

Witch 991

Chapter 991: Burdened by Destiny

After Zooley bid farewell to His Majesty, she led the God's Punishment Witches who were part of the expedition back to the Third Border City.

After she took care of the arrogant Senior Demon, she was guided by Alethea to a secret chamber in the deep underground, where Pasha and Celine were waiting as well.

Other than the captured demon, they were apparently more concerned about other matters.

"What do you think?" Shutting down the heavy Stone Gates, Alethea anxiously dropped in front of her. "Can we win?"

"Didn't we already win?" Zooley said matter-of-factly.

Alethea pointed at Zooley's forehead with her tentacles. "Don't tease me anymore. You know exactly what I'm talking about."

As she was the only Extraordinary of Taquila, she undoubtedly had a closer relationship with the Senior Witches than anyone else.

After the collapse of the Union, the ancient witches who survived began to follow the principle of "every witch is equally important," but the old class system still had some influence.

"Since she's so relaxed, I think it should be a good answer." Pasha smiled lightly.

"In fact... I'm not sure," said Pasha. Zooley also began to act more seriously after hearing Pasha's remark. "Nowadays, the demons are probably considerably different from the enemies we faced 400 years ago, not only in the use of magic but also in the varieties of species." She then elaborated on the entire battle process. "Arguably, Lady Alice's idea was correct, but according to her plan, mankind would inevitably fail."

Evidence has shown that the God's Punishment Witch was indeed a viable weapon for restraining the Senior Demon. Unfortunately, this weapon alone meant it would still be difficult to contend with the enemy on the battlefield—powerful armor did not indicate they would be spared injury. After being placed in front of the new war machines, the God's Punishment Witches' advantage would be formidable and impenetrable. Once they were at war, the plan of the Queen of Starfall City would lose its meaning.

After confirming this, Pasha seemed more relieved and looked as if a heavy burden had been lifted off her. "So that means we didn't follow the wrong leader—Lady Natalia's decision was correct. This is really great news..."

"Yeah, this is really great news..." Celine whispered. Her voice was faint and choking with emotion. This was an incredible thing for someone who had lived for more than 400 years.

But at this moment, Zooley empathized with the rest of them.

While the majority of the Union's leaders supported Alice, they stood by the Queen of Sunchaser due to their different ideologies. They were utterly torn apart by an unjust assault on the witch's empire that entirely destroyed the foundation of the Union.

Zoey would remember this scene till her dying day, when a severely hurt Blessed Army comrade lay dying in her arms and said, "You were the ones who ruined it all."

Since then, they have felt this huge burden in their hearts.

Death was nothing to be afraid of after all.

What was frightening was to be misunderstood and abandoned by their companions, while searching for a glimmer of hope in the dark.

If they failed in their mission, that would mean that they have destroyed the only way the witches would continue to survive. That kind of sin was unforgivable and could not be offset even by death.

It was with this firm determination that everyone endured the unconscious shells and have persisted until now.

Now that Alice's plan has been proven to be wrong, they naturally felt a long-lost liberation—even if the final outcome were still the total destruction of humankind, the fate of the survivors would not be as critical.

"Even so, Lady Natalia was just on par with the Queen of Starfall City," said Alethea, rubbing her nose that had long since ceased to exist, "We have not yet won the final victory. It's too early to celebrate—"

"Don't worry. Now that you've become like this, even if you cry, no one can see it."

"Pasha!"

Zoey shook her head and smiled. "I haven't finished speaking yet... Although I can't say for sure who will win the Battle of Divine Will, at least I've seen some hope."

After hearing these words, the three Senior Witches became quiet.

In the 400 years of searching in the dark, hope was the most desired thing—No one knew whether the Chosen One really existed, but they had to continue searching. This kind of aimless confusion was always on their mind. The longer time passed, the more intense the suffering felt. In the beginning, people often discussed the abilities of God's chosen person and her apparent age and appearance. However, when "Black Money" was used to begin the search for the Chosen One, nobody dared to talk about it.

They feared creating a false image of the Chosen One as they would not be able to handle the disappointment when they'd find someone fitting their standards and having them turn out not to be the One.

Because of this, hope had become something of a luxury.

However, now they could say this word easily.

The ancient witch who realized this couldn't help but fall into a moment of silence.

After a while, Pasha broke the silence. "So... can we complete the task that Lady Natalia entrusted to us?"

"Entrusted?" Alethea was shocked. "Wait—we haven't even found the Chosen One yet!"

"I don't have an opinion," Zoey said with a shrug. "In the ancient books of the underground civilization, there was no rule stating that the key holders had to be male or female, right? After all, whether or not they had any concept of gender was still unknown."

Natalia had left behind a will that said, if they could find the Chosen One, then everyone should treat her as the chief, destroy the demons, and rebuild Taquila. Although the Five-Colored Stone reflected a Chosen One that was different from what they had imagined and could not activate the Instrument of Divine Retribution, it was consistent in dealing with the demon.

"I also... feel that there's nothing wrong with it." Celine was the last to speak. "The ancient books also did not specify that there should be only one candidate for the Chosen One. After we have discovered the newly selected witch, we can still change the candidate."

"Since you've all agreed... well then." Alethea sighed helplessly.

"Whether there will be a new candidate or not, we can forget about that for now. But I think it's unnecessary to change the candidate," said Zoey, looking at Pasha. "What you were once worried about has already started to happen."

"Did the witches exclude you in battle?"

"It wasn't that obvious." She told the story of Camilla again. "After hearing that I would be the interrogator, she agreed to the request of connecting the demon's heart. This also shows that although she was concerned about the safety of the witches, that did not include immortal monsters like me."

"..." The atmosphere became a little intense. As early as a 100 years ago, Pasha mentioned this possibility. Although they considered themselves to be witches, the new generation of witches did not necessarily think so. Regarding appearance, characteristics or ability, there was no similarity between the two. They resembled neither witches nor humans. Roland Wimbledon, who was able to accept them so quickly, was more like an alien.

As the history of the Union gradually faded, the new Awakened ones might no longer see them as witches. And in an extreme scenario, to explore the mysteries of magic power and the techniques of the underground civilization, the witches might even use them as guinea pigs.

Although this idea was somewhat pessimistic, after centuries or even thousands of years, that could really happen.

When she heard Zoey's self-mockery, Pasha sighed. "I see, but I don't regret it."

Nobody answered, it was their choice as well.

"If we can accomplish the wishes of the Three Chiefs, our mission will come to an end," she paused and said, "what happens in the future is not something we can control... But at least for now we can plan a way out for ourselves."

"Should we hide in the mountains, disappear, or find a place to bury ourselves?" Alethea was displeased.

"Of course not," said Pasha, shaking her main tentacles, "we can be an indispensable force in the human kingdom."

Chapter 992: Future Direction

"You mean as God's Punishment Witches? The king who's a common person might not think so..."

"Power is not determined just by force," Pasha pointed toward Zooley and said, "Real strength lies in what influences the human kingdoms of today to change. This cannot be replaced and it's exactly where our strength lies."

"I see what you mean!" Celine exclaimed. "Compared to combat ability, this really is more important," she added as she came to the sudden realization.

"Hah..." said Zooley. "You can leave me out of it. This task would suit Faldi and the rest."

"Hey, what the h*ll are you talking about?" exclaimed Ellen in dissatisfaction. "Why couldn't I understand at all?"

"Pasha was talking about knowledge," said the youngest Extraordinary, "aren't there colleges, libraries and private scholars in His Majesty's Dream World already? Since everything in the Dream World comes from his memory, everyone should be able to learn... Compared to selective transcripts, it would obviously be better to fully absorb all that knowledge. As long as we allocate some time away from our leisure time, we could start learning the most basic information. It wouldn't take more than dozens of years and His Majesty would be able to have an additional group of helpers that can understand what he wants."

"The energy of common people will fade as their body ages, but we don't have to worry about this. A century's time would be enough to make a God's Punishment Witch His Majesty's heir. This is our greatest advantage." Pasha added, "Especially after he passes away. Only we know what the world will look like."

"If His Majesty Roland wants to continue his plans, then it can only succeed through us—even if we weren't witches, we wouldn't be affected too much. In a certain way, it would be disadvantageous to us if there were any attempt to overthrow the will of His Majesty, but the Witch Union would certainly respond to that. On the other hand, if we're only in charge of knowledge, this would be good for any faction. Even if we don't possess combat strength, we'll still have force even if its very light-weight."

"Isn't this the Cloud School?" El grumbled.

According to legends, when most human beings were still ignorant, some sages came together to fan the flames of civilization. They taught people how to make ironwork, weave clothes, and tillage livestock until human beings populated the entire Land of Dawn. Hundreds of years later, they reached the summit of their power. All those in power sought to win them over by any means, and many members

then turned from becoming knowledgeable communicators to being the private collection of those in power.

The leader of the sages discovered this point and moved the organization out to major city-states. He also stipulated that they should not be easily involved in politics, urging them to only focus on the mysteries of the world and uncovering the secrets of the ancient ruins. Since they were relocated to the top of a mountain covered by clouds all year round, everyone called it the Cloud School.

Although these people rarely interacted with the common people, their status was still elevated. No matter how the kings in power kept changing, they were still respectful to the Cloud School. Every year, they would send a large number of supplies and young students, just to get guidance from these sages.

But this period did not last long as the demon soon infiltrated mankind. The first Battle of Divine Will broke out... It was at this time that a disturbing rumor gradually spread. It stated that these brutal and terrifying beasts were introduced into the Land of Dawn by a sage hundreds of years ago.

The reputation of the Cloud School plummeted, and it was taken over by the demons as no leader willing to lend a helping hand. Finally, it became a dusty memory of history books.

"At least we won't collude with the demon," said Celine defensively. "And the title of 'manager of knowledge' is not so bad. It's better than the titles that were set by the Quest Society."

"Anyway, this is only a preliminary direction. Any plans for the future can only be decided after the victory against the demons." Pasha said as she smiled and patted Celine's head with her tentacle. "Well, let's adjust the soul instrument. After the completion of the celebrations outside, we should also have finished our preparations here—I don't think His Majesty has the patience to wait until tomorrow."

...

When the residents of the city were still celebrating the victory, Roland had already entered Third Border City while leading the united front army.

He was certainly impatient.

If the demon city in the memory fragment was from hundreds of years ago, then the information stored in this Senior Demon's brain would be the latest intelligence about the enemy. Given the ineffectiveness of conventional intelligence channels for aliens, the significance of this opportunity was particularly important.

As soon as he stepped into the core area of the hall, he noticed something strange.

He saw that the Taquila witches lined up in a neat queue in the center of the hall with their leader the threefold original carrier Senior Witch.

The God's Punishment Witch placed her elbows at a level position and overlapped her fingers onto her chest, before bowing to him.

It wasn't the first time that he had seen this strange manner of saluting as it was usually the special courtesy of the lower level witches to their superiors. However, before he even had the chance to ask questions, the three carriers also overlapped their tentacles in front of their bodies and fell to the

ground. The voice of Pasha also rang in his head, "Thank you, Your Majesty. Taquila will always be loyal to you."

This made Roland somewhat surprised. The previous time she thanked him was probably due to the fact that there was a chance to defeat the demons and get revenge, but the meaning of the latter sentence was obviously different. Although the united front required all the coalition leaders to work for the leader, the other party's respectful behavior told him that these two were not the same thing.

He suddenly remembered that Senior Witches themselves were the upper class of the Union, and that they would only need to salute the three Transcendents in that manner.

Did this mean they considered him as one of the Three Chiefs in the Union?

Although he was not clear why their attitude had changed so much, after being in power for so long, he was still sensitive enough to know that now was not the right time to investigate.

Roland coughed twice and treated it like a normal greeting. "It's not necessary to thank me. This victory belongs to all the people present. By the way, how's the preparation for the Soul Transfer?"

"We can start at any time," Pasha pointed to a purple magic core behind her, "please come with me."

As he followed her down to the core, Roland noticed that there were two stone beds set up next to her. On the left bed, there was a male God's Punishment Army soldier with no feet. His hair was gray and it was obvious that he had been transformed for a long time. The right bed had a figure that could not be described as human at all. Not only were the limbs missing, but even the black armor on its body was full of depressions. It was difficult to imagine it still being alive under such circumstances.

"Generally speaking, it would not be able to survive until now," explained Zooey, as if she had seen his doubts. "If Miss Nana's treatment was not available, it should have died the same day. In addition, Lady Agatha also helped a great deal, otherwise, we'd not have been able to conserve the Red Mist for so long. However, in order to prevent the Senior Demon from recovering on the road, a series of adjustments were needed. The result is what you can see right now."

"Adjustment?" Wendy said confusedly, "How?"

"It's very simple. As soon as it starts to come around, I would give it a stab. Thus, most of its magic would be consumed for self-healing. This was the first time that I had done such a job, so I'd almost caused it to stop breathing," said Zooey whilst stupefied.

In fact, it seemed that she was looking forward to this the most.

Sensing that the atmosphere was a little tense, Roland cleared his throat and said, "In that case, let's not waste time... We should start the transfer now."

"As you wish," Celine reached out with her main tentacle and inserted it into the core.

Chapter 993: Soul Interrogation (Part I)

The magic core which was shaped like a giant spindle suddenly expanded while giving out a purple light. Its luminescence lit up the entire hall. It floated two meters above the ground and began to spin, looking like a fabulous merry-go-round.

Seeing this, Roland had to admit that the magic power, to a certain extent, could not be explained by physical concepts. After this skeleton structure automatically expanded, all its parts could somehow stay in the air without falling to the ground under the influence of gravity. It looked as if there was an invisible hand holding them together.

"How did the underground civilization create these things?" He looked at Pasha. "Can you make copies of them if I give you the same materials?"

"I'm afraid we cannot do so for now, Your Majesty." Pasha shook her head. "Although I'm reluctant to admit it, the underground civilization did have a deeper understanding of the magic power than the Union. Celine is already one of the best researchers of the Quest Society, but even she only learned to operate them in the past hundreds of years."

"We are short-handed. It's a major problem." Celine turned around. "We can't activate the magic core simply by injecting our magic power into it. We have to connect ourselves to the thousands of sensors in it. Common people can never do this."

"In other words, if I want to learn to use this magic core, I have to transfer my soul into an original carrier in the same way as you did?" Tilly asked.

"That's right. A summer insect never knows how cold the winter is. A deaf man never hears anything in the world." Celine sighed with profound resignation. "A human being can hardly imagine what I feel when I'm operating the magic core. I can't find an appropriate word in the human language to describe this particular feeling to you either. Given that, now only Pasha and I can control a magic core."

"Wait... Do you mean that the main tentacle on you, which looks rough, is actually very sensitive?" Roland was surprised.

"Yes. Not only the main tentacles but also the other tentacles on us are highly sensitive," Celine confirmed. "They are able to smell and to feel cold and hot, wet and dry. They can sense even the slightest touch, and the main tentacles can even capture the flow of the magic power. So once you transfer your soul into a carrier, you won't be able to adapt to a human body anymore. Are you interested in it?"

"No, I was merely curious..." Roland turned his head away to stop the conversation. He had to clear his mind at such a crucial moment. He remembered that an original carrier's main tentacle was also her weapon and according to Phyllis, the carriers were as powerful as God's Punishment Witches regarding physical strength.

Based on what Celine had said just now, he realized that an ordinary man who was unable to sense the magic power could never study it in depth. Without a reliable observation and measurement method, this study could only be conducted by a few original carriers for now.

"No. 3 core has been activated in the Soul Instrument mode. The soul transfer is about to begin." Celine's voice interrupted his thoughts. Hearing this, Pasha and Alethea also inserted their main tentacles into the giant spindle apparatus.

Roland widened his eyes in fear of missing a single detail of the process.

However, this transfer process did not look as extraordinary as he imagined. Two beams of light shone out of the core and covered the two stone beds below. The magic power inside the skeleton structure began to surge. After 15 minutes, Celine sighed of relief. "Well, we are lucky. The instrument has caught the demon's soul. Now, all we need to do is wait for it to enter the God's Punishment Warrior's body."

"That's it?" Roland blinked.

"Yes, in fact, the Soul Transfer is a process of exchanging Keys," Pasha explained. "If you had observed the process through a Five-Colored Stone, you would have been able to see the demon's beam of light move to the God's Punishment Warrior."

Before the ancient witch finished her sentence, the God's Punishment Warrior who had lied on the bed motionlessly suddenly opened his eyes!

His face was contorted and thus looked exceptionally ferocious. He could not stop shaking and his fingers, which looked like dead wood, twisted violently. Some weird sounds came out of his throat. Seeing this, all the witches around subconsciously took a step back.

"Don't worry. That's the normal reaction shortly after the soul enters into an unfamiliar body," Zooley said. "We didn't look any better when we transferred our souls into the God's Punishment Warriors for the first time. We can hardly eat or drink without someone else's help."

Roland pictured the scene: a group of exiled ancient witches kept fumbling around in a cold underground cave for a dozen years. He was deeply impressed by the willpower of the Taquila survivors.

"Now that the demon is panicking and in a confused state, it's time for us to get started, lady Camilla." Zooley glanced at everyone and continued. "No matter what you want to know, you can ask me directly. I'll repeat what I've heard from the demon." She paused. "And I have a request."

"Go ahead." Roland nodded.

"As long as I don't gesture a 'stop', please don't halt the Mind Resonance no matter what happens," Zooley stressed each word with due strength. "The interrogation is the most important thing."

"This..." Camilla Dary looked hesitant, which was a rare thing.

"I promise." Without any hesitation, Roland approved Zooley's request. Seeing her determination, he believed he did not need to worry too much, and he really wanted to respect her wish.

"If so, I'll start to use my ability now." Chief Butler of Sleeping Island looked at Roland profoundly and then put one hand on the shoulder of Zooley and the other on the shoulder of the God's Punishment Warrior.

The next moment, Zooley looked miserable.

It seemed that she could not stop herself from growling out. However, Roland immediately knew that this roar must have come from the demon and it might somehow be able to roar through the witch's mouth in the Mind Resonance.

"What have you done to me?" Zooney's voice sounded totally different now. "Stupid crawlers, low-grade species, let me go! Otherwise, I'll make this woman suffer!"

The witches could not help gasping. "Is Zooney..."

"Don't worry. The demon is just bluffing," said Anna, calmly. "Look at her finger."

At this moment, the others noticed that the God's Punishment Witch raised one finger and shook it with ease. Apparently, she was not controlled by the demon.

Roland quickly understood why she acted this way. In comparison to a question-and-answer method, letting the demon speak through her own mouth was a better approach since it would give the demon less time to think and prepare.

"You were defeated by us." Roland sneered. "If we are stupid crawlers, what about you?"

"I was... defeated?" Zooney's voice sounded much deeper all of a sudden. She seemed to be stunned and caught in agony. Roland could not tell whether the painful expression came from Zooney herself or the confused demon.

He did not want to give the enemy any chance to take a breath, so he continued to put pressure on the demon. "Yes, you got riddled with bullets, and your army was annihilated. Half of your soldiers were killed on the battlefield, and the other half failed to flee back to Taquila in the end. We burnt down thousands of them and destroyed your underground camp, so tell me who's the low-grade species!?"

Roland shouted out the last question to the demon.

"No, this is impossible, unless, unless..." Zooney shook her head violently. After a moment, she looked up and muttered in astonishment, "Did you get a legacy shard and upgrade your species? Did you create those weapons... based on the contents of the shard?"

Roland captured the keywords instantly. "What's a legacy shard? What do you mean by 'upgrade'?"

Chapter 994: Soul Interrogation (Part II)

For a moment, Roland wanted to joke with the demon by saying, "You are also a member of Tadarin? Forgive me. I didn't recognize you." However, he gave up on this idea eventually.

After all, he came here to interrogate the demon. He did not want to undermine his own authority. In the state of Mind Resonance, the demon could manage to understand and speak the human language, but when it came across a word without counterpart in its own language, it would paraphrase the word. Given that, it might misunderstand or misuse the most common words in the human language.

Instead of answering Roland's questions, the demon rambled in agony.

"No, it doesn't make sense! You've never entered into the Sky-sea Realm, and you'll never be able to do so. How can you get a legacy shard? But if you don't have one, how come you can defeat me? You are lying. I, Kabradhabi will never believe you!"

As the demon's soul had been transferred into the God's Punishment Warrior, it could hardly control its own emotions during this moment. Before the interrogation, Roland had decided to grab this opportunity to delude the demon into leaking information which it would never mention under normal circumstances. He continued to push the demon. "Do you need more hints? You failed to lure my army into your trap and had to confront us on the battlefield, but before your army got close to us, they suffered heavy casualties. You led your troops to join the fight, wanting to revert this situation. As soon as you landed, however, you got shot down by the God's Punishment Witches. The fight between you and the witches lasted about ten seconds, and she's the one who led the witches to defeat you. Try to read her memory and then you'll see how vulnerable you appeared on the battleground."

"You—" Suddenly, the Senior Demon looked depressed.

Zoey interrupted the demon by showing it what had happened during the battle. It took her just a moment since the Mind Resonance significantly accelerated the pace of information exchange.

"You can't change the result of the battle by denying it, and your thought sounds ridiculous to me." Roland sneered. "We've never been to the Sky-sea Realm, so we can't own a legacy shard? I suggest we unify the concept first. If you don't tell me what a legacy shard is, how can I answer your question? Maybe in our eyes, it isn't a valuable thing at all."

"Stupid bug, you must be joking." Kabradhabi sounded very angry. "It's the cause of the Battle of Divine Will and determines the fate of the species. You think it's not precious!?"

Pasha suddenly thought of something. "Wait, does the shard look like a red crystal? Is it shaped like a spindle and able to bring anyone close to it into a spacious hall where he or she will see something incredible?"

"The relics of gods!" Tilly exclaimed in a deep voice.

"You call them the relics of gods? Sure enough, you are just low-grade crawlers," the demon responded scornfully. "They've nothing to do with deities. Each species has a shard like that. They can upgrade themselves by swallowing it, and once they lose it, they will become food for the other species. Now, do you realize how stupid you are? When those underground cowards died out, you still hid in a corner on the ground. How could you get their legacy?"

Hearing this, Roland's heart suddenly jumped. That's why it was so sure that human beings couldn't get a shard or a relic. The four picture scrolls represent four different civilizations. A civilization had to defeat another to obtain its legacy. During the first Battle of Divine Will, when the underground civilization was extinct, we were busy fighting against demons. It's impossible for us to rob the underground civilization of its relic.

He looked around and found that everyone had a grave look on their face. Apparently, everybody realized that they had just heard important information.

First of all, what the demon said confirmed what the Taquila witches had thought about the relics. Roland still remembered that Wendy had exclaimed, "How come we've fought for hundreds of years just because of a useless stone? The Divine Will is so cruel." Now he found that a relic not only determined the survival of civilization but also had high practical value for another civilization. That meant no party in this battle would be willing to conciliate.

Secondly, according to Kabradhabi, demons had already upgraded themselves. Though it did not mention the specific process of swallowing a relic, it apparently attributed all the progress that a species made and the invention of new weapons, to the relic. Roland could not help wondering. Maybe, they can inherit the knowledge accumulated by another species by swallowing a relic. Given that, did they create the giant skeleton monsters and the strange demons based on the technology of the underground civilization?

This is incredible. Even the industrial revolution can't achieve this kind of effect. Such a revolution needs lots of raw materials and professional workers, and it only happens when there's an enormous technological breakthrough. In comparison, inheriting knowledge by swallowing a relic sounds like force transfer in kungfu fiction. A species will be extinct and lose everything to its opponent after losing its relic? If it's true, it's indeed a fearful secret.

No, it can't be counted as a secret. It's important news for human beings, but it won't affect the result of the Battle of Divine Will. For any party in this war, knowing the importance of the relics won't guarantee the ultimate victory. Human beings have never had a proper idea about the relics until now. That's why we can't rally for the fight for the past thousands of years and lost again and again in the battles. Human beings can't compete with the other species depicted in the painting scrolls.

We've wasted too much time on in-fighting.

Roland's mouth went dry. He licked his lips and picked out the most crucial question among all the thoughts went through his mind.

"As you also refer to this war as Battle of Divine Will, do you believe that it's arranged by deities?"

"That's how you think of Divine Will?" The Senior Demon sounded much calmer this time, which was probably because it had remained quiet for a long time and had a chance to prepare during this period of time. "Well, it seems not bad to let you know the truth before you die out. Listen carefully, bugs. The battle has nothing to do with the deities. It's just among the civilizations. The final winner will be able to upgrade and open the door to the Fountain of Magic. When that happens, the winner will gain omnipotent power and his will become the Divine Will! But, forget about it, stupid crawlers. You'll never get such a chance. You are doomed to perish!"

"How do you know that?"

"What? Do you think that I, Kabradhab, will continue to talk to you?" The senior demon sneered.

"What do you mean?" Suddenly, Roland noticed something wrong and called out, "Zooley?"

"I'm afraid that this female can't hear your voice for the moment. You used a soul-transferring trick to confuse my mind and then used mind-reading ability to read my thoughts. Bugs, you really haven't made any progress for the past hundreds of years." Zooley now sounded cold and heartless. "You dare to

play magic tricks on me. You are headed for trouble. I'm Kabradhabi. Though I can't control this body, for now, that doesn't mean I can't use my magic power!"

"Camilla!" Roland shouted to Chief Butler of Sleeping Island.

"It's too late. Say goodbye to this female!"

With shrill laughter, Zooley closed her mouth. Camilla Dary went pale as if she could not believe what had happened. "The soul in the God's Punishment Warrior... disappeared!"

Chapter 995: Soul Interrogation (Part III)

"What?" Everybody gasped in horror and simultaneously looked at Zooley. What Kabradhabi said did not sound like boasting. Since the God's Punishment Witch was connected to the demon by Camilla, the demon's soul that had disappeared must have sneaked into Zooley's body.

Alethea was the first one to take action. Whilst Camilla was crying out in alarm, she swung her main tentacle, which was strong enough to crush a Devilbeast, at Zooley. She spared no effort to press Zooley down to the ground and even the slate floor where the God's Punishment Witch landed got cracked.

Zooley spewed out a mouthful of blood and passed out.

The hall fell into silence.

Everyone in the hall understood that Alethea launched a sudden attack to prevent the God's Punishment Witch from causing damage; since the demon might be able to control Zooley through the mind connection. Once it managed to make the God's Punishment Witch spread an anti-magic area, no matter how small it was, it would cause significant harm.

This was particularly true for most of the witches, who were not prepared to treat Zooley as an enemy.

In comparison to those witches, Alethea, a former commander of the Blessed Army, was much more experienced in fighting.

She acted right after the demon blustered out its threat and did not give it any chance to react. Zooley was knocked down by Alethea's main tentacle and appeared like a dummy during the whole process. She did not fight back or struggle as the other witches had expected. It seemed that the demon failed to control the God's Punishment Witch successfully.

"Did the demon's soul really sneak into Zooley's body?" After a while, Roland broke the silence.

"I've never encountered such a situation..." Camilla still looked frightened. "Mind Resonance is just a communication method. How come Kabradhabi could get out of its own body and enter into Zooley's body through the mind connection?"

"Are you sure?" Tilly frowned and asked.

"We can't be sure until Zooley takes the initiative to speak to us." Alethea loosened her grip on the God's Punishment Witch but still pinned her to the ground. "Souls can't survive without carriers, otherwise, we wouldn't have had to rely on these things left by the underground civilization. Although wiping out its

soul in the process is a possibility; it's also possible that it was able to successfully transfer its soul into Zooney's body. We have to prepare for the worst."

"I think I've a way to figure it out." Roland thought for a moment. "If I bring Zooney's light beam into my Dream World..."

"I can't agree to that!" Wendy immediately interrupted. "Your Majesty, you should avoid taking risks as much as possible. Your Majesty's safety is of utmost importance!"

"Yes, I agree with Wendy. What if the demon manages to occupy your body?" Nightingale added. "It's a real Senior Demon, not some loser on the Soul Battlefield!"

"I can control the risk." Roland slowed down to consider his countermeasures. "If the demon goes into the Dreamland with Zooney, it'll appear at a certain place. As long as we send a group of God's Punishment Witches into the Dream World to help me, we'll be able to kill it before it adapts to the new world. More importantly, the Dream World is different from the Mind Resonance. No matter what takes place in that world, it'll never affect the real world. Once I wake up, the time in the Dream World will stop and all visitors will be forced out. Given that, even if Zooney's soul is replaced by the demon's, I'll be able to get a clear idea of the current situation and come back safely."

"But..." Nightingale bit her lips and turned to look at Anna. "Come on, say something to persuade him."

"I agree with him," Anna said, which was totally beyond the other witches' expectations.

"Why?" Wendy and the other witches were stunned.

"Because he once did the same for me," Anna replied seriously. "If he had listened to the others and hadn't taken the risk to come to my rescue, I would have been hung a long time ago. I can't persuade myself to stop him from venturing to save Zooney. And I believe in his judgment. He knows that he isn't alone anymore."

She looked into Roland's eyes while talking and then they smiled at each other tacitly.

"..." Alethea remained silent for a long time. "I have to thank you on behalf of Zooney, regardless of the outcome."

"And I would like to hear Zooney express her thanks to me herself." Roland nodded.

"I'll go and pick out our most capable warriors," Pasha said gratefully.

"By the way, before we enter the Dreamland, please continue the Mind Resonance." He smirked. "Zooney asked us to keep the mind connection going until she gestures a 'stop'. If she's in a fight with the demon in the world of consciousness, she will probably win in the end."

"Hey, female, guess what your bug friends are going to do?"

Zooney raised her head to look at the Senior Demon and then looked at herself.

Her chest swelled slightly. Although she was still almost flat-chested, she thought this body looked much better than a rough male body. She could clearly feel her own hands and feet again, but since she hadn't

cut her hair for a long time, it covered her forehead now. She felt as if she had somehow entered the Dream World.

"Aha! They must think of you as an enemy and have you surrounded tightly." Kabradhabi mocked. "After they figure out what has happened, you've a 30% chance of being imprisoned. When that happens, you'll be tied to an iron bed and soaked in your own excretion like a dumb worm. Of course, you've a 70% chance of being executed right away too. After all, it's customary for you to sacrifice some of your own kind to prevent further losses; it's something you always did 400 years ago."

Zooey looked around and saw nothing except darkness. She wondered why she could see herself and the demon so clearly in such a dark place.

"Hey, did I scare you silly? Or, do you think that you can escape from this fight by remaining silent?" Kabradhabi sounded agitated. "My patience is limited. You'd better hurry up and understand the situation you're in. We won't die here, but if you devote all your energy to pleasing me, maybe I'll let you suffer less!"

"I've never expected a demon to talk such a load of crap before a fight." Zooey tore a strip of cloth from her sleeve and used it to tie up her hair. "If I were you, I'd never buzz in front of a bug, even if I mastered its language."

"Keep talking for now. Soon, you'll only be able to scream." The demon sneered. "I can feel the power of your soul. It's much stronger than the souls of most bugs. You'll make an excellent opponent for me. It's good to fight you in my last battle."

"And then? When I'm executed, what will happen to you? Did you pull me into this fight just because you want to vent your anger on me?"

"Yes, that's right. Fight! Kill! Torture! Upgrade! Bug, that's the attitude of an advanced species! Did you expect me to kneel on the ground and beg you for mercy?" Kabradhabi emitted a long, loud cry. "What's so scary about death? My soul will be taken in by the Fountain of Magic and when my species reaches the top, my soul will return to the world!"

"You'd better hurry up," Zooey said with a straight face. "They'll execute me any minute."

"Rest assured." Kabradhabi grinned grimly. "You don't understand the mysteries of magic. In this world of consciousness, time will become sluggish and controllable. Here, you'll feel that the blink of an eye is as long as several years. It's my last battle, so I'll do my best to satisfy myself."

Chapter 996: Fight with Pain

...

A long time.

But full of pleasure.

She felt as if she had returned to the battlefield from 400 years ago. But this time, she didn't need to worry about the pain of failure or watching her friends die in her arms. She was free from the heavy burden of responsibility.

Best of all, both she and the demon could feel pain.

The pain made the fighting real.

"Female... I have to say you've done a good job," Kabradhabi said as it threw Zooney's severed arm on the ground. "Although you're a bug, you're much stronger than most of your kind. I really didn't pick the wrong person. Your performance pleases me!"

"Really?" Zooney answered vaguely, then spat a piece of flesh from her mouth, "Unfortunately, your flesh tastes disgusting."

Was this the fifth day since the battle began...or the seventh day? It was difficult to estimate the passage of time without the sun, moon, and stars, so she could only roughly estimate it based on her body's natural reactions. Time here should be fixed in a cycle. For example, thirst and hunger would suddenly disappear when they became apparent and then reset. It was sensible to regard this cycle as a day. Otherwise, it would be impossible for people to fight for years. They would lose strength and be unable to move within days.

She felt a sharp pain from her arm where it had been cut off. It was obviously an unfair battle. The demon could create a long sword with its magic power, while she only had her arms, legs, and teeth.

But Zooney did not care about whether it was fair or not.

Because victory or failure was not important.

On the battlefield of old, she had to kill the enemy and protect herself, but not here. Here, the severed limbs would regenerate. No matter how severely she was wounded, she would not lose consciousness. Without death, the pain became eternal.

It was not necessary to use a sword to cause pain.

She noticed that this was the first time that the demon took the initiative to slow down the pace and talk.

"But your persistence is meaningless," the Senior Demon said, as it pressed on its wounded shoulder. The bloody wound quickly recovered. "Attacks like this are nothing to me. If you want to beat me with your teeth, I'm afraid you'll be disappointed. I'll knock out your teeth one by one and then make you swallow them. Get ready for it!"

"But you still feel the pain, don't you?" Zooney gasped and watched her arm recover. "By the way, I'd like to ask one more thing. Is that pain particularly familiar?"

"Female, what do you mean?"

No, I have to be patient. I can't let it see my intoxication, as it'll reduce the fun—

In spite of this, she still couldn't help chuckling. "When you were half dead, you should have felt it every day..." She pointed at the shoulder blade, "Being stabbed here and having your flesh cut away. With how much your body was shaking, you must have felt not so good. Ah, I forgot to tell you. The person who cared for you along the way was me."

"Bug—!" Kabradhabi was furious and lifted his sword, snarling, "I'll crush you!"

...

The sixteenth day, or maybe longer.

The dark ground was covered with blood, mostly reddish-brown, and some black-blue.

In addition, broken limbs, internal organs... and of course, teeth, were scattered everywhere. Although the lost parts would regenerate before long, the blood and scattered parts would not disappear. In this environment, they accidentally slipped again and again. But because of this, Zoey got two weapons—one of her thigh bones and half of the demon's spine.

The former was like a short hammer, and the latter could be used as a sword. As long as they didn't directly hit the demon's magic sword, they were quite useful to her.

400 years was long enough to make her an expert in all kinds of weapons.

And her favorite place to attack was still its shoulder.

Pain was sometimes unrelated to the size of the wound.

"If you're tired, you might take a break now," Zoey said, hanging the spine around her waist and moving her numb wrists. "After all, you have to torture me for a long time. It would be better to take your time."

"..." The demon did not respond for the first time. Its chest heaved as it was breathing deeply, and its scarlet eyes stared at the Extraordinary. The initial contempt faded from its human-like face.

Their relative strength had not changed. The various abilities of a Senior Demon had ensured its superior position in this fight. Zoey needed to pay several times the cost in order to strike her opponent. Once she made a mistake, she would suffer for a long time. It was not unusual that her fingers were broken and her belly was torn apart. Even so, the atmosphere gradually changed.

Zoey did not take any notice of its silence. "Let me ask... Is this space created by you?"

The demon probably needed to rest for a moment. Kabradhabi slowly said, "This is a stream of consciousness, a combination of magic power and the soul. It doesn't need anyone to create it. It's hard to understand for a bug like you. Almost no one has a chance to enter the stream of consciousness—"

"I've seen a bigger one, which was as complete as a real world," she interrupted. "There were trees, sky, and earth. It's not like here. There is nothing here."

"Nonsense, female!" the demon roared, "You have no idea how much magic power it consumes to construct entities in the stream of consciousness, let alone a complete world! Only the Fountain of Magic can do that!"

"It's the Fountain of Magic again... It's just like the domain of deities, an illusion. No one has been there, but they talk as if they've seen it." Zooney took off the spine bone and held it with her hand.

"This is engraved in the heritage. But you would know nothing about it!"

"Then can you elaborate further and come up with some evidence to convince me?."

"Female, do you think I'm a fool?" Kabradhabi was furious. "How can I, lord Kabradhabi, be deceived by such a clumsy technique—"

Before it finished its words, a "spear" pierced through its head.

The white spear was the spine thrown by Zooney.

"Since you don't want to say anything, then that's the end of the rest. When you want to talk about it, we'll take a rest again." She held the thigh bone and rushed toward the staggering demon.

...

Dozens of days later.

"Why," asked Kabradhabi, who had completely lost its original momentum. It held its Magic Sword in front of its chest, staring at Zooney as if she were a monster, "Don't you fear pain?"

"The war 400 years ago made me accustomed to it, while hibernating for 400 years made me forget it. If you regained something which had always accompanied you, would you fear it?" Zooney raised her lips. At this moment, she no longer had to conceal herself. "In fact, I have to thank you. You've compensated for the feelings which King Roland can't give me."

"You... are crazy!"

"This is only a brief moment compared to hundreds of years. Now, it's your turn to please me."

When Zooney once again stabbed her fingers into the demon's chest, the sight in front of her suddenly twisted. The blood, flesh, and body parts all turned into nothingness, and a strong sensation of dizziness overwhelmed her.

When she opened her eyes again, she saw the hall dome of Third Border City.

Chapter 997: Suppression

"She, she woke up!"

Zooney heard a cry of astonishment and then saw several sharp swords held to her neck.

"Don't move!" Alethea's voice also appeared in her mind, "You'd better stay still until we confirm who you are."

"So that was why..." She noticed that her hands and feet were tied with iron locks, and she was lying on the stone bed where the demon originally was. Her partners were wielding swords, standing guard around her. She thought, "This is indeed a wise decision. It's quite necessary to confine me before

they're clear whether it's me or the demon who occupies the shell of the God's Punishment soldier. They did not ask for my identity. Instead, they decided to make the judgment by themselves, which is a mature decision."

After all, since the demon has occupied my body, any answer might be a lie.

If Kabradhabi did not make it up, the dozens of days in the dark stream of consciousness was equivalent to only a few minutes in reality. It must have been Alethea who made the correct judgments and took countermeasures in such a short period of time.

With such partners, I really have nothing to worry about.

When Zooley was about to close her eyes and leave it to them, what she saw in the crowd made her frown.

What are they doing?

She saw another stone bed beneath the magic core. Though she could not see who was lying on it, the answer was almost self-evident as the witches were crowding beside it.

She soon came up with a possibility—

Do they plan to confirm my identity through King Roland's Dream World?

No, no one here can force Roland to do it. If it's real, then it can only have been prompted by himself.

But... this is too inappropriate! How can Alethea agree with this plan? Doesn't she know what the mortal king means to the God's Punishment Witches? What's more, according to the demon's words, their understanding of magic power is far better than ours. If the Dream World is also built by magic power, then it's a risky move to allow a Senior Demon into it.

I shouldn't have praised her!

Thinking of this, Zooley could no longer keep quiet. She cried, "Wait. Don't open the Dream World. I'm Zooley!"

Alethea took a look at her but didn't respond.

"Listen, Kabradhabi can revise the effect of magic power to a certain extent. If you let it enter the Dream World, we don't know what will happen. Wake His Majesty up. Quickly!"

"Oh? Really? To be honest, lying on that stone board is chilling. If I don't put a quilt on it, I really can't fall asleep. But if you were the demon, you could also say that."

Suddenly, a familiar voice echoed behind her.

Zooley tried to raise her neck and look backward. Then she saw a grey-haired man— It was Roland Wimbleton, the mortal king.

She immediately felt relieved.

It turns out that he has not yet lied on it.

Great.

For some reason, her senseless body felt a hint of warmth and satisfaction, as if it were no longer empty, though she did not know how to describe it. Compared with the pain which reminded her the suffering she'd been through, this completely different feeling made her feel calm and contented.

Zoey lightly sighed and said, "Indeed, if the demon occupied this body, it might see this information. So my method is very simple. Just let Ms. Camilla reconnect the demon and me."

"I... I did notice a soul movement just now, so I suspended the Mind Resonance." Noticing everyone staring at her, Camilla Dary hesitatingly replied, "But I can't tell which soul belongs to the demon."

"Are you sure that you want to enter the Mind Resonance state?" Roland asked.

"Yes, Your Majesty. There isn't a third soul here. Once it admits, you'll know the truth."

"Make the demon... admit?" The crowd did not know how to respond.

"No matter what happens, it won't get worse anyway," Pasha said. "It doesn't matter if you try. If Zoey is on the other side, I'll be able to tell."

"In that case," Roland looked around and quickly made a decision. "Connect them again."

The familiar sensation quickly enveloped her. Zoey directly transmitted her thoughts to Kabradhabi's mind, "I said before. I won't stop until I'm satisfied."

"Female—don't be too proud!" Almost at the same time, she heard the angry voice of the demon.

"If you don't want to talk about this, then I'll change a topic. You should know what I am thinking now?"

"Well, why should I admit? Use your own method to tell." The demon sneered, "I would like to see how you'll distinguish between different souls without knowledge of the stream of consciousness."

"If you don't say it, then I'll just go directly," Zoey said carelessly.

"Wait, wait... What does that mean?"

"Of course, going to your side. I can use the resonance channel to transfer my soul and enter the stream of consciousness. I suddenly realize I can also do that. Though you keep saying we're bugs, actually, the Extraordinaries are similarly sensitive to the flow of magic power. Even if I can't explain it, I can try to imitate it." She chuckled and said, "Do you remember what I said before? If you don't tell me, then it's the end of your rest."

The voice of Kabradhabi suddenly changed. "No... female, I mean... wait!"

"Even if you transfer again, it doesn't matter. I can still catch you easily. After all, there are just two shells." Zoey said carelessly, "Well, this time it'll be far more than a few dozen days. Are you ready?"

Mind Resonance did not mean you couldn't lie, especially when one side was in a weak situation. When the demon felt her overwhelming evil intent, it finally closed its mouth.

A moment later, it grinned—using the shell of the crippled God’s Punishment soldier. Though it sounded a bit panicky, it still tried its best to bluff, "Enough! You bugs, how dare you to force lord Kabradhabi! But it can’t be helped, this time, I’ll concede that to you!"

"Keep quiet. Don’t scare His Majesty," Zoey said unhappily through her consciousness.

"Ahem, female—" The demon was choked by her words, "You’re trampling on the dignity of the senior race!"

"You’ve had enough rest?"

"You—" It glared at the Extraordinary hatefully and decided to swallow what it wanted to say. It lowered its voice and said bitterly, "Don’t think that you can always win. Wars like this are just trivial setbacks for us! You low-grade bugs, you have no idea what’s on the other side of the mainland. The army of Sky-sea Realm is engulfing the land little by little, trying to turn the whole world into an abyss. If it were not to stop them, you, with such poor power, would have been crushed into ashes by us 400 years ago!"

Chapter 998: A Real Strong Power

What Kabradhabi said made everyone frown.

According to it, demons were waging war on two fronts and the enemy that humanity had never even met was their chief opponent.

That meant, during the previous Battles of Divine Will, the demons had only sent a small part of their army to battle humanity. Knowing this, Roland and the witches, who had been quite confident about the war, started to feel less optimistic.

There were four species depicted in the giant paintings in the Divine Land and the underground civilization had already been eliminated. Given that, Roland speculated that the so-called "Sky-sea Realm" was the homeland of the species in the fourth picture. It was the most mysterious among the four and was a portrait of some deep-sea eyeballs.

Did demons wage a war against the monsters in the sea right after they defeated the underground civilization and seized its relic? And they simultaneously managed to crack down on mankind in the Land of Dawn.

If it’s true, it’s no wonder that the Senior Demon showed utter contempt for the witches.

As for the common people without any magic power, Kabradhabi probably thinks of us as nothing more than useless weeds.

On the other hand, Roland was clear that the demon might have lied to them. Kabradhabi was an unyielding fighter. It had led its troop to penetrate deep into the artillery squad and had utilized the Mind Resonance to invade Zoey’s body. Obviously, it knew how to mask its intentions and to never give up fighting, even in the face of great adversity. Since no one was able to check whether it was lying, it might have been bluffing, trying to incite panic.

Everyone looked grave. Roland knew that he needed to bring the situation back under his control as soon as possible.

He shrugged and pretended to feel at ease. He looked at Alethea.

"So... this handicapped warrior is the demon?"

"Yeah, I guess so. I don't know how Zooney did this, but she'd never say anything like that," Alethea replied.

"Good, you saved me the trouble of taking a nap." Roland nodded to Zooney. "You can eat whatever you want in tonight's trip to the Dreamland"

"Thank you, Your Majesty." Zooney's lips could not help curling into a smile, but soon her expression returned to normal. "Unfortunately, this guy is already accustomed to our way of thinking. Although it's still unable to flexibly control the body, we can't read his real thoughts through Mind Resonance that easily now."

"It's not your fault. After all, no one has pried deeply into a Senior Demon's mind before. It's natural for you to misjudge the situation."

"Demon? You still call us by such a ridiculous name." Kabradhabi sniggered. "You look upon the other species as evil incarnate without realizing that you yourselves are nothing but backward barbarians. Your good days will end soon. When the Fountain of Magic appears again, you'll die out!"

All the people looked at each other simultaneously, since the Fountain of Magic mentioned by the demon reminded them of a thing in their legend.

"Is the Fountain of Magic... the Bloody Moon?" asked Roland.

"You bugs always see the surface." The Senior Demon did not give him a definite answer.

"Is the red sphere made of magic power?" Agatha interjected. "But that wouldn't make sense. I've seen the Red Moon with my own eyes. No matter what it is, it's way too far away from us. You said the final winner would open the door to the Fountain of Magic. It's impossible unless you can build a ladder to the heavens."

Kabradhabi snorted and turned its head away without explaining anything.

"Where's the Sky-sea Realm?"

The demon refused to respond.

"Did you destroy the underground civilization?"

The demon still remained silent.

"Is your new technology part of the inheritance of the underground civilization? I mean the deformed creature that is capable of growing out black pillars?"

"Save it, bug." Kabradhabi finally opened its mouth to speak. "I've already told you all that I can say. As for the things that I can't say, you'll never force me to tell you, even if you send this female to—" The

demon paused for a while and glanced at Zooey. "I won't give you any more information! If you want to kill me, you'd better hurry up. Otherwise, you'll be eliminated by Emperor Hect Zod. And I, Kabradhabi, will be reborn in the Fountain of Magic!"

Now that the interrogation had hit a bottleneck, Roland decided to stop questioning the Senior Demon and leave it to the Taquila witches. He believed that they would be able to get it to talk someday, for its soul had already been transferred into a disabled God's Punishment Warrior.

With this thought in mind, Roland said with his hands laid out, "You don't want to talk about sensitive things, so how about we change the subject. You said that your last defeat was just a trivial setback for your army, so how powerful are you? What about the army of the Sky-sea Realm? Are they stronger than you? And you mentioned the Sky Lord just now. I want to know how powerful the lord is. Is he a match for a Transcendent? These things aren't confidential, are they?"

Given the demon's character, Roland was confident that it would never miss such a perfect opportunity to boast of their strength.

"Oh, bug..." As Roland had expected, Kabradhabi said loudly. "I can tell you. Our power is far beyond your imagination! Do you know why we call you bugs? It's because the difference between an advanced race and a backward species is like that between birds and bugs. It's determined by the nature of magic power. At the other end of this continent, on the border of our territory and the Sky-sea Realm, our soldiers are countless. When we march together, the mountains tremble. Our enemies from the Sky-sea Realm are as strong as us. Otherwise, how could you have survived until now?"

Kabradhabi paused for a moment and then continued. "As for the Transcendents, if you're referring to the most powerful females, they could have been counted as the Sky Lord's rivals in the past, but now, the lord has enhanced its strength and become a prudent and smart commander. If it had led the army in the last battle to fight you, it would have been able to drain the blood from all of you by itself! Bug, when you hear that the Sky Lord is coming, you'd better kneel down and beg for mercy. This way, you can die faster and suffer less!"

Roland automatically dismissed the demons' exaggeration and captured several implicit clues in its words. For the demon army, logistics is always a major obstacle to their movement. Without Red Mist, they can't go anywhere. Therefore, such a large demon army must fight close to their black stone tablets.

Surprisingly, the army from the Sky-sea Realm can combat the demons in the Red Mist and drag the demon army's main forces into a quagmire of war. That means, they aren't just "as strong as" the demons. The Senior Demon apparently doesn't want to talk too much about this matter, which suggests about its attitude toward the Sky Lord and its army.

In addition, it never called the enemies from the Sky-sea Realm bugs or worms, which means that the sea monsters have already "upgraded" themselves. Here's a glaring contradiction. The Senior Demon claims that they are also an advanced race, but up until now, we've only known of one race in the Battle of Divine Will getting eliminated. Wait a moment, Kabradhabi never said that demons wiped out the underground civilization. It just said that each species had to go to the Sky-sea Realm to get a shard. Something is missing here.

When the Senior Demon was still crowing about how mighty its race was, Roland interrupted it.

"In fact, you don't know true power."

"You—" Kabradhabi pulled a long face. "Bug, what do you know?"

"A real, strong power, won't bring darkness to the world. Instead, it'll dispel the myth, be willing to burn itself to illuminate and warm the world... just like the sun."

"What... exactly are you talking about?"

"It's simple." Roland cleared his throat. "You guys are so powerful, so why don't you light the fire?"

The demon seemed at a loss when Roland stood up and left with the witches. He walked toward the gate leading out of the hall, back straight, without looking back.

Chapter 999: Witness the Glory

Roland and the witches were having a meeting in the castle's conference hall in Neverwinter.

Everyone looked worried, especially Agatha and Phyllis. They could not feel good after hearing so many subversive ideas about the demons and the world itself from Kabradhabi.

In this war that had lasted for hundreds of years, thousands of people had been killed. Human beings had already lost the vast majority of their territory and shrunk into a corner of the Land of Dawn. Now, the witches had discovered that mankind was not demons' rival. On the other side of the continent, there was a place called Sky-sea Realm, and the monsters from that place were as strong as demons. They entangled the main forces of demons and thus gave human beings an opportunity to survive.

It was a terrible blow to the faith of the Taquila witches.

Seeing the grim-faced ancient witches, the members of the Witch Union and Sleeping Spell also felt oppressed by worry.

In the previous battle, they had taken the initiative to attack the demons' outpost and had achieved a remarkable victory with little cost. It was the most splendid record in this war for human beings. Nevertheless, lots of serendipitous stuff had come into play in this battle. The demons had not had a clear idea of their opponent, and the First Army had happened to see through their trap. Thus, they took this chance to defeat the demons using the combat mode that they were best at. That meant this success could not be copied. If casualties increased significantly during the war, human beings who had already lost lots of land and population would have a slim hope of winning the Battle of Divine Will.

"Perhaps Kabradhabi just made up a story to deceive us," said Wendy, who felt that she needed to say something to boost everyone's morale. "After all, no one has ever been to the other side of the continent. Who knows if it's true or not? I think we'd better not think too much before we can confirm it. How about you?"

No one answered.

Agatha cast a thankful gaze at Wendy. "Although Kabradhabi might have exaggerated the facts purposely, I don't think it was lying, especially when it just woke up after the Soul Transfer. At that time, it could hardly control its body, let alone weigh every word before saying them out. Zooey should be able to feel it as well. The things it mentioned at the beginning turned out to be consistent with the story it told us later. To act so naturally in front of us, it had to prepare the story in advance and train itself for a long time. Could it possibly do that there?"

"So, you mean it told us the truth about the legacy shard?" Scroll asked, with a thoughtful expression on her face.

"Yes. If I understand Kabradhabi correctly, it told us that any species could upgrade themselves with the legacy shard, namely the relics of gods." Agatha explained slowly. "If demons are able to defeat us once and for all, why didn't they try their best to destroy us and seize our relic? There's only one explanation. They really can't."

Many people agreed with Agatha on this point. During the first Battle of Divine Will, when demons had been uncivilized barbarians, the human kingdoms failed to unite together to fight the enemy. The battle had lasted for decades and during that period of time, the underground civilization had tried to make contact with mankind. During the second Battle of Divine Will, when the Bloody Moon had come to the world for the second time, demons had become much stronger and had successfully driven the Union out of the Fertile Plains.

If the "upgrade" could bring significant advantage to demons, they should've done their best to eliminate human beings and seize their relic as soon as possible.

"We really underestimated demons," said Phyllis, who was overwhelmed with remorse. "For the past 400 years, the Union just focused on our familiar places in the Land of Dawn without paying any attention to the world outside. Now, we know little about the other side of the continent, let alone the Sky-sea Realm."

"Oh? What does the other side of this continent look like?" Roland asked curiously.

"I've only read about it in some ancient books. It's said to be an extremely barren land of numerous mountains and cliffs. Its average altitude is much higher than the Land of Dawn," Phyllis recalled. "Tens of kilometers across the sea, there's another continent, but actually these two continents are connected by a lofty mountain range which is surrounded by the sea. Only when the tides are low, can one see the mountain. Most of the time, the tides are high and half of the mountain is submerged in the sea. According to the legend, demons came to the Land of Dawn through this mountain."

"Wait, it sounds familiar. I think I've heard it from..." Roland touched his chin and wondered. Suddenly, a bolt of lightning flashed across his mind!

The ancient witch's description reminded Roland of Thunder's findings in the Shadow Waters, which included a seaside plateau, a vast cliff and a huge stone gate embedded in the cliff, though Phyllis did not mention a gate like that. "Did Thunder's exploration team somehow see the continent opposite to the Land of Dawn?" Roland thought.

That's interesting. More than half of the Land of Dawn lies to the northwest of Neverwinter, but the Shadow Sea is located in the east. How could the exploration team see the undiscovered continent

opposite to the Land of Dawn through a telescope? As long as this planet is a sphere, they could at most see the sky above that continent no matter how advanced the telescope is. How come they could directly observe such a faraway land? Something must be wrong here.

He noticed that Tilly, a member of Thunder's exploration team, was looking at him contemplatively. Obviously, she also thought of the wonders she had seen in the underwater stone tower in the Shadow Islands ruins.

Roland wondered. The building on the Shadow Islands isn't constructed by the Union, but it's apparently a watchtower overseeing the continent which is deemed to be the homeland of demons. Who's the owner of the building?

For my country and my people, I have to figure it out and thoroughly investigate the Shadow Islands ruins. I must give this mission to Thunder before he goes to the sea. Instead of having a quick glance at the place, he needs to carefully look into this problem this time.

"Your Majesty?"

Roland had been deeply absorbed in thoughts for a long time. When he heard someone calling him, he stopped wondering and found that Agatha was looking at him sympathetically. "Are you alright?"

"Ah... I was just thinking about something." He waved his hand.

"Please don't worry too much. I know this news causes stress for you, but we still have hope," The Ice Witch said in a soft voice. "When I just woke up from the Frozen Coffin, you told me human beings were going to defeat demons... Now, I still firmly believe it, even if it requires hard work of several generations."

"Yes," Phyllis echoed this sentiment. "We are so close to the Taquila ruins now. Once we destroy the demons' base there, they won't get the opportunity to build obelisks and will have to wait at least another 400 years to eliminate us. Even if human beings lose the war in the end, it's not your fault. Actually, you've done much better than the Three Chiefs."

Roland blinked his eyes in astonishment.

He realized that he must have been frowning when he had been thinking about the Shadow Islands ruins and his facial expression had made the witches believe that he was terrified by Kabradhabi's story.

He found the witches were just trying to comfort and encourage him.

He could not help shaking his head and chuckled. "It's the worst situation: curling up in a corner all my life and leaving the problem to our later generations. That's not my plan. After all... I probably can't live that long. I'm more interested in defeating all the competitors and solving the mystery by myself. It's such great fun, isn't it?"

"Your Majesty..." Most of the witches seemed confused except Anna, who looked at Roland smilingly.

"Since you guys still remember I said that human beings were going to defeat demons." Roland looked at Phyllis. "Do you still remember another thing I mentioned?"

"A real strong power won't bring darkness to the world. Instead, it'll dispel the myth and be willing to burn itself to light up and warm the world... I wasn't joking with Kabradhabi." Roland did not give the witches any time to respond and continued. "Faced with a mighty power like the sun, everything, including demons, will be burnt to cinders. You'll be able to witness such a power together with me."

Chapter 1000: Sisters

A fire was blazing merrily in a stove, casting a ruddy glow over the floor of the room.

Azima felt warm in her house. She watched snowflakes drifting in the north wind outside the window while listening to the crackling of the flames in the fireplace. In the past, when winter had come, she would have suffered severe frostbite on her hands and her hand skin would have chapped very easily. It was a memory from her childhood. Back then, she had had to rummage through rubbish in search of food every winter. After moving to the Sleeping Island, her hands got even worse because of the long-term exposure to salty seawater.

After all these years, she was already accustomed to the pain of frostbite. For her, it was nothing compared to the misery of being a tramp on the streets. However, right now, there were only a few shallow cracks on her fingers. She did not feel any pain or see any blood in them. She enjoyed this pain-free winter. She had not had such a comfortable experience for years.

She came to understand that the living environment of Neverwinter was exceptionally good and even ordinary houses were much better here than their counterparts in other towns.

For example, a thick mortar was applied to both sides of the walls of this brick house and each corner of the window was closely connected to the bricks. No matter how strong the snowstorm was outside, the people inside the house would never be affected. Without such a sturdy house, the fire could hardly warm up the whole room. If Azima was now in an ordinary residence of Valencia, she would hear a whistle of a wind blowing through cracks of the door and the window and many other clefts in the house.

In addition, there was a tunnel inside the fireplace, which was connected to the bedroom adjoining this living room. With such a heat supply pipeline, the bed would be warm when she and her sisters put out the fire and went to bed at night.

And those designs were only a small part of the new things she discovered in Neverwinter. Similar details were everywhere in this city. The longer she lived here, the more she wondered. "Maybe they didn't build this city to survive at this place."

"They built it this way in order to enjoy their lives."

"As for why they built it in the Western Region, the highest-hit area during the Months of Demons, it must be because of the strong contrast. In a place where all year is springtime, one would not feel anything special in a warm room. By contrast, in a place of ice and snow, one would be deeply impressed and satisfied by the warmth. The must think that only a seemingly impossible thing is worth doing and take pride in such an achievement."

For a moment, she really believed this speculation.

"The soup is ready. Let's have dinner." Doris walked out of the kitchen while holding a pot of soup and then she placed it on the low table in the living room.

"Thank you." Azima handed a cushion to Doris and then sat down at the table.

There were two dishes and one soup. All of them used bird beak mushrooms as the main ingredient. These fleshy and juicy mushrooms were a specialty of the Western Region. They were tasty and easy to cook. They only needed a little salt instead of lots of seasonings and they did not require a special cooking method. More importantly, they were the least expensive ingredient in Neverwinter and were as cheap as wheat.

"I bought a lot of mushrooms at a clearance sale and stored them in our room," said Doris, happily. "Even if we can't find enough food in the winter, these mushrooms will be enough for us to fill our stomachs until the spring, though they may become less tasty after a long time."

Azima scooped up some soup with her spoon. Under the reflection of the fire, the oil floating on the soup's surface shone with a golden color and looked quite alluring. When she put a spoon into her mouth, she felt its aroma fill her mouth instantly. After that, the warm soup flowed down all the way into her stomach and warmed her entire abdomen.

The soup was as delicious as before, but now she had no appetite.

After taking two spoonfuls of the soup, Azima put down her small bowl.

"Is there anything wrong?" Doris quickly noticed that Azima seemed to be a little different today.

"I'm wondering... whether my decision was wrong." After a long silence, Azima whispered. "It's my own decision to leave Neverwinter, but because of it, everyone lost the chance of having a better life together with their families in this city. If Whitepear didn't quit her job in the Sleeping Spell, she would now live in a big house equipped with a heating system instead of this small house that doesn't allow us to go about freely in our daily life."

"Why did you suddenly say that..." Doris was stunned and then soothed Azima. "No matter how small our house is, it's able to shelter us from wind and rain. When their relatives have enough money to pay the minimum down payment, they will move out. It's not as good as the house of the Sleeping Spell, but I think it's already good enough for two people to live in. Think about our old days on the streets—"

"But it's different now!" Azima interrupted Doris anxiously.

Azima had been feeling frustrated recently. She overestimated her personal ability and failed to assess the situation correctly. In the past, she had led her sisters to search for food in rubbish and snatch food from jaws of wild dogs, but now she refused to do anything like that. She did not want to give Tilly and her witches any chance to laugh at them, even though her sisters might not mind leading such a life.

She had submitted lots of job applications to the City Hall like ordinary residents of the city, but none of them got approved. Literacy was a key requirement in the job descriptions of most positions, and well-paid jobs usually demanded a primary education diploma. She could not meet those requirements and wanted to work in some construction projects or in the Furnace Area, but the Ministry of Construction and the Ministry of Industry only recruited adult males. The City Hall clerk told her that she should go to school to finish her studies first if she wanted to get a promising career.

Among the six sisters, only Doris and Whitepear had jobs. The former was employed by the Witch Union. She further processed Mystery Moon's magnetized copper rods with her enchantment and earned about 30 or 40 silver royals a day, almost as much as the witches living in the castle. But it was just a part-time job. Sometimes, she only worked one day in a week.

Whitepear worked in a tailor's shop as an ordinary worker. Considering she did not have to use her magic power in this position, she earned the average salary. According to the number of her working days, she usually earned 15 or 20 silver royals a month.

The other sisters were also unemployed just like Azima.

In other words, Doris and Whitepear had to afford the living expenses of the six sisters.

For this reason, Azima felt guilty for the cozy life she had now. She had firmly refused Wendy's invitation because she wanted to prove to Nightingale that she was not a weak person and could live on her own without relying on the Sleeping Spell. She felt embarrassed by the current situation.

That was why she sounded so impatient when talking to Doris.

She felt regret right as soon as she interrupted Doris. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to..."

"It's okay." Doris held Azima's hands. "I know how you feel and I want to tell you it wasn't your own decision to leave the Sleeping Spell. We also agreed with you. It's not your fault. As for the living expenses, please don't mind it. You've done so much for us and now it's time for us to pay you back."

"You don't owe me a thing. I helped you without expecting to receive anything in return."

"That's the same for us. See what I mean?" Doris blinked and said.

"But..." Azima did not know what to say at this moment since she was moved deeply by Doris' honesty and sincerity. She had not felt so touched for many years and could not adapt to it at the moment, but she soon managed to control herself and reminded herself that as the leader of the sisters, she should never mention those stupid things again.

At this moment, someone knocked on the door.

"Who's it?" She hurriedly turned her head, pulled her hands back and stood up, trying to cover her feelings.

"It's me, Wendy," the person outside answered. "His Majesty wants to talk to you."