

Witch Monastery

#Chapter 31: Secrets Uncovered - Read Witch Monastery Chapter 31: Secrets Uncovered

Chapter 31: Chapter 31: Secrets Uncovered

Then, Sophia witnessed them leaving together—and returning together.

She saw them enter the kitchen, with Hattie even feeding the man by hand.

She even observed them retreating to the bedroom, where unmistakable panting and the sound of splashing water reached her ears...

Fortunately, having lived over two thousand years, Sophia was no stranger to peculiarities—she'd seen couplings far stranger than this. Unlike Ruth, she didn't erupt in rage.

Yet shock still gripped her, mingled with deepening confusion.

This man appeared utterly ordinary. What made him so special? How could Hattie, with all her pride, lower herself like this?

Combined with yesterday's realization—that Hattie had failed to perceive the Night of the Witches—a foreboding shadow settled over Sophia's mind.

So now, confirming Hattie had left Charles alone in the scriptorium, she stormed in without hesitation.

She would study this human thoroughly.

Returning to the present moment—

The instant she entered, Charles reflexively rose to his feet, adopting an expression of wary deference. "Greetings, Miss Sophia," he said cautiously. "What brings you here?"

Sophia didn't respond immediately. Her jet-black eyes locked onto his, unblinking. Her dark nun's wimple and loose strands of hair stirred as if moved by an unfelt wind, giving her the eerie presence of a specter drifting through the doorway.

Subtle magic pulsed through the air, quickly enveloping Charles's mind.

Unlike Ruth—whose magical abilities were honed solely for executing perfect ambushes—Sophia possessed nearly every low-level spell. Though greatly weakened by memory losses, overpowering Charles posed no challenge at all.

Under the influence of her magic, Charles's gaze grew vacant. The world around him faded away until the raven-haired, dark-eyed woman before him became the only person who mattered—someone he trusted implicitly, someone to whom he'd confess his deepest secrets without hesitation...

Charm Person.

A 1st-level spell that compels weaker beings—humans, elves, dwarves, orcs—to view the caster as a trusted friend and confidant.

At his current level, resisting Sophia's spellcasting was naturally impossible. And once charmed, all his secrets would spill forth unchecked.

"What is your name?" Sophia finally asked, her voice soft. As she spoke, the pedipalps beneath her nun's habit twitched faintly while she glided across the immaculately clean scriptorium.

"Charles," he answered truthfully.

"You cleaned this scriptorium?"

"Yes."

"Why are you here?"

"To study. To learn magic."

Sophia turned her gaze to the books on his desk. Sensing the faint magic waves emanating from them, she immediately realized—these were priceless magical artifacts!

"Where did those spellbooks come from?" she pressed urgently.

"Hattie bought them for me."

Sophia's delicate brows furrowed in confusion.

This treatment was far too generous for mere food.

Had Hattie borrowed money from her... just for this?

"Did Hattie order you to study here?" she continued probing.

"No. I chose to learn," Charles shook his head.

"Oh?" Sophia's eyebrow arched sharply. "You wanted to study, and she just agreed? She obeys you that easily?"

Charles' expression wavered. The question struck a nerve, sparking resistance.

Noticing this, Sophia frowned slightly. Has my magic weakened this much?

With no alternative, she widened her eyes—then the skin at their outer corners squirmed violently as two additional eyes snapped open!

Her true form was a massive brain covered in pedipalps, completely eyeless. These human eyes were merely camouflage, tools for casting mind-affecting spells.

Four eyes now fixed upon Charles simultaneously, doubling the magical power washing over him. His struggling resistance was forcibly suppressed.

"Yes," he nodded faintly. "She listens to me."

Sophia's expression grew increasingly incredulous. "What exactly is your relationship?"

Charles straightened his chest with pride. "I'm her Master. She's my maid."

Sophia's beautiful eyes widened impossibly large—then suddenly, she couldn't contain herself.

"Pfft—!"

Clutching her small mouth and stomach, she doubled over in uncontrollable laughter. "Ohhh—!"

So that's it! Hattie was playing master-servant games with him!

I really don't know when this witch developed such sexual interests.

"Haha... Master, haha..."

Sophia laughed until tears streamed down her cheeks. Charles watched with confused eyes. "Why are you laughing? I'm telling the truth! Ask her yourself if you don't believe me!"

"Ah... yes yes, I believe you," Sophia wiped her tears, straightening up.

She'd remembered now—Hattie was even more skilled than her in illusions and hypnosis. The witch loved pushing victims to the brink with fantasies before sucking out part of their souls.

Clearly, this man's mind was already broken. To still believe himself Hattie's Master... how pathetic!

"Then tell me," she playfully cupped his face, her fingers subtly morphing into their true form—slender tendrils with flagellated pedipalps that caressed his skin, coiled around his head, and sent two probes creeping into his ears.

A habitual gesture, especially when feeding. One quick motion and those pedipalps would pierce his eardrums, spearing straight into his mind to devour memories.

Completely oblivious to the danger, Charles answered honestly:

"Because she's a witch... and I purified her."

Chapter 32: Chapter 32:Perilous Exposure

In an instant, Sophia's expression froze. Her pupils contracted to pinpricks.

"What did you say?!"

As rage overtook her, the soft flagella on her pedipalps hardened into steel needles, piercing his skin and leaving dozens of crimson gashes across his face!

His eardrums ruptured instantly.

Blood trickled from his face and ears. The agony nearly jolted him back to awareness—but Sophia's overwhelming magic power still crushed his consciousness mercilessly.

Fortunately, at that moment, Hattie's voice suddenly rang out from behind: "Sister, what are you doing here?"

Sophia whipped her head around, her stern gaze locking onto the newcomer. "Hattie!"

But then, remembering the outsider present, she silently chanted an incantation. "Sleep."

The spell took hold. Charles felt a wave of crushing drowsiness hit him. He slumped back into his chair, then collapsed onto the table, sinking into deep slumber.

In the doorway, Hattie frowned, her voice sharp with displeasure. "Sister, how could you lay hands on my food?"

She was genuinely alarmed. Through the Pact, she had sensed the other party's power surge, siphoning a portion of her magic—likely a sign of Charles' sudden strength increase. She had rushed over immediately.

Yet, she never expected to walk into this.

So, she struck first, questioning Sophia's motives.

Unshaken, Sophia turned back to Hattie, her tone icy. "I should be asking you, Hattie. Why did you reveal our secret—that we're witches—to this human?"

The color drained from Hattie's face. But under Sophia's piercing glare, she chose to yield, scrambling to smooth things over. "I... I'm sorry, Sister. It slipped out by accident..."

Her brain raced for an excuse. "I planned to kill him too, but not yet. As for why... well..."

Sophia watched her coldly.

Hattie pressed her lips together, then spoke with renewed resolve. "It's... because I still need him."

Sophia's eyes narrowed slightly, her anger cooling. "You mean... the Night of the Witches?"

Hattie's heart still pounded, but she played along, noncommittal. "You know how it is. This time, I... failed to sense the Night's approach."

"I'm desperate. I'll try anything."

Her words gained momentum, weaving a convincing front. "And him? He's an... unconventional strategy. I'm not sure it'll work, but it's worth a try."

"My dear Sister, you're the one I trust most. I'd never breathe a word of this to the others. You've endured the Night more than anyone—surely you understand my confusion... my terror?"

Seeing the usually unshakable Hattie wear such a pleading expression softened Sophia's heart.

Yet her words remained stern. "Still. You never should've revealed we're witches. One misstep, and the entire monastery pays the price."

Hattie's eyes gleamed—she'd won ground. Relief flickered in her chest. "Sister, dearest Sister, don't fret. My spells hold firm. The man's already broken, wrapped in my illusions. He'll never speak a word."

"You have my word - every ounce of my attention has been on him these days. Nothing will go wrong."

She kept making these solemn promises until finally, Sophia's tone softened. "As long as you know what you're doing, Hattie. I hope you survive this Night of the Witches."

Hattie nodded repeatedly. "Yes, you too. Oh, don't worry - after the Night of the Witches, I'll come find you immediately. I'll bring you back to the monastery and help you recover some of those lost memories."

From her conversations with Charles, she knew Sophia's greatest fear was losing control due to memory losses. Addressing this concern was guaranteed to move the witch.

"Ah, Hattie, my good sister." True enough, Sophia smiled again and nodded. "Then you have my thanks in advance."

With these words, Sophia bid Hattie farewell and departed.

Only when Sophia was well out of sight did Hattie finally exhale in relief. She immediately rushed to the scriptorium and gently shook Charles. "Master! Wake up, Master!"

His once handsome face now looked horrifying. Though the wounds had scabbed over, the crimson gashes remained shocking. His ears were clogged with congealed blood.

This pitiful sight made Hattie's heart hesitate.

Her nun's wimple slipped away as her long hair reverted to its true form—slender, ink-green tentacles that fluttered across the desks before finally retrieving Charles's Witherbloom Primer.

Then, she poured her magic into it, casting Cure Wounds spells upon him recklessly, as if they cost nothing.

Fortunately, magic proved reliable. After several spells flooded his body, the scabs on his face slowly peeled away, revealing fresh, unblemished skin beneath. The clotted blood in his ears dried into dust, and the damaged canals and eardrums healed perfectly.

Thankfully, the treatment had been timely—no scars remained, nor any permanent hearing damage. Otherwise, mere 1st-level Cure Wounds wouldn't have sufficed; they'd have needed a 5th-level Greater Restoration!

Charles stirred awake, residual pain echoing in his ears and mind. Seeing the teary-eyed Hattie beside him, he blinked in confusion. "Hattie? You... uh... I think Sophia was here earlier? Is she gone?"

He glanced around but found nothing.

Hattie sighed. "Sophia hypnotized you, Master. And... she learned many of our secrets."

Charles stiffened. "What did she ask? What did I say?"

"She knows you're aware I'm a witch," Hattie murmured. "But I convinced her you're just a madman under my illusions—that everything's under control. That's the only reason she didn't kill you."

"Still... the situation isn't ideal. At best, we've only delayed the danger until after this Night of the Witches..."

Chapter 33: Chapter 33: Undercurrents

Upon hearing this, Charles gritted his teeth inwardly: "That bastard... Never expected such complications to arise..."

As he spoke, countless thoughts raced through his mind. The more he pondered, the more Sophia seemed like an immense threat: "Hattie, tell me—if you and Ruth joined forces, could you subdue Sophia?"

Now, he had to consider purging the Memory Witch as soon as possible.

At this point, Sophia had nearly uncovered his most closely guarded secrets. For his own safety, she had to be dealt with swiftly!

Yet, he was acutely aware of Sophia's erratic strength. Acting now carried risks of failure.

For caution's sake, it was better to wait until after the Night of the Witches, when he had purified Ruth, before making his move.

Hattie hesitated briefly, then contemplated silently: "In this matter... I can't say for certain. At her peak, Sophia could very well defeat Ruth and me together."

"But judging by her displayed state in recent years... Master, if I survive this Night of the Witches, I'm confident we can overpower her with Ruth's help!"

Hearing this, Charles finally exhaled in relief: "Good... That's good."

Now, all that remained was ensuring no further mishaps in the remaining nine days.

His fragile heart couldn't possibly endure another shock like this!

...

Meanwhile, after leaving the scriptorium, Sophia slowly wriggled her pedipalps as she strolled steadily through the monastery gardens.

Yet her mind was anything but calm. Worry etched her face—she couldn't shake her concern for Hattie's current state.

In that condition... can she really be relied upon?

What if something went terribly wrong during this Night of the Witches...?

Her thoughts churned until a cool voice cut through from behind: "Sophia? You seem troubled. Did something happen?"

Sophia lifted her gaze slightly—just in time to see a petite, slender figure flicker abruptly into view before her.

It was Ruth.

Recognizing her, Sophia's eyes brightened at once. "Yes, sister. Truth be told, I'm deeply worried about Hattie's current state."

Ruth's eyebrow arched. "Oh? You've noticed too? She's been keeping that white-haired human as a pet lately. But I suspect she's grown... indulgent with its freedoms."

Though resentment toward Charles simmered within her, Ruth hesitated—then chose not to add, "She even slept with the thing."

For one, she'd only caught the scent, not the act itself.

More importantly, in her worldview, such deeds were unspeakably shameful. Exposing Hattie's secrets would only earn the wrath of a powerful witch.

Sophia's eyes gleamed. "You sensed it too? I've had the exact same thought. Hattie spoils him rotten—she even borrowed coin from me to buy him spellbooks! Now he's in the scriptorium, learning magic!"

Despite her fury over earlier events, Sophia bit back the words: "She even revealed she's a witch to him."

First, betraying Hattie completely would mean provoking another formidable witch.

Second, the human remained utterly under Hattie's thumb—deluded into believing he'd "Purified" her and become her Master.

Pathetic. Did the fool fancy himself some Chosen One of the Gods of Order? Purified? Master?

Hah. Stupid, wretched human.

Thus, in Sophia's view, the situation wasn't that severe. Merely mentioning these points should suffice to make Ruth empathize.

As expected, upon hearing this, murderous intent flickered in Ruth's eyes: "Is that so? Hattie truly spoils her pet too much! Between us, Sophia, I've long wanted to kill that human. Keeping him is nothing but trouble, yet Hattie forbids it..."

Sophia's eyes brightened further, her heart swelling with delight. In an instant, her vast experience helped her craft the perfect words: "Oh, dearest Ruth, I completely agree with your judgment. That man must be eliminated, or he'll surely become a threat to our monastery."

After a pause, she continued: "I support you killing him yourself. But Ruth—now isn't the time."

The murderous intent in Ruth's eyes gradually faded, her beautiful purple-red eyes filled with confusion: "Why?"

Sophia's lips curled slightly as she patiently explained: "Think—the Night of the Witches approaches. If you act now and kill Hattie's beloved pet, what if she bears a grudge? What if she acts recklessly, consumed by vengeance? How would you survive this Night of the Witches then?"

"Ruth, my dear sister, I know everyone's safety matters, but you must consider yourself too!"

Ruth pondered carefully before replying, her tone laced with reluctance: "Then... I'll strike after the Night of the Witches passes?"

Sophia nodded repeatedly: "That would be most appropriate. When the time comes, I'll join you in this endeavor."

After another pause, she added: "But I fear I might lose these memories after the Night of the Witches. So when that happens, you'll need to find me and help restore my state."

Ruth met her earnest dark eyes and nodded solemnly: "Yes, I promise. I'll make sure of it!"

Hearing this, Sophia finally exhaled in relief.

With the two most powerful witches in the monastery—aside from Theresa—pledging to aid me... This Night of the Witches should be virtually assured of success!

...

"The Xanathar's Guild is smuggling an extremely valuable magical artifact through the port in the South Harbor District?"

Bathed in warm sunlight by the massive floor-to-ceiling window, Gale Porter, an executive of Amazon Fisheries Company, sat with legs crossed in a boorish yet undeniably charismatic manner. Her heavy black eyebrows furrowed as she glared at the golden-haired, blue-eyed, long-eared male Sun elf smiling at her from the opposite sofa.

Gale Porter was a quintessential Amazon woman—crimson-black, naturally curly big-wave long hair framing a wild, striking face, brown gleaming skin, and a toned, enviable figure.

She wore only a red leather armor that barely covered her chest and a pair of extremely short blue shorts, as if she never felt the cold. Her exposed abdomen and thighs bore not an ounce of fat, the defined lines of her abs and the firmness of her thighs radiating a feral strength that made one yearn to either conquer this lioness or be conquered by her.

Right now, her thick brows were knitted tightly, her blue eyes locked onto the young man across from her. "Mr. Starsong, why bring this information to me?"

By her understanding, intel like this usually led the Zhentarim to strong-arm smugglers into buying it—effectively locking down the leak.

Yet here they were, offering it to her directly. Did that mean negotiations with the Xanathar had gone sour?

The male Sun elf facing her was none other than Daevyl Starsong, senior agent of the Zhentarim and employer of the half-orc woman Yagra.

Golden-haired and blue-eyed, handsome with taut skin, he appeared youthful. But an elf's age could never be judged by looks. From what Porter knew, this senior agent was at least two centuries old.

In response to her question, the Sun elf maintained his elegant smile. "As you've witnessed, the Xanathar's arrogance has broken the long-standing rules of the intelligence market. After deliberation, we agreed this intel belongs in the hands of the true master of the South Harbor District."

A flattering remark—though Amazon Fisheries Company was far from controlling the entire district, it still pleased Porter.

Yet even so, the battle-hardened executive wasn't about to recklessly purchase the intel. "I appreciate the gesture, Mr. Starsong, but I'm afraid you'll be disappointed."

"Hundreds of smuggled goods pass through the South Harbor District yearly. We're just a small company, hardly equipped to handle such matters."

"So, I suggest you take this valuable information to the District Office instead. I'm sure the guard force will manage it... perfectly."

A high-level executive of Amazon Fisheries Company didn't rise to her position by brute force alone. Negotiation, price manipulation, and reading her opponent were equally part of Porter's expertise.

After all, anyone who'd spent time in the South Harbor District knew the District Office's promises were worth less than a fart.

Across from her, the Sun elf was well aware she was just driving a hard bargain. His smile didn't waver in the slightest, as if he already had her cornered. "Ms. Porter makes a fair point. But what if I told you the man overseeing this smuggling operation is... Kendrz?"

Kendrz—one of Xanathar's Guild's senior executives, holding the position of "Guild Commander." He was the chief person in charge of this smuggling mission.

The one-eyed in the warehouse, the bald man Charles beat to a pulp—all were his subordinates.

At the mention of that name, the Amazonian executive's pupils visibly contracted. "Him?"

Her chest rose and fell sharply. There was no shortage of bloodied history between them. But then she exhaled slowly, her tone deliberately measured. "I admire your thoroughness, Mr. Starsong. You've done your homework."

"However, as a company executive, I don't let personal grudges interfere with business. Surely you understand?"

The Sun elf gave a slight nod, his smile unwavering. "Of course, Ms. Porter. Your professionalism is commendable. But what if I added that the ships being used for this smuggling operation... belong to Amazon Fisheries Company?"

"One of your mid-level enforcers is selling out the company's interests to aid Xanathar's Guild. As an executive, you can't possibly turn a blind eye to such betrayal, can you?"

Porter's eyes lit up.

Truth be told, this was barely worth mentioning. What enforcer didn't pad their pockets or exploit company resources?

Even a ten-person outfit skimmed coins during supply runs.

For a large enterprise like Amazon Fisheries Company, with thousands of employees, mid-level enforcers lining their own pockets was practically expected.

But officially? Such behavior demanded ruthless crackdowns!

"In that case, disciplinary action is unavoidable!" The Amazonian executive's expression turned grave, righteous fury dripping from her words. "Internal corruption has long been a festering wound in Her Majesty's eyes. This demands an iron-fisted response!"

Privately, though? She was thanking him for handing her a company-sanctioned chance to settle her personal grudge.

Chapter 34: Chapter 34: The Night of the Witches Arrives!

Ten days—or rather, nine—passed in the blink of an eye.

During those remaining nine days, no further incidents occurred within the monastery. The nuns were too preoccupied with preparations for the Night of the Witches to spare any attention elsewhere. Thus, Charles, though initially on edge, managed to pass the time without incident.

He hadn't been idle, either. He continued poring over his spellbooks, determined to master a few more magics before the Night of the Witches arrived—every extra spell was another layer of protection.

It was during this time that he discovered an unexpected boon from his Eldritch Invocations.

Eyes of the Rune Keeper: You can read all writing.

At first, he'd assumed this simply meant he no longer needed to study languages to understand texts—whether common tongues like Elvish and Dwarvish, or rarer scripts like Draconic, Giant, or even Primordial. After all, in the game, that's precisely what this invocation did.

But he never imagined "read all writing" would extend to the specialized jargon of this world's academic disciplines!

Now, the abbreviations, sigils, and technical terms scattered across his five spellbooks made perfect sense at a glance. The barriers he'd faced due to the knowledge gap between worlds—his lack of foundational understanding—vanished entirely.

His learning efficiency skyrocketed. In those remaining eight days, he mastered two new cantrips and two 1st-level spells!

A week. Four spells. And not just memorized for rote recitation like ordinary mages, who relied on flipping through their spellbooks mid-battle and could barely cast a thing without them. No—these spells were etched into his mind, ready to be conjured at will, no book required.

All self-taught, no less.

Even by Strixhaven University's standards, that kind of aptitude would place him among the elite.

Then again, in this world and era, basic education was rudimentary at best. The average person's self-teaching abilities paled in comparison to those from his modern society in his previous life.

Not that he could discount the "scriptorium's" contributions, nor the sheer convenience of his "Eyes of the Rune Keeper" invocation.

Of the new cantrips Charles learned, the first was Light—purely for illumination.

The second was Shocking Grasp, an offensive cantrip with no mana cost, near-instant casting, and a paralyzing effect on hit that could neutralize an enemy's combat strength even if it didn't kill them outright.

The drawback? This spell requires physical contact—the caster must touch the enemy to channel the violent current into them. A severe limitation.

Charles knows he's not good at melee combat, so under normal circumstances, he wouldn't use this spell. Only when a single enemy closes in, making Eldritch Blast impractical, would he resort to it as an emergency measure.

As for the two new 1st-level spells, one is False Life—the protective spell he'd been longing for.

Though it can't be cast infinitely without consumption, its effects last a full hour, providing formidable protection. At the very least, it'll give him far more confidence the next time he ventures out.

The other spell he learned is Sleep, a large-area crowd-control spell.

In the early stages, this spell is overpowered—especially in the slums of the South Harbor District. It's practically a massacre.

The reason? The cramped terrain often forces groups to cluster together, allowing the spell to maximize its effect.

And these gang thugs, no matter how much blood stains their hands, survive purely through brute viciousness and luck. None have undergone systematic training, so they lack any class levels, their magical resistance flat zero.

In combat, enemies tend to swarm in droves—only for the player to drop Sleep and watch them all collapse at once.

Then, the player can leisurely pick off the unconscious foes one by one.

Sure, once players gain a few levels, this spell loses its edge. But right now? It's an absolute weapon against enemies!

With these two new spells, his confidence for tonight's operation surges.

"Ten minutes left..."

Glancing at the system's countdown, then at the sun still hanging in the western sky, Charles feels every muscle trembling with excitement.

The Night of the Witches—though called "night"—doesn't strictly begin at dusk. Long before nightfall, the moon already rises in the eastern horizon. Most just fail to notice.

This secret is known only to a few. After all, no one in the world can predict the Night of the Witches down to the second like Charles.

Still, for safety's sake, he ultimately chose not to leave just yet. Though the witches had all departed from the monastery, with Hattie having bid him farewell with a morning kiss before leaving for the deep sea, the previous accidents had left him with what amounted to a psychological shadow. He absolutely had to wait until the twin moons rose together, the world's veil grew thin, and monsters lost all self-control before venturing out!

Tonight's events would determine life or death in the days to come. He absolutely couldn't afford even the slightest mistake!

For this very moment, he'd stayed up past midnight the previous night and slept the entire day today, doing nothing else - all to conserve his strength and prepare for tonight's operation!

And so, though his heart pounded with both excitement and impatience, he forcibly suppressed his emotions. Wait... just wait...

Time ticked by second after agonizing second until finally, the timer on the system interface reached zero.

In the eastern sky, the pure white moon and azure dark moon appeared simultaneously at the horizon's edge, both in their complete full moon glory. The discrepancies in celestial movement affected the world's veil, and suddenly, terrifying magical power from countless other worlds came surging violently into the material world!

In the shadows, master schemers released pleased chuckles.

But Charles noticed none of this. All he saw was the text on his system interface changing from a starting countdown to an ending countdown.

The timer reset from zero to thirteen hours, then began counting down second by second.

It begins!

Now - move out!

He immediately jumped down from his bed, pushed open the door, and stepped out of the monastery alone.

Ruth, you're mine!

Meanwhile, at Amazon Fisheries Company headquarters, Gale looked sternly at the row of fully armed female warriors standing before her: "Sisters, do you remember our operational plan for tonight?"

"We do!" the female warriors shouted in unison. "Kill!"

"Excellent!" Gale nodded approvingly. "Let's go make those bastards from Xanathar's Guild pay in blood!"

In a shadowy corner, two figures clad in black leather trench coats and round-topped hats suddenly spread their arms wide: "Ah, I can feel it - that power!"

"Good, now... let the show begin!"

...

South Harbor District, Port.

Though autumn had yet to arrive, the evening seaside carried a biting chill. The salt-laced wind sweeping in from the ocean easily stole the warmth from a man's body.

One-Eye stood on the port's weathered stone slabs, wrapped in a heavy black trench coat, his gaze fixed on the distant sea. Behind him, several subordinates waited in silence, pushing a wooden four-wheeled cart.

Their employer demanded covert operations, so the bulk of their forces remained hidden in the shadows. Unless raided, they would make no unnecessary commotion.

The port was nearly deserted. Liberl Port City Hall had issued an early warning—tonight was Twin Moons Night. Fishermen had hauled in their nets and returned home early. Despite it being barely evening, not a soul lingered by the docks.

Beyond the distant crash of waves, the coast was eerily quiet. The occasional cry of a seabird only deepened the stillness.

And One-Eye was perfectly content with that.

This environment was ideal—few variables, minimal chance of surprises.

Now, all they had to do was wait for Amazon Fisheries Company's ship to dock.

Xanathar's Guild had allies within Amazon Fisheries, hence their ability to smuggle cargo aboard their vessels. Truth be told, all major factions in Liberl Port operated this way—entangled in mutual interests, locked in struggle yet never delivering the killing blow. None could fully eradicate the others.

As One-Eye waited impatiently, another ten minutes passed before a large fishing boat slowly emerged on the horizon and pulled into port.

His expression brightened, but he remained composed. He knew such ships required time for formalities before fully docking, so he forced himself to wait.

Workers at the bow began unloading crates of pungent sea fish for the port inspectors to sample.

Of course, the inspection was purely for show. No one in South Harbor District dared thoroughly search an Amazon ship.

And that was precisely why One-Eye had chosen their vessels for smuggling.

Soon, as dusk fully settled, the perfunctory inspection concluded. A lean Amazon woman approached and flashed One-Eye a coy smile.

"Come along," she said.

He strode forward and embraced her. "Oh, darling, I've missed you terribly!"

This was his lover—a rare bond indeed. The Amazons had no men among them. They reproduced by seeking "temporary mates" from other races at a certain age, keeping the daughters and sending the sons back to their fathers.

But exceptions existed. Emotions could take root. And there were always exceptional men who could capture an Amazon woman's heart, forging lasting partnerships.

"You scoundrel, look at you!" The Amazon woman rolled her eyes but still pressed a light kiss to his lips. "Come on, Crate Seventy-Three is right over there."

One-Eye motioned for his underlings to follow. Soon, they reached the massive crate filled with sea fish.

Having drifted at sea for days without refrigeration or proper salting, the fish now emitted a faint, rotting stench.

"Load it up," One-Eye ordered.

Four underlings stepped forward, grimacing as they endured the foul odor. They gripped the crate's corners and heaved it onto their cart in unison.

Now, they could leave.

All that remained was to guard against potential robberies along the way. But Commander Kendrz had loaned them a small army—over two hundred thugs. Surely, nothing could go wrong...

Wait.

Would things really go this smoothly?

Suddenly, a sharp unease gripped One-Eye.

"Empty the fish!" he barked. "Check if the cargo's still inside!"

Chapter 35: Chapter 35: The Missing Illusionist's Bracers

Hearing this, the slightly petite Amazon woman's expression darkened with displeasure. "Are you suspecting me? I put the thing in there myself!"

One-Eye quickly soothed her. "Not at all. It's just that I won't feel at ease until I see it with my own eyes."

"Darling, you wouldn't want me worrying the whole way back, would you?"

The Amazon woman pursed her lips, still unhappy. "Fine, dig through it then. Don't complain about the stench."

One-Eye gave the order. "Search it!"

After a pause, he added, "You'll all be rewarded for the trouble. Once we're back, drinks are on me at the Muse District—pretty girls included!"

The Muse District—the city's hub of entertainment. In its early days, the area was dominated by grand theaters and concert halls, catering to refined arts. But now, with foreign conglomerates moving in, it had become overrun with casinos and brothels.

The Amazon woman pinched One-Eye's hip, and he merely chuckled, offering no resistance. The gangsters, however, brightened at the promise and stepped forward to flip aside the top layers of fish.

Immediately, a wave of putrid stench rolled out, nearly knocking them unconscious.

One-Eye only frowned and urged, "Continue Searching it!"

Left with no choice, the men steeled themselves and kept rummaging through the rotting fish. Yet even when they reached the bottom—several of them retching from the smell—they found nothing!

In an instant, the Amazon woman's face paled. "Impossible! I put it in there myself. It has to be in this crate!"

"Unless..."

Realizing the possibility, her expression turned ashen.

The only one who could override her permissions and tamper with the crate without her knowledge was her superior—the ship's captain!

One-Eye's face darkened as well. His eyes swept across the port, sharp and calculating, his mind racing.

Just as he'd feared—something had gone wrong. The item had been stolen right from under their noses, still aboard the ship!

"Anna, has anyone left on a lifeboat these past few days?" he demanded urgently, his palms slick with sweat. The Amazon woman shook her head vehemently. "I can swear on that—absolutely not!"

Good. That meant the thief couldn't have escaped by sea after stealing the cargo. The goods couldn't have gone far!

They must have been moved to another crate, still hidden somewhere in the port!

"Alert the commander!" One-Eye growled. "Lock down the port—no one leaves!"

Yet before the words fully left his mouth, a woman's voice cut through the air behind him.

"Since when does Xanathar's Guild dare to detain an Amazon ship?"

One-Eye whirled around, his face draining of color. Towering before him was a formidable figure clad in a simple leather breastplate and shorts, a round shield strapped to her left arm and a short spear gripped in her right. Behind her marched a contingent of fully armed Amazon warriors.

The insignia on her breastplate left no doubt—she was a high-ranking executive of Amazon Fisheries Company.

This was none other than Gale Porter.

After concluding her dealings with Zhentarim, she had immediately used a sending stone to alert the ship's captain.

Setting aside her thoughts, Gale's piercing gaze locked onto the scene ahead. "Seize them all!" she commanded. "Not a single Xanathar's Guild rat walks free!"

At her order, over a hundred Amazon warriors advanced, encircling One-Eye and his men with lethal precision. Their fierce eyes promised violence, freezing the gangsters in place.

One-Eye seethed inwardly. This was a trap—it had to be! No executive would coincidentally appear at the port with an entire war party unless it was planned!

Yet resistance was futile. Amazon warriors were raised through brutal training with staggering mortality rates—but those who survived emerged as at least first-level warriors.

To ordinary men, even a single classed warrior meant certain defeat. Among One-Eye's forces, only six could claim that distinction.

And this executive? Her strength was beyond measure.

Their only hope was Commander Kendrz's intervention.

As One-Eye silently prayed for rescue, Gale barked another order. "Move the cargo to our cold storage—now!"

"Understood!"

An Amazon warrior snapped to attention, then began driving the male laborers to unload the ship.

"Laborers" was a charitable term—they were slaves. In Amazon society, all heavy labor fell to captured men from other races. But since Liberl Port didn't recognize slavery, the Amazons simply gave them a different name.

Crate after crate of sea fish came ashore as One-Eye watched, sweat dripping down his back. Then—a miracle. A booming voice echoed across the docks:

"Amazons! By what right do you detain my men?"

He'd arrived.

The Amazon executive whirled to face the man she'd sworn to kill—Kendrz. He marched toward them at the head of a hundred-strong force, steel knives and light crossbows gleaming in their hands.

He looked just as she remembered: tall and powerfully built, with pale skin and a thick beard. One glance at him sent murderous rage coursing through Gale's veins. She longed to drive her spear straight through his chest.

"Your men dared to seize our ship," she sneered. "Did you think Amazons would tolerate such disrespect?"

"Sisters, ignore them. Keep moving the cargo to cold storage!"

Kendrz's eyes narrowed. He didn't yet realize this woman had personal reasons to hate him—that the Amazon warrior he'd raped and murdered years ago had been her mother.

He was still weighing his words when one of his thugs suddenly shouted:

"That one's trying to run!"

All heads turned. A dockworker in a bulky windbreaker was sneaking away.

Caught, the man broke into a sprint toward the slums.

But he wasn't alone.

Civil servants, bouncers, even Amazon "laborers"—four or five figures in total—were suddenly fleeing in different directions, clutching suspicious bundles.

Commander Kendrz's heart lurched. "Two squads—after them!"

Ahead, the Amazon executive's eyebrows shot up. "Oh no you don't!"

She leveled her spear.

"Kendrz! Your life ends today!"