

# Alpha's Rejected Mate Returns as Queen

Chapter 401 Moths and Garlands

Selma Payne's POV:

Looking down from the cliff, I could see the vast ocean. It was said that the other side of the sea corresponded to a human country. Someone had once drifted here by accident but only regarded everything as a beautiful dream. After leaving, he never came back.

"Like all the old stories, the female elf who fell in love with a human did not manage to wait for the return of her lover. She was so heartbroken that she jumped into the sea on a dark rainy night with her swaddling child. The female elf suddenly regretted it before she died. She felt that she should not have dragged her child to death with her, so she pleaded with the Goddess of Nature at her last breath. The goddess then saved her child and raised him."

Claire told me about the local legend.

"It's a pity that this boy, like his father, grew up to be a heartless man. He deceived a young witch and then abandoned her. The furious witch sacrificed herself to a demon to seek revenge on her cruel lover. The boy was so scared that he turned into a moth under the demon's temptation and hid in the goddess' dressing box."

"The demon pretended to ask for a boy from the goddess on behalf of the witch, and the goddess was undoubtedly unwilling to hand over the child she had raised. So the witch cried to the goddess about her experience. The goddess knew she was in the wrong and was in a dilemma, so she had to turn a blind eye to the matter and not help either side. The boy who had turned into a moth was dressed as a decoration on the goddess' garland, but he did not know that a moth only had nine days to live. When he felt that his life was ending, he tried to turn back into a human in fear, but he was too late. The angry witch found him, grabbed her lover's stiff insect body, and swallowed it. "

"As it happened, the boy was hungry while pretending to be a decoration on the garland, so he secretly ate a few leaves on the garland. Those leaves were the first leaves that the mother tree grew in spring, symbolizing pregnancy and new life. As a result, the witch who ate her lover became pregnant. Since she had sold her soul to the demon, her descendants served the demon for generations."

After the storytelling, we were all very emotional. But of course, we didn't just listen to it for fun. There was a very important piece of information in this legend – the garland of the Goddess of Nature.

"It's said that because of this, the goddess threw away the garland to avoid thinking of people. A mayor of the northern border picked up this garland, and it became the most

honorable family heirloom of that family. It's said that the chewed leaf is still full of vitality as if it had just been picked from a tender branch."

That was right. After a comparative selection, the barren background didn't have any treasures worth targeting compared to the wealthy area. Only this garland, whether it was the leaf or the legend related to the goddess and the demon, made it a target of plunder for the cultists.

In fact, there were many things related to the divine in the northern territory. Most were not very precious, such as the nitraria fruit everywhere. However, these things were everywhere in the mountains and plains. We couldn't guard against them even if we wanted to. Moreover, if the cultists' target were these things, they wouldn't be a threat to the city, so the urgency wasn't that high.

The more remote and backward a place was, the more closed it would be. The northern border was such a case. Garland City – yeah, that was what it was really called – the mayor refused to let us see the legendary garland.

"Only the previous mayor, his wife, and his children can see it," the mayor of Garland City said seriously. "This has been a rule since ancient times. I'm sorry, but I can't break it for you."

"We understand your difficulties, but the situation is urgent. Your family heirloom is in danger of being stolen. I beg you to let us see it to protect its safety and the entire Garland City. I swear to god that we have no ill intentions. We want to evaluate its value and see if the cultists are eyeing it covetously."

However, no matter what we said, the mayor of Garland City wouldn't agree. Compared to the missing wanderers, it seemed we were the thieves with bad intentions to him.

If we had enough manpower, I could leave a team behind to protect Garland City. However, our manpower, including the werewolves and elves, was only enough to protect one city. There were so many city-states at the northern border that had the ultimate goal. Were we going to give up everything else for a rumor?

It was getting late, so we could only rest in Garland City for the night.

Dorothy contacted me this morning to tell me that she had temporarily obtained the right to communicate with nature from the Elf King. However, she was severely exhausted, and even with the secret efforts of various parties, she would need at least three days to recover. Therefore, in the three days that we still couldn't find any traces of the cultists, we still had to be on high alert and constantly guard against the possible arrival of danger.

After finishing the night watch, I stretched my tired shoulders and prepared for bed. A gold-threaded tapestry on the wall caught my attention, shining in the light.

## 402 Garland City

Selma Payne's POV:

Garland City didn't have a prepared werewolf embassy like the Elf King's, so we were arranged to stay in the palace's guest rooms. Perhaps to show off their status, the guest room was decorated luxuriously. There were glittering crystals and gorgeous gold and silver threads everywhere. Garland City spared no effort to carve the unique family emblem on these luxurious decorations.

The family emblem of Garland City's mayor was just like the legendary garland, a vortex-shaped ring surrounded by all kinds of flowers and plants. I carefully observed the family emblem on the carpet and somehow felt that the pattern on it was familiar.

Daisies, marigolds, irises, lilies...

... Although the style was completely different, had I seen these flowers somewhere before?

Counting, there were precisely thirteen kinds of flowers on the garland.

Thirteen...

Wait a minute!

It was that stone slab!

To my surprise, I discovered that the flowers on the city's emblem were precisely the same as those on Mullwica's stone slab. Not only were the thirteen flowers the same, but even the order of their arrangement was the same!

In an instant, my back was drenched in a cold sweat. I wasn't sure if it was a coincidence or if there was a deeper meaning to it. It was reasonable to say that the mayor's family in the Elf Forest should not have any relationship with the witch tribe of the Rocky Mountains, which was thousands of miles away.

But there were thirteen flowers. There were tens of thousands of flowers in the world that could form the number thirteen, and how many ways did the thirteen flowers have to be sorted? How could it be so coincidental that two completely unrelated things would collide and create a similar one?

Speaking of which, who was the demon that the witch summoned for revenge? Claire didn't mention his name.

I immediately turned back to look for Claire, who was on duty in the night's second half. She was also confused by my question. "I don't know either, Your Highness. The

legends don't mention such details. In fact, even the names of the male and female protagonists have yet to be passed down. Everyone blindly calls them 'boy', 'witch', and 'demon'."

"What's with the family emblem of Garland City? Was this drawn according to the garland left behind by the real Goddess of Nature? Or are the plants just local flowers representative of the area?"

"The family emblem is said to be drawn according to a real garland. It was said that many years ago, the mayor of the first generation who had picked up this garland was eager to show it off to the whole country, but he was afraid that the journey would be bumpy and the real thing would be lost, so he ordered to change his family emblem and created a wreath according to the real appearance of the wreath to announce it to the whole country. You see, a small chip on the leaf is protruding out from the upper right corner of the family emblem. This is the piece that the boy in the legend bit."

She pointed to the upper right corner of the family emblem on the carpet. There was a round gap on the leaf, like a bite from an insect.

If that was the case, could it be inferred that the real garland looked like this?

So, if these thirteen flowers came from the Goddess of Nature, why would Mullwica, who believed in the Goddess of Fate, collect a stone slab with the pattern of the Goddess of Nature's sect? Could she have had some connection with the elves? But before I came here, numerous research associations had already briefly browsed through the books and notes left behind by Mullwica. There was no mention of any information related to the elves.

And that unknown demon...

This couldn't really be a coincidence. Neither the garland nor the stone slab was an ordinary item, and their patterns must have special meanings. And this might be the answer I couldn't understand, no matter how much I thought about it.

I became even more determined to see the garland with my own eyes. Just as I was suffering from the lack of a way to do so, a solution appeared in front of me.

The next morning, the mayor of Garland City politely invited us to a breakfast banquet. During this period, his wife also attended. I saw an unexpected pattern on his wife's luxurious long robe-the family emblem of Chena City's mayor.

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"Pardon me, but do you have any relatives with Chena City's mayor?" I asked.

"Of course, my dear," the mayor's wife smiled kindly. "The current Chena City's mayor is my grandnephew. That child even lived in Garland City for a few years when he was

young. Tsk, tsk, he was a lively and smart child. His wife died early, and my poor great-granddaughter... It's a pity that such a good child's life is full of misfortunes. Alas, I'm old, and I like to talk about trivial things. I hope Your Highness can forgive me."

They were so closely related by blood! According to the low reproduction rate of elves, a family of three generations could have at least ten people, which was considered a full house. And according to the mayor's wife, she was close to Chena City's mayor.

I was surprised by this unexpected surprise – the lobbyist was here!

After breakfast, I immediately sent a text message to Chena City's mayor, asking him to help me persuade his great-aunt and uncle. It turned out that this was the right decision. In the evening, the mayor of Garland City agreed to let us see the legendary garland.

#### 403 The Family Emblem

Selma Payne's POV:

"I can only let you see the garland once," the mayor said. "Please forgive me, but it's not because I'm an old-fashioned, conservative, and stingy grandpa. It is because the garland was old and valuable, and no one in the world had great power like the Goddess of Nature. As such, any accident cannot be salvaged, which is why my family has always regarded it as a treasure."

Of course, I understood his difficulties. "It's presumptuous of us to make such a request. How can we ask you to compromise?"

After passing through the overlapping doors of the treasure vault, we finally saw the actual appearance of the garland.

If I hadn't heard of the legend, I would have thought that the garland in front of me was just made up in the afternoon to perfunctory me.

Whether it was the delicate petals or the emerald-green branches and leaves, they all made people involuntarily like them. The rich vitality lingered between each flower and leaf, and even the gaps on the leaves were so round and lovely as if the world's most delicate artist could calculate such a perfect arc with painstaking efforts.

This was the legendary garland that the Goddess of Nature abandoned. However, before it was abandoned, it was once the most favored accessory in the goddess' dressing box.

"For thousands of years, my family has been protecting this garland," Garland City's mayor said proudly. The abandonment of the goddess was not because of disgust but because of love. That was why I was afraid to miss her and had to give it up."

I held my breath and carefully observed the garland, afraid that any inappropriate action would cause it harm. Just by approaching, I felt like I was bathing in a spring breeze, and the fatigue accumulated over the past few days was gradually being swept away. It was said that Garland City's mayor's family had always been known for their longevity, which was also quite outstanding among the elves. It was likely that this garland had played a part in this.

Even I could feel the vigorous life force contained in it. This thing was authentic. As expected, after a few tests, Master Hayley nodded to us and said, "Although I've never come into contact with the power of nature, it must be a divine artifact to contain such a powerful force."

The good news was that the garland was real.

The bad news was: because the garland was real, there was a high chance that Garland City would become the target of the cultists.

Perhaps it was confusing. 'How do I know that the cultists would know that the garland was real? I only believed the legend after I saw the real thing, didn't I?'

That was because we had a completely different way of thinking from the evil cultists. I had to protect everything, so I must be careful and verify the truth. On the other hand, the evil cultists wanted to plunder and destroy. Who cared if it was real or fake? They would steal it first and talk later. After all, they would not suffer any losses in the future.

So, as long as this legend still existed at the northern border, the cultists would target Garland City.

As a small city that was not outstanding in all aspects, Garland City had been calm and peaceful for hundreds of years. In the face of possible danger, they had no power to resist. Even the mayor and his wife looked a little panicked. It was only after Claire and I gave our words that they agreed to help us prepare against the enemy.

That was right. Due to the lack of manpower, I placed my bet on Garland City. In fact, this was not a big gamble. The city-states on the northern border were distributed in a fan-shaped formation that opened to the right, and Garland City was the only way to other city-states. If the cultists' target was other city-states, then as long as we hold on to Garland City, we'd be able to find their traces.

Before I bade farewell to the mayor and his wife, I asked them about the legend.

"Yes, just as the legends say, this is a tragic love story that can't be sympathized." The mayor said, "But if you want to ask for names, I'm sorry that I don't know either. My ancestors were not bystanders. They just picked up the garland."

“Is that so? Thank you.” I felt disappointed that I didn’t get any new information. However, the mayor’s next words made my eyes widen.

“However, in the notes of our ancestors, one of them seemed to have seen a woman in a black robe wandering at the edge of a cliff. She wore a metallic accessory similar to the garland of the goddess on her head, and the corner of her robe was embroidered with the same pattern as the garland, so our ancestors initially thought that she was a young woman who went out late at night to meet her lover.

“But when she got closer, she realized it was a stranger she had never seen before. The black-robed woman disappeared the moment she saw her.

“As a result, the ancestor thought she had met a witch. Due to the pattern on the corner of her robe, she thought she was an illegitimate daughter of a family member and a foreign clan and had come back to acknowledge her family. However, after searching through all the clansmen, they couldn’t find anyone who had an affair with another clan, so this matter became an unsolved case.”

The mayor told me about this incident as an exciting story, but my thoughts took a 180-degree turn after hearing what he said...

Who said only families who picked up the garland could use it as family emblems?

I realized that I had always been in the wrong place. I had always thought that the stone slab was made by Mullwica simply because the stone slab was found in her house.

404 The Demon And The Demon

Selma Payne’s POV:

Who wouldn’t want to decorate their own home? Who wouldn’t accept a gift from a friend? Were all the items in the Mullwica Family made by her?

Was there a possibility that the stone slab was a gift from someone else or that she had bought it from somewhere?

And the issue of the family emblem.

As the family of Garland City’s mayor had picked up a garland, they used it as their family emblem. However, many people had a deeper connection with this garland, such as the witch who ate her lover. Her lover had eaten the leaf on the garland, and she had eaten her lover and gotten pregnant. Didn’t this mean that the garland gave her the child?

In that case, why couldn’t her descendants also use garlands as family emblems?

Was the black-robed witch who wandered by the cliff in the ancestor's notes the descendant of the legendary witch? This way, the metallic accessory on her head that was similar to the garland and the embroidery on the corner of her robe could be explained clearly!

If there was indeed a witch family with a garland as their family emblem, then there was a new explanation for the slates in Mullwica's house. As a powerful legendary witch, it was normal for Mullwica to have three to five witch or wizard friends. It was a common etiquette in ancient times for friends to give each other items with family emblems!

After I returned to my bedroom, I immediately told Master Hayley and Dorothy about my guess. As an experienced and knowledgeable scholar, Master Hayley felt that what I said wasn't impossible. In fact, it was even more likely to be the truth than her previous guess.

The patterns on the stone slab, whether the flowers or the eyes, were out of tune with Mullwica's research. None of her books and notes showed their figures.

Dorothy listened to our discussion quietly. After a while, she suddenly said, "It doesn't matter if it's the legend of the garland or Mullwica. Have you noticed that there's one common point?"

"What?"

"Demons. Demons have appeared. Mullwica's son summoned a demon to resurrect his adoptive father, resulting in a complete ethical tragedy. To take revenge on her lover, the witch summoned the demon, which ended up as a complete love tragedy. These two legendary demons seem to like to play with the story's direction, causing them to go toward an irreversible ending," Dorothy said.

"I know that this guess might be outrageous. After all, there are at least eighty to 100 famous demons, and none are good. But... Is there a possibility that the demons in these two stories are the same? It's hard not to think that the offspring of the witch in the legend of the garland is related to the witch who lives in seclusion in the Rocky Mountains. It's a coincidence."

This guess was indeed outrageous, but Dorothy strangely convinced me. "You mean these two demons are Azazel?"

"That's right. In fact, I've been thinking about another question before. Why did Azazel's party have to attack the Elven Capital? If they need sacrifices, why don't they attack the cities with treasures?"

"It wasn't until I saw the chaotic internal affairs of the elven race after the Elf King went into a deep sleep that I realized this was a sophisticated plan. Attacking the capital was not an unnecessary move. On the contrary, they wanted the sacrifice of the Elf King."



Once the elven race falls into chaos without a leader, it would be easier for them to fish in troubled waters. They didn't know that the Elf King had the mark of nature, but it didn't matter if they couldn't leave the Elf Forest because they had already chosen the elven race as their target!"

Dorothy was right. I was the one who had the preconceived notion that the evil cultists were forced into this corner. However, if the legendary demon were really Azazel, a sacrifice closely related to him would naturally be the best choice.

At least, if the cultists wanted to recommend his followers to sacrifice themselves for him, the combination of 'the garland's descendants' and 'garland' would undoubtedly complete the broken garland into a real divine artifact. No matter how strong the physical body was, it could not be compared to it.

This almost made me certain that Azazel's party would come to snatch the garland. I sent a brief to the Elven Capital, hoping the Council of Elders would send some reinforcements.

Before reinforcements arrived, I received news from Dorothy.

After a few days of careful recovery, she could finally withstand the force of nature. For this reason, she was unwilling to wait a moment longer and immediately communicated with nature.

It was a mysterious state. During this time, even my mind-link with her was disconnected. I even felt that my connection with her kin was blocked by something. I could not feel Dorothy as if she had disappeared from the world.

She made me a little anxious, but what she just told didn't even give me the time to be anxious.

They were performing a short-distance spatial movement! Almost at the very first second after the communication was broken, Dorothy shouted at me with all her might, "They're less than a hundred kilometers away from Garland City!"

405 Don't Reveal Your Inner Thoughts

Benson Walton's POV:

It wasn't my intention to become familiar with this pair of siblings.

I didn't want to develop a relationship with anyone beyond strangers' social distance, but maybe it was because Bertha's cooking was delicious, or perhaps it was because Anjay's smile was really bright. In short, when I returned to my senses, my relationship with them rapidly escalated to a level that was difficult to ignore.

One morning, I was patrolling the streets. My footsteps were so light that I didn't even realize it. Just as I was thinking about what kind of flowers I should bring to the siblings tonight, a temporary communication suddenly shattered my fantasy.

My captain only contacted his team members if there was a routine report or a temporary mission. This time, he contacted me for the first time and asked me directly, "Do you suspect anything weird about the interim head servant, Bertha, and her brother, Anjay? Have you noticed anything with their identities or behavior?"

"No, Sir," I answered, a little confused. "From the current observation, they are outstanding citizens."

What my captain said next was undoubtedly a blow to my head.

"So why do you contact them so frequently? Can you explain to me what your motive is?"

In that instant, my face turned pale because of those words.

What was my motive?

To get close to other suspicious targets through them? To expand the intelligence network against the palace? To recruit two ordinary people who had no reconnaissance skills?

Was that even possible?

Was it credible?

I couldn't answer and could only remain silent.

My captain's steady breathing could be heard from the receiver. It was undetectable, but it was like a thunderclap that lashed at my heart repeatedly. My self-righteous heart, which I had been trying so hard to hold up, silently shattered bit by bit in silence. I became an ill-at-ease child again, waiting for the adults' judgment.

There was no need to explain anything. My silence was already enough to explain everything. It was far easier to understand than any other explanation.

Finally, my captain coldly gave me an ultimatum, "You've crossed the line, Benson. As a member of the mobile patrol team, you should be like a shadow drifting outside of the real world. This is the only way to save our lives in dangerous zone."

"But now, you're trying in vain to integrate into the life of the general public. You're so stupid that you create weaknesses for yourself and hand them over to others. You're like a hedgehog lying under a butcher's knife, exposing its belly."

“I’ve already investigated the interim head servant and her brother. They don’t belong to any faction and are just servants to their families in the palace. However, your actions have already attracted the attention of the palace. As intelligence officers, it’s a must for us to know our limits. You’re getting too close to the important people in the palace, kid. This is starting to make the higher-ups dissatisfied with you.

“We’re not like other soldiers or officers. Once the higher-ups suspect us, what’s waiting for us is an overwhelming investigation and endless entanglement. Even if there’s nothing between you two, even if you can prove your innocence in the end, so what? You’ll still be under constant surveillance for the rest of your life, and it’ll be impossible to climb up or return to your ordinary life.

“I’m not asking you why you’re doing this, kid. I’ve seen a lot of things like this. In the end, it’s just a throbbing that people can’t control.

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“I’ve never objected to my subordinates protecting their families, but the premise is that you can protect the people you want to protect. I can stop you from doing anything with a phone call. Obviously, you’re nothing now. But have you thought about the consequences of a more powerful government entity noticing you?

“Don’t think that I’m being arrogant. Just take it as advice from someone who has experienced it. The mobile patrol team is not a good place to have fun. Here, love and hate must be firmly hidden in your heart, and any soft emotion may become a sharp blade that pierces your heart.

“It doesn’t matter what you’re thinking about or if you don’t understand anything. Just remember one principle. When you’re still a member of the mobile patrol team, don’t think of yourself as a human, as a knife, a telescope, a notebook, or anything else that can’t think or speak. Don’t show your feelings easily, kid. This is not only for you but also for everyone around you.”

My captain didn’t say much else and hung up the phone after he finished talking.

I stood in the middle of the busy street, still holding the phone to my ear. My other hand was still holding the florist’s business card, which put me in a dilemma.

In those few minutes, I couldn’t think at all. I tried hard to recall my captain’s words, figure out his meaning, and analyze the reasons for his words. In the end, I was disappointed that he had no ill or good intentions. He was carrying out his responsibility as the team leader to advise his team members.

He was telling the truth.

Everything he said would come true, and it had already come true.

I was still holding the phone to my ear, like a robot that had lost its power. Time stopped at the second before the connection was cut off.

A gust of wind blew, and the florist's business card fell to the side of the road and was swept up to the road. A speeding car passed by, dirtied, and scratched the business cards, and then they rolled into the drain with the wind and disappeared.

406 Incoming Enemies

Selma Payne's POV:

How far was a hundred kilometers?

This was almost the distance from the Spring Rain Pack to the edge of the Elf Forest. It would take more than an hour to cover it if one drove at full speed.

The journey would have been much slower if it had been in the forest because the trees and shrubs that covered the sky and earth made it difficult for any means of transportation to move forward. If we didn't take the road, it was possible to spend three to five hours walking through the forest on foot.

Did we have three to five hours to prepare?

Obviously not, because the other party had the ability to jump through space, which meant that any obstacles were practically non-existent to them. Even the friction between the soles of their shoes and the road disappeared without a trace. Considering our estimated cooldown time, it was good enough that it gave us two hours to prepare!

It just so happened that the timing was too coincidental. Although Garland City had already asked for help from other city-states, it was still being determined when this help would come, judging from the history of the elf race's sweeping the snow in front of their doors.

The defense of the city itself was not very strong. As it had not experienced the baptism of war for many years, the standard of the guards could only be said to be at the passing level. There were less than a thousand of them, barely enough to cover the entire city for security work. It was impossible to ask for anything else.

There were only three city gates in Garland City. One faced the sea, while the others were connected to major traffic routes. In other words, two city gates needed to be heavily guarded.

Of course, considering the style of these lunatics, the city gate might not be their target. It was already the 21st century. Could the strongest city wall resist modern military technology? The city walls of Garland City were less indestructible than those of the

Elven Capital City, which had all kinds of runes and magic arrays. They were purely made of cement and bricks.

Now, the most important thing was allocating the limited defensive forces. Including my men, we could only mobilize a little more than a thousand people. It was impossible to recruit civilians. Letting people who had no iron in their hands and no military training face the vicious evil cultists was wasting lives.

Fortunately, we were well-prepared to take refuge. Master Hayley and the masters in Garland City had jointly built a temporary shelter. This shelter used a special method to condense my New Flow into a protective layer outside, which could effectively block and absorb evil power.

Since this part of New Flow was temporarily separated from me, there was a limit to the amount of evil energy we could store. We couldn't let the cultists enter the city to kill and loot, so it was better to finish the battle outside the city.

As soon as the mayor received the news, he arranged for the city's residents to take refuge in the shelter. The mayor, who was no longer young, was even prepared to fight in person to protect Garland City and fight the cultists to the death. Even the seemingly gentle and elegant lady of the city was ready to fight with her sword.

Dorothy kept a close watch on the cultists attacking Garland City and reported their whereabouts to me at all times. As expected, they gave up on attacking from the side by the sea. I guessed it was because they had to go around to the northernmost side of Garland City, so it was easy for us to outflank them.

The cultists were not large in number, only a hundred or so. However, considering that they had an unsolvable evil power concentration and that each of them was likely to have been modified by the demon, the combat power of this group of less than a hundred people could be compared to an army that was several or even a dozen times larger.

Could Garland City survive this?

I wasn't sure, but I had to do my best to keep Garland City safe.

"The last ten kilometers," Dorothy said. They're running at full speed toward the west gate, and they've completely given up on the north and east gates. I don't find any traces of the wanderers anywhere else!"

I immediately ordered everyone to be on guard.

Some of the younger soldiers were trembling. I knew what they were afraid of. The rumors from Elven Capital City had become increasingly exaggerated as time passed.

Those extremely vicious criminals had almost been demonized, and each of them had become an indestructible demon of the seventy-two sacred pillars.

Rumors could always easily sway people's hearts. Now that it was their turn to face this group of thugs, how could they not be afraid and worried?

However, there was no time for a pre-battle speech because a large flock of birds had already been startled in the distant forest. The sounds of movement gradually grew louder, and as the decisive battle approached, everyone became more and more serious.

Finally, the enemy revealed their true colors!

A group of weirdly-shaped wolves rushed toward Garland City. They had all kinds of deformed, sharp bones and ugly limbs. At first glance, one could tell they were the demon's products.

Suddenly, a shiny object in the enemy's team attracted my attention.

What was that thing? It was round and massive, shining with a dazzling light, just like... It was like a cocoon.

At that moment, Dorothy's terrified voice rang in my mind, "It's a light cocoon! Just now, the other party suddenly condensed a light cocoon!"

At this moment, I was already stunned-a light cocoon. Of course, I could recognize what that was.

407 Long-range Attack

Selma Payne's POV:

My superior vision allowed me to see their every move. Their sinister faces, strange movements, nauseating appearances, and... The cracks on the light cocoon looked like ice breaking.

The light cocoon...

How could it be a light cocoon?

In an instant, memories of the war between the werewolves and Adele's attack on Sivr Academy flooded me. A warning light flashed in my mind, warning me: It was dangerous! It was dangerous! It was dangerous!

It was certain that no matter what kind of monster would be hatched from the cocoon of light, if it had the powerful ability of the Wolf-Witch War, destroying a city would only take a few hours.

It was too late to stop it from hatching. The visible patterns gradually grew around the cocoon, and the fine residue indicated that the monster in the light cocoon was about to break out of the shell. At this time, the other party was slightly more than a thousand meters away from Garland City.

“We can’t let the light cocoon get close to the city!” I immediately told Garland City’s mayor. “Once the light cocoon hatches, destroying the entire city will be as easy as blowing off dust. There are so many civilians in the city even the shelter can’t guarantee it can withstand the monster’s attack!”

Garland City’s mayor panicked. “Then, what should we do? Should we take the initiative to go out of the city to meet the enemy?”

“This is the only way. We have to keep them outside the city.”

As a result, the guards stationed at the west gate were all dispatched, except for a small team that guarded the city at the back. The soldiers who received the order were puzzled, but these elven soldiers who had never faced a real battlefield had good discipline. They did not question their commander’s orders and faithfully carried out their duties.

“Shooters, get ready!” I raised the blue flag, and the well-trained shooters immediately ran to the front and got into formation. Half of them held traditional bows and arrows, while the other half held modern firearms. Both the bow and the bullets had been specially modified, so they had a unique magical structure and physical characteristics.

There was a limit to the magic structure of the weapon, and its power would be significantly reduced beyond a particular range. I patiently counted my steps and measured the distance between us.

The other party was getting closer and closer, a thousand meters... Nine hundred meters... Eight hundred meters...

After the enemy’s vanguard entered the 700-meter range, I immediately ordered, “Fire!”

Like countless ancient myths and legends, the elves’ talent and ability in long-range shooting weapons were unparalleled. A skilled archer could almost do a 100%-hit of the target. The specially processed arrows and bullets always succeeded. In an instant, many of the vanguards on the other side had become porcupines and colanders.

However, the enemy did not slow down because of this. These strange-looking wanderers seemed to have lost their sense of pain and perception as they charged forward like zombies.

However, this was just as I expected. I thought of the rainy night when we were chasing Locke. Locke's accomplices were like these deformed wanderers and became machines of violence.

These wanderers must have been transformed by the evil power like them, so they had probably lost their independent consciousness and become puppets of violence.

This round of long shots wasn't useless. Just as the distance between us and the other side was shortened to nearly 500 meters, a change occurred.

An invisible but real power spread out from the arrows and bullets. In a few seconds, they quickly linked together and wove into a strong, invisible net to block the enemy's path.

The wanderers didn't notice this at all. They rushed forward with all their might, and the result was that they hit the net head-on. They knocked people down and quickly dragged their compatriots behind them.

It was a success!

Seeing this, I immediately ordered the archers to fire the next round of shots to tighten the invisible net.

And one could already guess; yes, these temporarily modified arrows and bullets were sealed with New Flow's concentrated power. This was originally a backup plan prepared to absorb the evil power, but now it seemed there was no time to purify these mutated wanderers one by one.

Then, another special quality of New Flow came in handy – invisibility.

I specifically ordered the archers to concentrate their arrows and bullets on the vanguards leading the charge. This way, we could plant a hidden post in front of the enemy's main force. Once the arrows and bullets were fired, the seals on their bodies would be removed within a few seconds, allowing me to control the concentrated New Flow within to form a net to stop the enemy's advance.

Now, it seemed that the plan was very successful. If New Flow could hold back Azazel, these demonic creations were not much stronger than their master. It was useless no matter how these irrational wanderers tried to destroy it.

Now was a good time to catch a turtle in a jar. The cracks on the light cocoon were finer and denser, to the point that it was about to break out. Before the light cocoon hatched,



we must try our best to annihilate the enemy's forces. Otherwise, after the light cocoon hatched, we would have to divide most of our manpower to deal with the monsters.

With the order, the guards moved out in full force. At this moment, we gave up on long-range attacks because, at the moment, it seemed that superficial physical injuries were not a big deal to the mutated werewolves.

#### 408 The Hatching

Selma Payne's POV:

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The wounds caused by the arrows and bullets were still slowly healing. This was a little trick of the evil forces, so if we wanted to destroy them, we had to remove the evil forces from the bodies of the wanderers.

I had already wrapped every soldier with the New Flow to prevent them from being infected by the evil power. It was also a backup plan. As long as enough soldiers could get close to the mutant werewolves, the New Flow on their bodies would be enough to devour the evil power in the werewolf's body.

While we were charging, the other party realized that struggling was useless, so they focused on observing us. Every single wanderer was in a battle stance.

The battle was about to start!

Strength was a werewolf's natural advantage, even more so for the mutated werewolves. My team members could resist after transforming into wolves, but the elves were in a terrible state. The mutated werewolves could easily destroy the elves in close proximity as if they were building blocks.

However, the elves were not without their advantages. Compared to their cumbersome and deformed bodies, their flexibility and agility were many times stronger than the mutated werewolves. They could always avoid the mutated werewolves' fatal attacks in a way that caught them off guard. Many elves had even climbed onto the bodies of the mutated werewolves and locked their heads and joints, allowing New Flow to spread to the mutated werewolves.

For a time, the two sides were locked in a stalemate.

However, this stalemate meant that we were at a disadvantage. They had ten times the number of people on their side, but they could only maintain the stalemate. This was enough to show how difficult it was to deal with these mutated wanderers.

I used my wings to fly. This wasn't the time to hide my abilities. As I assisted my companions, I flew to the light cocoon. No one was guarding the light cocoon because

there was no need to. Any attempt to attack the light cocoon would only accelerate the hatching process.

But even so, it was even more strange that no one was around the light cocoon. Where was the creator of the light cocoon?

Suddenly, I heard a slight cracking sound. I immediately turned my attention to the light cocoon and was shocked to find that a fist-sized piece of its surface had already begun to peel off.

I couldn't drag this on any longer. The light cocoon was about to hatch!

Looking at the stalemate situation below me, I realized it was time to show some of my true abilities.

"Everyone, listen to my orders! We'll give up on annihilating the enemy, and our combat objective has changed to restrict the enemy's movements!"

Following my command, the soldiers fighting to the death with the mutated werewolves changed their strategy. Instead of looking for their fatal weakness, they focused on blocking the movements of the mutated werewolves.

At this time, the agile nature of the elves appeared. Once entangled by them, even if you were as strong as Hercules, you could not think about falling off the human-shaped shackles.

However, it was not the time to let their guard down. The elves had already suffered casualties in the battle, and their stamina was being depleted in an orderly manner. The resistance from the mutated werewolves was also rapidly depleting their stamina. After all, they were a group of newbies on the battlefield for the first time. Many of them were already at their limits.

I quickly released New Flow and had it drown the mutated werewolves on the battlefield, one by one, and devour the evil power in their bodies.

To my surprise, these evil powers did not come from Azazel but from another old acquaintance – Leviathan.

This meant that the enemy we faced was not Azazel's party, which was trying to create an incarnation for Azazel in the human world, but another group of wanderers who worshipped Leviathan!

I instantly looked at the light cocoon that was floating in the air. It was known that only powerful wizards or witches could create light cocoons, and werewolves didn't have this ability. Adele's magic power had been sealed, so there must be an unknown powerful wizard or witch in the other camp.

I didn't know why, but I suddenly thought of a person – Adele's foster father, the night magus, Kafka.

Before this, I couldn't understand why the Leviathan followers would cooperate with Azazel's party and rescue Adele, who seemed to have nothing to do with them. But now that I thought about it; if Kafka was a Leviathan follower, then to save his adopted daughter, it would be reasonable for him to facilitate this cooperation, right?

This light cocoon was created by Kafka, the leader of this team!

The moment I guessed the truth, a change occurred.

The light cocoon's breathing-like halos paused for a few seconds before it suddenly compressed together and trembled violently.

Dang!

"Retreat! Everyone, retreat immediately!" I shouted at the top of my voice, "The light cocoon is about to explode. Run!"

However, I was too late. The moment I finished speaking, the light cocoon, which had been compressed to its limit, exploded!

A burst of dazzling white light instantly overshadowed the sun's radiance, causing everyone present to lose their sight temporarily. As I was the closest to the cocoon, I received the most significant impact and was ruthlessly thrown to the ground from the air.

I felt as if all my internal organs had been smashed to pieces. A few seconds later, I realized that I hadn't become a pile of meat yet, thanks to the transformation I had given myself in that one minute.

409 The Monster

Selma Payne's POV:

The other soldiers weren't so lucky. Even though I managed to cover most of them with New Flow in time, the physical impact was still unavoidable. Some of them were knocked unconscious by the impact, and only a few awake were unharmed. The rest were more or less injured.

The only consolation was that I finished devouring all of the mutated werewolves in time. Now, the mountains of meat lying limply on the ground were no longer a threat.

Now, we only have one threat left.

How should he describe it?

The Cyclops in Greece mythology, or the terrifying sea demons that the Vikings spoke of. I'd never seen the actual appearance of those monsters, but any record of them revealed a fearsome and powerful aura between the lines. Words could not seal the permanent impact of those monsters on people's hearts, so people still remembered their true faces even after thousands of years.

For example, the 'monster' in front of me was not exactly a monster because it was not as ugly or strange as the stories claimed. Instead, it could be considered 'beautiful'.

It seemed to have no physical body. A bright halo, like a burning flame or an arctic glacier, refracted the sun from head to toe. It wasn't huge, at most four meters tall. It was very tall, but compared to the huge light cocoon, it was like a deformed child.

However, it was obvious that Kafka wouldn't produce a defective product to be nothing.

The newborn monster was still adapting to the environment and did not make aggressive moves for a while. Taking advantage of this time, I ordered the soldiers who could still move to drag their injured companions away.

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Garland City's mayor was also seriously injured. His entire right arm had been broken. He wanted to stay and continue to protect his home, but his dominant hand had been broken, so his combat power had been greatly reduced. Under my persuasion, he finally agreed to leave.

Before he left with his guards, he handed me a badge and said, "Take it with you. Good luck, child."

I didn't have time to look at the badge and put it in my pocket.

Now, the number of people on the battlefield was rapidly decreasing. After the mutant werewolves were freed from the evil power's control, they became a pile of rotten meat. On the other hand, less than 10% of our soldiers were left to fight. Even my team members were seriously injured, and we had to withdraw many of them.

Master Hayley had stayed in the city with the garrison from the beginning. Now, only Eve and Klein were standing beside me.

However, the situation we were facing was not the worst.

Just a minute after we evacuated the injured, the monster moved. It trembled like a puppet that was wound up for the first time. Its body, made of light, kept fusing and changing shape, even beginning to expand and compress, and finally formed a small light cocoon.

“Be careful!” I pushed away Eve, who was on the left and jumped away myself. The place we were standing just now had become a big burnt pit caused by a hot magma-like light beam.

It seemed that the monster’s power was light.

Finally, the monster began to exert its strength as if it had completely adapted to the environment and the mission. It began to compress itself, and when it returned to its original position, it would release countless powerful and rapid beams of light. These beams of light were not as harmless as the surface. They were hot, sharp, and had an uncomfortable evil aura and strong corrosiveness. They could easily turn rocks and earth into ash.

We tried to attack the monster while dodging the light beams, but it was like a ball of light. No physical attack had any effect on it. I tried to use the river to swallow it, but the result was shocking. The river could not find its target, as if the glaring monster was just a shadow!

This was the first time I’d encountered something like this since I got hold of New Flow. No energy could escape New Flow’s mouth. The monster hatched from the light cocoon was only a form of energy manifestation. How could it escape from New Flow’s attack?

The situation was utterly one-sided. The monster attacked us without restraint, and we could do nothing but dodge.

The most dangerous part was that since New Flow could not devour the monster, it could not stop it either. This meant that the net that New Flow had woven could not stop the monster from advancing!

Even if the monster’s pace was very slow, there would come a time when it would complete the distance of a few hundred meters. If we didn’t think of a way to delay it, Garland City would be in danger!

Suddenly, Claire exclaimed, “Look over there! It’s on fire!”

I looked in the direction she was pointing at. The forest not far away had already started to burn. The fire was spreading very fiercely in the forest. It had already set a large area of plants on fire in a few breaths.

This was bad! How could I have forgotten about this?

The temperature of the light beams was extremely high, and they could easily set flowers and trees on fire. Even if we could avoid the monster’s attacks, the plants couldn’t!

410 The Projection

Selma Payne's POV:

Once the forest outside of Garland City was set on fire, the most dangerous thing for the people in the city would not be the monsters, but the flames and smoke alone would kill countless people instantly!

We didn't have the manpower to put out the fire, which was spreading in all directions.

"We can't wait any longer!" I said. "Send a message to the city. Tell all the people to abandon the city and leave immediately. Evacuate to the nearest city-state!"

Abandoning the city and evacuating was our final plan. Once an uncontrollable accident happened, the safety of the people had to be the priority, and the remaining troops were responsible for escorting them to the safer city-state nearby.

However, this also meant that our last support was gone, and we could only rely on the few people we had now to fight alone.

"What do we do now?" Eve and the others came to ask for my instructions. "We can't stop it. At this speed, it'll reach Garland City in twenty minutes. Twenty minutes is not enough to evacuate all the residents in the city!"

"Let's go ahead and delay it for now. We'll try everything we can." I was also at my wit's end. I could only do my best. "We'll try every minute we can."

At this moment, Dorothy suddenly said, "Be careful of the east side. A group of unknown people had appeared there!"

"Is it Kafka?" I asked quickly.

"No... It's not a Kafka, let me see... Ah! It's Azazel's party!"

"Azazel's party?"

Why would Azazel's party come? Could it be that they and the Leviathan followers were trying to attack from the left and right? But didn't they already have internal strife and split up? Could it be that all the clues left behind were lies?

There was no time to think about these. The worst thing was that our planned evacuation route was through the east gate!

"Send a message to the people to evacuate from the north gate and stay away from the east gate! Azazel's party is here!"

Just as I finished speaking, a loud explosion suddenly erupted from the east. Following that, thick smoke rose like ink in water.

“The east gate has been breached!” the correspondent shouted. “The mayor is leading the people to the north gate!”

At the same time, Dorothy said in a serious tone, “I didn’t see any trace of Azazel’s party from the beginning to the end. No, it’s better to say there was no trace of Azazel’s party as if these people had somehow removed the mark of nature. But that’s impossible!”

“The Grand Elder said that the nature symbol on their bodies was created by the Elf King, which means that he’s representing the leader of the entire elven race to bring them the wrath of the entire elven race. Unless the Elf King himself or someone of the same status as him gives up the mark, the mark of nature can’t be removed by itself!”

But now, nature’s tracking of Azazel’s party had failed. A group of ordinary people obviously could not escape the eyes of the Goddess of Nature even with Azazel’s help because the power of the demons would be significantly weakened in the territory of the Goddess of Nature.

However, these problems had to be delayed because Garland City was now completely pincerred from the left and right. The people had nowhere to go except the cliff in the north, which was equivalent to a dead end!

“Have you found any trace of Kafka?” I asked Dorothy.

“No,” she replied helplessly. “I didn’t even find any target with a trace of magic fluctuation. It was as if there was no such person as Kafka in the Elf Forest. However, this is impossible. The spell caster of the light cocoon cannot leave the 50-meter range of the light cocoon. Otherwise, the light cocoon will gradually weaken until it loses its effect.

However, I couldn’t find him within a 100-meter radius, let alone fifty meters. Could he be hiding in the forest? However, not to mention that the forest was burning with a raging fire. Just this distance had long exceeded the limit. The light cocoon should not be so strong that it was invincible.

We tried everything we could to attack and block the monster, but it was all useless. No matter if it was physical or magical attacks, it was like hitting a mirage.

Wait a minute.

A mirage?

I subconsciously looked down at the ground beneath the monster. As expected, there was no shadow.

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How could there be no shadow? Even if it was a ball of light, there should be a shadow as long as it existed. This shadow might not be the monster's, but no matter where it existed, it would cast a dark shadow on anything, be it a towering old tree or a tiny speck of dust.

However, this monster made of light had no shadow. There was only one possibility – it was a shadow itself.

It did exist, but it was not the main body. Instead, it was a mirage of the main body the caster had projected into this space through some method. In addition to the shadow, the attacks of the main body were also transferred. The difference was that the shadow was only the shadow of the main body, while the attacks were real attacks from the main body. They were transferred over through some kind of spatial sorcery.

A certain guess gradually formed in my mind. For this reason, I gathered my companions and soldiers around me and said, "Cover me! Draw the monster's attack toward me!"

Eve and the others were shocked, "What? This is too dangerous!"

411 Kafka

Selma Payne's POV:

I had my plan. I wanted to see if I could follow these attacks to the main body because the monster in front of us was probably just a projection!

I didn't explain too much as there wasn't enough time. The others didn't stop me and cooperated with me to attract the monsters' attacks.

As I dodged, I carefully observed every change from the formation of the light beams to the firing. I used my vision to the maximum. Finally, when a certain light beam formed, I captured a small circle of tiny fluctuations around it, as if hot air was distorting the air.

I didn't need any magic talent to see the fluctuations because they were real distortions in space!

It was now!

The moment the beam of light was about to be shot out, I released New Flow and commanded it to follow the beam of light like a venomous snake toward the distorted space.

It was so tiny that not even a thin piece of paper could pass through it. Thanks to New Flow's ability to transform at will, I tracked the other party's trail in less than a second after the tiny crack opened.



New Flow's feedback told me that I'd succeeded. It was already entangled with the other one.

I sensed the presence of the hideout in an instant, but I didn't understand that New Flow's response told me he was hiding in the north!

Wasn't that where the people of Garland City were heading to?

Now I finally understood the whole picture of the other party's plan. The main force was, of course, the ferocious mutant werewolves. The light cocoon's projection would undoubtedly increase their determination to break into Garland City.

However, I had long been in contact with the cultists, and it was not surprising that they knew I had some strange abilities that could devour evil forces.

As a result, the military forces at the west gate could not guarantee their success, so another force used some method to shield themselves from natural surveillance and went to the east gate to attack from both sides. However, the people in the city were not fools. Naturally, they would not sit still and wait for death. Thus, the only choice left was to escape to the north.

At this time, Kafka was waiting at the north gate with the light cocoon's main body, which was the perfect time for the people to walk into the trap.

What a vicious scheme! Clearly, the other party wanted not only the garland but the lives of the entire Garland City!

It was still too early to think about why the other party was doing this. The most important thing was to take drastic measures. Only by subduing Kafka could we solve the problem of the light cocoon. Otherwise, we would never be able to deal with this projection.

"Give up this place! Head to the north gate, where Kafka and the monster's main body are!" I immediately retreated with the rest of the people. "Tell the people evacuating through the north gate to stop and return to the shelter. Now, it's useless no matter which direction we escape. Rather than falling into a trap, it's better to hide in a safe place now!"

Although I sent out the message, I didn't know if everything would happen in time, so I rushed to the north gate as soon as possible.

"Are we just going to leave the east side alone?" Eve asked.

"Whatever, we don't have that many people. Even if they had enough manpower, it would be useless to fight with a projection. Only by dealing with the main body could we solve this problem. I know this will bring losses to Garland City, but the price of war is

never free. Only if we win can we make the other party pay for everything they have done.”

To shorten the time, I flew over. As a result, even though I managed to find Kafka in time before the people arrived, my backup had yet to arrive. For the time being, it took a lot of work to say who would win.

He was a mysterious guy. There were very few pictures or portraits of him in the outside world. I'd never seen what he looked like. In my imagination, he was nothing more than a skinny old man with a sinister face.

However, if the person standing in front of me now was Kafka himself, then I supposed he was absolutely different from what most people imagined him to be – not to mention an 'evil wizard' – he didn't even look like a wizard.

If it weren't for his distinctive black robe, he would look like an ordinary middle-aged man with nothing special. If you saw him on the street, you would immediately think he was an ordinary middle-aged man going home to celebrate his daughter's birthday.

It was this 'ordinary' man who had caused many irreversible tragedies in the past. And today, he had set his sights on Garland City. For some unknown reason, he had tried to take the lives of the entire city.

I began to suspect his true purpose because this man didn't seem to be interested in the garland of the Goddess of Nature. The light cocoon's projection was able to easily break through the city gates, but he allowed a group of mutated werewolves, who were suppressed by me, to lead the charge. He didn't even think about stealing in the chaos, let alone stealing.

What was his purpose? The lives of the people in Garland City? Or was it just an evil nature to stir up trouble?

He wasn't surprised to see me here, as New Flow, wrapped around his body, had given him plenty of hints.

412 Twenty Minutes

Selma Payne's POV:

“Ah, we finally meet, Your Highness.” He treated me like we were familiar, as if he had heard of me long ago.

“Kafka?” I cautiously stood in front of him. This was the main body. The blinding light behind him already indicated his true identity.

“It’s my honor to be remembered by you.” Kafka slowly bowed, revealing his body covered in thick black mist. “You’ve never met me, but I’ve seen you. My daughter has offended you in the past. As her father, I would like to extend my sincere apologies.”

“So it was you who took Adele away,” I said calmly. “Where is she?”

“Please don’t worry. Adele is my precious daughter. I won’t do anything to her.” Although he said that, he didn’t seem to care about Adele much. He talked about her as if she was his dog.

I looked around but couldn’t find anyone hiding. Dorothy also said that she didn’t see any traces of Adele.

There was no doubt that Adele must have used some means to avoid the mark of nature like her adoptive father, but where else could he put her if not with him? Adele didn’t have any power to protect herself now, and she was mentally unstable. Wasn’t he worried that she would have an accident?

Perhaps he really didn’t.

With his superior hearing, he could vaguely hear the loud noise from the east. It seemed that Kafka didn’t come alone, so it wasn’t a strange decision to leave his daughter with an ally.

“No matter what you want to do, you’re doomed to fail,” I said as I looked at the monster behind him. “No matter how many light cocoons there are, you won’t be able to help. If you know me, you’ll understand why.”

Kafka sighed as if he didn’t want to fight me head-on.

“Alright, alright. I knew that this was a plan that was destined to fail.” He frowned slightly as if worried, but it turned into an indifferent void in the end. “It’s not clear to challenge a strong enemy who can restrain you. It’s also a virtue to know when to retreat.”

I couldn’t stand his hypocritical tone and said bluntly, “It’s useless to say anything. Not only will you fail today, but you’ll also be stuck here forever. An uninvited guest should be aware of facing the host’s anger.”

After saying that, I didn’t want to wait even a minute longer. Like an arrow that had left the bow, I rushed toward Kafka.

However, the famous night magus wasn’t to be trifled with. He used some unknown method to suddenly disappear from where he was standing, leaving only the monster still emitting a beam of light in front of me.

I came just in time. If I couldn't deal with Kraft, I could deal with this monster first. I immediately had New Flow wrap the monster up and devour this pathetic man-made creature. The monster did not have any consciousness at all. It did not realize that it was about to die. It continued to emit light beams at the space tunnels opened by the wizard's spell.

Loud noises had already begun to come from Garland City. It was unknown whether it was Azazel's party in the east, the projection of the monster that broke through the gate first, or both.

After calculating the approximate speed of both sides, I realized that I couldn't end the battle quickly. If I couldn't get rid of Kafka in ten minutes, then either Azazel's party or the monster projection would be able to reach the shelter.

Due to technical limitations, there was a limit to the area of New Flow wrapped around the sanctuary, and it could not immediately feed me the power of devouring like what New Flow, connected to me, had. If it were to suffer from an attack similar to the light beam, it would, at most last for another ten minutes or so before reaching the limit of devouring.

In other words, I only have twenty minutes left.

I didn't know what kind of spell he used, but he dodged my attacks like a ghost. He knew that most of his attacks were useless against me, but I couldn't attack him either. The two of us were in a stalemate, but this was the reality of my defeat.

I'd already absorbed most of the monster's energy, and the remaining energy couldn't be used to fire the light beam. It'd turn into my afternoon tea in ten seconds. However, his master, Kafka, was obviously much more intelligent than this stupid big guy. He dug 'escape holes' for him everywhere. If he really did escape, I would give him a new nickname, 'rat', on the wanted order.

As the monster grew weaker, even the spatial tunnel on its body was gradually collapsing. Observing the tiny cracks, I suddenly had a thought. If the beam of light left the monster's body through the spatial rift, what was the link between the energy controlling the monster and the monster?

Any spell would leave behind magic fluctuations, and the creation of the light cocoon was no exception. This meant that if I wanted to control the monster created by the light cocoon, I would have to maintain the light cocoon spell, and my magic power would have to be connected to the monster.

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In other words, as long as I find traces of magic fluctuations, I could follow that to find the melon and find traces of Kafka, who could be hiding anywhere!

And so, before the monster disappeared, I spared its life and had New Flow carefully sense the minute differences in the magic fluctuations.

413 A Move Higher

Selma Payne's POV:

There was no doubt that Kafka was a cunning and powerful wizard. I could find his traces from his magic fluctuations, so he would have taken precautions against such an apparent loophole. One of us was searching while the other was hiding. We had inexplicably fallen into a strange balance.

However, I didn't have much time to waste.

Just as we were in a stalemate, I suddenly heard my companions' shouts not far away. Eve and the others had come!

"Your Highness, what's the situation? Are we too late?" Eve shouted from a distance.

"You're not late. You've come at the right time!" I replied to them. At the same time, a plan slowly formed in my mind.

The open space in front of the north gate was very wide. There were countless plants in addition to the craggy rocks and cliffs. I didn't know how long it would take for me to play hide-and-seek with Kafka aimlessly.

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Eve, Klein, a few werewolf members, and elven soldiers soon arrived at the quiet 'battlefield'. While maintaining the light cocoon's dying life force, I silently wrapped New Flow around my companions.

I didn't say anything; they didn't need to know anything. A temporary and wonderful tacit understanding was born from the catalyst of the battlefield. I didn't need to explain anything as they silently dispersed with my hand signal.

The creator of the light cocoon couldn't leave the fifty-meter radius of the light cocoon, which meant that the range of Kafka's activity was limited. The light cocoon was a destruction machine for Garland City but also a restriction for him.

Obviously, New Flow couldn't travel through space. It could only move about in the current dimension, which meant I couldn't use the same method I used to capture the mutated werewolves to search for Kafka.

However, he couldn't stay in a fixed space forever. I didn't know if it was because of the restriction of this spell or some other reason, but who cares? In short, this kind of spatial

magic that was almost impossible to deal with gave me a chance to break out of this situation because of this minor flaw.

When Kafka was changing dimensions, there would be magic fluctuations. This kind of large movement was less stable than maintaining the light cocoon. Previously, I had used this method to determine Kafka's position, but due to the distance and time, he had escaped every time.

Now, we'd divided the space within a 100-meter radius according to the number of people we have. This way, the distance that each person had to share was within our capabilities. No matter where Kafka was, we'd have enough time to switch spaces.

The situation had been completely reversed, and it was only a matter of time before he was caught.

Ten seconds passed.

Twelve seconds.

Fifteen seconds ...

Suddenly, I sensed a violent fluctuation from the light cocoon. Almost at the same time, the dying monster began to dissipate rapidly.

Kafka forcefully cut off the connection with the light cocoon. He discovered our plan and was running away!

However, this also meant that he would perform a spatial transformation in the next second. I immediately roared in anger, and my companions' spirits were lifted.

The next moment, I felt obvious magic fluctuations coming from behind Klein.

"Klein! Behind you!"

I immediately warned Klein to be careful, and New Flow, wrapped around him, swarmed him.

He was a cunning rat, but even the most cunning rat would fall into a trap one day. I almost let him escape. He tried to use Klein to distract me, but just as he was about to disappear, New Flow caught one of his fingers and swarmed him, instantly wrapping him up.

New Flow continuously devoured magic power, and of course, Kafka's space magic failed.

He fell hard on the ground and could no longer maintain his composure. Without the protection of his spells, he was easily wounded by the tight river and the rough ground, which made it even more difficult for him to move.

Kafka had just attacked Klein, so Eve had pulled him aside for an examination. I slowly walked to Kafka and chuckled as I looked at his face that was no longer calm. "Thank you for letting me win, Sir. It seems that I'm one step ahead of you."

Kafka had no choice but to turn over and say while gasping, "Perhaps, Your Highness. You've made me see you in a new light."

"It's really offensive for trash like you to look at me in such a high respect." I kicked him in the ribs. It wouldn't hurt him, but it was enough to stop him from saying anything weird. "Your doomsday is coming, the famous night magus. For your evil deeds at this moment, for the heinous sins you have committed before."

He didn't panic. A pervert like him, who had been infected by evil, might have long scoffed at the so-called punishment and life and death. I didn't waste any more time talking to him. I asked New Flow to wrap him up a few times more tightly, then took him and my companions to the shelter.

Even though I was mentally prepared, I was still shocked by what I saw in Garland City. The light cocoon lived up to its reputation from the Wolf-Witch war. Almost half of the city razed to the ground in just a short while.

414 Who Will Win?

Selma Payne's POV:

There were almost no traces of civilization to the west of the city-state, not even the 'ruins'.

The destruction stopped just two or three kilometers away from the shelter, which made me a little scared. Fortunately, I had taken care of Kafka. The consequences would have been unimaginable if it had dragged on for another minute.

We rushed to the shelter and heard deafening roars and wails from afar.

Almost all of the existing forces were outside the shelter to fight against the other mutant werewolves. Even the wounded Garland City's mayor used his recovered arm to fight against the enemy.

"Hey! Be careful!" I flew over to help him kick away a wanderer who tried to sneak attack and broke his neck with a backhand.

“Thank you, child!” The mayor shook away a wanderer that was pouncing on him. These wanderers seemed to be mutating as well. He pulled the elven soldiers who had fallen to the ground and quickly retreated to the protection range of New Flow.

“How’s the situation?” I asked.

The mayor shook his head and said with a serious face, “It was very difficult for us to resist. These mutated wild dogs are very difficult to deal with. If our people are not careful, they will be in danger of contamination. I could only get most of the injured to get the civilians to the shelter. Fortunately, you came in time. Otherwise, we don’t know how long we could have lasted.”

New Flow was a dimension-lowering attack to any force, and the howling mutated werewolves were quickly eradicated. However, not all wanderers were contaminated by evil forces. After seeing the few remaining members of Azazel’s party who could stand up on the battlefield, I immediately realized that there was still a tough battle to fight.

Behind Locke and some of the old faces who had attacked the palace that day was Adele, still in a daze. She didn’t care about the battlefield but just stared at the vast sky.

“Locke, it’s you.” I stared at his frivolous eyes and almost couldn’t suppress the anger in my heart.

“Good Morning, Your Highness.” Locke bowed exaggeratedly and laughed. “Fate has brought us together. Fate has given us so many disgraceful opportunities to meet.”

I didn’t want to argue with him, so I said, “So you’ve now changed from a Leviathan follower to a lackey of Azazel? Speaking of which, you seemed to have sworn to give up everything for the descent of Azazel back at the Rocky Mountains. It’s suspicious. Who did you sell your soul to? Or are Leviathan and Azazel so close that they can share one fan base?”

Locke laughed exaggeratedly. “You’re so sharp! Unfortunately, those big shots don’t care about such a provocation. Of course, I’m loyal to my Lord, but if it’s for my Lord, it’s fine to give a little bit of loyalty to others occasionally.”

So he was indeed a Leviathan follower, but why was he leading the believers of Azazel?

And what about Kafka? Did he worship Leviathan or Azazel?

I looked at the half-unconscious Kafka wrapped up in the river and felt there must be some secret plot between the two.

“We’ve lost today’s battle,” Locke said dejectedly, but he didn’t seem to care about it, as if the corpses on the ground were not his ‘colleagues’. “But it doesn’t matter. No matter what, we have achieved our goal.”



They had achieved their goal?

The garland of the Goddess of Nature!

I immediately gave the mayor a look. He looked at me and nodded.

The garland was still safe?

What did Locke mean by that?

Did they not come for the garland? They had no reason to attack Garland City. They couldn't have come here to waste their limited power, right?

As I was puzzled, Dorothy suddenly said anxiously, "Something happened, Selma! There was an attack at the southwest border. A small group of wanderers escaped the search of the patrol team and went missing at the edge of the Elf Forest!"

What?

I suddenly looked up at Loke's smiling yet not smiling face. I suddenly had the answer to everything.

A plan to lure the tiger out of the mountain! We'd fallen for such a clumsy scheme!

Be it the team of mutant werewolves in the west of the city or Azazel's party led by Locke, they might not be the main force here to fight for the garland of the Goddess of Nature as we thought.

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The other party guessed that we would be on guard, so they made a bold decision to use most of the living forces as bait and put me and the entire elf race's attention on Garland City, so that the people who secretly planned to escape could do so through the southwest border with weak defense.

The large-scale city-states on the southwest border, Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, had all become ghost towns, and their defenses were weak. And we subconsciously thought that these wanderers would not be bold enough to escape back to the werewolves. Thus, the southwest border became a blind spot!

However, after thinking through this, there was another problem. The garland of the Goddess of Nature was fine, and there was no news of any theft in the Elven Capital City. What did the cultists take away?

Suddenly, I recalled the many legends that Klein had told me.

415 The Sand

Selma Payne's POV:

They were both relics of the Goddess of Nature and symbols of life and vitality, so how could ordinary wild fruits like the nitraria fruit be inferior to the garland of the Goddess of Nature?

I suddenly realized that from the very beginning, we had fallen into a blind spot in our thinking; only the precious ones were worthy of being offered as tributes to Azazel.

However, after thinking about it carefully, wasn't this idea a complete fallacy?

Could it be that the cultists who could not find any precious relics in the corners would not carry out the evil sacrifice? Didn't Ryan summon Leviathan's projection with such a simple ritual and sacrifice?

Moreover, in terms of life force, the leaves and branches of the mother tree were more than enough. More sacrifices provided a reasonable excuse for Azazel's arrival, a medium that the rules could accept. In that case, the garland of the Goddess of Nature was not as attractive as before. In the territory of the Goddess of Nature, there were plants that represented the blessing of life everywhere!

"It seems that you already know." Locke smiled and shook his head. "Unfortunately, it's too late."

I immediately flew up to Locke and pinned him down on the rough ground before anyone could react. At the same time, New Flow surged out and tied up the rest of the gang tightly.

"You'll pay for what you've done," I swore through gritted teeth. "I swear in the name of the goddess, in my name, I'll make all those who played me pay the price!"

Locke laughed hysterically, and my comrades immediately came forward to take these people into custody.

"What happened?" The mayor and the others surrounded me, clearly very worried about my loss of self-control.

I tousled my messy hair and sighed silently. "We've been tricked. These people have no intention of stealing the garland. I don't know what their accomplices have taken as a substitute, but they've already broken through the weak southwest border and escaped."

"What?" Everyone was shocked. "But the mark of nature is still restricting them. They shouldn't be able to leave the Elf Forest!"

“That’s where the problem lies.” I looked at the wanderers tied up like Christmas gift boxes and became increasingly confused. “Now it seems they have mastered ways to shield themselves from nature. They can freely control whether they want to be exposed to Nature’s vision. I even suspect that they intentionally revealed their whereabouts to us initially to delay more time and attract more attention.”

This was almost a 100% sure thing. The mark of nature had been blocked or deceived, so all the restrictions on the wanderers had lost their effect.

This battle had destroyed more than half of Garland City, and countless elves had lost their homes. The only thing to be happy about was that there were no civilian casualties.

Some elven soldiers were sacrificed in the face of the mutated werewolves. Compared to the contamination of evil power, the pure physical damage took away their lives instantly, and they did not even have time to heal.

Standing on a broken wall, the mayor of Garland City was in deep silence. He silently looked at the sky in the distance. I saw tears quietly filling his eyes.

“My condolences.” It would be useless to say anything, so I could only comfort him like this. “They are all heroes who have protected their home and country. May the Goddess of Nature bless them to enjoy eternal happiness in the Holy Garden.”

The mayor did not say anything but sighed heavily. After a long while, he said, “Garland City is not a big city that attracts attention. For nearly a thousand years, time seems to have stopped here. Everything is happening in an orderly manner. It seems that a peaceful life will stop here forever.

“But the comfortable life also made us degenerate. Our ancestors’ brave determination and alert vigilance were worn down by prosperity day after day. So much so that when fate made a disaster befall this place, we panicked and watched as our home was destroyed.

“These children... I know every single one of them. I personally selected these young warriors and gave them agile skills and fearless wisdom. I also gave them soft expectations. However, I had forgotten how cruel war could be. I also forgot that training a soldier was not like training a warrior from a myth. There were only two outcomes for a soldier: either they survived or died. Other than that, the so-called determination and honor are not worth mentioning. Nothing can be compared to life.

“I’m responsible for the deaths of these children. I’ve been immersed in a peaceful life for so long that I’ve forgotten the responsibilities of a mayor.”

At this moment, the elf who was born into a family famous for his longevity seemed to have aged a hundred years in an instant, and his serious regret almost crushed his shoulders.

The mayor of Garland City waved his hand and sprinkled a handful of blood-stained sand. The sand flew in the gentle wind, nimbly drawing a spiral trajectory, and quietly disappeared into the distant horizon in the company of dead leaves and smoke.

## Chapter 416 The Escape

Selma Payne's POV:

There was still a lot of work to be done in Garland City, but we obviously couldn't participate. The situation at the southwest border was urgent, and Aldrich, who received the news, also led his troops to guard the Spring Rain Pack. I had to return to the Elven Capital City immediately to carry out the next step of my plan, to stay or leave.

I purified the land of Garland City from head to toe to ensure that there would be no trace of evil power left here. Before I left, I asked the mayor if the garland of the Goddess of Nature was safe. He said, "We've been occupying the goddess' legacy for too long, and it has been proven that such an approach is of no benefit. The goddess' garland is safe, and I think it will be of greater value in the future."

The Elven Capital City sent out a small team to receive us and those cunning captives. The one leading the team was Kaya.

"Thank God you're safe." She was relieved to see us and the captives tied up. "The capital is in a mess. If anything happens to you, I really don't know where to go next."

I asked Kaya if she knew anything about the situation at the southwest border. Kaya frowned and said, "Ever since the four cities of Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter became ghost towns, a large area of the southwest border's defense has been emptied. The other city-states did not have time to seal it off, and the wanderers disappeared into the ghost towns.

The borders of the werewolves were also on high alert. At the very least, I hadn't received any reports of the wanderers' tracks, so it was highly likely that they hadn't left the Elf Forest.

After I returned to the capital, I could feel that the atmosphere had changed dramatically from when I left. The Council of Elders hurriedly took half an hour out of their schedule to meet me. The Great Elder's ashen face made me suspect that he would meet the Goddess of Nature in the next second.

Although Garland City still suffered huge losses, at least we eradicated most of the cultists' effective forces and captured their leader. This could be considered a morale-boosting victory, but it still couldn't dispel the haze hovering over the Elf Forest.

I told the Council of Elders about the disappearance of the mark of nature. They were even more confused than I was because there had never been a historical situation where someone could deceive nature. Unless this power was even stronger than the Goddess of Nature, it was impossible.

Even the power of Azazel and Leviathan would be suppressed in the natural forest, not to mention the cultists who relied on others' breath.

But now, there was no time to deal with these minor details. The cultists that disappeared at the southwest border were a thorn in everyone's heart. What the heretic cult believers had stolen as a sacrifice was still unknown. None of the city-states had discovered any theft of treasures.

The Council of Elders had thought of the limitations of the offerings. They were worried that if the cultists had only collected some common items, the screening work would be almost a bottomless pit.

The gentle elves were not much better at interrogating their enemies than other races, let alone dealing with their mortal enemies. I was busy discussing the follow-up plan with Dorothy and had no time to pay attention to the status of the captives. Eve went to take a look and said that the elves had not been able to get anything out of Locke and the others.

"Where's Adele?" I suddenly thought of the pale and dull woman. "How is she?"

"The elves haven't interrogated her yet because of her mental state." Eve shook her head. "She's in a very bad state. Her crazy appearance made the elves think that keeping her alive was a hidden danger, so they began to consider dealing with her in advance."

Locke, Kafka, and the others could be left to the elves to deal with. Unless they had a spy within them, I was not worried that the elves would let go of these enemies who had a blood feud with them.

But Adele couldn't be left to the elves. I was sure she couldn't do anything bad in her current state. Not to mention that she was the daughter of the southern Duke. Neither I, the southern Duke, nor the werewolves would allow Adele to fall into the hands of outsiders.

There was nothing much left for me to do in the elf territory. After some discussion, I decided to take my team to the southwest border to find traces of the remaining cultists and then leave the Elf Forest. But before that, I had to get Adele back.

Of course, the Council of Elders rejected my request.

“Unless you can give us a reason that we can’t refuse, I’m afraid we can’t do as you say,” the Great Elder said. “It doesn’t matter if the witch is crazy or stupid. She’s the enemy of the elves. Even if I let her go with you, how will I explain it to the public? The mayor and the nobles will not agree to it.”

The simplest way was to tell them about Adele’s origin, but this was a secret within the werewolf pack, let alone to outsiders. The Council of Elders was unwilling to give in no matter what, and I had to take Adele away. For this, we had no choice but to be in a deadlock for a whole day.

However, before this could be resolved, a sensational accident happened.

The captured Locke, Kafka, and the others killed the guards and ran away.