

## **Witch 971**

### Chapter 971: A Frightful Experience in a Demon's Memory

Hearing the prolonged blast of a horn, all the demons fell into silence simultaneously. The Red Mist which looked like a crystal a moment ago started to surge like boiling lava inside the gigantic sinkhole.

Two demons stepped out of the crowd and walked on the slender stone bridge.

Roland found that one of them was clearly a Mad Demon whilst the other looked like the Lord of Hell Agatha mentioned.

Though the former was the biggest Mad Demon he had ever seen, it looked mediocre in front of the giant crawler shaped Lord of Hell.

Neither of them wore armor, however, the relationship between them was obviously confrontational. They were pushing each other all the way to the island.

Seeing this situation, the demons around the island did not show even the slightest surprise. Instead, they all seemed very excited.

What're they doing? Is it a duel?

Roland guessed that it was a kind of ceremonial battle which most barbarian races enjoyed. It was a duel to the death and a show of strength. The one who survived in the end would be venerated as a hero.

He despised such duels. It was not because of racial prejudice, he just thought that it had no meaning except providing the audience with an exciting fighting show. Besides, it may cause the race more harm than benefit. People on Earth also enjoyed these kinds of shows long ago. The only difference was that they usually watched some slave fighting a wild animal. Thus, no matter which party died, they would not feel sad.

As the only human being here, Roland did not care about the demons in the duel at all. Instead, he decided to take a closer look at this fierce battle. To the demons, he was now intangible and invisible like a ghost. Given that, he walked directly through the crowd and followed the two demons to the stone bridge.

When he got onto the island which was as large as Neverwinter's square, he found that someone was already there.

His eyes widened in surprise when he saw the creature clearly.

It seemed to be a female demon!

He was not sure about this impression at first, but he could not deny that it resembled a woman in many ways.

Besides, she looked quite attractive.

Wait, it's not scientific at all!

He became alert.

"How can an alien species who are completely incompatible with mankind produce an individual who's so much like a woman! It's reasonable that some of them may have evolved to walk upright since height would give predators a better view and a practical advantage in hunting. However, it's really hard to believe that this extent of similarity was purely coincidental."

On second thought, he believed that other people would hardly agree with him that this female demon was attractive. She had livid skin, prominent horns, an extra eye on the forehead and bony spurs all over her shoulders and arms. Different from a time traveler with wide experience like Roland, they would probably be terrified by her appearance.

Before the duel, the two demons bowed to the female demon who wore a white robe before moving to either side of the island to take up their positions. They stood close to the edge of the island, facing the Red Mist Lake solemnly.

The female demon walked slowly to the island's edge and began to sing a soprano.

The lake vigorously rippled as if something was about to come out.

Roland wondered, "Maybe, it wasn't just a duel, or maybe these two demons weren't dueling at all..."

Suddenly, two stout tentacles popped out of the lake. They swung respectively at the Mad Demon and the Lord of Hell. It looked like they were going to crush the demons at any minute, but surprisingly, both of the demons raised their arms as if they had willingly given up resistance.

The female demon shouted out, causing the tentacles to reluctantly stop above each demon's head. They wiggled for a moment before each spitting out some mucus and a crystal gemstone.

The demons used their fingers to rip open their chests before inserting the gemstones into their bodies without the slightest hesitation.

Instantly, a strong light radiated from their bodies, making it difficult for Roland to open his eyes.

His heart sank.

"Are those magic stones? Is that how the demon warriors get their supernatural power?"

"No, it can't be. Mad Demons are just common soldiers. There are thousands of them in the demon army. How could the demon city afford to hold a grand ceremony like this to convert each Mad Demon?"

A few minutes later, the blinding light gradually subsided, revealing a shocking scene.

The mighty Lord of Hell curled into a ball under tremendous pain. All the spiracles on its back opened as it continuously leaked white fog. It seemed as if its body was melting.

The Mad Demon appeared to be much better compared to the Lord of Hell. Although its body also shrank after absorbing the Magic Stone, Roland believed that this was just a common side effect. Its arms and legs were not as stout as before and distinct blue veins appeared from the wound on its chest. It looked miserable, however, at least it was still able to stand.

Looking at the two demons, Roland could not help thinking of the incarnation ceremony of the God's Punishment Army.

"Do demon warriors also need to sacrifice their lives to get magic power?"

The next moment, the Lord of Hell issued a piercing cry. It lifted its upper body and sprang towards the female demon on the island.

With a loud bang, the entire floating island trembled.

Roland thought that he was going to see a crushed body under the Lord of Hell, but to his surprise, there were only a few shattered stones instead.

The Lord of Hell had missed its target. It got irritated and shifted its red eyes to the Mad Demon combatively.

"That's it."

"I've understood why they acted this way."

"A demon won't die after absorbing a Magic Stone, instead, it'll change. The Lord of Hell, who was an intelligent lifeform a moment ago, now looked more like a crawler and behaved as if it was an irrational beast."

The Mad Demon did not flinch at all. It fought the giant crawler fanatically!

After absorbing the magic stone, it seemed to obtain a new ability along with a smaller and agiler body!

The seemingly powerful four-legged crawler was forced to retreat by the Mad Demon. The hot steam it emitted could only damage a corner of the Mad Demon's garment whilst the Mad Demon's waves of black light were able to easily cut the Crawler's body. Roland could see the crawler's bones from its open wounds.

In less than five minutes, the duel was drawing to an end.

The Mad Demon tore off the crawler's tail. It quickly peeled the skin and flesh off the tailbone before throwing it back to the dying crawler to give a decisive blow!

The bone pierced the Lord of Hell's head and killed it. The whole process was as fast as lightning.

Roland who was standing by watching the whole duel, now looked grave. He noticed that the Mad Demon's arm did not wither after throwing the tailbone.

The frenzied Mad Demon walked step by step to the dead crawler. It grabbed the magic stone from the Crawler's dead body and swallowed it along with the flesh and blood adhering to the surface.

The audience suddenly burst into exclamation!

The female demon somehow appeared on the island again before Roland realized. She seemed to raise her eyebrows in surprise.

Once again, the Mad Demon revealed a painful expression as steam discharged from its nostrils and ears... Roland clearly saw that it was grinning. It seemed to be enjoying this torment very much.

This time, the converting process was much longer. It did not gradually recover until roughly half an hour later. Tearing off its old blister covered skin, it revealed a completely different appearance.

Roland could not help gasping at its new figure.

Its face now resembled a human being's.

Seeing this, the audience all cheered simultaneously.

"Charita!"

Roland did not know who called out this word first, but quickly, all the demons followed and repeatedly chanted together!

"Charita!"

"Charita!"

"Charita!"

Hearing the reverberating roar of the demons, Roland's heart further sank.

He thought of the rumor Pasha mentioned.

"The rumor was that, long before the beginning of the first Battle of Divine Will, someone had got in contact with the demons."

"That person had taught knowledge to the demons, who were no different from beasts."

"This might be the reason why Senior Demons looked more and more like humans."

Chapter 972: Going to War

After leaving the Dream World, Roland still felt the cold on his back.

Nightingale was bending over the desk while chewing snacks. Seeing him wake up, she instantly dashed to the couch and asked, "Are you all right? Is there anything wrong in that world?"

He felt relieved seeing the concerned look on a familiar face. It reminded him that he had already left the dreadful alien world. He exhaled and forced a smile before replying, "No. I just had some new discoveries."

She looked at him incredulously. "Really? You look pale." She touched his forehead before adding, "Look... you're even sweating."

Hearing that, Roland realized that the coldness on his back was due to his sweaty shirt.

"You know I didn't lie. It was just a dream after all."

But now, he was not as confident about this statement. The Dream World had become increasingly complicated and more like a real world.

"I don't know," said Nightingale. Her mouth twitched.

"What?" said Roland in surprise.

"I need to use my ability to discern the truth from a lie," she said with her hands laid out. "Now, you're not just the king of Graycastle but also the leader of the ancient witches of Taquila as well as Sleeping Spell. Even the Kingdom of Dawn is under your control. You aren't an ordinary lord anymore and will naturally have more and more secrets in the future. If I knew everything about you... you wouldn't feel comfortable around me anymore..." She paused. "You wouldn't like a person who could always look through, would you?"

Nightingale turned her head away to evade his eyes. Looking at her, he could not help but chuckle. All his mental stress had disappeared.

He was well aware of what she thought.

Most lords did not want their followers or servants to know too much about themselves. They usually liked to adopt an ambiguous attitude and enjoyed being a little unpredictable. If a person knew the lord they served too well, they would often not meet a nice end. Though Nightingale was aware that Roland was not such a cruel lord, she was still afraid that he would alienate himself from her when his power increased.

"What's so funny?" she asked whilst feeling aggrieved. After having several bites of her dried fish, she added, "I was really worried about you getting into trouble in that world."

"Ahem." Roland stopped laughing and with a straight face said, "Indeed, nobody wants other people to peer into their mind, not to mention a powerful ruler." He paused deliberately before continuing. "But you aren't included in 'these other people.'"

Roland did not want to become a real feudal king.

Having read about the ups and downs of many dynasties in history, he was sure of what he really wanted presently.

He needed a group of truly trustworthy people to help him accomplish this grand undertaking.

"What?" exclaimed the startled Nightingale.

"If you hadn't come to Border Town, I would've been killed by the maid assassin sent by Garcia long ago," explained Roland slowly. "When the Battle of Divine Will starts, the situation will become even more dangerous for me. Besides, some people in the kingdom still think of me as their enemy. You're going to be very busy and I'll be heavily relying on you. How could I not treat you differently?"

Roland found that he sometimes really liked the simple-minded people of this world. If he said this to a girl in the world he previously lived, she would probably roll her eyes and think that he was just trying to deceive her with sweet words.

"Besides, the most terrible lie isn't some plausible statement I may use to deceive others, but a lie I tell myself. With you around, I'll never have to worry about this problem."

Nightingale tilted her head and muttered, "I can't stop you from deceiving yourself."

"Of course you can. You're able to determine the credibility of a statement, aren't you? Like, 30% of a statement wasn't accurate or reliable, or alternatively, the whole statement was a downright lie."

"Well, yes, I can do that based on the feedback from my magic power."

"Then, when I announce a decision I'm unsure of, you can confirm if it's correct regardless of how confident I appear to be. Deluding myself into making a wrong decision will do more harm than being uncertain about it. When you notice me deceiving myself, you can give me hints. This stops me from making irreversible mistakes," said Roland with his hands laid out. "Now do you see how important your job is?"

"In that case... I'll ask you the same question again, but this time I'll use my ability," said Nightingale after a moment of silence.

"Please," said Roland as he gestured her to continue.

"Are you really alright?" asked Nightingale.

"So, the first thing she wants to confirm is still my safety..." Roland thought to himself.

"I really am fine," he replied with a smile.

After hearing that, Nightingale finally put her mind at ease. "What are the new discoveries you mentioned?"

"I'm going to tell the commanders of the united front about that now." He stood up and walked to his desk, picking up the phone which linked his office to Third Border City, before announcing, "I've seen a demon's memory fragment in the Dream World."

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"That's what I've seen." Roland described his entire experience in the Dream World. He excluded the book of the Martialist Association and the message on the red note. "What do you think of it?" he asked.

Pasha who had already appeared on the light curtain was the first one to answer his question. "It's of great importance, Your Majesty. No one has ever returned alive from the city of demons before. You are the first one to do so, even though it was just a dream experience."

"With this experience alone, you would be eligible to meet the Three Chiefs of the Union in person," said Alethea. She rarely had a positive attitude toward Roland but this time she sounded exceptionally excited. "The demons increase their power by absorbing Magic Stones. This explains many things that had baffled us before!"

"Yes, given that a Mad Demon can acquire a new ability and evolve by taking in a Magic Stone, we can speculate that a Senior Demon is likely also created this way. It wasn't born a Senior Demon. To become such a powerful creature, it has to strengthen its power by absorbing a certain amount of Magic Stones. This explains why Senior Demons are able to have so many kinds of abilities," explained Celine, who studied magic power deeply.

"I've got a question," said Tilly, the leader of Sleeping Spell. "Is there a limit on this power strengthening process?"

Her question made everyone in the meeting fall into silence.

After a long time, Celine replied, "I'm afraid that there isn't a limit."

"Does that mean a demon may grow even stronger than a Transcendent?" asked Wendy with a frown.

"Witches and demons can't be directly compared like that," said Celine as she shook her main tentacle.

"Do you still remember the words left by the underground civilization? If our magic power keeps increasing, we'll become indefinitely close to the deities one day. Thus, as long as we keep manipulating our magic power, our understanding will grow and our abilities will enhance, allowing us to evolve without limit. This rule applies equally to witches, demons and the underground civilization. Fortunately, it's not an easy journey. Getting close to the deities is hard, so don't worry too much."

Celine continued, "I reckon that this is very good news for us. If demons were born with various abilities, they would have a large number of Senior Demons now since they could reproduce countlessly in the past 400 years. Fortunately, we're now aware that they also rely on chances to evolve. Furthermore, based on His Majesty's description, their evolution isn't easily accomplished. Otherwise, the demons wouldn't react so enthusiastically to the Mad Demon's success."

"It's indeed impressive. Celine was able to get so much information from the scene I described. She has undeniably devoted her whole life to fighting demons." Roland exclaimed in his heart.

"After hearing your story, I'm even more worried about the rumor," said Pasha to Roland using mind communication. "Your discovery, to some extent, has already confirmed it, which makes me feel very uneasy. Why did the person help the demons? I guess that means Battles of Divine Will may not be as simple as we think."

Roland replied through the mind connection, "I agree with you. But no matter what, we can't change things that have happened in the past. All we can do now is fight to the death."

After a while, Pasha exclaimed, "Your willpower is exceptionally strong, Your Majesty. We underestimated you and thought of you as an ordinary man in the past. I have to admit that we were wrong about you."

Roland smiled without saying anything. In fact, he had not been so determined at the very beginning.

Six days later, the vanguard units of the First Army entered the demons' scouting area.

Roland received a report from the front line.

"Sylvie reported that she found a group of Devilbeasts flying toward the First Army." Nightingale repeated what she had just heard to Roland whilst holding a Sigil of Listening in her hand.

Roland decided to eliminate them as a prelude to the Battle of Divine Will. He nodded and said, "Tell them to act according to the plan."

Chapter 973: Combat Beyond Visible Range (Part I )

The sniper team was moving across the Fertile Plains, to the north of the Western Region.

Guided by Sylvie, they quickly reached their assigned position, in a grove of trees, far away from First Army's position.

According to the General Staff's plan, they would take care of any enemies within five kilometers in order to protect First Army without being spotted. Given that, the team had to stay away from the army, in case that some Devilbeasts spotted the soldiers on the plains when the weather was clear.

After all, there were more than 1,000 soldiers in the army. When moving across the plain, it was easy to notice them, even from 10 kilometers away.

When the sniper team set out, the First Army soldiers stopped marching and camouflaged themselves.

The sniper team included multiple witches to ensure its agility and flexibility. Lightning and Maggie formed the Flight Squad and the other witches were in the Ark Squad. They would work together to confuse and eliminate enemies to cover the movement of the First Army. All the soldiers were dressed in special camouflage uniforms which were called "jungle camouflage". They were dyed with strange colors and made from special materials.

Lightning and Maggie highly praised the camouflage uniforms. According to them, when they looked down from the sky, they could not easily discern the soldiers and after the soldiers stopped moving, they seemed to disappear.

Andrea also wore such a uniform.

But she did not like it at all.

It was not well tailored and completely without a fitted shape. Wearing such clothes, everyone looked the same. The brown and green color seemed to be daubed on the uniform casually and its fabric was as rough as the bark of a tree. If it had not been for the special lining made by Soloya, her skin would have been scratched by the uniform. She wondered where His Majesty found this crudely made material.

However, she would never complain about it no matter how much she hated it. As a noble lady, she had to remain elegant in all circumstances and more importantly, she did not want to give Ashes a chance to mock her.

"She'll tease me mercilessly about being picky and say that I'm still too fragile. She'll argue that my trip to the Kingdom of Dawn must have fed my arrogance. I can clearly predict what she's going to say and how she's going to say it."

"I was the one who made a vital contribution to our success in subduing the Kingdom of Dawn. While I was fighting, she was just lounging around Lady Tilly doing nothing."

Sylvie's voice interrupted Andrea's thought. "The demons are only 35 kilometers away from us. We must get ready. Let's rise to the ground."

"Roger, going up now. The barrier will be lifted in five seconds. Please watch out for the impact," Margie replied.

"Oh, yeah. That's the tone I like!" Lightning shook her fists excitedly and said. "You sound so professional. What a fast learner you are."



"Did I? Thank you." Margie touched her head bashfully. She might have never heard such a praise back in the church.

Andrea could not help holding her head and thought, "How come such a cool, crisp tone sounds professional? And where's the impact? When the ark disappeared, we just shook a little before standing firmly on the ground because of our inertia. This kind of impact can't even compete with the effect caused by Ashes' roars."

"Now it's time for the Flight Squad to get ready." Lightning gave everyone a thumbs up, put on her goggles, and then leaped up. "The runway has been cleared. The green light is on. Lightning, taking off!

"Maggie, taking off!" With these words, Maggie transformed into a goshawk and followed Lightning. They soon disappeared into the clouds.

"What's a runway? Some road specially built for running?" Amy looked around, feeling puzzled. "Where's the green light?"

"They probably learned these terms during their new training," Phyllis who came to protect the Ark Squad tilted her head and said. "I've heard His Majesty say them in the castle. They may be some technical words or expressions for flight training. However, besides the girls, I also saw Wendy and Anna during the training. It's a little strange."

"What? Does that mean witches without flying ability could also learn to fly?"

"I don't know."

"If I can learn it, what should I say to announce that I'm going to fly up?" Amy touched her chin and said. "How about... Amy, healing magic?"

"I like the term you created." Sharon's eyes shone with excitement. "Come on, make up a term for me!"

"Hey, be quiet. Don't disturb Miss Sylvie. She's tracking the enemies." Phyllis said smilingly.

"Got it!"

Watching the girls, Andrea could not help sighing. According to the plan, in the following week, they would get farther and farther away from the main force of the First Army. As an isolated team, they would advance toward the northwest to mislead the demons. As they penetrated deeper into the demons' territory, they could only rely on their own strength to evade or defeat their enemies.

It was going to be a hard journey for the sniper team. Andrea could hardly understand why the girls seemed so happy and relaxed.

Suddenly, someone patted her shoulder, she turned around and saw Iffy who showed her an "I understand you" look.

She felt comforted by this.

"We've no choice... because combat beyond normal visual range consumes a huge amount of magic power, we have to bring many assistant witches, such as Amy and Sharon, to provide us with magic power. This is the only way we can shoot continuously."

At this moment, she was really impressed by Countess Spear, who remained silent this whole time and looked more peaceful than her. She admired the way this great, noble lady dealt with the situation.

"Let's get started." Andrea took a deep breath and said. "The demons will enter our range any minute."

"Wait a second," Spear suddenly whispered. "I'm old and feel a little sick after traveling by the ark."

Andrea was speechless.

Fortunately, she did not have to exert much efforts to set up the anti-Devilbeast sniper rifle. Roland had minimized the installation steps by dividing the weapon into two parts, the gun and the tripod. Ashes and Phyllis had carried them the entire journey.

Andrea quickly got the rifle set up. She found that this sniper rifle without a scope turned out to be easier to operate when compared to a bolt rifle she had used before. She inserted a palm-sized bullet into the chamber of the rifle and nodded to Camilla Dary.

Camilla closed her eyes and extended her hands to touch Andrea and Sylvie.

Instantly, Andrea saw the world differently. Everything within her sight was distorted. She felt as if her soul was pulled out of her body, or another soul squeezed into her's. This weird change always made her feel a little dizzy, but after repeated training, she was able to get used to it and managed to quickly focus on targets that were far away.

Sylvie immediately sensed what she wanted.

The next moment, Andrea could see the world through Sylvie's eyes. The trees and grassland were instantly replaced by a sea of white clouds.

And she saw three black dots flying in the sky.

Chapter 974: Combat Beyond Visible Range (Part II)

"How far away is the target?"

"Twelve kilometers."

"What about the other directions?"

"Clear."

Sylvie was able to answer Andrea's questions in an instant, which made Andrea feel like talking to herself, since the Mind Resonance greatly improved their communication efficiency.

Although Andrea felt weird in the beginning, she really enjoyed this experience now. After her mind was connected to Sylvie's, she felt as if everything in the world suddenly sprang to life. This connection not only enabled her to see far across the world, but also enhanced all her senses. It was a wonderful feeling.

She could not help wondering how she would feel if she was in a Mind Resonance state with Princess Tilly.

"This is Flight Squad. Lightning speaking. Ark Squad, can you see me?" Lightning's voice came through a Sigil of Listening.

Andrea stopped wondering and concentrated on the task again. She searched in the sky and said, "I see you."

"Is it alright for us to stay at this height?"

"Yes. You'd better hide behind some clouds."

"Got it."

"Coo."

When Andrea missed a target or did not have enough power to shoot a demon, Lightning and Maggie, who hid above the enemy, would swoop down to take care of it. When Lightning flew at her full speed, she was three times faster than a Devilbeast, and Maggie could quickly transform into a beast. Under such circumstances, it would be impossible for the enemy to defend against an overhead attack.

But Lightning and Maggie were only able to launch one attack like that.

If there was more than one demon, they would have to retreat.

Personally, Andrea did not want to give the little girls any chance to fight.

She had absolute confidence in her own ability.

She boasted of being an unerring marksman. Even Ashes could not match her in this respect.

She wanted to show these little girls what a real professional was like.

"Six kilometers."

Sylvie warned her again.

"Good, I've locked onto the first target."

Andrea closed her eyes and focused her mind on her target.

In theory, she could shoot down any target she saw within the weapon's range, which was longer than five kilometers, but the amount of magic power required made it impossible for her to do so.

Once she exhausted all her magic power, she would pass out.

After repeated testing, she found that five kilometers was the ideal distance.

As she was tracking her target, a rush of magic power flowed out of her body and wrapped her tightly. She quickly saw a targeting line stretch to the Devilbeast, who was completely unaware of the impending attack.

This slender, silver line was so distorted that it looked nothing like a bullet's trajectory. The first stretch looked like an arched bridge stretching far across the empty sky and then it became a wavy line.

She had never seen any targeting line like this before she got this new rifle. It was a connected sequence of irregular line segments. It kept changing all the time and the middle part of it seemed like a spider silk thread waving in the wind, but the end of it was always fixed to her target.

She had asked His Majesty about this mysterious targeting line and his answer was totally beyond her expectation.

According to him, her ability was not about aiming. No matter how carefully a sniper aimed his weapon at a target, he could never predict whether he could hit it when he fired. Once a bullet was shot, its speed would decrease as it flew and the external environment's influence on it would increase. A strong cross wind was enough to make the bullet hit far away from its target. Even with the aid of the best scope, a sniper could never guarantee that he would be able to make each shot hit the target.

And when the target was five kilometers away, a normal sniper would have great difficulty hitting it.

"So, what's my ability?" She had asked Roland at that time.

Back then, she thought he seemed to have been bluffing and waiting for her to ask such a question, but she didn't mind it. "Actually, you're good at a coin toss. Many factors determine where a bullet will land, but surprisingly, you can always hit your target. Why? Think about this. If you toss a coin into the air, you somehow know which side it will land on. That's why you can always be sure that a bullet you shoot out will hit your target."

"Are you sure? How come I never get what I want when I'm playing cards?"

"Well, they aren't the same thing. Do you wish to get stronger? There's a theory that may greatly increase your ability."

"Really? What's it?"

His Majesty had replied smilingly, "Probability Theory."

"From the viewpoint of conditional probability, many different factors can affect your shooting results, but you're able to control or remove the effect of these conditions. Trust me, you'll have unlimited potential as long as you can master this theory." Andrea still clearly remembered that His Majesty had handed her the book with a smile on his face.

During that moment, she had been thrilled as if she could see a smooth road to a bright future and had thought excitedly, "I'm going to be a Transcendent."

However, this excitement had only lasted until that night.

She had opened the book, "Probability Theory", and failed to understand anything in it.

What the hell is this? Normal people could never understand this book!

"Crack—"

Andrea pulled the trigger when the silver guiding line dissolved into the background.

With a flash flames, the shot rang out. It was much louder than a bolt rifle. The sound wave was so strong that she felt as if it had hammered her chest and the heavy recoil kicked her shoulder. Thanks to

the impact-resistance coatings on the stock and the cushioned tripod, she didn't experience a severe impact from the recoil. Before the dust settled, she was ready for a second shot.

A flow of magic power poured into her body.

The witches acted according to their training. Besides Margie and the witches assisting Andrea, all the witches, including the combat witches who came to protect everyone, would provide magic power for Andrea.

"What happened? Did you hit it?" Everyone asked with concern.

After all, the first shot was the key to determining the success or failure of this operation.

"The bullet has a long distance to travel, but it won't miss the target" said Andrea, confidently.

That's it, just as His Majesty said.

I've already known how the coin will land.

The bullet was traveling at such a high speed that even Sylvie was unable to track it, but Andrea could clearly describe its trajectory. After flying four kilometers, it would start to drop toward the ground. Although a stray bullet was still fast and lethal, it would miss the target if it continued to travel like that.

However, a strong gust of wind would change everything. She felt that it was like skipping a stone on water. When her bullet hit the wind, it would begin to ascend like a bird riding on the wind and would make an arc across the sky. This was the only way the bullet could avoid the two devilbeasts flying in the front of the formation and hit the last one in line.

Andrea pulled the trigger again, but this time, she did not hurry to prepare for the third shot. Instead, she turned her gaze toward her first target, the devilbeast at the back of the formation.

"Bang," She whispered.

The next moment, the devilbeast shook violently, a cloud of blood erupted from its back, and its organs began to fall out of its broken body. The demon on its back was torn into two parts. Its upper body was thrown high and red mist began spraying out from the tanks they were carrying.

From a distance, it looked a red flower blooming in the sky.

Chapter 975: A Night in the Wild

If the demon flying at the forefront noticed what happened behind, it would have been able to escape. Although Andrea could easily shoot down a floating balloon from the air during previous live-fire drills, she noticed that it was much harder to predict the movements of a living being.

Once she pulled the trigger, the bullet would dart toward a definite position. She could not control the situation if the target left that position on its own. Thus, if a living being became aware of the danger and suddenly decided to change its path, her bullet would most likely miss the target.

She never missed a close target and always knew the result shortly after an attack was launched. Now, however, she needed to wait patiently for the result as the bullet had to travel five kilometers to hit its target.

She could determine which side a coin would land on when it was tossed onto a table, but she could not glue them down to ensure the result. If someone suddenly tapped the table or flicked the coin with a finger as it landed, it could still cause the coin to flip to the opposite side. Thus, she would not feel surprised if the demon escaped.

If it did try to escape, the Flight Squad would swoop down to take care of it.

Fortunately, the demon did not notice anything unusual.

It was not because the demon was not vigilant enough. By flying hundreds of meters above the ground, it could hardly hear anything except the wind whistling. Additionally, as it flew facing the wind, this whistling would be further amplified. When they had started to prepare this combat plan, Lightning had concluded from repeated testing that as long as the demon was flying 10 meters ahead of the target, it would not hear anything when a bullet went through the target behind it.

That was why Andrea chose to shoot down the demon flying at the end of the row first.

The big bullet left an opening in its belly and completely destroyed its inner organs. After they fell out of its body, it could not even make a scream.

Given that, the demon flying in the front did not notice anything abnormal and thus missed its only opportunity to escape.

After a dozen seconds, another bullet came from above and shot into its chest, passing through its body before breaking the spine of the mount below.

The devilbeast who flew in the middle carrying a pack on its back now noticed something was wrong, but it was not intelligent enough to understand the current situation. Driven by its instincts for survival, it turned around and flew toward Taquila.

Andrea locked onto it.

She foretold the coin's face for the third time.

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In the late afternoon, the Ark rose from the ground again.

According to the map drawn by the Exploration Group, the sniper team had safely arrived at their resting place below a cave which had naturally collapsed.

"There are dried bird beak mushrooms?" asked Amy with great surprise.

"I stored them here," said Maggie as she dug out several glass bottles under a stone. "We even have barbecue seasonings here!"

"Do you prepare these things at all your bases?" asked Amy.

"Of course," Lightning replied proudly. "This place is poorly-equipped compared to the other bases. If we were at Forest Pavilion now, we'd be able to hold a banquet with the amount of food we've stored there!"

"Forest Pavilion?" Sharon asked whilst intrigued, "Where's it at?"

"It's near the Impassable Mountain Range in a big tree that's as large as a castle," said Maggie while drawing an invisible outline in the air. "We asked Leaf to build a roof and a sunning ground to dry our jerky."

"I'm afraid that only His Majesty Roland can tolerate you stealing his salt and spices." Countess Spear rubbed her forehead. "I estimate that these seasonings cost several gold royals. If you do this to any other lord, he'll definitely throw you into a boiling wok."

Chief Butler of Sleeping Island nodded in agreement

"I didn't steal them!" Maggie retorted. "I just picked them up from the ground."

"You picked them up?" Spear asked doubtfully.

"They leaked from the buckets in the kitchen. I just collected them," said Lightning.

"And I didn't take them without paying," Lightning added. "In the Fjords, any explorer can earn lots of money by drawing maps, and I've drawn many maps for His Majesty."

"Well, His Majesty would never blame you even if you ransacked the kitchen." Sylvie interrupted in a weak voice. "Collecting some spices from the kitchen is nothing. I've seen Nightingale sneak into the kitchen six times a week to take all the dried fish. She has even broken into His Majesty's study to steal..."

"

Everybody looked grave now.

"To steal what?"

Sylvie realized that she had spilled the beans. "Ah, no, nothing... I'm just starving. Let's get ready to cook!"

After that, Andrea said something to quickly dispelled everybody's curiosity.

"By the way... Do you really want to pry into Nightingale's private life?"

All the witches immediately gave up the thought and began to find something to occupy themselves.

Sharon went to make a fire with her electric sparks. Amy swiftly chopped mushrooms. Phyllis and Ashes caught a boar for dinner. Spear Passi remained as she still felt sick... After a while, the tantalizing smell of food spread throughout the cave.

Unlike a banquet in the castle, there were not many dishes in this dinner, but their food tonight was delicious enough for a meal in the wilderness. Most of the time, when in the wild, they could only eat pancakes and jerky.

Ashes fried the boar's belly and sprinkled the grease from the pork onto the frizzled mushroom and meat. Seeing that, everyone's mouth kept watering.

In the end, they ate up the whole boar.

After their stomachs were full, the withes quickly fell asleep, except for the Extraordinary and the God's Punishment Witch. They were more energetic than the others and would keep watch during the night.

"I'll be on watch for the first half of the night," said Ashes as she added some wood to the fire. "Her Highness Tilly told me that you are more vulnerable to the effects of lack of sleep, although your sleep time is shorter than ours."

"That's true. Sleep deprivation will make it hard for us to control our bodies," Phyllis admitted. "But it's still early, I'll go to sleep later."

Ashes nodded and stopped talking. She was not talkative. Even in front of Tilly, she was mostly just a good listener.

Now, all was quiet except for the sputtering fire and the breathing noises of the witches.

"They're so close," whispered Phyllis whilst looking at the sleeping girls beside her. "I've never seen such a tight-knit team like them, even in the Taquila age."

Ashes looked to the side and saw Lightning lay sprawling on an animal skin and Maggie lay huddled up on her belly. The little girl's white hair tumbled down and covered both of them like a quilt which looked very warm.

She could not help but smile. "She wasn't like that in the beginning. Before we took her in, she had lived alone as a pigeon for several years. Back then, she almost lost the ability to speak, not to mention being close to someone. At that time, she would be alarmed by even the slightest rattling."

"Just, I don't know how long such intimacy between them will last..." Phyllis dropped her eyelids. "I hope this time the Battle of Divine Will will be different."

"Why do you say that?" asked Ashes with her eyebrows raised. She did not want to make this conversation sound like an interrogation, but she just could not suppress the question. "Faced with a common enemy, we'll all stick together, won't we?"

"Yes, we will," said Phyllis with a sigh. "But the war is also going to change the witches. Haven't you noticed that magic power affects more than just our ability?"

Chapter 976: The Way to Transcendence

"Magic affecting more than just our abilities?" Ashes was surprised.

"Yes, magic affects many aspects. For instance it allows our body to be more flexible. We can also heal wounds many times faster than a common person and in general live healthier," Phyllis said slowly. "Our temperament is also changed."

"Wait, what do you mean by temperament?"



"As we witches use magic, our desires are amplified in the moment. This changes who we are. For example, that feeling of vengeance as you see your friend cut down. An experience like this can scar witches and they would become indifferent, or even ruthless," Phyllis said, her eyes fixed on the flickering flames. "For a warrior, this type of mental state is indeed advantageous... but it also turns her into..."

"...Into what?" Ashes felt uneasy.

"A monster."

Ashes stepped back and almost tripped.

Ashes recalled her past... There's nothing else she would've done, she killed countless church members. Ashes remembered how she hacked person after person, her mind became stained with blood, transforming her into an uncontrollable killer. She felt like she had infinite power in this bloodlusted state. However looking back... she was just an empty husk, devoid of feeling any real emotion. It's only after she met Princess Tilly that she regained her humanity.

"Of course, that's not the case for all witches. It's only a trend. When faced with war, all people could care about is surviving. The long and hopeless period of resistance could even drive the common people mad. We're kind of fortunate that we can at least use our desperation to turn into fearless berserkers," Phyllis paused. "even if you find it hard to understand the events that happened during the Union, our methods make sense. Without firm determination, the Three Chiefs couldn't be Transcendents."

"I see..." The campfire swayed a little as Ashes poked it. "If the Battle of Divine Will lasts forever, what will happen to the witches?"

"No one knows. Maybe they'll even look different," Phyllis said lightly. "After all, the witches' beauty was judged by their facial features. If they become inhuman, they may look strange, like the way the demons look."

The flames flickered again. For a moment, silence loomed over the cave.

After several moments pass, the God Punishment Witch said, "Do you have a reason why you fight the demons?"

Phyllis gave her own answer first after thinking that Ashes is hesitating. "Our reason is simple. We want to defeat the demons, win the war, and regain the glory of Taquila. Only with this faith in our heart could we last out until this day."

"You want to rebuild Taquila?"

"Of course, this place means much more than just a holy city to us, we're willing to devote our lives if that is what it takes to rebuild. However if King Roland manages to vanquish the demons, then the path he has chosen proves he's more capable than the Three chiefs. If the cooperation between the witches and the common people can give a promising future, we certainly have no objection."

Ashes kept quiet for a moment before she replied, "I just want to protect a certain person dear to me. Help her in any way I can. If she wants to throw demons out of the Land of Dawn, I will do that for her."

"I see..." Phyllis said and then shook her head. "Please forgive me but, that's not a good faith to hold when fighting enemies."

"Why is that?"

"Because it's too broad, too unspecific." Phyllis extended her hands. "You'll get lost, especially at the crucial moment of life and death. It's hard to define what a person wants. Most importantly, do you really know what she wants?"

"Of course, she—" Ashes stopped half way.

"Does Tilly want me to be fighting demons on the frontline?" The answer was clearly a straight no since this was her own decision. If it was the previous mission to locate targets for the phantom instrument, she might have the reason to take it on Tilly's behalf, but this time she still accepted Roland's invitation and joined the sniper team, even though Tilly did not participate in the war.

There was no doubt that she did it partly to grow Sleeping Spell's reputation since as the importance of the Sleeping Spell in Neverwinter grew, Tilly's role at court would be more vital.

But was this the only reason?

Ashes could not help looking at the witches who were asleep. The tiredness was still in their faces but they looked so quiet and peaceful. Ashes' eyes moved from Sylvie, Maggie, to the other witches of the Sleeping Island and eventually to the rest of her companions.

Suddenly, Ashes asked, "Why are you telling me this?"

In any case, she was only an acquaintance to Phyllis. They had occasionally exchanged their experience of swordplay and fighting skill and were far from close friends. However Phyllis shared with her a topic on temperament and the Taquila survivors' ambitions. It all seemed very strange to Ashes. She thought that Phyllis was not the type of person to talk about these things with every person she met.

"Because you're an Extraordinary," Phyllis said in a grim tone. "You're the flowers of the witches with unimaginable potential. In the era of the Union, every combat-type Extraordinary was trained with the utmost care. As long as they could push the limits of their potential and become a Transcendent, they would be capable of killing a Senior Demon all by themselves. These types of witches would gain the most popularity and they would be elected as the new leader of the Union."

With that, Phyllis arose and saluted Ashes. "Perhaps I have no right to teach an Extraordinary how to improve, but having the right mindset is essential to becoming a leader". As far as I know, all the Transcendents in the Union were born in battle, and those Extraordinaries who couldn't successfully become Transcendents were all eventually killed by the demons," she paused. "I hope you won't meet that fate, Extraordinary Ashes."

The God Punishment Witch even addressed Ashes by an honorific title in the last sentence.

"You don't need to..." Ashes frowned.

"Just take it as an old fool who hasn't seen a Transcendent for over 400 years." Phyllis laughed. "Don't worry, I won't salute you this way. It's time to sleep now though, I'll see you in 2 hours."

"Yeah, good night."

When the cave returned to silence, Ashes looked up, staring at the sky through the crack of the cave ceiling for a long time.

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After Roland hung up the phone called from the frontline, he marked out a new route on the map.

It was the 22nd day since Operation Summit started and so far, the plan was going smoothly. More Devilbeasts were spotted patrolling the forest, diverting the First Army further and further off the main route. It seemed that the demons attached more importance to the Taquila ruins and so left a massive blind spot south of their outpost.

Of course, the demons kept patrol teams nearby and generally speaking, no enemies could remain unspotted before they approached and launched an attack.

However the First Army didn't need to close the distance.

The artillery battalion had a complete firing table and was equipped with refined Longsong Cannons that enabled them to launch precise and fatal attack 10 kilometers away.

Chapter 977: Gliding Wings

"Three days," Nightingale said suddenly.

"Yes, there are three days left." Roland nodded. If we take the army's current speed, they should reach the planned staging area within three days and launch attacks from there. The base was to be set on the slope of a hill facing the demon camp where it would look like a fort from the french maginot line. It offered the army a broad field of view and was in general a very good place to build fortifications.

Once the First Army entrenched the hill, it was almost impossible for the demons to shake their defensive line that was formed by guns and cannons.

In the meantime however, a lot of pressure would be put onto the sniper team over the next few days.

When the Army was on the march, demon scouts could easily intercept with them while on the vast open plain. Witches would have to work double time to keep these scouts from reporting back.

But as the demons send out more patrols, sheer numbers would just overrun the witches' surveillance net and demons would undoubtedly narrow down patrol areas where their scouts went MIA. Eventually, some credible information of the First Army's movements would make its way back. By then, it would be too risky for the witches to take any action.

The best result would be if the demons noticed the witches' presence in the area and sent out their flying units whilst the witches make the decision to return to the First Army. This would waste the demons' strategic units and give the First Army enough time to make camp before the demons could launch a surgical strike.

This assumes that the witches and demons would act this way though.

A small misjudgment of the situation could trigger some unforeseen consequence however.

"You should give them credit," Nightingale said, seeming to read Roland's expression. "The Taquila witches are probably good at assessing the risk, and they have the Magic Ark to use to escape. Even they run across a large scouting group, the witches will be a hard nut for those demons to crack."

"You're right." Roland held his cheek. To be honest, the cause of all these troubles could be traced back to Neverwinter's weakness. The slow speed of marching on foot had been an obvious drawback for the First Army. That was why the team had to run the risk of battle. If the army had wheeled vehicles, then the team would only need to hold off the demons for a day. And even if the enemies saw his army marching on them, they would not have time to hold the army back.

After thinking about how the problems eventually went back to Neverwinter's development, he would might as well just focus on that.

"By the way, have Wendy grasped the principles of flight?"

"Almost." Nightingale laughed as she threw a piece of dried fish into her mouth. "She even talked in her dream last night, something like 'the runway cleared' and 'all lights green'."

"That's good." Roland glanced out of the window. "The weather seems pretty good today. Maybe our flight trials can be put on schedule earlier than usual."

"Oh? Are you going to put that thing to the test?" Nightingale's eyes brightened.

"What, are you interested?"

"How can I not be?" she said excitedly. "One can fly in the sky even without wings. A thing that can help you fly more freely than the hot air balloon and can be controlled by anyone. That sounds just as incredible as the miracles. If you succeed, do you know how your subjects will look on you? Their reverence for you will be higher than God."

Nightingale's eyes shined with every word coming out her lips. She was full of joy as if she relived the ecstasy of chaos drinks once again while being admired by her followers.

Roland could not help laughing. "We're still working on it. There's still a long way to go before we achieve the goal you said."

The steam engine didn't have enough horsepower to drive an aircraft off the ground. Roland knew he needed to reinvent the combustion engine soon.

"But it'll come true, won't it?" Nightingale smiled back at him as she walked up to the door with her hands on her back.

"Yes," Roland answered decisively. "It will."

...

One kilometer east to Shallow Beach.

Despite its name, the beach was completely submerged, leaving a long line of cliffs erecting above the water surface. The line had stretched to the southeast and eventually formed the borderline of the south of Graycastle.

For the inland people who lived in the Western Region, the borderline was no more than a part of hills where they could see the endless whirlpool sea as they crested the gentle slope; for the traders on sailing boats, the borderline was like an impassable barrier. Because of the cliff that was at least 15 meters high above the water, it was impossible for their boats to dock, let alone unload the goods. That was why the Western Region, where one-third of its border connected the sea, had no seaport before they opened up a passage towards the Shallow Beach.

In other words, apart from the damage resulting from the Months of Demons, the lack of seaports was the main reason why the West Region was less developed than Eastern and Southern counterparts.

However, now this unusual terrain could serve as a perfect place for flight test.

As Roland and his companions arrived, the Garrison had sealed off the area one kilometer around.

At the end of the concrete runway, the soldiers were pushing three identical prototypes of the glider onto a platform.

"Oh! That's your new machine?" Thunder said, touching his chin. "It indeed looks like a seabird. But compared with the powerful steam engine, it seems... a little fragile."

As the most reliable overseas allies, both Thunder, the distinguished explorer in Fjords, and the businesswoman Margaret were invited. Thunder's comment did not surprise Roland, who instead smiled mysteriously and turned to ask Margaret, "What do you think?"

"Your Majesty," she said, "to be honest, it looks so different from your previous inventions that I would have thought it must be the something that the Society of Wondrous Crafts used to fool us in your name."

"The Society of Wondrous Crafts?" Roland asked curiously. "What organization is that?"

"A society set up by a group of half-craftsman, half-explorer lunatics," Margaret explained. "They refused to live a plain life as craftsmen and were also afraid of sailing in the unpredictable sea, so the lot focused on an assortment of odd inventions. Two years ago, one of them made a similar thing, a pair of wooden wings that was said to be able to help people fly."

"Wooden...wings?"

"It looked a little like yours except that it was much smaller and about the same size as a man."

"Did he succeed?" Wendy could not help asking.

"No," Margaret shook her head. "He wore the wings and jumped from a high tower, as soon as the wings flipped over and he started to drop like a stone until he hit on the ground and died immediately."

Wendy swallowed hard, almost regretting to say that.

"Before that trial, the man had claimed several times that he successfully flew on a number of occasions. This garnered attention from our chamber but as a result only made him look like a fool and also worsened the society's reputation as if it wasn't bad enough."

As Roland listened to the story, he could not help sighing. The man, who had made the wings of wood, thought that since the lifting was the key to keep a thing flying in the air, only a frame of hard materials that could withstand the force of lift needed. This was naive but it was still one of the first prototypes of the fixed wing and went beyond simply imitating birds.

Actually, the man should be viewed as a pioneer in exploring the skies. Definitely wiser than those who invented things like man-made feather wings, flying umbrellas, flying cloaks, and so forth.

Roland believed his previous successes were not completely without failure. He probably tested from a low height where there were less variables to consider. For this sort of test, you would have to account for strong contact force against the wind as your rate of descent becomes larger. you could predict on a graph when the man could not overcome the force to maintain stability and crash.

It was a pity that islanders in Fjords only admired the explorers who could find new livable places for them and had a prejudice against those who were afraid of sailing.

"We shouldn't call him a liar," Roland said slowly. "In fact, it's a great price we have to pay for the possibility of getting rid of the bond of the earth and being able to fly in the sky. Without the help of the witches, I also need to experience that testing process. If the man had a name, record his story."

Margaret was a little shocked, then she dropped a curtsey, "As you wish, Your Majesty."

Roland moved his eyes back to the Mark I Glider, which was getting ready for its first flight. In contrast to the train and the iron ship, it indeed looked fragile.

It had no cabin, and apart from the large wings, it was a frame with no covers. The seats were set between the wings to make it easy for the flyers to escape. The whole structure looked simpler than a model at first glance.

Unlike the machines Roland had made before, the aircraft was actually just a collection of things he heard from his acquaintance. All he knew was the principle of flight, which was far from enough to make a real aircraft.

The first thing on order was to write a Flight Manual.

These prototypes seemed simple, but they already contained all the essential factors the flyers needed to control the machine.

It looked like a newly born hairless chick.

But it was a beginning of a new wave of travel for all humans.

Chapter 978: Flight

To give the glider speed, Roland requested the Ministry of Construction to build a runway along the cliff towards the sea. It was designed with both ends curved upward like a crescent.

Once the glider was lifted and fixed in position, it could be released by unleashing the fixer. Due to gravity, it would glide forward and speed up until it darted out of the runway. The flyer would have a similar experience to sitting on a roller coaster in the modern world, though it would be far less thrilling.

Of course, these alone were insufficient as the wings needed more power to ascend. Thus, Wendy had to provide some wind to lift the wings.

Once the glider darted out of the cliff that was 15 meters above the water surface, it would have plenty of buffer space. Whether the glider ascended or descended, its slow speed provided both the flyer and rescuer time to prepare.

This was the reason why Roland designed the prototype to have two seats in the first place.

Now that both Lightning and Maggie were fighting on the Barbarian Land. The rescue job was naturally handed over to Tilly.

She took the job joyfully.

"It's time to board the plane," Roland said to both girls as he thought it was time to take off.

Wendy nodded. She clenched her fists to encourage herself and then walked up to the glider with Tilly.

...

It was not until she was on board that she found the aircraft to be much larger than she had expected.

Particularly the two pairs of straight wings that separately lay above her head and below her feet. They were larger than any birds' and were even longer than the transfigured Maggie's wings.

As Wendy saw the slim tip of the wings vibrating in the sea wind, concern rose inside her. It felt like the wings would easily snap from strong winds once the glider took off.

Roland had mentioned that the vibration of the wings was normal. The wings were assembled from a frame with a skin wrapping around it. The frame was made of hard aluminum. This was to ensure that it could endure the impact of air currents when the glider flew slowly through the air. The skin was created by Soraya. It was more resistant than ordinary leather and cloth. As a result, the wings looked quite slim and frail. Compared to the area of the wings, their thickness could almost be ignored. It was as if they were pieces of paper.

"My Lady, let me know if you're ready." A soldier's voice awoke Wendy.

"I see. Well... the first step is..."

"Confirm that every control surface is okay." Tilly on the back seat tried to calm her down. "Don't be nervous. I'll protect you even if something goes wrong."

"Thank you." Wendy felt relieved when she heard that. Exactly, she was not the only one who took His Majesty's class on the principles of flight. If someone could remind her of the steps she had forgotten, she would make fewer mistakes.

"First, pull the main lever to control the tail elevator."

Taking a deep breath, Wendy put both hands on an iron lever before her seat and pulled it. As she did that, a click was heard under her seat. She knew that the sound was produced when the wire connected to the other end of the lever pulled tail. She had done this step hundreds of times on the simulator before the prototype was ready.

"The elevator is okay. The next step is... um, the rudder," Tilly continued.

But the components in the simulator were much simpler. It only contained two vertical levers, two pedals, and a few wire ropes. At first, it was hard for Wendy to believe that only these few things could allow the glider fly like a bird. After all, it was almost as simple as controlling as a bicycle.

The elevation control lever could only be moved forward and back while the direction control lever could only be moved left and right because the holder had limited their movement space. On the other hand, a bicycle's head could make circles.

"The rudder is okay too. Last is the aileron."

According to His Majesty, an aircraft generally had three pairs of wings. One in the front and two in the back, giving the impression of the shape of "±" when viewed from the front. The rudder, which was the erected part, worked like the one of a boat. It could change the direction of the aircraft's nose in the wind.

The short horizontal bar was the elevator, which was also called the "tail". It rose and dropped with the aircraft's nose, looking very similar to a rudder flipped on its side. With the knowledge from the chapter "Decomposition and Synthesis of Forces" in Primary Physics, Wendy could easily understand the principle of this component.

The longer horizontal bar represented the aileron. Wendy did not understand why it was called the "aileron" until she saw the real thing. It was inlaid at the back of the large wing and was no more than one-tenth the size of the wing. Two ailerons were connected with iron wire to the two pedals near her two feet, one left and one right.

Unlike the former two components, the two ailerons must be in inverse (one up and one down) to work. However, if disproportionate forces impact on the two ailerons, the aircraft would deflect from its course or possibly even roll over. Hence, they were the most important part Wendy needed to handle in flight.

Wendy had once asked His Majesty why he had designed the ailerons when the rudder could also change the flight direction. He explained that every movement of the aircraft required the cooperation of the three control surfaces in combination. If the flyer only moved the rudder, the body of the aircraft would tend to move horizontally. Thus, when making a tight turn, the flyer must pull the elevator down to keep it stable.

Thus, he needed a detailed testing result to write a Flight Manual that could really guide people. He needed to find the answer to questions like: In different circumstances, how is the orbit maneuver controlled? How does the wind direction impact the aircraft? What is the deficiency of the aircraft when



controlling it? and so forth. Only by clearly learning this information could he make a truly reliable aircraft.

"The ailerons seem okay too." Tilly patted Wendy's shoulder. "I'll leave the rest to you."

Wendy felt her heart beat faster. She glanced at Roland in the distance before turning to the soldier. "I'm ready, loosen the fixer."

"Yes, please watch out!" The soldiers moved immediately.

"The runway is clear and lights are all green," Wendy whispered in her heart. Although she did not exactly understand what those words meant, she would still say it, since His Majesty said it could bring luck.

With a gentle shake, the glider was pushed onto the runway.

Then it descended.

The wheel creaked as it rolled on the runway, and the aircraft started to shake. Wendy felt as if the sea at the other end was approaching her as she raced down the runway towards it.

For a moment, her heart was in her mouth.

"What did she need to do next?"

Wendy panicked when she saw that the glider had passed half of the runway yet showed no signs of flying.

"The wind!" Tilly shouted.

Yes, the wind. The speed generated on the runway was not fast enough to make the glider take off whilst carrying both of them. She needed to create a stable and mild wind to lift its wings.

Just as the idea emerged in her head, she took action. The magic spiral worked and formed an invisible air current which lightly supported the wings.

With that, the harsh creaking noise subsided. It was as if the glider no longer had any weight. Before Wendy could figure out how it happened, the glider had rushed off the cliff.

For a short period of time, the glider ascended, giving her a sense of overweight. It felt like someone pressing her down into her seat.

As her body was drawn back, she could not help but pull the main lever down.

The aircraft's nose responded to her command and rose even higher.

Her view changed. She could no longer see the earth full of the leaves and withered grass. Even the vast whirlpool-like sea was almost out of her sight. Instead, the clear blue sky filled her view whilst the shimmering light forced her to narrow her eyes.

For a moment, Wendy felt like a petrel soaring up into the sky against the light.

It felt so unconstrained. She finally understood why His Majesty said that the aircraft was totally different from a hot air balloon.

But just a few seconds later, Wendy found that the sound of the wind had subsided.

The glider's nose was still high, but its speed no longer allowed it to ascend. Time seemed stopped. Wendy wanted to strengthen the wind under main wings, but this ended up turning the entire aircraft upside down.

"Too much wind!" Tilly shouted.

Before Wendy had time to find the problem, the glider had fallen like a stone.

Chapter 979: Another Kind of Genius

Everyone present witnessed it.

The glider fell down the cliff and out of their sight shortly after it left the runway. It happened so fast that no one had time to respond.

Roland also feared for their safety.

He had foreseen the possibility of all sorts of accidents during the trial. Although he had prepared more than one prototype in order to increase the flyer's experience with as many trials as possible, he did not expect the first crash to come so early.

In theory, the glider was slow, low-loaded, and easy to control. A little wind was able to maintain its airtime, making it very friendly to a new hand. In fact, there were only a few mistakes that could make the flyer lose control of the aircraft. Roland had emphasized these points whilst explaining the principles. This time, Wendy obviously lifted the aircraft's nose too high. As a result, the aircraft lost its original speed and started to drop.

Although the glider had lost its ascending speed, the situation could still be salvaged with appropriate actions.

As Wendy was capable of creating winds.

All she had to do was blow wind down towards the tail whilst reducing the wind that lifted the glider. This would force the glider's nose down and therefore its body would regain speed.

Unfortunately, the wind Wendy applied to the main wings was too strong and abrupt. As a result, the glider flipped over and thus they had no choice but to abandon the aircraft.

Although the glider could be saved, Roland cared more about the safety of the flyers as there were no safety devices installed, such as seatbelts. In fact, the glider only contained an aluminum chair with two arms and a backrest to steady the flyers. It was easy to imagine what would happen when the glider was overturned.

Fortunately, Tilly did not leave everyone worrying for too long.

A few seconds later, she was holding Wendy's arm and appeared on the edge of the cliff.

"Are you alright?" Roland asked anxiously.

"Don't worry. We're fine." Tilly smiled and panted slightly. "In order to avoid being hit, I flew down a little to dodge it before ascending."

Unlike Lightning who would significantly lose speed when she carried load, a witch who controlled the Stone of Flight would not lose speed even if she carried a person. Instead, the stone would consume much more magic power and become harder to control. Although Princess Tilly had made light of the situation, Roland knew that the rescue would not have been completed so easily without her remarkable control over the stone.

"My apologies... Your Majesty." Wendy said, looking a bit frustrated. "You've spent so much time making that aircraft, but I..."

Roland comforted her immediately, "It's not your fault. No one is born to know how to fly an aircraft. That's part of the knowledge unknown to all of us. The materials of the glider were more valuable than the process of making it. As long as we can recover the wreckage, we won't suffer a great loss."

"We won't?" Wendy asked.

"I can promise you that His Majesty is telling the truth," Nightingale said as she suddenly appeared and faced her friend.

Wendy felt relieved. "I see... I'll have another try!"

Roland was amused. "Is that another usage of the ability to detect lies?" He always felt that Wendy had worked too hard after she was appointed the head of the Witch Union.

"Don't you want to rest?" asked Roland.

"No!" Wendy exclaimed.

"Well then, just keep in mind that safety comes first," said Roland.

"Don't worry brother. I got this," Tilly said as she smiled.

...

In the end, it turned out that flying was not so easy to master.

The second trial did not last longer than three minutes.

Surprisingly, Wendy made great progress this time. She managed to successfully raise the glider to an altitude of nearly 50 meters high.

Unfortunately, as the glider was turning, the wings rolled too much.

Roland could see that Wendy had been trying hard to adjust the wind direction in order to re-balance the glider, however, this only resulted in a short unstable wobble before it dropped once again.

Tilly decisively pulled Wendy off the seat in advance, before the glider tumbled and crashed into the ground. Both wings were twisted completely out of shape, leaving the glider in an unflyable state until it could be repaired.

Compared to the first flyer in human history, who only managed to fly three meters above the ground, the participants of this trial equally deserved to be remembered in history for their remarkable accomplishments.

Sadly, Roland needed more than just putting an aircraft in the sky. To deal with the approaching Battle of Divine Will, he had to equip the army with aircrafts as soon as possible.

With such a high crashing frequency, Roland soon knew how depressing it felt to wreck three aircrafts in a single morning.

"What went wrong this time?" Roland asked.

"We bumped into a crosswind," Tilly said as she shrugged. "It caused us to lose speed."

Wendy nodded, feeling guilty. "I panicked and couldn't control the glider or my powers. If only I focused more on the gliders operation, I might have been able to prevent it from dropping," said Wendy depressingly.

These words reminded Roland of a problem that he had previously ignored. Witches had to concentrate when exerting their powers, hence their abilities were prone to fluctuations when in a state of panic. Thus, if a witch could not accurately control her ability mid-flight, she could potentially worsen the situation instead of helping it.

It seemed that this problem could only be solved with more practice.

"How about... letting me have a try," Tilly suddenly said.

"You?" Roland said whilst a little surprised.

"I took your class too. If I controlled the glider, there would be no need for me to worry about getting distracted by the wind. This way, Wendy would have less burden to bear. And..." Tilly raised the corners of her mouth, her eyes shined itching to have a try. "...I believe I can operate this big thing."

Seeing as Wendy was not against it, Roland agreed after a moment of thought.

Roland had chosen Wendy for the flight test because of her ability. She could sense the changes in the wind and generate air currents to support the glider when required. Though, it turned out that supporting the glider with wind was not as easy as he thought.

In that case, it should be fine to change the plan slightly.

Since Tilly was his nominal sister and the leader of Sleeping Spell, it was also part of his responsibility to make her happy.

There was only one prototype left anyway, might as well let them try. It did not matter if they destroyed it as next time he would prepare more alternatives.

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When the third glider took off, Roland came to realize that he had underestimated Tilly.

The glider initially flew leveled to the sea before steadily rising. When the glider turned down away from the sun, the flight rhythm suddenly started to change.

It flew soaring through the wind, like an agile petrel, alternating between the sky and sea. Although it may be inappropriate to compare a clumsy glider to an elegant petrel, the way the glider turned, swooped, and ascended was very graceful under Tilly's control. Roland felt a beautiful sense of harmony from its movements in the sky.

Meanwhile, he realized that Tilly was not overly relying on Wendy to produce wind. She only required it when the glider lost both its speed and height. At these times, she would adjust the position of the glider to allow the magic wind to lift it higher.

She was using the control surfaces on their own to control the glider.

Furthermore, she has had no more than 30 minutes of piloting experience.

It was surprising to see someone so gifted.

Roland then realized why Tilly was more versed in using Magic Stones than any other witch. Based on Agatha's opinion, Magic Stones were not easy to control because a witch would feel a sense of discrepancy. It was as if the stone became an extra limb when she activated it. Could this be Tilly's area of expertise after becoming an Extraordinary?

It was this astounding nervous system that enabled her to coordinate and accept new things more easily and quickly.

It explained why she could master the trick of steering an aircraft so quickly.

Whilst in thought, Roland could not help feeling a surge of pity.

It was a shame that he could not make a Gundam.

Otherwise, the demons would have had to face an unparalleled ACE.

An hour later, the glider was welcomed by the audience's wild cheers as it slowly pressed its tail and landed steadily on the grass.

Chapter 980: Ordinary People

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"Will Lady Tilly be responsible for writing the Flight Manual?" Anna put down her book and laughed gently. "Wendy won't be frustrated, will she?"

"Perhaps, she will, but I think she can take care of herself." Roland moved a little to get in a more comfortable position.

"Why are you so sure?"

"Nightingale asked for an advance on her next month's Chaos Drinks, and Scroll applied for three ice cream rolls. I believe that with both of them being with her, Wendy will recover in one night. Besides, I also gave her two bottles of fruit wine to comfort her. I don't think she'll brood on her failure after she gets drunk."

"Is the wine called 'Drink Yourself to Death'?"

"No, it's called Vanilla Medium."

"What? Such a common name..."

Nights like these were some of Roland's most relaxing moments. The two of them, having washed off a day's tiredness, leaned back against the soft, black velvet pillows and shared that day's stories. Anna would often prepare a book for bedtime reading, such as travelogues and biographies, while Roland would lay on his side and enjoy her beautiful face.

This was one of the few times they could stay so close to each other ever since the construction of the railway in the Misty Forest began.

Every four days, Anna had to take the train to the northwest and process the rail that Leaf had paved, then she had to return by train that evening.

Besides welding the railway, she also had a lot of other work to do.

Such as: making critical components of the weapons,

Improving the new machine's tools, while making replacements for the old ones,

Cutting aluminum bars, and assembling the glider.

The industry of the Western Region had grown dramatically since the time it began. The people were using primary metal materials and production tools without the witches' assistance. No matter how fast the industry advanced, it was still slower than the speed of Roland updating the designs.

It made moments like these all the more precious.

"It would be nice to have the Flight Manual written by Lady Tilly." Anna shifted the topic back to the flight test. "After all, your invention is made for all people to use and her feelings may be closer to the ordinary people. Besides, as far as learning ability is concerned, she has mastered almost as much knowledge as I have. She can probably offer you more help than Wendy."

"Yeah... this isn't something Wendy is good at," Roland said, nodding. "I should have thought of it from the start."

"Have you thought out the machine for the new aircraft?"

"Of course," he replied confidently, "this is my expertise after all. Now that there's a dream world where I can find relevant materials, I'm able to draw the design for a prototype immediately. We can start to produce the aircraft directly after the oil fractionation tower is completed."

After that, they talked about the other industrial problems of Neverwinter, including everything from technical details to development plans. The talk was comfortable and harmonious, Anna not only

understood his meaning but also added many relevant comments and compliments. For Roland, it was refreshing to have someone so considerate and tactful.

As Roland was staring at the girl's flashing eyes, his thoughts shot back to how few girls there were at his old mechanical engineering college and job. This would explain why he never saw any salary improvements and suddenly he felt that there must be a God of mechanics blessing him.

Ana laughed, probably after being stared at for too long. "Do I look that beautiful?"

Roland did not answer. Instead, he let actions to express his feelings. He leaned over and kissed her ear.

"Had I known you were such a man, I would have acted earlier." Anna smiled.

"Does she mean the night she intercepted him at the castle gate after the end of the first celebration of the Months of Demons?"

"What did you initially think of me?" Roland wondered.

"In my eyes, no matter how merciful you are, in the end, a prince is a prince. You were also above all the nobles, which are very different from us as it is."

"Haha ... sorry to disappoint you." He pretended to be sorry. "I'm just an ordinary person."

"No, it couldn't be better..." Anna shook her head and raised the corners of her mouth. "Because I'm an ordinary person as well."

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Two days later in the Barbarian Land.

The main force of the First Army finally arrived at the station of Northbound Slope, on schedule.

Iron Axe could not help having doubts, for it was such a smooth and peaceful journey as they had not suffered any attacks they had expected, not even aerial harassment.

He had prepared to carve out a way through the many enemies, but he saw none of them. Their only battle was with a pack of hunting wolves. Apart from that, the entire plain was strangely quiet, as if all the watchers had been distracted by the sniper team.

If that were the case, he could swallow his disbelief. But the information that the witches told him was not correct.

In fact, the demons only strengthened their patrol forces in the first couple of days and then withdrew most of the Devilbeasts, leaving the outpost un-patrolled until now. It seemed that they had given up watching the area.

After the army camp, Iron Axe summoned a meeting in the central camp with the General Staff and the heads of the troops.

"Why do the demons stay quiet? What do you think?"

"It is indeed a little strange..." Agatha, who represented the Witch Union in this mission, mulled it over for a while and said, "Only the red mist can restrict their movement, but Sylvie said the outpost was still under construction, which means the red mist supply line is still ongoing."

"Their motives would be easy to understand if they were nobles," Knight Morning Light said. "It's either because something happened in their rear or their reluctance to sacrifice a few Devilbeasts." Then he turned to Agatha. "Can Lady Sylvie see what's happening in the Taquila ruins?"

"The ruins are too far away from the sniper team." Agatha shook her head. "They gave up luring the enemy yesterday and are heading toward us."

"How long will it take them?" Iron Axe asked.

"At least four days." Agatha glanced at the map. "Although the Magic Ark is fast, they have been heading in the direction opposite from the First Army's from the start. But if Lightning and Maggie move alone, the two of them will arrive by tonight."

"There is no need for us to guess their intentions," Edith suddenly said. "Whatever they aim to do, it's a great opportunity for us. We have arrived at the station without any losses, and the underground supply line is running smoothly. It's the best start we could've hoped for. What we need to do next is set up the Longsong Cannons and raze the demons' outpost to the ground."

Her plan stated the obvious.

On second thought, Iron Axe asked, "The Magic Ark is almost impossible to notice as long as it remains underground, right?"

"You can put it that way," Agatha replied.

"Could Maggie bring Lady Sylvie here as well?"

"I'll tell her."

"Thank you." Iron Axe quickly made a decision. "Battalion commander Van'er!"

"Yes, Sir!" Van'er stepped forward.

"Set up the Longsong Cannons and get ready to fire," he said clearly and carefully. "The attack will begin tomorrow evening!"