

Witch Monastery

Chapter 16: Chapter 16: Kitchen Encounter, Ruth's Killing Intent!

The moment Charles became conscious of the other's identity, a chill crawled up from his soles and shot straight to his scalp!

Holy crap, wasn't it said that witches rarely ever came to the Kitchen?!

Especially Ruth—that woman who killed before eating. In theory, shouldn't she have even less need to use the Kitchen to feed her "food"?!

Why was she here?!

Charles wanted to curse aloud. This was like playing Resident Evil, reaching what should've been a safe room, only to push the door open and find the Tyrant waiting inside!

He seethed internally, sweat drenching his body from tension. Meanwhile, Ruth was equally confused.

She had merely come to the Kitchen on a whim to look at the knives. "Blade Witch" wasn't just a reference to her combat style—it was tied to her true form and origins.

For personal reasons, she held a fascination for sharp, metal objects capable of slicing through things. Today, on impulse, she'd wanted to see what kind of knives were stocked in the monastery's Kitchen.

Yet, after years of absence, she found the place utterly transformed.

And even more unexpected—within moments of her arrival, a human had barged in.

And of all humans...

It was that outrageously audacious, white-haired one who'd dared to defile a witch's purity!

The moment she recalled the thick, lewd scent she'd detected in Hattie's room that day, Ruth's fury flared anew.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded, her gaze sharp—though, for now at least, she held back from outright violence out of consideration for Hattie.

Charles didn't dare delay his response. Lowering his head, he said, "Miss Hattie is busy with her duties and lacks time to tend to me. After I could leave my bed, she instructed me to come to the Kitchen daily to prepare my own meals."

Even though this witch's beauty was breathtaking—her long lashes, purple-red eyes, delicate nose, and thin lips carved as if by a master artist's painstaking hand—he didn't dare meet her gaze.

Who was to say whether a flicker of anger from her might not shred his eyes into pulp with sheer sharpness?

Fortunately, for now, Ruth had no such intention. Surveying the Kitchen—its size clearly mismatched with its exterior—a puzzle in her mind unraveled.

Ah, so it was Hattie's doing, remodeling the Kitchen into this vast space?

But...

Watching Charles move so freely through the monastery, a thread of dissatisfaction with Hattie arose in her heart.

Just how presumptuous had she grown with her captured "food"?

No. Preparations had to be made. He needed to die soon.

Her eyes flickered as she studied Charles, then softened into a gentle expression. "Why so nervous?" she murmured. "I won't hurt you."

Yet at these words, Charles' muscles locked tighter, his hair standing on end, heart leaping into his throat!

He knew this routine well. Putting targets at ease, lulling them into dropping their guard—this was Ruth's essential pre-killing ritual!

All to savor that fleeting flavor of confusion in the soul at the moment of sudden death!

She was going to kill him!

Terror reverberated in his chest. His ears nearly deafened, overwhelmed by the thunderous pounding of his heart.

Was she making her move now?

His fists clenched involuntarily, mind blank except for raw instinct as he forced out a hoarse, stammered reply: "Ah... I-I know someone like me doesn't belong in the monastery..."

"But I've nowhere else to go, so... I'm scared..."

His brain overheated, scrambling to recall Ruth's habits, the excuses she'd used during their last encounter.

Under pressure, he could only rely on instinct, piecing together fragmented keywords into a shaky justification for his presence.

Before him, Ruth's brow furrowed slightly. Irritation edged into her tone at his jittery terror. "Then there's no need for such fear. Our monastery aids the poor. We don't kill or abuse..."

The lies came effortlessly—yet seeing his state, she cut herself short.

She had already realized that, in such a short time, a few words alone were unlikely to make him relax.

And to Ruth, souls harvested from those who died in tension and terror carried a bitter aftertaste—hardly worth consuming.

Time, then, would have to dull his fear.

Hiss... What a troublesome, infuriating human!

Very well. If that was how it had to be...

"Fine. Weren't you here to cook?" she continued, her voice cooler now. "Go ahead. Let me see what your cooking is like."

With that, she stepped aside and stood there, silent and unmoving, like a pillar of ice.

Charles couldn't help but suck in a sharp breath.

Great. She wasn't leaving.

But...

He had no good reason to refuse her "suggestion."

All he could do was brace himself and proceed.

His hands slick with sweat, his steps unsteady, he had no choice but to move toward the stove under Ruth's piercing gaze. He picked up a radish, scooped water from the bucket with a ladle, and began clumsily washing it.

He'd never washed vegetables like this before. In his previous life, he'd just turned on the tap and rinsed them under running water. In this world, he'd simply clicked options in the system, letting the Kitchen handle the ingredients automatically. He'd never done it by hand!

And with Ruth watching, he didn't dare reveal his real abilities—so he had to fake it.

The more he faked, the more nervous he became. As he scrubbed, he silently prayed: Just lose interest and leave already, Ruth. I can't keep this up much longer...

Behind him, Ruth maintained her usual frosty expression, watching his back while her mind raced through dozens of scenarios—each a variation of killing him in an instant.

No. He was still too tense. If she killed him now, the flavor would be unbearable.

She needed to earn his trust first, lull him into calm.

But... how?

Maybe Hattie had kept him alive for this very reason—to make him let his guard down?

Then... perhaps she could help him, speed things along?

As these thoughts churned in her mind, Charles—lacking a peeler—awkwardly began shaving the radish's skin with a kitchen knife.

Sweat beaded on his forehead, not just from Ruth's threat, but from the fear of slipping and cutting his own fingers.

And then—

Behind him, Ruth saw her chance.

She stepped forward abruptly, her hands closing over both the radish and the knife in his grip.

"Let go," she said. "I'll do it."

Chapter 17: Chapter 17:The Blade Witch

Charles froze. A careless brush of his fingertip against Ruth's sent searing pain shooting through him—as if he'd been stabbed by a needle.

He reflexively let go and looked down. Ruth's delicate, jade-white hand shimmered before his eyes. Each of her slender nails was painted a vivid purple-red, exquisitely manicured yet utterly incongruous beside radishes and kitchen knives.

Yet he knew—those ten purple-red nails were peerless weapons capable of shredding steel like paper. Tearing his body apart would be as effortless as slicing through butter.

And now, beneath Ruth's beautiful facade lurked nothing but cold, murderous intent...

In the split second he hesitated, Ruth's seemingly frail fingers snatched everything from his grasp.

Then Charles watched as the kitchen knife danced in her hand with feather-light grace, spinning across the radish's surface without resistance—peeling its skin as smoothly as cutting tofu.

The skill made Charles suck in a sharp breath.

What a performance. Truly worthy of the Blade Witch!

But this was merely the beginning. Next, Ruth placed the peeled radish on the board. The blade descended in swift, even strokes—first into uniform slices, then into fine shreds arranged neatly aside.

Flawless.

Such knife work could rival even the System's precision!

As Charles marveled, a faint, delicate aroma drifted into his nostrils.

It emanated from Ruth's body—that distinctive fragrance only fastidious maidens possessed. Hattie carried it too.

These witches, masquerading as nuns, committed fully to their roles, adopting every expected trait.

Now, that delicate scent teased Charles' nerves. Watching Ruth's busy, focused back, a bold idea crept into his mind:

How about taking advantage of the opportunity to launch a surprise attack and Purify her?

Yet the moment the thought arose, he crushed it mercilessly!

Charles, oh Charles, you've really grown arrogant. When better opportunities await, why rush here?

A mere twist of her body, a single pinch from her nails, and she could strike him dead on the spot!

So discard such wicked thoughts. Survival comes first!

Chastising himself, he then heard Ruth speak: "Why are you just standing there? Boil some water and soak the salted fish."

Snapping back to attention, Charles dared not delay. Warily keeping her movements in his peripheral vision, he lit the stove, ladled water into the pot, and waited for it to boil.

Ruth never once glanced at him, wholly absorbed in her task. She sliced radishes into uneven lengths but uniformly slender strips, then set them aside on a plate for later use.

"Take out the bread," she instructed next. Unsure of her intentions, Charles could only obey, following each command.

The kitchen settled into an eerie state—silent, bustling, yet oddly peaceful. Charles remained wordless throughout, while Ruth, as if performing a soliloquy, intermittently issued him orders.

Finally, after roughly half an hour of joint effort, a simple dish of salted fish and radish strips was ready. Ruth evenly layered the salted fish and radish onto each slice of bread, rolled them up, and brought one to Charles' lips. "Here. Eat."

Flustered, Charles studied her expression carefully, yet her face betrayed no emotion. "I-I can feed myself, Miss Ruth. Ah... won't you eat too?"

Ruth shook her head but persisted, holding the rolled bread to his mouth. "I've eaten. This is for you."

Her delicate, pretty hands now hovered near his lips, their translucent skin glowing with a healthy flush, tempting him. Despite his hunger, he longed to open his mouth and gently nip those fingers.

Yet he stayed lucid. Gazing at her beautifully polished purple-red nails, he knew—this witch, who loathed humans, would tear him to shreds the moment he dared any blasphemous act!

Hold back. You must hold back!

And so, unable to refuse yet forbidden from savoring her soft hands, Charles suppressed his impulses, parted his lips, and took a bite of the bread.

Hiss...

The fluffy bread wrapped around crisp radish, with the salty tang of fish lurking inside, ready to burst—surprisingly, it tasted... good?

Wait... the game never mentioned Ruth being a hidden chef?

Was this the system's doing?

A flicker of surprise crossed his face, and Ruth caught it instantly. "What? Does it not taste good?"

Charles shook his head quickly. "No, it's delicious. Thank you, Miss Ruth."

Even as he spoke, doubt gnawed at him.

What's going on? Why is this witch suddenly serving me?

"No need for thanks," Ruth said, her tone still icy. Yet she, too, was scrutinizing every shift in Charles' mood. "Helping the poor, especially underage children like you, is simply our duty."

"So, until you've fully recovered, rest here without worry. If you crave anything, don't trouble yourself—just tell me, and I'll prepare it for you."

After a pause, as if for emphasis, she added, "You can trust me completely. There's no need to be so guarded."

Her words were meant to ease his wariness. Instead, they struck Charles like a thunderbolt!

I get it now—she's trying to lull me into lowering my guard!

Just like how sushi chefs massage octopus—not for its comfort, but to make the flesh more tender!

This witch is softening me up for slaughter!

A bead of sweat formed on Charles' temple. Forcing an awkward smile, he muttered, "I... see. Thank you for your kindness, Miss Ruth..."

BANG—

The door burst open. Hattie, clutching a cloth-wrapped bundle, stood panting in the kitchen doorway—

And froze at the sight of Ruth feeding Charles a rolled bread stuffed with salted fish and radish.

Chapter 18: Chapter 18: The Five Colleges' Primers

At the same moment, Charles turned his head to look—and immediately, he caught sight of Hattie.

Instantly, his eyes welled up with emotion.

My dear Hattie... You've finally returned!

Realizing he was temporarily safe, his heart settled back into place, and he let out a long, relieved sigh.

But while Charles was overwhelmed with emotion, Hattie's state was closer to sheer terror. She hurried to his side, falling into a fighting stance as she glared warily at Ruth. "Ruth... what are you doing to the person I saved?"

She nearly slipped up, barely catching herself mid-sentence to avoid revealing anything.

Ruth's eyebrows shot up at the hostile stance, irritation flaring. "Hattie. For the sake of an outsider, you'd actually take this tone with me?"

The tension thickened instantly. Charles knew now wasn't the time to provoke a fight—they couldn't win—so he quickly interjected, "Miss Hattie, it's alright. Miss Ruth was just offering me a meal. We—"

Ruth's sharp gaze snapped to him. "You don't get to speak here."

Charles' eyes burned. He reflexively shut them, tears streaming uncontrollably down his cheeks.

His vision stung—and so did his rising fury.

This witch!

Seeing Ruth's action and Charles' reaction, Hattie stepped forward, shielding him.

Her mind raced. Then, she forced an apologetic smile. "Sorry, Ruth. I overreacted. It's just... Charles' physical condition really isn't the best..."

Ruth said nothing, only sparing Charles a sidelong glance, her corners of mouth curling slightly.

Next time we meet alone... I'll kill him outright.

Ruth plotted calmly, unaware that Charles—struggling to reopen his eyes—saw her smile and shuddered.

This witch is definitely thinking about murdering me!

Just wait. When the Night of the Witches comes... I'll make you pay!

He seethed silently, while Ruth, oblivious to his thoughts, stood with icy detachment. "Since you're back, Hattie, I'll take my leave. Goodbye."

With that, she strode out of the kitchen. Only when the door shut did Charles finally exhale in relief.

The crisis is over.

Hattie immediately clung to him, guilt thick in her voice. "Master, are you alright? Did Ruth... do anything else to you?"

"I'm sorry—so sorry! This is all my fault. I was too slow..."

Charles forced a gentle smile, though his corners of mouth twitched. "It's fine. Not your fault. I messed up. I should've prepared some bread in advance."

As he spoke, the memory of dancing on the knife's edge—his life hanging by a thread—made him want to slap himself.

You learned one Mage Armor and got cocky? Couldn't bear a little hunger? Wandering around this death-trap of a monastery like a fool!

Is this all you're worth? How will you ever achieve anything?!

Today was pure luck. Next time...

Never. Again.

He swore it silently, then stroked Hattie's head softly. "By the way... what were you doing out there?"

Hattie snapped back to attention, guilt and grievance in her eyes as she slowly unwrapped a package. "I exchanged some money... and bought you three more primers..."

Charles blinked. Then, remembering this was a lewd world, a chill shot down his spine—his hair standing on end, his heart leaping into his throat a third time. "Wait. Where did you get money?!"

Hattie blinked innocently. "Sophia gave me a few gemstones from her collection. I sold them."

"It took a while because the sum was large... That's why I'm late..."

As she explained, Charles nearly went limp in her arms. "You scared me half to death..."

Seeing Hattie's confusion, he turned stern. "Hattie, money isn't urgent. I haven't even mastered the magic in these two books yet."

"Once we fully control the monastery, Master will have plenty of ways to earn. So never do anything reckless for money, understand?"

Hattie stared blankly—adorably clueless. Then, after a long pause, realization dawned.

Suddenly, she beamed, nestling her head against his chest with a soft murmur: "Don't worry, Master. No matter what, Hattie would never defy your will."

Charles held her close, struck by a sudden thought—Perhaps this girl truly understands me. Maybe my fears were unfounded?

Well... caution never hurts.

Still rattled by Ruth's threats, Charles resolved to tread carefully in all things.

Only now did he finally have a moment to properly examine the spellbooks Hattie had brought.

And just as expected, the three new volumes were primers from Strixhaven University's remaining colleges: Lorehold Primer, Prismari Primer, and Silverquill Primer.

Each thrummed with magical energy.

Clearly, these too were arcane treasures—recording spells that required no study, allowing the bearer to cast them merely by holding the tomes.

Gazing at the covers, Charles couldn't suppress a sigh of awe.

Excellent. Now I've gathered all five Strixhaven college primers.

This set's value likely exceeded fifteen hundred gold. If the spells within proved potent? Two thousand wouldn't be unreasonable...

"You've done well, Hattie," he murmured, pressing a light kiss to her cheek. "But with so many tomes, I'll need time to absorb them all. Let's hold off on new purchases for now."

Hattie blinked, then nodded obediently. "Understood, Master."

Charles said no more. Instead, he turned and devoured every last crumb of the salted fish and shredded radish bread Ruth had prepared. Then, with renewed fervor, he faced the teaching materials before him.

Good. Now—let's master them all.

Chapter 19: Chapter 19: A Fortnight Later

Time flew by. In the blink of an eye, half a month had passed since Charles transmigrated into this world.

Reading the Quandrix Primer went smoothly—Charles mastered the spells within effortlessly. However, this didn't mean his prior life's knowledge gave him the same advantage with the other colleges' primers.

After all, the Lorehold Primer covered this world's history. The Prismari Primer focused on arts like music and dance. The Silverquill Primer dealt with all forms of written works. And the Witherbloom Primer delved into biology—none of which overlapped with Charles' past studies.

In his previous life, he'd never studied the history of a game world in detail. Most backstory lore got skimmed—who had time for that when there were games to play?

As for arts like music and dance? He could appreciate pretty sisters performing well enough, but actually doing it himself? Clueless.

Written creativity? For a STEM student who'd always struggled with essays, that wasn't an easy fix either.

And biology? At first glance, it seemed like a match...

But let's not forget—this was a fantasy world. If nothing else, the mere existence of dragons, which could bypass reproductive isolation with every species, shattered every biological principle he'd ever learned!

The only universal constant between both worlds was mathematics.

So, after finishing the Quandrix Primer, the next two weeks became a relentless cycle of torture from the remaining four books. Even with the assistance of the Scriptorium's construction, his learning efficiency plummeted. He barely grasped a handful of new spells.

Still, despite it all, his current strength had improved significantly compared to half a month ago.

After two weeks of effort, his attributes panel now looked like this:

Host: Charles

Gender: Male

Race: Human Subspecies (Silver Kin)

Age: 15

Height: 1.69m

Weight: 53kg

Strength: 8

Agility: 9

Constitution: 8

Intelligence: 13

Perception: 12

Charisma: 20

Class: Warlock (Level 1)

Warlock Class Ability:

Pact Magic

After signing a contract with the witch Hattie, you can draw magical power from her to cast spells. Your spellcasting key attribute is Charisma. After at least one hour of rest and meditation, you recover all expended spell slots.

Current Pact Magic Spell Slots: 4/4

Highest Spell Slot Level: 1st

Feats: None

Spells:None

Cantrips: Blade Ward, Eldritch Blast

1st-Level Spells: Create/Destroy Water, Mage Armor, Shield, Absorb Elements

Spellbook:

Lorehold Primer · Burning Hands

Prismari Primer · Armor of Agathys

Quandrix Primer · Thunderwave

Silverquill Primer · Longstrider

Witherbloom Primer · Cure Wounds

This was the sum of his efforts over the past fortnight. Prioritizing the Kitchen had clearly been the right call—with proper nutrition, not only had his weight increased noticeably, but his Constitution had also risen by one point, saving him a 100 purification points.

And this was just half a month. If he could maintain this growth rate, in six months, he could push Constitution all the way to twenty...

Ahem!

Of course, that was impossible. Attribute progression wasn't linear—the resources required scaled exponentially. Getting stronger demanded more nutrients, and more critically, as an average human, his racial genetics heavily capped his potential.

Just raising his Constitution to 9 through diet alone—netting him a 100 Purification Points—was already more than Charles could've hoped for.

Anything beyond that? He'd probably have to spend Purification Points the old-fashioned way.

Beyond attribute gains, his biggest progress was mastering another cantrip and two more 1st-level spells. Worried about his safety, he'd focused entirely on defensive magic.

The cantrip Blade Ward didn't consume spell slots and granted him temporary resistance to piercing, bludgeoning, and slashing damage—no more fear of ambushes.

Shield could block lethal strikes in an instant, meaning crossbow bolts to the head were no longer a concern.

And Absorb Elements specialized against fire, cold, lightning, and acid damage. Combined with Shield, ordinary attacks could barely scratch him now.

With this, his combat strength had truly left ordinary people in the dust.

As for offense? Though he hadn't learned many attack spells, he wasn't lacking. The free cantrip Eldritch Blast hit as hard as a heavy crossbow, and Hattie's spellbooks contained practical low-level options like Burning Hands and Thunderwave. He might not challenge powerful foes, but bullying ordinary people? No problem.

The only catch? He had to hold the books to cast their spells. So now, he'd need to lug these thick, heavy tomes around and swap them mid-battle like some kind of circus act.

It sounded ridiculous, but given his circumstances, what choice did he have?

Ah, the pains of being a non-mage spellcaster... Sigh.

Glancing at his remaining 850 Purification Points after constructing three buildings, Charles mentally simulated future fights. The more he thought, the messier it seemed.

So weak...

Maybe... just maybe... he should level up to 2 right now?

The idea took root. Staring at his Level 1 Warlock status, a bold plan formed.

Leveling to 2 only cost 300 Purification Points. He had plenty to spare.

Why not just do it?

Normally, reaching Level 2 Warlock would grant the class's other core feature: Eldritch Invocations.

In short, these were advanced magical techniques—boosting spell power or adding new effects. Repelling Blast could knock enemies back with Eldritch Blast. Armor of Shadows provided permanent Mage Armor. Eyes of the Rune Keeper granted fluency in all languages, and so on...

In-game, Level 2 warlocks got two free Invocations, swappable on level-up.

But reality wasn't a game. In-game, all warlocks shared the same spell and Invocation options, barring minor high-level variations.

According to lore, though, a warlock's spells and Invocations were granted by their patron. Each warlock's abilities differed wildly.

Take Charles—Hattie had only shared one cantrip and one spell at initiation, far fewer than the standard two cantrips and four 1st-level spells.

Yet he had 4 Spell Slots at Level 1, refilling hourly. Other warlocks would weep with envy.

Clearly, leveling up worked differently here.

And according to lore, Eldritch Invocations required active learning.

With that in mind, he slowly pulled his finger back from the system interface.

Better wait. He hadn't even mastered these damn books yet. No rush to level up.

Just as he resolved this, the system interface flickered. A letter-shaped sigil appeared in the upper-right corner.

Charles's eyes widened. In-game, this icon signaled major plot events.

He tapped it immediately—then froze.

Already? So soon...?

Chapter 20: Chapter 20: Night of the Witches — Ten Days Remain!

At the monastery doorway, Hattie had just returned, carrying a basket toward the kitchen. Inside lay two fresh sea fish.

The sky had already begun to darken. She'd gone out earlier to trade with returning fishermen, securing the freshest catch.

In this era, iceboxes were far from commonplace. Fortunately, she could use magic to freeze the fish, keeping them fresh for days.

Her steps were light—her mood bright. Her master's magical studies had finally shown progress these past few days, and his physique had noticeably improved. She needed to keep up the effort, ensuring he got proper nourishment.

Lost in these happy, mundane thoughts, a familiar voice suddenly called from behind:

"Hattie, how have you been lately?"

She turned to see Sophia gliding toward her. Beneath the nun's habit, something writhed unnaturally. Clearly, the witch couldn't be bothered to maintain human legs within the monastery's walls, opting instead to move on her true pedipalps.

Hattie sighed inwardly, a headache brewing. This recklessness risks exposing the rest of us.

Oblivious, Sophia smiled warmly. "How have you been?"

Forcing a polite smile, Hattie replied, "All's well, dear sister. And you?"

After all, the other party had just lent her a large sum of money some time ago, and Hattie knew that this witch must have a lot of money to gain, so for the sake of the Master, she had to have a good relationship with her.

Sophia's smile faded. "Same as ever. The lost memories... they never return. Soon, I may lose everything—relying entirely on our sisters' mercy..."

Memory Witches forfeited fragments of their past during the Night of the Witches, sometimes even portions of their power.

In earlier years, the condition was manageable. But lately, Sophia's deterioration had accelerated...

She feared the next Night might strip her last shreds of sanity, leaving only a ravenous monster.

Hattie's expression softened with sympathy. She stepped closer, linking arms with Sophia. "It won't come to that. You're beloved here—we'll all help."

"Besides, the next Night of the Witches is surely over a year away, yes? Together, we'll find a solution!"

She meant to comfort. Yet instead of relief, Sophia's gaze turned oddly probing.

"Hattie... you really haven't sensed it at all?"

"Sensed what?" Hattie blinked.

"The Night of Witches," Sophia said quietly. "The next one is nearly upon us. A week at earliest, no more than two."

Like animals sensing an approaching earthquake, many evil creatures could feel it coming—the swelling magic, the twin moons hanging heavy in the sky.

Witches shared this nature. Though they couldn't pinpoint the exact date without consulting stars, calendars or divination spells, they could always sense its approach about a month in advance.

Hattie's face drained of color. She'd felt nothing—no warning at all!

Seeing her reaction, the experienced Sophia understood immediately. Her eyes filled with pity. "I assumed you borrowed money to prepare for the coming Night... but you truly didn't know?"

Every witch's method of surviving the Night was a closely guarded secret. Revealing it meant certain doom. So despite their friendship, Sophia had no idea how Hattie endured the cursed event.

Under that confused stare, Hattie forced an explanation: "I've been... preoccupied with other troubles lately. Must have missed the signs. Ah, thank you for the warning, Sister. I owe you again."

Her heart pounded as she finally voiced her frustration: "How can this be? Only six months since the last Night! This frequency is unnatural!"

Magical beings of the material world loathed the Twin Moons' Night—when evil gods stirred, monsters rampaged, and every faction suffered heavy losses.

But for supernatural creatures like witches, it was worse. Mortals might avoid the chaotic magic's effects through luck, but witches had no escape—they bore the full brunt of its corruption!

Only the eternally mad denizens of the Bottomless Abyss, power-hungry schemers, and malicious evil gods—beings strong enough to shake the world and wicked enough to enjoy doing so—could possibly welcome such nights.

Sophia sighed. "Who knows? The stars move as they will. Until the omens manifest clearly, none can predict the Night's timing."

Her expression grew graver. "Hattie... you may not want to hear this, but in this Sister's experience, losing sensitivity to the Night's approach... often heralds something terrible."

"So... you must take extra care of yourself."

With those ominous words and a final worried glance, Sophia departed. Hattie swallowed hard, her mind swirling with dread.

What's happening to me?

Why no warning at all?

Is it... because of Master?

Since being purified by his power, her body and magic had undergone subtle changes. What would happen when the Night came in this altered state?

No matter. Stick to the original plan and prepare properly!

But first... I must ensure Master's safety.

Steeling herself, Hattie carried the fish to the kitchen, then hurried toward Charles' room—only to find him already waiting, his face tight with concern.

The moment she entered, he grabbed her arm urgently:

"Hattie! Did you know you've got exactly ten days—238 hours to be precise—until your most hated 'Night of Witches' arrives?"

Hattie's eyes widened in shock.

"You... How... How do you know the exact timing?!"