

Witch Monastery #Chapter 132: Allowing the Master to participate in revels? - Read Witch Monastery Chapter 132: Allowing the Master to participate in revels?

Chapter 132: Chapter 132: Allowing the Master to participate in revels?

Within the monastery's great hall, seven witches sat in anxious anticipation. Six of them formed a ring, with the petite Andny seated in their midst.

At that moment, this most diminutive of witches had her eyes closed, exerting all her magical power to control her swarm of mosquitoes—spying on Porter's chamber from every conceivable angle.

At the same time, her small mouth relayed a constant stream of commentary for her fellow witches, describing the current state inside Porter's room:

"Amazon number five has just pressed her chest down! Master's been blinded again! Porter's on top! Now Porter is launching a brisk up-and-down assault!"

"Porter's technique is rather unrefined, but her strength is formidable, her stamina boundless, and worst of all, Master is under heavy siege! This is no fair duel! He can barely handle it... He's screaming! Master's at his limit! He's surrendered! Waaa, Master's collapsed..."

"Luckily, Porter also fell at the same time, so the first round could be called a barely-decided draw. Now they're talking... but Master's at it again! Porter has caught her second wind! Porter's mounting up! Now round two is beginning..."

Her voice rose and fell with excitement, as if observing this lascivious revel was even more thrilling than taking part herself.

But to her chagrin, only she could witness such blood-stirring spectacle. The other six witches could only imagine what was happening—filling in with their own minds the luxurious image of Charles beset from all sides by a bevy of powerful, bronze-skinned women. Their worry deepened by the second.

"Should we rush over and rescue Master?" Hattie blurted out first. "When I used to haunt the seas, I dealt with those women plenty. They've never cared much for a man's life."

"If this keeps up, Master's body might suffer some truly irreversible, permanent damage..."

So spoke Hattie. Next to her, Ekta's eyes darted, then she piped up timidly: "But from what Andny's described, it sounds... like Master is... rather enjoying himself?"

"If we burst in now, wouldn't we only disturb him?"

She mustered all her courage to offer this, and immediately, excepting only Theresa and the meditating Andny, the other four witches swiveled to stare at her—ten eyes, unblinking, conveying every shade from surprise to mockery, amusement, or just icy disdain.

Though none spoke, the sheer pressure bore down on Ekta's shoulders. The witch shrank back half a step, stammered, and offered a nervous, conciliatory smile: "It was just a thought... heh..."

Though witches were a collective, theirs was a rigid hierarchy, not to be breached. In the past, the leader was self-evident; after all, strength was always the truest claim to supremacy.

Beneath the indomitable Theresa, stood Sophia—keeper of vast knowledge—and Sephera, Theresa's most trusted confidant.

Sophia's ranking ought to be higher, since Theresa often relied on her knowledge for counsel. But due to her affliction of memory lapses, Sophia had to be cared for by the others, giving Sephera a slight edge in the daily hierarchy.

Still, these two witches were more or less equals.

Next came Ruth and Hattie, both boasting considerable power and versatility in their magical arts—secure in their mid-tier status.

And at the bottom: Ekta and Andny. Their magical prowess was weak, their specialization unremarkable, nearly devoid of standing.

Yet ever since being purified by Charles, the hierarchy had subtly shifted.

Hattie and Ruth—having been purified earliest—rocketed upwards, with Hattie now exuding clear leadership. By contrast, Theresa—last to be purified—had unmistakably lost influence.

Now, a witch's standing was primarily decided by Charles's affections. The relationships among the five peers would need to be reshuffled; a new order had yet to stabilize...

Regardless, this was the invisible competition among powerful witches. Ekta and Andny remained firmly at the very bottom; if they so much as dared to overstep, regardless of the merit in their words, the others would instantly object on instinct.

Except for Theresa. Once mistress of the monastery's highest authority, she was now the least bothered by such breaches of decorum.

"In fact, I think tonight's events may not be a bad thing at all."

As Ekta finished, Theresa's voice rang out: "Sisters, we are witches after all. Though we've made good the lacks of soul and flesh, we can never bear Master's children."

"If Master is to pass down his bloodline, he must still mingle with mortal women."

"And, by all accounts, those Amazon women are healthy, robust, and have nothing but adoration for Master—no malice whatsoever. They are, in short, excellent candidates for motherhood."

As she spoke, she let slip a radiant smile. "Sisters—do none of you long to see Master's child?"

She meant every word. Beside her, Sephera started to speak but fell silent, instead supporting the archwitch's decision: "Indeed, by human custom, Master's age is right for siring children."

Theresa nodded and looked toward the others, seeking affirmation.

In times past, her word was law. The others held their objections and complied as told.

But things were different now.

"I must disagree."

Hattie lifted her head, blue eyes steadily meeting Theresa's, as if she weren't directly challenging the archwitch's authority: "Amazon women are wild and unrestrained—and if the child is a girl, they keep her as their own. The father has no claim."

"So, while beautiful and strong, they are absolutely unsuited as proper mothers."

Saying this, she fixed her gaze on Ruth. "No matter which Amazon you compare—some of us would be far better choices."

"For instance, Lady Anno, who's been visiting Master lately. Noble birth, spotless reputation. We ought to seek a more dignified mother for Master's child—not a pack of self-indulgent she-pirates."

At this, Sephera's eyebrow shot up. She'd recently been badly mocked by Anno—or, well, so she'd imagined—and regarded the knight most poorly. Now, as Hattie brought her up, resentment flickered in her eyes.

Under Hattie's insistent stare, Ruth dredged up memories of the royal wife-selection ordeal (and the sixteen decapitated kings), and nodded quietly: "True, Amazons may not be the best match."

A tense two-on-two standoff arose at once. Ekta quivered at the back, relieved at having no say—and thus, no risk of being forced to take a side.

Then all the witches turned to the last eligible vote: "Sophia, what's your opinion?"

At that moment, the most learned of the witches, Sophia's vote would determine their course tonight.

At last, Sophia stepped forward into the center, squaring her shoulders: "I believe we need more information before making any decisive move tonight."

Taking command, she became the focus of all eyes. "Andny, watch the bird eggs the Amazons are eating—see if their yolks contain rose-red threads?"

Frightened by the rising discord, Andny at last dared to speak: "They do, but it looks more like blood to me..."

"Good, then all's well." Sophia nodded, then gazed around at her sisters. "Everyone can rest easy. Their supper consists of special tribal tonics, reserved for only the most honored of men."

"In short, these dishes can permanently enhance a man's fertility—allowing him to impregnate more Amazons and father more exceptional offspring."

Her poise was commanding, as if she were already the monastery's true sovereign. She pronounced: "So let them be. Tonight is a rare and fortunate event for Master."

Dawn, the next morning.

Charles awoke from deep, dreamless sleep, roused by a gentle kiss upon his lips. Before he could open his eyes, a contented woman's voice chirped, "Good morning, dear Charles—priest."

He opened his eyes at once, and caught his first glimpse of the chaos left in the room.

Naked Amazon women sprawled haphazardly over the straw mats, their bronze bodies shining with every kind of lingering secret—remnants of last night's wild revels, evidence of just how unbridled and mad the feast had been.

Not a shred of coverlet on them. With bodies hardened since childhood by rigorous training, catching a chill was the last thing they feared.

Yet the voice was not theirs. Charles turned his head and found Porter, already dressed, calmly watching him.

Her lips bore a gentle smile, as if she were the doting wife, tending to her husband's waking.

But the memory of last night's near-manic ordeal was still vivid; Charles shook his head repeatedly: "No more! There's truly not a drop left in me!"

After Porter had sated herself, the other Amazons had each taken their turn with wild abandon—until at last they'd collapsed, satisfied, into sleep.

Unlike Porter, whose skill left much to be desired, some of the others were seasoned pros. By the end, Charles felt he was running on empty. Whatever they'd mixed into last night's meat, though, must have been powerful—for even after the last Amazon fell, he'd remained as vigorous as ever.

Recalling the scene in hindsight made his heart race with dread. Now, seeing Porter's smiling lips, his first reaction was to refuse outright.

At his look of dread, Porter cocked her head: "Really? Let me see..."

She reached under his body, gently teasing him. Instantly, his 'sleeping dragon' awoke—boldly pointing at the woman who dared taunt it.

Charles couldn't help but hold his forehead slightly, while Porter chuckled smugly: "Seems you're still brimming with energy!"

Yet, despite her words, she did not further torment him. Instead, she gathered his clothes, preparing to get up for the day.

Charles heaved a sigh, then asked, "Is this how you Amazons practice your seed-taking rituals? So many, taking turns to torment just me— isn't that dangerous?"

He'd heard of the Seed-Taking Tradition, but always one-on-one—never like what happened last night.

"Usually, no. Everyone gets her pick, and shares with no one." Porter grinned. "After all, one woman's taste is rarely another's."

She reached to cradle Charles's face: "But you're special. More than one of us has her eye on you. That's why you received the full attention of so many female warriors."

"So, what do you think? Isn't it nice, having us all like you?"

Charles rolled his eyes. "So none of you mind if I die in the process?"

"Not at all—we took precautions." Porter laughed softly. "The cost of all the food and drink you had last night—truth be told, not even that house you sold would've covered it."

"We saved up ingredients for ages to plan this revel. You're the man we all chose. Of course we wouldn't let you come to harm."

Charles tilted his head and rolled his eyes again: "But I still can't help feeling wronged—it really felt like I was going to die last night..."

Porter spread her arms, pulling him back into her embrace. "Don't worry, we know our limits."

"Relax! As compensation, I'll help you find buyers for those houses you're selling. You'll make a huge profit."

With this promise, Charles finally felt a shred of solace. Then another question came to mind. He hesitated: "So, if you or your sisters actually conceive my child..."

"If it's a boy, we'll send him to you. Girls, we keep ourselves." Porter answered at once, her smile fading. She released him, leveled her eyes at his, and spoke with grave seriousness, "It's an ancient tribal tradition—so, if it's a girl, don't expect to see her again, or to ever hear her call you 'father'."

She'd never gone through such things herself, but from remarks in the sisters' ordinary gossip, she understood that for men from patriarchal cultures, being told they'd never see their own daughter, never hear themselves called "father," could be deeply hurtful.

Even for a daughter.

For them, no matter their own preferences, some men felt personally challenged by this. After a seed-taking, countless Amazon women had fallen out with the fathers of their daughters for precisely this reason.

At the mention of this tradition, Porter's demeanor turned solemn.

"...Very well, I'll respect your tradition." Charles dismissed the thought for now, then turned away, avoiding further eye contact.

But he certainly had his own opinions.

As if! Once the ancient sea-god wakes and your tribes face obliteration, and your War God tucks tail and flees, forced to rely on my strength—let's see what becomes of your precious traditions, and whether my daughter will call me 'Papa' after all.

As a player, he'd skipped many plot scenes in the game, but he still knew the true cause, strength, and ramifications of the final bosses. If anything, it hardly bothered him how stubborn these women might be—for in the end, their own queen would be begging outsiders for help.

All that, however, depended on whether he had the strength.

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Chapter 133: Chapter 133: Lonely Nidalee

Through the crack of the window, seeing the daylight already blazing outside, Charles braced himself with one arm, preparing to get up. "I need to return... ah!"

Immediately, he realized his legs were like jelly, completely powerless.

Sensing his predicament, Porter let out a gentle laugh and leaned down again, her tone soft: "Let me help you get dressed, my adorable Priest."

...

Ten minutes later, with Porter's support, Charles limped his way back to the monastery's great doorway. It seemed that Andny had alerted someone in advance, for when he arrived, Hattie was already there waiting.

He thanked Porter for escorting him, watched her leave, and then allowed Hattie to help him back inside the monastery. Closing the door, her lips curled into a sly smile: "Master, how did you feel last night?"

Charles recalled the previous night's wildness. To be honest, with the invaluable Amazonian nourishing foods, he hadn't experienced any actual agony—everything was genuine pleasure, and only in calm analysis did some fear surface...

But facing the witches, guilt crept in. Instinctively, he put on a pained expression, holding his lower back and shaking his head: "Don't even mention it, I've lost all feeling in my legs. Hiss..."

He couldn't help but grumble, "Hattie, you all must've known what was happening—surely Andny saw as well? Why didn't you rescue me?"

Hattie pursed her lips and giggled lightly: "Because Andny said you were clearly enjoying yourself. And Sophia said this was actually good for you! That kind of group revel only happens once in decades, and they really went all out for you..."

"It's nothing but beneficial for your body. You may be tired for a few days, but naturally, we wouldn't interfere."

Charles's face remained twisted: "Still, this is... never mind, forget it."

Shaking his head, he gave up on further complaint. "Help me to my dorm. I'm going to rest for a full day. No lessons, no training today."

"And... I can't go punish Nidalee today. But we can't let her interrogation end—you take my place this time, Hattie."

Saying this, he slid the diamond ring from his left index finger and handed it to the nun beside him.

Hattie accepted it, slipping it on her own right ring finger, then nodded: "Of course, Master. Rest well—I will take care of this."

A glint shone in her eyes: "I'll make sure that druid receives an absolutely unforgettable experience."

Charles thought she had plans of her own—she was always good at using illusions to bring people close to the brink. His only advice was "don't break her," then he said no more.

...

On the hillside.

Handsome, fair-skinned Charles was pinned beneath, his expression pitiful. Nidalee sat astride his hips, her spirits high, then abruptly thrust downward—

"Ah..."

Yet again, the familiar moment when dream-matter ran out occurred. The entire dream faded to nothing. In reality, locked on her low cot in a prison uniform, Nidalee awakened slowly, her eyes brimming with endless emptiness and loneliness.

She was tormented by her solitude, nearly driven mad by the weight of it.

It was never what she expected—compared to whatever torments Charles could inflict, loneliness in the dungeon was breaking her down first.

Never in her life had she imagined before that being alone could be such torture. In the past, Nidalee believed she wasn't afraid of solitude. Unwilling to accept her father's many arrangements, she often wandered out by herself, shifting into panther form to run wild and free across the hills.

When she'd grown tired, she would rest in the grass, counting the stars, lost in her thoughts, breathing the scent of green and earth, listening to distant birds and cicadas until she drifted off, or until someone from her tribe called her back...

More often than not, she had only the company of nature—the running water, woods, flowers, birds, insects and fish. She'd never found it unbearable.

But now, trapped in this dungeon, she could no longer look at the stars, or smell the blossoms, or hear the birds. Even when she tried to meditate, there was no more response from the energies of nature. Only now did she realize, with chilling clarity, how terrifying real emptiness and solitude could be!

She had always relied on the world of nature to drive loneliness away. Without it, true isolation's horror emerged.

She felt she might go insane. The urge to claw at the stone, to snarl out loud, rose within her. Only pride kept her from revealing to Charles how broken-down she really was; instead, she forced herself to hold back that need to scream and thrash.

Now, Charles's interrogations were her only relief from the loneliness. Truthfully, those sessions weren't even that agonizing—if she adjusted her posture to suit his approach, it could even feel... nice.

Struggling beneath solitude, the druid had grown accustomed to the daily questioning—even beginning to welcome it, and to spar with Charles in words, trading barbs and taunts to keep him around longer, to draw out the company.

Imagining how Charles might interrogate her next, planning her own responses, plotting how to taunt him, and how to counter his retorts—these were the only ways Nidalee could soothe her solitude between visits...

Buzz—

The dungeon gates creaked, footsteps echoed. Nidalee's heart thudded, desperate for a glimpse of the figure who would break her loneliness.

Still, she made herself remain composed, putting on a look of defiance while waiting for him to appear.

Thud, thud, thud—

The steps were unfamiliar. This wasn't Charles. Someone else was coming.

Nidalee held her breath, peering outward—and saw an angelically beautiful nun approaching, cloaked in heavy black robes. Her sapphire eyes shone, her marvelous figure nearly bursting from her habit, accentuating every curve in stark, obvious contradiction to the sanctified garment's intent.

A gentle smile played about the nun's lips, conveying warmth and kindness. Nidalee didn't know her, but she was well aware that this woman was one of those witches who could transform into terrifying monsters.

At once, the druid's face twisted in alarm. She shrank away, adopting a defensive stance. "Who are you? Where's Charles?"

"I'm a nun of this monastery. You may call me 'Hattie.'" The nun's lips parted in a silvery, ethereal voice. "As for Master—he's otherwise occupied. Today I'll take over your interrogation."

She stepped to the iron bars, eyes fixed on Nidalee. "A word of warning: I am neither as merciful nor as patient as Master."

She paused, then continued, "Much as I'd like to begin, I'm required to ask one thing first by Master's orders."

"Miss Nidalee, are you willing to tell us the real purpose behind your quest for the Holy Sword Fragment?"

Nidalee shook her head at once. "In your dreams!"

At that, Hattie inclined her head slightly. "Very well. Then I'll waste no more time."

Even as she spoke, black mist erupted from beneath her habit, swiftly filling the cell with ink-dark haze.

The next second, several thick, black-green tentacles emerged from the mist, wrapping themselves around Nidalee's bare feet.

"Ah—!"

The sight triggered memories she did not want to recall; the horrors she'd witnessed that night invaded her mind. Nidalee's body went rigid, trembling, as she let out a sharp, terrified scream.

Watching her, Hattie's smile only widened. "I don't know what methods Master prefers, but my way is quite simple. I hope you enjoy it."

With that, the slick tentacles stretched further, sliding beneath Nidalee's clothes, binding her limbs and beginning to gently stroke her skin.

"No—!"

Nidalee screamed her resistance, shaking her head frantically and struggling to escape the tentacles' grip. Yet, powerless to cast spells, she could do nothing against their inhuman strength.

"You witch, I'll kill you!"

Her curses were pitiful, the struggle only making her seem even more helpless. The tentacles had fixed her firmly, leaving only her head free to move.

It got worse. One warm tentacle began to caress the soles of her feet, slithering like a wet tongue, licking her tender skin.

"Ah—hahaha—ha—!"

The unbearable tickling made Nidalee laugh uncontrollably, helpless tears threatening to spill. Her sensitive, pampered feet—unused to any true hardship—were devastated by this gentle, maddening torment.

Seeing her method was working, Hattie's lips curled into a further smile.

This was only the beginning. More tentacles crept higher, sliding beneath her clothes, winding about her thighs to caress the soft skin within.

"You—disgusting—!"

Fear welled within Nidalee; she dreaded the thought of one of these tentacles slipping into those forbidden places on her body. She cursed aloud, her long, dark ponytail whipped loose as she shook her head wildly. Yet, powerless against these tendrils, she could only be grateful that, so far, none had invaded her most private places.

Still, terror loomed near: more tentacles crawled toward her waist and armpits, pausing—awaiting only Hattie's command to begin the cruelest torture.

"You have one last chance." Hattie's voice was cold. "Tell us your real purpose—what do you want the Holy Sword Fragment for?"

"Tell the truth, and you can spare yourself the next round."

Nidalee closed her eyes, already on the brink of tears. Ticklish torment was beyond her capacity to endure. Yet when she pictured this beautiful witch—with her even finer body,

her arrogant tone, the fact she too had shared Charles's bed—resentment flared in Nidalee's chest.

She shook her head stubbornly, baring her teeth: "I won't talk!"

"Very well. You have only yourself to blame," murmured Hattie.

With those words, the tentacles at Nidalee's waist and armpits began their assault—licking her sensitive nerves into a frenzy.

"Ah-ha—hahaha—hah—!"

She could not stop laughing, all six sensitive points ablaze with maddening sensation, mind pushed nearly to the edge. And this was far from over—soon, two more tentacles slithered up, one playing with her breasts and another teasing between her thighs, stoking feverish heat within her body.

"You—haha—you beast—haha—pervert—!"

Staring at the ceiling, mouth wide in laughter, she was left gasping for breath. Yet even as her most secret flesh was teased, it brought her nothing but mortified shame and furious protest.

Hattie's brows rose: "My, such vigor still."

A thick tentacle rose high, plunging suddenly into Nidalee's open mouth, filling her cavity and curling around her tongue.

"Mmmph—uh-mmm!"

Now the poor druid could not even laugh, forced to bear the electric shocks through her most sensitive places, mouth helplessly filled. She rolled her eyes in desperation, nearly blacking out under the relentless torment—

Whoosh—

Suddenly, all the tentacles dispersed into mist, vanishing into the air. Nidalee collapsed to the ground, drenched in sweat, gasping for breath.

"You'd best think it over," Hattie advised from outside the bars, her face icy. "If you keep resisting, tomorrow will only get worse."

With that, she turned and strode away, leaving Nidalee alone in her cell.

The dungeon faded once more into gloom as Nidalee's gasping gradually subsided. But she did not immediately rise to return to her cot—she simply lay there amidst the straw, as if hope itself had left her.

Though Hattie had been purified by Charles, she was still just his follower, not the monastery's Master—still less the Dungeon's master.

Thus, while tormenting Nidalee, the cell's psychic enchantments remained dormant. All she'd felt was the barest pleasure; most of the experience was humiliation and actual agony.

This was true torment—utterly different from Charles's so-called torture, which was punishment in name only and in truth much closer to reward.

And Hattie had said that tomorrow's punishment would be harsher still...

"Wuu...uhh—!"

Stricken, Nidalee's long-held grievances finally erupted, and she buried her head in the straw, sobbing uncontrollably.

She had never wanted her enemies to see this broken, vulnerable side of her—but alone, in the empty darkness, she could endure no more. Her weeping echoed through the void, the loneliest sound in all that forsaken place.

At last, after a long time, Nidalee composed herself and climbed back onto her cot to rest.

But that night, instead of dreaming of rolling in the grass with Charles beneath the spring stars, she had a nightmare—one all about Hattie: The witch appeared, leering through the bars, wielding a legion of slaving tentacles.

Nidalee was naked, bound tight by a swarm of tendrils, being caressed everywhere. Worst of all, her body's three forbidden entrances were all brutally penetrated by thick, slick, ink-green tentacles.

Sticky, milky fluid and huge eggs were pumped into her, her belly swelling and swelling until her stomach looked like she was ten months pregnant. Milk trickled from both lips and nethers, leaving an obscene, horrifying mess.

Where once her petite breasts had been taut, now they swung heavy and round like overfilled balloons, the tips leaking thick, aromatic milk. Beside her, the dreadful nun Hattie jeered, while pinning metal milking machines to her chest, extracting brimming goblets of steaming cream.

With every cup, Hattie and Charles clinked glasses and drank before her, leaving white stains on their lips. In the end, they pried her mouth open and forced her own milk back into her throat...

"Ah—!"

Nidalee bolted awake, forehead slick with cold sweat, clutching her chest and stomach to make sure that nothing had changed. Only after confirming herself intact did she let out a long, shaky breath.

Thank goodness, it was only a nightmare...

But Hattie would be back today.

Imagining what might await, she trembled.

Please, fate—let that witch come a little later...

She prayed desperately, though fate never once heeded her needs. Before long, the sound of footsteps echoed down the stairs once again—someone was coming to torture her anew...

Nidalee shrank into a ball, pulling a quilt over herself, crowding into the corner and shaking, wide eyes glued to the cell's doorway—

And then she saw a familiar silhouette.

Tall and handsome, with a fair complexion and a fine sheen of sweat left from recent exertion, he lifted a hand, splitting the cell's iron bars open of their own accord, clearing a path for himself: "Good morning, Nidalee. Tell me, have you come to any decisions today?"

Instantly, the druid's composure collapsed. She burst out sobbing, launched herself from the bed, and locked her arms around his waist.

"Eh?"

Charles blinked, baffled by her tears and breakdown. "What's gotten into you? Hey now..."

Taking out his handkerchief, he wiped her eyes. "Well? Are you ready to tell the truth?"

Nidalee just buried her face against his waist, shaking her head fiercely as she clung to his arm, refusing to let go.

"I see," Charles sighed. "Well then, punishment continues!"

With the last word, four thick ropes sprang from the walls, binding Nidalee's limbs.

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Chapter 134: Chapter 134: Agonizing Blast

Inside the Amazon Fisheries Company building—the large Intelligence Division office.

It was night; the crescent moon was rising in the east. Yet the office lights still blazed, illuminating Amazon women working late, poring over documents.

The official workday ended at six, but in this company, such regulations were as useless as a labor law in Liberl Port. Not that it was the greed of vested interests causing this, but rather the demands of ever-accelerating expansion.

Want to go home? Forget it—never get between an Amazon and her profits!

With overtime earning triple pay, extra hours were the natural choice for every hustler in this place.

At the far end of the office, Porter, their Director, was working late too. Clad in dark blue leather and filling her chair—and her uniform—to bursting, she scribbled notes beside a cup of coffee rich with milk. Tonight, she was simply too busy to enjoy the drink.

When she finally finished her last line and set down her pen to savor the taste of her coffee, another Amazon, just done with her own stack of papers, yawned and took a sip as well. Twisting around, she looked at Porter—full of envy.

"Director, you've been different lately," she couldn't help but say. "Did you eat something miraculous? You've kept up this energy for days, you never seem to slow down."

Porter just laughed. "Not really—just fueled by coffee, that's all. Hmm..."

Looking at her barely touched first cup of the day, mind still sharp and thoughts clear, Porter couldn't help but ponder. She really had been brimming with energy lately; last week she barely made it through half a cup. Now she'd not even managed that.

It made sense, though—she'd been sleeping so well, falling asleep as soon as her head hit the pillow, not a single stray thought, not a dream or a nightmare, always waking refreshed as if reborn...

What had caused this?

Could it be... Charles?

But that only happened the one time—they hadn't even seen each other since.

Was he really that much of a miracle worker?

Besides, the other sisters all spent time with him as well...

She shook her head and smiled, murmuring, "New home, good mood—sleep's just been better, that's all."

She might not have said anything, but the words made the others in the office perk up with excitement. "The Director's place really is something special," they chimed in.

"Last night, I stayed late and ended up sleeping at your place. Normally, that means a bad sleep and lots of nightmares. But yesterday, I slept so deeply and well!"

Others agreed—their stories echoing in the late hours. Porter was startled. She often had colleagues stay for work sessions; certain intelligence matters needed extended collaboration after all.

Yet she'd never realized her home had this effect.

"Exactly," another Amazon added, "That time we played into the night, I didn't even use a quilt—we just slept right there. Normally, I'd feel exhausted after, but instead, I woke up totally refreshed—like after the best rest!"

"Is this just luck? Or does the Director's new house actually have some kind of magic power we don't understand?"

As more Amazons chimed in, Porter sat at her desk, thunderstruck by what she was hearing.

Was her new house truly imbued with some kind of beneficial energy?

Wait! Porter suddenly remembered that, when Charles had sold her the place, he'd specifically said, "You'll sleep better than ever in here"—but she'd written it off as promotional talk, never taking it seriously.

But now, it looked as though that magic was entirely real—a restorative power running through the home. Was it unique to her house, or did all the units Charles sold possess this enchantment? If they did...

Hot anticipation flared in her chest. Properties with a magical restfulness, selling for only a thousand gold each...

Priest Charles was truly a lamb to be enjoyed at our leisure—both in our beds and on the marketplace!

At that price, it's as good as giving them away!

I'm going to make a fortune. I have to buy every last one!

Even if I don't live in them myself, I could re-sell them and make an enormous profit!

Flames danced in her eyes as she dreamt of her bright and beautiful future.

...

Rubble District, Rockseeker camp, Adventurers' Guild-hall.

Anno walked alone through the crowd, her beautiful wide eyes taking in everything around her, glancing at the rewards and quests posted on the walls.

She was clad in chainmail that clearly wasn't expensive, a backpack slung over her shoulder, a shield strapped to her left arm, a longsword at her hip—all the trappings of a typical, greenhorn adventurer.

Her golden hair was tied simply with a rough cloth strip. She wore no makeup, and had even purposefully dusted herself to look like a common country girl.

Such attire made it easy for others to underestimate her—but that was no accident. She was deliberately camouflaged for a covert mission.

The rest of the Force Grey squad that accompanied her to Rubble District were similarly disguised. All of them mingled amid the crowd, feigning unfamiliarity while secretly assessing their surroundings and scouting for viable targets...

As for Anno's current mission, Charles had only half-guessed it. Yes, they were here regarding a threat that impacted the city's security—it had nothing to do with any harvest.

However, this particular threat was not the Abyssal Lord Charles had supposed. That wily old being—or perhaps Theresa's suggestion had been spot on—had, at least so far, managed not to expose even the faintest trail to Blackstaff Tower.

Anno had come for another reason entirely.

To investigate the Mountain People's recent, irregular alliance activities.

It was common knowledge that many Mountain People nursed a deep hatred toward Liberl Port; should they unite to raid the port, it would mean calamity.

While the Mountain People did remain divided by disputes and ancient grudges, Blackstaff Tower nevertheless monitored them closely.

After all, who could say if some heroic savior might emerge among them and forge an alliance of all the mountain tribes?

So this matter could not be neglected; Blackstaff Tower had to investigate their motives thoroughly, to prepare measures in advance and minimize future losses.

Anno had accepted this investigative task. Her recent setback in the South Harbor slums had left her undeterred—instead, it fueled her determination to prove her ability on this assignment.

Her chosen strategy was to have her squad disguise themselves as novice adventurers, infiltrate the Rockseeker camp's adventuring community, and then gradually trace the Mountain People's movements—after all, this place dealt with many who mingled with them.

She was no different; and whether the operation succeeded depended on her and her teammates' every move.

Now, Anno's gaze drifted to a shabby, yellowed bounty poster in a far corner. Seeing the message, anger flared within her.

Those damned hobgoblin bandits—despicable, loathsome degenerates!

She fumed inwardly, then stepped forward and tore down the neglected bounty, which had gone unclaimed for so long due to its meager reward. Turning to the nearby task window, she addressed the official inside: "Excuse me, is there any adventurer party waiting for partners on this bounty?"

Inside the booth, a bearded halfling man perched atop a high stool, puffing on a pipe with one hand while scratching his hairy, yellow-furred shin with the other.

Halflings never wore shoes. Their thick feet, adapted for the wild, came with shaggy leg hair.

When Anno approached, the man glanced up, then brightened at once. "Oh! Oh! That bounty is done—someone brought back Zenith's head two weeks ago."

"Oh dear—must have missed this one hiding in the corner. Sorry about that, I'll remove it now..."

So saying, he snatched the brittle poster with his scratching hand and stuffed it into a drawer. "Please, take a look at the other postings instead, heh..."

Anno's anger faded, replaced by sharp-eyed curiosity.

She wasn't clueless about the adventuring market; she knew that such a low bounty naturally gathered dust.

But she hadn't imagined that, even with such meager pay, someone had dared take out a wily bandit who'd plagued the local area for years. Whoever had done it was no doubt a person of justice!

And any such just soul would surely be willing to work with them to defend Liberl Port—so...

"Excuse me, sir." She inquired, "Who completed this quest?"

"Oh, three young humans," the halfling replied. Technically, this information wasn't for public disclosure, but one, the girl before him was stunning, and two, he was awfully bored. "The man, maybe from Sein, white-haired—exceptionally handsome..."

"And the two girls with him, well, they were truly beauties, too..."

He sighed at the memory, while Anno's expression shifted at those words: "That man... was his name Charles?"

The halfling lifted his eyes, full of surprise. "You know him?"

Upon hearing this, Anno couldn't help but widen her bright eyes.

Truly?

There were very few white-haired, strikingly handsome men she knew. She'd only asked on a whim and hadn't held out much hope.

But it was true?

Priest Charles had recently been to Rubble District and brought down a depraved, infamous hobgoblin bandit?

This...

It seemed unbelievable—such coincidences. She still managed to stumble upon traces of Charles here...

Suddenly, inspiration struck.

Oh, now I understand! That's it—the pieces fit!

No wonder the Priest's hair and eyebrows were gone—it must have happened when he fought the hobgoblin bandit and got caught in the crossfire!

Though his face was spared, his hair and brows were charred away!

Yes, that must be it!

Satisfied with her deduction, Anno trembled with excitement.

Charles was still as steadfast and noble as ever—never boasting, but always acting in secret to safeguard the city.

How admirable!

Delighted, her admiration deepened even further. A new thought crept into her mind.

Once I return, I should advise Madam Blackstaff to recommend him for the Force Grey!

He would need and even relish that job. And then, we could fight side by side, back to back, protecting each other and, after the battle, share an embrace—maybe even a victorious kiss...

As her imagination painted such glorious partnership, Anno blushed scarlet. She shook her head, forced herself to dismiss these fancies, thanked the halfling, then turned, a smile at the corner of her lips, continuing her search for suitable tasks...

Meanwhile, the halfling, with the same finger that had just scratched his leg, stroked his chin as he watched Anno's figure—eyes glittering.

Hmm... Looks like a rich scion pretending to be an ordinary adventurer—class must be eldritch knight, or perhaps paladin, but either way, she's among the stronger crowd...

Several more like her were scattered about the lobby—none of them looked ordinary...

Who are they? Official agents? Mercenaries hired by some noble house?

What are they here for? Abyssal Lord? Mountain alliances? Dark Elves? Or... trouble over at the Haunted Gold Mine?

...

While Anno labored in the Rockseeker camp, tirelessly investigating the Mountain People, on a peak a hundred miles away several chieftains—who deemed themselves the mountains' true guardians—were gathering in secret within the Mountaineer tribe.

There was the half-orc "Chimera" tribe, famed for their mastery over chimeras. Tall figures, often bare-chested, their deep brown skin painted with white, green, and yellow totems forming an abstract beast's head; each marked the strength of their signature three-headed chimera.

Then there was the Satyr "Green Vines" tribe, specialists in vine-warfare. These fey-blooded folk, intermarried with humans for generations, had become a stable—if greatly weakened—race. Aside from cloven hooves, sheepish ears, and tails, and their innate plant magic, they were now almost entirely human in appearance.

And, too, the Werebear "Stonehide" tribe—masters of melee druidic arts. Now greatly weakened, these shapechangers inherited three forms: a purely human guise, a bear-headed, furred, clawed humanoid shape, and a third—full beast, indistinguishable from a wild bear.

A shapechanger's gift is innate and differs from a druid's studied transformations: the former require no resources, can only assume one animal's form (with a hybrid intermediate stage), and are prone to moon-madness under full moons; the latter can assume many forms, must use spell slots, and have no such side effects.

Besides these powerful exemplars, numerous smaller human Mountain People factions—each invited by the Mountaineer or Highmountain tribes—had gathered here for this secret council.

Those attending were well aware of Liberl Port's vigilance, so they'd traveled with utmost caution, donning their tribe's insignia openly only once securely inside the Mountaineer encampment.

"Then, so it is decided, chieftains."

From the dais at the tent's far end, the young minotaur of the Highmountain tribe, Torun, stood ramrod straight, his glossy black fur immaculately groomed, his huge bovine eyes scanning the audience as he thunderingly, yet solemnly, declared in the Mountain People's ancient tongue: "The Alliance of the Mountain Purifiers is founded this day. We will do all in our power to protect our mountains from corruption by demons and evil, and prevent any vile foreign aggressors from setting foot on our land!"

The tent erupted in applause. Down below, the Mountaineer leader, Ilarode, clapped along, eyes narrowed in satisfaction as he watched the minotaur.

By rights, such an assembly should be led by him, the venerable archdruid. But after much thought, he had yielded the honor to the talented young Torun.

He believed in giving the youth a chance. In his heart, he'd already chosen the minotaur as his future son-in-law.

Following the conference, a grand feast began. The Mountaineer tribe spared no expense, bringing out their finest delicacies and wine for these honored guests. The chieftains ate and drank as they chatted quietly with those whose alliances mattered most to them. As today's hero, Torun was the star of the banquet, with countless minor chieftains flocking to speak with him—hoping to forge ties for their own future endeavors.

Torun, far from enjoying such adulation, found it exhausting; only late into the night did he finally slip away and step outside to clear his head. There, beneath the moonlight, he noticed that Ilarode had been waiting for him.

"Well done," said the archdruid. "Your performance today met my every hope for a future leader."

He praised him thus, but Torun's face showed little joy. He sighed and looked somewhat wistful. "Miss Nidalee hasn't returned yet?"

Indeed, Torun felt he'd done well today—just a shame that the girl in his heart had missed it all.

At these words, Ilarode's smile faded. "Don't worry, she'll return soon. Don't let such trifles trouble your mind."

He spoke calmly, yet his own heart was anxious. Only days ago, he'd performed a secret ritual to divine the fate of his rebellious daughter.

But nature's reply had been frustratingly vague. His daughter was neither dead nor imprisoned, but had lost all connection with the life of the land—it was as if she'd entered another world, no longer within the boundaries of the material plane.

Thus, even as archdruid, he could only hope for her return. With the upcoming alliance and looming decisions on the mountains' fate, he could not afford to spend precious time and energy on sentimental matters—he had to first steady Torun and focus on greater concerns.

Now, the minotaur sighed, then forced a note of confidence into his voice. "Understood, Archdruid. No matter the outcome, our alliance will remain unbreakable!"

...

Time passed swiftly. Whether in study, exercise, business, or training, Charles's progress had been stellar on all fronts.

In the training grounds.

Facing the archery targets, he took a deep breath, raised his hand, felt the flow of arcane energy and chanted: "Eldritch Blast!"

Buzz—

In an instant, four magic circles—each as large as a washbasin—materialized above his shoulders. Four searing beams of energy burst forth, lashing out at four separate archery targets!

Bang, bang, bang—BANG—

The four targets exploded instantly. At the sight, Charles lit up with joy.

Success!

All four Eldritch Blasts now carried incredible power; this meant he'd fully mastered the secrets of Agonizing Blast!

Excellent. Coupled with his Illusionist's Bracers and Hexblade's Curse, he could now unleash four bolts at once, each packing about as much punch as a heavy crossbow—the perfect magical turret for the battlefield, always maintaining consistent output!

He exhaled in satisfaction, then called up his system and opened his attributes panel, seeing the following:

Host: Charles

Gender: Male

Race: Human Subspecies (Silver Kin)

Age: 15

Height: 1.71m

Weight: 63kg

Strength: 8

Agility: 9

Constitution: 11

Intelligence: 13

Perception: 12

Charisma: 20

Class: Hexblade (Level 5)

Supernatural Gift: Toxin Immunity

Class Abilities: Pact Magic, Hex Warrior, Hexblade's Curse, Eldritch Invocations, Pact of the Blade

Remaining Spell Slots: 27/27

Highest Spell Slot Level: 3rd-level

Eldritch Invocations: Eyes of the Rune Keeper, Eldritch Mind, Thirsting Blade, Agonizing Blast

Feats: Extended Spells

Cantrips: Blade Ward, Eldritch Blast, Light, Shocking Grasp

1st-level spells: Create or Destroy Water, Mage Armor, Shield, Absorb Elements, False Life, Sleep

2nd-level spells: Gust of Wind, Blur

3rd-level spells: Elemental Weapon

Remaining Purification Points: 3659

Not only had he gained a powerful new Eldritch Invocation—his other attributes had also improved considerably. Sustained training and nutrition had put another six kilograms on him, and his constitution had grown again to eleven.

Overall, his strength had jumped upward. In an open fight, he might even have the confidence to singlehandedly slay Zenith!

He was not yet level six, and his stats were merely so-so, but this CR 6 boss no longer posed much of a threat.

However, his balance of Purification Points lagged behind his rapid growth in strength.

Perhaps thanks to the discovery of his room's secret, Porter later approached him to buy more houses. Charles seized the chance to raise the price, explaining that the earlier deals were "friends' rates for comrades-in-arms; for formal sale, the price is two thousand gold."

He'd worried the price too high—after all, this was South Harbor District: underdeveloped, with poor links to the other districts, and little room for real estate speculation.

At two thousand gold, his conscience pricked him—even more so since he'd bought up that land at rock bottom from the poorest slum dwellers, the average land cost just one gold per square meter.

What's more, he didn't have to pay for building materials or hire masons—everything was handled by the system. His total costs remained extraordinarily low.

His largest expenses were the bribes needed for South Harbor's officials—to secure the formalities and keep trouble at bay...

Apart from that, the rest was sheer profit. The rates were so high they left Charles feeling a bit guilty.

But in truth, he still underestimated the value these homes held for people of this time. Once he set the price at two thousand gold per unit, Amazon buyers flocked in like a swarm, demand far outstripping supply and forcing him to build dozens more on short notice—spending thousands more Purification Points in the process...

So, while he made a fortune selling houses, his Purification Points were mostly spent. To go from fifth to sixth level, he needed 7,500 Purification Points; at the current altar rate, it would be another year before he could advance.

Still, he now had a rough plan for further leveling.

From South Harbor, if he sailed southwest, he'd reach an island teeming with undead—a classic "undead hunter" grind spot for all players.

The boss there was terrifying, well beyond even the combined power of all the monastery's witches, but as long as he avoided the main quest, there would be no trouble!

Apart from the boss and his minions, the rest of the wandering undead posed hardly any threat. For Charles, who now equated undead with farmable Purification Points, that island!

It's decided, the next stop is there!

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Chapter 135: Chapter 135: Blindfold, Candle, and a Harsher Punishment

Inside the Dungeon.

Smack—

Nidalee knelt on the ground, her upper body resting low, limbs bound with ropes, her slender waist pressed as low as possible, causing her rounded hips to arch high, like a stretching kitten, adopting the most accommodating posture for Charles's punishment.

Charles swung a soft flyswatter, delivering yet another spank. A tingling, pleasurable sensation rose to her mind, making her delicate body shudder again.

"Ah..."

Her eyes closed, head raised, breathing raggedly, her skin drenched in fragrant sweat, her face displaying nothing but satisfied delight. Then, the Nidalee turned her head to look back, eyes suddenly mocking: "Is that all you've got? Did you skip lunch? Or are you eating grass these days?"

She taunted him thus, then turned back, shutting her eyes, waiting for his next strike; both dreading stronger pain and craving more intense stimulation, heartbeat racing, her soul brimming with excitement.

This trick had never failed before, but today, something changed.

Charles sighed, neither returning her mockery nor raising the paddle again, seeming suddenly disinterested.

After a long wait with no next blow, Nidalee couldn't help but wonder if she'd gone too far and really bruised his ego.

She turned her head again to look back at him. "What's the matter? Is something on your mind?"

Charles shook his head. "It's nothing. It's just, I'm leaving tomorrow."

Instantly, a powerful sense of foreboding struck her heart. "Where? How long will you be gone?"

"Sailing for a while—to clear out the undead occupying an island offshore. It'll be some time before I return." Charles said, "And during that time, only the other nuns can take over your interrogations."

Nidalee froze at once, as if doused in cold water. All excitement vanished; her eyes stared at him in dazed emptiness and reluctant sorrow.

She wanted to say, "Don't go," but at this moment, shame kept her silent.

What a joke—as a prisoner, how could she possibly beg him to stay...

She struggled silently, turning her face to the wall, her eyes vacant, her mood sinking into deep gloom.

Behind her, Charles picked up the flyswatter again. "No need to talk more. Let's continue!"

He gave her another brisk spank.

Smack—

But this time, there was little reaction. The girl didn't move, her expression dejected, as if her soul had fled—no response at all to the blow.

Charles's brow arched. "What, still too soft?"

Nidalee didn't answer, as if all will to converse had left her—indeed, even her desire to enjoy the punishment had vanished.

Seeing this, he narrowed his gaze thoughtfully.

It seems I'll need to use something stronger to pull this Nidalee's attention back.

So thinking, he set aside the flyswatter and gripped the edge of her prison uniform trousers.

Feeling his fingertips, Nidalee's body stiffened in shock. "What are you doing?!"

It was too late. Charles didn't answer—he yanked sharply and pulled down her blue-and-white striped prison trousers, baring her round, firm, toned backside.

Nidalee wore no undergarments—not by her own choice, but simply because Charles and the nuns never permitted her any. Thus, she had always remained bare beneath.

Beholding her lovely little bottom, Charles felt his pulse race. All these days, his flyswatter had tormented that rear through layers of cloth—never once had he seen it in the flesh.

Now he was feasting his eyes, thoroughly satisfied.

"You—!"

Nidalee panicked, looking back, but her posture offered only a perfect view of her exposed hips and thighs, fully on display.

And Charles's expression, from initial surprise, grew into admiration and awe, as if beholding breathtaking beauty!

She could imagine what he was seeing, just from his face. After all, throughout the flogging, her body had already grown intensely aroused—her flesh thoroughly wet!

Mortified to the core, Nidalee began to struggle more violently. "Charles, you lecher! Perverted priest—you deserve to die!"

But such futile resistance won no freedom; if anything, it only made her seem all the more like a kitten pleading for mercy.

Charles stroked his chin, gazing between her thighs. Because her waist arched low in order to raise her hips, that most secret place was on open display.

Though her skin was honey-colored, the untouched petals were still pink and tender. After so much training, Charles could even glimpse glistening moisture reflecting the firelight.

Truly... beautiful!

He marveled in his heart, then with a wave of his hand, conjured a black leather blindfold and a burning red candle.

Seeing the new implements, Nidalee tensed, a shadow of dread falling over her heart. "What... what do you want to do?"

"It's really quite clear, Miss Nidalee." Charles replied. "The traditional methods aren't affecting you anymore, so it's time to try something new."

As she resisted, he fixed the blindfold in place. Deprived of sight, Nidalee's attention became sharply focused on touch, her entire body tensed in anticipation of every unknown sensation, terror of what she could not see clenching her heart, tensing every muscle—

Next, Charles held the low-temperature candle above her hips and tilted it. A drop of melted wax landed on her delicate skin.

"Ah—!"

Nidalee's waist jerking upright, she screamed, all her hips and thighs trembling from the hot, stinging burn. "You fiend, Charles—!"

Charles showed no mercy, letting another drop of wax fall on the other cheek. The fierce sensation rendered Nidalee speechless, her body shaking violently, even the wet lips of her secret haven beginning to part and gasp, as though inviting him in!

"Seems effective."

Pleased by her renewed vigor, Charles nodded in satisfaction. Gazing lower, he could even see her soft, rosy flesh. No longer holding back, he gently slid two fingertips inside—

"Ah—no—ah—!"

It was her first time having something enter her body. Nidalee felt utterly overwhelmed. Instinctively, she tried to clench and expel the foreign objects—but before she could arch her hips and throw out the intruders, another drip of wax landed on her rear, making her scream again!

"How is it, Nidalee?"

Charles didn't move—he merely kept his fingertips inside, pausing even the wax. "Made up your mind yet?"

Nidalee bit her lip, her face now crimson. "Never!"

Charles nodded lightly. "Very well, then..."

He left the sentence hanging. Wax dripped again. At the same time, his fingers began to move, probing for her most sensitive points, flickering rapidly back and forth—

"Ah—ah—ahhh—ahhhh—!"

Nidalee screamed aloud. The double stimulation was too much, a sensation far beyond anything she could achieve with her own gentle middle finger.

Her hands clutched at the straw-strewn floor, thighs flexing hard, trying to clamp down and maybe snap those invading fingers!

She felt her soul nearly separating from her body, mind gone utterly blank, unable to think of anything but surrendering herself completely to the man behind, luxuriating in this moment of ecstasy—

Suddenly, a rush of warm fluid burst forth from Nidalee, spraying Charles's hand and wrist.

"Not bad at all."

Satisfied with her reaction, Charles finally withdrew his fingers, then slipped them between her lips, pinching her tender tongue and cleaning them there before rising to his feet.

He scattered all implements, freed her bonds, and rose, saying, "I'm off, dear Miss Nidalee."

"While I'm away, I hope you get along well with the nuns."

Leaving these words, and not even helping the limp, boneless Nidalee raise her trousers, he strode from the Dungeon.

Lying there, her soul slowly returning to her body, Nidalee didn't stir, but gradually regained her thoughts, recalling all that Charles had said.

He was off to slay undead again—just like when, in Zenith's castle, he used that white light to instantly purify an undead...

Could someone like him really be evil?

Maybe—maybe, he truly had the power to help us. After all, those terrifying witches now obey his every word...

But then, what of my own stubborn resistance these past days?

Have I... have I just been a fool?

She didn't know. After pleasure faded, all that was left in her heart was endless confusion and emptiness.

...

Soot Island lay in the straits southwest of Liberl Port. Thanks to the ocean currents, trash dumped at sea—broken crates, leftover food bones, and the like—was carried to this island by the waves. Hence, it earned the nickname "Garbage Island."

But it wasn't only debris that washed ashore. Sailors murdered at sea, their corpses too, drifted here with the tides. Over many years, the island had become a haven for the undead.

And it was these undead that Charles had targeted.

On the deck of a small wooden boat—about five meters wide at its widest, ten meters long, with a two-meter-tall cabin amidships—Charles, Hattie, and Theresa sat together at the bow, traveling onward.

Hattie used magic to control the waves, propelling the little vessel; the sea was her domain, and she could move across water even faster than in the air.

Theresa gazed into the distance, her beautiful eyes shining with magical energy. On the open ocean, nothing blocked her vision, and as a mistress of light manipulation, she could see for dozens of miles.

Thus, they could easily chart their course and avoid most dangers.

As for Charles?

He sat idly between the two girls, an arm wrapped around each full-bodied nun, enjoying the seascape while his sinful hands slipped beneath their garments to tease and provoke them.

He had no real contribution to make—the limits of his abilities left little for him to do in this setting.

The boat cut through the waves, flying steadily onward, making Charles feel like he was aboard a yacht. Yet the vessel's speed remained rather modest.

The sun floated southward. Around noon, Charles fetched provisions from the cabin to serve lunch, when Theresa suddenly said, "I see the island Master spoke of!"

Charles brightened. "Then let's drop anchor. We'll eat first, and then hunt the undead!"

It stood to reason, that with so much garbage, the place would smell foul. He didn't fancy purging undead on an empty stomach, retching from the stench.

Hattie stopped her spell. The witches busied themselves serving him lunch. Afterward, Charles lay his head on Theresa's lap and napped, resting until his food was digested enough to keep him from vomiting. Only then did he have Hattie resume rowing.

Half an hour later:

From ahead, a wave of rotten, sour stench washed over them with the salty wind. Charles wrinkled his nose, then dug a white cotton mask from his backpack and fastened it over his mouth.

He knew Soot Island was near.

Having learned his lesson in Zenith's castle, Charles had prepared plenty of masks this time, to block out any nauseating stench so his fighting prowess wouldn't be diminished.

Beside him, Hattie wrinkled her nose prettily and said plaintively, "Master, could I have a mask too? It really stinks here..."

"No problem," Charles said, handing one over—then paused, surprised: "Wait, Hattie, do you have a sense of smell now?"

Theresa turned as well, a little astonished. Hattie had never bothered giving herself a sense of smell or taste.

In days past, deep-sea witches enjoyed teasing captives to the peak of pleasure before devouring their souls, but abhorred the odor of human flesh and its secretions in such a state.

She found those odors disgusting, so she'd simply done without smell. But now, she'd restored it.

"Yes." Hattie nodded shyly, nestling close. "I overheard Lisa saying you smell wonderful, Master, and I realized I've never smelled you myself."

"So, I found a way to grant myself smell and taste. They're not terribly sensitive yet, but good enough for daily life."

As she spoke, she hugged Charles, nuzzling her nose into his neck and hair. Closing her eyes, she breathed in deep. "Lisa was right; Master's scent really is delightful."

Her action was almost like a spoiled child, and it seemed like she was claiming sovereignty, deliberately performing for Theresa. Charles couldn't help but feel happy, and hugged her with his backhand, and then helped her put on the mask, saying, "This is a good thing. Although there may be many inconveniences, it is still a good thing overall."

Nearby, the tall Theresa looked on at the couple with a satisfied smile, seemingly not jealous in the least, but rather delighted by their intimacy.

After this episode, Hattie continued navigating the boat forward. The island's shores were strewn with reefs, and heaps of garbage covered both nearby sand and distant

beach, making it nearly impossible to land. After circling for over half an hour, they finally found a barely usable strand, ran the boat aground, and went ashore.

At the island's center lay a diagonal hillside, dividing it into southeast and northwest halves. "Garbage Island" was an apt name only for the southeastern side, where trash was everywhere; the northwest side was actually clean.

Yet he dared not venture northwest, so they searched for prey amid the stench.

Even with a mask, the stink made Charles distinctly uncomfortable. He didn't want to linger a moment longer and urged, "Let's begin as planned!"

Theresa nodded, having already sighted several wandering skeletons earlier at sea. Raising her hand, she conjured glowing will-o'-wisps near the skeletons.

At once, the skeletons were lured, shambling toward the lights.

As they neared, Charles's heart thudded faster. He'd seen zombies and horrors before—had even slain one—but this was still his first time facing real skeletons outside a game.

Just as seeing a panda excites even those jaded by rhinos and elephants, seeing these tottering bones and the ghostfire in their skulls set his pulse pounding.

Time to get to work.

Without fear, he cast Longstrider upon himself, skipping forward, sidestepping a skeleton's claw, and grabbing one of its bones: "Purified!"

Buzz—

Milky-white Purification light flared. Instantly, the fire in the skeleton's skull extinguished. Deprived of necromantic power, its bones collapsed in a clatter, the threat gone.

Charles quickly checked his system panel: 25 Purification Points earned, and he curled his lip—not even half a zombie's worth.

But he wasn't about to complain. With the number of undead here, he could probably farm out several thousand, maybe over ten thousand Purification Points on this island!

Thinking thus, he brimmed with ambition.

All right—let's get started!

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Chapter 136: Chapter 136: The Legend of the Death Knight

Inside the Dungeon.

Nidalee lay on her bed, one hand caressing her petite yet firm breast, the other delving beneath the quilt between her thighs, gently teasing the mysterious spot there.

"Mmm..."

Her eyes closed, her fingertips moving in slow circles; as desire climbed, delicate gasps escaped her lips.

This had become a daily routine. After all, each night's inevitable spring dream would leave her burning with need, unable to resist. And being a woman, she was not like a man who would risk losing something equaling the value of tenfold blood; for her, there was no limit.

Pleasure would come, lust would be quenched.

But today...

After a long while, Nidalee slowly opened her eyes, withdrawing her wet fingers from between her legs. Staring at the crystalline fluid on her skin, her gaze was filled with confusion and emptiness.

She could still feel a trace of pleasure, but satisfaction eluded her completely...

All it took was his fingers invading her body that once, and now her own brought comfort no more.

So empty...

Nidalee bit her lip. In addition to darkness and loneliness, her suffering had a new torment now: a growing craving for the pleasures of man and woman.

In the midst of all this discomfort, a fresh thought rose from her mind: If only I'd told him the secret of the Earth Dragon yesterday, would he have stayed?

She couldn't say, but the question haunted her mind and would not go away.

I miss him... when will he come back...

She wailed soundlessly in her heart, but today, no matter what, Charles would not return.

Footsteps echoed from the Dungeon staircase. Nidalee glanced up and saw a familiar, tall and slender silhouette, her hips swaying down the steps like a water serpent—Sephora, none other than the nun Nidalee knew well.

Seeing the taunting smile on the nun's face, Nidalee resignedly closed her eyes. She knew that today, she was in for a rough time.

...

Buzz——

Purified white light shone briefly and then faded. Charles had long since lost track of how many skeletons he had purified. With each casting, he had to call out, "Purified!" and now, his voice felt raw. He resolved that upon returning, he'd find some honey or something similar to soothe and care for his throat.

At least, the rewards of this trip were worthwhile. His Purification Points had soared to over twenty thousand.

For that, the whole journey was worth it.

That said, these days of sitting and amassing large amounts of Purification Points were almost at an end.

The real world was nothing like a game. On this storm-battered, weathered island, the bones of skeletons broke and decayed easily.

And without their bodies' protection, the fire of their souls dissipated all too quickly. In truth, there weren't really that many undead wandering here.

Perhaps seven or eight hundred at most, enough to provide nearly twenty thousand Purification Points—a truly impressive bounty.

As for the other side of the mountain, where the greater undead slumbered quietly in their crypts—each was worth as much as several hundred skeletons in Purification Points. But those beings would never awaken alone.

If one awoke, all would. And if they awoke, it would become a raging tide of undead that Charles simply dared not provoke right now.

No, better to leave.

Noticing Theresa frowning, her beautiful brows creased, her gaze seemingly peering past the central peak, eyeing the skeletons wandering just beyond, eager for action, Charles called out, "Hattie, Theresa, let's go! No more hunting, we're going home!"

Theresa drew back her gaze, a hint of regret on her face. Hattie said nothing; the three of them made their way back to the small boat stranded on the beach, preparing to set out.

He had spent two days on this island; today was the third morning. For the past days, the small boat's cabin had been his temporary home; eating, sleeping, resting, and even relaxing—all of it, he had done there.

He had to admit, amusement on such a small boat, with its rocking hull and the waves' regular pounding, brought with it a rather unique experience.

But now, everything had to end.

The three of them took their seats at the bow, and Hattie once again controlled the waters, speeding the boat away from the island. Watching that shrinking peak vanish in the distance, Charles let out a long sigh—this plan, at last, could be called a complete success.

"Master, what exactly is behind that little mountain?"

Hattie suddenly asked, her attention split between guiding the craft and clinging to his hand in full view of Theresa. Pressing her full chest against his arm, her eyes sparkled with curiosity as she asked sweetly.

Theresa watched the whole thing, her expression unchanged, only her yellow-green eyes showing curiosity as she quietly waited for Charles's answer.

"Oh, over there..." Charles glanced once more at the retreating peak, his voice tinged with awe. "That's the resting place of a fallen Blackguard, along with his Death Knight subordinates—an entire tomb of dread."

Paladins—knights sworn to justice—attain their noble class only after taking sacred oaths before the world itself.

But should they break those oaths, paladins lose all of the gifts the world bestowed, cursed with a terrible burden. Unless they can receive fresh guidance from their deity, atone for their sins, and renew their vows, they are forever barred from the Order.

Such was the law decreed eons ago by the Gods of Order. But just as the gods' own material world is not perfect—hence the rise of witches and other evil creatures to exploit flaws in that world—so too was there always a loophole in the oaths themselves.

This loophole is not easily exploited—it requires the aid of either fiends or necromancers. But in the end, one who succeeds becomes a Blackguard: a knight who stands side by side with fiends and the undead, indulging in evil—with power equal to any paladin.

These Blackguards can still unleash powerful Divine Smite—or more correctly, Malicious Smite—though this time their targets can be any innocent living creature. Their terrible aura of hate no longer blesses mortal companions, but vastly strengthens undead and fiends.

These usurpers of Order and Justice's sacred power are, in truth, public enemies across the whole material world.

And there, slumbering still, is a Blackguard of immense strength.

"In life, he was prince of a small island kingdom, a paladin of the Oath of Devotion, resolved to defend his country and people," Charles explained. "But when evil creatures rose from the seafloor—no, not witches, Hattie, but a horde of Merrow devoted to the Demon Prince Demogorgon, who invaded his land with their demonic hosts—"

Hattie nodded gently; she had been nervous at first—if witches had done these things, a Death Knight's wrath could well have fallen on every deep-sea witch, and an undead army might well have marched on the monastery.

But it hadn't, and thus it did not concern her.

"In the end, his army was defeated, his people slaughtered, and he was helpless to stop it," Charles continued. "In despair, he listened to a devil's whispers, drew forth the Blade of the Damned—sealed away by his ancestors—and fell, becoming a Blackguard. He raised his fallen knights and soldiers as Death Knights and undead warriors, then launched a counterattack upon the invading fiends of the sea..."

"If that were all, it might have ended there. But he soon found his armies were still too few. He realized that commoners raised as undead could, under his leadership, wield power dozens of times stronger than before." Charles spread his hands. "In a sense, kings protecting their subjects are much like farmers guarding their livestock. After understanding this, that prince at last broke—he raised his blade against his own people."

Hattie's expression changed little, but Theresa frowned and let out a soft sigh.

Once, nothing delighted her more than playing with people's hearts, luring them into corruption, then devouring their souls. But now, thinking back on the many tragedies she'd personally caused, her heart ached with remorse.

"Though he fought and won, his will was finally consumed by the Blade of the Damned, rendering him its puppet." Charles said. "In one last moment of clarity, he begged the kingdom's greatest mage to seal him, and his cohort of Death Knights, away on this remote and filthy island, vowing never to awaken—unless he one day subdued the sword's will entirely."

Here Charles couldn't help but laugh bitterly. "Naturally, in that contest, the prince lost."

"Between the psychological torment of slaughtering his own people, and his resentment toward the gods for not granting him strength to protect what he loved, holes were worn in his faith. And so, he was powerless to resist the Blade of the Damned. Now, what lies sleeping on that distant shore is a monster fallen irrevocably into evil."

The two witches listened silently; all of this was new to them. At last, Theresa looked up and asked, "So, what's the Death Knight's challenge rating?"

"I recall it being about twenty-two—actually, he wouldn't be that strong himself, but it's because of that Blade of the Damned," Charles replied. "That sword was forged by Orcus, the Demon Prince of Undeath—infamous Abyssal Lord—meant as a temptation to paladins. Whoever wields it is doomed to fall and become a Blackguard."

He furrowed his brow. "A true Death Knight should have a challenge rating of about seventeen. Honestly, in terms of strength, the prince could maybe reach eighteen or nineteen at best—but that sword is savage."

He smiled. "Don't worry, he's not alone in his crypt. He has eight loyal Death Knights, and the monsters he summoned in life. There's no hope of us defeating any of them."

Theresa smiled warmly. "Naturally, Master, by your account, any of those undead would be stronger than I am."

As she watched the distant ridge, she shivered with lingering fear. "Thankfully, they're all still asleep."

Charles kept on smiling, but he knew this fragile peace would not last long. Sooner or later, some reckless adventurer, lured by a devil's treasure map, would come searching, disturb those tombs, and unleash these dreadful undead creatures.

By then, the utterly mad Death Knights would muster a legion of the dead and fiends, vowing to destroy all the gods cherish in the material realm.

But that was for the future. For now, Charles had only one thing to do.

Level up!

To go from level five to six demanded only seventy-five hundred Purification Points; he had saved more than enough. Now was the moment.

With nothing else to do on the boat, he opened his system and pressed the button—

Buzz——

Milky purified light shone as Theresa's brow arched—she sensed her power draining, turned, and shot him a slightly surprised look, before breaking into a gentle smile.

Ever since purifying the archwitch, Charles had switched his main magical source from Hattie to her.

This, too, was part of why Hattie had been so keen to stick close to him these past days.

Charles did not mind. To the first witch he had ever purified, the one who nursed him through his weakest days, his feelings were special; he was happy to indulge her a bit more.

With Theresa's power, he could cast every spell below the sixth circle—up to level ten as a warlock.

And now, going from five to six? No trouble at all.

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Chapter 137: Chapter 137: Tamed Nidalee

The milky light quickly faded as Charles opened his attributes panel. In truth, not much had changed—his mana bar increased from 27 to 32, and a new class feature appeared: "Accursed Specter."

The effect of this class feature was simple: it allowed him to bind the greatly weakened soul of a creature he killed, turning it into a ghost to serve him.

Whether for battle or other tasks, it would obey.

After all, Hexblade is a class wielding power drawn from the Shadowfell, so commanding a ghostly servant was only natural.

Still, even with this ability, Charles had no intention of killing a living person merely to create a ghost slave on the spot. But the ability wouldn't go to waste; he already had a perfectly suitable candidate in mind.

The ghost Agatha, boarding that pink diamond ring, was clearly the best choice.

Currently, this ghost was so weak she could not manifest in the real world. She could only invade people's dreams, attacking within them and draining soul energy to recover her strength.

However, because her power was so feeble, the least mistake could result in her prey turning the tables—just as in that night in the Rockseeker camp, when Charles, Ruth, and Sephera all managed to drive Agatha out, and Charles even purified her in the dream, enslaving her to his will...

Ahem!

Regardless, due to extreme weakness, this female ghost had never made a true appearance in the real world, only appearing occasionally in emergencies to assist Charles in battle—though never in any high-level encounters. For example, when he purified Theresa, Agatha had not joined at all.

But now, with his new feature, once he returned to the monastery and reclaimed the ring, he could finally allow this female ghost to walk the world again.

Hmm... For the moment, the Agatha ring was still at the monastery, worn by one of the witches remaining behind. Every night, the ring invaded Nidalee's dreams, distorting her thoughts.

So, on this trip back, it seemed the training would finally be complete?

At the thought, Charles felt a surge of anticipation.

For Nidalee to endure such relentless torment yet refuse to yield, the truth surely went deeper than a mere demonic invasion; it must relate to the vital interests of her own tribe.

Now, what could it be?

...

Inside the Dungeon.

It had been four days since Charles had departed.

For each of those four days, a different witch had come to torment her. Every witch possessed a gorgeous countenance and graceful figure, always wearing a warm smile—but their methods of torture were more cruel than could be imagined!

Potent aphrodisiacs, crawling worms, smoking and roasting, forced memory readings... Each witch had mastered a unique technique, their methods jaw-dropping, their selection of secret tools giving Nidalee constant surprises and new forms of horror.

Nidalee, who had believed her will was already adamant, was almost pushed to mental collapse over these few days. Add to this the nightly arrival of her spring dreams, each rekindling a unquenchable lust within her and leaving her body desperate for release.

This dual torment of body and soul broke her will to resist. Her mind was occupied with only one thing—Charles, please come back, come back soon!

But in yearning, longing, and desperate pleading, a darker doubt lingered within her heart.

What if... Charles had never truly left, never gone to purify some undead-ridden island?

What if, instead, he had simply grown bored of her, tired of indulging her in those games of pleasure and punishment, and had chosen any excuse to abandon her forever?

After all, her own charisma could hardly compare to the tall, fair, and alluring witches.

She did not know, but whenever this possibility crossed her mind, terror coiled within her, nearly making her lose all hope.

Thus, the fifth day after Charles's departure arrived. Nidalee woke from uneasy dreams, curling into the corner of her cell, unable to imagine what new torture awaited her today, nor how much longer she could last...

Thud, thud, thud...

The descent of footsteps echoed from above—the newest torment was approaching. Nidalee shook with terror, her heart gripped so tightly by fear she nearly fainted—

Then, at the staircase at the end of the dungeon, that tall, familiar silhouette appeared once more: "I'm back, Nidalee."

The iron cell bars slid slowly aside and Charles stepped inside, an eager light of concern in his eyes. "How have these days treated you?"

As if she had just seen her savior, Nidalee's pupils widened to their fullest and, unable to control herself any longer, she broke into sobs: "Waa—!"

He hadn't abandoned her. He had spoken the truth!

He had truly purified the undead on that island and then come back for her!

A surge of overwhelming delight flooded her soul; even though the Dungeon was as dark and gloomy as ever, at that moment, Charles radiated a warm, white light that seemed to illuminate her entire world!

She lunged at him, wrapping her arms around his waist. "Charles—!"

"Don't go, don't ever leave me—don't leave me behind again!"

All the grievance and agony of days past poured through her heart—her mind could no longer contain her emotion. "Please, I'll do anything, anything you ask—please don't leave me, please don't give me back to them..."

Her wailing was all the proof needed of just how harsh her torment had been. Charles gently stroked her long, dark, shining hair—and from the feedback flowing through the Dungeon, he was certain every emotion in her cry was absolutely genuine.

Good. The training was finally a complete success.

He breathed a silent sigh of relief, knowing that from today, this girl would be truly, completely his.

When Charles recalled the witches' reports—how cruel their punishments had been—he felt a rare twinge of sympathy. He stroked her hair a few more times, then slipped both arms under her armpits and lifted her upright.

Due to her height, even standing she barely reached his shoulder. Charles had to bend slightly to meet her tear-filled gaze, and whispered gently, "Don't worry. From today forward, we'll never be apart."

Charles looked deep into her eyes, his voice soft and soothing: "As your master, I will fulfill any wish you desire."

"So, Nidalee. Tell me, what do you want most right now?"

Nidalee ceased her sobbing, surged forward, closed her eyes, and kissed him on the lips.

Charles returned the kiss without resistance, embracing her trembling form. He knew precisely what primal need consumed her.

Inexperience rendered her clumsy—a novice fumbling without technique. Charles dominated their first kiss, tongue probing her mouth to tease her delicate muscle until she quivered helplessly.

Simultaneously, his hands slid beneath thin prison garb, caressing her taut abdomen and slender waist, palms savoring velvety skin.

Her wheat-toned complexion spoke of heritage, not sun damage—a druid hunter preferring forest shadows over open combat.

Nidalee's hands reciprocated feverishly, tugging at his shirt to explore defined musculature beneath, absorbing masculine heat and texture.

Perfection. Exactly as dreams foretold.

Countless nocturnal fantasies had played this moment, every contour memorized. Now tangible reality reignited those memories.

Charles deepened their kiss, permitting her aggression while his palms journeyed upward to capture firm breasts.

No undergarments hindered him—prison garb hung empty beneath. He cupped perky mounds, nipples already hardened peaks beneath his touch.

Though smaller than Amazons', their springy resilience enthralled him. Nidalee shuddered as electric pleasure surged from sensitive tips, melting her resolve.

Their lips finally parted.

Gasping, she gazed up with lust-drenched eyes, cheeks flushed crimson. While Charles toyed with her chest, she'd fumbled desperately with his belt buckle—inexperience culminating in a hopeless knot.

Unperturbed, Charles summoned Pact of the Blade, slicing the restraint: "To the bed."

He moved to initiate, but Nidalee crouched instead, yanking down his trousers.

His thick cock sprang free, grazing her face. Unfazed, she stared transfixed—this treasure she'd fantasized about night after night.

Yes! Identical to her visions!

The very object of aching desire!

Mere recollection of dream-pleasure made her pussy flood. She opened small lips, engulfing his girth—

"Ah—" Charles groaned, seizing her hair to thrust deeper into her throat.

"Wurgh—!" Gagging erupted as his thickness breached her limits. She fought expulsion with her tongue, unknowingly intensifying his ecstasy.

"Cough! Cough-hack—!" Only when her distress peaked did Charles withdraw, saliva-slicked. Tearful accusation shone in her eyes.

Apologetic, Charles knelt embracing her: "The bed. Now."

He intimately understood her fantasy sequencing. Nidalee licked residual taste, defying again: "I prefer not beds."

Dreams always consummated on hillsides or fields.

Comprehending, Charles knelt on hay, swatting her rump: "Arch up!"

Blushing crimson yet unresisting, she presented herself without restraint—plump ass lifted high, glistening pussy lips spread in invitation.

She buried her face in straw. Charles gripped her hips, crown nudging virgin entrance before sheathing fully with brutal plunge—

"Oof—!"

"Ah—!" They groaned in unison—her pain, his satisfaction. Savoring fiery tightness, Charles drove deeper, thrusting with gathering force.

Nidalee gasped as her dream became tactile: his thick cock stretching tender walls, burning ache yielding to rapturous friction. Charles pistoned steadily, each withdrawal coating his shaft in creamy wetness before reentry dragged quivering pleasure through her core. She convulsed—an orgasm already rising from the relentless stimulation of his girth.

Charles withdrew, flipping her effortlessly. Nidalee's legs wrapped instinctively around his waist as he impaled her again, this position allowing deeper penetration. Her cries blended pain and ecstasy as he pounded upward, cockhead kissing her cervix with every stroke. Sweat-slicked bodies slapped rhythmically until Charles pulled out abruptly.

"Hands and knees!" he commanded. Glistening thighs trembled as she scrambled to obey, presenting dripping folds from behind. Charles spat into his palm, smearing viscous fluid over his cock before spearing her anew. Her sharp cry dissolved into gasping whimpers as he established a punishing rhythm.

"Master... harder!" she begged mindlessly, her hips rocking to meet his thrusts. He obliged, slamming into yielding flesh, fingers digging bruises into her hips. Nidalee's third climax crested without warning—a silent scream tearing from her throat as her pussy clamped violently around the thick intrusion.

Charles seized her hair, yanking her head back. "Where do you take my cum, pet?"

"Inside—ah!—please fill me, Master!" she sobbed. Guttural groans tore from him as hot jets erupted deep within her clutching passage, seed pulsing with each convulsive spurt.

Spent, they collapsed into sweat-slicked hay, chests heaving. Charles kissed her temple, fingers tracing possessive patterns on her hip. Nidalee curled against him, spent but blissful, his drying cum cooling on her inner thighs. She nestled closer, whispering against his shoulder: "Pure perfection..."

After their climax, the two lay naked together on the straw-covered ground, holding each other close, breath coming in rough gasps, their sweat-soaked skin pressing flush, unwilling to separate for even a moment.

Nidalee rested her head on Charles's arm. She had never imagined there could be a day in her life as full and satisfying as this. Meanwhile, he caressed her breast, unable to take his hands off of her, though he didn't forget his true purpose: "So, now you can tell me—the real reason your tribe wants the Holy Sword Fragment?"

Nidalee lowered her head; at that moment, her heart was a maelstrom of conflicting feelings and her mind troubled with countless tangled thoughts: her father's expectations, her tribe's inheritance, the demons' pollution, the fate of the mountains, arranged marriages, her own desires...

But finally, she chose to let all thoughts go, and replied softly, "Yes, it's to... purify the Earth Dragon that has been polluted."

Charles raised an eyebrow. "Earth Dragon?"

In this world, there are chromatic dragons, metallic dragons, and gem dragons—five types each. Besides them, there are also three legendary kinds of dragons. But no matter how much he thought about it, Charles had never heard of an "Earth Dragon."

Unless...

"Is it a creature from the Plane of Earth? An Elemental?" he asked.

Nidalee nodded slightly, and for some reason, finding Charles knew this made her relax. "Yes, Master, you are truly well-learned."

"That 'Earth Dragon' is, in essence, a lizard-shaped being with not particularly high intelligence—an earth elemental lord. About a hundred years ago, to fight off the armies of the Empire of Sein that invaded our mountains and forests, my ancestor signed a contract with it. Our tribe would offer it a tribute every year, and in return, it would fight to defend the mountain woods."

"It is thanks to this being that the Mountaineer tribe has remained strong to this day. Not even the so-called Blackstaff Tower would dare to casually provoke us."

As she said this, a touch of pride crossed her face. But soon, that expression faded to gloom. "However, since the Night of the Witches several months ago, something has gone wrong with the Earth Dragon."

"Our best guess is that some tribes ignored the old laws of the mountains and summoned demons to the material world. Corruption and demonic madness began to spread throughout the mountains, and our Earth Dragon was, unfortunately, polluted."

"For these past months, it's been sliding ever closer to insanity, completely unable to fight. Even my father spends much of each day just trying to soothe its mood..."

Her voice grew dim. "Our tribe's greatest weapon is on the very brink of going out of control. That secret absolutely cannot be exposed. Otherwise, even if Blackstaff Tower does nothing, the enemy tribes in the forest—and any number of reckless opportunists—would see us ruined..."

Charles nodded thoughtfully. "I understand. Hm... The Earth Dragon—just how high is its challenge rating?"

Nidalee looked startled, then shook her head slightly. "That, I don't know. I have dealt with Adventurers at the Rockseeker camp before, but... honestly, I don't really understand how those experts from the Adventurer's Guild determine the challenge rating for such powerful elementals."

"Some monsters that seem easy to me, they'll rate extremely high..."

Charles scratched his head; he didn't really get it either. Their Monster Manual's ratings always seemed at least a bit outrageous...

Nevertheless, he comforted her softly: "Don't worry, honestly, nobody really understands their system—not even them, I'd bet."

"But is there any reference? For example, what kinds of foes has it defeated? Or—how strong is your father? Compared to this Earth Dragon?"

Nidalee considered for a moment. "My father holds the title of Archdruid, and by his own admission, he's no match for the Earth Dragon at all..."

Charles's eyes went wide, pupils narrowing. "Archdruid? That's—twentieth level, the peak for druids?!"

Real Adventurers advanced by training, improving their own strength, and then taking a class guild test to confirm their level—the complete opposite of how Charles leveled up instantly via his system.

"Yes." When Nidalee saw how shocked Charles was, a proud look returned. "My father is a once-in-a-century genius of the Mountaineer tribe, second only to the ancestor who first signed the contract with the Earth Dragon."

"All of us hope that one day, my father might even break through to legendary status—becoming the first true legendary druid in Mountaineer tribe history!"

She beamed with pride, and at that moment, Charles had a sudden insight. "Wait—what druidic circle does your father belong to?"

"Of course—Circle of the Land," Nidalee replied. "Everything I know of druidry, I learned from him."

Instantly, Charles breathed a sigh of relief. "Oh, thank goodness—then there's nothing to worry about."

Chapter 138: Chapter 138: Malena's Agony

A Circle of the Land Archdruid, huh...

Pfft—

Heheheheheheh.

If that's the case, then her father might be a max-level druid, but in terms of actual strength, his challenge rating would probably be eleven or twelve, maybe even lower—he couldn't even take on Sophia...

And as for that Earth Dragon, if her father is no match at all, and he isn't just being modest, then... fifteen? Sixteen?

It shouldn't be that high. Even if it's stronger than Theresa, it can't be that much stronger.

After all, if it could be mentally polluted by the power of an Abyssal Lord it hasn't even seen, pushed to the brink of insanity, then it's probably not what you'd call a true powerhouse.

Thinking this through, Charles's gaze flickered. "It seems I actually might be able to fix your tribe's problem..."

The force of purification can purify all evil taint—so, eradicating demonic corruption from an earth elemental lord should be entirely possible, right?

He wasn't certain; he hadn't tried it before. But it felt like a sure thing.

As for Nidalee, she said nothing, simply closing her eyes and hugging his waist.

By revealing her tribe's greatest military secret, she had effectively betrayed her kin, her father, even the entire Mountain People community. Now, except for Charles, she had no one left to rely on.

Sensing her agony and inner conflict, Charles gently patted her back and said in a soft voice, "It's okay. I promise, I'll help you and your people resolve this problem."

"But I have a condition. Nidalee, you have to become the leader of the Mountaineer tribe, understand?"

Nidalee nodded gently, then nestled deeper into his embrace, her pain easing a little. Sensing her change of mood, Charles's lips curled into a soft smile, and he suddenly asked, "Are you almost recovered now?"

Nidalee arched a brow. "Uh, you mean..."

With a swift move, Charles rolled her beneath him again, lifted her slender leg up onto his shoulder. "Let's go again, my darling!"

"W-Wait—" Before Nidalee could protest, he caught her lips with his own. The sweet rhythm of their bodies echoed once again through the narrow cell.

...

Several days later, in the chapel of the Goddess of Life.

Charles, garbed in black priest's robes, looked solemn as he presided over the ceremony. Behind him, Hattie and five other nuns wore heavy habits, their graceful forms fully covered as they folded their hands at their chests, heads bowed in silent prayer.

Beside Charles stood Theresa, dressed in a white, opulent nun's robe, holding a jar of chilled holy water. She stood with head bowed, face severe and reverent.

At the chapel entrance, Nidalee, Malena, and Lisa waited quietly in line. Nidalee appeared calm; Malena looked a bit nervous, and as for Lisa, her big eyes sparkled with curiosity as she peered about, taking in everything new.

Though all was a bit simple and shabby, this was all new to the little girl, so naturally Lisa wanted to look her fill.

Under the statue of the Goddess of Life, Charles reviewed the ritual steps in his mind one last time. Feeling well-prepared, he finally called out, "Nidalee."

At his call, Nidalee stepped briskly into the chapel and knelt on one knee before Charles: "I am here, Priest."

"Are you willing to take refuge with the Goddess of Life, devoting all of your remaining days and energy to her cause, and dedicating yourself to the goddess's great work?" he asked.

"I am willing," Nidalee replied, then repeated all the vows as Charles had spoken them.

"Very good." Charles nodded, and began to recite a lengthy passage of scripture and incantation. He had crammed this ritual in just the last two days, because Malena had requested to take refuge in the Church of the Goddess of Life—if he'd kept refusing, it would seem too suspicious.

The truth was, the Church of the Goddess of Life was in dire need of believers.

So he'd self-studied, and luckily, the ceremony was not that difficult—at least much easier than studying for the Agonizing Blast eldritch invocation.

Once he had finished the incantation and scripture, Charles dipped his finger into the urn of holy water that Theresa was holding and marked a droplet on Nidalee's forehead.

With that, the baptism was complete.

Nidalee stepped aside, and Charles called Lisa and Malena up in turn, repeating the process for each, and thus their baptisms were also performed.

The ritual was finally over.

After the baptisms, Malena and Lisa thanked Charles and left together. Watching them go, Charles couldn't help feeling how precious this time of peace and safety truly was!

His strength was increasing rapidly, the monastery grounds were expanding, and his accumulated wealth was multiplying. If only these tranquil days could last even longer!

As those thoughts drifted through his heart, and as Malena and her daughter left, Charles put his arm around Nidalee's shoulders, "Let's go, darling."

"What just happened was only the surface. What awaits you now is your true baptism."

There are two kinds of baptism: the first, like just now, is the sprinkling rite—just touching the forehead with a drop of water, and it's done.

The second is full immersion: you must strip completely and submerge your body in water—only then is the baptism complete.

At this point, Charles planned to take Nidalee to the communal bath chamber for her real baptism.

Hearing this, Nidalee's delicate frame trembled. She looked up to see the nuns—or rather, witches—smiling at her with not-so-pure intentions, sneaking glances among themselves.

Suddenly, she was filled with a powerful sense of foreboding. But with Charles's request, she had no right to refuse, so she steeled herself and nodded, "Yes, Master."

We will leave Charles's so-called baptism—actually an orgy—aside for now. Meanwhile, Malena took Lisa home.

"Home," though, was really just one of the dormitories Charles had constructed for sale, now being lent for free to Malena and her daughter.

He'd built all these stone houses together in one area, so Malena and her daughter now lived among the Amazon women as neighbors.

They'd been living here for a month, and Charles had never mentioned rent or demanded payment.

On the contrary, he repeatedly had the nuns show kindness and allow them access to the monastery's kitchen or bath—since it was all women anyway, letting them sneak in didn't break any rules.

Charles was making a shrewd investment—he knew Lisa's future was promising, so he treated their family sincerely, building up good feelings.

Once Lisa grew up to be a powerful Divine Soul Warlock, the genuine gratitude she would feel then would be worth far more than a petty sum of gold.

That was Charles's plan, but Malena had no idea, and felt guilty as a result.

She'd inquired among her neighbors and found out that these sturdy stone cottages cost two thousand gold to buy.

Which was a real bargain, but even with her two-gold-per-day high salary, it would take years to afford one.

She'd hinted about this a few times, but Charles either didn't understand or didn't care—in the end, the matter was always dropped, so she stopped asking and quietly saved her money, ready to pay him all at once when the time came.

Since today was a day off, Malena hadn't gone to the tailor's shop, but had returned home to patch up some of Lisa's clothes.

Since moving here, Malena couldn't take in laundry work as before.

She'd lost that stream of income, and needed to buy a lot of new furniture—a significant expense.

But as the saying goes, a blessing in disguise. After moving into the monastery's neighborhood, Lisa's education was unexpectedly resolved. The nuns volunteered to teach her history and magical studies, easing Malena's financial stress and allowing her to spend more of her saved wages on their diet.

Looking in the mirror on the table, Malena could see how her once sallow and dry skin was now regaining its creamy fullness and supple glow, like she'd had as a young noblewoman—delicate and beautiful.

She'd born a child, but she was barely in her twenties; her body still young, her bloodline vibrant, and lack of nourishment alone had made her look worn before.

Now, with a better diet and more nutrients—perhaps even an excess from using the nuns' kitchen—her body was swiftly recovering its health, youth, and beauty.

But with that nutrition came something else...

Feeling the fullness at her chest, Malena frowned, shifting uncomfortably.

She looked back at her daughter, who was reading a picture book. "Lisa, have you stopped... breastfeeding lately?"

Lisa nodded, turning from her book to look at her. "Yeah, mom, I'm a big girl now. I can't drink from you anymore."

She clenched her little fists, eyes brimming with ambition: "I'll eat well and grow strong, just like Sister Theresa, so I can stand up to the bad guys!"

Seeing this, Malena couldn't help but smile.

Since that fateful night, Lisa's own changes were apparent—she wasn't lazy and spoiled anymore, nor did she tire easily, but ran about all day or studied, to Malena's satisfaction.

Whether it was bloodline awakening or the nuns' influence, she didn't know.

But whatever it was, it was all good luck.

She mused to herself, then looked down with slight frustration at her shirt's front.

Her chest was swelling to the point where it could hold no more milk, and damp patches were already seeping through her shirt.

Ah well, she thought, I'll wait until Lisa sleeps tonight and express some myself.

...

That night.

After another round of fun with the nuns and Nidalee, Charles was about to turn in. Suddenly, the shrill beep of a warning alarm woke him. He jumped up and pulled up the monastery map in his system—several red dots, representing hostile creatures, had already entered the residential quarter, separated from the monastery by only a single wall.

It seemed the system's detection was quite aggressive—though those houses had been sold to the Amazons, the territory still counted as monastery grounds, and the Amazons living there were only marked as neutral yellow.

Now, when any hostile force set foot in that area, the system would treat it as an invasion and instantly alert the Master.

Staring at those red dots, Charles couldn't tell—were they after the Amazon women, or actually targeting his small monastery?

If it was the former, he could ignore it. If the latter...

Uh...

Looking at the direction those red dots were gathering, Charles's eyes narrowed.

That room—it looked like...

Malena's room?!

Realizing this, his pupils shrank, and at the same moment, the other witches awoke, sitting up with their bare upper bodies exposed, looking at him in confusion.

Charles didn't explain, but leapt out of bed: "Get up! Someone's here to kidnap Lisa again!"

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Chapter 139: Chapter 139: Succubus

At that moment, in Malena's room.

Lisa's breathing was slow and deep, showing she was sound asleep. Feeling her chest had swollen to an unbearable degree, Malena lifted the quilt, got out of bed quietly in her white cotton pajamas, and tiptoed into the living room.

She picked up the cup from the table, lifted the lower edge of her pajamas to reveal her snowy, ample breasts, then bent forward slightly to position a breast at the rim of the cup. With her other hand, she gently squeezed her breast.

A steady stream of warm, rich milk squirted into the cup. An enticing scent filled the air, one that would set anyone's appetite aflame.

As the pressure in her chest faded, Malena sighed in relief and switched sides, squeezing her other breast.

Minute by minute, the large cup slowly filled. Soon, halfway done, Malena found her chest no longer ached.

Staring at the generous half-cup of warm milk, Malena, not wanting to waste, considered drinking it all in one go—when suddenly, her ears twitched. Faint rustling steps sounded outside her room.

Who could it be?

Maybe the Amazons coming home from work?

She hadn't spoken much to her Amazon neighbors, but did know a bit about their group. Their company lately had been booming, with lots of overtime, so coming home near midnight wasn't unusual.

Their attitude to her wasn't warm, but not hostile either. Besides, Amazon women had such a fearsome reputation that living among them gave Malena a rare sense of security.

After all, with such neighbors, no ordinary kidnappers would dare cause her trouble.

But that reassurance applied only to ordinary kidnappers.

What if these weren't ordinary?

Just like tonight.

Letting her pajamas fall, Malena prepared to go back to bed. But with another twitch of her ear, she heard soft footsteps gathering near her doorway.

Her heart leapt into her throat. The memory of being tied up with her daughter as kidnappers broke in flashed through her mind, the shadow of that night's trauma returning. She trembled with terror, suddenly unable to breathe.

They're back!

The same wicked men again! Lisa's still sleeping—she couldn't let them rush into the bedroom!

Battling her fear, Malena gritted her teeth. She wanted to shove the table to block the entrance.

She thought they'd at least need a few moments to pick the lock, but instead there was a soft "click"—the lock and the bolt simply fell to the ground.

Knock, a 2nd-level spell, is the bane of any lock—mundane, safe, or magical alike!

Malena didn't realize the group included a spellcaster. They didn't waste time with lockpicks, but used magic to open her door in an instant!

The door opened, and several sneaky silhouettes slipped inside. This was far beyond Malena's expectations, and terror seized her chest, forcing a shrill scream from her lips: "Help—!"

"Burglars! Help, someone—!"

Back in the slums, the neighbors were almost as helpless as she was, and everyone minded their own business—few would help.

But here in this neighborhood, there were scores of Amazon women.

These female warriors were strong, proud, and viewed this compound as their own territory, so if they heard an alarm, they'd very likely rush to handle any kidnappers.

Malena had almost no battle power of her own, so in this moment, her best hope was to cry for help.

Her shrill scream pierced the walls, waking Lisa and all the neighboring Amazons. The two shadowy figures inside paused, then cursed angrily, "Damn, she's still awake?"

"Shit, this is bad! Get it done! If those maniac women hear, we'll be in real trouble!"

"Grab her arms! Gag her!"

Cursing, the attackers rushed in and forced Malena's arms down on either side. She struggled but was no match for them. A third figure stuffed a cloth in her mouth, silencing her.

Then, behind them, a tall, slender, and striking female silhouette sauntered into the room, cat-like in her movements.

It was late, and the lights were dim; Malena couldn't see her face clearly, but she caught a glimpse of a pair of short, thick horns atop her head.

Behind her waist, a pair of miniature bat-like wings stretched, and a long, thin tail trailed behind...

A demon!

Damn it, how did we ever cross paths with something like that!

Realizing this, Malena shook uncontrollably. And then, that tall female demon strode over to her.

Up close, Malena could see her skin was a faint violet, bright red lips, a full, proud chest and slim, alluring waist—her body's curves so exaggerated that she was almost hypnotic.

She wore almost nothing, just a slick of black paint artfully covering herself like a half-bowl-shaped bra and a white cotton thong. Her curves, pierced navel, and even a little tuft of neat hair were all on vibrant display. Even Malena, another woman, flushed and called her shameless in her heart.

While Malena was taking in her figure, the demon woman also looked her over from head to toe, studying her shape and face.

Then the demon woman spoke, her voice dripping sweetly, "Oh, she's still lactating? Heh, I get it—she must want to use her milk to seduce men..."

"Tie her up and bring her too. Our Abyssal Lord could use a milkmaid concubine."

With that, she turned to leave. Malena was gripped by utter terror. She understood all too well—these people wanted to deliver her as a tribute to a demon!

Damn demon worshippers!

No! My fate can't end like this!

Someone save me, please—someone help us!

Her heart howled in despair, but as if answering her prayer, the demon woman at the doorway was suddenly struck by some unseen force and sent flying sideways. "Ah—!"

...

The succubus's name was Ines.

As a succubus, she hadn't been in the best mood lately. Not long ago, she'd pledged herself to serve a powerful Abyssal Lord, following him out to the material world in hopes of making her mark.

Instead, he didn't trust her. He suspected she was an spy sent by another power, so he never assigned her anything important.

Take tonight for example: her only mission was to kidnap a mortal little girl of unusual lineage, but with no real fighting ability. Anyone could've done such easy work—yet the Abyssal Lord had given it to her.

Ines could only admit—

Damn, his instincts were dead on!

She really was a spy, planted at the Abyssal Lord's side to collect intel and deliver it to her true master.

But this gig wasn't going well, leaving her all the more irritable and frustrated.

Why wouldn't he trust her? Was it because her chest wasn't big enough?

Well, this woman's chest at least met that standard...

Not to mention her hips, which were nice and round...

Fine, whatever. Finish this job, hand the woman over, act sweet, and gradually earn his trust...

With such a trivial task, surely nothing could go wrong... right?

She'd just finished the thought when a burst of Eldritch Blast slammed into her side and sent her tumbling away.

The source, of course, was Charles. Thanks to the spell's extreme range, he hadn't even come close, but he'd already pinpointed her location and launched his spell, blasting her aside.

Just one look at the tumbling figure confirmed it—she was a true succubus.

Succubi, one of the demons from the Infinite Layers of the Abyss, are among the few types boasting actual intelligence—possibly even the only demons with genuine beauty, a rare exception.

Not only that, every one of them is highly seductive; with a glance or a smile, they effortlessly arouse desire in others, their repertoire of skills making them utterly irresistible.

Thanks to these three traits, succubi are popular both among demon lords and among mages eager to summon demons as servants.

"As demons they are irredeemable, but succubi are controllable—and beautiful—so must be forgiven," one mage who'd summoned five succubi as concubines once put it, earning wide agreement.

Thus, while fighting demons is right and proper in the material world, summoning succubi is a not-so-secret indulgence among mages.

Because of this, Charles still couldn't tell if this was merely a kidnapper's ring with a mage able to control a succubus, or if the Abyssal Lord himself had sent her directly.

But there was no time to ponder. As he burst into the residential district, footsteps echoed from every direction.

Tonight, a truly impressive number had come.

On the system's map, a sea of red dots swarmed—Charles hadn't even bothered to count, but now, looking closely, there were at least a dozen kidnappers lurking in the shadows.

To seize Lisa, these people had come full force.

Luckily, even with so many on the job, none could stand before his strength.

A corner of Charles's mouth curled in a smirk. He didn't let the standby witches get involved, but looked around and said, "Come on, all of you at once—I'm in a hurry."

Such blatant arrogance enraged the criminals. One kidnapper drew a half-meter-long cleaver from his back, spat, and walked forward: "This punk's asking for it! Let's give him some blood to remember!"

The man coming at him wasn't especially tall, looked like a slum native, but was thickly muscled, with a vertical scar on his left cheek that lent him a fierce air.

Spurred on, the other kidnappers crowded in with various weapons, murderous intent filling the air. Any gang would call these men their backbone; now, over a dozen had gathered just to kidnap a defenseless mother and child!

Clearly, Lisa was high-value prey.

All around, the Amazon women who'd been sleeping woke to the noise, threw on leather armor and grabbed their weapons, readying for battle.

Yet none rushed out—they simply watched from their windows or waited for the signal to engage.

And outside, as he was surrounded, Charles didn't panic. He raised his right hand, guiding the energy of the Shadowfell into the shape of a longsword. At the same moment, he finished his incantation: "Elemental Weapon!"

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Chapter 140: Chapter 140: Malena's Desire

Whoosh—

Intense flames began to gather on his longsword, igniting in a fierce blaze. This was the new spell he'd gained automatically at level five: "Elemental Weapon." With it, he could choose from five types of elemental energy—fire, frost, lightning, acid, or thunder—and infuse them into his weapon for added power.

Enhancing his blade, Charles raised the magic shield strapped to his left arm to guard his chest. Without waiting for these men to encircle him, he rushed straight for Malena's room. Two kidnappers, cleavers in hand, tried to intercept him. Charles wasted no movement; he struck out with his sword—

Clang—

A metallic crash rang out as Charles's blade was blocked by one man. Another came at him, swinging down, but Charles met him with his shield, barely deflecting the blow.

These two would try to retreat, waiting for others to close in from behind. Against a spellcaster, with numbers on their side, they thought themselves sure to win.

But this was wishful thinking. After gaining the "Thirsting Blade" Eldritch Invocation, Charles's blade strikes were now far faster than anything mere mortals could match!

Just as they tried to recover, Charles's flaming blade curved with a whiplash motion, slashing straight across a man's shoulder—

Shhk—

His magical sword cleaved through the kidnapper's leather armor like butter, severing the man's entire arm!

Driven by his spellcasting abilities, every swing of Charles's longsword struck with the force of a twenty-strength warrior—devastating in every blow!

At the same time, the intense heat from the blade nearly set his skin on fire, and the smell of roasting flesh filled the air, mingling with the kidnapper's agonized scream: "Aaaah—!"

Before a magical weapon, this sort of protection was as fragile as paper; it may as well have been bare flesh.

Charles withdrew his sword. The wounded kidnapper dropped his cleaver, clutched his wound, collapsed to his knees, pale and trembling, speechless with pain.

The other kidnapper's face turned ashen, mistaking Charles for a master swordsman, and hastily retreated, shouting, "He's a monster! Be careful!"

The front line opened up, revealing Malena's doorway ahead. Charles didn't bother to pursue, but dashed inside—just in time to catch two kidnappers lashing ropes around Malena and Lisa, staring up at him in shock.

...

Elsewhere, the witches were using Invisibility to mask themselves, watching in silence—no one making a move, as Charles had ordered.

Utilizing the monastery's internal map from his system, he could see that among these grunts, several larger Red Dots stood out.

Compared to these mere mortals—maybe a Level 1 Warrior class at best—it was those large Red Dots who posed the real threat.

So, he'd ordered the witches to stay hidden, waiting for the real enemies to show themselves before intervening!

But even so, seeing Charles charge into Malena's home, with a dozen savage thugs circling him, the witches grew nervous.

"How about I go out and poison a few of them right now?"

The ever-impulsive Sephera suggested, her vertical pupils glinting with anxiety. "One toss of poison could take out several—otherwise, with so many brutes, even if Master's a level six spellcaster, it won't be easy!"

She pressed her point, looking to Theresa for support: "Eldest sister, don't you agree?"

But Theresa only maintained her gentle smile, glancing calmly at the distance, exuding complete confidence in Charles.

This time it was Ruth who agreed with Sephera. "I want in, too."

Sephera shot her an odd look, then turned to Hattie, eager for her approval.

This wasn't just concern for Charles's safety—it was also a challenge to the deep-sea witch's authority!

"We're not to move!"

Hattie suddenly spoke, voice calm and steady: "These human kidnappers might be strong and vicious, but Master has several third-level spell protections on him. They're no real threat."

"Let him handle it himself. It'll also show Malena and Lisa, and all those Amazon women, just how strong he really is now—save us trouble later."

She drew a deep breath, adding: "Besides, Master sees further than we do. He says terrible foes hide in the darkness. If so, we'll need all hands when they show themselves. So, let's wait."

Her reasoning eased even Sephera and Ruth, who, though still worried, now held back.

Sophia, however, said nothing but pondered. Then she turned, invoked the Extended Spell metamagic feat, and silently cast Haste from afar, sending its effects to Charles.

If they were to let Master show off, of course they would support him wholeheartedly.

Inside the room, Charles's gaze met the kidnappers who had just bound Malena and Lisa.

They had heard the screams from outside and saw he had run in alone with a flaming longsword. Recognizing a dangerous opponent, each grabbed one hostage, hands clamped on Malena's and Lisa's throats, eyes bulging, yelling: "Drop your weapon!"

"Come any closer, and we'll strangle both of them!"

Charles halted, shrugged, and pretended to comply—planning to drop his weapon, then use Sleep to knock out everyone in the room—when Lisa, face filled with terror, suddenly screamed, "No—!"

Buzz—

A golden light blazed from her body, and a solid golden orb burst from her mouth—

Whoosh—

This time, her aim was true. The golden orb struck the kidnapper choking Malena square on the forehead.

The light vanished silently into his skull, but the man stiffened, collapsed, and fell to the floor.

The other, holding Lisa, was left so stunned he seemed frozen in place.

At the same moment, Charles felt a tremendous surge of magical energy flood his body—a rush of speed and strength!

Haste!

Sophia, buffing me?

Surmising who was helping him, Charles wasted no time. In the heartbeat before the last kidnapper could recover from shock, he lunged and drove his longsword through the kidnapper's chest—

Shhk—

The man tried, panic-stricken, to block, but in vain. The burning blade skewered him instantly—not quite striking the heart, but the superheated blade all but incinerated his internal organs.

Agony wracked his mind, and he gave a wretched howl. "Aaah—!"

Charles wrenched his sword free, spattering blood across his own face. Ignoring it, he scooped Lisa up with one arm, spun, and delivered her to her mother's embrace—even as both women were still tied.

"Whew..."

The kidnapper thudded to the floor, silent forever. The golden light faded from Lisa, and she looked weakened. Malena looked stunned. Last time, she'd slept through everything enchanted by magic. Now, for the first time, she saw this seemingly gentle, pale young priest ruthlessly slaying with a sword!

These fiends couldn't even slow him—he'd cut his way through them to save her!

How powerful... how dominant!

Overflowing with the forceful charisma unique to a truly strong man!

The bloody floor and twisted corpses did not frighten this woman. Her heart pounded wildly, her eyes now fixed only on Charles's face, handsome and smeared with blood.

But Charles couldn't worry about Malena's reaction. Haste's duration was short—he slashed the ropes binding the women, freeing their wrists, despite the red welts left by the cords.

"Hide here," he whispered. "Don't come out until I say it's safe!"

With that, he turned from them, facing the crowd of knife- and club-wielding bandits at the door. Shield up, sword raised, he charged again!

With Haste's support, Charles now moved at quadruple speed. Against these ordinary men, it was like fighting standing still.

The flailing cleavers could hardly touch him, even surrounded. If any blow landed, it failed to penetrate his Armor of Agathys, which instead sent freezing backlash through the attacker.

Every sword stroke Charles landed was lethal; none of these crooks even wore chainmail—their flesh fell easily to his burning blade.

In moments, he pressed back over a dozen foes single-handedly, nearly unscathed, while half the kidnappers lay dead or dying, the rest wavering and in retreat.

In the middle of this furious onslaught, Charles had no idea that behind him, Malena and Lisa had risen, standing together in the doorway, wide-eyed and staring at his every move.

To them, his slender shoulders seemed as solid and dependable as a mountain.

Malena felt a long-forgotten warmth returning to her body.

She was a little ashamed to admit it, but with her newfound nutrition and vanished stress, she had regained not only her skin's fairness and elasticity, but a surge of vitality.

And physical vitality and desire are always strongly connected. It is said: when someone endures hardship and exhaustion, all carnal longings die away; but when a woman is safe and comfortable, her own passions at night burn uncontrollably.

Just like Malena now. At twenty-two, she was in her prime, and no stranger to desire—she had a daughter, after all. Deep within, that longing burned strong.

In years past, crushing burdens had stifled those feelings, and she'd all but forgotten a man's warmth.

But now, or rather—just a moment ago—seeing the succubus's outrageous attire, realizing its purpose, then beholding Charles's imposing figure, flames of passion were kindled anew in her heart and spread uncontrollably.

This man...

She wanted him.

She needed him...

Malena's throat felt parched.

Unaware of Malena's inner struggle, Charles continued his furious battle. Just as the remaining gang members faced collapse, he heard a distant female shout: "Useless humans—our turn!"

The succubus's voice!

She was hiding behind cover, out of sight. And as her voice finished, eight figures cloaked in jet black emerged from the shadows, displacing the kidnappers and seizing the battlefield.

Seeing this, Charles halted his pursuit and fell back to Malena's doorway, shielding both women. His eyes narrowed as he summoned the system map.

So it was the hidden Red Dots all along!

It was time to face the real threat.

The eight figures flung off their cloaks, revealing skin of vivid crimson, horned foreheads, and great bat-like wings.

At once, Charles tensed, standing vigilant at the threshold—prepared for a real fight.

Cambions!

Were they like Regolas?

His mind flashed to the cambion who served Mephistopheles. But looking at these leering, wild faces and their savage bearing, he shook his head.

No, no... If they were like Regolas, they would never be so crude.

Cambion is a catch-all term: any offspring of a fiend and a mortal, no matter if the fiend parent is a demon of the Infinite Layers of the Abyss, a devil of the Nine Hells, or any other—mix them with a mortal, and you have a cambion.

This results in enormous variation, sometimes even more than between humans and orcs. Cambions born to devils often inherit their sire's discipline—strong in magic, dedicated to study, and fond of plotting.

Regolas is such a type—cold, calm, devious, fond of scheming through shadows. A true menace.

But these cambions were not. They vibrated with wild energy, savage, feral, cruel and bloodthirsty, matching perfectly the traits of the Infinite Abyss demons!

These were demon descendants!

Just seeing the succubus earlier, Charles had not been sure; after all, many mages summon succubi for use as secretaries or playthings.

But seeing this many powerful, demonic cambions under a succubus's command, their origin was now clear.

They belonged to the Abyssal Lord.

Not one must be allowed to escape tonight!

"Hattie, Theresa, you handle the cambions!"

He growled the command, loud enough for the hidden witches to hear. Then, casting more defensive spells on himself, Charles stood at Malena's doorway—eyes fixed, unwilling to charge forward, simply waiting for the enemy to come to him.

Now, he no longer feared these cambions. While Regolas's strength had been outrageous—able to cast Hold Monster and instantly stop even a berserk Ruth—he was not the average example, just as Charles himself was no average human.

According to the Adventurer's Guild's Monster Manual, cambions typically have a challenge rating of five, lower than Zenith. If they came one by one, Charles wasn't sure he'd even lose.

Cambions are tricky, though: skilled in magic, able to fly, and much more dangerous than a Zenith who can't cast spells or take to the skies.

But against Charles, these troubles were minor. He had even more spells, and his Eldritch Blast reached any height.

One-on-one, he could surely win, even against two he was confident to hold out.

Unfortunately, there were eight, so he needed help.

Incidentally, this also highlights the contradictions in that so-called Monster Manual—if a CR 6 Zenith fought these cambions, it'd lose, though the manual stubbornly rates Zenith higher... Which is just...

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