

# **Witch Monastery #Chapter 203: Earth Dragon**

## **"Galleon" - Read Witch Monastery Chapter 203: Earth Dragon "Galleon"**

*Chapter 203: Chapter 203: Earth Dragon "Galleon"*

Charles had no options left—he could only endure, relying on the Constitution he'd improved with systems boosts, together with the protection of False Life. All his tricks, techniques, and strategies were exhausted; now, the only thing left was a pure contest of vitality.

Fortunately, this Earth Dragon was not truly undead or a fiend—it was just a pitiful creature of the elements polluted by demons. Only a small part of its entire body needed to be purified, so completing the process wouldn't take too long.

Buzz——

Just as the sand-crocodile was about to begin a fourth spin—and Charles was nearing his own limit—the milky purifying light faded. The Earth Dragon's twisting body suddenly stopped, landing with its back facing upwards. Its agitated form stilled, then fell completely silent, as if dead—or perhaps merely asleep.

"Puh—ah!"

Realizing he was finally safe, Charles raised his head, shook the sand from his hair, and spat out the gritty earth that had crept into his mouth. His hair, clothes, pants, and shoes were caked with sand—every part of his body felt sore and raw from abrasion.

But now was certainly not the time for a cleanup. Trembling, he crawled upright, pulled out his spellbook from the Bag of Holding, and cast Cure Wounds on himself. The burning pain on his neck and the backs of his hands faded, abraded wounds healing as he breathed a sigh of relief.

Thank the gods, he made it.

He then opened his system panel, only to see the Purification Points had not increased at all, which left him somewhat disappointed.

As expected, only purifying undead, fiends, and similar creatures grants those rewards.

So he thought, but before the disappointment could spread, a gentle female voice sounded in his mind: "Thank you, child."

"Thank you for using that strange power to pull me from that abyss of madness, for keeping me from remaining a crazed monster, lost in endless killing."

Charles's eyes widened. Then, glancing down at the Earth Dragon beneath him, he hesitantly asked, "You are... under me right now?"

This Earth Dragon was actually intelligent—capable of communicating telepathically?

Hiss... Nidalee had never mentioned such a thing.

If that was the case, her real combat strength might be even higher than expected. Charles realized he'd just gotten lucky being able to purified her today.

As he thought about this, feeling grateful, the gentle voice came again: "Yes, it is me, the elemental life before you now, camouflaged as a dragon. The Mountaineer tribe calls me 'Earth Dragon,' though I prefer to be called 'Galleon.'"

Galleon?

Charles turned the name over in his mind; unfortunately, he'd never heard of it. The real fantasy world was so vast, with more in the Elemental Plane of Earth than just a handful of genies—he couldn't possibly know all of them.

"No need for thanks, Madam Galleon," he replied. "Helping others break free of demonic control and preserving peace and order is simply our duty."

He knew creatures of the Elemental Plane of Earth tended to be gentle and straightforward; acting selflessly and expecting nothing in return would win their favor far better.

Different people demand different approaches. For example, with devils, you have to be vigilant and haggle over every detail—or you'll be left with nothing but regrets.

As expected, even though Galleon's voice still sounded tired, she sounded genuinely appreciative: "You truly are a good child. What is your name?"

"Charles," he answered directly.

"Charles then..." The Earth Dragon quietly committed the name to memory. "Very well, I'll remember it. But now, my power is greatly diminished, and I need some time to recover."

"Please forgive me for needing to return to the Elemental Plane of Earth. When I regain my strength, I will bring you a token of my gratitude."

Charles was surprised, but Galleon seemed to allow no room for argument. Her massive body began to dissolve, transforming into dust and vanishing without a trace in moments.

Thankfully, as she disappeared, she softened the ground beneath him with loose sand, letting him land safely without further injury.

Landing, Charles patted the sand from his clothes, slipped off his shoes and emptied them, finally feeling a little better. In the distance, the exhausted Hattie and Nidalee leapt into the pit, slowly making their way toward him. Both girls looked worried, but seeing him safe, they both exhaled with relief.

Charles waved, enduring the soreness and fatigue that wracked his body as he stood upright. The two girls hurried to his side and, one on each side, supported his arms, barely letting him keep his balance.

"Master, what about the Earth Dragon?" Hattie asked quietly. Charles gave a slight nod: "It's already resolved. She regained her mind, then said she needed rest, and vanished underground."

Nidalee's expression shifted. "She?"

Charles looked at her. "Uh, yes, the voice I heard was female—though usually, creatures of the elements shouldn't have gender..."

Nidalee's face grew more subtle: "A woman's voice? She could communicate with you?"

Charles blinked: "Huh? Your father couldn't?"

Nidalee shook her head. "I don't know—I never communicated with her myself. But my father used to describe her moods—agony, rage, calm, happiness—but never said she could talk."

Hearing this, Hattie broke into a smile: "Then your father must not have told you everything. She must've always been able to speak."

"It's not possible that this elemental creature had no gender, then, after being corrupted by demons and going mad, and finally being purified by Master, suddenly her consciousness turned female, right?"

Charles gave Hattie a long look, thinking that the thing she was denying sounded far more likely to be the truth.

But Nidalee seemed to prefer Hattie's explanation: "It's true... but it doesn't really matter. Master, are you able to move?"

Charles lifted his head, glancing toward the up-reaching flames and billowing smoke of Rockseeker Camp, letting out a bitter laugh: "Of course I can move. Let's go—let's head back and get Anno and Theresa out!"

With that, he fought back exhaustion, had Nidalee summon more vines, and climbed out of the pit, sprinting toward the camp as fast as he could manage.

At that moment, in Rockseeker's Outpost, the duel between Ilarode and Theresa continued. Not expecting Theresa's wild combat style, the Archdruid was caught off guard at first. But once he calmed down and grew used to her attacks, he was at least able to defend himself and hold her off without much difficulty.

Unfortunately, just as he was planning a magical counterattack, the Earth Dragon was suddenly lured away. With no need to worry about an enormous elemental beast rampaging and slaughtering ordinary people, Theresa could now focus all her might on Ilarode alone.

The harsh glow of the 5th-level spell "Dawn" continued to shine, guiding bolts rained down, and "Daylight" illuminated every detail, leaving him nowhere to hide. The druid was so overwhelmed that he couldn't raise his head, forced to use spell after spell purely for defense.

He didn't dare retaliate with high-level magic; after unleashing Sunburst earlier and finding Theresa untouched, he had no way of knowing her true capabilities.

Was she blessed with some kind of radiant immunity, or had she used the wizard's 9th-level spell Invulnerability in advance?

He wasn't sure, and didn't want to risk being injured to find out, so he played it safe.

Even so, as battered as he was, in a way his strategy worked.

Though he couldn't defeat Theresa, he'd managed to tie her down and keep her from aiding the battle below.

As long as he continued to hold out, the Alliance of the Mountain Purifiers had already secured victory in this conflict!

That was the little calculation in Ilarode's mind, and he felt quite content. But just then, he suddenly felt the Earth Dragon's connection to his power snap.

His brows knit immediately, his concentration faltered, and he was nearly struck by Theresa's spell.

He hurriedly shapeshifted into a small animal to avoid it, then retreated, his mind on the situation.

So, Galleon had unilaterally broken the pact with the Mountaineer tribe.

Though that meant, by their agreement, he'd receive a considerable compensation, the truth remained that the Mountaineer tribe had just lost a mighty combat legend.

Of course, he had long prepared for this outcome. He'd been ready to lose the Earth Dragon before ever launching this assault.

With that in mind, he turned to survey the distant battlefield, his eyes reflecting satisfaction.

Fortunately, victory was at hand. Now, how much benefit the tribes could reap from it would depend on his skill in negotiation afterward...

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*Chapter 204: Chapter 204: Ion Beam Overheated?*

At that moment, in the chaotic center of the battlefield, Anno was struggling alone to hold the line. Even when facing the minotaurs protected by the ancestors, she could slay them almost unharmed, relying on her plate armor, magical shield, and the battle training she had received since childhood.

However, two fists cannot fend off a hundred enemies. When she was besieged by hordes of foes, unable to cover all directions at once, even her supposedly invincible magic plate armor could not prevent her from occasionally being stunned by a blunt weapon.

After all, the other guards had already broken and fled, and there was no one left to watch her flanks. The enemies could easily encircle her from both sides, or launch sudden raids from the rear.

Fortunately, Theresa, still flying overhead, kept a constant watch on Anno. When danger was imminent, a barrage of guiding bolts would rain down, dispersing her attackers and giving her just enough reprieve to hang on.

And so, Anno continued to hold her ground, even as so many had already broken ranks and scattered. No matter how tempting it was to flee, her sense of duty forbade her to do so. She had to stand fast, buying precious evacuation time for the innocent townsfolk.

Every minute she held out meant that more innocents could escape with their valuables, reducing losses, and perhaps allowing the Mountain People to claim fewer lives.

She was also waiting—for Charles to return.

She firmly believed he would resolve the Earth Dragon, return to support her and Theresa, and perhaps even engineer a miracle to turn the tide and lead them to victory...

This last hope was all but fanciful, but in her heart, a tiny spark still burned.

She longed for victory—to defend this place, and to make these Mountain People pay dearly in blood!

She didn't have to wait long. Fierce blasts of energy shot over from the distance, blasting apart the skull of a minotaur who had tried to ambush her from behind with a maul.

Immediately after, countless vines and tentacles erupted from the ground, binding or crushing the other foes surrounding her, finally relieving her predicament.

Anno turned to look around and saw Charles, Hattie, and Nidalee breaking through the smoke and fire, racing her way.

In that instant, the whole world seemed to light up, as if spring had come suddenly: "Charles!"

She waved her arm, greeting him, while Charles, seeing the situation clearly, frowned deeply.

He hurried to Anno's side: "What's going on? Wasn't everything under control just a moment ago? Why have we suddenly been pushed back like this?"

It made no sense. With those ion beam emitters, Rockseeker Camp's defenders should have been hammering the enemy!

How had it come to this reversal?

At his words, Anno's expression grew complicated. "Well... at first, everything was fine. The minotaurs couldn't even lift their heads against the Lightning Bolts. We had the upper hand."

"But as the fighting dragged on, those adventurers' Ion Beam Emitters suddenly started to overheat."

Charles blinked, already suspecting what had happened. "Overheat? What do you mean?"

Anno shook her head. "I don't know, but suddenly all those wielding emitters panicked, shouting about overheating and such."

Hearing this, Charles' face only darkened. "And then?"

"And then they exploded!" Anno sighed, face full of pain. "Who could have guessed the blue dragon's devices would be so prone to failure? One man was blown half to pieces instantly!"

Charles blinked again. "So... after that, they didn't dare fire again, and the Mountain People rallied?"

Anno nodded. "Exactly."

Charles pinched his brow, silently lamenting. Wealthy blue dragons dabbling in industry and manufacturing—misfortune and chaos seem to follow every venture...

Was it just bad luck, or were these Ion Beam Emitters simply lacking loyalty?

But with defeat certain, he harbored no more delusions of overturning fate. He was spent, and it was clear Anno's stamina and mana were all but exhausted.

Glancing back at the small town, he offered his suggestion: "It seems most people have evacuated. We should fall back as well."

Immediately, he saw profound disappointment and frustration flicker across the girl's face.

She bit her lip, clearly unwilling to accept such an ending—yet reality could not be denied.

"Alright," she murmured. "Let's retreat."

Charles could feel her sorrow. He gave her a hug in consolation, but there was no time to ease her distress further. He turned, shouting skyward, "Theresa, we're leaving!"

Up above, the ceaseless barrages had left Theresa feeling wearied and overheated herself. At that moment, hearing the retreat order, she breathed a sigh of relief.

She exhaled deeply, surveyed the charging minotaurs, then raised her hands, chanting the incantation: "Prismatic Spray!"

At the battle's end, she unleashed her trump card—a 7th-level spell, Prismatic Spray!

She knew it wouldn't destroy the Archdruid, nor did she expect to kill the enemy's highest-level spellcaster. She simply wanted to inflict as much carnage as possible, forcing these aggressors to pay dearly and deterring any immediate pursuit.

Rays of many colors enveloped nearly half the small town—red fire, orange acid, yellow lightning, green poison, blue frost, indigo petrification, and violet banishment, each striking different targets.

The minotaurs caught in these dazzling lights—even protected by ancestral blessings—were grievously wounded or outright slain; the especially unlucky, caught by two rays at once, were vaporized to ash!

"Storm of Vengeance!"

Seeing the mage show 'no honor' by attacking ordinary soldiers, the Archdruid's eyes bulged in rage. Disregarding collateral damage, he raised his hand and cast a 9th-level spell—Storm of Vengeance—summoning torrents of lightning to strike at Theresa!

Theresa's objective was accomplished; she had no intention of continuing the magical duel here. Her form transformed into a streak of light as she retreated, following Charles and the others.

With Theresa's withdrawal, Rockseeker's Outpost's last line of defense was finally breached. The greedy Mountain People warriors poured into the small town, roaring with laughter as they rushed into the houses to plunder.

Though most of the residents had evacuated safely, time was short, and much property was left behind—now easy spoils for the marauders.

Though the final 9th-level spell missed its mark, it had nonetheless driven away the last serious foe. Utterly exhausted, Ilarode finally stepped toward the small town at a measured pace. Watching the reveling Mountain People, relief filled his heart.

At least, in the end, they had won. That made it all worthwhile.

So thinking, he rejoined Torun, who had been leading the assault, as well as the Chimera tribe's war chief—both returned to his side.

As leaders, they would never dirty their hands with looting; that was beneath them. Such hard labor was for subordinates. All they needed was to give orders and then take their share of the spoils.

But before dividing the plunder among their own tribes, the leading tribes needed to split the main spoils between themselves.



Torun's gaze swept the battlefield, and he was the first to speak: "The Mountaineer tribe paid the highest price in this battle: the Earth Dragon disrupted the field, and the Archdruid personally held off the enemy's most powerful spellcaster. By rights, the Mountaineer tribe ought to pick the first spoils."

He said this not out of genuine magnanimity, but to establish a practice—if the others agreed, repeated occasions would make them accustomed to endorsing his policies, gradually cementing his authority within the alliance.

Besides, for the Highmountain tribe, destroying Rockseeker Camp was already gain enough.

The half-orc chief of the Chimera tribe had no objection to this arrangement. Ilarode frowned slightly, about to offer a polite refusal, when a booming voice came rushing over:

"Hey! Are you all alright?"

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*Chapter 205: Chapter 205: The Rage of the Satyr Matriarch*

The group turned and saw a tall, bald giant striding toward them. His steps were light, almost jaunty, but the look of intense indignation on his face clashed completely with his gait. "Outrageous! I have no clue what sort of sorcery that mage used, but I lost control of myself and just kept running away!"

The bald brute rushing over was none other than Luger Stonehide—the one who, after turning into a Giant Bear and wreaking havoc, had been repelled by a single staggering smite from Charles.

After being struck by Charles's sword, he'd wandered off to who knows where, hiding until now—when he just so happened to "regain" his senses and return.

"Hmph! If not for that fellow, I would've slaughtered eight hundred more at least!"

Luger Stonehide ground his teeth, his face twisted with resentment. Ilarode was quietly annoyed; as a spellcaster, he had clearly seen the Giant Bear pause on the battlefield, clearly recovered from the effects of magic.

In other words, that werebear had, in the end, chosen to keep running entirely of his own volition—the spell that had repulsed him really wasn't to blame.

Torun wore a subtle expression as well. He too had seen through the real state of things, but he said nothing. Back in the Tide Caverns, he himself had felt that terrible, soul-shaking terror and couldn't keep from turning and fleeing.

Only the Chimera tribe's warrior seemed to believe every word. "That's the power of spellcasters. You always have to watch out!"

Luger Stonehide managed an honest-looking smile, thinking, Well, that worked. "I only just came to, so I ran over as fast as I could. What are we discussing? Anything I can do?"

"We're dividing the spoils," said Torun. Then his gaze swept the battlefield, where squads of minotaurs lugged weapons, bags of grain, gold and silver, and all manner of goods away. He couldn't help lamenting, "All the tribes involved with this small town have made fortunes over the years."

Luger Stonehide's expression turned grim. "Yes, and just how much of the mountain's welfare have they sold out along the way, trading it all for their own pleasure!"

Nearby, the half-orc of the Chimera tribe nodded, his thoughts drifting back to his relatives in the Stonefist tribe, working as bodyguards in Liberl Port. He clenched his teeth, whether from jealousy or something else was unclear: "Exactly. A pack of traitors to the mountains!"

The three quickly reached an understanding; the air was harmonious, even friendly, as they split their spoils. But then, all at once, from behind came the voice they least wanted to hear at that moment: "Ilarode!"

The group whirled around. There, in the distance, was a company of satyrs with snow-white fur, approaching in solemn procession. There were both men and women, tall and short, some with rams' horns—but without exception, their expressions were complex and full of grief.

At their head was none other than Willo, Matriarch of the Green Vines tribe.

She looked completely spent, her eyes bloodshot as if she hadn't slept in ages. Hearing news of what had happened, she had rushed here as soon as possible.

But she was a step too late. By the time she arrived, Rockseeker's Outpost was already engulfed in flames. The Mountain People's warriors were merrily hauling away the small town's possessions, looking for all the world like a shameless band of robbers.

Willo's chest was burning with rage. She glared at each and every one of them, her anger plain as day.

"Why?" she demanded. "We had agreed in advance to purify the demonic pollution first. Why, then, did you suddenly launch this raid?"

A heavy silence fell instantly. No one dared meet her wrathful gaze—they didn't know if she'd overheard the conversation moments before. However many high-sounding excuses they'd used, the truth was that this war's origin was nothing more than greed.

Seeing them all lapse into awkward silence, Willo cast her eyes to the oldest and most powerful person present, leader of the Alliance of the Mountain Purifiers: "Archdruid, please tell me—what is the real reason for all of this?"

She worked hard to keep her rage in check, but it was clear that if the Archdruid couldn't offer a proper explanation, the only thing awaiting the alliance would be division and collapse.

Ilarode cleared his throat. If he wanted to be the true leader of the alliance, then he had to be the one to answer now. "The reason... naturally, it's complicated. Just a few days ago, we were approached by envoys from Blackstaff Tower. Their attitude was arrogant, and their proposals completely unacceptable to us."

"Furthermore, we have every reason to suspect they are sending more troops into this town—a threat to the safety of the mountains..."

Willo's eyes glinted with open derision. "So you decided to strike first, is that it? You didn't even wait for me to return before ordering the assault?"

Her discipline held; she couldn't even muster the sort of harsh language that might have stung the Archdruid. Still, her tone was so cutting that even Torun and Luger winced. In their hearts, both were surprised—a satyr normally so gentle, yet now so furious.

But there was nothing to be done—the satyrs were the only healers available, and with so many wounded, everyone needed their help.

So, however disgruntled, everyone bit their tongues.

"Ah... I admit that I didn't handle it perfectly. I failed to prepare enough, all for the sake of surprise, and so there were so many casualties," Ilarode said, subtly steering the conversation elsewhere. "That naturally means extra work for all us, especially for you and your tribe. But right now, those wounded and suffering need your attention, Matriarch Willo—yours and your tribe's."

His tone was sincere, but the mood in the air barely eased. So he pressed on: "As a sign of my contrition, and to honor the Green Vines tribe's effort in tending the wounded,

I'm willing to yield the first pick of the spoils to you. The Mountaineer tribe will choose last."

He seemed the embodiment of generosity. Beside him, Torun, Luger, and the half-orc from the Chimera tribe were all visibly moved.

After all, in this battle the Mountaineer tribe had unquestionably done the most, claimed the most merit—and now he was willing to take the smallest share of loot, all to appease the anger of the Green Vines and keep the alliance together!

In that instant, at least in those three men's hearts, Ilarode's leadership was now beyond challenge.

Yet when faced with Ilarode's great concession, Willo seemed entirely unmoved.

"That's unnecessary," she answered coldly. "The Green Vines tribe has no need of this material wealth."

She might as well have had "I refuse to join you bandits" written across her brow.

She considered herself a guardian of ecological balance—not a thief or thug. She preferred to use her own hands and wisdom to claim what she wanted, not this bloody, destructive path of killing and plunder.

"We will tend the wounded, but only this once," she announced. "If this sort of thing happens again, I will leave the alliance."

Having said her piece, Willo turned and, with her people, strode quickly away—leaving the others to stare at each other in the smoke and gloom.

After a moment, it was Ilarode who finally let out a sigh. "Matriarch Willo is, after all, a satyr from the Feywild, and a woman—her emotions run high. It's understandable."

The other men nodded in agreement. The Archdruid paused, then continued: "However, as leaders, for the safety of our tribes and our alliance, sometimes we must dirty our hands, snuffing out threats before they can take root."

"Misunderstandings, outsiders' scorn—these are the burdens we leaders must bear."

As he spoke, his features hardened with resolve. "When we take up leadership, we must have this resolve!"

At that, the assembled warriors broke into applause. Ever since Willo's rebuke they'd been filled with guilt—but now, as Ilarode spoke, their doubt and self-reproach melted away, replaced with a sense of pride and satisfaction.

And in that instant, Ilarode's position as leader was further solidified, beyond any doubt.

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### *Chapter 206: Chapter 206: Anno's Wish*

Charles and his group made their way down the mountain. Although they'd come and gone several times before, this was honestly the first time he'd traveled this road on foot—every prior visit, he'd always come by carriage.

Though they had left later than anyone else, the walking speed of their small group far surpassed that of the townsfolk burdened with children and luggage. Very soon, they caught up with the larger flow of refugees and began the descent surrounded by the crowd.

The refugee caravan consisted of the natives from Rockseeker's Outpost—including a fair number of Mountain People—as well as opportunistic adventurers, Liberl Port merchants, and employees of the various conglomerates. It was a massive, chaotic column. Among them, Charles even spotted the group sponsored by the blue dragon conglomerate, the same party that had advertised the Ion Beam Emitters.

Only now, compared to their former pride, they looked utterly crestfallen, heads bowed, faces half covered, supporting the wounded as they walked in silence with the main company, clearly hoping no one would recognize them. If not for Charles's extraordinary memory, he might not have recognized them himself.

It was plain their reputation was in ruins, and the blue dragons would almost certainly be deeply disappointed in them, even though it wasn't really their fault that the emitters had overheated and exploded.

But...

Charles found himself touching his chin, musing that at least his own company had made a profit—there was no question the venture had been in the black.

Even if the profit margin wasn't particularly stellar—since he'd skimmed a considerable amount for himself—by the standards of the blue dragon bank's investments, his project was the very best among them all.

After all, it's rare in any age to invest with a prince of the dragons and actually turn a profit.

Maybe, he considered, this could be his bargaining chip to ask the blue dragons for another round of funding... or rather, to entice them into a second investment.

He felt the odds of success would be high, and his spirits lifted. But then, recalling the last time he'd met the young blue dragon prince, he remembered the not-so-veiled hint that he should go "serve" a certain lonely blue dragon noblewoman...

The image of a massive matron blue dragon gazing at him with suggestive eyes sent a cold shudder down Charles's spine.

Forget it. He'd rather earn money slowly and quietly from now on—best to avoid unnecessary dealings with that blue dragon in the future.

Crushing his stray thoughts, Charles turned his attention away from that group and focused on keeping pace with his girls as they pressed onward together.

He remained unaware just how fickle destiny could be—how it delighted in toying with those who thought they could elude it.

Regardless of what the future would bring, in this moment he was simply trudging, exhausted, along the mountain road. It was the second half of the night, and with winter approaching, the icy wind in the mountains was enough to freeze anyone straight through their armor. Yet compared with the specter of death that lay behind them, that discomfort was trivial to endure.

They pressed on until midday, when the sun shone high overhead—and it was only then that they truly left the mountains behind and reached the open lands of the Rubble District.

Here, with the mountains behind them, the exhausted refugees found windbreaks where they could make camp and rest. Charles and his party did the same, setting up tents, lighting a fire, cooking a meal, and slowly regaining their strength.

Still, even with the comfort of hot food, the group's mood was distinctly somber. Anno, in particular, seemed downcast—where she'd once always eaten heartily, today she merely picked at her meal before quietly retiring to her tent.

Charles felt her sorrow acutely. After bolting down a few bites, he hurried after her into her tent. There he found the girl with her armor set aside, curled up in her blanket like a wounded animal, licking her wounds in lonely silence.

Hearing him enter, Anno turned to glance at him, pouting a little, looking quite wronged. "Don't worry, I'm fine." It was written all over her face—she wanted comfort, even if she didn't say it aloud.

Charles's heart went out to her. He moved to her side at once, sitting down and wrapping his arm around her shoulders, holding her gently in his embrace. "What's wrong, darling? Is there something on your mind? You can tell me."

As he spoke, he gently stroked her hair, and sensing her sadness, a cloud of gloom passed over his own heart as well.

In the game, Rockseeker Camp could be attacked from outside, but those incidents only happened in the mid-game. Players were usually well prepared, ensuring the town never actually fell.

Even in those cases where the town was destroyed, it was usually the work of rebellious players seeking special rewards.

But regardless, if the town was to be lost, it shouldn't have been to outsiders.

It was clear he had failed to protect it this time. His strength simply hadn't been enough to withstand such a large-scale assault—even purifying the Earth Dragon hadn't been enough to stop a determined army.

Picturing the aftermath that would follow the destruction of Rockseeker Camp, bitter frustration welled up inside him.

"It's nothing,"

Anno replied softly, but then continued more candidly, "I just feel... sort of hollow inside."

Charles gently stroked her hair. "Is it because we lost, because we couldn't defend the town?"

Anno shifted closer, nestling against his chest, and shook her head slightly. "No, not really... I know my own strength is limited. Whether you win a battle or lose one, it's a normal part of life."

"I just... I'm starting to doubt whether what I always believed in was actually right..."

Charles held her close, sitting on the bed beside her, intertwining their fingers. As she leaned against him, her emotions crested, and suddenly, in a low, wistful tone, she said, "Charles, I have a dream, you know..."



But the words caught in her throat, and she blushed self-consciously. Biting her lip, she tried a different tack. "Have you ever read... strange stories, famous biographies, or tales of great men and women and their adventures?"

Charles thought back. In his previous life, with nothing better to do, he'd often scrolled social sites and forums, and in-game, he'd read countless backstories of various heroic figures. He nodded earnestly. "I do, though I haven't read much, I know most of those tales."

"So, haven't you noticed that... well, a lot of people, like..." Anno's voice became hopeful, and she waved her hand, gesturing as if sketching in the air. "Those amazing athletes, or great artists, or bards—they often come from very humble origins."

Charles nodded. Naturally, one's strength might be inherited in blood, but a gift for the arts is innate and never truly passed on; no one can simply hand down artistic genius to the next generation.

Seeing him agree, her hope rose even higher. "So, I always wonder—if the spark of talent for every field can fall upon anyone, regardless of their background or class, then..."

"In those vast, poor little countries, aren't there surely countless geniuses waiting to be discovered?"

"Only, maybe their gifts are stifled—by their era, education, or the societies they're born into. Their whole lives are wasted, their talents buried, and the world loses so much of its brilliance because of it."

Charles reflected back on the first gangsters he'd met—bald-headed brutes with giant eye tattoos, the one-eyed leader, that commander from Xanathar's Guild, Kendrz...

They all came from poverty, the lowest rungs of society, starved of nutrition and formal training, relying on nothing but their own instincts—yet somehow becoming formidable warriors.

That proved their talent, and yet, because of their environment in the South Harbor District, those gifts went to waste; no matter how they struggled, they would never be more than foot soldiers.

He nodded, now more certain than ever. "I've seen many people like that, especially in the South Harbor District. Without an avenue for advancement, their talents are buried for life."

Anno's eyes sparkled—finding someone who understood gave her courage, and she grew bolder as she spoke her wish at last.



"That's why I've always had this unrealistic fantasy."

She drew a deep breath, mustering her courage. "I wish the world could remain at peace forever, so that everyone could find their place, use their gifts, and bring endless stories and wonders to the world."

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*Chapter 207: Chapter 207: Deep Kiss*

Speaking those words seemed to use up all of her courage. Anno quickly lowered her head, not daring to let Charles see her expression. "Isn't that a little childish?"

Before Charles could reply, she hurried on, "Don't rush to disagree—I actually have my own reasoning. I truly believe this dream can be realized."

Charles held her small hand and answered seriously, "I believe it can come true, too."

Anno jerked her head up, confused, gazing at him.

Charles looked down at her, offering a gentle smile, then lowered his head, touching his forehead to hers, softly nuzzling. "You first, dear—what do you think is the way to make world peace real?"

Anno lowered her head again, cheeks pressed against Charles's chest—but this time, she stretched out her arms and wrapped them around his waist. "I think... there ought to be a place where people from all around the world can gather to communicate, to sit down, talk, figure out what they really want. Understand not just their own needs, but also what their so-called enemies truly need."

"Really, Charles—after reading so many histories of war, and articles in geography journals, I've realized that many wars aren't inevitable. So often, a conflict comes from a simple misunderstanding of each other's perspectives."

"And even wars for survival could be avoided. Think of the primitive tribes on the Red Soil Continent—they sit on mountains of precious minerals, any of which would fetch a sky-high price across the sea, and yet since they can't exploit them, they end up at each other's throats, fighting their own kin for mere survival, despite sitting atop a mountain of gold..."

Her voice grew more passionate as she went on, "I just feel it could all be avoided, if there were a place where everyone could talk, negotiate terms, and trade fairly. It wouldn't end all wars, but at least ninety percent of them could be solved..."

"That place—is it Liberl Port?" Charles asked softly.

Anno gave a shy smile and nodded in earnest. "Yes... It's not just that I love my home. I truly think there's nowhere else that does it better."

"Here, even the gold dragons—symbols of justice—and the authoritarian, even evil blue dragons, can coexist in peace. Their holdings are in the very same districts. In the central district, every day, deals worth hundreds of millions are struck, letting poor lands build prosperity, and advanced ones never lack for resources..."

As she spoke, she slowly raised her head, hope shining in her eyes. "I believe that as long as this continues, one day, peace will truly come, and this world will hold greater wonders than we can imagine."

With a gentle smile, Charles caressed her hair, though in his heart he let out a weary sigh.

So this girl sees Liberl Port as a kind of United Nations...

Actually, not even the UN ever had this much power...

He mused to himself, but Anno noticed his smile and pinched his side. "No mocking me!"

Charles winced. "No, I'm not mocking you—it's adorable, honestly. I'm just really happy, that's all..."

Anno pinched him again—harder this time—then finally let go, puffing her cheeks and glaring at him.

Charles reached over, squeezed her cheek, and asked gently, "So what is it? Why do you suddenly doubt your dream?"

Anno's gaze dropped, her expression dimming. "Because, right during the last battle, it struck me—wasn't Rockseeker's Outpost just a small Liberl Port?"

"It was really good—gave so many Mountain People a place to meet and trade, let tribes escape poverty and find wealth."

"But in the end, it was destroyed. There will always be people in this world who nurse bitter, implacable hatred for others..."

And so, confusion clouded her mind. "Will Liberl Port one day fall to war, too?"

Charles gently stroked her hair and offered comfort, "No, of course not—don't worry."

"Rockseeker's Outpost was destroyed because it lacked the power to defend itself. But Liberl Port isn't without protection, right?"

"We have Blackstaff Tower, Strixhaven University, the security forces of all the major conglomerates... and most importantly, our Lady Laeral Silverhand, the city's lord, is the trueborn daughter of the Goddess of Magic."

"The Goddess of Magic would never abandon this city. If a problem arises that all these powerful groups cannot resolve, then there's likely no one in the world who could. When it gets to that point, the gods themselves will intervene— isn't that true?"

Charles was lying.

He knew perfectly well that after the disappearance of the Goddess of Life, the Goddess of Magic too had vanished. There were great stirrings among the divine realms, but he still told the comforting lie: the gods would not ignore the material world, and one must have faith in the deities.

What else could he do? He couldn't allow his beloved to be consumed by fear.

So, he held Anno's hand, his other hand tenderly stroking her hair, his tone absolutely certain: "The destruction of Rockseeker Camp looked like evil defeating justice, but in truth, it was just an isolated event—one stray shadow among countless corners of the earth."

"But Liberl Port is the world's crossroads—here, viewpoints and races mean nothing. All the defenders of order are gathered."

"To destroy this city would be to make an enemy of the entire world."

"And so..."

He pinched her ear. "Liberl Port could never fall."

Anno's heart began to race; never had she felt such a sense of security. Her face pressed against Charles's chest, wanting only to meld herself into his warmth.

"So... my wish can come true?" she asked softly, barely intelligible.

Charles answered gently, "Of course. We'll protect Liberl Port together. I believe our dreams will become reality."

Anno looked up, gazing into his earnest eyes. Gradually, her hearing faded, as if the world had lost all other sounds but their heartbeats.

Love filled her entire vision—only his face, only his lips remained.

Her mouth parted softly—never had she felt so thirsty. She began to gasp, warm breath brushing Charles's face, sending a forbidden message.

Charles sensed it; he bent slightly, but before he could initiate the kiss, Anno threw her arms around his neck and pulled him down for a kiss herself.

Their lips met, deeply and hungrily.

Outside the tent, Hattie—sensing what was happening inside—suddenly put her hand on her chest, brow furrowed. Beside her, Theresa reached over and put an arm around her shoulders. "What's wrong?"

Hattie closed her eyes, brows pinched in pain but forcing herself to shake her head. "Nothing... just, Theresa, I still can't be as openhearted as you, I can't so easily accept Anno joining us..."

Theresa laughed. "Is that all? It's just a kiss! If you're this upset, how come you weren't the same with Nidalee or Malena?"

Her ability to distort light was letting them project the scene from inside the tent for herself, Hattie, and Nidalee, a live feed they could all witness without entering.

Hattie shook her head, tightly, tears forming at the corners of her eyes. "It's different, Theresa, it's just... different."

"Master's feelings for Anno aren't the same, not as for them, or even for us..."

Theresa's smile began to fade, her expression growing complicated.

Hattie... really, another woman merely ranked above you—or maybe just equal—and already you're in such pain?

But have you ever thought of what it's like for the rest of us, who came after?

We were never by Master's side when he was at his most helpless. By the time we arrived, he was already strong in both power and renown; there's no way for us to ever hold the unique place that you do.

But you already have it. Whenever Master remembers his past, you will always be the first in his heart. How can you not feel content?

Theresa wanted to say this, but looking at Hattie's anguish, she could only send her thoughts with her eyes.

Inside the tent, Charles embraced Anno's delicate body and kissed her with fevered passion, eyes closed. He had never been so excited—every muscle tense, mind purged of all remnants of technique, filled only with maddening desire.

Anno, too, responded fervently. Though inexperienced, she'd read romance novels, and now she parted her pristine teeth, actively seeking out his tongue, craving affection, only to be rendered helpless by his eager dominance.

She was so aroused, the muscles in her face almost spasmed with tension. But she couldn't pull away, savoring a faint, sweet taste that overwhelmed her senses, drawing her further still—

Until Charles's hand slipped under her hem, caressing her firm, smooth waist. Not content, he slid upward, claiming her proud breasts, kneading through her undergarments, even trying to undo her bra, to explore her fullness and mystery. That snapped her to alertness. "No!"

She tore away from his mouth, a thin strand of saliva still linking them, trailing lewdly as they parted.

She pressed his wandering hand in place, suddenly aware of what he was attempting. Her cheeks burned red. "We can't..."

Peeking toward the tent doorway, she lowered her head. "It's still daytime..."

Charles felt a pang of regret but knew she was conservative and unwilling to go further, so he didn't press.

Instead, he withdrew his hands and pulled her into a close embrace, lips at her ear. "Then... we wait for nightfall?"

Anno pinched his side again, making him wince. "Not even at night. I'm... not ready."

She wrapped her arms around his waist. "...Let's wait until after we're married, all right?"

By the time she finished, her whisper was soft as a gossamer thread.

Hearing that word—married—Charles held his breath, a sudden weight pressing hard on his chest, leaving him at a loss on how to respond.

Married?!

Wait, Anno wants to get married already?!

But we're not even eighteen yet!

Then again... in this era, people do marry young...

Suddenly, a different kind of pressure weighed on him. His mind drifted to the real estate prices in the luxurious districts of Liberl Port. Not like the South Harbor District, where a couple thousand gold could net you a sturdy old house...

In those prime areas, you'd need at least two hundred thousand gold to afford anything decent.

And Anno's noble upbringing wouldn't let her live in anything less than a detached little villa. Which would multiply the price several times...

Then there'd be milk for the children, tuition, arts classes...

Just thinking about it left him dizzy.

And that was just the beginning. Seeing the complex look on his face, Anno, pressed close, could feel his hardness—her cheeks blushed red, and she understood what pressure he must be under now.

"I'll try and convince my family," she said softly. "So they'll agree for us to marry soon—and maybe we can have several children—oh!"

She'd actually counted on her fingers earlier and estimated that twenty children might be possible. So now, without thinking, the words slipped out.

Realizing what she'd said, she quickly lowered her head, too shy even to meet his gaze, only showing him her golden hair.

But Charles's sense of pressure only grew more intense.

A terrifying, four-legged gold-devouring beast—and Anno already planning for a brood...

"Ahem." He coughed, glancing away, desperate to dodge the mounting stress. "It's all right, Anno, I'm in no rush."

As he gently stroked her hair, melancholy filled his heart: in both his past and current lives, he was in no way ready to be a father.

But now, the towering peak of "marriage" had just dropped onto his head, and his first instinct was to flee the tent...

"Sounds like something's going on outside," he said, making up an excuse. "I'll just check it out. Are you tired? Get some rest, all right?"

With that, he rose to leave.

"Wait, Charles, don't go." Anno suddenly called. "You haven't said."

He paused.

"You haven't told me yet," she pressed, "What do you think is the path to world peace?"

Charles froze awkwardly. "Er, well..."

Seeing his hesitation, Anno's face grew sullen. "Did you just make something up earlier to comfort me?"

If so, she'd feel quite unhappy. She could understand if he merely wanted to cheer her up, but it would still feel patronizing.

It would mean he wasn't really respecting her.

Charles hurriedly shook his head. "No, no—absolutely not. I truly believe in this."

But seeing her skeptical look, his worry only grew. "Uh... It's just... I don't really know where to begin—how to explain what I really believe, or the method."

Anno blinked. She still thought he might make things up, but some part of her wanted to hear it. "Go on, I'll try to listen."

"Okay. So, have you ever heard of 'the surplus value theory'?"

...

Anno truly had trouble following. It was a new concept, and though Charles explained as simply as possible, it was hard for a paladin who'd never studied the topic, and soon her face was a mix of confusion and distress.

Seeing her struggle, Charles sighed and boiled it down to the simplest point. "The key idea is, every country must achieve fairness within—if wealth pools in the hands of the idle few, war and tragedy are bound to happen."

Only then did Anno nod lightly. "I... I think I understand a little."

Charles let out a long sigh. "That's the gist of it. Of course, fairness is easy to say, but impossible to achieve..."

He shrugged. "Let's drop it for now. You get some rest—I'll take a walk. After two hours, we'll set out again for Liberl Port."

Anno quietly nodded. When Charles left the tent, she curled up under her blanket, feeling dizzy, her mind spinning with his cascade of new words and the logic behind them.

Suddenly, a strange thought crossed her mind: By Charles's logic, are the rulers, nobles, and great tycoons of every country really the cause of all wars?

And...

Does that mean that I, my whole family, are the so-called 'idle few, the vested interests of the existing order'?

Just as these doubts surfaced, her eyelids drooped in exhaustion. Weariness swept over her and she couldn't think any more. She closed her eyes and fell fast asleep.

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*Chapter 208: Chapter 208: Shudde M'ell wake*

The Mountaineer tribe, that is to say, the headquarters of the Alliance of the Mountain Purifiers.

Watching the minotaurs returning with enormous packages fully laden, Ines—camouflaged as a female minotaur—had a flickering gaze. She naturally knew what these guys had gone out to accomplish. Before their expedition, she had deliberately seduced a minotaur guard captain; the latter, unable to resist her allure, spilled every detail of their mission.

Thus, she learned the enemy's general plan. Now, it appeared the aggression had ended in near mutual destruction—a narrow, bloody victory for the Alliance of the Mountain Purifiers?

Excellent, she thought. Both sides had been severely crippled. This outcome favored whichever master she served.

With this in mind, she slipped away while the minotaurs rested or celebrated, unnoticed, and hid behind a deserted rocky outcrop.

Once certain of solitude, she began spellcasting. She sent three consecutive Sending spells to her surface master, Montport, detailing the situation's scale and implications.



Though Sending is a 3rd-level spell, its message capacity is limited. To fully explain, she needed three casts. The spell's virtue was its reciprocity: each message allowed one reply, granting Montport three responses.

After sending, she waited anxiously. Fortunately, Montport replied swiftly—within ten minutes.

First, he lavishly praised Ines's competence. Then, he urged caution: she must continue tracking the tribes' movements, especially their settlement locations, to enable precise raids. He added that his grand plan neared completion; soon, a full-scale assault would begin. If she pinpointed tribal strongholds, his scheme would yield double results with half the effort!

Though Montport withheld specifics, her infiltration of the Alliance of the Mountain Purifiers had revealed his goal: awaken the Chthonians, wield them as a vanguard to ravage the mountains and Liberl Port, and harvest souls.

Cunning, she sneered inwardly. But since I know your aim, I'll never let you monopolize this soul-feast!

She retrieved her Bag of Holding, pulling out a thin copper wire, red crystals, and a vial of blood to assemble a small altar.

Sending had limits—it was reliable only within the same world. Cross-world messages risked distortion. Her true master, a formidable Demon Lord, currently resided in another realm—one layer of the Infinite Layers of the Abyss. To ensure accurate reporting, this altar was essential for stable communication.

Unconscious of the time lost, she started her ritual—

"What are you doing?"

A clear voice pierced the silence. Ines whirled around, forcing an awkward smile. "Ah, Miss Adele! I'm just wandering..." Her hands blurred, stashing the altar materials.

Behind her stood Adele Willo—pink-fuzzed young Satyr, heir to the Satyr tribes, and daughter of Matriarch Willo. The "female minotaur's" furtive movements made the girl narrow her eyes, brow furrowing in suspicion.

Ines's heart raced. Her hands clenched; murderous intent sparked. If Adele uncovered her identity, she'd eliminate the girl silently—corpse disposal being the only challenge.

Then Adele's expression softened. "You came out for air too? That atmosphere is unbearable."

Ines blinked, then nodded. "Yes... I've been here long, yet still feel like an outsider. The Highmountain tribe women seem to dislike me..." She sighed, twisting her waist to emphasize her exaggerated curves.

Adele glanced at Ines's proportions, then her own modest frame. Why must everyone have huge breasts but me? Suppressing fury, she said, "The men crow over every minor victory—as if nothing gets done without them!" Her lips curled. "Hah! Men!"

Isn't their vanity useful? Ines mused. With your looks, a little flattery would make them putty.

"They drink and smoke that foul tobacco," Adele added. "I'd rather practice spells alone than endure it." She paused, locking eyes with Ines. "I'm heading to the river to drill my new 5th-level spell, Antilife Shell. Join me?"

Ines shook her head quickly. "I don't cast spells... but a 5th-level spell sounds impressive!"

Adele shrugged. "It's nothing. I've mastered several fifth-tier spells, but the sixth remains elusive—likely forever."

"Since you won't come, I'll go alone."

She turned her back, walking away as if utterly unguarded.

Ines's gaze sharpened, but she suppressed the impulse. Gambling was unwise—if Adele truly wielded Antilife Shell, instant assassination was impossible. Exposure would mean doom: the enraged Ilarode and Willo Green Vines would destroy her, soul included.

She released the thought.

Meanwhile, in Montport's nest.

His hippopotamus-sized lower body stewed in the blood pool, lizard-thick tail churning the crimson depths. His malformed, undersized dragon wings lay folded—rarely unfurled. Half his upper body (indistinguishable from common demons) submerged in gore, he held a mage's arcane gesture, eyes shut, chanting.

He was reading Ines's messages—and replying. After absorbing her report, the Abyssal Lord opened his eyes, lips twisting into a taunt.

"Heh. Utterly foolish humans." His tentacle-like beard trembled. "Now wait... wait for the Great Montport to deliver glorious ruin!"

"Hahahaha! HAHAHA!"

Manic laughter echoed through the cavern. As he roared, the blood pool bubbled violently. A nauseating stench filled the air—enough to sicken any mortal trespasser.

The boiling pool shook the cave. Dust rained from the ceiling; an earthquake loomed. Yet Montport's eyes showed no fear—only exhilaration.

"Run! Rage! Great Shudde M'ell—millennia-slumbering Chthonians!" He flung his arms wide, celebrating rebirth. "Raze their hypocritical castles! Cast them into the wilderness! Aid my magnificent slaughter!"

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*Chapter 209: Chapter 209: The Real Back Door*

Charles and the others naturally remained completely unaware of the events unfolding deep within the mountains. He was still consumed by the pressure of "marriage" that Anno had mentioned, feeling an oppressive weight on his shoulders that made it hard to breathe.

Though he had now emerged from Anno's tent, the burden on his heart lingered. Heaving a long sigh, he turned and ducked into Hattie's tent, intending to discuss their next steps. There he found Hattie sitting on a blanket, knees drawn to her chest, clearly upset, while Theresa had an arm around her shoulders, whispering gentle reassurances.

Charles sat down beside them, embracing Hattie's ample figure. "What's wrong? Feeling unhappy?"

Hattie shook her head, visibly dejected. Beside her, Theresa forced a smile. "It's nothing... Master, you don't look so good either? Is something troubling you?"

She swiftly deflected, not wanting Charles to worry over trivial matters.

"Yes," Charles sighed. "I just had a talk with Anno in her tent. The pressure feels overwhelming now."

Hattie looked up, eyes brightening as if seeing sunlight. "What did she tell you?"

Having observed human customs, she knew young lovers could be intensely passionate yet quickly develop conflicts, pressure each other, and ultimately separate...

For a moment, she pictured Anno walking away, leaving her as the uniquely special woman by Charles's side...

"About marriage," Charles muttered gloomily. "Anno is already considering it, but honestly, I'm completely unprepared..."

Marriage proposal!

Hattie's heart trembled. "So you... agreed?"

Charles scratched his head. "Yeah... That's why the pressure is crushing. Marriage involves not just two people, but two families... Huh? Hattie? Why are you crying?"

Hattie buried her face in his chest, weeping silently as tears quickly soaked Charles's shirt. Theresa watched helplessly, murmuring comfort: "It'll be alright. Even if Master truly marries, he won't treat us differently..."

Finally, Charles understood why Hattie was grieving. As his first companion, she was most attuned to his mood shifts and had sensed him drawing ever closer to Anno...

Helpless, he wrapped both arms around her, pulling her tight against him. Rocking her like a child, he whispered: "Don't worry. Even if I marry, I'll always be the Monastery's Master first..."

At the far end of the tent, Nidalee watched with undisguised glee.

Ever since discovering how much joy it brought her to provoke Anno, she'd leaned into it. Now, every time she witnessed Charles or the girls close to him rage, fret, or despair over their tangled affections, she couldn't suppress her delight.

Catching Nidalee's amusement, Charles glared fiercely. "You dare laugh? This is YOUR fault! Always tossing around words like 'fiancée' and 'fiancé' in front of Anno, putting ideas in her head!"

Nidalee stared blankly, then waved her hands defensively. "No, this has nothing to do with me! I'm just here for the entertainment—"

Instantly, Hattie and Theresa snapped their heads up, shooting venomous glares at the Nidalee.

Nidalee swallowed hard.

Oh no. My amusement just backfired.

Now, I've become the joke.

But then...

Her heart pounded wildly. She prostrated herself, raising her rump high. "I was wrong, Master! I accept my punishment! Woo..."

Charles cracked his knuckles, ready to unleash his frustration onto Nidalee. Hattie eyed her body with icy resolve, accepting Charles' explanation that this troublesome druid—who constantly provoked Anno—deserved retribution.

Theresa tilted her head, a suspicion gnawing at her: Was this "punishment" truly agony... or Nidalee's deepest craving?

Uncertain, she eagerly joined the "disciplinary" game nonetheless.

Under the trio's assault, Nidalee's clothes vanished. Hattie summoned a sea of slick tentacles, expertly binding her wrists, ankles, thighs, stomach, and neck. One tendril plunged into her mouth, coiling around her tongue.

Theresa gripped Nidalee's swollen, diamond-hard nipples, rolling and pinching them until the druid whimpered.

Charles kneaded Nidalee's pert breasts, gaze raking her naked form. His eyes locked onto her neatly-trimmed pussy—already drenched and glistening. Hattie's tentacles slithered over the engorged labia, teasing her clit while viscous arousal soaked the furs beneath them. Every gasp, every twitch betrayed Nidalee's desperate hunger.

Time to wreck her.

Hattie's tentacles speared deep into Nidalee's cunt, mimicking fingers as they stroked her g-spot. Charles gripped the druid's muscular asscheeks, spreading them wide. Oil slicked her tight backdoor as he pressed his thick cock against it.

"WOO—!"

He thrust forward, impaling her virgin asshole. Nidalee's scream died against the tentacle gagging her. Her body bucked—not in pain, but savage ecstasy. Charles grinned. She's loving this.

He hammered into her, each thrust burying his length deeper. Nidalee's hips pistoned back, craving the stretch. Theresa twisted her nipples until tears streaked her face, while Hattie's tentacles pumped faster, hitting her cervix. Nidalee's eyes rolled back as her pussy spasmed, spraying fluids across Charles' thighs.

"Filthy beast," Charles growled. "You'll scream for me." He hauled her hips higher, slamming into her prostate until she convulsed again, shrieking into her gag.

Switching positions, Charles shoved her face-first into the furs. Hattie's tentacles pinned her wrists while Theresa knelt between Nidalee's legs, lapping at her swollen clit. Charles mounted her from behind, driving back into her ass. The druid's howls muffled against fur as he pounded her like a flesh-drum.

"Beg for my cum," Charles ordered, slapping her ass crimson.

"Mmmph! MMMMM!"

He pistoned harder, balls slapping her clit. Nidalee's body locked—a third orgasm tearing through her. Charles roared, filling her bowels with thick ropes of cum.

Yet the torment didn't stop. Theresa shoved her into a throatfuck, gagging her on cock while Charles claimed her dripping pussy. Hattie's tentacles wound around her torso, fondling her tits as both men drilled Nidalee raw.

Two hours later, Nidalee lay sprawled—limp, bruised, and coated in spit, sweat, and semen. The trio dressed languidly as she panted, thighs still quivering.

...

The punishment dealt to Nidalee lasted for nearly two hours, and it was only after that Anno finally woke up. Though still utterly exhausted, she forced herself to push through, and returned to the city together with Charles and the others, however unfortunate the company.

At last, when they arrived at the tram stops in the Rubble District, it was time to part ways, if only for a while. Yet, after all they'd been through, Anno was braver than before—bolder by far. She gave Charles a daring farewell kiss in front of everyone, then climbed onto the carriage and sped off toward Blackstaff Tower.

She had gained quite a lot from this journey and needed to deliver a full and detailed report to the higher-ups at Blackstaff Tower in person.

As for Charles, with no major faction behind him, he could not possibly go up against a powerful Abyssal Lord alone. Left with no other choice, he could only return for now to the monastery, waiting patiently.

In the meantime, he would focus on keeping his own little domain secure.

He had never heard of Montport by name, but the title alone made it clear—the adversary was a Demon Lord, and one who knew how to wield Chaos Energy as well. By any standard, the challenge rating would be sky-high.

But even more terrifying than his own Strength, it was the demon army he led: it was all but certain the ranks would be filled with horrors like mariliths, goristros, and even balors—mighty demons, swarming in endless, overwhelming numbers.

That was far beyond anything he could handle alone. So, until the legends and powers of Liberl Port decided to act, he would do best to stay coiled up in his old nest, waiting for the outcome.

With this in mind, he made his way back to his old sanctuary—the familiar South Harbor District.

Looking back, his journey to the Rubble District had stretched on for over two weeks without pause. Even in the South Harbor District, known for its mild climate, the edge of winter could now be felt. Passersby along the streets wore thick sweaters or leather jackets; even the Amazons no longer strutted with their usual flamboyant disregard.

Otherwise, little had changed—most things were just as before. Charles and his companions strode through the only clean streets he knew so well, and every Amazon, district office official, or patrolling guard greeted him warmly as they went by. Charles returned every greeting with a smile—in truth, it was all perfectly ordinary.

That remained the case—until he pushed open the gates of the monastery and at last returned to his own territory. Then, in the monastery's garden, he noticed something strange: a small, fresh mound of earth had appeared.

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*Chapter 210: Chapter 210: Did Raise it to Death?*

Charles's eyebrows shot up. The monastery was never very large to begin with, and thanks to his memory, he knew every corner and furnishing by heart. He was certain that before leaving, this mound hadn't existed.

What had happened?

Puzzled, he turned and called out beside him, "Andny, what's with that little dirt mound?"

It was already winter, but Liberl Port's low latitude, bordering on the tropics, and South Harbor District's seaside warmth, meant there was no shortage of worms—or of insects for the Insects Witch to command.

So even now, the monastery was full of her messengers.

As soon as he finished his question, a tiny worm softly landed by his ear. Andny's voice came through—unexpectedly, now thick with tears: "Master..."

"The spiderborn that hatched from the egg died because of my care..."

Between sobs, Andny told Charles the whole story: simply put, the Giant Egg she had brought back from the Drider nest hatched, but the infant inside would not eat or drink, would not cry or move. No matter how hard she and Sophia tried, it lasted less than a day before dying.

In the end, a grief-stricken Andny could only dig a small hole in the garden and bury the corpse.

Staring at that little mound of earth, Charles's expression grew complicated. Knowing there were two dead infants buried underfoot, he couldn't help but feel uneasy.

But then another thought struck—if one of those dead infants turned into an undead and clawed up from the dirt, he might just net a few dozen more Purification Points...

At that, his mood improved. But when he heard Andny still crying softly, he comforted her gently: "It's all right, don't cry, Andny. Where are you now? I'll come find you."

Andny said she was in her own room, so Charles walked through the monastery's garden to her doorway, didn't bother to knock, and pushed open the door.

Then he saw the Insects Witch, neatly dressed in her pitch-black heavy nun's habit, but at that moment she was curled up on the bed.

Looking closer, Charles immediately noticed that her abdomen was swollen, as though she was pregnant. Instantly, a jolt of alarm ran through him: "Your stomach—?"

Andny lifted her nun's habit, revealing her pale, snow-white belly and—hugged closely to herself—a giant spider egg the size of a basketball. "It's this."

Charles's face immediately turned complicated. "Ah, so there's another one left... Wait, why are you holding it against your belly like that? I thought..."

He almost said, I thought you were pregnant. I distinctly remember the game saying witches can't get pregnant.



Andny let her habit fall back down and continued to cradle the egg against herself. "Sophia said the reason the last spiderborn died might be that we got the hatching process wrong."

"She said that spiderborn could probably be counted as greatly weakened, and eggs like that need high temperature and motherly love to live, so she told me to do this; maybe this way the one in the egg will survive..."

Charles inwardly wondered what kind of nonsense that was, but at the sight of Andny's pitiful, hopeful eyes, he simply couldn't voice his doubts. Instead, he put on a serious expression: "That's logical and well-reasoned—it convinces me."

He said this and walked to the foot of the bed, sat down beside Andny, lifted the nun's habit to reveal the giant egg beneath, and placed his hand on it, grave and focused.

Even though this was a fantasy world where spawning new species didn't need to follow any basic laws, ilthreza wasn't some kind of goddess. She simply had a mastery far above the ordinary, but still nowhere near being able to create a stable, brand-new species.

Which meant these spiderborn might have simply been born with fundamental flaws—and that dying at birth was normal; surviving would actually be the abnormal outcome.

That's what he thought, though, seeing the anxious hope in Andny's eyes, he truly couldn't bring himself to speak any brutal truths.

Mm... even if creating a wholly new and stable species is out of reach, with our power, letting a child that shouldn't survive make it through—that ought to be doable, right?

He activated the system, eyeing the land area and prestige still lacking, and pressed his lips together before letting out a sigh.

Ugh—even by blowing through money as fast as possible, he could buy one hundred thousand square meters of land in a short span, but there was simply no way to grind up prestige points that quickly.

You can't keep distributing porridge every day. And if there aren't any big disasters in the slums, the prestige gained from free meals would be minimal at best...

Forget it. Looks like the monastery won't be getting a level-up to tier 3 anytime soon, nor will the clinic hit tier 3.

So, the only option is to try something else.

With that in mind, he pulled up his attributes panel, eyed the 15,000-plus Purification Points on hand, and drew a deep breath.

Whether this works or not will depend on whether the level-2 clinic is up to the task...

...

Three days later, in the monastery's clinic.

Charles and a group of nuns were gathered around the operating table, each more serious than the next. Andny, in particular, had her hands pressed reverently to her chest, face pious, silently praying.

On the operating table in their midst, a basketball-sized spider egg was quietly resting.

According to the calculations of Andny and Sophia, and Theresa's foresight, today would be the day this giant egg hatched.

In this near-unbearable silence, time ticked by. At the very least, Sophia's calculations were accurate: soon, the egg began to stir.

Crack—

It rocked twice, then the clear sound of eggshell splitting rang out through the quiet clinic room. Visible to the eye, the crack widened, the rocking grew more violent, and in just a few seconds, cracks had spread all across the shell.

Everyone held their breath, tension and anticipation thick in the air as they waited for new life to emerge. Very soon, the white shell collapsed, and in the midst of transparent, viscous fluid, a strange new being was born into the world.

It looked like a human baby girl, but with pointed ears; her skin was pale, but the wispy hair atop her head was a faint violet—perhaps inherited, perhaps mutated.

None of that mattered, though. What set her truly apart from all other life in the material world were the four pairs of spider legs sprouting from her back, each a different length.

The little girl trembled, stretching her tender arms and kicking her stubby legs, as if trying to grasp something—or perhaps enduring terrible agony. The eight spider legs at her back swung back and forth, brushing fragments of eggshell from her body in an apparent instinct.

Her eyes were squeezed shut, mouth parted, but entirely filled with slime; her expression was agonized, lips purplish, as though she wanted to cry out, but no sound emerged.

Charles's face turned grave at once; as feared, the child's state was all wrong.

No crying, no struggle.

That was a grave abnormality. Charles didn't try to act like a doctor and slap the baby to make her cry. Instead, he immediately looked up and commanded, "System, scan the baby's condition."

As soon as he finished, a football-sized, eye-shaped scanner floated over and hovered above the infant, beginning a full body scan.

Charles stared down at his system panel, watching line after line appear on the interface: cardiac failure... heart failure... kidney failure...

His expression froze.

Just as he'd suspected—ilthreza's technique was entirely unreliable. Her basic skills were nowhere near enough to create a new species from scratch.

This new kind, blending drider, giant spider, and human traits, fundamentally lacked viability; death at birth was to be expected.

And yet, if Andny wanted to save her...

Charles took a deep breath.

"System," he called again, "formulate a treatment plan that will enable this spiderborn to survive, and tell me what to do next."

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