

Witch 71

Chapter 71 Spy (Part 2)

In addition to starting the fire in the fireplace, Barov had also placed a mahogany candelabra on the table. This candelabra had one base which split into four branches. One in the middle, which was also the highest, and three branches which enclosed the middle branch in a triangular shape. A burning candle was placed on each branch, and the candelabra looked like a bright mountain as they burned.

The room was full of the scent of pine oil, resembling a sweet and rotten wood odor, making people feel drowsy. However, within Border Town, Barov could not ask for more. In this land of poverty, he couldn't ask for anything exquisite or anything elegant. Here, everyone was happy if they had a shelter over their head, so Barov could call himself quite lucky with his big room.

His room within the castle wasn't far from the courtyard, as it was the location of the former Lord's city hall. Of course, when the Lord left the castle, he took his whole staff with him, so now the room belonged only to Barov.

From time to time, he could hear the rustle of voices from within the castle and the howling wind from outside the window, giving him the impression of two different worlds. The old wooden table Barov was writing at was full of books and scrolls. On both sides, he had arranged a table, forming a "U". Usually, the tables weren't occupied by anyone. He only used them to display his manuscripts. When necessary, he would summon his disciples, and place them at one of his side tables. There, they could organize his information or write the first draft for an official document.

The candles in the lamp were already changed three times. Beside changing the candles, Barov didn't stop his hand from swiftly working through the documents. To him, time was a very precious thing. There was already a stack of documents at hand, waiting for him to deal with, plus, His Highness' proposed expenditures would also still need to be reviewed.

Barov's average work time was 10 hours per day, but he didn't feel tired at all. On the contrary, this was where he could show off all his skills, so he had the feeling that his body had inexhaustible energy. This is how it should be, he thought, no one is talking around me, all of my apprentices are self-responsible, and no one is holding the others back or creating a mess. As long as they fulfill the Prince's command, he can handle the specific administration process without outside help.

If the Prince's commands could only be a little more normal, while Barov thought this he gnawed on his lips regretfully. For example, at present, all of Roland's official correspondences were sealed with his seal like the last one he sent to Willow Town. In it, Roland asked for additional administration staff and a brig. The answer note said: With the price you offered, you cannot hire the captain, helmsman, and the sailors.

After reading, Barov was left dumbfounded, without these people, how would they deliver the boat? Would they walk back after delivering the brig? Also, why do we need to buy a boat? This was the most crucial point. At the moment, the trade between Border Town and Willow Town was stable. Even after the end of winter, if we want to expand the ore trade, we would only need to send a notice, and they would immediately increase the number of vessels for the trade. It just isn't worth it to buy a boat; the town's pier is just for parking and unloading, it isn't usable or maintenance. And without sailors who

could care for it, it won't be long before we have to abandon it. Was it another of His Highness' crazy momentes?

As for the first request, contrary to what one might expect, Barov could understand it.

At present, there was no one with any free time in the whole town hall, Barov had already brought more than ten people over to supervise the business, they were responsible for the statistical reports and settling income and expenditure. Barov himself was responsible for the administrative and legal work – which was obviously illogical. Since His Highness wanted to separate these sectors, it was necessary to expand the size of the employees in the city hall. Under normal circumstances, the assistant minister didn't want to let go of so many responsibilities. Every person who had this much power in his own hands would feel a sense full of satisfaction. He wanted to be like his teacher, the kingdom's finance minister. He was the only one responsible for Graycastle's finances and was also the King's right hand.

Ahem, well, now only Border Town is important, added Barov in his heart. Although Roland had promised him that he wanted to fight for the throne, there was still a long way to go. Barov didn't know when it happened, but today he actually contended the 4th Prince as a true candidate for the throne. Compared with the past it was the difference between heaven and sky, previous he had thought that such an ignorant and dandy character could never become the king.

But since he came to Border Town, he got one surprise after another. Up to now, Border Town was still able to survive by only relying on the militia. The fact that they were still able to hold was really praiseworthy. Don't even mention all the strange stuff he invented, the fact that he could handle all these people is totally unlike the 4th Prince. He seems more like the Devil who knows everything.

At this time, he heard a thunderous sound at his door, making him stop his work and answer, "Come in."

The door was opened by one of his favorite disciples, "Filler" Yarrow.

"Respected teacher, we have caught another "mouse." "

"Oh? Did you already question him?"

"He said that Timothy sent him. During the body search, we found cement powder, some coins and a letter on him." Yarrow walked up and handed Barov the leather-wrapped envelope, "As for the other information, we are still interrogating him. Teacher, how to deal..." "

"Just like the previous times, write down all the answers into the book and then hang the convicted spy." Ordered Barov.

"Yes," Yarrow saluted and said, "This disciple will leave now."

When the door was closed again, Barov didn't continue to work. Instead, he went back to his table, and opened the sealed parchment with his letter opener, taking out the letter.

The fourth ... he thought.

Long before the Months of the Demons had started, Roland Wimbledon had summoned him and discussed this matter.

His Royal Highness believed that when the cement powder, the new snow powder and the witches were revealed, his siblings' hidden spies would be unable to bear to not let their master know about it, which would be the best time to eliminate the mice. Thinking about it, Barov had to agree with the first part of his statement, but not the second part. In his view, Border Town had more than two thousand residents, which made it impossible to control everyone. They just didn't have the manpower, and the people they had weren't trained for it.

However, His Highness seemed to not see his points and said, "Why should we need so many people? Every person within Border Town will be our eyes."

Barov couldn't believe that the Prince believed his own words and let this ignorant, stupid and ordinary monitor for everyone to find the mouse? That's just impossible!

But the people showed him that he was wrong.

When Roland ordered the first census after the beginning of the winter, he gave special orders to the people who had lived for five years or longer within Border Town: Surely Longsong Stronghold had tried to drive Border Town into bankruptcy after their attempt to burn the food, but they had not given up yet. Instead, their spies sent should still be lurking around. Most of them should be disguised as relatives of townspeople or merchants who were too late to evacuate, always on the lookout for an opportunity to harm Border Town. So if anyone saw a suspicious character, they should immediately report them to the City Hall. Once it was verified, they would receive a reward of 25 silver royals.

The results of this move showed that it was extraordinarily effective.

Naturally, in the beginning, they received some false positives, but it was not long before they found the first mouse and thus arrested them.

Barov remembered that Roland said this awkward sentence proudly.

What did he say again? He thought for a moment, yes ... "Let the enemy sink into the bottomless sea of fighting against commoners."

This sentence had a really strange syntax; the assistant minister shook his head and spread the letter within his hands.

The person named "Groundhog" repeatedly stressed that various phenomena showed that the 4th Prince, Roland Wimbleton, had been replaced by the devil, and Barov could clearly read his fear between the lines. When Barov thought about how the Prince used several people, he actually could not help but feel a glimmer of recognition. He took a deep breath, and then he held the letter above the candle, the former of which soon caught fire and turned into ashes.

Since he didn't fear the God's Stone of Retaliation, he couldn't be controlled by the devil, right?

Chapter 72 Holding court as a King

Timothy Wimbleton sat on the throne, rubbing the scepter in his hand while overlooking the ministers within the pantheon.

This is the feeling I have striven for, he thought, instead of being held back in Valencia, where I had to oversee the endless tangle between merchants, who only fought for their own benefit.

He stopped the rubbing of the scepter, and began tapping its end on the floor, letting it sound through the hall. When all eyes were focused on him, he nodded and ordered, "You may begin."

"Your Majesty, I have something important to report." The first to step up was Knight Weimar, nicknamed "Sir Ironheart," who was responsible for everything regarding King City's defense.

"Speak."

"Can the witch hunts be temporarily stopped?" Your Majesty, the recent raids have become more and more excessive! I heard that yesterday, several women were taken out of their houses, were arrested, and later assaulted in the dungeons. One of them even died while being in prison! Later it turned out that none of them were actually witches! Now panic has broken out within the outer city. If it goes on like this, I'm afraid there will be a significant number of fugitives."

Timothy frowned, he was the one who had ordered the witch hunt. He was still unable to unwrap the truth about his father's death, and was still unable to believe that his father would commit suicide. The strange smile his father had on his face before he killed himself caused him to feel especially creepy. His father wore the God's Stone of Retaliation of the highest quality, furthermore the Church had also confirmed that the stone was genuine, but this didn't mean that no witches were involved.

Even if the theory was strange, he hadn't a better theory than it was plotted by witches.

He looked toward Langley, the officer and his pawn in training responsible for the raids. The latter immediately stood up and said, "Your dearest Majesty, it was just an accident, and I have already severely punished the relevant personnel," he started cracking his fingers, "the warden, castellan, and guards have been given ten lashes and have been fined twenty-five silver royals."

"One woman dead and three extremely brutally tortured, and you think some slashes and some money will be enough as compensation?" asked Sir Weimar in a cold voice, "And who gave you the right to judge? Was it the former Prime Minister Vic or the Minister of Justice Lord Padro? "

"Your Majesty! We are currently facing extraordinary times, so I had to act fast," Langley claimed innocence and fell to his knees, "When ignoring some minor setbacks, the raids have shown great success. We have already caught at least fifteen witches who were lurking in King City and now they are currently being tortured, so you will soon be able to know whether your father – no, I mean, if they have planned a conspiracy."

Timothy glared at him, you idiot, you almost told everyone our true intentions. While the ministers standing in this hall had most probably already guessed that he was the true mastermind behind the plot, but the outside world was only allowed to know his version, where Prince Gerald killed the King, this point wasn't permitted to be overthrown.

"Fifteen witches?" Sir Steelheart sneered with contempt, "Well, it seemed that King City has already become a witch stronghold. A few years ago the Church had started a witch hunt in the forest east of King City, but they were only able to catch six witches. It seems that your men are much stronger than the Church's own men."

"You...!" Langley shouted loudly but was immediately interrupted by Timothy.

“Enough!” Langley is such a fool, just like the other fools under my control, thought Timothy, who was annoyed that no one with skills was available. If he hadn’t needed him at the beginning for the battle of the throne, he wouldn’t have promoted this fool. Even if you want to take false credits, don’t make up such unbelievable numbers. I’m afraid these 15 women had to face the same treatment as the unlucky commoners. He didn’t want to involve the Church, but at the moment he saw no other way, so he ordered, “You will go to the Church, and pay a priest to come over, so he can confirm the identity of these fifteen women. Until then, stop the torture. Afterwards you will let the priest confirm every woman you catch! If I later hear that you people have not followed my orders, I will throw you into the city moat to feed the fish!”

“Uh, yes, Your Majesty.” Langley confirmed, “I will immediately follow your orders!”

After Langley had left the hall, Timothy turned toward the finance minister, “If there is anyone else who has been wronged together with the previous three, they will get three gold royals each. Regarding the women died in prison, send the money to the family, “he paused,” multiple times.”

“As you wish.” Said the Finance Minister as he nodded in confirmation.

“Your Majesty is very kind.” Praised Sir Weimar while saluting the Prince.

“Next question.” Timothy waited for a moment, but when he saw that no one had something, he said, “Since no one has a new issue, I will start with my own.” He looked at the Minister for Diplomacy, “Yoshua ‘Sir Bullet,’ it has already one month since the recall order was issued, but no one has come back to King City. Tell me, what news do you have to say?”

Sir Bullet came from the Flynn Family and held his position for thirty years. He had gray hair, an old face, and stood already with one foot within the grave. He cleared his throat, “Your Majesty, your 3rd sister Garcia Wimbledon has yet to answer. Your 4th brother Roland Wimbledon has replied. The letter said that, when his people are safe at the end of the Months of the Demons, he will consider his return...”

“And what else?” asked Timothy, annoyed.

“He addressed the letter to Prince Timothy and not King Timothy.”

Timothy couldn’t stop himself from sneered loudly in disdain. He is as ignorant as before, such a hopeless brother. He thought, if you intend to come back, you will take your instruction from me as your new King. I will give you a good place to live, just like the pampered prince you are. If you don’t come back, you won’t get an easy death. It will be the same as playing chess, regardless what you do I will have the right answer.

“Just let him be,” Timothy dismissively waved his hand, “What is with my fifth sister?”

“Your Majesty, she ... is gone.” answered Sir Bullet ashamed.

Hearing this answer Timothy asked confused “What? What do you mean by ‘she is gone’?”

“She was the first one who promised to come back, but a week later Her Highness disappeared from the palace where she lived, along with her her butler and her two maids. I already arranged staff to find her, but they still have yet to find her whereabouts.”

What could this mean? Such a waste, she only needed to believe in me! Timothy felt that his heart was full of pain, he had set high expectations for his sister; he had hoped that she could become his adjutant. After all, while growing up, Tilly always performed exceptionally cleverly, and her performance was even more dazzling than his own. She only lost her place as Crown prince because she was a girl.

In the beginning, Timothy had an excellent impression of her when looking at the arrangements made by his father; it was very clear that the King didn't want Tilly to be involved in this storm. Because of this, he gave her Silver City, which was near King City and had an ordinary business environment with no possibility of training troops. But who could have ever guessed that she would run away? Was this a choice made by a wise man?

"Now that she is gone, the former Lord should take over Silver City once more. You should also let the search continue, I cannot permit another person with royal blood to wander among the common people." He gritted his teeth, trying to suppress his raging emotions, "Well, until now, only my 3rd younger sister refused to obey?"

"Yes, Your Majesty," answered Sir Bullet.

"Since she was so stubborn, we have to take some rough measures," said Timothy while looking at Prime Minister Vic. To start a war, the Prime Minister and the King have to approve it. Since he was his biggest supporter, getting his approval wouldn't be a problem, "I'm going to let Duke Ryan guard the South Border and force Garcia to give up Port of Clearwater and escort her back to King City."

Sure enough, Marquis Vic replied, "This should not be delayed, please give the order for war, so that the Minister for Foreign Affairs can carry out the order."

Timothy nodded with satisfaction. At the moment when he wanted to order the secretary to write the drafting order, hasty steps could be heard from outside the hall. Then, with a burst of noise, the doors were opened and a Knight wearing a blue-striped cloak strode into the hall.

Timothy immediately recognized him, he was the famous "Cold Wind Knight" Naim Moor. He walked straight up to the center of the hall, went on one knee and said, "Your Majesty, I have just received news from the south," he gasped loudly and his voice was clearly anxious, "Your sister Garcia Wimbledon, in just five days, defeated Duke Ryan's troops and had occupied Eagle City! ... She also declared herself as the Queen of Clearwater, and all the Lords in the South have responded and declared their territory as independent!"

Chapter 73 Artillery Test

In the west of Border Town, near the Chishui river.

The snow didn't permit the cart to move a single step further; the entire group of people had already spent half a day dragging the carriage to the artillery field.

"What is this?" asked Carter, who had already become somewhat accustomed to the fact that the Prince would repeatedly come up with new inventions, "Is this just a bigger gun?"

"You are almost right," Roland confirmed. He directed his men to remove the cover so that he could personally adjust the angle of the cannon. He Set its angle parallel to ground level, pointing towards a snow pile.

The principles of cannons and guns were identical, so calling it a larger version of a gun wasn't inappropriate. The cannon used for the test was able to shoot 12-pound heavy iron balls. Before they could ignite the lead, the chamber had to be loaded with gunpowder and the iron ball. As a reference for the cart, Roland took the old designs from the cannons seen in history books. But to improve their durability, Roland had told the carpenters to replace many parts that were usually built out of wood with their iron counterparts.

In order to manufacture the cart for the cannon, Roland almost spent as much time on it as for the cannon itself. Three skilled carpenters needed one whole week to finish it, the especially time-consuming part was the wheels that had the diameter of half a human.

First, the carpenters had to produce four square bars of equal length. These bars were then baked by fire until they could be bent. Afterwards, knives were used to peel away the excess. Finally, an outer coating of iron was applied to the wheels. This process alone took more than four days.

So in Roland's eyes, this limited cannon made by hand took on a very special place. Now, when he dragged it out for a test, he had already made special arrangements.

Chief Knight Carter and the Militia Commander Iron Axe were both at his side, as always. Also, there was his personal guard along with twenty members of the militia who were acting as sappers and lookouts. As for the witches, he had Nightingale and Lightning by his side. Thanks to Nana, the prejudice towards witches had been significantly reduced. In the eyes of the Militia, the most important person here was Nana when excluding the Prince.

"According to the usual process, we have to clean the cannon's barrel first."

Roland said,, while he could picture the blueprints of the cannon, this particular operation plan was a blank sheet for him. Within his brain he went through various cannon shots he had seen in films, trying to figure out the right process, but only heaven alone would know how effective it would be.

Lightning, in high spirits, took a mop and began cleaning the cannon. While cleaning the muzzle – her contract was different to that of the other witches – as long as she was allowed to personally operate all of Roland's new inventions, she would always be willing to help him to the best of her abilities, even without any other payment or remuneration.

Since Roland had to save money, he quickly accepted her terms. However, if he had any secret projects, he would still be able to study it secretly. Within his mind there were still many ideas he hadn't realized and were only waiting to be implemented. For now, he would just have to throw her the occasional few pieces in order to distract her.

Sweeping around with the mop, Lightning was able to clean up some junk, but in accordance to the process, she had to clean it a second time. Taking another mop, she started the cleaning again until she'd finished.

"Has everyone seen it?" asked Roland towards the crowd of guards and militias. The artillery test was also a drill. If he was able to increase the production rate of guns, the militia was bound to turn into an infantry, exchanging the pike for the gun. But even then they would need to go through many training sessions before they were good enough to use both types of hot weapons.

When he saw that everyone nodded, he told Lightning to proceed.

The little girl first opened the bag and took out a pocket-sized paper cartridge filled with gunpowder then stuffed it into the end of the muzzle with a ramrod. She then took an iron ball and used the ramrod once more to push it into the barrel. Afterwards, she took out a lead wire from the rear end of the cannon barrel and inserted it into the eyelet to pierce it into the paperback. Thus, the launch preparation was complete.

To prevent accidents, everyone had to step fifteen meters away from the cannon. Lightning, who was standing close to the lead, saw the first sparks of the lead, but within the blink of an eye, it had already drilled into the barrel.

Then there came a loud roar – air sprayed out of the muzzle with such speed, that it even threw up the snow lying on the ground.

The theoretical effective range of a twelve-pounder cannon was up to a kilometer.

Even without any rifling, the cannon ball would still fly in a straight line.

Everyone could hear the sound when the iron ball hit the armor that was placed 100 meters away. The Iron-ball's speed wasn't reduced much, every time it hit the ground, it would bounce back up again, blowing up even more snow.

After the smoke cleared, Roland, along with Carter, and Iron Axe, all went directly to inspect the target. When they arrived near the armor, they noticed that the front of the armor was already in contact with its back, and that there was a palm-sized hole within the center. Obviously, the ball's speed still hadn't been reduced to zero, since it had still flown 100 meters further. Even after it had dropped to the ground, it had kept on rolling, showing the incredible amount of power it contained.

"What frightening penetrative capability!" sighed Carter. He could already picture what would happen when the enemy stood together in groups; getting hit by several cannonballs that brought terror to the whole battlefield

"Three deities above," Iron Axe began to pray. According to him, Roland had to be the messenger of Mother Earth. Except for a messenger of God, who else could bring such a frightening power to the world? He'd already studied the gun-powder's chemistry; it was made of common chemicals which only needed to be carefully prepared. The flame was the incarnation of Mother Earth's anger, as well as her most powerful weapon – at least these were the thoughts of the people in the south. Whenever they saw the never-ending orange flame produced by volcanic eruptions, they couldn't help but begin to pray.

The result of the test was similar to what Roland had expected of a classical 12-pound cannon. The cannon's biggest moment to shine had been during the US Civil War and in the time of Napoleon.

Afterwards, he loaded the cannon with different amounts of gunpowder to test their power levels. Although he knew that it could cause damage to the cannon, it was still necessary to do the tests.

Even after shooting with three different amounts of gunpowder, the cannon still didn't show any sign of deformation. Apparently, the quality of steel used to make the cannon was excellent. In the end, Roland

decided that the amount of powder they would use would be the 1.2 times the amount used during the tests. Afterwards, he used the tests to select a gunner.

“Your Highness, this is indeed a very powerful weapon but it is much too heavy. If we were to hit a pothole, we wouldn’t be able to move any further.” Carter, who was immediately able to see the problems with the new weapon, criticized, “And, after every shot, the barrel has to be cleaned with a wet mop, then it has to be reloaded. Carrying the gunpowder, the cannon balls, and the cannon itself, I’m afraid that you will need five to six people to operate one cannon alone it.”

“Indeed, but it’s all worth it! As long as we will be able to use two to three cannons, Duke... No, I mean the demonic beasts, like the kind of giant tortoise, won’t be able to break through the wall any longer.” Roland coughed, that was close. As for the disadvantages of a 12-pound cannon, he intended to resolve it by shipping. With the help of the steam engine, he would be able to convert a traditional boat into a steam-powered boat. Even if it was the most primitive of paddle boats, it would still have a complex and bulky mechanical system.

So instead of changing the boat, he purchased a two-masted sailing boat. With Wendy’s help, he would even be able to ship the cannons behind the Duke’s troops. With this he would be able to attack the enemies from both sides, and be being able to easily and efficiently annihilate the Duke’s forces.

Chapter 74 Shipbuilding Project

“What? Why aren’t we able to afford to buy it?” Roland asked while going through the analysis of his request to obtain a two masted ship, which had been put on the table within his office.

Barov cleared his throat and then he explained, “Your Highness, it’s impossible. A brig costs between 80 to 120 gold royals, but this would only be the manufacturing cost. We also have to take into account the wages of the crew. Taking all additional costs into consideration we would need to pay up to 200 gold royals. “

“Didn’t I say we don’t need sailors or a helmsman? We also don’t need a captain; we just need to buy a boat!” Roland exclaimed while knocking on the table to underline his point. With the help of Wendy, he wouldn’t need so many people to drive the boat. River sailing vessels mostly sailed in only one direction. So, to operate it, only the sails had to be set, which made helmsmen and sailors redundant. However, since we can control the wind, why should I be afraid that we can’t move forward?

“Your Highness, there aren’t any offers of that kind, at least not in Willow Town.” Barov carefully explained, “It seems that you don’t know enough about this industry. In general, the owner of the ship is also its captain. He might be a merchant or he may be part of the nobility. If they belong to the former group, they will travel between all of the major cities or towns that have a marina, to sell or buy goods. If they belong to the latter group, they would typically recruit a deputy captain who was looking for a boat. Employees won’t be paid on a monthly basis. Instead, their salary would be paid for one to three years all at once.”

“Most of the time, the boat and the crew are tied together. You intend to purchase a vessel from a captain, but without the crew he had already hired, so the salary he had already paid will be his loss. Even for a member of the aristocracy, 80 gold royals isn’t a small amount of money. After the trade with Willow Town at the beginning of the month, the town hall now has a balance of 315 gold royals, but if

we spend half of it to buy a boat now, we won't be able to pay the salaries of the militia." The assistant minister explained without pause, but afterwards, he had to first take a big gulp of ale.

After thinking about what he had heard, Roland asked "You said most of the time ..."

"Yes," Barov nodded, "There are two cases when boats will be sold without their crew. The first would be when the merchant is in an urgent need of money, and they have to sell all of their property. They will start by disbanding their crew, and then they will try to sell the ship as quickly as possible. In the second case, the owner wants to replace their old boat with a new one. Both cases would be a good opportunity, but I have to say that this kind of situations is very rare."

"Wait," Roland frowned, "you said to buy a new boat ... So in this case, where do these ships come from?"

"Port of Clearwater, Seabreeze District, Farsight Point. Only cities with a seaport that have a dock are able to produce new ships."

Hearing this Roland kept silent for a moment and thought everything through. So this was the original meaning of, "within Willow Town, it's impossible to find such a deal." However, I also can't afford to travel to any of the port cities; they're too far away, and if I don't hire a crew, how would I get the ship back to Border Town?

"Since this is the case, I will have to think about it."

When the assistant minister saw that the Prince was lost in thought, he quickly left the room.

Within Roland's plan for the future, ships played an irreplaceable part. If there wasn't a quick and conventional way to transport the artillery, he wouldn't be able to use them in battle. Generally, the Duke's troops were built up from the stronghold's troops, mercenaries, farmers and knights. So, inevitably their marching speed was slow when they had to move.

But, the artillery would be even slower. Just like Carter had said, as soon as they hit a pothole the artillery couldn't be moved any further— during this time and age, there weren't any asphalt roads, there wasn't even a stone road. During this time, the people would walk more, producing many trails. During sunny days they would be lucky, but when it rained, the path became muddy.

In the end, like always, would he have to rely on himself?

Roland spread out a piece of paper, writing down the needed specifications.

Firstly, the ship has to be able to carry one or two cannons in addition to thirty people, but it wouldn't be powered mechanically, only with sails.

Secondly, since the ship would be used only in rivers, it would need to have a shallow and stable hull.

Thirdly, it had to be easy to operate so that the members of the Militia could handle it after a short training.

Considering all these points, the only possible answer was a flat-bottomed barge ...

The draft in front of Roland was very shallow; it was a ship with a very low center of gravity that could be seen on almost all of the river routes. In the past, he had seen many loaded with piles of sand or gravel, and their railing was almost level with the surface of the water. And as long as there was a tugboat, it would be able to pull a barge.

After determining type of the ship, the next key point was to determine which material should be used when building the ship.

Roland wrote down three different options: Wood, Iron, or concrete.

Boats made of wood belonged to the earliest of the nautical technology tree. From a raft to a masted battleship. From sailing on either the river or the sea, wooden boats could be used everywhere. Unfortunately, Roland didn't know how to use a log to build a flat-bottomed ship, and neither did he have any skilled craftsmen. If he relied on what he knew and on his craftsmen, he would only be able to make a large raft which could fall apart at any moment.

Ships made out of iron were built similarly to houses, always taking two beams which were arranged in a crisscross pattern, constituting a keel. The keel formed would then be coated with sheets of iron. Since Anna could do the welding; the overall stiffness was guaranteed. However, this approach would deplete the already small iron reserves. So this could only be the last resort, as building steam engines and cannons was a much more appropriate choice.

Then building boats out of concrete would be the last option – since the city wall construction was already finished, there was now a surplus of raw materials. As long as Anna had the time to calcinate, they would have enough concrete for one or two ships. The construction process would also be much easier than that of iron-boats. As long as they were able to produce a wooden template which could be reinforced with iron bars, they could quickly fill it with concrete. Even in this rural area, they could easily create several fishing boats out of concrete. Compared to iron ships, they wouldn't rust. With this, the ship wouldn't even need much maintenance. Even though a concrete ship could be built at a low cost, it would still be strong and durable. Even if he had never learned how to make big ocean-crossing ships, a river sailing ship didn't need a high level of technological knowledge. So, building it shouldn't be a problem, right?

Picturing all the details in his mind, Roland picked up the quill and rapidly began to draw sketches of the barge.

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An area with a shed near the Shinshui River was hidden by walls.

In order to facilitate the launching process, Roland located the shipbuilding area as close to the river as possible.

The shed offered shelter against wind and snow and contained two basins for burning charcoal to keep the temperature from falling too far and destroying the hardening effect.

The carpenters had already pieced together the wooden template of the hull – the bow was formed in a circular design in order to reduce forward resistance, the aft instead had a square design meant to increase the load area. The boat had a length to width ratio of 3:1 and was built with a width of 8m.

Compared to the traditional ratio of 8:1, it was simply a fat boat. In the center, they had set up two masts. The masts were inserted into the deck and connected to the iron beams of the ship. At the deck, they had placed a reserve rudder. Everywhere, the hull was strengthened with crisscrossing iron bars.

Even though they didn't have any iron wire, it didn't matter since Anna had welded all the iron crosses firmly, to form an iron structure which was connected throughout the whole bridge.

When the template and the reinforcements were ready, Roland ordered the workers to start filling it up.

The concrete was poured into a basin-like template. The middle was flat, but the surrounding walls were five meters higher, forming the cabin walls. At first glance, it just looked like a uniquely shaped bathtub.

All people who were involved in the construction, including Anna, had never thought that this strange material, which was used to build the walls, could actually also be used to build ships.

TN:

Information to Concrete Ships

This information I wanted to give to you for a long time. Why is it realistic that the MC can invent concrete? When you click on the link, you will discover that concrete was a lost technology during the middle age.

Chapter 75 Holy Mountain (Part 1)

Cara could hear the shortened breathing of the other witches.

"Someone else has to take over," said Cara loudly, "Leaves, you will carry me next."

The walk through the Impassable Mountain range was especially taxing during the snowy winter season. Every day, the forty-two witches had to find a suitable place to the camp, where they also could re-empower their badge so that they could resist the freezing temperatures at night.

"Yes, respected Mentor," the witch in front of Cara answered while squatting down. When Leaves stepped to Cara's side, Cara summoned one of her magic snakes and had it wrap around Leaves' arm. She then used it to pull herself up, so that she could stand. As the snake touched Leaves' body, Cara noticed that Leaves started trembling slightly.

Damn Nightingale, Cara bitterly thought, if only she hadn't repeatedly refused my offer of mercy, I wouldn't have minded taking her back into the ranks of us sisters. But since we are almost coming close to the critical moment, I can't afford to take any risks.

And what was the result of my kind offer? Without any hesitation, the damn traitor took the first chance to escape, she even tried to stab me to death ...

This is what happens when I'm too kind! Cara's brain boiled in rage, Nightingale's blow had directly pierced her spine. Although Leaves was able to heal quickly heal her wounds with herbs, Cara's lower body was still paralyzed and without any feeling.

Wait until I reach the Holy Mountain! There I will gain the power to gather more witches, and with their help, I will one day cut you into thousands of pieces!

While fueling her anger, Cara suddenly heard a voice “Respected Mentor, there are demonic beasts ahead of us.”

The voice belonged to Scarlett, who was responsible for scouting. With her eyes, she was able to see through all obstacles and immediately discover any trap in front of her. She even had the ability to see fast moving objects clearly, which was demonstrated during one confrontation with the Church where she was able to knock away a crossbow arrow with her bare hands.

“Put me down immediately. Leaves, you will also go and assist them.”

Leaves nodded as she crouched down and placed Cara on a stone. Cara’s sore hand directly fell into the snow, from where a cold feeling spread through to her whole body, making her unhappily think, you can’t even remove the snow before you putting me down?

But she didn’t say it out loud. After all, Leaves was an irreplaceable member of her sisterhood. Previously Wendy with her kind temper had been responsible for recruiting new members for the Witch Cooperation Association, while instead Leaves had been responsible for maintaining the morale and courage to ensure that the witches would follow Cara’s orders. Without her ability, I’m afraid that we would have already lost more than half of our members to the witch hunts.

When thinking of Wendy, Cara’s heart began to hurt. She had never expected that Wendy, together with whom she had created the Witch Cooperation Association to help as many witches as possible, would betray everyone for the sake of Nightingale.

Even after Wendy had blown her away, she didn’t want to kill Wendy. The venom released by her magic snake “Suffering” was only acting slowly, but it would cause unbearable pain immediately. After letting Wendy suffer for a short time, Cara had planned to let her snake “Nothingness” bite her and remove the toxin. She had just wanted to teach Wendy a lesson. But no matter what, without the help of her magic snake, the venom was incurable. So Nightingale made the wrong decision by taking Wendy away. Without the bite of “Nothingness”, Wendy wouldn’t be able to live one more day.

Did that mean that the former nun was destined never to reach their final destination with her sisters?

Cara didn’t care about the other runaway, Lightning. She had only recently entered the Witch Cooperation Association and only seemed to have the ability to fly. She had always supported another view on how they should look for the Holy Mountain, even sometimes questioning the Holy Book. Whenever that girl acted against the will of the Witch Cooperation Association, Cara wanted to throw that talkative little girl into the snow and strangle her.

At the moment when the two wolf-like demonic beasts emerged from behind a corner on the mountain path, the witches were already prepared and awaiting the attacks from the demonic beasts. All the sisters without fighting abilities were placed near the end to keep them safe. Leaves was the first to release her magic, aiming at the weeds close to the feet of the demonic beasts. Soon green tendrils broke through the snow and wrapped themselves around that of the enemies’ feet. Another witch, with the power to control the air, begun to drain the air around the demonic beasts. Thanks to this, the two monsters soon fell into a state of asphyxiation. And were soon foaming at their snouts and began convulsing before finally falling to the ground.

This was the power of witches that Cara had been looking for. Within a group of mortals armed with swords these wolves would have wreaked havoc, but in front of us witches they perished within seconds. Clearly, only we, witches with the power of magic are loved by God. If only there wasn't such a thing as the God's Stone of Retaliation – bah, to the hell with the stone, she spat towards the ground, if that stone didn't exist, how would the Church be able to suppress us?

"Respected Mentor, let's continue forward," said Leaves when she came back to Cara.

"Have someone else carry me." Cara sighed, "You are too tired from the fight."

After the battle, they continued further along the path. At noon, the women responsible for finding the next camping ground discovered a place with less snow, thanks to its leeward arrangement. After reaching the place, they decided to take a break and eat in order to recharge their stamina.

One witch with the ability to work with stone began to work her magic. When the soil and gravel began to move and shoved the snow away, it seemed that the ground came alive. Soon the ground was flat and dry. One after another the witches began to carry out their duty, like making a fire and setting their pot on it to cook some porridge. They started to heating some snow until boiling and then added herbs which were strengthened by Leaves together into the water, which immediately started exuding a sharp fragrance.

"Everyone please give your badge to me," cried a little girl with rare red hair like a raging fire. It really matched her ability, since her power also had to do with fire. It's allowed her to heat any objects she was in contact with. The badges which had provided so much relief for the Witch Cooperation Association had been singlehandedly created by her.

Even though at first glance her ability seemed insignificant, the truth was, that she was of great help to the Witch Association Cooperation. Especially during their march through the Impassable Mountain range, where they couldn't find anything to warm themselves with. In the cold snow, it was very easy to lose heat from their bodies until eventually falling unconscious.

After everyone had eaten wheat porridge, the witches packed their bags and started moving along. According to Cara's conjecture, the so-called Gates of Hell, was in fact, the gateway to the Holy Mountain. The Church deliberately changed its name to Hell to prevent the witches from finding the Holy Mountain. According to the Ancient Books, they needed to cross a total of three stone gates, the last line before the barbaric lands. Usually, they were hidden deep in the ground, only during the blood moon, would the stone gates come to the surface.

After they had set out from the camp, the witches had to walk for about half of a month through the Impassable Mountain range, but soon they would leave the mountain range, setting foot into the middle of nowhere. During these last days, the demonic beasts appeared more and more frequently.

"Quick, quick, quick, look ... what is this?!" Suddenly someone shouted in horror.

Cara looked in surprise in that direction, becoming immediately stunned out of horror.

There was a city flying in the sky!

The sky was still gray, and the snow was still falling out of the very low clouds. But within the clouds, there was a city, partly hidden and partly visible.

Those buildings were built in a pattern I have never seen before, they look like spires standing side by side. If the black dots are windows within the spires with an average size, the spire would reach a height of hundreds of meters! This isn't something a human could build! Even the proudest building of the Church, the Cathedral at the Hermes, which they call the Tower which reached the Sky, was only 50 meters high!

Since this had to have been built by non-humans, then there was only one answer: This city has been constructed by the hand of God!

Cara had difficulty in restraining her excitement, throughout the whole time the voice within her heart shouted – I found the Holy Mountain!

Chapter 76 Holy Mountain (Part 2)

“Sisters, it's the Holy Mountain! We've found it!”

Cara screamed and showed the whole world her happiness. Many witches foolishly stood in their places, shaken by the spectacle before them. But, there were also others who jumped around and began crying out in sheer joy.

Scarlett, however, frowned after looking at the city and muttered, “Is this really the Holy Mountain?”

Leaves, hearing this, leaned toward Scarlett and whispered, “Why do you think this? Is something wrong?” Deep down she had the same question. After all, this city in the sky didn't look the same as described in the Holy Book, where it was said to be golden, splendid and majestic. This city with its spires also looked spectacular, but it was entirely built in grayish black, and looked bleak even during the daytime. In addition, there was also a red fog above the city, which strongly resembled a blood mist.

“There was something ... it squeezed itself into one of those holes,” Scarlett spoke again with a dry voice, “I couldn't see it clearly, but it definitely didn't resemble the gods...”

Leaves could feel all of her hairs begin to stand up. Within the Witch Cooperation Association, it was Scarlett who had the best eyes and could see clearly at this distance. So hearing her say this gave Leaves quite an uneasy feeling. Unfortunately, Lightning had also left with Nightingale. If not, she could have flown near the city and taken a look.

“Sisters! The Holy Mountain is waiting for us to take it,” Cara raised her hands into the air and shouted euphorically, “With just a little bit more effort, we will soon find the Eternity!”

Then, she immediately urged Stone to carry her further. Leaves personally didn't want to move forward, but in the end, she still took the first step. She thought, two weeks ago, everyone found out what would happen if someone disagreed with Cara. I'm afraid at this point, there is nothing which will be able to stop her from moving forward!

Their marching speed increased by a steady pace. After leaving the foot of the mountain, the snow had unexpectedly reduced and the surrounding temperature had also picked up. This is the legendary forbidden lands, the land on which no human had ever set foot before. However, now Leaves could see footprints stamped on this desolate land. If Lightning was here and saw this, she would be very happy, right?

When she looked back and saw the mountains towering behind her, she couldn't believe they were able to cross this barrier. Leaves guessed that it was only because of the impassable Mountain range that the demonic beasts couldn't flood into the hinterlands. Are they only able to attack from the north because that's where they can pass the mountains?

No matter what, if we really find the Holy Mountain and don't need to drift any longer from one place to another, then I will also be satisfied ... thought Leaves as she sighed softly. To tell the truth, when Nightingale came back to the camp and told everyone about her life and future in Border Town, Leaves was enchanted. When Nightingale asked Wendy and everyone else if they wanted to leave together with her, she couldn't help but want to step out and shout her name. But in the end, she wasn't able to cross the threshold within her heart and was unable to leave the shadow of the past behind.

Leaves shook her head, don't allow yourself think about the past, instead, focus on keeping pace with the others, don't fall behind in this desolate land.

Soon they discovered something strange- regardless of their speed, the city seemed to retreat as fast as they moved forward.

After an hour of marching, "The Holy Mountain" was still suspended in the clouds, neither growing nor shrinking, it seemed just like ... they hadn't gotten closer at all..

"Respected Mentor, please order a rest, our sisters are getting tired," said Stone. During this period of marching, the people who had to carry Cara had changed several times, but she was clearly the one who had to bear her weight the longest.

"No! How could we stop now!" Cara thoughtlessly rejected Stone's suggestions, "This is a test by our gods, sisters, if we don't show them our strong will, we will never be able to arrive at the Holy Mountain! We can never stop! We must continue up to the very doorsteps in order to enter the Holy Mountain directly in front of us!"

Seeing that her persuasion had failed, she couldn't do anything else other than move forward.

Under no circumstances were they allowed to stop, even during two waves of demonic beasts they had to go forward. During the second wave, they even encountered two hybrid beasts, on which Leaves' shackles didn't work and without them she was unable to stop the monsters' assault. A sister who was caught off guard had to pay the price for the group's overconfidence. She got her neck cut by claws and her blood was spilled over the ground.

When they finally were able to kill all the demonic beasts, they discovered in horror that the sky had gradually darkened. Apparently nightfall would arrive soon. The city in front of them was still visible, but its outline had become more and more blurred over time, seeming as if it gradually disappeared.

According to their past experiences, they had to find a suitable campground and build their camp, but in these desolate lands, the surroundings were completely different compared to the mountains. When looking around, all they could see were flat plains infested with demonic beasts. There wasn't a single place of safety where they could rest overnight.

"Respected Mentor, we have to withdraw to the foot of the Mountains! Let Scarlet lead us with her red eyes, with her help we might be able to reach the mountains by midnight," pleaded a witch.

“No!” Cara shouted, “We have spent the whole afternoon walking with nearly no pause just to reach this place. Now when we have already consumed more than half of our stamina, we can no longer maintain the same speed and return. Sisters, we only can press on further! We can truly find the Holy Mountain, and there we can settle down to rest. “

“Then what should we do with Sherry?” asked a witch as she pointed to the ground where Sherry, showing no signs of vitality, laid.

“We have no time to bury her,” Cara shook her head, “Keep her here, the earth will accommodate her.”

Leaves sadly closed her eyes, again another of my sisters is gone, if I were only a little more powerful, she wouldn't have to die in this desolate land, without a tombstone to tell of her life.

During that time when many sisters couldn't decide whether they should move forward or retreat, Stone suddenly exclaimed, “Look at the sky, the city is gone!”

Hearing this, Leaves immediately opened her eyes looked up to see the night sky hidden behind a wall of gray-black clouds. The city had disappeared, just as if it had never existed.

Everyone was rooted in their places, and a terrible silence began to befall them.

During the whole time the sun had been up, the city had never vanished ...

Leaves suddenly felt a horrible feeling as though her brain were struck by lightning; she remembered the tales told of adventurers, about those fantastic sceneries seen on the sea. Her whole body began to shudder, and she could only whisper, “We have been cheated...” Soon, she shouted, “We have been cheated, that wasn't the Holy Mountain! What we saw was only a mirage!”

“Mirage?” Cara abruptly turned around, looking somewhat grim and asked with a terror-stricken voice, “What is that?”

“It is something which Lightning often mentioned within her stories. A phenomenon which was often encountered during a sea voyage, but also seen on land, only much rarer. We have seen nothing but an illusion; the real city may be very far away from us, it is even possible that it isn't in front of us at all! “

“Does this mean that it at least exists and didn't just disappear?” Cara asked with little hope.

“This ...” Leaves took herself some time to answer, “I do not know.”

At this moment, Scarlett suddenly shouted, “Be careful! Something is coming!” with a horrified look on her face, she stared towards the left side of their group.

“Is it a demonic beast?” asked Windseeker as she entered her battle stand, “How many?”

“No ...” Scarlett answered and took two steps back in fear, “I don't know what that is ...”

After her voice died down, a shadow suddenly appeared from afar, and directly struck Scarlett with lightning speed. Although Scarlett had been able to clearly see it in the darkness, she was still unable to dodge it— it was just too fast.

Almost within the blink of an eye, it had struck Scarlett on her chest and pierced directly through her, even nailing down some other witches behind her. When it finally stopped, several witches had been impaled, and everyone finally saw what it was.

It was actually a spear.

Chapter 77 Holy Mountain (Part 3)

Leave's blood froze upon seeing this horrible scene.

To their left, two shadows slowly emerged out of the dark. They were big and had a strange appearance that was nothing like the looks of common demonic beasts. Leaves thought that their appearances were similar to humanoid creatures riding on the back of hybrid wolves. Their bodies were twice as large as ordinary humans, and instead of armor they wore clothes that were made from an unknown material – no, “clothes” wasn't the right word, it was more similar to bloated animal skin in which they wrapped themselves tightly, thus giving them a bulging look.

However, the most eye-catching feature of the two beings were the heads they wore as helmets, they were clearly skulls of demonic beasts, giving them a malevolent and atrocious impression. Their eyes were gouged out of their heads. Instead of eyes, lumps of reddish-brown crystals were sewn in. A patch of skin was attached to the head, extending to the back of the demonic beast's shell. One of the people still had spears attached to its mount's saddle while the other one wore an unusual kind of gauntlet – from Leaves' point of view, it looked like they only had three fingers.

Suddenly, one word flashed through Leaves' mind: “Devil!”

“Attack the enemy!” Cara was the first one to attack, and her piercing shout dragged their attention back away from stupidly looking at the enemy. Stone squatted down and placed one hand on the ground, turning the area underneath the snow into a swamp. This could be regarded as a brilliant response: Normally when they reacted fast, the two demonic beasts mounts could jump and fly the short distance over the swamp with their wings. But apparently not these two, their wings had been cut off, and now a harness was tied to their bare bones to which the devils held on to. Since they could not fly any longer, they would have to go around the swamp, which gave the other witches time to react.

But the enemy didn't play by the same rules, they just drove their mounts into the swam Using the beasts' momentum, they jumped up from the monsters' back, crossing over the distance of the swamp and landing behind Stone, which was exactly the place where the non-combat sisters were stationed.

“Spread out quickly!” Leaves loudly shouted at the same moment the devil with the three-finger gauntlet started its killing spree. Its agility was completely unexpected for its body length, the witch standing near its landing place hadn't even the time to react before her head was already shattered by its punch. Until they were finally able to respond, two more sisters got their necks immediately broken, but eventually they fled in panic. Only Shino was still standing at her former place. Although she didn't have any combat ability, she didn't choose to escape like all the others. Instead, she took the crossbow from her back, aimed, and shot at the enemy. But, the devil reacted just too fast, it took a sidestep and then kicked Shino in the chest. The kick was so powerful, that the little girl flew away like a broken doll, her body flipping over several times before crashing into the ground. Blood gushed endlessly from her mouth as she finally laid still.

The spear-carrying devil instead turned and walked towards the utterly terrified Stone. He raised the spear and aimed at her, but exactly at the moment when it wanted to release the spear, a flame exploded in front of it. Red Pepper had aimed at the enemies crotch, and after she had released her attack, she took Stone's hand and ran away together with her. When the devil tried to catch up with them, it was stopped by a wall of black grass.

Leaves released all of her magic into the ground, letting all the seeds within the earth grow, turning them into vines, which slowly crawled in the direction of Ironhand (Devil). At the same time, Cara shouted out "Pain" and released two snakes which each bit into one of the devil's arms. Just when the devil finally shook off Cara's snakes, it suddenly felt a tugging feeling at his feet. When it looked down, it saw vines crawling up his feet, and suddenly it was pulled back and fell towards the ground.

"Run, run, sisters, Run!" Shouted Leaves with a trembling and fearful voice, "Quickly, everyone escape! Hurry away from these horrible monsters! They are the source of evil described in the ancient book! They must have directly come through the gates of Hell!

The torment of the snake's venom seems to be ineffective against the Devils. When the fallen down Ironhand saw that his companion with the spear was in trouble, he frantically tried to free himself from the vines, which held his body down. The devil with the spear went into a throwing posture, which let its arm rapidly swell up. This caused the already thin supporting skin to get even thinner so that the devil's dark red blood vessels and bones became clearly visible.

"Leaves, look out!" shouted Stone as she used her quagmire magic again, this time directly aiming it at the devil's feet. The devil was already in its throwing motion and when its foot sank into the ground it had no time to react. Through this unexpected attack, the devil lost its balance and spear that was already leaving its hand changed its angle at the last moment, impaling itself completely into the ground right before Leaves feet. Seeing all this, Leaves broke out in sweat.

The swollen arm shrank rapidly after the spear was thrown, looking just like a dried tree trunk soon after.

Seeing that the devil couldn't throw spears repeatedly, Leaves realized that now was the best time to flee. Other witches also noticed this, for example, Stone and Red Pepper. Seeing that Ironhand was still struggling with the vines on the ground, they ran towards the unattended Cara, wanting to bring the mentor with them when they ran. Leaves, who looked into the direction of Ironhand, discovered that it didn't try to free itself any longer but instead turned towards the three witches with both of its hands extended towards them.

What is he doing? Stop!

"No -" Leaves didn't even have the chance to warn the others before glaring blue light burst out of the Devil's hands like a lightning bolt it pierced through the air, twisting and hitting her three sisters. Blue rays jumped between the three, issuing a crackling sound of thunder. White smoke began to rise from their twitching bodies which had caught on fire.

The attack seemed to have consumed much of the enemy's energy, because it started to breathe heavily and couldn't move. At this point, Leaves' magic also reached its limit, and her vines began to wither, turning into dead weeds.

Leaves was only able to think, now, everything is over. Cara's desperate cries seemed to slowly get farther and farther away as her own body strength faded away, until she fell to the ground.

After only a moment of rest, Ironhand had already stood up from the snow and began to walk to a panic-stricken Cara, this time there was truly no one who could stop it. When he arrived at her side, Ironhand grasped Cara's throat and began to strangle her. Cara desperately fought back and tried to break away from the Devil's finger, but in front of its monstrous power her efforts were futile. During her desperate struggle, Cara sent her snakes out again, letting them attack the enemy's arm and neck. However, the Devil seemed unmoved, and continuing to tighten its hand around her neck.

At this moment the unexpected happened. Under the fierce attack of the magic snakes, the devil's skin was finally ripped open. Immediately, red fog began to leak out of the fracture, soon enveloping the Devil and Cara. The former released a terrible scream, and under the red fog its skin began quickly to fester, exposing its tendons and bones. Ironhand had to let go of Cara and instead tried to block the wound, trying to hold back the dissipating fog. But it was in vain, its body began to tremble uncontrollably, and soon fell down to never move again.

When seeing this, the other devil whose body was already half buried within the swamp, released a heartbreaking scream, it was a sound Leaves had never heard before, like a sharp scream and a dull roar mixed together, piercing her ear and giving birth to endless pain.

But the enemy's scream didn't let Leaves fall into panic and flee. Instead, she only had their victory in her eyes.

She bit her lips and tried to pull out the last drops of her strength in order to stand up. When she finally stood, she grabbed Shino's crossbow, reloaded it and aimed at the last Devil. The devil clearly understood what Leaves was trying to do and began to work his arms frantically, but within a swamp, the more someone struggled, the faster they sank. The devil He tried to block its vulnerable parts, but yet in the end, it was in vain.

For my lost sisters, with that thought, Leaves pulled the trigger and sent the arrow flying.

The crossbow arrow accurately pierced the neck, releasing once more the red fog from the wound. After the mist dispersed, its head finally dropped down.

She had killed the Devil.

After letting the crossbow fall, Leaves turned around only to see the bodies of more than ten sisters who had lost their lives. Immediately hit by sorrow, Leaves dropped to her knees as her tears burst free.

TN: I would like to know what you think about the fight scene. Was it interesting or boring, was it understandable or confusing etc.? After all, it is quite different to the normal xianxia fights.

Chapter 78 Accompany

Wendy opened her eyes and discovered an unknown ceiling above her. The ceiling was made of gray brick, and had cobwebs hanging from wooden beams along with an unlit chandelier. Slowly, the scene turned from fuzzy to clear until she could see every detail.

It isn't a cold stone roof or a narrow tent, she thought, right, half a month ago we were forced to leave the Witch Cooperation Association. Who knows, perhaps under Cara's leadership they have already found the Holy Mountain?

She took a deep breath. Though it wasn't as clean and fresh as the air within a cave, the warm air and the cozy atmosphere made her very comfortable. Her body was wrapped in a soft and velvety silk and laid on a mattress out of several layers of soft cotton blankets, so when she laid down, she slightly sank into it. Even if she stretched her whole body, her toes wouldn't be exposed.

She felt a little guilty that she wanted to do nothing other than stay in bed. Even so, she had stayed here for only half a month but here her heart was at peace, something she hadn't felt in a long time.

Within the castle, no matter how late it was, no one would ever disturb her. For example, right now. Wendy turned her head and gazed out of the window, seeing that the sky was still gray, even somewhat dazzling. It was probably 10 a.m. Within her last years of wandering, she had never been able to sleep so peacefully. She would be woken by any small noise. She even had to prepare the food for rest of the day before daybreak out of fear. The whole time they had to live in fear that the church might discover their current whereabouts. Also, no one could guarantee that they would outlive their next Demon's Bite.

Even during their time walking through the Impassable Mountain Range, she was always busy with doing chores. She would help with drying foods or herbs, with drying her cooperation sisters' laundry, or cleaning the camp and so on ...

Even so, Wendy didn't mind doing it. Every time when she saw her sisters smiles, she felt very happy. But now, living such a lazy life, she discovered that she herself couldn't resist enjoying such a life.

No, I can't be this lazy any longer. She patted her cheeks to motivate herself to crawl out of bed. After all, when she had lived in the church's convent, the nuns would often warn that lazy people wouldn't receive the blessing and protection of God.

In a little while, I will go to the garden and practice my wind control. By the way, every time she remembered that the Prince required her to train her magic, she couldn't keep herself from laughing. Such strange and eccentric requirements – for example, after he saw her ability, he had told her that he hoped she would be able to blow the wind over a distance of more than ten meters. However, there had never existed a magic power that was effective at such a distance. When she told him that she wasn't be able to do it, he didn't get angry. Rather, he came up with a strange idea: she should stand on top of a stool, and use her power to rise up and down. When Wendy tried it, she discovered that it was actually feasible. Seeing the test results, His Royal Highness was very satisfied, so besides asking her to train more, he also asked her if she was afraid of heights.

It was exactly like Nightingale had said, Roland Wimbledon is an elusive person, but he is also a prince who deeply cared for us witches. Thinking up to this point, Wendy gently sighed. There really is a Prince who doesn't hate witches! Respected Mentor, you were wrong!

When she put on her clothes, she felt that they were a little small around her chest area – even so, Wendy had already become accustomed to this kind of strange clothing, she just wanted to find a needle to change its size, but before she could, someone knocked on her door.

"Come in." said Wendy.

It turned out that it was Nightingale who opened the door and came in, leaving Wendy a little startled, but Wendy smiled and said, "Is His Highness still in bed? If not, you shouldn't have the free time to visit me."

"What are you talking about? Ah, I'm not by his side all day long." Nightingale said, embarrassed, as she raised her basket, "I brought you breakfast."

Usually, the maids were the ones responsible for delivering breakfast. In addition, after bedtime, Nightingale would often accompany the Prince to chat, so it was quite hard to see her at all. Wendy smiled from the bottom of her heart, I just woke up, but she was already here to deliver food, she certainly had slipped in several times.

"Now tell, what's the matter?" asked Wendy while she took a cheese sandwich from inside the basket and put it into her mouth.

"Well ..." Nightingale came over and set herself on the bed, "Today Nana will go through... that day."

Wendy was speechless, since it was Nana's first time going through the Demon's Bite, it wouldn't be as violent and long as on the day of her adulthood, but still, it couldn't be guaranteed that she would be safe. The younger they were, the less pain they would be able to endure. Wendy placed the basket on the nightstand and went to Nightingale's side, patting her shoulder to comfort her and told her, "Didn't His Highness say that as long as we release our magic every day, we will be able to minimize our suffering?"

"But that is just a speculation." Nightingale contradicted.

"At least it sounds very reasonable," answered Wendy, "Didn't Anna safely pass through it? Even so, it was the most difficult of Demon's Bite, it was the day of her adulthood, yet she suffered no harm. This was exactly what you've seen with your own eyes." she paused for a moment, then asked, "Where is Nana?"

"At the moment she is in the Medical Center," When it came to this, Nightingale's mouth nearly sprang open, "I heard that her father, Sir Pyne had bought a huge amount of hares from hunters, which have been sent to the Medical Center so she can keep practicing until tomorrow."

"She has such a nice father," Wendy exclaimed a little enviously, "I can't remember the time when I was a kid ... that is a very strange thing, it's just as if my memories are a blank sheet. There is no father, no mother, the first thing I can remember, is my staying within the convent."

"It seems that I'm a little more fortunate than you." Nightingale teasingly exclaimed.

"Well, you were really lucky." Wendy sat herself beside Nightingale and took her into her arms, asking her, "Are you nervous?"

"..." For a moment, Nightingale kept silent, but then she gently nodded.

Wendy certainly knew why the other was so tense. Today wasn't only a crucial day for Nana, no, it was also the day in which could become the turning point in all of the witch's history. If Nana was able to survive this bite, it would mean that witches could thoroughly get rid of the shadow of being the devil's servants, turning Border Town into the long sought for "Holy Mountain" – maybe one day, all witches

will gather here. They will be able to live a normal life no difference with ordinary people, no longer having a need to wander around and try to avoid the Church's witch hunt.

"There is no use in worrying about it, we just to have to laze around the whole day and accompany Nana."

"Laze ... around?" Nightingale stared at Wendy in disbelief.

"Yes well, who told you to tell me the news so early? It makes me nervous too," Wendy simply said, "Since I'm no longer in the mood to practice, we could also use this time to visit Nana. Wasn't something like this written in the contract? It is called paid leave."

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After eating dinner, Nana's room was full of people – Anna, Lightning, Nightingale, Wendy, naturally also Nana's father, and Roland. Having to face the battle soon, Nana's face was full of insecurity, "Well ... will I have to die?"

"Of course not!" They all shook their heads.

"It's your first time, so the demon bite won't be as strong," Wendy took her hand and spoke encouragingly, "Just put all of your spirit on the thought of holding on."

"It hurts, you're breaking my fingers!" Sir Pyne held his daughter's hand, "You have become very strong during your time within the Medical Center, I, your father, am very proud of you." The little girl nodded, letting her gaze wander over the crowd before finally focusing on Anna, who stepped forward and kissed her on the forehead, "You will survive, right?"

"Yes."

Chapter 79 Answers

The curtains were shut and a fire was blazing in the fireplace, maintaining a comfortable temperature within the room.

There was a big difference between Anna and Nana's day of adulthood, this time the latter was awake. In order to ensure that she wouldn't become too frightened from the upcoming pain, they played some simple games to distract her, and so that she wouldn't fall asleep during the whole night.

Even Roland performed some magic coin tricks, stupefying the onlooking audience. Especially Nana, who for the whole time was staring with big eyes at Roland's hand. If it were ordinary times, she would have surely shouted that Roland should teach her.

The magic tricks of this age were still far from being a highlight, for now, it was more a small sideshow, like snakes dancing to the sound of a flute, breathing flames, crushing stone plates on one's chest and the like. Compared with later generations of skillful diversion and nimble fingers, everything now was only amateur level.

Finally, Lightning began to talk about her sailing experience, when she traveled with her father between the islands and fjords. Telling of big whirlpools and beautiful reefs, and of hunting giant deep-water sharks and octopus. Although everyone knew that part of it was fictitious she still had everyone's

attention, even captivating Roland with her tales – in his imagination, those sailing ships turned into huge armored battleships, which crossed oceans and discovered a New World.

As a matter of fact, there was a part in the historical timeline of this world he didn't understand. The last written record of the past wasn't older than four hundred and fifty years. Even the former Prince's education within the palace did not mention the reason. But it could also be, that the former Prince just hadn't paid attention during the lectures, thought Roland. Within Border Town's library, there was nothing to find, so the only possibility was to win the war against Longsong Stronghold and look and ask there for more information.

When Lightning finally finished her stories about her adventures, Roland could no longer suppress a yawn, but when he looked at Nightingale, the latter only shook her head, indicating that there hadn't been any magical change until now. Not having an accurate timing tool is so inconvenient, how can I determine the time we still have to wait? Roland thought in frustration and poured himself a cup of warm water then sat down afterwards to wait.

But gradually, everyone got the feeling that there was something wrong, it just took too long – Nana had repeatedly yawned, apparently only barely able to stay awake. Even Nightingale became anxious, so she touched the little girl's forehead, while also closely gazing at the magic power within Nana's body, looking for any change.

When Roland wanted to take a gulp of water, he discovered that the water was already emptied. So on the way to the kettle on the fireplace, he couldn't help himself from looking through the curtains when he passed the window, only to discover, that it was still snowing. But when he had opened the heavy curtains a fraction, a touch of light fell into the room.

He was pleasantly surprised to discover, that the dark sky had already gained a glimmer of milky white.

"Everyone look!" Roland shouted and pulled open the entire curtain. Alarming everyone with his cry, they all rushed to the windows to see what happened. When they discovered the faint light in the sky, they realized that the new day had already arrived without them noticing.

So with this, in addition to Anna, Nana also went through the Demon's Bite without any pain.

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When Roland later returned to his room he discovered that there were already two people who were waiting for him.

Nightingale and Wendy.

Within their faces, he couldn't discover any sense of sleepiness, there was only excitement.

"Were you able to confirm that Nana's 'date' was today – no, last night?" asked Roland immediately.

"Yes, but at that time the change within her was only very subtle, I would have never thought that it was the bite's critical moment," answered Nightingale with certainty, "Your Highness, your assumption was correct! As long as we witches continue to release our magic, it will continue to grow, and the suffering of our body will be reduced. If we can maintain a certain amount of training every day, all the witches would have a great chance at surviving their day of adulthood!"

“Within the whole Kingdom of Graycastle, only in your territory can we witches display our abilities, in a sense, Border Town is our Holy Mountain,” continued Wendy, “I want to beg you to make sure that as many witches as possible know of this news, so that our sisters can speedily arrive in this sanctuary. I think every one of them will be willing to help you. “

“From the beginning, those were my intentions,” Roland nodded. “By the end of the Months of the Demons, the normal people and the witches will also have gained a certain degree of understanding of each other and been in contact. By then, I will arrange for people to spread the message – but, only as rumors. You must understand, that I can’t start a big advertising project to recruit witches, if so I would cause an uproar within the country, “after slightly pausing for a moment he continued, “this will only be possible if the Church is eradicated, or I gain the throne.”

“So it seems my best option is to help you ascend the throne,” declared Wendy and then without any hesitation she fell on one knee, reciting the oath of allegiance. Roland could clearly see, that her movements weren’t skilled, it just seems to be a spur of the moment. But he did not care about these details, he treated her exactly as Nightingale when he had accepted her oath of allegiance.

After she finished her plea, Wendy turned towards Nightingale and asked, “How was my performance?” The latter curled her lip and said, “Barely passed.”

Roland helplessly shook his head, “So you two should get to bed early, during the whole night you weren’t able to close your eyes.”

“Your Highness, I have a request,” interrupting him, Wendy, who had just got up from the ground now she knelt down once again.

“Speak freely,” Roland put away his smile and seriously talked to her. The others act had made it clear that she had an important matter to discuss.

Unexpected Wendy told him “I want to, once more, go back to the Witch Cooperation Association’s camp.”

“Wendy!” shouted Nightingale and stared at her with big eyes, but she could see that within the latter’s eyes how steady and resolved she was.

“I do not know whether or not they were able to find the Holy Mountain, maybe they were, or maybe not. I hope you will allow me to go into the Impassable Mountain range after the Months of the Demons has ended. If Cara was unable to find the Holy Mountain, they may have gone back to the camp within the mountain range.”

“This will be highly dangerous,” Roland frowned, “Your leader attacked you regardless of your long friendship.”

“If she really had wanted to kill me, I would already be dead,” said Wendy. “She had summoned her magic snake ‘Pain’ instead of ‘Death’. “ I don’t know how many will come back with me, or even if only one will come back with me, but at least I can deliver this important message to my sisters. As long as they release their magic every day, they won’t need to suffer the terrible pain.” Speaking up to this point, her voice became very gentle, “Your Highness, as long as you continue to treat us witches with so

much kindness, my life will be yours, so naturally I won't throw it away so easily. I will protect myself. So please allow me this request."

Roland fell silent and thought, when thinking about safety, I ought to refuse her request. But there is also a different meaning to this request – if I give her the chance to save more witches, she will happily follow my orders and take any risk. But if I refuse her, she might still be willing to follow the orders, but I may lose the possibility to gain more witches, and she will forever carry a scar on her heart.

"I'll allow it," Roland finally nodded, "but you will still have to wait for two months until the end of the Month of the Demons. You also won't travel alone, Lightning will go with you. I will also give you firearms for self-protection, as well ... a God's Stone of Retaliation. Lightning can give you long distance support, and when you wear the God's Stone of Retaliation during your meeting with Cara, her or any other ability won't be able to hurt you."

"Your Highness, please also let me go with her!" Nightingale pleaded.

"No, Veronica. His Highness's safety is much more important than mine, he is the hope of all of us witches," Wendy disagreed as she shook her head and laughed, "Take good care of him."

Chapter 80 Artillery

A week after the concrete ship was placed in the curing room, it was finally the day to launch the vessel.

All the workers were stunned when the Prince ordered to put the oversized bathtub into the water, making everyone wonder whether they misheard him.

However, they hadn't had misunderstood him.

His subordinates had to dismantle the temporary shed, and then they had to dig a slope at the bottom of the concrete ship, leading into the river. This part had to be handled with great care because of the weak tensile strength of cement products, even a small knock on the ground was enough to create small cracks that could destroy the whole vessel.

The ship was placed on top of logs, and the speed at which it slid was controlled with ropes. When everything was prepared, the workers let the wrist-thick rope slowly slide through their hands, careful so that the vessel would always be pointed in a straight line. While the workers shouted their slogan in sync, the ship slowly slid over the logs, creating a harsh sound of friction.

Fortunately, everything went well, and Roland could see how the ship got slowly lowered into the water. The ship sank nearly half a meter into the water, with more than one meter still above the surface. The workers were totally surprised to see that this massive construction made out of stone and metal didn't directly sink into the riverbed with a loud bang, but instead peacefully floated above the surface.

"Hurry, take the ropes and put them around the bollards and then tie them tight!" commanded Roland loudly. If the vessel wasn't tied quickly to the bollards, the water current would carry the ship along with it southwards.

Although Nightingale didn't show herself to the public, but after seeing this shocking scene, she couldn't help herself and ask with a voice full of wonder: "Why does the ship float?"

“Well ... it’s quite simple. The ship’s average density is lower than that of water, and as long as this is the case anything can float on water,” explained Roland and after a moment of thinking, he added, “That the ship is built out of iron and concrete doesn’t matter. In fact, you should have already seen a huge sailing boat, those also weigh much more than several stones.”

Since he didn’t hear the voice of Nightingale again, Roland assumed that the other was still comprehending what he had said. Even Anna wasn’t able to immediately understand the concept he had explained. Discovering this, Roland smiled and continued to direct the workers next task.

The subsequent hardening of the concrete took a lot of time, and every time it began to snow heavily, the work had to be stopped. Only when it didn’t snow for more than one hour, were they able to continue their work. The most time consuming task was the construction of the deck, which was built out of many wooden planks, and supported by many small stakes which were placed between the bottom and the deck. Although this was a waste of space, but taking into account the primary purpose of the concrete ship, this didn’t matter so much.

Afterward followed the rot-proofing. The carpenters knew very well how to do it. First they brushed a layer of oil with a pungent taste onto the deck. When the oil had dried, they repeated this procedure several times until it was finally coated with a red paint. Once the deck construction was completed, the installation phase of the upper building was started.

The so-called upper part consisted of a wooden shed which was placed between the two masts, and which later would be used to store guns and ammunition. When it began to rain, the shed could also be utilized by the crew as shelter. The roof of the wooden shed was extra thick so constructed that a person could stand on it, a special place only created for Wendy. As long as she stood on the roof, her magic ability would range far enough to cover the entire sail.

The stern rudder was made of melted iron, and its installation was a bit cumbersome. First, it was required that they put the rudder shaft through a previously made hole, which now laid under water. To steer the ship, Anna welded a triangle plate at the side of the rudder shaft, which ended under water. At the other end of the rudder shaft, which ended on the deck, was melded an iron ring which could freely rotate.

The welding was naturally done by Anna, who was also shocked and puzzled by the fact that a stone bathtub could float on the water. Since she had the same problem like Nightingale, she also asked the same questions.

So Roland had to answer the questions, again and again. Afterward Anna went to the side and sat down to think about it.

Well ... I have still a long way before me before I will be able to raise the education level.

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In the end, Van’er didn’t know if it was better to become a gunner or if it was better to stay with the hunter squad.

Everything changed when he got the important order three days ago.

His Royal Highness decided to transfer out some members of the first and second militia team, who performed exceptionally, building a new elite force. When Van'er's name was called, he felt very pleased. But when he was asked if he wants to join Iron Axe's hunter squad or the new gunner squad, he didn't know what to choose. He was aware of the new flintlock, which allowed them to fight against the demonic beasts, due to its much stronger penetrating power than a hand crossbow. Currently, only Iron Axe, the Chief Knight and a number of senior hunters were allowed to use this weapon. Van'er was supposed to join the hunter squad without hesitation, but he instead spoke out of turn and asked, "What is a cannon"?

When he learned that a cannon is ten times as large as a flintlock and that its power is a hundred times stronger than the strength of a gun he fell into a dilemma.

Apparently, the more powerful the weapon used by oneself is, the higher one's own value is for the Prince. So joining the artillery seems to be the better selection than the hunter squad, but the advantage of carrying a gun is that it is possible to carry it while walking through the town, attracting the eyes of the people, which was always Van'er's dream. Although the cannon's power is ten times that of a gun, surely it isn't possible to carry such a powerful weapon while walking through the streets, right?

Until the last day of the deadline he wasn't sure what to choose, but in the end, he took the artillery. The last point which brought the decision was that the salary of a gunner was five silver royals higher than that of a hunter.

With his decision, the rigorous training began.

A cannon needs five people to operate it, and to Van'er's team were assigned Jop, Cat's Claw, Nelson and Rodney. Since Van'er was previously a vice captain within the first militia team, he was also chosen as the gunner.

Compared to guns, this cannon gave ten times more trouble! Since the beginning of the previous month, Van'er had secretly observed how Iron Axe operated his gun, making it able that he even was able recite the process fluently from memory. But the cannon had to be always switched from the limbered and mobile state into the ready to shoot state, always having to go through the tedious work.

Stop the horse, pull out the pin, pull the hook, move the cannon cart, push it towards the shooting spot, prevent it from dropping, these processes needed five people to cooperate in tandem. Such as when pulling the hook, the other people have to push the support cart away from the cannon, turning it from a four-wheel vehicle into a two wheel vehicle, without that the cannon's barrel would drop to the ground.

When the barrel is finally filled with the ammunition, it's ready to shoot. The shooting is quite similar to the gun and the cannon, but the clean-up of the cannon with its usage of two different mop is much more complicated. When using a gun, the ammunition can directly be put into the barrel. To start the cannon they had to ignite the fuse, but when it's raining, it could be quite difficult to use this weapon, Savannah had thought.

Fortunately, as a gunner most of the time he had to order the others around, and so he didn't need to spend too much effort.

For the first three days, the four newly selected artillery teams had only one cannon to train with. So under Iron Axe' command, the groups had to go through the process of stopping the mount, unloading the cannon, preparing it to shoot, loading the cannon on the cart and then restart the whole process. These four steps were always repeated, Van'er even suspected, that under the uninterrupted cleaning of the cannon, the cannon became even much cleaner than his own face.