

Throne of Magical Arcana

851 Side Story: Viscount Carendia

Crack.

The sound of the door lock being opened was particularly loud at the quiet night.

A golden-haired and golden-eyed little boy had been lying on the couch, half asleep, but he sat up the moment he heard the noise and ran to the door in excitement.

After the door was opened, a golden-haired woman, wearing a purple court dress, walked in. She was pretty and tall, with a blush that was not so obvious on her face. There was a certain charm in her formal smile.

“Edward, you haven’t slept yet?” The beautiful and mature lady was obviously surprised when the little boy ran to her.

The boy smiled shyly. “Mom, I wanted to wait for you to come back...”

He suddenly stopped talking because he saw a tall man behind his mother. The man had a sculpted, handsome face that looked like a glacier that would never unfreeze. He also had very special silver short hair.

The man suddenly put on a gentle smile, like spring melting the snow. He picked up the golden-haired lady's hand and kissed it. "It's an honor to have met you. I wish you a sweet dream tonight."

"I'm happy to make your acquaintance too, Viscount," the gold-haired lady responded with a smile and saw the formally-suited man off.

"Mom, who is he?" For reasons he did not know, Edward disliked the man just now.

"Well, it's a foreign viscount that I met at the ball today. His name is Carendia." The golden-haired lady tried to answer calmly, but her lips were still curling. Then, she suddenly became solemn. "Edward, it's almost twelve o'clock. You're two hours late for bed. Where is Adelin? I'm going to ask her why she allowed you to wait for me! You are the only descendant of this family, and you should never be self-willed."

"I... I slipped out of my room. It has nothing to do with Adelin..." Edward pretended to be scared. He knew that his mother would not really punish him.

...

"Young master, it's possible that you will have a new father soon," a maid said to Edward, who had grown much taller, in a low voice.

Edward, who was still not old enough, was gloomy and agitated. During the past two years, her mother and that Viscount Carendia were closer and closer and were really like a couple now. As a result, he had less time to talk or play with his mother. What an awful man!

“Although it has been difficult for Her Ladyship to support the family after His Lordship was summoned by the Lord, and she should be blessed for pursuing her own happiness, you must remember that you are the only heir to the title and the heritage. You cannot allow Viscount Carendia to transfer the wealth bit by bit.” The maid who was loyal to the family reminded Edward of the potential crisis.

Edward, however, blurted out, “He approached my mother for money and the title? No, I have to stop him!”

After that, the boy ran to the lobby, leaving the maid stunned. It... It was only a reminder. I certainly did not mean that.

“Wu, wu, Mom, I was wrong. I shouldn’t have been so impolite to the viscount!” Soon enough, Edward’s cries came from the living room. He had been pressed down on the couch and spanked hard by his mother, and he wept really hard.

The golden-haired lady snorted and said to Viscount Carendia in apologies, “Forgive me for not teaching the child well.”

“It’s nothing. Children of his age are all naughty,” Viscount Carendia said; his eyes gentle.

“Edward, apologize to the viscount,” the golden-haired lady asked him.

Sobbing, Edward apologized. Then, while his mother was not looking at him, he pretended to be tough and said in an extremely low voice, “I won’t let you steal my mother!”

Viscount Carendia looked the same as before, as if he were looking at an angry but not-at-all threatening kitten.

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“You will call the viscount dad in the future,” the golden-haired lady said to Edward rather shyly.

Edward pursed his lips and tried to make himself look normal. “Yes, madam.”

Viscount Carendia, who sat on the opposite side of the table, cut the bloodstained steak and said to Edward seriously as if he were his real father, “Your current knight teacher is not good enough. Starting from tomorrow, I will teach you in person.”

“I will certainly work hard.” Edward clenched his fists, swearing to vent his fury on the goddamn man during the training.

...

Pa.

Edward was thrown to the ground and cried in pain.

“Why do you need a sword if tears help?” Viscount Carendia said without the slightest pitifulness. “So, you are only a boy, not a man. A real man sheds blood, not tears.”

Edward stood up and glared at him.

Viscount Carendia waved his wooden sword. “Don’t you hate me the most? Don’t you want to kick me away? Accomplish it with the sword in your hand! Or maybe you are a coward who loves failure?”

Edward roared brutally and charged at Viscount Carendia with the wooden sword in his hands. He was knocked again and again but stood up every time.

He thought, I will not compromise!

...

In the church square, a cross had been established, and a mature, beautiful golden-haired lady was tied to it.

“Mom! Mom!” Despite the restraint of a few knight squires, Edward struggled to move toward the cross, with tears and panic all over his face.

With the Saint Badge of Truth in his hands, the bishop drew a cross on his chest and pointed at the golden-haired lady. “She is a noble, but she is corrupted by the darkness and degenerated into a vampire’s servant, trying to turn the Lord’s lambs into the vampire’s food.”

The golden-haired lady seemed to have lost her soul. She stared at the bishop without saying a word, but Edward refuted in a loud voice, “No! No! My mother never hurt anyone!”

The bishop completely ignored Edward and continued, “You are evil and filthy, but the Lord is merciful and benevolent. Purge is His grace and your path to paradise. Let me ask you. Would you like to repent and kneel before the Lord’s feet again?”

“If... If I repent, will Edward be pardoned? He’s just a child. He knows nothing!” The golden-haired lady seemed back to life all of a sudden.

The bishop kept drawing the cross. “The Lord is the fairest of all. As long as Edward survives the fire, it will prove his innocence.”

The golden-haired lady laughed miserably. “Hahaha. Then, let me answer you. I would rather fumble in hell than lose myself in paradise!”

“Sinner, go to hell and repent there.” Coldly, the bishop let out a holy light and ignited the stand.

“No!” Edward cried earsplittingly. He seemed to see the gentle eyes that were looking at him through the burning fire.

After a long time, Edward passed out in tears. Suddenly, a voice echoed next to his ears, “Sorry that I was late.”

Edward tried to open his eyes. He saw the man who caused his mother to be burnt. He gnashed his teeth and snapped, "It was all your fault! If it weren't for you, my mother wouldn't have been burnt at all!"

"I'm sorry. I was late." Viscount Carendia looked as gloomy as a mountain that just had an avalanche.

"You were late?" Edward said with a sneer that was beyond his age. "What a perfect reason!"

Then, he spat out, one word after another, "You murdered my mother!"

Viscount Carendia sighed. "Whatever you say, I will take good care of you."

He lowered his head and approached Edward's neck, his four teeth suddenly grew. "From today on, you will be Viscount Carendia."

Sting came from his neck, and Edward's face was numbed, but his eyes were still full of sparks of hate.

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The chilly and dreamy silver moon hung high in the sky, creating silver ripples on the lake that was as smooth as a mirror.

Golden-haired and golden-eyed, Viscount Carendia stood before the window with a cup of wine in his hand, appreciating the view.

“My lord, do you remember your past again?” Nied, his old butler, walked in from the outside.

Viscount Carendia nodded expressionlessly. “You can never forget hate.”

The old butler did not know what to say. He could only speak from a practical point of view. “My lord, you are just a grand knight, and the old viscount is close to a level-eight radiant knight.”

“What’s to be scared of if even death cannot intimidate you?” The handsome and muscular Viscount Carendia suddenly smiled. “Such an irresponsible man will be killed sooner or later. In the meantime, I will practice myself to be a radiant knight sooner.”

“However, as his descendant, you cannot resist him at all when you are facing him,” Nied said again.

Viscount Carendia sighed and did not pursue the topic. He turned around and went into a secret chamber. Looking at the silver-haired and silver-eyed man in the painting, he said, “Grandpa, although I haven’t seen you much, I can sense your love. I hope that I can follow you and receive your instructions...”

After his “prayer”, Viscount Carendia’s eyes suddenly focused, because he saw another cup on the table. Thick red fluids were floating inside, and countless illusionary symbols were drifting up and down inside.

“What’s this?” he asked in shock.

Nied’s eyes almost popped out. “This... This is the Origin of Blood of the first-generation vampires. Was... Was the old earl here?”

“Grandpa?” Viscount Carendia looked around, only to find nothing, but he soon burst into laughter. “As long as I melt this blood, I will no longer be scared of the bloodline suppression from that man.”

The old butler said helplessly, “The old earl hasn’t changed his hobby and habit one bit. How can such a tragedy be fun?”

“Camoray Cuke, did you notice anything?” Viscount Carendia asked.

A dull noise hummed, leading the whole castle to shake. “No. It’s just that... my nose is itchy. Achiu!”

It sneezed so heavily that the window glass was all ringing.

After a brief silence, Viscount Carendia said half-teasingly, “The greatest impression that grandpa has left on me is that he likes to observe everything in secret. He’s like a voyeur.”

“Achiu!”

Somebody on the mountain far away suddenly sneezed hard.

Throne of Magical Arcana

852 Side Story: Hellen

In the Allyn magic tower in the City in the Sky...

Berkley was already used to the magnificent building. No longer amazed by its appearance that was entirely different from other magic towers, he only felt that fondness and appreciation from the bottom of his heart.

Also, the moment he saw the magic tower, Berkley felt firm and steady. He was no longer as scared as he used to be in the past, when he was often woken up in the middle of a dream, fearing that the night watchers would find him, capture him, and send him to the fire.

“This place is the heaven of the sorcerers...” Berkley closed his eyes and remarked. Then, a fire seemed to be ignited in his heart. Would she still be there today?

He moved faster and passed through the lobby of the magic tower, entering the first zone on the first level of the magic tower where the General Arcana Library had been established.

Many arcanists had the habit of reading and studying the books immediately after they borrowed them, in order to figure out the files that they were missing. Therefore, the Congress of Magic had established a reading room on the empty ground in the first zone so that the arcanists would have a place where they could read quietly.

Later, many arcanists realized that the environment here was very suitable for them to read books that did not require experiments. Therefore, they came to the place to study as well.

Berkley took out two thick books with black covers from his magic pouch. Taking a few deep breaths and pretending that he had come here as a hardworking researcher, he slowly walked into the reading room, although no books were on his mind at all.

The moment he entered the reading room, he looked at a place next to the window, hoping that he could see the beautiful girl there again.

“She’s really here!” Berkley couldn’t have been more delighted. A brilliant smile popped up on his face completely beyond his control.

The sun shined into the room through the window and illuminated a beautiful girl who was sitting in the silence. She was focused and indifferent. Her face was delicate. Her lips were blue, but they emitted a certain weird charm. Together with the halo caused by the sunlight, she looked like a snow elf that could not be described.

She was the most beautiful and attractive female that Berkley had ever met during his escape all over the continent. As a result, he had spent the better half of his last week in the reading room appreciating the girl quietly, unable to get himself away from her.

“No. I can’t be like this anymore...” Berkley said to himself, as if he were making up his mind to work harder. “Who knows whether or not she’s coming to the reading room next week? After all, she barely came to this place before. I have to get to know her. This opportunity is too great to be missed out on. Otherwise, I will be regretful for the rest of my life!”

Encouraging himself and summoning his courage, he finally made up his mind after a minute and walked over to the girl with his books in his hand, hoping to use them as a conversation starter.

“There’s no need to fret! This is just regular friend-making! I am not forbidden from making friends in the Congress of Magic, am I?”

“Bring out the courage when you date with the noble ladies in the past! Don’t be a coward!”

Too many thoughts popped up in Berkley’s head. He felt that his feet were as unsteady and strengthless as his own heart.

The girl was too focused on the book in her hand, calculating on the paper now and then, to notice that Berkley had approached her.

Her hair seemed to be made of ice, which was clear and glittering under the sunlight, reflecting vague rainbows. Berkley was dazzled and completely forgot what he had in mind previously.

“Honorable lady, may I sit here?” Berkley asked; his lips dry. He felt that his voice was shaking beyond his control.

The sound of quill running on the paper never stopped. The girl with an unparalleled face did not even bother to raise her head. She was as focused as before.

“Honorable lady, may I sit here?” Berkley held back his cowardliness, which was urging him to turn around and flee, and asked again.

Hualala.

The pages of the book were turned, but the elf-like girl seemed to have nodded her head, or so Berkley thought that was what he saw.

Was it my illusion? Berkley thought unconfidently. However, he immediately told himself that he should leave it alone. As long as she did not openly refuse him to sit here, it meant that she was okay with that!

He sat on the girl’s opposite side carefully and stole a glimpse at her again, only to be astounded by her surreally delicate face again. In the meantime, he noticed that the girl had two badges on her magic robe. One of them was a four-star arcanist’s badge, and the other was a sorcerer’s badge with two black circles.

She’s already a middle-rank arcanist at such a young age? Berkley was shocked because he had barely seen any girls with such a remarkable achievement. Then, he thought hard about how to get to know her.

“My lady, I’ve been to the Congress for years, but I’ve never met anyone whose arcana level is so much higher than their magic level. You are really an arcana genius.” Berkley tried to make his smile elegant and handsome.

The girl kept writing with her quill, not even bothering to nod her head or give any reply that indicated her awareness of his remark.

Berkley's face was frozen on his face. Did she not like the subject?

So, he went on and said again, "My lady, you seem to be of the bloodline of the snow elves? That's an extremely rare bloodline. As I recall, it only exists in the northland."

Hardly had he concluded his sentence when the girl suddenly raised her left hand. Berkley couldn't have been more delighted. There was finally some reaction!

The girl's tiny eyebrows were furrowed. She held her cheek with her left hand, and her index finger was extended to her mouth and touched her lips without her realizing it at all. However, she still did not look at Berkley at all or said anything back to him.

Berkley was attracted by the most beautiful picture at first. Then, immense frustration of failure emerged and bit his heart deeply.

I can't... I can't give up just like that!

If I miss this opportunity, there wouldn't be any in the future. Who knows if she is from the northland? Who knows if she will return very soon?

After several minutes, Berkley summoned his courage again. Trying to soften his smile that had already been rigidified, he said, "My lady, I'm impressed by your concentration. I can't help but wonder what you are working on."

The moment he spoke it out, Berkley almost slapped himself in the face brutally because he had seen the familiar mathematical symbols all over the book before the girl. It was not difficult for him to guess what category the book belonged to at all.

The girl's left forefinger seemed to have already been extended into his lips. Her eyes were fixed on the paper, and the quill in her right hand kept moving, as if the whole world had nothing but herself as well as the book, the paper, and the ink left, and no other people existed in that world at all. Whoever sat on her opposite side would be treated as air equally.

Berkley was silent for another couple of minutes. The passion in his heart was unstoppable. Therefore, he pulled himself back together and said again, "My lady, according to my quick glance, you seem to be studying the knowledge about calculus. I don't know what problem you have run into, but if you don't mind, you can speak it out so that we can discuss it together. Although I've only come to the Congress for several years, I do know calculus rather well. After all, the solutions to many magic models cannot be achieved without calculus..."

He tried to start with the part that the girl was obviously most interested in.

Before Berkley finished his sentence, the girl had raised her head abruptly. She stared at him carefully with her transparent, ice-like eyes. Berkley felt that his mind was shaking so hard that he almost lost control of himself.

"How should a limit be strictly defined to avoid the previous problems? What about continuity, derivative, and infinitesimal? How can they be mathematically defined in a self-consistent way?" The girl's voice was chilling and refreshing, like the floating snowflakes in the winter. There was nothing but solemnity in her tone.

Dazed, Berkley opened his mouth and could barely close it. What... What were those questions? What was she working on exactly? It was... It was too terrifying!

His brain seemed to have just been savaged by “Mental Storm”, a legendary spell, and nothing could be found at all in it. However, the girl was still staring at him attentively and carefully. Subconsciously, he replied, “I... I haven’t really given any thought to those questions before...”

The girl nodded her head. With no despise, albeit some disappointment, she lowered her head again and continued writing her own ideas.

Looking at the chilling girl who basked in the brilliant sunlight, Berkley felt that his heart had been so destroyed that he could not fight any longer. She was a goddess in arcana that other people could only appreciate and admire from far away but could not approach.

Chapter 853 - The Unannounced Guest Side Story: Rise of the Congress

The Unannounced Guest Side Story: Rise of the Congress

“My lord.” The farmers who were busy working in the land greeted their liege humbly and obediently. Most of them did not quite see the face of the earl, but they knew that the only person who could have been surrounded by so many knights, who could have ridden the magnificent Dragon Scale horse, who could have worn the fancy clothes, and whose necklace was above the back of his head and covered his ears, was the distinguished Lord Earl. Also, the guys before them were also paying respects.

With the Dragon Scale horse between his legs and a whip in his hands, Earl Paphos heard nothing of the farmers' greetings. It was a privilege that any noble deserved, and there was no need to feel surprised.

After he left his manor and reached the highroad, Earl Paphos slapped his horse hard to let it run faster, surpassing the wagons and the passersby on his way.

Earl Paphos had always despised the nobles who took wagons. The nobles who had been knighted for eliminating sorcerers and the other heresies should not abandon their pride and their knightly instincts! Vanity was also an original sin!

The Paphos family was one of the earliest knight families who resisted the Magic Empire with the Church and the king. The title of the earl had been earned by the magnificent strength of every generation and the remarkable achievements they made. Earl Paphos himself was among them. He had become a radiant knight before forty, winning the nickname "Dragon of Protection". His hands were stained with the blood of evil sorcerers and other heresies.

Dozens of Dragon Scale horses galloped fast all the way into the city. The guards of the city cleared the path when they saw the emblem of the Paphos family far away, not daring to stop or examine them at all.

Hooooooooo!

Earl Paphos pulled his bridle, and the Dragon Scale horse rose like a human and roared as if it were a dragon.

The knights that followed him did the same. All the horses were stopped simultaneously.

“Good evening, my lord.” At the entrance of the villa, two nobles were already standing.

They were wearing the fashionable two-layered shirt inside, whose many buttons were all made of gems. Outside, they were wearing a high-collared coat that was decorated with many accessories.

Earl Paphos got off the horse and nodded. “Thank you for your trouble.”

They were the two barons on his land. Today, they helped him summon the nobles that were close to him for a private meeting.

“It’s our pleasure,” the barons answered respectfully and directed him into the villa.

Earl Paphos did not smile or say anything, but he was quite satisfied with the two barons’ attitudes, which made him feel the honor and power of a senior noble.

Several long tables were placed in the hall, and steaks, roasted chicken, and the likes were on them. Many nobles were already gathered in small groups with their wine cups.

“Good evening, my lord.” All the nobles greeted Earl Paphos as soon as possible.

Earl Paphos raised his right hand and waved it. “Everyone, good evening.”

He enjoyed such occasions. Power was always most fascinating at these moments.

Handing over his horsewhip to a knight who came with him, Earl Paphos was ready to host the meeting when the guard at the gate led in a cleric who was in a sacred white robe.

“Esteemed earl, the bishop invites you to the church.” The young cleric was very polite, but his facial skin was tightened without the slightest smile, giving an arrogant feeling. However, none of the nobles felt inappropriate. He was the Lord’s shepherd. Even though they were dissatisfied with his attitude, they could not reveal it, or the night watchers of the Inquisition would come.

“Is there anything urgent?” Earl Paphos asked slowly.

The cleric seemed to be looking at the ceiling. “I’m not sure about that. You will know it after you come to the church.”

Earl Paphos was secretly infuriated by the guy’s attitude. Did the clerics of the Church not have the basic manners now?

However, he got his feelings under control and said expressionlessly, “Alright.”

“Right, earl, it’s past six in the evening. None is allowed to ride a horse except for the knights on watch,” the cleric added in a rough tone.

Earl Paphos clenched his fists, feeling that fury was surging into his head. As an earl and the lord of this city, he did not even have the privilege to ride a horse?

After delivering the information, the cleric drew a cross on his chest. "I hope that you will come to the church as soon as possible. Only Truth lives forever!"

"Only Truth lives forever..." Earl Paphos drew a cross; his eyes deep and dark. He decided to hold it back. What else could he do? Defy the Church? How could he resist one demigod, fifty legendary Grand Cardinals and divine knights, and seraphs who can arrive at any moment? That was a force even more terrifying than the three Magic Empires in the past!

Also, as the remaining forces of the Magic Empire were gradually cleared, the Church was less and less dependent on the nobles, with a worse and worse attitude.

The wagon slowly reached the city church. The sky was dark and full of clouds, suggesting an upcoming storm.

Boom!

Thunders rumbled, and the silver snakes of lightning illuminated the sky. Earl Paphos looked at the sky, got off the wagon, and entered the church.

"Good evening, Your Highness. Please allow me to pray to the Lord first," Earl Paphos said politely. The dissatisfaction and fury in his heart were already gone.

The city was the capital of the county. It was at an important location and was relatively prosperous. So, the bishop here was Field, a newly promoted red robe. He nodded. "It's very pious of you."

After praying before the cross, Earl Paphos smiled. "Why did you summon me, Your Highness?"

Field said in a seemingly gentle way, "According to the report of the night watchers, sorcerers seem to be active in this area recently. I hope that you can devote more attention to hunting them."

"It's my responsibility," Earl Paphos replied casually, waiting for the bishop to discuss more important things with him.

"Very good. Please see that it is done after you are back." Field smiled.

"There's nothing else?" Earl Paphos blurted out in shock.

Field raised an eyebrow. "Do we need other things?"

Fury burst out in Earl Paphos' heart. You've asked me to come here for such trivia? You could've sent someone to deliver a message! What do you think I am? A dog of the Church that you can command freely?

"Or maybe, you think the issue is not important enough?" Field's smile was gradually gone.

Earl Paphos tried to hold back his fury. “I was just about to make more contributions to the Lord. Your Highness, since there’s nothing here, I’ll return and investigate the sorcerers immediately.”

He went out of the church and got into the wagon without changing his expression. Sitting like a stone statue with golden scales growing on the back of his hand, he did not turn gloomy until the wagon was some distance away and thunder broke out nonstop.

“Damn it! They do not regard us, the nobles, as their equal at all!” Paphos gnashed his teeth.

A torrential rain poured down. The night was even darker. Under the blowing wind, the trees and branches were flying crazily. Now and then, leaves and dust were thrown into the wagon.

Pa, pa, pa.

The raindrops hit the top of the wagon as if they were playing an instrument. Looking at the dark night out of the window, Earl Paphos couldn’t calm down after a long time. Was it the real position of the nobles?

Dum, dum, dum.

Three rhythmmed knocks echoed near the window. Earl Paphos was so shocked that he turned around in shock and roared, “Who is it?”

Having arrived soundlessly without being perceived by a level-six radiant knight, the person was definitely terrifyingly strong.

“An unannounced guest.” A low female chuckle echoed out of the window, but the coachman and the knights behind sensed nothing.

“Who are you exactly?” Earl Paphos squinted. Golden dragon scales surfaced on his skin that was exposed to the air, and his pupils became gold and vertical too.

The magnetic female voice chuckled again. “Are you too worried to invite me to come in, my lord? If I intended to ambush you, I wouldn’t have warned you at all just now. For the experts like you and me, does the blockage of a wagon really matter?”

A proud woman who likes to mock other people... Earl Paphos reached a conclusion. Considering for a moment, he opened the window carefully.

A red shadow blinked in and sat on Earl Paphos’ opposite side.

A senior-rank sorcerer... Earl Paphos raised his wariness again and was ready to attack. However, his eyes suddenly glittered, because it was a young and beautiful girl who was as bright as fire. She was petite with a blood-red magic robe and a delicate face. Her pupils were as red as blood, making her extremely vigorous.

The rumors are true that female sorcerers like to modify their look, but don’t they say that the senior-rank sorcerers often turn hideous because of their bloodline modifications and the experiment pollutions? Earl Paphos thought subconsciously. Why did he not know such a senior-rank sorcerer at all? Was she from a different country?

“Absentmindedness won’t help solve any problem.” The gorgeous beauty on his opposite side seemed rather impatient. She said directly, “My lord, do you not want to change the current situation?”

“The current situation?” Earl Paphos repeated in a low voice and then sneered, “Discussing the current situation with sorcerers who are no better than stray dogs? My lady, we are not on the same level. Right, how should I call you?”

The pretty girl’s expression turned grave. “You may call me ‘Storm’. As for the current situation, I believe that even pet dogs have to worry about their position nowadays.”

Is it the right attitude for communication? Earl Paphos was rather amused by the lady that the sorcerers sent over. She did not seem willing to give in at all.

However, his face became much more solemn. Despite her rudeness, the lady’s words were exactly his concerns.

“We don’t have much time. Your villa is not far away. Let’s talk straightforwardly.” Ms. Storm wasn’t bothered by Earl Paphos’ attitude change and said quickly, “The responsibility of the nobles is to help the Church resist sorcerers, elves, dragons, and other rogues. When you lose your value, you will be no different from the ordinary people, and the Church will treat you however they see fit.”

She slightly squinted. “Besides, the Church is more wary of the nobles than the ordinary people. So, you need to know where your responsibility lies and do not lose it.”

After that, instead of waiting for Earl Paphos to reply, she turned into a shadow and disappeared from the wagon. It was impossible to make a deal after only one negotiation. More communications were still needed.

Looking at the dark night where she disappeared into, Earl Paphos was deep in thought.

The storm was pouring outside with astounding thunders, and it was as dark as the doomsday.

Throne of Magical Arcana

854 Difficult Situation

The torrential rain poured from the sky like a waterfall and raised vague mist when it hit the ground. It was completely dark except for the occasional bolts of lightning in the sky, like a place of ghosts.

Nobody dared to come out at such a night. The storm had separated every house, giving people both the panic of upcoming doom and the strange sense of safety that nobody would break in. The curtain of water from the room was like a rampart for every house.

Inside a common two-floored house in the city, a young man in a blood-red magic robe was staring at the rain thoughtfully. He appeared to be in his twenties. His pupils were red, and his face was handsome, with bright electric arcs bursting out vigorously now and then. Also, the vague air of books on him added to his gentleness and made him look quite special.

“Fernando, did you forward those words to Earl Paphos?” The door of the room was opened, and another young man in fashionable clothes came in. He was wearing a popular black high-collared jacket that reached his head and completely covered his ears.

His face was slim and long with a mustache. He left the impression that he was a knowledgeable scholar too.

“Of course! Have I ever screwed up anything?” The young man who was called Fernando turned around and said, almost roaring. Then, he waved his hands to stop the guy from approaching him. “Lauren, like I told you, don’t get too close to me!”

Holding back his laughter, Lauren dared not say anything else and kept his distance. It was because he was significantly taller than the short Fernando.

“How did Earl Paphos react?” Lauren touched his mustache and became serious.

Fernando said angrily, “How could he have reacted? It’s the first time we met! He did not even know what the situation was! If he had promised anything, I would’ve suspected that it was a trap!”

His voice was loud and confident. Infinite strength seemed to be stored in his stout body.

“It makes sense. We have to take it slowly. However, we need to relocate tomorrow in case those black-clawed dogs catch us.” Lauren nodded. The black-clawed dog was the nickname for the night watchers who had killed many sorcerers, because of the black gloves they wore.

Fernando was fine with that. Although he was impatient and strict, and he was even bold enough to argue with his teacher about a certain mistake in the magic knowledge, not considering the rigorous teacher-student relationship in the ancient Magic Empire at all, he had little arrogance left after being hunted by the night watchers for such a long time.

“It’s best that we hide in the caves outside of the city first,” Fernando said calmly. Then, he turned his eyes to the table, where a plain-looking belt was placed. Immediately, he burst into a fury again. “Lauren, why did you ask me to meet Paphos in this belt? Is it fun to turn into a female?”

Lauren lowered his head in case he laughed aloud. It was not until a long time later that he finally raised his head and said “solemnly”, “You are a young senior-rank sorcerer and the hope of the Magic Empire. Also, having killed a red robe before, you already caught the attention of the black-clawed dogs and made it to the Cleansing List. How could Earl Paphos not know you? If he had other thoughts, chances were that Grand Cardinals or legendary knights would’ve come after you. It’s better if he couldn’t tell who you were.”

“I could’ve changed my appearance with other spells!” Fernando was not tricked at all. His red eyes seemed full of storms.

Lauren took a step back subconsciously. “However, isn’t it less likely for you to be recognized if you change your gender? Also, you are reckless and mean. You may have infuriated Earl Paphos as a male, but if you are a pretty lady, communication and negotiation would be easier.”

“We are not short of female sorcerers,” Fernando mumbled, although he found the explanation acceptable.

Lauren opened his hands. “But none of them are in the senior rank, and they might be caught easily. Besides, you did not object when I proposed it. You did not even ask for an explanation.”

“Fine.” Fernando’s fury was gone as fast as it came. He did not seem to be as angry as Lauren expected. “I was just curious about the feelings as a female...”

Lauren seemed interested. He asked curiously, “How does it feel to be a lady? Was anyone attracted by you?”

“How does it feel? It’s rather strange. It’s certainly pleasant to see other people enthralled by you. However, this belt is not perfect. The conditions after the change are all illusionary, and I cannot experience the body feelings of a female for real...” Fernando said, as if he were conducting magic research. “I need to find a way to create a perfect one...”

He looked at Lauren, only to discover that his friend was so astounded that he did not say anything until a long time later.

“What a pervert!”

“Huh?” Fernando snorted, and the air pressure around was soaring.

Lauren chuckled. “It was just a joke. Right, Fernando, we need to go to the Patray Port. A sorcerer is coming from the other side of the strait on a boat. It’s an archmage!”

“An archmage?” Fernando asked in surprise.

“Yes, a fairly young archmage. He will significantly build up our strength!” Lauren said in excitement. “If Gallos hadn’t met him before on the other side of the strait, we couldn’t have got in touch with him at all, and the other magic associations would’ve got him.”

This place had been divided into three kingdoms, one duchy, and one group of cities on the north coastline. The Magic Empire in the past had been shattered, and many magic organizations had emerged. Among them, there were large organizations with a long history, like “Cabin of Palmeira”, and there were smaller ones that were newly found, like “Union of Sorcerers” where Fernando was at. The one thing they had in common was that they all could only hide in the dark and struggle to survive.

Fernando nodded. “An archmage who knows the ninth-circle spells will really help us unite with other organizations.”

They had named their group “Union of Sorcerers” because they hoped to unite with the major magic associations to resist the Church together. However, they were not strong enough to convince other groups at all.

Lauren sighed. “Exactly. The legends can hide in their demiplanes and close the entrance, and they can run into the Dark Mountain Range. We, on the other hand, can only struggle to survive. An archmage will be the most important leverage for us.”

“That’s not fair. If the legends hadn’t distracted the Grand Cardinals and the legendary knights, we probably would’ve been eliminated.” Unusually, Fernando did not describe those legendary sorcerers as rats in the gutter.

Lauren sighed again. “There are still important cities like Aalto. It’s said that the Truth Cult has focused most of its men on attacking them. Well, many legends have been gathered there. It seems that the glory of the empire hasn’t died after the fall of Antiffler. Instead, people are even more united. Honestly though, if it weren’t for the missing legends, the Truth Cult wouldn’t have developed so fast at all...”

“It’s already a fact. Don’t regret and remorse. Focus on the present and the future!” Fernando interrupted Lauren rudely. “What’s the name of the archmage? How old is he?”

He subconsciously compared the guy to himself.

Lauren shook his head. “I am not sure. He can’t be too young. Every archmage is hundreds of years old.”

“I won’t be!” Fernando declared proudly.

He was born after the Divine Calendar was announced, but the War of Dawn was still in an impasse back then, and most of the places on this side of the strait were still controlled by the Magic Empire.

Lauren held back his smile. “Right, his name is Derrick Douglas. He has fled to our place due to the fall of Antiffler.”

“Derrick Douglas,” Fernando repeated and remembered the name for his future comparison. “Why doesn’t he just fly over?”

“It’s said that he is too wounded to fly. After all, there is barely any examination if you take the boat,” Lauren said unconcernedly.

BOOM!

A thunder burst out.

Fernando looked out of the window and turned to Lauren. "It's time to rest. We have to move tomorrow and then go to the Patray Port."

Lauren nodded and raised his eyebrows. "Got it. You want Ingrid here."

"Get lost!" Fernando roared impolitely.

Lauren laughed aloud. He shouted on his way out, "Ingrid, Fernando wants to see you."

The fury on Fernando's face was gone, replaced by vague helplessness and mixed feelings. There weren't that many deep feelings between him and Ingrid, a female sorcerer. They were just desperately in need of the comfort of each other's body in such a dark and depressing environment.

Suddenly, his face changed, and a mirror with countless mysterious symbols appeared before him.

A holy light that seemed to have descended from the sky hit the mirror with overwhelming magnificence, shattering it. However, the holy light was blown black and pierced through the rain and darkness outside. Several people were consumed.

"Enemy incoming!" Fernando shouted in a high voice. He pointed his finger, and a figure that jumped out of the shadow immediately glittered. It was frozen and fell on the ground into countless pieces.

“No...” A female cry came to an abrupt halt. Fernando’s eyebrows bounced. Was it Ingrid?

He left the room and entered the corridor, only to discover that a man in black gloves was passing by a body.

He was so familiar with the body, but it was completely lifeless now!

“Damn it!” Fernando’s eyes were bloodshot. Cracking noises burst out, and silver bolts of lightning surrounded the night watcher like giant serpents. A forest of lightning seemed to have arrived.

BOOM!

The electricity attracted the bolts of lightning outside, which fell from the sky and penetrated through the ceiling.

The place became an ocean of lightning and blocked the enemy. Fernando did not delay at all. Having been used to death, he held back his fury and covered the other sorcerers to evacuate from a secret channel.

Then, he cast a spell to ignite Ingrid’s body as a way of burial.

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The storm was still pouring, but lightning and thunder were getting rare. So, the night was even darker than before.

In the basement of a manor at the suburb, Fernando sat in a corner with a grim face, and Lauren paced back and forth anxiously, sneaking out now and then for investigation.

As a matter of fact, even the owner of the manor did not know that the evil sorcerers had turned his basement into their bureau.

“The night watchers were deceived by our arrangements and chased after the wrong direction.” After a while, Lauren reentered the basement. Avoiding several traps, he told Fernando what he learned. “Like how we rehearsed before, the other people went to the other bureaus in different groups. As for the loss of sorcerers and apprentices, we can’t calculate until this thing is over.”

Fernando did not nod or shake his head. “What I want to know is why the black-clawed dogs can find the place.”

A horrifying storm seemed to be brewing in his red eyes. Even Lauren, as a friend who was most familiar with him, couldn’t help but step back unconsciously.

Lauren said gloomily, “That’s exactly my question too. That bureau was very inconspicuous. We had never used it before. Also, we found no sign of being followed by the black-clawed dogs. I think that some of us might’ve joined the black-clawed dogs.”

He did not sound shocked at all. Betrayal, slaughter, and escape were the themes at the end of the War of Dawn.

“Investigate in secret but do not make a fuss. A good traitor might even ‘help’ us. Also, everybody has been separated to avoid the enemy now. Nobody knows the location of the other groups except us. The traitor cannot cause any greater losses.” Fernando was surprisingly calm. Lauren had thought that he would burst into fury and torture the traitor to avenge Ingrid.

Lauren nodded. “I know what to do. Honestly speaking, Fernando, I thought that you would lose control of your temper.”

There was no smile on Fernando’s face. “My fury is waiting to burst out at an appropriate moment.”

He secretly sighed to himself. Although Lauren and he had known each other for years as old friends, the guy did not really know him. It was true that he was picky, impatient, and downright a roarer, but he could control himself and understand the situation. Although he barely admitted it, he was never stubborn in front of unquestionable facts and reasons. He knew what to do very well at such a moment. His fury would be gradually accumulated until the day it was unleashed.

“Judging from the signs during the attack, it’s ‘vulture’ who commanded the squad of night watchers tonight.” Lauren shifted the topic to their ambusher. “He has been after us for a long time.”

“Vulture” was their scornful nickname for a senior-rank night watcher. The guy was a level-eight radiant knight, ranking top thirty among the night watchers. His codename was “Predator”.

“Yes. At the end of our evacuation, he was hit by my ‘Shadow Arrow’ but also broke my defense. Had it not been for Spell Trigger, perhaps I would’ve needed to find a way to transform into a lich.”

Fernando confirmed Lauren's speculation before he said with insuppressible anger, "We need to make a plan to secretly kill him so that the night watchers, reverend, and knights who are after us will be scared and work less hard!"

"Assassinating a ranked night watcher will raise the retaliation of the Church. Chances are that legends will be deployed to chase us. Are you willing to abandon everything here?" Lauren did not quite agree with Fernando's idea. The Union of Sorcerers was still too weak. It needed to avoid attention and grew up quietly.

"Because we are weak, we need to do something big so that the sorcerers will know that it is hopeful to follow us. After all, now that a traitor has appeared, we have to give up most of Paphos County. Also, our next target is very clear, which is to attract the nobles who are dissatisfied with the Church and hide behind them," Fernando said, as if he knew what was on his friend's mind. His hair was rather messy, suggesting that the previous battle with the Predator was not so easy.

Lauren hesitated. "Let me think about it. We should discuss it again after we pick Douglas up."

"Alright," Fernando replied briefly.

When he watched Fernando who fell quiet, Lauren seemed to see a human-shaped storm.

...

The bright sun, the clear sky, and the vague stink of the sea delivered by the wind filled the Patray Port with a charm that was different from any other places.

Fernando and Lauren, pretending to be merchants who had come to fetch their goods, paced back and forth in a fixed area in the port, glancing at where the boats were docked. According to Gallos and Douglas' deal, it was their rendezvous, and the white gloves and the red handkerchiefs marked their identity.

A classic boat slowly approached. Both Fernando and Lauren beamed with interest. It was exactly the boat that Douglas was on, but it was one day late. However, they were not very surprised, as the weather in the Storm Strait was terrible, and it was very normal for boats to be late.

"Black-clawed dogs!" Suddenly, Fernando's expression changed. He saw a few men, covered in capes, walk to the place where the boat was being docked with dozens of knights and squires. Their unique black gloves indicated their identities.

Lauren was rather grim. "Is it a regular examination, or is it specifically against Douglas?"

Ever since the fall of Antiffler, more and more sorcerers had come to Holm, and the Church paid more attention to the examination of boats. However, since their personnel and attention were not enough, most sorcerers could still successfully hide their identities. As long as it was not specific, an archmage wouldn't fear such examinations at all.

"How would I know?" Fernando roared in a low voice. "We have to see how strong the night watchers are."

At this moment, a merchant in clean clothes walked in from outside of the port. The two of them immediately stopped talking, pretending that they were waiting for their goods.

"Good day, sirs, have your goods arrived?" The merchant was tall and strong, probably in his thirties. His nose was high, his black hair was thick, and his face was square but not exactly

handsome. However, his deep blue eyes gave him a unique vibe that Fernando was quite familiar with.

Lauren chuckled. “Not yet. Our cargo must’ve been blocked by the storm. What about yours?”

He talked as enthusiastically as a real merchant.

“My goods have arrived. It’s right here,” the merchant said with a smile. His voice was as comforting as a spring breeze.

“What?” Lauren was dazed.

Fernando, however, immediately realized it. He asked in a low voice, “Douglas?”

Lauren looked at the guy, stunned. He finally noticed that the young merchant was also wearing white gloves with a red handkerchief in his pocket.

“Yes. Are you Gallos’ friends?” The young merchant admitted his identity frankly and asked warmly, not fearing that they were night watchers at all.

“Yes. Why... Why did you come from the outside?” Lauren was rather confused.

Douglas chuckled. “I got off the boat in advance and came from the bottom of the ocean. I’ve waited for you at the port for a day.”

His smile was as clean as an innocent kid.

No wonder he’s not afraid of night watchers or ambushes. He must’ve examined the environment carefully. Lauren was immediately enlightened.

“Our goods have been delayed. We should come again tomorrow. Let’s have some drinks and talk to each other,” Fernando said like a businessman, slightly disgusted by Douglas, because the guy was also one foot taller than him, and he was not nearly as skinny as Lauren was!

When the night watchers examined the boat, the three sorcerers did not attract any attention and left the place like any other merchants on the port. They took a wagon and returned to the capital of Paphos County.

After changing a few wagons, they finally had a member of the Union of Sorcerers as the coachman. It was not until this moment that Fernando and Lauren finally formally introduced themselves.

“I am Fernando Brastar, the leader of the Union’s branch in Paphos County. You can call me Fernando. I do not like my last name.” Fernando secretly sniffed.

“Fernando Brastar?” Douglas repeated, raising his voice before he smiled. “The ‘Dark Storm’, ranking the 296th on the Cleansing List?”

Lauren nodded on behalf of Fernando, implying that it was exactly him.

“You made it to the Cleansing List just after you arrived at the senior rank, and you reached the top 300 after you advanced into the seventh circle. Fernando, you must be significantly stronger than the regular senior-rank sorcerers,” Douglas complimented with a smile.

In this period, most of the archmages and senior-rank sorcerers of the Magic Empire still lived. There were almost eight hundred people on the Cleansing List.

Fernando chuckled. “I’ve only grasped and modified some spells and killed a red robe. I am certainly not as good as you, a ninth-circle archmage.”

Not bothered by Fernando’s subconscious tone of comparison, Douglas said with a peaceful smile, “Me? I am not even on the Cleansing List.”

“I’ve been quite curious about that too. You are an archmage. How come you are not on the Cleansing List?” Lauren had learned the Cleansing List from the night watchers they killed, but the name of Derrick Douglas was not on it.

Douglas chuckled in a low voice. “I was always considered a weirdo who did not have any prospect in magic when I was in Antiffler. I became an archmage because of the long-time accumulation, my teacher’s heritage, the training in the War of Dawn, the fortuitous incidents, and some of my own little ideas. It’s perfectly normal that the Church does not pay much attention to me. After all, the sorcerers who joined the Church will tell them that Douglas will never become a legend or achieve any ambitions. He will only ask his questions while he waits to die. It is unnecessary to waste time and energy on him.”

He made fun of himself, not angry at all that other people thought little of him.

“A weirdo?” Lauren and Fernando asked at the same time. In their conversation so far, Douglas had shown no weirdness at all. Instead, he was fun, warm, and attractive. He seemed to have natural-born leadership.

In the meantime, Fernando’s impression of Douglas was much better after he admitted that he had become an archmage because of the long-time accumulation.

Douglas smiled. “Yes, I am good at asking questions.”

“What’s weird about that?” Fernando said in confusion before he went on with his self-introduction.

Douglas suddenly interrupted him, “You must be good at the spells of storms and lightning in the school of elements, right?”

“Of course, night watchers rarely give wrong nicknames.” Fernando nodded.

Caught in silence, Douglas mumbled to himself, “Why can lightning kill people... How is lightning generated...”

Fernando and Lauren looked at him in shock and confusion. Wasn’t it natural that lightning could kill people? Was it necessary to ask why? He was really a weirdo...

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856 Talk in the Wagon

The atmosphere on the wagon became extremely weird. Douglas seemed to have forgotten the two sorcerers next to him. He kept asking strange questions one after another, and neither Fernando nor Lauren knew how to respond. Weren't they all as matter-of-fact as the sun rising from the east and the fruit falling to the ground after they were ripe?

However, Douglas soon came back to himself. He said apologetically, "Excuse me. I tend to be absentminded once in a while."

"It's nothing. It happens to me when I encounter magic problems," Lauren replied with a smile, as if he were not interested in Douglas' strange questions at all. Fernando opened his mouth but did not say anything in the end.

After a brief silence, Fernando and Lauren introduced the situation on this side of the Storm Strait.

"Both the Sylvanas Magic Empire and the Asso Empire have been dismembered into scattered organizations that do not obey each other. Some of them have even escaped to the Boundless Ocean. It is safe to say that the situation here is even worse than the other side of the strait. At least, the western territory including Aalto is still in the hands of sorcerers..." Lauren sighed.

Fernando added, "The territory that used to belong to the Asso Empire has been divided into two parts, the Kingdom of Brianne and the Duchy of Calais. From what used to be the Sylvanas Magic Empire, the Kingdom of Holm and the Kingdom of Colette have been born. Our organization is mainly active in Holm, which is where we are in right now..."

Having investigated the situation before he passed the Storm Strait, Douglas was no stranger to the information. With a tranquilizing smile, he said, “As a matter of fact, I chose to pass the Storm Strait instead of running to Aalto, because I had more hopes in this place.”

“Is that so?” Fernando tried to be indifferent and narrowed his eyes, preventing his eyes from betraying himself.

The Union had always been analyzing the situation, and their final conclusion was similar to Douglas’. That was why they risked making attempts and changes.

Douglas said peacefully, “Because the nobles here are more powerful than the Church in general.”

His words struck Lauren like lightning. He finally understood why his organization changed its policy and asked Fernando to meet the greatest noble at the capital of Paphos County.

Lauren knew that it was meant to attract the nobles and sow discord between them and the Church. However, he had never known why they were doing in, and what they were contriving to do.

Fernando said nothing and simply looked at Douglas, waiting for what he was about to say.

“We did not know the specific conditions here, but according to my observation, after the fall of Antiffler, the clerics were more and more arrogant toward the nobles, and most Grand Cardinals and divine knights have been concentrated in Antiffler and Lance, ready to march west,” Douglas spoke of what he knew.

“In western cities such as Aalto, many legends have been gathered, and they even have the help of some vampires and dragons. However, they have serious internal contradictions, and the gap between them and the Church and nobles will be wider and wider. Unless the Silver Moon arrives, they will be swallowed step by step. On the other side, while we are weak in this place, the gap between us and the Church is not as huge.”

He compared with the overall strength of the Church and the nobles in the first time but only the Church in the second time. Both Fernando and Lauren knew his meaning well.

Fernando spoke in a weird accent that suggested he wasn't a native of Holm, “After most of the senior-rank sorcerers were eliminated, the Truth Cult has mobilized more than half of the legendary clerics. Now, there is only one saint cardinal in Rentato and Cocus respectively.”

“Some of the legendary knights have been moved away too, but there are still five left. After all, this place is their hometown, and they are unwilling to attack Aalto far away even though they are devout believers. Also, they believe that the Church does not need their help. Obviously, the Church thinks so too.”

“But what's the point?” Lauren frowned and asked in confusion. “As long as the Church destroys the legends in the west and sends most of the experts over, all our efforts will be in vain.”

Fernando glared at him. “Time. The time for us to develop, look for allies, sow discord, and seek balance.”

Douglas also smiled. “We aren't the Church's only enemy.”

“Right, if Aalto is lost, the Church will reach the Dark Mountain Range. Perhaps the Silver Moon will really arrive.” Lauren nodded.

Douglas suddenly seemed tranced. “Even if the Silver Moon does arrive, I think the pope will remain undefeated.”

“Is God’s Arrival really so powerful?” Fernando asked in shock and curiosity. Their intelligence was too untrustworthy on this side of the strait, and now they were faced with a living sorcerer who went through the Battle of Antiffler.

“His Excellency the Light of Stars perished without any resistance. Even the city defense of Antiffler was mostly destroyed. I don’t know how powerful a real demigod is, but I know that the Light of Stars was beyond top legendary when he fought in Antiffler...” Douglas recalled; his peaceful smile replaced by panic.

Both Fernando and Lauren fell silent. Neither of them had been to Antiffler before. Although Fernando was a native of the Asso Empire, Antiffler had been “Crown of Arcana” for all the time thanks to the lessons of their teachers and seniors. It was known as the strongest fortress on earth where the most powerful legendary sorcerers were gathered, but after only one attack of God’s Arrival, the consul and the capital of the Sylvanas Magic Empire were demolished.

Was God’s Arrival so powerful?

For a moment, they were grasped by intense desperation. What was the point of their work? It would be finished by one God’s Arrival after all.

Douglas put on a warm smile again. “There’s no need to be too worried. I don’t think it’s so easy for the pope to perform God’s Arrival.”

“How do you know?” The intelligence was too important and Lauren had never heard it before. He was even suspicious that Douglas was merely comforting him.

Douglas did not have any beard, which made him younger than he actually was. He smiled. “It’s been almost ten years since the fall of Antiffler, but the Church never marched west on a large scale. The pope has never attacked again, even though people are regathering and picking up their confidence. I think there’s a reason for that.

“Besides, the pope was surrounded by legends before, but he never used God’s Arrival. If it is so easy to perform, he could’ve used it to finish the battle quickly.”

He proposed his guess honestly, not bothering at all that the two sorcerers kept a lot of stuff to themselves.

“Well...” Douglas was deep in thought. The more he thought, the more reasonable it appeared to him, and the more wary he was of Douglas. They had known the facts for a long time, but nobody had ever connected them or pointed out the problem. Was it because Douglas always asked strange questions?

They stopped further communication. After all, they hadn’t really established trust yet.

The wagon stopped at the suburb. Fernando and Lauren led Douglas in the woods and approached a shelter.

In this forest, the Union of Sorcerers had three secret bureaus. One was still unactivated, one had been given to the three sorcerers as a shelter, and the last one was their destination.

“Let’s go there and take a look first,” Lauren said to Fernando in the telepathic bond.

Fernando nodded and knew that he wanted to observe the shelter where the three sorcerers were hiding because one of the traitors they suspected was there.

Douglas did not talk but followed them in silence. Fernando and Lauren, on the other hand, did not intend to show him the bureau. For all they knew, he could still be a spy of the night watchers.

Now that the Church had dominating advantages, more and more sorcerers who struggled in darkness and depression joined the Church and became night watchers who hunted their companions. Nobody could tell if their close comrades yesterday would become the enemy who ended their life the next day.

Several big magic organizations had been infiltrated by the night watchers and suffered destructive strikes. The other organizations learned their lessons and gave strict tests on every newcomer even if the newcomer was an archmage. It had to be noted that there were plenty of archmages among the top thirty night watchers!

Fernando and Lauren only intended to glimpse at the place from far away in case the secret bureau was exposed. However, after only one glance, Fernando’s face became so gloomy that a storm seemed to come.

The cave was half open, and the intense stink of blood had attracted three wolves.

“We’re one step late!” Lauren patted his head in regrets. He already knew what happened. They had the correct suspect, but he did not keep lurking, hoping that he was not discovered. The guy had killed two sorcerers and left immediately. He had to be under the protection of the night watchers now.

Douglas watched them examine the surroundings and followed them to the cave in silence. He saw the two bitten, incomplete bodies, as well as their faces that were overwhelmed with fear and confusion.

“Gary is dead, Prince is dead...” Lauren spoke to himself, “Gary’s little girl asked me to take care of her father, and Prince hadn’t even told his girl that he loved her yet... Damn it, Benson, they were your good friends! Gary even saved you before! I came too late...”

“They’re dead for at least a day and a half. It’s obvious they were soaked in the rain,” Douglas said in a low voice, suggesting that Benson attacked immediately after they arrived. Nobody could have helped them.

Fernando’s face was blue and red. He vaguely recalled that Gary’s daughter was a lovely kid. After a long time, he finally roared in a low voice, “I’ll let Benson regret this!”

A fifth-circle sorcerer and an elite who was very likely to be a senior-rank sorcerer had joined the night watchers just like that!

Lauren took a deep breath. “Let’s get out of here first.”

The two of them hurried to burn the bodies into ashes and kept them in their magic pouches.

The rest of the journey to their secret shelter was even more depressing. Douglas suddenly opened his mouth. “Actually, I am a sorcerer who prefers figuring out the reasons behind things to killing and fighting.”

Fernando was about to roar, but what Douglas said next left a deep impression on him.

Douglas looked at the sky and heaved a soft sigh. “However, only in a safe and steady environment and with the support of other people will it be possible to explore and research. Now, there isn’t even a place where we can install an alchemical platform stably, and the partners we explore the world together with are all dying.

“When a person is cornered, it will be time for him to change.”

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As they traveled in the forest again, the three of them were even quieter. Fernando was like a human-shaped storm that was about to burst out. The more he held himself back, the more terrifying he was.

The shelter provided to Douglas was an inconspicuous cave, with only the traces of magic circles in the deepest part. The cover was most natural.

“Mr. Douglas, you can stay here for a couple of days. We’ll find you again after things are sorted out.” Even though Douglas had been warm and friendly, Lauren still chose to show him enough respect when they said goodbye to each other. He was an archmage after all.

Douglas did not appear to be angered by their treatment. He knocked on the wall of the cave and nodded with the same smile. "I'm already satisfied that there is a place for me to do my research."

He was not bothered that they were wary of him. Instead, he was very glad to see that, because most organizations that were not wary of the sorcerers who joined them had been eliminated. He did not wish that the one he was joining was among them, in which case it would be no different from suicide.

Before the fall of Antiffler, he had already learned the cruelties of the situation through his keen observation. Under the temptation and coercion of the Church, it was not unusual for parents to abandon their children, the apprentices to kill their masters, and friends to attack each other. It was even more brutal after the collapse of the Magic Empire. This was because, for most sorcerers, they could not afford any more hesitation. It was either betrayal or death.

"You'd better not run magic experiments. The black-clawed dogs have sharp noses," Fernando reminded him solemnly, fearing that the archmage from Antiffler would be overconfident.

Douglas took out a thick paper from his magic pouch and put it on a stone table in the cave. "Rest assured. I have mathematical studies that are enough to drain me."

"Mathematical research... Are you from the Tower?" Fernando was in a better mood now that the subject at hand was magic. The Tower Geometry was his first frustration when he learned magic. Also, the sorcerers of the Tower were as zealous about mathematics as Douglas.

The sorcerers of the Magic Empire had attached great importance to mathematics since a long time ago because it was closely related to the construction of magic models. However, they still devoted most of their attention to the studies of spells and blood powers. After all, the results of mathematical studies barely proved useful, and few sorcerers were really interested in it. Most of them were members of the Tower.

After the War of Dawn broke out and the Church was winning, fewer and fewer sorcerers had the leisure to study mathematics. At least, Fernando had never seen any guy who was so passionate about mathematics.

Douglas raised his head and said with a self-mocking smile, “As a matter of fact, I would love to join the Tower, but they did not want someone as queer as me. After the fall of Antiffler, I never saw them again.”

“I’m glad that you are fully aware of your queerness. If you ask fewer questions, you will be a great friend.” Fernando had always been fond of striking other people, even if the guy was an archmage.

Douglas smiled and did not respond to Fernando.

Lauren looked at Fernando and complained to himself. Why do I have to make up for someone else’s mistake? Does the guy not know how to talk without sarcasm? His pretty and appealing face is such a waste!

He coughed and said, “Mr. Douglas, don’t mind Fernando. He is a descendant of the savage empire of Aaso, as is evident by his accent. Right, you can make a list of what you need in the next couple of days. If you need anything urgently, you can tell me right now.”

“I don’t need anything.” Douglas shook his head and saw Fernando and Lauren off, knowing well that it would be time for his test when they returned.

What would the test be?

...

When they left the woods in silence, Fernando and Lauren did not talk to each other. However, they both changed their route and walked into the city, reaching Viscount Elrealcan's villa. That was their safest shelter that only the leadership of their organization knew. It was also the last place that the night watchers would be suspicious of.

The noble reached out to a senior-rank sorcerer of the Union of Sorcerers in a certain operation before he inherited his title. Then, with the sorcerer's help, he eliminated powerful enemies and earned his title. After that, he made many contributions by the intelligence provided by the Union of Sorcerers and was promoted to be a viscount. He was the first influential noble that the Union of Sorcerers acquired after the new strategy was implemented.

Fernando and Lauren had changed their appearances into those of the valets that everybody was familiar with. When they passed the gate, nobody suspected them because of their identities on the surface.

The old butler remained silent, not asking anything about the guys who often accepted the viscount's special orders.

After he returned to his room, Lauren had just washed his face when he heard Fernando's violent door knocks.

"What's up? Do you want to discuss how to test Douglas?" Lauren asked in confusion. All he wanted was a good rest after a few intense days.

Fernando's spiritual power spread out. He closed the door and roared in a low voice, "Lauren, we must counterattack!"

“Assassinate Vulture?” Since they discussed it before, Lauren realized it after a brief daze. He said cautiously, “We need a thorough plan. Should we tempt Vulture with the traces of other people and surround him?”

“No.” Fernando’s red eyes were full of solemnity and fury. “Benson has defected. The black-clawed dogs know very well how many men we have. Maybe before we even surround Vulture, they would surround us first. Also, I’m thinking of taking down Benson at the same time!”

“How is it possible? Benson must be hiding inside the Inquisition. There’s no way that we can get him out!” Lauren refused Fernando’s proposal without any hesitation. “Should we wait for more reinforcements from the headquarters?”

Holding his fury, Fernando shook his head. “Vulture has a keen nose. He will not attack recklessly a few days later. He may even go to other areas.”

“What are you planning to do then?” Lauren asked in confusion. What did Fernando mean exactly?

Fernando said, almost roaring, “We attack the Inquisition and kill Vulture and Benson! They have to be there!”

“You’re out of your mind!” Lauren felt that either Fernando was crazy or he himself was the crazy one.

When the Magic Empire still existed, there were cases where the Inquisitions and even the cathedrals were conquered, but no sorcerers dared to attack the Inquisitions anymore in the past

hundred years. They were the lairs of the black-clawed dogs, with powerful divine power circles and senior-rank night watchers. There were better ways of suicide!

A gentle breeze blew at Fernando's hair, like the prelude to a storm. "Since it's beyond your imagination, the Church and the black-clawed dogs won't be able to see it coming either! The Inquisitions have never been attacked in a hundred years. Their reactions must be slow. As long as we kill Vulture and Benson quickly, we will be able to leave easily!"

"But... But... We are too weak..." Lauren thought that his mind was in a mess. For a moment, he thought that it was certainly beyond Vulture's wildest dreams, but then, he also thought that it was too crazy and ridiculous.

Fernando said without any smile, "We have an archmage."

"Douglas?" Lauren was immediately back to himself. "Vulture, as a level-eight radiant knight, is the strongest enemy in the city. The others are all newly-promoted red robes or radiant knights. Perhaps there will be a few senior-rank sorcerers who have betrayed us, but there can't be any archmage; otherwise, we couldn't have escaped so easily."

He paced back and forth. "The ninth-circle spells are eccentric and powerful, and the archmages are far stronger than the senior-rank sorcerers. It shouldn't be difficult to break into the Inquisition. It will be better if he is capable of 'Time Stop'. Benson had no idea that we were picking up an archmage. Yes, our strength is not a problem. However, Douglas hasn't been tested yet. Will he betray us?"

Fernando was still rigid. "This will be the test. If he kills Vulture, he will be one of us."

"Alright..." Lauren felt that the odds of success were not slim, but he was still not determined. "But it will infuriate the Church. I'm afraid that 'Heart of Time' will be sent over."

His fear was so strong that he did not even realize when he mentioned “Heart of Time”. The legendary knight had forged his glory with the corpses and blood of sorcerers. He had even killed a legend. He was the nightmare for countless sorcerers.

He suddenly realized that he had been tricked by Fernando. “We have Douglas with us. It is totally possible to kill Vulture with distraction. Even if they pretend that they are tricked, they can’t see it coming that we have an archmage. Why do we have to attack the Inquisition directly? Fernando, don’t be blinded by fury. We can eliminate Benson in the future.”

Fernando snorted. “Ask the other people to evacuate from Paphos County first. You need to leave in advance, too. If the Church wants to retaliate, they need to find us first.”

He became more solemn. “We have to take down the traitor immediately. Only by proving that we are capable of eliminating traitors and causing trouble to the Church will the nobles be willing to work with us in secret, support us to create greater trouble, and not betray us easily!

“Lauren, you know very well how urgent the current situation is. If we are unwilling to take the risks, we will gradually be choked. We have to demonstrate our value in order to get help. Backing off will make us lose all the opportunities for cooperation.”

Gritting his teeth, Lauren thought for a moment before saying, “Fernando, be safe. Pay attention to Douglas in case he’s a spy.”

It was an indirect agreement with Fernando’s suggestion. According to the rules of the Union of Sorcerers, as long as the two leaders of the branch both agreed, the operation would be ready to go.

Fernando was not delighted because Lauren accepted his suggestion. He clenched his fists and suppressed his fury, preparing to unleash it at the appropriate moment.

...

In the forest, near the shelter...

“I’ll keep watch on the outside,” Lauren said to Fernando, fearing that the night watchers had already set up an ambush in the place.

Fernando nodded and entered the hidden cave.

Hardly had he passed the last barrier when he stepped on a piece of paper. Such paper was all over the ground.

Looking at Douglas who was busy writing, and seeing that his well-combed hair was now already a mess, Fernando picked up a piece of paper curiously and read the content on it.

Fernando was stunned the moment he started reading. He had been a well-acknowledged magic genius, and he was quite talented at mathematics, but the equations, words, and symbols on the paper made him feel that he had never learned mathematics!

What exactly was Douglas working on?

Throne of Magical Arcana

858 Pearl on the Crown of Magic

After being stunned for almost a minute, Fernando asked in a hurry, “Douglas, what mathematical problem are you working on?”

He had never been embarrassed when it came to asking other people what he did not know, and he was most earnest when it came to the things he was interested in. Magic knowledge and mathematical problems were certainly among them.

Having set up alarm magic circles around, Douglas had known about it when Fernando entered the place, but instead of greeting the visitor, he continued dwelling in the ocean of mathematics. It was not until Fernando opened his mouth that he finally raised his head and answered, “The calculation of the area and volume of irregular objects, as well as the corresponding problems.”

The quill in his hands did not stop when he answered the question. So, his words were quite literal.

Fernando immediately looked shocked after he heard the reply. His red eyes were like two scorching suns. “The calculation of the area and volume of irregular objects? Are you studying the curves?”

It was a fundamental problem in analyzing the complicated magic models that had upset generations of sorcerers. It was the most brilliant pearl on the crown of magic. However, the research so far could only be applied to special conditions but could not be extrapolated. Many sorcerers were so frustrated that they even questioned the possibility of a solution. They stated that it was better to devote their attention to the studies on the improvement of spiritual power. The progress wouldn’t be fast either, but at least the returns would be obvious.

That was the reason why Fernando was so shocked. From the paper, the strange symbols, and the graphs of curves, he could tell that Douglas went further than anybody else in that regard!

If the problem could really be solved, the difficulties in analyzing and engraving magic models for the low rank, the middle rank, and the high rank would all be significantly lowered, and the sorcerers would be much stronger in twenty years!

Douglas was woken up from his research and smiled. “Yes. Although I’ve always been mocked for being impractical, I couldn’t stop myself from studying it. I feel that it contains the most beautiful view in the world.”

“What’s your perspective?” Fernando blurted out. He then realized it was inappropriate. “If you do not want to answer, you are free not to. I’m just curious.”

He had always been respectful of other people’s secrets and would never snoop on them, which was a serious issue that might cause sorcerers to kill each other. However, “please tell me” was clearly written on his face.

Douglas chuckled. “It’s not a big deal. I’ve been troubled by some problems too, and I need someone to talk to me and inspire me. Well, I’m working from the perspective of infinite division and recombination...”

Not intending to keep it to himself, he went on eloquently. Although Fernando couldn’t understand most of it, he managed to follow with his basic understanding of mathematics. Now and then, he asked about the parts that he did not understand, which made Douglas even more enthused.

“What does this symbol mean?” Fernando had already approached Douglas. He pointed at a certain symbol on the manuscript.

His eyes glittering, Douglas said, “It’s a symbol that I defined. It denotes infinity...”

Just like that, the two of them were so dedicated to the discussion of mathematics that they forgot about Lauren who was outside.

It seemed that few people had ever talked with Douglas about the problem that he was most proud of. So, he was extremely thrilled. His previous warmth and gentleness were replaced by the excitement on his face. He went on talking like the most talkative old man.

“What are you doing?” Lauren waited for a long time outside, only to receive nothing, but he did not find any sign of a battle. The Secret Eye reported that Fernando was alive too. Therefore, he emboldened himself and walked in full of suspicion, only to discover what appeared to be a scene from when he studied in the magic tower before.

Douglas’ cheeks were particularly red. “We’re discussing mathematics.”

“I can see that.” Lauren smiled. “But don’t we have more important matters to discuss?”

“What is it?” Douglas calmed himself down from the heated discussion.

After a brief silence, Fernando said, “We are going to attack the Inquisition in this place to kill a high-ranked night watcher and a traitor. However, safety matters most. We should not take any risks. We would evacuate in case of an anomaly.”

Lauren looked at him in surprise. That was not what Fernando said during their discussion. He did not mention the latter half of the sentence.

“I need detailed information including the comparison of our strengths, the distribution of the divine power circles, etc. before I decide to join you or not,” Douglas said prudently.

Lauren hurried to introduce the situation in the city and spoke of their conclusion.

Douglas nodded. “Based on your intelligence, the odds of success are rather high, because the night watchers couldn’t expect that we are audacious enough to attack them at all. However, it is also very dangerous. If we are slow, and the Church activates the divine power circles and the transmission circles in reaction, we will be in serious trouble.”

The Church had set up plenty of facilities to defeat the Magic Empire. The churches of such a big city must have transmission circles that led to the capitals of the major countries. Heart of Time, the Sword of Truth, the Grand Cardinals, and the other legendary experts could arrive in several minutes. If they were stopped by the divine power circles, they would be in grave danger.

“Lauren will interfere with the church with magic items, but he will only buy two to three seconds for us. We have to seize the opportunity to escape.” Fernando introduced their plan.

“That will do. Even if we run into a gold knight, I’ll still be confident enough to get away from the battle, unless he is immune to Time Stop.” Douglas revealed that he was capable of “Time Stop”, one of the trickiest ninth-circle spells.

“I’m going to attack the Inquisition with you.” Fernando released some suppressed fury.

After they made the detailed plans and the backup ways to escape, Lauren asked Fernando in a low voice, “Why did you stress that safety matters most and we should not take risks?”

Fernando was very solemn. “Because I believe that Douglas is much more valuable than the Inquisition, this city, and even the whole Union. Of course, that is not including me.”

Lauren looked at his friend in shock again. The guy had always preferred sarcasm to compliments, but he had given Douglas such a high remark! Even though his compliment at the end exposed his nature, it was still rather unbelievable. Was the Sun rising from the west today?

What happened before he came in? Had Fernando been controlled?

Holding back his surprise, Lauren asked carefully, “Where do you see that?”

Fernando replied angrily, “Everywhere! Here, here, and here!”

He pointed at the papers on the ground and told Lauren about Douglas’ research in a low voice.

“If he succeeds, wouldn’t it be much easier for me to become a senior-rank sorcerer?” Lauren observed in excitement. He had always admired and trusted his friend’s judgment.

“Who knows? There are still plenty of problems. Chances are that it will be unfinished by the time he meets the Goddess of Magic.” Fernando couldn’t help but mock Douglas.

...

The horizon was crimson at sunset, and the city gate was about to be closed.

On a hill nearby, Fernando prepared his spell in a temporarily-established ancillary magic circle.

“Has he really improved the spell?” Douglas asked Lauren curiously.

Lauren said proudly, “Yes. In the entire Union and the other organizations that I’m familiar with, nobody controls the spell so perfectly that it’s almost natural.”

Fernando was suddenly covered in electricity. The sky within dozens of kilometers became dark, with clouds slowly appearing.

“Let’s go into the city. A storm is coming in three hours.” Fernando walked out of the magic circle. At this moment, the clouds were still not too many.

It was “Weather Manipulation”, a seventh-circle spell!

A thunderstorm would cover most of the traces of magic waves!

After they snuck into the Inquisition, since the sorcerers who had betrayed them often practiced magic, they wouldn't fear that they might be sensed by the defense circle of the whole city.

Douglas looked at the sky, somewhat shocked. The regular "Weather Manipulation" should have created thunderstorms or blizzards very quickly under appropriate weather conditions. Everybody could tell that those phenomena were caused by magic. Nobody had ever changed it bit by bit, as if it were a regular weather change, like what Fernando did.

Only in such a way would it escape the attention of the keen night watchers and red robes.

Lauren stayed out of the city to watch over the magic circle. He would also fly to the top of the city after the storm arrived, monitor the church, and disrupt it with magic items and bolts of lightning whenever it was necessary. On the other hand, Fernando and Douglas went into the city before the gate was closed. They hid in a fairly clean tavern.

More and more clouds were gathered, and the air was getting damper and damper. Everybody sensed an upcoming storm. So, few people were on the street. Even the patrolling soldiers were considering where they should hide from the rain.

Pa!

A bolt of lightning struck in the dark sky, raising intense thunders.

Douglas and Fernando looked at each other and nodded. They left the tavern and strolled toward the Inquisition.

BOOM!

The bolts of lightning and thunder broke out nonstop. By the time they reached the Inquisition, torrential rain was already pouring.

The Inquisition was an inconspicuous two-floored tower. It seemed plain, but it gave a gloomy and horrifying feeling. It was the nightmare of sorcerers and ordinary people.

“Based on our previous files, the main part of the Inquisition is below the tower,” Fernando reminded him.

Hualala.

As the rain poured down, everything became dark, and all their senses were blocked.

Douglas and Fernando moved faster as if they were in a hurry.

“What are you doing?” asked a night watcher who was pretending to be the janitor.

“Sir, we have important leads about the sorcerers!” said Douglas in a panic.

The night watcher was not surprised. He observed the strangers carefully. Recently, many people had come to the Inquisition at night to confess their secrets.

The moment his eyes met Douglas’ eyes, he seemed to have sunk into a boundless cosmos. He appeared rather agitated. “Why didn’t you come sooner? I’ll lead you to the captain!”

The vague magic waves were drowned in the storm.

Throne of Magical Arcana

859 A Tour in the Inquisition

Thick, dark-yellow carpet, crystal light hanging up in the ceiling, fine statues, vivid wall paintings and relief sculptures, and the bright and warm atmosphere made the small, black building look like a nobleman’s private property instead of a notorious “hell”.

That was the first impression that the Inquisition gave to Fernando and Douglas. The gatekeeper led them through the tree-shaded path and now they had come to the most horrible place known to every sorcerer.

In the main hall stood Fernando, Douglas, and the gatekeeper. Although they did not see anyone else, their sharp instincts were telling them that a few night watchers were hiding in the darkness.

Fernando and Douglas believed that those who were hiding were the first set of vigilance of the Inquisition.

The gatekeeper was slightly panicking. Walking, he said to them with annoyance, "I doubt your devoutness. You should've reported this right away. If this causes big trouble, you two will be sent to the gallows!"

After taking a short pause, his tone softened slightly as he said, "But if things go well, you'll be rewarded generously."

"Yes, yes, sir..." Douglas hurriedly nodded, pretending to be rather obedient. Fernando remained silent with his head low. He looked afraid.

The gatekeeper's words made the hiding night watchers stay where they were. They only scanned Fernando and Douglas using their intuition or spiritual power fields. But the two were well-prepared in advance. The night watchers could find nothing.

Of course, Douglas and Fernando were not acting as ordinary people since magic waves were hard to hide among the divine circles. What they were playing were two low-rank sorcerers who were selling out their friends. Half true and half fake as their roles were, they could well hide without catching unnecessary attention. After the fall of Antiffler, such betrayals were more than common.

Therefore, the night watchers hiding were just being curious, wondering what kind of important information the two had, but they were not qualified to know.

Walking through the main hall, there was an east-west corridor, along both sides there were many rooms. Some doors were open, some closed.

Through the half-opened doors, Fernando saw many common clerics doing paperwork. Most of them were not even priests.

He finally exchanged a look with Douglas, and they had understood each other through their slightly relaxed facial expressions. Although the Inquisition was still sticking to all the regulations and was equipped with layers of guards and alerts like an unbreakable fortress, this place was still run by human beings, and human beings could get careless and lazy.

The gatekeeper suddenly stopped halfway. He turned to the side and opened one of the doors. The room behind the door had no decoration and the floor was bare. In the middle of the room, there were stairs leading to the underground basement.

At the end of the stairs, there was a gray stone gate that was engraved with simple but meaningful divine symbols, representing ten different crowns that connected to each other.

The great power coming out from the gate made both Fernando and Douglas slightly squint their eyes. The gate was the direct display of the defense circle in the Inquisition, and its power was almost equal to that of a level nine red robe. At this time, the Church was so powerful that only a legendary could become a Grand Cardinal.

Fernando knew that the symbol of the ten crowns was called “Tree of Blessing”.

The gatekeeper gently knocked on the fourth crown while following a special pace. Soon, an indifferent voice asked, “Who? What for?”

“Team no. 2. The ‘Hand of Dusk’, today’s gatekeeper. We have two low-rank sorcerers here for some very important information. I’m afraid they will hide something or lie, so I believe it’s better to have our team leader investigate them,” said the gatekeeper clearly, and his eyes looked sharp and sober. However, if taken a closer look, there was this very indistinct dilation in his pupils.

In most cases, a gatekeeper was only responsible for reporting this to the team leader, who would be the one deciding where and when to investigate the sorcerers. But the gatekeeper’s request was also reasonable. After all, some special divine circles capable of identifying lies were only available in the interrogation room. Also, it was not the first time something like this happened. The night watchers had lowered their alert and decided to ignore some of the detailed rules set up by their predecessors because of the successive victories they enjoyed.

The night watcher guarding this stone gate did not respond immediately, as he was checking them using the core of the divine circle. About thirty minutes later, he said in the cold tone, “Come in.”

The ten divine crowns lit up, and the gate slowly opened.

Douglas was a bit relieved. Although they did have a plan B, which was to mentally control the team leader if he decided to come to the gate to check them himself, this was not ideal as the magic waves would be hard to hide. Once they entered, the situation would be different. As there were many sorcerers in the underground room, their magic spells would not be easily identified.

Behind the gate, there was an endless corridor. In the darkness, there were also night watchers hiding.

Along the winding corridor, there were two lines of candlesticks, but the light came from the divine power.

However, the divine light made the dark and gloomy corridor even more unpleasant by comparison.

Through the corridor, it suddenly became noisy. Many who were wearing black gloves were walking through the spacious hall. Some were wearing red gloves, as they were interrogators, whereas some were wearing big gray cloaks, and these were the executioners.

At the end of the main hall, there were many corridors. Douglas and Fernando could feel the magic or divine power waves. Obviously, some interrogations were going on, or it might be because some of them were practicing.

They did not draw much attention from those people, as they were led by a night watcher, and they had passed the many security checks already.

The gatekeeper led them to one of the corridors and then knocked on a door drawn with a black skull.

“Come in,” said the solemn voice.

Pushing the gate, Fernando saw a middle-aged man whose face was as thin and narrow as a serpent.

“Who are they?” asked the night watcher team leader with a bit of annoyance.

The gatekeeper closed the door first and then repeated the reason.

“Don’t be so reckless next time. Basic interrogation must be done first above the ground,” said the leader, whose tone wasn’t very strict.

He then looked at Douglas and Fernando before asking, “You know where Dark Storm is? And the headquarters of the Union of Sorcerers?”

His eyes now looked watery, and the divine light on the wall started flowing. As Fernando and Douglas had expected, he was using the power of the special divine circle to find the answer.

The night watcher leader was confident even though he was only a level-five grand knight. With the help of this divine circle, even a senior-rank sorcerer would be affected by this power if he was not prepared, so these two low-rank sorcerers would have no chance to resist at all.

Suddenly, Fernando saw a pair of dark eyes, in which there were countless tiny light spots like charming stars.

The team leader suddenly sprang up from his seat and said out loud, “You two do know it!”

The weak magic waves were so hard to notice when the entire space was filled with the flowing divine light and when all kinds of power were mixing together in this underground place.

The night watcher leader walked back and forth. “This is very important. I have to report this to the Executor... and also the Predator.”

The Executor was the leader of this county's Inquisition, and he was also a senior-rank sorcerer.

The team leader pulled open the door and said to a night watcher, "Go and find the Predator and the Executor. We have important information about the Dark Storm and the Union of Sorcerers!"

The night watcher hurriedly nodded and trotted away. The Predator was here to catch Dark Storm, and he had to be informed of this immediately.

The Predator was "Griffon Vulture", which was how Douglas and Fernando called him.

The team leader and the gatekeeper led Douglas and Fernando out of the room and walked to the Executor's room. On their way, both Douglas and Fernando were secretly observing the divine circles, and they came to the same conclusion—this place was like a solid fortress designed to restrain sorcerers.

However, they were already here.

Douglas and Fernando had found their way in. The over a hundred years of victory and peace had made them greatly lower their alert.

At this time, the team leader suddenly stopped and murmured to himself, "Gotta bring the sorcerers who surrendered there as well, so that they can confront each other."

Therefore, he changed the direction and walked to another corridor. Douglas and Fernando followed behind him.

This was Douglas' will. He had mentally controlled the team leader. He had to make sure that the Predator would be in the Executor's room before them so that they could kill them all. After all, the Executor would very likely notice the fact that the team leader and the gatekeeper had been mentally controlled, and if that happened, they had to give up on killing the Predator. Their time for the mission was very limited, so they had to make the most use of it.

In the room, Benson was drinking a glass of strong liquor, and the look on his face was very relaxed. The worry and fear on his face were gone.

Of course, only when he was drunk could he forget his friend's eyes the last second before his friend died.

"Follow me to the Executor. There are sorcerers offering information. Please help us with the identification," asked the team leader politely.

Benson was a young man with a red face. He was quite good looking.

"That's what I should do." Benson smiled.

He took a glance at Douglas standing behind the team leader and did not recognize him at all. After all, he did not know that many sorcerers.

Fernando had changed himself into a rather short man. Benson was even a bit amused by the male sorcerer's height.

It never occurred to Benson that Fernando would dare to come here in person, to the Inquisition!

On their way, Benson did not pay much attention to the two sorcerers, as he was busy talking to the team leader to better get along with him.

The team leader was then told that the Predator had gone to the Executor's room. He accelerated his pace for arriving there late might piss off his superiors.

In the Executor's room, the Predator, who was wearing a set of black leather armor and shadow helmet, was sitting in the dark red armchair.

"They found Dark Storm?" he asked the Executor, who was wearing a set of silver armor.

"They are not here yet. I'm not sure. But Lion must have a reason asking you to come," said the Executor.

Lion was the codename for the night watcher team leader.

Sitting in the darkness, the Predator nodded and went back to waiting quietly.

The footsteps came. Someone knocked on the door.

“Come in.” The Executor knew that it was Lion.

The gate opened slowly. The Predator’s heart suddenly started beating very fast. He got his current status from countless slaughters, and he had just sensed the great danger and death coming.

“Stop!”

The Predator rushed to the door. His rich experience told him that only by interrupting this could he survive.

However, all he could see suddenly looked very pale, and the world had been deprived of all sounds.

Throne of Magical Arcana

860 The Outraged Cardinal

Time Stop! It was too late!

Before his brain came to a pause, the idea occurred to the Predator. But he had been turned into an insect in a piece of amber in this static world. He was now frozen by time in the air.

The whole world looked like an old painting drawn only in the color of gray, black, and white. Then, he saw that the colors were returning; gold, green, black, and red... and his body was able to move again.

Move?

The Predator could not figure this out? How could he see himself moving?

In fact, he thought that he would be lucky to survive the three to four rounds of attack during the timespan of Time Stop because of the many extraordinary items he had.

But why was he now watching his body falling onto the floor heavily? The colorful light burst out, but it failed to prevent his body from hitting the carpet and making the dull, banging sound.

How?

To his great shock, the Predator looked back and realized that he had turned transparent and was grabbed in the hand of the tall sorcerer.

His soul was pulled out?

Ninth-circle spell?

The Predator realized what was going on. Experienced as he was, although he did not understand what kind of spell it was, the Predator once heard about it and knew that it could pull out one's soul!

None of his extraordinary items could resist such a creepy spell!

That was the end!

He knew that he wasn't able to fight back anymore.

Douglas showed no mercy and no hesitation. The pale flame in his hand burned the Predator's soul and made him give out a blood-curdling scream. The Predator felt that there were countless fine needles in his body and kept churning!

Meanwhile, he saw divine light burst out on the Executer and helped him resist a spell. However, the short sorcerer had also gotten rid of Time Stop and then turned the Executer into a stone statue before the Executer could do anything with a single pointing!

Although Fernando was also affected by Time Stop, he had prepared in advance. Therefore, he took action much faster than Executer.

According to their plan, Douglas' Time Stop was primarily for the Executer, who was level eight. Meanwhile, Douglas would destroy one of his extraordinary items to weaken his magic resistance, while Fernando, after he recovered, would focus on attacking the Executer.

Knights and clerics did not have as abundant methods as sorcerers for keeping themselves alive. Therefore, Fernando was confident that he could kill the Executer within two to three spells!

The most challenging thing in the plan was that Douglas and Fernando had to trust each other without any reservation and had confidence in each other that they could both do their tasks. So far, they worked pretty well with each other, and Fernando started believing that Douglas was quite trustworthy.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Five silver-black magic missiles flew out of Fernando's hand and hit the Executer, which was now a stone statue. The stone statue then cracked, and the gaps extended inward. Soon, the statue had collapsed to the ground, stirring and raising lots of dust.

It had only been two to three seconds since the door was pushed open, and two senior-ranks had been killed. One of them had his soul pulled out, and the other had been turned into a pile of rubble.

When sorcerers were prepared, they could be extremely horrific!

At this time, Benson had not even realized what just happened. He could only see the colorful light sparkling in front of him. Lion and the gatekeeper were still frozen to the spot by Douglas.

A dim light beam shot out from the tip of Douglas' finger and hit Benson. Instantly, all his spell effects had disappeared, and he could not cast any spells now.

“Antimagic Ray!”

Fernando looked around and roared, “Benson!”

He had abandoned the disguise, and his imposing manner was like the fiercest storm over the ocean.

Benson could not believe his eyes, and his heart was filled with fear and confusion. He kept murmuring, “I don’t... I don’t want to...”

Fernando would not even waste half a second at this time. He summoned flashes of lightning and wrapped Benson into a lightning ball.

When the lightning and sparks disappeared, Benson’s body, which had been burned black, hit the ground. Fernando purposefully kept Benson’s face intact so that those who came later could see the great shock and fear on Benson’s face.

At this time, the night watchers guarding the entire building finally noticed the fight through the divine circle.

“Attack!”

“Attack! Tell the Executer!”

“Report it to the Executer! Activate all the divine circles!”

“The Executer is under attack!”

The night watchers, interrogators, and executioners were all in a great panic and had no clue what they should do as they had never encountered this before. Following their experience, most of them chose to hide first, waiting for a chance to fight back. A few who were relatively calm were also anxiously seeking help as they could not get into contact with the Executer, who had full access to the divine circle.

“The Executer was assassinated! Go find the Predator!”

“The Predator is missing!”

“Who comes next after the Executer?!”

The chaos went on. The entire Inquisition failed to respond effectively after losing its leader. After a while, the Executer’s assistant finally recalled that it was he who had the access.

However, by this time, Douglas and Fernando had already left the Inquisition and were now standing in the air, holding the Predator and Benson’s bodies in their hands.

“Throw them to the entrance of the square,” said Fernando coldly, which still sounded like roaring.

The two bodies were thrown down to the ground like two sacks. Fernando moved his fingers in the air, and the Predator’s blood became the scarlet ink for him to write on the ground.

“Betrayers, die!”

“Predators, die!”

Meanwhile, in the cold rain, Douglas raised his hand, and four meteors in fire fiercely dropped from the sky and hit the two-storey building of the Inquisition.

BOOM!

A horrible explosion took place, and a powerful blast swept across the surroundings. The building as well as its underground constructions had mostly collapsed, and most of the night watchers were forever buried down there. Only a few of them survived.

Since the Inquisition was built underground, and it was separated by the divine circle, in the stormy night, when Douglas cast Time Stop and the spells, the red robe in the church did not notice it. Only when the Executer died did he finally feel something bad.

The red robe was shocked when he saw the meteors falling. For a second, he forgot what he should do. But he soon calmed down. He was going to activate the defense circles in the city, and at the same time, he was about to inform the Radiance Church.

The meteors flew across the sky and fell into the city. Hiding in the rain and darkness in the air, Lauren saw the meteors as the signal. A ring on his finger started releasing electric sparks, which had a strange connection to Fernando's magic circle.

Then the flashes of lightning in the air suddenly joined into one and hit the Inquisition building. Its light lit up the entire city.

Pa!

The thick lightning hit the light shield, which had just been activated. Countless electric snakes were wriggling, which made the functioning of the divine circle slow down by a few seconds.

Lauren didn't even look at the lightning but instantly flew away, heading for the place they previously agreed on. He was flying in the air as fast as he could, and eventually, he started flying lower and lower. In the end, he disappeared in the forest.

Meanwhile, Douglas and Fernando had disappeared as soon as the meteors were summoned.

The rain was still pouring heavily, erasing almost all their traces.

A minute later, another senior-rank in the city, Paphos, arrived at the Inquisition building. He was a radiant knight. Staring at the pit in the ground left by the destroyed Inquisition building, the look on his face kept changing. He was deeply shocked.

“Betrayers, die... Predators, die...”

Count Paphos murmured the words and talked to himself in low voice, “They’re surely crazy, those sorcerers. The Church is going to be outraged. The Church used me like a dog. I’d like to see how they respond to this!”

He took a deep breath and tried hard to control the impulse to laugh. It wasn’t bad being crazy sometimes.

The red robe then arrived. His face had turned pale with rage, as if Count Paphos owed him a hundred thousand Thale.

“Bloody Sorcerers! I’m gonna burn you all!” the red robe kept cursing.

Many nobles had also arrived. They saw the scene, but no one dared to say anything.

“What are you looking at?! Go and find the bloody sorcerers!” roared the red robe.

The nobles all looked down, for they were hiding their emotions in the darkness and pouring rain.

After two minutes, divine light soared high in the church, which was the waves from the transmission magic circle.

A black-haired young man flew out of the church. He was tall and strong, and he had dark blue eyes in which the light and radiance was like a flowing river. He was not wearing any armor, and there was a longsword in his hand.

The look on the red robe's face slightly changed. He then flew to the man and said in awe, "Your Excellency Kritonia."

"I'll find them." Kritonia looked up at the night sky, and somehow, the falling raindrops suddenly moved much more slowly.

...

When they met each other at the place that they previously agreed on, Lauren said in excitement, "We did it!"

"I didn't expect the Inquisition was on such a weak alert..." Douglas was quite surprised as well.

Fernando grinned, as he was in a very good mood. "The looks on those idiots' faces are gonna be so funny! Those stupid black-clawed dogs!"

Then he became more serious and said to Douglas, “We’ll take you to the Union’s headquarters.”

“I heard that the Union has a damaged floating city?” asked Douglas out of curiosity.