

Witch Monastery

Chapter 36: Chapter 36: Ruth's Hiding Place

Inside the slums.

Charles nearly wept at the sight of the familiar little house.

Finally—he'd found it!

The sun had long since set, and the twin moons now hung slightly to the south. He'd wandered the slums for two, maybe three hours before stumbling upon this place.

It couldn't be helped. The slums by day and by night might as well have been two different worlds.

Another oversight on his part. In the game, unless major plot events unfolded, the map never changed. No matter when he visited, the layout remained identical.

But reality was different. A resident might whimsically redecorate, move objects around, or a mudbrick wall might collapse after a brawl—any of which could drastically alter the area.

Thus, Charles had faced no small amount of frustration.

Compounding the problem, while his Light spell provided illumination, it paled in comparison to daylight, leaving much still shrouded in darkness. Navigating this pitch-black world had eroded his confidence with every step.

Thankfully, he'd at least maintained a basic sense of direction. When disoriented, a glance skyward had always reoriented him.

That was the one advantage of Twin Moons Night—with two moons hanging in the sky, he could never truly lose his way.

So, though progress had been slow, he'd finally arrived at the right place.

He approached the doorway, eyed the padlock hanging from it, and without hesitation raised his hand. Eldritch Blast activated, unleashing an invisible force squarely at the point where lock met door.

Bang—

He wasn't worried about attracting attention. Eldritch Blast was far quieter than Thunderwave—even at this late hour, it wouldn't draw outsiders.

And as for Ruth hiding inside?

Hah! She'd reverted to her true form by now, too weak to so much as twitch. The thought of disturbing her was laughable!

If anything, let the witch tremble in terror as she awaited his arrival!

Bang—

The door, though sturdy, couldn't withstand repeated Eldritch Blast strikes. Soon, the lock clattered to the ground, and the door creaked ajar.

Success!

Without pause, he stepped forward and kicked. The rotten door gave way instantly, its hinges surrendering with a cloud of thick dust that choked the room in an instant.

But Charles had no time to mind the filth. He rushed inside, and under the brilliant glow of his Light spell, his eyes immediately locked onto the heap of rusted, decaying metal piled haphazardly in the center of the room.

And there, buried beneath layers of scrap and corroded iron, lay an unassuming, dust-covered massive blade.

Yet Charles knew better.

This was Ruth's camouflage—her means of surviving the Night of the Witches.

Roughly five centuries ago, a western kingdom had been plunged into years of political turmoil. One usurper after another seized the throne, only to be overthrown and sent to the guillotine by the next schemer...

In less than a decade, sixteen kings had been crowned—and executed. Their average reign lasted barely half a year, with the shortest rule spanning a mere sixteen days.

This particular guillotine, having severed the heads of sixteen divinely-anointed monarchs, became feared as an accursed artifact.

When stability finally returned, the new king placed full blame upon the blade, declaring it had drained the kingdom's fortune and caused the decade of chaos.

Enraged citizens dismantled and discarded the execution device. Yet none realized that sixteen consecrated kings' tragic deaths, combined with a nation's decade of grief, resentment, fury and terror, could birth something monstrous.

Thus during the next Night of the Witches, abyssal magic merged with this lingering malice—and the Blade Witch Ruth came into being.

Her true form wasn't the guillotine itself, but rather a nightmare-like shroud of black mist. Yet her connection to the blade shaped her preferences, drawing her to such implements.

(Amusingly, having claimed sixteen royal heads, Ruth earned the darkly humorous nickname "Louis XVI" among players.)

Ahem.

But such trivia mattered not. What mattered was purging this witch—here and now!

Charles strode forward, knelt, and pressed his palm against the massive blade. Whispering the incantation:

"Purification."

Milky radiance enveloped the weapon.

Dark energies seeped forth—only to be annihilated by the purifying glow. The rusted metal warped and twisted until, moments later, the disguise fell away.

Before him stood Ruth's favored guise: the coldly beautiful nun in black robes, petite and poised.

Yet her usual icy composure had shattered. Violet-red eyes widened in shock.

"You—how did you find this place?!"

Simultaneously, she felt her very soul twisting. Something irreversible was transforming her at the most primordial level!

This sudden change filled her with even greater terror. "You filthy human—what are you doing to me?!"

Charles let out a cold laugh. "That's none of your concern, my noble and revered witch lord."

As he spoke, memories came flooding back—the two times she'd wounded his eyes, the murderous threats that had forced him to cower in that cramped room for nearly a

month. Humiliation and rage burned through him, turning his eyes bloodshot and nearly crimson.

At his words, Ruth's delicate brows furrowed tightly, her voice dripping with fury. "I knew it! You were always a threat to the monastery! I should have killed you the first day we met—Hattie's objections be damned!"

The mention of Hattie made her eyes widen suddenly as she recalled the deep-sea witch's strange behavior—her obedience, her doting affection toward this human.

Had Hattie undergone this same transformation to become so docile?!

No. She would never allow herself to become like that!

"I'll kill you, you wretched mortal—ugh!"

She clenched her teeth as the milky purifying light seeped deeper into her being. Then, grotesque tumor-like bulges began swelling across her petite frame, writhing beneath her skin.

"I'd rather lose control forever than—" She ground her teeth, eyes bulging with effort. "Than let some lowly human have his way with me! Aaaah—!"

Chapter 37: Chapter 37: Frenzy and Out of Control

A tremendous force suddenly erupted from Ruth's arm. Charles, powerless to resist, was nearly thrown to the ground!

Though his hand still gripped her arm, and the purification continued, his face twisted in shock. He couldn't believe what he was seeing!

What the hell?!

Both in lore and in-game, Ruth was described as "weak as an infant." How could she still possess such terrifying strength?!

Wait—

As he watched her body swell grotesquely, a horrifying thought struck him: Was this bastard choosing to go out of control... just to take him down with her?!

Damn it, this wasn't in the game's script!

Since when was Ruth this ruthless in reality?!

Before his suspicion could be confirmed, the witch let out a sudden, guttural roar:
"Raaagh—!"

Then, beside her, a rusted blade abruptly darkened with swirling black mist. Surging with chaotic energy, it shot uncontrollably toward the ceiling!

BOOM—!

The energy detonated above, instantly blasting through the dilapidated roof. Chunks of debris rained down, crashing toward his head!

"Shit!"

Charles snarled and rolled aside, barely avoiding the collapse. But in doing so, he lost his grip on Ruth—and the purification ceased instantly.

The witch was now fully out of control.

"AAAAHH—!"

Her agonized scream pierced the air as her body blackened and swelled. Within seconds, she bloated into a grotesque, two-meter-tall oval mass of darkness.

Dozens of bloody faces emerged across its surface, their muffled wails echoing faintly. Anyone who saw this would be haunted by nightmares for weeks—if not driven to madness.

This... was the Blade Witch's true form.

Charles staggered up from the dust, breath catching at the sight.

Damn it all—how did things go so wrong?!

No choice now. Run.

He wasted no time, yanking out his Silverquill Primer and consuming its stored charge to cast Longstrider on himself.

The spell boosted his walking speed by over 30% for an hour. Even an untrained civilian could outpace a world champion with this.

Buff applied, Charles didn't hesitate. He bolted.

Behind him, Ruth's transformation completed. The bloody faces chorused as one:

"Human..."

Then, black mist coiled around her lower half—and she gave chase.

...

Beyond South Harbor, the Deep-Sea Floor

Hattie's body slowly sank to the ocean floor, gradually reverting to its true form: a massive tentacled monstrosity, its ink-green limbs writhing around a central maw—a lamprey-like vortex of spiraling, hook-lined teeth.

After all, when the Night of the Witches arrived, she would lose control and revert to this form anyway. Better to embrace it now and remain in command of herself.

Scattered around her lay bait, its alluring scent drifting through the water to lure nearby fish.

She needed to feed.

If she failed to find prey during the frenzy of the Night of the Witches, the madness would turn inward, driving her to self-mutilation. These fish would serve as sacrifices, sparing her from her own claws.

Time slipped by.

Then, as the twin moons crested the eastern horizon, the familiar surge of boundless magic flooded into her body.

It was here.

She braced herself, ready to relinquish control and let the corrupting power take hold. Experience had taught her that resistance was futile—surrender meant less suffering.

But this time, she was wrong.

As the otherworldly energy filled her, the expected loss of control never came. Instead, her soul seemed to open a channel, allowing the excess power—the very force that should have driven her to madness—to pour out, leaving her body in a state of perfect equilibrium: saturated with magic, slightly swollen, yet free of pain.

And as a witch, a being woven from magic itself, this stable state granted her something unprecedented—a slow but unmistakable growth in power.

The realization stunned her.

What was happening?

Not only had the Night of the Witches not driven her into a frenzied, out-of-control state...

Instead, she felt better—stronger?!

This...

Was this why she hadn't sensed the Night's approach?

But why? This defied all logic. She was a witch, one of the most chaos-vulnerable magical creatures in the Multiverse...

Baffled, she steadied herself, focusing her perception on the fleeing magic, tracing its path. Where was it going?

One thing was certain—the energy was streaming upward, then veering north...

That direction led to the slums of South Harbor District...

Wait. Could it be...?!

Master?!

Suddenly, the only possible explanation struck her. A violent tremble wracked her body, overwhelming her with exhilaration.

Yes! Six months ago, she'd been normal—no anomalies. The only change since then? Master had purified her mind, mended her flaws, and bound her soul with a Pact!

Ah, it had to be! Her glorious Master hadn't just filled the void in her heart—he'd solved the Night of the Witches, her greatest torment!

Emotion choked her. She ached to return to Charles immediately. But without Teleport, all she could do was lash her countless tentacles, propelling her massive form toward the surface.

Master was taming Ruth tonight. And he'd mentioned the slums—exactly where the magic was flowing!

Her joy crested—then faltered. A faint, foreign emotion prickled at her mind. Terror. Discordance.

Confusion spiked.

Why was she feeling this?

No—this wasn't hers. It was...

Master's.

Master was in danger!

The realization ignited panic. She unleashed the raging magic within her, expelling it recklessly behind her like a roaring jet engine. Instantly, her massive form accelerated, cutting through the water toward the port.

A single mercy remained—the surging magic's current served as her compass. No chance of losing her way.

She raced onward, following the trail straight to Charles.

Chapter 38: Chapter 38:Escape and Interception

Raw terror electrified Charles' nerves. He didn't dare glance back, gulping air as he braced against the alley's crumbling wall, staggering forward through the claustrophobic passage.

His lungs burned as if about to explode. Yet despite the agony, he pressed forward—through the cramped passage, emerging onto the broader streets beyond.

But there would be no respite.

From the right-side corner, another band of thugs surged forward, torches aloft. Spotting his silhouette, they howled: "There! Get him!"

In the pitch-black night, the torchlight barely pierced the gloom. These gangsters couldn't distinguish foe from bystander. Their solution? Beat everyone in sight—better mistaken than merciful.

Charles snarled through gritted teeth: Damnable wretches! May Ruth claim all your heads!

Yet even so, his only choice was to pivot left and sprint.

The gangsters bellowed again: "Crossbowmen—loose!"

Whish-whish-whish—

This time, experience lent Charles speed. He barked the clipped incantation: "Shield!"

Shield!

An instantaneous, formidable spell. At any moment, it could drastically blunt physical strikes against its caster.

Its sole flaw? A fleeting six-second duration. Too slow to react, too poor in timing, and two precious Spell Slots would be squandered.

Just as now. The gangsters' bolts found only air. Six seconds later, his shield dissipated—two Spell Slots wasted for nothing.

No matter. Two slots for peace of mind.

A bend lay ahead. But as he rounded it, torchlight flared—six more gangsters blocked the way.

These guys, why are they everywhere!

Exhaustion anchored his feet. Wheezing, he scanned the surroundings—then spotted it: a crumbling, abandoned shack at the alley's mouth.

Summoning his last strength, he lunged inside, using the ruin as cover. His breath sawed like a bellows.

His retreat only emboldened the gangsters.

Torch-bearers in the front drew curved blades from their hips, edging toward the door with jeers: "Come out, coward!"

"You're trapped! Beg for mercy, and we'll spare you!"

"Hand it over, and you walk away unharmed!"

...

Inside the wooden shack, Charles listened to the jeers outside, his fury rising like a storm.

Hunted by a witch—fine. But you gutter-scum dare chase me too?!

Very well. Since you're hellbent on dying—don't blame me.

Gritting through the dust and the stench of rotting wood, he silently chanted the incantations. Blade Ward and False Life—two protective spells—wrapped around him like a second skin.

He'd considered Armor of Agathys, but hesitated.

Compared to False Life, its defense was pitiful—a single crossbow bolt could shred it. Worse, the spell's frigid retaliation only worked in melee combat. Against ranged attacks? A waste.

Good. Buffs applied. Now...

The alley was narrow, the gangsters packed tight. Charles mouthed another incantation, then spun, arm raised—

Bzzzt—

A circle of crackling magic flared in his palm. A beam of raw force lanced out—

BOOM—!

A thug at the back caught the blast square in the chest. Ribs caved; he slammed into the ground, vomiting blood. Lung-punctured. Likely fatal.

Eldritch Blast—a brutal, reliable cantrip. And with Charles' Charisma at the mortal peak of twenty, it hit harder than a heavy crossbow.

Chaos erupted:

"What the hell?!"

"Did something hit him? A rock?!"

"Damn it—that bastard's got strength!"

With only two torches illuminating the sharp corner, shadows swallowed most of the narrow alley. The slums' rubble-strewn ground made it impossible to discern what had just happened.

"Could it be magic?" one gangster suddenly shrieked. "I heard a mage beat the hell out of some guys just days ago!"

The tale of the bald small boss getting thrashed by a white-haired young mage had already spread through the South Harbor District. Now, facing another white-haired young mage, they immediately connected the two.

Panic surged through the group. Seizing the moment, Charles cast Eldritch Blast again—

BANG!

This time, the bolt missed entirely, leaving the thugs unharmed.

"Bullshit! If he were a mage, why'd he hide in some shack?" another thug growled. "He's just got a strong arm, that's all! Don't fall for his tricks. Chel's crew's on the other side—we'll pinch him from both ends!"

"He's alone. There's no way out!"

Most slum gangs had never seen a real mage, so rumors about their abilities ran wild.

Even the fight at the Foggy Fisherman Tavern had been twisted beyond recognition. These thugs believed Charles had crippled the bald small boss with a single spell, so now, watching him, they assumed he was just some stone-throwing warrior with freakish strength!

They crouched low, making it nearly impossible for Charles to land another hit. His remaining Eldritch Blasts all whiffed. Then—footsteps, loud and chaotic, closing in from the other end of the alley. Reinforcements.

Peeking out, Charles saw seven or eight more thugs rounding the corner, torches high, blades and crossbows gleaming. Their murderous intent was palpable.

He let out a sharp breath.

So much for conserving Spell Slots.

Fine. Time to burn one.

Without hesitation, he silently chanted the incantation.

"Sleep."

Chapter 39: Chapter 39:Unlimited Spell Slots?

This was a large-scale control spell. Anyone without ironclad willpower would instantly succumb to deep, magical slumber.

And now, deep into the night, exhaustion weighed heavy on these Xanathar's Guild thugs. The adrenaline of the chase couldn't fight the fatigue any longer.

Charles' spell was the final straw.

THUD—THUD—BANG!

Almost instantly, the reinforcements at the far end of the alley collapsed mid-stride, arrows still nocked.

Torches and weapons clattered to the ground, forgotten. All they wanted now was to sink into the dirt and sleep.

Good. One side cleared.

Charles exhaled—but the remaining gangsters were already upon him. As he turned, crossbow bolts whizzed toward his back!

TWANG—THUD!

At this range, the shots were precise—but futile. The first bolt splintered against Blade Ward's shimmer. The second grazed his Mage Armor, losing momentum before harmlessly dropping.

False Life had already soaked the damage. A 1st-level spell, but enough to shrug off the attack.

The thugs faltered. "He's warded! Chel, loose another volley!"

"Wait—why isn't Chel's group advancing?!"

Then, peering around the corner, they froze.

Bodies. Everywhere.

"They're all dead!"

The scream shattered their courage. Ice flooded their veins.

Six—no, seven men. Slaughtered without a sound.

A mage?

No.

A devil.

In their stunned hesitation, Charles acted. His spellbook thumped to the ground as he yanked another from his pack—"Lorehold Primer."

He had practiced this many times in the monastery, and was already very familiar with changing spellbooks. And the book contained another powerful offensive spell, Burning Hands!

A sixty-degree arc of searing flames, extending six meters in a deadly fan that ignited everything combustible in its path.

"Burn in hell, scum!"

Charles whirled around, extending his right hand. Without needing an incantation, a torrent of blazing fire erupted from his palm—

WHOOSH—!

The narrow alley offered no escape. Except for one exceptionally cautious crossbowman who had kept his distance, the inferno engulfed them all.

Instantly, the gangsters' clothes and hair burst into flames. The excruciating pain tore horrific screams from their throats: "Aaaargh—!"

Terror shattered what remained of their morale. Blazing like human torches, they fled in panic, abandoning all thought of combat.

The lone surviving crossbowman, seeing his companions routed, lost all will to fight. He threw down his light crossbow and joined the frantic retreat.

Just like that, the battle ended.

Charles exhaled in relief, choosing not to pursue the fleeing gangsters who would bear severe burns if they survived. Leaning against the wooden planks of the shack, he gasped for air.

Time to move. Who knew when Ruth might come after him again...

Supporting himself against the wall, he walked past the slumbering men, studying their identities. His eyebrows shot up when he spotted a familiar massive eye tattoo.

Hmm... Xanathar's Guild again?

Tch. Talk about bad luck crossing paths with them.

Well, they were just cannon fodder in the game anyway. With all those treasures in the beholder's lair, he'd have to clear it out eventually. No harm done starting the conflict now.

Losing interest in the thugs, he took another step forward when his body suddenly froze. His brow furrowed.

Wait. Where was Ruth?

Turning around, he was shocked to find no sign of the witch behind him.

Had she given up the chase?

Or...

Had she found new prey in these Xanathar's Guild thugs, her bloodlust driving her after easier targets?

Hiss... Did that mean he was safe for now?

But... he couldn't just leave Ruth unchecked.

An out-of-control witch could cause catastrophic damage. Her earlier feat of instantly killing seven or eight gangsters and decapitating them proved that much.

Even in these lawless slums, too many deaths at once would shake all of Liberl Port - enough to draw attention from major churches, Blackstaff Tower, even the Open Lord himself!

When that happened, the monastery's secret of harboring witches would be exposed, and he'd be implicated for sure!

The monastery was his stronghold. Without it, his advantage would be gone. In this world teeming with monsters, what chance did a physically weak average human like him have to survive?

So he had to go after Ruth.

Especially since he'd already purified her halfway - no reason to abandon the effort now.

But...

One Shield, one False Life, and one Sleep - three 1st-level spells totaling six Spell Slots. He was completely drained.

For the next hour, he'd have no combat strength whatsoever - couldn't even cast Longstrider on himself.

In this state, how could he hope to catch up to Ruth, let alone tame her?

Wait an hour for his Spell Slots to replenish?

Who knew what might happen in that time, or where Ruth might have gone by then.

Powerless yet unable to wait, Charles' mood darkened as he considered his predicament.

Was he really reduced to waiting here helplessly?

Refusing to accept this, he pulled up his system interface, desperately searching for a solution.

But when the attributes panel appeared, his pupils suddenly contracted.

Current Spell Slots: 3/6.

Shock flooded his mind.

How?!

He'd clearly cast three spells, and 1st-level spells always consumed two Spell Slots each - he'd tested this repeatedly! How could three remain?

Confused, he stared at the panel, his breathing ragged.

Then, before his eyes, the number "3" flickered... and became "4."

Another Spell Slot restored?

What's going on? Why?

He didn't understand. Frantically scrolling through the panel, he finally spotted a new line of fine text in the status bar:

Magic Power Plentiful: Due to the influence of the Night of the Witches, your soul-bound ally and Pact patron, Hattie, is channeling her excess magic power to you. Until the Night of the Witches ends, you regain 1 Spell Slot per minute.

Charles suddenly understood.

So that's it. Damn, something like this actually exists?!

Does that mean tonight, my mana pool is infinite? I can go wild without a care?

At this realization, Charles couldn't help but burst into laughter.

So that's it. That means tonight is my absolute domain!

Well then, I've got nothing to worry about!

Overjoyed, he watched as his "Current Spell Slots" ticked up once more—now 5.

Without another second of delay, he cast Blade Ward and False Life on himself, then pulled out his spellbook to add Armor of Agathys and Longstrider.

With everything in place, he turned back with blazing determination.

All he had to do was follow the corpses and bloodstains—he would find Ruth's trail!

Chapter 40: Chapter 40: The Ravenous Ruth

Ruth kept moving forward, slaughtering everyone in her path, leaving behind a trail of severed heads, blood, and corpses.

She felt no exhaustion, no need to stop—only an endless surge of magic power flooding into her body, making her stronger, yet leaving her soul emptier than ever. A desperate craving gnawed at her, demanding she find someone to fill that void.

Ah, give it to me—give it to me now—

She charged ahead, but then—suddenly—she caught the scent of countless human souls ahead. The overwhelming presence ignited her killing desire even further!

And there, just ahead, lay the vast open ground between the port and the slums—the very battlefield where Xanathar's Guild thugs and Amazon female warriors were locked in brutal combat!

The Xanathar's Guild commander had sent many pursuers, yet suspected it was all a diversion—that the prize still lay hidden in the port. As for the Amazon female executive, her purpose was clear: slaughter and vengeance!

The two sides clashed fiercely. Though Xanathar's Guild outnumbered the Amazon warriors by more than two to one, the latter were not just well-trained—they were disciplined, fighting in battle formations against gangs who knew nothing of large-scale combat, relying only on brute savagery. It was a massacre in the making.

And then—Ruth arrived.

The moment the monstrous figure burst into the fray at terrifying speed, both sides froze in shock.

"What in the Nine Hells is that?!"

"I—I don't—ARGH! My head—!"

"Mercy! PLEASE—!"

SCHLICK—!

The nearest unlucky Xanathar thug was caught in Ruth's path—her Transmogrification Blade cleaving his head clean off!

SCHLICK—!

A geyser of blood erupted as the head tumbled to the ground. His soul, however, found no freedom—instead, Ruth inhaled it, chewed it into fragments, and then...

Spat it back out.

Not this... Not what I want...

Where is he? That soul I crave... Where...?

Agony, confusion, emptiness - she could only mask them with slaughter. Yet the souls she devoured brought no relief, only sharper torment and hollowness!

This only fueled her rage further. Unleashing the magic power within, she charged into the crowd, indiscriminately venting her fury in a frenzied killing spree!

The carnage she wrought jolted both sides mid-clash. Then, their strength united in a single command to their forces: "Scatter! Get away from that guy!"

Yet in this moment, the disparity in training became glaringly obvious.

The Amazon women, drilled from childhood, were not just formidable warriors—class warriors starting at level one—but also disciplined. At the command, they instantly retreated several paces, regrouping into fresh formations with their comrades, withdrawing from the battlefield with precision.

Meanwhile, the thugs of Xanathar's Guild were little more than a rabble. At the retreat command, some turned and fled in terror, while others froze in confusion. Their ranks dissolved into chaos!

So when Ruth plowed into the crowd, it was Xanathar's Guild that suffered the worst.

In moments, the sounds of severed heads and screams merged into one. Within a minute, over a dozen lives were lost!

No—this can't go on!

With that thought, Kendrz surged to his feet, bellowing: "Hold fast! Don't fear her! Even her power has limits! Crossbowmen—ready your volley!"

"Stand your ground! Mages are coming! Survive this, and victory is ours!"

"Fight or die! Show your grit, brothers! With me!"

His roar shook his thick beard. Raising a magic-gleaming round shield in his left hand and gripping a steel knife in his right, he charged forward.

Behind him, One-Eyed—bloodied and bruised but unbroken—clenched his heavy hammer and followed.

There was no other choice. Though they'd brought over three hundred men, most were just ruthless ordinary people, not warriors of any class.

Against humans, they'd suffice. But against this monstrous terror? It was slaughter.

By Kendrz's estimate, fewer than twenty among them were even level-one warriors. Those above level two? A mere handful.

That included himself and One-Eyed: a level-six and level-four warrior, respectively—the strongest present. Only they could hold the line now.

CLANG—!

Ruth's Transmogrification Blade swung toward Kendrz's head—only to clash against his magic shield. The impact sent him stumbling back several steps before he steadied himself, his arm throbbing with numbness. Gritting his teeth, he roared over his shoulder: "Crossbowmen—volley fire!"

Seeing their commander actually hold his ground against the monster, the remaining Xanathar crossbowmen snapped into action. They cranked their crossbows and let loose.

Luckily, the target was massive enough that even their shaky aim couldn't miss entirely.

But these light crossbows and arrows were mundane, lacking any magic enchantment. When they struck Ruth, they simply bounced off, leaving little more than scratches.

Kendrz noticed this—and then his gaze flicked to the distant Amazon female warriors, mostly unscathed. With a sudden shift in footing, he slashed at Ruth, then bolted toward them, shouting: "Monster! Come at me if you dare!"

He was redirecting the threat, luring Ruth straight into the Amazons' ranks.

Meanwhile, on the other side, Amazon executive Gale Porter tallied the warriors regrouping around her. Satisfied most had returned, she prepared to order a retreat.

To her, this hulking monster was too unpredictable. Without a spellcaster in their ranks, fighting it head-on would only lead to heavy losses.

Pressing the attack might let them wipe out Kendrz's forces in one stroke—but if the monster turned on them instead, the cost would outweigh any gain.

She wanted vengeance, but not at the risk of her command. Too many casualties, and her peers would demand her head.

Between hatred and self-preservation, she chose the safer path.

Then—she saw Kendrz charging toward her, the beast in tow.

Her eyebrows shot up, fury igniting in her chest. "You dare?! Warriors—engage!"

Any thought of retreat vanished. Snatching up her shield and spear, she lunged at Kendrz.

The remaining Amazon female warriors hastily formed battle formations, bracing against the colossal foe. From afar, the bloodied One-Eyed bellowed: "Protect the commander!"

With that, his forces surged back into the fray against the Amazons.

The battlefield hadn't changed much—just an added monster, indiscriminately reaping lives.

And then—from the direction of the slums—a white-haired figure came jogging into view, panting heavily.