

Alpha's Rejected Mate Returns as Queen

Chapter 161 The Lost Stranger

Linda's POV:
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The wind and snow outside had stopped a long time ago.

I followed the team onto the vast snowfield. For a moment, I thought I had returned to my childhood, holding a hot potato soup and going to visit my father with my mother.

However, the piercing dark yellow uniform of the team members pulled me back to reality. My hometown had long been destroyed just after I moved away with my mother.

I wasn't sure if my mother regretted it. After all, at least she could stay by her lover's side. Living in seclusion was peaceful and sweet for her.

However, I would often think of my life in the past, the strict mothers and teachers in the public academy, the few classmates, the snow that never stopped, and the snowmen we piled together in the world of ice and snow.

My father loved my mother, but I didn't think he loved me. Not all creatures have the consciousness of raising their offspring. Perhaps my father's ancestors had the blood of the sirens, so they ignored me like the race that abandoned their eggs in the sea.

My mother loved me, but she loved my father more, so I gradually disappeared from their secluded life.

I wanted to return to my hometown to see my mother, teachers, and classmates.

But my home was gone, and it was only an empty shell.

I had nowhere to go now.

"Linda, are you okay?"

It was too obvious that I was lost in thought, and it attracted the attention of others. The girl called Selma looked at me worriedly. Only then did I realize that I had unknowingly fallen to the end of the line, seven to eight meters behind the people in front of me.

"I'm fine. I just slipped away. This is so unprofessional. I shouldn't have made such a mistake. I'm sorry."

I adjusted my expression in a practiced manner. As expected, Selma accepted my explanation and did not suspect anything.

I felt a faint heat in my chest. This was the 'mark' responding to the Lord's power.

I wasn't sure if anything had happened to Frank, but I hoped not. He was a good man. Although he was a little strict, he was very considerate of his team members. He took great care of Linda, a young team member, be it the original one or me.

I hoped Frank was fine, but no one knew what the Lord was thinking.

I was a little regretful now. Perhaps I shouldn't have dragged Frank into danger. I was always regretful; it didn't matter whether I was young or now.

However, my regrets were insignificant, and I could not change anything.

The pine forest gradually appeared in front of us.

Compared to the earlier blurry glimpse at the window, it had spread out a lot. This was the result of the Lord's power gradually seeping out. The seal was becoming looser and looser, and Aunt Mullwica's soul had probably reached its limit in the struggle with her son and the Lord.

When I thought of Aunt Mullwica, I fell into a daze again.

This powerful, gentle, legendary, and sorrowful witch, the Eye of Insight was a gift from fate and a poison that killed her.

Her life was as dramatic as ancient Greece mythology. Lovers turned against each other, mother and son became enemies, and in the end, she had no choice but to use her soul as a shackle. While trapped in evil, she was entangled with rebellious children until her soul was destroyed.

Why did the powerful witches always meet such a tragic fate? Was it a quirk of the gods? Or was the power itself the source of the tragedy?

I couldn't help but look at Dorothy. She was following Selma closely. Her expression was serious yet ignorant. She had no idea about the tribulations that she was about to face.

They looked like they were carved out of the same mold.

It was as if I had returned to the time when I had just finished school at the public academy. A girl who looked 80% similar to Selma was laughing as she rushed toward the endless snow.

She always liked to build snowmen, two big and two small ones, even though she and her mother were the only ones in the house.

Did Dorothy like to build snowmen too?

I didn't know. Things changed with time. The power of fate could wash away all the past. Perhaps other than that similar face, Dorothy and her have long since become separate individuals unrelated to each other.

Those who pried into fate would eventually be played by fate. God had lousy taste, hiding high up in the clouds and playing with the lives of puppets like us for fun.

I suddenly thought, 'Could everything happening now be part of fate's calculations? Every step we took on the snow, every breath we exhaled, even the direction we moved forward, the spread of our teams, was everything a script that fate had written long ago?'

Those who thought that they could change their fate, were they also within the expectations of fate?

I couldn't find the answer because I was just a small fry. I had to do whatever fate arranged for me. Perhaps my obsession was just a persona that had been arranged long ago.

Even if it was the mighty Lord, in the face of fate, was he the chess player who controlled the chessboard?

A lonely environment makes one easily sentimental. I shouldn't be thinking about this. It was not beneficial to what I was doing.

However, I was starting to feel lost. From the moment I met Dorothy... What exactly did I want? Could my obsession be considered an obsession?

Even I wasn't sure what kind of ending I was looking forward to, so what could that Lord bring me?

162 The Demonic Mark

Linda's POV:

However, there was no room for regret now. From the moment I took over the identity of 'Linda' all I could do was to become the Lord's pawn.

Until everything was over, or until they died early.

The pine forest was right in front of us, and the mark on my chest was getting hotter.

It was as if it wanted to burn through my muscles, corrode my bones, and rip open my heart to see where my empty heart wanted to go.

Selma Payne's POV:

This was a strange forest that exuded an ominous aura. On the surface, it looked like a pile of ordinary pine trees, but the sharp pine needles as steel and the scars that looked like ghosts crying and wolves howling all indicated a hidden evil secret here.

We all knew about the legend of the pine tree and the devil, so we can conclude that this place must be related to the devil's seal.

An evil solid aura. Dorothy's expression was solemn as she touched the rough bark. It was almost a textbook symbol. It seemed that this demon was quite confident. He had no intention of hiding it.

I only looked at the mark on the tree bark for a few more seconds before I heard a faint cry of misery. I quickly looked away. "Can you feel the seal?"

Unfortunately, I didn't see it. Dorothy shook her head and closed his eyes. But I saw something. I believed it was a sign of attraction between the same kind. This meant another witch with the Eye of Insight was in this mountain range. It should be Mullwica who guarded the seal.

The good news was that this place should only be a pine forest formed by the overflowing power of the demon. It had the ability to confuse people, but there were no demons in the end, so it was not very dangerous.

The bad news was that the Eye of Insight gave me the feeling that something was wrong. It was like a telegraph that existed somewhere was trying its best to send a telegraph message to my machine, but it was already on the verge of destruction. The signal was weak, and the password was chaotic. It was useless except to prove its existence.

I immediately understood the severity of the situation. Mullwica was on the verge of dissipating. She couldn't suppress the seal any longer!

"That's right." Dorothy nodded. "We have to find the seal before Mullwica dissipates. Otherwise, there will be no turning back."

Whether it was a powerful demon or an irrational mother slayer, they were both big troubles for us.

Moreover, there were human settlements at the foot of the mountain. If the innocent were to be affected, it would inevitably attract the participation of human forces. By then, it would be a chaotic battle and difficult to end it well.

"Everyone, follow closely. Pay attention to your companions, and don't fall behind." I gave the order, "Enter the forest!"

On the surface, this was just a tiny and ordinary forest, but after entering it, one would find that it was a whole different world.

The sunlight suddenly dimmed. The pine trees were not very lush, but the crisscrossed, withered branches were like a lampshade that firmly blocked out the sunlight. It was as if it was evening in the forest. Although it was not so dark that one could not see their fingers in front of them, they could not see the blurry shadows in the distance.

The place was utterly silent as if there was nothing but a vast expanse of pine trees. The sound of the team members stepping on the snow was infinitely amplified, and in such a quiet environment, it appeared a little terrifying and strange for no reason.

After walking for about ten minutes, a huge pine tree blocked our way.

It was as thick as four people hugging each other, and its top could not be seen. Its branches were withered and twisted as if they had been burned by fire. Its vitality had dissipated, leaving only a rotten shell.

“I can sense a strong evil aura,” Dorothy said. “Don’t get close to that place. There’s something strange about this tree.”

“Everyone, stop! Don’t get close to the tree!” I ordered the members behind.

I noticed that Linda’s expression was strange. She was hunched over, her hands were covering her chest, and she was gasping for air. She looked like an asthmatic patient, her face was pale, and her lips were purple.

“How are you feeling?” I immediately helped her lie down, but Linda couldn’t answer me.

The medical team member, Kerner, examined Linda, but he did not find anything strange. Linda never had heart disease or asthma. “I think it is because of the evil power, and something has contaminated her.”

“Send her back to the base.” I immediately made a decision. “Let the werewolf grandmasters examine her. This is no longer something we can handle.”

At this moment, Linda suddenly screamed and started to struggle uncontrollably. Even though four or five people held her down, she still managed to break free. She pulled her clothes off, and under the thick clothes, we were surprised to find something shining on her chest.

At this time, she couldn’t care about the difference between men and women because that scorching light seemed to be eroding Linda’s skin. We had no choice but to expose her chest. Dorothy hurriedly analyzed the principles behind it, trying to alleviate her situation.

“It’s some kind of mark,” Dorothy concluded. “Judging from the power and aura it’s emitting; it comes from a demon.” *innread.com*

163 Bloodthirsty

Selma Payne’s POV:

But this didn’t alleviate the problem at all. It was useless for us to know what it was because we couldn’t find a way to deal with it.

I’d never seen it before. Dorothy’s brows were tightly knitted together. It was clear that she was searching through her memories. “Whether in the books or the werewolf grandmaster’s class, I’ve never seen this kind of mark. I don’t know how to deal with it!”

I suggested she try a weakening spell. Dorothy tried it, but the effect was not good.

Linda murmured something, grabbing the air as if she was trying to catch some invisible ghost.

“Snow... There’s snow everywhere...”

“Mother, Father... The pack...”

“Why? What I want... Doesn’t exist...”

These meaningless words were so strange that we realized that she might have lost her mind and needed immediate treatment.

I instructed Kerner and another team member to bring Linda back immediately. However, when we handed over our hands, Linda suddenly broke free from my arm like a mad woman and bit down on my neck.

A sharp pain struck me, and in the next second, I felt warm blood flowing out of me.

“Selma!”

Dorothy shrieked and pounced forward, trying to pull Linda away. However, the latter suddenly became extremely powerful, as if a giant had possessed her, and no matter how many people tried to pull her, it was useless.

After a few seconds, Linda let go of me. Her body went limp, and she fainted.

The team members caught her, and Kerner quickly came forward to check the wound on my neck.

“The bite is very deep,” he said with a serious expression. “Fortunately, it didn’t hurt the main artery. Only a part of the skin and capillaries were cut.”

The short ten seconds of blood loss didn’t cause much damage to me. I didn’t even feel the usual dizziness after blood loss. It was as if nothing had happened.

Kerner bandaged my wound, and a few minutes later, I could feel that the wound had disappeared.

Although werewolves had strong recovery abilities, this recovery speed was still crazy!

After entering the forest, everything was not quite right. Not only Linda, but even my body underwent some unknown changes. I didn’t know if it was good or bad.

“Should we evacuate first?” Dorothy suggested, “Two of our team members are already injured. I don’t know what effect this forest has on us, especially you and Linda. You have to be inspected by the werewolf grandmasters.”

She looked guilty. “It’s all my fault. I only checked the surface of the forest and didn’t discover the hidden dangers.”

“It’s not your fault,” I comforted her. “It’s a great demon... Who knows how many tricks it has up its sleeve?”

I asked for the team members’ opinions. Some of them felt we could continue exploring, while others felt that we weren’t prepared enough and should return to rest before making any plans.

Kerner was in favor of continuing the exploration. “If we return now, what will happen to Captain Frank? The longer we delay, the more danger he will be in.”

The oppositions were not to be outdone. “Aren’t we worried about Captain Frank, too? However, the security force is an iron rule personally appointed by Captain Frank. We can’t risk our lives without knowing anything. It’s meaningless!”

“How is it meaningless? Maybe Captain Frank is in this forest.”

“You said it’s a ‘maybe’. What if he’s not? We don’t have enough preparation and safety guarantee even if he is. If Linda’s situation happens again, do you have a way to solve it?”

Seeing that the two sides were about to start arguing, I shouted to stop the argument.

“From now on, the small teams will be split into two groups. Those who agree to continue the exploration will stay. We will rest and reorganize before continuing our journey.

Those who agree to return to rest will immediately take Linda back to the first base and explain the situation to General Aldrich, Master Hayley, and Master Kevin. Ask them to analyze the current situation and send more reinforcements.

“All of you are experienced soldiers, and you should know better than me that quarrels are meaningless to solve problems. I hope everyone can calm down. This forest is too strange. Perhaps it affects our thoughts and emotions unconsciously, just like last night’s illusion.

“If we abandon our rationality and follow our emotions, we might fall into its trap, don’t you think so?”

The two teams fell silent. A few seconds later, Kerner said in shame, “I’ve embarrassed myself in front of you, Miss Selma. I think you’re right. We’ve indeed been affected by this forest and become overly agitated.”

Three minutes later, we parted ways with the return party.

“We’ll go back and forth as fast as we can, Miss Selma,” the team member in the lead promised. “If you encounter any danger, please stop immediately and return quickly. Don’t push yourself, okay?”

“Don’t worry. I’ll take on the responsibility of a temporary leader. I won’t let my team members get into meaningless danger,” I firmly promised.

At this moment, the unconscious Linda woke up.

The first thing she said when she opened her eyes was, “Burn that tree! Drink the blood!”

After she finished speaking, her eyes rolled back, and she fainted again.

164 The Heart

Selma Payne’s POV:

This inexplicable sentence made everyone confused.

After Kerner’s inspection, he found that Linda’s life force was rapidly depleting. Dorothy immediately cast some recovery and exorcism spells on Linda. The return party had no time to waste and immediately set off.

Only Dorothy, Kerner, and I, and five other members, were left in the forest.

What surprised me was that Yuri was among them.

This man who always found trouble with me had not said a word since leaving the illusionary world, and I often ignored him.

I didn't expect him to stay behind. I could see that he usually respected Frank.

"Don't look at me like that," Yuri said in frustration. "Frank is my captain, okay? He took good care of me, and I respect him a lot. Can't your noble brain understand this simple cause and effect, Miss?"

Alright, as expected; he was still that annoying petty person.

We had no choice but to go around the tall pine trees and choose another path because Dorothy insisted that there was a problem with the tree size.

An extremely ominous aura. She didn't even want to look at the pine tree. I felt that anyone close enough to it would be lost in its ugly branches.

It was as if someone had set up the route. Besides a relatively clean main road, the small roads we opened were all rugged and difficult. It was as if the weeds and shrubs that had disappeared along the way suddenly realized that it was time to go to work. This kind of 'loyalty to duty' was annoying.

"Wait," I waved my hand to stop the people behind me and carefully observed the surroundings. "Don't you think this place looks familiar?"

Some of the more observant members had already noticed that something was amiss. Behind the cover of the thick bushes was a small snowy path that we had cleared out twenty minutes ago.

The bad news was that we were lost.

The worse news was that our compass was not working.

"Maybe the compass didn't fail, but the forest has been changing. I feel that, just like last night's illusion, this forest is constantly changing."

I was getting rather annoyed. Regardless of whether that demon or some other faction caused all of this, couldn't they try something else? 'It's always a space of change, always these complicated smokescreens. I've had enough of this!'

Under an inexplicable impulse, I suddenly began to chop down the surrounding trees. These trees were very strange. Dark red liquid flowed out of their trunks as if they were real blood. Every time I cut down, the rustling of the leaves sounded like a muffled wail.

"It's alive!" I shouted, "These aren't pine trees. They're alive. Kill them!"

The team members joined in the frenzied tree-cutting party. Only Dorothy was a little worried. "We shouldn't be so impulsive. No one knows what this will cause."

"They're trying to intimidate us!" I said viciously, "Some inexplicable changes, ha! I've had enough. Why are we the ones being played? If you want to get out of the maze, there is another way besides finding the right path-destroy it!"

We madly hacked at the trees. Thanks to the werewolves' impressive physical fitness, these thick trees were as fragile as children's walking sticks to us.

Ten minutes later, we returned to the huge pine tree.

Now, even I could see something strange about this pine tree. Its dead branches and leaves were scattered all over the silver-white snow, and these pieces were carbonized and blackened as if they had been burned.

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Dark red liquid was flowing out of the broken branches of the giant pine tree. Some had already dried up, while others were dripping with a sticky substance.

This sight gave me an inexplicable sense of déjà vu-it was as if this pine tree was the heart of the entire forest, and the plants around it were its blood vessels. The heart controlled the blood vessels but would also suffer a backlash from the damage the blood vessels received.

Destroying the pine trees would also destroy this strange forest!

It was useless to search for Frank using the route we had cleared out. The changing forest would make us forever lost in the complex paths. If we wanted to leave, the only way was to destroy this evil creation at its roots.

I was unsure if destroying the giant pine tree required a special method, so I asked Dorothy, "Do you think we need any special method to destroy this tree?"

"No." Dorothy shook her head. "To be honest, I think this is just a pine tree. Although it is filled with evil power, it cannot change its structure. Moreover, I don't know if it's just my imagination, but this pine tree will die on its own without us having to do anything. Its life force is already very faint and gradually fading."

"How long will it take to die?"

"I think one or two years."

I couldn't help rolling my eyes.

"So, fire will help, right?"

165 Burning

Selma Payne's POV:

We didn't have any explosive tools like bombs, and small alcohol blocks and lighters obviously couldn't shake a towering tree.

"Do you know any fire-related incantations?"

"A lot. What kind do you want?"

At this moment, I was a little envious of Dorothy's sorcerer bloodline and sorcery. Most of the time, it could find a shortcut to help solve the problem.

I described the conditions in detail. It couldn't be too weak, or it'd probably be useless. But it shouldn't be too powerful, either. There were dried plants everywhere. If we caused a wildfire before the giant pine tree was destroyed, it'd be difficult for us to escape.

It would be great if I could have a little divinity. This would restrain the power of evil demons, increase their power, and save time.

Dorothy said that she had many fire spells that met the conditions, but she could not do it with divinity unless she believed in god.

It didn't matter as long as there was enough fire.

Although this huge pine tree looked like a pile of flammable firewood, the larger the tree was, the harder it was to burn. These old and experienced wooden blocks seemed to know how to abandon the carriage to protect the commander. Often, a branch would break and fall off halfway through the fire.

The flame alone was not enough. We had to make sure that the wood could burn.

It would be great if we had oil, but it was a fantasy to say this now. We could only set up more fire points so that these fire points are dense enough to burn together.

Dorothy's sorcery needed to focus on a fixed point. The team members cut some branches and tied them together in groups of five. One was especially long, and the tip was sharpened to ensure the arrow could pierce into the trunk.

The ends of the arrows were smeared with the oil from the can and tied with a cloth to ensure they could burn.

Without the use of bows and arrows, the arm strength of the team members was enough to throw a perfect javelin.

With the thirty marked points ready, it was Dorothy's turn.

Whoosh!

The flames suddenly started burning, and we were all shocked. We looked at Dorothy in unison. This didn't look like an ordinary fire spell!

"I'm sorry! I was a little too excited." She smiled embarrassedly. "I've been very anxious since I entered this forest, and I couldn't control myself."

Fortunately, the fire didn't burn any other plants and avoided a forest fire.

A pungent smell gradually filled the air. It didn't smell like burning wood but more like the burning body of some creature, the smell of burnt flesh.

The giant pine tree's bark cracked, and a large amount of dark red tree sap gushed out, trying to put out the fire on its body.

The sap was very strange. It was more like diluted clay or plasticine than liquid. A bubble-like cover wrapped the flame. After a while, the bubble dried and burst, and the flame inside weakened or even extinguished.

If this continued, everything we'd done would be in vain.

My team and I continuously shot our spare arrows at the tree trunk. Dorothy immediately set the tree on fire, but there was too much sap. Our speed could not match the rate at which the sap extinguished the fire. The fire was about to be extinguished.

"It's too late!" The last wave of arrows had been used up, and it was too late to cut down the trees.

The spreading sap even had the strength to spread to the snow. While we were setting the fire, it had already reached our feet.

"Retreat! Don't touch the sap!"

I led the team to retreat, but more pine trees had quietly covered the open space behind us.

There was no way to escape.

The giant pine tree shook off its broken branches and fallen leaves, and the burning branches and leaves were extinguished and dissipated on the snow like fireworks. The giant pine tree shrank in size, but it seemed to have been angered by us as it began to tremble restlessly.

As it trembled, the plants around it moved faster.

The gap we had just cut down was filled in a few minutes, and the other road was also blocked.

We tried to stop the branches from spreading, but snow and fire were useless.

The soil for survival gradually shrank, and the team members were tightly stuck together, unable to take a step back.

It was impossible to say that we didn't regret it now. I didn't understand why I was so impulsive. 'Indecisive' was more in line with my personality than a hasty start.

I thought this strange forest affected me. Even though I was always on guard, it took advantage of me.

I hate this kind of under-the-belt method!

However, the fact was that I couldn't do anything about the current situation. Even experienced team members like Kerner couldn't think of a solution to the problem.

The viscous sap seemed to have gradually developed consciousness and life. It scattered and folded like earthworms, trying to find an opportunity to attack us.

At that moment, I wanted to pray to god.

A thick 'earthworm' came at me. I dodged it and subconsciously waved my dagger, hoping to cut it off.

However, even though the 'earthworm' was cut off, its broken limbs wriggled and deformed like plasticine, wrapping around my body instantly.

166 Explosives

Selma Payne's POV:

The moment it touched my skin, a sharp pain suddenly burst out from the top of my head. Those tattoo-like engravings lit up like neon lights!

The pain made me lose control of my body, and I fell to the snow like a broken sack. The earthworms swarmed up like leeches that saw blood and drowned me instantly.

"Selma!"

I saw Dorothy reach out to me in panic at the last moment.

The dark red liquid tightly bound my vision, and I felt like I was a larva in a cocoon wrapped in cold mucus. They tried to invade my seven orifices and pores, but the engravings that emitted a soft golden light loyally protected me.

A power as gentle as the moonlight spread, forming a thin, formidable protective barrier between the sap and me.

After the failed attempt, the sap began to press down on my body. However, the soft protective barrier suddenly became as hard as steel, and I could not move it.

Taking advantage of this gap, I hoped to tear a hole in the cocoon, but the sap seemed to endlessly fill up the hole I created. It seemed to want to twist and break me when I moved my hands and feet.

My struggle failed, and I could only give up on moving. I used the mark to fight the sap.

Why was I always the one dragging me down?

I had never hated my weakness as much as I do now. Like Aldrich said, "Compared to true power, you are still far from it."

I thought I was a qualified warrior if I could show off my fists and feet on the training ground, but reality had hit me repeatedly. My strength did not match my ambition.

Every time I rushed to the front and tried to be a qualified leader, I became an arrogant burden, putting everyone in danger. I tried to save everyone, but I couldn't even save myself.

A ridiculous pine tree and a pile of disgusting sap. These were the unsolvable problems that lay before me. If I were a witch or an experienced warrior, I would not be as helpless as I am now.

But I was nothing. I was just a young girl who dreamt of being a queen.

Hot tears flowed down my cheeks. Look, what a fragile little princess. Arrogance was just an illusion under layers of protection. When I encountered a life-and-death situation, I could only cry shamelessly.

The power of the mark was getting weaker and weaker. I could feel the cold temperature of the sap gradually seeping into the soft protective film.

Maybe I'd die in less than a minute.

What would happen to the people I leave behind if I couldn't escape?

My father would sigh in silence, and my mother would cry to death.

Dorothy would live in the shadow of her good friend's death for the rest of her life.

Aldrich, my lover, I couldn't imagine his red eyes at my funeral.

And Mara and Avril, I couldn't be their bridesmaid anymore.

And the new friends we made in the social class, we no longer had the chance to laugh at the etiquette teacher's tight collar.

I once swore to return to my hometown in glory to repay my adoptive parents and brother for raising me. Now, it seemed that I might have to go back on my word.

There was one more person.

My enemy, the great demon Leviathan, hurt me and lured me to the Rocky Mountains. Did she predict everything that would happen today?

What we encountered, whether the illusion in the snowy night or the constantly moving pine forest, was this the demonic power that leaked from the seal or a trap she had set up long ago?

This despicable demon, had it been hiding in the dark for a long time to enjoy our final struggle?

I suddenly felt a gaze filled with malice and ridicule. It was trying to capture every second of panic and despair on my face through the tight cocoon.

'Moon Goddess, please tell me, is she there? Or is it all just my illusion?'

I suddenly felt wronged and angry. Why? Why must it be me?

I thought I'd been working hard, trying to train my strength, trying to learn everything a princess should have, and trying to bear the responsibilities I should bear.

I'd been looking forward to achieving something one day, but why was I always the one being played by fate?

Why was I always the one who had to swallow my anger?

I thought the sap must have affected me because I felt anger and irritation from the bottom of my heart. These sudden intense emotions were like a sharp steel cone, easily piercing my fragile heart.

I didn't want to endure it anymore.

This was a world where danger lurked everywhere, and it was also an unfair world. Danger always existed, and safety was just a lie. Natural-born demons had the power to rule over life, while weak creations, no matter how hard they tried, could only become puppets for people to play on the stage.

But why?

Why could Leviathan toy with me in peace while I could only accept her malice?

Was it because of this ridiculous difference in power? Was it because I couldn't match her natural strength even if I worked hard to death?

Why couldn't I be the one with this power if that was the case?

If I had this power, could I turn the audience below the stage into puppets on the stage?

167 Countercurrent

Selma Payne's POV:

My heart beat like a war drum, and my blood flowed rapidly. The strong friction made my skin hot all over, so hot that I cried out in pain and was about to burn.

The mark flickered rapidly, sometimes bright and sometimes dark, sometimes strong and sometimes weak as if it had a life of its own.

I was about to suffocate. My skin was expanding, and my internal organs were shifting. The mark was distorted, deformed, and cracked, reaching its limit...

Everything was compressed tightly, like the critical point before the Big Bang.

Then, it exploded!

I felt myself exploding. My blood evaporated, my body dissipated, my bones cracked, and everything turned into fragments, fusing with the cold cocoon.

Only my soul retained its consciousness. Everything had become my nutrients, a protein that could provide new life. It reassembled chaotically, hoping that a beautiful moth would fly out.

I saw the golden substance flowing between the nutrients. It was shapeless, like the light of fireflies. It swam aimlessly, emitting the sorrow of loss.

Why was she sad?

I tried to reach out to the golden substance, only to realize I had no hands.

However, the light spots of the fireflies seemed to have suddenly found their target. They gathered together in threads and formed a curled-up frame with a faint glow. 'Ah! That seems to be my body.'

I'd already dissipated.

Was I dead?

Were these light spots the purification runes from Moon Goddess?

It was a pity that I'd let them down and caused them to fail their mission.

A condensed black mist dispersed from the light spot, emitting a cold and evil aura. It wandered freely in the sticky liquid as if it was strolling in its backyard. It trembled slightly around the frame made of golden light.

It was laughing at him.

After realizing this, I was furious.

What was it? It was just a fragment left behind by a despicable creature, not even a fox, that used the power of a tiger to intimidate others. How could it dare to laugh at the gift of the goddess?

My anger drowned me, and my soul suddenly scattered, turning into stars to form a cage, imprisoning the black fog in the cage.

It tried to leave, using its ugly synapses to test the gap.

The moment it came into contact with my soul, I had an inexplicable thought, 'It looks delicious.'

I didn't know what emotion drove me, but the black mist disappeared when I reacted.

The next second, I realized that I had eaten it.

The moment it swallowed the black mist, a bright red liquid suddenly condensed between the frames formed by the light spots. Unlike the viscous dark red sap, this liquid was fresh and full of vitality. It was accompanied by a faint light wandering around, slowly flowing between the frames.

This was my blood!

It only took a second for me to be enlightened. I realized that everything in this cocoon could become my nutrients. I no longer needed to worry about whether the evil energy would pollute my body because I no longer existed. From now on, every bit of power I

digested would be for my use, whether good or evil. As long as I wanted, I would be their master.

I was like a crying baby waiting to be fed, using all my strength to squeeze out the power of my mother's body. The cold tree sap formed my blood, and the hard cocoon shell reshaped my bones.

After eating the cocoon, I was still unsatisfied, so I greedily looked for more nutrients.

That huge, lifeless, and abnormally powerful pine tree.

What could be more delicious than this?

Without muscles, I was like a hard iron frame, wrapped in the sticky sap, and rushed toward the pine tree.

It was afraid. It didn't understand why I wasn't digested by it, and it didn't understand what kind of monster it had created that was thousands of times more evil than it.

However, it was a tree, the heart of the forest. Where could it escape to?

It was surrounded by the sap it produced. This time, they were no longer sharp weapons that could be used with one's mind but axes that were about to take its last breath.

The thick branches were slowly disintegrated. No matter how much sap was produced, it would only be an additional helper for me.

I chewed on the dried pine needles and drank the cries of the pine trees until they gradually fell apart and collapsed in the bone-piercing wind and snow. Then, they were eaten by more sticky juice.

The heart of the forest I ate turned into my muscles, becoming the last piece of the puzzle to construct my new body.

There was nothing else that could provide me with nutrients. The plants that formed the forest's capillaries were nothing more than rotten wood that had long since decayed. Once the heart died, it would also dissipate with a bang.

In the end, all was left was the dark red tree sap that charged into the enemy lines for me.

Since they'd chosen to serve me, it was their honor to be my new student's celebration party, wasn't it?

It was too late to regret. I drank these evil creatures as if they were a fine wine. They were the last drop of blood from my heart. Did they think they could fool me by changing sides with their old master?

I didn't care. I just needed to eat them.

All the power flowed back to me. I transformed, was reborn, collapsed, and dissipated again. I was like a moth in the process of evolution.

The tree sap was my nutrient. This time, the snow and stone formed my cocoon.

168 Who Are You?

Selma Payne's POV:

I quietly lay in the hard and cold cocoon, curled up like a baby in the womb. My heart was calm, and my face was serene. I was like a stuffed child waiting for the arrival of my new birthday.

Speckles of golden light seeped out of my skin. They had completed their mission and were about to dissipate.

But I disagreed.

Why couldn't these engravings as gentle as the moonlight forever accompany me?

The fireflies landed on my skin as I wished, integrated into my muscles, and twisted and stretched. They were no longer in the form of purification runes but moths about to fly away. They were hidden in the blood in the golden and red light.

I was finally satisfied. I fell into a deep sleep in the snow, naked.

I woke up in the warmth.

When I opened my eyes, I was greeted by the rough wooden floor and the crackling of a warm fire behind me. I believed cream sausages were stewing on top of it, which aroused my appetite.

I was sleeping face down on a pile of furry blankets.

Dorothy was stirring the soup in front of the fire. When she turned around, she realized that I was awake.

"Hey! You're awake, Selma!" She kneeled in front of me and touched my forehead. She asked with concern, "How do you feel? Do you feel uncomfortable anywhere?"

To be honest, I felt great. I was full of energy and couldn't wait to go out and run seventy or eighty laps.

However, under Dorothy's gentle explanation, I suddenly felt lazy and didn't want to move.

"I feel pretty good. There's no problem." I stared at the pot. "I'm a little hungry. What time is it now? Should we have that meal? Is the main course cream sausage?"

Dorothy laughed and said, "Can you eat later? We'll have to check your body first."

She called out to some people a few times, and then a rush of footsteps came. The next second, I was held firmly in a hot, trembling embrace.

"You're finally awake, Selma!" Aldrich was not as calm as before. "God, you have no idea how long you were unconscious!"

"How long?" I was also quite curious. After all, I was as hungry as if I hadn't eaten for three months.

Aldrich was somewhat unhappy with my nonchalant attitude, but since I was sick, he could only say softly, "For an entire week, you were like an unconscious doll!"

"It's been a week?" My muddled brain finally started to work normally. I suddenly sat up and nervously asked, "What about the forest? What about the team members? Where's Frank? How are they? Is it safe?"

"Don't get too excited. Lie down now." Aldrich forcefully pushed me back into the pile of blankets. "The team members have all returned safely. The forest has disappeared. They found Frank unconscious in a crack in the rock. He was in shock then, but fortunately, he was given emergency treatment and is fine."

I heaved a sigh of relief. "That's good. Oh, right. Where are we now?"

I didn't see anyone else looking around other than Dorothy and Aldrich. This place didn't look like the first base.

Aldrich's answer greatly exceeded my expectations. "We're in human territory. This is a safe house in Gorndbell Village at the foot of the Rocky Mountains. The advanced team used this place as a supply point. Now, it's your place to rest."

"So we are at the foothill?"

"Yes, you were in an emergency. The werewolf grandmasters couldn't solve it, so we could only come down to find medical resources."

“But I didn’t wake up in the hospital.”

“Yes, you suddenly got better just as we were halfway down the mountain. Your body temperature returned to normal, and your breathing was no longer rapid. It was as if you had fallen asleep. We went to the hospital to check on you, and there was no problem. The human doctor didn’t agree to let a ‘healthy person’ stay in the hospital, so we had to bring you to the safe house.”

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I thought I knew what the sudden ‘illness’ was. One would always feel bloated after overeating, but it would be fine after the food was digested.

Master Hayley pushed open the door and walked in. She was holding a few bottles of nutrient medicine. I had probably been relying on these to maintain my body’s functions for the past few days.

“Thank the heavens. You’re awake.” She heaved a sigh of relief. “I dare say that I’ve never seen a case like yours in the records of the werewolves.”

She gave me a simple examination, and I nodded in thanks.

I was not sure if I should tell my companions about my transformation. A brand new body that had been transformed from ice and stone and great power that had been transformed from the remains of demons. Was that not too inconceivable?

This wasn’t as simple as removing my entire body or taking some stimulants. I wasn’t even sure if I was still a werewolf.

When your body was completely shattered and reassembled, even if the soul that awakened was still you, would your body still be the same?

Speaking of this, I suddenly thought of Maxine.

After I was torn apart like a wall-breaking machine, the blockage in my mind disappeared, and everything about the ‘wolf’ became clear again.

“Maxine, are you there?” I tried to call out to her in my heart.

A few seconds later, Maxine’s awkward voice sounded, “Ha! You still remember a wolf like me?”

169 The Day

Selma Payne’s POV:

I was immediately filled with guilt. Could you find another person as irresponsible as me in this world? I threw the newly awakened 'wolf baby' to the back of my mind. Although this was not my intention, the damage had already been done.

"I'm sorry," I apologized sincerely. "I shouldn't have put you to the back of my mind and ignored you for months. I swear I'll be careful in the future and won't be hit by this despicable sorcery again. I think the werewolf grandmasters have a way of helping me build a mental defense."

"Do you think so?" Maxine sounded a little helpless.

"What?"

"I mean, you don't know who gave you the curse?"

"Do you know?" I asked.

"Alright, so you don't know. I hope this won't scare you. You're the one who gave yourself the curse, Selma," Maxine said after sighing softly.

I was stunned. "What?" How is this possible?"

"Yeah, how could that be possible?" Maxine also found it unbelievable. "But that's the truth. You gave yourself a curse on the spiritual level. If you hadn't 'died' this time, I don't think we'd ever meet again."

'Selma, who were you in the past, and who are you now?' What was I?

I fell into deep thought as I looked at my fair and tender hands, which were as soft as a baby's.

No matter if it was the scars or the calluses that had been formed after years of training, they had all disappeared. This pair of hands was no different from my impression of them, yet they were so unfamiliar.

'That's right. What am I now?'

I suddenly wanted to know what happened that day when I was wrapped in the sap.

"You don't have any impression of it?" Dorothy's expression was a little strange. After a few moments of hesitation, she said carefully, "Perhaps it's a good thing to forget."

I shook my head. "No, I need to know what happened after that. I don't think it's good. Otherwise, you wouldn't have kept your mouth shut about me."

I could still vaguely remember the feeling of struggling in the cocoon. It was suffocating but satisfying, as if I had eaten a gluttonous meal in the deep sea.

The anger still haunted me, allowing me to clearly remember the feeling of arrogance and self-abandonment at that time. It was as if it didn't matter, even if I fell. As long as I could obtain great power and break my fate that was being controlled, I was willing to pay anything.

This made me highly unfamiliar with myself, and the current situation also told me I was a 'stranger'. My new body had nothing to do with this world. Only the strange power of rebirth reminded me that everything before was not an absurd dream.

Dorothy considered her words carefully before telling me what had happened that day. "You were wrapped up in that sticky sap. We wanted to save you, but the cocoon made of sap was unusually strong, and we couldn't break it no matter what. We were about to be swallowed by the sap, so Kerner had to take us to the tree to hide.

"We hoped to take you away, but the cocoon wrapped around you seemed to have grown roots on the ground. No matter how hard we tried, we couldn't pull it out. One of our team members even got his arm entangled in the tree sap.

"We were at our wit's end. Kerner could only heartlessly try to cut off the team member's arm, but at that moment, something strange happened. The cocoon wrapped around you trembled violently for some reason as if something had exploded inside. The imprints on our hands only flickered for a few seconds before dimming.

"We were all very worried about you in the cocoon, but the next second, the cocoon started twitching madly, like a water pump, constantly extracting the sap. It grew bigger and bigger, and the color became darker and darker. We tried using all kinds of tools, but we couldn't break it open. In the end, the cocoon suddenly rushed toward the huge pine tree like a car that had been stepped on the accelerator. Then, it exploded and wrapped around the trunk.

"We were stunned because we didn't see you then. We thought you were dead. I think I must have collapsed then, so Kerner had to drag me back.

"But no one expected that the sap seemed to have changed sides and started to attack its creator. The branches covered in the sap were like food soaked in stomach acid, quickly being digested. The giant pine tree wailed, and the plants around it seemed to have been given life to help its heart.

"But it was all in vain. In the end, the giant pine tree was easily digested, and most of the plants around it disappeared without a trace under the shadow of the sap.

"Without the heart, the entire forest seemed to have lost its vitality. It became brittle and disintegrated, turning into rocks and snowflakes all over the ground.

“The surging sap almost drowned the surrounding environment. We were washed away like ants by the tide, but the sap didn’t hurt us. In just a few minutes, it was digested by the cocoon in the center, just like its previous master.

“After the sap disappeared, even the cocoon gradually shriveled and disappeared as if its nutrients had been taken away. Then, we found you in the snow, naked, with a high fever, and unconscious.”

170 The Debate

Selma Payne’s POV:

It sounded almost the same as what I remember. I was glad I could keep my mind clear after being blinded by greed and hunger. Otherwise, I could only commit suicide to apologize if I had accidentally eaten my friend.

“The moment the mark flashed, I knew something had happened to you,” Aldrich said in a low voice. “I immediately brought people to support them. On the way, we met a team of members returning with the unconscious Linda. I have to say, I was furious at that time. Selma, you knew that the road ahead was full of danger. How could you bring those few people and go straight in alone?”

“I’m a little guilty,” I replied. “Because we haven’t found where he is. I’m worried that he’ll be in danger.”

After being looked at by my pitiful eyes, Aldrich, who was as angry as a pufferfish, put aside his temper and weakly scolded me, “That still couldn’t be... Girl, sometimes I don’t know where you get your courage. You’re not afraid of anything. Perhaps you’ve thought for a moment that if something happened to you, how sad would the King, the Queen, your friends, and I be?”

“I’m very sorry!” I had never suffered Aldrich’s unconcealed anger so directly, so I was a little at a loss. “I know I was too impulsive. I promise it won’t do this again!”

“Don’t give me a perfunctory reply, darling. Your eyes can’t hide your thoughts. Would you agree if I told you that the King wanted us to return to the pack immediately after you woke up? Don’t be impetuous. Follow your heart and tell me the answer.”

I subconsciously wanted to nod, but I stopped in the next second.

How could he possibly agree? Dorothy and I had a chance of survival here. Although the road ahead was dangerous, and we had suffered quite a bit of damage, hope was right before us. How could we give up halfway?

However, I suddenly remembered that I was no longer in danger. After my body had gone through the process of explosion, reconstruction, and rebirth, the little trouble left behind by Leviathan had turned into nourishment for my growth and disappeared.

I 'ate' Leviathan's power, just like I 'ate' the entire pine forest.

Although I hadn't studied it in detail, I already had a general understanding of the new energy I'd obtained. I was like a whirlpool at the bottom of the sea or a black hole in the universe. I greedily and insatiably devoured everything that could be transformed into my power.

Whether black or white, good or bad, whether it was a gift from the gods or a curse from the demons, everything would nourish my growth as long as I wanted to.

However, the side effects were also huge. Once my current body could no longer withstand the powerful force, it would explode as it did in the cocoon and then reform. This was my weakest and craziest moment. As long as you could find me hiding in the nutrients, you could easily kill me. And I, who had lost my mind, would likely devour everything regardless of whether it was friend or foe.

Having spared Dorothy and the rest this time was pure luck.

The time needed to digest the energy varied. For example, finishing the giant pine tree took me a week. I could easily digest the demon fragment because it was on the verge of exhaustion. If I were to encounter food with a stronger vitality, it would be hard to say how long I would take.

All in all, the curse of Leviathan has disappeared, and so has the mark of the goddess. I was now entirely out of danger.

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I could even use my power to 'eat' up the curse hidden in Dorothy's body. This was just a piece of cake compared to the giant pine tree.

I immediately told Aldrich and Dorothy about my new ability when I thought of this. Master Hayley was also present, but I trusted her completely. Moreover, she had performed many physical examinations on me, so she probably already noticed something was wrong with me. It was just that she didn't expose me due to the silent personality that she had developed in the Royal Court.

Aldrich didn't even care about being angry anymore. He wanted to stuff me into the plane back home without saying anything.

"This is no small matter! Be more serious." He finally displayed the dignity of a general when he saw my confused expression.

“Your body has undergone a structural reorganization and even formed such a strange ability. Selma, I dare say there has never been such a precedent in the history of werewolves. I can’t even find any data that can be used as a reference. We don’t know if this is good or bad for you, but the gift of fate has never been free. Before it starts to collect interest, we must understand the truth and seize the opportunity.”

“But I think this ability is harmless to me,” I tried to refute. “It’s like a new hand and foot that’s completely under my control.”

“All tools are controlled by their masters, but that doesn’t mean they won’t point their blades at their masters.” Aldrich had a non-negotiable expression on his face. “Right now, you are devouring the energy of the outside world. Who can guarantee that you won’t devour yourself one day in the future? The more powerful the ability, the more terrifying the backlash. Aren’t there a few examples of this?”

But I didn’t want to go back, and I couldn’t go back. So what if the curse of Leviathan was resolved?

171 What Right Do You Have To Control Me?

Selma Payne’s POV:

‘The demonic seal is still a hidden danger that has yet to be resolved. We have yet to find a way to control Dorothy’s Eye of Insight. I don’t want to return empty-handed like this!’

An inexplicable fire engulfed me, and I suddenly felt that Aldrich was annoying. What was he? He was not my parent, nor was he my master. What right did he have to decide whether I stay or leave?

I knew he cared about me, and I cared about him, but I also cared about my friend, Dorothy. I was one of the people who got her into this, where she was on the verge of eternal damnation. I had to take responsibility.

“Stop talking to me like that!” I suddenly pushed him away and shouted, “Recognize your identity, Aldrich! You are my subject, not my father! Don’t make your decisions for me. I have no obligation to follow your decision, and you have no right to decide whether I stay or leave!”

My words were like a bomb filled with silencing gas, immediately making everyone shut up.

The silent room was filled with unprecedented awkwardness. Everyone present was staring at me with indescribable shock as if I had just said something crazy, like a prophecy of the world’s end.

Aldrich looked at me hard; from the anger and disbelief at the start, it gradually softened into a mournful sorrow and disappointment.

“...We should all calm down.” He said dryly, “It’s the palace’s will to let you go back. I can’t interfere. The plane will depart at 5 pm. Get ready.”

With that, he strode out of the room.

I regretted it the moment I said that. What was I doing? I was like a young girl in puberty who her stubbornness and self-consciousness had blinded!

However, there was no point in regretting it as Aldrich had already disappeared from my sight. My words were too much. A ‘subject’? Moon Goddess! Why didn’t I realize I’d become such an old fart who cared about hierarchy?

Perhaps Aldrich was right. The gift was not as gentle and harmless as it looked on the surface, and it used a way I could not see to collect ‘interest’.

Maxine, silent for a long time, suddenly spoke up, “Have you noticed? You’ve been affected. The power that you’ve devoured is full of violence and pride. You’ve absorbed the nutrients, so you must deal with the bacteria and viruses it brings.”

“I know, but I can’t control it,” I said as I collapsed into the blanket.

Since I absorbed Leviathan’s wisp of black mist, my bipolar disorder had stuck to me like a disgusting piece of tape. Under its catalysis, I absorbed more power and endured more negative emotions. This caused the situation to become more and more serious, and it became a vicious cycle.

The worst thing was that I didn’t know if I could successfully expel these emotions like I was expelling toxins. If they were to become a part of me forever, then in a few years, I would have to go to the secret manor and be Adele’s roommate.

However, that was still far away. I could only worry about how to coax Aldrich back.

This wasn’t easy, especially when I was in the wrong first. Although Aldrich was usually lenient with me, his mature adult temperament would disappear when he was angry. After all, there was an age gap between us. When he was angry, it was explosive. On the other hand, I was just a rookie who didn’t know anything. It would be embarrassing even if I wanted to say some sweet words.

At this moment, Dorothy and Master Hayley, who had been in the background, finally took on the role of peacemakers.

Master Hayley consoled me with a few words before leaving. It seemed that she was going to do Aldrich’s work.

Dorothy, on the other hand, accompanied me.

“I shouldn’t have said that,” I covered my face and said gloomily. “I shouldn’t have said that to Aldrich. He was just concerned about me and didn’t do anything overboard. He was just conveying the decision of my parents. But I lost my temper at him, venting my anger meaninglessly. I’m such a rotten person.”

Dorothy gently pulled me out from the mountain of blankets and comforted me, “Don’t think like that, Selma. I think there’s a reason for this, right? You’re a taciturn person who only knows how to hide things in your heart. Don’t even talk about venting your anger on others. You’ll be overcautious even if you’re asked to throw a tantrum.”

“...Why do I feel that this is not something good?”
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“Of course, it’s not good. You made a mistake, and I’m criticizing you now,” she said very self-righteously. “Anyway, are you willing to tell me why you’re like this? If I’m not mistaken, is it related to your new ability?”

I hesitated for a moment before nodding. “Yes, it’s my new ability. Let’s call it ‘Devour’ for the time being. Devour can absorb the power of others and turn it into my own, but at the same time, I will also digest the negative factors contained in these powers. For example, I’ve just digested a big violent and proud tree, and I’ll become restless and proud, unable to control myself and say those hurtful words to Aldrich.”

“Of course!” Dorothy immediately turned serious. “If that’s the case, let’s put aside your conflict with Aldrich for now. Please tell me, will these emotions disappear? Or will it always be in you?”

“I don’t know,” I said with a bitter smile. “I hope it will dissipate, but who knows? It’s not like a game card will appear out of thin air to tell me all the attributes and values of Devouring.”

172 The Frivolous Demon

Selma Payne’s POV:

“I think this time I will stand on Aldrich and the two Majesties’ sides,” Dorothy said. “You must return to the palace for an examination, test your strength, and find a way to dispel its side effects. I don’t want to see my best friend become a crazy woman. If you become like Adele, I promise I won’t visit you at the sanatorium.”

“Don’t be so cruel,” I mumbled. “Aren’t you afraid some crazy doctor will cut off my frontal lobe? ”

Dorothy's face turned serious. "I think the owner of that pine tree is a frivolous demon. It made you a frivolous person!"

I could only correct my attitude.

"I am not against it," I said. "But what about your eyes?"

"There might not be a solution even if we stay here," Dorothy said, shaking her head indifferently. "Otherwise, Mullwica wouldn't be so weak that her son assassinated her."

I still didn't want to give up. Perhaps Leviathan's words were just a weak bait to lure the fish, but the Rocky Mountains were where Mullwica had lived the longest and had the most traces of her. I always felt that there was a glimmer of hope here.

"Or I can stay and continue to explore with the warriors and the werewolf grandmasters," Dorothy said. "But you must return and get rid of the time bomb on you."

I took a step back. "Then, you must let me remove the curse on you first. I can eat it easily, like eating a piece of cake—"

"No," Dorothy refused flatly. "The influence of one demon is enough for you to suffer. If Leviathan joins that in your body, do you think you can take that?"

I smiled slyly. "But I've already been affected by Leviathan. The power that made up my first drop of blood came from her curse. To be honest, the iciness was quite delicious."

Dorothy looked like she wanted to rush up and beat me up, but with her good upbringing, she held herself back.

"Whatever it is, no." She wouldn't agree, no matter what. "The power of the mark is still there. I'll be safe for three months. Even if you want to help me eliminate the curse, you'll have to fully understand the power and side effects of devouring and mastering it. Otherwise..."

I was not going to wait for her to finish!

As she was prattling on and on, I quickly moved in front of her, forehead to forehead, and started activating the power of Devouring.

Under Dorothy's wary gaze, I quickly grabbed the ball of pitch-black mist before she could say anything, wandering around the cage of imprints.

It seemed to treat me as a big fool who came to its door and tried to corrupt me with joy. However, the next second, it shrank back to the corner of the mark in fear, wishing it could roll the mark and wrap it around itself to avoid my reach.

But it was too late!

Eating the black mist was like drinking a cup of chestnut vinegar juice. It was cold, sour, and sweet. Although it had a rotten stink, it was still edible.

The curse that had tormented us so much that we couldn't sleep or eat in peace was easily resolved just like that. However, Dorothy didn't look happy at all.

"How could you?!"

She was so angry that she couldn't say a word, and her expression of wanting to say something but restraining her temper was the same as Aldrich's.

After the impulsiveness, I felt guilty and whispered, "At least the result is good, isn't it?"

"Do you want me to present you with a trophy to praise you?" Dorothy was feeling so incredulous that she raised her voice. "You're really... God, it's not a good habit to act first and think later."

I stood up and turned around to show her that I was unscathed. "Nothing bad happened. Look, everything is fine. This curse is just troublesome, but it's not strong. It has little effect on me."

Dorothy slumped on the sofa, dejected as if she never wanted to talk to me again.

After a long while, she said, "I'm thrilled that you're able to obtain such a powerful ability. I'm even more excited about how much you value me, Selma. But that's not the problem. You're fine, that's good. You can say that Moon Goddess' blessing prevented you from experiencing strange emotions."

"I think you never understood why Aldrich was angry and why I didn't agree to you removing the curse for me.

"We love you, Selma. When a person loves another, they will never want the other to put themselves in danger.

"You didn't get hurt this time, but what about in the future? We can't stop you from taking responsibility, but we hope you can value yourself more.

"You should put your safety first. You sacrifice yourself too easily and too willingly. However, most of the time, sacrifice is not necessary. If there is another way to solve the problem, then sacrifice should be at the bottom of the list.

"But you always go for it first.

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“Now, do you understand why Aldrich was angry? Do you know why I am also mad at you?”

“We love you, Selma. We care about you. Every time we see you sacrifice and forget yourself, our first feeling is not pride but worry for you.”

“No matter how safe the environment is, there are still unexpected dangers. You always let yourself get into the muzzle. You can avoid one or two dangers, even ten or twenty, but can you still avoid them every single time?”

173 Soul's Best Friend

Selma Payne's POV:

I was stunned.

I didn't think there was anything wrong with what I'd done. It couldn't even be considered a 'sacrifice'. This word was too serious as if it was not worthy of something that had to be fought with one's life.

But I'd never done anything so dangerous. Fine, it might be a little dangerous, but not to the extent of dying.

What we were facing wasn't child's play. There was no absolute safety. Someone had to pay a little more in exchange for everyone's safety.

Since that was the case, why couldn't that person be me? I didn't have the power to decide the universe, and I didn't have a brain as sharp as a computer. All I could do was take on more responsibilities and reduce the burden on my teammates.

“You don't understand what I'm talking about,” Dorothy said helplessly and clearly. “It's okay. If I could reason with you, you wouldn't be Selma anymore. We wouldn't have to worry about you. You'll understand one day. Now, please go pack your luggage.”

“What?” I didn't have time to react.

“That's right. There's nothing to pack. Aldrich has already packed your backpack.”

“Must I go back?” I asked unwillingly. “In fact, I ...”

“I respect your wishes, Selma, just as you will always respect our wishes,” Dorothy said earnestly. “However, there's no room for discussion on this. You must abide by the decision made by the Lycan King, and you must be responsible for your health.”

“You want to be a responsible leader and a powerful warrior, right? Even though I don't have much experience, I understand one thing: If you want to be responsible for others,

you must first be responsible for yourself. Of course, you can come back at any time, but the condition is that your body is fine and you can master the Devour skill.”

I suddenly reacted. “So you’re not coming with me? But you know how dangerous this place is.”

“That’s right. It’s dangerous here. I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t nervous.” Dorothy winked at me. “But you have your responsibilities, and I have mine. I have to take responsibility for myself. The Eye of Insight is mine. Whether it’s a gift from fate or a curse, I can’t escape its existence. In that case, I’ll try to live in peace with it.

“If I can control it, I’ll have the ticket to the supreme door. If I can’t control it, then although it’s a pity, there’s nothing to complain about. I accept this ending.”

“Dorothy...” tears welled up in my eyes. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have dragged you into all of this. If you were still a student sitting in your classroom, there wouldn’t be many challenges in your life.”

Dorothy helped me wipe away my tears, looking helpless. “So you’re finally willing to tell the truth, right? It seems you’ve been carrying this all this time, treating everything as your fault. But you’re mistaken, Selma. You’ve indeed provided me with another path in life, but I’m the one who has decided to embark on this path. No one can determine my life for me, including you.

“I’ve never regretted or resented. On the contrary, such a fulfilling and exciting fantasy life makes me extremely happy. I think it’s compensation for my boring life over the past ten years, so I’m so glad to enjoy it.

“Therefore, there is no need for you to blame yourself, and there is no need for you to feel guilty about anything. Instead, I’m grateful that you can give me more life choices. Although it has honed me, it has also taught me more at the same time so that I don’t have to be reduced to a mediocre person full of complaints.

“So, don’t blame yourself for these non-existent conflicts, Selma. I’m happy you can be honest with me about your inner feelings. I also hope that you won’t laugh at my childish remarks.”

“Oh, Dorothy...”

I didn’t know what to say, so I hugged her excitedly.

We hugged each other tightly. At this moment, I realized I had a soul friend who could open up to me and be with me for life.

At this touching moment, a stomach growling that spoiled the mood broke our emotional link.

“Uhm... Maybe we should have some lunch first.” Dorothy chuckled softly, making me blush a little. “Cheese sausage and garlic stick. There aren’t many ingredients in the village, and I’m only good at making these two dishes.”

I said I didn’t mind and ate more than half of the food.

I was starving. My stomach, which hadn’t worked for a week, was eager to work. After all, the nutrient solution could provide for my body but not for my tongue and heart.

Aldrich didn’t come to eat. I believed he was still angry with me.

I hoped he would have a big fight with me. It was easier to resolve the conflict by venting his emotions. The silent treatment was what I was most afraid of because I was an idiot regarding relationships. I could only roughly understand the other party’s emotional state, but I had no idea how to solve the problem.

That was why every time we quarrelled... Yes, Aldrich and I would have a little conflict from time to time, just like all couples... It was always Aldrich who coaxed me. He was particularly magnanimous regarding relationships and didn’t mind putting his ego aside first.

But he didn’t this time, and I had no idea what the process of making up was like.

I was a little flustered. What should I do?

174 Indifference

Selma Payne’s POV:

The silent treatment continued until we got on the plane.

Aldrich was still gentlemanly as he helped me carry my luggage and blocked the door, but he refused to say a word to me. He didn’t even look at me.

I kept praying that someone would give me a way out of this deadlock, but Dorothy, who had a high EQ, stayed in the Rocky Mountains. Master Hayley was also someone who was even more inarticulate than I was. The three of us remained in the sealed cabin without saying a word. It was so awkward that I wanted to open the door and jump out.

I thought I should say something to Aldrich like, ‘I was wrong. Let’s make up’. But Master Hayley was still around. I was a person who felt embarrassed for the male and female leads when they confessed and kissed in idol dramas. I was ashamed to reveal my feelings in front of others.

It was silent until the plane landed on the tarmac of the palace. We didn’t say a word.

The first person I saw was my mother, who was both shocked and angry. I thought she must have regretted letting me go to the Rocky Mountains because the first thing she said to me was, "My child, you are grounded!"

Moon Goddess was the witness. She hugged me tightly as she spoke as if she was afraid I would turn into a hydrogen balloon and float away the moment she let go. A woman's heart was like a needle at the bottom of the ocean when she heard such cold words and the passionate hug.

Oh, I was being naughty again. It's the two demons' 'fault'. They 'led' me astray.

My father was equally heartbroken and strict. His expression told me that there was no room for negotiation, especially after they found out that the curse left behind by Leviathan had been lifted with my rebirth. They were unwilling to send me to the Rocky Mountains for adventure.

What could I do? I could only pretend to admit my mistake while thinking of a way to sneak away.

Speaking of which, I'd never run away from home before. Although I knew this was an impulse brought about by negative emotions, I couldn't deny that I didn't want to hide in the palace until I was done.

Tracy gave me a check-up and used medical equipment I didn't recognize to scan me repeatedly as if she was wrapping a mummy. After the passing of modern medicine and ancient sorcery had also been activated, a group of experts formed by five werewolf grandmasters conducted a monitoring consultation on me for three days. It was as if I was an ancient scroll that was hard to come by in a thousand years.

In the end, they couldn't find anything. This was good news and bad news. The good news was that I didn't have any visible pathological changes or injuries, while the bad news also meant that they were utterly clueless about me and my new abilities.

Master Hayley, the representative, explained to my parents tactfully, "At present, the situation is looking good. There are no adverse reactions from Her Highness, which means there won't be any trouble in the short term. However, for the long term, we suggest that Her Highness undergo a long observation and treatment to determine her safety and prevent any side effects."

Her words were sincere, but I was concerned about how she addressed me, 'Her Highness'. That was right. My identity was no longer a secret to the panel of experts.

Perhaps in the eyes of many people in the outside world, this had already revealed enough decisive clues. After all, even if I was her niece, it was not to the extent that the most respected couple of the werewolf pack would personally care for her, no matter how big or small it was, right?

However, I no longer cared about my secret being exposed. On the one hand, I no longer felt as weak and powerless as I had been when I first met my family. On the other hand, it was also due to the influence of my negative emotions. My pride and carefreeness made me not care about any possible danger this could bring.

Things would work out when we got to the bridge, and there was no need to worry about problems that couldn't be solved, right?

By the way, the team of experts even examined that I had isolated my connection with Maxine because of the mental block, but they naturally found nothing.

After all, according to what Maxine said, I was the one who gave myself the curse. Unless I woke up one day and discovered that I had a split personality, and this personality personally explained what happened to everyone, the team of experts would not be able to find out the cause, no matter how hard they tried.

During this time, I had become unprecedentedly lazy. In the past, I would have been on guard and worried about this great danger, but now, it didn't matter anymore.

This included the silent treatment from Aldrich.

It had been three days since we returned to the palace, and we still hadn't said a word. He went to work in the military camp as usual and completed the various tasks my father gave him. I became Tracy and the werewolf grandmasters 'lab rat' in the palace. Other than our daily training, we didn't even meet once.

Even during training, there were only formal guidance and reprimands, as if our relationship was just a simple teacher-student relationship.

Even my parents could tell that something was wrong with us. Following the principle of not missing out on every change in their precious daughter's growth, they had a heart-to-heart talk with me.

According to tradition, my mother was the guide between my father and me when we had heart-to-heart talks.

"Sweetheart, how are you feeling recently? Are you under a lot of pressure? I think Tracy and the werewolf grandmasters are pushing you too hard. If you have any psychological pressure, don't keep that to yourself. Let us know, okay?"

175 Favoritism

Selma Payne's POV:

I shook my head. This wasn't Tracy's or the werewolf grandmasters' fault. On the contrary, they did this to ensure my safety. I wouldn't be so insensible as to see my savior blame me.

"Of course," my mother smiled. "We all know you're a kind and good child."

My father was concerned about the progress of my training because my body had changed, and my body's ability to resist attacks had decreased. Fortunately, the physical fitness of the new body had improved by a large margin, so it was not too difficult for me to learn.

"You can just be honest," I said bluntly. "Is it because of Aldrich and me?"

My parents looked at each other, feeling a little awkward.

There was always a barrier between parents and their children's love life. If they asked too much, they were afraid their children would be disgusted, but if they asked too little, they would be worried.

My mother said, "We have no intention of interfering with your decision, sweetheart. It's just that... Did you argue with Sir Aldrich? The atmosphere between you has been very strange and stiff these days. Your father and I have been very worried about you."

I opened my mouth, but I didn't know what to say. Was it because of my unreasonable behavior that Aldrich was angry? Because my careless words hurt Aldrich's heart? Or should I blame Aldrich for not putting aside his ego first to coax me?

I couldn't say a single word. These reasons were too childish, or rather, the cause of this silent war was very childish. I didn't want to be seen as a child.

My silence made my parents even more worried about me. My mother even carefully asked, "Did you guys... Break up?"

"No, we haven't!" I immediately denied it. "It's just a silent war. We're not breaking up."

"Oh, a silent war? Alright, it'd be strange if a couple didn't quarrel." My mother understood. "Perhaps you want to talk to us?"

"It's okay. I can handle it." I was a little embarrassed.

"Of course, we believe that you can handle it." My mother hugged me gently. "However, it seems that our little princess doesn't intend to handle this 'life event'."

"I don't know what to do. Aldrich is angry with me. He should be angry with me because my childish words were hurtful."

“What did you say to him?”

“I said, ‘Who are you? You don’t have the right to make decisions for me’. The truth was that Aldrich only conveyed your decision, but I took my anger out on him and even said such disgraceful words to him.”

“That was a little too much, child,” my mother said disapprovingly. “If you love Aldrich, you shouldn’t use your status to mock him.”

“Of course I love him!” I anxiously said, “It’s just that I was too anxious because I didn’t want to leave. I had just digested the incarnation of the demon fragment, and the complex negative emotions deeply affected me. By the time I reacted, everything was over. There was no way to save it.”

“It’s been such a long time. Haven’t you explained it to Aldrich?”

“No... I don’t know how to tell him. I’m too clumsy with my words.”

“It’s very simple. You need to apologize and tell him about your psychological state back then. Aldrich is an understanding child. He will forgive you.”

“Will he? I’m not sure, and even if he forgives me, I don’t think I can face him like before. Those words were too much. I will always unconsciously think about it when I’m with Aldrich, and I won’t know how to get along with him.”

“So the crux of the problem lies in the knot in your heart, right?” My mother gently combed my hair. “You know that Aldrich will forgive you, but you feel you have let him down because of this. Because the harm and punishment are not the same, you feel that you owe him.”

“... Yes.”

I dejectedly buried my head in the pillow, and the worries hidden under my indolence reappeared.

Of course, I knew that Aldrich would forgive me. During the training these few days, his seemingly cold eyes were so soft that I could only see a gentle stream in them.

Maybe he’d already forgiven me and waited for me to admit my mistakes. Then, he’d symbolically give me a little harmless chastizing, and we’ll make up.

He was so easy to talk to. I was happy because of this, but I was also suffering because of this.

I’d always met people who were too tolerant of me. In the past, my adoptive parents and brother Rhode were like this. Now, my parents, Dorothy, and Aldrich were the same.

I felt like I would be spoiled and become the kind of demon who caused trouble at will and didn't take it seriously.

But I didn't like this. I wanted to be loved, and I also wanted to be punished for my mistakes. I secretly rejoiced at the favoritism and privileges of my loved ones, relatives, and friends, and I also desired to be treated fairly and equally by others.

I was a pretentious girl, and when I realized this, it inevitably made me detest myself even more.

I deliberated and explained my contradictions and worries to my parents. I knew I wouldn't see them disappointed, but I didn't expect them to be so distressed by my pretentious thoughts.

176 The Desire To Make Up

Selma Payne's POV:

"Oh, my baby, my child, my hope." My mother held me tightly in her arms. "Your words almost broke my heart. Why do you think so?"

"You're too harsh on yourself, Selma." My father sighed softly and said, "I'm even starting to regret the harsh King's education I gave you. It's good to uphold justice and to oppose privileges, but love is different. It doesn't pay attention to this bone-deep red tape."

"It's normal for parents to favor their children, lovers to favor their other half, and best friends to favor their best friend. Or rather, these feelings can't be summed up with the word 'preference' in the first place. They don't matter whether it's fair or unfair, objective or not, because feelings are very subjective.

"Are we going to make a law to limit the emotional boundaries between people? Just like your mother and I, she is my subject, and I treat her the same as any other subject; But she's also my only soulmate in this life. I'll side with her without hesitation in any decision because I love her, and love always has the privilege of not being accused."

I looked at my father in confusion, finding it difficult to understand.

He gently hugged my mother and me, his broad chest firm and warm.

"You can't sleep or eat in peace because of this. Could it be because you didn't put yourself in the role of being loved?" he asked.

"I know he loves me, and I love him too..." I mumbled.

It was always a little embarrassing to reveal one's love in front of one's parents. Anyway, I had already said so much, so it didn't matter if I said a few more words.

"Isn't that it?" My father ruffled my hair and said affectionately, "Since you are loved, you must have the confidence to be loved. Believe in the 'privilege' that love gives you. You don't have to be ashamed of this because being loved is a lucky and happy thing.

I looked at my father with some uncertainty. "Is that the case?"

"Of course, it's true. I believe in you, and I believe in him, child."

"Just like you and us," my mother said with a chuckle. "Because parents love their child, and the child loves the parents, you can always act spoiled with us without any holdback."

I snorted shyly, and my mother pinched my face.

"If that's the case, why can't you 'act spoiled' with Aldrich?"

"Are you and father always 'acting spoiled' with each other?" I asked on purpose.

My mother let out a short scream, tickling me. "You bad girl!"

We laughed and fooled around while my father looked at me gently. At this moment, I was thrilled.

I also understood what my parents meant.

Love was such a wonderful thing that no rules could restrain it. Why should I trap myself in those meaningless worries if that was the case?

Tomorrow. Tomorrow I would end this annoying silent war.

I made up my mind.

The following day, I spent time with Tracy and the other werewolf grandmasters. There was still no progress, and Aldrich still didn't appear.

In the afternoon, when I excitedly ran to the training ground, I heard a piece of big news that surprised and depressed me.

Kara, who prepared towels and other tools for us in advance, told me, "Sir Aldrich has official business to attend to and cannot come to train you today. He just asked a soldier to send a message and his apology: I'm sorry to have made you come here in vain."

The courage I'd worked so hard to build deflated like a balloon.

What was this? Did he think I didn't know the working mechanism of the military? In this peaceful era without war, there were very few accidents in the military apart from daily training. Even if Aldrich had an urgent business, he would still have to report to my father.

'You're just avoiding me by skipping training without saying a word.'

Before today, I was hiding from him, but now it was him hiding from me. Moon Goddess, this comedy was not funny!

I should have been angry, but at this moment, I unexpectedly resonated with Aldrich's mood. Perhaps I was not the only one retreating, but Aldrich was doing the same too. It wasn't that he didn't send out a signal to ask for peace, but I was hiding like an ostrich and got nothing.

Perhaps my actions made him lose hope.

This reignited my confidence!

'Come on, Selma. Since you've always prided yourself on being responsible, you'll have to clean up the mess you've created!

After asking about Aldrich's whereabouts, I rushed to Duke Frank's mansion as if my feet were on fire.

Duke Frank was not surprised by my sudden visit at all. I suspected that he, like my parents, had long seen through the cause and effect of our little couple's quarrel.

Aldrich was in his room. I didn't even have to say anything, and he automatically reported Aldrich's schedule to me, "He didn't go anywhere today. Perhaps you know whom he's waiting for, Miss Selma."

I thanked him briefly and rushed to Aldrich's room.

177 Coward

Selma Payne's POV:

I gently knocked on the door, and Aldrich's voice came from behind. "Please let me be alone for a while. Thank you."

"It's me, Aldrich," I said.

He was silent for a few seconds before he opened the door.

“Hello, I heard you canceled today’s training, so I came to ask what happened.” I pretended to be calm, but my evasive gaze and unnecessary actions had already completely betrayed me.

“You’re going on a mission. Why are you still at home? Are you only leaving at night?”

I tried to find a topic to talk about, but when I realized what I had said, I wanted to slap myself.

“I don’t mean anything else, it’s just that I don’t know what I’m talking about, so I’m so embarrassed now. Don’t you want to invite me in? It’s awkward to be standing at the door like this.”

I blurted out a bunch of words like a machine gun. Aldrich silently nodded and gestured for me to enter the room.

The last time we were in his room, we watched a movie together. This time, the atmosphere was very different. The soft sofa made it difficult for me to sit still. I didn’t even know where to place my hands and feet.

Aldrich finally said the first words to me today, “Do you want some tea? I’ll get the servant to bring it up.”

“No need!” I was so nervous that my voice changed. “I had tea at the palace. It was lemon green tea with three sugar cubes. Kara also told me not to eat it so sweet and that it would cause tooth decay. Gosh! What am I saying?”

Aldrich sat down opposite me like a silent mountain. I suddenly realized that when he was expressionless, he was a completely different person compared to the usual sweet little dog. His strong body gave people an unparalleled sense of oppression, and his calm gaze treated everyone as air.

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We sat in silence.

I quietly observed Aldrich. His expression was empty, and I didn’t know what he was thinking. He was facing me, but I was sure his dilated pupils weren’t looking at me. I would have thought he had fallen asleep if he wasn’t blinking.

Someone had to break the ice.

I thought.

That was why I was here.

“Aldrich, we need to talk.” I thought about it again and said, “It’s about everything that happened in the past few days, about what happened in the Rocky Mountains.”

He didn’t answer me, so I could only bite the bullet and continue, “First, I have to apologize. I know what I said to you that day was too hurtful, but please believe that I didn’t mean to put status above our relationship. I was affected by negative emotions then, and I couldn’t control myself at all because I had just absorbed the giant pine tree formed by the demonic shard.

” I regretted it the moment I said those words. I should have apologized to you, but I hesitated. I was afraid, nervous, and a little embarrassed. I don’t know how to tell you. I felt that anything I said would be wrong. It would be too deliberate. At that time, I was a bit of a jerk and didn’t want to do those things that would ‘lose face’.

“You didn’t say a word on the plane. I wanted to find an opportunity to say something to you, but I missed it because of my hesitation. After returning to the palace, I had an ostricious mentality and didn’t want to face this matter. I pretended it didn’t exist, which caused the conflict between us to deepen.

“I don’t know why, but I somehow feel that you’re gradually forgiving me. Please don’t laugh at me for overthinking, but every time I look into your eyes, I can’t help but have this thought. People who hate me won’t look at me so gently. You’ve been giving me hints, but I’ve been avoiding them.

“To be honest, I’m a little afraid you’ll forgive me. It’s contradictory, right? But that’s the truth. Because your temper is just too good, you’re always forgiving me. Whether I made a mistake intentionally or unintentionally, it doesn’t matter to you. I like this feeling, but I also hate this feeling. I don’t want you to break your bottom line because of me. The reason is very selfish because I don’t want to take on this role of controlling people.

“You know what? I’ve even thought about breaking up these past few days, but yesterday, my parents told me that...”

“I’m not breaking up.”

Aldrich, who had been absent-minded the whole time, suddenly spoke up.

“No matter what, I won’t break up.”

My train of thought was interrupted, and I suddenly stammered, “No, listen to me first.”

“I won’t listen,” Aldrich said unyieldingly. “In any case, I won’t break up. No matter what.”

I couldn’t help but laugh at his childish behavior. “I’m not breaking up. I’m just telling you my feelings.”

Aldrich was like a doll wound up with a spring, suddenly receiving a vital life force. He looked at me with a serious and stubborn expression.

“I only had that thought for a moment.” I looked into his eyes and said thoughtfully, “Only one second, but I quickly brushed it away.”

“It’s because I love you, Aldrich. Love made me a coward, but it made me willing to take on all responsibilities. I don’t think our conflict has reached the point where we can end our love, and I can’t give up because of this small setback. If I do, I’ll regret it for the rest of my life and look down on myself forever.”

178 Mental Health

Selma Payne’s POV:

“So, I’m here today to ask for your forgiveness.

“In the past, you were the one who coaxed me every time we fought because you loved me and were willing to put down your pride for me. Since that’s the case, why can’t I be the one to lower my head first this time? This is my fault, to begin with.”

I walked up to him and squatted down. I took his hand and said softly, “I’m sorry, Aldrich. I promise I won’t be as impulsive as before. I promise I’ll care about myself as much as you care about my safety. I won’t let you worry anymore. I promise I’ll try my best to learn and control the power of devouring, and I won’t let negative emotions control my mind. Are you willing to forgive me?”

Aldrich looked at me deeply, and after a long while, he pulled me into his arms.

“I’ll forgive you forever, my girl. He buried his head in my neck, and I felt the moisture on my collar. Just don’t hurt my heart again. It has long belonged to you, completely belonged to you.”

We hugged each other tightly in the afternoon light.

Seeing us go down hand in hand, Duke Frank beamed a smile that said, ‘I understand.’ “Does it seem that the alarm has been lifted? I’ll have to tell the butler not to clean up the air-raid shelter.”

I shyly lowered my head as Aldrich helplessly said, “Oh, stop it, Father.”

“Alright, alright! Young people, heh.” Duke Frank shook the newspaper in his hand. “Where are you going? The palace?”

“Yes.” I nodded. “We haven’t finished today’s training.”

My parents weren't surprised that I went out alone and returned as two. They even invited Aldrich to have dinner.

During this period, my father said the same thing as Duke Frank, "It seems that I don't have to ask the palace guards to impose martial law. The air defense alarm has been lifted, hasn't it?"

My mother smiled kindly and did not say anything.

Aldrich and I secretly clenched our hands under the table, and we saw the same message in each other's eyes: This was the only time we would never be in a silent war again. It did not feel good, and the feeling of being teased by the elders was stranger.

From then on, I returned to my happy and leisurely life.

Tracy and the other werewolf grandmasters were still clueless about my abilities. As I was the first werewolf in history, or even in the entire world, all they could do was faithfully record all the data and changes that I had to prepare for future research.

My father had sent more warriors and werewolf grandmasters to the Rocky Mountains, but there were no more strange incidents related to the demon seal. Dorothy and the others had also successfully arrived at the second and third bases. After a short rest, they could set off for the ruins of the witch clan.

Communication between the two places was very inconvenient, but fortunately, Dorothy and I had already established a mind link to talk over long distances.

We were all surprised to find out that we had a telepathic link. As we were not family or married in front of the Moon Goddess, how could we have such a close mind link?

"Maybe it's because our hearts are connected." Dorothy said, "Mind link comes from the spiritual world. Blood and emotions are its strongest bonds. We've already become close friends, and our spiritual worlds are in perfect harmony. It's not strange for a mind link to form between us."

Due to the mind link, I received news from the Rocky Mountains even earlier than my father.

But I didn't have a close relationship with Dorothy either. Life in the Rocky Mountains was exhausting, and she was often tired. Every time this happened, the link in our mind would weaken. It was like two phones with bad signals, and their communication was intermittent.

I hoped that Dorothy could rest more so I didn't disturb her.

A week after I returned to the palace, Tracy and the others said the research could be concluded.

“The negative emotions don’t have a permanent effect on you.” She said, “Your mental state has moved toward a relatively stable level, which means negative emotions can dissipate over time.”

It took me a week to absorb the demonic shards and a week to dispel the negative emotions. This inevitably made me have a bad thought, ‘Could it be that I have to use the same amount of time to dispel the negative emotions as I take to digest the power?’

Tracy shook her head, “Unfortunately, I can’t answer these questions now. There are too few examples, and just one time could not prove anything. My suggestion with the grandmasters is for you to use the power of Devouring carefully and consider the effects of the side effects. Although mental health has always been ignored compared to physical health, this doesn’t mean it’s insignificant. Some major psychological damage can’t be reversed, and its impact on people is even more profound than physical disability.”

With her words, my parents paid more attention to my Devouring ability.

I’d been secretly planning to absorb insignificant things to test my abilities, such as spells, runes, and other abstract powers, or beasts and other tangible things.

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However, my parents strictly monitored me and ended all ‘reckless behaviors that could cause permanent harm’, making me extremely depressed.

I realized that simple physical training would not be able to fight against an enemy hiding in the dark. Although my new ability was powerful, it also had many restrictions. Wouldn’t things reach a dead end again?

179 Tensed Up

Selma Payne’s POV:

Ten days after I returned to the palace, Dorothy told me, “We’re going to the ruins of the witch clan today. Master Hayley will meet us there.”

I immediately woke up and excitedly said, “That’s great! Did Master Hayley reveal any good news?”

“Unfortunately, not yet.” Dorothy sounded a little disappointed. “She still hasn’t found Mullwica’s address. Every residence in ruins can be traced back to the past, but there is no Mullwica.”

“You’ve searched every house? Was there an open space or something? Maybe Mullwica’s daughter has hidden her home?”

“Not really. The houses in the clan have the characteristics of the old era. They are densely packed and close to each other, like rows of teeth suddenly growing out of the valley. There are no gaps at all.”

“Is that so...?”

I couldn’t help but feel disappointed.

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“But things will work out when they come to it,” Dorothy said optimistically. “Since Leviathan has lured me to the Rocky Mountains to look for the ruins of the witch clan, I might be the key to solving the problem. Don’t laugh at me for being too self-conscious!”

“I’m not! On the contrary, I think what you said makes sense. Perhaps as a prophet witch, Mullwica has been waiting for a descendant who is also a prophet witch to solve her mystery.”

We hung up after a short chat.

After I made up with Aldrich, our training also returned to normal. At my request, we now had a full training plan, even in the morning.

I couldn’t relax for even a moment. The cold gaze I felt in the cocoon seemed to stare at me persistently. From time to time, I would have the illusion that someone was hiding in the shadows and peeking at me. This made my nerves extremely tense. I could only train as hard as I could to divert my attention.

Perhaps my state of mind was too stiff; even Aldrich, who had always been strict with me, couldn’t help but advise me, “You should let yourself relax a little, Selma. Your body won’t be able to take this.”

I listened to him to let myself relax, but that cold gaze would appear whenever I was about to fall into a relaxed state.

I gradually felt a little impatient. In the dead of night, I secretly complained to Maxine, “Is there a peeping Tom in the palace? This feeling is annoying!”

“You’re too tense. If this goes on, you’ll force yourself into trouble even if you’re fine,” said Maxine lazily.

“What’s wrong with being nervous? I’ve been quite relaxed for the past eighteen years, but in the end, I’ve raised myself into a good-for-nothing, a rabbit that can’t even truss a chicken.”

“Don’t say that about yourself. Your past life is just a miniature version of the life of most ordinary people. Are all the people in the world rabbits?”

“I didn’t mean that. It’s just that in my position, being a rabbit is not good.”

“Still the exact words, you’ve pushed yourself too hard. I know what you’ve experienced in the Rocky Mountains. Although we were separated then, it also ensured that I was sober. From the illusion in the snowy night to the rebirth in the cocoon, your mood has been pained all the way, even to self-loathing.

“But this has never been your fault, Selma. No one is willing to be a puppet manipulated for fun, but the puppet is not wrong. The wrong one is the one who directed this play. You should vent your frustrations on the real murderer instead of torturing yourself like this.”

How could I not understand what Maxine meant?

Even though I knew what I was doing was wrong, there had always been a torn barrier between understanding and action. If one could restrain their actions with their thoughts so easily, then everyone in the world would be a saint.

I knew that, but I couldn’t do it.

Out of the choices in front of me, the best and only way was to aim the blade at myself.

“Forget it. Let’s not talk about this,” I said. “We must think of a way to return to the Rocky Mountains.”

“The Lycan King and the Queen will never agree to this.” Maxine did not have much hope.

I had to try. I had a feeling that the Rocky Mountains were hiding a huge secret. If I missed it, I’d regret it for the rest of my life.

“You know I will always support you, but the decision is in the hands of the two majesties. If they disagree, we can’t grow wings and fly out of the palace.”

“That’s right. We must think of a way to get my parents to agree...”

As I anxiously pondered, I gradually fell into Slumberland in exhaustion.

Darkness.

It was dark everywhere.

I felt like I was lying in a shallow stream, the cold and soft water gently kissing my skin.

The fine sand brought about a slight but hard-to-ignore pain. I suddenly opened my eyes.

Where was this place?

The dark sky was filled with heavy clouds, and lightning flashed with a dim golden light. A beast-like roar came from an unknown distance, causing people to tremble and have goosebumps.

180 An Unknown Dream

Selma Payne's POV:

What I saw was a boundless field. The short wild grass was half-dead and gently dancing in the breeze. Blue light spots were dancing between the grass and leaves as if they were unrestrained but also trapped.

I sat up from the shallow stream and found myself naked. Being free from the shackles of needle and thread was such a happy thing. It made one so excited that they wanted to run and sing loudly.

The clear and shallow stream of water washed over my ankles. It wasn't clear and revealed a faint red, like diluted blood, emitting a sweet fragrance.

I cupped the stream water and took a sip.

A refreshing feeling swept through my entire body, and an indescribable sense of comfort made me roll around in the stream.

I could sense that my condition was abnormal, but I wasn't worried. The vigilance I was proud of had dissolved silently with the stream, leaving only my primitive nature in pursuit of freedom and happiness.

I ran along the stream, running aimlessly on this endless grassland. At this moment, I didn't expect to meet anyone or anything because all I could think about was running.

'Run, run forward, don't stop.'

There was no fear, no hope.

I didn't know how much time had passed before I stopped. It wasn't that I couldn't run anymore, but the voice in my heart was saying, "Alright, this is the place. Please stop and wait."

And so I stopped.

Sitting in the seemingly endless stream, I looked at the dark clouds and waited quietly.

I didn't know what I was waiting for, but I had to wait.

The thunder was getting increasingly intense, and its light was already dazzling to the eye. With an earth-shattering thunder, the dark clouds exploded, and large snowflakes fell with the wind. The ground was immediately covered in an ominous white.

The sky was chaotic, and the field withered. Only the stream was still flowing.

It was getting redder.

The voice in my heart said, 'Are you thirsty? Have some water.'

So I picked up another handful of water and drank it. It was even sweeter than before, so sweet that it was bitter, so sweet that I couldn't stop, but I also hated it from the bottom of my heart.

"Do you like it?" she asked.

I nodded.

She chuckled as if lamenting that I was ignorant.

I shyly curled up.

"Don't be afraid, sweetheart. Just follow your desires and drink if you want." Her voice rang in my ear as if she was hugging me intimately from behind. "Remember this feeling, remember what you like and hate, then leave what you want to stay, and throw away what you want to throw away."

"I like the stream." I asked blankly, "But I also hate the stream. What should I do?"

But she disappeared and didn't answer me.

I felt very wronged and angry. I helped her to the end. What was the point of saying a few words for no reason?

The stream water became even redder, almost no different from blood. The snow kept falling into the stream, and the moment it touched the water, it melted like a marshmallow.

What did snow taste like?

With that thought, I grabbed a pile of snow and took a bite.

Suddenly, an indescribable bitterness, stench, and numbing sensation mixed, causing me to double in disgust.

“It’s awful!”

I kicked away the snow in front of me, and a lot of it fell into the stream and disappeared.

The water in the stream, which the snow had polluted, turned dark red at a visible rate and then spread to further places with the ripples.

“No!”

I understood the source of the strange smell in the stream, but I could not stop the snow from falling. All I could do was futilely scatter the snow on the bank, causing the color of the stream to darken.

In the end, it was as ugly as spilled ink.

The ice-cold temperature caused my body to stiffen gradually. Just as I was wantonly venting my anger, the cold and sharp blades of grass sliced through my skin as if it were tofu.

The drops of blood slid down quietly, dyeing the snow red, and disappeared into the stream.

At that moment, the surging halo exploded. The snow melted, the stream became clear again, and even the violent wind and snow avoided this place, leaving a peaceful world out of place with the surrounding.

The light was so warm, so familiar. From the night I was born, it had been taking care of me tirelessly, coaxing me to sleep and making me feel at ease.

It was the moonlight.

I looked at the tiny scratch on my index finger and had an epiphany.

I didn’t know when to transform my fingers into claws as sharp as blades. I cut open the skin on my arms and ran madly in the stream. As the dark red blood splattered, the color of the stream became lighter.

I still felt that it wasn’t enough, fast enough, or clear enough, so I cut open the skin of my legs and let the stream of water replace my blood.

When the water in the stream became clear again, I collapsed.

I didn't know when the small stream became more turbulent, but the rapid current gradually covered my mouth and nose. But I didn't feel suffocated or scared. Instead, I felt as comfortable and at ease as if I had returned to my mother's womb.

She appeared and hugged me in the water. "Do you understand now?"

I understood, but I didn't answer her.

I fell asleep in this sweet and warm stream.

181 Snow in Summer

Selma Payne's POV:

It was so cold.

In a daze, I curled up into a fetal position to resist the bone-piercing cold.

'Where's the blanket? Why can't I feel the blanket?'

I couldn't feel the blanket's warmth anywhere, so I opened my eyes reluctantly...

What had just happened?

My sleepiness instantly dissipated. I looked at the white world in front of me and had the illusion that I was still asleep.

Why was it snowing in my room?

"You're finally awake. I thought I was going to freeze to death in the middle of summer with you," said Maxine in a faint voice.

I found a coat from the closet covered in snow and put it on. I shivered and asked, "What's going on? The palace was attacked?"

"I don't think so. Rather, you were the attacker."

"What?"

"I don't know what happened to you when you were sleeping, but you suddenly showed off your power, as if you had suddenly learned sorcery, and emitted cold air, so the room was snowing for most of the night. I tried to wake you up, but just like the last time you were hypnotized, I couldn't contact you and take control of the body."

"Me? It's snowing?"

I recalled that strange dream, and without thinking, I grabbed a handful of snow and tasted it.

Ptooeey!

It was a familiar, disgusting taste.

This was the snow in my dream!

I was shocked. How could dreams and reality be connected? Could it be that after I purified the stream water in the dream, the disgusting snow didn't disappear but ran to the real world instead?

Speaking of which, what the hell was this snow? What was that shallow stream?

It was just 4:30 am, and the sky was dark and bright simultaneously. There were flashes of light and shadow behind the curtains from time to time, as if something was falling from the sky.

"No way..."

An ominous premonition welled up in my heart. I pulled open the curtains and saw that in the summer, which should have been bright and sunny, snow was falling heavily!

'We're finished! The snow has come to reality.'

A thick layer of snow had accumulated in the garden, and it was not an exaggeration to say it was a snow world.

Wait a minute.

Such abnormal snow, yet it didn't attract any attention?

It was reasonable to say that the servants on night duty should have started laying anti-slip blankets long ago, and the guards should have stepped up their patrols to prevent accidents from happening.

However, the garden was empty. The garden, the foyer, the corridor, and the rooms visible through the large glass windows were quiet. It was as if the entire palace had fallen into hibernation in the snow.

I immediately ran out of the room. As expected, the maidservant on duty in the tea room had already fallen asleep on the floor. I then looked at the guard on duty in the corridor, sleeping with his sharp spear as his pillow.

"Wake up, quickly, wake up!"

Their skin was already pale from the cold. I shook their bodies hard, and after a few seconds, they woke up.

“Oh, it’s so cold,” a servant mumbled with her eyes half-closed. “Did I forget to turn off the ice maker?”

Seeing the anxious look on my face, she immediately cheered up and said, “Miss Selma! Oh, do you need anything?”

“I need your help to wake up everyone in the palace.” I pointed at the quiet world outside the window. “For some reason, everyone has fallen asleep, and the room temperature is dropping. It’s almost below zero. We must wake everyone up, or they’ll be in danger!”

The servants looked out of the window in surprise at the heavy snow. Although they were full of doubts, they did not say anything and immediately left.

The guards also followed.

I turned around and ran to my father’s room. I thanked my parents for not following the tradition of sleeping in different King and Queen suites, which saved me from wasting my time.

After shaking the attendants and guards awake, I rushed into the bedroom. My parents hugged each other tightly. Their beds were covered in snow like the entire palace, and the room temperature was dropping.

“Father! Mother! Wake up now! Wake up!”

I woke my parents up, and my mother sneezed several times after opening her eyes.

“What’s going on?” My father, who had always been calm, found it difficult to keep his cool. “Selma? What was happening? The palace was attacked?”

I shook my head. “No, it’s because of me. Sigh, it’s complicated to explain. I’ll explain it to you later. Anyway, you guys should leave this place first. The servants have turned on the heater in the outer room. It’s too cold in here.”

It was a false alarm, but fortunately, no one was injured by this strange snow. The snowfall didn’t cover a large area. It only covered the palace and the surrounding forests and grasslands, which immediately put me at ease.

At around seven o’clock, the snow stopped, and the entire palace began to get busy removing the snow. The strange thing was that the snow removal agent could not remove the snow as effectively as it had in the past. The servants could not even find a

way to melt the snow. It was as if the palace was covered with cold powder disguised as snow.

“I think I know why,” I said guiltily. “This isn’t snow. It’s a crystal of some negative energy. If we want to get rid of it, we might have to invite the werewolf grandmasters.”

“How did you know?” my parents asked, puzzled.

I rubbed my hair and said embarrassedly, “Because I was the one who expelled it from my body.”

182 Within Expectations

Selma Payne’s POV:

What surprised me was that my parents didn’t seem to be surprised by this. Instead, they had an ‘I knew it’ expression. They even seemed to be relieved.

“Let me guess. It’s a derivative effect of the Devouring ability, right?” Although my father asked this, his tone was very confident.

“How did you know?” I was greatly surprised.

“I have guessed it. In fact, your mother and I have been waiting for this moment. Although we didn’t expect it to be huge, we have been mentally prepared for possible accidents in the future.” My father said, “The gift of fate is never free. When you open the history book, you will find that the treasures or abilities regarded as god-given will more or less have a negative influence, so we have been mentally prepared for it.

“I just didn’t expect it to be so unexpected,” my mother continued. “In addition to observing your mental state these few days, we’ve also been secretly monitoring the data of your various power fluctuations.”

I didn’t quite understand why they were hiding it from me. “So why didn’t you tell me? Can’t we guard against everything together?”

My parents looked at each other and sighed helplessly.

“You’ve been pushing yourself too hard recently, darling.” My father rubbed my head. “We don’t want to put too much pressure on you. Even if we can’t help you relax, we want you to get through this special period more easily.”

We didn’t talk much about this topic before Tracy and the werewolf grandmasters arrived.

As soon as they entered, Master Hayley said thoughtfully, "I can sense a powerful evil aura. It's hidden in the snow."

My father reassured her. "I've asked all the servants and guards responsible for clearing the snow to wear tight isolation suits. After the snow is cleared, I'll have to trouble the werewolf grandmasters to do a thorough inspection to ensure their safety."

The werewolf grandmasters all expressed that this was their duty.

Tracy first checked my parents' physical condition and said, "It's nothing serious. It's just that her Majesty has caught a cold. Please ask the kitchen to make ginger soup to ward off the cold."

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Kara immediately ordered that.

Next, the werewolf grandmasters examined my parents and me. Although the results weren't perfect, it wasn't a big problem.

"There are some remnants of evil energy, only stopping on the surface," Master Hayley said as she drew an exorcism rune for her parents. "You can completely exorcise the evil energy with this rune for more than twelve hours. Please do not touch water or any liquid during this period to prevent the rune from being ruined."

My father had instructed the werewolf grandmasters to research the snowflake crystals condensed from the power of dispelling evil as soon as possible. Due to their large number, they had to be sealed in a corner tower in a remote corner of the palace.

It was the room where Adele had been imprisoned.

After I was done with all this, it was finally my turn.

"Tell me how you made these snowflakes, child." My father said, "We need to help you find the answer to control this behavior."

I recalled the dream and said with uncertainty, "I don't think there's a need to trouble myself. I can probably control this kind of behavior."

"What do you mean?"

"I had a dream last night. In my dream, there was a small stream, and it was snowing. It was the same kind of snow that you see in the palace. The dream appeared again. I think the stream represents the source of my power. All the external power I absorb will eventually gather here. Snow, on the other hand, represents the impurities and negative emotions in the external force, which will melt into the stream."

“I was deeply affected by the negative emotions before because I couldn’t separate the snow from the stream. So, although my mental state seemed to be recovering on the surface, the impurities were settling and had not disappeared.

“And in my dream, someone taught me how to separate these two things.”

The rest of the people asked worriedly, “Who was it? Do you think she’s safe?”

“I don’t know. I didn’t know who she was. It was like she was just an illusion that had appeared out of thin air. But I felt she was very kind to me, and I wanted to trust her for no reason.

“She guided me to explore the secrets of the stream and helped me understand the secret hidden in the snow.

“In my dream, I used my blood to dispel the impurities in the stream. It was amazing. It was like a drop of detergent falling into dirty water. All the impurities in the surrounding area have been purified and disappeared.

“But I think blood was just an illusion. It doesn’t mean I need to bleed. The key lies in the power it represents, the warm, gentle, and full of vitality power.

“I’m very familiar with it. It’s a favor that I’ve been feeling every night since the day I was born.

“It might sound ridiculous, but I think it’s the power of the moon. It’s the Moon Goddess that helped me.

“So I’m thinking, could it be that the Moon Goddess has entered my dream to guide me on how to use the power of Devouring?”

“Because of the Moon Goddess, I think I can completely control Devour.”

183 Three Days

Selma Payne’s POV:

To be honest, I was not sure if it was true, but who could suddenly break into my dream and use moonlight to guide me in mastering power?

I didn’t want to appear too full of myself, but there was still a new mark formed from the old mark in my body. Although it was no longer effective, wasn’t it a sign of extreme piety to fuse the goddess’ mark into my flesh and blood? Who knew? Maybe the goddess was taking pity on me because of this?

To prove my words, I performed a ‘heavy snow’ for them on the spot.

As the negative impurities in my body had almost been completely removed, I could only produce a few scattered snowflakes this time. They were gone after covering the table.

At this moment, I could feel that the small stream in my body was flowing in a clear and full of vitality.

I'd finally absorbed and purified all the power in that demonic fragment.

The werewolf grandmasters were amazed by my ability. After the test, they told my parents, "The power fluctuation is very stable. It doesn't look like a witch's magic fluctuation or a werewolf's unique signal. Judging from the value, it's a new and never-before-seen ability. It wasn't turbulent but rather very peaceful and submissive. If we look at the data, we think Miss Selma has already completely mastered this ability."

"See?" I looked at my parents proudly. "The werewolf grandmasters said it's fine!"

"Although that's what you say, we can't let our guard down." My mother gave me an ultimatum. "You have to go through a period of observation and assessment. Only after we are sure that there is no problem with your ability will your father and I allow you to use it."

"Oh..."

I leaned against the stool in frustration and looked at Master Hayley, who was trying to evoke our comradeship in the Rocky Mountains. However, she was just as 'heartless' as I was. She had set a 10-day observation period for me!

It had been ten days! By the time they were done with their observations, Dorothy might have already returned from the Rocky Mountains!

I immediately refused. "No, ten days is too long. Looking at the current situation, we can only patiently observe my every move and record the cumbersome observation data. It won't be of any use to understand my ability. There's no need to waste so much time; just observe it for a day or two to make sure it runs smoothly!"

"This is for your sake, Selma," my mother said.

I retorted, "I know my abilities the best. All others can do is get information from the outside world that might not be useful. If you guys don't believe me, then there's no need to continue this experiment, right?"

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The situation was at a stalemate. In the end, my father mediated, "Selma is right. Ten days is unnecessary, but a short observation period is still necessary. Do you have any suggestions, Master?"

“Yes,” Master Hayley replied after some deliberation. “We must observe her for at least three days to get enough data.”

“Three days it is then,” my father decided. “In these three days, you must cooperate with Tracy and the werewolf grandmasters as much as possible. Is that okay, Selma?”

Three days was still too long, but I had no other choice. I could only agree.

Tracy and the werewolf grandmasters took their leave. Before they left, they even took the snow on the table.

After they left, I dawdled to my mother and whispered, “I’m very sorry, Mother. I shouldn’t have talked back to you like that.”

Mother looked at me intensely and pulled me to sit beside her. She said earnestly, “I’m at fault too, child. You’re all grown up now. I shouldn’t have made every decision for you. I’m just too worried about you and don’t want you to be hurt. Every wound you have is on my heart, and it hurts too much.”

“I’m sorry, Mother. I’ll be careful in the future and won’t make you worry.” I hugged my mother’s waist and buried myself in her arms. “I know I was too impatient in the past and did not take my safety seriously, making many people worry. I promise that I’ll think carefully before I do anything in the future. If I make you worry again, you can scold me well!”

My mother tapped my forehead and smiled. “What are you saying?”

My father looked at us with relief. The family quietly enjoyed the warm moment of having a child.

After Aldrich discovered that I had ‘gotten into big trouble’, he consoled me. Although I didn’t feel any fear or grievance, his behavior of trying to make me happy was fascinating. I had terrible thoughts and deliberately pretended to be depressed to play with him.

After I was exposed, Aldrich didn’t get angry; he just knocked my head helplessly and continued with the day’s training.

At night, I told Dorothy that I could control the devouring process completely. She was very happy for me, but we didn’t speak much before she became sleepy.

“Are you very tired today?”

“Yes, I am.” Her voice began to stammer, which was a sign that her mind link was fluctuating. “I don’t know why, but the conditions in the witch clan’s ruins are much better than in other bases, but I just feel very tired for no reason.”

“Did you do any physical examination?”

“I did, but it was useless. Master Kevin said that it might be the effect of the remaining ancient magic magnetic field on me. Because I have a witch’s blood, I am deeply affected by it.”

184 Fainting

Selma Payne’s POV:

Dorothy’s voice gradually weakened, and the mind link was finally completely disconnected.

The three days felt so sad as if they had been slowed down limitlessly. I thought about the progress of the Rocky Mountains every moment, and I wished I could grow wings and fly there immediately.

As expected, Tracy and the werewolf grandmasters could not give constructive suggestions in the past three days. I understood. After all, my example could be considered a ‘new research field’. It seemed difficult to find a second person who had the same experience as me. Studying me was as tricky as studying some difficult-to-treat diseases with only three or five cases.

However, it wasn’t as if I hadn’t made any progress. At the very least, I had given my ability a new name. It no longer had a perfunctory name like ‘Devour.’

This was Master Hayley’s suggestion.

“All the special powers recorded in the ancient books have a unique name.” She gave a few examples. “For example, ‘the Wind Breath’ from the elves, ‘the Holy Light’ from the humans, and ‘the Eye of Insight’ from the prophetic witches. You’ve created a brand new power, which is worth celebrating. Of course, it’s also worth giving it a resounding name.”

What kind of name should I go with?

I was ashamed to say that I had no interest in literature and history so I couldn’t come up with a name with literary talent and historical heritage.

When I wanted to ask my parents for help, they said, “This is a power that belongs to you, Selma. Only you have the right to name it.”

That night, after Aldrich and I finished training, we snuggled up to the grass and looked at the moon. I wasn’t sure why, but the gentle and bright moonlight suddenly inspired me.

“I got it!” I jumped up in excitement.

“What did you get?” Aldrich was confused.

“Name! The name of my new power!”

Since the moon taught me how to use this power, why wouldn't I honor the moon?

“Let's call it 'New Flow' then!”

The 'new' represented the beginning of the new moon, and its inexhaustible power interweaved into a stream as clear and holy as moonlight.

This was the most literary moment of my life. Maybe I had the potential to be a poet!

Everyone was delighted with the name I came up with, and 'New Flow' was solemnly recorded in the books of the werewolves.

Seeing that another page had been added to the thick ancient book, I suddenly had a very novel feeling – a brand new me and distant words were put together. I was looking at the ancient people, and the future people would also look at me the same way I looked at the ancient people. What a wonderful time and space intersection!

On the third night, I shared this with Dorothy.

“Congratulations! Our little princess has entered the history books at such a young age!” Dorothy said joyfully, “This is a great feat. Don't look at it as nothing. It bears the power of a brand-new bloodline. Your descendants will always be proud of your strength.”

Regarding the issue of descendants, I felt a little shy for no reason. What descendant? It was too early to talk about this.

“Early? In my opinion, it won't take too long.” Dorothy deliberately teased me, “Are you and Sir Aldrich going to wait until middle age like the southern Duke before getting married? Seeing how you two are so attached, I think I will be able to swear allegiance to the newly-born princes and princesses soon after graduation!”

“Hey! Dorothy! What are you talking about?”

I fell into the pillow, my face as hot as a furnace.

“Aldrich and I are not like what you think we are...”

Dorothy would not believe my nonsense. “Come on, girl. Anyone with eyes can see the wonderful atmosphere between you two. If you still want to hide it, then with all due respect, you two will never be able to be actors in your lives.”

Was he hiding it?

In fact, Aldrich and I only officially acknowledged our relationship before the parents of both parties. For the sake of privacy, we still kept it a secret from the public.

However, we were starting to ignore those agreements that kept us at a distance. Not to mention Kara, Tracy, and the other people around us all day. We didn't even avoid the werewolf grandmasters who came to treat the members and me in the Rocky Mountains.

At some point, we had unconsciously let go of the insignificant worries in our hearts and only took action based on our happiness.

Wasn't this pretty good? We didn't have to be careful, and we didn't have to be on tenterhooks. As long as we walked openly on the road, everyone around us would look at us with teasing and congratulatory gazes.

Although no one made it clear, the promise of 'hiding our relationship' had been quietly nullified between us.

I wanted to say something to Dorothy, but this time, no matter what I said, she did not answer.

That was weird. She used to say good night to me every time she cut off the mind link.

Was she so tired that she fell asleep?

Just as I was about to disconnect, a sharp wave came from the mind link.

This soul-penetrating feeling was so strange that I jumped up from the bed like a frightened cat.

"Dorothy? Are you alright?"

I anxiously asked her, but I didn't get any answer. Instead, the fluctuations became more and more irregular.

This was not caused by pure fatigue. Dorothy was in danger!

Without thinking, I ran to find my parents.

185 Returning To The Rocky Mountains

Selma Payne's POV:

My father was still working in the study, and only my mother was reading under the light in the bedroom.

“Mother! Dorothy is in trouble!” I said breathlessly, “There’s a strange fluctuation between her and my mind link. I’m sure there’s something wrong with her mental state.”

My mother put down the book in surprise and said, “Take a breath, child. How do you know? Did you have a nightmare?”

“No, I swear it’s true. For the past few days, I’ve been communicating with Dorothy every night before I went to bed, and she would always say good night to me before ending it. But today, not only did she not do so, she even sent me an abnormal fluctuation that made me feel uncomfortable. I can’t tell what the problem is, but it’s obvious that Dorothy has fallen into a coma and can’t control his mental state!”

My mother chose to believe me, so we went to the study to explain the situation to my father.

Due to the inconvenience of communication with the uninhabited Rocky Mountains, there was an unavoidable delay in communication between the palace and the various bases. My father had not received any news from the ruins of the witch clan.

I wasn’t sure if I was too fast or if they had not noticed Dorothy’s abnormality.
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After learning about this, my father immediately activated the emergency communication channel. Ten minutes later, Master Kevin sent back a message. Dorothy had been attacked by unknown sorcery. Her spiritual domain had been sealed, and it was currently producing extremely unstable vibrations.

The changes were too drastic. From the looks of it, if the problem could not be resolved quickly, Dorothy’s mental domain would be destroyed in less than twenty-four hours. Even if she survived, she would become a lunatic for the rest of her life.

I was shocked when I heard the news and immediately wanted to rush to the Rocky Mountains.

Of course, my parents did not agree. “Calm down first, Selma. There are currently unknown threats in the ruins of the witch clan. It’s too dangerous. We can’t let you take the risk.”

“But what about Dorothy? She will die!”

“No, Dorothy will be safe with the werewolf grandmasters watching over her.”

“Don’t try to fool me, Father. If the werewolf grandmasters had a way, they wouldn’t have announced Dorothy’s life in such a helpless tone!”

My mother frowned and said worriedly, “We don’t want to see Dorothy in danger either, but we’re even more unwilling to let you be in danger. Besides, what can you do even if you go? You don’t know sorcery, and if even the werewolf grandmasters can’t solve the problem, you won’t be able to either.”

“I have a way, and I can guarantee that I can save Dorothy.” I retorted, “Have you forgotten about New Flow? I can completely devour the curse that attacked Dorothy. Without the interference of the curse, her spiritual domain will naturally calm down.”

“But the side effects...”

I could freely control my power to break it down. You’ve already seen it. It doesn’t affect me at all.”

This time, both my parents were silent.

I continued, “Let me go. Father, Mother, Dorothy is my friend, comrade, and follower. Didn’t you always teach me that I should be responsible for everything as a leader? Now that Dorothy is in danger, and I have the ability to save her, how can I watch her lose her life for nothing?”

Under my repeated insistence, my parents had no choice but to agree.

“The plane will be ready in an hour. Go pack your luggage immediately,” my father said. “I will get a team of warriors to accompany you. Master Hayley and Aldrich will need time to prepare and will leave tomorrow morning.

I quickly packed my luggage. As I had been planning to return to the Rocky Mountains, I didn’t move much of my luggage, so it was ready very quickly.

“Be careful.”

My mother’s hair was gently swaying with the night wind, scattering around her worried eyes.

“I will.”

I exchanged a kiss with my parents and left on the plane.

When they arrived at the corner of the Rocky Mountains, Dorothy had less than twenty hours left. Frank, who came to pick us up, immediately led us up the mountain without saying a word. We only stopped at the three bases for about ten minutes to replenish our supplies.

By the time we arrived at the ruins of the witch clan, we were all exhausted.

The sun was high up in the sky, and I could not be bothered to rest. I immediately went to check on Dorothy's condition.

She was lying in her sleeping bag like Sleeping Beauty. Her face was calm, and her cheeks were rosy. If I hadn't been able to detect her chaotic mental domain, which was like a tornado passing through, I would have thought that she was sleeping.

"The curse is gradually affecting her soul," Master Kevin said. "If we miss the best time frame to save her, I predict her soul will undergo permanent changes."

"What will happen?"

"I don't know yet. From past examples, it's either because of the distortion of the soul that she becomes a mentally deranged cripple or because of the mutation of the soul that she becomes a stranger."

"A stranger?"

My heart immediately clenched.

Thinking about the unknown location of the devil's seal and its loose condition, I couldn't help but guess – could this be the doing of the devil's seal, plundering Dorothy's body as a carrier to escape?

186 Breaking The Curse

Selma Payne's POV:

The more I thought about it, the more I felt it was possible.

First, Dorothy had the most unique bloodline and power among all the people present.

Ancient beings were always obsessed with so-called 'bloodlines' and 'inheritances'. Dorothy, who had the bloodline of prophecy and ancestors as chaotic as those in ancient Greek mythology, met this requirement.

Furthermore, Dorothy was the descendant of the prophetic witch. She might even be a direct descendant of Mullwica. Possessing her body would be satisfying revenge for the demons with bad intentions.

Third, Dorothy's body had bones, and the side effects of the Eye of Insight were constantly snatching away her life force. She was like a dangerous bomb that could explode at any time. If the demon wished to break free from the shackles of his body

one day, then even if Dorothy died quickly, he could use the Eye of Insight as an excuse not to be discovered.

“Can you find the source of the magic oscillation?” I asked out of caution.

“The trajectory of the wave is very secretive. We only discovered that it’s related to the magic residue of the witch clan’s ruins and nothing more.”

“Does it have any special characteristics?”

“Cold, extremely cold, like ice formed from frost and snow. It makes one feel cold all over.”

Cold!

This was a remarkable feature. I recalled the impurities I separated from the demonic fragment. It was a substance as cold as snowflakes.

I was sure this had something to do with the demon in the seal.

However, all of this would have to be delayed. The most important thing now was to help Dorothy get rid of the curse as soon as possible.

“I need you to help look after Dorothy’s soul,” I said to Master Kevin. “Keep it stable to the maximum extent. If there are any problems, please inform me in time to avoid any possible damage.”

Master Kevin solemnly expressed that there was no problem.

“Let’s officially begin.”

This time, breaking the curse was not as simple as helping Dorothy remove the curse left behind by Leviathan. Back then, I could accurately grab the black mist as if taking something from my pocket because of the mark’s restriction.

This time, it was different. Magic power was flowing everywhere. I could only rely on myself to find traces of it in Dorothy’s soul. Any accident can cause permanent damage to Dorothy’s soul.

I closed my eyes and began to meditate, silently searching for the feeling of walking in the wilderness in a dream.

My thoughts gradually fused with Dorothy’s soul. The soft and warm feeling of being submerged in water relaxed my entire body.

Dorothy’s soul was as gentle as her own.

I wandered in Dorothy's spiritual world as if wandering in a blue ocean. It was completely silent and devoid of any living beings. There was nothing other than the boundless sea and the light source that came from nowhere.

That was not right. Where did Dorothy go?

I dived into the depths of the ocean. As the light source became dimmer, my vision became narrower. In the end, I couldn't see my fingers. I could only use my instinct to check if there was anything outside.

Finally, I seemed to have dived to the bottom of the ocean, and I touched a rough and cold object.

I walked around it. It was huge, like a shell.

Would Dorothy be inside?

I tried to knock on the shell, but there was no reaction.

The bottom of the sea was much warmer than on the surface as if lava was buried underground. As the temperature gradually rose, I had a hunch that something terrible was about to happen, so I decided to swim back to the surface with the shell.

The shell looked big, but it was surprisingly light. It was like a bubble, floating up as soon as it left the seabed.

I tried to find a crack in the shell, but it was tightly closed, not revealing a single flaw. I did not have any tools with me. I wanted to try to break it open with force, but I was afraid of hurting Dorothy, who might be inside.

The seabed suddenly erupted just as I was at my wits' end.

To my surprise, it wasn't boiling lava that came out, but cold white ash.

The shell beside me was gradually heating up. I realized that the shell had been trying its best to adjust the ocean floor's temperature to suppress the white ash's explosion.

Great, I'd moved the shell away, and my good intentions messed everything up!

I pushed the shell upward, causing it to float to the surface of the sea even faster. I prepared to devour the ice-cold crystals as much as I could.

But I only have one mouth, and I couldn't absorb the white ash everywhere in time!

I could only try to borrow the power of the seawater, hoping that it could become my external medium.

“Dorothy, can you hear me?”

I’d try my best to communicate with the owner of this place.

“I am Selma. Can you still recognize me? Don’t be afraid, don’t resist. I’m here to help you.

“If you trust me, can you temporarily give me control of the spiritual world? I need the help of seawater to purify the white ash. I promise I’ll devour them all, not leaving any trash for you.”

To my surprise, although Dorothy responded to me, she rejected me.

“Why?”

I asked in surprise.

She didn’t answer me.

Seeing the white ash spreading without restraint, I became increasingly anxious as I rapidly thought about why Dorothy might refuse.

Suddenly, the conversation we had in the safe house came to my mind.

Could Dorothy be worried about my safety?

187 Crystal

Selma Payne’s POV:

There was no mistake! Perhaps she was worried that the adverse effects of the white ash would harm me. Although she knew I could break down the power I absorbed, she had never seen it with her own eyes.

I immediately promised Dorothy, “I will never break my promise to you, Dorothy. I swear that this will not affect me in the slightest. When you wake up, I promise you that you will see the ice sculptures of all the negative elements that I have absorbed. If the werewolf grandmasters can find a way to purify it, maybe we can use it as a memento to decorate the room!”

The water started to move, and I knew that Dorothy was struggling.

In the end, she chose to trust me.

In an instant, I felt as if I had become one with the sea. This strange experience made me feel like I was an omnipresent spray, able to note every movement in the ocean

from all directions without any blind spots.
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Every drop of seawater was my incarnation.

I immediately controlled the seawater to start purifying the white ash. In an instant, large amounts of snow-white 'sugar cream' melted in the turbulent water. As if sensing my actions, the chasms at the bottom of the ocean started spewing out even more white ash in an attempt to stop me from devouring it.

But this was giving me more nutrients for no reason.

And due to this, I was able to find the source of the white ash accurately.

Like a swimming fish, I quickly dove into the crack at the bottom of the sea. As expected, I found a crystal-like fragment inside.

Although it looked different, it gave me the same feeling as a giant pine tree.

It was indeed a demonic fragment!

This evil creature was like a fragrant ice cream cake to me. I felt my appetite increase, and I couldn't help but swallow the fragment.

In the next second, the white ash that was spurting out immediately stopped. Without the core's support, they could not resist the aggressive seawater. I quickly devoured them all, just like I devoured the remaining sugar powder on the side of a bowl.

After solving the problem, I quickly floated to the sea's surface to look for shells.

The white and round shell floated alone on the boundless sea. It was lonely but not desolate.

It shook slightly, and then a corner was lifted.

Dorothy was curled up on the soft shell flesh. She whispered to me, "Thank you, Selma."

"You're welcome." I was more concerned about her current condition. "How do you feel? Are you hurt?"

"Thanks to you, white ash didn't manage to cause me any harm. If you had come a little later, I don't think I would have been able to suppress them."

"Can you confirm who cast a spell on you?"

"I don't know, but whoever it is must be very strong. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to stuff a demon shard into my soul without a sound."

"Alright. I have to leave first. It will take some time to digest the demonic shards. I can't remove the impurities from your spiritual world."

"Are you sure you'll be fine?"

"Don't worry. I said I won't go back on my word."

I ended my meditation and left Dorothy's spiritual world.

After devouring, I felt a little tired, but I didn't immediately fall asleep like the last time. I believed it was because I had just made a new body previous time. In addition to digesting the power, I had to adjust my body's condition, so I had to fall asleep.

The shard was much smaller this time than the last, so I didn't have to use up so much energy. My body was also stable, so I could stay awake.

Seeing me open my eyes, Master Kevin asked with concern, "Is it over? Did you succeed?"

I nodded and asked him to help take care of Dorothy's body.

After a simple examination, Master Kevin said, "She needs to recuperate from her fatigue. She'll be fine after a good night's sleep."

I was finally entirely at ease. A wave of sleepiness washed over me, so I lay down on my sleeping bag and took a nap.

When I woke up, it was already noon the next day. I was lying in a warm sleeping bag, and the alluring aroma of food wafted in from outside.

Dorothy brought a bowl of steaming hot porridge into the room. Seeing that I had woken up, she asked happily, "You're awake? How do you feel? Do you still feel dizzy? Master Kevin said you've overused your energy, so I've made you some beef congee. Have some to recover your strength."

"Thank you." My stomach was rumbling. I immediately took the bowl and started eating. "What about you? Have you recovered?"

Dorothy sat down beside me and nodded. "It's not a big deal anymore. Thanks to the Eye of Insight, my spiritual world is much stronger than ordinary people, and my recovery ability is also much faster."

She quietly watched me finish a bowl of porridge before she reached out her hand and asked, "Where's the thing?"

"What?"

"The crystal! Didn't you say I'll see the crystals formed by the harmful impurities when I wake up?"

Only then did I remember that. I whispered, "That will take time. I have to extract it bit by bit."

Dorothy crossed her arms and said with an unfriendly expression, "So you were lying to me? Swear that this will not affect you!"

"Of course not, really!" I hurriedly explained myself, "I need time. There's not much 'food' this time. I'll probably be able to separate the impurities by nightfall completely."

"Alright," Dorothy sighed helplessly. "I'll believe you one more time."

188 The Soul Sparrow

Selma Payne's POV:

Before I could inquire about the development of the witch clan's ruins, I asked, "Any progress recently?"

Dorothy shook her head regretfully. "Still nothing. We can't find the location of the devil's seal, and we can't find Mullwica's address either."

However, she excitedly took a few books from her backpack and showed them to me.

"But it's not like we didn't find anything. We found several books with notes on famous witches." She showed the old hand-woven books one by one. I found many new spells, runes, and magic circles that have not been discovered before, as well as some theories about bloodlines and special powers. They were very novel and worth referring to.

I was not very interested in the ancient notes. After all, the only ancient witches I could remember were the ones the werewolf grandmasters mentioned in class. However, I was still very happy for Dorothy. She was a person who liked to read and treasured all kinds of ancient books.

Dorothy showed me a new spell she had just learned as she said that.

A little dancing sparrow suddenly flew out of her palm and curiously circled me. After ensuring I was not in danger, she gently pecked off a strand of my hair and ate it.

“This is the Soul Sparrow,” Dorothy said. “I learned this spell from an ancient notebook specializing in studying souls. It’s a clone of my soul and can mark another soul by pecking at hair, blood, and other body tissues. It can ignore any space restrictions and fly to the marked point. It’s a way for some ancient witches to send information to their companions during the witch-hunting era quietly.”

I rubbed the little sparrow’s soft feathers lovingly. It tilted its head and obediently jumped into my palm.

“It’s so obedient!” I was extremely envious. “Can I learn it?”

Dorothy regretfully refused. “I’m sorry, but there’s no way for now. The sparrow’s basic frame is completely made up of magic. This is a spell that only wizards and witches can learn.”

“Alright then.” I was a little sad, but I was immediately healed by the little sparrow’s beady eyes.

“But the Soul Sparrow is not without flaws.” Dorothy called the little sparrow back, and the latter lay down on her hair. “The sparrow can only reach one marked point at a time and can’t change direction halfway. It’ll bleed or even die like an ordinary sparrow if it’s injured. Once it dies, its owner will lose this soul forever.”

I immediately retracted my hand that was about to grab the little sparrow’s tail feather.

“It seems like this spell doesn’t have many advantages.” I felt a little regretful that the Soul Sparrow had the body of a sparrow. “If only it were a goshawk or a vulture. Predators are the overlords of the sky. It is hard to say who would hurt whom.”

Dorothy did not know if this was true or not. “In theory, we can change the sparrow’s form at will. However, the larger the form, the more Soul Fragments are required. It is challenging to maintain the balance between the two.”

The Soul Sparrow disappeared after playing for a while.

“Do you have any plans for today?” I could see my team members and the werewolf grandmaster busy in the snow through the wooden window.

“As Master Hayley had returned, Master Mary and Master Kevin have decided to combine the power of ancient spells, runes, and soul witchcraft to communicate with the remaining soul consciousness here in an attempt to find out where Mullwica lives.”

“But didn’t all the witches retreat when the demon was sealed?”

“That’s right. So we have to set our goal a little further. Before the demon was sealed, there were probably witches who had passed away when Mullwica was alive. As long as I can find a trace of consciousness, I can look back at the memory of that period.”

“Is there anything I can do to help?”

“If you’re sure you’ve recovered, come with me to patrol. There are many secrets in these ruins, not as many as what was discovered on the surface. The team members are all excavating the hidden things here.”

I did as I was told. I tidied myself up to ensure I was warm and wouldn’t freeze, as this ruin was much colder than the snow mountains outside. Then, I followed Dorothy out.

Master Hayley used a special dark green paint to carve some runes on the broken stone brick square. Master Mary was observing and discussing something with Master Kevin.

“Sometimes, I think it would be great if I could use the power of prophecy. That way, I could easily see the past.” Dorothy was a little depressed, but she quickly pulled herself together. “But the werewolf grandmasters said there are strong remnants of ancient magic magnetic fields here, and it might be Mullwica’s work. If we use the prophecy rashly, there is a high chance that the ruins will attack us.”

I understood Dorothy’s feelings, especially after being ‘New Flowed’. Although this unique ability could sharpen us, it also gave us a unique strength advantage. With limited abilities, we were like good people who suddenly became blind or crippled. Not only was our strength significantly reduced, but the psychological gap also made us feel empty.

I held her hand and ran to the house in the distance.

189 The Quicksand Fog

Selma Payne’s POV:

We gained nothing.

We’d wasted the entire afternoon and found nothing.

The coverage of the ruins of the witch clan was not very large, and there were only about thirty families. Dorothy and I spent the entire afternoon searching through six houses, even the underground cellars. Other than being covered in dust, we did not find anything.

Dorothy and I were eating dinner by the fire. Either Mullwica lived underground, or she was an unprecedented space sorcerer.

“We have no choice. This is the only clue we could find. Mullwica’s home must be here, but we can’t see it.”

“Maybe Mullwica is a loner? According to the legends, she has experienced a series of major blows, so she might not want to be around people.”

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“Who knows? Captain Frank also sent people to search the valley area except for the ruins of the witch clan, but unfortunately, they didn’t find any traces of life in the habitable areas.”

Outside the house, people started shouting. Immediately after, the outside team members hid in the houses closest to them.

“What’s going on?”

Dorothy looked out the window and replied, “The werewolf grandmasters are preparing to start the ceremony.”

“Now? But it’s going to be dark soon!”

“We’ll have to wait until it’s dark. To some extent, the consciousness of the undead is very similar to that of undead creatures. They are afraid of light, and like darkness, so you can only find them at night. However, performing a soul-related ritual at night might attract some less popular guests, so everyone except the werewolf grandmasters has to leave.”

I was planning to explore a few more houses at night, but I had to give up now.

“Speaking of which, I have a question to ask.” I had this question in my mind since I stepped into the ruins of the witch clan. “Why are the buildings here so strong? This is a snowy mountain. With years of wind and snow and no one maintaining it, even the strongest stone house would collapse, right?”

I didn’t know either. The werewolf grandmasters speculated that it had something to do with the remaining magic fluctuations here. Dorothy sipped on the hot pea soup and said softly, “Maybe a few years ago, this place still had a relatively intact enchantment that could slow down the flow of time. That’s why nothing has changed. It still looks the same as when the witches evacuated.”

“It looks the same as when they evacuated?”

“Yes, the ruins of the witch clan you saw have been sorted out by the team members. When Master Mary and the others first discovered this place, it was covered in snow and scattered scorched wood, probably the traces left by the witches’ battle with the

demons. These traces left a strong evil aura. For their safety, the werewolf grandmasters had to purify them first.”

“Oh, really? I really couldn’t tell.” I didn’t sense any evil aura at all. What surprised me was that I didn’t feel relieved at all. Instead, I felt even more regretful that I lost the chance to eat ‘snacks’.

Dorothy suddenly burst into laughter as she thought of something. “The grandmasters even laughed at themselves. If the Historical Society of Magical Creatures saw what they did, they would publish a 100000-word paper to denounce the grandmasters for ruining the historical remains.”

The sky was completely dark, and the ceremony began.

The three grandmasters surrounded the triangle in the center of the formation, each chanting a different incantation. These incantations were bizarre. I couldn’t hear a single word.

It wasn’t that I didn’t understand, but I couldn’t hear it.

Dorothy explained to me in a low voice, “Don’t worry. It’s fine as long as you can’t hear it. This is for the past living and the undead. Those who live in the present can’t understand it.”

The chanting lasted for about ten minutes. The grandmasters’ mountain suddenly exuded some indescribable pale smoke when the last syllable was chanted. The smoke spread rapidly, and it didn’t take long to cover the entire ruins of the witch clan.

Dorothy pulled me along to check the doors and windows, confirming that no smoke had snuck through the cracks.

“Is this a bad thing?”

“Not really. I can only say that it negatively affects specific groups of people. This thing is called the Quicksand Fog. It is a kind of filler that exists in the historical gaps. Its presence indicated that history is about to overlap. People from the present can’t have any contact with the Quicksand Fog of the past. Otherwise, they’ll fall unconscious or get lost in the long river of history and never return.”

“What about the grandmasters?”

“Don’t worry about that. The grandmasters are the originators of the ritual. From the moment they chant the spell, they temporarily don’t belong to our time. In short, they are now traveling through history.”

The Quicksand Fog covered the window with a thick gauze curtain, and we couldn't see anything.

"How long will the ceremony last?"

"It's hard to say. According to Master Mary's prediction, it will end in three hours. Moreover, they can't stay too long in the stacked history space. Otherwise, it will cause damage to their bodies."

The waiting time was very boring. We couldn't do anything but talk to pass the time.

190 Human Shadows

Selma Payne's POV:

"It's only been an hour." I followed the second hand and counted the time. "Why does it feel so unbearable long?"

"Let's wait for a while. It'll be over in two hours."

Thus, while I chatted with Dorothy, I was also harassing Maxine in my mind.

"Why don't you go to sleep? It's already nighttime anyway," Maxine said. "You should go to bed early and wake up early. You can spend more time exploring the ruins of the witch clan tomorrow, can't you?"

"I don't want to sleep. I still want to wait for the werewolf grandmasters' results. No one is sleeping. I can't sleep alone."

"... can you let me go to sleep? I'm so sleepy."

"Why are you sleepy? You didn't do anything the entire day. You just slept."

"I don't know how to describe it to you, but I'm very sleepy, especially since your mental suggestion failed. I want to sleep the whole day but can't get enough sleep."

I immediately became nervous. "Did the reconstruction of your body cause you some side effects? We have to ask the werewolf grandmasters to examine us."

"Perhaps there's no need for that." However, Maxine rejected me. "I have an inexplicable intuition that you are the one who caused this. Come to think of it. Sometimes I even wonder if there's a third party in us that we don't know about. Otherwise, why would you not know about what you've caused?"

"A third party?" I shivered at her description. "That's not funny. Are you sure I'm the cause of your fatigue?"

“Yes, and it’s not the kind of fatigue from overusing energy. It’s like an alarm clock sets when we should go to sleep and when we should wake up,” said Maxine.

Before I could finish my sentence, she fell asleep. No matter how I called her, she didn’t respond.

If it weren’t for the fact that I could still feel her presence, I would have thought that she had disappeared!

I tried to free Maxine from this strange state, but before I could put in much effort, Dorothy suddenly shook me hard.

“Be on the alert, Selma. An accident has happened!”

I followed her hand and looked out the window. A pale ghost was staring at us!

“What the hell is this thing?!” I subconsciously jumped up and pulled Dorothy to the corner away from the window.

Dorothy observed the ghostly figure, then said in a serious tone, “This is a ‘person’... a ‘person’ that existed in the past.”

“Who would look like this? Is this a new race in seclusion for thousands of years?”

“No, it appears like this because it is a shadow from someone’s life in history.”

“So, one day in the past 300 years, a peeper appeared among the witches and peeked at someone’s window in the middle of the night?”

“Of course not. Human figures don’t have consciousness and won’t stare at living humans.”

Dorothy suddenly pulled me up the stairs, ran into a room, and slammed the door shut. At the same time, she bit her finger and drew a dispelling rune on the door.

An ominous premonition welled up in my heart.

Indeed, Dorothy said, “There can only be one explanation for this situation. First, a mistake has occurred, causing the figure to be confused! Any place within the Quicksand Fog area can produce these chaotic figures. We must create an enclosed space to ensure no figures can invade.”

I mimicked her and drew runes with blood. Thanks to the Moon Goddess’ grace, the Goddess’s gift did not require any magic. I asked, “So, there might be people in our rooms now?”

“That’s the problem.” Dorothy was not sure either. “The research information on human shadows is very limited. So far, no one has understood their production mechanism. However, one thing is certain. Chaotic human shadows have most of the negative attributes given by history. They have no rationality, are aggressive, and cannot be destroyed. They will only disappear after the collapse of history.”

At this moment, the door of the room was suddenly slammed hard!

My hand trembled, and I almost crooked the seal pattern.

“The worst-case scenario has happened. A figure has also appeared in the room.” Dorothy sped up on her drawing. “Hurry up. We have to finish drawing the runes at the corner of each wall before the human figure in this room is formed.”

From the corner of my eye, I could see a faint white mist gathering in the room. This was probably the sign of a human figure forming.

Finally, we used runes to connect the eight corners of the room. The silver moonlight immediately dispersed the incomplete figures.

However, before we could even heave a sigh of relief, we heard screams from outside.

It was the other team members!

I cautiously observed the outside of the window and asked Dorothy, “Are we the only ones who know this?”

Master Mary had given everyone training in advance. If anything happened, dispelling runes was the most time-saving, energy-saving, and efficient method. Everyone should know about it.

“But knowing is knowing. Whether or not we have the time to finish drawing is another matter.”

Dorothy nodded in silence.

191 The Unpalatable Cheese

Selma Payne’s POV:

We can’t even protect ourselves now, but we can’t just watch our team members sacrifice themselves in vain!

“I have an idea, but it’s a little risky.” I wiped the cold sweat from my forehead. “This idea may be stupid, but I can only think of this.”

“What?”

“Speaking of which, the Quicksand Fog is also a type of energy, right?”

“Yes, it’s a mist of quicksand formed by the useless elements discharged by history. Dorothy looked at me in surprise. “What are you trying to do? Don’t tell me...?”

I nodded and gazed out the window at the vast expanse of white. “It’s exactly as you think. Since it’s energy, why don’t I try to eat it?”

“You’re crazy! The Quicksand Fog doesn’t have a definite attribute and physical form like the demonic fragment. It has many changes, and no one knows what negative effects it will have on you!”

“That’s why I’m only trying a small amount. I’ll stop the operation immediately if there’s any problem.” I placed my hand on the window. “The werewolf grandmasters are still outside. I don’t know how many of our team members have been forced out of the house. We can’t just watch them die, can we?”

I thought Dorothy would insist on opposing, and I’d already thought of a way to convince her. However, she could only helplessly rub her head, close her eyes and sigh, saying, “Just a little, okay? I’ll guarantee your safety.”

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“You’re so quick to agree,” I said dryly.

“I understand you, Selma. You are a stubborn bull. Once you have decided to do something, even a hundred people cannot pull you back.” Dorothy rolled her eyes. “Give me ten seconds.”

She used her blood to draw an isolation rune on the wardrobe and then hid inside the wardrobe.

“We can start now!”

“Alright then.” It was my oversight. I had only thought I could eat the Quicksand Fog and neglected that Dorothy was helpless against it.

“I’m sorry,” I mumbled my apology and opened the window a little.

The Quicksand Fog immediately gushed into the room. I closed the window after a second, but the Quicksand Fog stuffed itself into the room in a huge lump the size of a watermelon.

“Come on.” I extended my hand to the Quicksand Fog. “Let me taste you.”

Wisps of pale white mist seeped into my body. They were cold and smooth like cheese but exuded a bitter taste like rotten wood. They weren't delicious.

As if it had hallucinating effects, a few seconds later, I felt as if my soul had left my body and was floating. I flew out of the house and wandered around the witch clan. The snowflakes passed through my body as if they were passing through the air and fell on the heads of the girls passing by. She and her friends carried their sackcloth bags and walked home in twos and threes.

They asked, "What are we having for dinner tonight? I don't want to eat potato porridge anymore. When would the snow stop? It's been a month since Mom went out to buy supplies."

The girls complained about the bland food and the terrible weather as they disappeared at the end of the path. I wanted to give chase, but I was pulled back by a strong force.

"Uh!"

I suddenly let out a breath before realizing I was standing right where I was.

What was that just now? What happened to the witch clan? Was it a memory of history?

"Dorothy, come out. I'm fine!" I knocked on the closet to signal her to come out.

"How do you feel?" Dorothy was not as good at detection spells as the werewolf grandmasters, so she could only perform a simple examination for me. "It seems like there's nothing serious."

I told her about the magical experience I had just had. "Could it be the effect of the Quicksand Fog? It contains the power of history, so it took me to see the past it experienced."

Dorothy was deep in thought. "If that's the case, it's somewhat similar to a prophecy. You can also see the past. However, you need to use the Quicksand Fog as a medium."

"If that's the case, then I suggest you give up on eating all the Quicksand Fog," she said thoughtfully.

"Why?" I was greatly puzzled.

"Prying into history is like prying into fate. There's a price to pay. Those who peek at fate without its permission would pay with their life as the price, but what about those who peeked at history? You're not like the werewolf grandmasters who have prepared a ritual to communicate with history in advance. No one knows what kind of punishment peeking at history will bring you. I don't think it's easier than peeking at fate."

“But... ”

I punched the wall in frustration. Was I going to give up just like that?

The team members continued to shout. Some of their voices were intermittent and distorted. This must be due to the Quicksand Fog’s influence on top of being attacked by the figures!

It would be great if there were a way to separate the additional effect of prying into history!

Right, separation!

“I can try to separate the side effects!” I recalled the feeling of the side effects of separating the demonic fragment. “It’s like separating the negative emotions from the Quicksand Fog to separate the additional effect of prying into history. They are illusory and ethereal powers and have a lot in common. I think I can do it!”

Chapter 192 Offset

Selma Payne’s POV:

“Can you do it?” Dorothy was not too assured. “This is not like the incubation period of negative emotions. Once you absorb the Quicksand Fog, the historical tracing will immediately begin. We can’t seize the opportunity.”

“How would you know if you don’t try?” I was eager to try. “You hide in the closet. I’ll try again. If it doesn’t work, we’ll think of another way.”

After Dorothy hid, I released another cloud of quicksand the size of a watermelon into the room.

I held my breath and reached out to the Quicksand Fog.

The moment I came into contact with the cold mist, I felt a powerful force tearing my soul apart and dragging it out. I immediately realized that the power of backtracking was forcing me to look at history, so I was in a stalemate with it.

The Quicksand Fog was unconscious, and its power to look back was as rigid as a programmed machine. Against my resistance, it was utterly helpless. It only dazedly pulled at my soul without any intention of taking a roundabout route to save the country.

Such a ‘fool’s play’ was undoubtedly advantageous to me. I immediately tried to compress the historical fragments brought about by the power of backtracking, just like how I compressed my negative emotions. Surprisingly, the historical fragments were

like fragile plasticine, allowing people to knead and squeeze them without resisting. Without much effort, I compressed the unorganized historical fragments into a small, concentrated ball the size of a fingernail.

After the historical fragments disappeared, the power of backtracking lost its target and immediately became helpless.

The tearing force gradually weakened, and it was about to dissipate.

I didn't want to give up such a good opportunity. I tried to eat the power of backtracking, but I gave up in a moment. Its remaining power pulled me in like a vortex. I was caught off guard and almost became a small black hole.

However, this inward protective force was the most perfect natural packaging. I wrapped the compressed orb in my backtrack power and made it into a simple 'viewing device'.

Anyone who used any force to destroy the 'packaging' would trigger the reaction of the power of backtracking and be pulled into the condensed ball to experience the historical fragments contained within.

However, this device was a one-time use. It would disappear after seeing it.

"I've succeeded!" I looked at the grey ball in my hand and said excitedly to Dorothy, "The historical fragments have been compressed, and I've successfully absorbed the Quicksand Fog without any side effects."

Dorothy carefully picked up the small ball and exclaimed, "What a genius idea. I dare say that you're the first person in history to be able to flatten and round the Quicksand Fog at will. All historians will go crazy when they see you!"

I was pleased for a few seconds before I said smugly, "Now, let's start a free journey of delicious food!"

Dorothy took the History Ball and hid in the closet again. I opened the window completely and let the Quicksand Fog rush toward me.

The rotten wood-flavored cheese wasn't a delicacy, but I didn't know if I got used to it after eating it for a long time. In the end, I could taste a faint sweetness from it, which was a little addictive.

I kept compressing history orbs. They were of different sizes and colors and piled up on the ground like the defective decorations discarded by a Christmas tree factory.

Correspondingly, the thick fog outside began to disperse, and the visibility increased little. The werewolf grandmaster and his team members' fighting figures gradually appeared.

Many team members were injured, and the snow was dyed with scarlet blood.

Master Mary saw me and shouted in surprise, "Selma, what are you doing? Quickly hide in the house!"

"I can deal with this Quicksand Fog!" I replied loudly, "Once the Quicksand Fog disappears, the figures will also disappear, right?"

"This is too dangerous! The nature of the Quicksand Fog is volatile. You will get yourself killed!"

"It's okay. I've already mastered the method to deal with the Quicksand Fog!"

I picked up a History Ball and threw it out of the window. I wanted to give Master Mary a sample, but I didn't expect the History Ball to hit a figure trying to attack Master Mary. The figure waved his hand and shattered the History Ball, and a wonderful thing happened; the History Ball instantly sucked it in, and then they all disappeared without a trace!

I immediately realized that the History Balls were a weapon to deal with human shadows. I grabbed a large pile of History Balls and threw them out the window.

"This is a History Ball. Inside it is a fragment of history. As long as you don't try to destroy it, it won't break, no matter how you knead it! They will disappear together if we use this against the human shadows!"

Some smarter team members immediately picked up the History Balls and threw them at the figures. The irrational figures could not sense anything other than destruction and be easily captured by the History Balls.

I absorbed the Quicksand Fog to create more History Balls while supplying 'ammunition' to the people outside the window.

As the Quicksand Fog gradually faded, the number of human shadows created decreased. Under the team's relentless efforts, they soon became insignificant.

Taking advantage of this time, people began to rescue the members who had been attacked by human shadows or were affected by the Quicksand Fog and had fainted.

I finished absorbing the last bit of the Quicksand Fog.

The moonlight shone on the wolves, and the people who had survived the disaster could not help but smile.