... isn't she?" Posack asked.

Wendy was too stunned to say anything, so Scroll replied, "Yes, she's a witch. Your first-aid was done very nicely."

"It's great to know that. His Majesty has said in an announcement that we're obliged to inform the City Hall if we were to find a witch." Posack heaved a sigh of relief, but soon he expressed his worry. "Can she... still be saved?"

Hearing this sentence, Wendy awoke with a start. She answered in a deep voice, "I don't know, but we'll try our best. Scroll, please help me take care of her. I'll go to meet Her Highness Tilly!"

"Okay, leave her to me."

Neither Nana nor Lily was in the city, and Leaf's herbal medicine could only heal some minor injuries. Right now, receiving injuries this severe was no different from getting a death sentence.

Fortunately, the first batch of witches from the Sleeping Island had just arrived at Neverwinter. Wendy thought that if that witch was here, she might be able to save the Wolf Girl!

With that in her mind, she ran even faster.

Every second counts.

Although Lorgar was not an official member of the Witch Union, Wendy felt that the Wolf Girl was already somewhat related to the union because this girl must have received some divine guidance and thus came to this city.

Wendy did not want to lose a sister again.

...

Three days later, Wendy walked into a bedroom carrying a basin of hot water that gave off a strong smell of medicine.

"How's her condition?"

"She's still alive, but other than that..." Ashes shook her head. "Such serious injuries are way beyond what can be handled by her self-healing capacity, and it was a miracle that she even made it to the city. If she had not been that strong-willed, she would have died in the wilderness without anyone knowing about it."

When it came to treating wounds in the emergency, the Extraordinary was the most experienced one and thus took over taking care of the injured girl. She stripped off the Wolf Girl's bloodstained clothes for a general check-up. When the bandage was removed, all the witches were shocked by the injuries all over her body. Some cuts were so deep that one could see her bones. Cleaning her wounds alone cost them almost half a day.

"But you don't have to worry too much." Ashes pointed to Nightfall who was lying in a bed nearby.

"Don't you notice that she looks a lot better than yesterday?"

"Do I?" Nightfall asked in a weak voice. "How come I don't feel any better?"

"You'll have steamed chicken, fried eggs, salt-roasted Bird Beak Mushrooms, and a bottle of Chaos Drink for dinner tonight," Ashes smirked and said. "So, how are you feeling now?"

Nightfall's mouth watered. "Well... Actually, I think I'm feeling better now."

"That's great, see?"

Wendy breathed a sigh of relief and nodded to Nightfall. "Thanks a lot for helping us."

"My pleasure," Nightfall forced a smile. "You guys helped Iffy. That means you've helped us. Now, please just don't let this girl die, otherwise I..."

"We won't. You can rest assured."

Nightfall was the person Wendy had thought of earlier. This witch of the former Bloodfang Association had an incredible ability called Symbiosis. She could connect her own life to another one's by planting her magic seed in the person who would then become her Symbiont. Through this connection, she could share the Symbiont's pains and sufferings and thus helped the person recover faster. More importantly, half of the nutrition she got during a Symbiosis period could be absorbed by her Symbiont. Given that, this ability was currently their best option to keep a near-death person from dying.

Roland had been unconscious and unable to drink or eat anything for months after the Battle of Souls against Zero, and the only reason he was still alive was due to Nightfall's help.

But of course, Nightfall was not the only one who came to help the Wolf Girl.

Her Highness Tilly had sent another witch called Pandora, the primary healer for the Sleeping Island witches, to stop Lorgar's internal and external bleeding, which had significantly reduced the pressure on the symbiosis. Pandora's ability had been proved to be very helpful during their campaign to crush the rebellious action of the Bloodfang Association. Leaf's herbal medicine also helped to keep the wounds from worsening. The Cleansing Water, which was stored in the castle's basement together with the ice blocks in case of an emergency, prevented any infection from getting out of hand.

Everyone did their best to help.

However, whether Lorgar could come back to life still depended on her willpower. Three days ago, they had sent Animal Messengers to the Northern Region. In the following days, they would have a difficult time waiting for information.

Suddenly, Lorgar's finger flinched when Wendy was about to wipe her body.

At first, Wendy was dumbfounded and believed that it might just be an illusion, but then she saw the Wolf Girl's lips tremble slightly.

"..."

Lorgar appeared to be whispering something, but her voice was so feeble that her words were indistinguishable.

Wendy's heart raced uncontrollably. She forced herself to calm down before she quickly bent forward and placed her ear close to Lorgar's mouth.

This time, she was able to make out the girl's faint words.

"Demons..."

She repeated the word.

"The demons are coming."

Chapter 904: Battle Alert (First Half)

Vader would go out and patrol every time dusk came.

Most of the time, he would circle Neverwinter with two or three of his subordinates. But sometimes, he would choose to head out alone—in theory, he was already the chief of the police department and the third most authoritative person within the kingdom's Security Bureau, so he didn't need to do any patrols personally. But he continued to do so as he preferred to get himself involved in the field rather than doing paperwork in the office.

He had already been in Neverwinter for a year and a half, and there were two things here that impressed him the most. The first was the exponential rate at which the city was expanding. It took him only half an hour to walk around Border Town when he first arrived, but now it would take him at least three times as long just to circle the city. That's not even including the harbor to the South and the farmlands to the east.

Secondly, the law and order of Neverwinter could only be described as amazing. The most common crimes were theft and brawl, but they were also the most serious ones. Crimes such as homicide, robbery, kidnapping rarely happened. The security of Neverwinter had deteriorated before when there was a massive influx of refugees, but with the combined efforts of the police department and the Witch Union, the troublemakers were swiftly dealt with.

His Majesty's promise on solving every single crime was not a bluff. In the face of Summer's retrospective ability and Vanilla's tracking ability, no criminal was able to escape the law. Due to the high risk and cost of crime, coupled with zero tolerance for Black Street Rats, Neverwinter's public security was able to experience a visible improvement.

He insisted on his daily patrols as he wanted to feel this peace—he would feel an immense sense of pride and satisfaction whenever he saw the carefree passersby strolling around late at night and seeing the trusting look on their faces as they saluted to him.

He was surprised himself that he could turn out to become a law enforcer respected by all instead of ending up a street thug that was condemned by the public.

He had never experienced such a feeling when he was in the patrol team.

Both of these jobs were designed for the same purpose. Even the procedure and the tasks were similar, yet they lead to entirely different results.

The main difference would probably be the capabilities of the rulers.

"Chief, should I go with you?" he was greeted by Whistle who had just dispersed his troops outside the city hall.

"Oh? Are you not going to spend time with that lady today?"

"You... even know about that," Whistle's face suddenly began to turn red, "Well... it's not necessary to stay together every night."

Some of the passersby burst into laughter at his remark.

"Then you'd better be careful, or else she will get stolen by someone else."

"Shut... shut up!"

Vader shook his head with a smile. "I'll be fine to patrol alone today. You should finish up and head home."

"Well... in that case, thanks, Chief!"

Looking at Whistle's back as he went away excitedly, Vader became a little emotional. When he had first left Valencia, he was alone and had thought that he would spend the rest of his life in solitude. He did not expect that he would be able to accomplish so much in his life. He started to consider finding his significant other after buying an adjoining house for his father Cacusim and himself.

Just as Vader was about to walk out of City Hall, a shrilling alarm suddenly went off in the city.

"Woo—woo—"

His face froze.

The sound of this alarm was utterly different from the ones that were used before. It consisted of a crescendo that was in an endless repeat. It was the kind of sound that would not be forgotten when heard once—it represented the highest level of alert that was not heard even in the Months of Demons. In fact, he had only rehearsed it during a drill, so this was the first time he had actually heard the alarm blare across the city.

According to procedures, when the highest alarm sounded, Neverwinter would be placed under martial law. The city gates had to be all closed. The police would be responsible for clearing the streets, while the First Army would form a defensive perimeter.

"Cheif!" Whistle and the rest that were with him rushed out of the office.

Vader turned around and saw that the entire City Hall was at a standstill. Everyone was so overwhelmed and stunned that they were frozen stiff on the spot.

His Majesty is now leading the troops to recover the Kingdom of Graycastle, so this is definitely not a drill!

Just what exactly had happened that would make the Garrison sound this alarm?

Damn it, it just had to happen now when Neverwinter is at its most vulnerable!

He gritted his teeth and shouted, "Stop standing there! Hurry up and get into action! Whistle, recall everyone that's on vacation! Firehead, take the rest and follow me to the wall! Do what you did when we carried out the exercise. Do you understand?"

Vader's thunderous voice not only awakened the police members from their daze, but it also shook the city hall officials into action.

"Yes, I understand!"

The City Hall became busy instantly, but Vader was in no mood to bother about those officials. He rushed out of the castle area with a group of police.

When he saw the confused residents on the street, Vader felt completely stressed out.

Since this alarm system was only put into practice after the new year, it had not even gone through a citywide drill. Perhaps His Majesty did not expect such an emergency to happen so soon. But now that it did, it can only be considered as a careless mistake by the Garrison. If the decision were up to him, he

would have sounded the regular alarm bell at the same time, as to evacuate the people wandering on the streets.

But anyways, now was not the time to complain. Vader clapped his hands and made the surrounding residents focus their attention on him. "Everyone listen up! Go home right now and stay indoors! This is an alarm of an enemy attack. I repeat! Everyone go back home now!"

"Go home immediately and don't stay here!" Firehead and the rest also started to follow his example and shouted out to warn everyone.

Fortunately, the police department had the trust of the residents. Coupled with the fact that the administrative department had also gone through multiple drills with the routine alarms, everyone started to move to the residential quarters after hearing the warnings.

In this manner, a group of people started to shout as they ran towards the city wall.

The soldiers were everywhere on top of the city wall, and flags were flapping widely against the setting sun. The artilleries on the platform were readied and aimed towards the vast grassland in front, waiting to fire as soon as they see any slight movement. Witnessing this scene, Vader was able to calm down a little.

As long as the First Army was around, no army can breach through this invincible defense line.

This was a point proven battle after battle.

The police quickly committed themselves to on-site security and ensured a minimal level of order... But Vader was puzzled as to why while the highest level of alarm was sounding, the grasslands and jungles of the Western Region remained motionless.

Where are the enemy?

In the meantime, another group of people started quarreling in one of the meeting rooms at the Lord's castle.

"Because of an unknown witch's mumbling, you triggered the alarm of the highest level?" Barov looked at Wendy with an expression of disbelief. "Do you know how much trouble and loss this will cause us? We don't even know whether this woman named Lorgar can be trusted. And if I'm not mistaken, your only evidence is her sleep-talk! It's ridiculous to shut down half of Neverwinter only based on this! How do you expect me to explain this to His Majesty if we end up not being able to accomplish our previously assigned tasks?"

Chapter 905: Battle Alert (Second Half)

According to His Majesty Roland's plan, the City Hall, the Security Bureau, the First Army, and the Witch Union were the four major organizations that constituted the administrative body of Graycastle. Except for the Security Bureau, for the other three organizations to take action, they would first have to get approval and support from the other departments.

This set of rules was initially made to utilize the full potential of the kingdom. When His Majesty was around, hardly anything would go wrong. However, the problems would usually arise whenever when His Majesty was absent from Neverwinter; it was difficult for the three parties to reach consensus on any given topic in a short time. Hence, when Wendy heard "demons are coming," she thought the best course of action would be to sound the alarm first and ensure the safety of Neverwinter before going through the process of holding a meeting.

It wasn't as if she didn't know how much trouble this would cause for the City Hall. There were wheat fields in the Misty Forest that produced hundreds of bags of Golden Two seeds every day. Those seeds need to be transported to the docks by workers before they can be shipped to the Northern Region, the Southern Territory and the other newly conquered territories of His Majesty. Also, the supply of timber, mushrooms, and fruits from the forests would be negatively affected. The livestock farming in the grassland pastures would also be stalled. Barov's scolding was not entirely uncalled for.

Originally, the plan was to build a new city wall before the third Battle of Divine Will. This new wall would cover the north side of the City and encompass half of the grassland. They would form multiple layers of defense together with the existing walls, thus effectively improving the defense line of the Impassable Mountain Range. The ore smelting area and factory in the north of the city would then be much safer. The flow of resources from the forests and the North Slope Mine would not be cut off even after battle commences.

But this plan was after all still, a plan. No one expected that news of the demons would come so soon. Compared with the financial and trade losses, Wendy made this decision out of caution.

"Are the demons not a good enough reason, mortal?" The curtains hanging down the walls of the conference room started to sway as El's voice resounded in everyone's mind. "You cannot slack at all when dealing with the demons. They're no foolish demonic beasts. They won't wait for you to prepare before attacking—I don't think you're aware of how terrifying our enemy is. That's a real pity. After witnessing your King's brilliance, I thought you common people have made significant progress over the past few hundred years."

As an ally in the fight against the demons, Taquila survivors and members of the Sleeping Spell naturally had the right to attend the meeting. Both Pasha and Tilly expressed their approval regarding Wendy's decision to sound the alarm of the highest level.

Barov was so angry that he nearly laughed out of frustration. "Yes. It is true that I do not know how scary these demons are because I've never actually seen them myself. But are you saying that these guys can launch an attack out of thin air? You kept mentioning how we have to be well prepared for their attack, and that I agree with. However, the problem is that we can't even spot the enemy's shadow right now! There's the witch controlled Misty Forest to our west and the Watchtowers on the Impassable Mountain Range to our east. Between the two is a flat, coverless grassland. Any movements made by the enemy will be seen from miles away. Do we have to be even more cautious?"

It was clear that the City Hall Director was wholeheartedly devoted to Neverwinter's expansion tasks that were entrusted to him by His Majesty himself. Wendy remembered that at the last meeting, Barov dared not even breathe loudly in front of the monstrous original carrier, yet now he even rebutted her directly. Not to mention the obvious sarcasm in his voice.

"I think it's necessary," said Ashes. "In fact, I was the one who suggested the idea to Wendy."

"And what's your reason? Is it still because of the mumbo-jumbo of a half-asleep witch that came from who knows where?" Barov slammed his palm on the table. "Don't tell me that you believe her. If her words can actually be trusted, or if your relationship is that close, then why isn't she a member of the Witch Union yet?"

"That's not the reason. I judged the situation based on facts," Ashes explained calmly, "I have fought with her before, and I am aware of her capability. If it were just one or two hybrid demonic beasts, she wouldn't have ended up in such a dire situation. According to what we know, a Mad Demon without the support of the Demon Stone is about the same with a demonic hybrid in terms of combat prowess. Furthermore, even if Lorgar couldn't overpower them in a confrontation, she could have simply just turned into a wolf and escaped."

"What exactly are you trying to say?"

"She most likely ran into more than ten demons. There must have also been a flying Devilbeast that could track her from the air that caused her to be so severely injured." Ashes said matter-of-factly, "Besides, we also found a map on her. If we are not mistaken, the characters on it were written there by Lightning. Although we don't know the details of her trip, one thing was certain: She had ventured out into the wasteland after she left Neverwinter. If there were suddenly so many demons in the Barbarian Land, then we'd better start preparing to deal with whatever they are planning."

"I also agree with this judgment." Pasha's voice was much softer than El's. "Distance means nothing to the Devilbeast. If they really wanted to attack Neverwinter, the news of their attack might still be on their way from the watchtowers when the Devilbeast has already landed in the city."

"Not to mention that most people don't even know about the demons. If the enemy were to just drop into the city without any preparation on our side, the result would be catastrophic." Tilly added and said, "The alarm would at least give people the time to go back to their homes home and hide. This allows us to control the panic to a certain extent."

"Uh, but..." Barov was at a loss for words.

To him, compared to the first few people who voiced their opinions, the words of Princess Tilly certainly held more weight. It was not because she was the leader of the Sleeping Island witches, but it was due to her being part of the Wimbledon family. As she was a member of the royal family and the sister of the ruling king, the City Hall Director naturally had second thoughts about blatantly refuting her words.

He turned toward the head of the First Army garrison, who was a quiet, middle-aged hunter, trying to pull someone to his side. But the man remained silent and just stared straight ahead as if he was not paying any attention to the argument.

Seeing the atmosphere tense up, Wendy took a deep breath and stood up. "I've already sent the message to the Northern Region, so His Majesty should be informed about Neverwinter's current situation and issue countermeasures soon. Lorgar could also wake up any moment now. So I hope the Director can stop worrying so much—as long as we gain a clearer picture of what's happening, we can easily call off the martial law. But before that, everyone should still be more cautious." She paused and said, "As for the tasks set out by His Majesty beforehand, we can make it up through other means."

Barov frowned and asked, "Such as?"

"We might be able to use the devouring worm to transport the wheat. All the Neverwinter workers would have to do is transport the wheat from the Misty Forest to the Third Border City." Wendy looked at the Taquila survivors in the light curtain and said, "This way, the wheat can still be loaded onto the transport ships even without having the workers leave the perimeter of the city."

"What?" El was displeased and said, "We're soldiers, not porters."

"But as allies, this is something we can do." Pasha stretched out her tentacles and curled them around El's body—although El did not appear to have a mouth at all.

Wendy nodded thankfully and said, "Livestock can be transferred in the same way, and since Honey has a lot of control over animals, we don't have to worry about them being scared by Fran. The Western Region has an abundance of grasslands, and the lands along the shores of the Redwater River can be used as temporary pastures."

Barov's expression still did not look satisfied, but his frown had loosened up a bit.

"I know these measures can't completely erase the damage caused by imposing martial law, but right now, Neverwinter's safety is our utmost priority." Wendy knew perfectly well that it would not be enough to rely on tenderness if she did not want to let His Majesty down and carry out her role as head of the Witch Union... She must step up and become a person that people can rely on. "If there are any losses caused by this decision, I'm willing to take full responsibility!"

Chapter 906: Unveiling The Mystery (Part I )

In the following week, the atmosphere within the castle was incredibly tense. Hour-long meetings were held every day, during which all the ministers from each department would come to report and discuss the current situation.

"So? Are you still unable to find a trace of the demons?" Barov sipped his tea as he glanced at the people around the table.

He looked much more relaxed than he had been a couple of days ago. Wendy's promise to take full responsibility for her action seemed to have lifted a heavy burden off his mind. Either that or the smooth implementation of the plan for transporting the Golden Twos likely relieved some of his stress.

"The first army's lookouts have already expanded their surveillance range to the edge of the grassland, but they still couldn't find anything," the garrison leader replied concisely. "Further north lies the Barbarian Land which is covered by a dense forest. Without sufficient supplies, it would be tough to expand our perimeter any further."

"And that's all you can do, common people. You'll probably die to the insects living in the forests before you even get a chance to see the demons." Alethea seemed keen on scoffing at the people of Neverwinter at every chance she got. "Just leave it to us. A team of ten God's Punishment Witches has already gone 15km into the Fertile Plains and set up a small outpost at the Pearl Lake."

"The Pearl Lake?" Wendy asked.

"It's marked with a lot of bird's nest on the Wolf Girl's map. The place was once full of lakes and springs, but now most of it has already turned into a swamp."

"There shouldn't be any dangers, right?"

"Rest assured. When it comes to fighting demons, we're far more experienced than you people. Any God's Punishment Witch can deal with three to four Mad Demons at the same time. With five witches as a team, they would have no problem wiping out a small demon patrol," Alethea said confidently. "Of course, if the Wolf Girl did run into a patrol team, then I'm afraid that the enemy's main force is most likely already closing in on us."

"Are they incapable of acting alone?" Barov asked out of curiosity.

"Due to their reliance on the Red Mist, it's impossible for the demons to stray too far away from their supply line," Pasha explained. "After all, demons can't move around freely like human beings who only need to breathe in air."

"Well then... As the enemy is still quite far away from Neverwinter, why can't we call off the alert now?"

"Unless we can set up a web of sentry posts around Neverwinter, we won't be able to fully eliminate the possibility of the enemy sneaking into the city."

"But even then, the sentry posts would mean little to us," another Senior Witch added. "Without enough Sigils of Listening, the sentries won't have enough time to send back the warning even if they were to catch sight of the Devilbeasts."

The extreme environment of the Barbarian Land formed an invisible barrier which barred any news from going through in time. It was as if a layer of mist shrouded the whole area to the Northwest of Neverwinter, and all they could do was to search for tiny clues in the wilderness. When Wendy realized this fact, she could not help but sigh in her heart.

Lorgar's news truly came at a bad time.

If His Majesty had not left for the expedition, it would have taken only a day or two for Sylvie, Lightning, Maggie, and Nightingale to scout out the current situation of the entire Northern side of the Impassable Mountain Range.

My own ability isn't particularly helpful in this kind of situation.

Suddenly, Tilly asked, "Mr. Director, you may feel that I'm being nosy, but could you please tell me how the people of the city has reacted to the situation these past few days? Were they scared or panicked?"

"That will be my pleasure, Your Highness." Barov hastened to put down his teacup and bow to Princess Tilly with a hand on his chest. "Everything in the city is within the control of City Hall. Recently, our clerks have received lots of inquiries, but most people just want to know where the enemy is and whether the First Army needs help. So the news has heightened our people's morale rather than stressing them out, even the productivity of the night shift has significantly improved. Please rest assured. No one blames the Sleeping Island witches for the coming demons."

"Well... That's good then."

"Of course, we've also received some complaints about the price increases for Bird Beak Mushrooms and pinecones." City Hall Director eyed Wendy blankly. "If we don't cancel the alert in time, the prices of eggs will also begin to skyrocket"

"Let's put aside those matters for now. I think we need to raise the awareness about demons as soon as possible. Since the demons are completely different from all our previous enemies," Tilly said worriedly. "If someone takes this chance to stir up troubles and stigmatizes the witches as Devil's minions again, the trust between the common people and the witches will be destroyed."

"This..." Barov hesitated. "I have to consult His Majesty about this matter."

"So let's write it down in today's report." Tilly looked at Wendy.

"Understood." Wendy nodded. When she was about to summarize all the reports today, a burst of rapid footsteps interrupted the silence in the conference hall. They heard Ring's voice before seeing her. "La-Lady Wendy, the Wolf Girl woke up!"

"What?" Everyone stood up in surprise. Wendy could hardly wait to meet the girl and said, "I'm coming right now."

"Ahem, I'll also go to have a look—" Barov was about to follow, but Ashes stopped him.

"That's a girl's bedroom you're talking about. I think it would be better if you just stayed here and waited for our news."

...

The moment Wendy entered the room, she saw that Lorgar was struggling to get up from the bed, and beads of sweat were welling up on her forehead. She looked pale. Her broken ears drooped, and her hair seemed dry and dull.

"I can't believe it... I'm still alive." She panted and then turned her head to look at the crowd pouring into the room. "How long have I been unconscious?"

"Ten days have passed since we found you." Wendy gently pressed her back into the bed. "Don't move. Your limbs, bones, and even inner organs have suffered severe injuries. Ten days isn't enough for them to recover. You survive these days because of Nightfall's Seed of Symbiosis, but you still ought to stay in bed and rest before Nana comes back."

After knowing the use of Seed of Symbiosis, Lorgar slightly inclined her head to greet Nightfall who was lying in a bed nearby and said, "Thank you."

"That's alright." Nightfall shrugged her shoulders, trying to appear casual. "And I think it's quite good to be able to lie in bed and have Chaos Drinks every day."

"What exactly did you meet in the depths of the Barbarian Land?" Ashes asked in a deep voice. "You've mentioned demons many times in your sleep."

"Yes, I did encounter demons... many of them." Lorgar closed her eyes to recall what had happened. "At first, I met two demons by themselves when I was chasing a hybrid demonic beast. They might've been scouts, or perhaps they were just out hunting for some demonic beasts." She took a deep breath. "I

managed to kill them both, but I never expected that these two demons are but droplets in the vast ocean when compared to the army of demons that I spotted soon after. Countless demons swarmed the Taquila ruins, and among them were several colossal monsters."

Hearing the Wolf Girl's description, all the people in the bedroom fell silent.

#### Chapter 907: Unveiling The Mystery (Part II)

Roland and Lightning had once told Lorgar that if an opponent was too strong for her to take on alone, it would be better to withdraw and report the news back to Neverwinter as soon as possible. Lorgar always kept this in mind. When she discovered the demon army, she decided to return to the Neverwinter immediately.

After all, she had already proven herself in her previous battles, and she knew that she would have plenty more chances to fight against these demons once they invaded Neverwinter.

Despite having made that decision, Lorgar did not leave the vicinity immediately and instead decided to scout out the movements of the demons from a higher vantage point. She did not want to embarrass herself by telling everyone in the city that she fled at the sight of the demon army. Lorgar thought that if she were able to bring back more information about the demons, then even the great chief would owe her a huge favor.

All this time, she had been trying to prove herself and gain the great chief's recognition rather than his apology. It did not matter whether his words that day were out of genuine concern or just mockery. Simply put, for the Wolf Girl, this was about her honor. But for the entire Wildflame clan, this would significantly improve their status in the great chief's heart.

That was why she chose to stay in this dangerous place.

Of course, she would never tell the witches what went through her mind as she did this. She would simply tell them that she was just curious.

She began to describe her experience to the witches. "I quickly found an abandoned stone tower that was covered by moss and vines near the ruins of Taquila. Half of the tower had already crumbled down, but it was still the best spot in the area for me as a vantage point."

"To be able to transform and run away any minute in case of an emergency, I took off my clothes and stored them in my backpack. I wrapped myself in a cloak and climbed up to the top of the tower."

"As I reached the top, I happened to find an opening in the tower walls that was covered by vines. This was a perfect hiding spot for me, as many Devilbeasts flew over my position without spotting me."

"Only then, I was finally able to get a clear picture of the massive beasts."

"Those are actually not living creatures!"

"They're not... alive?" Much surprised, Wendy could not help but interrupt.

"I think so," Lorgar said in a low voice. "Those monsters didn't seem to have any characteristics of a living creature. They were more like..."

"Like what?"

"Like the iron bridge that your people built over the Redwater River."

The witches looked at each other in bewilderment. "A bridge?"

"I also couldn't believe it back then, but that's how they look like." Lorgar coughed twice weakly. "Those monsters had straight backs which looked like the deck of a bridge. On either side of its torso, there were two long legs which resemble the pillars that support the bridge. However... neither its torso nor its limbs were covered by flesh. I was able to see right through its body with the empty gaps between its bones and metal pieces."

Wendy gasped in fright.

A walking steel bridge? Is this a new invention of the demons?

After resting for a short while, Lorgar continued, "Each skeleton monster is nearly 30 meters tall with many demons secured to the top of it. From a distance, it looked as if insect eggs covered its surface. A huge sack hanged on one side of its abdomen, and it looked like some inner organ that had fallen out of its body. I could see it pulsating with a dark red mist surging under the skin." She clenched her fist and then gently placed it on her chest. "By the name of Three Gods, those monsters looked like evil incarnate."

Ashes frowned, "... and then?"

"These monsters laid down by the ruins, and hundreds of tubes came out of the sack and inserted themselves into the ground. Within seconds, all the soil surrounding them turned into dark brown clods and the weeds and trees around withered, as if life was somehow drained out of them. After that, most of the demons sank into the ground, leaving only a couple hundred of Mad Demons and a dozen of Devilbeasts in the ruins. I guess they were responsible for some scouting or patrolling tasks."

"Have you ever seen a demon which has countless eyes and tentacles? It usually stays at a higher place; it looks like a wiggling blob at first glance." Wendy asked while noting down the Wolf Girl's description.

"Do you mean a Multi-eyed Demon?" Lorgar shook her head. "Lightning mentioned this dangerous monster to me, but I didn't find anything like it in the Army of Demons."

"So how did you get hurt?"

"I underestimated the enemies." Lorgar looked a little depressed. "I hid at the top of the tower for three days. Many Devilbeasts flew across this area during this period, but it seemed that none of them were seriously patrolling the place. When I heard a Mad Demon blowing a horn, I thought it wouldn't attract the attention of the main force, but when I started to run away, I found that several squads of demons had already been lying in wait nearby for me."

"Wait... Do you mean they ambushed you?" Nightfall asked, surprised. "How come the demons were able to make this kind of arrangement? You guys said before that they were nothing but strong, simple-minded beasts?"

"The demons from the lowest rank are indeed stupid beasts, but once they get a commander, the situation will be different," Tilly said in a low voice. "There must have been a senior demon among the enemies that besieged Lorgar."

"In the face of an unknown enemy, no one can come up with a perfect battle tactic," Ashes patted the Wolf Girl's shoulder. "You were able to escape from such a formidable enemy and return to Neverwinter alive. That in itself is already an impressive achievement."

This was the first time Wendy had heard such a compliment from the Extraordinary.

"Maybe. Fortunately... the senior demon didn't come to capture me personally." Lorgar forced a weak smile. "Immediately after I knew that I was spotted, I transformed into a wolf and tried to escape under the cover of the night. During the pursuit, their spear throwers were unable to hit me in the darkness. I don't know how many enemies were after me at that time, but some Devilbeasts were always hovering over my position."

"You, You killed all the demons chasing you?" Tilly asked confusedly.

Hearing that, Wendy also began to wonder. If Lorgar couldn't get rid of the enemies besieging her, she would remain in a passive position under attack. The fact that she had suffered severe injuries also proved this point. It seems that she was in quite a desperate situation.

"No... they gave up hunting me," Lorgar replied. "I don't understand why... If they had chosen to run after me for another day, I would have died from exhaustion. But surprisingly, they all just suddenly withdrew."

"Red Mist!" Tilly quickly responded. "They must have been afraid of wastefully using up the Red Mist that they brought with them. Do you remember the place where they started to retreat?"

Lorgar thought for a moment while rubbing her forehead. "It's probably about 2,500 or 3,000 meters away from the grassland."

"Where's the map? Give me a map quickly."

Seeing Tilly measuring distances on a map, Wendy gradually realized what the skeleton monsters mentioned by Lorgar might be. She thought of the church's Siege Beasts and guessed that the skeleton monsters were possibly also some machine driven by magic power, which was used to transport Red Mist. If that was the case, everything in Lorgar's description would make sense. The demons sinking into the ground and the soil polluted by Red Mist was just like the scene in the Devil's Town behind the snow mountain.

"According to Lorgar's report, the Devilbeasts that set out from the Taquila ruins could only make it to the edge of the Barbarian Land. Does this mean that Neverwinter is still safe?" Wendy wondered.

After recounting her experience to the witches, Lorgar was exhausted and some blood began to leak out of her wounds and had stained her bandage once more.

Seeing this, Wendy comforted the Wolf Girl and asked her to take some rest before Nana's return. After that, she led the witches out of the bedroom and gently closed the door behind them.

Chapter 908: A Bloody Road

Back in the meeting room, Wendy read out the newly acquired intelligence from the beginning. However, El rudely interrupted her when she started to talk about the safety measures.

"There is no such thing as a safe distance when it comes to the demons—Taquila paid a heavy price before realizing this, and it would be extremely risky to use the Red Mist's consumption area to plan for the war zone. For instance, Devilbeasts are capable of carrying multiple gas tanks, thus extending their attack range. Or they could bury a batch of gas tanks in advance and then replace them as they marched. Naturally, the most direct measure would be to build outposts and use them as links to extend the attacking range. Fighting to gain control of these outposts will be crucial in the Battle of Divine Will. Unfortunately, it will be tough to find all the hidden sentry posts in the vast plains. Never forget that the demons are always more cunning than you can ever comprehend."

Wendy could not help but imagine the scene El had described: the overwhelming army of demons would be launching fierce head-on attacks while at the same time setting up outposts everywhere to store their Red mist. If they succeed, the whole area would be quickly overrun by an endless horde of demons. This would have had cut off the communication and transportation of resources within the old Union's territories, which in turn would also endanger the surrounding areas. It would be like a stone rolling down a slope; the more land they lose, the harder it would be to resist the demons. In the end, they would no longer be capable of fighting back.

"In your opinion, what are the chances of them attacking Neverwinter city?" Tilly asked calmly.

"I must say that you are fortunate—or rather we are all very fortunate," El said while stretching her tentacles. "even though we can't use the Red mist to determine the enemy's attacking range, at least we can determine their intentions through it. I don't think the demons are likely to launch a large-scale attack on Neverwinter city in the immediate future"

"Could you elaborate?"

"The Red mist." The ancient witch nodded its blob head, "Any movements the demons make are based on their supply of the Red Mist. The fact that they went underground and left only their patrol team above ground instead of building a camp means that there aren't enough resources for them to use. Even if there were attacks at the border, it would probably only consist of a few small skirmishes. Of course, whether or not this situation will change in the future will have to depend on whatever happens from now on."

Tilly shifted her gaze to Pasha.

"El's judgment is credible," said the latter while shaking her main tentacles. "during the days of the Union, she led a small platoon of the Blessed Army and successfully attacked the Devil's Town multiple times... but her temper is rather bad."

"My patience is only used on things that are worth worrying over," El said bluntly. "Compared to the Devilbeast's long-range sneak attacks, I'm more concerned about those new war machines."

"I would like to ask... how did the demons transport Red mist before?" Barov finally found a chance to talk.

"Pretty much in the same way we would transport our supplies," Pasha sighed, "with low-level demons, carts, enslaved demonic hybrids or transformed Siege Beasts. The time they require to prepare for war is also close to that of ours. Everytime a battle was about to start, one could see dozens of red mist supply lines running across the entire Fertile Plains."

"To stop the transportation of the Red mist, everyone including the Blessed Army, the combat witches, and the common troops would have to go all-out. When we had to face a well-guarded Red Mist transport platoon, the blood of our soldiers would dye the whole plains red. As a result, those red mist supply lines were both the demons' and our troops' line of life-or-death." El added.

Everyone in the room was a bit startled by those words.

Even though they have not officially fought against the Demon army yet, everyone could already feel the pressure that this fierce race had put on humanity 400 years ago.

Under the guidance of His Majesty Roland, even Wendy could understand the importance of logistics. Transportation of supplies was undoubtedly a measure of an army's capability in sustaining itself. Suppose the demons did have the ability to construct such a large vehicle to transport Red mist. This would mean that they would be able to provide large quantities of supplies for the front-lines without expanding too many forces. Fewer supply lines would mean that there would be a higher concentration of troops guarding the transport teams. Perhaps the scene that Lorgar saw would become standard for the demons' inevitable march.

If it weren't for Roland Wimbledon, she really would have no idea how the third Battle of Divine Will was to be fought. It was clear that the demons have changed dramatically. There are now Senior demons who can move around independently; not to mention the appearance of the gigantic skeleton monsters. Other than Neverwinter city, the rest of the human kingdoms' strength was probably even weaker than during the Union's time. She did not even dare to imagine a scene where those noble knights would charge into the sea of demons.

"All in all, the current situation does not completely refute our previous assumptions—only the time was misjudged." Aware of the fact that overemphasizing the hardships of war was probably not good for morale, El coughed twice and changed the subject. "The BlackRock spire, which can produce Red mist, needs to be built on the God's Stone mineral veins. So it's not surprising that the enemy chose to capture the ruins of the Holy City. After all, Taquila is now the easternmost God's Stone mining place on the Fertile Plains. Once the demons construct the spire, the range of the Red mist will directly cover the Impassable Mountain Range. At that time, any resistance will be futile."

No one could object to the fact that if the demons were no longer restricted in their movements, they would be able to launch attacks from any direction. And their flying Devilbeasts were much more flexible than the hydrogen balloon. It would be highly possible to get attacked by them if one left the city area... In a situation like this, it would be unlikely for humans to be able to resist for more than a couple years and in the end, they would be annihilated.

Though Wendy was not very familiar with the intricacies of war, she still had participated in these kinds of meetings multiple times. She knew that both His Majesty Roland and the Church of Hermes were adamant in stopping the demons' plan to occupy the Taquila ruins.

It seems like the three parties were in agreement on this point.

"Fortunately, the demons have exposed their intentions prematurely, and considering how the Bloody Moon won't appear for another 3-5 years, we can still prepare ourselves to the fullest before launching a decisive attack." El continued. "Even if we fail, the nearest Blackrock spire to the demons is in the Fertile Plains, which is hundreds of miles north of the Dragonspine Mountains. So in terms of supply lines, they don't have any advantage over us. But anyways, one thing is certain. War is now upon us."

Wendy suddenly felt that her shoulders had become a lot heavier.

"Wait, wait..." Barov suddenly shouted. "How you decide to fight the demons does not concern me. However, we can't keep the gates closed forever, right? Since we now know that the Army of Demons is still far from Neverwinter city and that they won't attack us for the time being, shouldn't we call off the alert and get those farms back up and running?"

"I believe that Neverwinter requires a more reliable alarm system," the head of the garrison followed up, "His Majesty mentioned before that establishing a deeper defensive line would allow a higher margin of error when it came to the alarms. I was wondering if it's possible to ask Miss Lotus to construct a few Beacon Towers along the plains. Of course, it would be even better if we utilized what His Excellency Carter had mentioned: a communication tool that can connect dozens of miles instantaneously. This way, the City Hall's work wouldn't be delayed."

The first option was easy but the second required both Anna and Roland since nobody knew how to actualize it. Also, delivering news through beacons may not be necessarily faster than a Devilbeast ambush.

Wendy hesitated for a moment but before she could reply, Pasha's voice sounded in their heads.

"Leave this to us."

"Hmm? What do you plan to do?" Ashes raised her eyebrows.

"Since we already know the location of the demons' camp, it makes things a lot simpler," Pasha stretched out her tentacle and showed it in the light curtain, "through this, we can create a complete surveillance system to watch the demons, similar to a light curtain."

In her tentacle, there was a Five-Colored Stone.

Wendy immediately remembered what No. 76 Phyllis had done before. "Do you plan to use it to locate the phantom instrument?"

"Exactly, once shattered, the magic core will unfold the light curtain in the corresponding position. But the number of these magic stones are limited. Each time we use one of them their number will decrease. At the same time, they are also essential in finding the keys of the Chosen One. Therefore, I will only be able to use it in extremely important situations."

"But—" she instantly thought of another problem, "this requires someone to get close to the Taquila ruins, correct? But the demons have already..."

"Rest assured. There is no need for you to worry. Since it's our idea, we will be the ones executing it." El said. "Taquila would never do something as cowardly as proposing a plan only to have others execute it. This is but a small matter. All God's Punishment Witches are prepared to sacrifice themselves.—"

"But it's still the best if you do not have to sacrifice yourselves," Tilly interrupted the other side with a smile. "Leave the task of placing the Magic Stone to the Sleeping Spell. Though their fighting capacity is limited, they do possess a variety of skills. Also, being the newcomers in the Western Region, they must also contribute in order to gain everyone's approval, isn't that right?"

Chapter 909: A Problem in Dreamland (Part I)

"Your Majesty... Roland?"

The voice was soft and distant.

It wasn't until Roland felt a tickling sensation around his ear that he suddenly realized someone was calling his name.

"You spaced-out again." Nightingale leaned dramatically on the long table, looking right into Roland's eyes. She held her chin in her hand, with her head slightly lopsided, and one pale index finger was swaying from side to side. It was obvious that she had used that finger to fiddle with Roland's ear.

"Um... really?" Roland cleared his throat, pretending that he was reading the statistical report that had just come in. "Probably because of the warm weather today. It makes me doze off easily."

"This isn't the first time you started daydreaming." Nightingale walked back to the recliner on the other side of the tent. "Ever since you came back from Reflection Church, you've constantly been in a daze. Has anything happened?"

Roland was about to deny what she had said, but the words got caught in his throat. He knew Nightingale could tell lies from truth, and he could not continue to deceive himself either. Even though it had been almost a week; he still could not understand what was going on.

"I did find something wrong... But the whole thing is so creepy and weird that I don't know where to start."

"You don't have to tell me if you don't want to." Nightingale stared at the sky above, her hands behind her head. "I'm not as smart as you anyway. Even if you were to tell me, I wouldn't be of much help. Perhaps Anna would be more useful in this area..."

"I haven't told her either." Roland shook his head, forcing a smile.

"Oh... is that so?" Nightingale turned over immediately. "Why not?"

"Because it's so bizarre that I'm afraid it's beyond the scope of my understanding," Roland said flatly. "As much as I hate to admit, it doesn't affect anything. In other words, this is completely personal. Telling her wouldn't help any, it would only make her worry."

"I see." Nightingale blinked as if sudden enlightenment had struck her. Roland, however, knew she did not understand anything but just thought the whole idea cool.

"Don't tell her that I frequently daydream." Roland reminded Nightingale. "This is something nobody else can solve."

"Of course!" Nightingale's face somehow lighted up. She patted her chest, produced a slice of grilled fish from the sack and shoved it into her mouth, looking quite satisfied.

After obtaining Nightingale's promise, Roland sighed internally. The data on the statistical report did not make any sense to him, What Roland had seen in the secret chamber of the church cluttered his mind.

Why would a legendary figure appear at the early stage of the foundation of the Union? From her portrait, it seemed that she had existed even before the Union age.

Roland had later made inquiries to Isabella, Agatha, and Phyllis, but none of them had given him a definite answer. It was such a dim and distant past that nobody could tell who the person in the picture was. They could only conjecture that she had, at one time, been prominent.

Roland used to think that there were only two types of people in the Dream World. One was those defeated by Zero, whose souls were permanently bound to the Building of Souls but who still more or less maintained a feeble connection with the real world. The most typical features of them were the astonishing resemblance of their physical appearances and the memory fragments in their rooms.

The other type were fictitious characters who came out of thin air directly from the Dream World. They were fabrications of his imagination and the Dream World itself.

Roland was now not sure about his theory, however.

Isabella told him that, according to her service records during the time she had served the Pope, Zero should be between 200 to 250 years old. Therefore, it seemed impossible for Zero, the pure witch who never aged, to "imprison" a person living 800 years ago. Although Zero was much older than ordinary people, numerous figures in history had had much greater longevity than her.

Zero had been born after the establishment of the church. Based on seniority, Agatha and some other witches were old enough to be her grandmother.

"Could the person in the picture intrude the Dream World by herself?"

This hypothesis was even bolder and more inconceivable.

"How can a woman from an ancient civilization survive in modern society and disguise herself so well? Where was her soul before the existence of the Dream World?"

Also, Lan's physical appearance contradicted this hypothesis.

She was elegant and graceful indeed, but she was by no means attractive, which meant that she was not a witch. Without any extraordinary power, one would, without exception, return to the earth 100 years after one's death, no matter how great they used to be.

The most reasonable explanation, although the least creative one, other than the above-noted two assumptions, was that the two people happened to look the same. In other words, it was a pure coincidence.

It would save Roland a lot of trouble if he adopted this theory, but he had a hard time convincing himself. "Is it really a coincidence?"

To find the answer, he probably had to ask her in person.

Roland felt a little reluctant to enter that increasingly bizarre Dream World. At the same time, however, he did not like the feeling of throwing himself into the unknown and being kept in the dark either.

In theory, it was better to pick the lesser of two evils. After hesitating for about a week, Roland finally made up his mind.

It was worth mentioning, though, that the nagging Taquila God's Punishment Witches and the free time after the tour of the Holy City of Hermes had also contributed a great deal to his decision-making process.

...

Roland was now accustomed to entering the Dream World. When he woke up, he noticed the calendar still showed the date on which he had last left. The surrounding had not changed a bit during his one month's absence. The picture of the martialist trainees on the nightstand still looked new as if they were recently brought back from the headquarter of the Martialist Association.

Roland took out his cell phone and dialed Garcia's number.

He soon got through and heard even breathing on the other end of the line. "Hello?"

Roland glanced through the window. The first hint of dawn was faintly visible in the east. "Are you doing morning exercises?" Roland asked.

"Cut the crap," Garcia snapped as she usually did, but her voice was no longer as crisp as before. "What's up?"

"Well, I want to discuss something with you. Is it a good time for you? I can come over now. We can have breakfast together, my treat."

"Is it that urgent?" Garcia was silent for a moment. "Come down. I'm in the alley right in front of the apartment."

"Wait for me." Roland hung up, got changed as fast as he could and dashed out of the room. When he passed the living room, however, he found Zero, still not entirely awake, half-dressed. It was apparent that the little girl had just woken up. Her wrinkled pajama tumbled down to one side, revealing half of her lovely fair shoulder. She was waddling in a pair of oversized men's slippers, which were apparently his.

Roland clapped his hand over his forehead. He had no choice but to turn around and help the little girl get dressed.

"Just a moment... I'll make some water downstairs..." Zero mumbled.

"That's OK. I'll bring you breakfast. You just wait here for the food after you brush your teeth and wash your face." Roland patted her on the head and pushed her into the bathroom before he scurried out.

Chapter 910: A Problem in Dreamland (Part II)

"Beef stew soup noodles for two, here you go!" The restaurant owner placed two bowls in front of them, exhilarated and gleeful. He even gave the table another quick wipe. Apparently, he believed that the arrival of the martialist had enlightened his simple premises, for Garcia was, after all, a celebrity in the apartment.

"Thank you. Can we also have a fried egg, please?" Roland drew out two sets of chopsticks. "One for each."

"No problem!"

"If I were you, I would definitely not pick this place to eat breakfast with a lady." Garcia rolled her eyes. "No wonder you're still single."

"This is slander!" thought Roland. If he wasn't such an honorable man and above flirting with the God's Punishment Witches, they would have taken him long ago...

"Um, Zero has to go to school later, and I need to bring her breakfast. If it's too far..."

"I understand. That's why I say this shouldn't be regarded as an example." Garcia interrupted him. She split the disposable chopsticks and mixed the green onions and beef together. Soon the soup noodles turned an appealing brownish red color. She first blew on the noodles to cool it down and then slurped them as if they were long, flowing ribbons.

The slurping sound made Roland's mouth water.

"Wow." Roland twitched his lips. "You know how to eat fast food pretty well. I thought you weren't used to this kind of street food."

"That's just your assumption." Garcia shrugged. "I've been here for almost 10 years and have tried every restaurant around this area. It's just basic manners for a host to pick a relatively decent restaurant. Plus, I don't like being stared at by strangers all the time."

Roland now noticed that not only did customers in the restaurant look in this direction from time to time, but random passersby as well. Apparently, Garcia's distinctive gray hair and toned body attracted a lot of people's attention.

"Oops... I forgot about that."

"So let's get down to business." Garcia cast him a cold glance. "Why did you suddenly need to see me? The Martialist Association won't help you with anything illegal."

Roland wondered why she was so alarmed. He had just returned from the headquarter yesterday and did not do anything illegal. Was there anything more illegal than the hunting license?

Roland hesitated for a while before answering Garcia's question. "I want to meet your master. Can you book an appointment for me?"

"Huh?" For a moment, Garcia did not follow him.

"Your master... Ms. Lan." Roland soon made an excuse. "I feel regretful for bailing on her last time, so I want to apologize to her in person."

Garcia studied him with great interest as if he were a stranger to her. Then she waved away Roland's request and said, "Really? Now you know how important to have my master as a reference. Save it. She won't see you anymore."

"Perhaps Ms. Lan doesn't hate me as much as you imagine."

"Do you want to tell me that she was nice to you at the orientation?" Garcia said carelessly, "Get over with yourself. You've missed the chance I once gave you. My master will never waste her time on a person who doesn't even abide by the basic etiquette of punctuality, not to mention meeting them."

"Regardless, make a call first." Roland insisted.

Garcia seemed to notice something. "You... you don't really want to make an apology to her, do you?"

"If I can learn some training methods for martialists from her, that would be even better." Roland managed to keep a straight face.

Garcia twitched her lips. She was about to dissuade Roland from pursuing such an unrealistic idea, but she, in the end, picked up her cell phone.

"By the way, what's your master's number..."

"You can't get through anyway. You have to get a SIM card from the association to connect to the headquarter." Garcia gestured him to keep silent and then spoke to the person at the other end of the line, "Hello, it's me..."

But she hung up within three minutes.

"I knew it."

"You knew what?"

"That she would refuse! She even reproached me for calling her again." Garcia grunted. "She's completely disappointed in you. Her tone dropped by at least an octave when she heard your name."

Roland was surprised at the unexpected result and did not understand why. Based on the attitude of Lan toward him at the orientation, she had seemingly not been very angry with him for standing her up for the first appointment. Instead, she had thought quite highly of him. Roland had felt her use of a hidden language was a demonstration of her excellent skills of applying the Force of Nature, so it did not surprise him that Garcia knew little about it. Now he wondered if he had been hallucinating.

At first, Roland had not been very eager to solve the mystery. Even after he entered the Dream World, he was hesitating, but the little defeat just now made him decide to get to the bottom of it.

"Oh, well." Roland took a small sip of the soup. "So when can we visit the headquarters again?"

"After you can deal with the erosion yourself and officially become a martialist. You're as green as grass at the moment."

Roland thought this requirement was reasonably straightforward to meet, but he managed to not reveal his thoughts. "I'm looking forward to that day. By the way, do you still remember the opening speech of Ms. Lan when we arrived at the underground hall?"

"What about it?"

"She said the Battle of Divine Will is around the corner. What does that mean?"

"Well, that..." Garcia replied resignedly. "My master is very fond of a book written 50 years ago, by the name of 'Raison d'être.' She recommended it to me, too. The book develops some theories on how a civilization emerges and evolves. The author calls it the deity's choice. This deity isn't a personified character, but actually a rule, or rather the purpose for the continuity of everything. But these theories are too abstract for people in this world, and they have nothing to do with us. As the book is only circulated in the Martialist Association, few people know about it."

Garcia's answer alarmed Roland. Without a doubt, it was a book he had never seen before, which meant it was a creation of the Dream World itself.

"Can I take a look at it?"

"The book is in the headquarter. I can borrow it from the library next month when I report my work." Garcia glanced at Roland curiously. "If I still remember."

Noticing that Garcia was starting to be suspicious of his motives, Roland wolfed down the noodles and excused himself.

He breathed a long sigh after waking up from the Dream World the following day.

Everything in the Dream World seemed to be normal when it was not associated with the Martialist Association, but anything that involved the Association appeared to be sketchy.

Although the investigation this time did not go well, it was not wholly fruitless. One big success was that the God's Punishment Witches, who had waited for so long, had once again been able to gain various physical sensations in the Dream World. Seeing them have a good time, Roland felt the trip was worthwhile.

Roland was about to take advantage of his recovery to have a few more trips to the Dream World to get things moving faster when Lightning suddenly flew into his tent with a swallow-tailed eagle under her arm.

"Your Majesty, your express mail." The little girl mumbled. "It's an encrypted letter from Neverwinter."

Directly from the Western Region? This isn't a short trip. Did anything happen in Neverwinter?

To save on messengers, regular mail such as reports on governmental affairs were typically sent to the old king's city by water and forwarded by Theo and his men to him. A swallow-tailed eagle was the largest among all the animal messengers, and it required the highest power. The good thing about using a swallow-tailed eagle to deliver mail was that the animal was at the top of the food chain and it was relatively secure. The drawback of this method was that it would consume a significant amount of the witch's power. It was relatively hard for Honey to control such a fierce bird, due to the energy required for a swallow-tailed eagle was three times that of a gray eagle.

Roland stroked the limp animal messenger and took the sealing ring off its claws. He stood rooted to the ground the moment he unfolded the letter.

"The Demons' army has appeared in the Barbarian Land?" This was earlier than he had anticipated!