

Witch 1441

Chapter 1441: Consensus

The span of time which Eleanor claimed of not being unable to last much longer was in fact not a short period of time.

The final movement of the Deity of Gods took up nearly two full days for the descent. Roland dispatched the First Army to Seawindshire's coastal area and executed a thorough sweep, ensuring that the drop of the island would not harm anyone.

At nightfall two days later, the bottom of the floating island touched the surface of the ocean. From a distance, it looked as though an inverted and giant vertebral body stood alone on the ocean horizon, and that view was the last time the floating island's entirety was exposed. Following the slow descent into the Swirling Sea, the water surface rose quickly, causing the sandy shores at the port to disappear at a rate visible to the naked eye. The ocean spray crossed the coastal levees and burst into many of the dock's warehouse facilities.

The discarded boats left at the port swayed incessantly with the man-made waves, ultimately tearing apart under the violent waves. The continuous rumblings produced by the waves crashing onto the land were so loud that even those standing a few kilometers away were capable of hearing them.

Roland stood safely on high ground and witnessed the entire process.

After all, such a majestic sight was probably the first and only one.

His only regret was not being able to recite poetry.

According to history, such times were perfect for one. Regardless of his poetic standards, that scene with his back view would go down in history forever.

Finally, the rays of the setting sun appeared once again behind the Deity of Gods, reflecting upon the clear and crystalline water and produced a band of light from the new land over to Seawindshire's lowlands, as though the two were one entity.

Although the Deity of Gods was humongous, it was nothing compared to the Swirling Sea. By the time the island touched the bed of the ocean and turned into an island, the tidal waters that had inundated the docks had already receded. The gap between the island and mainland formed a new waterway. At the same time, it had closed the gap between Graycastle and the Fjords. From this, Roland could foresee it becoming a flourishing trade island.

"I never thought that the demon's ultimate weapon would turn into new land for the kingdom." By his side, Nightingale spoke emotionally. "Seems like we will have to redraw Graycastle's map."

"Compared to that, I am more concerned about what the the upper echelons of the demons will be doing." On the other hand, Phyllis paid more attention to actual problems. "If there isn't a supply point for them along the way, it would be difficult for them to return to the ridge of the continent."

“We can resolve them in the meetings. For this first step, I would consider the outcome as passable.” For some reason, Roland thought about the Dream World. In there, the demons came from a distant peninsula, and it was somewhat similar to the scene before him. “As for this new land, let’s call it Cargarde Peninsula.”

...

The following assembly with the three Chambers of Commerce did not have much twists and turns.

After learning about Mask’s shocking grand plan and the King’s awareness of the developments, Hackzord was clearly distracted, leaving Serakkas to act on his behalf and answer a few questions.

Roland could guess how he was feeling. Regardless, the Sky Lord did not want a complete fall out with the King before obtaining concrete evidence. But after stumbling upon the King’s knowledge of everything they had done, it was equivalent to him having no path of retreat. To the careful and prudent Hackzord, it inevitably resulted in him worrying over his personal gains and losses.

Compared to him, Silent Disaster was much calmer, as though nothing mattered to her so long as Valkries was safe.

The plans for the remaining demons inside the Deity of Gods were quickly resolved.

It was impossible for Roland to agree on establishing Red Mist supply lines at the periphery of the Four Kingdoms, while the two Senior lords were unconcerned about the lives of the Inferior Demons. As such, the tens of thousands of demons were left inside the new island for hard labor and continued construction; thousands of the Mad Demons entered dormant states, cutting down on the consumption of Red Mist, and to wait for a suitable opportunity for migration.

The obelisk was in an irreversible state of decay, and with the Red Mist Lake being able to only supply a certain amount of Red Mist, its continued decay was definite. This land became an isolated island for the demons that relied heavily on the Red Mist. After assisting the transference of the Mother of Soul, Hackzord brought Silent Disaster back to Sky City to take control of the remaining forces.

Since his actions were already known by the King, having a little bit of strength in hand would not be a bad thing.

Roland did not demand anything from Hackzord, who was clearly unwilling to go against the King. After all, if he suddenly went against his words right before the battle, it could potentially lead to disaster.

The last thing that mattered was Mask, Nassaupelle.

This time, even the two Senior Lords came to a surprising consensus—he had to die.

According to Hackzord, despite his evolution to an omnipotent state, it had nothing to do with the race. He had chosen the path for his sole existence, and if he succeeded, only his name would exist in the race, or in other words... he would have completely turned into another species.

“The problem is, he can change into another body at will with the use of the ‘network,’ how am I supposed to destroy him?” Roland posed the crucial question.

“Until his plan is successful, this will indeed be extremely difficult to come to fruition, but we are still far from that state.” Celine conveyed Eleanor’s words. *“Before I severed his connection, I sensed that there were nodes of drastically varying strengths, and ones which are comparable to the Deity of Gods number only one or two.”*

“This female—Ancient Witch is right.” After being glared at by many of the God’s Punishment Witches, Hackzord quickly changed his choice of words. “After all, Nassaupelle is doing everything behind the King’s back, and he will not have many opportunities to make similar alterations to every Mother of Soul in every city. For those nodes that have not undergone sufficient alterations, they are most probably incapable of completely transmitting his consciousness. Furthermore, the immobile Birth Towers would have been destroyed by Sky-sea Realm, so there are very few places that he can go to. My guess is that Mask is at King’s City.”

That’s truly Hackzord’s style.

Roland thought inwardly to himself. To destroy Nassaupelle, they had to destroy King’s City, and aside from Nassaupelle, there was the King. Although he had made it known that he had no wish to oppose the King, his suggestion immediately pushed the King to the center of the target.

But this plan made Roland wary.

He did not want the human territory to once again fall into another crisis akin to the Deity of Gods’s plummet.

Attacking the enemy before their all-out attack and strike the King’s City down at the Fertile Plains was undoubtedly the method with the lowest risk. More importantly, Eleanor’s appearance had greatly increased the feasibility of the plan.

With their own floating island, they could cut down on the Aerial Knights’ flight time, which was undoubtedly significant for the large caliber bombers. The greatest difficulty for the project was researching new high-output engines. According to the Design Bureau of Graycastle’s plan from manufacturing, assembling to test flights, they required a time line of about a year. But with the moving runway, there was the possibility of changing the engines to the Type-14 Piston Engine used by the Phoenix, which barely made the mark of operating the large caliber bombers. With that, the bearing of fruits for the bomber project was imminent.

Chapter 1442: A Powerful Current

Hermes, in the old Holy City.

In the past month, the emotions Marwayne had experienced could be described as a roller coaster ride.

When the Sky Lord had brought him up the Deity of Gods, he had made the decision to cozy up with this powerful entity and never falter.

Whatever firearms or iron birds were insignificant in the face of the floating city.

This is the true miracle that humans ought to bow down to!

He did his utmost to prove his worth by sweeping away all past records, organizing the others to work, giving his all in the construction, so much that he earned praises from the Sky Lord. This caused his status among the nobles to become increasingly stable, and just like that, he felt like the leader of the people.

But a single letter from the north broke Marwayne's smooth and steady life.

He never thought that Sky Lord would attach great importance to the seemingly preposterous piece of paper and ended up disappearing for several weeks. The first thing that happened upon his return was their immediate movement to Hermes and Everwinter Kingdom, to wait for a similar letter—even without knowing who the sender was, how long it would take, or the location for collecting the letter.

In all honesty, Marwayne never wanted to leave the Deity of Gods, even with all the demons around them. None of them were capable of depriving him of his position and power. But the senior lord's command could not be violated and thus, he chose the former of the two locations, not for any other reason but because it was closer to the Deity of Gods.

At this time, the northern region of the Four Kingdoms had been enveloped by Red Mist and Graycastle appeared terribly busy resisting the demons, while he enjoyed a life no different from a duke's away from the Deity of Gods, with not only citizens as his subordinates, but with a few nobles at his beck and call. But the mission of waiting for a secret letter that had no stipulated time was worrying. In an attempt to complete the mission early, Marwayne did not hesitate to take the risk of having his subordinates escape by expanding their area of activity. Countless attempts to escape occurred during this period which resulted in him hanging the traitors as a warning, and at the same time, offered handsome rewards for clues. Yet, they never got the letter.

If all of that was down to luck, the following events completely exceeded Marwayne's expectations.

The Deity of Gods suddenly rose, flew east, and disappeared from his vision. This plunged the duke into a great panic. The miracle city originally floating behind him served as his biggest crutch and without it, his days were fraught with worry and anxiety. To add to the bad news, Sky Lord no longer revealed himself, as though having forgotten all about the secret letter.

Not long later, he heard of news that Graycastle had shot the floating island down.

Marwayne did not believe in the lies from the bottom of his heart. It was a floating mountain with a radius of over five kilometers; if Graycastle had the ability to level the mountain, why would they have waited so long to do so?

It was a pity that not everyone was as intelligent as him.

Instantly, everyone wavered. He discovered that he was no longer able to control the other nobles.

The continued silence from Sky Lord only added to the drama.

His mood became worse. Aside from having alcohol and women to dispel his worries, he no longer had the heart to do anything, and his days returned to how he spent his time in Everwinter.

"Zack, Zack!" When the bottle of grape wine was finished, Marwayne shouted for his butler.

"My lord, how may I assist you?" The butler quickly pushed open the doors to his room.

“Find a few more ladies tonight, I want them young and pretty—” he yelled.

“But, you ordered them yesterday to...”

“That was yesterday! I am the duke and this is the power I wield, understand? They should give up everything to me!”

“Yes... I understand,” the butler lowered his head and replied.

“Right, the people that we dispatched... Have we received any news?” Marwayne disbelief in the absurd rumors through the grapevine did not mean he would not verify the information. In fact, when the Deity of Gods left the Hermes Plateau, he had sent out a few troops to follow the target with the intent of finding out the floating island’s destination. But they were ridiculously inept with barely a few returning even up to yesterday.

The butler shook his head. “At the moment, we only know that Graycastle has not engaged in a large-scale battle with the Deity of Gods, but we might have some concrete news in another two days.”

“Those lazy scums...” Marwayne swore while opening a new bottle of wine. “Fine, you are dismissed.”

Then we shall wait another two days.

The Red Mist was dissipating and there was no guarantee on when the Graycastle people would make a comeback. Marwayne felt that he needed a path of retreat. Even if he was absent from where he was, that did not violate Sky Lord’s command. Whoever obtained the letter was merely making a bit of contribution. It did not matter otherwise.

Of course, he didn’t wish to go to Everwinter; it had proven itself incapable of defending against Graycastle.

Marwayne heard from other Senior Demons that a new Deity of Gods was on its way, and it held the city where the Demon King resided. It was the perfect location to retreat to.

So long as I move according to the demons’ change in route, it should not be difficult to locate it.

At that time, he told himself that only the most loyal of the nobles had the privilege of leaving with him.

Nightfall descended, but Marwayne’s ladies never came.

This infuriated him. Apparently, even his old butler had started to turn useless.

After patiently waiting for another hour, he heard footsteps outside. Curses which had been built up within Marwayne’s heart surged to his throat.

It was not his butler, but a group of dirty-clothed civilians. Some held hoes and carrying shoulder poles, completely resembling a mob of unhappy people. The duke watched them in disbelief as they barged into his home and stained the fur rug on the floor with their muddy footprints.

Upon realizing that his own home was being invaded by a group of lowlifes, he screamed, “Soldiers, soldiers!”

But he never got a response.

He was interrupted with a blow to the head by none other than his old Butler, Zack.

Marwayne immediately sobered up from his inebriation.

“What are all of you doing!?”

“Everyone’s had it with your oppression, Marwayne Parker!” the leader shouted. “For the sake of your damn orders, many good people died in the quarry from fatigue, yet you never listened to us or asked about us, and you even deducted our pay! We are not your servants, much less your slaves!”

“You nobles aren’t superior to us; Graycastle was right!”

“We have to risk our lives for this monster in the day and send our wives and daughters to him at night. You are the true demon!”

“Surrender and follow us to Graycastle, otherwise, don’t even think of stepping out of this house!”

Damn it, Marwayne thought inwardly. *All of these idiots have been brainwashed by Graycastle.* If he had known earlier, he would never have sent them to the former Holy City to investigate!

“I am the duke, which one of you dares to touch me!?” He warned them while drawing the sword by his table. Compared to their ‘weapons,’ his was a truly sharp blade. Their ability to charge in without any warnings meant that the guards and servants had betrayed him. He felt the need to get out, contact the other nobles, gather the knights, and quash the rebellion!

The position of duke was meant to frighten the crowd. He was unlike Zack, an ordinary man. The Parker family had ruled over Snow Reflection Castle for many generations, and to any ordinary citizen of Everwinter, he was of a lofty status. Marwayne believed in this and deliberately assumed his supercilious attitude. He did not believe the lowlifes would dare touch him.

Suddenly, a stone was thrown from the darkness and it struck the side of his face.

The pain froze Marwayne in his position.

They actually dare to hurt me?

An old man suddenly barged out of the crowd, weeping and howling as he pounced onto Marwayne.

“You demon, return my daughter to me—!”

Marwayne subconsciously raised his sword and stabbed it through the old man’s chest.

But by the time he reacted, the crowd had surrounded him—the old man’s death was like the drain that set free their repressed emotions.

Hoes and shoulder poles smashed down onto Marwayne like rain, and he thought he heard his bones shattering.

“You scum, stop!”

“No, stop... Stop, stop hitting...”

“Cough, cough, I beg you...”

His voice gradually softened.

The mob only stopped when the duke turned into mush.

“We killed a noble...” someone whispered with his voice trembling.

“So what, Graycastle doesn’t acknowledge nobility, and he is an enemy of Graycastle.”

“What do we do about the other Everwinter nobles? They have horses and armors, if they chase after us...”

“Since we’re already at this point, what can we do.” The leader looked around. “We are not the only ones oppressed. Since the demons aren’t here, why don’t—”

“We fight them with everything we got.” Another person completed his sentence.

“Let’s fight it out with them.”

“Let’s fight it out with them. then head to Graycastle!” In a short moment after the words were spoken, it spread amongst the people and became a catchphrase which was chanted in unison, like a powerful current that rushed out of the house and into the pitch-black lands.

Chapter 1443: Eleanor

The change in the attitudes and the beliefs of the two Senior lords did not only bring about the island formed out of the Deity of Gods.

Aside from the sparks of flames that occurred quietly at the foot of Hermes, the battle at the Western Front stopped because of the absence of Red Mist.

Although there were activities from remaining Monstrous Beasts at the Impassable Mountain Range, they soon sank into an eternal silence following the depletion of magic power. This greatly decreased the burden placed on the First Army, and Cage Mountain was no longer a ‘life or death barrier’ that required protection. In a week, countless troops returned from the front lines and assisted the west front of Neverwinter, alleviating the originally situation which was running on fumes.

The influx of reinforcements instantly reversed the situation at the Western Region. The new tanks that appeared on the ground charged through the hordes of demonic beasts, surrounding the invisible blade beasts like a net. Once the demonic beasts were gathered together, they became strike zones for the Aerial Knights. All the railway blockhouses that were abandoned before were gradually captured again, with the carcasses of mutated beasts lying all around. If not for the terrifying rate at which they decayed into black water, the entire development would have piled up with stinking corpses.

Despite Valkries’s theory that the demonic beasts were merely an evolutionary farm for the Sky-sea Realm and were of extremely limited effect on the battlefield, while the true danger laid at the back, the restabilization of the situation was undoubtedly important to Neverwinter. It was inevitable that the Sky-sea Realm would make a large-scale effort to enter the Land of Dawn with the overrun of the demon’s frontlines. This was where the First Army had to gather its strength, instead of dividing into two different battlefields.

Roland sighed and began embarking on Eleanor's "rescue."

Although the movement of the Birth Tower, which was also the movement of the obelisk, had always been Mask's responsibility, the other senior lords had more or less heard and learned how to do so after so many years.

The core step was naturally the altering of the Mother of Souls, allowing it to meld with new mineral veins as one. Only Mask and the higher ascendants that followed him were aware of this technique, but they were able to skip this step, since the body that Eleanor obtained was a finished product.

Secondly, the Mother of Soul had to be sufficiently robust enough to survive the transplant. This sounded extremely easy to understand, but the transplant would deal severe injuries on the Mother of Soul, just like on trees. Now that the Mother of Soul was Eleanor, Roland could only trust her.

Lastly, the Mother of Soul could not be without the Red Mist, which meant that before the obelisk resumed its production of Red Mist, it had to remain in an environment rich with the mist.

This was the most difficulty point for the entire rescue operation.

Fortunately, Hackzord had participated in the operation. His Distortion Door held significance in the logistics, fully displaying its extraordinary ability in such a situation.

After finalizing the plan, the Ministry of Industry was the first to engage.

To pull the immobile Eleanor out of the Red Mist, they had to grasp her position first. The interior of the Deity of Gods was a forbidden zone for Witches, unexpectedly allowing Rex's diving suit to yield a miraculous effect.

Using suspension ropes, more than ten Sand Nationals equipped with the diving suits plunged into the Red Mist lake. The verification of Eleanor's position at a 150 meters depth was confirmed by the lead man named Simbad.

Following that, the humans slowly peeled the Mother of Soul off the obelisk before securing her firmly with ropes. A Mother of Soul in its original state wielded strength comparable to a carrier, and with its nearly inseparable link to the tower, it was almost impossible to separate her. But the withering of the obelisk made the lifting feasible. Even if they never took any action, the obelisk would still have slowly crumbled into debris.

When the Mother of Soul was lifted to a higher altitude within the Red Mist, Sky Lord opened a Distortion Door beneath it and moved Eleanor into a unique metal container. Naturally, a large amount of Red Mist was injected into it along with her.

When this step was completed, everyone heaved sighs of relief.

The subsequent procedures were much simpler.

Farrina's steam-powered trucks took responsibility for the transportation, carrying not only the metal container but many Red Mist tanks—nutrients for the Mother of Soul, as well as supplies for Sky Lord. Through a series of Distortion Doors, the fleet completed the transport from Seawindshire to Neverwinter in half a day.

If not for Hackzord's insistence on leaving, Roland would have granted him the position of a logistics head.

Under the careful watch of the God's Punishment Witches, the metal container was swallowed by Fran and sent into the lower levels of North Slope Mountain's mine.

This concluded the entire operation. Under the coordination of the Administrative Office, close to ten thousand personnel of different races had been mobilized to complete the transportation that consisted of crossing through more than half of Graycastle's line of fire.

The only thing left for Roland was to wait.

...

North Slope Mine, God's Stone mining region.

Pasha held a tank of Red Mist and carefully poured it over the root of an ugly monster. It resembled a ball with sludge-like tentacles growing all over its body, with a symmetrical pair of compound eyes over its head, the size of it equaling to three central carriers. Even without a Stone of Measuring, she could feel the immense magic power accumulated within it.

This demon named the Mother of Soul was the catalyst that allowed the stone pillars to turn into Red Mist towers. It was said that only when the magic power density in the world reached its peak would the Battle of Divine Will begin. Before receiving the transplantation technique, the demons could only lay low and wait quietly for the Bloody Moon and for their opportunity to arise. If this had been the era of the Union, Pasha wouldn't mind sacrificing her life to if she had the opportunity to kill a Mother of Soul. But now, it was as though she was taking care of a child, meticulously caring for this Mother of Soul. The contrast made even her feel slightly surprised.

"As expected, you're here." A familiar voice suddenly sounded from behind her. "How's her situation?"

Pasha turned and bowed her main tentacles. *"Your Majesty, there hasn't been any signs of her gaining consciousness yet."*

The person was none other than Roland—other than the existing Ancient Witches of Taquila, he was considered Eleanor's most frequent visitor.

"Seems like moving her was truly a painful experience for her." Roland sighed.

"But I heard from Celine that Lady Eleanor had already made the promise." Pasha's voice did not sound overly dejected. *"From what I know, she rarely makes promises. But once she does, she will abide to it."*

"I hope so too..." Roland slightly nodded.

After observing alongside each other, Pasha broke the silence. *"Thank you, Your Majesty."*

"You've already thanked me multiple times." He replied somewhat helplessly. Ever since the ancient witches found out that the Three Chiefs and their other companions were alive within the central carrier, their emotions and response could nearly be described as fervent, earning him unanimous gratitude from them. However, Pasha seemed to be unsatisfied with a single expression of her

gratitude, and expressed her thanks almost every time she met him. "Eleanor contributed greatly to Graycastle, saving her is part of my responsibility."

"My gratitude isn't merely for this, but for what you've done for everyone. Regardless of the number of times I thank you, I am unable to convey this appreciation of mine, so... let me say it a few more times."

The emotional speech from Pasha startled Roland. He turned to her, almost wanting to see her current expression from her lowered tentacles. Little did he expect that this look caused his heart to skip a beat and almost cry out loud—

Without them realizing it, the Mother of Soul's symmetrical eyes were wide opened and observing the two quietly.

"You're already someone several centuries old. For such unruly words to come out of your mouth is truly surprising..." A new voice sounded in his mind.

Pasha jolted and immediately used her main tentacles to cover her face. *"Lady, Lady Eleanor?"*

"Yes, it's me."

Pasha immediately positioned her main tentacles straight and pulled herself towards the cave entrance with a breath before disappearing further into the cave.

"Uh... She has always wanted to be the first to talk to you..." The corners of Roland's mouth twitched, as he muttered in disbelief. "By the way, you awoke just like that?"

"If not how? With a thunder boom, or from an earthquake?" Eleanor yawned. *"That's Alice's style, not mine."*

"..." Roland took a long time before he continued the conversation. "Alright, it's good that you're fine. Since my job is complete, the next thing will be to see—"

"I've completed mine as well," Eleanor replied languidly.

"What?"

"The transplant process was truly unbearable, but it was enough for me to suffer alone without hindering the thought processes of the others," she replied matter-of-factly. *"The analysis of the magic power cores is complete; although we are unable to construct one at the moment, it wouldn't be much of an issue to use one that is already available. In other words, your floating island can fly at any moment."* At this point, Eleanor paused for a moment, before quipping. *"Or, why not now?"*

Chapter 1444: The Riddles of the Consciousness

It seems like their description of Eleanor as being "amiable and approachable" is true...

Comparing her to Alice, Roland found it difficult to imagine that a Transcendent that emitted a cold and imposing aura would ever say such words.

“No... I believe you.” He waved his hand immediately. The current North Slope Mountain was connected to a huge industry district, so any sudden flight would be a recipe for disaster.

“You should really believe me only after I’ve activated the core instruments,” Eleanor replied somewhat regretfully. From her tone of speech, it sounded as though she was extremely regretful to be unable to reveal her abilities right away.

Roland gained some understanding with regards to her personality.

Her self-acknowledgment of not being a qualified leader did not mean she was ordinary. She had aspects that she prided herself with. Anyone that became a Transcendent was a lofty existence without exception.

“Right... when did you wake up?”

“About a quarter of an hour ago.”

So you’ve been eavesdropping from the beginning! Roland cursed inwardly. “Then why didn’t you tell us?”

“Nobody made it a rule that it’s compulsory to announce to the world that they have woken up, right?” Eleanor replied matter-of-factly.

“Then why did you speak up in the end?”

“What other reason can there be? Do you really want me to see my junior embarrass herself?” The two rows of eyes at the top of her head rolled upwards in unison. The rolling of eyes at such a large scale was quite a magnificent sight.

It’s because of your sudden ‘awakening’ that makes it even more embarrassing!

Seeing Roland speechless, Eleanor casually changed the topic. *“In all honesty, I am rather satisfied with you at the present.”*

“Why is that?” He realized that he could hardly follow her train of thought.

“Because there aren’t any traces of exploitations here,” Eleanor replied. *“Ever since my connection with this region, I can feel that the foundation of this God’s Stone pillar is fully preserved—proof that you don’t have ideas over it.”*

She means that I didn’t exploit this mine, which indicates that I’ve never had the intent to control the witches? Roland realized the meaning behind her words. “Celine should have told you about the Witch Union; could it be that you didn’t believe her?”

‘Of course not. It is just that people get deceived easily by facades, especially from words by an omnipotent King. It would not be difficult for you to fake everything,’ Eleanor stated bluntly. *“Even if you adhere to such a position for now, it doesn’t mean that you will be the same in the future. Planning ahead is a matter that every leader has to consider. If you harbored any wariness, it would be impossible for you not be tempted by this God’s Stone mine. Secretly arranging to mine, storing, and taking precautions against the witches’ power that would become too potent for you to control, while maintaining a kind and friendly front. Isn’t that what usually happens?”*

Roland sighed. "That is because too many people treat witches as a different species, but in my eyes, they are just humans with slightly advantaged."

"You're fine even if the witches occupy all the important positions in the kingdom?"

"What you're asking, should be Alice's assertions, right?" Roland replied bluntly. "As long as humanity continues to exist, witches will definitely return to the peak."

"They actually told you that as well?" It was the first time Roland heard Eleanor exclaim in surprise.

"No, but that was what I saw in the Sigil of Recording," Roland admitted. "In fact, Alice has been mistaken as well. As long as the word 'witch' is switched to 'human', wouldn't this sentence be normal and expected? If outstanding individuals are prevented from leading the civilization, the civilization is doomed to have no future. At the same time, if the leader at the peak no longer strives for the benefit of the people, the civilization will not last as well."

In some sense, random awakenings, the inability to have children, and magic power could be considered a special ability, and should have never been a rift between the talented and the ordinary. The most dangerous aspect was artificial selection and designated inheritance, which prevented the misgivings between witches and ordinary people to cease.

"You..." Eleanor looked at him in a bid to figure out his true thoughts. But after a moment, she gave up. *"I shall wait and see. What are your plans, going forward?"*

"We will be executing a large scale remodeling of North Slope Mountain to be a suitable flying stronghold." This was another reason Roland did not allow Eleanor to lift the floating island right away. Regardless of attacking the new Deity of Gods or moving to the Bottomless Land, they had to amass a substantial amount of supplies. Upon leaving Neverwinter, it would be difficult to have resupplies. "Can you estimate the volume of the floating island?"

"It shouldn't be a problem." Eleanor blinked her eyes and nodded. *"Aside from the remaining vein, the Red Mist tower also takes into account the range and augment accordingly, so it is impossible if you want it to be as big as the Deity of Gods."*

"How do the Red Mist Towers grow?"

"I was equally curious as you on this, so I spent a bit more time investigating this body. I discovered that it can assimilate the God stone pillar into the body. Simply put, while the God's Stone doesn't reveal any signs of life in an ordinary circumstances, it will start to self-duplicate upon its binding to a Mother of Soul. The process depends on the quality of the God Stone; using it too much will put an end to the magic power within."

"Then..." Roland hesitated for a moment. "Are you able to create Red Mist?"

This question caused Eleanor to sigh. *"Yes, in fact, not only do I have control over the various unique abilities of the Mother of Soul, I even have a deeper understanding of their intricacies. For example, the Red Mist lake can be considered a type of demon as well, as they are all produced in the same manner."*

"You mean to say—" Roland was surprised.

“That’s right, be it Mad Demon, Fearsome Demons or Lords of Hells, they are produced that way... I found information within the Mother of Soul related to them. But to incubate the demons, there are a few crucial factors lacking—and the one to supply the crucial factors to the Mother of Soul is considered King.”

Roland was dumbstruck. Although he knew that the demons did not need to mate, he never thought that they would reproduce in such a manner.

‘In other words, It is possible for me to become the King of Demons as well—Isn’t it ironic, one of the Three Chiefs will be a demon producer one day.’ Eleanor then glared at him. ‘You have to remember everything you said, don’t make me stay here for too long.’

This will depend on our advancement in magic power and not me, Roland thought to himself helplessly. But what was on his mind went deeper—through the shift of consciousness, Eleanor had practically obtained all the information stored within the Mother of Soul, and just like learning, she could, in a sense, obtain the legacies. It was inevitable that the different legacies from the different races would end up mixed and evolved was inevitable. But why would God be superfluous and use the Battle of Divine Will and legacy shards, for the races to kill each other to push for it to happen?

Secondly, what mattered was consciousness itself.

It was a clear cut distinction in the world where technology was still primitive. Access and a shift of consciousness was simple, as though there was no technique or skill involved. If God were the only one that had the ability to do so, Roland would had let it slide. But why were the underground civilization, demons, and humans capable of it as well?

In his previous world, simulating perception remained a concept and only existed in television shows.

He had a vague feeling that the two might be related.

Chapter 1445: The Island That Will Never Fall

Upon returning to Graycastle from North Slope Mountain, Roland invited City Hall Director Barov and Minister of Construction Karl to his office.

“I need the Administrative Office to start on a new metallurgy material supply plan as quickly as possible, and move the production from the center of North Slope Mountain to other locations—be it Longsong Stronghold or Redwater City, the only guarantee that I need is that the production cannot be inadequate. North Slope Mountain will no longer be mineable soon.”

The expressions of the two men changed. After glancing at each other, Karl lowered his head, while Barov spoke with much difficulty. “Your Majesty... has the situation in the north deteriorated that badly?”

“North?” Roland was startled for a moment before realizing that the two had assumed that a new powerful enemy had appeared at the Fertile Plains that not even the First Army could handle. Hence, to protect the city, they had to give up on North Slope Mountain. Amused and exasperated, Roland shook his head. “The army hasn’t degenerated to the point that we have to lie about our victory so as to

appease the people. Furthermore, you are in charge of logistics, you should be able to grasp the general situation from the drop in medical supplies being supplied out. How can you ask such a question?"

Barov hurriedly wiped the cold sweat from his forehead. "Hahaha... I thought Your Majesty was provisioning for bad times. In fact, I have been curious from the beginning, thinking which witch was the one who discovered news about the Sky-sea Realm that the Administrative Office hadn't been informed in a timely fashion."

"If that is the case, why are you giving up on the mines in North Slope Mountain?" Karl couldn't help but ask.

"Because that mountain is about to fly soon." Roland shrugged.

"..."

The two fell silent once again, but wearing weird expressions on their faces this time, as though questioning themselves if they had heard wrongly.

"You heard that right. It will fly soon and become a floating island." Roland looked at the two with interest, and recounted everything about the ancient witch, Eleanor, as well as their gaining of control over the magic power core. "Remember the metal container that the Administrative Office transported from before? The central carrier for the Deity of Gods was contained inside. But due to the risks involved in transplanting it, we were unable to determine the outcome until the final moment; therefore, I didn't inform all of you about the details. But now you can know that the project was successful, Neverwinter will soon have a floating island as part of its territory."

Barov widened his eyes, momentarily at a loss for words. As for Karl, he trembled in excitement. He asked in a trembling voice, "Your Majesty, what you want is not just a giant rock, right?"

"That's right." Roland no longer kept them in suspense. "It will be a floating battleship, a stronghold that will never fall. It must be able to provide months, if not a year's supply for large numbers of soldiers on an assault mission. It is both capable of taking the initiative to attack our enemies, and it naturally possesses defensive capabilities. How long do you think you need to transform North Slope Mountain into something like that?"

With his engineering background, he completely understood Karl's excitement. Any ambitious architect hoped of having their own work placed in the most inconceivable of places. To be able to personally create the floating city was definitely a once in a lifetime opportunity.

"According to the scale of the project benchmarked against typical projects, it would require about four to five years, but I believe that Your Majesty cannot wait that long. Besides, a floating city cannot be considered an ordinary undertaking," Karl immediately answered. "Considering its unique features, the Ministry of Construction can send a team of engineers to reside in the structure while it moves. If I didn't misinterpret Your Majesty's intentions, I believe you definitely wish for the Aerial Knights to be stationed permanently on it as well. So long as there is stop-over point on it for resupply, their attacking and defensive capabilities will far surpass that of cannons."

It seemed like after building over ten runways, the Minister of Construction had formed a deeper understanding towards the air force. Roland smiled and nodded, "Continue."

“The requirements for the Aerial Knights includes having a runway, storehouses, fuel oil and ammunition reserves. We already have feasible blueprints for them, and will take at most a week to be completed. Your Majesty—” Karl placed his hand across his chest. “The minimum we will need is a week. In a week, it will satisfy your most fundamental requirements; the rest can be broken into phases, to add on, perfect, and extend.”

“What about the materials for construction?” Barov asked. “Once the North Slope Mountain takes off, it will be difficult to transport them upwards.”

“Leave that to me to ponder.” When it came to professional queries, Karl always planned in advance. “North Slope Mountain’s mountainside has a sizable lake formed naturally from the spring water that comes from the mountain top. The engineering team can enclose it and form a natural water reservoir to supply water for daily use and construction.”

“Secondly, we can excavate the mountain to obtain limestone required for cement. I believe that Lady Eleanor wouldn’t mind having the floating island slightly lighter. Bricks, lumber—all of these—can be obtained on the spot, while materials such as steel should be prepared ahead of time. If Miss Hummingbird is willing to help, I think that we can load up a considerable amount of resources.

“Aside from that, the Third Border City’s Taquila witches can assist as well. As long as we make minor changes to the contiguous caves, they will form the best warehouses. With all of these things, even if we are unable to resupply the floating island in the short term, the project team can continue working for at least a year or two.” He turned to Barov. “Of course, if the furnace area and steel-making plants are preserved, this amount of time will undoubtedly extend.”

Roland could not help but to clap. The proposed plan was the most suitable method considering the time constraints—ensuring that the floating island possessed the basic fighting capabilities in the shortest time, and leaving the other constructions, like residential, functional buildings to the later for improvement.

“Barov, what do you think?”

“It means that aside from the First Army, we will need a large population living on it.” The old director stroked his beard. “I will have to think up a recruitment plan.”

Roland smiled in satisfaction; it appeared that the duo had grasped the crux of the plan.

The floating island meant going for a long and drawn out battle away from the mainland, and the living conditions in the early stages was incomparable to those in Neverwinter. As a result, be it the promotion or remuneration, the Administrative Office had to prepare adequately—only a group of zealous workers brimming with determination would complete the tasks efficiently.

In the past, it was Roland that personally took the lead for the planning. With Barov taking up the position, he obviously had a clear understanding of his governing principles.

“Go ahead as discussed.” Roland finally gave the go ahead.

...

“Welcome back, my lord.”

When Victor entered the office in Miracle Building, Tinkle immediately rushed forward and welcomed him just like back in the hotel.

The Rainbow Stone business was picking up, with many competitors appearing. To safeguard his supply, he had no other choice but to move between Everwinter and the Port of Clearwater. Although the operation was draining, he took pleasure in it. Compared to the uncertain jewelry business, he was far closer to his initial target than before—to become a successful businessman to support the family.

Just as Victor extended a hand out, Tinkle handed a copy of Graycastle Weekly to him.

This tacit understanding made him smile. Although the Port of Clearwater also had the weekly newspapers, there was always a two to three weeks delay. Towards a city like Neverwinter, two or three weeks was enough for great changes.

As expected, the large header on the front page immediately captured his attention.

“Heading for the skies—official announcement of the Heaven Plan.”

Chapter 1446: Skycarrier

“The key to ending the Battle of Divine Will has been found...” Victor muttered to himself. “His Majesty is determined to take the initiative and attack our enemies to end the flames of war outside the Fertile Plains?”

Even after experiencing so many inconceivable matters in the past, the headlines was still as shocking as before. Every line was worth being elaborated. Back in the past, such news would have never left the confines of royalty, much less an ordinary businessman like him of zero noble status.

The report had an extremely grand drawing: the commotion caused by the descent on the floating island into the sea did not announce the end of the demons’ attack. Thousand of kilometers away, a new Blackstone stronghold was rushing towards Neverwinter through day and night. Beneath it held millions of demons—enough to drown the entire human kingdom! To prevent this from occurring, the king had decided to take action and prevent the flames of war from affecting the ordinary citizens.

Upon defeating the approaching enemies, the King would send out an expeditionary force to the other side of the world where the boundary between both continents existed, to remove the threat of the Battle of Divine Will. Upon obtaining success, a long and peaceful era would emerge, and be it demons or demonic beasts, nothing would ever threaten the safety of mankind.

Victor was familiar with expeditions, since he had personally witnessed a miracle more than a year ago. Relying on the heavy machinery called a train, the First Army had transported troops to the deserted Fertile Plains almost five hundred kilometers away and defeated the demons that occupied the northern ruins. At that time, Graycastle Weekly had a detailed written record of the entire process, with a realistic drawing termed as a ‘photograph.’ Victor could still recall the sensation of overlooking the black train’s rushing headlong into the Fertile Plains.

But this time, King Roland seemed to have taken one step further, one that was even more thorough.

He’s actually planning on moving a mountain into the sky to become an expedition stronghold!

Can it truly be accomplished by human hands?

Victor eagerly flipped to the second page. He saw the plan being divided into three phases, the first being the lift off stage—the entire North Slope Mountain and a kilometer of soil beneath would be escape the restraints of the Impassable Mountain Range and become a single entity.

The second phase was flight test stage. North Slope Mountain would be integrated into the army and be conferred with the name “Eleanor Skycruiser” officially. In this phase, the floating island would patrol Neverwinter’s surroundings multiple times for training as well as await the perfect opportunity to attack.

The last phase was the official set off, to fight the enemy a thousand kilometers away.

The Administrative Office termed the battle as the war to decide the fate of mankind. Aside from soldiers, the support provided by various professions was equally as important; thus, the remuneration given were rather handsome, two to three times that of a peer working in a similar job in Neverwinter. Aside from that, volunteers would have their name added onto a monument that would stand tall perpetually inside King’s City.

Additionally, Lord Barov divulged at the end that only those who volunteered to go aboard the floating island would have the opportunity to witness mankind’s strongest weapon in history.

At this point, Victor realized that the Administrative Office would be crammed to the point where not a single drop of water could flow through. The difference between Neverwinter’s citizens and migrants from other cities was how they viewed the floating island. When he interacted with the locals, he often got the misconception that the land not only belonged to King Roland, but that they also had a share in it. Furthermore, once an individual settled into the city and received his identity card, they would have the similar acknowledgment and sentiments towards the land, because he had experienced it for himself before.

He would even hear migrants from the Kingdom of Dawn discussing about Neverwinter’s various miracles with pride, something that was unheard of before.

If not for his business, Victor had the urge to ascend the floating island and experience and witness everything.

“Connect me to the Administrative Office, tell them that Rainbow Stones is willing to contribute a thousand sets of clothes.”

“Yes, my lord.” Tinkle nodded.

“Right, have you asked about North Slope Mountain’s exact flight date?”

“It should be within the next two or three days; the mountaintop already looks completely different from before.”

“In two or three days... I’m afraid that the good seats have already been snatched clean.” Victor folded the newspaper and walked to the window. Although the Miracle Building was tall, it was too far from the Impassable Mountain Range. Victor felt it appropriate to witness the marvel at close proximity. He turned and took out a key. “Tinkle, you should know what to do, right?”

Fortunately, anything that could be solved with money was not considered a big matter to him.

“Leave it to me, my lord.” Tinkle smiled and accepted the key.

...

Three days later, the First Army removed the cordon tape at the foot of the mountain, indicating to the public that the moment they had been waiting for was about to arrive.

The current North Slope Mountain was completed different from before. From a distance, one could see dense scaffolding all around, the irregular mountain walls had been artificially remodeled—not only were the walls smoothed, there were various places that had been patched up. All of the patches that were either made out of metal or lubricating oil fabric were distinctly out of place with the stone walls, but made the natural structure look more like a weapon.

What shocked Victor the most were the several hundred strips of flags that hung down from a high elevation.

They were just like a skirt for the mountain that undulated like waves along with the wind.

The tower and rifle emblem symbolized Graycastle Kingdom.

The red, black, and white colors made it even more dignified.

The visual impact was one that would live eternally in everyone’s mind.

The crowds on the street grew and by noon, all the main streets had become impenetrable. If not for the black-clothed policemen and army personnel directing the crowd towards the Misty Forest, half the city would be in deadlock.

Following the deep and resounding alarm that resonated through the entire city, Victor, positioned at an exceptionally good spot on the roof of a building in West Street, felt tremors from the soles of his feet.

Very quickly, the tremors turned into loud rumblings!

In that instant, it felt as though the entire Neverwinter had boiled over—

It was the sound of the mountain being ripped apart.

Despite being expectant of the proceedings, witnessing the scene first hand caused Victor to gape in shock.

Tinkle grabbed onto his arm tightly.

North Slope Mountain slowly ascended in an indomitable fashion, releasing dust from the severed connections with the Impassable Mountain Range. The scaffolding situated on the surface collapsed, seemingly powerless at restraining so gigantic. The fallen trees, gravel, and scaffolding were left behind, but were later lifted up by the even wider bottom.

The entire scene resembled a radish being pulled out of the soil, except that the soil spanned over a kilometer of land. The floating island was in a distinct triangular shape with the lowest point situated at the center of the island. With the rise of North Slope Mountain, a gigantic pit was left in the ground’s

surface, and faced with the sudden disappearance of the 'roof', countless underground creatures scurried away, becoming one of the vivid footnotes in this historical event.

This should have been an impossible task unachievable with human strength.

But the flags swaying on the mountain announced that there was no mistake—it declared that it belonged to Graycastle Kingdom, to mankind.

After waking up from their shock, the crowd erupted into deafening cheers. Once the first cries of “long live His Majesty” sounded, it was destined that the chanting would not stop until a long while after.

It took a long time for the feverish atmosphere to abate. Victor licked his dry lips and was about to bring Tinkle back to the hotel when he caught sight of an elderly figure on another roof from the corner of his eye. The figure looked so familiar that he slowed down in his tracks.

Victor tried to take a better look, only to discover that the figure was gone.

“My lord, what is it?” Tinkle sensed his strange behavior.

“No, it’s nothing... I might have been seeing things.” Victor hesitated, because no matter how he saw it, the old man somewhat resembled his father.

But how can Father appear here? He shook his head, and quickly threw the thought to the back of his mind.

Chapter 1447: The Unfulfilled Promise

Inside Graycastle’s parlor, Roland quietly observed the old man before him.

Seated in a wheelchair with a head full of grizzled hair, sunken cheeks and wrinkles bulging on his forehead, the old man was clearly approaching the final years of his life. But compared to his age, his eyes remained clear and youthful, with the vigor of an adolescent. The monocle hanging on his nose bridge and bow tie at his neck added a touch to his bearing. At the same time, the old man was also observing Roland.

Roland broke the silence after a short moment as he revealed a smile. “It truly wasn’t easy inviting you over from the Kingdom of Dawn. Welcome to Graycastle’s new King City, Mr. Banach Lothar. It must have been a long and tough journey for you.”

“It is my honor to be received by the King of Graycastle...” The old man lowered his head slightly. “But may I ask, what does Your Majesty have for me?”

“You’ve already contributed greatly to Graycastle; there isn’t anything you need to do.”

“Me?” The old man revealed a look of surprise. “Your Majesty, are you mistaken about something?”

Typically, a man at such an age would have their thought processes slow down substantially, their speech turning inarticulate or stammering, but not only did Banach Lothar reply promptly, he managed to control his facial muscles to maintain a poker face, enough to prove that his mind had never stopped or slowed down. Compared to the inevitable aging of the body, his mind was still working at his prime.

"I know of your concerns, but be at ease, I have no ill intentions towards Black Money." Roland spread open his hands. "The 'Oracle' that delivered the information to you is from Neverwinter. In fact, I was the one to decide that the information was to be delivered to you."

By using Pasha as his mouthpiece and using the reason of it being the opportune moment for the incarnation ceremony as way to summon Banach Lothar, Roland had men forcibly take him back to the castle upon verifying his identity. Although this method was considered crude, it was straightforward.

"Your Majesty... I don't understand what you mean..."

"It's fine, I will explain it until you do—this is a very complicated story, but I assure you that it's real." Roland then narrated the story of the ancient witches, as well as the essence of the God's Punishment Army's incarnation ceremony. Soul containers only accepted consciousness that had magic power; in other words, non-magic humans could only turn into empty shells.

In a sense, turning into a shell with no consciousness coincided with how the ancient witches extended their lives. If Black Money was an ordinary underground Chamber of Commerce, Roland would not have paid much attention to it. But Black Money had contributed greatly during the Western Front's military campaign against the demons, not only by assisting in providing intelligence network in Kingdom of Wolfheart and Everwinter, but they had also sent out crucial reports and filled the empty spaces which the witches were unable to investigate as a result of the areas being filed with Red Mist.

Perhaps Banach Lothar's intent was never to help mankind or save humanity, but the contribution was tangible. Roland did not believe that turning a man of such meritorious deeds into a puppet without consciousness was a suitable reward; thus, he chose to personally interview him.

After a long while, Banach Lothar took off his monocle and spoke with trembles in his voice. "You mean to say that eternal life is nothing but a scam?"

Roland sighed. "At the present, the only ones capable of maintaining their consciousness and not age have to be magic power users. For humans, only witches can do that."

Even Roland himself, who opened up the Dream World, was incapable of instigating a response from the soul container.

"But after drinking all of that medicine, I truly feel that my body has turned for the better—"

"It doesn't mean that the medicine is useless. It increases the success rate of the ceremony by overdrafting one's vitality, but it cannot go on continuously like that," Roland interrupted and shook his head. "Very quickly, the side effects will surface, and that is the reason why I have sought you so urgently."

Banach Lothar was stunned. "You mean to say, my days are numbered..."

"I'm sorry," Roland replied lamentably. "I am unable to deliver a perfect promise, and can only attempt other means to make up for it. Black Money protected the witches, and contributed so much to the Battle of Divine Will. If you have anything on your mind, tell to me. We owe that to you."

Nightingale had questioned Roland earlier, to have Pasha and the others resolve issue on their own. By using the King's identity, it meant shifting the responsibility of the entire scam onto Graycastle itself.

Nightingale was right, but Roland was aware that since Graycastle accommodated all the Taquila witches, it not only meant enjoying the benefits of their abilities, but shouldering their faults as well.

“...” Banach Lothar remained silent for a long time. “Are you able to handle the matter, even in the Kingdom of Dawn?”

“You should know that of my influence on the Kingdom of Dawn.”

“Then I am at ease.” Unexpectedly, the other party did not fall into despair or turn hysterical, but instead revealed a calm smile. “The reason for my desire to live longer is to ensure the survivability of Black Money for my children—if I die, the other businessmen will not let this piece of the pie go. With such large benefits laid in front of them, a few lives are worth nothing. If Your Majesty is willing to get involved, I believe that no one will dare act blindly; that itself is much more reliable than me living longer. If that is the case, why should I harbor a grudge?”

Roland muttered to himself irresolutely, then spoke to him. “Are you sure you want that, as your reward?”

“Your Majesty, is that... not possible?”

“It is possible.” He paused for a moment. “Have you ever heard of the name ‘Rainbow Stones?’”

“I have heard of it.” Banach pondered for a moment. “If I recall correctly, it is a brand new line of clothes for your distinguished country that operates at a massive scale, with some products sold even at the Kingdom of Dawn—but forgive me for saying this, the style and design is still far inferior to ours.”

That’s because Victor only employed artisans from the Lothars family... And he never told any of you that the price of such clothes is only a tenth of other clothes shop in Neverwinter. Roland coughed twice.

“From what I know, the founder behind this line of clothes is called Victor Lothars, your fourth son. Aside from that, the business revenue as of today has already surpassed ten thousand gold royals. With such a talent here, I believe that even without Graycastle’s support, he will not lose to the other businessmen.

Ten thousand gold royals was definitely a large amount, with only the sale of Chaos Drink in Neverwinter being able to beat that record—the reason was simple, not everyone needed beverages, but everyone needed clothes. With the Neverwinter’s population turning highly centralized, the demand for necessities exploded. In the face of a booming industry capable of producing large amounts of profits, the deals made within the underground chamber of commerces were nothing.

This time, Banach Lothar revealed genuine surprise. “Your Majesty, is what you said... true? Ever since he left the City of Glow, we have rarely communicated... I thought he was still in the jewelry business...”

“Victor is now in Neverwinter, it won’t be difficult for you to meet him and verify if what I said was true or not. But... you have to make haste.”

“Yes... I understand.” Banach Lothar could no longer help grab onto this opportunity, his actions clearly revealing the emotions buried at the bottom of his heart. “Please excuse me, Your Majesty.”

Roland nodded and was about to call for a few guards to send the old man out, when the latter spoke up again. "You said that I have not much time left... will it be possible for me to live my last few moments on the floating island?"

"..." Roland closed his eyes. "If that is your wish."

When the doors closed, Nightingale appeared and whispered, "Strange..."

"What?"

"In the beginning, his responses were strange, not to say that they were lies, but my magic power felt blurred, unlike the calm he presented." Nightingale shrugged.

"I see," Roland replied thoughtfully.

"You know why?"

"Maybe." He lowered his voice and turned his head towards the window. "The thing about eternal life is that it will always be attractive. When one's expectation fails to be met, it'll be the most difficult thing to accept, regardless of who it is."

"But that's not a lie." Nightingale repeated herself.

"Because he knew that no matter what he does, he can never change the outcome," Roland replied wistfully. "Since the outcome cannot be changed, he has to accept it—rather than hold a grudge and become enemies with the King of Graycastle, why not act magnanimous and win a favorable impression. All other unnecessary emotions will simply turn into a sunken cost. That is what he most probably thinks. There are many that understand this, but very few are able to act on it... That is what's impressive about him."

Roland somewhat understood why many of the businessmen in the Kingdom of Dawn were treated like nobles—their ability to split control and have stop losses made them far more capable than a vast majority of the nobles.

"As for you—" At this point, Roland turned towards Nightingale. "Not only are you able to discern between truth or lies, you're actually able to sense their emotions. Are you about to evolve?"

"You think of me as a person who will intentionally hide the fact that I'm about to evolve—or in other words, am I that modest a person to you?" Nightingale cast a glance at him and replied sourly.

Uh... I have no response to that.

Roland tactfully closed his mouth.

Chapter 1448: The Black Giant Bird

"Ring..."

The telephone on the table rang.

Roland spent a few seconds rummaging through a pile of machines before finding the connecting receiver, lowering his body and answering it.

The label on the phone indicated that the caller was from the Aerial Knight Academy.

Following the increase of lines to the office, Roland was compelled to add another table to his work area just to hold the phones.

“Really? I’ll be right there.”

After hanging up, Roland stood up with a joyful expression. He picked up the coat hanging on his chair and draped it over himself.

“Was that Tilly?” Nightingale asked, frowning.

“Yes, the preparations for the big plane is complete, they are going to have its trial flight soon.”

The so called big plane mentioned by Roland was the Design Bureau of Graycastle’s main focus—the Four-engined strategic bomber. Upon finding out that there was the possibility of obtaining a mobile runway, Roland immediately sought for the relevant technical staff and inquired about the feasibility of changing out engines. The answer he received was, so long as minor adjustments were made to the existing weight, there would not be an influence on the yielding of pneumatics. But modifying the Phoenix’s engine brought about a substantial drop in performance; for example, the takeoff required a longer runway before the Phoenix was able to lift off, the internal fuel capacity dropped by half, and its flight time dropped to a third of its original time... In all, the new planes were incapable of satisfying the demands previously raised for long distance raids.

The only advantage was that outcomes could be immediately seen.

The Phoenix’s engine was an improved model of the star-shaped engine, a model Anna completely grasped over a year ago. It was relatively more mature and robust compared to the engines allocated to the large-scale bombers—even though the Bureau had supplied detailed blueprints, the prototype had to be first tested, and that definitely affected the progress of the entire project.

In reality, when the plan was initially formulated, the bomber had been prioritized in the ‘one year plan,’ and was already considered a brazen plan for Neverwinter. Even if nothing unexpected occurred during the research and development stage, its production would still have taken another half a year.

If not for Senior Lord Mask’s actions that caused Roland to realize that the Deity of Gods had an internecine ability, a year would not have been considered long. But now, the situation was substantially different—in the event where the Deity of Gods overdrafted on the God’s Stone mine to ascend into the sky, destroying the core would not be able to prevent the floating island from falling and causing catastrophic destruction.

With humanity’s own Skycruiser in the form of a floating island, losing bombers was no longer a huge cause of concern anymore.

Crossing over a tangled mess of lines, Roland wore the coat whilst walking to the door. “We should take a look as well, this might be history’s largest plane!”

“Clang—”

Just when he passed the mahogany table, his sleeve suddenly pulled a teapot on the table. By the time Roland was aware of this, the teapot was already falling to the ground irreversibly.

“Ah...” Nightingale moved slightly, her figure disappearing for an instant but she was still one step too late.

The teapot tumbled in midair, as though something invisible had struck it, before dropping and shattering into pieces on the ground with the boiled tea splashing all over.

“Your reaction seems to have slowed quite a bit,” Roland quipped. “In the past, you’ve never slipped up on such things; have you been eating too much snacks that you’ve become heavier?”

“...” Nightingale surprisingly didn’t retort, and instead turned to look at her own hands.

“Leave it to the maids to clean it up, we need to head to the Aerial Knight Academy, Tilly is waiting for us there.”

...

At the Aerial Knight Academy runway, a black plane larger than the Seagull was being towed out of the hangar.

Aside from its massive size, the broad dual wings and the four engines installed below were the fighter plane’s distinct features.

Although the thick and short outline of the star-shaped engines was not aesthetically matching with the slender plane, the spectators did not seem to mind the disharmony—just its unprecedented size was enough to capture their attention.

Compared to the Fire of Heaven’s dexterous form, the pure black paint made the plane look like a gigantic creature lying prone on the ground.

Good was no exception.

His eyes never left the plane ever since it came out. If not for his personal experience of flying the Fire of Heaven, he would never have believed that such a heavy plane could actually fly. But even so, Good’s heart was filled with shock and awe—from the fact that Neverwinter was able to produce such an exaggerated gizmo in a year of his absence, he simply felt that the Queen’s abilities were just too exaggerated.

Finkin, on the other hand, could not give any other descriptions other than repeat how huge it was.

“I reckon that only the most outstanding of Aerial Knights will have the qualifications to operate this beast?” Hinds sighed with emotion. “In our class, I think only Good stands a chance.”

“Not really.” Unexpectedly, the one to reply to him was the usually cold Instructor Eagle Face.

“According to what I know, the pilot of the bomber will not be selected from the current pilots. That doesn’t mean that these people aren’t outstanding, but Princess Tilly believes that ensuring sky dominance is the main goal for the Aerial Knights. As long as the bomber is protected and any approaching enemies are shot down, it doesn’t matter if the huge plane is operated by a team of recruits.”

“Instructor...” The three of them straightened their backs.

“Rest easy soldiers, I’m not here to reprimand you.” Eagle Face glanced at them emotionlessly. “You are all the best of the best among the Aerial Knights, have more confidence in yourselves.”

“Yes!” The three saluted.

“Everyone will be going up against the demon’s main force soon. Work hard.” Eagle Face turned and walked away with a wave of his hand.

Finkin heaved a sigh of relief. “Why do I feel that Instructor is feeling especially...”

“Gentle?” Hinds added.

“Yeah.” Good shrugged. “But if the words we speak behind his back reaches him, he will not hesitate to send you guys to a week of toilet duty.”

The two immediately switched topics.

Right at this moment, the black plane’s propeller started spinning at high speeds, the loud humming noises drowning the discussions of the spectators.

Even after so long, hearing the familiar and pulsating cadence caused Good’s heart to pump with ardor.

I really love flying...

With the unending striking sounds of the pistons, the bomber gradually moved forward and gained speed—the entire process took longer than the Fire of Heaven, but upon reaching the end of the runway, it still only lifted its nose by a bit.

Gravity no longer had its clutches on the plane.

It was as though the black beast had expanded its wings while facing the damp sea breeze to climb to the skies.

After its takeoff, the bomber adjusted its direction and flew northwest of Neverwinter. In that direction, the floating North Slope Mountain appeared especially strikingly.

Good knew that the essential factors to their initiative had been completed.

The time for the decisive battle was right in front of their eyes.

Chapter 1449: Journey Together

After dealing with all official business, Roland returned to his room and saw Anna arranging her clothes, with a large leather suitcase at her side.

“Uh... What are you doing?”

“Can’t you tell.” She patted the folded clothes. “Preparing for a long journey.”

“Then Neverwinter has to stop everything.” Roland cracked a joke. “Is it really good that the Minister of Industry is able to leave without saying a word?”

“Don’t you worry. Aside from the steam turbines, the few finished products to strengthen the piston engine, the factory is already in the production stage, and at the most, the number of qualified products will drop slightly. Also, the Society of Wondrous Crafts members you’ve brought back are all talented. Letting them take over for a while isn’t a bad thing.”

“Wait a minute...” Roland sensed something amiss. Anna had picked out all the plain and durable clothes, with not a single party dress or formal silk gown. There was not even a single skirt within them, and she did not appear to be joking. “Where are you going?”

“To the floating island, with you.” She revealed a “do-you-still-need-to-ask” expression. “You’re not planning to wait in Neverwinter for the outcome at the frontlines, right? I can tell that you’ve made that decision after conversing with the Three Chiefs of Taquila. Furthermore, traveling to the Bottomless Land from the ridge of the continent is far more convenient, so that gives you more of a reason not to come back here.”

“That won’t do—” Roland subconsciously denied her. “Firstly, ignoring the fact of how this final battle with the demons will turn out, no one knows what is in the Bottomless Land. And Hackzord mentioned that the land there has been overrun by Sky-sea Realm; the risks are too much, you don’t even know—”

“Smack.”

Anna extended both arms to gently slap his cheeks, then shake his head by force before caressing them. “I know. And because of that, I’m going.”

Her voice was soft and gentle, but Roland knew from one look in her eyes that she was accepting no as an answer.

And in that instant, the image of her during their first encounter overlapped with her current appearance.

At that time, Anna still had a trace of her nascency. She had nothing but her ability. Even so, her resolve once she made up her mind had always been difficult to change.

Roland could only attempt one last time. “You’re different from the past. As Queen, leaving Neverwinter to take on this unnecessary risk is not the mature thing—”

“If I am truly mature, I would not have agreed to let you go to the Bottomless Land without knowing anything about it at all.” Anna pressed down on his shoulders, cutting him off. “As to what would eventually happen to you, be it you failing or disappearing, all of them are possible outcomes. In other words, this final attack might possibly be our last time seeing each other again. Do you think I’m willing to stay in the city? Since everyone is taking the same risk, it isn’t much for me to join.”

“...” Roland knew that his last attempt had failed. After all, in a flipped situation, he would never be willing to wait alone. “If we don’t return...”

“Then it will be a situation so terrible that it can’t get any worse right?” Anna released her hands and laughed. “But even so, I will not regret it.”

...

Passing through the contorted black and white lines, Nightingale entered the empty office.

With it so late at night, most people had already fallen asleep, leaving only a few flickering flames in the courtyard dancing to the night breeze.

After drawing the curtains, she pulled open a drawer, taking the glowing magic stone and placing it into a light holder.

Very quickly, the room was lit with a mild light.

The broken teapot had been cleared long ago along with a replaced rug, as though the little incident had never occurred.

Nightingale walked past the telephone table and found her target—a wooden case covered up by the messy files at the table head.

In the Mist, she could distinguish objects without light. In this unique domain that felt like a completely different world, it was forever in its monochrome state. Black, white, and gray constructed the entire world even without any light source.

Except for this.

She opened the case; in it were filled with papers with scribbling written all over, and a few bright stones.

Nightingale took one stone piece and placed it in her palm, then attempted to enter the Mist. Just as the surging magic power took form, it immediately scattered, as though obstructed by something.

“As I’ve expected...” She sighed as she placed the stone back into the case, feeling somewhat depressed.

It was a report from the Magic Tower; if it wasn’t not from Agatha or Celine, then it was from Isabella. But the possibility of it being written collectively by the three of them remained—the crisis of the Deity of Gods had just been resolved, but the Red Mist on the Hermes Plateau had not dissipated completely. The Taquila witches had to digest the findings and experiments done by the pure witches; thus, Isabella chose to temporarily live in Neverwinter. Together with the technology obtained from the demons, plenty of results were obtained, with a report due to be sent in the coming days.

Typically, Roland would complete reading the report on the same day, but this day was an exception. With the separation of North Slope Mountain and the test flight of the huge plane arranged on the same day, Roland never had the opportunity to open the case.

But Nightingale noticed the existence of the stone right from the beginning. After all, there were only two things that were not affected in the Mist, one being magic power, and the second being the pure dark cavity formed by God’s Stones. According to Isabella’s research, the two might even be connected.

Thus, Nightingale had long noticed the black blob of light when Roland had met with Banach Lothar, just that compared to a God’s Stone, its range of influence was on a much smaller scale, obviously a result from Isabella’s alterations. As it was a specimen related to the report, she did not pay much heed to it.

The small stone was the reason why Nightingale was unable to react when the teapot dropped—the black light shielded the falling teapot, and inside the Mist, her body had deemed the situation ‘irreversible.’

If it were merely so, Nightingale would have attributed it as an accident. However, she had seen a line that outlined a table being ejected upon her contact, passing through the blob of black light to collide with the teapot, ultimately altering the falling trajectory of the teapot.

Distortions in the Mist could not be controlled. Even she had to be careful around unsettled lines; otherwise, she might be the one to be severed.

It was her first time witnessing such a thing.

But Nightingale was unsure if it was a coincidence, or if something had changed within her.

She attempted to manifest the ability again by touching the edge of the table in the Mist repeatedly, mimicking the situation a couple of times but to no avail.

Seems like I'm overthinking this. Nightingale awkwardly retracted her hand. *Agatha's right, just because many of the Witches are able to do it, I shouldn't assume that evolving is a simple thing. Fortunately for me, I hadn't said anything, otherwise Roland would have made fun of me.*

She put the glowing magic stone back into the drawer and departed the office by retracing her steps.

“Crack...”

The room that had regained its silence suddenly produced a soft sound.

At the table side that was hidden from sight, a crack blossomed along the wood grain.

Chapter 1450: Taquila Street Battle

Days later.

South of the Fertile Plains, Tower Station No. 10.

Balshan lay prone outside the turret, looking at the silhouette of the ancient city a distance away. She had once read a report in the weekly newspaper about the Northern Expedition. She knew it was once the famous witch city in history, Taquila. In order to conquer it, demons went to great lengths, but were ultimately sent retreating by the First Army.

And now, they were here to defeat new enemies, so as to recapture Taquila.

One minute... Thirty seconds... Ten seconds...

As she counted silently in her head, she covered her ears.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! The cannon's booming sounded behind her. The continuous reverberations transmitted to the vehicles through the ground as she felt her arms turn slightly numb. They were the 152mm Longsong Cannon of the Artillery Squad which were raining metal on the target. Compared to the short-barrel cannon on the tank, they were on two completely different levels.

“Team Leader, haven’t you gotten used to the cannon booms?” The driver, Bay, turned his head and quipped. He sat cross-legged in the front area of the vehicle, and even in a battlefield strewn with corpses and the stench of rotting demonic beasts wafting through it, he continued consuming his meal. “That won’t do. You need to learn how to let your ears filter out the unimportant noises. Only then can you constantly maintain your focus.”

“To me, you just have a poor sense of hearing.” Balshan cast her sight away emotionlessly. Although the driver and the cannoneer were veteran soldiers with rich experience, according to the rules, the Vehicle Commander was the leader of the team. Besides, in terms of age, it was even possible that she was older than the both of them. “The only thing I need to listen out for is any abnormal sounds from the Sigil of Screaming, not the sound of cannons or your nonsense, get it?”

“Team Leader... What you said is a little harsh.” Bay smacked his lips. “I thought a witch would be sweet and adorable, just like Angel Nana...”

“Five years ago, witches were the devil’s minions, the embodiment of evil.”

“Uh— No one will like you if you act this way.”

“What nonsense. I think Team Leader’s pretty good,” Cannoneer Shure interjected. “She’s straightforward and capable. She has never had any military experience, but she’s able to adapt to the battlefield in such a short amount of time. She’s the best choice of being Vehicle Commander.”

Both of them looked at Shure.

The latter was stunned. “Why? Did I say something wrong?”

“No.” Balshan shrugged. “Although you missed nine out of ten shots during training, you don’t seem completely inept.”

The cannoneer revealed a look of pleasure.

“Enough, enough. Let’s not talk about this any further.” Bay hurriedly switched topics. “By the way, Team Leader, back at Tower Station No. 9, who was the person waiting outside the camp for you? He seemed to be wearing a First Army uniform as well. Is he your friend?”

“Why are you asking about this?”

Bay said, a little embarrassed, “I saw a medal hanging off his chest and wish to get to know him. Being awarded a medal isn’t an easy task. He must be someone impressive.”

“I do know him, but he’s not that impressive. Without me, he would probably have been food for the demonic beasts.” Balshan feigned indifference, but her tone slowed down significantly.

“Wow, your standards are way too high...”

Before he finished his sentence, she covered her ears again.

It was another deafening salvo.

Bay, who wasn’t prepared at all, curled his lips from the rumbling boom.

And after these booms, three green flares flew into the sky—a signal for attacking.

“It doesn’t seem like your focus is that focused either.” Balshan patted the steel plate by the side of the turret. “Convoy 12, set off immediately!”

Bay didn’t provide a rejoinder. Instead, he threw the canister in his hand away and rushed from the driver’s seat to the back of the vehicle. Shure also went into the cramped turret and prepared for battle. Regardless of how it was typically, none of them showed any sense of carelessness at critical moments.

Balshan raised her telescope and saw that under the assault of the artillery, many demonic beasts were fleeing from the ruins and heading north. And turning to look back, the First Army had split into dozens of tiny teams and were advancing steadily behind the tracks of tanks.

Such a formation clearly wasn’t used to deal with hybrids.

The deeper they were into the plains, the more blade beasts they would encounter. It went from one every two to three days to several in a day. Due to the difficulty in detecting them with the naked eye, they were harder to deal with compared to the typical demonic beast. Without a doubt, the strategy provided by the upper echelons of the military was effective. Sigil of Screaming and Sigil of Resonance would discover the targets beyond the range of short-barreled cannons and then annihilate them. However, the enemy appeared to be nothing as simple as pure wild beasts.

They knew how to conceal themselves and launch a surprise assault on the troops. Cannon fire was able to frighten away the demonic beasts, but it was unable to frighten away the blade beasts. As such, recapturing the railway’s strongholds took quite a lot of work for everyone. After paying a certain price, the First Army rapidly established a battle strategy with armor troops at its core. Originally, the flintlock troops would treat tanks as scouts, but now, they learned how to rely on them to clear out the enemy.

And the Taquila Ruins in front of them was, to date, the most complicated battlefield that wasn’t in the wild.

Half an hour later, as one of the vanguards, Convoy 12 drove into Taquila. To Balshan’s side were Convoys 9 and 17. According to the plan, they were responsible for clearing the main street that led to the western square and reacquire the two fortresses that were established there.

After studying her surroundings, Balshan could not help but feel her scalp tingle. Many stone buildings made the situation in the city extremely complex. Even the Sigil of Screaming’s detection range was greatly reduced. She now had to rely on listening to various magic power sources, but was ultimately unable to determine the target’s exact location.

“How did you guys take down this place previously?”

“Simple. As long as you get rid of the Red Mist towers and those skeletons, the demons would naturally retreat,” Shure replied. “Have you found the enemy?”

“Not yet. But I am certain that there are many monsters hiding in this city.” After saying that, Balshan gestured to the soldiers behind her, requesting that they stayed closer to the tank. This also resulted in them opening a gap with the other two convoys.

Shortly after, a gray cement fortress appeared at the end of the street. Although the First Army was forced to abandon it, the solid construction was not damaged by the enemy.

At this moment, the sound of the Sigil of Screaming intensified clearly.

Balshan frowned. That wasn't the sound a blade beast should have.

She looked towards the Vehicle Commander of Convoy 9, Amy. The latter shook her head, indicating that she was confounded as well.

And when they drove past the fortress, the sigil's hums were so loud that even Bay could hear it.

For precautionary reasons, she made the two vehicle convoys stop temporarily. She planned on heading to the square alone and bring along the Sigil of Resonance which had been activated. Even if the target wasn't a blade beast, she wanted to see where the source of magic power pointed.

Soon, a glow appeared out of thin air, pointing to the middle of the nearby square—but there was nothing there.

Could it be that she had encountered a new type of invisible enemy?

That's not right. Balshan quickly discovered that the bricks on the surface of the square seemed to have been pried away. There were signs of black corrosion in the vicinity.

That thing was hiding underground!

The moment she had that thought, the soil underneath the bricks suddenly rose. A monster formed of ribs and flesh and blood crawled out from underground, spewing out a pile of "transparent bodies!" If not for the sticky mucus that remained on those things, Balshan wouldn't have been able to detect them.

Almost at the same time, the Sigil of Screaming released a loud warning. She suddenly came to the realization that all those things were blade beasts!