

Throne of Magical Arcana

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chapter 1

Billows of black smoke burned Xiafeng's throat and lungs while making hissing sounds like old broken bellows.

"Anyone... here? I don't wanna... die..."

"Xiafeng, wake up... don't fall asleep..."

...

The endless flaming red light suddenly dimmed, followed by a deep darkness. Like a drowning man, Xiafeng tried his very best to grab onto anything that could save him from this darkness.

At that moment, like a rising sun, a red light appeared in front of him.

In that light, Xiafeng felt his strength recovering slightly, so he struggled desperately to get closer to the light. After taking a step forward, Xiafeng saw the light becoming brighter and brighter, changing from flaming red to pure white. The darkness was thoroughly entrapped by the light and completely dissipated in a second.

"Ah..." Xiafeng suddenly sat back up and was now panting with great effort. In his dream, the smoke of a terrifying fire had made him lose all means of resistance, leaving him unable to do anything but helplessly lie on the ground and wait for the flames to devour him. Like being constrained by a ghost, he knew that he was in a nightmare, but he just could not wake himself up.

The dream was so real that it took Xiafeng quite a while to recover. After his fast-beating heart calmed down, he finally remembered that he had been working on his essay for the whole night in the school library. "No wonder I dreamed about the fire, I'm practically burning my life here these days," Xiafeng thought to himself in a self-deprecating way.

When he roused himself and was about to collect all the reference books and go back to the dorm, Xiafeng was stunned with the strange and unimaginable scene in front of him. Like being struck in the head, he was shocked and his mind went blank.

All the nice-looking wooden desks were gone. There were no piles of reference books, paper manuscripts, and laptops. The only thing left was an old black blanket with loose threads covering him.

Instead of sitting in the library chair, he was actually sitting on a narrow wooden bed.

“Where am I?!”

In this situation, even a person like Xiaofeng, who was relatively quiet and slow, could feel things were going wrong. Even if he was caught in a fire and sent to a hospital, this place definitely did not resemble a hospital! Not even close!

His heartbeat rose up due to the shock. He looked around and tried to stand up on his feet, but as soon as he put his feet on the ground, a sense of dizziness and weakness spread over him and almost made him hit the ground.

Xiaofeng hurriedly reached out and grabbed the handle of the bed to retain his balance. His face was pale and his heart was beating very fast. He was already aware of the surroundings from the quick look just now.

This was a small shack. Including the wooden bed, there was a wooden table, which could possibly fall apart at any moment, two relatively ok-looking stools, and a crate with a hole in it. On the other side of the deteriorated wooden door, there was a crock hanging, a worn old stove was under it. The fire had been put out for quite a while. Just chilly kindling was lying underneath.

Everything seemed strange to him. Xiaofeng had no idea where he was. The weak and dizzy feeling was bothering him a lot as well:

“Where is this place?! It feels like I just recovered from a serious illness... like pneumonia I had in high school.”

...

Countless thoughts were going through his mind, but Xiaofeng had never been in this extremely weird situation before. Panic was violently stirring up in his mind.

The only thing he felt lucky for was that there was nothing unpleasant or horrible that showed up. So, Xiaofeng took several deep breaths and calmed himself down. Then, a loud shout came from afar outside the shack:

“Burn the witch! Aderon Cathedral is going to burn a witch!”

“Everybody!”

“Burn that damn witch to ashes!”

Fear and excitement were mingled together in that strange accent. Xiaofeng was distracted from his panic and felt curious, he thought to himself, “Witch? What on earth is this world?”

As an adult, Xiaofeng could definitely feel that something bad was going to happen there. But his thought was cut off by a sudden crashing sound that came from the door. A twelve or thirteen-year-old boy came rushing in.

“Lucien!” The brown-haired boy, wearing linen clothes reaching to his knees, was standing beside the bed as he exclaimed in surprise, “You’re awake! Thank god!”

Looking at the boy’s completely different-styled clothes, Xiaofeng nodded his head unconsciously. A ridiculous thought arose in his messy mind: “Lucien... Witch... Cathedral... Burn... Am I in a different world or even in another dimension? It seems like... I am in ‘The Middle Ages’ of Europe now, at the time when witch hunting was prevalent...”

If things had to go wrong, they always would. Murphy's Law was reminding Xiaofeng in a cold way. The color of the boy’s hair and his clothes were all proof of his guess. Xiaofeng could instinctively understand and speak this unknown language, but he was far from being a linguist, so he could not even tell what kind of language they were speaking.

The small boy, with several dusty black marks on his face, was not surprised at all when he saw Xiaofeng’s strange behavior. “Mom didn’t believe me. During mid-night she always cries, and her eyes would swell up with tears, she keeps murmuring, ‘my poor little Evans’, like you were already buried in the cemetery.”

“Daddy didn’t know what to do, so he asked that little bastard Simon to bring a message to Lord Venn’s mansion, asking for my brother to somehow come back. Now he is a Knight’s Squire. Of course, the charity doctor would not dare to claim his unreasonable, ridiculous price in front of a knight squire!” The boy talked with his chin slightly raised, feeling sincerely proud.

“But look, I was right! I knew you were gonna be fine! I knew it!”— he was talking, he grabbed Xiaofeng’s arm — “Let’s go! They are gonna burn that vicious witch. It’s the very same witch who made you go to jail and be interrogated for the whole night by the church guards!”

Xiaofeng wanted to think more about his current situation, so he was not interested in going out at all. Besides, they were going to burn a person to death. That was something completely unacceptable for the kind-hearted Xiaofeng, at least, he believed he was. But the last thing the boy mentioned shocked him, “The witch had something to do with me?”

Xiaofeng, therefore, changed his mind. With his arm in the boy’s hand, he stumbled out of the room and followed the boy towards the cathedral.

Xiaofeng looked around the people on the way. It was warm outside. Most men were wearing narrow-sleeved linen clothes, the same color pants and shoes without heels,

while women wore monotonous roughly cut long dresses with big pockets. It was simple and old.

Most of them had brown hair and eyes, while some outstanding-outlined faces had red or black hair with green or blue eyes.

“This is really Middle Age?” Xiaofeng found out he himself was wearing the same clothes.

Soon after they came out of the slum filled with low and shabby shacks, they saw a not so large but solemn and grand cathedral with high arched ceilings in front of them. On the biggest ceiling hung a large white cross. The windows under it were very narrow and small.

Lots of people had gathered there already. Following the small boy, Xiaofeng squeezed through the crowd and kept pushing forward. This made some people irritated and they stared at them angrily, but they knew that as adults, they could not misbehave on the square of Aderon.

Soon, Xiaofeng could see ahead. They were in the very front of the crowd now.

In the center of the square, a twenty-something, pale-faced beautiful woman in a black robe was tied to a wooden cross. People were throwing stones and pieces of wood while shouting, swearing, and spitting at her:

“Go to hell! Damned witch!”

“You wanted everyone in Aderon to die!?”

“My poor Tracy! She died several months ago... Must be because of you! You evil!”

...

The woman in the black robe got hit several times, but she just tightly shut her pale and thin lips, without letting out a groan. Standing there like a statue, she looked at the crowd.

In the front of the crowd stood a middle-aged man wearing a baggy white golden embroidered robe, with a white beret on his head and a white cross in his hands. He remained silent all the time, appearing solemn and respectful. Several men and women were standing behind him. All of them were wearing the same neat white robes. Their faces were fresh and rosy, standing in a sharp contrast to the poor and dirty crowd on the square.

Behind the white robes, there was a mighty row of armored guards in chainmail.

The middle-aged man looked at his pocket watch and stepped forward. He raised the round badge in his hand.

Instantly, those indignant and resentful people who were arguing all shut their mouths and quieted down.

Xiafeng could hear the sound of wind passing through people's clothes.

He was very impressed. Even in contemporary society, people's absolute obedience and quick response like this would require at least several months' of training. What kind of authority or power could be able to make all those poor people be so compliant like an army?

The middle-aged man was holding the badge, speaking with a low but penetrating voice which resounded all over the square, "You poor sinner. You are deceived by the devil and become greedy for power. Both your body and soul have been corrupted. Only the Light can purify. It is punishment, but also the mercy of God."

"Burn her! Burn her!" People's cries started gathering together and becoming louder and louder.

The scene of the fanatical people crying loudly at the same time made Xiafeng shudder. If they knew he actually came from another world, Lucien, or say, Xiafeng, whose soul had been occupied by the "demon", would be the one on the gallows next time.

"Before the Light shades on you," the man asked in a merciful manner, "Confess your sins! Sincere penitence can save your soul. Then your soul would ascend to heaven where God lives."

The women in the black robe suddenly started crazily laughing, her voice was very powerful. "What I pursue is the true form of magic, not the true form of God! Burn me! I will see your heaven being destroyed and your cathedral collapse in the flames!"

"Insane!"

"Vicious!"

"She cursed the bishop! Kill them all! These damned witches following the demons!"

"Burn her to ashes!"

The bishop remained silent, but the poor people were screaming and shouting hysterically with great fever.

It was the first time for Xiafeng to see this kind of terrifying madness. "Too dangerous here." He was deeply shocked.

He really wanted to be caring towards that woman, but he dared not take any action or those insane individuals would execute him with huge amounts of rocks. Xiaofeng was also confused to find that there was no wood beneath that woman.

“How are they gonna burn her without any firewood?”

The bishop started praying, his voice was loud and cold, “You, the sinner. Go to hell under the Light!”

The cross in his hand suddenly burst forth with splendid light. The light was so bright that all Xiaofeng could see was a white mass.

It was like the bishop was holding a small sun, solemn, pure, and grand looking. Including the small boy, everyone lowered their heads and started praying.

Beams of light gathered and took off capably to the unmistakable blue sky. When it reached the ceiling, the light reflected back and fell straightforwardly on the gallows.

Fierce red flames flared up even higher than a person’s height and devoured the woman.

She laughed and cursed Insanely.

"In the blazes, I will see your shrewd paradise demolished."

"In the blazes, I will see your fabulous house of God crumbling."

"In the blazes, I will see you individuals everlastingly worsened!"

...

Her thrilling cries and curses were lingering in everyone's ears until she was burned down to ashes.

However, Xiaofeng was completely stunned since earlier when the cross erupted with dazzling light.

“This is not medieval Europe...”

“This is a world where magic truly exists!”

“My name is... Lucien...”