Advent of the Archmage

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## 1. "Legend" in the Flesh

It was a cold night.

Towards the North, in the northwest corner of a little city called Gladstone, sat the Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings. In the darkest corner on the third floor of its Apprentice Dorm stood room 309.

Blankets were thrown up in a flurry. A black-haired, thin and frail-looking young man sat up with a jolt. The moonlight shone in through the glass window panes, casting a pale white sheen onto his face.

Am I really in the World of Firuman now? A world of darkness, dying gods, that bloody night, the flashing magical lights, saving the world? Was that all real?

The young man's head was in chaos. Utter chaos.

His name was Link. He was from Earth. At least, he had been, up until just an hour ago.

Just recently, he was still in his own home on Earth, playing the game Legend.

Legend had been the most popular online virtual reality game on Earth. It was about a world in a tragic state, slowly being taken over by the Dark Side. In the game, he had been the first ever Archmage, as well as the head Magician of its largest guild: The Guild of Starry Dreams. Just before this, he had challenged the game's Ultimate Bossthe Lord of the Deep, Nozama.

Nozama was a mighty Demi-God. He was one of the three overlords of the Dark Army in the Mortal Realm. Link's battle with Nozama had been an arduous one. Of his team of more than a hundred and ten players, only Link was left standing. By that time, Nozama had worn down his health to the point of almost finishing him off.

Towards the end, Link unlocked the God-level item, the Archangel's Sword. Immense power surged through him, and he became temporarily invincible for five seconds.

In those five seconds, Link and the frenzied boss clashed, each using three Fingers of Death on each other!

Finger of Death

Level-19 Legendary Spell

Effect: When it hits a target, it will carry out divine judgment (magical judgment) according to the condition of the target's body. There is a very large chance that it will cause the target to experience sudden death!

(The version used by the game player is Basic. It can only be used when the Boss' health is below a certain level.)

The scary thing about this spell was that it judged its targets regardless of their skill level. If the spell's judgment was successful, even a God would be killed on the spot!

Link and Nozama's Fingers of Death activated at the same time. They both had literally fought each other to their deaths.

Strangely enough, Link's avatar hadn't been resurrected at the graveyard. Instead, it entered a dark, eerie dimension.

In this dimension, there was a luminescent but dim ball of light. It claimed to be the God of Light hailing from the Legion of Light, a realm in the World of Firuman far away on the verge of defeat. As its supreme God, his powers had been weakened to the point of death, and he begged Link to save his beloved World of Firuman.

Link just listened. Who could believe such a ridiculous thing as saving a world?

He thought that this was a cut scene that had been activated by slaying the Ultimate Boss. Full of pride after having just slain the boss, Link had somehow actually agreed to the God's plea. This caused him to be banished to this godforsaken, wretched place!

Under the silver moonlight, Link looked about and was able to make out the room around him.

The room was neither large nor small, 100 or so square feet. By the window were a distinctively foreign-looking bookshelf and chair. A single bed had been placed against the wall, and at the head of the bed, there was a storage chest. That was all.

There were three books on the bookshelf. Link found that he could recognize their names very quickly:Elemental Magic, The World's Equilibrium, and Light and Dark. All of them were basic learning materials from the academy's library.

More memories began flooding into his head. This body had also been called Link. It was the youngest son of a small baron in the Eastern Dunes of the Norton Kingdom. He was 17 this year, introverted and taciturn. He had only learned an extremely basic Trick (Level-0 Apprentice Spell) throughout his half a year in the Magic Academy The Magician's Hand.

He was a hermit in the academy. Almost no one noticed him.

But none of that was relevant now.

Jumping down from the bed, without even bothering to put on any shoes, Link strode over to the calendar hanging by the table. Clearly inscribed on the calendar of vellum was today's date.

The Light Ages: The Year 1056, the 9th Day of the 10th Month.

Link gasped. It seemed to be just a normal day, but after today, it would be carved into the history of the World of Firuman for all eternity!

Because late tonight, the vanguard of the Dark Elves would succeed in ambushing Gladstone City. They would follow it up with the atrocious massacre of the whole city 150,000 people would be wiped out within a day and a night, their souls sacrificed to the Dark Elves' goddess, the Spider Queen, Lolth. There would be less than 1000 survivors.

After the sacrificial ritual, the corpses would be thrown into the Gladstone River beside the city. The river would nearly be cut off by the dam of corpses, the water stained red with blood.

Gladstone was reduced to rubble that night.

This incident was known as The Change of the Bloody Moon!

Soon, a war swept over the entire World of Firuman. The Dark Ages had arrived. Twenty years later, there were still no signs of it ending anytime soon. In fact, it only seemed to have gotten worse.

All this had been a part of the background history of the game Legend. After comparing what he knew with the memories of his body, Link realized that this world he was in was almost identical to the world in Legend.

The only difference was the timeit had been the year 1076 in the game. The Legion of Light had been on the retreat, losing more battles than winning, its territory steadily shrinking. There had also been constantiternal squabbles leaving it in extremely poor condition. Now, the world was just about to face the beginning of the disaster.

The Change of the Bloody Moon would happen tonight!

Cold to his core, Link turned to see a pocket watch lying on the chest by the bed. He rushed over and picked it up. It had been made by the dwarves. Opening it, the watch hands glowed in the dark, he could tell the time very easily. It was 9:35 at night.

"There's less than an hour! The Dark Elves' attack will start soon!" Link thought, his heartbeat quickening.

This night, the Dark Elves had been the ones to deal the first blow. They had snuck into Gladstone City in disguises, carrying out an intricate asssination scheme.

In the game's lore, the asssination had been carried out at 10:30 pm and went on for an hour.

Within that one hour, 99% of the leaders of the city had been murdered, leaving the rest mortally injured. When the Dark Elves began their main attack, the city was already in turmoil. The Dark Elf Army hadn't come across any significant resistance.

How did he know all of this so well?

Because in the game Legend, every beginner had to go through The Change of the Bloody Moon as part of their first mission. Their mission was to escape Gladstone.

"How can I save myself?"

Link paced the room, asking himself over and over again.

He would be experiencing a city's massacre in a foreign world. If he didn't run, by morning, he would definitely be one of the corpses in Gladstone River!

Thinking of the events he knew were about to happen made Link break outito a cold sweat. But as the only Archmage in the game, he was very strong in mind. Shocked, but still managing to keep his resolve, he had no real resentments about being placed in such a tight situation. Once he had processed what was going on, he began to think of a strategy to get himself out of his current circumstance.

Suddenly, Link's heart skipped a beat. A glowing numeral had appeared in his head. It was the number 20.

"These areOmni Points? The God of Light had told the truth!" Link felt his spirits lift.

In the game, The God of Light had been the main God of the Legion of Light. It was the same in this world, Link confirmed with a quick review of his memories.

In the strange dimension that he had been in before being teleported to this world, the God of Light said that for him to leave Gladstone safely, he would receive 20 Omni Points. With them, he would be able to quickly grasp the power of magic.

Link's eyes lit up. He had been an Archmage in a game. He had no idea how magic actually worked. If he were to truly master magic, he would have to study at a magic academy. And that would require a huge amount of time which he didn't have.

"How do I use Omni Points?" he asked immediately.

Something flashed in the corner of his eye. Link found a line of glowing text appear at the border of his vision. It was exactly the same as in the game.

The text started scrolling.

The gaming system is loading Loading completed.

Scanning body stats Scan completed.

Game player: Link Morani (noble)

Title: Magician's Apprentice

Magic Recovery Speed: 0.2 points per hour.

Maximum Mana: 1 (Mana consumption follows the Omni Points chart)

List of Mastered Spells: Level-0 The Magician's Hand (0.2 Mana per use)

Current gear: None

Link was dumbfounded.

What is this? It's so similar to the game's user interface Anyways, this body is seriously trash. There's almost no difference between this body and a commoner's.

The gaming system went on to give him a thorough explanation.

To help the game player adapt to the real World of Firuman, the game player's body is integrated into the gaming system. The gaming system will give the game player missions, from which the game player can gain Omni Points.

"But what can Omni Points be used for?"

The interface refreshed to show new information.

Omni Points can be used to change the game player's body stats.

Exchange ratio: 1 Omni Point = 1 Mana Speed Recovery = 10 Maximum Mana Points.

Omni Points can be used to purchase spells. The spell prices are as shown below.

Mortal Spells:

Level-0 Spells = 1 Omni Point.

Level-1 Spells = 10 Omni Points.

Level-2 Spells = 20 Omni Points.

Level-10 Spells = 100 Omni Points, and so on.

Legendary Spells:

Level-11 Spells = 500 Omni Points.

Level-12 Spells = 1000 Omni Points.

Level-13 Spells = 2000 Omni Points.

Level-19 Legendary Pinnacle Spells = 128000 Omni Points, and so on.

Demi-God Divine Spells: Locked.

Okay. This definitely made things clear.

That is to say, as long as Link completed the missions given to him by the gaming system, he would receive Omni Points and continue getting stronger until he reached the Legendary Pinnacle of Level-19.

Of course, that would all be in the future.

Right now, Link only had 20 Omni Points. He needed to use his Omni Points wisely in order to escape from Gladstone safely.

In the game, Link had chosen to be a Magician. This was why his starting point to escape Gladstone City had been The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings.

On the night of The Change of the Bloody Moon, the Magic Academy had been one of the places in which the Dark Elves prioritized their attack.

The Magic Academy was very small. It had less than 100 pupils, and of that 100, less than 20 were full-fledged Magicians. The best among those Magicians was only Level-4.

Yet, more than 200 Assassins had been dispatched here. There were at least 20 already in hiding around the place.

Half of the Academy's tutors had been killed in their sleep. Some of them had woken up but had been unable to fight off the throngs of Assassins. As a result, the Magic Academy had fallen and its apprentices massacred!

It had been a real bloodbath!

Remembering the details of his last escape, Link decided to purchase some of the spells he had used back then first.

"Summon Spell Menu."

Many glowing cards appeared in his field of vision. Slowly rotating, each of the cards was a spell. The number on the upper left corner of the card indicated the Mana cost, while the number on the card's upper right corner indicated the spell's level. Every spell was there up to more than a thousand of them.

The higher the level of magic, the brighter the card glowed.

The Legendary Spell Cards nearly blinded Link. In a sweeping glance, Link spotted Finger of Death, Doomsday Meteor, and Greater Ruin. All famous, and all Legendary.

"I was done in by that God of Light! If I had 2000 Omni Points, I would be able to win this battle single-handedly. But I only have 20 points."

Considering how weak the God of Light had looked, it had probably been difficult to just send him here. Giving him 20 points wasn't bad at all. Any more and that sad old fellow might have died on the spot.

Filter. Show only Level-0 Spells.

High-level spells were powerful. But he couldn't afford any of them. Just one Level-1 Spell cost 10 Omni Points, and their Mana consumption was much higher than a Level-0 Spell.

As for Level-2 Spells, they cost 20 Omni Points and used 30 Mana. The price and cost of using any of them were too high for Link to sustain. He didn't even consider them.

Level-0 Tricks were also known as Apprentice Spells. If not done well, they were just smoke and mirrors. Used properly, they could kill!

He had also chosen them because despite being much less powerful, Tricks required less casting time than the higher level spells.

Link could cast a Level-0 Spell in 0.1 seconds. For a Level-1 Spell, he needed at least 0.3 seconds. And he needed one full second for Level-3 Spells. That was far too longcompletely unsuitable for a lone Magician.

Fwoosh. The bright magic cards disappeared, leaving some tens of dimly glowing cards behind. All of them had the number 0 inscribed on their upper right corner.

Link looked through them all one-by-one. Finally, he settled on four Level-0 Spells.

"Purchase Fireball, Earth Spike, Lesser Invisibility, Slumber."

Instantly, those magic cards lit up brightly. They shattered into countless little pinpoints of light then disappeared into thin air. Link felt his consciousness blur for a split second, then recover.

He suddenly found that he was very familiar with the four Level-0 Spells. If he wanted, he could have cast any of them in an instant.

That's it? he thought. The sensation of having learned a spell is exactly the same as back in the game. The familiar sensation gave Link a sense of comfort.

After purchasing the four spells, Link spent another two 2 Omni Points on Maximum Mana Points in order to be able to use his Mana. His Maximum Mana became 21 points, enough to use a Level-0 Spell ten times.

After converting the Omni Points, he felt the full level of Mana surge through his body and heaved a sigh of relief.

The gaming system was quite reliable. The Mana in his body had been filled automatically the first time he increased his Maximum Mana. If it had been empty, it would have needed time to recover. Link's Mana recovery speed of 0.2 Mana Points per hour made it virtually useless to wait for that to happen.

Now, he was left with 14 Omni Points.

Looking down at his pocket watch, just 5 minutes had passed. It was now 9:40.

The asssination would begin in an hour. Before that, it would be safe inside the Apprentices' Dorm. But outside, the Assassins were sure to be in their positions, ready and waiting. Running out now would be as good as suicide.

In the gaming world, to escape from the academy, one had to wait for the asssination to begin. The academy would be in chaos. That was the only way of escaping and surviving.

There's still an hour left. What should I do? Link racked his brains.

Save the others? Persuade the Apprentices to escape with him?

That was pointless. Link was a nobody in the Magic Academy. Who would listen to someone who had only mastered one pitiful little Trick? They would just take him for a madman.

Get some gear to augment his powers as much as he could?

Yes, that was a good idea!

## 2. The New Moon Wand

How could one get strong fast in the World of Firuman?

Well, there were three ways: gear, potions, and buffs.

The Apprentice's Dorm lodged only Apprentices. Their magical abilities were so low that he didn't even need to think about buffs.

Link didn't bother much about potions either. There were no alchemy laboratories in the Apprentice's Dorm. More than 150 feet lay between the Apprentice's Dorm and the closest alchemy laboratoryan impossible distance to cover in the dark, with Assassins at every turn waiting to strike.

The last and only viable option was gear.

What was the most important gear for a Magician? A tool to compress Mana!

In layman's terms, a wand.

A Magician could use magic without a wand, but Magicians had frail bodies. Unable to concentrate Mana strongly within their bodies, the magic they used would be very weak.

This made it necessary to rely on outside help. That is, wands.

For example, a Level-0 Fireball, cast by a Magician's Apprentice, would be roughly equivalent to a firecracker. But if the Magician's Apprentice were to use a wand, even a common one, he would be able to do much, much more. The firecracker would becomea large firework, perhaps even a grenade.

And there would be no change in the Mana consumed. The secret was all in the wand. It simply compressed the Mana.

If one were to liken magic to a bullet, wands would be guns. The quality of the gun determined the impact of the bullet.

Wands were extremely expensive. The cheapest wand cost 100 gold coins. Link was just a small noble and the youngest son in his family. He had little talent in magic and had no way of getting his hands on a luxury item like that.

He didn't have one, but others in the dorm certainly did.

There were more than 50 Magician's Apprentices in the Apprentice's Dorm, most of whom who were loaded. At least twenty of them had wands, the best of which belonged to an Apprentice named Grant.

Link knew that the wand was called New Moon. It was one of the earlier works of the Wand Master Hermira, and was worth more than a thousand gold coins. It had been Grant's coming of age present from his father, a duke, to his beloved son.

It was rumored that Grant loved his wand so much that he even hugged it to sleep.

Link's target was the New Moon Wand.

He acted immediately.

Link put on the clothes by the bedside. He froze halfway. These were the Apprentice Robes given out by the Magic Academy. The material and design were unique. His identity as an Apprentice of the Magic Academy would be obvious to all who saw the robes. Normally, this wouldn't be a problem. But tonight, the more eye-catching he was, the faster he'd die.

Throwing off the Apprentice Robe, Link opened the chest and dug out a gray robe. It was his own. There was nothing special about it. Wearing it, he would be able to blend into any crowd without standing out.

Link set out after putting on his shoes.

Most Magicians liked towers. The Apprentice's Dorm was a tower with five floors, each of which had 10 rooms arranged in a circle.

Walking out, Link found himself in a round hall about 30 feet in diameter. It was dimly lit by a ball of light that floated above the hall. It was 9:45. For Magicians, who tended to sleep early, it was already bedtime.

Following the spiral stone stairs to the second floor, Link found his way to Grant's room and knocked on the door lightly.

There was no response. Grant was probably fast asleep.

Hesitating, Link stopped knocking. It might wake the other Apprentices. Considering what he had in mind, that wasn't a good thing.

Reaching out, he laid a hand on the lock. Link activated The Magician's Hand.

The Magician's Hand

Mana consumption: 0.2 points

Level 0 Trick

Effect: Move objects without physical contact (A technique Magicians often use to show off.)

The Magician's Hand had been the only magic that the original Link had known. It was very simple and cost only 0.2 Mana Points.

The Apprentice's Dorm used standard locks. Opening one with The Magician's Hand was as easy as pie. Five seconds later, the door opened with a click.

The wooden door let out a slight squeak as Link gently pushed it open. For someone stealing for the first time in their life, the noise would be extremely jarring. But not for Link. As someone who had managed to become the first Archmage in the virtual-reality game, he was, mentally, as strong as a rock.

Without flinching, he pushed the door open, walked in and closed the door with a light hand. He did all this as naturally as entering his own room.

The interior was very dark, the arrangement similar to his own. However, the furniture was much more ornate than those that Link owned. The academy didn't provide its pupils with furniture. Grant had bought these himself.

Grant laid on the bed, fast asleep. The rumors had been true; he loved his wand so much that he clasped it tightly even in his sleep.

It would have been a difficult situation for a real thief. But not so for Link. He knew that the massacre would effectively erase anything else that happened in the city. No one would care about anything else.

There were no repercussions for him to fear.

Walking up to Grant's bed, he swung his hand at Grant's handsome face. The slap landed heavily on Grant's face with a resounding smack.

That was for the original Link. This Grant had often picked on the original Link. Once, he had even pulled a prank that caused Link to break an arm.

Grant's father was a duke, so the young man had chosen to suffer in silence. But the Link now would never do that.

With that slap, Grant woke up, startled, and jumped up from the bed. Pressing a hand to his cheek, he looked around, yelling, "What's going on? What's going on?"

He was still hazy from sleep, not fully understanding the situation.

During all this, he relaxed his grip on the wand in his hand.

Quickly, Link snatched the intricately-made wand from him. Then, he lifted an arm. Before Grant managed to get a grasp of what was going on, a karate-chop landed heavily on the back of his neck.

Grant's eyes rolled back and he fell back onto his bed, unconscious.

He had no idea of what had just happened.

Link had the wand!

Link admired the wand in his hand. It was 15 inches long, with rings of magic-imbued gold inlaid along its length. Tiny magic runes had been engraved throughout the wand, a new moon embellishing its tip.

A virtual box appeared beside the wand as he admired it. Glowing text flashed through the box.

New Moon Wand

Quality: Fine

Effect: Offensive spells gain +20% power

(Note: Coming of age gift from Duke Gridan to his second son, Grant)

Link smiled. The God of Light made this gaming system really well. It has a true audio-visual feel to it, he thought.

He had gotten the New Moon Wand. Taking out his pocket watch, it was now 9:50, he still had forty minutes left. There was more than enough time. He walked out of the room and placed the tip of the New Moon Wand against the door lock. ActivateThe Magician's Hand.

With another click, the bolt of the lock was destroyed. With the wand, The Magician's Hand had become much more powerful! No one would be able to open the door now, whether from the inside or from the outside. Even if Grant woke up halfway, he would have to find a different way to get out of the room.

In another forty minutes, no one in the academy would care about anyone else's affairs.

He had the wand. That was the first step.

Link made his way to the first floor of the Apprentice's Dorm. On the first floor, there were a few display cabinets. One of them contained a magic bracelet called The Band of Protection. It was a low-level magic item. The one who wore it could use the Level-2 defensive spell, Guarding Barrier.

Link had to have it.

During this period, because of the low Mana density, there were less powerful people around as compared to the future. A Level-2 defensive spell was already considered to be very strong. Used well, it might even save his life.

As the war progressed, powerful forces clashing caused dimensional cracks to appear across the Firuman Continent. As a result, the Mana density of the world would increase, and along with it, the number of combatants. By then, Level-2 Spells wouldn't do much at all.

But his problem now was that a fully-fledged Magician lived on the first floorMadame Fairfax. This kind old lady was a Level-1 Magician who was also the dorm supervisor.

She was a light sleeper and woke up at the slightest noise. It would be much more difficult to steal the bangle with her there. But Link had a plan.

He walked towards the stairs, but his footsteps paused before another door. Sentimental feelings welled up within him.

Link blinked. The young man's memories replayed in his head.

The Apprentice's Dorm was a mixed dorm. An Apprentice called Celine, a commoner, lived in the room. She studied in the Magic Academy on a full scholarship thanks to her exceptional talent in magic. Within just three months, she had mastered three Level-0 Spells. Her future was bright and unfettered.

According to his memories, Celine was a very beautiful girl. Even without makeup, she was the uncontested first beauty of the Magic Academy. But that wasn't the reason for his feelings. It was because she had been a great help to the original Link. When Grant had broken his arm, Celine had helped to look after him for more than a month, giving the excuse that she held some responsibility in the incident.

Link was introverted and had almost no self-confidence. He had virtually no friends in the academy. He easily developed strong feelings for Celine within that month.

"Haha. Kid, is she your puppy love?" Link chuckled softly to himself.

He wasn't willing to stick his nose in. He would be lucky just to make it out on his own. With one more person, the danger he faced would increase exponentially.

Turning to leave, he took a step, then a second, and then a third. On the fourth step, he froze.

He found that the sentimental feelings within him had become much stronger, so much so that he could no longer go on ignoring them.

"Fine, fine. Since it's your last wish, I'll do it. After all, I did take over your body."

It was inexplicable. But when Link made that promise, those feelings vanished. He felt lighter, as if a burden had been lifted from his chest.

Link knew that the original owner of his body had disappeared forever.

What a besotted fool, Link thought, shaking his head.

He would take this Celine away, but not now. Now, he had to steal no, take The Band of Protection.

## 3. His Way of the Magician

On the first floor of the Apprentice's Dorm were three display cabinets.

In the first cabinet, there was a document in the hand of the previous Lord of Gladstone City. The second contained a beautiful, hand-wrought sword that was supposedly a gift from the dwarves. The last, of course, contained the magic bangle, made almost two centuries ago, by a Level-10 Master Magician from the Magic Academy.

With the low Mana density in this world, no more Legends (Level-11 and higher) had appeared in a while. A Level-10 Master Magician was already the pinnacle of existence in the mortal realm. He had been the pride and joy of The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings.

The things on display weren't actually that valuable. They were displayed just to show off the history of the Magic Academy. Which was why they had only been guarded with a simple spell that would sound an alarm if the display cabinets were destroyed.

But Link knew that the display cabinet had a key. Better yet, he knew where it was.

The hall on the first floor was much wider. Because it was late at night, it was just as dark as the hall on the floor Grant's room had been on.

Link walked lightly to Madame Fairfax's door. He knocked lightly on the door.

Bam, bam, bam. In the silence of the night, the knocking sounds seemed especially loud.

Madame Fairfax replied at the first rap. "Who is it?"

She really did sleep lightly.

Link made his voice sound urgent and anxious. "Madame, it's me, Link from room 309. I need to talk to you about something, it's urgent. Can you please open the door?"

This was a kind old lady. She would never refuse help to anyone, even if it disturbed her sleep.

"Aye. Give me a second. I'm coming."

Rustling noises came from inside the door. It was probably the old lady putting on some more clothes. The attire of the ladies of this world was quite complicated, and Madame Fairfax wasn't as nimble as she used to be. After about three or four minutes, Link heard footsteps from underneath the door.

Link took a deep breath and raised the New Moon Wand. He pointed it squarely at the wooden door.

Very soon, the lock turned and the door opened with a click. Madame Fairfax's wrinkled face appeared from behind the door.

"What happened"

Before she even finished, the tip of Link's wand glowed.

"Slumber."

Slumber

Level-0 Spell

Effect: Makes people fall into a deep sleep. The stronger the opponent, the weaker the effect.

Now this spell was considered real magic. Link thought back to the sensation of casting the spell. He found it fascinating. It had been just as easy as it had been in the game!

If it's like that, it won't be too difficult to escape from Gladstone. Link felt more confident.

The magic had used one of Link's Omni Points. He had also used two Mana Points. But it was worth it. There was no way Link could have brought himself to knock this gentle old lady over the head.

Madame Fairfax was just a Level-1 Magician, barely a true Magician. Her magical talent was extremely common. Her Level-1 qualification had been obtained out of sheer determination and time.

Even now, just woken up and barely awake in the middle of the night, she hadn't even been in time to react when Link had cast the spell as fast as he could. With the flash of light on his wand, she crumpled, falling towards the ground.

Lightning quick spellcasting. That was how Link had managed to outshine the rest in the game Legend. It was just as lethal in this world.

Link quickly caught the old lady's frail body and moved her back into her room, placing her on the bed.

He estimated that the spell's effects would last for an hour at the most. It was 9:55. He had enough time.

Madame Fairfax was the dorm supervisor, so she held the key to the display cabinets.

Link searched the room. Finally, he found a large ring of keys in a small chest in the dresser by the window. The old lady was a little forgetful, so she had labeled each of the keys. This made things much easier for Link.

Easily finding the key, Link opened the third display cabinet and grabbed the Magic Bangle.

The bangle had been made of fine gold and purple copper alloys. As a result, it glowed a faint purple. Magic runes were engraved along its circumference. Because of all the Mana within the runes, a silver glow emanated from within them. It was beautiful.

The Band of Protection

Quality: Fine

Effect: Forms a Level-2 barrier when activated.

Uses: 0/1 (Limited use item)

(Note: Pride of the academy. One of Master Magician Aylant's earlier works. An unfinished piece.)

"Even though it can only be used once, it's enough for me!" Link wore the Bangle on his wrist.

He had now obtained all the useful items he could from the Apprentice's Dorm.

Flipping his pocket watch open, it showed the time: 9:58. There was half an hour left. He had one last thing to docomplete the last wishes of the original Link and save Celine.

Taking big strides towards the second floor, he didn't have to look around for her room. Link's legs seemed to bring him to Celine's door of their own accord.

Bam, bam, bam. This was the third time Link was knocking on a door tonight.

There was no reply. The young girl slept soundly. Link sighed softly. He pointed the New Moon Wand at the lock and activated The Magician's Hand.

Within one second, he heard a click and the door was unlocked. Link pushed it open, walking into the room. He closed the door and locked it behind him.

Only then did he turn to look around the room.

The room was very sparse. Besides the bed, the only other furniture was a worn-down looking dresser. On it, a mirror and a comb lay next to an open book. There was a half-eaten loaf of bread on the other side.

Celine lay on the bed under a thin, tattered blanket. The blanket was too thin and barely able to retain heat. She was huddled tightly in a ball because of the cold.

This was the difference between nobles and commoners. Even with a full scholarship, she had no choice but to live a frugal life. The original Link, as a noble, even with his lousy magical talent, didn't have to worry about things like heating and where his next meal came from.

Link sat down on the chair by the table. Silently, he stared out of the window and into the night, waiting patiently.

It was 10:00. There was still half an hour before they could take the chance to escape into the chaos. To avoid having to explain too much, Link left Celine asleep for the moment.

Walking over to the dressing table, he flipped through the pages of the magic book that laid on it. The book was called The Branches of MagicAn Analysis. It was an advanced magic book. Link tried reading a few pages of it.

"Hmm?"

Amazingly, Link found that he could not only recognize what was written but easily understand it too!He even found some errors in the magical theorems.

His brain had become exceptionally good.

He couldn't believe it. Thinking that it was a fluke, he flipped through a couple more pages. It wasn't just a lucky break! The book, which should have been completely foreign to Link, especially being from Earth, seemed just as easy to comprehend as a kindergarten storybook!

"Oh yes, the God of Light did say that he would fortify my soul so that I could travel through time and space safely. Could this be an effect of that?"

It seemed to be the only possible explanation.

Link continued to read it, rapidly developing an interest in its contents. He flipped through the pages, reading each one quickly and understanding everything he came across. Not only that, but he also knew it by heart and developed his own interpretations of it.

The cogs and wheels in his brain turned like a well-oiled machine, seemingly made for magic.

By the time he had finished the book, Link had developed a rather comprehensive understanding of this new foreign world.

According to the book, the World of Firuman was a lone island surrounded by an endless sea of Mana. Mana emanated from the sea and drifted into the World of Firuman, nourishing all the creatures of the world.

Magicians knew this phenomenon as "soaking". The world was "soaked" in this sea of Mana.

Even though the drifting Mana had nothing on the Sea of Mana, it made the world a different place, full of different forms and colors. The creatures of the World of Firuman used the Mana to create a bright and colorful Magic Civilization.

This was the way Magiciassaw the world.

That's weird. I was an Archmage in the game, but I feel as if I'm learning what magic really is for the first time.

Link looked at the wand in his hand. He found that it wasn't difficult to understand the principles behind the wand. It was just a nifty little skill used to compress Mana. He could sense the wand's deficiencies easily.

If I could just study properly, in three months no, no, just one month, I could make a better wand than this one! Link thought confidently.

As a gamer, Link had known how to cast a spell, but not how the spell worked. The so-called Archmage had just been an honorary title by the other gamers. In this world, with the blessing of the God of Light, he had the resources to become a true Archmage.

"After I get out of Gladstone City, I must get some magic books. I'll study them when I'm not completing missions. I must get stronger!"

He could become very strong and master many spells very quickly even if he only relied on the Omni Points.

But there was a fatal problem in the spells provided by the gaming systemthey were Basic and run of the mill, just like those in the game.

The same spell would always be weaker when wielded by a player rather than by an Elite Boss, let alone an Ultimate Boss.

All the powerful Magicians had their own techniques. The same spells could be much more powerful than gamers' in their hands. These supreme magic skills were built on a deep understanding of magic. It wasn't something that the gaming system could give.

In his last fight with the Lord of the Deep Nozama, Nozama had been able to use his superior magic skills to cast the Level-19 Spell, Finger of Death, instantaneously. There had been almost no delay before he cast the spell.

At the time, up to 90% of the challenging team had been killed by Nozama's Finger of Death.

The gaming system and the Omni Points are just bonuses. I need to have my own way of the Magician! Having figured out which way he would go in the future, Link felt more at peace.

Taking out his pocket watch to look once more, he found that it was already 10:25. He didn't have much time left.

Link turned and strode over to the bed. Patting Celine's smooth face lightly, he said softly, "Celine, Celine. Wake up."

Undeniably, she was beautiful. Her figure, facial features, and style were all admirably fine. No wonder the original Link had been besotted with her.

For whatever reason, Link felt that her face was familiar, but he couldn't put a finger on where he had seen it before.

That's weird, Link thought, feeling disorientated.

Celine slept very soundly. She murmured, "Mother, let me sleep for a while longer"

Her tone was like a little girl. Link smiled in spite of himself.

But Celine came to her senses very quickly. Link felt her freeze. She turned her head swiftly, a pair of flawless sapphires fixing themselves on Link, not a wink of sleep left in them.

"Why are you in my room?" She looked surprised, but not afraid.

Link stepped back. His expression was serious. "Get up quickly. We can't stay at the academy anymore. We need to leave now!"

"What did you say!" Celine was taken aback, but she still put on the clothes that were by her bed.

"Don't wear those! Wear some simple short robes and some pants!" Link warned her.

He looked out through the window. His pupils constited. In the hazy moonlight, he could see many silhouettes swiftly moving through the shadows.

The Dark Elf Assassins!

They had begun!

Dark figures moved quickly and silently. Two of them charged towards the Apprentice's Dorm.

## 4. The Bloody Assassins

"Hurry, they're coming," Link urged, his voice soft.

"Don't rush me. I'm putting them on," Celine complained under her breath.

Link turned his head to glance at her. He was stunned.

The young girl had had no choice but to take off her nightdress in order to put on the short robe and trousers. The underclothes she wore were very thin. Part of her naked waist peeked out mischievously. Under the hazy moonlight and contrasted by the curvy hips below, her waist seemed especially slender, her skin so white it was blinding.

Link felt his blood boil. Hurriedly, he averted his gaze, "I saw Assassins coming over. Later, follow me. If anything happens, I'll protect you," he explained under his breath.

All the Dark Elves involved in this operation were Elites and extremely powerful. In the game, during his escape from Gladstone, they had all been in Elite mode, with insanely high blood and attack levels.

Normal Apprentices stood no chance against them.

"Assassins? That's terrible!" Celine quickened her pace. A scream from outside the window proved what Link had just explained.

As she had finished putting on her clothes, Link walked towards the door. Ten feet away from it, he pointed his wand at the lock and activated The Magician's Hand. The door swung open.

Some Magician's Apprentices milled about outside the door, but luckily no Assassins.

"It's safe, follow me!"

Link beckoned to Celine. Unless absolutely necessary, he didn't want to clash with any Assassins. He wasn't afraid of them, but it meant that he had to use his limited Mana.

Celine followed him unquestioningly. She found that the Link in front of her was completely different from usual. There was a gravitas about him.

"This human is strange." Celine looked at the back of his figure curiously. He didn't seem anxious despite there being creatures all around ready to kill them. Link was observing the situation in the hall, and not particularly paying attention to the girl's odd behavior.

His image of Celine, according to the original Link's memories, was that of a gentle, mild-mannered maiden. It seemed as if nothing could faze her. Because of that, Link didn't think that there was anything off about the way that she was behaving.

The hall was a mess. The Magician's Apprentices were all in a state of confusion. They had no idea what was going on.

"What happened, why is it so noisy?"

"Damn it, I was having some good dreams earlier!"

"Good heavens, what a mess!"

Seeing Link come out from Celine's room, the Apprentices all turned to look at him in astonishment. Some couldn't hold back their thoughts.

"A piece of trash and a commoner, actually fooling around in the middle of the night? Trash!" This was spat out in jealousy.

"Celine, why would you shame yourself doing this?" This came from a confused fellow Apprentice.

Celine's face, which had been calm and collected, flushed pink. Just as she opened her mouth to defend herself, a shrill scream came from the first floor of the Apprentice's Dorm.

It was a scream that could only come from someone dying in agony, piercing and echoing throughout the building and catching everyone's attention all at once.

"What happened?"

"Damn it, it sounded like Madame Fairfax."

Bam! A Magician's Apprentice raced out of his room, yelling, "Look outside, there are people attacking the academy!"

In just a short while, many of the academy's buildings had been set on fire. Every now and then, the sounds of magical explosions filled the air. In the Garden of Magic nearby, they could see the vague outlines of people fighting and flashes of magic.

It was chaos.

"Oh, God of Light, who can tell me what's going on?"

"Good heavens, it's the Dark Elves, the lackeys of Lolth, the Spider Queen. Look, here they come!"

At the top of the stairs leading to the second floor stood two figures fully clad in black leather. Though they were masked, their characteristic dark red eyes and ashen gray skin betrayed their race.

Link was startled at the sight of them. He knew that a battle was unavoidable. He pulled Celine into a room.

He had a reason for doing so. The hall was too large, meaning that there was too much space around the two of them. The elves would be difficult to handle. On the contrary, the door to the room that they were in was small and narrow. Even if the Assassins followed him in, he only had to face one opponent at a time. This would reduce his Mana consumption significantly.

Alarmed cries came from outside the door.

"He killed Madame Fairfax!" a Magician's Apprentice yelled and pointed at one of the Dark Elves. The Dark Elf held a bloody, dripping dagger.

The Assassin responded with his actions.

One of the Assassins fitted an arrow into the Dark Elf Bow in his hand. Pulling it swiftly, he released the string with a twang, causing the arrow to fly and land square in the throat of the Magician's Apprentice.

The Apprentice crumpled to the ground, blood spreading out on the floor around him. The scent of blood filled the air.

The other Apprentices were speechless.

"Ahhhhh!!!"

"Murderer!"

The young Magicians were stunned silly by the scene. Most of them were panic-stricken. Some ran back into their rooms, bolting their doors. Some could only crawl up into a ball and scream. Others were bolder and retaliated!

But what could the spells of a Magician's Apprentice do? Their attacks were a joke to the powerful Dark Elf Assassins.

Holding his wand, a student threw a Level-0 Fireball at one of the Assassins.

The pale orange fireball, barely larger than a marble, whizzed towards the Assassin with a hissing noise.

The Assassin didn't move an inch. He just faced the Fireball, a pitch-black dagger appearing in his hand. He swung it at the tiny flame.

Poof. The fireball was sliced into two halves. It burst up into a flurry of sparks and disappeared.

"Anti-magic weapons!" cried out the Magician.

Firuman Continents' Warriors had Battle Qi, but only from Level 3 onwards. Below that, Warriors used all types of anti-magic items against Magicians.

Anti-magic weapons, Elemental Magic Resistant Armor, and potions. All were ways that Warriors used to fight against Magicians.

Of course, if one was fast enough and sharp enough, one could duck and evade spells. But there was a considerable risk in doing so. If one met a powerful Magician, just one Fireball could burn the self-proclaimed nimble fellow to ashes.

Those were the last words of that young Magician. The Assassins didn't give him a chance to cast another spell. The Dark Elf on the right raised his bow and sealed the Apprentice's fate with another arrow to the throat.

Then, the Assassin began his massacre. His bow sang short, high-pitched tones as the Magician's Apprentices fell to the ground one by one. They were killed like chickens in a slaughterhouse.

The elves were too powerful. And they were experienced in battle. The unseasoned Magicians were defenseless. Within the blink of an eye, only a handful of them were left. One of them rushed into the room where Link hid.

He shut the door behind him with a loud bang. Then, he cowered on the ground, hugging his head and shivering uncontrollably. He had been stupefied.

In the room, Celine hid behind Link, her brows furrowed tightly. It was unnerving. The quiet, peaceful Magic Academy had transformed into a bloody scene right before her eyes. She found it hard to believe.

"The Dark Elves really are a bunch of beasts!" Celine had grown to love the peaceful environment of the human academy in her three months here. But the Dark Elves had destroyed all of it within just a matter of minutes.

Link was the calmest. He faced the door, held the New Moon Wand in his hand and waited patiently.

In that moment, Link, too, felt fear in his heart. This was the first time he was actually experiencing such a bloodbath. But his strong mind suppressed his fear, not allowing it to influence his thoughts and actions.

Some screams came from under the door, then the sound of doors being kicked down. More cries rang out. Then came an eerie silence. It was obvious that all the Magician's Apprentices on the second floor had been killed. Then came the sound of footsteps. They grew louder as the steps got closer and closer. The Assassins were walking towards the room in which the three of them hid.

"Don't kill me, don't kill me, I don't want to die! I don't want to die!" the young Magician blubbered uncontrollably as he curled up on the floor. He succumbed to loud wails, snot and teassmeared across his face.

Celine didn't even lift an eyebrow, but the space between her and Link grew tighter still.

The footsteps stopped right outside the door. There was a short pause of two seconds, each dragging on into eternity for the Apprentices in the room.

Suddenly, with a bang, cracks appeared on the wooden door.

The thin wooden door couldn't hold up against a Dark Elf Assassin's strength.

"Little cowards, why don't you let me send you down to hell?"

Link looked at him. The Assassin's information appeared in his head.

Dark Elf Assassin (Elite)

Level-2 Warrior

Battle Skill: Speed Burst

Gear: Standard Bow (Fine)

At this time, a Level-2 Elite Assassin was an extremely powerful being compared to the average person. To make matters worse, all of the Dark Elf Assassins tonight were at least this level. Gladstone was a small city without many strong inhabitants. It was no wonder that it had fallen!

Something else shifted in Link's field of vision. Another message appearedit was a mission!

Open details of mission.

Part One of Mission: Retaliate!

Mission Details: Kill the Assassins in the Apprentice's Dorm.

Reward: 15 Omni Points

Link was excited! He needed power, and he needed it fast. This mission had come at just the right time!

## 5. The Magicians First Battle

Of the three Magician's Apprentices, Link was the calmest. Holding an elaborate magic wand, he was also the most eye-catching.

The Dark Elf stood at the door. He raised his bow and nocked an arrow. With a twang of his bow, an arrow shot towards Link's head.

If he had had enough Mana, Link would have used the Level-1 Spell, Lesser Field of Protection from Arrows, to block the attack. But each Level-1 Spell cost 10 Omni Pointsmore than he could possibly afford.

So instead, Link used the Level-1 Spell, Fireball.

A white, marble-sized fireball appeared in the air before him. With a tap of his wand. It shot towards the Dark Elf Assassin's arrow.

"Huh, your spellcasting isn't bad. But it's naive to think that it can stop my anti-magic arrow," the Dark Elf Assassin chuckled to himself.

In the next moment, the fireball and the arrow flew past each other, separated by only a few centimeters.

Link and the elf watched silently as the tip of the arrow flew past the fireballfollowed by the shaft. As the flame glided past the arrow's feathers, the Level-1 Fireball exploded!

A boom rattled the air. It wasn't too loud, but the air beside the anti-magic arrow expanded rapidly, sending air currents in all directions and more importantly, against the arrow itself.

Yes. To deal with the Magic Academy, all the Dark Elves had been equipped with anti-magic weapons. If Link had aimed the Fireball directly at the arrow, the fireball would have been pierced and scattered into mere sparks.

Instead, he had used the force of the Fireball's explosion to change the trajectory of the anti-magic arrow! It was incredibly effective!

The arrow strayed from its original path. By the time it reached Link, it had deviated more than seven inches from where it should have been. It flew past his cheek, ruffling some locks of hishi

"Hmm?" The Dark Elf Assassin seemed surprised that he had missed.

He prepared another arrow.

But he never got a chance to release it. Link had never been the type to get hit and not give payback. His style had always been to give an eye for an eye!

Psh

Earth Spike

Level-0 Earth Element Spell

Effect: To bring up a solid stone spike up to 2 feet tall from the grounddon't step on it.

Like the Fireball before it, the earth spike appeared so abruptly that the Dark Elf Archer didn't have time to react. To make matters worse, the elf had worn light, thin-soled shoes for stealth. He was almost completely unprotected.

With a dull thud, the earth spike pierced through the Dark Elf's ankle, rising up to extend through the side of his calf.

One can only imagine the amount of agony such an injury would cause!

"Ahhh!"

Even the Dark Elf Assassin, who had gone through extensive and formidable training regimes, couldn't bear it. He screamed out in pain, the arrow he had just nocked falling to the ground. He fell backwards, landing on his behind, and shaking uncontrollably.

Psh

This spike had been placed ingeniously, as if Link had known exactly how the Dark Elf Assassin would react. As the elf fell backwards, the second earth spike rose up from the ground, pointing directly towards the Assassin's back.

With another dull thud, the Dark Elf landed on the ground. He jerked. His eyes wide and his muscles taut, he remained motionless for two seconds. Then, his head drooped.

He was dead.

Even a legendary hero wouldn't survive being impaled by a two-foot-tall earth spike like that.

Both spikes had been activated swiftly and silently, leaving their target defenseless.

A Dark Elf Assassin had been killed within a one-second encounter! Only when the elf fell to the ground did his companion in the hall realize what had happened.

There was no way he could have imagined it. There were only Magician's Apprentices in that room. He thought that they would've been an easy kill, just like those in the other rooms.

"You little shit!"

Holding an anti-magic dagger, he sprinted towards Link. He ran quickly, gaining at least 50 feet of ground each second. He looked just like a black whirlwind.

He had used the Battle Skill: Speed Burst.

Fast opponents with anti-magic weapons were the worst nightmares of low-level Magicians. In close range, they usually spelled disaster.

"Careful!" a voice rang out from behind him. It was Celine.

Link's face was as hard as nails. His eyes cool and indifferent to the Assassin in front of him, he summoned the Spell Menu.

"Purchase Level-1 Spell: Vector Resistance Field."

Spell purchase successful. 10 Omni Points used.

Vector Resistance Field

Level-1 Spell

Mana Cost: 6

Effect: Repel objects towards the direction chosen by the bearer.

If Level-0 Spells were equivalent to large firecrackers, then Level-1 Spells were powerful enough to make the average human cower in fear.

The Assassin got within three feet of Link. He struck out at Link with the dagger and lifted a foot to kick him. Link tapped the New Moon Wand in the thin air before him. There! he exclaimed to himself.

Level-1 Spell, cast successfully within 0.3 seconds!

Ripples of wind spread out from the tip of Link's wand, warping the air before him. The ripples radiated out and away from Link towards the direction he faced.

The Assassin, who had been charging forward like an arrow, stopped as if he had slammed into a wall. For a split second, his body stopped in mid-airas if time had frozen. The force of the Vector Resistance Field built up to its peak. With a boom, the Assassin's body ricocheted back in the opposite direction!

With the strength of an Elite Level-2 Warrior-Assassin, he could have resisted the repelling forces of the Level-1 Spell. But Link had cast it at the perfect time.

The Assassin had just lifted a leg when the Vector Resistance Field had been cast. In such an unstable posture, the elf had been unable to produce enough power to resist the spell.

Link had achieved complete victory by pitting a Level-1 Spell, at the peak of its strength, against the Assassin in his weakest moments!

Having gotten the upper hand, Link pursued. There was no way he'd let his opponent get a chance to rest and recover.

Link pointed his wand towards the Dark Elf. Even as his opponent's body flew through the air, a Level-0 Fireball came shooting at him.

The fireball, its Mana having been compressed by the wand, was much hotter than it normally was and glowed a fiery white.

The Assassin was remarkable. Even as he flew back, out of instinct, he managed to lift his dagger to stab at the incoming fireball.

If the Fireball had been cast by the average Magician's Apprentice, it would have been easily dispersed by the anti-magic dagger.

However, the one who had cast the Fireball had spellcasting abilities far beyond the elf's own imagination.

The marble-sized, white ball of flame danced around like a sprite. It didn't fly in a straight path, but instead spiraled around in circles. Incredibly, it sped up and slowed down randomly, making it impossible to predict where it would be in the next moment!

Just as the Assassin's dagger seemed to touch it, the little fireball evaded the blade nimbly and glided through the air in a smooth arc, landing right between the Assassin's eyes.

As a Level-0 Spell, Fireball wasn't powerful. Even with the magic wand, the most damage it could do was to blast the average human's hands to a bloody mess. Used on a Dark Elf Assassin, it would barely be able to crack open the calluses on his hands.

But a fireball exploding next to fragile areas like the eyes was a different story altogether.

The Assassin was faced with this tragic scenario even as he hurtled through the air.

He was masked, but the mask only covered the lower part of his face, leaving his eyes exposed. Link's Fireball was fast. The Assassin had only enough time to close his eyes. But how could delicate things like eyelids shield anything from a fireball's explosion?

Bang! The fireball exploded, destroying the Assassin's eyes and leaving them bloody. He screamed in pain. Everything was pitch black he couldn't see! He was terrified.

But his screams only lasted for a split second. He fell to the ground. Even before he fell, an earth spike stood ready and waiting where he would land.

Tragically, the now blind Assassin didn't even notice it.

Pssh. The earth spike impaled the Assassin's chest from the back, ending his life right then and there.

With this, both Assassins had been dealt with.

Magicians and Assassins were arch-enemies. Their powers and strengths were polar opposites. A low-level Magician could slay a high-level Assassin, but it was just as possible for a beginner Assassin to kill a high-level Magician with a well-planned stab.

When they dueled, winning and losing wasn't determined by their levels, but rather, their battle skills and experience.

Link had executed everything almost perfectly in this battle.

In the fight, Link had used a total of five Level-0 Spells. The Level-1 Spell he purchased had cost him 16 Mana Points. Link hadn't moved an inch throughout the entire battle. Not because he couldn't, but simply because he didn't need to.

Notifications flashed through Link's head.

Mission complete. Player Link receives 15 Omni points.

A warm current flowed through Link's body. Link checked his Omni Points again. It had been 14 Points. Purchasing a Level-1 Spell had cost him 10 Points. With the 15 Points he had just received, he now had 19 Points in total.

The Magician's Apprentice by the door had seen everything. He had been watching with dread and anticipation. When the Assassin died, he stammered, "Link, youyouyou"

Was this still that nobody he had known? His spellcasting was downright incredible!

The cowering Magician had no words for the wonder he felt. He was amazed, not only by the spells Link had used, but also the the presence he carried when Link used magicas if everything was completely under his control.

"That was simply God-like!" He finally found the right words.

Link's expression betrayed not a hint of pride. Such battles were child's play to him. He left the room. "Come on, Celine!"

"Oh. Okay." Celine threw Link a look of admiration. Following him, she asked, "Where are we going?"

To be honest, the Dark Elves' ambush had taken her aback, but she didn't really think much of it. She followed Link simply because she was curious. The human Magician had changed too much. Something wasn't right.

"To the academy's Portal Tower." Link had planned an escape route from very early on.

The city was surrounded by the Dark Elf Army, and within it, hordes of Dark Elf Assassins. He now had 19 Omni Points, but less than 3 Mana Points. With an extra person with him, fighting his way out wasn't realistic. The only way out was to use the portal in the Portal Tower.

After thinking it over, Link spent 1 Omni Point on 10 Maximum Mana Points. Link's Maximum Mana was now 31 Points.

Because of the spells he had used earlier, his Mana wasn't full, but only at 13 Points. He would have to wait for the rest to recover.

His Mana recovery speed had never seemed more important. His recovery speed was only 0.2 Points per hour. In such fast-paced, precarious circumstances, it was as good as nothing.

I still have 18 Omni Points. They should be enough for anything that might happen. Link felt slightly more at peace.

## 6. The MissionOr Survival

There were two types of Magicians.

The first were Scholar-Magicians. Such individuals had deep understandings of how magic worked. Normally, their spellcasting was excellent, but they were not fighters. Under pressure, they made all types of mistakes.

Unfortunately, the magic tutors of The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings had all been Scholar-Magicians.

Link saw Grant's corpse in one of the rooms. It lay on the floor, a deep, bloody hole in the middle of its chest. Grant had obviously been awake when he was murdered.

The floor had been littered with bodies, the air filled with the scent of their blood. Link mentally suppressed the urge to puke. What surprised him was that even though Celine's face was still pale, it had regained most of its normal composure.

It seemed that the maiden's soul and spirit were much stronger than her delicate appearance suggested.

Seeing a magic wand on the ground, Link picked it up. He passed it to Celine. "Take it."

Celine nodded. Taking the wand, she took a deep breath and tried to cast a Fireball. She took just over a second to do it.

"Not bad," Link praised her. It was an excellent attempt for the average Magician's Apprentice.

"Far behind you." Celine smiled faintly, looking much more at ease than before.

The two of them walked down the stairs. In the hall of the first floor, they saw Madame Fairfax's corpse. She lay there with her eyes wide open, an arrow lodged in her chest.

Sighing to himself, Link walked past the old lady's corpse and headed out of the Apprentice's Dorm.

Just as he was about to reach the exit, some eye-catching, glowing text appeared in his mind.

Part Two of Mission: Stop The Signal

Mission Details: Destroy the Portal Tower of the Magic Academy. Stop the Dark Elves from using the Portal Tower to contact the Dark Elf Army outside the city.

Mission Reward: 20 Omni Points

Seeing it, Link laughed bitterly inside. A reward of 20 Omni Points. It was very high, but he wanted to escape via the Portal Tower. If he destroyed it, how would he escape?

Never mind, he thought. I'll deal with it when the time comes. Let's get to the Portal Tower first. As for the mission, I'll just accept it for now. I'll forfeit if the circumstances don't allow it.

Omni Points were important, but his life was much more so. He had to act wisely.

After considering it thoroughly, Link chose to accept the mission for now.

Then, he trudged on with Celine.

The sounds of skirmishes from outside the academy had died down. The magic tutors were not good at battle techniques. Already at a disadvantage, their small numbers and being taken by surprise made them no match for the well-trained Dark Elf Assassins.

At the exit of the Apprentice's Dorm, Link tapped Celine and himself with his magic wand. He cast the Spell of Lesser Invincibility twice.

Lesser Invincibility

Level-0 spell

Effect: Gathers a shroud of darkness around the bearer. Is very effective at concealment in the dark. User must beware of bright lights.

This was the most basic spell of invincibility, as it was unable to conceal the sound of footsteps and scents. Bright lights and hunting dogs easily rendered it ineffective. But deep in the night, it would be enough.

"Follow me closely."

Link stepped into the darkness first, heading towards the direction of the Portal Tower. Celine followed closely behind him.

Not far from the Apprentice's Dorm was the Magic Academy's Starry Gardens. Flowers from all seasons were in full bloom under the nourishment of Mana. Peonies, roses, lilies, and tulipsthe garden had every flower one could think of. It was beautiful. But the beauty of the scenery was destroyed by a corpse sprawled in the shrubs.

"It's Mr. Glasse," Celine said softly.

Mr. Glasse, a Level-3 Illusionist, skilled at transmutation magic and virtually harmless in battle. An arrow was buried deep in his back.

Evidently, his illusions hadn't managed to fool the Dark Elves.

Link had prepared himself for this. If no unexpected changes had occurred, he knew that they would see many of his magic tutors' bodies lying ahead of them.

And this was just the prelude to the massacre of Gladstone City.

As he thought, soon after, they came across the body of the young and beautiful lady teacher Vera. She wore only a thin gauze nightdress, most likely having escaped from her room hastily after hearing the commotion. But the Dark Elves had caught up to her.

The Dark Elves didn't appreciate her beauty. Her smooth, flat belly had a stab wound in it. Her body lay tited on the ground. She was still alive and breathing, blood gushing out of the wound in her abdomen. Her nightdress soaked up the blood. It looked no different from a bewitching, bloody-red rose at first sight.

As if hearing them, her beautiful eyes sought the source of the noise, glowing strangely with a strong will to live.

She was still young, less than 30 years old. With her strong magical talents, she was already a Level-2 Conjurer. Her future held much promise, and her beauty was well-known throughout the academy.

She didn't want to die; her life had only just begun!

But her injury was fatal. No one could save her. Link was helpless.

Seeing corpses was one thing, but seeing someone on the brink of death was completely differentespecially since that someone was a beloved teacher, struggling to live. It was too much.

Link's pupils constited. The hand holding Celine's tightened.

In that moment, it suddenly struck him that he could never return to Earth. In the future, he would be just one amongst the countless creatures of the World of Firuman, struggling to survive in the Darkness.

I'm not a game player just watching from the sidelines anymore. I'm one of them. He'd really been disadvantaged by the God of Light!

Celine sensed Link's feelings. She was much calmer than he was. Patting his hand lightly, she sighed, "She was hurt too badly. We can't save her."

Link nodded, his heart heavy. Walking up to the lady teacher, he lifted his wand and used 2 Mana Points for the Spell of Slumber on her.

He couldn't save her. The least he could do was to let her leave in peace.

Under the Spell of Slumber, Vera slowly closed her eyes. Her body stopped writhing.

In another few steps, they saw the elderly Mr. Wilson. His head had been chopped right off. It lay ten feet away from his body.

All of them had been good people. Seeing them, Link felt the cruel reality of the war between Light and Dark. War was like a scythe, reaping lives like a harvest, it took a large patch of them with just one swing.

"What a dark, terrible world." Link felt sorrow in his heart and sighed deeply.

After the garden was a small forest. There were few trees in it, but they were huge. Each was more than 200 years old. A small path pierced through the wooded area, with lit street lamps every now and then that made it look like those of the High Elves.

This had been the favorite meet-up place for the couples of the Magic Academy.

But as Link walked through the woods, he counted six corpses sprawled out on the path, all lovers who had been meeting up late at night.

Tonight, these woods had become the final resting place for these couples.

"These Dark Elves are such a disgusting pack of Hell-Spawns!" Celine's face was full of disgust.

Link stopped walking abruptly. He took a step back and wrapped Celine in his arm, a large hand clasped over her mouth as he pulled her behind one of the ancient trees.

"Shhh."

Celine's beautiful eyes fluttered. She didn't say a word.

After a while, they saw a squad of Dark Elves run past them towards the direction of the Apprentice's Dorm.

There were at least 30 Magician's Apprentices in the dorm. These Dark Elves were going to annihilate them.

In a small voice, Celine asked, "Link, are we going to save them?"

Link shook his head almost imperceptibly. He couldn't. Celine understood. Her bright eyes danced. "Then why did you save me?" she asked.

Link paused before answering, "We're friends, are we not?"

Unexpectedly, his answer made the maiden's eyes light up. "You're a good friend. Can I ask you a question?"

"Go on."

"How did you learn so many spells in such a short time? And use them so well at that?" Her eyes burned with curiosity.

"Iperhaps you could say it's a revelation from God. When I woke up, something else was in my head," Link replied, mincing his words.

"Oh, that's how it is." Celine's gaze wandered. She didn't poke any further. Pointing at the Portal Tower, she said crisply, "Then let's go."

The squad of Dark Elves had passed. Link nodded and went on with Celine.

Passing through the woods, they scurried through the shadows in the Passage of Truth for about 30 yards before they took a left. They had arrived at the Portal Tower.

The Portal Tower had been very expensive to build. It was small, and could only send physical objects to no more than 6 miles away. Even so, such a tower had cost more than ten thousand gold pieces to build. That was half of what Gladstone City collected in taxes each year.

The building might've been costly, but it was very useful. It wasn'titended for treasures, but rather, information. It could send materials to much further locations, even places more than 300 miles away. It was extremely useful in that sense.

It was because of this that the Dark Elves also placed a lot of importance on the Portal Tower. Link saw three strong Dark Elf Warriors standing before the tower. He would have to face them.

They were guarding the Portal Tower from harm. If Link's memory served him right, a Dark Elf Magician would arrive soon. The Elf Magician would then use the Portal Tower to transmit a detailed report back to the Dark Elf Army stationed 30 miles away.

One of the three Warriors held a shield full of runes. The Warrior had wrapped himself in anti-magic armor from head to toe, not even exposing his face.

Link's pupils constited. He knew this Warrior. In his last life on Earth, he had met the Warrior during his Escape Mission.

The Warrior was called Jiggs. He was the commander of the ambush on the Magic Academy. A Level-3 Warrior with Battle Aura, he knew many powerful Battle Skills. Covered entirely by anti-magic armor, he could completely disregard any direct spell attacks below Level-3.

In the game, he had been known as The Magician Slayer. All beginner Magicians finding their way out of Gladstone City avoided him like the plague.

The two Warriors flanking him were his subordinates, they both were Level-2. Although their gear wasn't as good as Jiggs' was, their anti-magic properties weren't weak either.

Now, Link had 18 Omni Points and 7 Mana Points. Engaging three powerful Dark Elf Warriors with that alone seemed impossible.

But he had no choice.

Taking a deep breath, Link purchased two new Level-0 Spells.

After that, he spent another 3 Omni Points on 30 Maximum Mana Points. He now had a Maximum Mana of 61 with 37 Mana Points. As for Mana Speed Recovery, he was short of time and had no use for it now.

He was left with 13 Omni Points after making his preparations.

Throwing a look at Celine to indicate that she should continue hiding in the bushes, Link walked out from the shadows on his own, letting the silver moonlight expose his form.

Link, who had been concentrating on observing his opponents, hadn't notice Celine open her mouth as if about to speak, then stop herself. The beautiful maiden decided to stay back in the shadows.

Never mind, that silly boy, she thought. I'll help him out as the situation progresses.

In that moment, Link saw only his opponents.

He waved his wand in greeting. "Hey, you pariah elves, what are you doing?"

He hadn't spoken loudly, but the three Dark Elves heard him quite clearly. They turned their heassimultaneously, fixing their bright red eyes on him.

## 7. Whos the Toy Here?

The young Magician who had popped out of nowhere rather confused Jiggs.

Truth be told, the operation on the Magic Academy had been far too easy. The Magicians here had been raised in ivory towers. Their spellcasting had been artless, like children learning to walk.

Honestly, Jiggs felt a little disappointed.

The Magician who guarded the Portal Tower had a sea of knowledge and Mana flowing within him. He'd been able to cast Level-4 Spells, but Jiggs had finished him off within just two seconds.

One charge, a shield strike, and a quick swipe of his blade. That was all it took. It had been so easy; it was almost distasteful.

A Magician who had no idea how to fight with magicit was inexplicable. A Magician like that wouldn't have even lasted a day in the Black Forest.

The young man who stood before him didn't look a day over 20. He was probably one of the academy's Apprentices. But compared to the teachers Jiggs had already faced, what could possibly be special about their students?

Because of that, Jiggs didn't act immediately. He just snorted and laughed coldly, "Young man, do you think that you're invincible just because you've learned a few days of magic? Look at him. He's probably been dabbling in magic longer than you've even lived."

Jiggs kicked the corpse by his feet. Link recognized it. It was Master Phil, one of the academy's only Level-4 Magicians. He had been 50 years old this year, with 30 years of experience in magic. Indeed, he had learned magic much, much longer than Link had been alive.

"The strength of a person's magic doesn't just depend on how long they've studied it. Talent is more important! You pariahs, I'll show you what real magic looks like!"

Link's voice was calm and cold. As he spoke, he lightly and discreetly tapped his foot on the ground. No one noticed his little trick.

"Hahaha. Then let me see your so-called talent. Sherman, go and cut his head off for me!" Jiggs ordered, pointing to one of his subordinates.

"As you wish!"

The Dark Elf Warrior Sherman carried his shield and walked towards Link. Twenty paces away, he suddenly set his shield in front of him and charged at the young Magician.

Lesser Charge

Battle Skill

Effect: A warrior can use a special breathing technique to gain explosive strength throughout his body. For a short period, they will gain unimaginable speed. It is highly recommended for use against Magicians.

The Dark Elf Warrior was incredibly fast. His body raced through the air with a loud fwoosh.

What was worse, he held an anti-magic shield, and so magic couldn't hurt him directly. When he reached Link, he would be able to cut down the Magician's head with just one swing of his sword.

Yes, just one swing!

From the shadows, Celine had her wand extended at the ready, a darkness emanating from its tip. The young man was in danger. She couldn't just stand by any longer.

In the next moment, however, she withdrew her wand.

The reason was very simpleSherman hadn't managed to reach Link.

Halfway there, Sherman had reached his maximum speed. But each subsequent step he took was a struggle, leaving a deep footprint on the ground. The ground pushed against him, stopping him from moving forward.

Just five paces away from his target, he found that the hard, solid ground had become very soft. He couldn't push off of it.

Not only was he unable to continue forward, but because his foot had struck the ground with such strength, his entire leg sunk into the ground.

He had been charging forward at lightning speed, a minimum of 60 feet per second. With one leg in the ground and the other still on solid ground, at such a high velocity, they heard a resounding crackit was the sound of Sherman's pelvic bone shattering.

The worst had yet to come. The soft spot between his legs fell astride the solid ground!

He had been charging forward with all his might, and the momentum had carried on into his fall. There was a squelch. Something else had broken.

A shattered pelvis and a fatal blow to the grointhe pain was intolerable!

"Ahhhhhhhhhhh!!!!! Ahhhhhhhh!!! Ahhhhhhhhhh!!!" Sherman screamed with all the breath his lungs would allow. Anyone could hear the agony in his voice.

After letting out a couple more screams, the Warrior's head dropped to the side. He had passed out due to the sheer amount of pain.

The warrior Sherman had been ruined with just one little spell.

Mud Marsh

Level-0 Spell

Effect: Transform solid ground into soft mud.

(Note: Do not step on it! Especially not when it's hard! Stepping on it while running at high speeds is absolutely forbidden! Or else bear the consequences.)

"Hmmm?" Jiggs finally started to take his opponent seriously. Looking at Sherman's tragic state, his eyes narrowed in on Link.

"Apprentice, you've made me very angry!"

The Magician before him was a very low level. He hadn't crushed Sherman because of his strength, but because they had been careless.

But now, Jiggs was serious.

Pulling out the sword that hung by his waist, Jiggs gave orders to the Warrior next to him. "Terry, guard the Portal Tower. I will deal with this little thing myself."

"Yes, Commander." Terry retreated to the side. He knew that Jiggs would never gang up with him on a young Magician like that. Such was the pride of a powerful soldier.

Jiggs walked forward slowly, swinging his sword in the air languidly.

The black, heavy shield he carried glowed a soft white, made more obvious by the dark of the night. That was the Battle Aura that only Level-3 Warriors could have.

Then, he strolled towards Link as if he were leisurely walking through a park.

"Fireball!" Link growled.

A marble-sized white ball of flame appeared. It shot towards Jiggs.

Jiggs lifted his shield. With a small bang, the fireball collided with it, scattering into a cloud of futile sparks, not even causing the white glow of the shield to flicker.

Level-0 magic was too weak. A Level-3 Warrior could easily defend himself from such attacks.

As if confirming Link's thoughts, Jiggs said, "If that is all your magic can do, then you needn't put up a struggle. Just stretch your neck out and let me cut you down."

Fully clad in anti-magic armor, Jiggs seemed undefeatable, like a battle tank.

In the dark, Celine stretched her wand out again. This Jiggs was an experienced warrior, and he had Battle Aura. She found it impossible to believe that Link could defeat someone like that.

She had to help.

In the next moment, Link attacked again.

The New Moon Wand in his hand flitted up and tapped the air before him. In that instant, he looked just like a music conductor with a baton.

With each tap of his wand, a white ball of flame appeared. In that one second, Link tapped the wand nine times!

Within that one second, Link had taken 0.1 seconds to produce each Fireball, displaying his quick spellcasting abilities.

Something even more incredible happened.

The nine fireballs flew out simultaneously. Each followed a different trajectory, spinning in random patterns, but with a common goal the Warrior Jiggs.

The fireballs landed in different areas. Some landed on Jiggs' chest, others whipped behind him and landed on the seam between his helmet and the armor on his neck. Others even crashed into the eye openings of his helmet.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! The fireballs exploded in rapid succession. Some flames managed to seep into the seams, succeeding in dealing some damage to Jiggs.

"Damn it, your little tricks have brought my patience to an end!" Jiggs raised his voice. The fireballs were a real nuisance, and they were actually dealing some damage.

With Sherman's tragedy before him, Jiggs did not dare charge forward so easily. He instead jogged towards Link.

Link's magic wand flitted around in the air again.

Fwoosh. Another nine fireballs appeared, shooting out in random patterns again, landing with frightening accuracy onto the seams of Jiggs' armor.

Jiggs had learned his lesson. He didn't slow down his pace even as he shielded his face from the tiny flames.

The Fireball's power was limited though. Even if Jiggs' other parts were hit directly, protected by Battle Aura, the worst he could get was a light burn. The burns would probably heal within an hour or two. What was important was that his eyes didn't get hurt.

Bang, bang, bang! The fireballs exploded again. Even though they didn't do Jiggs any harm, the force of their blasts still made Jiggs feel somewhat cornered.

"This damned Magician's Apprentice. I will crush his head between my hands!" Jiggs' blood boiled as his pace quickened.

Even a saint would get angry at such attacks.

The Mana in Link's body had almost been depleted by his use of the Fireballs. But he still had 13 Omni Points left. He used one of them to replenish 10 Mana Points. Then, while Jiggs was still trying to protect himself from the fireballs, Link used a different spell.

"Grease!"

Grease

Level-0 Spell

Effect: The ground will become very, very slippery. Just like it's been covered in oil.

Within a split second, the ground beneath Jiggs became as slippery as ice.

Jiggs had been running at a jog, covering his face with his shield and fuming because of the constant barrage of fireballs. His anger and impatience led to his downfall.

It was important to never lose one's cool in battle because it could lead to poor decisions.

Jiggs had noticed the change in the ground. But he had been more afraid of the mud from the Mud Marsh spell, so he made his footsteps lighter.

He slipped as a result, his expectations opposite of the outcome. Jiggs was alarmed and tense, he was unable to keep his balance any longer. The heavy armor he wore made him all the more clumsy. All he saw was the sky as he fell backward.

Here, we need to elaborate a little on armor.

No armor covered its joints with metal. In fact, such parts needed to be made with soft, supple leather to facilitate body movements, especially around the crotch area.

Like a turtle onto its back, Jiggs fell over, exposing his groin -- a weakness that was never seen when he stood upright.

But now, it was fatal.

"Purchase spell: Vector Throw!" Link muttered.

Vector Throw

Level-1 Spell

Effect: Throw an object at high speed. The lighter the object, the faster it will be.

Link was very familiar with this spell. If he threw a stone weighing 2 pounds, the spell could bring its velocity up to 160 feet per second.

A 2-pound stone, at 160 feet per second. If it were to smash onto a delicate area like the grointhe outcome of such a thing, one couldn't even bear to think about.

Purchasing the spell as fast as he could, he pointed his wand towards the ground.

"Go!" he shouted.

Controlled by magic, a rock about the size of a fist flew out in a smooth arc, landing smack dab in the middle of the only unprotected area of Jiggs' armor-covered body.

Bam! A muffled thud rang out. Despite the sound not being loud, it was still worth the concern because of where the rock had landed.

How painful that must be!

"Guhhh." Jiggs let out a snort that sounded just like a strangled animal.

Only then did he slam onto the ground. He let go of his shield and clutched at his crotch, writhing on the ground.

He didn't know how badly his genitals had been injured, but the pain was excruciating. Worse, he couldn't even feel down there anymore, as if it had been smashed to a pulp.

Pain, fear, panic, all kinds of emotions clamored within him. He had long since forgotten about defending himself, not even maintaining the Battle Aura that protected him against magic.

"Earth Spike!"

Link dealt the finishing blow.

From the spot on the ground that corresponded to the joint between Jiggs' helmet and neck armor, rose a spike of stone, two feet tall. It pierced the joint in Jiggs's armor, impaling his defenseless neck.

Jiggs was dead!

The Warrior Terry could not believe his eyes.

The commander had been killed, by someone from afar, who hadn't even moved throughout the entire fight, using only low-level magic tricks.

How was this possible?

In the shadows, Celine's mouth gaped.

Using Level-1 Spells to kill a Level-3 Warrior who was literally wrapped in armor from head to toe was unheard of!

Tssk-tssk. Perfect timing, impressive spellcasting skills, and a formidable grasp of the human psyche and behavior, Celine thought. This warrior was toyed with to his death! Celine had sharp eyes. She had seen everything, including the play of emotions between them.

It was because she had seen everything that she was shaken up.

## 8. His Choice

Two of the three powerful Dark Elf Warriors were brought down in the blink of an eye.

Link had no idea what anyone else thought. He was just relieved that he had managed to kill Jiggs.

Part of it had been his own strength, but it was also thanks to Jiggs' arrogance and the fact that he underestimated Link. Subconsciously, the Warrior had thought that he could crush the young Magician like a bug, never once seeing Link as an equal.

In other words, he was too reckless.

Now, Link was left with 2 Omni Points and 5 Mana Points. Without hesitating, he changed all the Omni Points he had into Mana Maximum Points. His Maximum Mana became 81 Points, with 25 Mana Points.

The Mana he had was more than enough for him to handle the Dark Elf Warrior named Terry.

Link turned to look at Terry. He pointed his wand at the elf, the tip glimmering with magic.

Link was waiting for him to attack.

The elf was just a Level-2 Warrior. As long as he attacked first, his weaknesses would be apparent. Link would use that to give him a fatal blow, just like he had done for Sherman and the Commander, Jiggs.

Terry gulped and took a few steps back. Out of the blue, he bolted, running for his life at full speed, disappearing into the dark within the blink of an eye.

Okay. It seems like his courage had fled with him.

This guy must have gone to call for help. I need to hurry! Link thought. Link understood what Terry was thinking. After all, there were many Dark Elves in the Magic Academy.

He waved a hand at the shadows where Celine hid. "Let's go. We need to leave this place as soon as we can."

The Portal Tower was just in front of them. With no more enemies in their way, it was time to leave.

Celine walked out of the darkness, her sky-blue eyes shining with a strange light. Smiling, she said, "Link, you use magic so well. Better than almost anyone I know."

Her face held no fear, only admiration.

Her response was a little strange though. The way she squinted as she smiled, it made the feeling that Link had seen her before even stronger.

This Celine isn't just your average person. I must have seen her before, somewhere.

"Hey, what are you spacing out for? It's dangerous to dilly-dally here." Celine patted Link on his shoulder, bringing him back to his senses.

"Oh. Yes."

Time was of the essence. Link didn't ponder it any further and instead just followed Celine into the Portal Tower.

But as he watched her figure from the back, her round ass, her long legs, the poofy ponytail bouncing behind her, the graceful way her body swayed as she walked Something cracked inside Link. He spaced out again.

He finally remembered.

Celine did look like someone he had known. More specifically, a demon he had known. A demoness NPC who had broken Link's heart in his last life!

The demoness' name had been Celine Flandre, also known as The Demon Princess. She was known for being one of the top four beauties in the game Legends.

Her mother was a human, but her father was the famous Demi-God, the Lord of the Deep, Nozama. The very same Demi-God that had fought Link to his death. According to the latest update in the game, in order to kill the final boss, one needed to complete an extremely difficult mission. And the one who had posted the mission had been none other than Celine Flandre.

As a half-demon, Celine Flandre was tremendously talented. At a young age, she was already a Legendary Great. The Lord of the Deep, Nozama, hating the fact that such a daughter was lost to him within the Mortal Realm, had sent his demon lackeys after her. To achieve that, Nozama had even killed Celine's human mother.

From then on, Celine and her demon father had become sworn enemies. Escaping from her father's clutches ever since childhood, she only began to fight back when forced into a corner by Nozama himself, who had entered the World of Firuman.

"I couldn't choose the circumstances of my birth, but I can choose my own path!"

"My father? Huh! He's just a turd of The Deeps!"

"I swear that I'll kill him!"

"Oh, Link. You really are an amusing Magician. Honestly, I think I may have fallen in love with you. Heehee. You didn't believe me, did you?"

"Silly. I love to watch you mortals and your silly, dumbfounded expressions."

Celine Flandre's every word from his last life echoed in Link's head. Her every laugh was carved into his heart.

Even though she was only an NPC, the game company had created her character especially well. Her pain, her determination, her love of pranks, her breathtaking features, and that sweet but mischievous charm of hers. Everything about her fascinated Link.

For a long time, Link had harbored the illusion that she, although just an NPC, had been real.

Link snapped back to his senses very quickly.

He knew that this Celine was most likely a different one from that famous Demon Princess. The woman from his memory had eyes black like the night sky, a head full of thick black hair, cute little fangs, the tips of which were just vaguely visible against her red lips, and two little nubs of horns on her forehead. But this Celine had golden hair and green eyes. They were completely different people.

I must be mad, Link thought, spacing out because of her at a time like this. She's just an NPC from the game. She may exist in this world as well, but her and the Celine in front of me are definitely not the same people.

Shoving his thoughts of her into the deepest crevices of his mind, Link continued to follow Celine into the Portal Tower.

There was a large hall in the tower. The floor of the hall had been inscribed with tons of runes. There were four obelisks around the hall, white light flowed around their tips.

The Portal Tower was a small one. There was only one portal rune and it could only transport one person at a time.

Looking at the portal rune, Link remembered the mission he had been given by the gaming system.

Stop the signal. Stop the Dark Elves from using the tower to contact the rest of Dark Elf Army outside the city. The objective of this mission was very cleardelay the arrival of the Dark Elf Army.

Perhaps it could only delay them for an hour or two, but that time was especially precious because this had been an ambush. Each second that the Dark Elves lost could mean an unexpected turn of events for Gladstone City.

Initially, Link had intended to forfeit the mission. But on his way here, he had seen countless tragedies. Now, he hesitated.

Maybe, just maybe, I should destroy this tower after all. If I do so, I may be able to save a lot of people, he thought.

Celine's voice rang out. "Hey, is something wrong? Why do you keep spacing out? Hurry, I'm ready to go. Follow after me."

She was already standing on the portal rune.

Link raised his head to look at her. The beautiful face before him seemed to blend with the face of the Demon Princess, striking Link's heart.

Yes, the Portal Tower must be destroyed. Only then will the Dark Elves be unable to go after Celine via the Portal Tower. And I, will gain 20 Omni Points. I will definitely be able to find another way to escape Gladstone City!

Link finally made up his mind. He would complete the mission and destroy the Portal Tower.

Of course, he wouldn't tell Celine anything. He had the feeling that once he did, she would stay back to face everything with him. That was too dangerous.

He smiled. "I was just thinking over a complicated magic question. You go ahead. I'll follow after you. I'll activate the portal rune for you."

Activating the portal rune was a simple task. He just had to channel some Mana into the rune.

Link tapped the portal rune with his wand. The four obelisks around the hall each shot out a white beam of light at the cornerstone portal rune carved on the ceiling. The huge rune was activated. White light beamed down from it, enveloping Celine within the countless formless runes that flitted within the pillar of light.

Celine's form was drowned out by the blinding white light. When it died out, she was gone.

With his weakness gone, Link heaved a sigh of relief.

He activated the Portal Tower again, the light on the obelisk appearing once more. But this time, there was no-one waiting on the portal rune.

Link then turned and ran out of the hall. When he was about 100 feet out, the imposing rune on the ceiling beamed the white pillar of light down once more.

In that moment, Link turned and shot a Fireball at the portal rune.

The Portal Tower was an intricate product of magic. Destroying it was easyit only needed a little Level-0 Spell to throw the Mana within itito chaos.

Magic was forbidden within 100 feet of the Portal Tower. It was taboo within the Magic Academy!

Bang!

The white fireball collided with the portal rune, shattering itito countless little particles of light. The particles were then converted back into pure Mana. At the same time, a beam of light descended down onto it. Thrown into disarray by the unexpected burst of Mana, the rune on the ceiling exploded with a loud boom.

The explosion started a huge chain reaction. The immense Mana contained within the tower was thrown into turmoil.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The Portal Tower radiated with Manait was blinding. White, gold orbs of light rose up and disappeared into the air, wildly and uncontrollably releasing Mana. In the sheer chaos of it all, many cracks appeared on the outer wall of the Portal Tower. More runes were torn apart, releasing more waves of magical energy.

Within the blinding flashes of light and a tremendous boom, the Portal Tower collapsed into a pile of rubble.

Link was far away by then. He returned to the small woods from earlier and hid in the shadows of one of the ancient trees. Once again, he cloaked himself with a spell of Lesser Invisibility.

All the activity going on at the Portal Tower caught the attention of the Dark Elf Assassins. All of them knew the significance of the tower, and they ran towards it, or at least, the ruins of it.

Hiding in the shadows, Link heard the game server's notification even as he watched the Dark Elves run past him.

Mission: Stop the Signal, completed.

Gamer Link receives 20 Omni Points.

Part Three of Mission: Escape

Mission details: Escape the Dark Elf Assassins' pursuits.

Mission reward: 20 Omni Points

Looking at the mission contents, Link smiled bitterly. The city was full of Dark Elf Assassins. He had killed the Dark Elf Commander Jiggs and destroyed the Portal Tower. More importantly, he had let the Warrior Terry escape. Link was definitely their main target.

The entire academy of Dark Elf Assassins would certainly be searching for him. No, not just the Dark Elf Assassins. In a while, a Dark Elf Magician would be arriving to use the Portal Tower. Since the Portal Tower was now in ruins, that Magician would join in on the search as well.

Remembering the Magician he had come across in the game, Link's smile grew more bitter.

That Dark Elf Magician wasn't like the soft Magicians of the Magic Academy. That was a true Battle Mage, a member of the Silver Moon Mage Council of the Black Forest, a Level-2 Elite!

Luckily, Link thought, I have 20 Omni Points. And I don't need to kill them. I just need to run away from them. I still have a chance.

Gladstone City, the suburbs.

In the darkness of the night, a white light flashed. A human form appeared out of thin air. It was Celine.

She moved to the side and waited patiently.

Half a minute passed, but no light appeared. One full minute passed, and a blinding white light appeared. Not in the suburbs, but at the Magic Academy in the distance.

Celine stared. Seeing the continuous flashes of light and feeling the enormous Mana waves emanating from there, she guessed what had happened right away. She understood what Link had done.

"He didn't come. He destroyed the Portal Tower, afraid that the Dark Elves would come after me through the portal. But now, I am safe, and he is in danger!"

In that moment, Celine felt her chest grow tight.

"You go ahead. I'll follow you. I'll activate the portal rune for you." The young man had been smiling as he said it.

His smile appeared in her mind, as clear as day.

"Fool! Idiot! Moron! I didn't need you to save me!" Celine stomped her foot. She made up her mind. "This won't do. I need to get him out of there."

She had grown up in loneliness. Other than her mother, no one had ever been so good to her!

## 9. The Dark Elf Magician Holmes

Hiding in the shadow of a tree, Link did his best to steady his breath. He wondered how he could possibly escape from the Dark Elves.

20 Omni Points. I'll spend 9 of them on Mana Speed Recovery first, Link said to himself.

If all went well, he would be able to just avoid them. If he could replenish his Mana quickly, the longer he dodged them, the more Mana he would recover and the safer he would be.

His Mana Recovery Speed became 9.2 Points per hour with the 9 Omni Points he had spent on Mana Speed Recovery. He now had a Maximum Mana of 91 Points, and 23 Mana Points. If only he could hide from the Dark Elves for seven more hours, then his Mana would be refilled completely.

With his Mana full, he could easily use the six Level-0 Spells and two Level-1 Spells he knew. Even if something were to happen, leaving him with no choice other than to fight, with those spells he was confident that he would be able to escape.

He heard voices coming from the ruins of the tower. The Dark Elves were engaged in a heated discussion.

Everyone from the Magic Academy had been wiped out by now, leaving most of the Dark Elves free to gather around the Portal Tower. This would be the best time to escape from the academy.

Link thought about it and came to a decision.

Purchase Spell: Silence.

Silence

Level-0 Spell

Effect: Reduces the noise emitted by the bearer, including footsteps, breathing and speaking. The spell's effect lasts for 20 minutes each time it's cast.

After purchasing it, Link felt the familiar haziness wash over him. When it was gone, he had mastered the Level-0 Spell.

Link recited the Spell of Silence in his mind, using it right away.

At this time, the Mana around the Portal Tower had already settled down and the flashes of light had died out. The Magic Academy once again sank into darkness.

With the spells of Lesser Invincibility and Silence cloaking him, Link moved as discreetly as a shadow. He stood up, avoiding the streetlights and followed the path back by memory. He walked towards the back door of the Magic Academy.

The Dark Elf Assassins hadn't noticed anything as he slipped past them. Link managed to escape the Academy.

The Magic Academy had been built in Gladstone City's Flower Distit. It was a gathering point for the city's upper-class citizensmost of them even lived there.

That was the reason why so many Dark Elf Assassins assembled throughout this area.

But in contrast to the Assassins in the Magic Academy, the Dark Elves here had specific targets: the prominent figures of the Flower Distit. Their mission was clear, and so they wouldn't go around just killing every person they saw.

As long as Link didn't get exposed as a Magician, he would probably be safe even if he was discovered.

In that moment, Link felt extremely grateful that he was wearing a normal, gray robe. With his average features, and as long as he kept his wand hidden, he would look as common as common could be.

I should be safe before the news gets out about the Magic Academy. But I should be careful and get as far away from the academy as I can. No matter what, I need to leave this place before the Dark Elf Army arrives.

Link walked quickly, his luck seeming to be in his favor. Along with the help of the two spells he wore, he flitted through the shadows without running into any obstacles.

The Magic Academy, at the Portal Tower.

When Link left the Magic Academy, a crowd of Dark Elf Assassins stood around the ruins of the tower, unable to believe their eyes.

Commander Jiggs had died, and the Portal Tower had been destroyed. The prime location for their ambush on the Magic Academy had disappeared in a cloud of smoke.

"Terry, what do we do now?" a Dark Elf Assassin looked at Terry and asked, his voice raw.

Even though Terry had chosen to run rather than fight Link, with the death of Commander Jiggs, he was now the only highest ranking Dark Elf among those present.

Terry's heart was heavy. The Portal Tower had been crucial in their ambush of Gladstone City. If news of the successful asssination did not reach Marshal Lorde outside of the city, he would not dispatch his troops.

In addition, there was a possibility of the attack on Gladstone City being abandoned. If that happened, every single Dark Elf involved in the ambush would be severely punished according to military law. There might even be a mass execution by the furious Marshal.

"I think, that the only thing we can do now, is to avenge the Commander. Find that young, human Magician!" Terry sighed.

The Dark Elves exchanged looks with one another. The same Dark Elf asked again, "Could he have used the portal to get away?"

Terry shook his head. "Impossible. No one can use a portal on the verge of collapse. Not unless he has a deathwish. He must have escaped after destroying the Portal Tower. If I'm not mistaken, he should be hiding in some dark corner of the Magic Academy."

"We'll find him!"

The Dark Elf Assassins scattered in all directions, determined to search each and every nook and cranny of the academy.

The academy wasn't large. Its circumference was only about 1000 feet. There weren't many places one could hide in such a place. There were at least 200 Dark Elf Assassins searching for Link. Within less than half an hour, they had torn through each and every corner of the school, to no avail.

Half an hour later, the Assassins gathered around the Portal Tower once again.

"We didn't find him. He's escaped!" one of them reported.

"If he's escaped from the Magic Academy, he's likely in a disguise, and we have no way of finding him now. It's a pity we didn't bring the hounds from the Black Forest.

Terry frowned deeply. He felt helpless.

Just then, a cold voice rang out from the darkness beside them. "What is going on here? Why is the Portal Tower in ruins? Why is Jiggs dead?"

Heads turned to the source of the interruption. They saw a middle-aged Dark Elf dressed in a black robe with silver trim, holding an ebony staff as tall as he was. He stood at the gate of the enclosure around the tower.

A pair of Dark Elf Warriors fully clad in armor followed closely behind him.

The Dark Elf Assassins straightened their backs at the sight of the newly arrived elf. "Master Holmes," they all said in unison.

Holmes, he was a Level-2 Battle Mage and a member of the Silver Moon Mage Council. He was well known for having single-handedly defeated three Elite Assassins from the Norton Kingdom. Not only did he slay them, but he also left the battle completely unscathed.

In the plans for the ambush of Gladstone City, he had been tasked with activating the Portal Tower and sending a detailed report back to the Dark Elf Army 30 miles away.

For his safety, he was only supposed to enter the tower after the Magic Academy had been cleared out.

The academy had been cleared, but the crucial Portal Tower had been destroyed as well. What was the point of him coming here?

"What on earth happened here?" Holmes barked. He looked at Jiggs' corpse and strode up to it, crouching down to examine his wounds.

"A Level-0 Earth Spike? Was he killed by a Magician's Apprentice!?" For the life of him, Holmes just couldn't understand what was going on.

A Level-3, fully-armored Dark Elf Warrior with Battle Aura had actually been defeated by a single Earth Spike. It was a disgrace to the Dark Elf Warriors!

No, a disgrace to all Dark Elves!

"I demand an explanation!" Holmes' voice was as sharp as knives.

Terry took a deep breath and stepped forward. "Lord, it happened like this."

He began to describe what he had seen. He told every detail, from the young human Magician's appearance to every word Commander Jiggs had said. He recited every response and explained every attack. He left nothing out.

He spoke in simple but descriptive words. As the Dark Elves listened, the battle scene was re-enacted in their minds. They saw a young, powerful, composed human Magician.

His magic had been like a web of death. The moment he appeared, the web had begun to weave. Each spell had been a thread, binding his prey and ultimately suffocating them.

When Terry had finished, the Dark Elves all shivered. They could never have imagined that such a formidable character had been hiding in the Lower Magic Academy.

At the same time, they rejoiced that they hadn't encountered that dangerous Magician themselves. They knew that they wouldn't have been able to stand there listening to Terry's tale otherwise.

Holmes' face was dark. He was a Magician and therefore knew better than anyone else here how dangerous this human counterpart was.

Nine Level-0 Spells within just one second. Precise magic control. What spellcasting skill!

Two barrages of Fireballs to rile Jiggs up, and a Grease Spell to make Jiggs vulnerable, and finally finishing it all with a Vector Throw. Thinking of the intricate planning of the battle had him in a cold sweat.

"This is a master tactician!" Holmes concluded.

He made up his mind then and there. "He has achieved so much at such a young age. If he is allowed to grow, he will become a large threat! We must kill him!"

"But Lord, he has already escaped from the Magic Academy."

"But he's left his scent. He will have left footprints, all of which can be tracked."

Holmes laughed coldly. The fiery-red crystal on his staff glowed brightly. A beam of Mana shot onto the ground, causing the earth to bulge out and writhe, finally taking the form of a 6-foot tall hound.

Earth Hound

Level-2 Spell

Effect: Condenses earth elements into a gigantic hound. The hound's strength knows no bounds. Its eyesight and sense of smell are exceptional.

(Note: Don't ever let an Earth Hound get a hold of your scent!)

Where the Earth Hound's eyes should have been instead sat round black holes. When it had fully taken shape, Holmes pointed towards Jiggs' corpse. "Find the killer!"

The hound pounced onto Jiggs' body, sniffing furiously.

After about ten seconds, the hound let out a howl, then turned and darted out towards the outside of the Magic Academy. It sniffed the ground even as it ran.

"You, and you. Send this report back to Marshal Lorde at the camp outside the city!" Holmes passed a scroll to the Dark Elf Assassin. He could only rely on the Assassins to deliver the report on foot since the Portal Tower had been destroyed.

"Yes, Lord." The Assassin took the scroll and vanished into the night.

"The others, follow me!" ordered Holmes.

## 10. The MI3 (Mission Intelligence, Section

The situation in the Flower Distit was much better than the Magic Academy's. Very few had actually been killed.

Though there were many Dark Elf Assassins in the city, they were very few in number compared to Gladstone City's population of more than 100,000.

The loud noises from the Magic Academy had startled many of the Flower Distit's residents. There were usually few people on the streets at such a late hour, but tonight, the streets were packed.

Every now and then, shrill screams and wails rang out from the grand mansions. Those were probably the reactions to the asssinated corpses being discovered.

Link continued walking on the streets for about a half an hour. He saw the chaos Gladstone City was in.

The noise and activity coming from the Magic Academy along with the asssination of the prominent figures of the city within the Flower Distit usually would have caused armed guards to show up and restore peace and order to the city. But now, there was neither a trace nor a shadow of them.

The officers in the city watch must have also been killed. Link sighed and carried on his way.

People continued to flood the streets. In addition to the attack initiated by the Dark Elves, robberies, and even acts of rape began to ring out throughout the city. In the absence of the city watch, the criminals that usually hid within the city's shadows had all come out to wreak havoc.

After about 20 minutes, the Lesser Invincibility and Silence cloaking him wore out. But he wasn't afraid of being seen. He had blended into the crowd.

In front of him, a middle-aged man in tatters rushed towards him with a dagger, eyes glistening from within a vicious-looking face. He looked determined to rob Link.

Link continued to walk as he extended out his hand. The Mana within him surged into it, making it glow softly.

"Don't disturb me!" he barked quietly, ice coating his voice.

A Magician. The scruffy-looking middle-aged man froze with fear. He turned and ran, looking for another weaker victim.

To commoners, Magicians were mysterious and powerful. Angering them surely meant death.

It took more than half an hour for Link to travel through most of the Flower Distit. More and more people crowded onto the streets, making it even more chaotic than it was before. Some of the buildings had even caught fire, cries ringing out from inside them. Some people tried to help, but others still continued to loot and plunder.

"The law and order have collapsed." Link sighed. He could do nothing to help such a situation.

A little further off, he caught sight of a river. It wasn't wide, just about 60 feet across, but it had a small port. A few small boats were tethered to it.

This was one of the branches of the Gladstone River.

Something occurred to Link. He walked over and untied one of the boats. Jumping into it, he used the oar to push against the riverbank, letting the boat follow the currents down the river.

He did it to avoid being tracked by the Assassins from the Magic Academy.

The Dark Elf Magician who went to the Magic Academy will definitely search for me with tracking magic. But he's just a Level-2 Magician. He can only rely on scent, footprints and the like. Since I'm on a river, let's see how well he'll find me now!

Link hadn't come across the Dark Elf Magician in the game, but the game server in his last life had hosted many forums where players could discuss strategies and talk. He often browsed through whenever he was free, looking for hints just in case he encountered the feared Magician. Because of that, he was familiar with all the powerful Dark Elves that had appeared during The Change of the Bloody Moon.

Link even remembered the Magician's nameHolmes.

Low-level Magicians' tracking wasn't much different from non-magicians'. This was why Link could use common means to evade them.

But if it had been a high-level Magician, able to track the scent of one's Mana, the scent of one's soul or worse, cast a Spirit Anchor, especially if it had been the latter, Link would have really been in danger.

Just over ten minutes had passed, during which Link had traveled about 1500 to 2000 feet. Link then saw another port. He rowed the boat towards the riverbank.

He didn't really know how to row a boat, but the currents weren't strong. He managed to dock the boat after some struggle.

Getting back on shore, he carried on on foot for a while, quickly reaching the Flower Distit's exit.

The exit led to the market area. It was busy by day, but quiet by night. This was because few people lived here, the rental prices being too high for the average citizen.

Tonight was the same. Other than some security guards outside the shops, there wasn't a soul in sight.

The oil lamps lining both sides of the streets had been extinguished leaving the streets in darkness. Cold gusts of wind blew from time to time, throwing the trash up into the air. It was the picture of desolation.

The city gates were just behind the market area. He could leave from there.

The Dark Elf Army will arrive soon. I'll get involved in the massacre if I stay in the city. I should leave now, while I still have the chance!

With that in mind, Link left the Flower Distit without looking back and walked through the market area.

Flicking his pocket watch open, it showed the time to be 11:36 pm. It was almost midnight. His Mana had recovered to 32 Points.

In the game, the Dark Elf Army had attacked the city at half past one in the early morning. There had been no one guarding the city. Worse, the Dark Elves had seized and opened the gates, allowing the entire army to just march on in.

And then, the massacre had begun. By the time dawn arrived, more than a 100,000 people had been killed in rituals performed by the Dark Elves. The tattered corpses were disposed of like trash in the Gladstone River. It had been a real catastrophe!

It was now half past eleven. He still had more than two hours to escape from Gladstone City. He had more than enough timeunless, God forbid, something happened.

The market area was too quiet. He would be too obvious walking down the street alone. Just in case, Link cloaked himself in the Spells of Silence and Lesser Invincibility.

Twenty minutes later, Link had reached the market square. Just as Link was about to cast the Spell of Silence again, he heard the sound of clashing weapons coming from an alley near him.

Someone's there! And they're fighting! Link went on the alert. It sounds like they're really at it. That's not the sound of gangsters fighting. Could it be a surviving Elite of the city?

Link followed the noises to their source.

The alley was quite deep and rather dark, the only source of light being the moon. Thankfully, it was a cloudless night. Still, even with the moonlight, Link was barely able to make out what was going on in the alley.

In front of him stood four figures, while one laid on the ground. Four living, breathing people and a corpse.

Of the four still left standing, three of them were clad in grayish-black leather armor, a defining feature of the Dark Elf Assassins. Their identities were obvious. They all surrounded the last remaining person.

He wore dark-green, leather armor. Though he was masked like the Dark Elf Assassins, his rounded ears betrayed his human identity.

The corpse on the ground was that of a Dark Elf Assassin. The human Warrior had evidently paid his price for killing the Dark Elf. Blood oozed and dripped from a long gash on his left arm.

None of them spoke. They stood, watching each other in silence.

The three Assassins were obviously quite wary of their human counterpart. They watched his every move all while edging closer to him.

The human Assassin retreated slowly. But the alley ended in a brick wall behind him, that which he soon reached. With nowhere else to escape, he braced his back against the cold stone.

He held a dagger in each hand. From its luster, it didn't seem to have any anti-magic properties.

That was reasonable. Anti-magic weapons were extremely expensive, and not everyone managed to own one.

Just as they were about to break outito a fight, the human rasped, "Hehehe. The Portal Tower has been destroyed. Your plans are ruined!"

One of the Dark Elves replied, "Even without the Portal Tower, we still have homing crows. We can still send the news to our army waiting outside. It may just be delayed by a half an hour or so."

"Homing crows? Blood-eyed Owls patrol the skies of Gladstone City once night falls. They were bred to take care of homing crows and pigeons. How likely is it that your crows managed to make it out?" spat the human Assassin.

The elf couldn't deny it. It was true. "Our mission isn't sending the news out. Right now, our mission is to kill you. As an equal, I'll leave your corpse whole."

As he said that, the Dark Elf Assassin charged forward. His companions, too, attacked at the same time.

Three against one!

Link, eavesdropping from the mouth of the alley, had guessed the human Assassin's identity. The characteristic dark-green armor and the contents of their conversation all led him to one conclusion.

He's from the Military Intelligence, Section 3!

Military Intelligence, Section 3, otherwise known as MI3, was the intelligence agency of the Norton Kingdom. Its chief duty was to defend against the infiltrations of the Dark Elves in the East. Before The Change of the Bloody Moon, the Norton Kingdom and the Dark Elves of the Black Forest had maintained a peaceful faade. But behind it, their intelligence agencies warred with one another. However, the situation had never been as tense as it has been lately.

The MI3's counterpart in the Black Forest was known as The Death Hand. It was an organization of Dark Elf Assassins.

The Change of the Bloody Moon meant that MI3 had failed miserably in the information war.

From their short exchange, Link had gained a more comprehensive understanding of the situation in Gladstone.

Gladstone City may not be doomed to fall after all! Perhaps the Norton Kingdom did know of the Dark Elves' ambush. Maybe it hadn't been able to respond in time because the Dark Elves had attacked earlier than expected. If the Dark Elf Army is delayed, maybe we can save Gladstone City?

Once the thought came to him, he felt a jerk inside. New notifications appeared in his mind.

Completed Part Three of Mission: Escape.

Game player receives 20 Omni Points.

Unlock Part Four of Mission: A Helping Hand.

Mission Details: Help the Human Assassin in the market area to defeat the Dark Elf Assassins.

Mission Reward: 10 Omni Points.

Saving just one person could get him 10 Omni Points. There was no way Link would let such a good deal get past him. He accepted the mission without hesitating.

## 11. Rescuing the Legendary Assassin

The gash on Ardivan's arm was very deep. It seemed to have cut a vessel, and not a minor one at that. Blood gushed out of it and the muscles in his arm spasmed, unable to hold onto any strength it still had.

Facing three Dark Elf Assassins from The Death Hand was a difficult task for him even at his best, let alone without the use of an arm.

Ardivan had already made up his mind to fight to the death when the three of them came at him.

"I've already killed one. I've covered my losses. Anymore are bonuses!"

He went all out, attacking viciously without caring for his wounds.

The Dark Elf Assassins, frightened by his savage way of fighting, exchanged just a few blows before one of them managed to make a cut across Ardivan's waist. But the Dark Elf Assassin didn't get away unscathed. Ardivan's dagger sliced deep into his arm. The dagger had teeth. When Ardivan pulled it back, the Dark Elf's arm was a bloody mess.

"Retreat! Let him bleed out!"

The three Dark Elf Assassins sprang back, leaving Ardivan gasping and heaving against the wall. Fighting on his own against three opponents, he had already done better than he had expected. At the same time, however, he had also used up a lot of his strength. The blood from his arm flowed more freely, and the cut on his waist also bled, soaking his underclothes in a warm red.

It hurt. Very much. He could feel his resolve trickling away with each drop he lost, but with his three opponents still keeping a close eye on him, he had no time to bandage his wounds.

Ardivan laughed wryly to himself. "I wonder how the Commander and the rest of them are now?"

Even before the Dark Elves had ambushed Gladstone City, the MI3 and the Death Hand had been covertly warring under their peaceful facade, more so than ever before. The situation had been intense.

The Death Hand had suddenly dispatched more operatives, leaving the MI3 outpost at Gladstone short-handed. In a moment of negligence, their scouts outside the city had been rooted out, sealing off all their communications with the outside world.

The MI3 and the city guards' homing pigeon lofts had been closed off or destroyed by the Dark Elves, leaving them useless. Only the secret pigeon loft in the marketplace held a possibility of being unharmed.

Under the cover of their Commander, the Assassins most skilled in the art of stealth broke past the Dark Elves. Ardivan was one of them. He had done his best to get to the market, had found the homing pigeons and had sent out news of what happened in Gladstone City.

The homing pigeons had all been sprayed with a special scent. They wouldn't get attacked by the Blood-eyed Owls. As long as nothing unfortunate happened, the news would reach the Black Iron Garrison in the South within an hour.

The Black Iron Garrison was the Norton Kingdom's first major stronghold to the north of Gladstone. The Kingdom's Iron Crusade Corps were stationed there. As long as the news reached them safely, the Army Marshal, Master Swordsman Allonse, would dispatch his troops to aid them immediately, ultimately saving Gladstone from ruin.

All that Gladstone City needed now was time.

I wonder who destroyed the academy's Portal Tower. It really was a blessing from God, Ardivan thought. He rejoiced.

Without receiving a detailed report from the Portal Tower, the Dark Elf Army in the North wouldn't dare to act rashly. To ensure that it arrived safely, the Dark Elf Assassins would have to send the report on foot. That would buy the troops from the Black Iron Garrison more time.

Too bad I won't live to see it. Ardivan sighed regretfully. He understood his opponents' plan; they wanted him to bleed out.

But he wouldn't just wait for death. Clenching his teeth, he roused himself and charged at his opponents, swinging his dagger.

So long as he still had the strength, he would fight back with everything he had!

Naturally, the Dark Elf Assassins didn't back down at the challenge either. They too rushed back out towards Ardivan.

Right now, the Dark Elves and Ardivan only had each other in their sights. No one noticed what was going on behind them.

At a spot less than 100 feet away, a dark, hazy patch of shadow inched closer to the fight. It hid behind a pile of cartons.

100 feet. That was the furthest Link's Fireball could reach.

As Ardivan and the Assassins clashed once more, a dark figure darted out from the shadows, bearing flickers of magic.

"Fireball!"

As the shadowy figure revealed itself, so did three scorching fireballs. They shot out towards the Assassins' ears, traveling in a straight path, spitting and hissing as they flew.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Three explosions rang out through the air. All three of the Assassins were hit; they were completely caught off guard.

Although the fireballs weren't powerful, the explosions next to the elves' heassent smoking air currents and flames into their ears, destroying importantiternal structures.

The Dark Elves felt sharp stabbing pain within their eardrums and their heads began to ring, leaving their senses muddled.

The inner ear was an organ that helped to maintain the body's equilibrium and stability. Whenever the ear is affected, humans too would become unstable. The anatomy and physiology of Dark Elves' ears were similar to that of humans', and so the elves were affected as well.

The Assassins' movements changed drastically. They stumbled around, unable to maintain their balance.

Ardivan felt his spirits lift. Taking advantage of the situation, he slashed the throats of one of the Dark Elf Assassins. In a flash, he buried his dagger into the chest of the second. Finally, crouching down to duck from the useless attack of the last remaining Assassin, Ardivan leapt back up to thrust his dagger from below into the Assassin's left side.

Ardivan moved so quickly; this all happened in an instant. The three Dark Elf Assassins lay on the ground and only Ardivan alone was left standing, the final victor.

He pulled out his first-aid kit immediately. Taking a bandage from it, he wrapped his wounds, but he did not forget the Magician who had helped him.

He looked up towards the mouth of the alley. A young man in normal, gray robes walked towards him. There was nothing remarkable about his features. He held a magic wand in his hand and a magic bangle glistened on his wrist.

By the God of Light! It's my own kind, and a Magician at that! It couldn't get any better. Ardivan rejoiced within himself.

Magicians weren't particularly good at combat, but that wasn't their strong point! They excelled due to their wisdom and the various spells with myriads of uses that they had control over!

There were a lot of things that neither Assassins nor Warriors could do but that Magicians could achieve easily. Take flying for example. Any Level-3 Magician could fly. That alone was enough for them to leave the other class in the dust, figuratively or not.

Now, Gladstone City was in extreme danger. If Ardivan had the help of a Magician, he would have a higher chance of delaying the Dark Elf Army's arrival.

The MI3 had originally thought of seeking aid from the Magic Academy, but by the time he had broken out of the throngs of Dark Elf Assassins, the entire academy had been wiped out.

Yet, he had managed to find a Magician in the marketplace. And from the Magician's spellcasting speed and his intuition in battle, he was obviously a Battle Mage.

There could be nothing better.

Quickly bandaging his wounds, Ardivan pulled out a Quick Healing Potion and chugged it down. Then he stood up and went over to the Magician. "Your honor, Sir Magician, my thanks for saving me. I am Ardivan, of the Military Intelligence, Section 3."

Afraid that the Magician wouldn't believe him, Ardivan pulled out a ring as proof. There were runes embedded all over the band, a lion embossing the signet. Behind the lion, a blade stretched outito a circle, forming the background. The lion represented the Norton Kingdom and the blade represented the MI3.

Link looked at the ring in Ardivan's hand. The magic flowing within the runes told him that it was probably a Level-1 Magic Ring. It was enchanted with the Level-1 Spell, Concealment.

Being the owner of such an enchanted ring meant that Ardivan was of considerable rank within the MI3.

At this point, Link had already completed his mission to save the human Assassin. As a result, he had received 10 Omni Points. In addition to that, he already had 20 Omni Points from the survival mission and an added 10 Points from his mission to destroy the Portal Tower. He now had at his disposal a total of 40 Omni Points, 26 Mana Points, seven Level-0 Spells and two Level-1 Spells.

Link's confidence grew with the resources he held.

Perhaps I really can change history and save Gladstone. The thought flickered through his mind but was struck down right away. I'll just take one step at a time. I'm facing the Dark Elf Army. I'll die a tragic death if I try to take on more than I can.

He was anxious to find out more about the situation in Gladstone. What he had to do now though, was to build some rapport and trust with the Assassin called Ardivan.

He saluted Ardivan with a Mage's salute and introduced himself. "I am Link Morani, third son of Viscount Hamilton Morani. I am also a Magician from The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings. I just narrowly escaped from the academy."

"I destroyed the academy's Portal Tower before escaping." He threw that in as a bargaining chip.

At this, Ardivan's eyes lit up. He thanked Link from the bottom of his heart.

"Your Honor, Mr. Link, you have truly done us a great favor. But Gladstone City is still in danger. I beg you"

Before he even finished, Link waved a hand in dismissal. "Time is of the essence. I know that the Dark Elf Army has troops waiting outside the city. No need for the formalities. Just say it, Assassin. What can I do for you?"

The destruction of the Portal Tower would definitely delay the arrival of the Dark Elf Army. In his last life, they had attacked the city at 1:30 pm. This time, they would be delayed by at least an hour. It was now 11:55 pm. He had a two-hour window of safety.

Within this time, earning some Omni Points by giving the MI3 a helping hand seemed like a good idea.

Not expecting Link to agree to his pleas so quickly, Ardivan paused. He was overjoyed. At such a perilous time, Link was exactly what they neededdecisive and brave in the face of danger.

His praise for Link was sincere and he meant it from the bottom of his heart. "Your honor, you truly are an upstanding Magician!"

Link was embarsed. He waved a hand. "Stop all this nonsense."

Ardivan got down to business. "The outpost Commander distracted most of the Dark Elf Assassins in order for me to break free from their attacks. He's in grave danger right now. We have to help him and the rest of the troops!"

Ardivan looked at Link nervously. He wanted them to help, but there were only two of them. Anyone could see that this would be an extremely dangerous mission. Going to help the others was more likely going to result in their deaths.

Just as Ardivan finished talking, a notification appeared in Link's mind.

New mission triggered.

Mission: Help the MI3.

Mission Details:

1. Save and ensure the survival of Annie Abel, the commander of the MI3. (Main objective)

2. Save the remaining members of the MI3.

Mission Reward: 25 Omni Points.

Annie Abel?

The name was remarkably familiar to Link. She had been a famous character in the game. Her father was a duke of the Norton Kingdom, the younger brother of the King. He was a strong-willed man, also known as the Iron Duke. He held a very high status within the Kingdom.

Annie was his only daughter. She should have been a pampered princess, but instead, she became an Assassin, working from within the shadows. She worked her way up from the very bottom of the organization, making countless contributions. Ten years later, she became a Legendary Assassin, one of the three main decision makers within the MI3.

In the game, there had been another mission concerning her, but only a year later. The mission had been to rescue her from the Black Waters Prison in the Black Forest.

Yes, Annie Abel had not died in the massacre of Gladstone, instead, she had been captured. She received inhumane torture during her imprisonment.

In the game, when Link and his teammates had seen her in the Black Waters Prison, one of her eyes had been blinded for life. Her beautiful face was covered in a web of scars. And that had only been on the surface. Link didn't dare to imagine what else could have happened to her.

According to the latest news Link had before coming to the World of Firuman, Annie had become the first Assassin of the Norton Kingdom. She held great power, but ensnared by a demon, she grew more and more radical. In the end, she became a tool of darkness, killing King Leon and causing the ruin of the Norton Kingdom.

Link imagined that it had something to do with the inhumane torture she had received in the Black Water Prison.

But now, he had a chance to stop all that. To top it off, he would also receive Omni Points if he succeeded. How could he refuse?

Under Ardivan's hopeful gaze, Link nodded. "Show the way, Assassin!"

The MI3's outpost was located within the old city quarters, a considerable distance from the marketplace.

Ardivan led the way, followed closely by Link.

"Are your injuries alright?"

Link noticed the pallor in Ardivan's face. His footsteps were light, as if he were walking on clouds. His breath grew labored at the slightest increase in speed; his condition resembled that of a frail Magician.

"Heh heh. Don't worry, Your Honor. I can bear injuries twice as heavy as this," Ardivan laughed weakly, trying to put Link at ease.

As a professional Assassin, he had undergone harsh endurance training. The injuries he had were nothing. Still, he wasn't in a good condition due to his excessive blood loss.

Link scrutinized Ardivan closely. Ardivan's information appeared within his mind.

Ardivan (MI3)

Level-2 Elite Assassin

Battle Skills: Speed Burst, Dancing Daggers

Current condition: Weak and bleeding.

Weak and bleeding, his power was currently less than 50% of his maximum, and his stamina was less than 30%. His energy could run out, leaving him to die a sudden death at any second!

Ardivan's face was covered with sweat. Link was deeply moved by the human Assassin's determination to battle despite his condition. Back on earth, the World of Firuman had just been a game to him. He had looked on coldly to the tragedies of the worldthe lives there had been no more than mere NPCs to him.

But now, being a part of this world, Link realized that he was dealing with peoplereal people, actual flesh and blood just like the Ardivan before him. Ardivan could have just run away, but instead, he was risking everything he had to save Gladstone.

Thinking about it, Link decided to spend 10 Omni Points on an Elemental Healing Spell.

Elemental Healing

Level-1 Spell

Effect: Brings the elements within the target's body to equilibrium in order to relieve symptoms and replenish the body's shortages. The stronger the target's body, the stronger the effect of this healing spell.

Elemental Healing wasn't true healing magic, but it could relieve the symptoms of many diseases by bringing the target body's elements into equilibrium. It was quite suitable for Ardivan's conditionexcessive blood loss and severe dehydration.

Ardivan was a powerful Assassin and the key to saving Annie Abel. He could not fall. Spending 10 Omni Points on him was worth it. In addition, Link would meet even more Assassins, and they too could be injured. This supplementary spell would help raise their overall combat abilities.

The familiar haze came over Link. A moment later, Link had learned the spell of Elemental Healing.

"Ardivan, I know a supplementary healing spell. Perhaps it will work for you," Link informed him to avoid any misunderstandings.

Ardivan was elated. "Your Honor. Please use it on me!"

The human Assassin understood his condition quite clearly. He was at the end of his rope, about to pass out and die at any moment. It didn't really matter to him if he died, but it would be terrible if it affected the overall situation.

Link lifted his wand and pointed it at Ardivan's chest. A clear, transparent beam of light appeared. The light, swarming with mysterious runes, enveloped Ardivan's torso.

After about one second, elemental properties gathered around them. The most abundant was water, then fire. The rest of the elementswood, earth, and metalwere also present. They adjusted themselves according to the condition of Ardivan's body.

The whole process took about three seconds.

Afterwards, the light went out. The elements that had been lured there by Mana, blended into a milky-white fog. The cloud of smoke they formed didn't just consist of elements, but also contained nutrients processed by magic.

Under the guidance of Mana, the fog seeped into Ardivan's body silently. They replenished the elemental losses he had sustained due to the excessive blood loss.

In other words, the supplemental healing spell was just giving Ardivan all of his much-needed components. Ardivan absorbed all of it, saving much of his energy by skipping the physiological processes of digestion.

As an Elite Assassin, Ardivan had quite a strong body. He was weak not because of disease, but because his body had suffered substantial losses.

After the spell, Ardivan felt as if his pores had opened, allowing something to enter his body. Then, he found that he no longer felt thirsty. The rapid heartbeat brought on by his blood loss slowed. His quickened, shallow breaths grew long and deep, then resumed normalcy. He felt tremendous energy within himself.

The renewed strength was thanks to the nutrients, converted from the floating elements earlier. His body had now been replenished of its essential materials.

"Incredible! I feel so much better." Ardivan was thrilled. He moved his arm. Even his wounds weren't as painful as before.

Link smiled faintly. "Give it some time and you'll feel even better. Let's set out now. Move a bit more slowly. Let your body adapt to the changes."

Ardivan's body would convert the nutrients into the building blocks his body needed. It was an innate ability of the body to save itself. Ardivan's wounds would probably be fine after a while as a result.

Coming from a character class which emphasized physical combat, Ardivan knew his body very well. He could feel the changes within it and knew that Link's words rang true. He slowed his pace and adjusted his breathing. They then continued on to the old city quarters at a less hurried pace.

Less than half an hour later, the two of them stood at the entrance to the old city quarters.

This part of the city had been the cradle of Gladstone. It held many ancient buildings, most of which were more than a century old. Many of Gladstone City's important governmental departments were also located here, including the MI3's outpost.

Because of that, there were just as many, if not more, Dark Elf Assassins within the area.

The large number of important governmental divisions in the area meant that few ordinary citizens lived here. Link and Ardivan would be easy to spot and thus, targeted by the Dark Elves.

Link now had 30 Omni Points. His Mana had recovered by more than 10 points, replenishing the Mana he had spent earlier. He now had a total of 30 Mana Points.

They would face frequent battles around the area. Fearing that he might not have enough Mana, Link spent another 5 Omni Points on Maximum Mana Points.

His Maximum Mana became 141 Points, with 80 Mana Points and counting.

Link did know the benefits of using Mana Speed Recovery, but the circumstances were too complicated. If he had used his Omni Points on Mana Speed Recovery from the beginning, he probably would have just died at the Magic Academy.

When this is settled, I will have to spend some Omni Points on Mana Speed Recovery. But my Maximum Mana needs to keep up too. Link thought to himself. A Level-1 Spell uses 6 Mana Points. A Level-2 Spell uses 30 Mana Points. A Level-3 Spell uses 120 Mana Points while a Level-4 Spell uses 300 Mana Points. If my Maximum Mana is too low, I won't be able to use high-level spells. That would be unfortunate.

He had to use his Omni Points on the best possible combination of Maximum Mana Points and Mana Speed Recovery.

"Ardivan, how do you feel now?" Link asked. He had to ensure that the Assassin beside him was alright.

Ardivan swung his injured arm and smiled. "Better and better. My wounds don't hurt and all. They've even started to itch. I feel as if I hadn't even been hurt! Your magic is amazing."

Link took a close look at him. Ardivan's face was no longer pale, and his breathing was steady. Knowing that Ardivan wasn't pushing it, Link relaxed.

"Show the way. Go as fast as you can. I'll follow you. No need to worry about me, I can keep up," Link responded.

At this, Link spent another 10 Omni Points on the spell Cat's Agility.

Cat's Agility

Level-1 Spell

Effect: Energy will fill the target's body, allowing the target to be as agile as a cat. The spell lasts for 20 minutes.

There were many Dark Elf Assassins ahead, all swift, agile and on the alert. If Link still casted his spells without moving like he had in the Magic Academy, death would certainly welcome him soon.

But thanks to magic, Magicians could also be agile!

After purchasing the spell, Link spent 6 Mana Points to cast it on himself. Silver ropes of light surged out from his wand and wrapped around Link. The silver strands then sank into his body, leaving countless glistening magic runes on his skin.

Link examined the runes. He was embarsed to admit that he didn't recognize a single one of them.

When I get out of here, I really will have to study magic properly. Otherwise, if I ever encounter a Master Magician, I'll be toyed with to my death. Link thought with unease.

Under the effects of the spell, Link felt much lighter. With just one stride, he shot out by 13 feet. He was as quick as a phantom, dispelling any worries Ardivan might have had.

"Follow me. Keep to the walls and the shadows." Ardivan crouched. Silently, he entered the old city quarters.

Link followed closely behind him. He also used 8 Mana Points on casting the spells of Lesser Invisibility and Silence over both himself and Ardivan. Instantly, they became as discreet as the shadows, disappearing into the night.

Ardivan was shocked. Only then did he notice the changes on himself. Cocking his head to the side, he realized that he couldn't pinpoint Link's exact location. And that was despite knowing Link was there. There was no way the Dark Elves would be able to sense them.

Magic really is incredible! he sang prass in his heart. He was far more confident now that they'd be able to save the Commander.

It was no wonder he was amazed at such little things like that. Magicians were proud beings, as most of them were scholars rather than Battle Mages. Few Magicians actually appeared on the battlefield, and even if they did, they were usually kept as secret aces. At his level, Ardivan was still unfit to receive any Magician's support.

The pair of them flitted through the shadows silently. In about five minutes, Ardivan suddenly stopped and rushed into the darkness of a particular street.

From the shadows, Link saw another Assassin from the MI3.

It was a female Assassin. She was petite and wore the standard dark-green armor of the MI3. Her chestnut hair was tied up in a ponytail.

She had been heavily wounded. There were gashes across her arms and legs, but at least she was still alive and conscious. Her wounds had received emergency treatment. Hearing some noise, she instinctively lifted a dagger.

But unfortunately, she was too weak. Her defenses would fend off a commoner, but in the eyes of a professional Assassin, one could see that it was full of flaws and exposed her weaknesses.

"Mary, it's me, Ardivan! I came back!" Ardivan cried out hastily.

The female Assassin called Mary cried out in surprise and joy. Immediately, she asked, "Has the news been sent?"

She had broken through the siege of Dark Elves with Ardivan, and held the same objectivefind a way to let the Black Iron Garrison know of the situation in Gladstone. But she wasn't as strong as Ardivan, and she had been heavily wounded, stopping her from going any further.

"I sent it out. I sent out all the homing pigeons in the marketplace. All 23 of them! I labeled them all with the scent. They will definitely send the news out!" Ardivan cried.

Mary heaved a sigh of relief, but then she rushed to say, "Go to the headquarters to help out quickly. There are at least a hundred of the damned Dark Elves there. Commander Abel is in danger!"

Link arrived just then. Seeing him, Mary asked suspiciously, "Who is he?"

"This is Link Morani, a Magician. He's with us," Ardivan hurriedly explained.

Link looked at the petite female Assassin. Seeing her wounds, he said, "Don't move. I'll heal you."

He lifted his wand and pointed it at Mary.

Magic was mysterious to the average person. It was the first time Mary had heard of Magicians being able to heal. She shifted, visibly uncomfortable, but Ardivan comforted her.

"Don't worry, Mary. You'll recover very quickly."

Lights flashed, and five seconds later, the healing spell was complete. Mary moved around. She didn't understand. "There seems to have been some effect, but it's still not as effective compared to a Priest's Divine Spells. But at least I can stand now."

In the World of Firuman, all true healing magic was Divine. Divine Spells were powerful, able to heal wounds on the spot. They could even resurrect the dead. But that belonged to the realm of Gods. Mortal Magicians could never hope to achieve something like that.

Mary struggled to get to her feet, but Ardivan pushed her back down. "Mr. Link's healing spells are amazing, but you shouldn't move. Just rest here for about half an hour or so. You should be able to regain some strength by then. I'll go to the headquarters now. Come over quickly as soon as you've recovered."

Mary nodded, not entirely believing him.

Ardivan then stood up. With a face full of worry, he said to Link, "Your Honor, I need to go and give aid to the headquarters, but it's very dangerous."

He had thought of asking Link to help, but with an area having more than 100 Dark Elf Assassins, that was just too much. There were less than 30 of the MI3 still fighting at the outpost. The situation was quite desperate. Ardivan was prepared to fight to his death, but knowing that, he wouldn't just willingly send Link to his death too.

"Show the way!" Link said.

Ardivan opened his mouth to advise him against it.

"Every second that pass may cost us the life of one of your warriors!" Link looked straight at him. He had a rescue mission with a high reward, and he knew that Annie Abel couldn't be taken prisoner. The corruption of the future Legendary Assassin would be a catastrophe!

As long as he lived in this world, he wouldn't be able to just stay out of it.

Between facing a hundred or more Dark Elves now, and facing a formidable Legendary Assassin of the Dark in the future, Link wisely chose the former.

Ardivan's heart raced. He gave a strong nod, then turned and raced towards the headquarters, Link hot on his heels.

More than a hundred Assassins, that would be tricky. Link still had 15 Omni Points and 60 Mana Points. After thinking hard about it, he still decided to buy a ranged spell that took effect over a large field.

The exact spell he chose would depend on the situation there.

The MI3 outpost was just over 300 feet away.

As a department in charge of information, the location of its outpost was quite unremarkable. A two-story building with iron grills, it was vaguely visible underneath several huge trees.

The building had been built of stone and so it was extremely sturdy. Naturally, it would have been expensive to build.

On its left was a shop that sold armor, while a tailor's shop stood on its right. The MI3 outpost sat before a wide square with a fountain in its center, lined with smooth pebbles. A small hotel stood opposite, flanked by residential units.

All the other buildings had been made of wood.

The buildings weren't labeled; neither were there guards by the door. If it hadn't been for Ardivan, Link would have never found his way here, even with his prior knowledge of the game.

A game was just a game after all. Compared to reality, many details were omitted. To avoid ridiculous costs, it was impossible for the game to duplicate Gladstone City exactly. The game had just given an outline of it.

Ardivan and Link hid in an alley towards the left of the fountain square. Link leaned against the wall as Ardivan stuck his head out to take a look at their surroundings every now and then.

After a while, he shrunk back into the shadows. Earnestly, he turned to Link. "The battle in the building is still going on. But the important streets are all guarded by Dark Elf Assassins. I found at least 20 hidden Dark Elves. They've taken over the vantage points around the fountain square and oil lamps. There's no way for us to sneak in.

They had lit all the oil lamps. The fountain square was as bright as day, leaving not a shadow unseen. It had rendered Link's spell of Lesser Invincibility ineffective.

Should they break through by force?

They would probably die as porcupines, pierced by the Assassins' arrows, within ten steps of charging out. That would be nothing other than suicide.

Link frowned and thought deeply. Within a few seconds, he came up with a plan. "Why don't the Dark Elves just attack with fire? Do they want to capture Commander Abel alive?" Link asked.

Although the three-story building was made of stone, it had still used a large amount of wood in its construction. Attacking with fire would have been enough to force the people inside to flee.

Ardivan paused. His expression grew heavy. "It's very likely."

Link said, "Even though they have no good intentions, it's far more difficult for them to capture her alive. They'll take more time to do it too. That's our chance. Can you pinpoint the Dark Elves hidden around the fountain square?"

"I can. I am the best in concealment at this outpost. Even these Dark Elves are no match for me. Only one or two might manage to escape me." There was a hint of pride in Ardivan's voice.

But Link shook his head. "You can't miss a single one. Can you promise that?"

Ardivan looked dismayed. Doing it alone would be too difficult for him.

"Then we'll have to take advantage of some chaos if we are to meet up with Commander Abel safely." Link wasn't really surprised. People had their limits after all.

"What should we do?"

"Attack with fire," Link replied.

"Alright. I'll be relying on you...but wait, we'll be seen once we light anything." Ardivan suddenly realized that he had forgotten an important factLink was a Magician! Link had many more ways of conjuring fire than he did.

Link quietly stuck his head out from behind the wall and threw a quick glance at the fountain square. Then, he blended back into the shadows.

With that one glance, he had memorized the positions of all the oil lamps around the square. The image was as clear as day to him.

The Link before couldn't have done that. But his soul had been fortified by the God of Light. Now, accurately recording every detail like a camera seemed as easy and natural to him as drinking water.

Against the corner, Link lifted his wand. Something shifted above its tip. Mana stretched out quietly and discreetly. With the Magician's Hand, his Mana crept out slowly towards an oil lamp 50 feet away.

Very soon, Link felt his Magician's Hand touch the oil lamp. But he didn't make a move; he was waiting.

After about 30 seconds, strong gusts of wind blew, causing the oil lamps to swing and creak with noise.

Now!

Link pulled at the oil lamp in time with the wind. It fell from the lamp post, Link controlling its descent the entire way. The lamp, which should have smashed onto the floor, instead fell onto some firewood three feet away.

The oil spread out onto the firewood, and with a roar, it burstito flames.

Beside the firewood was a wooden house. Within moments, that too caught fire. The wind blew towards the outpost of the MI3. Fanned by the wind, the flames burned stronger than ever, quickly spreading to the other wooden buildings around the square.

Taking the chance, Link quickly stuck his head out from his hiding place again. He saw several figures jump down from the window of one of the wooden houses. They landed with a roll, deflecting the momentum of jumping from such a heighta clear display of their agility.

These were, of course, Dark Elf Assassins who had been in hiding. They had been forced out by the fire.

Five minutes later, the flames grew stronger. One by one, the Dark Elves were forced out of their hiding places. The fountain square was in chaos.

That was good enough. Link said to Ardivan, "Come with me. Let's rush in."

"No, you don't know the way!" Link rushed out before Ardivan could finish. Under the effect of the Cat's Agility, he was lightning fast.

Speechless, Ardivan had no choice but to follow.

But before long he found that Link seemed to know the square's layout like the back of his hand. Ardivan was astounded. From one hiding place to another, even while using the flames to shade themselves from sight, Link seemed as familiar with the place as if it were his backyard.

Already halfway through, the Dark Elf Assassins still hadn't noticed them!

He was unable to explain it, but the worry he'd held disappeared. More at ease, he focused on following Link.

They reached the iron gate in front of the outpost very quickly. The fire hadn't spread there yet, nor was there a place to hide. The Dark Elves had finally noticed them.

They were out of the range of the hidden Dark Elf Archers, so the elves just charged at them.

Link didn't even stop. He continued running towards the iron gate, yelling at Ardivan, "They're still more than 100 feet away from us! Ignore them, just keep going!"

With his agile movements from the Cat's Agility spell, he darted forward. Right before the iron gate Link leaped up more than ten feetito the air. Reaching out, he grabbed a drooping branch from one of the ancient trees within the courtyard and swung himself into the compound.

Ardivan, seeing that, stopped trying to be stealthy and quickly flipped over the gate.

There were also Dark Elf Assassins within the courtyard. Three of them came at Link before he even landed. Link, still in mid-air, prepared to cast Fireballs at them.

But just then, a figure flashed behind the window on the second floor of the stone building. With a single, loud twang, three arrows flew out of the window, each one shooting out towards the Dark Elf Assassins, forcing them to retreat.

It was an ally!

Thanks to that, Link and Ardivan managed to land safely.

Ardivan covered Link as they charged forward. Link leapt up to the window where he had seen the mysterious figure. With the effects of Cat's Agility still in play, he managed to jump to a height of more than ten feet. Link grabbed onto the window-sill and flipped through the opening.

An Assassin of the MI3 had appeared in this window earlier. That meant that it was safe. That was why Link had chosen to enter the building from here.

Ardivan didn't have the explosive power that Link had. Though unable to jump to the same height, climbing up to the second floor was easy for a Level-2 Elite Assassin like him. Building on the momentum from his charge, Ardivan leaped up and pushed off the crevices in the walls, ultimately managing to enter the window.

As Ardivan stood, he was shocked by what he saw.

Hastily, he shouted, "Commander, this is Magician Link Morani. He's here to help!"

Annie Abel had her dagger held to Link's chest, mistaking him for an enemy. Link had anticipated this, and so he froze with his hands held high above his head.

Of course, he didn't really think that Annie would harm him. During this moment he took a good look at the future Legendary Assassin before him.

She was very young, only about twenty-three or twenty-four-years-old. She was about 5'5'' in height. The dark green, figure-hugging armor she wore outlined her slender figure. Though she was masked, the contours of her face were perfect. The exposed skin was a flawless, milky-white. Her dark-blue eyes were framed by thin eyebrows that fanned up towards the end, making her look somewhat handsome instead of just pretty. She sported a head of bright golden hair, cut short in a blunt and bold style.

Compared to the tortured, scar-faced Legendary Assassin he had seen in the game, Annie Abel was now a flower in full bloom.

Link looked around the room. There were only four MI3 Assassins left. Each of them had been wounded to varying degrees. The most seriously injured Assassin couldn't even get up. The room was filled with the thick scent of blood.

Hearing Ardivan's words, Annie knew that she had been mistaken. Though she lowered her dagger, she still remained cautious. She looked towards her subordinate. Her motive was clear. "Has the news been sent out?"

"Twenty-three homing pigeons, all labeled with scent. They won't be attacked by the Blood-eyed Owls and will probably reach the Black Iron Garrison in an hour's time!" Ardivan reported, straightening his back.

"Very good!" The lines of Annie's face softened. Turning towards Link, she said, "Introduce this Magician."

Ardivan kept his reply short and sweet. "Commander, he's from the Magic Academy. It was he who destroyed the Portal Tower."

At that, all the Assassins in the room turned to look at him, their gazes full of respect.

The Portal Tower had been crucial to this battle. Only because the Portal Tower had been destroyed, did the Norton Kingdom stand a chance at saving Gladstone.

If Gladstone managed to overcome this disaster, Link would have contributed the most. What he did was what allowed everything else to be possible!

Annie relaxed completely. "I am very sorry for my rudeness earlier, Mr. Link."

Link wouldn't take such a small thing to heart. The situation around was very dire. He cut straight to the point. "Commander Abel, what is your plan?"

## 12. Preparing to Breakout

Annie and the other Assassins looked dumbfounded at Link's question about their plans.

They had no plans. The outpost only had five Assassins left. With so many Dark Elf Assassins surrounding them, and having lost the ground floor, the room on the second floor was the only other place they could go to.

Honestly, they were just waiting for their deaths.

They couldn't even hope for reinforcements. As the foremostitelligence agency in the Norton Kingdom, no one knew the situation in and around Gladstone better than they did.

The Dark Elves had planned their ambush for a very long time. From what they knew, Gladstone's defenses had all collapsed.

The powers that were within the city were doing their best just to save themselves. Frankly, even that would be a blessing. There was no way they'd spare the time to save others.

The room was silent for some time. Then, Annie, blushing slightly, shook her head. "Mr. Link. We want to break out of here. But as you know, there are too many enemies out there."

They hadn't thought of another plan other than to fight to their deaths.

But Link had come here just to save them. There were many Dark Elf Assassins out there, but he was confident that he could help the human Assassins out with his magic.

He pushed on, "If we managed to escape, what would you do next?"

Annie paused, pondering the question. "If we manage to get out of here, then I'd go to the city guard's barracks. There are more than 1,500 soldiers stationed there. If we have the city guard on our side, then we'll be able to suppress the Dark Elf Army!"

The commander of the city guard was called Carlos. He was a powerful Level-4 Warrior. However, he had passed away after a brief battle with an illness last night. Considering tonight's events, it was more than likely that he'd been poisoned by the Dark Elves. The city guard, merely a disordered pack of armed men without their leader, were completely incapable of maintaining the law and order of the city. Annie believed that as the daughter of the Iron Duke, so long as she managed to reach the barracks, she would be able to seize control of the city guard!

Link nodded. Instantly, new notifications appeared.

Part One of Rescuing the Legendary Assassin: Find the Legendary Assassincompleted.

Game Player receives 10 Omni Points

Begin Part Two of Mission: Breakthrough!

Mission Details: Break through the siege of Dark Elf Assassins!

The 10 Omni Points had come at just the right time. Link, who had been left with 15 Omni Points, now had 25 Omni Points. He now had more resources to fall back on.

He also had 65 Mana Points. Of the Assassins around him, two were heavily injured while another two had suffered only minor wounds. He walked over to the heavily wounded Assassins. "Don't move. I'll heal you."

Annie was apprehensive. She had never heard of Magicians performing healing magic before. At a glance from her, Ardivan explained, "Mr. Link's healing magic is very effective."

Annie relaxed.

Link then cast the spells. There were two flashes of light as he cast Elemental Healing on each of the heavily wounded Assassins. For that, he used 12 Mana Points.

Upon the completion of the spell, the Assassins' breathing slowed and steadied as some color returned to their ashen faces. The changes she saw made Annie sigh in relief.

"They should be able to move in half an hour's time," Link said quietly. Just then, the hairs on the back of his neck stood up. Something wasn't right! Right away, he lifted his wand and pointed it squarely at the door.

"Who is it!"

A shadowy figure appeared on the wooden stairs right outside the door. At the sight of Link's wand, it flitted to the side, blending into the darkness.

"Who's there?" Link was somewhat shaken up. Such quick movements most likely meant that the Dark Elf Assassin was powerful. He might have even mastered Battle Aura.

For a Magician, an Assassin who has mastered Battle Aura was a huge threat, ten times more so than a Warrior of the same skill level. This was because they were too fast, too agile for Magicians to predict what they would do next. Magicians needed to predict their opponents' movements because spellcasting took time. Even Link was unable to cast a spell instantaneously. A Level-0 Spell needed 0.1 seconds, a Level-1 Spell needed 0.3 seconds, and a Level-2 Spell needed a full second. If the Magician was unable to predict his opponents' movements accurately, he would have to rely on sheer luck.

But you lived only once. How could one rely on just luck?

Annie turned and shielded Link from what lay beyond the door. Her expression was serious. "It's the Dark Elf Assassin Leader. He's Level-3!"

A Level-3 fighter who had already mastered Battle Aura. He was formidable indeed.

Because Annie stood right in front of him, Link easily saw her information.

Annie Abel

Level-3 Elite Assassin

Battle Arts: The Shadow Form

Battle Skills: Speed Burst, Dagger Storm, Shadow Dance, Strangle.

After reviewing her information, Link felt slightly more at peace. As a Legendary Assassin to be, Annie Abel was probably just as strong, if not stronger than the Dark Elf Assassin Leader. Otherwise, the MI3 wouldn't have been able to keep the large number of Dark Elf Assassins at bay.

If Link, with his current strength, had to face the Dark Elf Assassin Leader alone, he would most likely be killed within a single second.

Assassins were also known as Magician slayers. Worse, the Dark Elf Assassin Leader was already 2 skill levels higher than Link. Alone, Link didn't stand a chance. But now, he had teammates. That made all the difference.

One century ago, a Magician of the Norton Kingdom once said, "If you give Magicians enough time to cast their spells, they can create wonders."

With teammates, Link would surely have enough time to cast his spells. At that thought, he felt his spirits lift.

More confident, he nodded. "I'll be careful."

He looked at the Assassins he had healed. Their bodies were much stronger than he had expected. Though they still looked weak, they were much better than before and had even managed to sit up on their own. Their conditions were improving rapidly.

"We'll break through in another 20 minutes," Link said quietly. The two Assassins should be able to fight by then. He would then take the time to replenish some Mana.

"What should we do?" Annie couldn't think of a way to break through the hordes of Dark Elf Assassins surrounding them. Not even with a Magician added into the equation.

But Link already had a plan in mind, he just didn't say it out loud to avoid being overheard by the enemy. Instead, he looked around for a different means to communicate. Seeing some graphite sticks on the table, he picked one up and began writing on the stone floor. "First, we kill the Dark Elf Assassin Leader!"

Annie disagreed. Taking the graphite stick from him, she quickly wrote, "Even if we manage to kill him, we'll still be surrounded. The fountain square is too wide and they've nearly put out the flames. We won't be able to avoid the attacks from their archers."

Link frowned. "Doesn't this building have a secret passage?" he wrote back.

How could information agencies like the MI3 have just a single exit? It should have multiple.

Annie smiled bitterly and went on writing. "The escape passage was found out. They bribed one of our external Assassins. The passage collapsedthey bombed it."

That was unexpected, but it made sense. Otherwise, Annie and her team wouldn't have been stuck on the second floor like that. Link thought it over and came up with a different plan. "My magic can handle their arrows, so we'll only need to deal with their close range attacks. I should also be able to stop them from getting close to us easily. Do you think you'll be able to fend them off like that?" He scribbled hastily.

His initial plan had been to use a Level-1 Lesser Whirlwind Spell to defend against the arrows. But now that he had 25 Omni Points, he planned to purchase a Level-2 Spell.

Level-2 Spells were far stronger than Level-1 Spells. They would have higher chances of escaping successfully if Link used Level-2 Spells.

Annie's eyes lit up. "We'll definitely be able to break out of here!" she wrote back.

She had complete confidence in her own skills. All she had been worried about were the Dark Elves' arrows.

Link nodded. "That's good. Now, let's think of a plan to get rid of the Dark Elf Assassin Leader."

"What should we do?" asked Annie. Without her realizing, the Magician who had appeared out of nowhere had become the cornerstone of their little makeshift team.

Link smiled as he wrote back a response. "Can you pinpoint the Dark Elf Assassin Leader's exact location?"

"Yes! I can feel him!" Annie nodded earnestly. Powerful Assassins had an awareness of each other. It was rather easy for Annie to locate him because she was, though just by a hair, stronger than he. Further, his appearance earlier had narrowed down his possible whereabouts.

Link was thrilled. "Draw out the layout of the first floor and tell me where he is!"

That was easy. Sketching was a basic but important requirement of being an intelligence agent. With just a few strokes, Annie produced the first floor's layout. She then went on to produce a 3D plan of the first floor from a 45-degree angle, showing the structure of the floor quite clearly.

Link examined it for a few seconds before closing his eyes to recreate it in his mind. "And where is he now?" he scribbled.

Annie cocked her head and listened closely. After about three seconds, she tapped the 3D plan lightly before writing, "Not far. He's on the stairway landing. The location I give you won't be further off than two feet!"

Link's skill with mental images proved its usefulness as he imagined the Dark Elf Assassin Leader's location. Nevertheless, he was quite aware that he wouldn't be able to take out the Dark Elf Leader on his own. Level-0 Spells wouldn't stand a chance against an agile Level-3 Assassin, and Level-1 Spells used too much Mana. He needed to save as much Mana as possible for later, so that wouldn't do. He needed someone to cooperate with him!

"If I use magic to hinder his movements, what are your chances of killing him?"

Annie looked up towards the ceiling, pondering. After a couple seconds she replied, "If none of the other elves interfere, I will kill him!"

Link nodded. "Don't worry. They won't."

There was just one stair landing where the stairs took a turn. It was a small, tight space. His Fireballs would be enough to keep the other Dark Elf Assassins at bay.

"Then, we'll begin once your injured Assassins are able to move properly!" Link scribbled, finalizing it.

By this time, the light from outside the window had dimmed as the Dark Elves had put out most of the flames. The chaos earlier was also in the midst of settling.

As the time passed, the Dark Elves grew more restless, attacking them from time to time. Their patience was obviously wearing thin.

The injured Assassins recovered much faster than Link had expected. They were able to stand and walk after just another ten minutes. Though still weak, they had regained some combat capabilities.

"Commander, we're still recovering but we're good enough to set out," one of them said.

Annie looked at Link, who had his eyes closed, conserving his energy. Though his Mana had only recovered by 3 Points throughout this time, he now had 58 Mana Points. It was enough.

Even with his eyes closed, he could feel Annie's gaze on him. The strength of his soul, fortified by The God of Light, made Link's senses exceptionally sensitive. Opening his eyes, he nodded.

Let the escape begin!

## 13. Summoning the Hailstorm

Gladstone City, the Old City Quarters, the MI3 outpost.

The Dark Elf Assassins' patience had worn out. Their leader hid silently on the landing of the stairs leading up to the second floor, waiting for his subordinates to fall into place.

They should have launched their main attack half an hour ago, but unexpectedly, two allies of their opponents had appeared, setting fire to the buildings around them. It had forced them to spend manpower on putting out the rapidly spreading flames around the fountain square, throwing their plans into disarray.

But now that the fire had been put out, it was finally time to put an end the confrontation.

Ting! Ting! Ting!

The Dark Elf Assassin Leader heard the distinct clash of weapons from somewhere outside the stone building. It was the signal they'd agreed upon, signaling that the Dark Elves there were already in place.

Three more positions left. The Dark Elf Assassin Leader thought to himself. His plan was simple. When all his subordinates were in place, blocking their opponents' escape routes, they would shoot fire arrows throw the windows and into the room where their opponents hid. Then, three Dark Elf Assassins would break down the eastern wall of the room, letting more of the elves into the midst of the chaos. While the powerful human female Assassin was engaged, he would barge in through the door, capturing her alive quickly!

Annie Abel. I wonder what that sly old duke's expression will be when he finds out that his only daughter has been captured. Hahaha. The Dark Elf Assassin Leader sneered coldly to himself.

Capturing Annie Abel was an important objective in this ambush of Gladstone.

Out of the blue, three white, glowing orbs shot out of the room. Gliding in a smooth arc, they shot out towards the Dark Elf Assassin Leader's head.

His pupils constited as he took in the attack.

Fireballs! It's that Magician!

Fireballs were just Level-0 Spells. The Dark Elf Assassin Leader was just slightly taken aback. Composing himself, Battle Aura enveloped him in a faint gray glow. Then, he moved.

His speed was leaps and bounds beyond the average person's limits. His torso tited abruptly, the dagger in his left hand shooting out with deadly accuracy. He was as quick as a flash of lightning, storming towards one of the fireballs.

With a light poof, he hit the fireball, which had been flying in an unpredictable path! It exploded into a harmless cloud of sparks.

One down. Two more to go.

This time, the Dark Elf Assassin Leader didn't use his dagger. He lifted a foot, the gray glow at its tip growing brighter, to kick the second ball of flame.

It extinguished with another poof!

One last fireball remained. The Assassin swung his arm up to cover his face, protecting his eyes.

Bang! It smashed into his arm, exploding into a ball of flame, yet it barely managed to shake his arm.

What a joke, using Level-0 Spells against me, the Dark Elf Assassin Leader thought contemptuously.

Within a split second, his contempt turned to horror.

When he removed his arm, he saw that a figure, covered by a hazy glow had charged forward within six feet of him. The Dark Elf Assassin Leader recognized it to be a special kind of Battle Aura.

The figure was much more petite than he wasonly about 5'5'' in height, but they were fast. It took only a split second to travel the distance between them, bringing two ice-cold gusts of wind as they swung their daggers at him.

Shit! It's Annie! This is the Battle Skill, Dagger Storm! The Dark Elf Assassin Leader's heart shook.

Dagger Storm was a classical Assassin Battle Skill. Once activated, it would stab the target's vitasseveral times within a split second. Augmented by Battle Aura, the speed was even faster, such as now. The daggers in Annie's hands blurred with the sheer speed in which they moved.

But the Assassin Leader wasn't a normal person either, after all. With his life in danger, he gave it his all and countered with the same Battle Skill, Dagger Storm.

The rapid clashes of their weapons rang out in the dark, bringing up a flurry of sparks that lit up the narrow stairway landing from time to time.

Dagger Storm against Dagger Storm.

Annie stabbed her dagger eight times almost simultaneously, each time clashing with the Assassin Leader's own dagger. Her Battle Skill was countered perfectly.

The Dark Elf Assassins on the first floor reacted. The two closest to the fight rushed to the aid of their leader.

But their leader wasn't the only one who had help.

Fwoosh! Fwoosh! Two more fireballs flew out of the room on the second floor. Making sharp turns at the stairway landing, they each shot towards a Dark Elf Assassin.

Recognizing the location of the source of a sound was an essential skill for Battle Mages. If a Magician's attacks were only limited to his field of vision, it would really be a waste of magic.

With the fireballs flying right in their faces, the two Dark Elf Assassins had no choice but to stop and defend themselves.

Link's spell had bought Annie more time.

The Dark Elf Assassin Leader had managed to counter her Dagger Storm, though largely due to luck. And he had used most of his strength on the same Battle Skill. Annie could feel that his reactions were slower, though just by a hair. She, on the other hand, felt perfectly fine and in fact, was still at her peak.

She didn't use any Battle Skills after the first Dagger Storm. Quick as lightning, she swung a dagger towards her opponent's neck, while her other dagger stabbed towards his chest.

The Dark Elf Assassin Leader had countered her Battle Skill with difficulty. His arms were numb and he was unable to react in time.

Sensing the impending danger of the daggers before him, he was filled with dread. It's over! he thought to himself.

Ting! Pshhh. He managed to block the stab towards his heart, but despite extending his neck as far back as he could, he was unable to duck the attack to his throat since Annie had adjusted her blade accordingly.

The cold dagger sliced through his throat, dissecting his trachea. Destructive Battle Aura surged around his wound, making a mess of the surrounding tissue.

Blood spurted out, but Annie had already backed off. Not a drop landed on her. By the time she had retreated to the second floor, the Dark Elf Assassin Leader, clutching his throat, had fallen to his knees with a thud. Then, his upper body landed heavily on the ground.

He was dead.

There was no need for Annie to check the results. The sensation of her dagger slicing through his flesh had told her all she needed to know. Back in the room, she said quietly, "It is done!"

Immediately, Link ordered, "Let's go. Now!"

The moment the Dark Elf Assassin Leader died would be the moment of chaos for the Dark Elf Assassins and also the best time for Link and the other MI3 agents to break through.

As he charged, Link shouted in his mind,

Purchase Spell: Lesser Hailstorm!

Lesser Hailstorm

Level-2 Spell

Mana Cost: 30 Points

Effect: Summon an icy draft that spins around the spellcaster like a whirlwind. The radius is more than ten feet. Any opponents that go within ten feet of the spellcaster will be attacked by drafts and ice shards. The spell lasts for 5 minutes or until the spellcaster cancels it.

If Level-0 Spells were just large firecrackers and Level-1 Spells were able to crush normal defenses; Level-3 Spells, which cost as much as 30 Mana Points to cast, were enough to make the average person cower in fear.

Link's Lesser Hailstorm and Master Holmes' monstrous Earth Hound were both formidable forces that never appeared in normal lives.

Link still had 48 Mana Points left after using five Fireballs and 10 Mana Points during Annie's battle. It was enough for him to use the Lesser Hailstorm once.

When he had successfully purchased the spell, Annie had already reached the stairway landing where she came face to face with the two Dark Elf Assassins from earlier.

The two elves were both Level-2 Elites. They were powerful, but to Annie, they were as weak as newborn kittens.

Annie moved in a flash, the daggers in her hand flitted like butterflies, leaving one Assassin clutching his chest and the other grabbing at his throat as he fell to the ground.

The rest of the MI3 Assassins rushed to the first floor where they first entered the hall.

The six Dark Elf Assassins positioned there attacked them from all directions.

Annie had no problems dealing with two of thembut six, she would be putting her life on the line if she tried to fend off six of them. No matter how strong she was, it would be difficult to guard against so many.

But she wasn't alone.

Her five Assassins, including Ardivan, formed a circle around Link, protecting him against the Dark Elf Assassins that came at them.

It was now was six against six. Though two of their own Assassins were still very weak, they had Annie, a Level-3 Assassin with Battle Aura, and Link, who used Fireballs to stall them.

Annie killed three Dark Elf Assassins single-handedly. Link cast two Fireballs to save his teammates when they were in danger.

With no one in the hall left to stop them, they rushed towards the door. Outside, there would be more than 90 Dark Elf Assassins. Their hidden guards would be everywhere. Silent arrows could come at them from any dark corner.

They would be in true danger.

All of them turned to look at Link. He took a deep breath and calmly told them, "Gather around me. Don't go further than six feet from me. I'm going to cast a spell!"

If they stood too far away from him, they would get attacked by the Lesser Hailstorm.

The Assassins nodded. They were all well-trained fighters. The six of them formed a circle around Link, leaving less than two feet of space in between each other. Luckily, the circle was less than six feet in diameter.

Link raised his wand. The Mana within him surged into the wand in the form of a cold, clear glow from his hand. The new moon that embellished the tip of the wand glowed a piercing, icy-white.

The white light lit up the night. As it did, cold winds seemed to appear out of thin air.

Fwoosh! Violent winds, snowflakes, and ice-shards rapidly grew to form a whirlwind more than 15 feet wide.

Within it, sharp shards of ice danced around like daggers, ruthlessly cutting anything that entered their paths. As the whirlwind blew through the room, ice shards broke with crashing sounds as they smashed into the objects in the room.

In that moment, Link, holding his wand up high, looked just like the God of Wind.

Even the Assassins of the MI3, who had seen many things in their lives, were stunned. They stood still, full of awe.

"What are you waiting for!? Charge!!" Link cried out harshly. He could only hold the spell for five minutes. Every second was precious.

The Assassins were brought back to their senses. Gathering tightly around Link, they charged out of the MI3 outpost and outito the open fountain square.

## 14. Lets Do It!

The Dark Elf Assassins were shocked at the sight of the icy storm appearing at the door of the MI3 outpost.

"What the hell is that?"

"It's magic!"

"Where is the leader? Where ish

The Dark Elf Assassins couldn't see their leader from where they stood. They couldn't see anything through the spinning shards of ice either; there was no way their leader was in there.

Their leader had probably died.

The obvious conclusion threw the Dark Elf Assassins into a panicked chaos. Some hesitated, others attacked, and some yelled in confusion. It was a mess.

Link brought the MI3 Assassins out of the metal gate and into the fountain square.

Fwoosh! Arrows shot towards them.

"Shoot, shoot! They're inside! Shoot them to death!" a Dark Elf cried.

More arrows came at them, but to no avail. The hailstorm not only blew away their arrows, but also blocked the elves from even seeing their targets. The human Assassins within it were quite safe. All they needed to do was to stay on the alert and cast away any stray arrows that might have made their way in.

The hailstorm continued moving forward. In that moment the Dark Elf Assassins knew that their arrows had been utterly useless.

"Charge! Kill them!"

"The hailstorm is too dangerous. It's full of ice shards. Charge into that?"

"Are you scared? You coward!"

All sorts of arguments broke forth. Without a leader to guide them, the large crowd of Dark Elf Assassins was just like headless geese.

But there were still hot-blooded, reckless fellows among them.

More than ten Dark Elf Assassins charged at the icy whirlwind, masked and leaning forward as they ran. They went in head-on.

But they regretted it the moment they stepped footito the hailstorm.

The icy winds were sharp, and there were countless dagger-like shards within them. The attacks that rained on them couldn't be fended off with just techniques alone.

The Lesser Hailstorm spanned slightly more than 15 feet with a concentrated radius of less than ten feet. The true zone where it took effect was just a little more than three feet wide. It was in this zone where one would be torn to shreds.

Once they charged in, the Dark Elf Assassins were attacked from all directions.

Some immediately sustained critical injuries and fell to the ground. Others were luckier to have made their way into the center, but even so, they shivered with cold, and they were bruised all over. What waited for them was no welcome ceremony, but the blades of the human Assassins!

The first wave of Assassins was crushed within five seconds.

When the hailstorm moved away, their mutilated corpses were left on the ground, leaving the others speechless.

The remaining Dark Elf Assassins became silent. Their bravery fled. No one else dared to charge at it.

After that, a small group of the Dark Elf Assassins followed the hailstorm from afar, another group of them shot arrows towards it every now and then, while yet another group just stood around, not knowing what to do.

"The leader's over here. He's dead!" a Dark Elf cried out from the first floor of the MI3 outpost.

Link successfully brought Annie and the other human Assassins out of the fountain square. Three minutes later, they found themselves in a small alley.

It was narrow, making it difficult for arrows to ambush them and significantly reducing the amount of danger they faced.

"Continue. Go to the hotel, it has a secret passage!" Annie said suddenly. The secret passage there was privy to only core members. It probably hadn't been found since it was in a such an inconspicuous location. Link immediately turned towards the hotel.

There were Dark Elf Assassins at the bar inside, but after witnessing the damage the hailstorm could do, they bolted when it started moving towards them.

The hotel was small and cramped. Seeing no trace of the Dark Elf Assassins, Link canceled the spell.

Annie waved a hand. "Follow me."

She led the way to the kitchen in the back of the hotel. Several corpses laid on the kitchen floorthe chef and some workers. The entrance to the hotel's cellar stood in a corner of the kitchen.

Annie took a deep breath, opened the cellar door, dragged the chef's corpse over and threw it in. The corpse landed with a thump. It looked as if there weren't any Dark Elf Assassins in there.

"Safe!" Annie gestured before entering the cellar. Link followed closely behind her, and the other human Assassins walked behind him.

Annie explained the situation to Link as they walked deeper into the cellar. "The passage is in the deepest part of the cellar. It's a real maze, with only one correct path which leads to a house about 650 feet away. It should be far enough for us to shake the Dark Elf Assassins off our trail!"

Link nodded. They would probably be safe by that point.

Actually, the game server had already given him a new notification about that.

Rescuing the Legendary Assassin completed.

Game player receives 15 Omni Points.

The next part of the mission has not been activated.

With the 15 Omni Points, Link's total Omni Points had gone back to twenty. This gave him much more leeway.

They had reached the deepest part of the cellar. Annie fumbled around the wall behind a huge wine casket. Finally, she opened a very cleverly hidden secret door. Climbing into it, she told Link, "Mr. Link, you've done us all a great favor. We'll take it from here and make sure you reach your destination safely."

Ardivan piped up, "You saved my life. I will be your strongest shield!"

The other human Assassins nodded in agreement.

From this short journey, they had realized the importance of having a Magicianwith magic, they had broken through a siege of Dark Elf Assassins more than ten times their number!

It was nothing short of a miracle. No one would believe it even if they told them.

As long as they had Link, they would be able to achieve so many things that had originally seemed impossible. How could they put such a precious, important member of their team in danger?

Link relaxed a little, knowing that he could rest.

He had been tensed this entire time. Using magic in combat was also especially taxing on the mind. Not a single thing could go wrong. He really was tired.

Luckily, their passage through the tunnel was uneventful. Five minutes later, they walked out of the passage and into a normal-looking house.

A young couple, who were external members of the MI3, greeted them. They didn't seem surprised to see Annie and her team. Noticing that all of them were hurt, the husband brought out some clean bandages and medicine while his wife cleaned and wrapped the Assassins' wounds. She seemed quite good at it and had probably received professional training.

It was a pity that they didn't have any Magic Potions. Otherwise, Link might have been able to replenish his Mana more quickly.

When she opened Ardivan's bandages, which had been wrapped hastily, the woman cried out, "The wound has healed so quickly!"

At this, Ardivan gave Link a grateful nod.

Annie was surprised. She hadn't thought that Link's healing magic would be so effective. She turned to look at him.

Link was slumped against the wall. His eyes were heavy and his arms were crossed before his chest. His wand had been stuck in his belt rather simply. Weariness was etched all over his young face.

Annie knew that spellcasting was a very taxing thing to do. This was why Magicians placed a lot of emphasis on restand it was already close to one o'clock in the morning. Within just one night, the young Magician had destroyed the Portal Tower, escaped the Dark Elf Assassins within the Magic Academy, and then had come to their aid, all with little to no rest.

He must be exhausted.

For some reason, Annie's heart softened at the sight of him like that. She wanted to hug him close and let him rest.

This was a completely foreign sensation to her. Blinking rapidly to bring her back to reality, Annie herself was shocked at the thought. What is wrong with me? Why would I think something like that?

Touching her face discreetly, she could feel the heat on her cheeks.

Ardivan looked at her curiously. "Commander, are you hurt? Why is your face so red?"

"I'm fine." Annie panicked a little, as if her thoughts had been found out. She pulled a straight face. "We don't have much time. Rest properly!"

"Yes." Ardivan didn't dare to disobey her instructions.

The small team rested for a full ten minutes in the house. Their wounds were taken care of and with enough healing tonics, they were energetic and almost as good as new.

"Commander, should we get going?" Ardivan asked softly. According to their plan, their next destination would be the city guards' barracks.

Annie looked at Link, hesitating. She wanted to let him rest a little more.

But Link had already opened his eyes. "Let's go!" he said.

"But you" Annie said in spite of herself, worry brimming her eyes.

"I'm perfectly fine. My Mana has recovered somewhat since I've rested. It'll be enough to handle some things. We should go!" Link urged.

He only had 15 Mana Points, but he had 20 Omni Points in total. He'd be able to handle anything, even if that Holmes came after him!

As he stood up, a new notification flashed.

Mission triggered: Escort!

Mission Details: Escort the Human Assassin Leader, Annie Abel, to the city guards' Camp of Gladstone City.

Mission Reward: 30 Omni Points.

30 Omni Points; that was a very high mission reward.

As Link completed these missions, the objective of the game server became clear. It didn't want Link to just escape from Gladstone City like in the game, it wanted him to stop the massacre and save the city!

Should he accept it? Link hesitated. If he did, he would be putting his life on the line.

His mind flashed back to the images of the young and beautiful magic teacher Vera struggling to live, Ardivan, covered in blood, fighting the Dark Elf Assassins, Mary, heavily wounded and hiding in the alley, first asking whether the news had been sent out

The Assassins of the MI3 were doing their best to save Gladstone City, not caring for their own safety. Link suddenly felt that fighting for this didn't seem all that bad.

This time, I'll give it my all! He told himself softly.

To get stronger, and to save the city, those were his goals.

Straightening up, he clutched the New Moon Wand tightly. The past series of battles had affirmed his conviction.

## 15. He Must Be Stopped!

Gladstone City, the Flower Distit.

A monstrous black hound sniffed the ground as it ran, followed by the Dark Elf Magician, Holmes, and some Dark Elf Assassins.

Tracking was a meticulous artit couldn't be rushed. Only after one full hour, did the Dark Elves trace Link's path to the port where Link had set out on boat.

Then, they faced a problemLink's scent had ended there.

The Earth Hound went in circles outside and around the port, letting out small howls. It seemed to be quite frustrated.

"Master, he must have gotten on a boat. What do we do?" Terry asked.

"Obviously!" Holmes sneered. He stood by the dock and stared into the waters, thinking.

The next step came to him quickly. "Go, follow the river downstream. He can't have stayed on the river. He will have embarked somewhere."

"Master, what if he went upstream?" Terry asked, unsure.

Holmes felt that that the Warrior was downright stupid. Throwing him a sideways glance, he retorted, "There is probably a 100:1 ratio of Magicians who don't know how to row a boat versus a single one that does. So, do you think that we should look for him upstream or downstream?"

"Downstream."

Terry was convinced. Rowing against the currents was a skill, and hard work at that. Even he as a Warrior wasn't particularly good at it, let alone a weak-bodied Magician.

The Dark Elves followed along the riverbank, ignoring the people running amok in the Flower Distit. Truth be told, no one dared to approach the Assassins anyways.

About twenty minutes later, the Earth Hound let out a low howl and picked up its pace. It lowered its head and began to sniff the ground again.

"We found it!" Holmes cried out in glee. Tracking was actually a gamble. No one could tell how it would turn out, but this time he'd won.

Holmes could feel the respect and awe in the gazes of the other Dark Elves. He rather enjoyed it.

Without even realizing, he straightened his back and held his head higher.

Tracking Link has led them to the entrance of the marketplace. Though some figures darted around, the streets were, for the most part, desolate. But, the less people there were around, the less scents there were that could possibly impede their task. The Earth Hound tracked at a much faster speed than before.

After another hour, Holmes and the Dark Elf Assassins stood at the entrance to the Old City Quarters.

"This isn't good. He headed to the Old City Quarters. Could he have come here to save the female leader of the MI3?" Holmes frowned slightly. He knew that the Commander of the MI3 was another one of the Dark Elf Assassins' main targets. Their superiors had asked for her to be kept alive, not dead like the rest.

"Hurry up!" Holmes shouted. He had a bad feeling about this.

There were even fewer people around the Old City Quarters. As a result, the Earth Hound ran faster. Ten minutes later, Holmes reached the fountain square.

What they saw there was appalling.

The buildings around the square had been reduced to rubble by a fire. Smoke still rose from the buildings' remains, a sign that it hadn't been long since the flames had died.

More than ten bloody, mangled corpses laid on the square. Though it was difficult to tell from the bodies themselves, their build and rags of clothing that still remained on them identified them as Dark Elves.

Holmes, seeing the puddles of water, went up for a closer look. Using the back of his hand to touch it, he found that it was icy cold, some ice sludge still remaining.

"The power of magic of the Lesser Hailstorm Spell. He was here!" Holmes frowned yet again. Not just because the other Magician had been here, but also because he sensed the power of high-level magic.

The Lesser Hailstorm was a Level-2 Spell. The young human Magician was a Level-2 Magician, not a Level-1 Magician as he had thought!

He's the same skill level as myself. This made things a little trickier.

But Holmes was confident in his Magic. The human Magician is young. He has no experience. Perhaps he has mastered the spell, but he definitely doesn't have superior magic abilities. I will definitely be able to beat him if I face him!

Dabbling in magic for as long as he had, Holmes had his own understanding of the art. That, was the source of his confidence.

Footsteps rang out behind him. He turned. It was Terry, with another Dark Elf Assassin. Holmes instantly recognized that the elf before him hadn't been part of his tracking team from earlier. That meant that he must have seen the battle at the fountain square!

"What happened here?" Holmes asked.

Shock and fear were still apparent on the Assassin's face. "It was a Magician! Dreadful Magic! He summoned a Hailstorm and killed the leader! He escaped with Annie Abel. Dark Mother above, it was horrible!"

"Which way did they go?" Holmes pressed on.

"I don't know. We lost them at a hotel. We went in, but we didn't find them. We couldn't find a secret passage though we searched all over for it." The Assassin looked miserable, fear hinting at his expression. He knew that he would be heavily punished for failing their mission.

"The hotel must have a secret passage!" Holmes looked towards the building in the distance, then back at the six-foot tall Earth Hound, and cursed, "Damn hotel!"

The Earth Hound was too big to fit through hotel's door.

But Holmes had a plan. Digging a secret passage is difficult. It won't be too long, and there isn't any significance to building it longer anyway. Six hundred to one thousand feet should be the maximum, he thought.

At this, he asked the Assassin, "How many of you are left?"

"Seventy-six of us," the Assassin replied.

"And where are they now?"

"We split up to look for the humans."

"Very good." Holmes paced for a while. Suddenly, something occurred to him. Why should I follow behind their ass?What is the first thing they'll do since they've escaped? Why can't I just lay in wait for them?

There was another important question; where would they most likely go?

The answer screamed in the face. It was painfully obvious.

"They're most likely going to go to the barracks of the city guard! Once they gain control of it, then it won't be something as simple as escaping. They'll even be able to turn the tables on us! No, that cannot happen, damn it!"

Holmes felt his heartbeat quicken. He found that it was no longer important whether the Magician or Annie Abel escaped. What was important, was that the city guard remained in chaos and useless.

Otherwise, when the human Magician and the head of the MI3 outpost entered the city guard, they would be unstoppable. They, as enemies who had infiltrated the city, would certainly die!

"Gather arms! We're going to Horus Castle!"

Horus Castle was the family castle of the Lord of the city, Hessman Horus. It sat in a valley, the furthest valley west of the city, in the northernmost region of the Old City Quarters.

The Lord of the city, Duke Hessman, had already been done in. His womanizing ways had been the end of him.

Three hours earlier, he had died in bed, killed by a beautiful human Assassin who had been painstakingly bred and trained by the Dark Elves for more than ten years. Truth be told, every human in the Horus Castle had been wiped out.

The city guards' barracks were quite close to Horus Castle. The Commander of the city guards had been poisoned a day ago. With most of its officers dead, the city guard was leaderless. Perhassome had tried to restore the law and order, but they didn't hold enough weight to pose a threat to the Dark Elves.

But now, Annie Abel and the Magician were both prominent figures, enough so that they could easily take hold of the situation. They had to be stopped.

In every race, Magicians held very high social statuses. Though not the official commander of the operation, Holmes had become the de-facto leader when the Commander and First Officer had died. The Dark Elf Assassins, needing someone to rally behind, naturally gathered around him. There was a total of 150 of them, including the Assassins Holmes had brought from the Magic Academy.

This formed most of the Assassins who had infiltrated Gladstone City. Helmed by a Level-2 Magician, they were a force to be reckoned with.

"Hurry up! We might still have time!" Holmes roared. With a snap of his fingers, the Earth Hound crouched, allowing him to climb onto it. Then the hound sprinted off.

The Dark Elf Assassins ran behind it.

The Earth Hound was fast, very fast. Soon, Holmes left the Assassins in the dust. It was risky, but he didn't care. Holmes believed that he had the power to deal with that human Magician, even if he had MI3 allies!

The Dark Elves, in their haste to stop Link and Annie, didn't notice a petite figure watching them quietly from a secluded corner of the fountain square.

It was the human Assassin Mary, whom Link had saved earlier. After the Elemental Healing and more than half an hour of rest, she had regained most of her strength.

"This isn't good. The Commander and that Magician are in danger; I need to warn them!"

Mary slipped into the hotel and down into the cellar. Deftly opening the door to the secret passage, she sped forward. She appeared at the exit, in the house within no time.

The young couple looked at her with surprise.

"Has the Commander been here?" Mary asked, rushing.

The husband nodded. "She was here. But she left not even three minutes ago."

"In which direction did she go?"

"I'm not too sure, but it was probably towards the North." As an external member of the MI3, he knew not to ask more than he was told.

"I understand. Seal the passage permanently, immediately. Anyone else who comes out from there is definitely an enemy!" Mary raised her voice as she said this.

The couple nodded hastily.

## 16. The Power of Supreme Magical Skills!

It was half-past one in the morning by the time Mary had caught up to Link and the others.

In the game, this had been the time when the Dark Elf Army had launched their main attack. But now, thanks to Link, it was peaceful and quiet outside the city.

However, Link knew deep down in his heart that destroying the Portal Tower could only stall them for a little while. Their time was running out.

Mary continued on towards the city guards' barracks along with Link and the other human Assassins. She told them all about what she had seen and heard at the fountain square, leaving everyone speechless.

More than 150 Dark Elf Assassins was certainly a force to be feared, but even more so, was the Dark Elf Magician.

This was the real world, not a game. The imbalance of power couldn't be adjusted.

To outsiders, Magicians had wisdom far beyond the reach of other beings. Their magic was mysterious and powerful. Fear struck the heart of any Warrior facing a Magician simply because there was no way to know what the Magician had in store for you.

Very often, people were killed without even knowing what happened.

Their sheer intelligence was the reason for their complete domination.

There was a silence among them. Annie turned to look at Link. "Mr. Link, what do you think?"

To face a Magician, one needed another Magician. Annie had never been so grateful that Link was there. Otherwise, her subordinates would have been dead and she, captured. The possibility of turning the tides wouldn't have even been a thought to consider.

Link, fortunately, knew all about his opponent.

The Dark Elf Magician was named Holmes. He was a Level-2 Elite Magician specializing in both Elemental and Summoning Magic as well as a member of the Silver Moon Mage Council.

In contrast to the teachers at The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings, he was a true Battle Mage. As far as he knew, Holmes could use at least one Supreme Magic SkillSwift Spellcasting!

Under that Supreme Magic Skill, Holmes could cast Level-1 Elemental Spell, Fireballs with incredible speed. His best record was casting 10 Fireballs within 1 second.

Level-1 Fireballs were the upgraded version of Level-0 Fireballs. They were also significantly more powerful. If Level-0 Fireballs were large firecrackers, Level-1 Fireballs were grenades.

In his last life, there had been a team of ten novices who had attempted to take Holmes down as they escaped Gladstone. They had been killed insteadall ten of them, with just a barrage of Fireballs.

Because of that, Holmes had gotten the nickname of Fire Canon.

All this information flashed through Link's head. Link compared himself to what he knew of Holmes. He knew not a single Supreme Magic Skill, though he had 20 Omni Points, 15 MP (Mana Points). Oh, and he also had a Level-2 Defensive Magic Itemthe bracelet.

It seemed that he stood a chance as long as he had enough Mana!

At the thought, Link used 10 Omni Points on Maximum Mana Points without hesitation. He felt warmth envelope his body he was full of Mana once more. Taking a look at himself, his Maximum Mana was now 241 Points and he held 118 Mana Points.

That was enough for him to go inobattle.

Link thought quickly. "The Magician is very powerful. But I know his strength roughly from what Mary described. Don't worry. I can handle him!"

Holmes was just a Level-2 Magician. Link was once an Archmage, a Legendary Pinnacle. How could he lose in a battle of magic?

Annie breathed easy, "That's good."

The other Assassins also breathed a sigh of relief.

After running for about five more minutes, they saw the raised flag of the city guard. The Lord's castle could also be seen in the distance.

"Faster! Faster! We'll reach soon!" Annie yelled.

This urged the Assassins forward, their steps becoming quicker by the second.

Just then, Annie said, "Listen. There are footsteps behind us. Someone's approaching, and very quickly!"

Startled, Link was about to turn and look, but within that split second, he sensed a great wave of Mana coming towards them at an unbelievable speed.

He sensed the danger within it, as if a beast was reared up and poised to attack him from behind, its teeth already touching his neck!

The hairs on his neck stood on end.

The sense of peril was so pressing that Link barely paid attention to anything else and just activated his Band of Protection.

Magic lights flashed. A crystal clear glow quickly spread out from his wrist and over the rest of his body, blending into the gray robe he wore. His robe was covered with a thick, dense layer of light. Magic runes swirled within the light, making his robe appear extraordinarily grand and elaborate.

Guarding Barrier

Level-2 Spell

Effect: Strong defense against magical attacks but weak against physical attacks.

As soon as the spell took effect, Link caught a glimpse of a flash of fire from the corner of his eye.

At the same time, he felt a push from behind him, making him stumble forward by a few steps. The push had felt mildly hot, and with it, an explosion had rung out from behind.

That wasn't all.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The explosions continued on, sparks and flames bursting out everywhere. Link spun around and saw the bluish-white, fist-sized fireballs whizzing through the air, each heading towards a human Assassin.

Each fireball exploded with a huge bang, flames spreading outito orbs that spanned more than three feet.

Within just two seconds, almost twenty Level-1 Fireballs had flown at them from almost 200 feet away.

Except for Annie, who managed to duck and defend against the balls of flame with her incredible speed and the strength of her Battle Aura, the rest of the human Assassins flew out from the impact of the explosions.

Ardivan and Mary weren't spared either. Charred from the flames, they were thrown out 15 to 20 feet. They spat out blood before passing out.

In just one blow, almost all the Assassins were wiped out. With the exception of Annie, they all had been fatally wounded.

Such was the power of a Magician with Supreme Magical Skills!

"It's Holmes! He doesn't just have the Swift Spellcasting ability; he also has the skill Distant Spellcasting as well!"

Holmes casted his Fireballs from almost 200 feet away, more than twice the normal range for an average Magician. It was unnerving!

Link, barely having any time to think or feel sad, countered immediately. He pointed his wand at a brick by the roadside. "Vector Throw!"

His opponent was too far, beyond his spellcasting range. His magical attacks wouldn't be able to reach. The only attack that stood a chance at hitting Holmes from this distance was Vector Throw.

The brick went flying with a whoosh towards the huge black figure in the distance. Link had already made out what it wasit was Holmes, sitting astride the Earth Hound he had summoned. He had come alone, before the other Dark Elves.

As an Archmage, Link had had an extraordinary grasp and control of his magic. His aim was exceptional, even using a semi-physical spell such as Vector Throw. The brick flew at Holmes' head.

Magicians' bodies weren't much stronger than commoners'. If he was hit, he would be severely injured if not die. Holmes urged the Earth Hound to duck to one side. Seizing his chance, Link slid over to Annie's side.

The Legendary Assassin to be had been awestruck by the terrifying display of magic. She hid, hyperventilating, in a corner. The mask on her face was gone, showing the fear on her white, delicate features. Her eyes brimmed with tears for her subordinates, whose life or death was still uncertain.

Without hesitation, Link raised a hand and brought it down with a hard slap across her face. The smack was cipand clear. With it, five finger marks appeared on Annie's face. The pain brought her back to her senses. Clutching her face, she stared at Link in disbelief and confusion.

"Go! Quickly, to the barracks! I'll stop him!" Link barked.

This was Gladstone City's only chance to change to course of history!

At this, his wand flashed. A beam of light wrapped around Annie. He casted the Level-1 Spell, the Cat's Agility!

"Then what about you?" Annie asked anxiously. She knew that Holmes wasn't too far behind, and there were more than 150 Dark Elf Assassins following behind! How would Link fight them all single-handedly?

"Stop worrying about me and go!"

He pushed her out. With another flash of his wand, he used the Level-1 Spell, Vector Throw on her.

Under the repelling force of the magic, Annie flew three feetito the air and into a second-story window.

"Link!"

Annie's sobbing shriek rang out from inside the window. She knew that Link had stayed back to stop the enemy from going after her. It meant that he had been ready to fight to his death.

The Magician prodigy had already saved her once tonight. And now, he would sacrifice his own life for her sake. The young girl's heart quivered, tears running down her face.

Link didn't hear her. His opponent was strong, but he had entered a serene calm and focused on his spellcasting.

His wand flashed with magic again as he casted Cat's Agility once more on himself. With a leap, Link shot out like a cat, charging towards Holmes.

Holmes could cast spells from much farther with his Distance Spellcasting ability. Therefore, Link needed to close the distance between them! Holmes, however, wouldn't let him get close so easily. Sitting astride the Earth Hound, he pointed his magic staff at Link and bellowed, "Fireball!"

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Under his Swift Spellcasting skill, fireballs rushed out of his staff, producing four of them almost instantaneously. They shot out towards Link in rapid succession.

Link was protected by the Guarding Barrier and impervious to the Fireballs, but the Guarding Barrier had its limitsit would disintegrate if it was hit by seven fireballs. He wouldn't let them hit him unnecessarily.

"Lesser Hailstorm!" Link cried.

An icy glow radiated from his wand. At the same time, Link ducked using Cat's Agility, successfully evading two incoming fireballs.

One second later, the Lesser Hailstorm took full effect. An Icy storm and hail swept around Link, closing off the narrow little alley.

If Holmes wanted to pass through, he would have to force his way through the storm. The high-speed Fireballs he heavily relied on would also have to pass through to attack Link.

But his Fireballs were just Level-1, while the Lesser Hailstorm was Level-2. The Lesser Hailstorm wouldn't give way without more than ten of Holmes Fireballs.

Holmes also didn't have much Mana left in him after having released 14 Level-1 Fireball Spells. He wouldn't have any Mana left if he continued using fireballs to break through the hailstorm. But he had plenty of battle experience under the belt, and so he countered Link's spell instantly. Pointing his staff towards the hailstorm, he roared, "Charge!"

The Earth Hound was a creature summoned from tightly knit Earth Elements and contained immense power. The Lesser Hailstorm was a chaotic mash of water and wind Elemental Magic. It might be able to damage the Earth Hound, but the beast would definitely be able to sink its teeth into the Magician, killing him before the storm disintegrated.

Once a Magician died, so did his magic.

Link and Holmes' battle was intense within just three seconds of their encounter. Victory and defeat, life and death could be all decided at any second!

## 17. Meeting the Demon Princess, Again.

Attacking Magician's magic was useless. The most effective way was actually to attack the Magician himself. Every Magician knew that; Holmes knew it, and so did Link.

Link reacted immediately at the sight of the monstrous six-foot tall hound bounding towards him.

"Grease!"

A faint beam of light shot out of the hailstorm, landing on the ground in front of the Earth Hound and spreading out like a puddle of oil. The ground of the alleyway instantly became as slippery as ice, stopping 15 feet before and after where Link stood.

"You and your little tricks!" Holmes sneered. Grease was a Level-0 Spell. Overcoming it was a simple task for other Magicians.

"Sand!"

Bright light shot out of Holmes' staff. A small whirlwind containing vast amounts of sand suddenly appeared in the small alley. The spell suddenly disintegrated when the whirlwind blew onto the surface affected by Grease, covering the surface with rough grains of sand.

The Earth Hound ran over the ground safely, rapidly approaching Link and reaching the hailstorm in no time. It charged into the Lesser Hailstorm fearlessly despite the sharp shards of ice.

Link was now 130 feet away from Holmes. It was still further than his spells could reach, but his target was Holmes, not the Earth Hound.

In response to the Earth Hound bounding at him, Link did two things.

First, he canceled the trailing effect of the Lesser Hailstorm on himself. Second, he leapt backwards and then to one side using Cat's Agility. Under the protection of Guarding Barrier, he left the safe zone of the Lesser Hailstorm and evaded the Earth Hound's attacks.

Leaving the hound to deal with the Lesser Hailstorm behind him, Link strode towards Holmes and pointed his wand at the ground behind him. "Vector Resistance Field!" he cried.

The air warped around the tip of Link's wand. At first glance, they looked like the heat waves left behind by a rocket.

The force field smashed onto the ground. Link, with one foot in the air after having taken a step forward, was pushed by the force field which had just bounced off of the ground. The rebound energy launched him high into the air.

Behind him, the Earth Hound turned. It had its eyes set on Link and Link alone. It rushed out of the Lesser Hailstorm and pounced at Link with its jaws wide open. But just then, Link shot forward, leaving it to close its jaws on thin air.

In that moment, Link flew towards Holmes at breakneck speed. The monstrous hound, however, caught up from behind, poised to bite Link's head off with just a snap of its jaw.

He would die when he landed. Link had only a fraction of a second to react!

Within that split second, Link focused his attention so intensely that the world around him seemed to slow down. Raising the New Moon Wand, he pointed at a fist-sized pebble on the ground.

Vector Throw! Vector Throw! Vector Throw!

Link had cast the Level-1 Spell three times within the blink of an eye!

A pebble flew off the ground towards Holmes each time he cast the spell. Despite taking only 0.3 seconds to cast, the pebbles flew swiftly and accurately towards their mark.

He hadn't been called an Archmage for nothing.

Throwing a pebble with Vector Throw, Link had never missed his markso long as it was within 100 feet.

Holmes' Swift Spellcasting ability was limited to casting Fireballs; those were his specialty. But each spell's mechanism was different. It was impossible for him, a mere Level-2 Magician, to perform a Swift Spellcasting skill with each of the countless spells in the universe. Thus, Holmes' spellcasting was far slower than Link's for all other spells.

Anticipating Link's next move, Holmes casted a defensive spell.

The reason was simple. His opponent was protected by a Level-2 Guarding Barrier. His Fireballs wouldn't be effective even if they managed to hit the human Magician. On the other hand, he himself would be vulnerable to the Vector Throws.

Holmes was a Magician, not a Warrior. Further, he was neither agile nor fortified with supporting spells such as the Cat's Agility. It would be difficult for him to duck or evade the oncoming, bullet-like pebbles.

The rocks were aimed right at his head. If even one of them hit their target, he would definitely be heavily wounded. He couldn't afford to let any of them get close!

He had neither enough time nor Mana to cast a Level-2 Spell. Holmes came to a quick decision.

"Ice Shield!"

Ice Shield

Level-1 Spell

Effect: Forms a shield of ice with water elements. An exceptional defense against both elemental magic and physical attacks.

The Vector Throw had been used on a pebble. It was a classic physical attack. Using the Ice Shield was the right choice.

Throughout this exchange, the only mistake Holmes had made, was to underestimate Link's spellcasting speed.

Link had cast the Level-1 Vector Throw Spell in less than 0.3 seconds. For Ice Shield, a spell of the same skill level, Holmes had taken slightly more than 0.4 seconds.

When the first pebble reached Holmes, he had only just cast the Ice Shield. Holmes had chosen the spell carefully based on his estimation of the time the pebble would take to reach him.

With a resounding clunk, the Ice Shield just managed to stop the pebble in its path. However, smashed to smithereens, the Ice Shield spell also disintegrated.

The next pebble followed right after the first.

Holmes wasn't fast enough to cast an Ice Shield in time. Facing the possibly fatal blow, he had no choice but to pull out his ace.

A ring flashed on his left middle finger. Light flowed from it, covering Holmes' entire body. It was similar to the Guarding Barrier Link wore, but it was neither as thick nor as bright.

It was a Level-1 Guarding Barrier. Link wore its upgraded version, Level-2 Guarding Barrier.

There was one problem, however. Guarding Barrier was a spell designed to defend against elemental magic. It was exceptionally effective against elemental attacks such as fireballs and wind blades, but it performed poorly when it came to physical attacks.

The pebble reached Holmes the moment the Guarding Barrier was completed. Thwock! It smashed onto Holmes' forehead with deadly accuracy.

The inferior Guarding Barrier presented some resistance towards the pebble, reducing some of the force, but most of it was still transferred onto Holmes' head.

Holmes' jerked back, his head dizzy, as he cut off the second Ice Shield which he had been in the middle of casting.

Horror filled his dark red eyes. "How can this kid cast spells so quickly?!"

It was terrifying. He didn't cast just the one spell quickly, but all of them!

Thwock! The incoming third pebble landed a second blow on Holmes' forehead.

His guarding barrier's first attempt at slowing the Vector Throw presented almost no resistance against the last remaining pebble.

Just picture a fist-sized pebble going at the speed of 160 feet per second towards someone's head. It was more than enough to knock someone out. With some luck on Link's side, it could even kill.

Link saw a faint depression on Holmes' forehead. Holmes' eyes rolled up as he fell backwards.

He'd been knocked out, that was certain. But was he dead yet?

Link finally landed on the ground, running a few steps to carry forward his remaining momentum.

The Earth Hound had been just two feet behind him, now at a crossroad between life and death.

Without its spellcaster sustaining it, the Earth Hound froze and cracked. One second later, the huge hound crumbled into a pile of sand with soft fwoosh.

"Vector Throw!" Link cast the Level-1 Spell once more, dealing out the finishing blow.

Thwock! This time, his attack landed on Holmes' temple, leaving another depression there. Without a flinch, groan nor sigh, Holmes' breathing, which had already been faint, stopped.

He was dead.

Throughout the battle, which had started with Holmes' ambush and ended with his demise, Link had used a Level-0 Spell, eight Level-1 Spells, and a Level-2 Spell, all of which had cost him 80 Mana Points, leaving him with just 38 Mana Points and 10 Omni Points left.

Looking at Holmes' dead body, Link stroked the now dull Band of Protection he wore. In his heart, he heaved a sigh of relief. Thank goodness I took the bracelet. Otherwise, I might have died.

Link's victory was partly due to his super-fast spellcasting, but the advantage the Level-2 Guarding Barrier Spell had was also an undeniable part of it.

Walking over, he picked up Holmes' magic staff.

Fire Crystal Staff

Quality: Sterling

Effect 1: Spells +30% power.

Effect 2: Spellcasting speed of fire elemental magic +10%

"This is good! So much better than the New Moon Wand. It can even increase my spellcasting speed. No wonder Holmes' Fireballs are like bullets from a gun, a lot of it was probably thanks to this staff."

Just then, a notification appeared in the corner of his eye.

Annie Abel has reached the city guard barracks.

Escort Mission completed.

Game Player Link receives 30 Omni Points.

Link now had 30 Omni Points more, which represented significant power. He smiled, but it turned bitter soon enough.

The reason was quite cleardark figures surrounded him. It was the Dark Elf Assassins; they had caught up.

Link wasn't surprised, though. He had been prepared to face this when he had stayed behind to fight Holmes.

The Assassins don't seem to be in a rush to attack. Are they afraid? Or do they want to capture me alive and send me to the Black Forest?

The former seemed more likely. Holmes had died, leaving the Dark Elf Assassins without a leader. Avenging Holmes was probably the first thing on their minds, but they refrained due to the fear of Link's powers.

The Dark Elves were a threat larger than any he had ever faced tonight, but he still stood a chance.

Leaning onto the Fire Crystal Staff, Link stood. He had 40 Omni Points. He wondered how he would escape as the Dark Elf Assassins hesitated.

Suddenly, a mocking but sweet-sounding voice rang out from beside him. "Link, you're giving up just like that? Why aren't you playing the hero anymore?"

The voice, infinitely familiar, made Link's heart skip a beat. He traced the voice to its source, a petite figure beside him.

It belonged to a woman with long black hair, eyes like the darkest night, a pair of little horns on her head, incredibly delicate features and red, soft lips that betrayed just a hint of the pair of small, sharp teeth that lay beneath them. The simple short robes she wore did nothing to hide the perfect curves of her small waist. Her trousers clung tightly to a pair of perfect, long legs. All the details brought erotic, sensual thoughts to mind.

It was the Demon Princess, the NPC who had stolen Link's heart!

With one hand raised to hold a hemisphere that looked like it had been made of obsidian, she left her other hand on her waist. Seen in profile, her pose accentuated her perfect curves as she turned to look at Link with interest. It was a tempting sight indeed.

Link was stunned. His heart racing, he hastily averted his eyes to the magic shield protecting them.

The shield was very strong. A group of Dark Elf Assassins attacked it with all their might. Yet, all was calm within.

Link recognized it. It was the Level-5 Dark Magic Spell, Obsidian Barrier. He put two and two together.

No wonder he had felt that she was familiar. Celine was Celine Flandre. What he had seen earlier was just her human guise. This was her true form.

"You you're Celine?"

Link asked even as he thought, Celine Flandre. So we meet again.

## 18. The Lonely Vagabond

Celine was still quite young; she was only 17 years of age. Compared to Link's image of her from the game, she looked a lot more innocent, less guarded and wary. Her powers, though far less powerful than before, were stronger than the norm.

Link tried to look at her information on the game interface, but all he got was a line of question marks. In the game, such a phenomenon only happened when players were more than 3 skill levels weaker than their targets.

Link now had the strength of a Level-2 Magician. Since Celine had used the Level-5 Obsidian Barrier Spell, Link inferred that she was at least Level-5.

Such power currently ranked her among the strongest 1000 throughout the Firuman Continent. It was enough for her to be a guest of honor at any kingdom.

Of course, this was all provided that she didn't expose herself as a demon, the public enemy of the Legion of Light.

The multitude of Level-2 Dark Elf Assassins could do nothing with her there. Grabbing Link by the arm, she sprouted black wings and took off with a mighty flap of her new appendages.

The Dark Elf Assassins, seeing their target suddenly leave the protection of the shield, started raining arrows on them, but a sword of blue crystal suddenly appeared in Celine's hand. She swung it around with incredible speed.

It was so fast that it appeared just like a light-blue haze.

The sound of the arrows being struck down by Celine's sword rang out clear and sharp as the fall of rain. Not a single arrow breached her defenses.

Then, Celine shot up to more than a 300 feet above the ground, beyond the reach of the arrows, leaving the Dark Elves gaping in her wake.

Just ten seconds later, Celine landed atop Gladstone City's clock tower. Link, still in a daze, just stared at her blankly.

"What? Cat got your tongue?"

The young maiden was captivating. Her red lips tweaked with the bare hint of a smile as she veiled her eyes and spoke with a voice as smooth as honey. She held an indescribable air about her.

Sweet, sweet evil. The description popped into Link's mind as memories from the game flooded back to him.

In the game Legends, there were four famous beautiesthe Angel of Light, Herrera, the Red Dragon Queen Gretel, the Elf Princess Milda, and lastly, the Demon Princess, Celine Flandre.

The four beauties, who had been chosen by the game players for their spectacular looks and style, were each extremely powerful.

The demon mistress' personality, in particular, was like sweet poison. She was a goblet of enticing venom, drawing others deeper and deeper with her charms.

Celine's smile widened as she read Link's expression. She reached out and traced his face with her white, soft fingers. In a coy and enticing voice, she said, "What? Aren't you scared? I'm a demon, you know?"

With that, she bared her little fangs.

Link finally came back to his senses. He shook his head slightly to clear his mind. "You saved me. Why should I be scared of you?"

In the game, the mission leading up to unlocking the Ultimate Boss, Nozama, had been a long one. Link and the NPC, Celine, had spent a long time together. He knew her inside and out. Though she had a penchant for pranks and had an eccentric personality, she definitely wasn't one to kill without good reason. In that aspect, she drew a stark line between herself and the other demons.

Truth be told, she drifted around, evading her father's lackeys because she didn't want to be a true demon.

"Who said that I was saving you? You lied to me earlier. I'm very angry about that, I brought you out here to punish you!" Celine's dainty brows grew tight. She placed a slender white finger in front of her face. Her dark eyes, though fixed on Link, danced around his face, as if she really was considering what to do with him.

Link wasn't scared in the slightest, neither did he become complacent. Instead, he just waited patiently.

If he wasn't wrong, the quirky young maiden was probably coming up with a prank.

His behavior made Celine feel as if she was reprimanding a porcupinethere was nowhere for her to get her hands on. It was a strange, new experience for her. In the past, everyone ran away in fright whenever she had shown her demon appearance, regardless of how close they might have been. Why wasn't this human scared at all?

She circled Link. "Hey. I'm a demon. Can't you at least give me a normal reaction to that?"

"No, you're not really a demon," Link shook his head softly, "The demon part is just on the outside. In my eyes, you're still Celine, the kind girl who looked after me for a month after I broke my arm."

Speechless, Celine was really cornered this time. The playful, evil air around her vanished, and her voice grew cold and distant. "Human, you're not as naive as to think that I'd be swayed with just empty words of flattery, are you? I've seen many just like youall so full of themselves."

The original Link, at the sight of Celine's cold and distant behavior, would have run off in fright.

But this Link knew that Celine behaved that way because his words had struck close to her heart. She had taken off that sweet, mischievous facade, and her indifference was just a way of protecting herself.

The half-blood demon was actually very lonely and sensitive. Thinking about it, it made sense. She had seen her mother killed by demons, and the mastermind behind it had been her own father. It was already a miracle that she hadn't gone insane.

But Link didn't back down. Earnestly, he said, "A real demon wouldn't have saved me, nor would one have said so much to me. They would just have torn me apart and devoured my soul. Celine, what I see in your eyes is pain and loneliness. Can you tell me what you've been through?"

Celine's petite figure shuddered. It was the first time anyone had told her something like that. Before this, they had either been after her for her looks, or shied away from her demon identity. No one had ever cared about what she actually felt.

But this human seemed to be able to read her soul. Each word had rung true.

Celine was a mess inside. There wasn't a trace of the sensuality she had worn earlier. Taking a few steps back, she turned her face away and stared into the darkness under the clock tower in silence.

Link, too stayed silent, again waiting patiently.

At the top of the tower, gusts of the night wind caressed her thick black hair. Celine stood still as if she was a beautiful statue of a Goddess.

Her childhood memories flashed before her.

"Mother, why do I have these things on my head?" Celine had asked adorably while stroking the little nubs on her head. She was only five-years-old.

Her mother, that gentle, beautiful woman, hadn't hidden her disgust. "That's from your father," she replied briskly.

"Mother, I don't want to train anymore. I'm too tired." Celine had collapsed onto the ground in exhaustionshe was seven-years-old. Her mother cared for her every need tenderly, but she had done so with a stern hand.

"You must get stronger quickly! Your father won't let you go!" Her mother had been quite harsh about it, despite the sorrow hidden in her eyes,

"Ah! Mother, what happened to you? Who are you people?!" Her mother was sprawled in a puddle of her own blood, almost torn to pieces. Still somehow clinging to life, she rasped, "Celine, my daughter, don't fall" Celine was fourteen-years-old.

Her mother hadn't finished when the hideous creatures, shrouded in black miasma, had cut off her mother's head.

"Princess, the Lord has asked us to bring you home!" the heinous beings had said.

"Die!!!!" Celine had learned martial arts for many years by then she had already been very powerful. The demons were completely defenseless against her as she slayed them with ease.

Having found out about her background, she disguised herself and wandered around to evade her father's clutches. Three months ago, she had come to The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings.

She had never really considered becoming a Magician and had only developed a passing interest in magic.

Celine remembered the times she had spent with Link.

"Mr. Morani, I think that staring at a lady the way you are is poor manners."

That had been two months ago. The first time the young man had laid his eyes on her, he had behaved rather oddly, as if he had lost his soul. Of course, Celine hadn't thought much of it. She had seen so many others like that during her travels.

That fact that such an inconspicuous boy had brought her away from the academy at risk to his own life, had been completely beyond her expectations. Yet he had done it.

Celine had to admit that the human now held a special place in her heart.

She had bottled her secret for so long. When Link brought it up, she stayed silent for a while before opening her mouth in spite of herself. "My father is the Lord of the Deeps. He wants me to go back to the Deeps to become his vassal. For that, he sent his subordinates into the Firuman Continent to capture me. All I can live is a life of hiding, of drifting from place to place. My mother, a beautiful woman, was torn to pieces before my eyes. She had tried to protect me. For my mother's sake, I cannot become a puppet of the dark."

Towards the end, her spirits sunk. She lowered her head as her beautiful brows drooped. After her long speech, she sighed heavily, her face full of loneliness.

She was a demon, the symbol of darkness and terror, the public enemy of the world of the light. Demons were attacked by all other creatures around them. Yet, she had grown up in the world of the lightdeep in her heart, it was the place that she had acknowledged as home.

That was why she was damned to live a life of pain and loneliness!

"This is indeed a lonely journey." Link sighed.

## 19. The Last

Celine was a little disappointed at Link's silence. She laughed in self-mockery. "You don't believe me. Because I'm a demon. Demon's lie all the time."

All the texts of the world of light claimed that demons were the darkest and evilest beings in existence. Demons were taboo. According to the game Legend, demons who appeared in the world of the light brought about bloody catastrophes.

"I believe you!" Link's voice was firm and strong

This Celine was different than one he had known in the game. The Celine he had known then had been cynical and eccentric with a deep love of pranking others. But the Celine before him now was more like a normal girl. She was still innocent, trusting, and longed for friendship.

Yes, in the game, I met her after 20 more years of hiding and running, friendless and alone. Such a life would have tited anyone's personality. But now, she's still hopeful.

Looking at Celine's clouded, beautiful eyes, Link repeated, "I believe you."

"Why? You're saying that because you're scared of me, aren't you?" Celine looked at him. Though suspicion glinted in her eyes, it was overshadowed by hope.

She could hear the earnestness in his voice. But her past experiences made her wary of humans words.

Link shook his head. Without thinking, his mouth opened to recite one of Celine's most used quotes, "No one can choose the circumstances of their birth, but they can choose their own paths! It may be long and difficult, but that is true freedom!"

Celine paused, rolling the words over her tongue. Light shone through the clouds in her eyes. "Yes, I am free! My father will never bind me!"

Gaining new strength and conviction, she turned to Link and spoke to him from the bottom of her heart, "Link, you are wise indeed, and forgiving. No wonder you received divine revelation. I'll remember what you told me, my friend."

"I, too, am honored to have known you. Thank you for saving me Celine, or I would have already been dead." Link smiled.

"Hahahaha," Celine laughed heartily. She suddenly felt relaxed, not caring for her image anymore. Not a trace of her previous mischievous demeanor was left. Now, she seemed more like a friendly neighborhood girl than anything else.

Then she asked, "You seem very different tonight. Can you tell me about your divine revelation?"

She was still curious about Link's change.

Link rubbed his nose. How should he put it? Telling her about things like coming from Earth, his soul crossing over dimensions to possess this body, and the game server didn't seem quite right.

He explained after some thought, "Actually, my understanding of magic is the same as it was before, that of a poor student at the academy. But somehow, there's a lot more Mana inside me, and with it, a sea of memories of spellcasting. Truth be told, all I know about magic is how to use itI still have no idea how or why it works.

For that reason, he was only a normal Level-2 Magician, not an Elite. It was rather embarrassing. For the same reason, all his spells were just Basic. As for Supreme Magic Skills, he had none, neither had he any idea of how to acquire one.

Celine understood but she still burst outito laughter. "What an embarrassing situation. It looks like you'll need to find a chance to learn magic properly."

"I definitely agree." Ever since Link had seen Holmes' Supreme Magic Skills, he had known that he would have to get stronger much faster. He'd also thought about how he'd do that. "So I'll look for a magic academy when Gladstone City's issue is over."

"Oh. Do you have any particular academy in mind?"

"I'm thinking about East Cove Higher Magic Academy." It was the most famous magic academy in the Norton Kingdom. The dean was a Level-7 Master Magician.

At this time, a Level-7 Master Magician was the highest existence in the World of Firuman. Few held such power within the human world.

Celine was taken aback but she couldn't resist a smile. "You would, would you? Let me ask you, what is the structure of magic in a Fireball?"

" I don't know." Link was dumbfounded.

"What about that of a Whirlwind...? You don't know that either? Then you should know how the simplest Earth Spike works, since you use it so well" Celine held out her hands, solidifying her point, "Okay. If that's the extent of your magic theory, I think that you don't need to pay the East Cove Magic Academy a visit."

The East Cove Magic Academy was the best academy for magic within the kingdom, but it was a higher academy. It didn't accept students who didn't already have a strong foundation in magic. The students would have a hard time keeping up even if they did.

Even Celine wasn't confident about enrolling there.

Link was a little shocked. The real world of Firuman was different from that in the game after all. He'd thought too lightly of it. But whether or not he would manage to get in, he still would have to try to find out.

Of course, all of that would come later. There was no need to think so hard about it yet, especially not now of all times.

"Let's not talk about it yet. Gladstone is still in danger. I need to save it!"

Celine couldn't hold back her laughter once again. It was a friendly laugh, but still mocking. "What do you think you can do with your current strength? It took great efforts to get you out of there. Can you not keep running to your death?"

Celine was a Level-5 Warrior with exceptional talent in magic; even she was nothing before the Dark Elf Army, let alone a half-baked Magician like Link.

"It won't do now, but I have a plan!" Link chuckled. He had already thought it through. Though he had planned to go alone, his chances of succeeding were even higher with Celine around.

"Just tell me." Celine had no idea what they could do. Unless Link suddenly became a Master Magician like the dean of the East Cove Magic Academy, there was no chance for them.

"I need to go to the Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings. The key to our success is in there."

The magic academy had everything a Magician could need. Potions, gear, and more importantly, something very powerfulpowerful enough to let them turn the tides on the Dark Elf Army.

That was his target!

"I can bring you there, but I want to know, what is Gladstone to you that you're working so hard to save it?" Celine still didn't understand. She had thought that it would be alright for them to just leave the city. There wasn't a need to put up such a struggle because this place was doomed anyway.

Link kept quiet. He looked towards the city guard's barracks. It was brightly lit, and soldiers walked out in tidy profile. It looked like Annie had managed to gain control. If that was so, the Dark Elf Assassins in the city were no longer a threat.

He turned towards the North. From the winds, he sensed an overwhelming dark force getting closer and closer.

The Dark Elf Army had arrived.

By the looks of it, they would launch their attack on Gladstone within half an hour.

The Black Iron Garrison was too far, more than 60 miles away. They needed to delay the advance of the Dark Elf Army for at least an hour if they were to save Gladstone.

Suddenly, something flashed in the corner of Link's eye. A new mission!

Ultimate Mission: The Final Battle

Mission Details: Protect Gladstone City. Ensure that it isn't invaded by the Dark Elf Army within the next hour.

Mission Reward: 100 Omni Points.

A huge reward for a difficult task. Link accepted it without any hesitation.

The things he'd experienced tonight made him realize something important. The kind of person he became depended on the path he chose. Link wanted to be an almighty Archmage in the World of Firuman, so he chose to fight in spite of the obstacles.

After accepting the mission, Link looked Celine in the eye, a fire burning brightly within his pupils.

"Yes, the city has nothing to do with me. I may die, but I may also get stronger because of it. Celine, I will become the world's strongest Magician!"

He left some words unsaid. He would get stronger until he was able to confront the Lord of the Deeps. He would rid the world of the Demi-God Nozama just like he had in the game!

Celine was stunned. She thought that Link was a little crazy, but in her heart, he was already a true friend of hers. "That's bold of you," she held out her hands and shrugged, "But I'll bring you to the magic academy anyway. I'll take you away from Gladstone when you've failed."

"Thank you." The fire in his eyes suppressed along with all his other, stray thoughts.He returned to a calm mindset, allowing him to concentrate on his future task.

Tonight, he'd give it his all!

## 20. Each Second Counts!

Lorde, at just 35 years of age, was already the youngest Level-6 Warrior of Pralync, the country of the Dark Elves.

The Warriors of the Firuman Continent developed their Battle Aura at Level-3. At Level-6, they could unleash their Battle Aura beyond the boundaries of their bodies as ranged attacks.

Before Level-6, however, a Warrior had to risk being attacked as he attempted to get close to an enemy Magician. But at Level-6, they gained the strength they needed to truly confront Magicians.

In the world of the Dark Elves, strength was equivalent to status. The young Dark Elf prodigy, Lorde, had been appointed as the marshal of the Dark Elves' ambush on Gladstone City.

The Dark Elf Army, now just five miles away from Gladstone City, could already see the city's high walls and the spire of the clock tower when they looked towards the East.

Their plan hadn't been carried out as smoothly as Lorde had imagined.

The scouts he sent out came back with waves of bad news that made Lorde's face as dark as the stormy sea.

"Marshal, there are still guards on Gladstone's city walls!"

"Marshal, the northern doors have not been opened as planned."

"Marshal, there are at least 2000 guards on Gladstone's city walls! All of the defensive units along the walls have been deployed!"

There was dead silence from Lorde and his generals.

The Dark Elf Assassin from the city earlier hadn't told them anything like that. All he had said was that most of the prominent figures in the city had been killed, and that Gladstone City's Magicians had been wiped out. The only accident throughout the entire operation had been the destruction of the Portal Tower in the Magic Academy. Because of that, they had had no other choice but to send someone with the bad news.

But now, it looked as if there had been more major disturbances within the past couple of hours.

"Bring the Assassin here!" Lorde seethed at the Dark Elf's shortcomings.

The Assassin who had sent the message was brought over quickly. He knew that all was not well when he saw Lorde and the generals' expressions. His legs turning to jelly, he stumbled and fell.

He scrambled to his feet, shaking as he walked up to the Marshal and addressed him respectfully. "Marshal, I am here."

Lorde's handsome face was so ominous it looked as if a black hole might swallow him up at any moment. His ruby eyes pierced through the Assassin before him. "This is your last chance. Are you hiding anything from me?"

The Assassin started to shake uncontrollably. After a while, he stammered, "MarshalJiggs is dead. He was killed by a young Magician, the the same one who destroyed the Portal Tower. Master Holmes had been on his tail when I was sent here."

Lorde's eyes narrowed. "A young Magician?"

A general beside him said softly, "Marshal, it seems like Holmes was no match for the young Magician. He was defeated as well."

This was war. Defeat meant death!

Lorde felt a migraine coming on. Holmes was a member of the Silver Moon Mage's Guild, and not one of his own soldiers. Holmes' mission hadn't been to fight either, he'd just been there to use the Portal Tower! Now that Holmes was dead, the Magicians from the Mage Guild would come after him again.

The anger in his heart grew. Glaring coldly at the Assassin, he asked, "And why didn't you say all this earlier? Hmmn?"

The Assassin collapsed onto the ground. He knew his end was near.

Lorde waved a hand. Two Dark Elves came up and dragged the messenger away. Soon, a shrill scream rang out. The Assassin had been killed.

"Marshal, what do we do now?" asked another of the generals.

Lorde sneered, "Gladstone City's leaders have all been killed. The 2000 troops guarding the city are just a useless pack. With haste, attack the city!"

He had 20,000 Warriors and he himself was a powerful, Level-6 Warrior. He was further aided by the generals, each of whom who were powerful in their own right. Gladstone City's powerful fighters had been wiped out. The 2000 troops guarding the city were just average soldiers. Who could stop them if Lorde and his generals took the city by force?

The strength of his military gave Lorde the confidence that he would be able to take Gladstone before the human reinforcements arrived.

By then, he would be able to guard the city even against Gladstone's allies, the Black Iron Garrison when they arrived. He would be honored among the Dark Elves when the sacrificial rites within the city were completed!

"Marshal, it's a little risky. If" one of his generals advised.

If they didn't manage to take Gladstone before the human armies arrived, they would be in great danger.

"You dare to question me!" Lorde barked, his red eyes blazed at the general.

Within the Dark Elves, the strong were greatly respected. The general backed down immediately. "No, of course not, Marshal. Your word is my command!"

Lorde snorted coldly and gave the orders. The Dark Elf Army began to advance much more quickly than before.

...

In the East.

An army made its way North as fast as it could on a wide highway. Marshal Allonse, a defender of the Black Iron Garrison, led the army.

Allonse was also a Level-6 Warrior. He had led his troops out immediately after receiving the word that the MI3 outpost in Gladstone needed aid.

There were 15,000 troops were stationed at the Black Iron Garrison. He had brought 10,000 with him and left the rest to guard the garrison under his second-in-command.

From the report, Allonse knew that the situation was urgenthe also forwarded the news to the capital. He believed that he would be able to defend the city against the Dark Elves' attack so long as he managed to enter Gladstone before them.

If he managed to hold the city for some time, until aid came from the capital, the Dark Elf Army would have no choice but to retreat or be annihilated.

"Faster. Faster!" Allonse kept urging.

Time was of the essence. With each second that went by, the outcome of the battle could be drastically affected. Whether Gladstone fell to the Dark Elf Army, or if they, the Black Iron Garrison, managed to protect the citizens of the Norton Kingdom and beat off the pariah elveseverything depended on who entered the city first.

Fwoosh. Fwoosh. Strong winds blew through the sky. It was the Griffin Special Command Unit of the Black Iron Garrison.

Fifteen Griffins flew in a V formation in the sky. The Magician Osmu sat on the Griffin at the front, his wand glowing softly, guiding the flock towards Gladstone.

Osmu, a Level-3 Magician skilled in Elemental Magic, was a Battle Mage from the Violet Council who was stationed at the Black Iron Garrison. Griffins were normally unsuited for battle in the dark, but under the guidance of the soft, magical glow from Osmu's wand, the huge, fierce beasts swiftly carried 15 powerful Warriors towards their destination. These were the Warriors chosen from among the troops at the Black Iron Garrison to form a suicide squad.

The Griffins would send the Warriors into Gladstone City to help stabilize the current state of affairs and do their best to delay Gladstone's fall into the hands of the Dark Elf Army.

The mission was exceptionally dangerous, with only a slight chance of survival. That was why each member of the suicide was a powerful Warrior of at least Level-3. The strongest among them was Minx, a Level-4 Warrior, an officer with the rank of Major in the Black Iron Garrison. He held another identitythe younger brother of Lord Derrick, the Earl of Maple County in the East, who himself was a knight of the kingdom.

As for the Magician Osmu, he wouldn't join in the battle unless another Magician appeared from the enemy camp. Otherwise, he would just leave Gladstone City after guiding the Griffins there.

No one would or could force him to join, because Magicians were few and far in between. They were too precious to use in normal skirmishes such as this. Rough jobs like this were for Warriors.

Griffins flew extremely fast; Gladstone City was within their sights within half an hour.

From the sky, they could see the guards patrolling the brightly lit eastern walls of the city. And towards the North, black, shadow-like mass approached.

The good news was that Gladstone City hadn't fallen yet. It had even managed to put up some defenses. The bad news was that the Dark Elf Army had already arrived.

The Magician Osmu slowly descended until he reached about 300 feet above the citythen he cast a spell towards the ground.

The Griffins flew down, guided by the light. One by one, Osmu cloaked each of the warriors that passed him with the defensive spell, Rock Armor.

Rock Armor

Level-2 Defensive Spell

Effect: Thick, heavy Earth elements form a strong, sturdy magical armor. It is especially good at defending against physical attacks.

Magic flashed non-stop. Thick layers of ochre yellow light appeared on the 15 powerful Warriors. The light was so dense that it looked just like a layer of yellow crystal.

Having cast more than 14 Level-2 Spells continuously, Osmu had used up more than half of his Mana. "Minx, the battle after this is up to you all!" He bellowed.

"Don't worry!" Minx said as he took the shield from off his back and ran towards the city wall.

Osmu watched Minx as he faded into the distance. Urging his own Griffin, he circled and left Gladstone City for the Black Iron Garrison, followed by the other 14 Griffins.

He had accomplished his mission of sending the suicide squad to its destination.

...

At the same time, Link and Celine reached The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings.

How could one get strong fast in the World of Firuman? Gear, potions, and buff.

All these could be found in the Magic Academy, and he had come here to gain power.

## 21. The Treasure of the Academy

The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings.

Some Dark Elf Assassins still milled around the academy, but Celine disposed of each of them with just a swipe of her sword.

Then, she and Link foraged through the entire academy. They searched the library, the dean's tower and all the other mysterious towers around the school. Yet they found not a single piece of valuable gear. Even the low-level magic wands in the Apprentice Dorm were nowhere to be found.

"We're really unlucky. The Dark Elf Assassins took everything," Link sighed.

Almost everything of value was gone. Throughout their search, all they had found was a stack of basic magic books and a small pile of around 1300 gold coins.

They had found more than 50 magic books and more than 20 pounds worth of gold coins. Link couldn't carry all that, so he just left them in the care of Celine. The demon princess had dimensional storage items, and so could hold as many items as she wanted.

This world had dimensional storage items that could be used as portable storage, but such gear was extremely expensive. The most basic dimensional storage ring cost 3000 gold. Link didn't even dare to think about such a thing at this point.

They left the Alchemy Tower for last.

The doors to the Alchemy Tower had been broken down. When they walked in, they saw a mess and several corpses lying on the ground. The Dark Elves hadn't managed to take most of the alchemy equipment as they were too large and heavy, so they had just destroyed it instead. The cabinet that stored the alchemy materials had been left in disarray, excluding the valuable materials, which were all gone.

But since the Dark Elves hadn't had much time, they'd left some things behind in their haste.

One of the drawers in the potions cabinet was only half open. Link walked over, pulled it out, and saw a crystal vial containing a light blue liquid.

The interface showed its information:

Low-level Mana Potion

Quality: Normal

Effect: Rass a Magician's Mana by 100 Points after drinking it.

(Note: The potion is slightly toxic. Do not consume more than 1 vial per day.)

Link took a vial out, pulled off the cork, and chugged it down.

He felt some discomfort in his stomach once he swallowed it, a side effect of the potion. But at the same time, a cool sensation spread across his body and finally concentrated within his head. His mind instantly felt much clearer.

He checked his stats again. He now had 145 Mana Points.

Not bad. It was enough to deal with just a few opponents, but far from enough to slow the advance of the Dark Elf Army. Link foraged further and found another crystal vial full of a light green solution.

Low-level Mana Recovery Potion.

Quality: Normal

Effect: After drinking, Mana Recovery Speed doubles for two hours.

(Note: Drinking multiple vials does not further increase effect.)

Link drank it without hesitation. His Mana Recovery Speed became 27.6 Points per hour.

But it still wasn't enough!

The alchemy hall only had basic potions. Flemmings Magic Academy was a Lower Academy that only served to provide introductory studies after all.

But no matter how inferior, all magic institutions had treasures of their own!

The Alchemy Tower held the Flemmings Magic Academy's prized possession, Link's target and ultimate objective of returning here!

He walked around inside the Alchemy Tower, finally stopping before a tapestry. A smooth wall stood behind it. If his senses weren't wrong, it was probably a magic door!

Magic Door

Level-3 Magic

Effect: Creates a flawless, solid screenthe ideal way to seal a passage.

The Magic Door was cleverly concealed. It blended perfectly into the walls beside it. Finding it would have been an impossible task for one not familiar with magic.

The Dark Elves were all outsiders to magic, so the magic door had been left untouched. This made Link rather relieved. The door being intact meant that the academy's Magicians hadn't had time to use what was behind it.

"Celine, can you open this door?" Link asked.

"Of course. Not a problem," she smiled. Taking out her crystal, blue sword, she strode over and swung it at the door.

With a loud boom, the jade-like, smooth magic door leading to the hall on the second floor was forced open.

With Celine's power, destroying the Level-3 Spell protecting the door had been as easy as crushing an egg.

A spiral staircase appeared behind the door. Link strode in and followed the stairs up into a small, secret room on the second floor.

The room was empty except for a square cabinet three feet wide, sitting in the middle. The cabinet was dark purple, the color of precious mahogany, and had gold wire embellishing its edges. It looked extremely grand.

Link heaved a sigh of relief at the sight of the cabinet. Despite the game having been made much more crudely, it looked as if the crucial details were still the same.

He had read about the treasure chest in the game forums.

There was a novice Magician who had somehow managed to break down the hidden, Level-3 Magic Door and found the secret room behind it. There had been a grand chest in the room.

When the game player had opened the chest, he had found an incredible potion inside it. After drinking it, the game player's strength had increased exponentially, allowing him to defeat and slay all the Dark Elves on the academy grounds, including the Magician Holmes!

Link quickly walked up to the chest and tried to open it, but the thin, clear film of light indicating the presence of a magic seal enveloped it. There was no way he could open it with his current powers.

"Let me." Celine walked over, preparing to break it open by force.

"Don't!" Link stopped her hastily.

Though he didn't recognize the seal, he could feel the Mana flowing within it. He had the feeling that if they destroyed it with brute force, the Mana in the seal would explode. The explosion wouldn't be strong, but it would be enough to destroy the contents of the chest, leaving him with nothing.

"Then what should we do?" There was no way such a beautiful chest didn't contain anything.

"Let me see."

Link closed his eyes and made a mental map of the flow of Mana within the chest. After about five seconds, he used his wand to tap three of the magic runes. "These three runes are probably the key to it. If we can destroy them at the same time, the magic seal should disappear."

He had no real proof for this course of action, but they were the meridians where the channels of Mana met each other.

"Destroy them at the same time?" Celine asked, uncertain.

"It probably won't cause a chain reaction if you manage to destroy them all within a split second," Link said.

"That's easy."

Celine walked up to it, the blue crystal sword in her hand moving so fast it blurred.

She struck three times within a split second, making a small cut on each of the runes, immediately rendering them ineffective.

The magic seal started to break down a second later. A dent appeared in the film of light, growing larger and larger until the whole seal disappeared altogether.

Link sighed in relief and walked up to open the chest.

It was almost empty. The only object within it had been placed in the middlea crystal bottle of amber potion that glowed like the moon. It was beautiful.

The game interface refreshed to show the potion's information.

Magical Murmurs: An Epic Potion. The prized possession of The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings.

Effect: The one who drinks it shall receive the "Blessing of Magical Murmurs". With it, all spells cast will have a 100% increase in power and a 30% increase in speed. Player's Maximum Mana Points will be restored, along with an increase of 1000 Points, and Mana Recovery Speed will increase by 1000 Points per hour. At the same time, the one who drinks it shall receive the protection of the mid-level Mage's Armor. This "blessing" lasts for two hours, after which the bearer shall enter a state of "ailing mana" for three months, during which all Mana stasshall be reduced by 90%.

What a potion!

Though the side effects were formidable, within those two hours, he would be able to gain unbelievable strength. No wonder the novice had been undefeatable after drinking it!

Link, who had already learned many spells and still had 40 Omni Points tucked away, would be like a tiger sprouting wings with the potion!

But instead of drinking it, Link passed it to Celine.

"You are stronger than I am. You drink it!" If Link could be compared to a winged tiger with the potion's effects, then Celine, at least a Level-5 now, would be akin to a nuclear weapon.

Unexpectedly, Celine seemed ashamed. "I don't actually know magic," she admitted.

"What about the Obsidian Barrier from earlier?" Link asked, surprised.

"That's a Bloodline Talent. I rely mainly on battle skills This is a magic potion, right? It's not going to be of much use if you give it to me, and I'm a demon I'm afraid"

"I didn't think that through properly." Link understood what she was saying. Celine's demon identity couldn't be exposed, or it would bring her great trouble.

So only he could drink the potion.

Pulling out the cork, he poured the contents of the small crystal bottle into his mouth. He felt a boiling sensation. The feeling was somewhat like drinking fizzy drinks, but the fizz was far stronger than anything he'd ever experienced.

The potion was still boiling by the time it hit his throat. It rushed into Link's stomach like a ball of fire.

Boom.

Link felt something explode within his stomach, but it was painless. Then, immense, uncontrollable waves of power surged into his limbs. At the same time, his mind became clearer than it had ever been before.

The add-on effect of the potion, the mid-level Mage's Armor, also appeared on him. Runes, covered by an inch of glass-like, yellow crystals, appeared on the surface of Link's robes.

The mid-level Mage's Armor was Level-5 Magic. It looked similar to the Guarding Barrier, but the color and shape of the runes were very different. Their properties, too, lay on opposite ends of the spectrum. This particular armor wasn't very effective against magical attacks despite being exceptionally good at defending against physical ones.

Wearing the spell was as good as wearing thick metal armor!

For a moment, Link felt that he was untouchable.

He checked his current stats.

Link Morani (Noble)

Level-2 Normal Magician

Mana Recovery Speed: 1027.6 MP per hour

Maximum Mana: 1241

Current Mana 1241

Current Gear: Fire Crystal Staff

Current Condition: Low-level Mana Recovery Potion, Magical Murmurs

Currently in use: Mid-level Mage's Armor

With such a high Mana Recovery Speed and Maximum Mana Points, and with the potion's effects lasting for two whole hours, Link suddenly felt the long-lost sensation he had had as an Archmage in his last life.

With this newfound power, what spells should he exchange his remaining 40 Omni Points for?

Link looked at the rapid recovery speed of his Mana. Without hesitating, he exchanged the Omni Points for the Level-4 Spell, Flame Blast!

Flame Blast

Level 4 Spell

Mana Cost: 320

Effect: Create a large, powerful ball of flame that can shoot beyond 50 meters!

(Note: Cass everything to burn!)

Without Supreme Magical Skills, even Link needed more than 3 seconds to cast a Level-4 Spell, at a cost of 320 Mana Points each time.

But the harsh casting requirements were definitely worthy of the spell's terrifying power!

Link also had the Fire Crystal Magic Staff which increased casting speed by 10% on top of the 30% increase from Magical Murmurs. When it came down to it, he would only need 1.8 seconds to cast each Flame Blast.

At the same time, the power of his Flame Blast would increase by 130%, far more than the Basic version and almost as good as having a Supreme Magical Skill.

Yes, Link wouldn't be able to use the Spell for a long time after the effects of the potion wore off, but tonight, his enemies would burn.

Let everything burn!

## 22. The Battle On the City Walls

It was 3:35 in the morning. The cold dawn of early fall weather caused one's breath to mist.

The northern city walls of Gladstone.

The color from Annie's rosy cheeks drained as she watched the Dark Elves surging over the city like a dark tide.

There were just too many. It looked as if there were at least 15,000 of them.

She had entered the city guards' barracks and managed to gain control of 1500 city guards. With them, she had cleaned up the remaining Dark Elf Assassins lingering on the streets and recruited any wandering Warriors she could find.

She'd tried her best, but there hadn't been enough time. Even now, there were less than 2000 Warriors manning the city walls, and most of them were unseasoned, new recruits.

Looking around, Annie saw fear and uncertity on their faces. Some of them were even shaking. Each of them knew that they had just a small chance of making it out of this battle alive.

She suppressed the fear in her own heart and spoke up.

"Straighten up! Let those damned bloody-eyed elves taste our strength!" she shouted loudly, attempting to raise the troops' morale, "Soldiers, our city walls are tall and strongwe have crossbows! We have trebuchets! We have nothing to fear!"

Before she could finish speaking, a terrible battle cry rang out from the Dark Elf Army below as they filed into their ranks below the city walls.

"Kill!!!"

It had obviously been let out by a single elf, but like a clap of thunder, it shook the entire battlefield.

Annie's heart skipped a beat. As the daughter of a duke and the head of an intelligence agency, she had significant knowledge and experience. She instantly recognized her opponent's skill level just from his voice alone.

Crap, this opponent is a Level-6!

She was as good as a child in front of such an enemy. No one could stop him if he were to charge into the city. The Dark Elf Army followed his lead.

"Kill!!! Kill!!! Kill!!!"

Their battle cries came in like a multitude of tsunamis. The 2000 soldiers on the city walls were like little boats adrift the terrible waves, about to topple over and get washed away at any moment.

"God, there's just too many of them. There's no way we can stop them!"

"No, I'll die! I can't, not here!"

"Let's make a run for it!"

The voices were all from the soldiers who had been drafted at the last minute. Though the regular city guards wore pale faces, they showed no signs of giving up, perhaps due to the training they had received.

Without needing a signal from Annie, a city guard strode over and chopped off the head of a new recruit who was trying to desert with one swing of his sword.

Annie's eyes constited. She'd never experienced war, and all its cruelty. She could be harsh and ruthless to her enemies, but not towards her own. Knowing it was necessary, she suppressed her misgivings and bellowed in rage, "We are the last line of defense for Gladstone! Deserters will be killed on sight!"

This shook many of the new recruits to their core, stabilizing the situation on the city wall.

Below.

With the night vision of a Dark Elf and the sharp eyes of a powerful Level-6 Warrior, Lorde saw everything on the city walls. He laughed, saying to the generals beside him, "Look, a little girl, leading a pack of cowards. How is it any different from just opening up the gates for us?"

All the generassaw what was going on. The few who had been uncertain made up their minds, and rushed to volunteer, "Marshal, let me be the first wave to attack."

They wanted to take the glory of such an easy battle.

Their enemies were few and weak. In contrast, the Dark Elf troops were eager and in high spirits.

Lorde laughed haughtily. He picked several of his generals at random. "You, you, you, and you. Lead the Warriors to attack the city!"

"Yes, Marshal!"

The four generals accepted his command. Each of them led several battalions carrying grappling hooks and charged at Gladstone's walls.

Gladstone was just a small city in the Norton Kingdom. Its walls weren't very tallthey stood at less than 50 feet. Off the generals chosen to attack it, three were Level-3 Warriors while one was a Level-4 Warrior. As long as they managed to climb up the walls, no one would be able to stop them.

Annie watched as the Dark Elves attacked the city ferociously. Each of them glowed with Battle Aura, one of which who glowed brighter than all the rest. This gave her quite a lot of pressure.

He's much stronger than me. I'm no match for him! I can't let them get up here!

Inside Annie panicked. "Attack!!!" she yelled.

The archers rained arrows down on their enemies. The crossbows howled, releasing bolts as thick as children's arms. Several trebuchets flung stones the size of basketballs down at the Dark Elf troops below. Their vicious attacks managed to cause some damage to the Dark Elves, but their largest threat, the powerful Dark Elf generals, remained unharmed.

Due to the Battle Aura enveloping them and the thick, heavy shields they held, the elves were easily able to evade the bolts and stones despite the human soldiers' heavy rain of attacks. Their speed was also completely unaffectedthey were now less than 160 feet away from the city walls.

The Level-4 Dark Elf General swung a large grappling hook around in the air, slowly accumulating speed until he finally let it fly out of his hands and shoot up onto the city wall like an arrow.

Ka-thunk. The hook lodged into one of the battlements, and the general pulled it tight immediately. The human Warriors beside it rushed towards the hook and started hacking at the thick ropes with their swords.

But whatever the rope had been made with, it was extremely tough and resilient. The soldiers' normal swords could only leave white marks across it. They would need at least a couple more minutes to cut through it entirely.

"Let me!" Annie yelled, rushing at them.

But she quickly found that it was just the first of many hooks. Even before she started hacking, she saw another grappling hook fly up, and a Dark Elf general charging up it.

As she approached the first hook, Annie covered her dagger with Shadow Aura and slashed down on the rope.

Kishhh. The rope broke, causing the Level-4 Dark Elf General to fall back onto the ground. But he was just one of many. The other grappling hooks had all met their objectives, allowing the other fully armored Dark Elf generals to scale up the wall.

All three of them were Level-3 Warriors. Once they reached the top, they lashed out, gaining territory rapidly. Behind them, the Dark Elf Army surged on to the city walls, the Level-4 General who had fallen down earlier among them.

Annie, too, had Battle Aura and was Level-3, but she was an Assassin. She would face a real disadvantage on the battlefield, head-on with Warriors who had aggressive fighting styles.

But she was also the only Levle-3 defender on the city walls. Only she stood a chance at stopping them.

Annie could only brace herself and charge towards one of the Level-3 Dark Elf generals who was massacring her city guards. In that moment, she suddenly remembered Link.

He had stayed behind to stop the Dark Elf Magician. By the time she had taken control of the city guard and returned to the little alley to help, all she found was a heavily injured Mary, Ardivan, and the other human Assassins.

The Dark Elf Magician and Dark Elf Assassins, as well as Link, were all nowhere to be seen.

As she charged forward, she recalled the last thing he said to her.

"Go, I'll stop him!" the Link shouted. And he had done it. At the last moment, he had sent her to safety.

"He should be in heaven by now, shouldn't he?" Annie sighed to herself.

She knew very well that she was no match for the Dark Elf generals. Even if she and the soldiers helping her managed to kill them, there was still the Marshal.

She would die in this battle, but she was prepared for it.

Annie slipped behind the Dark Elf general and stabbed her dagger at the back of his neck just as he swung his sword out at one of her soldiers.

Her dagger drew closer and closer towards its target. Just as it was about to hit, the Warrior swung around with his shield and charging towards Annie.

Annie knew at once that she would be flung into the air by his shield before her dagger managed to reach him. She had no choice but to change tactics to duck and evade.

But once she did, someone leaped onto the wall behind her. It was the Level-4 Warrior from before. He had been watching for a chance to strike all this time. Sneering, he charged towards her.

"Die, little girl!"

Annie didn't stand a chance against the fully armed Level-4 Warrior.

Is this the end? Despair filled her. Father, I tried my best.

The young Magician's figure flashed through her mind once more. Are you lonely up there, all by yourself in heaven? Don't worry, I'll be there with you soon.

Activating her Shadow Aura, she charged at the Level-4 Warrior.

She'd fight to her death.

Just then, a figure cloaked in yellow light jumped out from the steps leading up to the city walls. It moved so fast it left a yellow trail and strong gust of wind in its midst. The yellow flash collided with the sneering Level-4 Dark Elf General.

Battle Skill, Charge

Bang! The Dark Elf general was caught unaware as he was flung off the city wall. He dropped a total of 50 feet, leaving him stunned as he crashed onto the ground.

The general fainted after landing with a dull thud. On the wall, the glowing figure walked up to a crossbow. Maneuvering it expertly, he shot an arrow towards the fallen elf. His aim was trueIt ended the Level-4 Dark Elf in one attempt.

Only now did the glowing figure stop and turn to look at Annie. A young voice rang out, "Princess Annie, I'm here to help you."

As his voice dropped, more glowing figures leaped up onto the walls from inside the city. It was the suicide squad from the Black Iron Garrison!

The voice was familiar. Annie stared and rejoiced. "Minx, why are you here?"

Annie, being the daughter of a Duke and highly favored by King Leon, had grown up in the palace. Minx, as the son of an Earl, was a member of the Norton Kingdom's aristocracy. Once, during his travels in his younger days, he had attended a ball at the palace. He and Annie were old acquaintances.

"It's an order from Marshal Allonse. The army is on its way. I'll help you defend the city in the meantime!" Minx charged at one of the Level-3 Dark Elf generals.

His words were like a soothing balm. Hearing that aid was on its way, the morale of the human soldiers rose. With the help of the 14 Level-3 human Warriors, they managed to quickly wipe out the Dark Elves still remaining on the city walls.

Below the city walls.

Marshal Lorde watched the retreating elves, his face bleak.

He took a deep breath and gripped the hilt of the sword at his waist.

The sword had a nameBlood Pride. It had been made by the Dark Elf Master Blacksmith, Andrew and the Enchanter, Meissen of the Silver Moon Mage Council. It was a powerful, Epic weapon that the King himself had given to Lorde upon his rise to become a Level-6 Warrior.

As he pulled it out, a blood-red mist emanated from its blade.

"It's time!"

## 23. The Invincible Dark Elf Marshal

A hush fell upon the elves beneath the wall. They started to retreat beyond the reach of the human archers.

After about ten minutes, Lorde stepped out from among them.

A faint, red glow emanated from the gear he wore; a similar but stronger glow shone from his weapon. The light from his weapon was so dense, it seemed that it might burstito flame at any second.

He took a few steps forward and pointed his sword at the city. His low, deep voice reverberated throughout the battlefield.

"It's time to end all this!"

Before he even finished, five Dark Elf generasstepped out from behind him, all clad in fine armor. They glowed with different colors of Battle Aura. From the luminosity of their auras, one could tell that they were all very powerful.

The vanguard of the Black Iron Garrison had already arrived. Their reinforcements would arrive soon, leaving the Dark Elf Army with little time. Lorde wasn't about to test Gladstone's strength. He would gather his forces and take the city quickly.

"Warriors, charge with me!"

Lorde shot out first, his generals quick on his heels. One followed tightly behind him while the other four spread out and attacked different parts of the city wall.

Their human counterparts were mainly Level-3 Warriors, with only one Level-4 among them. With the five of the generals attacking from five different locations, they would be unstoppable.

They were followed by countless Dark Elf Warriors.

If any of the generals gained a solid footing on the city walls, countless Dark Elf Warriors would surge up onto it, expanding their territory. Against the meager defenses of the humans, they would be able to take the city with just one breakthrough point.

On the city walls, the command had already been passed to the most powerful warrior on the human sideMinx.

His tall build and the magical glow of the Rock Armor drew eyes. He had gained standing among the human troops by striking a powerful Dark Elf general down the walls earlier.

As an Assassin, Annie had already blended into the darkness. Only in the dark, was she at her best.

Minx saw disaster when Lorde appeared.

As a major in the Black Iron Garrison, he had access to a list of the current Dark Elf generals. The one who stood before him, glowing with dark red Battle Aura, 6'2'' tall and holding a blood-red broadsword, was sure to be Lorde, the youngest marshal of Pralync, the kingdom of the Dark Elves.

Lorde, widely known as the Bloody-Handed Demon, had a reputation for being cruel and ruthless. In his younger days, he had often attacked human villages, leaving only death in his wake.

Disturbingly, he not just massacred his victims, but also took joy in torturing them. Being captured by him was truly devastating.

But Lorde could afford to be as cruel as he was. A powerful Level-6 Warrior, he also held the Epic weapon, Blood Pride.

Minx was just a Level-4 Warrior. There was no way he'd hold up against Lorde!

But this was war. War didn't give anyone a chance to choose their opponents. He'd been prepared to fight to his death when he rode the griffin into Gladstone that night.

Between his thoughts, he ordered the two Level-3 Warriors beside him, "All three of us will stop him! For as long as we can!"

"Yes, General!" The two Warriors wore determined expressions. They already knew their deaths were near.

"The others, splitito groups of three. One group to each Dark Elf general. Annie, support them where you can," Minx rushed, laying out his strategy as quickly as possible.

The soldiers carried out his orders immediately.

Seeing that Lorde had entered the range of their crossbows, Minx roared, "Shoot! Shoot the one holding the red sword!"

Lorde was unmistakable. The archers trained their crossbows on him. Huge bolts flew towards Lorde in the midst of loud bangs.

"What a joke!" Lorde sneered.

His voice rang loud and clear throughout the battlefield, giving the human warriors intense pressure while raising the spirits of his own army.

Lorde didn't even try to evade the huge bolts hurtling towards him. He swung his sword and faced them head-on.

Clang! Clang! Clang! The loud clashes that rang out seemed endless. With each collision, the Blood Pride which Lorde held flared up in red light, splintering the crossbow bolts in half!

Minx watched, his heart racing. Such a force was far beyond his powers.

I will probably be killed right away, Minx laughed bitterly inside.

The Dark Elf Marshal was far more powerful than Allonse from the Black Iron Garrison. He had formidable, magical weapons that Allonse lacked. He was also younger and fitter than Allonse. Minx was sure that in a one on one battle, the one who fell would certainly be Marshal Allonse.

As his opponent drew closer, he roared, "Shoot, delay him!"

The archers on the city wall shot their arrows down at Lorde. The arrows rained on him with hissing sounds, barely giving him enough room to evade.

But Lorde's defenses were incredible. Perhaps he was still wary of the crossbow bolts, but he completely disregarded the common arrows.

Casually raising a hand to block some arrows which might have posed as a threat, he allowed the rest to just land on his armor.

Ting! Clang!The arrows rained down on him in a flurry of noise. The horde of arrows left white dots on Lorde's armor, the only sign that he had just been attacked. The normal arrows were no threat to him.

Quickly, Lorde charged within 130 feet of the city. He then paused, allowing his generals behind him to take the lead.

"Go ahead, I'll catch up later!" he instructed.

He was the marshal, the leader, and soul of the armynothing could happen to him. Attacking the city personally would be extremely risky. He needed someone to draw away the gunfire.

"Yes, Marshal!" The Dark Elf generals nodded and went on charging towards the city walls without an ounce of hesitation.

Fwoosh. Fwoosh. Fwoosh. The generals threw multiple grappling hooks up the walls. Within seconds, more than twenty sturdy ropes hung down the stone structures, allowing the Dark Elf Warriors to stream past Lorde and climb up the city walls.

The average human Warrior was relatively equal to Dark Elf Warriors in combat. Perhaps human Warriors had some advantage in terms of strength, but Dark Elves were slightly more agile. They had equal chances of victory and losing when they faced each other.

But there were too many Dark Elf Warriors on the city wallsthere was even a Level-4 Dark Elf Warrior among them and a Level-6 Warrior eyeing them from below the city walls.

The human Warriors couldn't keep up. Their morale reached rock bottom and their defenses looked as if they would be breached at any second.

The Level-4 enemy Warrior was about to reach them. Minx, knowing that he was forging a path for Lorde, had no choice but to charge forth to try and stop him.

He caught sight of Annie in the shadows under the city walls.

She was no longer masked. The moment Minx saw her biting her lip, deep sorrow and regret in her dark blue eyes, the realization hit him. He knew what she was thinking.

Once he rushed to engage the Level-4 Dark Elf Warrior, the Marshal below would charge up past him. No one would be able to stop the powerful elf then.

He would massacre the human troops.

When Lorde stepped foot on the wall, Minx would surely die. The entire suicide squad would die. Annie would die. And Gladstone would fall into the enemy's hands within the blink of an eye.

Then, the residents of Gladstonehundreds and thousands too would be massacred by that demon.

It would be the most tragic night in human history.

The situation was as clear as day to him, but he was powerless. As he rushed past Annie, he said, "Annie, run! Leave this city!"

He had watched her grow up and had alwasseen the proud, strong woman as a little sister. If Gladstone was doomed to fall, he would die with it.

But he hoped that Annie would live on. He hadn't thought that Annie would shake her head softly, her expression sorrowful yet determined. She had long since accepted her fate.

As Minx's shield engaged with the Dark Elf general's sword, the Dark Elf marshal's wild laughter rang out from below the city walls. "Hahahahah. Let the flowers of fresh blood bloom!

His figure blurring into a blood-red haze, he charged to the bottom of the wall and prepared to scale it.

Despair loomed over the hearts of the human warriors.

No one noticed a shadow slip into one of the archer towers stationed between the battlements. The archers were dumbfounded at the sight of a figure floating up to them.

Luckily, the young man was a human, otherwise, they might have attacked.

"Shhh," The young man wore a smile as he indicated the archers not to shout out. A young woman, so beautiful that she didn't seem human, floated up from behind him.

The young man was Link, and the young woman none other than Celine in her human guise. Her identity being special, she wouldn't take part in the battle directly but would keep Link safe instead.

On the archer tower, Link could see the Dark Elf Marshal as he prepared to scale the walls.

Link's face stayed calm despite the raging Mana within him. The corner of his lips twitched up into a small smile as he slowly lifted his Fire Crystal Staff.

A Level-6 Warrior, eh? Why don't you have a taste of my augmented Flame Blast?!

Let the battle between magic and Battle Aura begin!

## 24. Flame! Blast!

Lorde charged up to the bottom of the city wall. Once he did, he tugged on the rope, borrowing the momentum to leap up into the air.

Arrows rained on him and the human soldiers threw large boulders down to slow his ascent.

How annoying, Lorde thought.

He could ignore the arrows, but the boulders weighed several hundred pounds eachthey were going to be a little tricky to avoid. Even he wouldn't be able to brush off an injury caused by one of those things, but he still had a way to deal with them.

When the boulder hurtled down, he swung his sword, Bloody Pride, with an angry bellow. A ray of blinding, red light, spanning a little over a foot in width shot out from his sword and flew 30 feet up to meet the huge incoming boulder. With a grating sound, the boulder, as wide as a man's waist, was sliced cleanly in half.

That wasn't all. The red light traveled up to slice the human soldiers behind the boulder in half. It traveled up to 100 feet in the air.

"He cast his aura!"

"A true master!"

"How do we block that!?"

Anguish covered many of the human soldiers' faces as they realized the inevitable outcome of the battle.

Minx was still locked in combat with one of the Dark Elf generals. His comrades tried to rush to his aid, but the surge of Dark Elves onto the city walls stood in their way, leaving Minx to fend for himself.

At the sight of the blinding red light, his heart raced. Is this the end?

Annie was helping two of their Level-3 Warriors fight against a Dark Elf General. Seeing Lorde effortlessly cast his aura, gloom and despair loomed over her once more. She attacked her opponent like a woman possessed.

She knew that they wouldn't be able to defend against the Dark Elf Marshal even with the help of the suicide squad. All they could do now was do their best to slow the pace of the Dark Elves' invasion.

The Dark Elf soldiers, however, reacted differently. The show of their Marshal's invincible strength boosted their morale, making them attack more fiercely than ever.

Up until now, everything had proceeded according to Lorde's expectations.

But then, suddenly, something happened!

A dark blue glow emanated out from a nearby archer tower.

It wasn't obvious at first, but it quickly grew brighter and brighter, almost blinding those who looked at it. In the dark of the night, it was as bright as the sun, lighting up the entire horizon.

The next instant, it shot out from the archer tower and like a bright bolt of lightning, leaving a white arc on the retinas of all who saw it.

"Huh? What was that?" Lorde asked out loud.

The attack was unexpected and came at a crucial moment, right as he was unable to release another Aura Scythe.

In the next moment, the blue orb of light slammed into him.

Boom!

Deafening explosions, blinding flashes, and the heat of blue flames reverberated throughout the skies.

The battlefield was as bright as day under the light cast off by the flames.

After seeing the terrifying attack, Lorde suspended in mid-air, went all out with his Battle Aura.

Battle Aura allowed a Warrior to have magnificent strength and agility. Though it was unable to guard well against physical attacks, it could defend against magical attacks very well.

Lorde easily protected himself against the flames, escaping the fate of being burned to ash like the other Dark Elf Warriors.

But the flames weren't all there was to be feared.

In the heat waves, Lorde felt a huge force smash into him. It was immense, far more than he could fend off. Worse, he had nowhere to run as he was still mid-air.

The shock waves from the explosion!

The spell, Flame Blast wasn't just an explosion of flamesit also carried a terrifying wave of energy.

Lorde, even with his strong physique and the strong defenses of the magic armor he wore was unable to withstand the attack. He felt the blunt force of the explosion.

In that moment, he felt sick, bloated, and nauseous, as if all his organs had all been affected.

He'd been injured!

He was flung 100 feet out and landed on the ground with a heavy thud.

Dust billowed around him. The impact of the force had left a crater in the ground where he landed.

The battle between magic and Battle Aura, between the Level-6 Warrior Lorde, and the highly amplified Level-4 Spell, Flame Blast, ended with the Dark Elf's defeat!

Why was that?

The reason was simple. In the World of Firuman, Magicians were far more powerful than Warriors!

When Magicians drew on the various types of energies in their environment, rather than using just the Mana within them, they could call on all types of creatures to their aid. Some examples were elemental magic, Soul Power for mystic magic, and summoning magic.

Flame Blast was a form of elemental magic. In the spellcasting process, the Mana first formed a framework, which drew in large amounts of fire elements that condensed into a ball of flame having an extremely high temperature.

Since the Mana was supplemented with the energy around it, the magic it formed was naturally on a much larger scale.

In contrast, Warriors could only rely on the aura within themselves.

One summoned the strength of heaven and earth while the other could only rely only on himself. Of course the former held the advantage.

If a Warrior and a Magician were to face each other head-on, the Warrior's Aura would be depleted by just a few spells, leaving the Magician with ample Mana.

Lorde, a Level-6 Warrior, defended one strike of Flame Blast with almost one-third of his aura!

Perhaps it wasn't fair. But such was life.

Magicians fought with wisdom. The spells wrought with it had always been the most formidable forces throughout the World of Firuman!

However, Lorde remained vigilant. Though he was injured, he knew that as a marshal he couldn't allow himself to show any weaknesses. He rolled to his feet immediately.

"Who is the Magician who ambushed me!?" He roared, his voice strong and firm, obviously not that of an injured man.

His pupils constited as he took in the tragic scene on the city walls.

The Dark Elves, on the winning side earlier, had gathered more than a thousand of their troops below the city walls, leaving them all within the range of the Flame Blast's shock waves.

The normal soldiers, without the protection of an aura, were just stronger than the average person and thus defenseless in the face of the powerful Level-4 Spell.

Heat waves still rolled into the area. More than 300 corpses lay there burning, and further still were littered body parts.

Lorde, despite being strong at heart and known as the Bloody Hand for his cruelty and ruthlessness, shivered nonetheless.

He had only brought 20,000 soldiers. The death of more than 300 at once hung heavily on him.

Just then, he saw the Magician responsible for the ambush. He stood on the archer tower, still casting spells. A seemingly unending chain of bright blue small orbs of flame flew out from his staff.

Each little orb of fire burst outito flames that spanned more than a foot, and reaped the life of at least one Dark Elf Warrior.

Lorde recognized his magic staff instantly.

It's Holmes' Fire Crystal Staffit's the young Magician who had escaped! But he's so young, how can he have such power? Lorde didn't understand.

Magicians were powerful. But that power was only gained through years and years of diligent study and practice. The powerful Magicians in the Silver Moon Mage Council in the Kingdom of Pralync all consisted of middle to old aged elves.

With the young Magician's age, the most he could have attained was that of a Level-2 Magician. Even that was a feat only possible by a prodigy among prodigies. But the range and power of the Flame Blast he had cast earlier had been horrifying. It was comparable to that of at least Level-5 magic.

How was that possible?

Even as Lorde stood there, stunned, another group of Dark Elf Warriors succumbed to the Fireballs from the Magician. Their shrill screasshook Lorde from his daze.

As he looked up at the young spellcaster sending out spells as if there was no end to his Mana, Lorde knew that he would have to kill the Magician if he were to take the city tonight!

The Marshal's injuries had improved extremely quickly. In less than half a minute, he had recovered from most of his wounds, which weren't even that heavy in the first place. The only thing was that just slightly more than half of his Battle Aura remained. That wasn't something that he could replenish so quickly.

Still, Lorde was confident that he would be able to slay the Magician even with only half of his Battle Aura.

He had been careless earlier. This time, he wouldn't be so lax.

On the city wall.

Minx, with the help of Link's Fireball, finally managed to kill the Level-4 Dark Elf Warrior he had been fighting. He watched in awe, his mouth agape, as Link cast his spells confidently.

Since when did the Kingdom have such a young, powerful Magician? Minx thought to himself. The spell earlier was a Flame Blast, wasn't it? Minx wasn't too sure as it had been far more powerful than the Flame Blasts he'd seen before.

Annie saw Link as well. Her eyes reddened, full of joy and surprise at the sight of the sight of the young Magician calmly casting his spells.

The human soldiers on the wall were reinvigorated! Such earth-shattering magic from such a powerful Magicianand one of their own kind! Link had blasted the Dark Elf Marshal away like it was nothing. Finally, they stood a chance at victory!

The Dark Elves panicked, appalled by the Flame Blast that had flung their Marshal to the ground.

Many of the Dark Elves jumped down from walls in fear, despite the risk of breaking a limb. Others just turned and ran.

The only Dark Elves still standing on the city walls, were the Level-4 Dark Elf generals, and even they were scared. In a fight against magic, all of them would have to fight on the defensive side.

As he watched the morale of his Dark Elf warriors plummet, Lorde's voice once again filled the battlefield. "My Warriors, get away from the Magician. Charge separately!"

Roaring thunderously, he went full throttle with his Battle Aura. The bloody glow he wore grew brighter than ever and his speed became unmeasurable. He shot out like a red arrow towards the archer tower where Link stood.

The Magician's spells were powerful, but the power was far less condensed than his own. As long as Lorde managed to get up close to the Magician and release his aura, he would be able to take the Magician's head in one shot!

## 25. The Break of Dawn

Link looked down from the archer tower at Lorde, who was charging towards him. Calmly, he asked Celine, "Can you stop him?"

Celine's dainty brows creased. "He's stronger than I am. I can only hold off up to three blows from his sword."

With that, Link knew that Celine was probably Level-5. It would be difficult for her to take on Lorde, who was Level-6.

Being able to fend off even three blows was probably already due to her demon blood.

He checked his Mana. Because of the rapid Mana Recovery gained by the Magical Murmurs potion, he now had 1010 MP, enough for him to use Flame Blast three more times.

His thought for a bit, then a solution came to him almost immediately.

"Holding him off once will be enough."

He turned to the archers on the tower. "Leave this place. Tell all the Warriors to get away from here!"

The Flame Blast from earlier had sealed Link's authority in stone. The archers hastened to follow his orders. Quickly, the human Warriors retreated away from the archer tower.

Lorde had already reached the bottom of the city wall. With their marshal safe and unharmed, the Dark Elf Warriors charged forward again, following Lorde's lead. However, their advance was far slower than before, carrying a sense of crippling uncertity and fear of the terrifying display of magic.

After all, the charred bodies still flickering with flames below them whispered the awesome power of magic. They would be afraid so long as the threat of the Magician still loomed.

What if the Magician used Flame Blast again?

Lorde charged up to one of the ropes and hastily climbed up the wall. The other Dark Elf Warriors followed suit, taking some of the pressure of the humans' attacks off their marshal. Above, the human Warriors threw boulders off the walls to stop their advance.

This time, Lorde ducked and evaded the attacks instead of using his Aura Scythe.

He'd learned his lesson earlier. He had to keep an eye out for the Magician's attacks.

As he climbed, Link quietly explained his plans to Celine. He spoke quickly, but clearly. He was evidently unfazed despite the strong enemy coming towards them.

Celine listened attentively as her eyes glowed bright. Sneaking a glance at the young man next to her, she saw a pair of black eyes, as dark as her own.

In that moment, the pair of eyes seemed deep and clear, full of a chilly glow like that of a blade in icy water. It was the glow of wisdom.

Celine's heart stirred. The plain-looking young man seemed very handsome all of a sudden.

"Do you understand?" Link asked after concluding.

"Yes," Celine nodded.

Just then, Lorde reached the top of the city walls and slayed the human Warriors around him with just a few swings of his sword. He then charged towards the archer tower.

"Lesser Hailstorm!" Link's voice was faint, as if the one charging at him was just a normal soldier and not a deadly enemy.

White light flowing out of the tip of his staff enveloped the archer tower in an icy storm.

The storm wasn't meant to injure Lorde, but rather to obscure his vision.

Lorde found that he was unable to pinpoint the Magician's location with the violent hurricane between them. He wouldn't be able to use his Aura Scythe so easily.

If his Aura Scythe didn't manage to hit the Magician, he would have used a lot of his Aura and would have to be on the defensive.

"Hm. Do you think that that can stop me?" Lorde sneered to himself.

He could take the Magician's life even without having to use his Aura Scythe. He wasn't afraid of the Magician using another Flame Blast either. This time, he'd be prepared. He'd extinguish it with a swipe of his sword once it came at him.

Lorde closed the distance between them. But the Magician hadn't made a move since casting the Lesser Hailstorm.

All the soldiers on the battlefield had their eyes on the battle between the Dark Elf Marshall and the human Magician. The pace of the battle slowed considerably because of that.

The hope that their Marshall would kill the human Magician grew in the hearts of the Dark Elf Warriors.

But the human soldiers began to worry.

Lorde was too fast. They couldn't catch up. Unable to help, they could only watch.

Minx threw sideways glances at the archers' tower as he fought a Dark Elf Warrior. The Magician's quiet ate at him.

Could he have finished his Mana? He's so young. He must have done his best to cast that Flame Blast and then run out. But he can't lose!

If the Magician died, the human troops' morale would die with him, causing their defenses to crumble and collapse!

Minx understood what was happening on the battlefield, but he was just a powerless observer.

It was painful. The sheer feeling of uselessness was overwhelming.

Annie acted immediately. Gripping her dagger, she shot out with a Speed Burst, hurtling towards the tower without paying any heed to her surroundings. Even if it bought Link just a fraction of a second, she was willing to pay for it with her life.

Her life was his. She owed it to him twice over.

But she was still too slow. The Level-6 Dark Elf Warrior, charging at full speed, was far beyond her grasp.

Within the blink of an eye, Lorde reached the archer tower. Using the momentum of his charge, he leapt up into the air, the sword he held, Bloody Pride, glowing brighter than ever.

In mid-air, he was prepared to use his Aura Scythe at any time.

Just then, Link leapt out from the Lesser Hailstorm in the opposite direction. He was as quick as a dart.

Level-1 Spell, Cat's Agility!

As he fell, Link cast another spell towards the archer towerVector Resistance Field!

Bang! The archer tower shook a little. The force of the rebound flung Link out and away from the tower in a wide arc.

Throughout all this, the staff he held glowed blue. He was casting another spell! This time, it was another Flame Blast.

But Lorde, in the midst of the Lesser Hailstorm, couldn't see Link. In fact, he had been attacked viciously once he reached the tower.

A glittering sword of blue crystal had stabbed at him. It was astoundingly fast. Halfway through the attack, tight-knit sparks of thunder and lightning gathered around the incoming blade.

The attack was horrifyingly powerful!

Huh. Who is this? Lorde, taken by surprise, had no choice but to bring his sword up to meet it.

Ting! An explosion erupted from the collision. Lorde felt his wrist go numb, but he managed to repel his opponent's sword. Celine was not as strong as he was.

Having had the upper hand in that exchange, Lorde finally passed through the hailstorm and onto the archer tower.

The Level-2 Lesser Hailstorm was just normal wind and frost to himit was completely unable to breach his defenses. Its only function was to obscure his vision, which it had done.

Where is the Magician? Lorde was confused.

Only a human maiden of inhuman beauty stood there facing him. She held the sword that had stopped him earlier.

"And who are you?" Lorde asked curiously.

Celine didn't answer, but instead cast her Bloodline Talent, the Level-5 Obsidian Shield. As a type of bloodline magic, it was engraved deeply in every drop of blood that flowed within her. She cast it almost instantaneously, the strong crystal shield enveloping her within less than one-tenth of a second.

Lorde was stunned. Holding off a blow then hiding within a turtle shell? What type of combat style was this?

Throughout this exchange, a dark blue beam of light shot across the night sky, landing squarely on the archer tower.

Boom!

Another earth-shattering Flame Blast split the air.

The archer tower on the city wall was swallowed up by sparks and flames.

The fire raged, rubble shooting out of it; two figures shot out from within the chaos.

One of them was Celine. Her Obsidian Shield had protected her from most of the impact, allowing her Demon Aura to easily handle the rest. She had been prepared for the Flame Blast's explosion. She put as much distance between Lorde and herself with the momentum borrowed from the explosion.

The other figure was, naturally, Lorde.

Faced with the ambush of the Flame Blast, he had been forced to defend against it by fully unleashing his Battle Aura again, using up a large portion of his remaining power.

As he fell through the air, Lorde felt his aura plummet to less than a third of what it was before; he broke outito a cold sweat.

He would run out of aura at any moment. It wasn't enough for him to carry on his attack on the city. He would have to stopotherwise, he might just die in Gladstone due to the depletion of his aura.

If that really happened, his name would be smeared for eternity.

As a Warrior, he could die fighting, but not a shameful death like that.

As he fell, he finally caught sight of the Magician who had vanished earlier.

Like him, the Magician was 'flying'. However, the Magician was already about to land. From the trajectory, it seemed as if the young spellcaster would land on the city walls.

The Magician was looking at him too. Those deep dark eyes unfathomable. Lorde could see no ripples or emotion within them.

A Magician with absolute calm. I never stood a chance! With that one glance, Lorde's thoughts of slaying the Magician were extinguished.

But the Magician wasn't about to just let him go.

Blue light condensed around the Magician's staff, forming a Flame Blast that shot at Lorde from more than 130 feet away.

Lorde's heart raced. The Flame Blast didn't travel in a straight line; Lorde was completely unable to predict its path.

"Damn it!"

He didn't dare use his Aura Scythe due to its high consumption of power. If he used it, he would have almost no aura left. Furthermore, if he missed, and the Magician used another Flame Blast on him, he would be in mortal danger.

He couldn't use his Aura Scythe on the Magician even if he had enough aura anyway. They were too far apart. A little over 150 feet lay between them, and the range of Lorde's Aura Scythe was only 100 feet!

Lorde was left with no choice but to brace himself against the attack.

Boom! The Flame Blast smashed into Lorde. It was as if a sun had appearedthe light of the flames lit up the entire battlefield.

Lorde's body shot out like an arrow through the waves of flame, landing heavily with a loud thud 200 feet away.

He sustained some injury with each Flame Blast he took. This time, he had used up almost all his aura. When he landed, he tasted something bitter at the back of his throat. Unable to control himself, he opened his mouth and vomited a decent amount of blood.

Dark Elf Warriors gathered around him instantly. Their faces were dark at the sight of their Marshall in such a state.

"Marshall, are you okay?" Lorde's closest aides walked up to him and helped him to his feet.

"I'm fine." Lorde stopped his aides and climbed to his feet on his own. But this time, his movements were slower and his voice weaker. His injuries weren't light.

After he stood, he looked towards the city walls of Gladstone where the Magician stood silently.

The Fire Crystal Staff he held glimmered with flames as his robes seemed to flow, glowing with the clear light of magic. The spellcaster's face was stoic and expressionless.

At that moment, the young Magician looked just like a God above the clouds!

Suddenly, deep horn blasts rang out from the northern side of Gladstone City. The sound, though bleak and desolate, pierced the hearts of the human soldiers. They rejoiced while the Dark Elves' faces filled with panic.

The humans' reinforcements were here!

At the same time, the darkest part before the dawn ended. A golden ray of light broke out from the horizon, bathing Gladstone's city walls in gold.

Dong. Dong. Dong. The bell sounded. It was five o'clock sharp in the morning.

The long night had finally ended, bringing forth a new day.

"Retreat!" Lorde cried. He heaved a long sigh, his pride replaced by a sense of deep resignation.

## 26. Leaving for a New Beginning

It was finally daybreak.

As the Dark Elf Army slowly retreated, Link too sighed, but in relief. The effect of Magical Murmurs was about to wear out. He could already feel the exhaustion seeping into his bones.

He would face three months in the weakened state of Ailing Mana, leaving him no choice but to seriously contemplate his course of action during that time.

He had been too noticeable last night. There was no way the Dark Elves would let him go for what he'd done. He would probably face countless asssinations from the Death Hand throughout those three months.

Gladstone City was very close to the Black Forest. The further he was from the city, the safer he'd be.

Throwing a glance at Annie Abel, Link rejoiced. Not only had he rescued Gladstone City, he had saved the future Legendary Assassin, truly changing the fate of the Firuman Continent.

Annie walked up to him. Link smiled and nodded to her. Then, as she looked on in shock, he leapt off the city walls and cast a Vector Resistance Field once more.

Under the Spell's rebounded effect, Link fell towards one of the small alleys of Gladstone City. He still wore the effects of the Cat's Agility and so he landed lightly.

He had completed his mission and gotten what he wanted. Each second he spent in Gladstone meant more danger. There was no need for goodbyes.

Celine was already waiting for him in the alley.

"Let's leave," Link said as he smiled at her. They had agreed on this beforehand.

Celine nodded. They walked through the alley for a while before turning onto a small path. When they had sneaked out of the city and reached far beyond the sight of anyone else, Celine took on her demon form. She brought Link close in preparation for the long-distance flight they would undertake. Link did his best to stay calm as the position was quite dangerous. Shaking out her wings, Celine soared into the skies.

Gladstone still didn't know of Link's disappearance. They were still searching for the powerful Magician who had rescued the city. Of course, there was nothing to be found.

Tales of the Magician spread throughout Gladstone.

Some said he was a messenger of the God of Light. Others said that he was a prodigy of magic. While yet others said that he was the master of fire.

All of these were pure speculation. The truth was long buried by the sands of time.

All the people knew was that the Magician had come from the Magic Academy of Flemmings. And so, in the Flower Gardens of the rebuilt Magic Academy stood a large and tall statue.

The statue was that of a young man, his facial features crafted vaguely. Holding a magic staff and wearing a gray robe, he stared into the distance. The statue was called: The Guardian.

A simple line was annotated below: He saved Gladstone.

Of course, this was all in the far future.

When Celine flew past the boundary of Gladstone, Link saw two new notifications appear on his interface.

The first notification read:

Mission Completed: Save Gladstone

Game Player receivers 100 Omni Points.

That was great!

The second notification was:

The effect of Magical Murmurs has worn out. Game player will be in the weakened state of Ailing Mana. All stats will be reduced by 90% for three months.

That was terrible. Link sighed to himself and checked his current condition.

Link Morani (Noble)

Level-4 Normal Magician

Mana Recovery Speed 0.92

Maximum Mana 24.1

Weapon: Fire Crystal Staff

Supreme Magical Skills: None

Condition: Weakened state of Ailing Mana.

His Mana Recovery Speed and Maximum Mana had both reverted to that of the average Magician's Apprentice; it would stay that way for three months! This sucked.

Though he was labeled as a Level-4 Magician, it was only in name, and largely due to the Level-4 Flame Blast he had cast earlier. The skill level of a Magician on the Firuman Continent was equivalent to the highest level of magic they could cast.

Truth be told, Link only had some elementary knowledge of magic theory. He had a long way to go before he could truly become a great Archmage!

"Are you sure that you want to go to the East Cove Magic Academy?" Celine asked.

"Yes," Link nodded.

He'd foraged a lot of basic magic books from the Flemmings Magic Academy's library. He should be able to read and digest them quickly. Once he learned enough of magic's basic foundations, he would apply for enrollment. He probably wouldn't lag behind then.

But there was another important reason for him to go to the East Cove Magic Academy.

In the game, a terrible incident had occurred within less than half a year after the Change of the Bloody Moonthe Demon Tarlvess escaped from his three-century-long imprisonment at the East Cove Magic Academy.

Tarlvess was a true demon of the Deeps, and his power was almost Legendary. The only reason he was captured was because a human prodigy in magic three centuries ago by the name of Bryant overpowered him.

Bryant had managed to attain Legendary status despite the low density of Mana at his time and age. His battle with Tarlvess had been fierce and long. It lasted two days and two nights; the aftermath of their battle formed a deep valley where the East Cove Magic Academy now stood.

Now, however, the mighty Mage had long since passed away. Though weakened by the magical barriers Bryant had cast three hundred years ago, Tarlvess still had the formidable strength of a Level-8 Demon.

Blood flowed from the academy in rivers at the cost of his escape. The dean, a Level-7 Master Magician had paid the price of his soul to chase Tarlvess off with the Level-8 Spell, Demon Cage. Even so, less than half of the academy's Magiciassurvived and the valley was leveled flat. This was the most significant event since the Change of the Bloody Moon. It had been called the Mourning of Magic.

The two successive blows had crippled the Norton Kingdom. They met defeat in each subsequent battle with the Kingdom of Pralync. In just three years, the once mighty kingdom, now hanging on by the skin of its teeth, had no choice but to move its center of power. Its monarchy relocated south to take refuge with the Free Trade Confederation. However, the asssination of King Leon by the fallen Annie Abel in several years' time had caused the complete collapse of the Norton Kingdom. And so, the weak Freedom Confederation of the South, which had been protected by the Norton Kingdom's troops before that, had no choice but to directly confront the Dark Elf forces.

The future of the human race had seemed dark indeed.

Considering the behavior of the game server so far, any missions regarding the demon, Tarlvess, would be truly important. He would be able to earn many Omni Points from them.

"Fine. I really don't understand you though," Celine responded.

Despite that, Celine still carried Link as she flew towards the North.

"The dean of East Cove Magic Academy, Earl Anthony, is a Level-7 Master Magician," she began to explain, "There are powerful Rune Barriers around the academy. Even the Girvent Forest around the academy is under the surveillance of their watchtower; it's extremely sensitive to dark magic. It'll be very hard to for me to hide myself there, so I can only send you to the border of the forest."

This came as a surprise to Link. He had thought that Celine would be able to enter the academy with him. If that was so, then he and Celine would have to part ways.

Feeling the soft, warm body behind him, Link stayed silent, full of reluctance.

Celine sensed it and said laughingly, "I would have to leave even without the Rune Barriers. As you know, since I showed my true form, my father's lackeys will be after me again. I need to shake them off first."

"Be careful," Link stirred. Yes, this wasn't the time for romancing. Celine was in constant danger. He needed to get stronger as fast as he could!

"Don't worry. I'm used to it. Those hounds are all idiots," Celine giggled.

They continued to chat as they traveled. Celine flew very quickly. Half an hour later, a vast expanse of rubber trees appeared beneath them. It was the Girvent Forest, also praised as the Courtyard of the Gods.

Lush green trees and shrubs, dappled sunlight, birdsongs and the aroma of flowers astonished their senses. A wide path stretched out in a straight line through the forest, some clearings appearing beside it every now and then. Those were forest ranches. Further in, at the middle of the forest, there was a bustling small townthe town of River Cove. A clear stream ran through the middle of it.

From up in the sky, Link's heart was filled with joy, yet tinged with regret by the picturesque scene.

In the lore, the Dark Elves had used a God-level item to conquer the South. When the Dark Elves reached Girvent Forest, the East Cove Magic Academy, which had just been rebuilt, had been forced to use powerful magic barriers to stop the Dark Elf Army from advancing. Between the two forces, the beautiful Girvent Forest had been reduced to ashes.

This time, Gladstone was saved, and Annie lived. Would history change because of that? Link had no idea. But he vaguely sensed that all he had changed were some minor detailsthe main flow of history was not that simple.

They soon reached the western entrance of the forest where Celine landed. "I'll drop you off here."

"Many thanks," Link smiled. He was reluctant to part with her, but he knew that in order to walk with the Demon Princess in the future, he had first to catch up to her footsteps.

Celine, too, was sentimental. In her heart, she saw Link as a true friend and she was worried considering that he was now in a weakened state of magic.

She gritted her teeth and pulled three feathers from her wings. She quivered in pain as she wrenched them off.

She passed the soft feathers to Link. "Take these with you. Burn one when you're in danger, and I will come to save you."

Link took the pitch-black feathers from her. Information popped up on the game interface.

Feathers of the Demon Princess Celine Flandre

Quality: Epic

Effect: Summons the Demon Princess to your aid when burned.

(Note: A token of friendship.)

Link carefully hugged the feathers to his chest, making Celine blush a little.

"I'll remember it," He said.

Celine took out a pendant of mystic silver. "A storage pendant. Most of the magic books from Gladstone are in there. Your New Moon Wand, and Fire Crystal Staff will need to be hiddenyou can put them in here."

Dimensional storage gear was very expensive. Such a pendant probably cost more than 2000 gold pieces, but Link needed it, and the books inside it, desperately. He had been rushing around Gladstone and didn't really have time to consider them, but the magic books were especially important to him now. It came as a pleasant surprise that Celine had prepared all this for him.

"You I'll take it." Link wasn't coy. The greatest favors needed no thanks.

Celine watched as Link put on the pendant. Suddenly, she walked up and planted a kiss on his forehead before taking a few steps back. Her smooth, white face flushed. "My friend, I'll leave now."

Link felt the tingling on his forehead. In a daze, he nodded. By the time he came to, Celine had already left.

It was as if a piece of his heart had gone with her. He touched the pendant that lay on his chest. It felt like Celine was still with him. Strangely comforted by it, he stepped onto the forest path.

The wide path in the forest was also known as the King's Lane. It led Northeast, passing through River Cove Town in the middle of Girvent Forest, past East Cove Magic Academy, and finally to the capital of the Norton Kingdom, Springs City.

It was the only path leading from the South to the capital.

"Springs City must be a mess right now," Link sighed.

In the game, Norton Kingdom had crumbled not just due to the invasions but also because of internal squabbles. The capital city was in chaos mainly due to the struggle of power between King Leon and his younger brother, the Iron Duke.

The chaos in the capital city had spread throughout the land. Take Girvent Forest, for exampleall was peaceful and beautiful. But it was just a faade for the danger that lay within.

Link met that danger within 12 miles of setting foot on the King's Lane.

A skinny old horse had collapsed by the roadside, it's neck slit by a knife. The blood hadn't coagulated yet, so it had probably died not long ago.

Listening carefully, Link could hear some noises coming from within the trees by the road. It sounded like someone was battling.

Just then, the game interface shifted and a new notification appeared.

Mission Activated: Aid and Rescue

Mission Details: Save the master of the old horse.

Mission Reward: 5 Omni Points.

A mission!

Letting his curiosity get the best of him, Link took the mission without another thought. Then, cloaking himself in the Spell of Silence, he traced the sounds to their origins, deep into the forest.

## 27. The Undying Protagonist of Legend

Within two to three minutes, Link saw the battlegrounds through the sparse cover of the rubber trees.

Link's heart raced at the scene before him.

Three bandits, wearing masks of blood-red fabric, were attacking a young kid of around seventeen or eighteen years of age. He had a face of indescribable beauty.

It was fine if someone was prettier than average, but this kid's features were far beyond that. He had a head of cloud-gray hair, eyes of a deep, dark green hue and near-perfect facial features. He was worthy of any praise in that regard.

A name popped up on the game interface before Link.

The half-elf Eliard!

Eliard: A Legendary character, born of a human and a High Elf, with unfathomable magical talent.

The first twenty years of the game had been a time when darkness had crept over the world. But it had also been the time during which the half-elf had grown to reach the Legendary Pinnacle.

If one were to speak about the World of Firuman without its game players, and only of the native NPCs, Eliard was definitely the typical undying protagonist!

Of course, at this moment, the prodigy's journey had not yet begun. Now, he was just a normal kid. Though somewhat skilled in fighting solo, he was still in pretty bad shape.

Facing three normal bandits with skills equal to that of the average street thug, Eliard managed to duck and evade here and there, narrowly missing death several times. He bled from multiple cuts on his body, and he looked as if he would fall at any moment.

Link had his mission to complete. Seeing that Eliard was about to be captured, he attacked.

There were just a few bandits. Link cast a Fireball at each of them from behind the tree without even showing his face.

Though his magic was weak, and despite the spells being cast without a wand, the Fireballs still possessed a certain amount of strength. Link used his old tricka fireball exploded in each of the three bandits' ears.

Bang! Bang! Bang! One of the bandits was knocked out by the blast, leaving the other two stumbling about like drunken men.

Eliard was quick and nimble and knew some martial arts, but he was not a bloodthirsty fellow. At this, he landed a karate chop on each of the bandits' necks, knocking them out for good.

Then he looked in the direction in which Link stood. Wearing a hint of wariness, he called out, "Mr. Magician, thank you for your help."

He was too handsome, too beautiful. Because of his mixed parentage, Eliard had been left at an orphanage and grew up facing a lot of deception. Many harbored evil thoughts due to his exceptional looks. He had almost been sold to the nobles as an escort. The three bandits' aim had been obviousthey wanted to capture and sell him. His past experiences made him wary of strangers' help.

The Magician had appeared at a crucial moment, just as he was about to be captured by the bandits. There was something strange about that.

Perhaps he was being overly suspicious, but it was that same suspicion which had allowed him to survive up until now.

Link, not knowing what thoughts ran through Eliard's head, walked out from behind the tree and smiled at him. "It's nothing, just a simple gesture. I'm Link. May I know your name?"

Eliard hesitated, but the Magician had saved him, after all, so he gave his real name. "My name is Eliard."

Link smiled. He remembered a randomly generated, secret mission he had once heard of.

People on the game forum said that a young, unbelievably powerful NPC Magician appeared around the East Cove Magic Academy. The NPC appeared at random, issuing missions which allowed game players to collect all sorts of alchemy ingredients and materials. The missions weren't difficult but they were somewhat tedious. Game players received Epic Magic Crystals from the NPC after completing the final part of the mission.

In the game, items of Fine and Superior Quality were common, but Epic items were precious. Even in the next 20 years, when the world's Mana density was much higher, it was still quite an accomplishment for a game player to be able to collect a full set of Epic quality gear.

The NPC Magician was Eliard. All those who had completed the secret mission said that the half-elf was a mild, generous fellow who paid his debts in kind. Link knew that the stories probably rang true from Eliard's clear eyes and gentle features.

Making friends with a talented, future Legendary character was probably a good thing. But Eliard looked wary. Link would probably need a few tricks to build rapport with him.

"Good. I'll remember it. I should leave too, now that you're safe." Link gave Eliard a Magician's salute, then turned to leave.

He believed that Eliard would stop him. Even if he didn't, they would meet again at the East Cove Magic Academy. After all, Eliard was also bound for the school to study magic.

"Wait," Eliard did indeed stop him, "Mr. Link, are you a Magician of the East Cove Magic Academy?"

Link stopped and shook his head. "Not yet. I am on my way there to study magic."

"You" Eliard's dark green eyes swept up and down Link's figure. What he saw was a pair of dull eyes (a manifestation of Ailing Magic), a normal gray robe and just a faint tinge of Mana around him. The Magician was probably just a normal Magician's Apprentice.

As far as he knew, the East Cove Magic Academy was extremely stit in its enrollment requirements. After all, the academy was the gathering place of the elite figures within the Norton Kingdom. It took in only prodigies or fully-fledged Magicians.

This Link knew some magic, but his talent was weak. He would probably be turned down at the door.

"What? Is something wrong?" Link asked with a smile.

"Sir, I have heard that the East Cove Magic Academy is very stit in its selection of applicants. I am afraid that you may not make it," Eliard said carefully, doing his best to avoid hurting Link's pride with his words. He no longer held any suspicion of Link.

Link understood what Eliard was saying. A wry smile crossed his lips. With just one glance, the effect of Ailing Magic allowed others to tell that he had not been blessed with magical talent.

"I brought some magic books with me. I'll try to enroll at the academy first. If I don't make it, I'll self-study for a while and try again when I improve." Link's smile was sunny and cheerful.

Eliard felt pity at this. In his eyes, Link was the type of person who, despite having his heart set on magic, had not been blessed with talent.

There were many such people in the Kingdom. But there was a stark difference between ideals and reality. Most of them studied magic with a passion, but still ended up wasting their youth.

Eliard pondered it, then said, "I'm planning to go to the East Cove Magic Academy too. Why don't we go together?"

The young Magician's Apprentice had saved his life. He owed Link a huge favor.

I'll be able to help him with his magic even if I can't help him getito the academy, Eliard thought.

As for himself, he was confident that he'd be able to enter the East Cove Magic Academy thanks to his incomparable magical talent. All the Magicians who had seen him said so, and he himself could sense it.

Link's heart leaped for joy. It was all going as he'd planned. He'd managed to get close to Eliard, a halo of undying luck shone upon him. Following Eliard was definitely the right choice.

A notification appeared on the interface.

Mission completed.

Game player receives 5 Omni Points.

Subsequent mission activated.

Mission: Enrollment

Mission Details:

Enroll and study magic at the East Cove Magic Academy. Truly master a Level-0 Spell. Mission Reward: 5 Omni Points.

Wonderful. Link accepted the mission with a smirk.

## 28. His First Level-0 Spell

The two of them traveled together and they both intended to enroll in the East Cove Magic Academy.

The bandits had left multiple cuts on Eliard's body, but they were just about as skilled as common street thugs. The wounds weren't deep and had stopped bleeding even without any first aid.

After wrapping the wounds, Eliard changed into a fresh set of clothing taken from the bundle that had fallen off the old horse. He looked much better after that.

"Here. It's just a normal healing tonic, but your wounds will heal faster if you drink it," Link said as he took out a bottle. He'd found it in the Alchemy Tower of the magic academy in Gladstone and only had two of them.

Eliard wavered. He'd only known Link for a short while and still wasn't at ease with drinking something from someone he had just met.

He watched Link earnestly. Seeing the Magician's open and composed demeanor, he relaxed somewhat. It was an act of kindness after all, and he wasn't one to turn it down just like that. He accepted the bottle from Link and took a small sip. After sensing that all was well, he drank it all down.

"Thank you." Eliard felt a comfortable warmth suffuse his stomach. Instantly, he knew that it hadn't been tampered with, and was in fact, most likely a potion of superior quality.

"No problem," Link answered cheerfully, "Let's go."

The East Cove Magic Academy stood on the northeast side of Girvent Forest. They had entered from the forest's western entrance, which meant that they would have to travel through more than half of the Girvent Forest.

Luckily, it wasn't that large, only about 30 to 40 miles wide. Also, the King's Lane had been paved smoothly, making their journey much easier.

They chatted as they walked.

Within three or four hours of walking, they had become rather familiar with each other and could see the town of River Cove in the distance.

In Eliard's eyes, Link, though just a common Magician's Apprentice, was an interesting fellow with a cheerful and generous personality.

They had spoken about almost everything under the sun. Many times, Link seemed to have been able to tell what he was thinking and follow his line of thought. Such clever fellows were rare indeed. It almost made him forget his own embarrassing circumstances.

Yes, he was pretty pathetic right now, especially in terms of finances. Being an orphan, no one would willingly support his magic studies. He had no choice but to do his best and make money on his own doing any job he could find. He made barely enough to pay his fees for the magic academy. As for his other expenses, he could only scipand save to avoid going hungry.

I'm so lucky to have made such a friend, Eliard rejoiced.

Link felt the same way. Eliard was a true prodigy. His brilliant mind was able to follow many of the jokes from Earth that Link told.

But there was one thing that still bothered Link.

His own appearance was really quite plain and his body rather frail. With his common gray robes and without his wand, he looked just like any old commoner on the streets. On the contrary, Eliard was incomparably handsome, tall and fit. The normal clothes Eliard wore were unable to hide his brilliance.

Link looked just like Eliard's subordinate when they stood side-by-side.

I'm now the leaf that brings out the red of the blooms, Link lamented.

Indeed, Eliard drew everyone's attention in River Cove Town, especially the ladies. Their eyes glowed, wolf-like as their gazes followed him. While Link, next to him, was ignored completely. At the inn, the owner looked towards Eliard and asked, "Do you want to stay here Sir?"

Eliard nodded. Gritting his teeth, he handed over the money for two rooms. Link was his savior; he couldn't allow Link to pay.

By this point, Link knew all about Eliard's circumstances from the conversations they'd shared. He strode up and placed a gold coin on the counter. "Two of your best rooms, please and thank you."

Turning to Eliard, he casually said, "Don't argue. Just take it as my repaying you for the drinks from last time."

He knew that Eliard was in a tight spot financially. And the reason they had come to the inn, despite Eliard having expressed his preference to travel through the night, was that Link hadn't slept properly in almost two days.

The so-called 'returning of money' was so as not to humiliate Eliard.

Eliard was taken aback for a moment. Then, he understood. Gratitude filled his heart as he nodded. Though he remained silent, he would remember the favor in the future.

The years he had spent wandering had taught him the cold and evil things of this world. Pure and good intentions like Link's were hard to come by, and he remembered each and every one, hoping that he would be able to repay them someday.

The two of them had their dinner in the inn's hall. Link paid the bill before both of them retired to their rooms.

Back in his room, Link went to bed after washing up. But he tossed and turned and was unable to fall asleep. He decided to look through the items in the pendant Celine had given him.

The pendant was too precious, too valuable for Link to display it to everyone. He could only look at in private.

His consciousness, entering the pendant, found itself within a murky gray place, around 30 feet tall and 30 feet wide where items floated around in piles.

The first thing he saw was a stack of magic books, up to 64 of them. The Flemmings Magic Academy's most valuable books were all there.

Then came some low-level potions. There weren't many, only seven or eight bottles, all which he had gotten from the Alchemy Tower. The only other things left in the murky space was a pile of gold coins. He counted 1315 of them. Celine had left him all the gold.

Though they'd only been apart for less than a day, Link already missed her very much.

I wonder if she's managed to get rid of the demons from the Deep? Is she well now? Questions filled Link's head as he felt the new sensation of longing and worry for the first time.

I'm still too weak!Link sighed. Even if he was by her side, he would only be a burden to her.

He rubbed the pendant with one hand as he clasped the feathers that he had hidden next to his chest. It was comfortingit made him feel like Celine was right there beside him.

He was extremely tired and fell asleep after half an hour. When he opened his eyes, he found that the sky was still pitch black. Link pulled out his pocket watch. It was two in the morning. He'd slept for around six hours.

But those six hours made him feel completely refreshed. He felt the warmth return to his fingertips as if he were in a hot spring. It was comforting, and his mind was clearer and sharper than ever, no longer dazed as it had been in sleep before.

He could analyze whatever problems popped up in his mind quickly and systematically. The questions his body's original owner had regarding magic were solved with little thought paid to them.

Is this what I'm like at my peak? If I were to take an IQ examination, the original Link would probably get a maximum of 90 points. I would probably have gotten about 130 as I was back on Earth, just a little better than average. But now, I'd definitely get more than 250No, 260. Whatever. But this mind is invincible!

It'd be a waste if such a sharp mind wasn't put to good use!

Link pulled out a magic book from the pendant. It was called "Spell Structure". He flipped to the index. It listed the common Level-0 Spells: Earth Spike, Fireball, Wind Blade, Grease, Lesser Invisibility. The book explained each in detail.

It was just what Link needed.

"As the idiom goes, 'an hour in the morning is worth two in the evening'. I'll start my studies of magic now!"

Putting his nose in the book, he began to read diligently.

Link never thought that for someone who was a poor student on earth, he would actually be able to sit quietly and focus his attention on reading a dry and technical textbook on magic and spells. In fact, he had been engrossed in the reading for almost a whole day.

When he started, he had to force himself to focus. It was almost torturous at firsthis eyelids were heavy from the endless numerical Mana formulas and the sea of magic runes that looked like nothing he'd ever seen before.

But as his focus gradually settled into the subject of the book, he became more and more interested in the contents, and by the end of it, he was completely enthralled.

The experience of reading the magic textbooks now was completely different from what he experienced last night while reading Theory of Mana Turbulence in Celine's room. Yesterday, he was only roughly scanning the book's pages; he wasn't paying close attention at all, and he didn't apply himself to the knowledge. But this time, Link put in all his efforts into the book.

He flipped through each page slowly, sometimes he even stopped between pages to carefully think about what he had just read.

According to the book, spells were divided into six major types: elemental spells, secret spells, conjuring spells, summoning spells, enchanting spells, and alchemy spells.

For spells of Level-3 and below, the differences between these various types of spells weren't significant. A Magician could develop their skills in all types of spells. But as the Magician reached Level-3 and above, they would need to specialize and decide which type of spells to focus on.

A Magician could normally only develop and advance their skills in only one spell type. To be an expert in more than one type of spell after Level-4 was fundamentally impossible, and very rarely were there any exceptions.

The book, Foundation Structure of Spells, listed Fireball and Earth Spike as examples of elemental spells, and Lesser Invisibility as a conjuring spell. As for secret spells and summoning spells, there were no examples given because these two branches were extremely obscure subjects. Very rarely could someone learn about them through textbooks alone. The only way to learn about them was to study directly with a tutor.

As he finished reading about the magic structure of Fireball, Link took out his New Moon wand and tried to cast the spell.

The spellcasting process consisted of three steps: first was to attract Mana, the second was to build the spell's structure, and the third was to release the spell.

The most critical phase was building the spell's structure. The success of any spellcasting process depended on this very step.

Link focused all his attention and followed each point instructed in the book. Two seconds later, the tip of the New Moon wand lit up, and a tiny point of light appeared in thin air near the tip of the wand.

This was the Fireball spell's prototype.

The light point was about the size of a grain of rice, it was maintained for about a second, and then with a puff, the light disappeared into thin air.

If the building of the spell structure failed, then the spellcasting would abruptly come to an end.

This can be quite difficult.

Link pursed his lips. He realized that this method of learning was completely different from the way he learned the spells he obtained with his Omni points. Right now, Mana was as wild and mischievous as a child. When he wanted it to go left, it would insist on going right. When he wanted it to stabilize, it would become agitated. It was almost impossible to keep it under his control.

Link tried again.

Three seconds later, there was another puff, and a pebble-sized light orb once again appeared then rapidly disappearedanother failed attempt at Fireball.

Link felt a hot rush of air hit his face. He was lucky that he was only testing out a Level-0 spell. Had it been the Level-4 spell, Flame Blast, and he had messed up in the middle of the spellcasting process, he would've been burnt to a crisp.

Magic was considered to be the biggest force in this world. But it was also a double-edged sword. The more powerful the Magician the more cautious they had to be at spellcasting. This was a saying by a famous Master Magician, whom which Link now deeply agreed with.

If one couldn't stand the collapse of a Level-4 spell, then a legendary spell might even kill them.

In truth, Magicians who wished to study high-level spells must make use of different types of tools to aid them. The most important among these tools was a fully functioning Mage Tower.

A Mage Tower could help a Magician by monitoring and controlling the area surrounding the tower, and the equipment inside the tower could also be used to protect them while they were experimenting with new spells.

However, the downside of these towers was the cost to build them. A normal Mage Tower required a huge amount of magic and anti-magic materials, costing about 10,000 gold coins to buildan unbelievably high price.

Strength always came at a cost.

Magic was like an expensive hobby that burned up money at the speed that was simply unbelievable to the average man!

Of course, Link had not thought of Mage Towers yet at this moment. Fireball was nothing but a Level-0 spell, he could boldly experiment with it without worrying about his safety.

The third, fourth, and fifth time casting the spell were all failures. Then on the sixth attempt, after about five seconds, a white marble-sized glass orb finally appeared at the end of the wand's tip.

Link now directly observed and experienced the whole process of how a spell came to be from scratch.

Mana flows in, and the spell's structure was constructed, and the fire element was drawn in, building a stable structure. What a beautiful process.

He felt a warm rush of air from the small fireball in front of him and Link's heart was filled with pride at his small achievement.

Fireball was the very first spell that he had truly learned.

But then Link laughed at himself. This is just a Level-0 spell, and I still needed five seconds to cast it. Besides, my Fireball is only good for lighting a match.

In the game, he could release Level-0 spells in 0.1 seconds. Only with that speed could they be of any use in battle.

However, Link had faith that he would get better in time with more practice.

Link also had no reason to worry that he would use up all of the Mana in his body while practicing. He made sure to reabsorb the Mana used for the spell, and so when the Fireball slowly disappeared, the lost energy re-entered Link's body.

Then, Link let some more Mana flow into the wand, then built the spell structure again. This time, after four seconds, the Fireball was completed.

Link was beginning to get the hang of it, and he incessantly practiced again and again.

He was so fully immersed that he was unaware of the flow of time.

He cast the spell again and again, not realizing when the spellcasting using his own efforts and the spellcasting obtained from Omni Points melded together and became indistinguishable.

Fwoosh. A stable fireball appeared at the tip of his wand, and thenpuff, the fireball disappeared, and the Mana was re-absorbed. All of this happened quickly, just as one would switch lights on and off.

Without knowing it, Link's spellcasting had sped up to less than 0.1 seconds. Link felt that in just one second he could release at least 20 Fireballs.

He was in an unusual state right now, where he still received aids and boosts from the gaming system, but he could also feel and understand each step in the process of spellcasting and the underlying structure of the spells.

"Did you boost my spellcasting?" Link asked the gaming system. It would be impossible for him to advance so quickly if it was only just his efforts.

The gaming system replied.

Of course. Repeated practice of a single move would only consume a player's energy, and wouldn't help with the player's understanding towards magic. When the player has developed their understanding of the spell's foundation, the system will boost the player's spellcasting to speed up their overall spellcasting speed.

"Then how fast can I release each Level-0 spell exactly?"

0.0512 seconds. That's the limit for Fire Element spells. You can't get any faster than that.

Spellcasting time for elemental spells was divided into two parts: First, was the Mana structure construction time. This depended on the mental speed of the Magician, which could surely be improved with practice. Second, was the time for the elements to accumulate and arrange into proper configuration. This speed depended on the concentration of the elements in the surrounding area. To compare between the snowy grounds of the North and the deserts of the South, the latter would accumulate fire elements ten times faster than the former.

In the room that Link was staying, fire elements needed 0.05 seconds to accumulate, and this was the fastest time limit for the spell.

Oh, that means I'm pretty fast then. 0.0512 seconds, that was as fast as lightning. Link was satisfied with this level of progress.

The next time he practiced Fireballs, he didn't pay too much attention in controlling the stability of the spell structure, instead, he put his efforts into the process of attracting fire elements.

After more than ten minutes, a doubt emerged in Link's mind. There are flaws in this spell's structure.

Once he'd gotten practice and some experience, Link now started to question things. He now understood the whole spellcasting process, and he could discern some shortcomings in the structure of the Fireball spell.

He paid thorough attention to the structure of the spell and made further discoveries.

This spell's process in drawing on fire elements from its surroundings isn't perfect, and not very efficient. But it is very stable, and the simplest and easiest to develop. But these aren't what I need in my spells, maybe I can modify and improve it.

Link was a man of action; once he had an idea he immediately set out to do it.

But at this moment, someone knocked on the door. From outside, Eliard called out, "Link, it's time to get going now."

Link turned around to look out the window. It was only then that he realized that the sky was getting light.

"Wait, I'm coming," Link responded hurriedly.

Putting away his wand, he hastily washed his face and tried to make himself appear more energetic. But, from what he'd seen in the mirror, no matter how he looked at himself, he just looked like an average person. The ailing Mana had surely been affecting him.

He opened the door and saw Eliard. Link felt even more nervous now.

After a good night's rest, Eliard had changed into new clothes. His whole person seemed more vivacious now, as if he were glowing. Those pair of light green eyes of his were clear, yet meaningful as if they were shining themselves. Anyone who saw him would know that he had strong spirits.

In magic, there was a spell called Aura Detection, where one could measure the arsemanating from a target.

Link hadn't learned it yet, but he believed that if anyone were to check Eliard using this spell, they would find that he was glowing with a brilliant Mana force.

Ah, what can you say when he's the number one most talented Magician and the number one most handsome man in the game. He really has a dashing appearance that no one can compare to! Link couldn't help but lament.

After the two had their breakfasts in the hall, they were on the move.

East Cove Academy was 30 miles southeast of River Cove town, in a coven area. It wasn't that far away since the road was level. They only had to walk for about two hours, then the cove entrance was already in view.

At the entrance was a massive stone plaque, and on it, written in huge letters, was the name of the East Cove Higher Magic Academy. There was a crest on top, with a lion's head in the middle, and crossing wands beneath it, signifying magic in service of the Kingdom of Norton.

Beside the stone plaque was a small two-story wooden building, and in front of the building was a courtyard where a white-haired old man clad in a bluish grey Magician's robe was sunbathing on a long chair.

Just as Link turned to the direction of the old man, a notification flashed up.

Vincent

Level-2 Normal Magician

Status: Measures constant auras.

Position: East Cove Magic Academy admission and qualification tester.

At the time Vincent saw Link and Eliard, he swept a glance at them and asked, "Are both of you trying to enter the academy?"

"Yes," both of them answered respectfully.

Vincent raised the wand in his hand and pointed it towards Eliard, then nodded, "You may enter, as long as you can pay the tuition fees."

He pointed the wand towards Link, then shook his head, "You, your innate Mana is too low. Unless, if you could prove you have enough knowledge and insight in magic, if not then go back to where you came from."

## 29. A Glimmer of Sunlight in a Cold, Cruel World

This gatekeeper certainly calls it like he sees it.

Fortunately, Link was prepared for this kind of outcome. His current Maximum Mana limit was now 24.1a very low figure, no different from that of an average Magician's Apprentice. It would take a miracle for him to get accepted into this academy.

Of course, he still had 105 Omni Points left, and he could spend all of it to increase his Maximum Mana. Even if Ailing Mana had a 90% effect on him, by exchanging one Omni Point with 10 Points of Maximum Mana, he could increase his Maximum Mana to 129.1 Points. That was equivalent to that of a typical Level-2 Magician, and enough for admission into the magic academy.

But that would be a silly thing to do. Yes, he might possess the power of a Level-2 Magician, but his knowledge would be nowhere near that. And if he did enter the academy this way, he would naturally be assigned to class for Level-2 Magiciansclass that would be completely incomprehensible to him. What would be the point of that?

Admittedly, Link was only here to try his luck. He knew that if he was rejected he would just have to go back to the inn and teach himself the basic foundations of magic, and then he'd try again. He wouldn't feel too bad about being turned away, so he responded to Eliard's sympathetic stare with a smile, signifying he was fine.

Nonetheless, this experience had taught him a valuable lesson. He would never have guessed that one could enter the East Cove Higher Magic Academy with just a thesis. Nothing like that was ever mentioned in the game on Earth.

In fact, in the game, once you reached a certain level, you could just pay a certain amount of money and bamyou were now a student of the Higher Magic Academy.

"How could my friend prove his skill in magic then?" asked Eliard.

Vincent snickered as he scrutinized Eliard's appearance from head to toe. He gave the young man's attire the once-over and said jeeringly, "Worry about yourself, boy! The tuition fees of the Eastern Cove High Magic Academy aren't cheap you know?"

Vincent had seen all walks of life, and this had allowed him to accurately judge a person's situation in life just based on their appearance. With a mere glance, he could clearly see the disparity in quality between these two young men's clothing. This unremarkable young man might have been wearing a plain grey robe, but it was made of fine squirrel fur, the value of which was at least ten times higher than that of the shiny new clothes on the pretty boy's body.

By his estimation, he was sure that the ordinary looking young man must be of the noble class. His companion, on the other hand, was nothing more than a simple commoner.

Regarding funds, Eliard had naturally come prepared. Before preparing for magic training, he had thought over and over of various ways he could make money. Fortunately, he had a decent brain between his ears, and that allowed him to find a way to save up 200 gold coinsthe exact amount, from what he had heard, needed for the academy's tuition fees.

"Oh, you mean the 200 gold coins? I've got it right here," Eliard said with a laugh.

To the young man's surprise, Vincent shook his head and laughed. He held up two fingers and said, "No, no, you've got it all wrong my boy. It isn't 200 gold coins for you, that is the price for a student who came from a noble family. For a commoner, it's 300 gold coins. Unfortunately, though, the academy received too many students this year, so there isn't any space left. If you do enter the academy, you will be an extra member of the student body, and as such, you will be charged for the extra arrangements and extra materialsand these, of course, will cost money. As a commoner you won't be entitled to benefits or discounts, so all in all, the total fees will amount to 2000 gold coins."

Eliard was stunned, and his brows furrowed. "It can't possibly be ten times the usual amount! That's ridiculous!"

How many commoners in this world could fork over 2000 gold coins!? Only the rich merchants of the Northern Free Distit could ever afford such a ridiculous sum of money.

This is nothing more but a barely masked effort to prevent commoners from learning magic!

Link, however, knew that the magic academy wasn't just trying screw them over. Money was essential to a Magician. What commoners might view as a large sum of money could easily be spent in a heartbeat on a random piece of magical gear.

Take this New Moon wand in his hand, for example. This single wand alone would've cost him 1000 gold coins. And if it's the Crystal Fire Staff we're talking about, then the price could easily go over 3000 gold coins!

He had encountered a similar situation like this in the game back on Earth. You had to spend money immediately after choosing to become a Magician! The price to pay for magic skills training alone was already more expensive than the other professions, let alone the various other gears needed to practice magic.

From Vincent's perspective, 2000 gold coins wasn't just a random number he coughed up. It was roughly the calculated cost needed to study magic, but of course, he knew that this explanation alone could not conceal the academy's unfair treatment towards commoners.

But Eliard was unfamiliar with the world of Magicians, and this caused him to erupt in anger.

Vincent's countenance was relaxed and unmoved. He spread out his hands, leaned back into his seat and glibly said, "There's nothing I can do about it. I'm not the one setting the price, after all. These are orders from the academy dean. I am simply the messenger."

However, Eliard still had another trick up his sleeve. He pulled out a letter. "I've got a recommendation letter from Duchess Alice."

Vincent glanced up and saw a wax seal on the letter and immediately recognized the blooming rose insigniait really was the seal of the Norton Kingdom's one and only Duchess.

He looked at Eliard's strikingly handsome face, then laughed. "Oh, what a blessing to be born good-looking!" he mocked. "You could even get a noble to write you a recommendation letter! Well, according to the academy dean's orders, with a letter of recommendation from a noble, fees are cut down by 500 gold coins, making it 1500 gold coins!"

Seeing this letter, Link suddenly saw how clever this young man really was. No commoner could earn 200 gold coins even if they worked their back off their whole life. Yet, this young man had somehow managed to earn that much by the age of 17. He had even obtained a letter of recommendation from a duchess to boot! Link knew that such things could have only been achieved through great sacrifice.

But 1500 gold coins was still an unacceptable amount of money for Eliard. He couldn't contain his anger any longer and finally lost his cool. "This is blatant robbery!" he shouted through clenched teeth, his face red.

Vincent shook his head, unmoved. "I'm warning you boy, you're lucky I'm in a good mood today, so I will let your impudence pass," he said with a sinister calm. "But if you ever utter such drivel to a Magician who's not as forgiving as I am, I assure you you'll pay for it in blood!"

Sensing that Eliard was going to continue arguing with the gatekeeper, Link quickly pulled him back by his arm.

Right now they were nobodies, while on the other hand, the East Cove Higher Magic Academy was the most prestigious magic academy in the Kingdom of Norton. The academy's dean was also a Level-7 Master Magician. If they lost their temper here, it would achieve nothing, and only leave a bad impression of themselves on the academy and the dean.

Eliard was a commoner and he didn't have enough money for the tuition fees. Although there might have been some unfair treatment towards commoners on the academy's part, these were just the facts of life. No amount of shouting and arguing could change anything.

Link became the first ever Archmage in the gaming server back on Earth all because he had full control of his emotions. He never complained nor held grudges against anyone, and he would never get riled up without good reason either. Whenever he was faced with a problem, he would stay calm and collected, and try to solve the issue with reason and logic.

It was indeed this strong character of his that enabled Link to become the first ever Archmage. And for this same reason, when the God of Light dumped him into this strange unfamiliar world, not only was Link able to escape from Gladstone city alive, he was even able to save the city from ruin. And as he was then, his character remained just as strong now.

Link understood that in order to abolish this unfair rule from the East Cove Higher Magic Academy, a few dissenting voices wouldn't amount to anything. Real change would only come when everyone was forced to notice the absurdity of the rule.

With a slight tug from Link, Eliard slowly came to his senses, but his eyes had already turned red. It wasn't that he had never experienced society's unfair treatments before. In fact, under normal circumstances, he wouldn't lose control over his emotions so easily, but this matter was too close to his heart. He couldn't just give in. He had fought tooth and nail just to get to this point. He had endured unimaginable pain and many hardships just to earn those 200 gold coins.

To earn the money, he undertook dangerous missions. Because he had no fighting skills, he had to navigate dangerous investigative assignments in which he had only a one in ten chance of surviving.

Apart from those missions, he also did all kinds of businesses, frequently receiving extortion threats from ruffians and rogues. He still managed to save his money though, copper by copper.

Ever since he was ten, except for when he was invited to dine with his friends, he would only have three coarse wheat buns a day, and nothing else. Sometimes, when he felt that he was not getting enough nutrients, he would go to the river in the middle of the night and catch some small fish and shrimp to eat. He could only do this at night because he was too busy working during the day. He wore the same clothing for three years. Even the old horse he rode was not actually his. It was, in fact, a parting gift from a friend.

When he had heard of the East Cove Higher Magic Academy's prejudice against commoners, he knew he had to obtain a recommendation letter from a noble by any means necessary.

To that end, he swallowed his pride and slept with that fat, ugly duchess for a whole month. He endured this humiliating and demeaning experience every night, casting his dignity aside.

He had suffered through hell, and he had sacrificed everything that mattered all to chase his dream of becoming a Magician, to ensure that his natural talents wouldn't go to waste, and to prove himself and stand a head above the rest.

But now that he had finally earned enough money, obtained that recommendation letter, and showed up at the door of the academy full of hope, reality had once again dealt another blow to his chest.

Simple words plainly uttered had raised the goal of admission into the academy to unattainable heights. In the end, all of his hard work had amounted to nothing. Should he start over and try to earn more money again?

By the time he earned 1500 gold coins, he would already be over 20 years old. If luck wasn't on his side, he might just die on his missions before that.

The next few years of his life were critical for magic training. How could he just throw them all away?

At that moment, the enraged, hurt, and hopeless young Eliard looked up at his dream right in front of him, but there was an impenetrable moat obstructing him. His eyes had unknowingly started to redden.

A commoner chasing his own dreamhow much more difficult can such a simple task be? Eliard balled up his fists, raised his chin, and forbade himself from showing any tears. He would not make a fool of himself in front of this glorified guard dog.

But Vincent had long seen through him. He shook his head and chuckled while uttering these cold words, "May I suggest a brilliant solution to your woes, boy? Why don't you just go back to Duchess Alice and serve her well? Who knows, she might end up paying all the fees for you? Hehehe."

Eliard was so livid he shook. This matter was his biggest shame. Vincent's words had sliced through him and cut open the terrible scar in his heart.

His face turned scarlet, his heart beat so hard it could jump out of his throat. He clenched his fists tightly, having only one thought in his headwhatever the consequences, he would beat this old man to a pulp.

Just as his rage reached its peak, someone grabbed his arm. He struggled to break free, but the grip on his arm tightened. "Let go of me!" Eliard demanded.

Link's voice cut through the fog that clouded his judgment. "Eliard, don't bring yourself to ruin!"

This voice was like a cold splash of water to the face. Eliard's struggle gradually became weaker and weaker.

Eliard turned his head and came face to face with the young man who was then quietly staring back at him, gently shaking his head. Link's eyes glimmered softly. His face was ordinary and plain, yet the young man emanated a spirit that could calm a heart at its wildest as if there was nothing in this world that could provoke or disturb him. As calm as a still lake, as piercing as a knife's blade. This moment, this scene would forever be etched into Eliard's heart.

Many years from now, whenever he was in a fury, in doubt or in despair, this memory would emerge again and again to remind him how a true Magician should act in the face of this cold, cruel world.

## 30. A Glimmer of Sunlight in a Cold Cruel World

Eliard calmed down. Although his spirits remained gloomy, he was still able to keep himself under control.

When Link was sure that Eliard wouldn't lose his temper anymore, he stepped forward and gave Vincent a reverent Magician's bow. "Mr. Vincent, may I ask, how do I prove my own insight in magic?" he respectfully asked.

"Simple, all you need to do is write a thesis that shows your understanding of the world and the universe." Vincent closed his eyes and lazily rocked in his chair. That good-looking young man had calmed down, but really, he was a bit disappointed. Had the boy dared to raise his hand, Vincent would've gladly carved a few magic runes on that pretty little face.

"Oh, could you be a bit more specific?" Link's attitude was deferential, and that made Vincent happy.

"Your thesis need not be about magic, as long as you show a unique perspective and a deep deductive power, and if this thesis of yours receives approval of one of the tutors, you will be accepted into the academy. But of course, the tuition fees would still be 2000 gold coins, or if you come from a noble family, 1000 gold coins."

"I see."

Link was deep in thought for about five seconds, then he had come up with an idea. He then said in a tone full of regard, "Mr. Vincent, sir, thank you very much for your guidance."

"Ha, now that is a young man befitting of a Magician." Vincent leaned back in his chair on the courtyard. He nodded slightly, then looked at Eliard and said, "You, on the other hand, are just too brash. That attitude of yours needs some mending, otherwise, you'll be regretting it when it's too late!"

Eliard snorted, then turned his head around. He felt his blood boil again from the sight of that self-assured old geezer.

Link stepped backward a few steps until he reached Eliard's side. "Let's go back for now," he said softly.

Eliard nodded. His face was pale, but he still followed behind Link.

He felt as if he couldn't face his friend. He had thought that he could enter the academy, then somehow help Link. But now, all his plans had crumbled.

Once they were about 100 feet away from the school, Link consoled Eliard with a smile.

"Come on, stop being angry, he was just a Level-2 Magician. Once you enter the academy, I'm sure you could easily surpass him with your level of talent. When that day comes, he'd definitely flatter you like a lapdog."

"I'm afraid there's no way for me to enter the academy. I'll never be able to get 1500 gold coins, that's just too expensive!" Eliard's face was full of dejection. He was just hit with a huge roadblock, and he had given up hope.

I have 200 gold coins, I can live comfortably as a commoner, marry a beautiful girl, live a decent life without becoming a Magician, how bad can that be? The idea flashed through his mind.

As these thoughts ran through his head, Eliard let out a long sigh.

All these years, magic had been his only goal in life, yet it had always brought him misery and pain, never once an ounce of happiness. He simply couldn't bear it anymore.

Link saw the way Eliard looked and could guess what was on his mind. He softly patted Eliard's shoulder, smiled, and said, "Don't worry, my friend, it's just the matter of fees. You don't have to be so gloomy. I've still got 1300 gold coins with me, I can lend it to you, and add that to your 200 gold coins, then you'd have just enough to enter the academy."

"What did you say?!" Eliard couldn't help but gasp. He thought he misheard.

This was 1300 gold coinsnot silver coins, not copper coinsgold coins. That was an amount of money that normal people couldn't even imagine. It was about the amount that a few thousand commoners in River Cove town needed for food and other necessities in a year.

And now, this young man whom he had just met had offered this much money to him. He was dumbfounded and was unsure of what to think. He was a mixed bag of emotions: happiness, alarm, doubt, worry, and reluctance.

Link was still smiling. "Are you afraid that I might have unreasonable demands in return for helping you?"

Eliard fell silent, but the silence was full with agreement.

He wasn't a naive child who hadn't experienced such things. He knew no one would offer kindness and help for nothing, and he knew not to expect free pies to fall out of the sky into his hands, especially not when it came from nobles.

This was what Duchess Alice had taught him. Even though she was as pretty as a pig, in the month that he had spent with her, Eliard had, in fact, learned some valuable lessons.

Link could guess the thoughts running through Eliard's mind, so he explained, "You know I'm a viscount's son. But I'm the third son, I have no rights to inherit his title, only a meager amount of his money. In that way, I'm just like you, I have to rely on myself and work my way up. You see, between us both, you're the one who can easily enter the academy. So what I'm thinking is, if you could enter the academy first, and then become a stellar student, then maybe you could recommend me or find an opportunity for me to enter the academy too. And as for the fees, well, don't you worry, my father is a viscount after all, isn't he?"

They had only known each other for a day, so Link knew not to spew any nonsense about friendship and loyalty. If he did say such things, it would only arouse Eliard's suspicions.

So, he stated his own plans honestly and clearly. He thought his plans made sense, and he was sure that Eliard would understand that it's a win-win situation for both of them.

But even so, there was no denying that this was a great act of kindness on Link's part.

"Aren't you afraid that I'd just run off with the money?" Eliard was moved, but he still didn't understand why Link would risk doing such a thing. After all, they had only known each other for a day. What made Link trust him so much?

He understood that 1300 gold coins was still a hefty amount of money, even for a viscount's son. He suspected that it was Link's whole inheritance, and if Eliard ran off with this money, it would leave Link destitute.

Link's father would not lift a finger to help, Eliard was sure of that. He knew the nobles well; he knew how heartless they could be.

Link smiled and looked into Eliard's eyes and plainly said, "Eliard, your natural talents in magic are immense. I can clearly see in your eyes that you are fully committed towards magic. I know that if you were to have a chance to learn magic, you would become a Master Magician one day. Is a Master Magician's honor worth just 1300 gold coins? If it turns out to be so, well I'll blame my own judgment and my own stupidity then."

Eliard was speechless for a long while. Then, he bowed low in front of Link, and that striking face of his turned solemn. "Link, from this day onwards, you are my lifelong friend. I will never betray your trust!"

Link patted Eliard's shoulder and said, "Don't worry about it, my friend. Things won't be as bad as it seems. I know some aristocrats, I'm sure they would write me a recommendation letter. Plus, I've got an idea for a thesis that could prove my knowledge of magic."

"Oh, what is it about?" asked Eliard, full of interest.

Link picked up a stone from the ground, flung it upwards, then after a few seconds, the stone fell back down to the ground. He then looked at Eliard and said, "Can you guess what it is?"

Eliard stared at him wide-eyed. He thought and thought, but was simply befuddled, so he scratched his head and said, "What is it?"

"What do you think made the stone fall back down to the ground?" Link replied.

He came from Earth, so he had a basic knowledge of scientific theories, even though in he hadn't been a very studious person back then. But now that he had a much more vigorous soul, he could easily understand what used to confuse him so much before.

To write a thesis that would grant him admission into the academyLink had the wealth of knowledge from the scientific masterminds from Earth to learn from, so he felt no pressure at all.

But with just this one question, Eliard felt as if he fell into an endless pit.

In the beginning, he thought the question had an obvious answer, but the more deeply he thought about it, the more perplexed he became. With a puzzled look on his face, he repeated Link's words, "You're right, why would a stone always fall to the ground?"

Why didn't it continue flying upwards? Why didn't it out shoot horizontally? What kind of force always pulled it back down to the ground?

## 31. From the Stones to the Sun, the Stars and the Universe

With Link's help, Eliard managed to get 1500 gold coins for the tuition fees. Because he also possessed prodigal talents in magic, he was naturally accepted into the academy without further ado.

Link, on the other hand, fell on hard times. He had given almost all of his money to Eliard, and now there were only 6 gold coins left for him.

Even though he already had an idea for his thesis, Link knew that his academic aptitude in the previous world was nothing to shout about. He wasn't a particularly bad student, but he was far from being the top, and he only had a basic understanding of the things he'd learned.

He might now be gifted with remarkable intelligence, but in order to produce a sound thesis, he would still need a lot of time and mental exertion. Consequently, he had no time at all to think of ways to earn money.

To save the money he still had left, he moved from the best room in the River Cove inn to a small attic on the top floor. The rent for the attic was very cheap, only 50 coppers a night. The room was always draughty and it was very small too, barely over a hundred square feet. It also had no bed. It originally didn't have a table either but Link managed to persuade the innkeeper to put in a table and chair, with an agreement that he would pay half a month's rent for each.

It wasn't a fair deal, but Link didn't mind it much because he had no need for luxury in order to survive; a place to stay, a roof over his head, and he's satisfied.

He went to the sundry shop to buy a quill pen, some ink, and some goatskin paper. These cost him 9 silver coins. Then he bought some more daily necessities until, at last, he was left with only one gold coin and one silver coin in his money bag. (one gold coin is worth ten silver coins.) He still needed money to eat, so he must start skimping more.

Presently, he had two major problems to solve. One was the thesis paper that he had to write, and the other was the 1500 gold coins for the tuition.

Well, I guess I'll finish writing that thesis first, then I'll worry about the money later. I'll find a way when the time comes.

Eliard was completely oblivious to the problems Link was facing, of course. He was now staying in the academy dorm and had started learning magic. East Cove enforced a closed-door policy on its students. Once you're inside, you wouldn't be allowed to go out of the cove without special permission. So for a long period of time, Link wouldn't be able to see Eliardthey could only communicate through letters.

But Link thought this was fine, he didn't plan to let Eliard know all the problems he was facing anyway. After tidying up his things and settling down in his new room, he sat down on the tattered little chair and started to write his first thesis essay.

He dipped the quill in ink, then stared out through a small window in the attic. He saw that Girventh Forest bathed in sunlight. "What should I write about?" he mumbled to himself.

He thought about it for a few minutes, then scribbled down in a flowing hand, "From Falling Stones to the Sun, the Moon and the Stars: The Theory of Universal Interactive Forces".

Since he was going to write a thesis, he might as well shoot for the stars and attempt to write something grand, so grand that it would surely grab everyone's attention!

Link was recalling his memories from the previous world and was surprised at how clear and accurate his recollection of that distant place was. There was no confusion nor fragmented pieces of memories. He thought he would've completely forgotten all about the Law of Universal Gravitation, but in fact, when he tried to recall it in detail, he realized that these bits of knowledge were like treasures buried in the corner of his mind, all waiting for him to do a little digging to retrieve them.

There was mathematics in the world Firuman too. In fact, their mathematics had progressed to a decent extent, although not in the same path that it took on Earth. Here, mathematics was only a branch of magical studies, a mere tool for research.

To put it more accurately, magic studies covered every field of knowledge in Firuman, and mathematics was just a small area branching out of it.

The young man whose body Link now inhabited had studied in the Flemmings Academy for quite some time. He might not have learned true magic, but he had a decent understanding of the basic foundations of it. What knowledge the young man had gained was enough for Link to start writing his thesis.

And perhaps because he already had a solid understanding of the basics, his analysis and deductions went smoothly. He found that he could effortlessly focus his attention, easily ignoring any stray thoughts or distractions, and all his mental processes were concentrated solely on the thesis.

Because of that, as he began to write, he was completely immersed in the task, forgetting the flow of time.

Under this kind of sustained rigorous thinking, Link began to logically analyze the hypothesis of the omnipresent force's mutual attraction that he had postulated earlier.

At first, Link thought that all would go according to planhe would put in all his efforts into writing an impressive thesis that would leave everyone in awe, then he would find a way to get the money for the fees, and voila! Into the East Cove Academy, he would go.

But just as theory and practice usually clash, Link realized, as he went further into the deductions for his thesis, that he had a problem.

Link knew that he would eventually arrive at the universal gravitational law at the conclusion of his thesis, he thought that it wouldn't be difficult to come up with the final mathematical equation for the universal gravitational law. But as it stood, the further and further he went along the path that logic set out for him, the more he realized that he was actually falling down a completely bizarre rabbit hole.

As he came back to reality, he saw that the goatskin parchment was full of scribblings of mathematical formulas, of Mana runes equations, and he was nearly brought to the brink of insanity.

I was only trying to infer the law of universal gravitation, but what on earth has it come to?

A ghost of the gravitational law did actually emerge on the paper, but so did remnants of the theory of relativity, and many other perplexing things that Link knew nothing about.

And so well, naturally, he was stumped. He didn't know how to go forward with this line of thought.

What he didn't realize was how postulations like the universal gravitational law or the theory of relativity, if you scrutinize them to their logical roots, all defined the nature of the fabric of space and time in imperfect ways. They might describe nature in fascinating detail, but ultimately there were cracks and flaws and they were not truly universal. There were always exceptions and circumstances where the laws broke down and became useless.

Link also didn't realize that his current mental capacity was much more powerful than he suspected, frighteningly so, in fact. As he followed the path of pure logic, his mind was automatically repairing the flaws and cracks in the theories until it discovered a handful of novel equations that even Link himself had no full comprehension of its significance.

But even when these strange equations did describe the nature of reality, they still came short of doing it perfectly, and it was this imperfection that rendered it befuddling and impenetrable.

To the inexperienced Link, this was just too much, and he was unsurprisingly overwhelmed.

He tapped at his warm forehead, then cleared his head completely of the complex ruminations and stacked the sheets of paper away in a neat pile. His stomach grumbled, so he decided to have a meal, then he would take a walk outside to unwind and breathe easy for a while. Maybe then he would find some solutions for the problems in his thesis.

That's just how Link was. When confronted with a problem, he would never back down or give up, instead, he would step back and think up of ways to solve them to the best of his ability. If the problems were too big to see the light at the end of the tunnel, then he would forge on anyway like a snail, slowly but surely.

Rome wasn't built in a day, so I can't expect to wrap up a grand thesis in a day either. Maybe all I need is a rest, he thought, to soothe himself.

Once he got to the inn hall, he took a loaf of coarse wheat bread and a cup of water and settled down to eat on his own. Once his stomach was filled, Link set out and headed for the waterfront of the River Cove town.

In the Girvinth Forest, the clear river flowed rapidly, the sun beamed in its full radiance, the cipautumn breeze blew, and the forest itself was alive with sounds of birdsongs. All of this had put his mind at ease.

After half an hour, Link was suddenly struck with an idea for his thesis. He rushed back to the attic of the inn and immediately went back to work.

But after a few hours, he got stuck again, and no matter how hard he thought about it there was still no solution in sight. He realized that it was already dark, so he ate dinner and decided to rest his mind. He pulled out a book from the pendant and started to read.

Link had mastered the Level-0 spell Fireball, but he noticed some shortcomings in the structure of the magic in the spell. He thought of attempting to fix the flaws but ended up getting interrupted by Eliard. This time, with no one to interfere, he fully applied himself to the problem and threw himself into an experiment.

With the New Moon wand in his hand and a slight quiver in his heart, his Mana started to flow into the wand, its tip glowing in a dim light of magic.

Just like that, Link started to focus on perfecting the magical structure of the Fireball spell.

Little by little, the Mana flowed out of the wand's tip and began to build up the structure of the spell. As the key magic structure was fully formed, the fire element in the air began to coalesce. Then Link began to use his modified magic structure but he lost control, and with one soft pop, the half-formed fireball collapsed.

This was startling, but Link knew he wouldn't get it right the first time anyway. He started analyzing the modified process that he used from scratch, and once he was sure of the revised procedure, he repeated the experiment.

Pop!

Three seconds later, the immature fireball once again collapsed and dispersed.

Again.

Another pop. But this time he could sustain it for four seconds. This meant that there was 80% more progress. Good.

Again.

Pop!

One more time pop! He repeated this process about 50 times, but without succeeding even once. In the end, the fireball collapsed when it was around 98% fully-formed.

Link decided to temporarily stop the experiment. Why do I always lose control of the Mana at the very end? he wondered, I must be missing something here.

He thought back to when there was a change in Mana during the experiment. He considered it thoroughly for more than half an hour before he was suddenly struck by the recollection of a simple explanation he had once encountered in a magic textbook.

Hastily, Link scoured the room for his magic textbooks, and after a few minutes, he finally found three of them: The Nature of Mana, Theories of Mana Turbulence and Mana Scattering and Interference.

He relied on the original Link's blurry memory, flipping the pages of the books page by page. In no time at all, he found what he was looking for.

Mana scattering equation and structural interference chart, nine circumstances where a Mana turbulence would occur but of course! I've made so many mistakes!

Once he was done reading, Link realized how coarse and superficial his understanding of the nature of Mana was. Attempting to perfect magic structure with this level of knowledge was indeed an act of ignorance.

Since my predecessors have provided me with so many stepping stones to climb on, I'd be foolish not to use them.

Even the great scientist Newton had once claimed that he was able to see so far because he was standing on the shoulders of giants, so there was no reason why Link shouldn't do the same. To ignore the great works that had been done before him and attempt to discover everything on his own from scratchthat would truly be the work of an imbecile.

## 32. Links Glass Orbs

Magic was a rigorous subject, anything that was written in the books, meant that it had been experimentally proven countless times before.

Why was this so important?

For a simple reasonany mistakes made in spellcasting could trigger serious accidents. This was a matter of life or death, and those Magicians who were not scrupulous enough in their experiments would be automatically eliminated by the accidents they caused.

Link set aside his wishes to modify and improve spells and started to attentively read the magic textbooks, absorbing the wisdom and knowledge passed down by his precedents.

As he read, he was deeply engrossed by it. He even forgot about his thesis.

There were 63 magic textbooks in his pendant, all of them about the foundation knowledge of magic.

The facts recorded in these textbooks were approved by all Magicians and had been proven true by hundreds and thousands of experiments. So even if the knowledge level was basic, it was the accumulation of knowledge and wisdom from over the years. Some even paid for it with by their lives!

Link read closely, and his extraordinary memory recorded each detail into his mind. His newly obtained intellectual power had also made him understand the philosophies in the books easily.

He had even forgotten to sleep and neglected to eat!

After two weeks, Link had gotten considerably thin from eating just three pieces of coarse wheat bread a day. His eyes had sunken into his face, and his figure was gaunt. But his pair of black eyes now looked like a still lake, serene in its depth, filled with wisdom.

In these two weeks, Eliard had written two letters to him, telling him of his progress in the academy. Eliard had truly impressive talents. In just a short period of time, he had mastered one Level-0 spell and was even accepted by a Level-5 Mage tutor called Moira as her protg.

The moment Link read that he grumbled. "Moira that sounds like a woman's name. What a blessing it is to be born so handsome!"

But Eliard was fitting in nicely in the academy, and that was a good thing.

Link, on the other hand, would tell Eliard of interesting news from the River Cove town. He always made sure to write in cheerful tonesnot once did he reveal any hardships he was facing. He would also include questions he had about magic in the letters to Eliard, hoping that he could help him with them.

Of course, Link didn't actually expect Eliard to answer them himself. Didn't that lucky bastard have a tutor to help him?

Eliard's guilt and anxiety were greatly relieved each time he received Link's letters. While he was settling down in the academy, he constantly worried about Link, and would be awaiting news from him with concern and trepidation. But now that he knew Link wasn't doing so bad, Eliard felt much better.

As for the questions that Link posed in the letters, he didn't understand much of them, still, he was willing to do anything to help Link. In truth, any opportunity to help Link made him feel gratified.

So he took the questions to his tutor, Moira.

Moira had been taking special care of Eliard. She would answer every question that he asked her. Eliard was not oblivious to the special perks he was receiving.

Eliard would then copy down Moira's answers to the questions in his letters to Link.

This way, it was as if Link also had a Level-5 Magician mentoring him as he was studying. This kind of communication was a big part of why Link could finish reading 63 basic textbooks in two weeks.

Gently flipping the last page of the last magic textbook he readThe Way of the Magicianthere was the name of the author on the book, Bryant, a Master Magician from three hundred years ago. He was the only human to ever become a Legendary Magician.

"My successors, we cross the barrier of time and communicate through words, and these are my wordsremember, magic can give you anything, including eternal life. Forge on ahead down this path, keep moving forward, and maybe one day we will meet."

The message seemed to have a hidden meaning, but Bryant had been dead for three hundred years. The whole of nobility in the Norton Kingdom had attended his funeral. There were clear records of it in the historical documents there was no cause to doubt the authenticity of those documents.

So Link just took the message as a dead man's witticism and didn't think more of it.

Gently he placed The Way of the Magician together with all the books he had read.

Not only did he finish reading them, he had also remembered every detail and understood and digested each piece of information.

Right now, Link was no longer a complete novice in magic, nor was he the underachieving student of the Flemmings Lower Magic Academy. He had now truly grasped the essential knowledge that is the foundation of magic.

And so, it was time for Link to revisit the idea of modifying the Fireball spell's structure. He now had many fresh ideas to commence from.

He took out his New Moon wand then closed his eyes and concentrated. The insights he achieved after two weeks of study swiftly emerged in his mind.

These insights then merged with his knowledge of spell structure of Fireball, and like pouring hot oil to the fire, an explosion of inspiration and ideas resulted.

Five minutes later, because of Link's amazing imaginative power, a novel spell structure was fully formed in his mind.

Then, Link opened his eyes.

And in that instant, the pair of eyes which had been dulled by Ailing Mana came back to life. He reached out his hand holding the wand, and Mana flowed into it. Runes on the wand lit up one by one before finally, the new moon at the tip of the wand glowed too.

In the air right in front of the wand, a speck of light appeared. When observed carefully, the fire elements in the speck were actually rotating at a high speed, but it wasn't an ordinary type of rotation at all. It was an internal rotation, with the structure of a whirlpool.

It was as if in the heart of the light speck there was a black hole that sucked in fire elements from its surroundings, and the rotation of the fire element was a way to maintain the stability of the structure.

A second later, the speck of light expanded to the size of a glass marblethe usual scale of a normal fireball.

But there was a difference. The fireballs that Link used to produce were white, and waves surrounded it, emitting a misty light. But this one had a blue core, its surface was very smooth, and no heat streamed out of the surface. It looked exactly like a glass marble.

The spell was completed!

Link opened the attic window. Outside, sunlight shone brilliantly. He took aim at a rubber tree about 100 feet away. Then he pointed the wand at the tree's direction, and instantly the fireball shot out.

Bang! There was an explosion, and the fireball flew through the air and hit the tree trunk accurately. Wood pieces scattered in all directions and a teacup-sized hole appeared on the trunk.

For normal Fireballs, the distance they crossed was no more than 60 feet. Even if the Fireball was boosted by a superior wand, the impact would not have been any more than that of a large firecracker, at most skinning off the outer bark of the tree.

This unique Fireball from Link was absolutely beyond the strength of a normal Fireball, not just in the distance it traveled, but also in its destructive power.

The greatest distance it could travel should be around 200 feet, and its power could probably rival a Level-1 Fireball. If I used the Fire Crystal staff the power and distance may increase a little. The Mana consumption is low as well, so even in my condition, I could release 24 of these consecutively. But the spellcasting time has increased considerably, that's its only downside.

Link could cast normal Fireballs in as little as 0.05 seconds with the aid of the gaming system. But now that the modified Fireball had more complicated structures, and also because it wasn't stabilized yet, Link had to use more effort to maintain its form. He needed eight seconds the first time he cast the spell.

Never mind that. With practice, I'm sure I can do it faster.

The moment he set his mind to something, he jumped into it immediately. He started to practice the modified Fireball just as he practiced the normal Fireball before. He gathered the elements at the tip of the wand and then absorbed his Mana back without releasing it.

He kept on practicing and applied all of his concentration into it.

Half a day had gone by, and the results were outstanding.

Link waved his wand gently, and instantly a blue glass fireball would appear at the tip of the wand. Then, as he lifted the wand, the fireball disappeared. He then waved the wand again, and the fireball appeared. He raised it, and it disappeared once more.

It happened so quickly that no one would be able to believe it. He was able to do it as fast as he would with the normal Fireball spell.

But Link knew that in truth it was still slower, even though it was only by a slight margin.

If the normal Fireball spell took 0.05 seconds, then the fastest limit for the modified version should be around 0.07 seconds.

The more complicated the spell's structure, the more time it took to construct it, and so the more time it took to cast the spell. This was a simple universal pLinkiple.

However, for this modified version of Fireball, the spellcasting speed might be slightly slower at 0.07 seconds, but the accumulated energy rivaled that of a Level-1 spell (the difference in scale was almost incomparable). It was also effective from an impressive distance of about 200 feet, yet the Mana consumption was equal to that of just one normal Fireball. This was indeed a terrifying spell!

Spellcasting speed could still be decreased. I'll practice a little more.

Even decreasing the spellcasting speed by a little bit was still valuable because it could massively influence the outcome of a battle. Therefore, Link would not settle and pushed himself very hard to improve his speed as much as he could.

So he continued to practice.

Link spent the next three hours modifying the Fireball spell. He practiced it until he couldn't feel any more progress, until he'd reached the limit. Link then noticed a notification activated in the interface.

He checked it and found that it was an announcement from the gaming system.

Player has successfully modified Level-0 Fireball. Please name the new spell.

Link chuckled, visibly amused and excited that he had the power to name new spells. He thought of the solid and vitreous appearance of the modified Fireball, so he said, "Call it Glass Orb then. Link's Glass Orbs, haha."

Spell named "Glass Orb".

Player successfully modified a Level-0 spell, 1 Omni point rewarded.

Ha, I even get Omni point rewards from this, not bad at all. Link was even more motivated now.

He now had 106 Omni Points. But because he was still under the influence of Ailing Mana, even if he spent all of his points to increase his Maximum Mana, he could only get to 106 Maximum Mana points. Only three months later would things recover. He didn't need a lot of Mana now, though, so he decided to reserve these Omni Points for later use.

Each point was like a card under his sleeve, so he thought it was wiser to have as many Omni Points on hand as possible.

After he finished reading the magic textbooks and successfully modified Fireball, Link's mind finally went back to his thesis.

This time, because he received lots of new ideas from the textbooks, he resumed his work on the law of universal gravitation. It developed very quickly, until the deduction process had gone too deep that the law devolved into something completely unrecognizable.

In the end, he couldn't even comprehend the conclusions that his own deductions had brought him to.

But this time, Link's deduction ended much quicker than expected, not because there were no more ideas, but instead because he had run out of goatskin papers. The ink was used up as well. It was time for him to restock his stationeries.

He fumbled at his money pouch, then felt embarsed of his own situation. He had very little money leftonly about three silver coins.

"I need to earn some money."

His pouch was almost empty. If he didn't go out and earn some money now, he might need to resort to begging in the streets soon.

## 33. The Forest Bandits Ordeal

The only way he knew to earn money was by utilizing his magic.

To use magic, Link would need a wand. Currently, there were two wands in his possession: The New Moon wand and the Fire Crystal staff. The former was a recognizable work of a Master Magician, while the latter was a bulky thing with obvious Dark Elf features. None of them were suitable to be exposed publicly.

After careful consideration, Link made up his mind to use the New Moon wand. But of course, he would first conceal the wand under the cover of camouflage.

He then decided to spend one Omni Point to purchase a new spell.

Transmutation

Level-0 Spell

Effects: A low-level enchantment spell. Transforms the appearance of one objectito another without altering the innate nature and shape of the original object.

Once he received the spell, Link swathed the New Moon wand under layers of linen rags, completely covering the original appearance. He then foraged some rubber tree twigs and put the thickly covered wand on the twigs. He picked up the Fire Crystal staff and cast the Transmutation spell.

A rippling, translucent ball of light appeared at the tip of the staff; Link pointed it towards the New Moon wand. "Transmutation!"

The ball of light hit the wand. The brownish surface of the rags began to show minute changes as faint lines of woodgrain began to appear. But this wasn't enough. Casting the Transmutation spell once was not going to completely change the rags into a wooden stick.

"Transmutation! Transmutation! Transmutation! Transmutation!"

He rapidly cast the spell five times successively. Now the rags that covered the wand were completely transformed into a plain wooden stick. The stick had many pores, though, so it wouldn't affect spellcasting in any way.

Still, the surface was a bit too rough, so he smoothed it out with some grains of sand. Now, the once magnificent looking New Moon wand had completely transformed into an ordinary looking wooden stick.

There. Now I can use it.

As the wand camouflaging business was done, Link suddenly felt peckish, so he went to the inn hall and got himself, as usual, a long loaf of coarse wheat bread for five coppers. But he thought the occasion called for a drink, so he spent another ten coppers on a mug of ale.

He had been eating the same thing for half a month so his tongue might've forgotten how to taste. A mug of ale would certainly be a nice change.

"Hey, Link! What's the matter with you today?" the inn servant teased as he handed the young man a mug of ale filled to the brim.

Another voice called out from the other side of the room, "Link, you'll soon become as thin as a bamboo rod! You can't go on like that, you know?"

It was the drunkard Tormun. He was a regular of the inn who would spend the first coin he earned on drinks. Once drunk he'd go home and beat his wife. The two had been fighting over this habit of his for many years until his wife couldn't take it anymore and ran off with another man. This didn't stop Tormun from going back to his old habit, though. Alcohol was his true love, after all.

"Say, Link! You're cooped up the whole damn day in that little attic! What could you be doing in there? Come on, share it with us!" another regular chuckled.

He had spent half a month there, so everyone in the inn knew him. In fact, by now the whole town had heard rumors about the oddball at the inn.

Link's only response to these jeering questions was to tell the truth. "I'm a Magician, and I'm working on my magic skills."

To his surprise, laughter rang out through the entire hall in response.

"Ha! If you're a Magician, then I'm a wise Sage!" slurred Tormun the drunkard.

The rest of the hall joined in on the laughter. Link had been telling them the truth many times before, but no one ever took him seriously.

Because of River Cove's proximity to the East Cove Higher Magic Academy, its inhabitants were accustomed to the sights of Magicians from the school. In their eyes, Magicians wore magnificent robes, spent their money liberally, always carried sticks with them they called wands; there was a certain mysterious air about them too, as if they were fully shrouded in an enigmatic aura.

This Link, on the other hand, wore tattered rags for a robe (he had sold the grey robe for money), had a body as thin and frail as twigs, he had the pallor of boiled cabbage. In addition, no one had ever seen him do any kind of magic before. Only fools would take his claim of being a Magician seriously.

Link understood all that, and so he never argued. To him, what the townspeople thought of him was completely irrelevant. So long as they did not hinder him in his quests, the whole town could take him for a beggar and he wouldn't lose sleep over it.

He knew that it was all beneath him. An eagle never concerned itself over the opinions of chickens, so he never bothered with explanations.

And so, all Link did was laugh, then he carried his food to a seat in the corner and sat down and ate. He took a bite out of the loaf, then washed it down with a swig of ale. All throughout this scene, his spirits were calm and utterly undisturbed.

The inn hall's crowd occasionally threw some remarks on Link from time to time, but seeing as they got no reaction or response from him, they just mumbled something to themselves and moved on to town gossip.

Suddenly there was a sound of heavy footsteps from outside the door, as the light flowing into the inn was blocked. Darkness momentarily swept over the room, the change causing everyone inside to be silent. Every head turned towards the door.

Even Link did the same.

There at the entrance stood an enormous brute striding into the hallhe was almost seven-feet tall. His arms were bigger than Link's thighs, hishi

Link could guarantee that if he was ever hit by a gentle swing of that hammer, he'd be as dead as a doornail.

The brute walked into the hall as if he were a war tank invading enemy territory, each heavy step stomping loudly onto the floor's wooden planks. It was only when the brute was well inside the hall that everyone noticed the two people behind him.

One of them was an Archer, about 30 years of age. His robust physique was also completely covered in leather armor. The other was a woman, around 27 or 28 years old. Crowning her face was a full head of fiery, red hair. She wore a full-body leather armor suit that hugged her figure, revealing enticing curves on a body so stunning she could easily spike any man's hormones.

Every pair of eyes in the hall were latched onto them.

The wretched drunkard Tormun couldn't peel his eyes off of the woman from the moment she appeared. He didn't even notice the drool spilling out of his mouth.

This drunkard hadn't touched a woman for years, his eyes would've bulged out even if he'd seen a sow (female pig), let alone a beautiful woman like this.

The woman appeared to be a swordswoman, seeing that she had a one-handed sword on her back. She was extremely perceptive of her surroundings, easily sensing the drooling Tormun's gaping stare. Immediately she glared at him with her cold deep-blue eyes.

Tormun was frightened to his senses. "Ah!" he gasped, then dropped the drink in his hand. He didn't dare look up at her again.

The rest of the crowd in the inn was spooked as well, and none of them dared to stare anymore.

These three are definitely professionals, Link thought, There's a strong murderous aura emanating from that woman. She must've killed many people before. But I sense no darkness or evil coming from them, so I guess they must be roaming mercenaries undertaking missions in exchange for money.

Seeing that the inn crowd was completely intimidated by them, they ordered their food and began a discussion as if no one else was around.

They were boisterous and completely indiscreet, so Link could clearly hear every word they were saying.

"There's just no way, no way in hell we could ever fight him. This Viktor scum is a wimpy little wuss! He'd just hide in his little cave and never come out. It's too dangerous if we go in there, it's too small to fit my bow, so I can't aim right. It's just impossible," the Archer said in a tone of exasperation as he took a big bite of smoked beef.

"Hey, stop being so gloomy. Of course, it's a little bit more dangerous than usual, but don't forget how sweet the reward is going to be! And we've come a hundred miles! Are we really going to just give up now?" the woman responded. She then turned to the giant brute, "What do you say, Jacker?"

The brute had a craggy face, but his demeanor was surprisingly gentle. He carefully cut a piece of meat and put it in his mouth, then slowly chewed the food. Hearing the woman's question, he considered it for a while, then said, "We need a helper. Viktor is a Level-3 Assassin; he's also developed Combat Aura. Now that he's on his toes, he'll make a terrible opponent."

"Helper?" the Archer spat out with a laugh, "What kind of help can we get in River Cove? Unless...if we could get one of those Magicians in the East Cove Academy?"

"Gildern, are you out of your mind?" the red-haired woman immediately countered, "What kind of Magician can we afford? Even if we give up all the reward we get they might still not pay us any attention, and don't even think about them risking the danger with us!"

"I was only joking." The Archer pursed his lips, then lowered his head and concentrated on eating.

Afterwards, the three mercenaries continued talking. Most of what they said was about their mission and the mission's goal. The name Viktor was mentioned a lot. But even after half a day of discussion, they didn't seem to come to any solution.

But instead, the one who did come up with an idea was Link, who was listening intently their issue. He remembered exactly where he had heard the name Viktor before.

Viktor, the leader of the Dark Brotherhood, a band of rogues, robbers, and ruffians. The Brotherhood's most recognizable feature was their blood-red masks.

In fact, the bandits that attacked Eliard in the forest had belonged to this Brotherhood.

At that point in time, the Dark Brotherhood wreaked havoc in the western part of the Girventh Forest. It was the most powerful band of the underworld west of Girventh Forest, and Viktor was at its helm. His words held more power than the mayor of River Cove. If he wanted someone dead, one word and that person would not live to see the next sunrise.

But of course, like any underworld organization, the reason Viktor could get so powerful in a town so near to Springs City was that he had powerful political connections in the capital.

Link remembered exactly how far up the power ladder this connection wasthe Iron Duke. It wasn't that the Iron Duke directly supported the Dark Brotherhood, but even so, he did receive part of the loot and treasure from Viktor, so he turned a blind eye to the Brotherhood's criminal activities.

Naturally, this made Viktor even bolder and more unscrupulous.

While thinking about all this information, he suddenly remembered a thing called Viktor's treasure trove.

As an underworld leader, Viktor naturally was paranoid about his own safety. He never kept his treasures in the banks of Norton Kingdom. He would instead hide them in a secret location, but he didn't hide all of his treasures in one place, though. Instead, like a squirrel, he would hide portions of his treasures in numerous different locations all over the Girventh forest.

In the game, if a player was lucky, he could have a chance of picking up a map to the location of Viktor's treasure trove. In fact, Link had picked one up once, and as he followed the path on the map, he eventually found 100 gold coins, which was equivalent to about 1500 dollarsindeed a substantial amount of money.

The locations of the treasures shown on the map were random, but according to the statistics in the game forum, there should at least be 20 or more locations where Viktor buried his gold coins.

If there were 100 gold coins in one location, then in 20 or more sites he would've collected enough money to pay the fees for the Academy!

For this reason, Link's interest was piqued the moment he heard the name Viktor.

His financial situation had become truly dire, so he had been listening intently and paying close attention the three mercenaries. Just then, he received a notification in the interface.

Mission Activated: Assassination

Mission Details: Kill the leader of the Dark Brotherhood Viktor!

Mission Rewards: 10 Omni Points

Ah, this is one mission I can't refuse!

He waited patiently for the three mercenaries to finish their meal. Once they got up to leave the inn, he swiftly stood up and followed them.

Once they were outside the inn Link hastened his footsteps and caught up with them. "Hey, wait up!" he shouted, "Is it true that you people are in need of a helper?"

## 34. The Terrifying Power of the Glass Orbs

The River Cove Inn's front door.

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The three members of the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries heard a voice, and they all simultaneously turned around.

What they saw at the inn's entrance was a black-haired youth of about 16 to 17 years of age, with a weak and gaunt figure. He was so frail-looking that he looked like he might actually be blown away by the wind. He was clad in a dirty and tattered linen robe, and his leather boots were old and worn, all covered in mud and dirt.

"Ha!" the Archer, Gildern barked out a laugh, "Young chap, if you want to play house, you'd have to go find your brothers and sisters first."

The red-headed swordswoman did not waste her breath to taunt him, she went straight to rejection, "Young man, this isn't something you should get involved with."

Jacker was the only one who stayed silent. He closely examined Link from head to toe.

Link ignored the Archer and the swordswoman, he focused instead on the colossus brute, Jacker. He knew that this Warrior was the most important member of the mercenary band. If his guess was right, the one called Jacker must be their leader.

"What can you do?" Jacker felt there was something special about this young man. He was too calm and collected, his black eyes were too deep and penetratinghe didn't look like the average person at all.

"I am a Magician," said Link with a laugh.

The Archer Gildern and the red-headed swordswoman were both startled when they heard this. They began to scrutinize Link with new-found interest, but no matter how they viewed him, they had just never seen such a decrepit looking Magician before.

Jacker doubted Link's power and abilities, but he dared not underestimate him yet. He asked, "What spells do you know?"

In the eyes of the average person, Magicians were both mysterious and powerful. But Jacker was far from a normal person; he was a strong Level-3 Warrior, and a roving mercenary too. He'd seen extraordinary things common people could never imagine seeing. So even if he'd never personally experienced magic spells before, he had seen as many majestic and divine Master Magicians as decrepit and desperate wandering Magicians.

Even if this young man's claim as a Magician was true, that still didn't guarantee that he possessed an awesome power. Chances were, he might only be capable of some Level-0 spells and not much else.

"Wait here, I'll go get my wand!" Link hurriedly said. His wand was actually right in his storage pendant, but storage gears were not supposed to be exposed publicly, so he turned around and went back to the attic.

While he was gone, the Archer Gildern pursed his lips and said, "Didn't expect him to even own a wand, I'm impressed. Hey Lucy, wanna bet?"

Lucy was the name of the red-headed swordswoman. She laughed and said, "Bet on what?"

"On how many spells this pipsqueak knows. My bet is that he only knows some Level-0 spells."

"No way, who's going to bet against that? How powerful can that boy be, looking like that? If he'd known some Level-1 spells, he would've been in the East Cove Academy."

Gildern chuckled and said, "Who knows? Didn't you hear what happened in Gladstone? They say the Magician who saved the city was a young man just like our Magician here, but he could cast a Flame Blast that single-handedly defeated the Bloody-Handed demon."

Lucy pouted her lips and said, "Do you think such geniuses are walking about everywhere?"

"That's enough, stop bickering. I think there's something peculiar about this young man, so don't be so quick to underestimate him," Jacker waved his hand to stop his comrades from taunting the young man further.

The two turned quiet. Jacker was someone they both held in high regard.

At the same time, Link returned from the inn and in his hand, he was holding a wooden stick that should be his wand.

"That's his wand? That's clearly just a stick!" Gildern whispered.

Link pretended not to hear, he walked towards Jacker, smiled and said, "So far the only spell that I've mastered is Fireball, but I think you'll find my spellcasting skills useful for your mission."

"Just Fireball?" Jacker was disappointed as it really was just a Level-0 spell. To him, casting Fireball was as good as throwing firecrackersin short, it's a completely useless spell.

This was a normal reaction, so Link explained, "My Fireballs are not like ordinary ones. I've modified them with supreme magical skill."

"Is that so?" Jacker was not impressed. He'd heard that spells could be improved by supreme magical skills, but even if he had the capability to modify and improve spells, a Level-0 spell was still a Level-0 spell. Could it ever rival a Level-1 spell?

"How about we go to the woods and test out my spell, so you can judge it yourselves?" Link suggested. He was in dire need of some money, but if he faced Viktor alone, the possibility of defeat was high. But with the help of these three mercenaries, he might have a chance.

He did not worry about the possibilities of getting betrayed by these three at all, and even if they tried to kill him off after the mission, he believed that he could easily defeat them all with his Fireball. Even the Level-3 Warrior was no match for him!

The three mercenaries looked at each other, then nodded. If the young Magician's skills turned out to be useful, then they would gain another comrade, and that wouldn't be so bad after all.

So the three found a clearing in the woods, then Jacker raised his thick iron shield in front of him and told Link, "Aim your Fireballs at my shield, then I'll judge how powerful you are myself."

Link nodded, but he did not hurry to attack. "My Fireball can travel around your shield though, so you might not be able to block it," he said with a smile.

"Never mind that, just attack me with all your might." Jacker's face turned serious, his shield began to glow in a light of Combat Aura. It was an earthly yellow shade, meaning that his Combat Aura was of the earth element; it was excellent for defense.

In truth, Jacker didn't think much of Link's warning. It would only be a Level-0 spell after all. Once, in the North, Jacker had fought against an opponent who purchased a Fireball magic scroll. When he launched the Fireball at Jacker's body, the only damage it did was leave a scorching mark on his leather armor.

Seeing that Jacker was fully prepared, Link said, "I'll start now then."

"Go on," Jacker nodded.

Gildern who was standing aside was getting impatient, "Hurry up, kid. It's just Fireball, so stop dawdling! Just do it already and let me hear a nice boom."

Before he finished the sentence, Link had made his move.

In an instant, the smile on Link's face disappeared and his eyes turned solemn. His whole body projected an air of seriousness and apathythis was his calm and concentrated state of spellcasting.

Link waved his wand gently in the air, and then a dimly glowing light blue marble appearednot just one, but two, then three blue marbles appeared at the same time.

The three glass orbs left three zigzagging trails in the air that seemed to move randomly, and they all aimed for Jacker at the same time from different directions.

One glass orb hit the shield, another went for Jacker's sides near his ear, and the last one aimed at Jacker's lower body.

The Fireball's speed was hypersonic. In an instant, Jacker's pupils shrank to a pinprick, and he was overwhelmed by an ominous feeling. This was nothing like magic scrolls. Is this what it was like when a true Magician cast spells? How was it possible for the spellcasting speed to be this quick? And why did they look nothing like normal Fireballs at all? How could this spell be so nimble and agile?

What he saw in front of him was beyond Jacker's expectation. For the first time, he felt he was in grave danger!

This was definitely not like those firecrackers that he had seen; these Fireballs were out for his life!

Could it be that this is the true power of supreme magical skill? Jacker's mind was trying to guess amidst the chaos. He realized that his knowledge of magic spells had been so limited.

He saw those aberrant Fireballs closing in on him so he gave out a loud roar then raised his shield with one hand to block the Fireball and used the other hand that emanated Combat Aura to deflect the other Fireball that was rushing towards his ear. As for the Fireball that was heading for his lower body, he could only close his legs together and hope that it wouldn't do too much damage.

Bang! The shield was the first to be hit by the fireball. Even though the shield completely blocked the explosion, the brunt of the impact still numbed Jacker's arm.

This is bad! Jacker began to panic.

The Fireball that hit his shield was of no more danger to him, but from the power of the explosion he knew that had his body been any nearer to it, it would've done some serious damage. He wasn't sure if his hands could cope with the other incoming Fireball.

He braced for the looming impact, but the Fireball exploded just a foot away from his body.

Bang! Bang! Two successive explosions boomed, and Jacker felt a gust of hot air hitting his body. He knew Link had eased the power of the attack, and that he was now safe. He heaved a sigh of relief.

"Thank you." Jacker felt a new respect for Link.

This young Magician really was something. Yes, his Fireball was terrifying, and its power was immense, but it wasn't the power that was remarkable. What really was frightening was the Magician's dexterity in spellcasting. While it really was just a Level-0 spell; in the hands of this young man, the spell came to life. It was like being hit with a torrent of spells, making it close to unstoppable.

In that moment of confrontation, Jacker could smell the scent of his own death.

Gildern and Lucy didn't comprehend what had truly happened, so they asked, "Jacker, how was it? How good was he?"

Jacker did not reply, he looked at Link and said, "Let them try it. These two wouldn't know real power if it hit them in their face."

Link didn't object, of course. In his plans to go against Viktor, he would have to lead, and the three mercenaries would be his helping hands. In that position, he would naturally need to display the extent of his power to inspire their respects.

Link waved the New Moon wand twice in the air, and two glass orbs shot towards Gildern and Lucy.

The speed of the Fireball that he released was quick, so quick that Gildern didn't have enough time to nock his arrows!

Bang! A glass orb exploded not far from Gildern's ear, and the impact of the explosion hit him squarely. Before this loudmouthed Archer had the time to utter a word, he fainted instantly.

Link controlled the intensity of the energy in that Fireball so as to not seriously hurt him.

"Ah!" Lucy was shocked, immediately she drew her sword, as soon as the blade reflected the orb's light she cut through the glass orb. Link did not control his spell to evade her attacks, he only allowed Lucy's sword to cut the glass orb. Lucy was only a Level-2 swordswomanit was enough to let her feel the power of his spell, there was no need to hurt her.

Bang! The Fireball exploded right at the edge of Lucy's sword, and it absorbed the impact of the Fireball's explosion.

The power of Glass Orb was comparable to that of Level-1 Fireballs, and the impact of Level-1 Fireballs was comparable to that of a grenade. So the impact from the explosion of Link's Glass Orbs was equivalent to that of a grenade as well. This kind of power was naturally something the lithe and agile professional swordswoman Lucy couldn't stand.

"Ah!" Lucy cried out in terror. It felt as if her sword was hit by an electric shock, it vibrated violently till her wrist felt numb, and she knew she couldn't fight anymore.

Even though she still held her sword in her hand, she knew she didn't have the energy to fight further. Another Fireball attack and she would end up on the ground just like Gildern.

"I lost," Lucy relented. She didn't wonder why Jacker had that kind of expression just now. This Magician's Fireball was truly a force to be reckoned with.

"How's Gildern?" Jacker looked at the Archer who'd fainted.

"He's fine. But he can be too chatty sometimes," Link laughed.

Jacker and Lucy stared at each other, they now understood that the young man in front of them was nothing like what he seemed. Despite his gaunt and frail figure, his spellcasting skill was something the three of them couldn't match up even if they combined their forces.

He's a diamond in the rough! Jacker and Lucy made eye contact, and both sensed from each other's eyes that the other had the same thought.

"Now, let's talk strategies," Link smiled, his arms waving gently, and the wand danced deftly in his hand.

## 35. Lets Charge in!

The Flamingo Band of Mercenaries had given in to Link, and once the Archer Gildern came to, they would be on the move at once.

Jacker had previously done some investigating for the mission, and their destination was the north-western part of the Girventh forest called the Cove of Echoes.

As they journeyed, Jacker briefed Link on the situation they'd be facing from the intel he gathered.

"Dark Brotherhood members will be guarding the cove entrance, patrolling the surrounding hundred yards. There's a cave in there, which, according to the information we gathered, is Viktor's usual hideout spot. Several bodyguards surround him inside the cave, each of them an elite member of the Brotherhood, highly skilled in combat."

"Do you guys know how many people we'll be facing?" Link asked.

"There should be at least 60 patrolling the cove. I'm not certain about the bodyguards inside the cave, but there shouldn't be less than 30 of them," Jacker explained, "We're only four people, so storming straightito the lion's den might be a bad idea. Our original plan was to keep watch at the cove mouth. Viktor is the leader of the Dark Brotherhood; people like that can't just hide in a cave forever. He must come out eventually, and when that happens, we'll ambush and kill him."

"Except we've been lying in wait for a fortnight and we haven't seen his shadow once." Gildern's hands were held out, his face a picture of dejection.

Link felt he was still left in the dark about some key things, so he asked the most eloquent one out of the three, Lucy, "What exactly is the story here?"

So Lucy explained every detail from the beginning to the end, and now things started to make sense to Link.

As it turned out, the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries had originated from the North, but ever since the Dark Elfs attacked the city of Gladstone, Jacker, who was the leader, felt it wouldn't be safe to stay there. There was a very high possibility that they would encounter the Dark Elf army, and those bloodthirsty creatures had never shown any sympathy towards humans before. They'd kill you the moment they saw you, no questions asked.

As things stood, they'd be sticking their necks out tempting fate if they stayed there, so they moved south.

Just 20 days' prior, the three reached Girventh Forest. They then later received a mission from the River Cove Town Hall. Afterwards, they nosed around for a bit and gathered roughly enough information and decided to keep watch at the Cove of Echoes.

But in the end, the ambush was a fruitless effort. For two weeks, they hadn't seen a single trace of Viktor.

Link tapped his forehead lightly with the tip of his wand. He thought deeply for a while, and not long after he came out with an idea. "It's impossible for Viktor to hide in the cave all the time. Since you've never seen him come out, it's possible that he's not inside the cave in the first place. Either that, or there's another passage out of the cave."

"Impossible. He's definitely in there, that's his old lair! All of the Brotherhood members we've caught said so," Jacker cried.

"That leaves the second option, then," Link tugged at his hands, "I have heard that cunning rabbits would dig many exits from its burrow. Viktor himself is a death-fearing cunning man, I'm sure he would never trap himself in the middle of the cove. If my guess isn't wrong, the other exit must be inside the cave."

As a matter of fact, in the game, there was a cave in the Cove of Echoes which was a duplicate, called The Silent Mine. The passages in the cave were a complex mix of many dead ends, like a maze. There were at least three different exits. Many players who entered the duplicate for the first time would get lost, wandering in there for half a day and they would still find no trace of Viktor.

And precisely because of that, the duplicate was commonly called the Silent Maze.

Now that this is a real world, the condition of the cave could only be worse.

What Link said made a lot of sense to the mercenaries, and they were all convinced. Lucy knitted her brows and said, "Then the secret exit must be Viktor's most important safeguard, only the most important members of the brotherhood would know about it. There's no way we could ever find it."

"That damned turtle, that cowardly mouse!" Gildern shook the arrows in his hands with fury. He thought of the wasted fortnight when they were waiting at the cove mouth like idiots, braving rain and cold for nothing, and that enraged him even more.

Jacker turned to Link. "Do you have any ideas?"

Jacker had gradually come to respect Link, firstly because of his power, and secondly because of his brains.

Link had long had an answer in mind, laughingly he said, "Let's charge in."

As he finished his words, the three mercenaries stood gaping. Jacker furrowed his brows. Gildern's face wore a baffled expression, if he hadn't learned his lessons earlier, he would've shot out a barrage of insults. But Lucy had a wry smile on her face. "Link, there are only four of us, they outnumber us tity times over."

Link merely laughed at this and didn't reply. He was thinking of ways to spend his Omni Points.

He currently had 105 Omni Points.

According to the rules of Omni Point exchange, one Omni Point could be traded for 10 Maximum Mana points, but now that his magic was in a weakened state, the effect would be cut down by 90%. One Omni point exchanging with one Maximum Mana point might seem small, but he did have a decent amount of Omni Points after all.

After thinking about it, Link decided to exchange 75 Omni Points with Maximum Mana points, so now his maximum Mana limit was 99.1. He also brought along with him a bottle of low-level Mana potion that could quickly increase his Mana by 100 points. With one bottle, he could fully replenish his Mana, which meant that he had 198 expendable Mana points today.

One of his Glass Bead spells would use up one Mana point. As a result, he could cast 198 Glass Beads, plus he had three helpers, and one Glass Bead per one of the ruffians wasn't a problem. He could also complement his attacks with other spells and combat tactics so storming into the cave was, in fact, not an impossible task.

But Link didn't increase his Maximum Mana limit for this reason alonehe simply had no choice but to do it.

When he thought about it, one single Level-4 Spell like Flame Blast would cost him 320 Mana points. In his current condition, he couldn't even cast one Flame Blast, but after adding 75 points, and once the Ailing Mana effect had subsided, he would have 991 Mana points. Not to mention, his Omni Points would have increased substantially by then too, so he would be able to purchase Level-4 or even Level-5 Spells. What's more, he would be able to use them immediately instead of having to wait because his maximum Mana was too low.

Even if his Omni Points were not sufficient, he would still have one Flame Blast Spell left.

It also wasn't such a bad idea to leave some Omni Points on standby. There still were considerable risks involved in the storming of the Cove of Echoes. If his Mana ran out then he'd be in deep trouble, and if his Omni Points were depleted then he'd surely be finished.

So he decided to reserve the 30 Omni Points he had left for emergencies.

The whole process of increasing Mana points took place in Link's head. Just like that the whole process was all done. Then he smiled and said, "If it was just the three of you then it would certainly be a suicide mission, but with me, it's absolutely no problem."

"..."

Jacker and the other two stared speechlessly at each other. Those words did hurt their egos, but as they thought of the power that Link had demonstrated earlier they simply couldn't argue with him. They had only seen this young Magician use a Fireball spell, but who's to say he didn't have more tricks up his sleeve?

But still, this was just too outlandish!

The three still looked unconvinced, so Link waved his wand back and forth and said, "It's getting dark, we must decide now. I've got just one life myself, I wouldn't send us all to certain death, would I?"

That did make a lot of sense.

Jacker believed that such a powerful young Magician would not toy with him. "What exactly do we have to do, then?" he asked.

Link had a plan in his mind. First, he purchased a spellPhysical Avatar.

Physical Avatar

Level-1 Earth Element Spell

Effect: Creates a shadow avatar. The avatar can produce sounds of footsteps, can speak and emanate scents. It is indistinguishable from an ordinary person.

(Note: It cannot swim. Do not let it be exposed to rain if you don't want your cover blown.)

This trick wouldn't fool a Magician, but it could easily dupe every single one of those dim-witted goons in the Dark Brotherhood.

Once the spell was ready, Link started to plan their combat tactics as he walked.

The mercenaries listened keenly, their eyes twinkling in anticipation. When Link finally cast the Physical Avatar, producing a perfect double of Jacker, the three mercenaries had not a single thread of doubt left about the young Magician's plans.

...

Just as Link and the rest were preparing to storm the Cove of Echoes, in the Silent Mine, Viktor was meeting a special guest. The guest was wearing a hooded cloak and his hands were glovedno part of his skin was exposed. The only thing that gave some information about the guest was the blue gemstone wand in his hand.

On the table in front of the two was a pouch and a crystal that emanated a blackish, purple light. Because of the crystal, the cave seemed shrouded in a mysterious darkness even though it was lit with many candles.

"Viktor, this pouch contains precious gemstones worth more than 500 gold coins. That's your reward. What you need to do is to find a way to bring this crystal to a Magician in the East Cove Magic Academyany Magician who has expressed interest in black magic."

"Yes, my lord." Viktor's hand clutched the pouch tightly, his eyes filled with greed. All his life, the only thing he cared for was money. Once he received his money, he would hide the coins in a secret spot. Each time he kept his money away, his heart would be filled with a rush of satisfaction.

Truth be told, he would have no problems selling off his own kin if the price was high enough.

"Don't let me down, and don't let master down!" The black-robed person's voice was hoarse. Had Link been there, he would have noticed that the mysterious individual had used magic to mask his real voice.

"I will do everything I can." Viktor half-knelt on the floor to demonstrate his solemnity. As he raised his head up, the black-robed man was gone, just as suddenly as he had come.

Viktor was left in awe and respect. What a frightening skill.

He grabbed the pouch on the table and opened it. Under the candle lights, the gemstones in the pouch shone blindingly bright.

"Tsk tsk, a Cat's Eye Stone, Blue Gemstone, Fire Diamond What beauties! 500 gold coins for a mission, my lord sure is generous," Viktor admired as he looked over each gemstone with detail. He was glad indeed.

## 36. Viktor, Im Your Father!

There were vast distinctions between the maps of the real world and the maps of the gaming world. Even though all landmarks were mainly in the same position, there were huge aberrations in the minute details between the two.

All Link knew was that the Cove of Echoes was at the western part of the Girvent Forest. But how you actually get there, Link had absolutely no idea.

In the game, there didn't seem to be such lush vegetation. Thickets grew taller than people, thorny shrubs were rampant. Coming from the modern world, walking into the forest was no different from walking into a treacherous maze.

Luckily, Jacker and the rest were experienced mercenaries. They took on the role of living and walking maps.

On the road, it was always Jacker who was leading the way in front, with Lucy behind him, then Link, and then lastly the Archer, Gildern.

This was Link's own arrangement, and he had reasons for it.

He had just met this band of mercenaries. Although they did seem to be decent people, Link he knew nothing is more unfathomable than a human heart, so he thought it wise to be cautious, just in case. Jacker and Lucy were both more introverted, so they were harder for Link to size up. Gildern, on the other hand, was different. He had always been frank and forthright, so Link knew that though he may be brash sometimes, Gildern ultimately had no sinister intentions. Gildern was the only one Link trusted to let walk behind him.

But while he was suspicious of the mercenaries, Link was unaware that the mercenaries themselves had nagging doubts about Link too. This Magician was clearly powerful, and so mysterious toothey were naturally apprehensive about him. They didn't know if Link would betray them, trap them or kill them off after everything was over.

It was as if all of them were pulled taut by a tensed string in their hearts.

And so, that was how the journey commenced, with a tense atmosphere where each side was wary of the other until they reached about 200 yards near the Cove of Echoes.

There was a giant Cinchona tree that was almost 200 feet tall. Its trunk was big enough for three people to hug it without their hands touching. It had a very dense canopy, so the four of them climbed up, hid within its foliage, and spied down into the cove from there.

The cove entry was blocked by a huge natural boulder. Thick vines crawled all over the boulder, and dense shrubs grew at the base of the large rock. It was simply impossible to peer through and discern the exact position of the opening of the cove.

Gildern pointed out to Link, "The entry was right under the boulder, you see, it's right underneath the thickest vines there. Yes, right there, can you see it?"

Link squinted to focus his sights. Finally, he could make out a faint outline of a dark cave behind those thick and dense vines.

"Now that's a hidden spot," Link couldn't resist exclaiming. Then he asked Jacker, "There's no way you could see what's going on in there from out here, how did you figure out the number of people inside?"

Jacker explained, "After a certain interval of time, someone would bring fresh fruits and spices into the cove. Fruits are unreliable because they're too perishable, but for spices like garlic, onion, peppers and the like, their consumption rates were more stable. Taking into account the tastes of people around the Girvent Forest, from the rate of spice consumption, we thought there must be about 100 to 150 people. Then we supported this information with other observations, and we could pretty accurately estimate the total number of people inside."

Link listened then nodded and said, "That makes sense."

He scrutinized the cove entrance, then asked again, "Are any of their hiding spots around here?"

Jacker shook his head, "These bandits are confident no one would find their lair, so they don't have any ambush spots outside the cove. The cove entrance is a different matter, though. Lucy told me she sensed a strange aura around the cove entrance, as if as if there was some kind of detection spell there." Link was surprised, he turned to Lucy and asked, "This strange aura, you can sense it?"

Some people were born with an innate ability to sense the aura of Mana. This was not that uncommon, in fact, it was one of the natural magic talents. In other words, Lucy would have a great potential if she were to become a Magician.

But of course, Lucy was only a commoner, she was born gifted, but had no money, and no one to guide her or tell her that she had a special gift. She ended up as just another average mercenary who happened to be sensitive to the presence of magic spells.

To claim herself to be perceptive to magic spells in front of a true Magician was something Lucy was wary of doing, but still, she nodded in agreement, "I can sense it somehow, but I'm not certain about it."

Gildern added, "She's been really accurate, we couldn't count how many times our lives were saved because of her sense."

Lucy gave him a quick stare, and her face began to redden, she felt even more embarsed now.

Link was not so surprised. Since Lucy thought there was a detection spell at the cove entry, then he'd better check it out.

He considered it for a while, then decided to spend 1 Mana point to purchase a Level-0 spell.

Basic Detection Spell

Level-0 Spell

Effects: Roughly detects the auras in the surrounding area, including auras from Mana, elements, secret forces and so on.

After the purchase was made, Link began to cast the spell at once.

There was no need for the wand to cast this spell. He blinked his eyes twice then Mana streamed into his pupils. A dim white light emanated from his eyes. At the same time, there was a slight change in his field of vision.

Everything in his sight glowed in a veil of lightthe ground was yellow, the trees were green, the rock was sprinkled with the bright white aura of metal elements, and at the cove entry, Link could see that it was shrouded with a barely discernible layer of crystal clear aura.

The aura was hardly detectable, it was blocking the entrance to the cave, its light was transparent like the water in a stream, pure and clear, but its edges were distinctit was indeed an aura full of Mana.

It was just as Lucy suspected, the cove entry was set up with a detection spell.

When the Basic Detection spell wore out, Link turned to the three mercenaries, and saw three pairs of eyes, full of respect, looking back at him. Then he realized, a person whose eyes were glowing with light must look very mysterious, and this air of mystery would naturally have inspired awe and respect.

At that moment, the three mercenaries had completely forgotten about Link's awkward looks when they first met him. They had now completely acknowledged him as an authentic Magician.

"What did you see?" asked Lucy.

Link nodded, "Your perception of magic is indeed strong, they really did set up a spell at the cove opening."

Gildern immediately laughed and said, "Didn't I tell you? Lucy's sense is always right."

Lucy looked glad, and a little proud too.

She had absolutely zero experience or knowledge of magic, but now that someone who truly was a Magician finally acknowledged her abilities, she couldn't help but feel validated. If the news of her ability spread, it could be a great advantage for her to stand out among the mercenaries.

From now on, she could tell people she can sense the presence of magic spells, and that a Magician had acknowledged her gift. She was sure the other mercenaries would not look down on her again.

Viktor was indeed cautious. There was nothing more to observe outside the cove, so Link told the three mercenaries it was time climb down the tree.

Once he reached the ground, Link immediately began to cast a spell on Jacker.

He pointed his wand at Jacker, then a water-like aura shrouded Jacker's body, it moved from his head to his toes then back up three times. Link then waved his wand to the ground beside Jacker and the aura seeped into the ground.

On the ground, the dirt started to move as if it was alive, then after a while, there was a mound protruding from the ground. First, it formed a dirt column, then arms grew out of it, then legs, then a head, and at last the five sensory organs of the face. Each part of the body gradually became more distinct, and when the spell was completed, an avatar that looked exactly like Jacker was formed. This physical avatar had everything that Jacker had, including his war hammer and shield. If the real Jacker and the avatar stood motionless side by side, there would be no way to tell one from the other.

"How wonderful." The three mercenaries couldn't tear their eyes from it. This was nothing close to what they'd ever seen before.

Link pointed his wand at the cove entrance, and ordered, "Go, march into the cove in a defensive stance."

The newly created Jacker then turned around, raised his shield in front of his body, then, with an expressionless face and without any fear or apprehension, marched into the cove.

At the same time, Link told Jacker and the rest, "Let's go, we'll wait at the cove entry, and once the avatar attracts the attention of the bandits, we'll make our move!"

This was their careful plan, and in this plan, each of them had distinct responsibilities.

Link was the sharpest spear in the team, so he was responsible for killing the opponents. Jacker and Lucy would stand guard beside Link; their job was to prevent him from getting shot by stray arrows. As for the Archer Gildern, he would lend an extra hand in the killing.

Link saw the fake Jacker reach the boulder, then the avatar nonchalantly strode into the cove. Link waved a hand and said, "Let's go, we'll follow him."

The three mercenaries then surrounded Link, and together they stormed into the cove.

On the way there, Link waved his wand at each of the mercenaries. Instantly, a layer of clear aura covered the three's bodies.

Level-1 Spell: Cat's Agility.

Effect: It enhances the spell receiver's nimbleness and speed. Spell last for about 20 minutes.

This was the first time the three mercenaries directly experienced the power of magical boosts. Their faces were full of amazement. Jacker kept waving the shield around, it felt as light as a leaf in his hand. Lucy took long sprightly strides, she felt as if she were flying. Gildern cried out in wonder, "Is this what magic feels like? What a wonderful thing! I feel I feel as if I could sprint as fast as a war horse!"

They're like three bumpkins. Link silently mocked.

He then divided some of his attention to controlling the avatar currently storming into the cove. He was the one to cast the spell, so he could see in the perspective of the avatar, and also control the avatar's movement from afar.

The physical avatar did not even try to cover his tracks or be covert, he was like a Spartan warrior, fearlessly storming into the enemy's den while letting out a thundering roar.

"Viktor, you little coward! Come out and fight me in a duel to the death!"

"Viktor, you son of a b\*tch! Come on out!"

"Viktor, come meet your maker!"

The avatar's voice was booming, it didn't just travel across the cove, even those at the cove entry could hear him clearly. And there was a reason it was called the Cove of Echoes. All sounds echoed in the cove, again and again, lasting more than a few seconds.

"Viktor, come meet your makermakermaker"

At the cove entry, the three mercenaries stared among themselves. If Viktor could still hide in his cave after these insults, then he's no leader of the bandits, but a saint!

When those bandits heard their leader mocked and insulted so disgracefully, they would definitely boil over and go berserk.

"When are those bastards coming out?" Lucy kept licking her red lips, she was all too ready to kill.

Jacker held the shield fast in one hand, and the other hand wielded the war hammer. "Yes, come out, all of you," he said jeeringly, "When this mission is over, I'll boast about how only the four of us managed to defeat the whole of the Dark Brotherhood. If all goes well today, I can live comfortably for the rest of my life!"

At that moment, the cove erupted into chaos, just like a kicked hornet's nest.

## 37. Give it All in One Fell Swoop

A bizarre madman, a ridiculous imbecile, riding a horse alone into the cove then beginning to insult and ridicule their leaderwho could stand for that?

"Kill him! Kill him!"

"Shoot him with the arrows! Turn him into a porcupine!"

"Skin him alive! Teach him a lesson that he'll remember into his next life!"

The expanse of the cove was large, and the trees were all cut down. The cove's land was oval shaped, and the perimeter was lined with rows of wooden huts, about twenty or tity of them; it seemed like a small village. In the middle of the cove was a clearing, and right in the middle of the clearing was a cave.

Jacker's shadow avatar stormed into the clearing and stood there as he banged the metal shield with the war hammer in his hand. "Viktor, get out of that cave! If you've got the balls get out here and let's have a duel!" he yelled.

The avatar continued to spew out more insults, enraging the robbers even more.

Dark Brotherhood members slowly continued to trickle out from the wooden huts around the clearing. They only stood there surrounding the avatar, not one of them making a move.

These bandits were all carrying impressive weapons. The ones nearest to the avatar held single-handed swords and a shield. From the shine, they must've been made from steel. They also wore good quality black leather armor and protective metal plates which had both aesthetic and practical value. The bandits furthest from the avatar wore the same leather armor, but they were holding longbows in their hands, and their arrows were all aiming towards the intruder.

There were about 70 or so robbers there, but none of them hurried to make a move.

One with double swords in his hands walked out from the crowd. He sneered at the avatar and said, "Our leader won't stoop to accept anyone's challenge. If you want to fight him, then you have beat us first!"

The bandit was wearing leather armor of a higher quality than those around him; he also wore a helmet. He must've been a lesser chief amongst the bandits in the cove.

The avatar made no answer, instead, he only positioned himself into a defensive stance.

"Ha! You really are an idiot after all!" The lesser chief went back into the crowd.

There were 75 of them all around the intruder, their arrows nocked and ready. Even if the intruder was a Level-6 Warrior clad in full-body iron armor, he would still come to a sorry end when all the Archers shot their arrows down at him.

Just as the bandits' attention was focused on the avatar, Gildern asked in a low voice, "Attack now?"

Link shook his head, "No, wait for the moment the avatar makes a move. Gildern, your target is the small chief. Kill him with one arrow."

Just after the first wave of attacks came to pass, there would be a break before the next attack. This gap was the safest window of time for them to retaliate. If they attacked now, the risk of being hit by a stray arrow would be too high.

The three mercenaries had plenty of combat experiencetheir only reply was a gentle nod of the head.

Link breathed in and his whole spirit was calmed. His gentle demeanor was gone without a trace, and now he only looked solemn and still.

In that instant, he focused all his energy and entered a state of absolute tranquility in preparation for spellcasting.

In that moment, everything in Link's surroundings melded together like the flow of water. Every emotion in him was gone, and all he could see and think of now was the target in front of him. The flow of time seemed to slow down; the preparation for the spell was done.

His eyes focused solely on the ring of bandits. The shadow avatar in the middle of their enemies immediately lowered its head and made a move as if to charge.

"Kill him!" the chief bandit ordered.

The strum of bowstrings rang out, and at least forty arrows were shot towards the avatar, his whole body quickly covered with the wooden bolts.

But the avatar did not fall. The magic structure inside his body remained undamaged, and he kept on propelling forward.

The bandits all stood in shock, none of them fully understanding what they were seeing.

A moment later, one of them suddenly noticed the slumped body of their chief. An arrow was shot through one of his eyes and pierced right through his brain. He was dead. The bandits grew even more alarmed.

Did someone misaim and shoot the chief instead? But they were shooting at such a small distance, how could anyone make such a stupid mistake? the bandit thought to himself.

Then, suddenly, rapid successions of explosions resounded throughout the cove.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

After each explosion, an Archer would fall.

The faces of these Archers were a horrifying mess of flesh and blood. Their noses, eyes, and lips were an indistinguishable muddlethey were completely destroyed.

Such a frightening attack came from nowhere, and the bandits began to panic. Each of them suspiciously eyed left and right for the unseen perpetrator.

After about two seconds, the most perceptive of them identified the attackers' location. The assailants were hiding behind a wooden hutthere were four of them. Behind a huge figure who looked very familiar, a quick series of fireballs flew out. There were close to 20 fireballs released within a single second, each one aiming at a different Archer.

In just two seconds, 40 small balls of fire shot out and exploded on impact. Immediately afterward, all of the Archers fell, their faces totally obliterated. It was clear by the looks of it that not one of them survived.

After the Gladstone experience, Link was accustomed to sights of blood, murder, and death. He felt no mercy for these bandits either; they were just villains anyway!

The Archers were all dead and only the bandits with swords and shields were left standing. Now they had no means of long-range attacks.

"What the hell just happened?" one robber said out loud.

The pupils of the mercenaries shrank in size at the horrifying sight before them; they were simply dumbfounded.

In their eyes, they saw the tough Archers drop one by one like flies, like rows of wheat cut down by the scythe of the God of Death himself, each death insignificant and meaningless.

Was this how magic really was? Was this how powerful Magicians truly were?

Even though Link had explained that if he was given two seconds to cast his spells he could eliminate all of their strongest enemies, they still weren't prepared for the gruesome sight. It left a huge impact on the three mercenaries. It was just dreadful!

"Go! Charge forward!" Link whispered urgently. In his head he was thinking about how tedious low-level spells were. With higher level spells, such as a Level-4 Lightning Storm or a Level-4 Flame Blast, facing that many opponents wouldn't be an issue.

Jacker charged forward without thinking, Lucy and Gildern followed him. Like the bandits, they were scared out of their minds.

The bandits quickly came to their senses, however.

"It's a Magician! Take cover!" someone amongst the robbers shouted. But just as he finished his words, a dim glass orb shot through and hit the bandit's face, leaving a beautiful but deadly trail of light.

Bang! The crash was so loud that it could topple over a large tree. Just like that the bandit's face was blown clean off.

Without a sound, the bandit fell to the ground.

The other robbers were so shocked they were stunned motionless. They covered their faces with their shields and cowered themselves away from Link in terror. Some of them ran towards the huts, some towards caves in deeper parts of the cove, all to escape the terrifying attack.

The events went just as Link had expected. He had chosen to use the spells to scare the bandits and make them panic.

In two seconds, he cast 40 glass orbs, each one hitting its target accurately. Link felt tired from his mental exertion; his head started to ache, so he had to decrease his spellcasting speed.

But even so, in one second he still managed to cast seven to ten fireballs.

To ensure that his mental fortitude wasn't damaged any further, these fireballs were only aimed to hit the body of the bandits, rather than using more energy to focus on headshots. Even if it didn't kill them, that was okay because the orbs could deal some serious damage, enough so to render them motionless.

Gildern would then shoot an arrow at them, finishing off the already injured bandit.

The panicked robbers did not retaliate much, instead, they were too busy frantically hiding and attempting to escape. But no matter how fast they were, their feet couldn't match the speed of Link's spells. Having already lost 40 of their Archers, there were just 35 of them left.

Five seconds later, the last bandit running towards the cave fell as the back of his neck was hit by Link's glass bead, and his head was blown off his shoulders.

The cove quickly returned to its normal calmness. A gentle breeze flowing through the air bringing with it the heavy stench of blood. The whole cove had become a mass grave.

Jacker gulped nervously, and Lucy was silent and deep in thought.

"Just what kind of creature have we gotten ourselves mixed up with here?" Gildern muttered under his breath.

They had been mercenaries for many years, so it's not that they'd never seen a Magician cast spells before. In fact, they had worked with a wandering Magician's Apprentice once. They'd relied on him to open locked doors, but that Magician needed at least three seconds to cast a simple spell like Candle Light. At that time, the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries thought that this was how all Magicians worked. But now, their initial impressions had been turned upside down.

Link's skills in magic were so powerful that in the moment it took to utter the words of the spell a life was instantaneously destroyed. It was unnervingly fast; it churned their stomachs in fear.

Could I ever survive being hit by such an attack? the three mercenaries asked themselves.

They were sure they couldn't, not even if they were prepared for it.

As he saw the three standing idly at the mouth of the cave, Link furrowed his brows and said sharply, "What are you waiting for? Get inside the cave before Viktor escapes!"

"Eh? Ah, right!" Jacker quickly snapped out of it and was the first to storm into the cave.

Link followed him, and then Lucy and Gildern.

Link had sensed their fear of his magic, so in a low voice, Link said, "I'm a bit tired right now, I need to rest for a few minutes. I'll leave the rest up to you all."

Showing your weakness at the right time can calm others.

As expected, the three mercenaries noticeably relaxed as soon as Link said that. Their clumsy movements had become sharper.

He's just a normal person, after all, the three simultaneously thought.

Nonetheless, this did not make them respect him any less, in fact, they respected him even more now. Not only did he eliminate the biggest threats of the mission at the cave entrance, he had also geared them up with magic buffs. If they still couldn't deal with the bandits in the cave, then they'd better not call themselves the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries anymore.

They' weren't too shabby themselves after all!

...

Just as the shadow avatar stormed into the cove, the crystal in Viktor's room glowed with a dim red light. The magic crystal that Viktor had spent a fortune on had worked just as expected.

Red light, that meantitruders. The light was very dim, signifying that the number of intruders was small, probably less than ten.

Some mercenaries too greedy for money to fear for their lives, probably, Viktor thought amusedly.

Viktor didn't bother to move from his chair, he just sat there and continued to sort out his papers.

As the leader of a big brotherhood, he was too busy to deal with trivial matters like that. He would just have to leave the intruders to his underlings. He was sure they would bring the attackers to him in a moment.

Whether they brought in a living body or a corpse, it didn't matter to him.

## 38. Lightning Intrusion!

The bandits in the cave had long heard the cries and commotion outside the cove. But they hadn't expected the intruders to be able to get inside so fast. When the three mercenaries emerged at the cave entrance, the bandits were completely unaware. They were impossibly fast!

Between the cries outside and the arrival of the intruders, no more than three minutes had passed. It was so fast that they had no time to draw up a plan.

Facing two strong guards at the cave entrance, the mercenaries noticed that the two bandits were clad in a different armor than those inside. It was noticeably of finer quality. In the dim lights of the cave, they saw that the weapons in their hands also glowed with a dim lightthey were boosted by magic!

This made the three mercenaries hesitate, their charging footsteps slowed down at once.

These were magic weapons, and magic weapons were extremely expensive. Not only that, but the power of these weapons were not to be underestimated either.

They'd always known that Viktor, the leader of the Dark Brotherhood, was very wealthy. They'd heard that even his sh\*t was gilded with gold. But they never expected him to be so opulent to the extent where he would arm his guards with magic gears and weapons!

Link was shocked too. A real magic sword was worth at least 100 gold coins. Viktor was, after all, just the leader of a pack of banditswhere did he find all that money?

He examined them closely, then a mission notification popped up on the interface.

Silent Cave Guard

Level-2 Elite Swordsman

Main gear: Silent longsword

Link then averted his attention to the Silent Longsword, and the gear's description appeared on the interface.

Silent Longsword

Quality: Average

Material: Hundred Layered Steel

Effects: Lesser Sharpness Potion

After reading these notifications Link breathed a sigh of relief. The lesser sharpness potion was one of the cheapest alchemy potions in the game. In fact, Link's body's original owner had a relevant memory of it too. This weapon potion, made with wild Steelbloom, would cost one gold coin per bottle, and each bottle could be used five times, the effects lasting for an hour.

As the name might suggest, the potion could enhance the sharpness of weapons. For such a low-level potion, even if the effects were small it was still very effective.

Link saw how the three mercenaries were reluctant to make a move, so he assured them, "They're not real magic weapons. Those swords were just doused with an alchemy potion. It's nothing to worry about. Go!"

The mercenaries trusted Link's knowledge, so when they heard his affirmation, their doubts cleared. The Warrior Jacker roared out a battle cry, then lifted his thick heavy shield to protect his body as he charged towards the guards like a bull.

Lucy followed closely at his heels, but Gildern stayed behind to guard Link. At the same time, he kept his arrows nocked, ready to shoot.

Jacker was a Level-3 Warrior; he emitted Combat Aura when he charged forward, his shield was shrouded in a hazy earthy yellow light, and he stood at nearly seven-feet tall. All this combined to make Jacker's assault a wild and brutal one.

The two swordsmen didn't even dare to block the attack, they bolted to the side to evade instead.

These two were Elite Swordsmen, so their limbs were decidedly agile. They could predict the direction of the attacks and successfully escape from being hit.

"Have a taste of my hammer!"

Jacker's other hand held a war hammer. The moment he saw the guards evading his attack, he flung his hammer at one of them.

Clang! Bash! The swordsman attempted to block the attack but to no avail. The force of Jacker's hammer was just too ferocious to counter. With a swing of the hammer, the sword in the guard's hand was sent flying, and without any hesitation, Jacker swung the hammer again at the guard's chest.

On impact, the swordsman's chest was instantly dented, and he was flung back about ten feet. He was dead before he even hit the ground.

The other bandit did not retreat, but he used the opportunity to charge towards Jacker with his sword. Just as his sword was going to cut Jacker's waist, it was suddenly blocked by another swordLucy's.

The bandit was stunned, and in that moment Gildern saw the perfect opening. He shot his arrow, then, whoosh! The arrow hit the bandit in the face, and he fell backward, instantly slain.

The three mercenaries worked together seamlessly. Those two Level-2 Elite bandits were both killed in a single joint attack.

This was not out of Link's expectation. These mercenaries had been working in the North and therefore could not have been mediocre people. Those who had average skills would have been killed long ago, it would have been impossible for them to survive up there.

Link saw Lucy trying to raid the belongings on the bandits' corpses, so he urged her in a low voice, "Not now, go on forward!"

Jacker added, "We must kill Viktor first! We can't let him escape!"

Fine, thought Lucy. These men don't appreciate how much these expensive things are hard to come by. Hesitantly, Lucy left the dead bandits, stealing a lingering glance at a perfectly good longsword that lay on the floor before following Jacker into the cave.

On their way, they met with more elite members of the Dark Brotherhood, but the cave's passage was narrow and so the elite bandits could only attack them, at most, four at a time. They, like the guards, did not expect these intruders to reach inside so quickly, so they were all caught off guard and hurried out with absolutely no preparation. The mercenaries, on the other hand, were ready for anything that came at them. Their attacks were fierce, violent and decisive.

When the opposing sides converged, the bolder side won. In a short period of time, the elite bandits dropped like flies.

During the battle, Link did not lift a finger. The only move he made was to cast a Physical Avatar on himself, and so in the cave, there were two Links. He did this to prevent Viktor's sneak attack.

In the game, Viktor was a Level-3 Assassin and the Silent Cave was a dark, dimly lit place. That would certainly give him an upper hand because Assassins thrived in the darkness. Therefore, it would be foolish for Link not to use extra defensive tactics.

The only problem was the fact that controlling this Physical Avatar required his full concentration, otherwise, it might even attack the mercenaries.

Not long after defeating the onslaught of bandits, they reached a large underground hall.

This was a spot in the cave gouged out to make room for this large meeting space. The ground was paved and leveled and covered with wooden planks making the top smooth and flat. The four walls around it were deliberately cut too, and on the ceiling, there were a lot of candles which brilliantly lit up the whole hall.

There was a long table in the middle where there were platters of untouched food. A man of about tity years of age sat at the table. He had striking features, and his brown hair was combed back neatly. He looked to be slightly over six-feet tall and was clad in a jet black armor. When closely inspected, the surface of the armor seemed to glow in a very dim red light. He was using a steak knife to calmly and carefully cut the piece of smoked deer on the silver plate. He took a bite, seemingly oblivious to his surroundings.

He saw Jacker, who was the first one to reach the hall. He was unperturbed, though. He even waved his hand and greeted them, his face impassive and expressionless,

"Hello, there. You people sure are quick."

News of these intruders had reached him from the bandits outside.

"Who are you?" Jacker stood at the hall entrance, thoroughly scrutinizing the opponent.

"Me? I'm Grinth, the biggest and strongest Warrior to serve our leader Viktor." As he said it, Grinth's free hand reached for a white handkerchief, which he used to carefully wipe his lips and the grease on his fingers. Then, he took his time donning the thick leather gloves that were on the table.

These mannerisms were typical of nobility. Grinth's great-grandfather had been a knight, so he declared himself to be a noble and took great care to act in a particular way that he saw befitting of his class.

He was exceedingly confident too. He knew that with his strength and his magical gear, no one in the western part of the Girvent Forest could ever defeat him!

When he was done with his grooming, he then picked up the double-handed heavy sword that was lying on the table.

It was a black sword with blood-red lines running through the length of the sword's blade. Like Grinth's armor, the whole sword emitted a dim red light, and it looked terrifying.

Link peered through behind Jacker, and on the interface, a notification about the opponent appeared.

Grinth

The Dark Brotherhood's Number One Warrior

Level-3 Elite Heavy Sword Warrior

Main Gear: Fire Warrior Armor, Blazing Sword

Review gear, Link said in his mind.

Fire Warrior Armor

Fine Quality

Effects: Accumulates fire elements. When attacked, fire elements flow into the opponent's weapon, causing it to be unbearably hot.

Blazing Sword

Fine Quality

Effects: Each attack will bring a sputtering of flames that will cause further damage.

Now, this was true magical equipment. These two weapons probably cost at least 300 gold coins. It seemed that Viktor had spent a lot of money on this Warrior.

"He has real magical equipment," Link murmured. At the same time, he began to use Omni Points to purchase a protective spellLesser Protective Barrier.

Lesser Protective Barrier

Level-1 Spell

Effects: Protects from magic attacks. Especially effective in blocking attacks from Elemental spells.

In Gladstone, the Dark Elf Magician Holmes had used this spell to block Link's Vector Throw. The downside of the spell was that it was useless in blocking physical attacks, so it did not get much use. But this didn't mean that the spell was useless, as long as the circumstances were right for it, it could be used to great effect.

Link waved his wand at both Jacker and Lucy, and instantly the two were shrouded in a layer of vitreous light. Inside the haze of light were countless magic runes constantly popping up and disappearing, like flowers blooming and falling, it was a remarkably beautiful sight.

"Go on, his magical gear can't hurt you now," Link said with a smile.

It was true that Grinth's magic gear would be very effective on normal people, in fact, it would have terrifying power. Imagine if your weapon gradually became doused in flames during battle, how could you continue to fight if that happened?

When the opponent's double-handed sword was swung down violently, the back of the blade would flare up in flames. Even the sight of it could make a normal Warrior panic and their courage waver.

But the advantage gained when an average Warrior was armed with magical gear only worked when he fought with other average Warriors. If faced with a real Magician as an opponent, this kind of low-level magic equipment was as futile as fighting a seasoned Warrior with a makeshift axe!

The magic runes that flowed slowly across Jacker and Lucy's armor reassured their confidence. Jacker strode forward, his thick iron shield protected his body, and the aura covering his body glimmered. At that moment, Jacker looked just like the Warrior of the Gods.

Grinth's face changed, he stumbled backward subconsciously, the aristocratic air he had on just now was gone without a trace.

"How could there be a Magician with them?!"

Shouldn't a Magician be hiding in a tall magic tower researching spells? Why is he running around here in a bandit's lair? How could he possibly fight them now? Grinth was completely dumbfounded.

Then barely half a minute later, there was a clang, Grinth's double-handed sword was sent flying by the impact of Jacker's big iron shield. Then he was stabbed viciously in the knee by Lucy's sword.

Thud! Grinth couldn't stand on his feet, so he toppled down, kneeling on the floor.

He had planned to kill them all, but in the end, the magic gear that he was relying on so much was swiftly obliterated, just like that.

Grinth lamented, "No! I can't lose! I am the strongest Warrior in Girvent For"

Thud! Grinth's sentence was abruptly cut short.

It was the sound of Jacker's war hammer hitting squarely on Grinth's face.

"A lowly bandit that pretended to be a noble, these kinds of people are the scum of the Earth!" Jacker toyed with the bloody bits of flesh stuck to his war hammer. He stood over the corpse of Grinth, whose handsome face was now just a ghastly mess.

## 39. The Occult Viktor

The cave was still and silent.

Viktor remained immersed in the task of checking his documents in the library. He completely ignored the matter of the intruders.

There were so many documents for him to deal with, each one concerning huge amounts of money, so he had to pay close attention.

Oh, the Broughwell Manor's rent is overdue for two weeks? It's time to teach them a harsh lesson then! And Princess Annie's entourage will pass through River Cove next month? Better tell my brothers to keep their swords then, we wouldn't want to vex her royal highness, after all. Ever since the disaster in Gladstone happened, so many people are moving south now, hehe, what an opportunity for me to earn some gold coins.

Viktor was so immersed that he dealt with each document swiftly and efficiently. He liked the feeling of power he got by holding the fate of others in his hands; he didn't find any of it dull or uninteresting.

He didn't know how much time had passed when suddenly he heard a sound from outside his study. It was the sound of hurried footsteps.

The footsteps are unstable, they must be terrified, Viktor deduced from the sound of the footsteps.

From outside, the voice of his second-in-command Collins was heard, "Leader, we have a problem!"

Viktor was startled, he couldn't make a response. The realization dawned on him as he was able to put two and two together. He linked the problem Collins just mentioned with the intrusion into the cove earlier.

How could those few people ever be a threat to him? Unless, if it were a Level-6 Warrior. But what would a Level-6 Warrior have to do with a small fry like him?

"Speak," Viktor finally managed to say.

Viktor swiftly put down his documents and opened a drawer in the room. In it was a pure black, lightweight, leather armor, the quality of which was very special. Its surface was shrouded in a black fog. As long as he remained in the dark, he could completely disappear into his surroundings and never be found.

This was Catskin Armor, a magical gear from his lordship who gave it to him as a gift.

Viktor quickly took off the normal clothes he had on and began to put on the powerful Catskin Armor. Collins walked into the room and said in a flurry, "There are four of them coming in from the cove. No one was left from the cove to give any message or information. Even in the cave the bodyguards dropped one by one, none of them returned alive."

"Where's Grinth?"

"Grinth is he's dead. There's a Magician amid the intruders," Collins's voice was shaky as he spoke.

The intruders were just too quick, in fact, they were so quick that no one survived to even warn the others. Even the message Collins received was a bit vague.

"What? A Magician?" Viktor was surprised. For the first time in his life, he thought of escaping rather than staying to fight. Magicians were too mysterious; he wouldn't dare face such an opponent.

He didn't know why a Magician would bother him, he had always been careful with them. He never bothered the lands belonging to the East Cove Higher Magic Academy, so how did things come to this?

He had no idea, but he knew that the one thing he should do now is to escape and save his skin.

Putting on the headgear of the Catskin Armor, Viktor hurriedly packed up the documents on his table. There were too many of them, he couldn't take them all with him, so he chose a few important ones.

He put the documents into a knapsack and carried it on his back. Then he grabbed the crystal that the special guest previously had thrust upon him. This would go with him too.

That important guest was a Magician too. He would never dare keep that Magician waiting.

Apart from the precious gemstones and most of his possessions, Viktor also packed up a dagger that emanated a black aura. It was another piece of magic equipment of his, a special weapon that was a gift from Grinth who had spent a lot of money on it.

He slid the dagger into a pocket of the leather armor on his leg, then turned to Collins and said, "Let's go, we're getting out of here."

"What about our brothers?" Collins repeatedly, gulping anxiously.

"There's nothing I can do about them, it's too late."

They were just rogues and bandits anyway, with money, he could easily hire new ones. And money was not a problem for him!

Collins nodded and silently followed Viktor's footsteps.

But the two had underestimated the intruders' speed. No more than 10 seconds passed since they got out of the study, and as they walked by a long and narrow passageway in the cave Viktor had no choice but to halt.

In front of them, a giant brute whose whole body was covered in a glowing reflective aura was blocking their way. Behind the brute were four others: one was a swordswoman, one an Archer, and the other two were a pair of identical twins that looked like thin and frail young men. One was Link and the other his avatar, though Viktor did not figure this out yet.

Damn it! They can't have been this quick! Viktor creased his brows.

The intruders were all standing there right in front of him.

The Archer Gildern couldn't hold in his laughter when he saw Viktor, "Would you look at that, aren't we lucky to get here before the little mouse burrows his way out again?"

Viktor and Collins were both carrying knapsacks on their backs, and their footsteps were distressed. Anyone who saw them could tell that they were trying to escape.

Collins stuttered out, "Leader, what should we do now?"

Viktor said nothing. He wasn't even sure how to save his own skin, let alone try to save other people.

Viktor's eyes stared fixedly at the intruders' movements, he took a couple steps backward until he reached a pitch-dark corner. In the thick of the darkness, the effects of Catskin Armor worked, and his body completely blended into it as if disappearing into thin air.

Collins, realizing that his leader had just vanished, immediately understood that he was abandoned. As he saw the intruders slowly closing in, he dropped to his knees, and begged, "Please don't kill me! Please! I don't want to die!"

"How pathetic," Lucy said with disgust.

Gildern drew his bow and prepared to shoot the little coward, but Link stayed his hand and said, "Let him live. We'll dig Viktor's secrets from him."

At first, Link thought he should keep Viktor alive, but now, he seemed too dangerous alive. It's best to just kill him on the spot!

The mercenaries' eyes shone. Yes, of course, this coward looked like he could be Viktor's second-in-command, he must know all the secret spots this cunning fox hid his treasures.

Jacker walked up to Collins, and with one hand he hit Collins neck. The bandit immediately fainted.

"Viktor's gone." Lucy's brows furrowed.

"There was something strange about the black leather armor he wore, I'm sure he must be hiding in the dark. Be careful, everyone. This Viktor is a dangerous Assassin," Link cautioned everyone.

Jacker immediately ducked down and walked a few paces backward, until he reached Link.

"Protect Mr. Link," he urged in a low voice. As a mercenary, he knew how big a threat an Assassin was to a Magician's safety.

Lucy and Gildern surrounded Link and his avatar.

...

In the pitch-black darkness.

Viktor slowly paced around, his eyes were fixed intently on the intruders under the dim candlelight, especially the pair of Magiciassurrounded in the middle.

These people had average skills, except that one brute who was a bit more powerful. They must've relied on the two Magicians' power to break into my lair so quickly. They don't seem to have any protective gear on, now's my chance!

Viktor had been cornered into a dead end. He had no way to escape, the only way was to fight to the death.

If I could only kill the Magicians, these three stupid mercenaries wouldn't be able to keep up with me. I'm sure I can escape from them. And once I'm out, I'll definitely remember them!

The moment he escaped, he would put a price on the heads of those three. He was sure that in no time they would be brought to him.

As Viktor was scheming he turned around quickly and looked out for an opening to attack.

But he underestimated the Magician's power. To put it more accurately, he underestimated Link, who was not as weak as he seemed.

Link might have an appearance of a thin, frail young man, but that was only his camouflage.

Once he discovered that Viktor had escaped in darkness, Link spent one Omni Point on a new spell.

Illumination

Level-0 Spell

Effects: Creates a light orb as bright as five candles. Lasts for an hour.

A Level-0 spell costs two Mana points and each spell was enough to light the passageway as bright as five candles. The Mana left in Link's body wasn't much, but he still had a bottle of Mana potion that he brought with him.

Decisively, he drank the potion, replenished his Mana and learned the spell of Illumination at the same time. Then he started to cast the spell.

The spell was the default version. The casting speed was 0.1 seconds. Link cast ten times without hesitation, and on the passageway, he would place one light orb every six feet. In dark corners, he would place two light orbs.

In an instant, the dark passageway was brightly lit by Illumination.

Darkness was an Assassin's safe lair. Once that darkness was eliminated, the Assassin then lost his biggest strength and advantage.

In a dark corner, now lit by Illumination, Viktor who was clad in black leather armor lurked. As the light hit him, he stood there motionless, completely bewildered.

How could an Assassin fight if he wasn't able to sneak up on his opponents?

In that moment, Viktor was like a maiden being snatched out of her clothes in the middle of a busy market. He was shocked and had no idea what step to take next.

"Haha, a tiny mouse under the sunlight!" Gildern laughed. He nocked an arrow and shot it towards Viktor.

Jacker sprang into motion towards Viktor, but Lucy cautiously stood by Link, just in case.

Ding! Clang! Bang! "Ahhh!"

Chaos ensued, and facing Jacker and Gildern's joint attack, Viktor struggled to counter two blows. His body was hit by Jacker's iron shield, Lucy grabbed the opportunity and stabbed Viktor's heart with her sword.

In his cries of agony, Viktor floundered around like a kite without its tail, stumbling and coughing up blood simultaneously. He managed to flee for about twenty feet, then with a thud he hit the passageways' stone wall, and fell to the ground like a bag of bones.

He was no longer breathing.

Assassins simply were no match for Warriors. If nothing else, the weapons they used were of different levels. One used lightweight daggers, while the other used heavy and sturdy war hammers and iron shields. What's more, it was two against one. The fact that Viktor could delay his death after the joint attack was very impressive.

Link had noticed the Mission Complete notification in the interface, and he had received the Omni Points rewards. He now had 13 Omni points.

"That's it? It's over?" The Flamingo Band of Mercenaries couldn't believe it. The whole process of the mission had gone so smoothly and easily that compared to the other missions that they'd undertaken, this one was like a vacation.

"No! It's not over yet!"

Link had thought that the mission was over too, but he saw a black crystal roll out from Viktor's bag. The black crystal was in a pool of Viktor's blood; thick black clouds were emanating from it.

The moment this black cloud appeared, the temperature in the cave passageway plummeted immediately, Link's Illumination light orb dimmed significantly too, just like a flickering candlelight.

What's more terrifying was how life-like this black cloud seemed. It flowed into Viktor's nostrils, and Viktor's body began to shake slightly.

"What the hell is that?" Gildern cried out in terror.

A dead man had started to move again, it seemed things were taking a turn for the worst!

Just in that moment, Link received a notification for a new mission.

Mission Activated: Eliminate the Occult!

Mission Details: Kill the Occult Viktor.

Mission Rewards: 30 Omni Points.

The higher the Omni Point reward, the more difficult the mission would be. If killing just one target could get him 30 Omni Points, Link shuddered to think of how powerful this Occult Viktor actually was.

Even Link was considerably shaken!

Whatever was happening to Viktor got more and more horrific.

Smoky vapors flowed into his nostrils, and his body began to shake violently. Then, a scarlet gas surged out from his skin's pores, circulated around his body, and turned into a sturdy blood-red shield.

Within the shield, Viktor's build and figure visibly became stronger and stronger!

Link was overwhelmed by a looming sense of danger as he witnessed this grotesque event unfold in front of himhe'd seen something like this happen before!

It occurred in the East Cove Magic Academy, probably half a year after the game was launched. It was also the reason behind an infamous accident that happened in the academy.

There was a Level-6 Magician called Bale there who was caught researching dark magic without permission. He was, in fact, working on the most sinister branch of dark magicdemon summoning. Indeed, when he was discovered, it was right at the time when he was performing a ritual to summon the demons!

The dean of the academy, Master Magician Anthony, assembled many Level-6 Master Magicians to stop Bale's summoning. However, due to the clash of the spells, Bale's Mage Tower collapsed and the elements pooled together in high quantities until it reached an overload, resulting in a violent eruption that swept these elements across half of the academy.

But it didn't stop there!

When Bale was killed, a black crystal appeared on his body, which absorbed all of Bale's blood. He was then resurrected as a horrible undead monster!

This monster not only knew all of Bale's spells, it also had a very strong anti-magic body. When it was in a battle with the Master Magicians of the academy, the strange monster had crushed the demon Tarviss's seal barrier, causing the demon to re-emerge and escape.

When Link was participating in this mission in the game, he had seen with his own eyes how the Master Magician Bale had been raised from the dead, and it was a sight he would never forget!

And now, Viktor's body was transforming in exactly the same way!

"Quick! We have to get out of here!" shouted Link.

The black crystal was called Occultic Runes. It contained countless amounts of prohibited dark magic runes, and when it was stimulated by fresh blood, it could enable the blood's owner to possess demonic power!

After this occult transformation, the person would lose their humanity and become ruthless and bloodthirsty. In addition, their strength and power would increase at least twofold, and their skin would be endowed with potent anti-magic capacity, becoming a barrier that blocked external elements. In short, the transformation would turn them into a vicious killing machine!

Even though the process of occult transformation could be halted, it required a massive amount of energy, at least as powerful as the runes' creator. But the creator of these magic runes was an extraordinary demon, while the strength of even the average demon was already insurmountably enormous!

In the game, even the Level-7 Master Magician Anthony was incapable of stopping the occult transformation process. In fact, he couldn't even destroy Bale's corpse because the Occultic Runes' power protected it, just as the blood-colored shield is now protecting Viktor's body.

This was because the creator of the Occultic Runes was the imprisoned Tarvissa notorious demon who possessed Legendary power!

Link was cautious. He slowly backed away from Viktor's corpse while keeping his eyes fixed on the crystal beside it. Then, a notification popped up on the interface.

Occultic Runes

Quality: Legendary

Effects: Corrupts a form of life in the Realm of Light to possess demonic characteristics and power.

(Note: If you are not a Legendary Magician, don't even think about stopping the occult transformation process. Brace yourself for a fierce battle!)

A Legendary itemthat meant that the creator was a Legendary demon. Link would never believe that this black crystal that appeared now in Girvent Forest had nothing to do with the Legendary demon Tarviss.

He thought the Occult Runes crystal's creator must be the very same Tarviss from the game!

But why would Tarviss' Occultic Runes be here? Link was stumped for an answer, but he knew that the Occult Viktor would possess an immense power when he got resurrected, a power that even the combined forces of the three mercenaries and himself would not match up. Naturally, for now, retreating was the best and only option.

Still, Link couldn't resist putting up a fight, so while he was retreating, he waved his wand and a glass orb appeared and shot out towards the Occult Viktor. The orb hit the target easily, but it landed with a soft poof on the blood-red shield, not even disturbing its surface.

That put an end to his hopes of stopping the occult transformation process.

The mercenaries trusted Link's opinions, so when they saw signs of him beginning to panic, they immediately and quickly fell back. All of them were equipped with Cat's Agility so they bolted at a high-speed, but as they reached the opening of the cave passageway, Link's footsteps stopped abruptly.

"Stop running, it's too late now!" He felt a sudden change and movements coming from the chaos of the dark aura behind him.

Just as he finished his sentence, the occult transformation was complete.

The effects of Occultic Runes were such that the weaker the target, the quicker the occult transformation. In the game, it took 15 seconds to transform the Level-6 Magician Bale, but now with Occult Viktor, it only needed less than five seconds.

Jacker and Lucy stopped immediately, but Gildern followed his instincts and kept on running.

Link bellowed at him, "Come back! Our only chance is to join our forces against the monster and defeat him! Otherwise, even if we escaped the cave, he'd still get us. This monster is out for revenge; it won't stop until we're dead!"

Gildern's body shivered, and he immediately stopped running.

Just at this moment, the four heard a croaky voice coming from behind them, "You think you're going to kill me? Ha, you fools are optimistic."

All four of them turned their heads around and saw Viktor on his feet again. His body had become significantly bigger and taller and the exposed skin on his face looked a greyish green, a complex web of magic runes scattered across its now metallic-like surface. His eyes were emitting a blinding red light. Anyone unfortunate enough to look into those eyes would be consumed by a sense of chaos, murder, crazed bloodthirst and all kinds of negative emotions. The emotions inspired were so violent that it might drive a weak-willed person to mentally breakdown, or in other words, be scared witless.

This was the kind of dreadful mental influence that creatures with demonic powers could exert!

Jacker, Lucy, and Gildern all had courage, but facing such a bloodcurdling sight, they'd be scared out of their senses too.

That thing will surely kill us!

There's no way we can ever defeat that monster! It's too strong!

In the name of the Lord of Light, is that a demon?

A mixture of negative emotions emerged in the three mercenaries' minds. They had no willpower left to do anything else except retreat and run for their lives.

Jacker was in a slightly better state than the other two, his face was stony, betraying no emotion. But Lucy was now deathly pale, and Gildern had started to shiver.

The only one who managed to keep his wits and composure was Link.

His soul was fortified by the God of Light, so he was much stronger than normal people, but his own personal character was naturally calm and composed in the first place. Even when Viktor flooded them with a fierce torrent of murderous aura, Link remained as calm as a millpond, unmoved in the face of a wild raging surge.

He saw that the three were stunned motionless, so Link calmly assured them, "The Occultic Runes can only double the strength of the body's owner! Jacker, Viktor was only a Level-3 Assassin, even with his strength doubled, he won't be able to defeat you!"

Assassins prioritized on the agility of their limbs; their physical strength was mediocre at best. Jacker, on the other hand, was a Warriorbrutish strength was his greatest forte!

Realizing this, Jacker eased up a little. He believed that what Link said was true, as Link had proven to be knowledgeable many times before.

Then Link turned to Lucy, "His skin was enforced by magic, but I will cast a spell on your sword that will increase its sharpness, you can definitely pierce through him!"

Link had 19 Omni Points and 80 Mana points left. But without hesitation, he spent 10 of his Omni Points to purchase a Level-1 spell.

Mid-Level Sharpness Spell

Level-1 Spell

Effects: Enhance a weapon's sharpness to a high degree. A normal iron sword will be able to cut through steel like butter. Effect lasts for ten minutes.

The Sharpness spell was a normal spellthere was not much potential to modify and improve it. It was a higher-level equivalent of the Level-0 Sharpness Spell, so it was already sufficiently powerful.

After the purchase, Link pointed his wand at Lucy's sword. At once, a sheath of bright white light enveloped the sword. When the light dimmed down, Lucy's sword emitted a clear blue auraa sign that the effects of the mid-level Sharpness spell had started to work.

Then, Link pointed his wand at Gildern's quiver and cast the same spell. When the light dimmed and scattered, the 15 arrows in the quiver all shone in an icy blue light.

Link worked at a quick speed. When he was done, barely a second had passed. Occult Viktor was still 60 feet away; he had not begun his attacks yet.

Right now, Link's Mana was down to 68, and the Cat's Agility effects on all of them had waned down. Still, without any hesitation, he waved the wand and re-cast Cat's Agility on everyone. That used up 24 Mana points, so he now had only 44 left.

Forty-four Mana points were not much, but it was still enough to release 44 Glass Orbs!

Occult Viktor saw his opponents make their moves, and his blood-red eyes stared fixedly at Link. "You pansy Magician, you destroyed everything I built! I will catch you and cut out your flesh bit by bit! I'll savor your slow painful death!" Viktor's voice was filled with vengeance.

He slowly strode towards the four, and as he strode pass Collins, he raised his foot and stomped on Collins' neck.

Crack! It was the sound of Collins's spine snapping. He died while he was still unconscious.

Viktor burst out in a bone-chilling laugh, "Everyone in this cave must die today!"

Link ignored Occult Viktor's show of cruelty, and instead, focused his eyesight to make it as sharp and piercing as ice. He was now, once again, in his focused spellcasting state!

"Are you all ready?" he asked.

Jacker inhaled deeply and held on to his shield tightly. "I'm ready."

"I'm good too." Lucy said as she pursed her deep red lips.

"Might as well get it over with." Gildern gripped at the longbow in his hands; he was soaking in a cold sweat.

"Very good." Link kept his eyes peeled on the approaching Occult Viktor, "Everyone, remember, if we kill him, everything in the Cove of Echoes will belong to us!"

That sentence perked the three mercenaries up. Their eyes lit up brightly thinking about it. All this while, they had seen so many valuable treasures, but because of pressing circumstances, they had to leave it all undisturbed. But now, all they had to do was push through this last hurdle and everything will be theirs. It would be foolish to run away now.

They were mercenaries after all! Who knew better than mercenaries that in life, you either kill or be killed?

Once they thought of it that way, bold courage returned to the three mercenaries. They were now ready for battle!

The Cave Passageway

...

"You little things, I hate your magic!" Viktor's hand was holding a dagger that was emitting a dark black light. His eyes were fixed on the two thin, frail young men who were surrounded in the middle.

Even now that he was brought back from the dead by magic, he still retained a high level of knowledge, and in a few seconds of observation, he clearly understood how dangerous those Magicians were.

He was sure that as long as he killed the twin Magicians, the three mercenaries would be nothing to worry about.

But he did think it strange, though, why in a mercenary band there would be a pair of identical twins, who were both Magicians. The coincidence was just too uncanny.

"Blast it all!" Occult Viktor couldn't understand it no matter how hard he thought about it, so he relented and put the matter aside.

When Viktor had reached closer than 30 feet, Jacker muttered under his breath and lifted his shield before charging towards Viktor.

An accurate charge consumed Combat Aura, required a special breathing technique, and concerted efforts from all the muscles in the body. It released an explosive amount of energy and the speed was very high. It was also very hard to dodge unless the charge was predicted beforehand.

But without any effort at all, Occult Viktor deftly dodged the attack like a weasel!

At the moment the shield was going to hit his body, he swiftly sidestepped, and that rendered Jacker's charge completely in vain.

"You're fast, but not fast enough!" Occult Viktor's voice was full of mockery. His body turned, and then at a speed as fast as the wind, he suddenly appeared right beside Jacker's body. His dagger was like a venomous snake; it easily skirted around Jacker's shield and stabbed Jacker in the neck.

His dagger's speed was simply too quick; Jacker had no chance of dodging it.

If Jacker was alone in fighting the Occult Viktor, he would've been finished off in that one move. This was how powerful the Occult Viktor was. But Jacker was not alone.

As his eyes were focused to go in for the kill, Viktor saw from the corner of his eye a flashing light. He then noticed that right in front of his dagger there was a sky blue sphere of light that glowed dimly.

What is that? The question flashed in Viktor's mind, but before he could react, the light orb exploded.

Bang! There was a loud explosion. Viktor could feel the back of his hands were hot. At the same time, his dagger was vibrating with energy. It wasn't a lot, but it was very condensed; it shook until he could feel a slight pain in his palm, and then it stopped.

It was Link. He had used Glass Orbs to rescue Jacker.

In that slight delay, Jacker came to his senses.

He didn't have the time to celebrate his luck and was quickly regaining his posture to prepare to counterattack. He held up the thick and heavy iron shield with his left arm like a giant iron hand and charged viciously towards Viktor. Jacker had developed this move through his experience in battle. The aim of this move was to counterattack when his charge failed to do damage.

If it had been an attack from Jacker in normal circumstances, Viktor, with his increased agility after being transformed by magic, would have easily dodged this move. But Jacker's body was geared up with Cat's Agility. His body might not be as agile as the Occult Viktor's, but he was still much better than the average Warrior.

Now, he flowed as smoothly as water, his movements just as quick, much beyond Viktor's expectation.

Bang! There was a heavy thud.

I hit him! Jacker rejoiced, but he felt something was not right. Why isn't he retreating?

Usually, hits as powerful as this would've knocked out or sent the opponent staggering backwards.

Jacker looked across from his shield and saw a terrible sight. Viktor had stopped his attack with just one hand on the metal shield. With just one hand, he was able to almost effortlessly counter Jacker's powerful attack!

He also saw three glass orbs exploding near Viktor's face. But this attack, which would've finished off a few bandits, did not even scratch his skin. In fact, Viktor didn't even crease his brows.

Viktor only closed his eyes, and waited for the orbs to explode. He knew that if he didn't open his eyes at the wrong time, he wouldn't receive any harm.

Of course, these attacks weren't completely useless, they did manage to control and limit Viktor's movements so that he couldn't attack Jacker further.

What strength! What powerful defensive magic! Jacker thought, but at the same time, he breathed a sigh of relief. The opponent might have blocked the shield, but it was not powerful enough to overwhelm him. This proved Link's words that Viktor was not unbeatable.

"I can block him here! You guys attack!" Jacker shouted. His right hand swung the war hammer at Viktor's head.

Seeing that Jacker could hold the Viktor in place, Gildern's courage returned, and he shot an arrow towards the Occult Viktor's head. Lucy charged towards Viktor as well.

Before she stormed forward, Link's voice urged her, "Don't try to draw out the battle! Just strike a quick blow, and cut his skin!"

The Occult Viktor's skin had a magical protective power. Link's magic was basically useless to him. But no matter how protective the skin was, ultimately it was just a protective shell outside of the body made up of the elements. If all elements were blocked from entering the body, life would then be impossible. Viktor's inner body could not possibly contain highly protective magic as well. So as long as there was some skin exposed, the glass orbs must be able to do some real damage.

"Understood!" Lucy responded. At the urging of the Cat's Agility spell, she looked just like a genuine cat, rushing towards Viktor.

At the same time, Viktor was facing Jacker's war hammer, Gildern's arrow, Link's spells, and Lucy's sword.

Before he died, Viktor was a Level-3 Assassin. Now, his power increased to that of a Level-4 Assassin. Still, it was impressive how a Level-4 Assassin could withstand the joint attacks from four sides!

Suddenly, Viktor felt crushed under the tremendous pressure. He briefly became careless, and his right arm was cut by Lucy's sword. The damn woman's sword was so sharp, that his skin was exposed!

"Damn you!" Viktor swore, and the black cloud around his body pulsed then covered the stab wound on his arm. At the same time, with speed fast as lightning, using the dagger that was glowing with black light, he stabbed Lucy before she had any time to react.

Viktor's movements were frighteningly quick. The dagger was swung violently as if in rage, and his hand moved so fast it was like a shadow, almost becoming invisible.

Facing this kind of attack, a mere Level-2 Archer and Lucy had no ability to evade or dodge.

She remembered Link's words, once she had attacked the opponent she must retreat, but her speed was too slow, and she had no time to dodge Viktor's attack. She felt the skin over her heart tingle, and she knew that she would be stabbed there by the dagger!

Is it over then?

At the very last moment, time seemed to stop. Lucy saw her life saw flash before her frame by framefrom a peasant girl to a beautiful young woman, and then being sold off by her drunkard father to an old nobleman as a maidservant in the castle. She then sacrificed her body to a knight in the castle to learn swordsmanship, and then she escaped from the castle and became a wandering mercenary.

In her life as a mercenary, she met Jacker and Gildern. They formed their own small band of mercenaries and made a pact that they would earn money together and found their own mercenary troop.

She struggled her way out of the lowly mud that she was born in so she could one day fly high like a bird, but now, everything was in vain.

She saw the dagger, it had a pitch-black glow surrounding it. It was gradually edging in closer to her heart, she knew she would soon be dead.

Is this where it will all end for me?

Bitter, ordinary and nameless. Is that how it will end today for her, unknown and unmissed in a pitch-dark cave?

I'm not willing to give up my life yet! Lucy shouted internally, but she had no power to resist or fight anymore.

Just at that moment, a crystalline Flame Blast that shone with a light blue glow appeared. The Flame Blast was like a messenger of God, moving inexplicably in curved lines, skirting around the other arm of the Occult Viktor. It accurately hit the blade of his dagger.

Bang!

The Flame Blast exploded, it was as if a hot wave detonated between Lucy and the dagger, blocking it from piercing through her skin.

But this was still not enough!

Viktor's body was geared with very high protective magic. He was exceedingly powerful, a Flame Blast's attack could only block him for a second, a period of time too brief for Jacker and Gildern to rescue Lucy!

But then, Lucy felt her body being pulled back by a strong force. She was pulled backwards at a speed that was at least 50% faster than normal!

It was Link, who used the Level-1 spell Vector Throw on her.

With the help of this spell, Lucy narrowly escaped the claws of death!

"Whoa!" gasped Lucy. Viktor's dagger had punctured Lucy's leather armor, leaving dark traces on the black leather like that of venom. But right before Lucy's skin was pierced with the dagger, she was out of Viktor's range.

Life or death was decided at that very critical moment.

The prey had escaped and Viktor's efforts were in vain. Not only that, he had put himself in a risky position as well, because now he was in a spot where he could not escape Jacker or Gildern's attacks.

At least, that was what the two mercenaries thought.

But Viktor still had a trick up his sleeve!

The black cloud that surrounded his body flashed again in a violent pulse, and then it was as if he was instantaneously transported out of the combat zone, 15 feet away!

"That's impossible!" The three mercenaries were stunned at the strange turn of events.

"It's an Assassin battle skillInstant Flash!" Link shouted to reveal Viktor's trick.

Instant Flash

Level-3 Assassin Battle Skill

Effects: Explodes Combat Aura to allow the traversing of distances under 30 feet at unimaginably high speeds.

(Note: Uses up a lot of Combat Aura, do not use excessively.)

"He can only dash up to 30 feet away! And he can't use it too many times!" This warning was uttered by Link's avatar, not Link, to confuse Viktor.

Jacker and the rest were initially shocked, but after hearing what Link shouted, the three instantaneously heaved a sigh of relief.

The terrifying thing was the unknown. But now that they have a knowledgeable Magician on their side who could reveal the opponents tricks one by one, what more did they have to fear?

Jacker had no more doubts; he attacked Viktor with another charge.

The charge cost a lot of Combat Aura as well, but that was fine with Jacker because he wasn't alonehe had three more teammates along with him!

On the other side, Viktor's Instant Flash had just ended. He felt a gust of wind in front of his face and a shadow flew towards him, gradually resolving into a big figureit was that damned Warrior!

The attack this time was a swift one. Viktor realized he was unable to respond quickly enough. He had no choice but to explode his Combat Aura again. He then aimed one of his palms at the shield.

Bang!

Jacker's charge was stopped by Viktor's hand, but Viktor was not unhurt. The impact from of charge was very strong, and even in his strengthened occult form, it was still quite unbearable. His right arm had been hurt originally, and now it was damaged further to the point of no longer being able to lift it.

"How about another arrow from me!" Gildern's confidence started to grow; he and Jacker made a great team. He fired an arrow that shot past Jacker's ear, bringing with it some of Jacker'shi

Having been cut by the blade of the swordswoman, Viktor could not risk being shot by the arrow that glowed with the same blue light again.

He managed to dodge the arrow at the critical moment, but as he dodged, he heard the sound of rushing wind. In the corner of his eyes, he saw Jacker's war hammer being swung towards him again, and on the other side, a longsword glowing with a blue light striking down at him.

This time it was Jacker and Lucy's joint attack!

Even more dangerous than that, the Magicians were casting spells at him too. Anob glowing with dim blue light hit the wound on his arm accurately.

It hit with a bang, and Victor felt pain and then numbness in his hand, and on the stab wound, he felt an extraordinary heat flowing into his body.

This joint attack was fatal, and Viktor had no time to react. Still, Viktor was extremely cunning. He saw that there was no way out for him, so he used his Combat Aura one more time and activated Instant Flash!

But this time, Viktor Flashed not in retreat, but forward, towards Link.

Those two Magicians had been the blame for all his woes. He hated their guts and he was resolved to kill them!

After the previous Instant Flash, he activated another one!

In a short instant, Viktor had reached Link.

"Die!" Viktor angrily shouted as he stabbed Link with the dagger.

Occult Victor had an insurmountable strength. His speed was too fast to keep up with, and his Instant Flash battle skill was top-notch. Put simply, Viktor had the decisive upper hand in this battle.

No one could stop him from attacking whoever he wanted!

At least, that was what it seemed like.

Moments before, the three mercenaries were driving Viktor into a corner. They could almost finish him off in one move, but in the next moment, the situation reversed. Now, it was Link, their leader, who was in a situation of grave danger.

Jacker and Lucy were the first to turn back to help Link, but they were not able to do anything with such brief warning.

The speed of Jacker's Charge required at least half a second to reach Link, but by then, Viktor would have enough time to kill Link three times. And while Lucy might have very nimble limbs, her speed was still behind even Jacker's, so it was impossible for her to make it anywhere near fast enough.

"Protect him!" shouted Jacker to Gildern.

The battle just now had clearly proven that Occult Viktor was well beyond what the three mercenaries could fight against. If Link got killed, it would mean that their deaths were guaranteed as well.

The Archer Gildern understood Link's importance well. He was ready to use his bow as a wooden stick to hit Viktor with. He knew it wouldn't kill or even seriously hurt Viktor, but he hoped it would buy them some time before Jacker and Lucy could reach them.

"I'll kill you first!" cried Viktor.

Viktor was completely unimpeded by the longbow's hit. His dagger went straight at Gildern, who was an Archer, so close combat was not his forte at all. Viktor didn't even bother to dodge Gildern's futile attack as he was too consumed by the urge to kill everyone.

Gildern knew he had no chance of dodging Viktor's attacks, he thought he was about to be dealt a finishing blow, but then bang! It was Link's glass orbs. One struck Viktor's arm while the other struck his face. Viktor's attack was, once more, thwarted by the Magician!

Gildern instinctively backed away. Now there was no one left to protect Link.

"Ah! You're still trying to rescue other people? Let's see who's going to rescue you! It's time for you to die!" said Viktor, with a malicious grin on his face.

He lunged forward with his dagger and it struck Link in his heartnot the actual Link, but rather, his Physical Avatar.

But how could it be the avatar?

That's because, in the moment when Viktor launched his Instant Flash in Link's direction, his instincts flared up. As a weak-bodied Magician, he was extremely sensitive to these kinds of sudden attacks. So, he intuitively stepped backwards, making the Physical Avatar just slightly closer to Viktor.

In any fierce battle, it would be a natural instinct to attack a target that was nearest to you.

In Viktor's eyes, these were just a pair of twin Magicians, they should both be killed and it didn't matter which one died first. So naturally, he attacked the one closest to him first!

But as soon as the dagger pierced through, Viktor realized something was wrong.

He had killed many people before, he knew precisely how it should feel when his dagger pierced through flesh and bone, but now, the feeling was off. It didn't feel like he was stabbing a bodyit was rough as if he had planted his dagger into the ground.

What's going on? Viktor was in shock.

Then, Link gave up his control over the Physical Avatar and the spell began to collapse. The avatar turned into a clump of dirt and sand. Viktor knew immediately that he had committed a grave error!

"Glass Orb!" Link chanted in a low steady voice. With a slight movement of his wand, small orbs appeared in the air one after another. This time, Link really concentrated all his attention on the spellcasting, and in less than half a second, a total of 9 light blue orbs appeared out of thin air.

They moved in two groups: the first flew towards Viktor's face and the others were aimed at the stab wound on Viktor's arm.

Like Gildern, Link wasn't expecting to seriously hurt Viktor; he only wanted to slow down his attacks, giving Jacker and the rest time to catch up.

To maximize his spellcasting speed, Link stood as still as stone. But Gildern thought that was a bad idea, he was focused on one thingLink must not die. He swung his bow over his back, then with both hands carried Link's body away, and bolted from Occult Viktor as fast as he could.

Link was unaffected by all this. He focused completely on the spellcasting.

Even though the flames could not hurt him, Viktor dared not underestimate the impact of these explosions. The other parts of his body could stand it just fine, but his eyes couldn't bear it at all; he had to shut his eyes. But in the battle against joint attacks, shutting his eyes even for a moment meant certain death and or defeat. The wound on his arm couldn't bear the attacks either, so when faced with the explosive attacks he had no choice but to dodge and evade them.

Still, he underestimated Link's spell. The Glass Orbs were nothing like the arrows; their trajectory could change at any time. When the distance was short enough, there was no chance of dodging these attacks!

Bang bang bang bang bang! Viktor could only feel the skin on his face going numb, but he didn't dare to open his eyes. The only thing his nose could smell was the heated air around him and this made him hesitate even to breathe because the air might burn his lungs.

The stab wound on his right arm stung with a fierce burning pain; it felt as if his whole arm had been burned to crisp.

Under these circumstances, he had no more power to use Instant Flash to chase after Link.

By this time, Jacker had made it to Linkhe had used his Charge!

Thud! After Link's prior attack, Jacker, with all his might, used his shield to hit the motionless Viktor squarely on his back.

Ahhh! Viktor's body shook and he spat out dark, thick blood. His wounds were serious and he was now truly incapacitated.

A perfect opening!

Lucy was close at Jacker's heels. Her sword pierced into Viktor's chest from his back. The sword had penetrated his body about an inch deep, but she wasn't sure if that was enough. The sword didn't cut through his heart, but the attack did stun him, so his reaction slowed down considerably.

She was aware of the vast disparity in skill level between her and this monster, so after stabbing him once, she pulled back the sword and hid behind Jacker's shield, waiting for another opening.

But Jacker had no such reservations. He knew that he was his comrades' shield. The only thing he focused on was to stop or delay this monster's attacks, even if it meant receiving blows to himself, and at the same time create openings for his comrades to attack.

He swung his shield towards Viktor, then rapidly pulled back the shield to protect himself. Then with his right hand, he swung the war hammer down onto Viktor's skull.

Faced with the looming war hammer attack, all he could do was lean his head to the side.

Thud! As the war hammer crushed onto Occult Viktor's left shoulder, it made a gruesome sound.

The war hammer was about 170 pounds, and Jacker swung it down with all his might. A dent appeared on Viktor's shoulder; the bones inside had been smashed!

Viktor's two arms were both limp and useless. The strength of occult bodies was, however, that they had enhanced recovery speed. A black vapor swirled over each of Viktor's wounds and the wound was noticeably healing at an impeccable speed.

If Viktor could just have some rest, he could definitely fight back and regain the battle!

But would Link ever allow that to happen? Absolutely not!

"Attack with all your might!" yelled Link.

This was their best opportunity!

Lucy stormed up to Viktor again. Gildern put Link down, nocked his arrow and shot multiple arrows at Viktor. Jacker kept hitting Viktor with his war hammer in a crazed fury. Link himself kept casting spells, and successions of little orbs kept shooting straight towards the wounds on Viktor's body.

In less than a second, Viktor was completely wrecked under a barrage of attacks!

The occult body might be strong and resilient, but under such an intense wave of attacks, he was finally beaten into a tattered rag doll.

Crunch! Viktor's skull was smashed under Jacker's war hammer. As he was rolling on the ground, his body scattered with wounds seemingly from a thousand cuts, there was no good piece of meat left on Viktor's body.

But even for a wound that serious, this monster still wasn't deadit was still breathing and struggling. The black vapor still swirled around his body, trying to heal the wounds.

This horrified the three mercenaries. They didn't care how smashed Viktor's body already was, they just kept attacking him in a shocking frenzy.

Over ten seconds later, Jacker slumped down on the ground, trying to catch his breath. Lucy leaned on the cave wall, soaking in sweat. Gildern was massaging his cramped arm.

Between the three was a pile of smashed flesh that used to be Viktor.

"Is he really dead now?" Jacker was still skeptical and worried, so he wanted to make sure of it with Link. The Occult Viktor was just so monstrous and bizarre that it reminded him of the demons in the legends.

In the legends, demons did not die. The three mercenaries didn't dare to risk it with Viktor. If they must, they would burn Viktor's corpse to ash, then keep that ash sealed in nine different urns and bury those urns separately. They would also make sure that each urn was at least 20 miles away from the others. According to legends, that was the only way you could make sure demons don't come back to life.

Link silently nodded, then said, "He's dead."

He was only transformed by occult magic, his life force still differed from that of a true demon by thousands of miles. There was no way Occult Viktor could survive getting beaten up that badly.

Something was flashing on the interface. Link checked it and discovered it was a notification for a completed mission. He had killed Occult Viktor and completed the mission of eliminating demon magic. He was then rewarded with 30 Omni Points.

And now he had 39 Omni Points in total.

"Now, everything in the Cove of Echoes is ours to take. It's time to pack up," Link reminded them.

That sentence revived the tired and exhausted mercenaries. Their eyes suddenly shone like light bulbs, and immediately, they began to collect their loot.

## 40. The Bandits Treasures

In the game, whenever players wanted to search for loot after battles, they would either search the Boss' body or scan for collectible items on the map. Generally, loot was raided from the corpses of fallen enemies. This might seem dishonorable, but it was, in fact, commonly regarded as chivalrous, resourceful and prudent as well.

But in reality, the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries exposed Link to the other side of pillagingthe wild side. They were so eager that Link stood dumbfounded as the mercenaries descended upon the Brotherhood's treasures and belongings like a swarm of locusts.

Every single object in the Silent Mine that could be sold for a little bit of money was seized. Even the Dark Brotherhood members' underpants weren't spared!

And so half an hour after Viktor was dead, Jacker, Lucy and Gildern stood on the plain of the Cove of Echoes, their faces flushed, and beside them were spoils piled up as high as a hillock.

All the Dark Brotherhood members were stripped clean of their leather armorsnot even the normal members in the cave were spared. All their weapons were grabbed and collected in a pile.

In total, they collected 75 ordinary leather armors, 28 elite leather armors, 50 bows, 100 swords of various qualities, 30 shields, and 25 daggers.

Apart from that, there were 4 sets of magical equipment too!

These were Grinth's Fire Warrior Armor and Blazing Sword, and Viktor's Dagger of Corruption and Detecting Crystal Ball.

The Shadow Dagger hadn't been of much use in the hands of Viktor, but it was, in fact, a sterling quality weapon, and could be worth more than 200 gold coins.

Lucy's face had turned crimson and her almond-shaped eyes were gleaming. She was dashing back and forth gathering the spoils, and that red hair of hers glinted like a kindled flame. She was acting as the bookkeeper, calculating the total cost of their loot on a goatskin paper with a pen in hand.

"A normal leather armor costs one gold coin, a fine quality leather armor costs 2 gold coins...a bow 1.5 gold coins...a standard steel sword is worth 2 gold coinsall of this gear is worth at least 800 gold coins!"

Even before she finished the sentence, both Jacker and Gildern couldn't help but gasp in astonishment.

"Wow, that's a fortune!"

"I must be dreaming!"

Previously, they would earn about 5 gold coins for each mission they undertook, and that was if they were lucky. Their usual income had always been in silver coins, for example, in an investigative mission, the reward would be about 20 silver coins (about 2 gold coins), so everyone would get about seven or eight silver coins each.

In the past year, they undertook about ten missions and earned 50 gold coins. They were able to survive comfortably on that income, but they were living by the sword, fearing for their life every day. So whenever they didn't have any missions, they would spend their money lavishly as if there were no tomorrow. Had Lucy not been cautioning them, they would probably be penniless by now.

But this time, with just one mission, they were able to make 700 gold coins from the equipment alone! That was an amount of money that they couldn't earn even if they worked for 10 years as mercenaries!

"But there's more!" cried Lucy.

Lucy's heart pounded, with this much money, she could get better gear. There were so many things that she had wanted to buy but couldn't afford, yet now, she could buy them all!

The equipment needed to be sold first before they could get any money. There were still some gold coins around because every bandit had money pouches on them. Of course, they snatched all of it up. Viktor also had his own private chest that Jacker smashed open using his hammer. He found about 80 gold coins inside!

In total, they had around 200 gold coins ready to be spent. The mercenaries' eyes were dazzled by the sheer amount of gold and silver coins.

What's more, every bandit had their own private treasure, gemstones, jewelry, pocket watches and various other types of valuable trinkets. All of this could be sold for some money, and naturally, not a single piece of it was left behind.

"One silver pocket watch could sell for 3 gold coins, and this red gemstone ring could get us 5 gold coins...and look at this one, this silver horse trinketit's Master Dormick's work, I'm sure it's worth a decent amount of money too. But the most valuable must be this pouch of gemstones, look at how exquisite these rare gemstones are!" said Lucy.

These gemstones were, of course, the recompensation Viktor received from the black-robed man.

Lucy quickly made a calculation and concluded, "They must be worth at least 700 gold coins."

Jacker and Gildern both gulped.

Gildern counted on his fingers, "700, plus 200, plus 700...holy God of Light, that's 1600 gold coins!"

He should at least get 100 gold coins. He wouldn't be at peace keeping this much money. No, when he got his share, he must find himself a beautiful wife and have a child with her. That way, even if one day he died in battle, he'd die peacefully knowing he was not the end of his lineage.

Gildern had never desired a quiet and peaceful lifehe loved the thrill of danger, and couldn't stay in one place for long. This attitude towards life is something all three members of the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries had in common.

After the value of their loot had been determined, Jacker, as the most level-headed of the three, looked to Link and waited for him to divide everything among them. He knew that the reason they were able to earn this much gold coins was because of Link's magic.

Lucy and Gildern looked to Link too, but they were a bit worried that Link might get too big a share.

Link, though, was slightly disappointed. For a commoner, this amount of money would be considered a fortune, but for a Magician, this was but a beggarly amount.

But he didn't regret anything because he'd found the most valuable object of all among the pilethe Occultic Runes of Tarviss.

Link knew the Occultic Runes were ominous and sinister, it might even have demagogic powers, but nevertheless, it contained the most coveted magic knowledge that a Magician could hope to learn.

No one in the Legion of Light would openly admit to wanting such an object, but if it was sold to the Dark Elf Kingdom of Pralync, it would definitely fetch him more than ten thousand gold coins!

But Link would never sell it.

With the level of magic that he was at now, he had nowhere near enough knowledge to study and decipher the Occultic Runes. But in the future, if he kept it with him, it could come in handy one day.

The three mercenaries didn't think much of the fact that Link took the magical runes. To them, all they wanted was to be as far away from such an evil object as possible; who would want to touch it again after all they went through?

Seeing that the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries members were all staring at him, Link thought and said, "Just give me the gold coins, you take all the gear and divide them among yourselves."

Dealing with the equipment would be too troublesome, and troublesome things were what Link hated the most. He'd already gotten the Occultic Runes, a rare Legendary object, so he was more than content. And after all, these mercenaries did risk their lives on this mission, he couldn't let them do it for nothing, could he?

As for the tuition fees, Link suspected he would find enough money to cover it because he had seen from the loot pile something that said "Viktor's Treasure Map".

The treasure map was a thrown about in the pile, so the three mercenaries hadn't noticed it at all.

Digging for treasures in the game was interesting and fun, but in the real world, it was more of a dirty, exhausting, and dangerous undertaking. Link had no desire to do it alone. He knew that it would be best to have someone help him do the dirty work, and then divide the gold coins up among them. But to do this, he needed people he could trust.

These three mercenaries seemed reliable; they were agile and strong. They might lose a bit of composure in the face of such enormous wealth, but their judgments remained sound, and they didn't lose their poise. This kind of mental strength was not bad at all, though Link still had doubts about their integrity because they had only known each other briefly. Link was also using this opportunity to test their honesty.

The moment they heard Link speak, the three mercenaries looked at each other.

"But Link, what's left is worth at least 1400 gold coins!" Jacker exclaimed in disbelief.

"I know, but it's too troublesome to deal with them; it would waste too much of my time. All of you have helped a lot, anyway," Link said.

"But how could we agree to this? You should at least get 1200 gold coins," Lucy stated without hesitation. There were only three of them in the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries, but it's only fair that the one who did the most work should get the most money!

Even the seemingly stingy Gildern didn't expect to get much. From the total of 1600 gold coins, he would be very happy just to get 100 gold coins.

The young Magician not only enabled them to plunder the Dark Brotherhood's treasures and belongings, he had also saved their lives many times, particularly Lucy, whose life was snatched from the clutches of the God of Death himself. Naturally, she felt deeply grateful to Link.

Jacker nodded in agreement. Gildern had some reservations, but he did agree with what Lucy said, so he nodded too.

Link laughed. What just happened proved that the three mercenaries had integrity. Even if integrity did not account for everything, it was still a strong foundation for trust and cooperation.

Link would never dig for the treasures himself anyway, that would waste too much time and energy. He would have to find someone else to do it, and now that he knew he could rely on the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries, he would naturally ask them for their help.

He had no need to search for all of the hidden treasures. Once he'd found enough gold coins to pay for his tuition, he would stop.

He pointed at the tiny notebook in the loot pile, then said with a laugh, "Have you looked at that red leather notebook?"

Lucy glanced at the direction Link was pointing, then with slight disgust on her face, she said, "Of course, that's Viktor's filthy little notebook, it's full of his lecherous adventures."

She had found the notebook when she was raiding Viktor's room. It was right there on the study table, so she flipped it open and discovered that it was filled with lewd and obscene contents.

If it hadn't been for the fact that the notebook might be worth a few silver coins due to its fine material, it would never have appeared in the pile in the first place.

## 41. Viktors Dirty Little Notebook

Lucy wasn't the only one who noticed the red leather notebook, Jacker and Gildern had seen it too.

Jacker didn't think much of it. Gildern, on the other hand, laughed and said, "It wasn't that badI never expected Viktor to be that kind of a person, but I liked it."

Lucy glared at him for what he said.

Link just shook his head, "It's not that simple."

The three didn't understand what Link meant. "Mr. Link, did you notice something in the notebook?" Jacker asked.

Link nodded, then asked Lucy, "You found this notebook in Viktor's study, didn't you?"

"Yes, it was boldly splayed out on the table." Lucy nodded, even though she didn't understand why Link would ask that question.

Boldly splayed out on the table? Maybe Viktor was in such a hurry to make his escape that he forgot to take it. Either that, or he remembered every location of his hidden treasure and didn't need this notebook to remind him. It could also be that he was confident no one would be able to decipher the secret locations inside even if someone found it later.

Nonetheless, Link was sure that the notebook contained the maps to the hidden treasures because in the game, this was exactly what the notebook looked like. The notebook in the game, similarly, was filled with obscene details that contained secret messages about Viktor's hidden loot. But of course, in the game, the erotic details had been edited out, so it wasn't as exposed as the actual content here.

Link asked again, "Then I'll ask you a question. Do you think Viktor was a perverted man?"

The three stared at each other before shaking their heads.

From what they'd learned so far about Viktor, he wasn't a good person, sure, but he definitely wasn't a lecherous man. In the whole of the Cove of Echoes, there was not one woman in sight. In fact, the only rumored misdeeds of Viktor's were robbery, murder, extortion and so on, but as for women, they seemed to be of little interest to him. So why would he have such a dirty notebook laying proudly on his study table?

Link continued, "I think all of you have heard the rumor of Viktor's hidden treasures, am I right?"

Viktor had kept a large portion of his wealth hidden away, but secrets were always brought out by the wind of rumors. Anyone who knew anything about the Dark Brotherhood would have heard about it.

The three mercenaries nodded, their eyes full of anticipation and joy. They had guessed what Link was trying to say, but each of them stayed silent, waiting for Link to reveal his discovery.

So Link stopped dropping hints, he flipped open the first page of the notebook and began to read it out loud.

To be honest, this erotic diary was written wellit was rich with details, full of delicate and explicit descriptions and imageries of the women's characteristics. Each page was bursting with lust and desire, and each woman was brought to vivid life on paper.

When Link finished reading, Jacker's gloomy face had become slightly reddened, Gildern kept licking his lips, and Lucy was discernibly uncomfortable as she clamped her long legs together.

Link pretended he didn't see the mercenaries' reactions, then calmly asked, "Now, what do you think?"

Jacker felt too awkward to say anything, Lucy's face had by that point turned beet red, and she stayed silent too. Gildern chuckled and said, "That really wasn't bad at all, now I'm itching to go to the Red Mill brothel."

Link stared at Gildern, then asked, "Did none of you catch the obvious secret message in there at all?"

"Secret message? What secret message?" Lucy couldn't resist asking. All she caught was the salacious content inside.

Alright. Link was tired of giving them clues, so he explained it to them in detail, "If my guess is right, this notebook is a map of Viktor's many hidden treasures. You see, in the first entry, it says here he went to Springs City for a pleasure-seeking trip, but that was a front. The hidden meaning lay in this passage," Link flipped through the pages," Listen to this, Viktor said he stared at a small stream flowing between a woman's legs. In fact, he was probably referring to a small stream that flowed in the middle of Girvent Forest. He said beside the stream there were three erotic moles, I think these moles are his markings maybe stones, maybe trees though I think they're probably trees since trees would be more inconspicuous. It wouldn't attract unwanted attention."

The three mercenaries looked on keenly as Link continued.

"And lastly, he said he fondled the stream between her legs and discovered that something was protruding, what he meant was that at the position marked by the three big trees, there would be an islet in the middle of the stream, and that was where he buried his treasure."

When Link had finished explaining, something clicked in Lucy's mind. "Wait, I think I've seen that place before. Yes, it's about a mile from here. We've walked past the place before, I'd even remarked on how beautiful those three huge trees were. Jacker, Gildern, don't you remember that place?"

Jacker and Gildern simultaneously nodded. It was only two weeks ago.

"Then that must be it. Since it's just about a mile away, why don't we go there now and check it out?" said Link with a laugh.

The Cove of Echoes was a truly hidden place, there should be no worries of theft even if they left everything here unattended. The three mercenaries agreed with Link's view on this matter.

A few minutes later, the four reached the spot where the stream was marked by three huge trees. They dug the ground on the islet in the middle of the stream, and after a while, they finally found a chest box. When they opened the chest, it was full of gold coins. After counting, it was discovered to be 150 gold coins in total!

The three mercenaries felt their heart beating against their chests. This was only the first hidden treasure and they'd already found 150 gold coins! No less than half of that red notebook was filled with erotic escapades! The three thought of the potential gold coins they could gain in the future and got so their faces turned red.

"Link, why don't you tell us about the next hidden treasure spot?" Jacker asked. He had read the notebook but did not catch any hidden message in it at all. But in the eyes of this remarkable Magician, it turned into something else entirely. An erotic notebook had become a treasure map! That just proved how wise Magicians werethey really did deserve awe and respect!

Lucy and Gildern both nodded their heads in anticipation. To them, they both found this kind of treasure hunting interesting and exciting!

Link flipped through the notebook and counted 18 entries, meaning there were 18 hidden treasures. This was another difference between the game and the real world. In the game, you would randomly find pages of the notebook, but here, one discovery and you find all the locations where Viktor had hidden his treasures.

He smiled and said, "I will, don't you worry. Although this will be the last time I'm hunting hidden treasures with you guys. Right now, let's go back to the Cove of Echoes."

The first hidden treasure was easy to find, and it wasn't that far away either, but that was just their luck. The rest might not be so easy to find. They're called hidden treasures for a reason. Viktor must've hidden them in high mountains and isolated roadsplaces people wouldn't normally dare to go. Link wasn't planning on wasting so much time going on such treacherous quests.

So, they all returned to the Cove of Echoes once again, and the three mercenaries began to pack up their loot. They put them in linen sacks, then dealt with the bandits' corpses.

They had no means of digging a trench big enough to bury all of the bandits, so they burnt the bodies, including the smashed and destroyed body of Viktor's. He had been transformed by demonic magic and the mercenaries wouldn't be at peace until they burnt his body.

The three mercenaries had completely forgotten all about the rewards from the River Cove town council. Only fools would make it known that they'd defeated the Dark Brotherhood, though. It's best that they kept the whole incident to themselves. If news of their deeds spread, people would know that they had Viktor's treasure maps, and that would get them into a lot of trouble with people who wanted to get their hands on the map. And so they all agreed that this whole quest of theirs should be forever kept as a secret.

At this point, Link had deciphered all of the hidden messages in the notebook. Some of them were truly obscure and hard to decode, but for Link it was hardly any problem at all. He only had to read it a few times before Viktor's hidden message was clear to him.

Link wrote everything down and gave the notebook to Jacker, "If each of these hidden treasures contains 150 gold coins, then there must be at least about 2700 gold coins in total."

2700 gold coins. Add that to the 1400 gold coins they obtained previously, and that was 4100 gold coins in totaltruly a fortune. Link knew that his father, although a viscount, would never be able to fork out that much money. Even if he sold all his properties, he would still have only about 1000 gold coins. The rumors about Viktor's great wealth was true indeed!

The three mercenaries' eyes widened. That was an amount of money they couldn't even imagine!

After a long pause, Jacker was the first to break the silence. "Link, how do you plan on dividing it?"

Lucy and Gildern both looked at Link too, their eyes were full of both anticipation and unease. They had nothing else on their minds right now other than the hope that Link would let them have a nice chunk of the share.

Link already had a plan in mind. He said, "I don't have the time to hunt for the hidden treasures, so I'll just rely on the three of you. Once you've found them, you could give me 1500 gold coins. Then when my magic skills are good enough, I would provide each of you with fine quality magic gear for free. Of course, you may choose not to give me those 1500 gold coins. In that case, I'll just take these 200 gold coins now, and we'll part ways from here." He was a nobleman's son1500 gold coins were enough for his tuition fees.

Link remained as calm and composed as he ever was when talking about the matter of the share. He didn't seem to appreciate what a fortune 1500 gold coins actually was. It seemed that, to Link, it didn't matter whether he would get the money or not. He would be fine either way.

And that wasn't so far from the truth. Even if he had a treasure map, he wouldn't trouble himself with the task of hunting for those treasures. His whole focus right now was on his thesis of magic. He didn't want to waste a single minute not working on it, much less, devote so much time and energy to the pursuit of gold coins.

If it hadn't been for the tuition fees, he wouldn't have even bothered with the Dark Brotherhood in the first place. But now that he had completed the mission, he couldn't just give all the loot and rewards away, so he played a trick on the mercenaries, and used fine quality magic gear as the waiver.

In truth, integrity was, of course, important, but to let the success of a mission, especially one that comes with a lot of money like this one, hang upon the honesty of the people in your team was simply foolish and would most probably entice your team member's betrayal!

Integrity could be tested, but if it was tested with such alluring temptation, it might easily be broken too!

A really good plan would be to rely on people who were morally honest and then tempt them with rewards. That would guarantee a higher chance of success.

Link was sure that the three mercenaries were tempted by the offer of 1500 gold coins in exchange for three fine quality magic gears tailor-made by the Magician himself.

Tailor-made fine quality magic gear would definitely give them the upper hand in battles. This was an advantage that even money couldn't buy!

As for the question of Link's magic skills, Jacker and the rest had no doubts that he could, one day, be good enough to do it. He was such a powerful Magician even at such a young age. How much more powerful would he be years from now?

They'd fought with Link, so they had no doubts about his integrity. If he really was just after the money, Link could easily kill them off now with his spells and take everything for himself.

The three mercenaries discussed among themselves quietly for a while, then Jacker stood up and put the 300 gold coins and the 100 gold coins from the hidden chestito a money bag and gave it to Link. Then he promised, "Mr. Link, we promise you that we will send the 1500 gold coins to you as fast as we can!"

"I will be at the River Cove inn." Link didn't touch the money bag, instead, he used Magician's Hand to lift it for him because it was quite heavy.

"Farewell, then. And good luck." Link turned around and walked out of the Cove of Echoes, the money bag mysteriously floating a few feet away from him along the way.

When he exited the Cove of Echoes, the three mercenaries felt they had seen and experienced such bizarre and wonderful things in just one day.

"Jacker, are you sure it's a good idea to give him 1500 gold coins?" Gildern felt some hesitation.

Lucy immediately glared at him and said, "You idiot! That young man will surely become a powerful Magician one day. He may be short of money now, but that makes it the perfect opportunity for us to get on his good side! Or do you plan on being a mediocre mercenary for the rest of your life?"

Jacker nodded. "Lucy's right. We can't stay as a small Flamingo Band of Mercenaries forever. I want us to expand and become a big mercenary group, one that rivals even the Thorn of Glory Mercenary Troop from the North!"

"Fine, give him the money then." Gildern shrugged. For some reason, he still felt uncomfortable and was troubled by the loss of 1500 gold coins to the Magician.

On the other hand, the moment Link came out of the Cove of Echoes, he immediately put the money bag in his storage pendant. He only took out five or six gold coins to spend on his necessities. He was feeling jolly and was whistling while strolling back to River Cove town.

He believed in his own judgment, he was sure that the three mercenaries would send him the gold coins. Even if they didn't find enough gold coins from the hidden treasures, he was sure they would find another way to get them for him.

This was because he saw the fire he ignited in their eyes when he mentioned the magic equipment. He knew how much they strived to be better mercenaries!

With that, he was sure that the matter of his tuition was finally settled.

## 42. An Unprecedented Question!

Link returned to the River Cove Inn and tossed a stack of about tity copper coins in the direction of the inn servant. The servant stared at him in alarm. Link laughed and said, "Three pieces of oatmeal bread with butter and a cup of milk, sent to my room, please."

He now had 300 gold coins in his pouch and he could afford a nice meal. There was no need to overindulge, though, since his body didn't need a lot of food to subsist. A small meal would suffice.

"So, you're rich now, Link?" the inn servant joked.

Link chuckled but explained nothing. He went back up to the attic. While waiting for his food to be served, he took the goatskin papers which contained his thesis from his pendant and then by sheer force of habit checked it for any mistakes.

It turned out that his thesis wasn't bad at all. What he had written was a basic paper that had omitted nothing essential. The edited parts had smooth flowing logic and elegance; the whole thing even had an ineffable sense of beauty that he couldn't quite put his finger on.

Even as the author himself, as Link pored over the thesis a sense of incredulity arose. Did I really write this? Or did the God of Light borrow my hands to do it?

This might be the case, but even so, Link didn't take it to heart. To compare himself to a supreme being in a higher plane of existence was simply a foolish thing to do.

Not long after, the food was sent to his room. Link savored each bite and he soon felt reinvigorated. Then, he slipped out the new goatskin papers he bought and continued working on this thesis.

His recent exploit in the Cove of Echoes had possibly transformed his brain because when he began to re-write his thesis, Link discovered that he had a torrent of new ideas. Soon after, he was completely immersed in the task.

This time, he had secured enough gold coins and, so, was notiterrupted by thoughts of materialistic woes. He freely spent his whole day writing the thesis and working on his spells.

One week later, Link had already improved three Level-0 spells: Earth Spike, Illumination, and Mud Marsh.

After improving these three spells, Link renamed them as: Spiral Spike, Spark, and Sticky Marsh. These three spells only used up one Mana point. The scale of the spells decreased, but their energy was condensed to the level comparable to that of Level-1 spells. When combined with Link's accuracy, these spells could develop shocking levels of power.

However, after having improved these spells, Link lost all interest in Level-0 spells. Magic of this level was just too simple for him now; it posed absolutely no challenge to him and he now yearned for a more advanced knowledge of magic.

And so, his heart was even more set to getito the East Cove Magic Academy.

What was left was the thesis. Link's determination was as strong as steel, once he set out to do something, he would make sure that he finished it. So, he continued to work on his paper and in his spare time, he would write letters to Eliard. Lately, the questions he asked Eliard in the letters were becoming more and more complicated.

Link himself did not notice this change. He was unaware that the questions he asked had surpassed the level of a Magician's Apprentice.

While Link buried himself in the task of writing his thesis, Eliard received Link's letter. He could only shake his head in bafflement after reading it since out of all the questions Link asked this time he could only understand one. The rest was all an enigma to him.

I give up, I'll just ask the tutor. Eliard copied the question in the letter on a goatskin paper, then climbed the spiral staircase up the Magic Tower until he reached the big hall on the top floor where his tutor resided.

His tutor, Moira, had a sweet and gentle character, except when in class. The fact that she didn't like to be disturbed in her spare time was a common knowledge among the students in the Magic Tower. But the rule did not apply to Eliard.

He could find Moira any time he pleased, to ask her anything he didn't understand or had doubts about. In the beginning, Eliard felt uncomfortable about this, but after Moira's insistence, he gradually became more at ease about it.

Now, he would go straight to Moira whenever there were any questions. And that was what he was doing now.

When he reached the door, he knocked. "Tutor, may I come in?" he said to the Sonicator on the door.

Just as he had finished his sentence, he heard a soft click sound. The magic runes on the door glowed in a dim light and the door opened automatically.

This indicated that the tutor had given him permission to go inside.

As he pushed the door and walked in, there was another click coming from behind him and the door automatically closed. Eliard was now used to all this.

Behind the room door was a wall, and on the wall, there was a colorful painting. This wall completely blocked the view of the hall behind it. On two sides of the wall were passages that entered the large hall. As Eliard walked in, he found himself in a round hall of about 50 feet in diameter. In the middle there was a luxurious set of furniture and the floor was covered in luscious camel fur carpet. Glass windows surrounded the hall, and the glass of the windows was inlaid with precious crystals.

Rays of light shone in through the windows, making the big hall look spacious and airy. Picturesque views around the East Cove made themselves present through the inlaid crystals. Bookshelves lined the walls, and they were packed with rows and rows of books. In front of one bookshelf sat a lady Magician of around 30 years old, reading a book about magic.

She was Eliard's tutor, Moira.

Moira was a Level-5 Magician, age 35. She was the academy dean's proud student and East Cove Magic Academy's top genius.

She had a head full of lustrous blonde hair and her body emanated a thick aura of magic as if she was emanating light. She was wearing a deep blue Magician's robe with silver linings and she was comfortably settled down in a chair quietly reading her book. She was calm and relaxed; sunshine was scattered through the crystals, shining a shimmering light on Moira's delicate features, making her look impalpably elegant.

But Eliard was completely oblivious and unmoved by all this. There was nothing in his mind except magic, and this lady in front of him was just a tutor that he respected.

"Tutor," he calmly said,

Moira nodded and put the book in her hands on the table. Her eyes looked at the goatskin papers in Eliard's hands, and then she cheerfully asked, "What's the question this time?"

She took special notice of this student because she saw the persistence in this young man that was just like hers in the past.

Eliard walked up to her and handed over the scrolls.

Moira unrolled the goatskin paper and attentively read the contents, but after glancing at it, her eyes froze. "You've progressed so far, are you at this level now?" she remarked with surprise.

As a Level-5 Magician, she could see that these questions were very advanced. For someone to be able to ask these questions, their basic understanding of magic theory had to be rock solid.

On the scroll there were six questions, she perused through it once, and found that she could only instantly answer two of them, for the other four, she had to carefully consider it first.

"What excellent questions!" Moira couldn't help exclaiming.

For a Magician of her level, she didn't concern herself much about whether her students were working hard enough because if they didn't work hard, they wouldn't be able to become her students in the first place. Instead, she paid close attention to whether her students were asking excellent questions.

One could only ask advanced questions once they had studied a topic seriously and then considered it thoroughly afterwards. Only then could one ask a high-level question. The questions in this scroll were beyond her expectations. Not only did they approach problems with a unique perspective, but they also possessed a certain level of spirituality that was hard to describe.

She was deeply impressed that Eliard could ask these kinds of questions.

Eliard blushed. This was the second time the tutor had praised him. Heaven knew these questions weren't his, he had only learned magic for a month, and couldn't understand anything in the scroll.

Eliard didn't explain himself last time, but this time, he feared he would have to because the misunderstanding was getting worse. If it went on any longer he could be in trouble.

He formed his sentences in his head, and said, "Tutor, these these questions aren't mine."

"Hmm?" Moira's didn't change her tone, she looked up from the scrolls at her handsome young student, "Whose are they, then?"

"A friend of mine. He is seventeen just like me, he tried to enter the academy too, but his magic skills were still too low, so he went back to work on it. I I was able to pay the tuition because of him. He was a great help."

"Explain everything to me in detail, and don't leave anything out." Moira's interest was piqued.

Eliard was faced with his tutor's piercing blue eyes, eyes that could see through any secret. He didn't dare lie, so he divulged every little detail that had happened since his fateful meeting with Link to Moira, including their recent letters.

Moira listened carefully, sometimes stopping Eliard to ask some questions. She then sighed and said, "So he is now in River Cove, writing a thesis that would prove his understanding of magic?"

"Exactly, Tutor."

"Do you know what his thesis is about?" Moira asked again.

Eliard nodded, "Link discussed some of it with me. He told me he is attempting to explain why a stone would always fall back down to the ground when we throw it up to be honest, I have been thinking about this problem myself lately, but I have absolutely no idea how to solve it."

As she heard it, Moira was instantly startled. She repeated what Eliard said word by word, "Why would a stone always fall back down to the ground? Why would it fall back down to the ground? What a strange question...no one has ever asked it before, and yet, why indeed?"

She tried to use the knowledge that she had to explain this question, but after a while, she gave it up. Her knowledge was insufficient to explain such a common incident.

After some time, she sighed, "This is a truly rare and excellent question. With just this one question his understanding of magic has already been proven."

She started to find this young man named Link very interesting.

She took the goatskin scroll on the table and said, "These questions are all exceptional, I'm afraid I need some time to think about them. Tomorrow, then. I'll give you the answers tomorrow."

"Thank you Tutoraren't you angry about what I did?" Eliard cautiously asked.

"Why would I be angry?" Moira smiled, "You're an honest person, I should be proud of that."

Eliard heaved a sigh of relief, but the question of Link's entrance into the academy always hung over his head, so he asked, "Since the question in the thesis has proven my friend's understanding of magic, can he enter the academy now?"

Moira carefully considered the question, "Rules are rules, he would still need to submit a thesis. Let Link finish his, then hand it to me. In due time, I'll discuss it with the dean. I think he'll agree with me."

"Thank you!" Eliard was elated. The tutor was the dean's top student, so her words assured him that Link didn't need to actually solve the problem in his thesis. So long as he produced a coherent paper and submitted it, he would definitely be admitted into the academy.

"You're welcome," Moira smiled. She found the young student Eliard impressive, not just because of his talents in magic, but also because of his integrity.

After some consideration, Moira touched one of the bookshelves behind her and a book flew into her hand. "This friend of yours is quite an impressive young man. I think he might find this book helpful. You may hand it to him along with your letter. Magic textbooks are extremely valuable, we can't risk any damage or loss, so you will have to run over and pass it to him yourself. He's only allowed to read it for a day, so on the day after, you must return this book to me."

"No problem!" said the overjoyed Eliard.

## 43. A Golden Opportunity!

Half a month following the defeat of the Dark Brotherhood, Link had still been cooped up in the attic of the River Cove Inn.

The interior of the attic was plain and spartan, but Link wouldn't have it any other way. He wouldn't move to another room because there was a tranquility and a quietness in his current space that couldn't be found anywhere else in the inn.

He'd made huge progress in his thesis, but he still couldn't find a definitive way to advance it further. Everything he conceived might've been fascinating, but different lines of thought were all jumbled up together, resulting in an overall haphazard structure.

In other words, each part of Link's thesis did make sense, but it lacked a solid and distinct theme to hold it all together.

By now, the contents of Link's thesis had evolved into something so complex that it became inadequate to encapsulate everything under the Universal Law of Gravitation.

It felt as if he was feeling his way around in the dark; he had no idea whether he was trudging through a thorny bush or walking on a smooth road.

What mysterious knowledge will I uncover when I'm done? Link stared at the symbols that kept popping up in his paper, full of anticipation and excitement.

He wasn't feeling too inspired today, though. He had been wracking his brain for almost half a day and now his concentration was waning. So instead of mulling over it, he put down his quill, leaned back and put his hands behind his head. He rested both legs on the table and with half-closed eyes stared out of the tiny window, drinking in the wonderful view of the Girvent Forest bathed in golden sunlight.

Anxiety and confusion were then cleared away and peace and serenity took over him.

He didn't know how long it had been before he heard the footsteps outside. There were multiple, one sounded heavy but furtive and deliberately subdued as if it was afraid to disturb Link.

Link immediately recognized the footsteps' owner. He waited until they reached his door, then he pointed the New Moon wand at the wooden door and cast the spell, Magician's Hand.

Click. The door opened, and right outside stood the members of the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries.

"Come in," said Link.

Jacker was the first one to walk in. He was carrying a bulging linen sack. The attic room was both small and low-ceilinged, so Jacker had to hunch over to fitito the space. When Gildern and Lucy entered the room, the whole space was so cramped that it felt like it might burst at the seams.

"Mr. Link, you should find a better room to stay in," said Gildern. He didn't understand why such a powerful Magician would choose to stay in such a derelict and draughty attic room. It's not that he didn't have the money, after all.

Link replied with a laugh, "It's good enough for me. I'm used to it. In fact, it's a lot quieter and peaceful here, and I like that."

Then Link turned to Jacker and said, "So, my guess is, you've found the hidden treasures?"

Jacker nodded, then dropped the linen sack onto the floor. From the heavy thud it made, it was clear that this was a hefty sack. He untied the strings, opened the sack, and immediately a golden light shone out of the bag. It was full of gold coins!

"We've discovered all 18 hidden treasures that you described and found 2900 gold coins. Add that to the money we got from selling the loot and the total is 4000 gold coins much more than we expected. Here are your 2000 gold coins," said Jacker with very low voice, afraid that anyone might overhear.

Heaven knows how anxious they must've felt carrying that huge bulky sack on the street. If anyone knew of the content of the sack, there would've been many bloodbaths over it.

Even so, Link's expressions remained the same, except for a thin smile. "But the deal was to give me 1500 gold coins, why did you bring me an extra 500 gold coins?"

What Jacker admired the most about Link was his stoic nature; it was as if nothing in this world could take him by surprise. Jacker explained, "You are a Magician, but you continued to stay in River Cove, so we guessed it must be because you're trying to enter the East Cove Magic Academy, is that correct?"

Link nodded, he could guess what Jacker's intentions were, but he waited for Jacker to explain it himself.

"We found out that the fees for East Cove Magic Academy are 2000 gold coins. I'm sure you can earn that much money sooner or later, but you'd agree that the earlier you could enter the academy the better it would be. For our current strengths, possessing this much money could be dangerous, and we don't know how to spend this much money anyway. So we thought, why not put the money to good use and give it to you instead?" explained Jacker.

To common folks, the value of gold coins was shockingly immense. If all you wanted was to buy food and drinks and other daily necessities, you could live comfortably on 30 gold coins a year. After giving Link 2000 gold coins, the three would still have 2000 gold coins left to divide among themselves, each of them getting 650 gold coins. That was still an outrageously enormous sum of money.

With this amount of gold coins, they would have more than enough to buy whatever they wanted but could never afford.

For instance, Jacker had now finally bought a full-body set of steel armor. Lucy, on the other hand, had bought a sleek rapier and made it her new regular weapon. She was also wearing new crocodile leather armor. Even Gildern was carrying a brand-new bow and had replaced all his arrows with steel, each one donning an eagle-feather fletching costing him 3 silver coins per arrow. That was a ridiculously expensive price. The three had even bought a small cabin in River Cove town and set it up as their temporary headquarters.

They never would have imagined that they would be able to afford any of these before.

They had fantasized about it, sure. Jacker, for instance, had always dreamt of founding his own mercenary troop. But though their dreams were beautiful, reality had always hit them in the face with hardships and disappointments. Their biggest constraint had always been, unfortunately, that they were not strong or powerful enough.

Jacker was a Level-3 Warrior and Lucy and Gildern were both at Level-2. For an independent band of mercenaries, that strength level was not too bad, but for a mercenary troop, it was vastly insufficient.

For example, even though they had the money now, they only dared to purchase normal gear and weapons. They would not even think about buying any magic equipment yet for a simple reasonthey were afraid that they might get killed before they had a chance to use them. It was very likely that they might get mugged the same night they purchased the gear, then it would've all been in vain.

Jacker's reasoning convinced Link, so he nodded and said, "The extra money will be useful to me. Since you insist, I'll keep it."

The tuition for commoners was 2000 gold coins, but Link was of noble blood, so he should get a discount and pay less than that. Still, learning magic required a lot of money, so he didn't mind having some to spare at all.

Jacker smiled, but Lucy betrayed a sign of resentment in her eyes as she stared at the sack and Gildern had to excuse himself out of the attic. If he had stayed any longer, he might not be able to resist seizing the sack of money and running away with it.

After taking the money, Link suddenly said, "I don't think the news of the Dark Brotherhood's defeat can be concealed for too long. Did you notice anyone spying on you recently?"

Link had originally just thought of them as temporary comrades and planned to sever their ties completely after their mission was over. But now, Link realized how admirable Jacker's character was from his decision today to give him the extra 500 gold coins. Link thought he was an ambitious man and a visionary who was not afraid to take risks.

If such a man was given the opportunity, Link was sure he could soar to great heights!

Even though Link was flung into this strange new world by the God of Light, he never wasted time feeling sorry for himself. Since he's stuck here now, he thought he might as well make the best of it. Link still doubted if he could ever achieve such an incredible mission as saving the world. Whether it was to earn more Omni Points so he could get stronger and more powerful or to strive towards a better future where he wasn't perpetually hounded by the Dark Armyin the end, it all boiled down to the fact that he must work very hard to try to change the world he now lived in.

Fighting against the Dark Army was not an easy task. If he was to do it alone, failure was almost certain. He would need a helping hand. From what he'd seen, the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries didn't seem like a bad choice and they also seemed worthy of his trust too.

What Link suspected was truethe Flamingo Band of Mercenaries were facing some difficulties recently.

Jacker let out a long sigh and his brows furrowed slightly. "Lately the underworld around Girvent Forest has been in an uproar. We had to be especially discreet when we sold the loot from the Dark Brotherhood," he explained, "Still, these things are impossible to hide, and lately we have encountered many sleuths sniffing around."

Luckily, they were strong and powerful enough that they were not in too much danger. Otherwise, they might already be dead by now.

When all was said and done, their problem still revolved around the fact that they were not powerful enough. After all, they weren't actually responsible for the Dark Brotherhood's defeat, it was just their luck that they had Link on their side.

Jacker believed that they had been able to survive until now largely because those sniffing around hadn't figured out the truth yet.

The moment Jacker told Link of the tight spot they were currently stuck in, Lucy and Gildern both turned grave and sullen. It was obvious that they had all been under a lot of pressure.

Although they now had a lot of money, they had to tread each step much more cautiously than before because they might lose their lives before they got the chance to spend it. Being wealthy was the most desirous thing to them in the past, but now that they had money, they couldn't spend it for fear of being discovered. It was a cruel irony.

Link asked, "Then why don't you take your money and leave this place?"

Jacker laughed bitterly then shook his head. "But we haven't given you your money yet, so how could we just leave? It wouldn't make any difference anyway. The minute someone finds out about our money, our lives would immediately be in peril."

He didn't know why, but as he was uttering these words he felt a sort of premonition. He felt as if he were at a critical turning point in his life where he could transform from a commoner into a powerful Warrior.

And just as he suspected, the moment he finished his sentence, Link smiled. This time it wasn't the polite smile like before it was full and sincere. "Very well. As my thanks for what you've done for me today, I will grant you a golden opportunity," Link said.

He now had 39 Omni Points. With these points, he could afford to purchase a secret mythical spell among the Level-3 spells.

It was considered mythical because this spell had an almost god-like power to alter the elements of a Warrior's body. It helped the Warrior to attain Combat Aura no matter who they were or what level they were at.

In its essence, a Warrior's Combat Aura was the precise application of various forces. That made it no different from magic spells.

For a long time, the Warriors' understanding and application of their Combat Aura were minimal, and the Combat Aura that they possessed was also very thin and feeble. Very few Warriors could surpass Level-4, and as for Level-6, 7 or 8, only peerless geniuses who appeared once in a century could achieve such heights.

But about a thousand years ago, there was a Magician named Vance who changed all this. He conducted extensive and detailed research on Warriors' Combat Aura. He was also an obsessive Magician. In order to obtain data and specimens for his research, he had hunted for and asssinated countless Warriors. According to legends, he even managed to capture a genius Level-8 Warrior and then dissected him alive!

After years of exhaustive work, he finally discovered Combat Aura's ultimate secret and pioneered the field of Combat Aura Studies a branch of studies in secret spells.

The most common way a Warrior's Combat Aura was attained was by natural innate talents but one could also attain it through practice. This practice technique was categorized by the Magicians as another secret spell, but in the world of the Warriors, it was called Battle Art.

After a quick search, Link found this Combat Aura spell among basic secret spells in the spell menu.

Hidden Power

Level-3 Secret Spell

Mana Consumption: 80

Effects: Alters the elemental composition of the spell receiver's body, and greatly enhances the spell receiver's potential. At the same time, it will insert a detailed instruction for the next day's practice into the spell receiver's mind, and through practice, the spell receiver can exponentially advance and increase their power.

(Note: Let this spell be my repentance of the countless murders I committed upon many gifted Warriors.)

## 44. The First Followers

An opportunity?

Jacker's heartbeat quickened. He was wary of the kind of opportunity Link would offer him, but he knew how powerful Link wasa genius Magician who defeated the whole Dark Brotherhood armed with only Level-0 spells. Would someone like that give ordinary opportunities?

Surely not!

He pressed a hand over his thumping heart and waited silently.

Behind him, Lucy and Gildern shared no such emotions. They were both not as excited as Jacker was, but they did sense Jacker's solemnity, so they stayed silent.

By this time, Link had already purchased the spell. He held out the New Moon wand and Mana started to flow into the wand.

For a Level-3 secret spell, the spellcasting process would differ from the usual. When Mana flowed into the wand, it began to arrange into complex configurations and the wand then glowed with a green Runic Aura.

This Runic Aura was a very special magic structure; Link had seen it in a magic book and had read a simple introduction about it. According to the book, Runic Aura was a high-level spell's essential structure. Each aura contained an independent magic structure and when many types of auras combined, a complicated and powerful spell would then form.

The way Link understood it, the spell's structure had a modular design where each aura represented a modular unit. When different modular units combined, an infinite variety of spells arose.

This modular way of thinking would be useful. There's a huge potential for further development, I must carefully research into this, the idea flashed into Link's mind.

The spell, Hidden Power, contained nine Runic Auras, and these auras glowed from the bottom part of the wand to its tip. Each aura shone a ray of green light and then merged at the tip to form a light greenob the size of a fist. Countless tiny runes moved inside the orb like tadpoles swimming in a pond. These runes were too many and too dense to differentiate each one, just looking at them would make someone dizzy.

Illuminated by the green Runic Aura, Link's body seemed to glow in a mysterious light. Because the Mana in his body was also dancing and vibrating, his whole body seemed to suddenly emanate light as well.

Jacker gulped. His eyes were filled with awe and respect. Lucy and Gildern both held their breath.

The first time they met Link, no matter how they looked at him he was just a normal looking young man, but now, this young Magician looked majestically god-like!

Before casting the spell, Link chose words that Jacker would understand to explain what was going on. "Jacker, have you heard of Battle Art before?"

Jacker held his breath suddenly, his heart thumping like beating drums. He softly nodded his head, "Of course, that's how the noble lines pass down from generation to generation!"

On the Firuman continent, Battle Art had always been monopolized by the nobles. It had never been passed down to anyone outside of the noble family or to commoners because the core of Battle Art was only passed down to those related by blood. Any commoners who wanted to acquire Battle Art had just one way, and that was to join the army and then climb up the ranks to become knighted. The knight would then be rewarded with Battle Art from the noble family he served.

But this was a treacherous path because it was almost impossible for a commoner to become a knight. They would have to fight tooth and nail for it, and nine out of ten who tried ended up dying. Even if they did obtain the Battle Art, it would only be the most basic level; the essential parts would be omitted.

But now, it seemed that this Magician, Link, was going to bestow the highly prized Battle Art upon him!

At this point, Jacker felt his blood boiling in his veins. He steadied his own breathing, fearful that if he breathed too hard, he would accidentally blow away the flame of the green light orb on Link's wand. The tension almost suffocated him.

Behind him, Lucy and Gildern were both stupefied.

Lucy's face was all red, and that pair of almond-shaped eyes sparkled, full of hope. Gildern had completely forgotten the matter of the 2000 gold coins, the only thought that dominated his mind right now was Battle Art.

For every Warrior in the Firuman continent, Battle Art represented power and glory!

With it, one could soar up and cruise through life on the upper crust of society. Without it, one was doomed to struggle in the dirt no matter how hard one worked.

"Jacker, are you ready?" Link asked the large man in front of him.

The strong giant knelt in front of Link and solemnly lowered his head as if he were being knighted. His voice was shaky as he said, "Yes, I'm ready!"

Link pointed the wand in his hand at Jacker, the green aura flowed into Jacker's body, and then the surface of Jacker's body began to glow.

Jacker's body glowed in a yellow hue, like the earth. It was his unique Battle Art that his body generated after receiving Battle Art. This was a testament to Link's Hidden Power spell's unique capacityto develop a person's potential, improve their body constitution, and let them absorb energy from their surroundings much better.

Under this spell, Jacker's Battle Artitensified rapidly.

But there was more.

Jacker could sense that there was information in his head that wasn't there before. He closed his eyes to concentrate on it and was shocked to discover that it was the practice method to develop his Battle Art. The information was very clear, with key details; this was the most valuable knowledge for a Warrior.

As he opened his eyes, Jacker pressed a hand on his heart, and swore, "Master Link, I, Jacker, son of Bodin, by the name of the God of Light, swear, that with your agreement, from this day onwards, I will forever be loyal to you, forever follow your every footstep, you shall have my strength whenever you need it!"

Yes, Battle Art, he had obtained the thing he had so desired for all his life. Moreover, he received the complete Battle Art without any omissions. His brain contained all the detailed methods, all he needed to do was practice it daily and his Battle Art would continue to advance on and on.

With Battle Art, those Legendary realms would no longer be a mere fantasy for him. One day, he would possess unrivaled strength, and become a Warrior above all the others!

Then, Jacker began to reminisce about his past.

He was born in a rural little mountain village, and his father was a blacksmith. They were both headstrong, so they butted heads a lot. One day, when he was still young, they had a heated argument and Jacker ran away from home afterwards. He had planned to wander and achieve some success before going back. All these years, although he had been very hardworking, he felt that his successes were still too small, so even though he missed his father and sister very much, he was too ashamed to go home.

But everything was about to change now!

He heaved a long sigh. Jacker felt markedly content. His heart was filled with respect and gratitude towards the young Magician in front of him. His kindness had touched Jacker's heart. He was prepared to give his life to serve Link.

Link was taken aback by Jacker's reaction, his only intention was to gain a comrade. He never thought of gaining a follower sworn to him under the name of the God of Light. What Jacker did was no different from selling his life to Link.

Yet all Link did was cast one spell. The effort to him was minuscule, on Earth there would be no such easy deed. But then, when he thought about it, Link suddenly realized that this world is a strange worldit had its own separate set of rules. He understood that Battle Art was very important to a Warrior, so he had no need to struggle or oppose it. He decided that when in Rome, he should just do as the Romans did.

Thus, he nodded his head and said, "I give you permission to be my follower. But I don't like to be interrupted, you can go your own way, and whenever I need you, I'll find you."

"Yes, my Lord." Jacker immediately changed the way he addressed Link. He looked behind and made eye contact with Lucy and Gildern.

The three mercenaries had fought alongside each other for a long time, so they understood each other well. Lucy and Gildern had initially noticed the strange expression in Jacker's eyes, and now Jacker was reminding them again. The two weren't stupid, they knew that the opportunity was rare, so, without hesitation, they stepped up and knelt on the ground.

"My Lord, please accept me as your follower!" said Lucy, though her tone was tited with uncertity. She had not known Link for long, so she still had some reservations.

"My Lord, allow me to bask in your glory!" said Gildern. For someone who alwasspoke sarcastically, it turned out that he knew how to flatter people when he wanted to after all.

## 45. My Brother!

Link's current Maximum Mana limit was 99.1 points. When a Magician's Mana was full, his body would glow with an aura and his eyes would look bright. These were simply the effects of magic. But right now, Link's Mana was down to 9 points, and so the magic aura around his body dimmed drastically, and his eyes were now noticeably dulled.

When the three mercenaries first met Link, this unremarkable looking appearance was exactly what they saw.

Link considered Lucy and Gildern's vow of loyalty towards him and decided to accept them. The three members were all equally important to the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries and Lucy and Gildern both showed promising talents and had proven themselves to be reliable comrades in battles. So Link nodded in agreement.

"I will grant you Battle Art too, but not right now because I've depleted all my Mana. By the way, I must remind you that Battle Art is only an instruction of the proper practice method. If you want to develop your Combat Aura, you'll still need to work hard."

Hidden Power was only a Level-3 spell after all, and it was only the basic version purchased with Omni Points. In other words, this was only an average-level Battle Art, so the resulting Combat Aura wouldn't be too spectacular either. Link calculated that if the mercenaries practiced hard enough, at 35 years old they would be able to reach Level-5 but from then on it would get harder and harder to advance further. Lucy and Gildern would probably peak at Level-6, while Jacker might reach a little bit higher, but still, no higher than Level-7.

But that was only temporary, of course. If the three turned out to be very useful to him, Link might consider giving them a higher-level Battle Art in the future.

"Understood!" The three mercenaries all nodded. They never shirked from discipline and hard work. What they dreaded were useless and wasted efforts where they pushed through and gave it their all and but still remained at the same level.

The mercenaries noticed how bone-weary Link looked, so they excused themselves, said their farewells and left the attic. Once they reached the inn's hall, Jacker exclaimed, "Now I can feel that my dreams are within my grasp!"

Lucy was still shaken by what happened in the attic. "These days, I feel as if I'm in a dream. Jacker, should we give Lord Link all the money that we have left? I heard learning magic uses up a lot of gold coins. Once the tuition is all paid, he might not have much left to use," she murmured.

They still had 1500 gold coins left, and this was a sum too big to ever spend for them. In the end, all they could do was hide it somewhere safe and leave it there.

"Lucy's right. Jacker, what do you say?" Gildern said.

Gildern felt no more resentment towards Link. With Battle Art, he now dared to hope for a brighter future. Money was nothing at all compared to how invaluable Battle Art was to Warriors, and yet Link had granted them such a precious thing so graciously. If he still begrudged Link because of money, then he was nothing more than a self-serving ridiculous little mouse.

Jacker had no objections, of course. He had devoted his life to Link. Now that everyone in the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries had become Link's followers, he knew that whatever benefited Link would benefit them too. The more powerful Link got, the more promising their future would be as well.

And so, he would do anything in his power to support Link's progress.

"Not only should we give the remaining money to him, we must also strive to strengthen ourselves as fast as we can, and earn as much money as we can to support Lord Link's studies!" Jacker said.

Lucy and Gildern were both smart enough to understand the wisdom of Jacker's words. They both nodded in agreement.

Jacker added in a low, serious voice, "One more thing, we must lay low for the time being. Let's not make any commotion lest anyone takes notice of us, at least until this storm settles down. Right now, the best thing we can do is to go back and focus on practicing. I will share the instructions I received from my Battle Art with both of you, so you can practice them too."

They were sailing close to the wind lately, with many people from the underworld trying to sniff them out. Even today, they had to be especially careful when coming to the River Cove inn, anxious that Link's life might be endangered. In these circumstances, the wisest thing to do was to learn from the tortoise and hide in their shells for a while.

Once the three came to an agreement, they decided to go back to their makeshift headquarter to get the money. But just as they were making their way out of the inn, they noticed a carriage right in front of the entrance.

It was a handsome carriage, with a sky-blue top and silver-gilt edges. The horses were all majestic, long-legged pedigrees that looked stronger than the horses of some knights they encountered in the North. Even the coachman was wearing a luxurious livery. One look and it was clear that the carriage belonged to someone of high personage.

"Who's that coming into the inn? Must be some hotshot." The inn hall was now filled with droning sibilant voices discussing the identity of the approaching visitor.

"Shhh! Didn't you see that crest on the carriage? It's from the East Cove Magic Academy!" someone in the hall said in a low voice.

"Is that a Magician, then?" the other replied.

As they overheard these conversations, the three hurried to the side to give way. Ever since meeting with Link, they now had a newfound respect for all Magicians. To them, real Magicians were almost as powerful as gods, existing in a completely different plane of reality from those drifting Magicians they'd previously met. Link hadn't been able to enter the academy yet, but his power was already at a fearsome level. They couldn't begin to imagine how much more powerful a Magician from the East Cove Magic Academy would be.

I wonder how powerful this Magician is, the three simultaneously speculated.

When the carriage finally came to a full stop, the door opened. Then, a young man garbed in a sky-blue Magician's robe climbed out of the carriage. Gildern drew a sharp breath the moment he saw him.

"By the God of Light, how couldamn be so much more handsome than I am?" Gildern had always thought of himself as a good-looking man and he had won over many women with his looks. But looking at the Magician in front of him, he felt ashamed of his looks for the first time in his life.

Just look at himthat tailor-made Magician's robe, that white jade-like wand in his hand, his tall and well-built body, that dreamy face with its striking features, and that magnificent aura his whole body was basked init was as if the Sun God had been dropped from the heavens! Gildern thought in astonishment.

To possess such arresting looks, while also being a true Magician from the academyhe must have been a favorite of the God of Light!

The moment this Magician appeared, he became a distinct focal point of everyone's attention in the room. Everyone around was dwarfed by his presence, even Jacker's almost seven-foot frame with his muscular build now paled in comparison to this glorious creature.

What a lucky bastard! Gildern had felt the magnetic attraction too and couldn't help but envy that Magician.

Lucy was the only one who was unimpressed. She just scowled and cursed, "So what, he's still just a pansy!"

When she was younger, she had been duped by a handsome man. Not only did that bastard cheat on her, what was truly unforgivable was the fact that he had also stolen all of her money! From that moment on, she had been especially suspicious of all good-looking men. She now thought that ordinary-looking men like Link were a much better lot, and definitely much more reliable and trustworthy.

Jacker was the calmest of all. He crooked his eyebrows slightly and wondered aloud, "Why do I have a feeling that this Magician from the East Cove Magic Academy is still not as powerful as Lord Link?"

He was a Level-3 Warrior who now possessed Battle Art. He was much more perceptive now, and when he looked at the Magician in front of him, he sensed how weak the Magician was. Jacker could probably defeat him with just one punch.

"Who knows? Maybe he's just a pretty boy who's good for nothing," said Lucy with a grimace.

By this time, the young Magician had walked into the inn under everyone's mesmerized stare. The three mercenaries then looked away and walked out of the inn and went on their way.

The Magician was none other than Eliard. He was here to visit Link, and not only did he bring the answers to Link's questions, he also brought with him the magic textbook from Moira and some money as well.

He knew that Link wouldn't have much money left after he lent him 1300 gold coins. He still had no way of returning all the money, but now that he was a student in the academy, he realized that in the world of Magicians, 1300 gold coins really was not much at all.

As Moira's favorite student, he utilized his talents to write some Level-0 magic scrolls, created some basic potions, and earned 15 gold coins. He believed Link wouldn't have much money, so he brought 10 gold coins in the hopes that it might alleviate Link's current situation.

When he found the innkeeper, Eliard asked him, "Hey, Matt, which room is my friend Mr. Link staying in?"

Matt the innkeeper remembered Eliard, and Link left an even deeper impression on him. When he saw Eliard, he shrugged and said, "Room? He's not in a room. After you left, Mr. Link has alwasstayed in the attic."

What? The Attic!

Eliard's heart pounded violently. He forced himself not to show any expression and continued asking, "Why is he staying in the attic?"

"No money, why else?" Matt said matter-of-factly, "Before, he even ate coarse wheat bread every day. Two loaves a day, one for lunch, and one for dinner. Recently it seems he's earning some money, but not much, I'd say. He's mostly cooped up in the attic. If you want to see him, he's right upstairs."

When he heard that, Eliard's heart started pounding again. He knew that after Link gave him the 1300 gold coins, he probably didn't have much left. But he never would have thought that it would get Link into such a dire situation.

But why didn't he mention it in the letters? In the letters, he went on about the beauty of Girvent Forest, about his questions of spells and magic theory, and yet, not a word about his living condition was mentioned.

Why did he have to do that? Eliard could not come up with any answers. He thanked Matt, and under the gazes of the crowd in the inn hall, he climbed the stairs up to the attic.

On his way, he heard the discussions in the hall.

"But that's a real Magician! Is he really here to meet Link?"

"Does that mean Link really is a Magician?"

"That's impossible! He wears tattered rags, eats and stays in a place even I wouldn't be willing to, how could someone like that be a Magician?"

These voices had proven the innkeeper's words. Eliard felt even more distressed now. His eyes started to sting until it became quite unbearable. He thought it must have been the dust in the inn getting into his eyes.

He leaned on the wooden rail and kept climbing up. Once he'd reached the third floor, he turned at the corner and reached the inn's attic.

The attic was dark and dingy, the stairs were covered with a thick carpet of dust, and the door to the attic room was low and narrow. As he stood at the door, he was stifled by how cramped this space was.

He had been staying in the spacious and high-ceilinged Magic Tower so long, that when he was back in a commoners' dwelling like this, he felt alien and uncomfortable.

Eliard rapped softly on the door. He tried his best to calm down his nerves and keep his composure.

"Come in, it's not locked." The voice was familiar. It was as calm and gentle as before, like a peaceful pond under the starry night.

Eliard pushed the door open and entered the room, and then was faced with a view of Link's back bathed in sunlight.

The golden sunlight shone in through the small window in the attic, like a golden column in a dark stuffy room. The light column nicely lit up his frail and thin body.

This gaunt figure was sitting on a lame chair, his hand was holding a goose feather quill, and he was earnestly writing on an old mottled table. In the corner of the table, there were a few magic textbooks and a stack of goatskin scrolls.

Eliard turned to his right and saw a rough mattress on the floor. In the corner of the room, there was a big spider web with a fat spider casually hanging in the middle of it. In another corner, there was a large hole in the wall stuffed with a rag. That didn't seem to do much because currents of cold draught still blew into the attic.

Decrepit and in disrepair, the room was like a typical dwelling of a poor peasant. Eliard had been a wandering orphan in the past, so he knew this life well. But he never thought that Link, a nobleman's son, would also be suffering this fate too.

But precisely because Eliard had experienced it all before, he sympathized with what Link was going through more acutely!

Anguish, shame, and gratitudea flurry of emotions swirled in Eliard's mind, they sent a hot flash to his eyes, and he began to tear up. But before the tears fell, he hastily lifted his chin up and forced the tears back.

When he was eight-years-old, he was bullied by a few children in the streets. He cried and cried, but as he was an orphan, no one came to consoled him, they only came to mock and ridicule. He swore from then on that he would never shed a single tear ever again.

But at this moment, there was no holding back the tears.

Link was a nobleman, he had 1300 gold coins with him, he could've comfortably settled down in the River Cove Inn. But because he wanted to help Eliard, he sacrificed his own comfort and had to live poorly. How could Eliard be unmoved by that?

What's even more agonizing was the fact that Link never said a word about it. He had been comfortably settling into the Magic Tower studying magic, but at the same time, Link had never mentioned a word about his difficult life. Instead, he'd always been consoling Eliard, reminding him to concentrate on his studies and not be distracted. Eliard did not even suspect anything like this was happening to Link.

"Link?" Eliard tentatively called out, while strenuously calming himself down.

That frail body was stunned, the quill in his hand stopped moving, and then he turned his body around. "Eliard, what are you doing here?" Link said, startled.

He'd gotten thinner, much thinner than a month ago. His eyes seemed bigger now, and they looked dull and lifeless. His body was wearing that rough linen robe which seemed too big as it hung on his bony figure.

Eliard's heart wrenched at the sight. He was at his limit, his eyes were red now and a teardrop fell as he said, "Why didn't you say anything?"

Link was considerably shocked when he saw Eliard's expression. He wondered how this kid could be so sensitive. He was almost an adult, how could he cry for such a tiny matter?

But he thought of what he knew from the game and realized that this was indeed Eliard's nature.

In the game, there were three occasions when Eliard cried, once was for his wife who was murdered by a demon, once was for a comrade fallen in battle, and once when he witnessed countless refugees from the North.

This half-man, half-boy was just that sensitive.

Link thought about it, and guessed why Eliard would be upset, and laughed and said, "You're blaming me for leaving out this small detail?"

Eliard nodded. His life in the academy had been comfortable, in fact, if he worked hard for a little bit, he could even earn some gold coins. This month, he didn't spend much time writing magic scrolls, and yet he still earned 15 gold coins. Some students who were more industrious could even earn more than 50 gold coins in a month!

If only Link had told him, he wouldn't need to live in such poor conditions.

Link laughed and shook his head, "My friend, my life hasn't been as bad as it seems. You see, if you look out from this window, that's the beautiful Girvent Forest. And listen, can't you hear how quiet and peaceful this room is? And think about it, I've got no money, and my clothes are old and plain, so no one bats an eye on me, no one distracts me or disturbs me, so I can fully concentrate on working on my thesis and magic spells. Don't you see how lucky I am?"

When he put it that way, Eliard was swayed. But he couldn't help feeling that there was something wrong. "But"

"No buts! You know all I care about is magic. Apart from magic, nothing else matters to me." Link was all smiles and he shone as bright as the sun, chasing away the gloom and doom in Eliard's heart.

Alright, since he put it that way. Eliard felt better, but what he saw today had been etched deeply into his heart and he would never forget it.

He knew that in this world there was only one person who would sacrifice his honor and dignity, who was willing to be ridiculed, who was willing to live like a beggar, just to help him.

In his heart, such a man was nothing less than a brother. If need be, Eliard would be willing to sacrifice everything for this brother.

"Are you free now? Let's get a drink in the hall, how about that?" Eliard wiped his tears and tucked his emotions away.

"Sure, no problem, just give me a minute while I tidy up my scrolls," Link said with a laugh.

Once everything had been neatly tucked away, the two went downstairs to the hall.

"Matt, the best dish you have, and the best ale," Eliard shouted his orders.

"No problem," said Matt with a smile.

Once the food and drinks arrived, the two chatted away as they ate.

They talked about Link's thesis' development and some magic theory problems. Eliard told Link all about what he'd seen and what he'd learned in the academy, as well as some circulating gossip he heard.

Each of them was so engaged in the conversation that, without knowing it, more than ten cups of ale had been downed. Eliard couldn't handle a lot of alcohol, so his words started to slur and he began speaking nonsense. Link's ability to hold his drink wasn't too bad, so he managed to stay ostensibly sober.

As he was drunk, Eliard started to act strangelyhe would cry and then laugh. Link didn't know how to handle this, so he asked the inn servant to take Eliard to a room so he could rest.

"No, stop it! Go away, I want to sleep in the attic!" Eliard kept insisting.

Link had no choice but to relent, so in the end, another mattress was added to the attic and after a while, Eliard finally fell asleep on it. Link was sweating from the effort to subdue Eliard, and before long the slight alcoholic effects he had were gone.

He went outside the inn and spoke to Eliard's coachman from the Magic Academy. The coachman said they had planned to spend the night in town and would head back to the academy tomorrow. Link was relieved by this and headed back to the attic.

There were scrolls and a textbook that Eliard had brought with him in the attic room, he glanced through all of them, and he was immediately captivated by the textbook. It was a high-level magic textbookjust what he needed!

This magic textbook was called Progress in Magic Spells, it contained the introduction to Level-1 spells and the structure of the spells. It also had a rough summary of the progressions of high-level spells. Link flipped through the pages and discovered that inside there were also detailed descriptions of Runic Aura structures!

"What a great book!" Link was immediately engrossed in the book. He read and read, completely unaware of the flow of time.

He didn't know how much time has passed when behind him a voice called out, "What time is it?"

Eliard had woken up.

Link was startled by the voice, he fumbled for his pocket watch and said, "It's seven in the evening."

Link realized now that he was quite hungry.

"I'll go get us something to eat." Eliard was hungry too, so he left the attic, then five minutes later he returned with a huge tray of cheese.

The two began to eat. While eating, Link continued to read the magic textbook. He very carefully flipped through each page and took great care not to let any dust or dirt land on the pages. Eliard, on the other hand, casually flipped through Link's thesis.

Eliard was completely enthralled by Link's thesis. The silence between them was only interrupted by Eliard's occasional murmurs like, "This is astounding! Oh, I've never seen these kinds of deductions before!"

Eliard was completely spellbound by Link's paper.

The candle burned brightly all through the night in the attic of the River Cove Inn. The two young Magicians inside were both hard at work.

One was engrossed in studying the magic textbook, the other was immersed in the former's thesis. Time flew by and none of them noticed that it was already midnight.

Link felt tired, so he put down the textbook and prepared to go to sleep. His body was quite frail, so he had to be cautious and mindful of his health. Even though he would often be so immersed in a task that he would forget the time, the moment he remembered, he would always ensure that he got enough rest.

While settling down under his blanket, he noticed Eliard was still poring over his thesis. "Hey, Eliard, it's late. Why don't you get some rest?" he said.

"Just a minute, there's something I'm trying to understand here," Eliard said as he quickly jotted down notes with a goose feather quill. He was keenly trying to work out a point about Mana transformation in Link's thesis.

He might not know much about the application or usage of this theory, but he couldn't help but be fascinated by it. As a Magician, he could easily perceive a sense of elegance in this simple Mana formula, even though he was just an apprentice. Just as a lecherous man would be captivated when he saw a beautiful womanhe was, similarly, completely sucked in.

Link saw how focused Eliard washe knew that there was no way he could convince him to rest, so he said nothing more and went to sleep himself.

And so the night passed silently.

At three in the morning the following day, Link woke up automatically like clockwork. His concentration was now razor-sharp, and he sensed there were some quiet movements in the room. As he opened his eyes, he saw Eliard still sitting at the table exactly as he was before Link went to sleep. His eyes were as red as a rabbit's, but he didn't seem to be the least bit sleepy.

So he's just as obsessive as I am. It was no coincidence that in the game Eliard managed to become a Legendary Pinnacle Magician.

Link was careful not to disturb him as he sat up and cast the Illumination spell. He then began to read the textbook that Eliard had brought with him.

The magic textbook was a property of the East Cove Magic Academy, so he would have to return it soon. He read through the entire book once, just to memorize its contents. Then he would slowly make sense of what he memorized later.

He had an extraordinary memory, plus he had just woken up so his concentration right now was working at its full capacity. He only had to read through the textbook once and he would remember everything, including the graphs and illustrations. He read it a second time to go over some details he might have missed, then once more to strengthen his memory. Now he was at his fourth reading, and he could remember clearly each and every detail in this Level-1 magic textbook titled Progress in Magic Spells. A quick search through his memory and he would recall every detail from the book as vividly as if he were watching a slide film.

It sure is nice to have an incredible brain, thought Link proudly. He was grateful for the exceptional memory he now possessed.

By this time, it was getting light outside. Link checked on Eliard again and saw that he was still as immersed in the thesis as ever. He noticed Eliard's face was getting pale, and thought that if he continued this way, his body would soon collapse.

So Link walked up to him and forcibly pulled away his thesis. "Hey, you really need to get some rest."

"Wait, let me read it just a little longer," pleaded Eliard. He was staring wide-eyed at the goatskin paper in Link's hand. He looked as if he was going to grab it but was hesitant to do so.

"It's not even finished yet, so what's the rush?" Link was taken aback by how fascinated Eliard was. He thought what he'd written was still too disorganized, with no clear line of thought. He thought it was nowhere near presentable and nowhere near finished. Why exactly was Eliard so interested in it?

"What? It's not even finished yet?" Eliard looked discouraged.

He had read through it for the whole night, but in the end only managed to finish reading three pages. Of what he'd read, he only understood half of it at most, but Link had, in fact, written about fifteen or sixteen pages in total. Last night, he glanced through the last few pages but realized he couldn't make head nor tail of its contents.

But even so, he was certain that this thesis contained novel and revolutionary ideas!

"Link, I think if you could just reorganize some points in the thesis, then think up a suitable title, I'm sure it could get approved by the academy or rather, what if I copy down parts of your thesis and bring it back to the academy, so my tutor could have a look?" said Eliard. It was a spur-of-the-moment idea that he just came up with.

He believed that even if the thesis couldn't get Link admitted into the academy, it would definitely improve his tutor's opinion of Link even further. She might even lend Link more textbooks too.

Eliard would do anything he could to help Link, without any hesitation.

It's too bad Link's innate magic talent wasn't sufficient, otherwise, he would've been accepted by the academy a long time ago.

Eliard sighed. He noticed that Link's current magic aura was as dim as before. It was obvious that Link had only been consoling himself when he told Eliard previously that his magic aura was so dim because he was hurt.

Link didn't know what went through Eliard's mind at that moment. He considered Eliard's idea then nodded and said, "Fine. You haven't had rest yet, so you'd better have some sleep after breakfast. I'll organize the parts of my thesis that I've already written, and you can take it back with you."

He had only just roughly read through the book Progress in Magic Spells, but he'd lapped up all the knowledge he could glean. He was like a wanderer in a desert who would drink up all the water of the first pool he'd finally stumbled upon.

If Link could feel this way with a book, he was sure that when he finally became a student of the East Cove Magic Academy, it would feel as if he was a beggar that had walked into Aladdin's cave of hidden treasures!

These thoughts made Link's desire to enter the academy deepen.

Eliard, on the other hand, was indeed very tired. He went to bed after having his breakfast and Link began to clean up his thesis.

Even though he still had a long way before the completion of his paper, Link noticed that a clear outline began to emerge. As the author, he was very familiar with the contents, so in no time at all, he managed to organize it all into distinct parts.

Of the many parts it was divided into, the very first was devoted to the formulas of Newton's Universal Law of Gravitation.

It was true that Link had finally managed to churn out the formulas of the Universal Law of Gravitation, but this was just a superficial conclusion to tie up the many complex ideas in his thesis together. There were still premises that were not yet proven. In short, the current thesis did not represent the true depth of Link's analysis.

This part contained the most compelling arguments, so I'll let Eliard take it with him. The rest is still too ambiguous, I'd better work on it more before showing it.

Link made a final decision to let Eliard take the part of his thesis where he derived the formulas of Universal Law of Gravitation. As for the parts where he dug deeper and made more complicated conjectures, he felt they were still too unrefined and was reluctant to show them to anyone.

After deciding which parts he would include, Link copied the revised version down on new goatskin papers. Then, as Eliard was still sleeping, he took out the scrolls on which Eliard's tutor had written her answers to Link's questions and started to read them.

The moment he read the explanation for the first question, Link had to admit that Eliard's tutor was indeed a gifted Magician with a deep knowledge of magic.

Her explanations possess such clarity and conviction. This tutor Moira sure is impressive. Why haven't I heard of this name before from the game? Link wondered. The questions he gave to Eliard were all complicated, but Moira could give him answers that not only cleared all of Link's confusions, but also inspired him with new ideas to advance his thesis.

He searched carefully through his memory but still couldn't find any character named Moira in the game. There was no trace of her even during the infamous accident in the East Cove Magic Academy.

But it's a strange thing that such a knowledgeable Level-5 Magician with her own Mage Tower didn't leave any trace of herself in history.

But it wasn't important, anyway. Link couldn't think of any reason for Moira's invisibility in the game's history, but he decided to leave the matter aside and continued to read the answers on the scroll. His reading speed was fast, so in a short time, he had completed reading all six answers. Just as he was putting the scrolls away, he discovered some messages left by Moira in a neat handwriting.

"I'm glad my student has such an exceptional friend such as you. Your understanding of magic is deep, and your approaches are unique. If there are any questions at all that you have regarding magic or spells, write directly to me, and I will do my best in giving you the answers and explanations. Moira Droskyn."

These words proved that Link had now received Moira's recognition.

He pondered for a while and realized that he did have some questions. Since Moira insisted she was happy to help, why not write her some questions now?

Link lifted the quill pen and wrote down some new questions. Eliard would be going back to the academy today, so he would just give the letter to him so he could give it to Moira.

At midday, Eliard woke up. Before he departed, he was about to leave 10 gold coins for Link, but Link interjected cordially. "Don't worry, my friend. My father had finally answered my letters and sent me some money too."

"Oh, that's good to hear!" said Eliard, visibly relieved. He knew that Link's father was a nobleman, so it wasn't strange to him that he would send Link some money.

"Well, goodbye, Link," said Eliard.

"Farewell, and safe journey."

And so Eliard took the revised thesis from Link, Moira's textbook, and Link's letter with him. He climbed back into the carriage and made his journey back to the East Cove Magic Academy.

When the carriage was out of his view, Link turned back into the inn. By this time, the way people in the inn hall looked at him changed drastically. They now treated him with more respect and reverence.

Link found it amusing. This was just typical of the common folksthey would be drinking in the hall all day shooting the breeze. Then when a bright star appeared in the sky, they would all point at it and exclaim in awe. But moments later they would go back to their gossips and rumors, wasting their lives away. Getting respect from these people did not make Link feel flattered or honored at all.

He walked up to the counter and told Matt the innkeeper, "Send my dinner and tomorrow's breakfast to my room please, thank you."

Matt's face bloomed as bright as a chrysanthemum flower. "No problem."

Link climbed up the stairs to the attic and then went back to reading.

I know many Level-1 spells. If I could improve a few, then create a few Supreme Magical Skills, my power would increase exponentially. But which spell should I start with?

He considered it for a while and decided to improve the spell Vector Throw. The Mana consumption of this spell was low, its adaptability was boundless, and even if the opponent was armed with anti-magic gear, this spell would still cause considerable damage and pain.

Just as Link was settling into deep concentration, engrossed in the task of modifying the spell, something sinister was unfolding in the underworld of Girvent Forest.

In the Cove of Echoes.

Two black shadows were standing amid the ruins of the cove.

"Did you find the runes?" asked the black shadow who was clad in a loose cloak, with a wand in his hand. Had Viktor still been alive, he would've recognized the cloaked figure as the mysterious Magician who had given him the Occultic Runes.

"No. I couldn't find it anywhere in the cove. But I've found these," said the other black shadow who was clad in a greyish brown leather armor, his face covered by a hood. He had just come out of the cave and was holding a piece of burnt reddish rotten flesh and fragments of leather armor.

The black-robed Magician was alarmed. "There's a trace of magic spells. I've seen this leather armor before it's Viktor's. He must've been transformed by occult magic, and yet he was killed. Who would have such power? Could it be a Magician from the East Cove Academy?"

"No, Viktor was a cautious man. He wouldn't provoke the ire of the Magicians. I've heard rumors that it was a group of mercenaries who did this."

"Mercenaries?" The black shadow went silent briefly, then reopened his mouth and said, "Find these people, the runes must be found no matter what it takes! Here is your reward."

"Understood." The black shadow took the pouch from the black-robed Magician. He opened it, saw its contents and smiled. Then, his body blurred, became translucent and blended completely into the surroundings of the cove.

Soft rustling footsteps echoed around the cove. It was the sound of this black shadow leaving, masked from his surrounding by a spell that granted him invisibility.

## 46. Links Whistle

It was a beautiful day.

The sky was bright and blue like pure tourmaline. The golden sunlight was filtered through the leafy canopy, sketching a painting of mottled light and shadows on the ground.

Green-feathered birds sang prass to mother nature, squirrels scurried from tree to tree, storing as much food as they could before winter came.

In River Cove town, not far from the small headquarters of the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries, there was a clearing in the middle of the forest.

This clearing was about 100 feet wide. It was thoroughly cleared by the mercenaries, its ground was leveled and then covered with fine sand. It was installed with training wood dummies and arrow targets, and there was also a resting hut. In the area surrounding the clearing, thorny shrubs were planted and many anti-trespassing devices were set up. If any strangers were to break in, the devices would make loud noises.

Ever since Link used the Hidden Power spell on Jacker, Jacker had been training his combat skills in this clearing area. His body was originally very strong, but now that he received Battle Art, his strength kept accumulating and rapidly progressing. After only a few days, he had progressed to Level-3, and there were signs that he might even break through to Level-4.

Lucy and Gildern looked on, immensely envious of Jacker's progress. They could only hope that Link's Mana recovered quickly so he would use this enigmatic spell on them too.

Link had been resting for five days, he should have replenished all his Mana by now.

These few days, Link's life had been very convenient. Because he didn't like to be disturbed, he stayed in the attic room of the inn. But Lucy went there to clean his room until it was spotless. The spider webs were removed, his shabby mattress was changed to a nice little bed, his blanket and bed cover were all changed, now crisp with the scent of sunshine and clean linen, and his dirty laundry was all cleaned.

Even Link had to admit, having someone take care of his daily chores this way wasn't bad at all.

Today, he was stuck writing his thesis, but his new spell experiment was successful. The weather was good anyway, so he went to the clearing to rest a little. He would also use this opportunity to cast Hidden Power on Lucy.

When Link arrived at the clearing, Gildern was practicing with his bow and Jacker was practicing his shield attack on a heavy sandbagthere was no sign of Lucy anywhere.

"Where's Lucy?" Link asked. The mercenaries had agreed earlier among themselves that Lucy would be the second one to receive Hidden Power.

As they saw him, Jacker and Gildern immediately stopped practicing. Jacker grabbed a rag and wiped the sweat off his face, and said, "Lucy went to the market to hire some people, she'll be back in an hour or so."

"Oh, fine. I'm not in a hurry anyway," Link nodded then said to Jacker, "Come on, before she comes back, come and try out a new spell I've just developed."

"No problem." Jacker took his big iron shield and covered the front of his body. He gotito a defensive stance and then activated his earth element Combat Aura.

Immediately, his body and the shield were shrouded in a solid layer of yellow gemstone-like lightthis was the light of his Combat Aura. Compared to the Jacker that Link first met, the light was brighter and more concentrated now; it could even rival that of a Level-4 Warrior.

"Great progress," Link applauded, "But my spell's pretty powerful, so be careful."

Jacker knew the power of Link's spells very well, so he didn't take the warning lightly. Jacker focused his concentration.

When he saw that Jacker was prepared, Link began to cast the spell. He didn't want to catch Jacker off guard so he did it slower.

Mana slowly flowed into the New Moon wand. A continuous flow of runic shadows flowed out from the tip then combined to form Runic Aura.

Link was inspired by this Hidden Power's Runic Aura, which was an essential component in high-level spells. So, he adapted the modular structure of the spell to develop his own new spell.

There were three Runic Auras: transparent water aura, fiery red aura, and pure white aura. Each one of these Runic Auras contained massive quantities of magic runes, and all of them created a truly magical sight.

When the Runic Aura was forming, Link used his left hand to take something from a pouch that was hanging on his waist. He took a powdery substance out of the pouch they were iron filings.

He opened his palm and the iron filings flowed towards the tip of the wand which then glowed brilliantly in a white aura. This was the color of the metal element aura. Except in places like mineral caves, naturally occuring metal was scarce. By bringing his own supply of metal elements in the form of iron filings, Link was able to increase his spellcasting speed remarkably. However, Iron filings were rare and expensive in this worldhe couldn't even find them at the blacksmith's. So in the end, he got them from a sawmill where they were carved out by a hydraulic saw. Twenty pounds of iron filings had cost him 20 gold coins.

From the same spot at the tip of the wand where the metal element flowed into, a stream of red flame accumulated and these two elements rapidly combined with each other. The metal element formed the shell and the fire element formed the core, combining to make a fist-sized silvery iron ball.

Instantly, after the iron ball was formed, the third rune circling at the tip of the wand began to work. A streak of brilliant light shot towards the silvery iron ball and it began to rotate rapidly.

Not only did it start to rotate, it was also changing shapes. It started to transform into a pointy shape and the light orb's rotation also became the axis of the rotation of the spike.

The spike's rotation speed was very quick, so much so that a tornado began to form around it and the air made a high-pitched hissing sound.

Seeing this, Jacker inadvertently gulped. Because Link cast the spell slowly, he saw the whole process of the spell materializing, and it looked absolutely terrifying.

"Get ready, I'm releasing it!" Link warned.

Jacker nodded, then held on to his iron shield tightly. His whole body was hidden behind the shield's cover.

And then, Link released the ball of magic.

Instantly, this flaming hot metal spike that contained condensed fire elements shot through the air as fast as lightning; it traveled almost 100 feet, hitting the middle of Jacker's shield.

Clang! There was a deep and resonant chime, and on Jacker's shield, the yellow tinge of his Combat Aura scattered in all directions like firecrackers.

Jacker was hit by an enormous forcealthough he was still standing, he was pushed three feet backwards. His feet had carved the sand into two channels.

He felt his arm go numb and there were a few seconds where he simply couldn't find the energy to fight against this force. He checked his shield and discovered a fist-sized dent about an inch deep on his thick shield.

Jacker stood motionless as he witnessed such awesome power. He knew Link also had spells for fireballs that looked like glass orbs, and if Link had decided to use that on him now, Jacker could be finished off swiftly and sent to the kingdom of gods with just one move.

"My Lord, what kind of spell was that?" Gildern asked, horrified.

They had been trying to learn and understand magic with Link recently, and they now had a rough idea of what spells were and what they involved. Still, this new move was an enigma to them. If it was a fireball, then its power was just too terrifying, and if it were a metal ball, then its speed and charging power were also too powerful. What's scarier was the fact that the four rays of metal that scattered after impact were powerful as well. If they had been in a crowd, the scattered shards would've caused unimaginable damage.

Link put his wand away, then gave a rough explanation, "I used some higher level magic techniques. This spell combined the techniques of fire elements, metal elements, and some transforming elements. When it shoots through the air, it makes a high-pitched sound, so I call it Whistle."

This was originally a Level-1 spell, and its original version was Vector Throw, but Link had improved and transformed itnow, it looked nothing like its predecessor.

The spell Whistle had an incredibly high speed of 650 feet per second, so its attack range was also very large.

At the same time, it also had special magical elements. Link could change its trajectory mid-flight. Of course, because the speed was very high, its magic energy would be big too, so its change in trajectory might not be as agile as that of normal elemental spells. But, it was powerful enough to kill!

Whether it was a PVP or a group battle, Whistle was at an advantage in both situations because as soon as Link willed it to, the fire element inside the metal shell would explode. In other words, it was just like a grenade with shrapnel.

After testing it out, Link was satisfied with the spell's power. Even the defenses of a Level-3 Earth Element Warrior could be suppressed by this spell.

The most critical point of the spell was its spellcasting speed. Even though this high-level spell's structure was much more complicated than normal Level-1 spells, Link was able to release it successfully in 0.2 seconds due to the number of times he had practiced it. This was mostly thanks to the aid of the game system.

With such speed and power, Whistle had become Link's new killer move.

Jacker had experienced the power of the spell himself, and there was a lingering fear inside him. Whistle? It should be called the Whistle of Death, he thought to himself.

Link laughedhe was satisfied. This spell had combined all of the insights he recently gained on magic, and after creating it, he received 5 Omni Points from the system; it was definitely a big gain.

At this point, Lucy wasn't back yet. Link was not in a rush, so he sat on a stool and chatted with Gildern. Gildern told him about the things the mercenaries heard and saw and Link explained some basic knowledge regarding magic.

Jacker listened to Link's explanation about magic while he continued to practice.

They chatted and chatted until two hours passed. But there was still no sign of Lucy.

Things started to feel anxious.

"Jacker, are you sure it's just an hour?" Link furrowed his brows slightly, it's been quite some time now.

Jacker knitted his brows, he had no heart to continue practicing. "This isn't right; Lucy has always been punctual. Even if something unexpected happened, she would send someone to inform us, especially at a time like this could it be that something bad happened?"

Gildern's face went pale, "It couldn't be that someone from the Dark Brotherhood was exacting revenge, could it? But it can't be that bad, we are in River Cove after all!"

Even if chaos ruled outside of the town, inside, the militia was patrolling the town. Moreover, it was still daytime and Lucy wasn't a weak little girl. Who would dare to fight her?

Link stood up and said, "We'll achieve nothing just guessing here, pack everything up, we'll go to the market and ask around."

Lucy was now his follower, now that she was in trouble he had no option but to help her.

Jacker and Gildern nodded. In the fight against the Dark Brotherhood, Link had built a strong prestige among them, and now he was a lord that the two were loyal to. So now that there was a problem, the two subconsciously obeyed his words.

## 47. The Syndicate

Once they put all their things away, Jacker put on his new steel armor and reached for his new steel round shield and hammer. This new set of gear, combined with his seven-foot frame, made him look as bulky and imposing as a tank. Gildern was ready with his new set of gear too.

Link changed into a lightweight leather armor so he would be able to move more freely. The three then quickly made their way to the market on the eastern side of the River Cove town.

King's Lane ran through River Cove town. It was a small town with an area of just about a square mile due of its proximity to the capital, Springs City. Hence, the town was always full of travelers from all walks of life hustling and bustling about. For this reason, Link and the mercenaries could easily blend in with the crowd. After walking for about five minutes, they reached the entrance to the town market.

There was a great deal of livestock trading in the market. It was where the farmers around the Girvent Forest came to buy or sell cattle, sheep and other livestock. These animals were of high value, so to prevent them from escaping, a wooden fence encircled the market and two militiamen guarded the market entrance. There were more patrol officers inside, policing any ruckus or commotion.

Jacker was a mercenary, so naturally, he was on good terms with the militiamen. He walked up to one of the guards and slipped a silver coin into his hand. "Jon, did anything unusual happen here today?"

"No, everything was in order, there wasn't even any bickering," replied Jon, as he shook his head and rolled over in his hand. He was politer than usual to Jacker.

"Oh, I see. Did you see Lucy?" asked Jacker.

Lucy was a beautiful woman, and she had an alluring figure. She liked to wear form-fitting leather armor because it enabled her to move much more freely, but this also meant that her luscious curves were exposed too. Because of this, she was well known in the town, and was the woman of the single townsmen's dreams. So, everyone in town knew Lucy. Even if they'd never seen her, they had at least heard of her.

Jon knew Lucy, in fact, he was one of Lucy's greatest admirers, although Lucy herself had never spoken to him.

"I didn't see her, she didn't come here today, otherwise I would've noticed her!" said Jon, shaking his head.

The minute Jon finished his sentence, Jacker, Gildern, and Link all frowned and furrowed their brows. It seemed something terrible had really happened!

"What's the matter? Isn't she with you guys?" Jon asked nervously as he saw their reactions.

Jacker thought it was just the expression of a man worried about the woman he desired, but Link sensed there was something more.

Jon looked genuinely worried, but as he was speaking Link noticed that his eyes were looking suspicious, as if he knew something that he was not telling them.

Link immediately walked up and furtively revealed two gold coins in his hand, gleaming in its golden sheen. At the same time, Link checked the surrounding area and made sure to block other people's view to ensure that Jon was the only one who saw the gold coins.

Link asked in a low voice, "Tell me what you know Jon, and these two gold coins will be yours."

Jon was still hesitant and made no reply.

"Do you know why Lucy has always ignored you?" Link asked.

"Why?" Jon asked without thinking.

Link sneered, then said, "She once told me that you are the type of man who was unreliable and that you could never make her feel safe. I had thought that it was just an excuse, but now I know it's the truth. Even now that you know Lucy is in danger, you're only thinking about your own safety, and you still have the audacity to desire her?"

"I'm not just thinking about my own safety! Don't you know who you're messing with?" Jon retorted in shame and anger, his face reddened.

"Who?"

"I can't say!" said Jon, stopping himself at the very last moment.

Link revealed five gleaming gold coins in his hand. Jon gulped. This was the amount of money he would earn in half a year. He looked furtively to his left and then his right, and when he was sure no one was looking, he finally said in a very low voice, "If anything happened to Lucy, it must have something to do with the Syndicate. That's all I can tell you."

After finishing his words, Jon stared wide-eyed at the gold coins in Link's hand.

Yes, Jon did like Lucy, but Lucy had always ignored him. She had somehow provoked the Syndicate's ire. She must be a dead woman by now, and in his eyes, a dead woman was much less alluring than these gold coins in front of him.

Link flung the gold coins to Jon's face, then told Jacker and Gildern, "Let's go, there's nothing more we can find out here."

If the Syndicate was the true culprit, then they must've covered their tracks well. The market was full of people going about their business, so any trace of their aura would've been drowned out, and even a low-level tracking spell would be useless here.

Link knew of the Syndicate, of course. If the Dark Brotherhood was the biggest underworld organization in the western region of Girvent Forest, then the Syndicate would be an unrivaled underworld organization in the entire human realm. They originated from the Free Trade Confederation in the South, and after a thousand years of development, they had now spread all over the human world. And there was a division of the Syndicate in the Girvent Forest which ruled over the entire southern part of the forest.

The Dark Brotherhood was like an ordinary snake, while the Syndicate was like a giant underground serpent. They had to be immensely powerful to have survived this long because different kingdoms in the realm of humans had unleashed multiple attacks on the Syndicate in attempts to eradicate them. But those attacks only resulted in brief periods of dormancythe Syndicate always managed to somehow re-emerge and then, in a short span of time, regrow until they reached their former glory. They were like wild weeds neither fire nor blades could wipe them off the face of the Earth.

Link also knew that the Syndicate was as hard to get rid of as scabies because there was a figure leading the organization in the cover of darkness, an almost invincible figure with formidable strength.

This figure was the shadowy puppeteer who pulled all the strings out of everyone's sight. He was the master of thieves, the king of the Firuman Continent's underworld, and the original founder of the Syndicate Morpheus!

Morpheus's strength was at the Legendary Pinnacle level, and some said he had even had a glimpse of the secrets of the gods. In the game, in order to ignite the Godly Fire, Morpheus joined the God of Darkness, making the Syndicate a cancerous organization associated with the Dark Side.

And because of that, Morpheus became the first final boss in the game. That year, Link had been in a group that was defeated by this boss.

Morpheus, are you already walking on that path of darkness? lamented Link, looking back on the fearsome battle in the game.

But the Girvent Forest division of the Syndicate was just a small part of the entire organization, so Link was sure he would not be facing Morpheus yet. Still, he had to admit that facing the Syndicate was an onerous task. He must plan his next moves wisely.

Obviously, Jacker and Gildern have both heard of the Syndicate too. They were both silent on their way back, lost in their own thoughts. They didn't want to give up on Lucy, no, they would never give up on her. But they were now facing such a terrifying opponent that they were at a total loss on how or even if it were possible to rescue her.

In the few minutes they spent walking, Link thought the whole incident through methodically, considering every aspect in detail.

Firstly, what exactly did the Syndicate want?

Gold coins? This might be one of their objectives, even though he doubted that the Syndicate would be so desperate for money. No one would turn down an opportunity to gain more money anyway, least of all the Syndicate.

Another thing that they might be after would have to be Tarviss's Occultic Runes.

The Occultic Runes helped the demon Tarviss escape the sealed barrier he was imprisoned in. But because of Viktor's defeat, the Occultic Runes were now lost. And so, the powerful figure behind the Syndicate became the next slaves for the demon Tarviss.

The Occultic Runes, surely that is what they're truly after, thought Link. If that was true, then it meant that Lucy should still be alive before the Syndicate figure out the location of the Occultic Runes.

But in the meantime, they must have been torturing her to force her to reveal where the Occultic Runes were. As soon as she revealed it to them, Lucy would be swiftly killed and then a hellish storm of trouble would come after Link.

Even so, Link wouldn't blame Lucy at all if she cracked under torture because he knew that if he was caught in a similar predicament, all the secrets he held in his mind would spill out of him too.

Right now, what was most important was to locate where Lucy was and bring her back some way or another.

Link turned ideas back and forth in his mind, and once they reached the entrance of the River Cove Inn, he had already drawn up a big plan.

"Do you know where we can find a messenger to the Syndicate?" Link asked Jacker, who had been silent the whole time.

No organization was ever completely covert. Every organization would appoint an external messenger to facilitate quick and smooth communications between each division.

As a mercenary, Jacker knew the underworld much more than Link. Before working in the Girvent Forest, he naturally had to learn the rules of the turf and understand which lines he shouldn't cross. From what he'd learned, the Syndicate was the most prominent untouchable authority that no one could ever defy.

"There's someone in the River Cove Town gambling house who knows how to find them," answered Jacker.

"Then let's go to the gambling house now!"

## 48. A Serendipitous Meeting

The gambling house was in the north-western part of River Cove town. It was a big two-story wooden house. It was probably the busiest and most successful business in the area. Rumors said that the gambling house was owned by the mayor's nephew, which was why they could operate in broad daylight and the militia would still never bother them.

As they entered the gambling house, Jacker and Gildern each stood on either side of Link, protecting him in the middle.

There were many people there; most of them were red-eyed gamblers. In front of each card table, there was a female dealer with a voluptuous figure wearing skimpy clothing. In every key spot of the gambling house, there were strongly built bodyguards keeping watch of any situations.

This was where prostitutes, pickpockets, cheats, crooks, and indeed the whole dregs of society mixed.

After entering the gambling house, Jacker scanned the room and walked to a table in the corner.

As he walked, he told Link, "My Lord, do you see that yellow-haired boy there? That's Jimi, rumors say he knows how to get a message to Syndicate's people."

This was definitely one of Jacker's strengths. He had been socializing with lowlifes, so he knew the ins and outs of this society very well, just the thing that Link lacked.

Link turned to where Jacker indicated and saw that Jimi wasn't participating in the card game, but was standing at the side watching. Jimi's hands and feet weren't very clean. Just as Link saw him, he was extending his hand and reached into the pockets of two gamblers.

He didn't steal much, only a few copper coins from each gambler. He was quick and discreet, like a dragonfly skimming across the water's surface.

"But he's just a pickpocket," Link said.

"Yes, but Syndicate is a group of thieves," said Gildern.

As they talked, the three walked to Jimi and surrounded him. Jimi attempted to bolt, but Jacker and Gildern had cornered him, blocking every possible escape route.

"What are you people trying to do? I'm telling you, I don't like to be pushed around." Jimi gulped. One of his hands was extending in front of his chest, and his other was grabbing at his pockets, where a dagger was hidden.

But just as his hand moved, Gildern raised a pocket knife and with lightning speed cut Jimi's wrist.

This was not a light cut, Jimi's wrist shook and he gasped. His other hand rushed to hold his cut wrist. Just like that, both of his hands were now subdued.

Link walked up to him, pointed the wooden-looking New Moon wand to Jimi's heart, the tip of the wand glowing dimly, and said, "I hear you can get a message to Syndicate?"

Link spoke with a very low voice. They didn't want to raise any commotion in the loud gambling house. The guards glanced over at their direction but saw nothing out of the ordinary, so they turned elsewhere.

In the gambling house, small disagreements were normal occurrences, they couldn't possibly check for every problem that arose. So as long as there were no big commotions, the guards wouldn'titerfere.

Jimi felt differently, though. He could feel that there was something pressing on his heart. It felt a little cold and a little painful, and he saw that there was very dim light at the tip of the wand, so he was sure that this person was definitely a Magician. He was so terrified that his body shivered and his voice shook when he spoke. "Yes, yes, yes, I can send the message."

"Then tell them that I have what they want. If that woman dies or if there is even a scratch on her, then they can forget about getting it. Remember, my name is Link, and I'm a Magician. If they want to meet me, I'll be at the River Cove Inn!" Link's voice was low, but his gaze was cold as ice when he was talking. He released the Mana in his body, charging the air around him and created a noticeable air around him.

He now had close 100 Mana points and he was fully replenished. This was normal for a Level-2 Magician. If he made it visible now, it could easily shock and terrify people who were not familiar with magic, and that was enough for him.

Yellow-haired Jimi had never seen such a thing, he violently nodded and said, "I will convey your message. Now! I'll go now!"

Link then kept his aura and pointed the wand at Jimi's heart. In the dark, he cast the spell Magician 's Hand, then he penetrated Jimi's flesh and bone and grabbed at Jimi's beating heart.

Jimi could feel the horrifying sensation of his heart being gripped. He was soaked in sweat and his whole body was petrified with fear.

"Do not tell lies, and be quick. Otherwise, the magic that I planted in your heart will explode to a thousand pieces!" said Link, and then he ended his Magician 's Hand.

This spell was very useful in scaring ordinary people who were foreign to magic. If it had been a powerful Warrior, this trick would never work because the magic power in this spell was just too weak. Their body's strength alone could stop him from penetrating through their flesh and bones.

Jimi almost went crazy, then Link released him. The moment he was free he began to run, while running he said, "I will report your message immediately."

Good, now all they could do was wait.

Link said to Jacker and Gildern, "Let's go, we'll wait for the people from Syndicate at the River Cove Inn."

He knew that the powerful people behind the scenes valued the magic runes very much, and the rune was hidden by Link in his crystal pendant. It was undetectable, that was why they could never find him.

Because they couldn't find it, Link had threatened them with such bold words. They would not dare make any rash moves; the only option was to send someone to deal it.

This way, they had a chance of saving Lucy's life.

The next step would depend on the message sent by the Syndicate.

The three exited the gambling house. While on the road, Link said, "I know both of you must have some questions."

"My Lord, we'd like to know what Syndicate actually wants," asked Jacker.

Gildern was similarly curious.

Link didn't hide anything, "Remember that black crystal that Viktor had? It had a proper name, Magic Runes. I'm guessing that's what they want."

"My Lord, then should we give them this thing?" Jacker asked.

Link vehemently shook his head and said, "Absolutely not. This is an evil magic device and I have sealed it up. If this falls into their hands, it will bring misfortune to the whole Girvent Forest, no, maybe the whole Kingdom of Norton. Then, there will be a calamity that might destroy the whole Girvent Forest. If that happens, no one would be able to escape."

These were all true, technically, because if the academy was in trouble, they would lose half of the kingdom's Magicians and that would make defending against the Dark Elf Army impossible. That would then bring forth the burning of Girvent Forest to ashes. All of this had its origin in this Magic Rune.

Once they heard such terrifying catastrophes, Jacker and Gildern went silent. They knew that Link would never lie to them.

Link's face showed a cold smile, "So Jacker, Gildern, do you know the downfalls of being strong now?"

When your power was increased, you were then able to do what other people normally couldn't. These things you achieved would then attract attention from people who were as strong as you were, so you would face much more terrifying opponents.

Take eliminating the Dark Brotherhood for instance; if it was up to the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries alone, not only would they not have been able to defeat the Brotherhood, they also might not have even been able to kill Viktor. Then, they never would have touched the Magic Rune, and so would never have to deal with this present danger they were facing.

But now, everything was different.

Jacker understood what Link meant, but he chuckled and said, "My Lord, everyone has to die, the only difference is how. If I get killed by the strong opponent who used to look down on me, then that's a life well lived."

Gildern held on to the bow in his hand tightly and said, "My Lord, this is just a fact of life for a mercenary."

Link smiled, he felt he had truly chosen the right allies, "Don't worry, it's not that big a deal, we're only facing a small part of the Syndicate anyway. We defeated the Dark Brotherhood, we even killed the Occult Viktor, those hiding thieves of Syndicate can't be that hard to deal with!"

Although truth be told, there were some worrisome troubles about the Syndicate. The first was the matter of saving Lucy's life, and the second was the Syndicate's power that was spread all over the human realm. Even if they managed to destroy the Girvent Forest division of the Syndicate, that doesn't mean it would be the end of their problems.

Link would be fine; as long as he could enter the Magic Academy, he would be safe inside. But not so for Jacker and the rest. Link felt responsible for landing them into this current mess, so he thought it was his responsibility to think of an idea to decrease the risks his followers would face from the Syndicate in the future.

As for what exactly he should do, Link had no idea at the moment.

Forget it, don't think too much, when the time comes I'll find a way. Let's just take one step at a time and make sure the next step is planned properly. Right now, the most important thing is to save Lucy's life. Link tucked away all of his worries about the future and concentrated on the present most pressing problem.

When they heard what Link was saying, Jacker and Gildern both heaved a sigh of relief. Link was their main strength, their central support, and if he had confidence, then all they needed to do was follow his lead and they were sure that everything would be fine.

Just then Link heard uniform hoof beats coming from behind him. He turned around and saw a beautiful carriage being driven towards their direction.

The carriage was drawn by four beautiful Corot horses. The carriage itself was built with solid iron ebony and there were a few spots where silver runes were etched onto the carriage. The carriage was also armed with some defensive spells.

This carriage was many times more luxurious than the one Eliard was riding!

Must be some members of a noble family. Link and the rest had stepped aside to let the carriage pass. Coming from a noble family himself, he had some understanding of these luxury items that only the nobles and the upper-class people could afford.

This kind of carriage would cost at least 2000 gold coins, his old man Hamilton Morani had one too, but it only cost 300 gold coins, the one in front of him now was certainly more expensive.

River Cove town was not far from the royal capital; its views were beautiful. Important people from the city frequently came into the town for their vacations. Needless to say, carriages of this scale and caliber were not a rare sight.

Because Link's head was full of plans to rescue Lucy, he paid no heed to these nobles. He didn't notice at all how the carriage had stopped immediately after passing the three of them.

The knight who followed behind the carriage rode up to the carriage window and seemed to listen carefully to an order. Then the knight turned his horse around and rode towards Link and the two mercenaries.

Jacker and Gildern were both alarmed, and they both gripped their weapons. Link was shocked too, but he didn't panic. He touched them both on their shoulders and reassured the two mercenaries, "Don't worry, there won't be trouble."

And then, he stepped forward.

The knight quickly reached Link, and then condescendingly he shouted, "Young man, report your name."

Link did not immediately answer, he thoroughly scanned the knight in front of him. He was wearing carved silver plate armor and a sky-blue shirt, and on his chest, there was an imprint of a roaring lion a family crest.

In the Norton Kingdom, a roaring male lion was a symbol of the royal family of Abel.

That meant the knight in front of him was a high-ranking knight serving directly under the king, and the person in the carriage must also be an important figure tooprobably a member of the royal family.

Link didn't know why the knight would want his name, but he gave his usual answer, "I am Link Morani, son of Viscount Hamilton Morani."

He had to mention his own noble family name. When interacting with the nobles, he found that they would communicate better with him if he demonstrated himself to be one of them.

As expected, the moment he mentioned his father's name the knight's hard gaze softened. At the same time, a soft voice was heard from the carriage.

The voice was barely audible, but incredibly familiar. Link instantly knew who was inside the carriage. It was Annie Abel, the Iron Duke's only daughter, and King Leon's own niece.

The only trouble was, shouldn't she be in Gladstone? What was she doing here in River Cove Town?

## 49. A Formidable Ally

Ten minutes later, Link and Annie reached the River Cove Inn.

Because Annie was a royal Princess, they couldn't stay in the hall, as it might attract too much attention. So, they gathered on the second floor in the private sitting room of the inn's best suite. Apart from Link and Annie, the knight who had asked for Link's name earlier was there too. His name was Anderson.

In the meantime, Jacker and Gildern remained in the hall downstairs, awaiting the message from the Syndicate.

"Why did you leave before even saying goodbye earlier?" asked Annie.

Annie was clad in a light azure leather armor. She stared fixedly at Link, anticipating his reply. Her deep blue eyes were tinged with signs of anger.

When they met on the streets, she was heading to the capital on royal summons. After the carnage in Gladstone, her father and even King Leon himself had been paying close attention to the matter of the Dark Elf invasion. And because Annie was directly involved in the incident herself, she was called to the capital to report to the king.

Link sighed. He never thought that he would meet this future Legendary Assassin after having escaped so far from Gladstone. He couldn't help but be amazed at such a remarkable coincidence.

In Gladstone, the constant threat from the Dark Elf Assassins had kept Link on his toes so he was perpetually on the move, afraid to linger in one place for too long. But now he was in River Cove Town, a town in the heart of the Norton Kingdom far from any foreign threats. Plus, he had since managed to learn more higher-level spells. So all the apprehensions and anxieties he felt in Gladstone had been sloughed off.

Link pondered for a few seconds, then came up with an idea for a suitable explanation for Annie.

"I guess you're wondering how a Magician's Apprentice could use such a high-level spell as Flame Blast?" said Link, with a laugh.

Annie's attention was grabbed by these words. This was exactly what she had been curious about. Anderson's interest was similarly piqued. He'd always assumed that this young man was just another nobleman's son, or that he was just a regular Magician's Apprentice. He was surprised to find that Link was skillful enough to use such a powerful spell as a Level-4 Flame Blast!

How old is he? He doesn't look any older than 16 or 17! Shouldn't young Magician's Apprentices of this age only know some Level-0 spells? the knight wondered.

And so, under Annie's and Anderson's curious gaze, Link began his explanation that he filled with necessary half-truths.

"I was not capable of casting Flame Blast at first. In fact, the highest-level spells I knew were just some Level-2 spells. But after defeating the Magician Holmes, I went back to the Flemmings Academy and found three Flame Blast magic scrolls there. The power of those scrolls was too powerful for my level, though, so they backfired on me. My body weakened drastically after using them, even to the point where I couldn't cast any spells. You know how dangerous things were in Gladstone. I wouldn't have lastedamnute there in my weakened state. So, in the end, I had no choice but to escape south as quickly and discreetly as I couldbefore I had a chance to say goodbye to you," said Link, carefully going through each word.

He thought his explanation did make sense. There might have been discrepancies at some points, but Flemmings Academy had been burnt to the ground, so there was no way for anyone to invalidate him.

Annie completely boughtito Link's explanation because she thought he had no reason to lie to her. Still, she couldn't help feeling unnerved by Link's actions.

"But you should've told me about it, I would've sent people to protect you and made sure you escaped safely to the South," said Annie.

Tsk, she's being frivolous, how annoying! Link was in a dilemma. Not only was Annie a Princess, she was also a friend. Link understood that she was only acting out of concern, so he couldn't just give her a cold shoulder. And so, he had no choice but to keep on explaining patiently.

"It's fine, because I had found a secret escape route. I reached Girvent Forest safely by midday on the same day," said Link.

With Celine's flying speed, it only took three hours to traverse the distance of a thousand miles between Gladstone and Girvent Forest.

Annie had no more bones to pick with Link, but she still couldn't accept the fact that Link left Gladstone without telling her first. It felt as if Link didn't even care about her feelings wait, what a strange thought that was! Why would Link care about her feelings?

She was completely thrown off balance once she discovered the reason behind her vexation, and the anger in her heart was gone. She quickly tried to regain her composure.

"I saw you looking distressed in the streets, and your two friends looked distraught too. Has anything terrible happened?" asked Annie.

Heaven knows how ardently Link had been waiting for this question.

Annie had the power to rally up considerable strengths behind her. Link was also on fairly good terms with her, so he'd hoped that she might be willing to lend a hand in his fight against the Syndicate.

It wasn't that Link was afraid of facing the Syndicate alone, though. The trouble was the fact that the Syndicate's influence and power had spread all around the human world, so even if he managed to destroy their Girvent Forest division, he would then be faced with wave after wave of counterattacks.

There was a saying that went, 'it is possible to be a thief for a thousand days, but it is impossible to defend against the thieves for the same length of time'. You are much more likely to crumble and fail from passive defense than active offense. Link would hate having to defend himself against the Syndicate for the rest of his life.

But if he was able to get Princess Annie's help, even if the Syndicate discovered that Link had defeated one of their divisions, they would still be helpless against the strength of a nation's army, and thus be much more reluctant to retaliate.

With Annie's help, Link could shift the risks to the Syndicate instead.

And so, Link laid bare everything he'd faced in the River Cove Town for Annie to hear, starting from his meeting with the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries, to their fight against the Dark Brotherhood in pursuit of their gold coins. Then he told Annie about Viktor's hidden treasures and then the Syndicate's discovery of their possession of the hidden treasures, and finally of Lucy's kidnapping. The only thing Link left out was the matter of the Occultic Runes.

He was sure that he could keep the existence of the Occultic Runes a secret from Annie and her company. The Syndicate would never mention it because it was a forbidden item in the Realm of Light. Jacker and Gildern were both his followers, so they wouldn't reveal it either.

Once Link finished his story, Annie turned to Anderson and said, "General, the Syndicate is getting too bold. They dared to cause such trouble even in a town so near to Springs City. Things might turn as bad as it did in Gladstone if nothing is done to keep them in check. Isn't it time we cleanse the kingdom of this dirty group of thieves?"

Everybody knew that the Syndicate was a poisonous and dangerous organization. In fact, every kingdom in the Realm of Light had attempted to destroy the Syndicate, although none of the attempts had any permanent effect. But now that Princess Annie was ordering it, General Anderson was naturally fired up with enthusiasm.

"Yes, your Highness," said Anderson in a solemn voice. He placed his right hand on his heart. "I will rally up the militia in River Cove Town immediately."

"Good. You may go now. The sooner the matter is settled, the better." Annie maintained a cool and haughty facade as she talked to Anderson.

Anderson bowed one more time and walked out of the sitting room in long strides.

Once the door was closed, Annie and Link were alone in the room.

Link's mind was filled with thoughts about the Syndicate, so he felt antsy sitting still in the room doing nothing.

"Princess" he began after a few silent minutes had passed.

"Just call me Annie, the way you did in Gladstone," Annie interjected.

"Alright, Annie, then," said Link, "The Syndicate's message could arrive anytime now, should we move to the hall and wait for it there?"

Jacker and Gildern were both in the hall, but those two had been scared stiff by the thought of facing such an opponent as the Syndicate. Link thought it best for him to be there with them.

"Alright, let's go," replied Annie.

They both stood up and headed for the door, but just as Link's hand was about to reach the doorknob, he heard Annie's soft voice coming from behind him.

"Is Lucy pretty?" she asked.

What kind of a question is that? Link wondered. He stood there in confused silence for a few seconds.

"She's alright," Link finally replied.

"Oh, prettier than me?" asked Annie again.

"You're both uh no, not as pretty as you are, of course," said Link. He finally caught the meaning behind the strange tone in Annie's voice. Could it be that Annie had fallen for him? But that's impossible, they've seen each other for the total of two hours, what kind of feelings could develop that fast?

To be frank, Link thought of Annie as a friend and nothing more. She might be a Princess, and a pretty one at that, but she was just not his type. He had to be careful with what he said, though, lest he hurt her feelings. He didn't want to risk that, for fear that it might influence her decision to help him fight against the Syndicate.

"Lucy is my follower," said Link, as he quickly turned around to face Annie, "We had fought together in battles, so if something happened to her, or even to Jacker or Gildern, I would do anything in my power to help them. Lucy's looks have nothing to do with any of this. It is what I must do to fulfill my obligations as their lord," explained Link in earnest.

Both lord and follower had their own responsibilities and duties to uphold. Once they were sworn to each other, the followers must be loyal to their lord, and in turn, the lord had the duty to protect his followers' interests. If a follower died fighting for him, then the lord must arrange proper funeral rites for the follower so that his other followers won't lose their faith in him.

As expected, Annie brightened up the moment she heard Link's explanation. Her footsteps quickened and she caught up behind Link. Her attitude was noticeable more positive too.

"If you have trouble entering the academy, I can write you a recommendation letter. My father has a friend who's a powerful Level-6 Magician. He's also a tutor at the East Cove Magic Academy. He will take you under his wing as soon as my father orders it. With your talents, he would be more than happy to accept you as his student. I'll let it pass this time, but you must let me help you if you're ever in trouble next time," said Annie.

"I'll remember that," replied Link.

And so Link opened the door and the two exited the room. But before they went any further, they bumped into Jacker at the stairs.

"My Lord, there was a letter from the Syndicate," he said.

"What did it say?" asked Link, his face stony.

"They demanded us to meet them at the Red Leaves Cove, south of River Cove Town, before three o'clock in the afternoon, bringing gold coins in exchange for Lucy's safety," said Jacker. He saw Annie there and thought it unwise to mention the crystal in front of an outsider, so he changed it to 'gold coins' instead.

Annie didn't catch anything suspicious in Jacker's tone, she only frowned in anger and said, "Has the Syndicate's power grown to such an extent in the Girvent Forest? It seems that I've arrived at the right time!"

Jacker didn't quite understand what Annie meant, so he looked to Link for an explanation.

"Princess Annie will help us rescue Lucy. General Anderson has gone to town to rally up the militia on her orders," said Link.

Jacker perked up instantly. With the help of the royal family, the Syndicate's threats now appeared much less terrifying. It seemed that there was a chance that Lucy could be saved. Still, he was amazed to learn that his Lord was acquainted with a royal Princess and was on such good terms with her too!

Link turned to Annie and said, "Annie, the most important thing right now is to save Lucy, we can think of destroying the Syndicate later. We can't make too much commotion right now, lest they might uncover our plans. I'm planning to go there with Gildern and Jacker, then you and the rest can quietly follow along later"

"No, I'll go with you now, Anderson will wait here to make further plans and follow us later. And don't try to stop me, it's too dangerous for you to fight alone. You saved my life in Gladstone once, so let me help you now," said Annie, looking resolute.

"All right." Link knew there was no point in arguing the matter, so he only nodded.

And so, Annie quickly wrote a letter, and told her servant to send it to Anderson.

"Let's get going," she said, "We'll ride my horses!"

## 50. What a Tenacious Young Lady

The Red Leaves Cove was about two miles north of River Cove town. There were many maple trees in the area and every fall season the whole cove would be covered in red leaves, giving it its name.

The shape of the cove was long and narrow, with a small stream flowing through the middle. Because it was fall, the stream was almost dried up, exposing a big area of the riverbanks.

In a grove beside the riverbank, stood a solitary log cabin.

Surrounding the log cabin was a thick blanket of darkness. These were where all the thieves of the Syndicate hid. They were experts of camouflage. Even the birds, and other small creatures there had no idea of their presence.

The interior of the log cabin was sparse. Hanging in the middle of the room were two iron chains where Lucy's hands were each hung. Her hair was messy, the leather armor was stripped off from her body, and her whole naked body was marked with bruises and bloodstains from lashings. In some places, her skin was whipped into minced meat; you could almost see the bones inside.

The Syndicate had always been extremely brutal in the treatment of their captives. Lucy had only been captured two hours ago, but already they had tortured her to the brink of death.

A dark shadow stood at the corner this was the executioner in charge.

"Well, pretty lady, are you still unwilling to speak?" His voice was exceptionally calm and gentle, it sounded like he was conversing with old friends.

Lucy's head drooped weakly, she let her fiery red hair fall on her face. Streams of blood trickled down her body, forming pools of blood on the floor.

Once she heard the voice of the dark shadow, her body automatically started to shiver. In the past two hours, every time the voice emerged, it was accompanied quickly after with whips.

As expected, a black whip conjured out of the darkness like a venomous snake from the dark shadow's hand. Smack! It hit Lucy's chest, and the whip coiled back immediately, bringing with it a piece of her flesh.

The thrashing this time was especially heavy-handed. With an incredible force, the whip penetrated Lucy's chest. Lucy felt a sweet taste in her throat as blood rushed up, but she swallowed and forced it back down.

Her face contorted slightly, then it carved out a wry smile, "Don't you have any other tricks apart from whips?" Lucy said weakly.

Lucy could handle the pain just fine. She had been a mercenary for such a long time and had suffered through much worse than this. Once, they were catching magma spiders on the volcano of Blackstone Hill in the North. The fire spider had spurted its acidic saliva on Lucy and the pain she felt then was immeasurableshe could recall it vividly even now.

But she didn't make a peep from that kind of pain, so even if the whip was doused with salt water, it would still be nothing she couldn't bear!

As soon as she finished the sentence, the whip came again. This time it was on her face. But because her thick layers of red hair covered her face, the whipping was not so bad, but still, it did leave a deep bloody line.

"Why do you have to keep it a secret?" the black shadow's voice finally showed a slight change in tone, "If it's money you want, I can give you 1000 gold coins right now, you can take the money and go wherever you want, and live the rest of your life in luxury."

"Stop dreaming!" Lucy spat out blood in the direction of the corner, "I'll come back and kill you all!"

She was no damsel in distress who could do nothing but cry and wait to be rescued. Her nickname among the mercenaries was Fire Rose. She would pay whatever debt was due, whether it was a debt of gratitude or revenge. She vowed that if she ever escaped this place, she would come back and repay what these cowards hiding in shadows did to her in kind!

"I hate to disappoint you, but you will never live to do so. No one will come to save you. I should, perhaps, inform you that we are members of the Syndicate. Your two mercenary friends stand no chance against us, not that they would even risk it, hehe," the black shadow mirthlessly laughed, and continued, "After all, your torture has only just begun. If you don't talk now, I will teach you what hell on Earth is like!"

The moment she heard the word Syndicate, her heart sank. Of course, she knew the Syndicate. It was a venomous snake entrenched in the Firuman continent. The southern part of Girvent Forest was their main territory.

Their power far outweighed that of the Dark Brotherhood by ten, maybe a hundred times over. This is much beyond what the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries had the capability of fighting against. Even if Jacker and Gildern came to save her, they would only be meeting their end here.

If the one who captured her was the Syndicate, then it seemed she had no chance to survive after all.

She laughed bitterly, in her mind there flashed a picture of a thin and frail figure that of the genius young Magician. The Lord she had just recently sworn her allegiance to; would he come and save her?

She wasn't sure.

In her memories, the young man's attitude had always been calm and indifferent. His eyes did not seem to ever move; they were dark and black, deep and quiet, as if nothing would ever rouse his feelings.

When she cleaned his room, he never even set his eyes on her. Her sensational figure, her beautiful face, none of it ever attracted him. His eyes were forever fixed on his spells and magic. The most reaction she got was a simple "thank you" when she was done, and nothing more.

For such an impassive person, she could in no way discern what kind of place she had in his heart and mind, but, she guessed, she probably wasn't all that important to him.

Ah, I was planning to focus on my Battle Art practice the next few days. But I guess I won't ever have the chance to do it now, Lucy sighed internally.

A brilliant path lay right in front of her, but just as she was stepping up to it, right at the last moment, a venomous snake jumped out and bit her. And now, everything crumbled, all that was left was darkness.

"Do you get it now?" in the corner, the dark shadow spoke once again.

Lucy bit down on her lips, shook her head, "I will never tell you."

Syndicate's power was huge, even if her Lord Link was a powerful Magician, it was possible that even he might not be able to defeat them. It would be understandable for him to not come and save her, but she could never break her oath and betray him.

"What a tenacious young lady. I do admire you, haha." Out walked a figure from the dark corner, his features were gradually emerging, and this person was dressed like a typical thiefmasked, and clad in brown leather armor. His left hand was carrying a whip dripping with blood, and his right hand was holding a sharp dagger.

He threw the leather whip away, then swung the dagger around, and with silent steps walked up to Lucy. He reached out his hand and lifted Lucy's chin, then laughed and said, "Do you see this dagger? It's called Dissector."

As he was speaking, he traced a circle on Lucy's breast with the dagger. His voice became even more gentle as he said, "It is exceptionally sharp. For those who refuse to cooperate, I will cut open their flesh bit by bit. I will cut open their chest, so they can see their hearts beating. Then I will cut open their guts, so they can see their own livers, intestines and the rest. But don't worry, I will be very gentle, so it won't hurt too much, and you won't die quickly."

"You're a demon!" Lucy finally felt a real terror. She never feared death, but she did fear this horrifying torture.

"Thank you for that compliment," said the thief, smiling cruelly. His eyes were extraordinarily cold, "Now, this is your last chance. Will you speak, or will you stay silent?"

For an instant, there was hesitation in Lucy's mind, but she forced it away quickly. She bit her lips and said, "I'd rather die. Then I'll be up there in the kingdom of gods looking down on you as you're going to hell!"

"Ahhh" the thief sighed, the dagger slowly approaching and was about to pierce through Lucy's bloody chest.

But right at this moment, someone knocked on the door, and a voice from outside said, "My Lord, the River Cove town mercenaries have sent a message."

The thief immediately stopped his actions, put the dagger away, and patted Lucy's face. "Oh, so your comrades have come to die. They are just as stupid as you are."

As he spoke, the thief opened the wooden door and walked out.

Lucy's eyes suddenly sparkled. Is he here to save me?

She knew Jacker and Gildern well enough to know that they would definitely come to rescue her, but they had no way of finding her this fast. the only person who could figure out where she was taken and send a messenger in this short period of time was Link.

In this moment, a mixture of emotions churned inside herthere was joy, worry, and gratitude. In her mind, the figure of that young Magician had now become clearer and clearer.

...

Outside the log cabin.

As Andy heard the message from his underling, his brows furrowed. Why would there be a Magician among them? Damn it all!

They demanded Lucy be safe and without harm, but she had been beaten until her whole body was bloodied and bruised. This could pose some problems. He contemplated and said, "Go tell them to come to the Red Leaves Cove."

"Yes, my Lord." The thief turned around and left.

Andy stared at the back of the thief and thought, Normal people wouldn't know about Magic Runes and they certainly wouldn't dare touch it. Only Magicians know its true value. It seems it really has fallen into the hands of a Magician. Ha! Only three of them, and they still want to fight me, what idiots!

Andy then whistled, and not long after, a black shadow appeared from the bushes. "My Lord, what are your orders?"

"Assemble all Night Blade members and tell them to wear their anti-magic armor and carry their anti-magic daggers! And bring me my anti-magic gear!" Andy ordered.

"Yes, my Lord."

Mockingly, Andy said, "A Magician? Let's see what you can do."

## 51. Let Magic Roar!

Thirty minutes after receiving the letter from the Syndicate, Link, Annie, and the two mercenaries had reached the opening of the Red Leaves Cove on horseback.

It was late fall and the cove was awash with fiery red maple leaves. Weeds and shrubs thronged the spaces between the maple trees. Except for the stream that flowed through the middle of the cove, the whole place was full of nooks and crannies where the thieves of the Syndicate could be lying in wait. If they barged into the cove without prior planning or preparation, just one misstep and they could easily be surrounded and captured.

A narrow, craggy path ran through the middle of the cove. It was too small for the horses to trot on, so they had to dismount their horses and walk from there.

Jacker walked in front with his shield raised, Annie was at Link's left side, and Gildern walked behind him. As they entered the cove, Link saw a notification popped up on the interface.

New Mission Series Activated: Venomous Snake in the Girvent Forest!

First Mission: Rescue.

Mission Details: Rescue Lucy who was captured and tortured by the Syndicate.

Mission Rewards: 20 Omni Points.

Link accepted the mission without hesitation. He now had 14 Omni Points, while his Mana was almost full at 96 points. His Glass Orbs only consumed 1 Mana point each, and his Level-1 spell Whistle only needed 4 Mana points. All in all, he had more than enough resources to put up a good fight against the Syndicate.

Their visibility in the woods was very limited, so to protect themselves against sneak attacks, Link used the Aura Detection spell on his eyes in order to see everything's Innate Aura. Non-living things and plants had stable and unmoving auras, but animals and humans were covered in auras that actively moved and vibrated.

The auras that the three people beside him emitted were both intense and energetic. Jacker's aura was yellow, and it shone the mostitensely. This meant that his Combat Aura was the most powerful. Annie's aura was grey, which came from the energy of shadows that Assassins possessed. But what surprised him the most was Gildern's luminous green aura, which was the color of the wind element.

Gildern's green aura was much brighter and more intense than what Link had seen previously. It seemed that even though he hadn't cast the Hidden Power spell on Gildern yet, he had been practicing his skills according to the Battle Art techniques that Jacker had shared with him. He managed to achieve impressive progress just from that.

After walking for about five minutes, Link saw a flash of aura behind a large boulder that was about 160 feet awayhe immediately knew that it was a scout sent by the Syndicate.

The scout was a bit far from them, and he was hiding in an inconspicuous spot, so Annie and the mercenaries did not notice him. Nevertheless, nothing could escape the eyes of a Magician!

Right now, they had absolutely no idea of what to expect in the Red Leaves Cove, but now fate had provided them with someone to interrogate. So Link grabbed the opportunity and began to make the first move. Mana flowed into Link's wand and it vibrated slightly, then a light blue glass orb started to form.

"Go!" Link pointed the wand at the big boulder, and the glass orb whistled through the air in a high-pitched screechin less than a second it traversed more than 160 feet. Just before it hit the stone, it changed its trajectory abruptly and circled around the boulder.

Bang! From the distance, they could hear a howl of pain coming from behind the boulder. The Glass Orb had successfully hit its target!

Jacker and Gildern were used to seeing Link's magic in action by now, so they weren't stirred by it much. But it was Annie's first time.

"Link," she exclaimed, "What was that spell? How could it work at such a huge distance?"

She was much more knowledgeable about magic than the mercenaries, so she knew that normal elemental spells could only work at a distance of no more than 100 to 130 feet, but Link had just unleashed a spell that worked at 200 feet!

"It's Fireball, but I've modified it," Link explained while signaling the rest to head towards the boulder, "Do you still remember the Dark Elf Magician in Gladstone who cast a spell that worked at a large distance too? I used the same technique he did."

"Is it Supreme Magical Skill?" asked Annie. She was beginning to understand Link's powers.

But the more she understood it, the more stunned she was by it. Link must now have a deep understanding of the workings of magic to be able to modify spells with Supreme Magical Skills. Moreover, she knew that the process of modifying a spell, even a Level-0 spell, was arduous and time-consuming. Some Level-6 Magicians might need months to perfect a stable modified spell.

Annie remembered clearly that Link did not have this skill when they were in Gladstone. But it had only been barely more than a month since then and he had managed to achieve such vast progresswhat level of talent was she witnessing here? If she had seen Link's whistle, she would've been in for a bigger shock.

Link didn't have the time to explain, so he only nodded in reply to Annie's question.

The four checked behind the boulder and saw a man clad in a greyish brown leather armor writhing on the ground in pain. His left arm had been blown off his shoulder by the Glass Orb.

There were characters in movies on Earth who could still run around after their arms had been blown off. But in reality, the pain of limbs getting amputated was unimaginably debilitating. The wounded thief now had a deathly pale face, and he couldn't stop wailing. Not only was he unable get up and run, he couldn't even manage to keep himself conscious.

Jacker walked up to the thief and tore up a piece of cloth from the thief's underclothes, then wrapped it around the stub of his arm to prevent further blood loss. Then he slapped the thief twice in the face, and the thief immediately swallowed his cries and came to his senses.

Link took a step towards the thief and pointed his wand at his skull. A faint icy aura appeared at the tip of the wand. "Tell me, where is the woman held?"

This was just a Level-1 thief, not much different from any other common folk, so he was easily awed and stunned by signs of magic. Naturally, Link's threatening method worked well with him.

"She's she's in the cabin on the Silverfish riverbank," said the thief laboriously due to the pain.

"Silverfish riverbank?" Link had never heard of the place.

"My Lord, I know the place," said Jacker.

Link was relieved. This would make their mission much easier.

"Who ordered the kidnapping?" Link asked the thief.

"It...It was Andy. He's a Level-3 Assassin, a terrifying person," said the thief, gulping. He was hesitant to answer Link's questions but was even more scared of the magic coming from the wand.

Andy? Link blinked a few times while recalling where he had heard such a familiar name. It was in the game. Andy was one of the members of Morpheus's core group, and the first boss a player would encounter in the mission to defeat Morpheus. When he was playing the game, Andy was already a Level-5 Assassin.

Link was surprised to learn that Andy was only a leader of the small Girvent Forest division of the Syndicate now.

Andy had no particular strength or power that stood out in the game, the only thing that was infamous about him was his ruthlessness and cruelty, as well as the fact that he was a perverted man through and through. If he was a man from Earth, he would have been a sadistic and psychopathic serial-killer, like Leatherface of the movie Texas Chainsaw Massacre.

The thing that worried Link the most right now was how wealthy and powerful the Syndicate was in comparison to the Dark Brotherhood. They would be able to afford a myriad of special equipment and potions, so even though Andy's own strength might not be that impressive, with some aid he could still be a terrifying opponent.

"What schemes did they set up in the cove?" asked Link. He feared for Lucy's life now because he knew that Andy's brutality was something not to be trifled with.

"I don't know, I'm just a lowly thief, please have mercy," said the thief, his face contorting in pain.

Link could sense that he really didn't know, so he didn't wait for him to finish talking before using Magician's Hand to break his neck. It was war between them and the Syndicate the moment they captured Lucy. Should he have granted the thief mercy and let him go back to report on them? Absolutely not!

"Let's go now! To the Silverfish riverbank!" Jacker knew the place, so he lead the way. Along the way, Link used the Aura Detection spell and he uncovered three more scouts. He attacked each one with his Glass Orbs, interrogated them, and finally killed them all!

By the time the Silverfish riverbank emerged on the horizon, they had formed a rough idea of what to expect from the opponent.

Andy would not be there waiting for them. He had assembled elite members of the Syndicate, armed them with special gear, and ordered them to lie in wait near the cabin, ready to ambush them.

As for what kind of special gear it was, Link had no doubt that it was one that was often used to fight against Magicians anti-magic armor.

The four walked along the rugged path until a cabin on the riverbank came into their view. The information they gained from their interrogations was that Lucy was held inside the cabin, but the moment they reached there, they were faced, instead, with an atrocious scene.

Lucy was not inside the cabin; she was dangling from a tree outside the cabin. Her arms were hung in chains and her body was stripped naked and covered with bloody lacerations all over. Thick blood still dripped slowly from her toes down to the ground. From afar, she seemed completely lifeless, and her head hung down limply from her shoulders while her face was covered by her red hair. It wasn't clear at all whether she was still alive. It was an abhorring sight!

Jacker's face reddened, and he gripped the hammer in his hand so tightly that it squeaked. Gildern gritted his teeth in silent wrath. Even an outsider like Annie was enraged.

"Those savages!" said Annie, "We must make them pay for what they did in kind!"

There didn't seem to be any changes in Link's expression, but his eyes had grown much darker and his breathing had slowed down considerablyhe was already in the focused state of spellcasting!

Lucy was still alive, Link could sense that through Aura Detection. But now Andy's barbaric schemes had managed to ignite the flame of fury in him, and this flame could only be extinguished by Andy's blood!

"You'll get a taste of my magic powers, just you wait and see," said Link, as Mana surged through his body.

At least twenty elite members of the Syndicate lay in ambush around the log cabin, or to be more precise, around Lucy.

These elite members were clad in anti-magic armor and armed with various expensive anti-magic gear that would completely mask their Innate Auras. There was a downside to this though. Everything in the universe emits Innate Aura, the masked auras of the thieves would create a black outline against a backdrop of Innate Aura emitted by everything else in its surroundings.

The Syndicate was well aware of this point, though, and they had a countermeasure against it. Apart from the anti-magic armor, they would also hide behind a barricade made of thick wooden planks; it was built like a small, triangular, wooden hut. The exterior of the barricade would be covered with sticks and grass, making it even harder to tell apart.

Additionally, the thick planks of wood would be covered with more anti-magic armor. This way, average-level spells were obstructed from being able to penetrate the barricade.

These arrangements clearly exposed Andy's defensive tactics.

"I used Lucy to taunt you. And I didn't kill her to let you think up of ways to rescue her, just so I can aggravate you!"

If infuriating Link and the rest was Andy's goal, then he had definitely achieved it.

In the hiding place, Link laid out his plans, "Lucy is still alive. Jacker, you protect me. Gildern, you are to kill those that survive, and Annie, you sneak in there and rescue Lucy.

His tone was as usual, very plain and calm, but Jacker who was familiar with him could detect a certain coldness in it. There was an air of bloodthirstiness and ruthlessness around him; that surge of magic aura around Link made hishi

He immediately nodded, "Understood."

Gildern inhaled deeply, then nodded and said, "Yes, my Lord."

Annie felt a kind of psychological oppression, she subconsciously obeyed Link's words and said, "Understood."

Link put away his New Moon wand and decided to instead use the superior Fire Crystal staff!

Annie knew what happened in Gladstone, so he had no need to hide his true power.

The moment the Fire Crystal staff appeared, the fist-sized flame crystal at the tip glowed a blazing red. It was influenced by Link's burning fury, and this light was burning brilliantly just like a flame.

But even though his heart was in fury, Link's mind was still in pristine order; his concentration was perfectly in focus, time slowed down in his mind, and everything in his surroundings became calm and quiet.

Massacre, begin!

With the staff in his hand, Link violently shot up from the hiding spot. Jacker immediately followed behind him and with his shield raised high, he protected Link from the arrows shooting from the dark.

Gildern stood on the other side of Link, his hand holding a fine quality mulberry wood longbow, and nocked his steel arrows. He actively searched for targets in the dark.

Then, Link's magic began to roar!

The thieves, wearing anti-magic gear, hid behind their barricades and taunted Lucy. This sparked something in Link as he prepared to cast a spell.

Whistle

Level-1 Modified Mixed Spell

Mana Consumption: 4

Effects: With Vector Throw as its foundation, a mix of metal and fire energy form a high-speed, rotating spear. IT contains extreme levels of penetrating and explosive energy.

(Note: As the whistle blows, the God of Death closely follows.)

Link held iron filings in his palm and threw them into the air in front of him. Less than a second later, the first Whistle took form and flew towards the area where Link detected Innate Aura.

This target was about 160 feet away. That distance might be too great for the average Magician, but for Link's modified spell Whistle, it wasn't far enough!

Barely half a second later, this high-speed rotating spike threaded through the trees, avoiding them by a hair's breadth, then penetrated through the thick barricade.

The barricade was about an inch thick; it was enough to block normal Level-1 Fireball attacks, but it was simply no match for a spell like Whistle.

Bang!Whistle penetrated the barricade and reached the sealed space inside the planks.

Three Assassins crouched on the ground behind the barricade. This tactic of having three people hiding in one place was to prevent being ambushed in the dark. It was one of Andy's schemes, a clever one at that, but it had actually sped up his own defeat.

The spike of death easily penetrated the barricade and on impact, the fiery core inside the metal shell immediately exploded.

When Level-1 fire element spells explode, its explosive power was about equivalent to that of a hand grenade on Earthif grenades were covered with an iron shell.

Bang! The spell exploded and flames flew and scattered. The metal shrapnel shot through the air in all four directions and the Syndicate Assassins inside had nowhere to hide from it all.

The anti-magic leather armor on their bodies had the ability to block the damage from the flames for about a minute. That was at least enough not to render them incapacitated. But how much could leather armors protect, ultimately? When faced with the flying shrapnel, these Assassins were as vulnerable as newborn babies.

Andy was the Syndicate's division leader. He never actively took part in battles and had always been hiding from afar observing. He heard a magic explosion and immediately turned to its direction.

It's a Fire Spell, looking at the power, it must be Fireball. Night Blade members could definitely survive this, Andy deduced from his past experiences.

The Fireball spell was made purely of the fire element; the damage from the flames must have been minimal because every Night Blade member wore anti-magic leather armor.

Just as he was making these conclusions, he heard eight explosions just within three seconds!

This was exactly the number of hiding spots that he planted around Lucy where the Assassins lay in ambush.

Then, the cove quieted down.

Andy was full of confidence that his underlings could stand up and fight, but then, he saw the Magician who was the cause of all the commotion. He was standing at the riverbanks behind the grove with only a Warrior holding a shield and an Archer by his side to protect him. At this moment, had there still been some Assassins alive, just ten of them charging at the three would have successfully captured them.

After capturing them, he was sure that his torture methods could make anyone blurt all their secrets out.

But after the commotion, one second, two seconds, then three seconds passed, and the hiding spots were still quiet and motionless. Andy's heart began to sink.

After the barricades erupted in flames, there was some screaming, but none of the Assassins inside stood up and came out to fight. In fact, the screams only lasted momentarily. The wooden planks which the Assassins used to hide behind had been destroyed to pieces, while Gildern shot his arrows at the surviving Assassins who did not die in the explosions. None had survived.

After only a couple seconds, 22 Night Blade Elite Assassins perished. They were dead before they even understood what happened to them.

Andy's face became very pale. He looked at his two underlings beside himthese two were both crouching on the ground, silent, and one of them was trembling. They had been scared out of their wits.

He then looked at the surviving Night Blade members; they all had no choice but to retreat hastily.

What kind of spell did he use? What terrifying power he has! Andy couldn't find an explanation for what was happening. This was beyond what he knew about magic!

Then, he suddenly saw a black shadow appear beside Lucy. It shot two darts, cutting the cord that held Lucy, causing her to fall, but the shadow caught her before she hit the ground. Then, Lucy was carried on the shadow's back and they both escaped.

The shadow's speed left Andy shocked. That speed, only a Level-3 Assassin could do that! But why would there be a Level-3 Assassin among them?

He had investigated it earlier and found out that they only consisted of three people: one was a Level-3 Warrior, and the rest were just average Level-2 fighters. The Magician who was with them was not even able to enter East Cove Higher Magic Academy!

How could a Magician that wasn't even accepted by the academy be so strong? They had defeated the Dark Brotherhood, but what puzzled Andy was, firstly, how could the Dark Brotherhood be so weak, and secondly, what kind of spells did the Magician use?

In the Cove of Echoes, the black-robed Magician did say that he did not discover any trace of high-level spells being used there. The highest level spell used was only Level-1.

Andy had planned his tactics today based on that information. But now he realized how wrong he had been.

"My Lord, what should we do now?" asked his right-hand man in a low voice.

Andy was sweating in fear. He glanced at the Magician on the riverbanks and just at that moment, Link saw him too, as if he had discovered his location. Andy began to panic.

"Retreat! Retreat! I won't fight those people!"

They were just a band of thievesall they ever did was collect money and do errands. Now that their lives were in danger, there was no point in doing any favors for anyone.

So Andy lead the surviving Night Blade members and escaped the Silverfish riverbanks.

He was quick, and he was familiar with the tits and turns of the Red Leaves Cove, so in no time at all, they were far away from the Silverfish riverbank.

However, when he turned a corner, he bumped into a person standing in the middle of the path. He knew this person; it was the black-robed Magician who was the messenger from the main division of Syndicate.

"When did you get here?" Andy asked, shock evident in his voice.

The black-robed Magician said with a croaky voice, "I'm here to help you fight that Magician."

"You're going to fight him yourself?" Andy was both surprised and happy, although, in his memory, this Magician had never been one to dirty his own hands.

"This Magician is worthy of my time!" The black-robed Magician gently waved the wand in his hand. The wand was made of pure Mithril, and embedded in the tip of the wand was a goose egg-sized, deep blue, magic gemstone glowing in a light blue magic light.

Then he followed his exclamation closely with, "But he's very strong, so we'll have to lay out our plans carefully."

...

On the other side of the cove, Link said to Annie, "Bring her back with you, I'll chase and kill them!"

He couldn't end the battle by letting Andy escape. He would never be at peace if he didn't kill that cruel and perverted venomous snake.

As he was speaking, a notification flashed on the interface.

Mission First Step: Rescue Completed.

Omni Points Achieved: 20

Excellent! Add that up to his existing 14 Omni Points and he now had 34 points, and 63 Mana points left. That was more than enough!

At the same time, the second step in the mission was activated.

Mission: Pursue and Kill

Mission details: Attack and kill elite members of the Syndicate division.

Mission Rewards: 25 Omi Points

Current Progress: 22/32

That's good. If even the gaming system supported this action, then there was no reason for him to back off from it.

Annie felt a little anxious, but she knew that under these circumstances, just like when they were in Gladstone, there was no stopping Link from doing what he set out to do. She had no choice but to nod and agree, "Fine, but be careful. Leave some marks on your way, so General Anderson can quickly catch up with you."

"Understood." Link nodded.

He turned around to look at Lucy. This tenacious woman was still conscious. She did not make a sound and was staring wide-eyed at Link. She had resolutely not given in or begged for mercy. She even suffered through the pain without so much as a groan, but now that she saw her Lord and comrades right there in front of her, she turned into a little child who was reunited with her parents. Her stony countenance softened and her eyes brimmed with tears.

Link saw the lines of bruises and blood stains from lashings on Lucy's body, so he lifted his staff and pointed it at her and cast a spell.

"Elemental Cure."

A shroud of light covered Lucy's body, replenishing and curing the lost elements. When the spell had done its job, Link turned around and told Jacker, "Let's go, we'll kill those thieves!"

## 52. Super Long-Distance Assault

The pathways in the Cove of Red Leaves were winding and narrow. The area after crossing the Riverbed of Silverfish was particularly difficult to maneuver around, with the dense forest blocking their every step.

But that was precisely what made Andy's trails especially clear.

The trampled undergrowth, splintered chopped wood from their hasty escape, and the unnatural position of bushesthese clues were telling and voluminous.

A fully armored Jacker cleared the path with a shield in one hand and a sword in the other. Currently, there was no shred of fear in his heart.

With the asstance of Princess Annie, Link's destructive magic power, and his increasingly powerful abilitiescoupled with his intricate equipment, these bolstered his courage.

Even the Syndicate was on the run from them.

In order to keep up with Jacker, Link cast a spell of Cat's Agility on both Gildern and himself. Gildern took up the role of a rear scout, as his marksman abilities were not made for close quarters combat.

They moved swiftly through the forest.

After ten minutes, Jacker was the first to reach the summit and the bird's eye view allowed him to spot the enemy easily. A team clad in brown leather armor, similar to that of the Syndicate bandits they defeated previously, were hastily on the run.

"My Lord, there's the enemy!" Jacker pointed ahead.

The enemy was at the foot of the mountain and there were roughly 15 of them. They were traveling at a relatively fast pace, albeit slower than Link due to the treacherous terrain of the mountains, which required them to constantly bash their way through the overgrowth.

However, something was amiss with this group of bandits.

In theory, they should have been on the run due to fear of his magical prowess. As much as Andy was an impressive leader who instilled confidence in his men, they should have appeared hysterical and afraid.

And while this group of bandits was indeed traveling at a fast pace, they did not seem to be desperate. "Instead of being on the run, they seem to be on the retreat," Link clearly made a distinction between the two terms.

How could that be possible? Link placed himself in the shoes of the bandits. If his intricately planned ambush was easily overcome by the enemy, it would be a huge impact on his morale, even for him. He would definitely be frantically on the run.

Are you telling me these bandits are still clinging on to some form of hope? What if, they have other manpower are already waiting in ambush for us? several possibilities flashed through Link's mind.

An ambush wouldn't be a problem for Link. His Aura Detection spell could easily pinpoint the hiding spots of his enemies.

However, something was still off. Link estimated the distance between the bandits and himself. He was currently occupying a higher ground of about 600 feet. It was at that moment Link had an epiphany.

Not only did he have the advantage of a higher ground, the group of bandits was also tightly clustered, his whistle would definitely be an unpleasant surprise for them!

"Since it might be a trap, let us commence our assault from here!" Link ordered, "Jacker, you continue on the pursuit, Gildern and I will catch up soon enough!"

"Roger!" Jacker had unflinching trust in Link and he sped towards the bandits without any second thoughts.

"Watch my back," Link said to Gildern.

Gildern nodded and unsheathed his dagger, standing on guard beside Link.

Link set his sights on the bandits and grabbed a handful of steel dust from his pocket. He felt a wave of magical energy surging into his Fire Crystal Staff and 0.2 seconds later, a metallic flaming tip formed at the top of his staff.

The metallic tip spun at a high speed and created a whistling sound that pierced through the silent forest, visible air ripples forming around it as magical energy continuously flowed. This phenomenon was caused when magical energy, elemental energy, and air interacted with one another.

Gildern looked at the magic with great respect, in awe of its terrifying power.

Link, on the other hand, was fully absorbed in his spellcasting, calculating the angle of assault in his mind.

In that instant, Link saw multiple images which converged at the position his enemies were currently at. He also saw many murky images which dictated their possible positions in the future.

Between him and those images was a long parabola which dictated his line of fire.

Link knew in his heart that this was the game interface giving support to players during spell casting, and not his own powers.

The game interface was useful not only in supplying missions that awarded Omni Points, but also in assting him in spellcasting which greatly increased his attacking speed. And now, it was even helping him to make more precise attacks.

I wonder what else the system is capable of, Link thought expectantly.

The enemy was starting to fade away from his sight. Link slightly adjusted his spellcasting angle and without a second thought, fired his powerful magic attack!

Fwoosh~ The Whistle let out a high pitched sound and sped through the atmosphere, landing a hit on the bandits.

Six hundred feet was a really long distance for spellcasting. At the 300-foot mark, Link could barely control the attack, and by the 600 feet mark, Link could barely even feel the existence of the magic anymore. It was tough to ensure the magic didn't disintegrate.

This was the difference between magic and weapons like guns, bows, and arrows. Magic was way more volatile and difficult to control!

In order to preserve the integrity of the magic, a Magician had to constantly focus and control his powers. The maximum distance of an attack was dependent on both the techniques of the Magician and the tenacity of the Magician's soul.

Naturally, the discussion of the soul falls into the realm of mystic studies, and its strength was difficult to quantify. Judging from Link's current power, maintaining a magical attack beyond 600 feet was already his limit.

It was impossible for him to control the trajectory of his attack at this distance.

The success of this long distance attack fully depended on his estimations before he lost control of his magic.

Link had full faith in the game system that the line of fire shown would allow him to successfully hit his targets.

The foot of the mountains.

...

Andy had no clue about his impending demise. After the black-robed Magician promised to offer help, the Magician on his tail was the least of his worries. Link was strong, but he too had a strong Magician on his side.

Currently, he simply had to follow the plan he made together with the black-robed Magician to lead Link into the trap they created.

When Link appeared at the mountain's summit, Andy was elated, the trap was set up midway down the mountains. As long as his enemies continued to be on their trail, they would fall victim to their elaborately planned trap.

Andy even slowed down his pace so that he could turn back to aid the black-robed Magician when the trap was triggered.

"No one has ever managed to make me look so bad in front of my men. When I get hold of you, you will be sorry you were ever born!" Andy browsed through the thousands of torture methods he knew by heart and swore to use them all on Link.

All of a sudden, a voice disrupted him from his thoughts.

"Hide behind the trees now! Immediately!"

The voice was anxious and rough, yet familiarit was the black-robed Magician!

Andy had no idea what was happening but he trusted that the black-robed Magician would do him no harm. He threw himself behind a tree nearly a foot and a half wide in diameter.

At that moment, he heard a familiar yet terrifying whistling sound hissing into his ears.

A sharp sound echoed through the surroundings and boom! Andy felt a heat wave surge through the forest, violently disrupting the tranquility. This was followed by cries of pain and despair.

He emerged from his hiding spot and saw a revolting scene. At the place he was at, the remaining 14 members of the Syndicate lay lifelessly on the ground. Five of them died immediately on the spot while nine of them were injured. Among them, the five who were lucky enough to suffer mild injuries had a look consumed by fear and had already lost all morale.

The Syndicate bandits had lowered their guard and stuck together in a small group simply because they thought the enemy was far away.

Little did they know that a Whistle spell from Link almost wiped out their entire squad.

No, it did, in fact, wipe out the whole squad!

Andy's heart was beating at an insane rate, just when he wanted to remind the remaining members to split up and take cover, the familiar voice rang out again.

"Hide! The attack is here again!"

With lightning speed, Andy retreated behind the same tree.

The whistling sound struck again, followed by a deafening explosion and propelling rubble and dirt everywhere.

The only difference was the lack of screams. This time, there was complete silence.

Andy was devastated. The Night Blade Squad that he spent so much effort cultivating was now history.

In the end, they were all useless in the face of magic.

Is magic really such a fearsome power? Or is it the Magician that is terrifying? Have I incurred the wrath of someone Ishould never have? Andy began to question his decisions. His mind was in a whirl.

Link's magic had exceeded the expectations of Andy in every way. Under the fearsome assault, Andy's efforts were once again, all for naught.

## 53. Psychological Warfare

On the Summit of the Hill.

...

Two more Whistles were unleashed, and the last remaining elite members of the Syndicate were killed. Then, Link noticed a flash of light on the interface, so he glanced at the new notification that just popped up.

Pursue and Kill Mission Completed.

Player rewarded with 25 Omni Points.

Next Mission Activated: Assassinate Andy.

Mission Details: Kill the leader of the thieves, Andy.

Missions Reward: 40 Omni Points.

Link accepted the mission immediately. He now had 59 Omni Points and 38 Mana points. Link knew that Andy might not be the last he would see of the Syndicate, but he'd be content with just being able to kill him alone after seeing what he'd done. One thing did make Link pause, thoughthe mission's high reward.

Andy's strength isn't that impressive, so why is the reward so high? Is he really worth 40 Omni Points? Is there anyone else helping him or is there more to this than what it seems?

The reward was ridiculously high. The mission of saving Gladstone only got him 100 Omni Points, so why was he being rewarded with 40 Omni Points just for killing a single Assassin? Link realized that he had to be more cautious in planning his next steps.

"Jacker, stop! Stand still!" shouted Link as he rushed forward. He was now more than 60 feet in front of them.

Jacker halted abruptly, raised his shield and wentito a defensive stance. Link and Gildern quickly caught up to him and they regrouped.

"Keep on walking, but slowly. Beware of sneak attacks," said Link. As he spoke, Link used the spell Aura Detection on himself again to scan the surroundings in detail as he walked. He could only detect normal auras around him, nothing looked suspicious or out of place, and there was no sign of anyone lying in ambush.

Had I thought too much? Link doubted. But one could never be too careful, so Link told Jacker to carry on as slowly and vigilantly as possible.

Link thought he shouldn't worry too much because the only opponent left was Andy anyway. He was just a Level-3 thief, so even if he escaped from his field of vision Link could still use a tracking spell to hunt him down based on the aura and footprints he left. It would be just like how the Magician Holmes had used an Earth Hound to track Link down in Gladstone.

Soon after, the three reached halfway down the hill and Link's Aura Detection still detected nothing out of the ordinary. Oddly enough, that ominous sense that Link felt became even more palpable now.

"Stop. There's something wrong. Something smells fishy here." Link's niggling worry worsened, and deep furrows appeared between his brows.

Magicians naturally had excellentituition and Link's soul was boosted by the God of Light, so he was even more sensitive than average.

From before, Link had sensed that the way Andy behaved was odd and unnatural. It seemed as if the gaming system was giving him hints. Now, the further downhill they were, that foreboding sense of danger was getting even stronger, as if an electric current ran through him making hishi

Jacker and Gildern stood wordlessly beside Link, waiting for his orders. The two were just normal mercenaries, and in a special battle like this where they faced such a powerful opponent as the Syndicate, they were as blind as a mole and couldn't see through the situation at all. All they knew was that they must obey Link's orders.

"Why is Andy just hiding behind the tree there and doing nothing? Has he been scared out of his wits?" asked Jacker.

When Link attacked Andy with his spells earlier, it seemed as if someone had warned him of the attack and told him to hide. And ever since then he had stayed behind the tree, not making any attempt to escape or attack them.

But Link had been in his spellcasting state of mind at that time, so he failed to take any notice of this peculiarity. Now that Jacker pointed it out, Link's intuition flared up again. It dawned on him how odd Andy's reactions had been.

He was oblivious to my attack and I should've been able to defeat him in that one strike, but he dodged it at the very last moment. If he had noticed my attack then, then he should've warned his underlings to scatter, but he didn't do that. He swerved suddenly, seemingly, without even understanding why or what he was evadingNo, someone else must've warned him! The idea occurred to Link as he thought.But who could've warned him? Link used Aura Detection to scan left and right, trying to sniff out any hidden enemy in the forest, but as usual, he detected nothing.

This secret accomplice must have very high camouflaging skills. He could even see through my attacks and alert Andy to it. He must be a Magician. Which means that right now, a powerful Magician is hiding in this forest! This much Link was sure.

It was only when Link had reached this conclusion that all the odd puzzle pieces in the present situation began to fall into place.

Because Andy had an accomplice who was a powerful Magician, it was no wonder that the thieves had regained their confidence to fight back after they had fled from Link. It was also no wonder that Andy could escape from Link's attacks. And because the accomplice was a powerful Magician, he had no trouble remaining invisible under Link's searching eyes.

But where could the Magician be hiding? There were still some missing puzzle pieces that Link couldn't identify, but he remained level-headed enough to be able to think clearly.

This Magician must be of a much higher level than me, or at least his concealment skills are much better than mine. But he probably isn't superior to me in battles, though. Otherwise, he wouldn't be hiding from me

Just as he was having these thoughts, he noticed some changes in the surroundings. It came from behind a tree at the base of the hill.

It was Andy, leaping and bolting out from his hiding spot.

"You damned Flamingos, I remember all of you! Just you wait, one day I'll make you wish you were dead!" shouted Andy in a heated rage.

There was pure hatred and vengeance in his voice, and the anger contorted his face so much that it looked grotesque. He looked exactly like a demon from hell.

"My Lord, should we go after him?" whispered Jacker, considerably shaken by the sight.

In his experience as a mercenary, psychopathic and perverted devils like Andy were the type of opponent he feared the most. These people were typically hell-bent on destruction and they didn't care if it meant that they would be killed in the process, much less if it would snuff out the lives of others.

Every time he was faced with this type of opponent, he would either run away from them as far as he could or just kill them swiftly and be done with it.

"My Lord, he's getting away!" urged Gildern. He had the same thoughts as Jacker.

The two mercenaries had been dazed by Andy's trick and were subconsciously falling into his traps. If Link's mind hadn't been strong enough, they would all fall into Andy's trap.

This was the reason why a war general's most important attributes when leading the soldiers inobattle were his mental strength and clarity. Even though Link had never experienced real war before, the same pLinkiple still applied here.

"No need to rush, he won't be able to escape far," said Link, shaking his head. Luckily, Link could always maintain a clear focus and was not easily affected or duped by Andy's tricks.

Andy must've been trying to taunt us into following him. He's likely going to lead us into the trasset by the Magician Yes, we had been following him all along, and that's just what he and his accomplice wanted. We must not fall into their traps!

Link began to piece together the hidden Magician's schemes now. Though he was taken aback by the sudden shift of events, he managed to make his own plans too.

"Chase him, but don't follow his exact route. We'll make our own path," ordered Link.

"Yes, my Lord!" cried Jacker.

Jacker nodded and turned away from the path used by the Syndicate's thieves. Then, using the steel armor on his body as protection, he pushed down the shrubs and overgrowths of the forest to carve out a new path. Link and Gildern followed behind him, moving at a speed only slightly slower than before. They marched on without incident or attacks, rapidly shrinking the distance between themselves and Andy.

In the middle of the hill forest, the black-robed Magician gripped the wand in his hand and creased his brows. He was frustrated that they had not been lured by his bait. His carefully set plans had been ruined.

"He's not an easy opponent to defeat. This is the Magician who killed Holmes in Gladstone, after all. I guess I'd have to exert some effortito this then!" He breathed in deeply and his eyes were focused. He had now entered the calm state of spellcasting.

## 54. A Trick up the Sleeve

Battles between Magicians differ slightly from that with other class.

The major difference, being high-level spells, would rarely be used in a one-on-one Magician duel.

The reason was simple. The higher the spell level, the more complex its spell structure. Magicians would then have to spend longer time on both constructing the magic and gathering enough energy to release the attack, inevitably increasing the time needed to cast spells.

This was almost an iron-clad rule.

A Magician had to be extremely focused during spellcasting and would be vulnerable to any incoming attacks. In most cases, Level-1 Spells would be more than sufficient to defeat the opponent, which was why Magicians rarely used high-level spells when they were not under protection.

The most commonly used spells in duels are Level-0 and Level-1 Spells, Level-2 Spells would also occasionally be used either for ambush attacks or when a lead had already been secured.

Currently, the black-robed Magician was hiding in the undergrowth with a Level-3 Invisibility Spell cast over himself.

This Invisibility spell was extremely strong, blending the user completely into the environment and even erasing most of the user's Innate Aura. Naturally, this was not something detectable by Link's Level-0 Aura Detection Spell.

Without a doubt, he had gotten the pre-emptive strike advantage in this duel.

Being able to land the first hit was a huge advantage, in fact, it was usually the deciding factor in a duel. This advantage often gave Magicians a change to release a high-level spell which would otherwise be difficult to pull off!

This duel might be over in just one hit!

In order to hide his trails, the black-robed Magician chose a hiding spot around 240 feet away from Link. This distance had already exceeded his spellcasting range.

He also took a huge risk by not casting a high-level defensive spell on himself in order to enhance the effectiveness of the Invisibility spell. The defensive spell would have created a concentrated magic aura around him making him easily noticeable, rendering the Invisibility spell useless.

The strongest defense was usually not one which protects you from a powerful attack, but one which conceals you from your opponent. With this knowledge, the black-robed Magician chose the Invisibility spell over the defensive spell without any hesitation.

And that decision had now bore fruit by providing him a chance to strike first using a high-level spell.

"Should I use a defensive spell or an attacking spell first?" The black-robed Magician weighed the pros and cons of the two choices. His strongest defensive spell was a Level-3 Mid-Level Guarding Barrier with a casting time of 2.5 seconds, which could effectively protect him from a Level-3 magic attack.

As he had the pre-emptive strike advantage, he should have been able to successfully cast the spell. However, the Mid-Level Guarding Barrier spell could only defend against elemental attacks and was not effective against physical ones. Based on his previous observations, the long distance attack his opponent released had a strong piercing effect; his Guarding Barrier might not be strong enough to withstand the impact.

His next defensive spell was the Magician's Armor, a Level-2 spell. This spell performs well in the face of both physical and magical attacks. However, his opponent was using a Level-1 spell enchanted with Supreme Magic Skills, which might easily break through his Level-2 defensive spell. He did not harbor much hope for this too.

His opponent's spellcasting speed was way too fastMagician's Armor would disintegrate in an instant if he focused on offense. Furthermore, his attacks would most surely be blocked by the loyal Warrior at his side.

The result would be his life in exchange for that of his opponent's follower. It was not a worthwhile exchange.

It seems like offensive spells are the way to go! the black-robed Magician weighed his options and came to a conclusion.

More problems arose.

His opponent was way too far for him to assault with pure elemental spells. Throwing-type spells would also be blocked by the shield Warrior.

If only I was closer to them, I could have cast my Level-3 Chain Lightning and inflict paralysis on them! The black-robed Magician was slightly disheartened.

After much thought, the black-robed Magician chose to use the highest leveled summoning spell in his archive. Magical powers surged into his staff, the sapphire at the tip of the staff glimmered ever so slightly, forming runic magic circles in the atmosphere. When the fourth magic circle appeared, the black-robed Magician stopped the transfer of magical energy.

He pointed at the ground and the four magic circles each released a beam of runic symbols which converged onto the ground, enchanting it with magical powers.

In an instant, the ground started to tremble, forming a rolling, growling ball of mud. It grew exponentially in size, congealing more rubble and mud together until it reached 12-foot-high. This ball of dirt then began to transform.

Limbs sprouted out of its unimpressive body, then clear muscular groups began to form. Before long, it became a 12-foot-high Golem with crystallized rubble formed at its surface. This was especially so at the limbs, where more rubble was concentrated to give support. It looked almost as if it were wearing a crystal armor.

Summoning Magic: Crystal Golem

Crystal Golem

Level-4 Spell

Mana Cost:280

Effect: Summons an extremely strong earth elemental golem. The effect lasts for 30 minutes or till destroyed

(Note: It's extremely strong!)

This was a strong Level-4 spell, also the only one known by the black-robed Magician. He heaved a sigh of relief after using the spell.

The magical construct of this spell was very complex, and also consumed a lot of Mana. He was drained of more than half his Mana from this one spell, not to mention that it took him 4 seconds to complete the spellcasting.

The appearance of this Crystal Golem in a tranquil forest with the Magic Disturbance of a Level-4 spell was bound to be noticed.

In fact, from the time the black-robed Magician started casting the spell, Link had already felt something was amiss.

But when he finally pinpointed the position of his enemy, the golem was already fully formed.

Boom! Boom! Boom! A 12-foot-high Crystal Golem sauntered towards them. It destroyed everything in its way, from trees the size of a man's limb to trees with more than one foot in diameter, in a single hit.

Such destructive force was simply unstoppable! It might be possible for a Level-5 Warrior or higher, but not for Link and his comrades. Even Jacker, the strongest of them all, would not be able to stop this monstrosity.

Gildern fired an arrow at the golem.

Tick. The metallic arrow barely grazed the surface of the Golem. A few pieces of crystal shattered while the golem sauntered on.

A pale Jacker immediately jumped in front of Link in an attempt to protect him. "My Lord, I'll deal with this, please leave now!" He was prepared to fight to his death.

Link kept silent and stayed put.

He recognized this spell.

Crystal Golem, a Level-4 spell. From what he saw, it should only have been a normal version of the spell without any enchantment effects from Supreme Magic Skills. Of course, this spell was still difficult to deal with.

If he had used up his 59 Omni Points previously, the three of them would no doubt be eliminated by this spell. The gears in his mind spun wildly, looking for a solution.

The best counter-magic to summoning magic would be dispelling magic.

However, the magic structure of a Level-4 spell was extremely stable. Without a Level-4 or higher dispel spell, it would not be effective. On the other hand, even if Link bought a Level-4 dispel spell with his Omni Points, he would not have enough Mana to cast the spell. Link therefore dismissed this idea almost immediately.

Then there was only one other option left. Stall the summoned and kill the summoner.

Link thought of a plan. "Purchase Support Magic: Might of a Giant!"

Might of a Giant

Level-3 Spell

Mana Cost: 60

Effect: Greatly increases the strength of the receiver. Increases strength by 200%. Effect lasts ten minutes.

Even though this was a Level-3 spell, it's Mana cost was relatively low at 60 Mana due to its supporting nature. Link's mana was now at 35 points. Purchasing a Level-3 spell would leave him with 29 Omni Points. He spent the rest of the Omni Points on increasing his Maximum Mana without hesitation.

As a result, his Mana became 64 points, just enough for one casting of Might of a Giant

His staff glowed with a bloody red aura. The sticky consistency of the aura was akin to blood and was transferred into Jacker's body with graceful fluidity. Under the effect of the spell, Jacker's muscles instantaneously increased in size, and his body glowed with a metallic golden shine. His muscles became even more defined and looked on the verge of tearing.

One look at Jacker would remind someone of the Legendary Titan of Greek mythology."ARRGGHHH!!!!" Jacker felt power surging through his body and uncontrollably let out a war cry which reverberated through the mountains.

The spell took two seconds to cast. Jacker's eyes shone with the bloody redness of the magic aura and he felt a destructive force churning in his body. It felt as though he could shatter anything into smithereens.

At that moment, the Crystal Golem threw a punch at Link and his comrades.

This punch was devastating. Before the hit even landed, the blow had already flattened the overgrowth around the area.

ARRGH! Jacker raised his shield in defense.

Jacker has already attained the peak of Level-3 Combat Aura and was naturally born with the gift of strength. Being enchanted by magic now effectively tripled his original strength. In theory, he should have the power of a Level-5 Warrior.

Crash! A low rumble echoed, the shield and the Golem's giant fist came into contact and both of them stopped in their tracks. Everyone was holding their breaths. It was a stalemate!

Jacker gritted his teeth. He was almost at his limit. His body trembled slightly and dug his heels deep into the mud. This was Link's chance.

## 55. A Walking Lump of Meat?

Jacker gritted his teeth as he was hit with each explosive blow from the Crystal Golem, straining to keep himself from collapsing.

With each attack, his bones rattled, his inner organs churned as if he were riding on a tsunami, his chest pounded violently, and his throat was filled with the metallic taste of blood.

He was at death's doorstep. He knew that he would not be able to last much longer. Another five minutes? Six? He wasn't sure.

But apart from the foreboding sense of imminent death, another peculiar feeling emerged in Jacker's mind under the weight of those horrendous attacks.

Jacker felt as if each of the Crystal Golem's attack was like the strike of a hammer and his body was like a piece hot iron being forged and wrought by the hammer. As thrashing after thrashing hammered down on him, he felt excruciating pain, but at the same time, he felt as if the attacks were pounding the impurities out of his body, forging him into a stronger Warrior.

Well, look at me. I'm holding out against a giant of an opponent. How proud would my friends be of me if they saw me now?

Another heavy strike from the Crystal Giant and blood surged up through Jacker's throat, staining his teeth red with fresh blood. Still, there was not a shred of fear in his mind, only courage that grew bolder and bolder.

To be able to fight against an opponent worthy of the legends this was exactly the kind of battle he'd always wished for!

On the other side, Link had managed to escape to a spot where he would be safe from the Crystal Golem's attack. His gaze swept across the battlefield.

In a few seconds, he spotted his two targets one was the Magician in a black robe whose face was covered and was holding a Mithril wand with a blue gemstone on its tip, and the second was Andy who was beaming with regained confidence now that he had a Crystal Golem on his side.

Once his targets were identified, Link stopped to quickly asss the whole situation.

Right now, he had 4 Mana points, which was only sufficient for one Whistle or four Glass Orbs. As a Level-3 Assassin, Andy possessed dangerous speed, so if he ever got near Link, Gildern would not be able to block himin one second Link would be finished!

At the same time, there was another opponent that he'd have to face the Magician. He had the capability to summon the Level-4 Crystal Golem, so he must be at least a Level-4 Magician. What was worrying was the fact that his magic aura was still more intense than Link's present aura, even after summoning a Level-4 spell. That meant that he could cast much more powerful spells than Link in his current condition.

Under these circumstances, it seemed impossible for Link to defeat the Magician!

Both of them were dangerous enemies and the situation had now become life-threatening to Link. From the way things stood, it seemed that Link had fallen into a bottomless pit of defeat. Still, Link had no intention to give up yet. He would give it his best shot and fight to his last breath!

That was how he excelled in the game in his previous life. He had even achieved the miraculous feat of single-handedly defeating the Demi-God Lord of the Deep, Nozama, all thanks to his unrelenting determination.

And that was how he intended to face the present battle. It was just in his nature to never give up always had been, and always will be.

Link's eyes swept the whole scene of the battle and quickly he spotted a potential opening for an attack.

Andy had nimble and agile limbs, so he could easily hide behind the tree trunks to shield himself. He was gradually closing in on them at 100 feet. Gildern had fired a few arrows at him, but he dodged them with seemingly no effort at all.

The black-robed Magician was not so brash, though. He made no moves or attacks. Instead, he kept hiding behind a tree trunk more than 200 feet away, observing the situation now and again, obviously trying to be out of range of Link's spells.

Although he would be safe from Link's spells at that distance, at the same time it meant his spells won't reach Link either. In fact, the Magician had not been attacking at all, he was obviously waiting for Andy to get near to Link before making his move.

And that was the chance that Link spotted. The Magician would not begin his attacks yet, but if he could kill Andy, then he would complete the mission of killing the leader of the thieves and receive 40 Omni Points. That would boost his chance of defeating the black-robed Magician.

"Back me up. We'll kill Andy!" muttered Link in an urgent voice.

Gildern nodded then inhaled deeply. He reached for three arrows in the quiver then nocked all of them at once on his bow. Gildern knew this was a moment of life and death, so he focused all his energy and concentration on this one attack.

By this time, Andy was already 60 feet away, close enough that Link could plainly see those pair eyes that were brimming with bloodthirst.

Coincidentally, Andy was looking this way too, and the two locked eyes.

It was the first time Andy had seen Link at such a close distance, and it made him stop in his tracks momentarily. He had expected to see a young Magician pale-faced with fear and shaken to his core. But what he saw instead was a dark pair of eyes, unfaltering and chillingly calm.

The word young didn't seem to suit the owner of those eyes, though he didn't seem old either. The Magician couldn't be more than 16 or 17 years old, his body looked gaunt and weak, and his arms couldn't be any thicker than a toothpick. The only thing that stood out about him was his expressions, or rather his lack thereof. His face did not betray any kind of emotion. Even when Andy was staring into his eyes, he couldn't detect a trace of feeling there at all.

Is this really the Magician who killed all my Night Blade members? He looked so weak that a single breeze could carry him off. I can easily finish him off with a single stab of my dagger. But why is he not afraid? Andy had seen countless people, but Link was unlike any other he had met so far.

In the short instance that Andy was lost in his thoughts, Gildern grabbed the opportunity and raised the three arrows and shot it towards Andy. At the same time, Link also shot a glass orb at him.

A gust of wind roused Andy back to his senses; he was now faced with arrows shooting towards his eyes. But with lightning speed, he raised his dagger. Clang! With the dagger in his left hand, he easily deflected the arrows and sent them flying in another direction, and with the dagger in his right hand, he stabbed at Link's glass orb.

Bang! The orb swiftly moved forward, but all the same, Andy had managed to stab it with his dagger because his reaction was incredibly fast!

This was what high-level Assassins were capable of. Their biggest strength was their speed, and each movement they made in battles was with purpose. They reacted to each attack without having to think because they had gone through so much training; it had become their second nature.

No matter how random and unpredictable Link's Glass Orbs' movements were, their speed could never exceed 100 feet per second. To common folks, this speed was unimaginably fast, but it fell short when faced with a high-level Assassin like Andy.

After successfully thwarting the attacks, Andy bent his body and sprung towards a tree and hid behind it, as nimbly as a fox.

He was now only 50 feet away from Link.

Right now, Jacker was struggling to block the Crystal Golem's attacks with all his might, and it seemed that he wouldn't last any longer. Link had only 4 Mana points left. Gildern's shooting skills weren't bad, but he was only a Level-2 mercenaryhis reaction speed and attacking speed was no match for Andy.

While on the other side, Andy was armed with anti-magic armor and anti-magic daggers, so Glass Orbs couldn't hurt him much at all. In addition, somewhere further away in the forest lurked a powerful master Magician waiting for the right moment to attack.

At that point, even Link was beginning to think that they had a slim chance of killing Andy.

Then Andy appeared from behind the tree and in a flash, disappeared behind another tree again. He was now only 30 feet away from them.

"Magician, it's time for you to die!" said the Assassin, and Link could clearly hear his maniacal voice ringing through the forest.

The black-robed Magician told him that the young Magician had almost used up all his Mana and that at most, he could only cast two spells. A Magician without his spells, in Andy's eyes, was nothing more than a walking lump of meat!

## 56. Turning the Tables in A Desperate Situation!

What exactly was a bandit? And what constituted an Assassin?

There was only a fine line between the two professions. Both prided themselves on being agile and having delicate movements. The only difference was their way of earning their keep. While the former used his abilities to rob people of their riches, the latter specialized in killing people for the bounty on their heads.

The Syndicate, in essence, was an amalgamation of bothan organization of bandits that robbed people of their lives! And at the top of these immoral acts, sat Andy.

Andy crept behind a tree roughly 30 feet away from Link, gently caressing the blade of his anti-magic dagger. The Magician behind the tree, Link, was young, but powerfulthere was no doubt that he was a genius. The thought of claiming the life of such a talented Magician excited him.

Andy listened intently to Link's breathing patterns. Link was breathing at a fast pace, faster than most combatants. However, what set him apart from a normal human was the stability of his breathing. Even during times like this, the pace of his breathing didn't change.

Isn't this guy shocked that I just blocked his attack? Andy was slightly disappointed, he would much rather fight an opponent who had given up all hope, rather than one who was calm and collected. It brought him joy to see his opponent suffer.

In the face of such calmness, Andy began to hesitate. How can he be so unflinching? Could it be that he has a trump card that I do not know of? Should I unveil all my powers now?

Despite having the backing of a Magician, the trauma from his previous encounter with Link's unimaginably powerful magic had not yet dissipated.

Andy knew that the only that could bring him out from the shadows of his failures was the life of the Magician opposite him right now. But would he be successful?

Time was passing: one second, two seconds, three...

The voice of the black-robed Magician rang in his head, "What are you waiting for! The opponent has already called for backup; the time is tight!"

While Andy was clueless about Princess Annie's background, the black-robed Magician was fully aware. He was also aware that the army of River Cove Town was rushing to this location under the command of a strong Level-4 Knight. He had no confidence in securing victory against his opponent.

If the knight managed to establish contact with Link, they would have no chance of winning.

The voice of the black-robed Magician woke Andy up from his thoughts. He listened intently to Link's breathing and discerned his exact location. A second later, Andy was on the move!

Holding his dagger, he emerged from behind the tree with lightning speed and threw the anti-magic dagger towards the location he marked out.

He did notitend to use this attack to inflict any form of damage, but as a decoy to distract his opponent's spellcasting!

He then threw the second dagger directly at Link. From the trajectory, it would pierce Link through the abdomen. If Link could not retaliate in time, he would be gravely injured, if not, dead!

Andy then sprung out from his hiding place and activated his Battle Skill: Dance of Slaughter!

Dance of Slaughter

Level-3 Battle Skill

Effect: Releases a huge amount of Combat Aura allowing the user to move swiftly and elegantly towards the target, much like a graceful dance. The movements are so fast the target will see multiple images.

(Note: Be careful, this is the prelude to an asssination. Using this skill will allow the user to cover 30 feet in less than half a second!)

This Battle Skill was specifically used to deal with opponents who were sluggish and physically weak. More often than not, it ensured not only the safety of the Assassin but also the death of the target!

At the same time, Link sensed something was amiss. He knew that the deciding factor of this match lied in this final second. He currently had 3.2 Mana points after the short recovery period. These Mana points could be used to fire three glass orbs and to cast The Magician's Hand once.

His greatest threat at this moment was the anti-magic dagger.

Link made his decision in a split second. He released The Magician's Hand!

Even though the dagger had anti-magic properties, it could only dispel spells that were elemental in nature, but not spells that were mystic in nature. Although The Magician's Hand was a weak spell, it was purely mana in nature and would thus be effective.

The Magician's Hand successfully blocked the airborne dagger and greatly reduced its speed.

But in the end, the Magician's Hand was still weak. In the face of the power of a Level-3 Assassin, the dagger would still retain some of its power.

However, the weakening of the dagger was enough. At the moment the dagger saw a decrease in speed, Gildern lunged forward, using his steel arrow as a sword.

Clang! The dagger was knocked off its trajectory and failed to do any damage to Link.

Link's attention, on the other hand, was already long drawn away from the dagger. Even if Gildern had not knocked the dagger off its trajectory, he was prepared to take the hit. Based on the angle of the dagger and its speed after the interference of the Magician's Hand, Link had deemed the injury to be non-lethal. However, if Andy, a professional killer, managed to come into close proximity, he would definitely be dead!

Luckily, the situation was a lot more positive.

Andy had already managed to cover 18 feet by nowtime was running out. Link immediately tapped the ground with his Fire Crystal Staff and in 0.04 seconds, a glass orb was released!

This had exceeded his maximum spellcasting speed!

But how?

The Fire Crystal Staff possessed the ability to increase spellcasting speed, especially when casting fire elemental magic. This was because the fire crystal at the tip of the staff contained a certain fire element, thereby reducing the time needed to gather energy.

The glass orb shotito the atmosphere, constantly changing its trajectory based on Andy's position.

Andy was swiftly maneuvering in different directions due to the effects of his activated skill. His position changed every single moment and his speed was so fast multiple images were formed. In Gildern's eyes, it was impossible to determine which was the real one.

If he could not determine the exact position of his opponent, how was he going to land an attack?

The opponent was way too strong. Gildern was unable to react fast enough to counter his attack. He could only watch as Andy maliciously advanced towards them with breakneck speed!

However, Link was special. In his eyes, there were no multiple images and all was crystal clear. His reaction time was way faster than a normal human, and no matter how Andy tried to deceive him with multiple images, his line of vision was always fixated on the real one!

The Glass Orb drew an elegant S-shaped trajectory in the air as it completely ignored the dazzling moves put out by Andy. It hit Andy right in the face!

This completely unexpected attack knocked Andy off his feet. He did not expect his plan to be foiled. By the time he regained his focus, it was too late to block the incoming attack with his anti-magic dagger!

This was how the situation unfolded from a third-person perspective.

After Andy rushed out from his hiding spot, he activated his skill and was enveloped in a glow of light. He dashed towards Link but before he could take the fourth step, he was hit in the face by Link's attack!

Boom! The glass marble exploded with a low rumble.

The residual flames from the explosion were put out by Andy's anti-magic leather armor and his own Battle Aura. However, the impact of the explosion penetrated through the anti-magic mask and hit Andy in the face with full force.

While the impact was cushioned by the anti-magic mask, it was significant. The force of the explosion was comparable to that of a bodybuilder throwing out his fist with full force. This was enough to interrupt Andy's Battle Skill and brought him to a halt.

"Success!"

Link heaved a sigh of relief. His opponent was traveling at an insanely fast speed. If he had made any mistakes, the result of this battle would have turned out differently. This was definitely the most harrowing battle ever since he descended into Firuman!

Link gave Andy no chance to recollect himself, firing a second glass marble into his face yet again.

Boom! Andy was still reeling in shock from the previous attack and failed to dodge in time. He took the full force of the second attack.

He was completely in a daze.

Link still had one Mana point remaining, and could only release one more glass orb. It was then Link saw the black-robed magician running in their direction, intending to rescue Andy.

However, the black-robed Magician was still 240 feet away, a distance that was further than his spellcasting range. Link was struck by an idea and decided to release the last glass orb in his direction.

The maximum range of Glass Orb was 180 feet after being enchanted with Supreme Magic Skill. This range was almost the limit of pure elemental spells below the Legendary rank.

There was a limit to the casting range of pure elemental magic. Usually, the limit was at 240 feet, any further, elements would start to disintegrate due to the weakening of focus and turbulence in the atmosphere. This was an ironclad rule, unaffected by the willpower of Magicians.

This was the black-robed Magician's first encounter with Glass Orb. He did not expect the attack to have such a long range. He was not worried when he first witnessed a dull, light blue marble fired in his direction. However, when the marble exceeded the normal spellcasting range of 90 feet and showed no signs of disintegration, he was taken aback and immediately released a defensive spell in response.

His staff was enveloped in a ball of light and a Level-1 spell was instantaneously cast. It was a low-level Guarding Barrier that performed exceptionally well in terms of magic defense.

Little did he know that this delay had far greater implications.

It was at this moment Gildern took action!

A distance of fewer than 30 feet, coupled with a stationary target was child's play for Gildern's archery skills.

A split second was all it took. Andy was dead!

## 57. Dark Elf?

Bang! Bang! Bang! Gildern quickly fired three successive arrows. The steel arrows shot through the air, one heading towards Andy's heart, one towards the eyes and the last one towards the belly. And they all hit smack-dab on the target!

Andy's leather armor might have had anti-magic properties, but against Gildern's carved steel arrows shot from his new strong bow, it was downright futile!

The three arrows went straight through Andy's body. He died before he had time to utter a cry.

Then, a notification popped up on the interface, but Link didn't bother to check its details, he only cared for the Omni Points. Once he verified that he now had 40 more Omni Points, he spent 20 points to increase his Maximum Mana limit without delay.

Now his Maximum Mana increased to 148 points, and his Mana was at 21 points enough to shoot off his Whistles.

With Andy dead, Link focused all his attention on the black-robed Magician who was 200 feet away.

The Fire Crystal staff in his hand lit up, and in 0.2 seconds, a Whistle screeched through the air, heading quickly towards the black-robed Magician.

The Magician had just been dealing with the previous attack of Glass Orbs, he never expected that things would change so drastically in less than a second. He was dazed, but his reactions remained quick. With lightning footsteps, he turned and hid behind a tree trunk.

He wouldn't be able to hide from Link's Whistle behind the tree, but at least it would protect him from the arrows, so he could concentrate on spellcasting without worrying about the archer.

Soon after taking cover behind the tree, he could hear the shrilling sound that Whistle made rushing towards him. The moment it broke through his Guarding Barrier, he waved the wand in front of him and cast a spell.

"Frost Shield!"

Instantly a triangular shield with an area of about 10 square feet appeared in front of him. The shield was unlike the Ice Shield used in Gladstoneit had a bigger surface area, it was more stable, and the spellcasting speed was much faster too, being fully formed within 0.3 seconds.

This was an Ice Shield that had been modified with Supreme Magical Skills.

Clang! The instant the Frost Shield took form, there was an impact that left a white point on it. And from that white point cracks emerged and spread throughout the shield like cobwebs. It looked like the shield was going to collapse.

But there was another Whistle coming for the Magician from behind!

The high-speed rotating spike of death had gone around the forest and reached behind the Magician, heading straight towards his heart!

The black-robed Magician had the fright of his life. He had not expected the young Magician's spellcasting to be as quick and relentless as a hurricane. It was only now that he felt he'd gotten a real taste of Link's true power, and he couldn't deny the pressure it exerted on him.

It's no surprise that he could defeat Holmes with a low-level spell like Vector Throw. Holmes must've underestimated this young Magician, and to his cost!

Holmes' defeat illustrated the fact that a Magician's skills in battle and his knowledge in spells were two different things. A Magicians' source of power might spring from their knowledge in the facts and theories of magic, but at the same time, these fixed laws and theories did not always translate well inobattle skills and could in no way substitute battle experience!

In other words, Magicians were primarily scholars and, secondarily, warriors in battles.

When two Magicians battle, what truly mattered were the distance and the speed at which they could cast their spells. The rest whether it's the level of their spells or the strength of their Mana were merely figures that looked good on paper, but in fact, meant nothing on battlefields.

Even if you had knowledge of higher-level spells or could cast more powerful spells than the opponent, if you were too late or too slow in using them, then all of it would just be in vain!

And that was why those Magicians who wanted to be stronger in battles would tirelessly strive for additional and more advanced Supreme Magical Skills, especially those that improved their spellcasting speed and spellcasting distance.

But as proven now, the black-robed Magician had not been developing these aspects of his skills as much as he should, or at least, not enough that he could match Link's distant and fast spellcasting.

In fact, this Level-4 Magician had been cornered and pressured into defensive mode by Link's Whistle.

When the Whistle headed towards him, he had no time to cast an offensive spell, all he could do was cast a defensive spell.

Buzz! In an instant, a transparent crystal-like bubble appeared around the Magician's body.

Physical Defensive Spell: Omnidirectional Vector Shield!

Level-1 Spell

Effects: Creates a repulsive force field that deflects any object that tries to break through the shield. The higher the speed of the penetrating object, the bigger the force of its repulsion.

Link's Whistle crashed into the shield as soon as it appeared and it discernibly slowed down the moment it entered the force field. In half a second, when it was a foot away from the Magician, its 600 feet per second speed had slowed down drastically almost to a halt.

Finally, it stopped at about four inches away from the Magician's body. He could clearly see that on the surface of the rotating metal spike, there were numerous runes continuously flashing red light, looking very unstable.

From a glance, the black-robed Magician knew that it was a complicated and high-level spell that would attack in two stages first would be a physical impact, and the second would be an explosion!

"Damn it!" cursed the Magician. He knew that an explosive power would be released, and not only would he have to deal with the flames, but he would have to face the metal pieces that would be sent flying in all directions by the explosion. He knew that his shield was unobtedly insufficient in blocking the shrapnel.

Then, the black-robed Magician finally showed the true capabilities of a Level-4 Magician in no time at all, he had instantaneously cast the Level-0 Basic Guarding Barrier around his body. It was only a Level-0 spell, so he could cast it quickly. In fact, he didn't just cast the spell once, but in that short period of time, he managed to cast five basic Guarding Barrier around his body, right at the moment before the Whistle exploded.

Bang! Shattered metal pieces were scattered in all directions, most of them were deflected by the shield, but some managed to penetrate the shield and hit the Magician's body. Tongues of flame from the explosion spewed in all directions too, but the Magician was protected partly by the Guarding Barrier and partly by his robe. Nonetheless, a small part of the fire did reach the Magician's body.

A groan of pain escaped the Magician's mouth before he could stop it. He had to make a hasty decision then. Instantly, a ring on his finger flashed up and the Magician's body was engulfed by a burst of blinding white light. 0.1 second later, the Magician had disappeared into thin air, and reappeared again hundreds of yards away!

He had used a short-distance teleportation spell Burst!

Bang! Another Whistle had exploded exactly where he had been moments ago. If he had escaped just seconds later, he would've been a fresh corpse by now.

Once he was about 300 feet away from them, the black-robed Magician's wand lit up again and 1.8 seconds later, an enormous magical creature began to materialize Ashen Hawk.

Ashen Hawk

Level-3 Spell

Effects: The colossal hawk will transport the spellcaster at the speed of a wild swan.

Grey billowing smoke streamed out from the blue gemstone at the tip of the black-robed Magician's Mithril wand. Then the smoke coalesced into dust, grass, sticks, and other light objects to form a giant hawk. The black-robed Magician then mounted onto its back. The giant hawk flapped its wings and flew up into the sky.

To evade from Link's Whistles, the hawk flew in sporadic paths, fluctuating up and down, then zig-zagging from left to right. Only when it had flown more than a thousand feet away, which meant they were safely out of Link's attacking range, did it pick up speed and soared away into the distance.

The black-robed Magician had gotten away!

There was no way of chasing the Magician now, so all Link could do was to stare at the Magician flying away on his giant bird.

The moment the black-robed Magician escaped, the Crystal Golem gave out and stopped its attacks abruptly. Its structure didn't collapse but it just stood there motionless instead.

Jacker immediately backed away from the giant and heaved a huge sigh. Beads of sweat streamed down his forehead as if he had been standing in the rain. Heaven knew how harrowing the battle had been to Jacker and how much of a close shave it had been with death for him.

Still, it wasn't a total loss. He felt as though the fierce battle had unshackled his potential and freed him from his own doubts which had been holding him back. He was confident now that with just a little bit more training he would surely be able to reach Level-4.

Link sighed with relief too. He stared at the diminishing figure in the sky that was the Magician.

"We've been tricked by a Dark Elf!" said Link with a bitter laugh.

When the metal shell of Link's Whistle pierced the Magician's body after it exploded, Link noticed that the blood that spilled out was dark blue with a purplish tinge that was an irrefutable characteristic of the Dark Elves' blood.

It's little wonder that the strange incident in the East Cove Magic Academy happened half a year after the tragedy of the Change of the Bloody Moon when there were Dark Elves lurking around causing mischiefs.

Finally, Link went back to the interface and checked the latest notification. He was immediately taken aback by the contents of the newly activated mission.

Mission Activated: Search for Clues.

Mission Details: Locate the members of the Syndicate division and from there retrieve more information about the Dark Elf Magician.

Mission Rewards: 20 Omni Points.

What is the Dark Elf Magician up to now? Link was apprehensive because from what he learned of the nature of the game and in lights of recent events, he knew that this Dark Elf Magician must not be taken lightly.

Never mind, I'm too exhausted to think of anything now. I'll just wait for General Anderson to arrive and we'll decide what to do next then.

## 58. The Final Opponent

Red Leaves Cove

...

"Gildern, pack our spoils of war and we'll set off," Link commanded.

Link usually left the physical labor to his followers. Jacker was injured from the previous fight while Gildern remained unscathed. The work naturally fell into the hands of Gildern, who hastily loaded the weapons and armor they looted from the bandits of the Syndicate.

After casting an Elemental Healing Magic on Jacker, Link leaned against a tree to get some rest and recounted on the past few battle experiences, reflecting on his mistakes.

This was a habit he developed from playing the game in the real world. Wasn't there a saying that went, "the Holy Knight would not be defeated by the same tactics twice?"

Link was no Holy Knight, nor did he suffer any defeat. However, he was not perfect either, and he often reflected on those insufficiencies to ensure he did not commit the same mistake twice.

Even if I continue to invest Omni Points into my Maximum Mana, it would only be at 148 points, that's way too low! It would be fine if I cast Level-0 and Level-1 spells. However, one Level-2 spell consumes 20 Mana points, and a Level-3 spell consumes anywhere from 60 to 120 Mana points. I can only sustain casting one or two of these spells before I run out of Mana. The assault from the high-level Magician this time was especially dangerous, I would need to find a more efficient and faster way to replenish my Mana.

Link was still afflicted by the Ailing Magic status. When he fully recovers in two months, his Maximum Mana would be at 1480 points, equivalent to that of a Level-4 Magician. There was thus no reason for him to continue investing Omni Points into his Maximum Mana. The best alternative now was to find a faster way to replenish it.

Mana Recovery Potions can be an option; I should prepare those when I get back. However, the side effects of these potions are also strong. I should couple this with mana recovery spells.

Link vaguely remembered a Level-4 Secret Spell, Mana Surge. The cost was 50 Mana points and it could recover at least 80% of your Maximum Mana points in a short period of time after casting.

It was probably time to invest some Omni Points into learning this spell.

There was yet another problem with the battle today.

Though he emerged victorious, luck playing a major factor in his triumph. At the last few moments, if Andy were to be more patient and stall the battle for another five minutes, Jacker would not have been able to withstand the Crystal Golem's attack. With Jacker defeated, Link would have had to deal with both the Crystal Golem and Andy's assault, and the probability of his success would have been much lower. It was such a high-risk maneuver; if that continued something bad was bound to happen.

Link found this battling style to be uncomfortable. As a Magician, he preferred to be in control of the tempo of the battle. Also, in the event that he was unable to do so, he always had to have a trump card he could play in case of an emergency.

A battle like today's, where they unveiled every single tactic they had was disastrous.

Link couldn't help but think of the black-robed Magician.

That Dark Elf has been searching for the Occultic Runes, he should be the one working in the shadows to rescue Tarviss. He must be upset, letting an Occultic Rune slip by him like that, I will definitely see more of him in the future.

Link did not know the Dark Elf but was able to gauge his personality based on the battle they just had.

As with most Magicians, he does not like close quarters combat but prefers to plan in advance and control the flow of battle. I would probably have been unable to retaliate if I had walked rightito his trap.

Speaking of traps, Link gestured to Jacker and Gildern to stay and went off alone to search for the untriggered trasset by the Magician. He cast an Aura of Detection over himself and followed the trails of the Syndicate bandits. This time, he was calm and meticulous, inspecting every detail. Midway through the mountains, he stopped in his tracks.

There was something peculiar about the aura in this area. There was a small distortion, but peculiar nonetheless. In the midst of a raging battle, a single misstep would have landed the trap.

Link advanced cautiously, circling around the peculiar aura when he finally found the trap. He swiped the weeds off and revealed a flat rock, slightly illuminated by the silver-green light emanating from the rune formation carvings on it.

This was Rune Magic!

Rune Magic was merely a layman's term. In theory, it should have been termed as a high-level spellcasting technique. It worked by enchanting the magic structure into the rune formation before carving it onto a relatively flat surface.

Link observed the position of the runes and the elemental energy emanating from the stone. This spell

"It's Chain Lightning!" Link felt a shiver run down his spine.

Chain Lightning

Level-3 Lightning Spell

Effect: Attacks the target with lightning bolts. This attack will automatically jump and target other enemies that fall within a 9 feet radius for a maximum of 5 times.

Level-3 lightning spells were known for their destructive forces. If they had fallen into this trap, Gildern and himself probably would not have survived the attack. Jacker would still be alive due to his Battle Aura, but with the Syndicate bandits and the Level-4 Magician on his heels, the odds would not have been in his favor.

Link shuddered at the sight of this magic. "The opponents are getting stronger and craftier; I might have been lucky this time but I won't be forever. I need to craft some protective Magic Tools!"

Until now, he had been relying on his instincts and chose to be on the offensive. This was an extremely dangerous style of fighting; a single mistake could cost him his life.

During an emergency such as an ambush or a trap, spellcasting was out of the question. He simply did not have enough time to go through the complicated process to cast a spell. He would need to acquire magic equipment that could store spells and release them almost instantaneously.

"I guess it's time to learn Alchemy and Enchanting spells to create my own Magic Tools!"

Link was a fast learner. Moreover, he preferred to use his own Magic Tools rather than ones crafted by others. He did not mind spending time acquiring this skill.

Gildern was done packing, dragging a full gunny sack of their spoils. The armor was made from a high-grade material, despite being damaged and the anti-magic daggers were all in good condition; they should sell for a good price.

"Let's head back and see if we can meet General Anderson on the way."

Five minutes into their return journey, they were greeted by the sound of footsteps and chatter. A fully armored knight emerged from the thick undergrowth. It was General Anderson!

Behind him was the River Cove Town Army, and their captain, Yaksha. There were about 200 soldiers, probably the fighting force of the entire River Cove Town.

Anderson clearly rushed here with full speed, his shiny armor now tited by spots of dirt. After making sure that Link was unharmed, he heaved a sigh of relief.

Princess Annie had requested that he set off immediately to asst Link and ensure that he returned to the kingdom alive. Should the mission fail, she had personally ensured the same for his future in the kingdom.

He was delighted to see Link in one piece. "My Lord, how are you feeling?"

Link needed the River Cove Town Army to aid him in the search for the Syndicate's hideout. And so, he needed to be cooperative in order to ensure their asstance.

"The leader of the Syndicate and his men have already been eliminated by us. However, a Magician got away despite being injured," Link explained, "He was a Dark Elf and might have escaped to the Syndicate's hideout."

The mention of a Dark Elf sent shivers down Anderson's spine. After the incident at Gladstone City, any occurrences related to the Dark Elves were bound to attract attention.

King Leon even gave a royal order to eliminate all Dark Elves in the Norton Kingdom. To think that the Syndicate got themselves tangled up in this mess.

How foolish! Anderson thought. Despite having strong connections in Hot Spring City, the Syndicate would definitely be completely uprooted this time around!

"Link, can you still fight?" Anderson asked.

You needed one Magician to deal with another. Anderson hoped that Link would accompany him in the search of the Syndicate's hideout.

Link shook his head. "My Mana is completely depleted. For the time being, I'll rest in River Cove Town, when you find the hideout, do not be hasty to attack, instead, please approach me to discuss a plan."

Even though he was on an investigative mission, the Girvent Forest was an extremely large area. The Syndicate's hideout was also well concealedit was not possible to find it in a short amount of time and so there was no reason for him to tag along.

Upon seeing Link's tired and drained expression, Anderson nodded. "If there are any discoveries, I'll let you know. Please rest well."

"Yaksha, lets search for the bandit's hideout!" He hollered at the captain.

The elimination of the Syndicate was a personal order from Princess Annie and now, even the Dark Elves were involved. If he was successful in this mission, he would have made a great contribution to the kingdom. Anderson was enthusiastic.

His attitude put Link at ease. From the looks of it, the Syndicate should be of no threat to his Flamingo Band of Mercenaries. The only one left would be the Dark Elf Magician.

"Once we find clues of the hideout, we'll leave him with no means of escape!"

Link stepped aside and waited for Anderson to lead his forces into the forest. "Let's return for our much-needed rest," Link said to Jacker and Gildern.

"Yes, My Lord."

## 59. The Clandestine Guardian

Even though Link had a fierce battle with the Syndicate at the Red Leaves Cove, the news of the incident had not reached the people of the River Cove town yet, so life here went on just as peacefully as before.

Link, Jacker, and Gildern were on their way back to the cabin in River Cove town that the mercenaries had bought. When they reached there, they noticed that the front door was wide open with two Warriors clad in iron armor standing guard there. Three carriages stood waiting outside. Link recognized one to be that of Annie's, but he'd never seen the other two before.

Just as he was dwelling on the identities of the owners of the two carriages, a white-robed Priest walked out of the cabin.

Link knew this Priest. He was from the Temple of Eichrod, the God of Dawn, in the River Cove town. His name was Pytor, and he was Level-3.

Eichrod, the God of Dawn was one of the Gods of the Realm of Light and he represented the first ray of light to shine on the world, bringing the end of darkness.

Legends said that he was the son of the Lord of Light and the Goddess of the Hunt, Achyllia. He had a warm and tender temperament and Priests devoted to him possessed powerful healing magic powers.

Pytor looked exhausted, and the aura around his body was dim, evidently from having spent much energy using strong divine healing magic.

"Princess Annie has invited a healing Priest here, so I think we can stop worrying about Lucy now," said Link to Jacker with a gentle smile on his face, visibly relieved.

When the three of them got nearer to the cabin, Pytor had gone into one of the carriages and went away, so there was only one unknown carriage left. It was plain and unadorned, and there was no crest or emblem on it which Link found to be quite suspicious.

"Mr. Link." One of the guards had recognized Link as they were about to enter the cabin, so he formally bowed and greeted him in a booming but polite voice.

His voice rang through the cabin, so anyone inside would've heard him clearly. Soon after, someone rushed outsideit was Annie. She quickly examined Link from head to toe. She then breathed easy once seeing that he suffered no serious injury.

"How did everything go?" she asked.

She had not reached the cabin long before Link arrived. Initially, she had planned to make sure that Lucy's condition was stable before going back to Red Leaves Cove. She did not expect Link to come back so quickly.

"Everything's fine now, more or less. Andy and his men are all dead. General Anderson is leading the militia into the forest to search for the Syndicate's lair," answered Link, while leading Jacker and Gildern into the cabin.

Under the effects of Link's Elemental Cure, Jacker had recovered considerably and his wounds were not life-threatening anymore. All he needed was some rest to restore his conditions, so Link ordered him to get some sleep while Gildern was dealing with the battle spoils.

Link and Annie then headed towards Lucy's room, and just as they reached the hall on the first floor, Link could clearly sense a mysterious Mana coming from Lucy's room.

Sensing Mana was a natural ability of all Magicians, but Link was much more sensitive than most Magicians, so he could sense it even though it was weak. In fact, the Mana was so weak that he couldn't sense it at all from outside the cabin. Nonetheless, based on the Mana that this person exuded, Link was sure that there must be a Master Magician in there!

"Is there someone else in Lucy's room?" Link asked Lucy, thinking of the strange carriage outside.

"You don't let anything escape from your eagle eyes, do you? Yes, there is a guest in the room, someone you'll be glad to meet, I'm sure. You'll understand once you go inside," explained Annie with a sweet smile on her face.

Link was even more intrigued now. He climbed up the stairs to the second floor, slowly opened the door to Lucy's room, and the scene inside slowly revealed itself to him.

Because the mercenaries had enough money after defeating the Dark Brotherhood, they could afford a decent-sized cabin. It was quite well-built too, being constructed of mud bricks, stone, and timber. It even had two stories, and Lucy's room was on the second floor where it got the most sunlight. A screen divided the room into two parts the bedroom section and the sitting room section.

Link's view of the bedroom section was obscured by the screen when he entered the room. In the sitting room, though, he saw a woman with delicate features and long golden locks clad in a blue Magician's robe with silver linings. She had an elegant air about her. It was very dim in the sitting room, so the luminous aura exuded by the woman's body made her stand out starkly against the gloomy atmosphere of the room.

She was sitting at the table when Link found her, flipping through sheets of goatskin papers. When she heard the noise of someone opening the door, she raised her head. She saw that Link was about to say something, so she interrupted him.

"Shh! Lucy has just gone to sleep," said the mysterious guest.

"Who are you?" asked Link, lowering his voice as much as possible.

From her magic aura, he knew that this wasn't just an average Magician. In fact, he was sure her level must be far beyond his own. He now had a vague idea about the identity of the woman, because the goatskin papers in her hands looked very familiar.

The woman stood up, walked to the door and said, "Lucy's life is safe now, but she still needs a lot of rest. Let's go to the hall downstairs and we'll talk there."

Naturally, Link had no objections, so the three of them went downstairs. Once they reached the hall, the woman introduced herself, "I'm Moira. I'm sure you've heard of the name before."

Link had, of course, heard of her name beforeshe was Eliard's tutor. The two had never met before, but they had communicated with each other through many letters and Moira had helped explained many questions he had about magic.

"Thank you very much for your patient guidance," said Link, as he bowed. Those answers from Moira had been a great help to him, he had managed to circumvent so many false turns and dead ends in his studies of magic because of her.

Moirassmile widened and she stretched out her hand to invite Link to sit down. Then she handed the papers to him. He took a glance at it and recognized that it was his revised thesis, then he turned back to Moira with a puzzled look.

"Do the celestial bodies really move this way?" asked Moira. Her voice turned serious when discussing these academic matters.

Link nodded. He now turned serious too.

"I had analyzed the astronomer Derek's 50 years' worth of observation data and deduced my theory from there. If the celestial bodies were each assigned a fixed path of orbit, then it would only have to be according to the way I described here," explained Link with much confidence.

The stars and the outer space were infinitely mysterious and fascinating, and in every world, there would always be some people who were attracted to its beauty. Derek was one of them in this world. He was a scholar from 300 years ago who had devoted his whole life to observing the sky and the stars. In his later years, he wrote down all his findings in a book called Dreams of the Stars. Although he gave it a poetic title, the contents were stitly scholarly and scientific and in it was Derek's own observation data of the movements of celestial bodies that he'd collected in 50 years.

In the world of Firuman, Derek's studies were mostly ignored. But because his observations were both detailed and accurate and because he wrote beautifully, his book had been passed down and read widely long after his death. Link had even found it in the small bookshop in River Cove town, so he bought it at the price of only five silver coins. It had been a great help to him while he was writing the thesis.

"But I could see that your theory is far from complete or perfect," said Moira. There was a glint in Moira's eyes when she was listening to his explanations, but she quickly hid it and kept her cool composure.

She seemed uninterested in matters of stars and space, which was understandable because stars were just too far away; they couldn't have much to do with magic or our daily lives at all.

"You're right. The theory is merely descriptive of how things behave, but as for the question of why they behave that way or where these laws came from, the theory offered no answers at all," said Link as he nodded.

"I heard from Eliard that there are still some parts of your thesis that you haven't finished yet, could I take a look at them?" asked Moira. Her eyes were focused on the pendant made of fine gold chain around Link's neck.

"The manuscripts are in my all right." Link had planned to tell Moira that his manuscripts were in his room in the River Cove Inn, but seeing her eyes now, it was obvious that he couldn't keep the matter of the storage gear a secret from the Master Magician. So Link pulled out the rest of this thesis from his storage pendant under Annie's startled gaze.

Fortunately, there was no one else there. Annie was a Princess, so the sight of a storage pendant wouldn't surprise her much, and he was sure nothing could be a more common sight to a Master Magician like Moira than a mere storage pendant.

As expected, Moira was completely unperturbed. She took the goatskin papers from Link and started to read through it for about an hour, as if no one else was there.

"Any magic academy in the world would open their doors wide to welcome you in for this thesis," said Moira more than an hour later. She put the thesis down then let out a long sigh.

"Does that mean that I can enter the East Cove Magic Academy now?" asked Link, excited by Moira's remark.

Moira nodded and said, "Actually, before I came here, your thesis on the Universal Law of Gravitation had been passed around for every tutor in the academy to peruse, and the dean, Master Magician Anthony himself had agreed to your admission. But since your innate talent in magic is very low, he had to raise your fees to 2000 gold coins to prevent other students from feeling they were unfairly treated you wouldn't have any problem paying the fees, would you?"

"2000 gold coins? But that's too expensive! That's unfair!" Annie interjected.

"It was what the Dean Anthony ordered," said Moira shrugging, her expression signifying there was nothing she could do about it.

Annie said nothing more when she heard that it was an order from the dean of the academy. The dean was a Level-7 Master Magician and was highly regarded in the kingdom. Even her father, the Iron Duke, couldn'titervene with whatever the dean ordered.

Never mind, she thought. If Link couldn't afford to pay the fees, then she would just help him with it. It was only 2000 gold coins after all, and she had saved up that much money anyway.

Link himself had no problems with the order at all. All he wanted was to enter the academy. Now that he was admitted by the Dean, why would he let the small problem of money complicate the matter?

"I agree to the dean's orders," said Link, nodding.

There was still a nagging doubt in his mind, though. His Mana limit had now reached 148 points, and although he didn't have a lot of Mana in his body now, how could Moira, who was a Level-5 Magician, not notice it?

He was only 17 years old, but he possessed the Mana of a Level-2 Magician and had the ability to cast Level-2 spells in Gladstone. He had even used the Level-4 spell Flame Blast. All of this wasn't so hard to find out, so why did Moira still think his innate talent in magic was low?

Just as he was thinking about it, he heard Moira saying to Annie, "Your Highness, I must beg your leave to return to the academy now. Link, you'll go with me to the town, and on the way, I will discuss the rules of the academy with you."

Annie suspected nothing of what Moira said, so she gave them her leave. Even Link sensed nothing out of the ordinary of Moira's request, so all he did was nod and say "Of course."

Once he and Moira reached outside the cabin, Moira invited him into the carriage.

After having settled down inside the carriage, Moira snapped her fingers and immediately Link could feel the noise around him quieting down. All the noise outside, the people, the horse, the rolling of the wheels had turned silent.

Link was slightly taken aback. He knew this was the effects of the Soundproof Barrier, meaning that Moira was going to say something important to him.

He held his tongue even though questions ran through his head. He thought it best to let Moira start the conversation.

After a whole minute, Moira laughed and said, "Young man, I'm impressed with your self-restraint. You must be dying to know why I would think your innate talent in magic is low, aren't you?"

"Well, you could easily identify my storage gear, so I thought it was very peculiar for you to make such an obvious error in judgment," replied Link.

"Because you would be Magician Bale's apprentice, and he wouldn't take any notice of you if you were just an apprentice with weak magic abilities. This way, you could get close to him and watch his every step without him suspecting you," said Moira, blurting out surprising revelations as if it was just a matter of fact.

Link was completely stupefied. He had absolutely no idea how to react to Moira's revelations. He had figured that this woman was no average Magician, but he hadn't expected her to baffle him this much.

In the game, the Level-6 Magician Bale was the turncoat in the magic academy. He had been secretly studying Dark Magic which in the end had led to the catastrophic accident in the academy. From Moira's words, he could sense that she was already suspecting that Bale was up to something sinister.

"I don't understand." Link couldn't think of a reason why Moira would choose him to spy on Bale; he didn't understand why she would trust him and was even more surprised at how she could've seen through what Bale was up to.

In fact, even the Master Magician Anthony had no idea about what Bale was planning to do. In the game, when the Magician Bale had attempted to summon the demons, the incident was only discovered at the very last minute, and before that, no one knew anything of Bale's secrets at all.

How could someone who had the acuity to apprehend all this before anyone else not be famous in the game? Who exactly was this Moira?

Moira could guess all the questions that were running through Link's head. She smiled and explained, "Because I'm not a human. I'm the secret guardian of the Realm of Light an Angel of Light!"

"..."

Link was rendered completely speechless, and his eyes had widened as big as saucers.

The Angels of Light were a Legendary race that appeared in many folklores across the World of Firuman. In these stories, the Angels of Light were protectors of the Gods; they were sacred and powerful, always fighting against the dark forces at the frontlines.

However, not many had truly seen an Angel of Light with their own eyes.

Link could not believe that the Magic Instructor from East Cove Higher Magic Academy was an Angel of Light. Furthermore, her motive was to inform him of certain secrets that had been kept for centuries.

"May I ask for your name, please," Link asked after he recollected himself. While he was playing the game, an Angel of Light could frequently be seen in the World of Firuman trying to save the World of Light from being constantly corroded by the dark forces. She was termed as one the Four Beauties, Herrera.

After playing for half a year, players would occasionally see Herrera.

When Herrera first awakened, her powers and beauty were average at best. However, as the players grew stronger, more of her powers awakened and eventually revealed her true identity as an Angel of Light.

Not all players were lucky enough to witness the true form of the Angel of Light. The first condition was to attain the Legendary state, which only 5% out of the billions of players managed to achieve.

While other players could see the Angel of Light through the data of Legendary players, the experience of meeting her in person was vastly different.

Even so, the sight of Herrera alone was sufficient for many.

She had an elegant and scared disposition. Seeing her would rid you of your evil thoughts and help you attain inner peace. Moira did notitend to keep her real name a secret. "My name is Herrera, from the Sacred Land of Light. My mission is to asst the people in the World of Light in their fight against the dark forces. However, I won'titerfere directly in the battles out of respect for the free will of life in this world."

It really was Herrera. Link was dumbfounded. He did meet her once when he played the game. However, they first met after the explosion of the East Cove Higher Magic, and not at the academy itself. In fact, her location prior to the explosion was a mystery, to think that she would be at the academy.

"Why did you approach me?" Link was puzzled.

"I descended onto the Mortal Realm 35 years ago. Two years ago, I awakened a memory where the God of Light hinted at the coming of the Chosen One. I have been waiting ever since. In the beginning, I thought the Chosen One was Eliard, but after reading your thesis, I had a feeling it was you, meeting you in person confirmed my hypothesis."

Link was speechless. He was indeed chosen by the God of Light to descend into this world. Although until now, he still refused to admit it.

Link's silence validated Herrera's hypothesis. A normal human wouldn't be able to stay so calm after her revelation that she was an Angel of Light.

She continued, "I discovered that Bale seems to be experimenting with dark magic. He has ventured too far into that area; there is a high chance he'll fall into deprivation. I need someone to investigate the situation for me. You seem to be the best choice."

An in-game message appeared in Link's field of vision.

Mission Activated: Suspicion

Task: Investigate Magician Bale and find evidence of his black magic research.

Reward: 25 Omni Points.

Link hesitated for a moment and then accepted the mission. After all, he really needed the Omni Points.

Link remained silent the entire time. Thinking that he was unwilling, Herrera spoke, "I will notiterfere with your free will. If you are not willing to, you can still enter the academy to practice magic, or even re-pick your magic instructor. You can also choose to become my disciple."

Link felt at ease listening to those words. Similar to his previous experience, Herrera still put emphasis on respecting the free will of the living. Completing her missions usually would garner you pretty decent rewards.

In essence, it was a privilege to converse with Herrera.

Link knew that Herrera had misunderstood, he said, "No, of course I am willing to. I'm just slightly worried."

"About what?" Herrera inquired.

"My real magic power is way above that of a normal academy student. The only reason I am so weak now is due to the side effect of a potent potion. A Level-6 Magician like you should have realized that by now right?"

"Indeed," Herrera nodded, "But that is not a problem at all."

Herrera took out a glimmering pure white feather surrounded by many sparkles. "Look carefully, every ball of light you see is a rune."

She gave this feather to Link. "Carrying it with you will cloak your aura, making you look like any other normal student."

Link carefully inspected the feather and a message appeared in the game system.

Cloaking Feather of the Angel of Light

Quality: Epic

Effect: Greatly reduces the magic aura that you emanate.

The moment Link came in contact with the feather, the feather transformed into a ball of light and circled his body, before disintegrating into the air.

Link peered into the mirror in the carriage. He had become as ordinary as any other student of the academy!

Herrera continued, "I have already made all the preparations. There is an empty slot in Bale's class. Give him 2000 gold coins as your tuition fee; he will not be able to resist such a huge amount of money. You have to be careful though, Bale is a vigilant man. You have to find a balance that allows you to grab his attention yet not raise his suspicion. Only then will you uncover the truth."

This was a tough request. Link thought for a moment and asked, "Is Bale in need of money?"

"Every Magician needs money," Herrera winked.

"I understand." Link already developed a plan to get close to Bale.

The carriage was now close to the exit of River Cove Town. Herrera spoke her final words, "Your thesis was intriguing. Your exposition on the orbit of the stars was accurate and you even brought in the discussion of the nature of space into your evaluation. However, you should never release this information to the public, at least not until you acquire the power to protect yourself. Do you understand?"

Link shuddered and gravely nodded his head, "I swear by my heart."

In the World of Firuman, knowledge could be directly translated into power. Before when Link was clueless, he only wished to gain the validation of the academy. He thought back on his actions and laughed. Luckily, he did not submit the full paper but only a part of it.

"Alright. Make your return and report to the academy in a month's time. Someone will lead you to Bale's Magic Tower."

The carriage pulled to a stop, waiting for Link to alight. Suddenly, a thought flashed across his mind. "Recently, I've been interested in alchemy and enchanting magic, can I borrow some books from you?"

"Of course." Herrera smiled.

Her hands glowed in a sacred light and reached into the space beside her. When the glow subsided, three books appeared in her hand: The Theory of Enchanting Magic, Foundational Enchanting, and Mid-High Level Enchanting Magic.

"The requirement to learn enchanting is much less as it does not require special tools. As for alchemy, let's wait until you reach the academy," she said as she passed the books to Jacker.

Link was elated. "Thank you."

Herrera smiled, her eyes reflecting the dazzling sunlight of the Girvent Forest. With a voice as clear as water, she gently spoke, "You are the Chosen One. As the vessel of a god in the Mortal Realm, it is my responsibility to help you become stronger. As long as you don't fall to the dark side, I will do all I can to help you uncover the mysteries of magic."

The carriage door closed and rode on, slowly riding out of Link's field of vision.

With the weight of three books in his hand, Link thought, Fall to the dark side? What can the dark side offer me?

He clutched the necklace in front of his chest which housed the Magic Runes and Celine's Feather of Darkness, both of which emanated a strong aura of darkness.

A certain amount of research into the dark side is still necessary. Know thy enemy, right? Link was never one to completely follow the rules.

## 60. Links Matchstick Wand

The Syndicate had covered their tracks well. Even after three days of thorough searching by General Anderson and the militia, their lair had still not been smoked out yet. There was nothing Link could do about it, so he decided to just wait patiently.

As for Princess Annie, she was ordered to report to the king in Springs City, so on the second day, she reluctantly left River Cove town. With no one left to disturb him, Link could finally dive back into his studies peacefully.

He was no longer staying in the inn attic but was staying in the cabin that the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries had bought instead. There were people tending to his needs here and the food that the cook that they hired at a high price had prepared was delicious too. Most importantly, no one would disturb him here while he studied, so he settled down in the cabin contentedly.

Within three days, Link had finished reading three books on enchantment. From these books, he had developed a deep understanding on the subject. The opening of the book Introduction to Magic enchantments had very neatly encapsulated the concept of enchantment in a single sentence.

enchantment is the process of fixing spells onto a certain object.

Theoretically speaking, as long as the proper method was employed, any spell could be fixed onto an object, including Fireball, Protective Armor, Flying Blades, Hidden Power, and so on. The method and skills involved in fixing these spells fell under the field of enchantments.

Take the wand for example. The wand was, in fact, an object where Mana could be stably fixed on. According to folklore 500 years ago, Magicians used to cast spells without using wands. Therefore, there were two steps involved in their spellcasting the first was to compress their own Mana into magic aura and then using this magic aura to release the spell that they intended to release. This made it much harder for the Magicians at that time to advance their skills compared to the present where Magicians used wands to cast their spells.

Having read the three books, Link turned his attention to writing letters. He had two of them to write: the first was to Moira, where he would write down all the questions he had concerning the contents of the textbooks and the second was a letter to Eliard.

Eliard shared many similar interests with him, and their intelligence was on roughly the same level as well so Link enjoyed talking to him about anything. Link would write to Eliard often, regardless of whether there was anything important to inform him on. They would often discuss their thoughts and comments on subjects about magic, or they would only share news and gossip they had come across. Whatever it was, they both enjoyed hearing from each other very much.

Link would have a lot of free time while waiting for the replies to his letters and he would spend it by conducting enchantment experiments in his room based on the theoretical and practical knowledge that he had just gleaned from the books.

The most commonly used metal in enchantment was Mithril because it was highly conductive for Mana. By molding Mithril into different configurations through various methods, a stable and long-term Mana storage device could be built. And through changing the structure of Mithril, the structure of Mana could be altered too, enabling the casting of different spells.

Those were the theories, anyway. In practice, though, one had to pay attention to numerous other details that would eventually affect the outcome, which was why Link wanted to conduct these experiments.

He didn't have any Mithril on hand, but that was fine because he could get some of it by breaking the New Moon wand apart. Although the wand wasn't of the highest quality, it did contain a decent amount of Mithril. In fact, Link managed to obtain a pound of Mithril after dismantling the wand.

What a waste, the 1000 gold coins' price was all spent on the Mithril in the wand. Was this supposed to be crafted by a master wandmaker? thought Link. He wondered if the wandmaker's reputation had been grossly exaggerated.

Once he'd obtained the Mithril, Link spent 20 Omni Points to purchase a transformation spell necessary for enchantment Shapeshifter.

Shapeshifter

Level-2 Spell

Mana Consumption: 0.2 points per second

Effects: Once cast on a certain object, the object's physical shape will alter and change according to the spellcaster's wishes.

(Note: This is a necessary spell for low-level enchantments.)

After quickly learning this spell, Link immediately used it on the Mithril on the table.

The spell didn't require any special Mana focusing skills, so even a Magician's Apprentices' spellcasting skills were sufficient. As the Mana in Link's body got agitated and was arranged into a specific spell structure, a special force field would emerge.

This force field was almost invisible. If it didn't slightly bend the light that passed through it where it was concentrated in the palm of Link's hand, he wouldn't have noticed its existence at all.

Link knew that the force was known in transformation spells as the 'Higgs Force Field'.

This force field was discovered by a Magician called Higgs more than six hundred years ago and he was also the one who pioneered the field of transformation spells. His discovery had changed the enchantment skills from something that only high-level Magicians could do to something any average Magician could easily learn.

The Higgs Force Field had a strange property where it could transform any non-living objects' shape and properties. As long as your skill was developed enough, you could change metal to water, or even stone to gold.

But of course, the skills that were needed were very, very difficult to develop, and there was also another constraint the huge Mana consumption rate.

The more properties of the object that was to be transformed, the higher the Mana consumption rate. For example, the ability to transform rock into gold at first glance might seem like an enticing idea that would enable one's fortune to grow infinitely. But in fact, it would take all of the Mana that a Level-6 Magician possessed just to transform a palm-sized cobblestone into gold of the same size and weight.

Nothing could be more precious to a Magician than his Mana, so no Magician in their right mind would ever waste all of their Mana for a mere palm-sized lump of gold. And so, no Magician has ever bothered to learn to transform rocks into gold.

As the adage went, there was no such thing as a free lunch in this world.

Now back to Link.

Link guided the transparent force field with his mind to wrap around the thumb-sized pile of Mithril on the table. Then he imagined the structure of the spell, Glass Orb in his head.

Link possessed an especially active imagination, so he could easily visualize things in his mind down to their smallest details. This skill worked in his favor when learning enchantment.

The pile of Mithril started to move and began to form into threads. The threads turned into magic runes and finally it transformed into a solid body of Mana structure, precisely the way Link visualized it in his mind.

About three minutes later, a shiny ball of Mithril was formed. At a glance, the orb seemed to be a normal ball of metal with a hollow structure, but when examined closely, it was an exact replica of the spell structure of Glass Orb.

Of course, there was no Mana in the Mithril threads, so it was presently only a hollow structure that was not able to capture the fire elements in the air. In short, right now it was just a pretty thing to look at.

Let's see if it works. Link picked up the small Mithril ball and focused his Mana into it.

This process did not require high concentration. All Link had to do was to pour his Mana into the ball. He didn't need to visualize the spell's structure because the Mithril threads would automatically guide the Mana into the structure of the glass orb.

Moments later, Mana filled the whole of the Mithril ball. When closely examined, Link could see that the Mithril ball was starting to light up, became blue, and finally grew into a glowing blue orb.

It was now a perfect facsimile of Link's spell Glass Orb.

"What a time-saving way to cast a spell. It did come at a high cost, though," Link said with a sigh. The spell had cost him 1000 gold coins, even an ostentatious Magician wouldn't choose to use such an expensive technique.

This was a Mithril-based glass orb, with the Mithril threads already in the configuration of the spell structure of Link's Glass Orb. This way, any Magician in the world capable of manipulating the Mana in their body would be able to unleash Glass Orbs. All they had to do was direct their Mana into the Mithril ball.

But of course, this technique was just too expensive to be practical. Not only was its power pitiably small, it could also only be used once, so it was only useful in experiments.

There was a description of the basic structure of magic wands in Basic enchantments, I think I'll try and replicate that.

So Link got himself a wooden stick. He then cast the Shapeshifter spell on the Mithril threads to move and fit it onto the stick according to the spell structure shown in the textbook. After that, he put on some finishing touches and then Link had successfully created his first basic magic wand from scratch.

Link was examining the crude wand in his hand that was lined with Mithril when a notification popped on his interface.

Basic Wand (Unnamed)

Poor Quality

Effects: Increases the power of spells by 5%.

That's not too bad. Link didn't mind that the wand was of poor quality because he had only spent half an hour to make it.

He tried casting spells with the new wand and thought it felt very nice in his hand.

"Ha! Isn't this interesting!" exclaimed Link, amused at how surprisingly good the wand was.

He successfully cast two more spells with the new wand. Now Link's interest towards enchantments deepened considerably. He remembered a chapter in Basic enchantment about the creation of magic scrolls.

Magic scrolls used special Mana-conductive ink. It involved the process of transferring the structure of spells onto a two-dimensional surface of an anti-magic sheet of paper. The advantages of magic scrolls were that it was portable and cost-effective, and if Mana and activating magic runes were fixed onto the scrolls too, even laypeople could use them to cast spells.

Link wanted to try creating a magic scroll, but he didn't have any materials that were required. He didn't let that stop him though.

What to do when there was no Mana-conductive ink?

No problem. The source of magic-conductive ink was the blood of magical beings, and Magicians were one of those magical beings, so the blood of a Magician could be used as a substitute for Mana-conductive ink. The more powerful the Magician, the more effective their blood would be as Mana-conductive ink.

Without any reservation at all, Link took a few drops of blood from his own body.

But what about anti-magic paper? Well, in fact, goatskin paper was the most basic and the most common type of anti-magic paper, so Link had that covered too.

Now that he had all the materials he needed, Link dipped the quill into his own blood and then sketched the spell structure of Fireball onto the goatskin paper.

Link's ability to accurately imagine a structure worked in his favor in recreating the spell structure of Fireball in one smooth stroke onto the goatskin paper. He then incorporated the necessary activating magic runes and poured his Mana onto the scrolls.

Immediately, the blood-red ink on the goatskin paper emitted a magic aura, but because of the restitions of the activating runes, the scroll did not absorb fire elements in the air, so no Fireball was formed.

Link wanted to test the effects of the scroll right away.

He activated the magic scroll according to the method in the books, which was to wipe away the activating runes and then hurl the scroll into the air.

The scroll absorbed and attracted fire elements in the air, then it started to catch fire and burstito a ball of flame. Because of the very simple spell structure and because the scroll was made with crude materials, the Fireball did not have much explosive power. But all in all, Link considered it a success.

"How fascinating!" Link's interest on enchantment grew even stronger now.

Soon after, letters for him arrived from the academy. He opened and read the one from Eliard first before carefully going through Moira's letter, where she had given him very clear and detailed answers to his questions. Along with the letters, Moira had also sent him three new textbooks: Wand Construction, Advanced Enchantment Skills, and Cutting-Edge Applications of the Higgs Force Field.

Link rejoiced at the titles of these books; he couldn't feel happier if he had been sent precious gemstones. After skimming through Wand Construction, he vowed that he was going to create a new wand for himself!

## 61. Links Matchstick

Three days had passed and the Royal Knight Anderson still had no success in the search for the Syndicate's hideout. This was much within Link's expectation. When he was playing the game, the Syndicate's hideout was well known for its secrecy. The hideout of the Dark Brotherhood was well-hidden, however the Syndicate's hideout was on a completely different level.

The Syndicate built their hideout to complement the geography of the land. They also used various spells and Divine Powers to conceal it. Even if a thorough search of Girvent Forest was done, luck still had to be on their side for the search to be successful. Link thus decided that he would take this time to focus on crafting his magic wand.

The strength of a Magician was largely dependent on the quality of his magic wand, which made the staff the most crucial part of a Magician's equipment. A powerful wand was extremely complicated to craft. The basic wand he crafted previously only managed to increase his magic power by a measly 5%.

He would probably be dismissed as grossly overestimating his own abilities if he told another Magician of his foolish attempts at crafting a wand after only six days of practice.

However, Link was never one to follow the rules. He always valued action over words and would set out to accomplish what he envisioned despite the odds.

He first needed to fully understand and absorb the knowledge in the three enchanting magic books Herrera had kindly given him.

"Lucy, I plan to do meditative training these next few days, just place any food outside my door and please do notiterrupt my progress," Link gave Lucy a heads up.

"What if General Anderson is looking for you?" Lucy had already gotten used to Link's quirky habits of locking himself in his room and thought nothing of it.

"Anderson inform me if that happens." Link was left with no choice. He had promised to help out with the search previously and could not go back on his word, much less by locking himself in his room.

"I got it," Lucy nodded.

Link then started his research into the field of enchanting magic.

When he was awake, his eyes would be fixed on the books. He only slept three hours a day, and even when he slept he dreamt of enchanting magic. From a third person's perspective, he seemed to have gone slightly insane.

Link's brain was like a supercomputer. In a matter of three days, he was done with all three magic books.

"Enchanting magic is so interesting," Link exclaimed.

He started penning a letter to Herrera. He had so many newfound questions about the wondrous world of enchanting magic. After sending the letter, he started his experiments on enchanting magic without any delay.

Naturally, enchanting was a branch of magic. Through the work of many generations of Enchanters over the past 500 years, a complicated system of spells was finally developedmany of which were unique and powerful.

Link had to familiarize himself with some of the enchanting techniques before he started crafting his staff.

We are slightly lacking in resources, but that doesn't matter! Mithril is the only resource we need! Link delved into fanaticism yet again.

For the next few days, one could constantly hear sounds of explosion, laughter and even the howling of wind from Link's room. Initially, everyone was slightly afraid of what was happening, but they soon got accustomed to it.

Whenever an explosion sound was heard, they would look at each other and achieved a mutual understanding. "I guess Link's experiment ended in a failure yet again."

Three days passed. Herrera had sent her letter back to the academy. After reading through her answers, Link wrote down new questions from the experiments he conducted the past few days and passed the letter to the messenger.

He never stopped working. And under such fanaticism, his enchanting magic level rose rapidly.

Time flew by; it had been two weeks, yet was already the fifth exchange of letters between Link and Herrera. General Anderson also tried his best to not disturb Link's training with superfluous things.

In the last two letters, Link had improved to the point where he could raise some objections to Herrera's answers, instead of just passively absorbing the knowledge. He had made major progress.

On the last day of the two weeks of training, there was a large explosion sound that came from Link's room. With his face covered in dust, hishi

Magic Wand: Matchstick

Quality: Epic

Effect 1: Increases casting speed of fire magic by 20%.

Effect 2: Increases magic power by 50%.

Effect 3: Contains Level-3 magic: Might of a Giant(Released after charging)

(Note: Created by Magician Link)

Based on the rule of classification for magic equipment in the World of Firuman, an equipment with three additional effects was strong enough to be written into the annals of history, also known as epic quality.

Link dismantled both the Fire Crystal Staff and the New Moon Wand before attempting to combine both their materials together. Using the knowledge he gained in these past two weeks, he finally succeeded in creating this epic quality wand after many failures.

The wood of the wand came from the Fire Crystal Staff, which he thinned to lighten the weight and to increase movement speed. The tip of the wand had a huge fire crystal. At first glance, it looked simply like a giant matchstick, therefore the name.

This was probably the ugliest epic equipment in the history of Firuman.

Link got a reward of five Omni Points after crafting the wand and also developed his own understanding of enchanting magic. The whole process took him around 20 days, a progress much faster than the average Magician. This was partly due to his talent, but more so, his undivided attention and passion.

These few days, he skipped meals to conduct experiments and even dreamt about enchanting magic while he was asleep. He also had confidence in his control of magic, and was daring to conduct all sorts of experiments, as evidenced by the consistent explosion sounds.

It was not surprising that such a hardworking, fanatical genius could achieve these results. Lucy was the first person Link saw after rushing out of the room.

Lucy had already fully recovered from her injury. The power of divine spells was mind-blowing, not even a scar remained after recovery. Lucy looked well-rested and in the peak of health; she even looked like she had put on some weight!

Link was thrilled, and gave Lucy a tight hug. He attempted to make a spin while hugging her to celebrate his achievement but Lucy did not even budge. Lucy was half a head taller than Link, and though she looked slim and lightweight, she was a warrior, after all, and weighed much more than the average girlit was impossible for Link to carry her with his weak physique. Link awkwardly withdrew his hands while Lucy blushed.

"How many gold coins do we have now after paying my tuition?" Link hastily changed the topic. He was too excited and lost his cool.

"We made 1300 gold coins from the sale of anti-magic equipment previously. On top of the 1500 gold coins you saved, we have 2800 gold coins in total," Lucy reported the numbers after she calmed down.

"We will leave 500 gold coins for our daily necessities. Instruct Jacker to purchase more Mithrils with the remaining gold coins, I will enchant the rest of your armor!" Link laughed.

Link was still not confident in enchanting other types of high-level equipment. However, he was confident enough to enchant basic equipment. He believed that for Jacker and the rest, the addition of a few magic attributes would be enough to greatly increase their power.

Most importantly, everyone now knew that the master of The Flamingo Band of Mercenaries was a strong wizard. Jacker had also become a Level-4 Warrior, while Lucy and Gildern had acquired Battle Aura and became Level-3. No one would look down on them anymore.

"Roger!" Lucy's eyes shone at the mention of magic equipment, ecstatically nodding her head.

## 62. The Spiked Shield, the Gale Sword and the Executors Bow

No shops in the River Cove town would openly sell such a precious and expensive metal as Mithril which was commonly used in magic spells. But that was not a problem to Jacker because he had his own bag of tricks.

Only a day after Link had explained everything about enchantment to Jacker, he managed to acquire ten pounds of high purity Mithril ore containing more than 60% Mithril by weight. He had spent 2300 gold coins on six pounds of Mithril not a bad bargain at all.

The reason he could get so much for so little was because Mithril refining was an incredibly complicated process. This Mana conductive metal had an extremely high melting temperature, so normal flames were insufficient to extract them.

If you were a Magician, though, then nothing could be simpler. All Link had to do was to use a displacer spell and in no time, pure Mithril would be extricated out from the ore, giving them 6.2 pounds of Mithril.

Then, he took Jacker's shield, Lucy's sword and Gildern's bow, then went right back into his room and started tinkering with them.

"Give me three days' time." That was the last thing they heard of him before he disappeared into the room.

Outside the room, Jacker and the rest stared at each other, not knowing what was to become of their weapons after three days.

"I wonder what it would feel like wielding a magic shield," said Jacker, earnestly rubbing his hands, anticipating what would happen to his shield.

"Who knows?" said Lucy, "I've got sword practicing to do." She picked up her practicing iron sword, walked out, and started training with a wooden dummy outside near the pavilion.

She seemed focused, but in fact, she was quite distracted today and it affected her performance. Usually, she could swiftly pierce through the dummy. Nine times out of ten she could easily stab the dummy accurately at its heart. But today, she could only manage to do that five times out of ten.

Ah, Link is only seventeen, and he's still as pure as a child, he'd probably get bullied in the academy. Lucy knew Link would be entering the academy soon, and she couldn't help but be worried for him.

Gildern was the only one who was the calmest and most focused among the three. His spirits had been jolted by the fierce battle with Andy and the Dark Elf Magician. He didn't want to feel helpless against a strong opponent as he did that day, so ever since then, he had been training like mad, trying his best to improve his archery skills. He was doing great too. His performance had been stuck on a plateau no matter how much he trained, but recently he had been making some real progress.

And so, three days' time had passed.

On the afternoon of the third day, Link walked out of his room yawning and noticed a servant sweeping the corridor.

"Tell Jon in the kitchen to get me something to eat, I'm hungry," ordered Link.

"Yes, my lord," said the servant before scurrying to the kitchen.

"If you see Jacker and the rest on your way, tell them to come and see me. Their weapons are ready," added Link before the servant got away. The servant nodded deferentially in response.

A few minutes later, Jacker, Lucy, and Gildern were all standing in front of Link's room. Lucy was holding a dish in her hands it was roasted mutton rolls, her best dish.

Link beamed at the sight of the dish. He grabbed it from Lucy's hand and quickly stuffed the food into his mouth. At the same time, he pointed towards the room and said, "Your weapons are inside, you can go get them."

The three went in and saw a wooden shelf in the middle of Link's room. On it, there was a shield, a sword, and a bow. Three days earlier, these weapons were plain and unremarkable, but now, they were unrecognizable even to the owners.

The heavy steel shield had become jet black, and its surface was now covered with rows and rows of thorns like porcupine spikes. The sword, on the other hand, seemed to be shrouded in a white light. When closely examined, one could see that this white light was caused by small vortices of air. And finally, Gildern's originally pale wooden bow was now pure black with lines of red aura running through its surface like blood vessels.

The eyes of the three mercenaries widened at the sight of their weapons. Their appearance alone would have been able to shock and intimidate anyone.

Link leaned on the wall beside the door chewing on the mutton roll. He smiled and said, "Jacker, I've added the spell, Thorn, and a low-level Guarding Barrier spell on your shieldthe magic runes embedded into the shield will also strengthen it and protect you from impact. If you use the shield to block an attack, the opponent will feel the backlash of their attacks from the thorns. This will work for about 100 times. At the same time, the Guarding Barrier spell will protect you from any spell that is under Level-2. I've also fixed a recovery spell on the shield, so even if the shield suffers any physical damage, if it's allowed to recover for three days, it will revert to its original condition, so you could use this shield for as long as a year. After a year, I will have to pour my Mana into it to reinvigorate the magic properties of the shield, but I guess by then you should get yourself a new shield."

The spell, Recovery fell under the field of enchantmentits use was to extend the magical property of gear and weapons. In this world, the magical effects fixed on weapons generally faded over time. The only weapons that didn't fade over time were the ones that had undergone enchantment, and sacred or divine gear (or in other words, gear with mythical levels of quality).

Link's enchantment skills were only considered average now, and although he had a unique experience in building his own wand, his skill was still far removed from the level needed to produce sacred or divine weapons.

But even so, Jacker was more than happy with his newly improved shield. He picked up the brilliant shield, waved it back and forth a few times, and remarked, "This is the best shield I've ever laid my hands on!"

He discovered that not only was the shield boosted with magic spells, its shape and physical properties had changed as well. The rough surface was gone and was replaced with a smooth and fine surface. There was an additional grip to prevent slip where the handle was, and even the center of gravity had been adjusted so it fit nicely in his hand, almost as if it were a part of his arm.

"My lord, does it have a name?" asked Jacker.

"If you don't mind, I'd name it Spiked Shield!" said Link with a laugh.

"What a good name." Jacker handled the shield carefully with both hands as if it were made of glass, afraid that he would break or damage it.

Lucy picked up her sword too and the moment it was in her hand, her eyes lit up. The sword was so light as if it had no weight at all, but once held in the hand, it felt as if it merged with her bodyas if the sword was an extension of her arm.

"Try thrusting it forward," said Link, as he took another bite of the mutton roll. It was, in fact, his favorite dish. It was a pity he wouldn't get to eat it once he'd entered the academy.

Lucy did as she was instructed and thrust the sword forward.

Whooosh! The tiny air vortices around the blade of the sword suddenly merged and became one big whirlwind. It rushed forward in step with the swing of the sword and the resulting gust of wind was strong enough to topple a chair that was eight feet away.

"Do it one more time," said Link.

Lucy repeated the movement, and the moment she thrust the sword, a translucent dagger-shaped draught surged forth from the sword and shot through the air. It hit a wall 12 feet away. The wind blade scratched the stone wall, leaving a line on it and sent dust flying everywhere. If such power was directed towards human flesh, it would've done great harm.

Lucy believed that this extra aid from the air vortices would definitely give her an edge in battles and help compensate for her lack of physical strength.

"This is a divine weapon!" exclaimed Lucy, lovingly caressing the exquisite sword in her hand.

"It's far inferior to a divine weapon. You can call it Gale Sword," Link responded.

"Gale Sword? What a fitting name." Lucy carefully swiped the sword into its sheath. Just as Jacker cherished his new shield, Lucy's heart would be broken if a single scratch appeared on the sword's blade.

And finally, it was Gildern's turn.

He picked up the bow, nocked an arrow, and then pulled the string. Suddenly, the red aura on the bow accumulated at the tip of the arrowthis surprised him, so he relaxed the string, and the red aura flowed back into the bow.

"Don't be afraid. Try to shoot an arrow with it. How about aiming at that tree outside the window there?" said Link.

Gildern nodded, walked to the window then promptly shot an arrow at the tree.

Shwooosh! One moment later, Gildern could hear a sound coming from the tree, but the arrow he shot was nowhere in sight.

"Where did the arrow go?" the bemused Gildern asked.

"Inside the trunk of that tree," said Link, "Do you see that red aura on the tree?"

Gildern nodded, his face a picture of bewilderment.

"I've fixed a spell on the bow to stabilize the flight of your arrows. I've also fixed the spell, Sharpness on it. With these spells, your arrows will be extremely accurate, and it will be able to pierce through even the hardest surface. I call it the Executioner's Bow."

Gildern immediately hugged the bow to his chest, thinking he would never part with it. He thought the old deer skin haversack that he used to keep his bow in was not good enough for this bow anymore, so he decided to spend some money to buy a mink fur haversack instead.

These three mercenaries were such country bumpkins that it was the first time they'd ever seen or touched magic weapons. Unsurprisingly, they cherished them and treated their weapons with the utmost care.

"All right, now get back to work. I'm going to take a rest." Link waved his hands to dismiss his followers. He had also finished his meal.

He was very tired indeed, so after a quick wash up, he laid down on the bed and went straight to sleep.

He had a good night's rest. When he woke up, it was the morning of the next day. His spirits were now completely reinvigorated. He went downstairs to the main hall and found that a delicious looking breakfast had been laid out on the table and Jacker and the rest were already waiting for him to eat.

Link greeted them, then sat down and began to eat. The breakfast was scrumptious as it was prepared exactly to his taste, so he savored every bite.

Just when they were busy eating, there was a knock on the door. Link raised his head and saw a knight walking into the cabin. He wore a silver full body armor that was full of scratches and score marks and a pair of iron boots that were covered in dirt and mud. Once he was inside and saw Link, he immediately removed his iron helmet, revealing a face of exhaustion. It was the royal knight Anderson.

"Mr. Link, we've found the Syndicate's lair!"

What perfect timing!

Link nodded then greeted the knight, "General, come and have breakfast with us and clean your armor. After that, we'll all set out for the Syndicate together."

Anderson had rushed back overnight because it was an order from Princess Annie before she went to the capital. But he was absolutely fatigued and hungry, so he gratefully accepted Link's invitation. He walked into the main hall, thanked Link, then quickly gulped down the food on the table as soon as his butt settled on the chair.

By this time, Link and the mercenaries had all finished their meals.

"Let's get ready, then," said Link.

## 63. The Sinister Bandit Hideout

Ample preparation was of the utmost importance before a battle. Jacker and the rest did an inspection of the equipment and brought along any other convenient tools they believed could help in their battle.

As Link possessed the dimensional pendant, he had the liberty to store more itemsespecially those that could be used in the case of emergencies, such as bread and water in case they got trapped.

Time stopped within the dimensional pendant. Link was thus not worried that these items would be corrupted by the Occultic Runes.

He also brought around 20 magic scrolls which he wrote during his free time. They contained Level-0 and Level-1 spells, allowing him to rapidly cast spells without consuming his Mana.

These magic scrolls indirectly increased Link's Maximum Mana, the thing limiting his battle competency. Lastly, Link also brought along a low-level Mana recovery potion.

He bought this potion for 20 gold coins from Herrera. This potion allowed him to recover 100 Mana instantly. Link was well prepared with gear to overcome his weakness of having a low Maximum Mana limit.

It wasn't long before they were ready. General Anderson also looked more refreshed after a satisfying meal. "Let's go," Link said.

Anderson was surprised at the quality of the magic weapons Link and his comrades had with them. He wanted to inquire more when his noble upbringing stopped him from poking into other's affairs.

He explained the situation to Link along the way.

"The bandit's hideout is too well-hidden, there are even conjuring spells cast around it. We're lucky enough to have even captured a Syndicate bandit after circling the mountains for such a long time," Anderson said, "The hideout is hidden in a cave within a canyon and looks extremely suspicious and eerie. As we are afraid it will be reinforced with magic, we do not want to take any chances."

Anderson had a look of fear when talking about the hideout. He was clearly traumatized by something he saw in the canyon.

Jacker raised the question that was lingering in everyone's heart, "What do you mean by eerie?"

Anderson recounted what he had seen with a pale face, "After finding the canyon, I personally led a group of soldiers into the canyon to investigate. However, less than 60 feet in, we felt as though there was a voice in our head, similar to that of a demon's whisper trying to bewitch you to the dark side. Just when we were about to turn back, a soldier went insane, his eyes were bloodshot red and his body twitched uncontrollably, attacking everyone in sight. In the short process of our retreat, at least three soldiers lost their minds and we had no choice but to kill them. When we got out of the canyon and turned back to mourn for the dead soldiers, we saw them standing back on their feet again like zombies! Oh, in the name of the God of Light, I bet there is a Necromancer hiding in the canyon!"

Anderson was stricken with fear. His voice rose by a few decibels when he recounted the story and there was a genuine cloud of dread in his eyes.

Link frowned and cast an Aura Detection spell on himself.

Anderson's aura was immediately clear to him. The strongest aura surrounding him was green in color. Anderson was a Level-4 Royal Knight with a wind element Battle Aura it was thus no surprise that his wind elemental aura would be strong. However, the outermost layer of his aura was covered by a thin black veil, with skeleton figures emerging ever so often. It was as though the aura itself was alive.

Anderson was cursed by a type of black magic. He was able to resist its full effect due to his strong powers, only causing it to slightly affect his demeanor.

In this period, Link had also been learning other spells in addition to enchanting spells, especially so when he felt like taking a break from his research into enchanting magic

One of them was the Level-2 spell, Guarding Barrier, and the other was a Level-1 dispelling spell.

Of course, as time was tight, these were all basic spells without any enchantment from Supreme Magic Skills, but they were more than sufficient to deal with the current situation.

Dispel spells consumed very few Mana points. The average Mana consumption for a Level-1 spell was six Mana Points, while a Level-1 dispelling spell only consumed 3 Mana points. Link's Maximum Mana now was full at 148 points. He pointed his wand at Anderson and released the dispelling spell.

A warm glow of light enveloped the wand and gently flowed towards Anderson like a trickle of clear spring water; it spiraled down his body and disappeared in a shining sparkle.

Link checked on Anderson once again using his Aura Detection spell. The black aura that was enveloping him had already disappeared. It seemed that it was merely a Level-1 curse, and while it was super effective on normal soldiers, it would not have a huge effect on strong opponents.

Under the effect of the magic, Anderson could clearly feel a weight off his shoulder and the grasp of fear gripping his heart slowly loosening. On his way back from the forest, he was pale and afraid to even stare into the dark corners of the forest.

Now, he could bask in the warm and comforting sunlight of the Girvent Forest and enjoy listening to the melodious chirping of birds. He took a deep breath of the fresh air lined with the refreshing smell of the clear morning dew. The fatigue from his sleepless night seemed to be instantaneously lifted.

"Feeling better?" Link laughed.

"I feel like I was reborn," Anderson chirped with joy.

"If I am not wrong, a black magic formation was placed in that canyon and it'll afflict anyone who enters with a curse. As for the resurrection of the dead, it could have been an illusion or indeed the work of a Necromancer, I cannot be sure until I have seen it with my own eyes."

"Can it be dispelled?" Anderson hastily asked.

"It's definitely possible if the origin of the magic can be traced," Link answered.

Actually, he knew the exact reason for the resurrection. It was neither illusion magic nor Necromancy, but a type of divine spell from the sacrificial altar of Shadow Stalker Morpheus.

Morpheus was an extremely powerful Legendary character at the pinnacle that had come into contact with the Origin. He was currently preparing a seal that could contain even the power of gods, explaining the abundance of sacrificial altars in the Syndicate's hideout. Many of the Syndicate's bandits worshipped Morpheus as a god, providing him with some sort of divine powers. However, he was unable to fully control such powers as he was technically still a mortal, hence causing some of these powers to remain in the sacrificial altars. It eventually turned inoblack magic that resurrected the dead as protectors of the altars.

These divine spells only targeted the dead, and as long as the sacrificial altar was destroyed, the curse would be broken; there was nothing to fear. With this knowledge, Link relaxed.

Link was an expert on magic, and Anderson knew. He had once witnessed the battle between him and the Syndicate's elite bandits, and experienced the power of Link's dispelling magic. Seeing how confident Link was had put him at ease.

After four hours of trekking, they finally reached the canyon where the Syndicate's hideout lay. Yaksha and the River Cove Army could be seen in a camp at the entrance of the canyon.

"Did anything happen while I was gone?" Anderson was concerned he immediately inquired about the situation the moment he reached the campsite.

Yaksha was in a bad shape. He was pale and had bloodshot eyes, definitely the work of the curse. He shook his head and said, "It was extremely quiet since last night, much like a cemetery."

Yaksha was a Level-3 Warrior and had a decently strong Battle Aura. Link immediately cast a dispel spell on Yaksha.

He then set his sights on the canyon in front of him.

Compared to the game, this canyon looked way more majestic and intimidating. The two sides of the canyon were at least 300 feet high and the gap was narrow at only 18 feet wide. There was also a blanket of uncomfortable eeriness aggravated by the lack of sunlight.

The howling wind sounded like cries of vengeful spirits as it passed through the narrow gap of the canyon. Coupled with the pitch black darkness, it indeed looked like the proverbial gate to hell.

The camp was at a slight distance from the canyon. "We need to get closer. General, Captain, I need the both of you to accompany me as you are the only ones that can resist the curse," Link requested.

The rest of the soldiers were mostly Level-1 and Level-2 Warriors they would have difficulty fighting against the curse. On the other hand, it would be fine for Anderson, Yaksha, and his three followers.

Naturally, Level-3 Battle Aura could defend against a Level-1 curse.

The six of them then proceeded towards the canyon.

Link activated his Aura Detection spell and detected a thick dark miasma in the canyon. It was indeed only a Level-1 spell.

Link stepped into the canyon without any hesitation and his three followers confidently trailed behind him. Anderson, on the other hand, was still cautious, "Umm Link?"

"It's fine. Follow me."

Anderson and Yaksha followed begrudgingly.

Link immediately felt the bewitching voices that Anderson spoke of the moment he entered the canyon. There seemed to be a muffled voice in his head speaking things that he couldn't make sense of. Attempting to ignore it would send shivers down your spine. It felt like someone was breathing down your neck the entire time.

Other than Link, everyone showed signs of discomfort. Even the usually brave Jacker was hesitant in his steps.

"This is a curse of fear; ignore it, this is all it can do," Link said as he stepped forward with big, confident strides.

If Link, the frailest of them all did not display any signs of fear, then the rest had no choice but to follow suit.

Suddenly, after around 120 feet, an unfamiliar sound could be heard. "Beware!" Jacker hollered and jumped in front of Link, raising his shield.

Bang! The arrow was deflected by the shield, leaving a white spot on its surface.

Despite the low visibility in the canyon, Gildern spotted the attacker and immediately fired a shot in that direction. A red flash sped past and a cry of pain could be heard from the other end of the canyon followed by a loud thud. The ambusher was killed.

"Look, he was still alive," Link mentioned.

The rest of the squad heaved a sigh of relief. They were not afraid to fight people who were alive; the undead, on the other hand...

It wasn't long before Link witnessed the resurrection of the dead with his own eyes.

The Syndicate bandit who was just shot dead started thrashing on the ground in occasional spasms. After ten seconds, he slowly stood up, his limbs in unnatural positions due to the fractures he suffered from his fall. It was indeed a terrifying scene.

"Look, he's alive again!" Anderson screamed in fear.

The corpse stood at its position for a moment before turning in the opposite direction and walking deeper into the canyon. It wasn't long before he disappeared from their field of vision.

"What do we do now, my lord?" Jacker whispered. This was all too strange. Why didn't the corpse attack them?

There were no signs of fear on Link's face. Instead, he pointed straight in the direction where the corpse was heading. "Follow its trail and find the magic formation causing the curse!"

Everyone was at a loss for words. Did this young Magician not know fear?

Link had already started walking, unfazed by what had just happened. The rest of them unwillingly followed in his footsteps, amazed yet puzzled at his courage.

## 64. Trapped in a Labyrinth?

In the midst of the narrow passages of the cove, the group advanced 20 more yards before they encountered another sneak attack.

This time, two dark arrows were shot at them: one from the left and one from the right. Jacker raised his shield and managed to block the arrow from the left. On Link's right, Lucy was madly swinging her sword and the blade glinted in the dim light as she thrust her sword forward. Then, out from the tip of the blade came a strong gust of wind that sent the arrow flying in the opposite direction.

Anderson and Jacques were both staring dumbfounded at Lucy, stunned by the power of her sword. She then calmly sheathed her sword after the arrow had been deflected, paying no attention to the two men. Although the men were full of wonder and curiosity, they dared not say anything to her because of her intimidating cool attitude. Nonetheless, the extraordinary sword had left a great impression on them.

Link noticed Gildern was going to rush towards the enemies, so he said, "Gildern, leave one alive, don't kill them all!"

After hearing Link's instruction, Gildern killed one of the thieves with an arrow, then held back and carefully shot another arrow in order to not kill the target. Soon after, there were two cries of pain and a shadowy figure fell from the cliff and landed with a hard thud. The other one fell too, but he was still conscious. He waved his hands and feet mid-air to grasp at the rocky cliff face to slow down the speed of his fall. When he finally hit the ground, the thief wailed in pain but was still alive.

"Go, interrogate him." Link walked up to the falling figure, and the rest followed him.

Just as they were approaching the thieves, the corpse of the dead thief reanimated, just like the others before it, and climbed back up through the narrow passages of the cove back into the darkness. This time, a corpse had come back to life before of everyone's eyes, so they could plainly see the shocking disfigurements of the zombie.

The zombie's body was bent out of form. What was even more chilling was the expression on the walking corpse's faceits empty eyes were wide open and blood and other bodily fluids uncontrollably oozed out of its mouth. Whenever it moved, its body would make cracking sounds due to its broken bones it was simply a bone-chilling sight.

"By the Lord of Light, what a terrifying organization the Syndicate is!" muttered Anderson under his breath.

If he was lucky enough to survive this, he thought it pre-emptive to report whatever he'd seen today to the church. Such a sacrilegious organization must be cleansed and eliminated from its roots!

The zombie had walked into the darkness out of their sight, so Link walked towards the other thief and pointed his wand at him. The tip of the Fire Crystal staff lit up in a red aura, and under Link's precise control he shrouded the dying thief with the red light.

The light did no harm to the thief at all, but it was a good ploy to scare someone with no experience in magic. It worked very well, evidently, by the look of horror on the thief's face.

"Now, you have two options: one, answer my questions, or two, keep silent, and I will burn your soul!" threatened Link coldly with a mirthless laugh.

Before he could finish the sentence, the thief was scared witless.

"I'll answer your questions, please don't kill me!" he pleaded.

"Very good, you've made a clever choice."

Link's countenance softened slightly. He then asked, "What's going on in the cove? Why is it so dark?"

"Because a Magician had put a magic seal around the cove. The leader, Andy, said it would scare away the enemies of the Syndicate," answered the thief in a panicked voice.

"Magic seal? Where?" asked Link.

"In the main hall inside the cave, about 30 yards from here, one more turn along this path and you'll find it."

"One more question, why did the dead thieves rise up again? And where are they going?" asked Link.

He had encountered nothing like this at the Syndicate's lair in the game so Link couldn't expect what was to come after this, neither could he figure out what exactly was going on.

Link's confidence in his own strength was unshaken, though, as he now had his Matchstick wand and his Mana was almost full. Moreover, by his side there were two Level-4 Warriors and three Level-3 professional mercenaries. He even brought along a big pile of magic scrolls. He was confident that all this was enough to help him face whatever the Syndicate was to throw at them.

"No, I can't tell you anything, otherwise the master will punish me. Please Please don't force me!" answered the thief.

Link was taken aback by the response. His eyebrows furrowed, and the aura of the Fire Crystal shone even brighter now.

"Do you want to know how painful it is to have the Fire Crystal's flame burn your soul?" asked Link.

"No, I can't tell you I can't tell you Ahhhh!" Then, something unfathomable happened to the thief. His voice gradually became fainter and his pupils dilated until finally, he died.

Jacker walked up and checked the thief's body, then turned around and said to Link, "My lord, it seemed he was shocked to death."

Shocked to death? I don't think so, Link thought in disbelief.

Link used Aura Detection to scan the corpse and saw a black haze receding from the skull of the thief. This haze was much denser and even moved more quickly than the one that filled the atmosphere of the cove.

"No, he wasn't shocked to death. It's a curse. These thieves were cursed so as to not reveal anything about the zombies, otherwise, they would die," said Link.

Everyone was stunned by Link's explanation. This was the kind of demonic plot that would've made anyone's blood run cold!

Link noticed how everyone around him was petrified, so he added, "Don't worry, this curse involves a complicated process. It would require someone to swear an oath that would bind them to the curse, so rest assured that we won't find ourselves cursed without our knowing it."

This was common knowledge in magic. Since Link had read so many textbooks, he could easily see the tricks involved in the magic curse.

Everyone was instantly put at ease after hearing Link's explanation.

"Mr. Link, what should we do now?" the leader of the militia Jacques asked.

Among everyone present, he was the least experienced and the most spineless. He thought the shrewdest thing they should do right now was to retreat and escape from this dreadful place as soon as possible.

Before Link could answer, the dead thief started to move again. Link took a step back and waited until the corpse stood up and walked for about ten feet. Then he waved his hand and said, "Let's follow him. We'll see where they're going and find out once and for all what this is all about."

By now, everyone around Link was a bundle of nerves. Even the proud knight Anderson broke out in a cold sweat. Nonetheless, they all followed behind Link.

And so, a zombie teetered and tottered down the narrow winding path in the thick darkness of the cove while the young Magician followed behind as steady as a rock. The rest of the group who were all gulping in fear, followed closely behind him.

It turned out that the thief hadn't been lying about the cave. After following the zombie for about 60 feet, a corner appeared, just as described. There was another sneak attack, but the group was on high alert. The ambushers consisted of only two Level-2 thieves, and so they were easily killed off before they could even make a move. Shortly after being killed, the thieves stood up again and headed into a cave not far away from where they fell.

There was a bright torch hanging beside the cave entrance and its flickering flame cast long quivering shadows that looked like ghostly figures on the wall.

Soon, they almost lost sight of the three zombies as they were swallowed up by the pitch-black darkness of the cave.

"Illumination!"

With a wave of his wand, Link cast the spell to throw some lightito the darkness. A bright and stable orb of light then appeared at the end of the wand. Not only did it light up the dark cave, it had also lifted the spirits of the whole group.

"Follow them," ordered Link to the group of Warriors behind him. Then he turned to Jacker who was walking in front with his shield raised.

"Jacker, be careful and stay alert."

"Yes, my lord," answered Jacker. He gripped his shield tightly and raised it higher. He felt his courage emboldened as the aura emanating from it spreads to his body.

And thus, the group furtively walked further into the depth of the cave in single file.

It was obvious that the cave was previously inhabited, as its walls were polished and dry. There were also torches posted every few yards. They even passed some rooms with tables and chairs inside them along the way too. From the signs of cups and food left on the tables in some of these rooms, it was apparent that some thieves had been resting in these rooms not too long ago.

Even so, Link and the rest of the group had not encountered anyone since entering the cave, except for the zombies in front of them who were shrouded in a thick black haze as they staggered into the dark underbelly of the cave.

They had walked along that serpentine cave passage for about 100 feet when they suddenly came upon a dimly lit, big round hall. There on the floor in the middle of the hall was a magic seal shrouded in a purple aura!

Link examined the runes on the magic seal, but he discovered that he didn't recognize any of the magic runes. He also noticed a thick black haze that seemed to spew out from the seal which made him think of what the thief had told him before the magic seal must be the source of the curse.

He memorized the magic runes on the seal, then waved his hand and said, "Everyone step back into the passageway, I'm going to destroy this seal!"

Dismantling a magic seal was a simple procedureall one had to do was destroy the runes on it. The only problem was that when the runes were destroyed, the harmony of the seal would be disrupted as well, and the energy that it contained would be imbalanced. This would then trigger an explosion which was why Link had ordered everyone to step out of the hall.

So Link followed the rest as they stepped back into the cave passageway, and they retreated as far back as they could around a corner. Then Link unleashed three glass orbs and directed it towards the magic seal, carefully and precisely controlling the path of the orbs' trajectory.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Three explosions rang out through the cave. Soon after, there was another loud boom and then a burst of black haze gushed out from the hall like a strong current of water.

Even though the black haze was not a type of spell, it was still a harmful force that could do some serious damage to the body.

But Link was prepared for this. Immediately after the orbs exploded, he unleashed his magic scrolls which had the spell Level-1 spell, Guarding Barrier fixed on them.

There was a burst of white light and the spell in each scroll was released one by one. In total, there were six magic scrolls shielding everyone from the black haze. Just as the spells were cast, the black vapor surged through them, clashing with the spell. It protected them and the collision caused the white aura from the Guarding Barrier to shine even brighter. After three seconds, the black haze finally disappeared.

Something strange happened right after the black haze dissipated. Although the cave remained just as dark as before, somehow the oppressive dark atmosphere had vanished too, and the strange noises they heard in their heads were gone too.

It was a sign that the curse had been lifted.

Everyone heaved a sigh of relief. Finally, there was a respite. They had almost been stretched to their limits by the stifling air in the cove and the nightmarish thoughts it produced in their minds.

"My lord, what should we do now?" asked Jacker.

Link considered it for a while and said, "The curse has been lifted. We should get out of this cave now, then rally more militiamen together and come back later to search the cave."

Link was sure that it would be the safest course of action to retreat now and fight with more men later. There were more than a hundred militiamen in River Cove town and with the curse lifted, there was nothing stopping them from destroying the Syndicate's lair.

Everyone agreed, and they proceeded to retrace their steps through the winding cave passage back to the cave opening.

But then, something happened that made them stop dead in their tracks.

"Where did the cave opening go? I'm sure this is where we entered the cave!" shouted Jacker, visibly shaken. Everyone else almost jumped out of their skin too when they realized what was going on.

There hadn't been any forked passages, so it was impossible for them to have taken a wrong turn. They had retraced their steps precisely back to where they entered the cave. But instead of the cave opening, all they could see was an unending passage that stretched far into the darkness.

A slight crease appeared between Link's eyebrows. Then, he unleashed a glass orb at the cave wall in front. The orb exploded, causing the rocks of the cave wall to crumble and crack. This proved that the sight in front of them was not an illusion.

How did the cave turn into a labyrinth, then? It was something Link had never encountered in the game, so he was just as baffled as everyone else by the bizarre turn of events.

"Don't panic, just keep on walking!" said Link, suppressing even the slightest signs of fear and panic. He knew that he was the key member of this group that was holding them all together, so it was vital for him to keep calm and clear-headed.

## 65. Through the Looking Glass

The Syndicate Hideout

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After walking for a few hundred feet, Link and his comrades arrived back at the same hall where they first discovered the cursed magic formation.

"We are back here again. We will be trapped in here forever." Fear and desperation were written all over Captain Jacques' face.

After arriving back at the same hall for the third time, Jacques, the most emotionally volatile of the group, was already on the verge of collapse. The rest also felt discouraged, perturbed by their current situation.

"Let's not jump to conclusions and take a rest." Link's voice was as calm as ever.

Link walked towards a rattan chair in the corner of the hall and sat down. A beam of light was then released from his wand, illuminating the table in front of him. When the blinding light dissipated, bread and water had appeared on the table top.

Naturally, this was taken from his dimensional pendant, however, in order to boost the morale of the squad, Link pretended to be able to create food out of thin air, "Do not worry! Even if we are trapped, we will not starve, we have ample time to figure out a plan."

The amount of food in the dimensional pendant could last six of them for at least half a month. Link was confident that he could find a way out of this maze in that time. Even if the food ran out, he could still use Elemental Healing magic to replenish the energy of the squad.

In fact, there were spells that allowed Magicians to create food and water, except that Link did not bother to learn those superfluous spells. If needed, a Magician could stay alive simply by casting Elemental Healing on himself in replacement for food.

In other words, as long as Link had Mana, the six of them would not die of starvation or thirst.

Link was therefore calm.

Link's words and the presence of food relieved the tension and negativity that was in the hall. After all, the lack of food and water was the greatest problem if they were going to be trapped. Everyone heaved a sigh of relief.

The fact that Link could create food and water with magic also went uncontested. In any case, magic could do almost anything, creating food and water was nothing unusual.

Jacker immediately sat down and took a bite of the bread. After chewing for a few moments, he exclaimed, "This bread tastes exactly like the ones John made! Delicious!

Link smiled. It was made by John.

The rest soon formed a circle to satisfy their growling stomachs after their long walk.

After a hearty meal, everyone was feeling a lot more enthusiastic. Even Jacques looked ready to continue despite his pale demeanor.

Link observed his surroundings.

This was indeed the hall where the cursed magic formation lay, marks of its destruction could still be seen clearly on the ground. However, if you continued walking straight after passing through the exit, you would end up walking back to this hall.

As for the exit that lead back to the canyon, it was nowhere to be found.

This was preposterous. It was understandable that Captain Jacques would be terrified. In fact, Jacker, Anderson, Lucy, and Gildern were also out of ideas and waited for Link to give instructions.

Link did not manage to find any clues. After some rest, he suggested, "Let's try it once more but at a slower pace this time."

The rest trudged their bodies along and followed Link.

Link carefully observed the changes in the corridors as they passed. When they reached the exit that was supposed to lead them out of the cave, Link stopped and set his sights on the path ahead of him.

It seemed normal enough, but there was something strange. Link was perplexed, he could not explain this eeriness. In fact, it was familiarity he was feeling.

Link stayed stationary for a long time, carefully observing the path ahead of him. He compared its details with all those that he painstakingly memorized on their way here.

Link had discovered the trick.

The path ahead of them was, in fact, a mirror image of the current path they were on!

A certain person or spell had placed a theoretical mirror in the location that was supposed to lead them out of the cave. You could walk through this mirror, and that caused them to walk in circles.

Previously, Link and his comrades had been walking again and again into the mirror and back to the hall.

This mirror magic was perfectly cast, even the gaps had been meticulously patched up. You couldn't see any peculiarities in the walls of the cave or the contours of the groundit looked natural.

It was lucky that Link was observant enough.

He immediately thought of a spell: Dimensional Mirror.

Dimensional Mirror

Level-11 Legendary spell

Effect: Creates a dimension and links it to the real world, forming a closed dimensional loop.

(Note: This spell is a staple in creating an ultimate maze!)

When he was playing the game, this was Link's favorite spell to use after he reached the rank of Legendary. He loved to trick his opponent with it and subsequently controlled their movements. For a moment, he was revered as the Demon King of Mazes.

However, it was much easier to see the loopholes in the spell when playing the game. In this world, the Dimensional Mirror was almost perfect, definitely capable of trapping a person in this loop infinitely.

Link was troubled yet again. This was a Legendary spell and there was no way he could dispel it. They had two options: the first was to clear a path from the gap where the mirror was connected to the cave walls, digging a tunnel that linked them to the outside world.

However, this was extremely risky. The exit that they created could once again be sabotaged by the same magic.

The second option was to continue walking to the deepest parts of the corridor to see if there were any new discoveries.

This was also dangerous, albeit less so than the former. Link thought for a moment and chose the second option.

"My lord, did you find anything significant?" Jacker asked.

Link nodded and said, "We are now caught in a loop by an extremely powerful magic and I am not strong enough to dispel it. However, we have a chance of escaping. Let's walk back to the deepest part of this cave and we may find something we need."

The presence of a Legendary spell meant that there was a Legendary spellcaster nearby, and the only one that fitted the criteria was none other than the leader of the Syndicate, Morpheus.

However, Link was convinced that Morpheus was not in this cave. If Morpheus desired, he could have defeated them easily with one or two spells; there was no need to set up a Dimensional Mirror spell.

Link thus inferred that because Morpheus's real self was not present, his sacrificial altar was nearby instead, allowing him to extend a part of his power to create the Dimensional Mirror.

Link was also convinced that Morpheus could not extend much of his power as the Dimensional Mirror was not a Mana consuming spell. The crucial part of this spell was the user's familiarity with the space. If Morpheus had a stronger outreach, he could also have easily captured them due to the vast difference in their powers.

After thinking it through, Link felt that he had a chance.

As the exit was sealed, the only other option was to go deeper into the cave. All though the rest were not willing to, they followed suit.

Jacques trailed timidly behind as he was afraid to be alone.

The other exit in the hall lead to the deepest part of the cave. It was also the direction the undead were heading towards.

Similar to what they did previously, Jacker raised his shield and took on the role of a front scout while Link cast his Illumination spell. Everyone else surrounded Link to protect him.

Along the way, they saw many rooms made out of stone.

Some of these rooms were used for storage, some to house weapons, and the more luxuriously decorated ones should be the living quarters of the Syndicate leaders.

At that moment, Syndicate bandits sprung out of nowhere. However, they were merely Level-1 and Level-2 bandits and were no match for the squad.

Link and his comrades had a rather smooth journey and killed around 30 Syndicate bandits on the way. The only eerie thing that happened was the resurrection of the lifeless bandits and their suspicious actions of running straight towards the deepest part of the cave, despite the severity of their injuries.

They came back to life even after they were beheaded.

This was getting too much even for Link to handle. "Chop off their limbs! Do not let them revive!" he shouted. He felt that there was more to this than what met the eye!

Everyone else was also terrified of the indiscriminate resurrection. They became a lot crueler and dismembered the bodies of the bandits, hoping that this would stop the resurrection process.

"Damn it, they are still reviving and moving!" Jacques hollered.

A dismembered body without limbs was crawling its way deeper into the cave like a giant slug. His severed limbs flung around on the ground desperately trying to head deeper into the cave as well. This was way too traumatizing to look at.

"Burn them all!" This was also Link's first time seeing such a horrific scene, it was usually censored when he played the game.

The separate body parts were still struggling even when they were getting toasted by the fire. Despite the boiling blisters, they continued to move towards their goal and only stopped in their tracks after becoming completely charred.

Everyone was speechless. Just what exactly was lying in wait for them in the deepest part of the cave?

## 66. Blasphemers?

Despite encountering hair-raising situations along the way, Link and the rest of the group had no other choice but to soldier on.

"We must have provoked the ire of the demons! We're all going to die!" muttered Jacques. Recent events had obviously scared the daylight out of him.

"Stop your bleating, you coward!" snapped Jacker, gradually becoming impatient with the leader of the militia.

Jacques would not have tolerated such brazen insults in normal circumstances without countering with a curt retort. But this time, he merely responded by massaging his temple with his fingers.

"I shouldn't have come to this damned place," murmured Jacques under his breath.

Anderson heard it though, and that was the last straw. He felt it was his duty as a royal knight and the official commander of this mission to teach Jacques a lesson, so he gave him a hard slap across the face.

"Silence! Have you forgotten your duty to obey your orders?" barked Anderson.

It wasn't that Anderson was unperturbed by the things they'd encountered himself, but he knew that panicking would only serve to exacerbate the problem. The most important thing to do in dire situations like the one they were in now was to stay as calm as possible.

Anderson also knew that Jacques's cowardice had been lowering everyone's morale. If they were at war now, he would not hesitate to eliminate this soldier with a stab to the heart.

The slap was violent enough to make one of Jacques's tooth fall out of his mouth, filling his mouth with blood. He glared at Anderson but dared not utter a sound.

This may have seemed like a tiny spat within the team, but it was in no small part caused by the underlying tension they all felt at the time coming to a head.

Link knew this, and he was sure that if they did not find a way out of here quickly, the internal strife might devolve into mutiny soon. He could not let that happen.

Just then, they encountered another room. As it was with the other rooms, no one was inside. There was something slightly different with this room, though. Instead of just the tables and chairs, there was a small bookshelf in the corner and a pile of scrolls on the table. Link examined the scrolls and discovered that these weren't regular documents, but were all scrolls filled with magic runes.

Link had a strong premonition that the room belonged to that Dark Elf Magician.

He examined each scroll more thoroughly and found out that they were mostly theories of how to improve inefficient spells. All in all, the scrolls contained nothing special, only basic theories of magic.

Then as he flipped through the scrolls, a letter that was slipped between the scrolls fell out. Link picked it up and opened it, then saw that it was written in Dark Elven characters.

To the average person, Dark Elf writing was nothing but illegible scribbling with no apparent rhyme or rules to them, where each character looked like funny little tadpoles. Link was no different from the average person in this regard, so the letter's contents were completely beyond his comprehension.

Then, an extraordinary thing happened. As he picked up the letter, a notification popped up on the interface. It showed the contents of the letter.

My dear friend, Felidia

Link was jolted by the mention of the name Felidia. He never thought that the black-robed Magician was, in fact, such a prominent figure in the game.

Felidia, the gifted Dark Elf Magician, was a member of the Silver Moon Mage Council. Link recalled from his memory of the game that five years after the bloodshed in Gladstone, Felidia fought Eliard, who was by then a Level-7 Magician and the most gifted Magician among humans, in a famous battle at the Mirror Lake.

Their battle was a tie, and the aftershock of the battle had even caused the area of the lake to increase twofold.

Felidia was a young Magician himself. He should only be 23 years old now. And because Dark Elves usually lived up to 100 years old, Felidia could be considered about the same age as Link and Eliard. But unlike Link and Eliard, Felidia was now already a Level-4 Magician!

I can't believe the black-robed Magician was him! Link was stunned, but now he understood why this Magician could be so bold as to create havoc in a place so near to the capital city. What did a genius Magician with strong magical skills have to fear?

Link continued to read the rest of the letter. The first half consisted of trivial talks between two close friends, but he spotted key information in the middle of the letter a place called Howling Wind Cliff.

It was the place where Felidia's friend stayed, and from the descriptions in the letter, Link could work out that the place was within the Norton kingdom. In other words, this friend of Felidia was his accomplice in this kingdom.

Felidia was hurt in the last battle, and he's not in the cave, so he must've gone into hiding at his friend's place to recover. I must find this friend of his. Even if he wasn't with him, there must be something we could find out from him about Felidia's plans! Link thought.

Just as Link was coming up with this plan, a notification popped up on the interface.

Mission Completed: Search for Clues.

Player rewarded with 20 Omni Points.

New Mission Activated: Escape.

Mission Details: Escape from the Syndicate's lair and find the Howling Wind Cliff.

Mission Rewards: 50 Omni Points.

Fifty Omni points? It was a surprisingly generous reward. Although, when Link thought about it, whether it was to escape from the Syndicate's lair or to locate the Howling Wind Cliff both parts of the mission were exceedingly difficult.

But before thinking about escaping from the lair, Link first had to figure out the situation they were in right now. He was baffled by the presence of the high-level spells in the cave and was wary of what the darkness of the cave could be hiding or what could emerge from it to attack them.

As for the Howling Wind Cliff, Link himself had never even heard of the place before. The Firuman continent was vast. Even the Norton kingdom alone was about a thousand miles at its radius. If he was to look for this place alone without any help, it would probably take forever to find it. But Link was not without friends, so there was hope.

Right now, though, he had to focus on getting out of this cave.

He put the letter and the scrolls back down on the table, then walked over to the bookshelf. He flipped through some of the books and discovered that the books weren't about magic at all.

Link decided that they weren't worth his time, so he turned to the group and said, "Let's go, we have to keep looking for a way out."

The crowd continued forward. They passed a few more rooms and encountered 30 more Syndicate thieves. Link killed and burned half of them, but some came back to life before Link could burn them, and they all headed deep into the cave.

The group was unnerved by how determined the undead was to walk towards the depth of the cave.

"It's like they're puppets and someone is pulling strings in the dark controlling their movement," said Lucy.

"Could it be that there's an undead Magician in there? But why wouldn't the Magician come for us face-to-face?" said Anderson.

"There's no use guessing," said Link, shaking his head, "We must follow them and find out once and for all. But no matter who the opponent was, I don't think he's all that strong, otherwise, he wouldn't be using the undead or trap us in this labyrinthine cave, all the while not lifting a finger to attack us directly."

"My lord, I agree. It seems that the opponent is wary our power!" said Lucy. What Link said made a lot of sense to everyone, and all nodded except Jacques.

Jacques made no sound, not because he disagreed, but because he feared Anderson's harsh lessons.

As they headed into the depths of the cave for another 100 yard, the group finally reached the innermost chamber of the cave.

Eerily enough, they found themselves in a large hall of about fifty yards wide. And in the middle of the hall, there was a jet-black statue wearing a large cloak, veiled in a dark hazy shadow. Around it was a ring of candles with flickering flames, and surrounding the candles were a horde of silent undead.

There were quite a number of undead there, probably about fifty of them, all of which were the Syndicate thieves killed by Link and the team. Once they entered the hall, the undead all simultaneously turned towards them with their dead eyes, staring vacantly at them.

The dark subterranean hall, the black statue with a row of white candles around it, and the silent pilgrimage of the undead all of it combined to produce a blood-curdling scene from hell.

Everyone was scared stiff at this point. But suddenly, the eyes of the statue glowed in a dim red light. Then, a sinister androgynous voice rang out through the hall, saying, "Do you mortals know how blasphemers pay for their unpardonable sin? That's right, you'll have to pay with your souls! Oh, what delicious souls you have here!"

## 67. A Mortals Wisdom

The deepest area of the Syndicate's hideout.

...

No one could determine the origin of the voice. It seemed to be directly transferred to their minds. What was more terrifying was the content.

Mortals? Blatant disregard? Holy Land? Only a God would speak of those words.

Amongst the warriors, Anderson had the most experience in battle and so he took a few steps backward and shouted, "It's not looking good, we seem to have unknowingly stepped into the forbidden grounds of a dark evil god's sacrificial altar!"

A secluded cave, eerie undead, strange cursed magic formations, what else could it be other than an evil god?

Captain Jacques' body began trembling and he screamed in a high pitched voice, "Oh my god!"

Following which, he spun around and ran back to where they came from, cowering in fear.

Alright, that was one man down.

To the common man, a god was mysterious, strong and as intangible as the stars in the night skyan existence that they could never hope to understand, much less stand up against.

The only way to fight against a god was to render the asstance of another.

Jacker and Gildern also froze upon hearing those words. If not for their adventures with Link and their pledge to the God of Light to protect Link, they would most probably have run off together with Jacques.

"My lord, what do we do now?" He asked. In his eyes, Link was as collected as ever, as though he was just dealing with an ordinary opponent.

He had no idea how Link could stay so calm, but based on his past experiences, he knew that Link definitely had a way to get them out of this mess.

Apart from Link, one other person was exceptionally calm, and that person was Lucy.

The moment she heard the sinister voice, she unsheathed her sword and prepared herself for battle. She smirked when she saw Jacques running away in fear.

"To think that such cowards are protecting River Cove Town. What a joke."

Naturally, she also felt terrified, but after her close shave from death while escaping from the Syndicate, her attitude towards life had changed. To her, now death was but a destination that everyone would finally arrive at.

If Link lived, there would be hope. However, if Link was met with misfortune, she would accompany him to the lands of the dead.

Before Link could answer Jacker's question, sounds of hurried footsteps could be heard, and a disheveled Jacques once again emerged from the corridors.

Looking at Link and the others, Jacques had an incredulous expression. This was way out of his expectations. He collapsed to the ground and mumbled, "How can this possible? How?"

Link immediately knew the reason. "This corridor has also been sealed. It's pointless to run, the only way out now is to fight!"

"But how?" Anderson softly whispered.

"Destroy the sacrificial altar!" Link spoke without hesitation. At the same time, he pointed his wand at the statue on the altar and fired a glass orb in that direction.

Boom! The shockwaves from the explosion flung centuries-old dirt from the ground and extinguished the candles, causing the hall to descend into darkness. But almost immediately after, the hall was illuminated by another source of light.

A blood-red light surrounded the sacrificial altar, forming a dome of light. From the visibility brought by this faint light, Link could tell that his attack had completely no effect on the altar.

Even stranger things started taking place. The eyes of the statue started glowing in an eerie black light and slowly began to move like a sentient being.

That wasn't all.

The 50-odd undead in the hall started moving towards the statue as though they were summoned by a higher being. As they moved closer, white balls of light started to emerge from their bodies. When they made contact with the blood-red light dome, these balls of white light transformed into a black sinister cloud of gas and was absorbed by the statue.

Once the white light was absorbed, the undead collapsed onto the floor as though they lost all energy, before rapidly decomposing into piles of ashes.

The speed of the statue increased with every absorption of the sinister black cloud of gas.

"Oh my, the god has revived and is here to eliminate us!" Jacques screamed and ran into the corridor once again. It seemed like they would have to make do with one less person for this fight.

"Link, please think of something!" Anderson was also on the verge of a breakdown, there were probably not many things more terrifying than an evil god statue reviving right in front of your eyes.

In folklore, a god would not only destroy your physical body, but would also torment your soul until your existence was completely destroyed for all eternity. For many Warriors, the death of their physical bodies was not something to be feared, but the destruction of their soul struck fear in their hearts.

Jacker, Lucy, and Gildern held their weapons tightly while chanting the holy name of the God of Light, hoping for his divine protection.

Link, on the other hand, frowned and carefully observed the changes that were happening to the statue.

The statue was extremely sturdy, as evidenced by the ineffectiveness of Link's attack. However, the absorption of the energy of the undead exposed a clear weakness.

It was that Shadow Stalker Morpheus could not freely control his powers in this space, in fact, he was heavily restited, so much so that he had to make use of the powers only available in this space. His power here was most likely only enough to sustain the Legendary spell, Dimensional Mirror.

In other words, their only opponent was the statue in front of them.

At this thought, Link commanded in a deep voice, "There is nothing to fear, it's just a stone statue. In the name of the God of Light, purify it!"

Link pointed his wand at Jacker and released Might of a Giant, the spell stored inside his wand. A beam of runes was immediately projected onto Jacker and absorbed by his body.

In an instant, the muscles of Jacker's body shined with a golden glow and became more defined. However, he was already a Level-4 Warrior, thus reducing the effectiveness of the spell. Instead of tripling his strength, it increased his strength by a multiplier of 2.5.

The final result was a strength comparable to that of a Level-5 Warrior.

But that was hardly all the tricks Link had up his sleeve.

Jacker was the strongest Warrior in their squad and was thus tasked to face the statue head on, absorbing the damage. Despite the strengthening spell and the use of a shield, Jacker still struggled to match up with the statue. Link then cast a Level-2 Guarding Barrier spell to further enhance his capabilities.

At the same time, Link took out all the magic scrolls he prepared and released the magic contained within them, giving all members of the squad a Level-1 Cat's Agility buff.

Link hollered, "Don't hesitate, first destroy the undead and stop the statue from absorbing more power!"

The strength of the statue was directly proportional to the number undead it absorbed. The fewer the number of undead who reached the blood-red light dome, the weaker its battle power. Link wasted no time and bombarded the undead army with his Whistle spell.

Holding a handful of iron dust in his left hand, he raised his wand in the direction of the undead. He felt magical energy surge into the wand before it was compressed and manipulated to make up the accurate spell structure. Fire and earth element particles were then concentrated to the tip of the wand, causing the fire crystal to glow. After 0.2 seconds, a whirling, high-pitched whistle was created at the tip of the wand.

Fwooshh! The spell was launched towards the blood-red dome. Link was testing the strength of the dome.

The attack caused a giant explosion and created airborne metallic pieces that scattered everywhere. However, the blood-red light dome was barely scratchednot even a ripple was generated. This dome was extremely sturdy, way above the power of the Whistle spell.

Link immediately gave up on his assault on the light dome, with another whistle formed at the tip of his wand, he aimed and fired it at the legs of an undead. The whistle penetrated deep into the limbs and was blown apart by the explosion that followed soon after. The undead subsequently lost its balance and fell to the ground.

It was unsurprising that the undead continued crawling towards the statue, albeit at a slower pace.

"Hey!" Anderson understood what Link was doing and dashed forward. His weapon was a two-handed heavy sword, and while it prevented him from defending against attacks, it's destructive force was top notch.

A Level-4 Warrior wielding a heavy sword 5'4'' in length and 15 inches in width dashing headlong into a group of undead was akin to a tiger entering a herd of sheep. The undead had no chance to even defend themselves before they were brutally dismembered.

Jacker remained vigilant and defensive besides Link, while Lucy and Gildern began their assault.

Lucy's weapon was the Gale sword. The sword was extremely light and that allowed Lucy to attack at an insane speed, like a strong gust of wind, both sharp and lethal. She weaved among the undead like a dancing butterfly, severing their limbs along the way. Her speed was, in fact, comparable to Anderson's, dismembering ten undead in a matter of seconds.

Gildern on the other hand, was an archer who specialized in one-on-one combat. His attacks had a high penetrating power but were not suited to fight against large groups. In fact, even though his arrows hit his targets, it could not sever their limbs, after a few arrows, he stopped attacking knowing it was futile.

There were only about 50 undead in total. With Lucy and Anderson clearing the undead at such a fast pace, most of the undead were unable to move at all after 15 seconds, lying lifelessly on the floor, tumbling around.

The statue only managed to absorb the energy of 10 undead.

"Hurry, pile up all the undead, we need to burn them!" Link hurried the rest along. They had only prevented the undead from moving, but to fully stop the absorption of power, they needed to burn the undead into charred pieces of flesh.

Anderson, Lucy, and Gildern rushed to move the undead, while Jacker stayed faithfully beside Link in the event of an emergency.

Soon, the undead, with their respective limbs, were piled up into a veritable mountain of corpses.

This whole time, the statue simply looked silently at their attempts to sabotage his power absorption process. Link knew, that the statue had a final trump card he hadn't revealed.

But what exactly was it?

A thought flashed through his mind, he remembered that this place used to be a story map and that this underground statue was a hidden boss.

It was extremely difficult to summon this boss, at least Link never had the chance to fight against it. However, he had read comments on the forum that it took extremely gory and inhumane tactics to summon this hidden boss.

However, this boss was quickly removed from the game due to many players reporting it to be too cruel. Link had a hazy memory of the forum as he did not pay much attention to it while he was reading. He desperately searched his mind for a clearer version of the guide to fight this boss. As his eidetic memory slowly kicked it, the content became clearer to him, combining his knowledge with the current situation, Link smiled.

Hehe, luckily I still have 20 Omni Points.

He already thought of a plan, but was waiting for the statue's next move to decide whether he would put itito action.

When Link was preparing to ignite the fire, the sinister voice once again reverberated through the cavern.

"What a brilliant Magician, but it is still merely the wisdom of a mortal!"

The statue released a beam of red light onto the pile of undead, causing little white balls of light to float in the air. They then slowly started converging into a brighter and larger sphere of light.

The rest of the squad was at an utter loss for words when this situation unfolded in front of them. Their efforts had been in vain! Link, on the other hand, jumped in excitement.

As expected!

Morpheus' reaction was exactly the same as that of the hidden boss in the game!

## 68. Secret Plot

Link learned one thing from the battle he fought in the game against the boss of the Syndicate Morpheus was not truly a god, no matter how powerful he seemed. He was just a false-god or a demigod who had stumbled upon a fraction of the mysterious secret knowledge from the realm of the heavens! Even though he had set up his own altar, and even though he possessed a power that seemed infinitely strong to a mortal, he still wouldn't match up to the powers of a true god.

Link noticed something that proved this point. Although Morpheus could control the stone statue from afar, his control was still crude and limited. It might be the perfect ploy to strike terror into people who were unacquainted with magic and spells, but when faced with someone knowledgeable and experienced, his tricks fell like a house of cards.

For instance, Link could sense that Morpheus's grasp of the current situation in the cave was less than perfect. There were many secret moves and tricks that could be easily concealed from him. And that was the perfect window of opportunity for Link to attack him!

Right now, under the control of the red aura from the statue, the white orb was gradually condensing, and its formation was nearing completion.

Once complete, the red aura would guide the white orb into the statue's body, becoming the point from which Morpheus would control the movements of the statue.

Anderson tried to stop this process, but the minute he entered the area shrouded by the red light, his footsteps staggered, and he entered a trance-like state which made him lose control of his movements and tumble straight to the ground. Soon after, there was also a white light on his body that was starting to condense into a white orb.

Anderson almost died of fright, but he managed to muster up all his strength and roll his body out of the zone of the red aura. He'd never dare to go near it again. This showed that the power of a Legendary-level figure, even in its limited and weakest form like the one they were up against now, was still something that a mortal could never match up to.

"Mr. Link, do something!" shouted Anderson. Link was the only one left that they could rely on.

"Shh! Be quiet," said Link with a thin smile on his face and a finger raised to his lips. While speaking, the tip of his wand glowed slightly, and from the tip a fog-like greyish aura kept flowing out, which then headed towards the heap of corpses.

It was strange how the fog did not face any obstruction this time. It easily floated through the air and into the pile of corpses, effortlessly merging with the white orb.

Ten seconds later, a white orb was then fully formed. And under the red aura's control, it started to penetrate into the statue. At the same time, Link's spell was also complete, he could feel that his grey aura was inside the white orb, entering Morpheus's statue together. And the supposedly godlike Morpheus was completely oblivious to all of this!

When the white orb settled deep inside Morpheus's statue, the black haze around it became extraordinarily thick, and the red shroud of light disappeared. Then, a stony spike about half a foot long materialized in its right hand, and it began to move.

"Hahaha, you mere mortals, I'm tingling in anticipation of your fresh blood! Especially you, Magician!" It was the sinister voice again.

When Link looked over to the statue, a notification popped up.

Morpheus's Elemental Puppet

Level-5 Elite

Specialty: High-level anti-magical properties and immense physical strength.

Battle Skills: Unknown

Status: Weak (not yet activated)

Weakening Spell

Level-2 Spell

Mana Consumption: 32 points.

Effects: Reduces the strength and power of targets by 80% for five minutes.

(Note: The higher the target's level, the lower the weakening effects. Not effective on targets with skills of Level-6 and higher.)

The details of the spell had put Link at ease, because the Elemental Puppet was at Level-5, just within the range of the spell he had just purchased with 20 Omni Points.

The Weakening spell would be able to weaken the strength of a Level-5 Elemental Puppet for about 30%, which was good enough for Link. However, the opponent had anti-magic powers and its body was solid rock, which meant that it would block the powers of magic spells efficiently both inside and outside its body. This would basically render any of Link's spell attacks useless.

The Elemental Puppet was now rushing towards Link and the team. Because its body was rigid and stony, its movements weren't exceedingly fast, but was roughly on par with the speed of a Level-3 Warrior. All the Warriors on the team could match up to its speed.

As a shield-wielder, Jacker rushed forward with his shield raised, ready to block its attack.

"Be careful, it's strong!" warned Link.

His warning made Jacker hesitate for a moment. They had fought together in two battles, so Jacker knew that it was wise to take Link's judgment seriously. And so Jacker changed his tactics and abandoned his plan to charge at the Puppet head-on but opted instead to go into a defensive stance. He gradually slowed down his footsteps and wentito a stable stance to defend against the monstrous opponent.

A couple of seconds later, the two collided with each other. Their speeds weren't all that fast, and yet the resulting impact of the collision was frighteningly explosive!

The instant they collided, Jacker raised his shield to cover his face and head, his seven-foot frame was fully covered with steel armor that made him look like a charging tank, while the eight feet tall Elemental Puppet raised its left hand while the other hand attacked Jacker's shield head-on.

The clash between the colossus and the brute rang through the hall in a reverberating boom. It wasn't the volume of the clash that was intimidating though, but the fact that it resonated with everything in the cave everyone there could feel the vibration in their chest, and even the cave walls shook, causing dust and pebbles to fall from the walls.

But that still wasn't the terrifying part. What was truly disturbing was the strength of the Elemental Puppet!

Jacker was already in a fully defensive stance and was fully bracing himself for the oncoming attack. He was also boosted by the spell Giant's Strength while possessing the power of a Level-5 Warrior himself. Still, when he was hit by the Elemental Puppet's attack, he was hurled backward by one punch!

Yes, he was sent flying, where his whole body was lifted by the force of the impact and then was hurled a few feet backward. Had the monster been fast enough, Jacker would've likely died with that one hit.

When he was in mid-air, Jacker's body was completely numb, he couldn't muster up any energy left to even lift a finger. At the same time, he saw the Elemental Puppet rushing towards him to finish him off.

Luckily, he was not alone.

When he was still in mid-air, Jacker could feel that his body moved backward much faster than it should be, as if there was a powerful force pulling him backward. This slight acceleration had given him time to recover while at the same time saving him from the Elemental Puppet's next attack.

It must be Lord Link's Vector Throw! Jacker was by now very familiar with Link's spell. He recognized that this spell had once saved Lucy's life from the Occult Viktor's attack, and now it had saved his life.

As his body was moving backward, Jacker could feel a cool gas entering the pores of his skin which instantly made him feel better. The numbness he felt receded and he could feel his body was being replenished energy.

It was Link's Elemental Cure!

After unleashing this spell, Link now had an accurate asssment of the Elemental Puppet's strength.

"Attack it with all your might! Jacker, charge on!" shouted Link.

After hearing this order, the moment Jacker's feet hit the ground, he unhesitatingly charged towards the Elemental Puppet, as if he wasn't the one who had just been hurled backward by the monster's attack just moments ago. He would never doubt any of Link's orders.

Meanwhile, Lucy was close at his heels. She thrust the Gale Sword behind her, creating a wind force to push her forward. Her body was as light as a butterfly and as nimble as a cat, so the resulting force easily propelled her towards the Elemental Puppet at a high speed.

Gildern shot an arrow too, sending an arrow with high penetration power whistling through the air, hitting accurately at the Elemental Puppet's eye.

The only person who proceeded with some reservation was Anderson. The sight of Jacker being completely overpowered by the opponent, was still too fresh in his mind. He dared not follow too closely behind Jacker, in case he was once again hurled backward, which would mean trouble for him if he was right behind him.

The Elemental Puppet seemed slightly nonplussed by the oncoming joint attacks.

"Aha, are you ready to meet your ends, then, mortals?" said the sinister voice.

Just before Jacker and the Elemental Puppet crashed into one another, Link waved his wand at the Elemental Puppet and said, "Weakening!"

"Weakening? You're using a magic spell against me? Magician, have you been struck dumb by the sight of my power?" jeered the Elemental Puppet, after bursting out in laughter. The Elemental Puppet possessed high-level anti-magic powers able to block any kind of attack from mid-level spells.

But Link only responded with a smile on his face.

## 69. Dont Blame Me, I Want to Live

Originally, the Elemental Puppet wanted to finish Jacker in just one hit, but something unexpected happened!

With his original power, he should have been able to destroy this shielded Warrior with ease, but the moment he raised his arms he felt a wave of lethargy overwhelm him. His power was decreasing!

A 30% decrease in power might not seem like much, but to an Elemental puppet with powers comparable to a Level-5 Warrior, 30% might well be the strength he needed to fight against Jacker. If he was not at his full strength, he might not be able to defeat Jacker who was a Level-4 Warrior.

Boom! A familiar sound reverberated through the cave, but the result of this clash was entirely different!

The Elemental Puppet's arm was easily deflected by Jacker and the shield smashed onto the statue's chest with full impact.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The Elemental Puppet was continuously knocked back. He tried to regain his footing by stomping on the ground with his heavy, bulky legs, causing trembles in the cave. There were also fine granules on his chest from the impact with the shield.

Seeing that his attacks were working, Jacker regained his confidence. He knew that Link would definitely be able to deal with this guy!

Jacker rushed forward once again. He pounced on a retreating Morpheus and used his shield to protect himself, bracing for another impact.

However, Jacker was too full of himself this time round. His Warrior instincts wanted to fully humiliate the enemy and he acted too rashly!

The moment Jacker sped towards the enemy, Link knew he had to do something.

The enemy was careless the previous time, but this time, he would already be prepared!

This Elemental Puppet was not an easy opponent, he still had some battle skills up his sleeve. What they needed to do was to weaken the puppet one step at a time. Jacker was way too impulsive!

However, it was too late to stop Jacker now.

"Lucy, use the power of your Gale sword to save Jacker!" Link shouted.

Before he could complete his sentence, the Elemental Puppet raised his leg and stomped on the ground. A low rumble echoed throughout the cave and visible shockwaves emerged on the hard solid ground.

These shockwaves sped towards their target, Jacker. In an instant, Jacker's legs felt numb and incredibly weak. He then stumbled in the direction of the Elemental Puppet.

His inability to keep his balance exposed his head to the enemy. In front of him, the puppet was holding a stone spike in his hand, fully prepared to eliminate him!

Not good!

Jacker's eyes widened, however, he was currently hanging in mid-air and was unable to fully utilize his strength. He could only helplessly watch as he was flung towards the stone spike.

Link cast a spell.

"Vector Throw!"

This was only a Level-1 spell and was not able to change the trajectory of Jacker's Level-5 charging power, but, it still slightly reduced his speed.

"Lucy!" Link hollered. It was too late for him to cast any more spells, the only person that could save Jacker now was Lucy who had already rushed to his side to give support.

Wind element particles spiraled around Lucy's Gale Sword. The moment she made an attack, a gust of wind rushed towards Jacker. Confident that the gust would be enough to save Jacker, she changed the direction of her attack and made a dash for the puppet's eyes.

The Vector Throw and Lucy's wind element alone could not stop Jacker in his tracks but was still able to change the trajectory of his Battle Charge. Furthermore, Lucy's attack was extremely fast and she managed to reach the puppet's eye before Jacker was hurt. If Morpheus did not defend against Lucy's attack, he would have been pierced by the merciless blade.

At the same time, Gildern shot an arrow as a tag team attack with Lucy. He used a skill called Arrow of Punishment, an attack with unimaginable penetrating power aimed at the Elemental Puppet's weakest joint.

The Elemental Puppet suddenly found himself the target of many powerful attacks. The chemistry between members of The Flamingo Band of Mercenaries was truly something to be feared.

Now that Jacker's trajectory was changed, even if he continued to invest his strength into killing Jacker, his chance of success was low. Moreover, he would be heavily injured. Even with his sturdy exterior, he needed to be careful of this heavy assault.

Left without a choice, the Elemental Puppet shifted his focus away from Jacker.

He used the stone spike in his right hand to defend against Lucy's sword and his right hand to deflect Gildern's arrow. Jacker then flew past the side of the puppet onto the solid ground. Although he looked disheveled, he escaped unscathed.

"Get back on your feet; be calm and listen to me!" Link shouted.

Warriors fought with a burning passion in their hearts. This caused them to become easily agitated and impulsive, robbing them of their ability to make sound decisions in a fight.

There were only a few people in the world that could make calm decisions in the midst of a battle. Those people were termed as geniuses of their fields and clearly, the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries did not possess such a rare ability.

But Link did!

Jacker had a close brush with death. He pounded his numb legs and kicked them back and forth to circulate the blood flow. After regaining his senses, he stood up.

He would not be impulsive this time. He listened carefully for Link's instructions, while slowly skirting around the Elemental Puppet.

Royal Knight Anderson was in a daze this entire time. Link and his comrades were simply moving at a pace he couldn't keep up with. He started attacking only after the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries had fought the puppet for a round.

"Might of a Giant!" Link strengthened Anderson with his spellhe was assuming the role of a supporting spellcaster.

Anderson was also a strong Warrior. While his attacks were not as fast as Lucy and Gildern, he could still deliver heavy, powerful blows to the opponent. Every one of his attacks would be a great threat to the Elemental Puppet and thus, Link was happy to use his Mana points on him.

This spell alone cost him 60 Mana points. On top of the other spells he had cast, he was left with only 20 Mana points and a Mana Recovery Potion in his dimensional pendant.

Link hated the taste of the potion but he uncapped the flask and downed it in one gulp. His Mana points were almost replenished again.

Anderson felt a wave of power surging through him after being strengthened by the Level-3 spell. The Elemental Puppet had to defend against the attacks of the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries and had left his neck area open! This was his opportunity to attack! He swung his blade with full force.

Anderson currently held the power of a Level-5 Warriorthe force from this swing was extremely significant. A cut two inches deep could be seen on the puppet's neck.

Through the crack in the puppet's exterior, streaks of light could be seen flowing through its body.

Link was elated. "We just have to land one more blow on his neck to destroy its rune formation!"

Once the rune formation inside the body of an Elemental Puppet was destroyed, it would disintegrate!

Everyone was jolted out of their thoughts; morale was high.

Morpheus was powerful. However, with only two bulky arms here against so many attackers, he was not able to fully defend himself from the all-out assault. The puppet's body was severely damaged and Link and the others' victory was near!

"You, Magicianyou have angered me!" It was the voice again, although this time the eeriness had been replaced by boiling rage.

Link originally thought it was just words of anger. However, an ominous premonition suddenly flashed through his mind.

Does he still have something up his sleeve?

Link heard footsteps slowly creeping up on him. He immediately spun around. It was Jacques! He had emerged from the corridor and was only six feet away from him.

Jacques might have just been afraid of staying in the corridor alone. That was Link's exact thought when he first saw him. But when he looked at Jacques again his breath got knocked out of his lungs. Jacques was heading straight for him and his expression was devoid of feelings, even fear. Most importantly, it wasn't until a moment ago when the sound of footsteps became audible.

Not good, this coward has been bewitched, he is on Morpheus' side now! He was transported here directly using the Dimensional Mirror! Link thought.

Jacques was timid, which translated into weak willpower. It was easier for these kinds people to suffer mental breakdowns and be targets of bewitching spells. At that moment, everyone was concentrating on bringing down the Elemental Puppet while Jacques, a Level-3 Warrior, was prepared to attack Link with his full strength.

There was no time to react!

Jacques had already readied his sword, his Battle Aura enveloping his entire body.

"Don't blame me, I want to live..." he mumbled.

## 70. Absolute Quietude

More than a month ago in Gladstone, Link had once defeated a Level-3 Dark Elf Warrior called Jiggs. But there was a distance between Link and Jiggs, and that gave Link ample time to cast his spells.

Now Link was facing another opponent, Jacques, who was also a Level-3 Warrior. But there was a critical difference.

This time, it was a sneak attack. Jacques had stabbed Link from behind. Link was only aware of it when it was too late. Jacques had also been observing and following Link for quite some time, so he was quite familiar with his magic spells. In short, everything worked to Jacques's advantage!

The sword was aimed at Link's heart from behind and the sword was shrouded in an icy-blue water element Combat Aura. The instant the tip of the sword touched Link's clothes, a biting cold spread to his skin, which Link immediately recognized as Combat Aura.

By then, Jacker, Lucy, and Anderson were all focused on attacking the Elemental Puppet, so none of them had any idea there would be such a tit in events happening right behind them!

At that moment, except for the archer Gildern, none of them had noticed Jacques's betrayal. But even Gildern wouldn't be able to save Link,

Gildern wouldn't have enough time to save Link either because Jacques attacked Link at the right time when he was focused on aiming an arrow at the Elemental Puppet. All he could do was stare helplessly at Jacques stabbing his sword at Link's frail body.

"No!!!" bellowed Gildern.

Gildern's scream had caught the others' attention. Jacker turned around and was completely shattered by what he saw. When Lucy saw it, she completely abandoned the fight against the Elemental Puppet and rushed towards Link to save him.

The damned coward! I should've killed him! thought Anderson, fuming.

He then cast aside the fight against the Elemental Puppet too and rushed to save Link. Princess Annie had ordered him to protect Link's life at all costs. If anything happened to Link, he could just kiss any hopes of an advancement in his career goodbye.

In fact, even if Princess Annie hadn't ordered him to do so, Anderson would still do anything to save Link because he had conceded to the plain fact that without Link, the rest of the team simply had no hope of getting out of this place alive. Link's life must be saved no matter what!

But Lucy and Anderson were too late. Nothing could change the fact that no one could save Link now, he only had himself to rely on in order to survive.

The moment Jacques attacked him, Link knew that he had a very short time to react, probably less than 0.1 seconds. All he could do in that time was cast Level-0 spells. Among all the Level-0 spells he knew, the one that was the most powerful and that had the shortest spellcasting time was Glass Orb.

Using his Matchstick wand, he had decreased the spellcasting time for Glass Orb down to one every 0.04 seconds.

In 0.1 second, I can only unleash two Glass Orbs, which isn't enough to damage Jacques's Combat Aura or even to block his sword attack.

Fortunately, Link's thinking speed was as quick as lightning, so he could analyze the situation in no time. He knew that to survive this attack, the wisest plan wasn't to attack Jacques or to dodge his sword, but to minimize the damage his sword could do as much as possible.

Once he was clear of what to do, Link's wand lit up and 0.04 seconds later, a dim blue orb flew out in a zig-zag trajectory, going around Link's body and hitting Jacques's sword's blade before exploding.

Bang! The Combat Aura on Jacques's sword flickered, counteracting with the fire elements in the Glass Orb. Nonetheless, it was not sufficient to block the Glass Orb's explosion, so the blade of his sword was bent slightly.

An instant later, another glass orb appeared and the bent blade of Jacques's sword bent even further. Because the second attack came right after the first one, the Combat Aura on the sword did not have time to recover from the first attack yet, so for a short while the strength of Jacques's Combat Aura was halved.

It didn't have any significant long-term effect, though. In truth, a Level-3 Warrior like Jacques didn't even need half a second to restore the lost strength of the Combat Aura caused by the Glass Orbs back to its original level.

But to Link, this half a second of weakness was more than enough.

After the two Glass Orbs, Jacques's sword was blasted and bent by the explosions and was deflected away from the position of Link's heart. But even so, Link could not stop it from stabbing his body.

Link felt something cold on his left abdomen, he looked down and saw that Jacques's sword had stabbed through his body!

Thank goodness, it didn't go through my heart!

Even now, Link still managed to keep his calm. Instead of panicking, he felt relieved. He knew that even though the wound was serious, ultimately it wasn't fatal and that he had a good chance of surviving it.

Link could feel that his stomach had been pierced through. He could also sense a foreign energy in his body Jacques's Combat Aura. Link knew that this energy would soon explode and once that happened there was no other outcome for him but death.

In this instant, Link manifested what was called a Magician's absolute quietudea crucial state of mind for Magicians that fortified their mental strength and grit.

Even though he was stabbed, Link's mind was just as clear as before and he managed to stay focused enough that his spellcasting was not affected.

Spellcasting was nothing like physical attacks which worked as long as you could thrust your weapon forward. To cast a spell, you must construct the complicated spell structure and your mental state must be calm and stable. Even minute emotional disturbances would negatively affect spellcasting. Under the extreme conditions that Link was under right now, only a handful of Magicians in the world would be able to cast spells.

And yet Link still managed to do it!

The tip of Link's Fire Crystal staff lit up and 0.2 seconds later, Link successfully cast another spell Level-1 Vector Protective Force Field.

Then, in the space between him and Jacques, an almost transparent barrier materialized. It gradually expanded until it hit Jacques's body, but because he was a Level-3 Warrior, he was not affected much. Link, however, was sent flying forward.

With a terrifying sound of flesh tearing, Link's body pulled away from the sword's blade just in time before the Combat Aura on Jacques's sword burstito small eruptions. But no matter how small the explosions were, Link was glad he managed to dodge them.

Blood then gushed out of the wound on Link's body. A burning pain spread throughout his body, a pain so unbearable it made Link bend over his waist. Jacques's Combat Aura had done much damage to his internal organs, but luckily, his heart was unharmed.

It was all thanks to the two Glass Orbs that were timely released, otherwise, Link was sure he would've died.

When Link was hurled forward, his wand lit up once more and he cast the Elemental Cure spell on himself. When he landed, he gritted his teeth, swallowed down the pain, and used the aid of Cat's Agility to drag himself as far away from Jacques as possible.

Jacques was about to chase after Link, but he was stunned at how he had escaped as swiftly as the wind. Just as he came back to his senses and was going to step forward with his sword, a violent gust of wind rushed towards him, tossing him a few feet backwards.

It was Lucy.

"Die, you bastard!" she barked, her voice icy and vicious.

Her face was contorted by vengeance and her eyes were filled with bloodthirst. There was not a thread of compassion or mercy left in her. She took advantage of the time Jacques was pushed backwards and charged towards him. Each thrust of her sword was both quick and heavy, accompanied by the loud howling of wind. Jacques was completely overwhelmed and was forced into a defensive stance with no chance to counter Lucy's attacks.

Gildern turned around at the same time and joined Lucy in attacking Jacques. He nocked an arrow and aimed at the joint in Jacques's armor on his leg.

Thwang! Gildern's arrow hit Jacques's left leg right where his skin was exposed!

Link was relieved to see Jacques attacked by two people. He knew he was safe now.

Only then did he allow himself to feel scared. Morpheus's trick had almost cost him his life. Had his reaction been just marginally slower, he would've ended up in the pile of corpses.

I must never underestimate a Legendary opponent, otherwise there'll be a high price to pay! Link would never forget the lesson he learned from this battle.

But he was not a weakling who was there for anyone to push around. Jacques was Morpheus's last trick, and now that he was dealt with, it was time for the decisive battle!

## 71. What a Tenacious Young Man

Link made the correct decision in an instant. He had just escaped from Morpheus' murderous plan but was in no position to be relieved or to even worry about his injury. He swept his gaze across the hall and hollered, "Jacker, Anderson, resume the attack on the Elemental Puppet!"

Everyone had left their original post following his injury, but Link was clear that their greatest threat was still the Elemental Puppet. Jacques was nothing but a chess piece in Morpheus' elaborate plan.

After Link escaped the ambush, Jacques had outlived his usefulness. Morpheus, on the other hand, was a powerful Legendary Magician. Even if only a part of his power was present in the form of a puppet, he was still extremely dangerous if not dealt with in time. It would only take him a matter of seconds to do something unexpected.

The fact that Link was alive and still energetic enough to give commands put Jacker at ease. Although he was fuming with rage and desperately wanted to grind Jacques into minced meat, upon hearing Link's command, he immediately commenced the assault on the puppet.

Anderson also charged forward before exclaiming, "Link is such a tenacious young man! To think that he can still remain conscious after such a serious injury!"

Previously, Anderson did not think highly of Link. This was not because of his suspicions of his magic, but due to Link's tender age and frail physique. He felt that any brandish of the sword would scare the wits out of this young man.

He thus never understood why Princess Annie held Link in such high regard. Link was a genius Magician, but similarly, there were many other genius Magicians in the palace. As the princess, there was no reason to give Link this much support. But now, it all became clear to him.

He was ashamed of himself. If he were to be met with such circumstances, he would definitely have been defeated!

Also, after looking at the way Link responded to the crisis, he was convinced that he would even suffice as an opponent to Link in a battle.

Morpheus, on the other hand, was perplexed. "How can this be possible?"

To think that his ambush was foiled. Even though the opponent was physically damaged, he was still fully conscious.

And as long as a Magician was conscious, his battle prowess would not be affected.

"No wonder this Magician could defeat Andy and Felidia. He wasn't just lucky."

This was not the first time Morpheus met a valuable opponent, however, to be defeated by the same bunch of rookies twice in a daythat was a first.

Absorbed in his thoughts, he momentarily forgot that he was in the heat of battle.

His loss of concentration gave Jacker a chance to charge into the Elemental Puppet with full force. Boom! The puppet sauntered unsteadily backwards from the impact. Anderson immediately followed up with a heavy sword attack, successfully damaging the neck of the puppet and aggravating the previous injury by another two inches.

This swing of his blade also destroyed the rune formation of the Elemental Puppet!

The Elemental Puppet stopped in its tracks and light began spilling out of the cracks in its exterior. The granite on its body began to fall off, signaling that there was a problem with the rune formation that controlled its movement and maintained its form.

After a few violent spasms, the puppet's arms hung lifelessly from its body and the black aura surrounding it completely dissipated. It was now merely an ordinary rock.

Morpheus' Elemental Puppet was now destroyed!

But the disintegration of the puppet continued. This might be due to the heated battle which completely destroyed the integrity of the rocks itself, previously held together only by Morpheus' Legendary power. All that was left in the end was a black crystal the size of a fist.

The black crystal was inconspicuousother than Link, no one noticed its existence. They were all more concerned with Jacques' betrayal. His sinister voice had also been completely cut off.

Lucy took advantage of Jacques' foot injury and unleashed a flurry of nine slashes at Jacques' heart. The Gale Sword was light and almost weightless, and on top of Lucy's rage, the insane slashing speed was something Jacques couldn't defend against. It was barely a second before his heart was thoroughly punctured.

After completing her mission, Lucy dashed towards Link and held him in her hands, "My lord, how are you feeling?"

She undressed Link without hesitation to reveal the injury underneath. "My lord, how can it be!" Lucy covered her mouth with her hands, tears flowing out of her eyes.

It was a three-inch-long injury across Link's abdomen. Under the effect of the Battle Aura, the surrounding flesh was also thoroughly destroyed and blood was gushing out of the wound. To a common soldier, this was definitely a lethal wound.

This was also an internal injury and there was no way to stop the bleeding. They could only watch as Link's life slowly slipped away.

"But my lord is only 17 this year!" Lucy sobbed uncontrollably.

Jacker, Anderson and Gildern also fell silent at the sight of the wound.

Their experience was telling them that Link could not be saved.

On the other hand, Link was amused by their reactions, "What's up with all of you? I'm not dead yet. Lucy, this is merely a small wound, stop crying!"

"What?" Lucy looked at Link with puffy eyes. This was merely a small wound? She could not understand.

Link placed his hand gently on his wound and started concentrating Mana. A white light enveloped his handthis was the precursor to the Level-2 Blizzard spell.

Of course, Link was not planning on using Blizzard on himself, he was simply using this spell to accumulate water element particles.

By maintaining the spell at this precursor state, water elements surged continuously to the wound and turned into ice. After around 30 seconds, Link removed his hand.

He had frozen the entire wound and even the area surrounding it, effectively stopping the bleeding process. As the tissues and nerves were also frozen, he could barely feel any pain.

Naturally, this was only a temporary measure, with serious side effects on the body. But that would not be a problem. As soon as he returned to River Cove Town, he could be treated with Divine Healing spells. Such wounds were nothing compared to the healing prowess of a priest.

Link stood up and tried walking for a few steps. His abdomen area still felt slightly uncomfortable, but the feeling of his energy constantly being drained due to heavy bleeding was gone.

"Feels good," He smiled at the rest of his squad, "Look, merely a small wound."

He also cast an Elemental Healing spell on himself which would rapidly replenish the blood he had lost. Apart from looking slightly pale, one could tell that Link was fine.

"I could probably last three days in this state," Link said as he smiled. Although he was out of danger, his abdomen area and the organs around it had completely lost its function. He would not be able to ingest any food, though he could replenish his energy simply by casting Elemental Healing on himself again and again.

This was unimaginable on Earth, but in the World of Firuman, anything was possible.

The squad was at a loss for words. Have you ever seen someone who could still joke and move around after being stabbed in the abdomen? Even though they were already used to Link's strange tactics, this was way too amusing.

But they were extremely relieved. Lucy wiped her tears and blushed. She did not expect herself to lose her usual calm demeanor.

"Alright. Let us check if the path is unsealed now that the puppet is defeated," Link laughed.

Almost immediately, Link saw a message from the game system.

Mission: First step Escape.

Player rewarded with 30 Omni Points.

Next Mission: Search for the Cliff of Howling Winds (Uncompleted)

That's 30 more Omni Points in the bag. Link was satisfied.

## 72. Gaining a Noble Ally

Sure enough, the illusion in the passages was gone and the conditions in the cave returned to normal. Finally, it was over.

They all heaved a sigh of relief.

"Should we search for spoils before leaving the cave?" Link suggested.

The mercenaries agreed immediately. They had almost lost their lives fighting in this cave, even Link was stabbed with a sword. How foolish would they be to leave with their hands empty?

Moreover, Link seemed to be in good spirits now and there were no visible signs of fatigue from the serious wound. In fact, he looked much better now. That made the mercenaries less anxious to go back and tend to Link's injuries.

Only Anderson hesitated. He was a Royal Knight of the Norton kingdom. It didn't seem befitting of an honorable Knight to kill men, set fire to the corpses, then rob them of their belongings.

"Are you sure we should be doing that? Maybe we should hurry back to rally the militia," said Anderson. He had to be careful not to tarnish his pride and honor as a member of a noble family and a Knight.

Link himself was the son of a Viscount so he perfectly understood the underlying sentiments that made Anderson reluctant. Even so, he'd much prefer to live and thrive rather than die in the name of idealistic concepts like honor and chivalry!

Still, Link knew thatitegrity was without its merits. He and Anderson had fought together in this mission, so they were comrades now. He had to find a way to persuade Anderson without making him think that his integrity was in question.

"General Anderson, if we are to call in the militia, then we'd have to divide the share with them as well. Plus, there's no way of keeping a secret when many people are involved, so words will surely spread out and more people will try to grab a slice of the cake. Ultimately there'd be next to nothing left for everyone. Wouldn't it be best to divide everything amongst just the five of us?" said Link.

Before Anderson could interject, Link continued, "General, before you refuse, why don't you think of your son? You said he's already started his training. I'm sure he wants to become a Knight just like you when he comes of age. But a Knight will need armor, a horse and his own weapons and none these things come for free. Why don't you stop and consider how much the loot might benefit your son in the future?"

When Link put it this way, Anderson was no longer able to argue with him. Link's words had hit upon the things that had been worrying him lately.

It was true. What good was there in being an honorable Knight if he couldn't secure a good future for his son? At least, with enough gold coins, he could provide his son with some high-quality magical gear.

Ah, what was the point of getting hung up on his own honor? He should be thinking about more practical things like gold coins!

"Let's do it, then!" said Anderson, completely beguiled by Link's sly rhetoric.

Soon after, they began to search for everything inside the Syndicate's lair.

Anderson's movements were still clunky and unsure. He still couldn't completely let go of his ideals as a Knight. The mercenary trio, on the other hand, were professionals in this regard. They swept through the cave like a swarm of locusts, much to the wonder of Anderson who stood staring at them on the side.

Meanwhile, Link didn't help much as he needed to rest. But when the rest of them were preoccupied with the search for booty, he surreptitiously sneaked away into the dark hall in the underbelly of the cave to pick up the black crystal from under a pile of gravel and put it in his storage pendant.

When the others noticed he was gone, they assumed that he was away to examine the Elemental Puppet, so they didn't give it much thought.

Half an hour later, the four of them gathered in the first hall in the Syndicate's lair where they found the cursed Magic Seal.

Lucy began to count and record everything one by one.

"1400 gold coins, 38 steel swords, 30 sets of new leather armor, 3 barrels of 50-year-old aged wine, a pair of gold figurines The estimated total value should be at least 3500 gold coins."

As expected, the Syndicate was much wealthier than the Dark Brotherhood.

3500 gold coins! Even Anderson couldn't keep himself from gulping in awe at the sheer wealth in front of their eyes. He was a noble Knight who lived in a large manor, and had additional income from the land he owned, yet his annual income had been no more than 150 gold coins. Who would've thought that an underworld organization like the Syndicate would possess such unimaginable wealth! The fact simply boggled his mind.

What a dastardly group of thieves! It seems I must search and clean out more lairs of thieves from now on. The Knight was quickly turned into a sly fox by the irresistible temptation of gold coins.

And now it was time to distribute the loot, which was decided by Link. Anderson had no objections to this. He had seen and understood how Link was the core of the group, and that they had even managed to defeat an evil demon under Link's command. Anderson had recognized the young Magician as a peerless and fearsome man and he was ready to concede to his decisions.

"There are five of us and about 3500 gold coins. The four of us will share 2300 gold coins among ourselves. General, you should get 1000 gold coins out of the share. As for the remaining 200 gold coins, 50 of them should be given to Jacques's family as his pension, and the rest should be divided among the militia. After all, they've made contributions, too. What do you think, General?"

Anderson was speechless. 1000 gold coins were far beyond his expectation! He thought of the contributions each of them made. Link was the brain of the mission, and Jacker was the strongest Warrior who had played a huge role in defeating the Elemental Puppet by restraining the puppet and giving Anderson the perfect opportunity to give it the final blow. All he did was one simple move for him, with no risk at all!

His esteem and position as a Royal Knight had not been the slightest bit useful to the mission. How could it be of any use when Link had the support of a much more exalted figure like Princess Annie?

He would've been satisfied if the loot was equally distributed, and everyone got about 600 pieces of gold.

"Isn't my share too big?" He had some reservations. He wouldn't mind getting more money, of course, but everyone had risked their lives to get to this point. It would simply be unfair to everyone else and shameless of him to get the lion's share of the loot. They had fought against terrifying opponents together and survived. Deep in Anderson's heart, he had acknowledged Link and the mercenaries as his comrades in arms.

"Don't say that, General," said Link, waving his hand, "You were the one who found the Syndicate's lair, and you were the one who gave the Element Puppet's its last blow. What's more, you are a noble Knight who shoulders a great responsibility of keeping the peace of the kingdom. Your daily expenses would be much bigger than ours and the money would be put to better use if you take it. If you think of us as friends, then please just accept the money."

Link meant everything he said and had no ulterior motives. He valued his friendship with the people who had fought together in battle with him. To him, this relationship was far more precious than a mere few hundred gold coins!

Anderson turned silent for a while. He was utterly swayed by Link's speech.

"Fine, I'll take it," he finally said.

Link's sincerity and generosity had left a deep impression on Anderson's heart. He would remember this act of kindness and the extraordinary young man for the rest of his life.

Not only does this Magician possess powerful magical skills, he also has a good heart and strong integrity. He was even favored by Princess Annie. He will certainly become an important figure in the Norton kingdom in the future. I must maintain my friendship with him.

And that was the most distinct difference between nobles and commoners. Sure, the aristocrats had feelings too. But they never forgot to consider things from a long-term angle and pay more attention to their interests. As a nobleman, Anderson was much more adept at securing his interests than the mercenaries. After some serious consideration, Anderson decided that becoming Link's ally would be the wisest thing to do right now.

Ever thoughtful, Link took out 200 gold coins from the big pile then put them in a bag and handed it to Anderson.

"General, give this to the militiamen. When we go out later, they will be watching our every move, so we'll divide our share once we're safe from prying eyes in River Cove town."

The 200 gold coins were to keep the militiamen quiet. Although Link was certain that the militiamen knew that there would be much more than 200 gold coins in the Syndicate's lair, if they did not see anything concrete all they could do was suspect. At worse, they would spread some rumors to the public, but that wasn't too much to handle.

The worst thing would be for them to see the entire loot and to know that they only got a small fraction of it. This would surely trigger discontent and resentment, and then more trouble would come from that. Anderson understood how terrible people could become because of gold coins, so he agreed to the plan.

Then, Link pointed his wand at the big pile of loot. Suddenly, magic aura shrouded the treasure. Link walked over to the pile and put the items one by one into the storage pendant under the bright cover of magic aura.

In doing so, although Link couldn't conceal the existence of his storage pendant, still, at least he could conceal the storage gear.

By then Anderson had been accustomed to the sight of Link's magic. Anyway, he was now on Link's side, so the more powerful his ally got and the more tricks he kept hidden from everyone, the better it would be for him.

After some cleaning up, they all finally walked out of the Syndicate's lair.

Once outside, Anderson went straight to the militiamen and addressed them.

"The lair has been cleared, but unfortunately Jacques had perished. I am grieved, but fear not my brothers, I will take care of his family. We've found a few gold coins in the cave, and I'll give some of it to Jacques's family as a pension. As for the rest I'll give it to all of you!" he said.

After he was done speaking, Anderson summoned the vice-captain and handed him the bag of coins.

"Matt, take this money, and divide it among yourselves," he ordered.

The vice-captain opened the bag and was almost blinded by the glinting gold inside. His hand trembled at the sight. He was only an ordinary soldier whose annual salary was about 15 gold coins. He'd never seen such a dizzying number of gold coins before, and it almost made his knees buckle.

Eventually, each soldier got about one gold coin each. Despite the news of Jacques's death, there was a festive mood in the air.

Some of them were suspicious, and some rumors did spread out, but ultimately nothing came of it. So in the end, Link and the rest successfully smuggled the fortune out of the cove without any incident.

Once they reached the River Cove town, Link invited a priest to heal his own injuries. The Divine Healing spell was indeed potent. Link could even see his wound healing with the naked eye during treatment. The whole process only took a few minutes' time, and it didn't leave any scars on his body.

Still, he dared not envy this power. He knew that many Magicians in history had been trying to study and emulate Divine Healing spells, but they'd all stumbled into dead ends. Link conceded that healing wounds fell under the gods' domain and that it was beyond a Magician's power.

Then Link took out the loot from his storage pendant and handed it to the mercenaries so they could manage it. Then he instructed Gildern to discreetly send 1000 gold coins Anderson.

Anderson took the hint. He gave the mercenaries a guarantee that he would station himself in the River Cove town to cleanse the Girvent Forest of brigands and bandits, and that if the need ever arose, he was always there to help!

Thus, the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries had gained a noble ally.

It was late in the night when everything was settled. Alone in his room, Link sat up in his bed and examined the black crystal that had been on the Elemental Puppet.

## 73. The Universal Crystal

The black crystal was the size of a fist; one would think that it was the shape of a sphere from afar. However, closer inspection revealed that it's in fact a multi-sided object, similar to a soccer ball. It was translucent just like amber. Link peered through the crystal and observed the flickering candle flames.

It looked like a crystal that you could just buy off the shelves of a shop. The only thing out of the ordinary was the slight dark energy emanating from the crystal every now and then.

This energy was very vague, if not for Link's sensitivity to magic and his close proximity to the crystal, he would not have been able to detect it. After a moment, an in-game message appeared.

Mid-Level Domingo Crystal (Universal Crystal)

Quality: Flawless

Level-5

Effect: Used to store all sorts of energy, Elemental, Divine, Mana etc.

Current State: Dark energy (25% filled).

Upon reading the message, Link could not control his excitement.

The Domingo Crystal was a special crystal body created by the genius Alchemist Domingo more than 1000 years ago. It had great versatility in its uses and the creation process was extremely complex. It was thus highly valued and could be sold for a high price. Link estimated that this Domingo crystal in his hand could be sold for 8000 gold coins, despite only being at Level-5.

I would be rich!

The Domingo Crystal was very useful to a Magician.

Take Link as an example, the fastest speed in which he could cast the Glass Orb spell was 0.04 seconds. In this time, Link only spent 0.01 second constructing the spell structure while the remaining 0.03 seconds was used to accumulate elemental energy.

The same could be said for the Whistle. In the 0.2 seconds needed to cast the spell, at least 0.15 seconds would be used to accumulate elemental energy.

However, with this Domingo Crystal, Link could store elemental energy within it. If he stored fire elemental energy, he would not be required to accumulate energy before releasing the spell. He would shorten the time needed to cast the Glass Orb from 0.04 seconds to just slightly more than 0.01 seconds, and the Whistle to just 0.05 seconds. He might even be able to cast Level-3 and Level-4 spells within 1 second.

That was not all. If Mana was stored instead, Link's Maximum Mana could exponentially increase and solve his Mana shortage problem altogether!

The Domingo Crystal was indeed a dream come true for many Magicians!

However, this crystal could not be fully utilized now as it still contained the dark energy that Morpheus stored. He had to find a way to purify it.

Find a priest? That was Link's initial thought. When he was playing the game, he had occasionally found some of these Domingo Crystals laced with dark energy as loot. His standard practice was to purchase dispelling services from a priest.

However, that was in-game. In reality, bringing such a rare treasure to the priest would create waves in River Cove Town. What if they became targets of assault because of this crystal?

This was the difference between games and reality. Games were blessed with an unending amount of resources and developers would fiercely protect the players' rights. Items were simply pixels and codes that could be rewritten and added.

But in the World of Firuman, resources were scarce, especially spellcasting materials. They could be sold for a high price everywhere.

Link hence rejected this idea immediately.

Then I guess we can only use that method, although it would take a long time, there is no risk involved.

In the game, some Magicians did not feel that it was worth spending their gold coins on dispelling services, nor did they have alchemy labs they could use to purify the crystal. They then thought of a method called the Torrent Purifying Method.

The Magician would place the Domingo Crystal into a running stream or any type of flowing water, and under the influence of water elementals, the dark energy in the Domingo Crystal would slowly be released. The Domingo Crystal in Link's hand was at Level-5, meaning that it contained at least a Level-5 dark magic. This level of contamination required one month of purification. Seeing that it was only 25% filled, around ten days would be sufficient.

However, there was a problem with this method. Releasing dark energy into the river was no different from polluting the river with deadly poison. Level-5 dark energy was extremely dangerous. In terms of the fire element, a Level-5 fire elemental spell had the destructive force of fuel-air explosives!

If dark energy was indeed released into the river, all life in the river would be contaminated. Anyone who drank from the river would also fall ill.

In essence, it was an immoral act.

When Link was playing the game, he had once accepted a mission, "Punish the Shameless Magician!" This Magician in question did exactly the thing Link was thinking of, polluting the river and destroying the livelihood of a village downstream. It was an act that was frowned upon.

Link could not bring himself to do such a thing. He had to make amendments to the method.

As it was getting late and Link needed ample rest to recover from his injury, he kept the Domingo Crystal and cast an Elemental Healing spell on himself before turning in for the night.

It was a silent and peaceful night.

The next morning, Link was almost fully recovered due to the constant Elemental Healing and ample rest he got. He felt energetic and even a little too well fed.

After breakfast, Jacker, Lucy and Gildern continued sorting out their spoils while Link stayed in the attic above his room. The attic was made entirely of stone, with the exception of the roof, which was made of glass. When the sun shined through the attic, it would be brilliantly illuminated.

Link started casting some spells. He used enchanting magic; a shaping spell that created a large water vat connected to the ground. The opening of the water vat directly faced the glass roof, in fact, it would be more accurate to say that it was connected to the glass roof as well. It was impossible to see the insides of the water vat when you were in the building.

Link then filled the vat with clear water.

The vat was huge and cylindrical in shape. It was almost 4.5 feet tall and 6 feet wide. It took nearly five tons of water before it was fully filled. If not for his enchanting magic which strengthened the sturdiness of the attic's structure, it might have already collapsed.

Link then placed the Domingo Crystal into the vat. He was now prepared to execute the final step.

He climbed to the roof and cast the shaping spell on the attic's glass roofs, melding the glass into its surroundings. This way, it was impossible to open the roof through normal means, preventing anyone from stealing his crystal.

He then started changing the internal structure of the glass itself, even going so far as to rearrange the particles to create a complex and intricate refraction structure.

No matter which angle the sunlight hit the glass roof, it would be focused by this refraction structure to shine directly onto the Domingo Crystal.

Sunlight was the world's mightiest source of light energy, with the power to curb all forms of darkness. By focusing the sun rays onto the Domingo crystal, the dark energy within would slowly be purified. Not only would this ensure the consistent and safe purification of the crystal, it would also not be detected by the outside world.

Following which, Link created another window and refocused its sunrays to the vat as well. This was to ensure the stability of the purification process even on days where the sunlight was not strong.

The Domingo crystal would first release dark energy into the clear water and would only start spilling out of the vat when the water reached its threshold.

Link was thus not worried about nightfall as the Domingo Crystal would not be able to release that much dark energy in a night.

The Girvent Forest was blessed with good weather today, with strong sunlight and a cool breeze. Standing in the attic, Link calculated the time needed to purify the Domingo Crystal.

It would probably take aroundamnth for my Domingo Crystal to be fully purified, Link smiled at the thought.

Even though it was going to take a long time, it was carried out in a secretive and safe environment.

When he left the attic, he transformed the door into a concrete wall.

Jacker and the others would probably not go to the attic. Completely sealing the attic off would reduce the chance of the crystal getting discovered.

It was not that Link didn't have faith in his comrades, but he generally felt that the less they knew about magic, the better it would be for them.

It was noon by the time Link was done.

Jacker and the others had returned from their morning sale. Their loot fetched a grand total of 2500 gold coins in the River Cove Town black market. It was an extremely good deal; everyone was all smiles during lunch.

Link was happy that everyone was in a good mood.

After the meal, Link took out the letter he found in the Syndicate's hideout.

"This was the letter taken from the black-robed Magician who ambushed us when we were at the Red Leaves Cove. Apparently, it was a message for his friend. It mentioned that the black-robed Magician was a Dark Elf who went by the name Felidia, and his friend lived in a place known as the Cliff of Howling Winds. Anyone recognize this place?"

Everyone searched their memories before shaking their heads.

Jacker broke the silence, "There are some new faces in town recently. I heard that some are soldiers from the north habitat and traveling poets from the South, maybe they have heard of this place. I'll go ask around later."

"That's good," Link nodded, before continuing, "From tomorrow onwards, I will be going to the East Cove Higher Magic Academy to study magic, and we probably will not see much of each other. If there is anything important, ask Lucy to write to me. Also, Jacker and Gildern, both of you have to start learning how to read. The only one who can read and write here is Lucy, and that is why she is the housekeeper of the Mercenary Band."

"Okay," Jacker and Gildern begrudgingly agreed.

"As for the gold coins, I only need my tuition fees and 100 gold coins as my living expenses. I will leave the remaining 4000 gold coins here."

"My lord" Lucy wanted to object.

"Let me finish," Link stopped Lucy from completing her sentence, "I don't really need a lot of money at the Academy. Currently, we have quite a bit of fame in River Cove Town, and Jacker is already a Level-4 Warrior. I guess it is time for us to recruit more members to strengthen our Mercenary Band. Make use of our connection with General Anderson too."

The three of them fell silent. Forming a Mercenary Band had always been their dream, and now the conditions were ripe.

## 74. A New Apprentice in the East Cove Magic Academy

Jacker went out in the afternoon to sniff around the Cliff of Howling Winds. He wasn't out for long, though, and was back an hour later.

"My lord, no one has ever heard of this place, but a bard told me there's a place that fits the description of the name. The place is more than a hundred miles north of the Girvent Forest," informed Jacker. Vague clues were the only thing he managed to obtain.

"In that case," said Link after some consideration, "We should hire someone to investigate this place. If there's any news, contact me."

"Yes, my lord," answered Jacker.

Link had been packing and Lucy was helping him by his side. She was usually a very capable woman, but she took her time with the chore this time. She was anxious about Link so much that she would follow Link to the East Cove Magic Academy if she could.

Link was at once moved and annoyed by her. Finally in a state of confusion and weariness, he stuffed everything into his storage pendant - towels, blankets, clothes, and even some of his favorite snacks that Lucy had prepared for him. There was almost no space left in his storage pendant when he was done.

The next morning, Link gotito a hired carriage and went to the East Cove Magic Academy alone. He was silent all the way there.

More than an hour later, he reached the front gates of the East Cove Magic Academy. The same gatekeeper Vincent was there, still basking in sun in the garden. He spoke to Link the moment he saw him got down from the carriage.

"Boy, I thought I'd never see you again in my life. Who would've thought that you would manage to getito the academy?" he said, laughing.

Link might have gained some fame and prestige in the River Cove town, but the East Cove Magic Academy was an ivory tower filled with powerful Magicians who were the cream of the crop even among Magicians in the kingdom. Unsurprisingly, they took no notice of the lives of common folks, so Link's fame had not reached the gates of the East Cove Magic Academy.

Moreover, the effects of Herrera's Camouflage Feathers concealed most of Link's true potential, so in the eyes of Vincent, Link was still the poor teenaged boy whose innate talents in magic were pitiably low.

Link, of course, took none of Vincent's derision to heart. He took a Magician's bow before Vincent, then smiled and said, "Yes, I can't believe my own luck myself. I'm going inside now, Mr. Vincent."

"Go ahead. Don't waste your good fortune." Vincent nodded at the young man as he wentito the academy. Although his talents were poor, he was very humble, so Vincent decided to treat him as another ordinary Magician's apprentice.

He'd seen almost a thousand students like that every year.

Link walked passed the academy gates where he encountered a small flat path. He walked along the path for a few hundred feet when then turned a corner. He was unprepared for the view that emerged once he took the turn.

In front him, a vast valley stretched across the horizon.

Golden rays of sunshine shone down from the heavens like waterfalls made of light, a spacious, flat ground in the middle of the valley. On the flat ground, there were Mage Towers with blue roofs so tall they seemed to touch the sky. At the top of the towers, there were countless brilliantly shining magic runes flowing around the towers. Threads of elements flowed in the air, crisscrossing each other and making it look like the towers were connected by a magical spider's web. Flowers and trees dotted the space between the towers while a creek meandered around the academy, its surface glinting in the sun.

What a glorious view of the capital of magic where the best Magicians gathered!

It's a beautiful place now, but it may not be long before all that is left is rubble.

Link felt both awe for the splendor that stood before him and grief for what would be lost.

Although he now had the Occultic Runes with him, thus undermining the first steps of the Dark Elves' plan, but as long as some of them were still alive, they would never give in until they'd thought of a way to release the demon Tarviss.

What would their next step be? Link could only make wild guesses for now. What he must focus on at present was to constantly improve himself before the disaster, so he would not stand helplessly aside when the time came.

There was a huge square near the cove entrance where people rushed about to and fro. They were all Magicians and they all look hurried, as though in a race against time.

An impressive statue of a Magician stood proudly in the middle of the square.

Link went over and looked at the nameplate at the bottom of the statue, which read, The founder and the first dean of the East Cove Magic Academy, the Level-8 Master Magician, Ambron.

Beneath it, there was a quote from the dean.

Two things are essential in the quest to advance your magic skills: first, to strive for the truth and second, to strive for the power to defend the truth!

That's a wise old man. Link could not help but nod in agreement with the statement.

Once he'd crossed the square, Link took out the map with directions that Herrera had given him.

From the square, take the widest path, go all the way to the third tower on the left, where there's a statue of a hound at the door...Ah, there it is.

Bale was a Level-6 Magician and he was arsected figure in the academy. He was one of the core academic council members and his Mage Tower was significantly taller than the rest. Even the decoration and furnishing inside was much more refined and luxurious than the others.

He walked up to the door then summoned a Magic Mirror a little trick he learned when he was bored. He checked himself in the mirror and made sure everything was in order, then gently knocked on the door.

After a while, a young Magician answered the door. He looked to be about 30 years old. Moments later, a notification about him appeared on the interface.

Derek

Level-2 Average Magician

Status: The Magician Bale's apprentice and asstant.

The message was brief and didn't say anything about the spells that Derek had mastered, but it was already enough information for Link.

Derek stared at the unremarkable youth standing at the door and sensed that the Mana on his body was pitifully low. Derek couldn't help but frown at the sight.

That morning, his tutor Bale had told him that a new student would be coming today and instructed him to welcome him on his behalf. Derek had thought it was just another trivial chore. But the minute he saw this lanky young man when he opened the door, Derek was swept over by a sense of disdain.

So here comes another imbecile who got in through the back door.

Derek was not good at hiding his emotions but he realized that although this young man was completely worthless and inept, he was still invited to the Mage Tower by the Magician Bale himself. Derek was sure this young man must have strategic connections in high places, so it's best not to offend him too much.

"So you're Link?" asked Derek in a frosty tone and with a frown on his face.

"Yes, that's me." Link noticed the contempt in Derek's eyes, but he thought nothing of it. He was here to learn magic while keeping an eye on Bale. Everything else was trivial and unworthy of his attention.

"Did you bring your recommendation letter?" asked Derek

"Of course." Link handed over the letter that Herrera gave him. It was written by Princess Annie on behalf of the royal family of Abel, no doubt carrying immense weight and stature within it.

Derek took the envelope and saw the roaring lion seal printed on it, which got him even more irritated.

What a lucky kid. He doesn't seem to have any talent and yet he managed to ride on the coattails of the royal family.

"Come in." Derek's tone had gotten even colder now.

Link followed Derek into the hall on the first floor. It was a spacious hall with an abundance of light streaming in from the outside. There were many tables and chairs teeming with young people. There was, all-in-all, about 30 people in the hall.

Some of them had their noses stuck in books, some were in quiet contemplation, and others were experimenting with magic. At the corner of the hall there was a large, semi-circular bookcase filled with at least 300 books.

On the other side of the hall, there was a small wine bar with a bartender tending to it. A few young people were drinking there while softly chatting. The scene called to mind the ambiance of a tavern. Yet when Link overheard parts of their conversations, he found out that they were discussing magic.

What a rich learning atmosphere, thought Link.

He carefully sensed the Mana of everyone around him and found that most of them were at least mid-level Magician's Apprentices. In fact, some of them were just a step away from becoming a full-fledged Magicians.

The level here is much higher than Flemmings Academy.

Derek led Link to a table at the far corner of the hall. He then explained, "This is your table. You're now a beginner apprentice. You're allowed to listen when a tutor is giving a lecture, but you're not allowed to ask any questions, let alone disrupt the class. Understood?"

In other words, Link only had the right to participate but no right to speak because his magic talents were too low. The questions he asked would only waste the other students' time.

Link was happy with what he got, though. It was good enough for him just to be able to getito the academy.

"I understand," replied Link.

"Good. Follow me, I'll take you to your room."

Derek walked towards the corner of the hall while Link hurried to keep up. Eventually, the two stopped at a narrow door below the spiral staircase in the hall.

"This is your room," said Derek.

It was originally a small storage room that was deemed unfit to turn into an apprentice's room. But because the tutor had suddenly received a new member into the Mage Tower when all the rooms were occupied, they had to make do.

Derek could sense from the tutor's tone and attitude that he did not care much about this new apprentice but had no choice but to make the necessary arrangements because it was an order from the dean. So Derek took the initiative and arranged Link to stay in the small room.

Derek opened the door, revealing a space of less than fifty square feet. There was a small bed with a nightstand instead of a table, and a small window in the corner. Despite the size, the room was spotlessly clean.

There was only magic on Link's mind, he was not concerned about the external living conditions at all. Otherwise, he would not have been able to stay in the River Cove inn attic for a month. And so all he did was nod his head and brought his luggage into the room.

Link didn't seem to have much baggage, all he had were some books and few changes of clothes. He placed everything onto the nightstand by the bed.

Derek was still standing in the doorway and saw that Link was done setting his things down.

"One last thing. You need to do some routine work as a Magician's Apprentice. What spells do you know?" asked Derek.

"I know Earth Spike," answered Link. Herrera had reminded him earlier that he should maintain his identity as a beginner Magician's Apprentice.

"Earth Spike? Good." Derek turned to an apprentice in the hall and shouted, "Warwick, get me some blank scrolls!"

Soon afterwards, an apprentice called Warwick appeared with a handful of scrolls. He glanced sympathetically at Link who was in the room as he handed the scrolls to Derek.

What an unlucky guy. Not only did he get the worst room in the Mage Tower, he's also in charge of such a menial and tedious chore as creating magic scrolls!

Derek sent Warwick away, and used the Magician's Hand to place the stack of scrolls on the nightstand.

"I've heard that you've been studying at another magic academy before, so you must have the basic skills in preparing magic scrolls, haven't you?"

"Yes," answered Link.

Preparing magic scrolls was the most basic skill in the field of enchantment. As for Link's skill level in enchantment, he was sure that he could rival even the Level-6 Magician Bale, so he had no problem at all in preparing magic scrolls. In fact, before going into the Syndicate's lair, he had even prepared 20 magic scrolls himself.

But of course he couldn't display his true powers in Bale's Mage Tower. Link had even hidden his Matchstick wand away and would now only use a simple ordinary white wooden wand that he made himself.

"Good," said Derek, "Now take these scrolls and make sure you prepare at least three Earth Spike magic scrolls a day. You'll only be allowed two extra blank scrolls if you run out because you've produced defects. If you need more than that, you'll have to pay for it and one blank scroll costs 3 silver coins. But if you manage to produce perfectly functioning magic scrolls, you'll be paid a silver coin for each. You can get more silver ink and quill pens from Warwick, the Magician you just met just now. Any questions?"

This is ridiculous, thought Link. A Level-0 magic scroll would sell for at least 6 silver coins, and the cost of producing it should not exceed 2 silver coins! Not only am I being cheated by getting paid only one silver coin per scroll, I'd even have to pay 3 silver coins for each damaged scroll, when in fact these ordinary blank scrolls shouldn't cost any more than 50 coppers! No wonder every famous Magician in the game were all wealthy. Turns out they'd all been exploiting the apprentices' hard labor!

It was true that this was unfair to Magician's apprentices. Since the Magicians were shameless enough to take advantage of the powerless and the apprentices were themselves willing and even glad to be taken advantage of, nothing was ever done about it.

Link thought this was probably one of the important sources of income for a Mage Tower. In the future, he would certainly have his own tower and his own apprentices as well, so this was a lesson for him about how he would manage it in the future.

"I understand," answered Link.

"Good, get to work then." Derek walked out of the room and closed the door behind him.

Finally, Link was alone in the quiet room. He sat on the bed and took a long breath.

Then, a notification flashed on the interface.

Mission: Enrolment completed.

Player rewarded with 5 Omni Points.

This was a mission that he had received when he first arrived at Girvent Forest, which seemed to happen so long ago. It had taken him quite a while to complete this mission.

Mission: Upgrade.

Mission Details: Master a Level-1 spell and become a full-fledged Magician.

Mission Rewards: 15 Omni Points.

Link had long mastered a Level-1 spell. He'd even modified it with Supreme Magical Skills and created his own spell, Whistle, so as soon as the notification appeared he had already completed it.

As a result, Link was rewarded with 20 Omni Points. Coupled with the 30 Omni Points he got from the mission of escaping the Syndicate's lair, he currently had a total of 50 Omni Points.

Another month and a half and the Ailing Mana effects will be over. I must save these points so I can purchase a high-level spell when my Mana is fully restored!

Then, another notification appeared.

Mission: Upgrade.

Mission Details: Master a Level-2 spell and become a Level-2 Magician.

Mission Rewards: 25 Omni Points.

This mission had also been completed, because Link had mastered a Level-2 defensive spell Guarding Barrier. So Link's Omni Points were now at 75 points.

Then, another notification popped up. Link glanced over and found that it was another upgrade mission.

Mission: Upgrade.

Mission Details: Master a Level-3 spell and become a Level-3 Magician.

Mission Rewards: 40 Omni Points.

Good, this is a mission I can concentrate on for now, Link thought.

So Link now had three active missions that he must complete. The first was to upgrade his level, the second was to investigate the Magician Bale, and the third was to locate the Cliff of Howling Winds.

My hands are full with all these missions! Link sighed, then pulled out a blank scroll and started to prepare an Earth Spike.

## 75. The Mage Tower's Economic Operation

In the blink of an eye, two weeks had passed.

Link was sitting in the corner of the hall listening intently to a lecture by a Level-4 Magician on the technique of magic control. Much of this knowledge could not be found in the books that he read and thus were extremely valuable. Link was inspired.

He did not want to miss a single detail.

This Magician went by the name of Darris. He was Bale's chief disciple and was a very high level. As Bale was usually busy, most of the time class would be lectured by him instead.

As a Level-4 Magician, he was the strongest Magician an apprentice could hope to meet at the Level-1 hall.

Link listened while comparing to his own spellcasting experience, and found things that he could improve on.

After the lesson, many of the apprentices rushed forward to bring up the burning questions they had. Link listened to some of them and could not help himself from chuckling.

These were some very basic and simple theoriesto think that the apprentices in this academy could not figure them out.

He shook his head and headed back to his room to write some magic scrolls.

On the podium, Darris was extremely patient and answered every one of the apprentice's questions with a gentle smile on his face.

At the corner of his eye, he noticed a calm and almost nonchalant Link sitting at the side of the hall. He did not seem to have the passion that the other apprentices had for magic.

What a strange person. As Bale's chief disciple, Darris knew of Link's existence, although he did not get much information either. He simply knew that his teacher received a letter from an old friend and subsequently agreed to take this "talentless and taciturn" young man under the watch of his Mage Tower.

Magic requires a conversation to generate sparks. What good does it do if he just leaves after listening every lesson? Darris was perplexed. However, he was tied up right now and decided that he would find a time to talk to this young man later.

Link, on the other hand, was unaware that he had been noticed by Darris. After going back to his room, he sat on the little stool in front of his bed and took out the low-level scrolls, silver ink, and rune brush, laying them in front of him. He took a look at the blank scroll and adjusted his concentration to be fully on the task before starting to write the Earth Spike spell.

During the process, a complete image of the Earth Spike spell formed in Link's mind. He penned every stroke with an extremely clear mind.

When Link was completely focused, the rune images in his mind seemed to slowly materialize in front of his eyes. Under his control, this image would then project itself onto the blank scroll.

Following which, Link only had to trace the rune images he saw and complete the scroll easily. In about five minutes, Link placed the last stroke on the blank scroll.

The whole process was smooth and natural, with confident strokes and no pass in between. The Mana surging through the strokes was tranquil and the completed product was enveloped in a warm trickling light of Mana.

As usual, it was a success!

Now, as long as the user didn't erase the activating rune from the scroll, the Earth Spike spell stored within would be activated. This was true even for ordinary people without any abilities.

This convenience was what created a market for magic scrolls.

It was the easiest way for a Magician to earn his keep.

Link was tasked with completing three magic scrolls every day. From his observations these past two weeks, an ordinary apprentice would take around one to two hours to complete a Level-0 magic scroll. If he was unlucky and failed in one or two scrolls, the whole process of writing three magic scrolls could take seven to eight hours.

Hence, for an ordinary apprentice, three magic scrolls per day was an extremely tiring taskLink did not even break a sweat. Link continued with the production process and wrote nine magic scrolls within an hour. Only then did he start feeling lethargic.

He only had to give three magic scrolls out of the nine, meaning that he could keep the remaining six for himself. Link was taking advantage of the two free empty scrolls per success given by Derek.

This was a great chance for Link to stock up some magic scrolls for sale.

Link then started reading a book. Naturally, this was not just any other basic magic book, but one he borrowed from Herrera called The Magician's Armor. It offered an in-depth discussion of defensive magic.

After Jacques' ambush, Link had been focusing his research on defensive magic so as to create armor for self-protection.

However, he was unable to conduct experiments as he did not want to attract Bale's unwanted attention.

After an hour of reading, Link was struck by an idea. He immediately took out his thesis and expanded on his current idea.

Link was well aware of the difficulty of his thesis, which discussed the nature of space itself. He did not expect to complete this thesis by himself, but he did not feel like giving up either.

As he delved deeper into this topic, the progress of his thesis became exponentially slower, but there would come a day where he would finally reach his goal.

Two hours passed since Link immersed himself into writing his thesis. Link grabbed his books and magic scrolls and headed out to hand his magic scrolls to Warwick.

Link now had a rough idea of how interpersonal relationships worked in the Mage Tower.

Every apprentice in the tower would take up an extra role other than studying magic. Some would help in brewing basic potions, some with enchanting and others with the writing of magic scrolls.

Warwick was in charge of the magic scroll branch and Derek was, overall, in charge of low-level magic items.

The magic items created would then be sold. Naturally, most of the income would go to Bale, but a substantial amount would also be given to the apprentices. This was one way apprentices could earn a stable income while studying in the Mage Tower.

When Link appeared, Warwick greeted him with a smile, "Done in less than five hours? That's pretty fast, Link."

Warwick received the scrolls with glee and made a special marking on the scrolls that Link made. As one of the strongest apprentices, Warwick was currently learning Level-1 fire elemental magic. If he succeeded, he would be considered an official Magician.

He was considered a genius based on his current achievements and had an eye for good quality magic items. The scrolls submitted to him were all successful, but he realized that even within these scrolls, they would be marked with a difference in quality.

Link's magic scrolls would almost always end up in the batch of highest quality scrolls. The scrolls he wrote were of extremely good quality, with stable output and 20% stronger magic power.

And to their largest group of customers, the mercenaries, a strong and stable magic scroll was well worth the few extra silver coins they had to pay. After all, this scroll could save their lives in times of need!

Link's scroll could be sold for eight silver coins, while Warwick only had to give six silver coins to Derek for every magic scroll sold. The remaining two silver coins were naturally pocketed by him.

Most low-level Magicians were in need of money. As Link could bring him extra income, Warwick was especially nice to him and overlooked certain strange occurrences, such as the fact that Link always needed to consume three blank scrolls before he could create a successful one, despite the quality of his scrolls.

Link also knew of the situation on the ground. However, this was a mutually beneficial situation where both Warwick and himself would earn extra income. It was a pleasant cooperation.

Who would complain of having too much money anyway?

"This scroll took me around one hour, how can that be considered fast," Link laughed and started walking off. He needed to discuss his reflections for the day with Eliard.

Darris was wrong about Link. It was not true that Link didn't like to converse with others, but that he was unwilling to converse with the apprentices in the Mage Tower. Only by talking to exceptional geniuses like Eliard would he truly benefit.

"Hey, wait a minute," Warwick stopped him.

"Is there a problem?" Link asked.

Warwick looked around before whispering, "Do you want to earn even more?"

"Of course," Link nodded. He was interested in what Warwick wanted to say.

"Then I recommend that you learn Lesser Armor and Lesser Sharpness. They are both Level-0 support spells and a high-quality support magic scroll can sell for a maximum of 12 silver coins (1.2 gold coins). As you know, we only have to give six silver coins to Derek...we can split the remaining between us."

Warwick was extremely clear. Link was bought over immediately and nodded, "They are two simple spells, I will master them as soon as possible."

To mercenaries, an attacking spell was merely a spontaneous burst of energy and would rarely change the tide of a battle. It was true that supporting spells that could enhance their capabilities for an extended period of time would be more practical.

Link would be happy with whatever percentage of the money he got. Anyway, his main source of income would be from the extra scrolls he would be making.

"I have high expectations." Warwick was confident of Link. He knew that some people had been looking down on this taciturn young Magician, but he had a feeling that Link was not someone to be trifled with.

Link nodded and headed towards the academy plaza.

Eliard should already be there waiting for him.

## 76. What a Pity!

There were two squares within the gates of the East Cove Magic Academy. The one near the entrance was called the Square of Glory, while the other one was a small courtyard inside the academy called Bryant's Inspiration Courtyard.

Who was Bryant?

As the only Magician who rose to Legendary level for nearly a thousand years, Bryant was a household name in the Norton kingdom. Within the Magicians' circle, he was also known as the "Child of the Apocalypse".

It was said that this courtyard was where he received the inspiration that would later lead to his upgrade to the Legendary level. A century later, the East Cove Magic Academy was built on this valley, and as a tribute to the Master Magician Bryant. This piece of land was preserved and turned into a courtyard.

Rumors had it that once a Magician got Bryant's blessings, they would then receive inspiration from the unrivaled Legendary Magician which would help them break through their current level and reach a higher one. There was, of course, no truth to this hearsay, and no Magician actually took it seriously.

However, only Link knew that this so-called Inspiration Courtyard should be called the Seal Courtyard instead, because deep under the grounds of the courtyard was exactly where the demon Tarviss was sealed!

With very few exceptions, no one in the entire academy knew about it.

The events that led up to the capture and confinement of the demon Tarviss happened hundreds of years ago. The horror of the past had faded through the ravaging tooth of time. Nowadays, the courtyard was a nice little place with a meticulously trimmed garden, surrounded by woods and streams. In fact, it was now the Magicians' favorite place to take leisurely walks whenever they needed a break or had time on their hands.

Link and Eliard had agreed to meet here.

Link walked past lush green grounds, went around the Enchanted Fountain Garden, and finally to the willow grove by the stream. From afar he could see Eliard who was under the willow trees.

There were tables and chairs under the shade of the trees. Link walked over and saw Eliard engrossed a magic textbook.

"Hey, you're early today," said Link, who then sat down on the chair opposite of Eliard. He reached for a round wooden box on the table, opened the lid, and was immediately hit by an appetizing aroma of food that wafted out of it.

"Wowsea bassoup, soft wheat bread, mushrooms and baconwhat a feast! Tsk tsk, Eliard, you lucky bastard; the best cook in the world is in your Mage Tower!"

Link tore into the piece of bread. It was both fragrant and soft, and it even had a savory seasoned buttery filling inside it was just a piece of bread, yet it was irresistibly delectable!

This was all thanks to Herrera, the Angel of Light, otherwise known as the tutor Moira, who put particular emphasis on the quality of life of her apprentices. She employed the best chef in the academy in her Mage Tower. The apprentices in her Mage Tower only had to pay a small fee and the cook would prepare a scrumptious meal for them.

Whenever Eliard came, he would bring along some food with him to share it with Link.

Eliard put down the magic book, smiled and said, "Food can only bring joy to the body. The only thing that can enrich and delight the soul is magic."

"I wouldn't mind indulging in these earthly luxuries though," replied Link with a laugh.

Link finished his bread, wiped his hand, then flipped through the textbook in Eliard's hand. It was a book that he'd read before, titled Progress in Magic.

"So you've started to learn Level-1 spells, Eliard?" asked Link, slightly surprised.

"Yeah, I've recently just started to dive into it," Eliard nodded.

Link could not help but marvel at the revelation. Eliard really deserved to be called a peerless genius. A month ago, he was still a beginner in magic who had absolutely no skill or knowledge. But now, he had advanced so quickly to Level-1 spells. Link couldn't imagine how shocked the other apprentices in the academy would be if they found out.

Any Magician's Apprentice who could begin to learn Level-1 spells within six months would already be deemed a genius. But in a mere month, Eliard could achieve what most other geniuses would need half a year to accomplish this was irrefutable proof of his formidable talents!

"Eliard, that's amazing!" Link was genuinely impressed. Link knew that the only reason he himself could make progress so quickly was because of the help from the Lord of Light. Eliard, on the other hand, was a pure and unadulterated genius!

"You're mocking me," said Eliard jokingly while looking at Link with a wry smile. "I'm only better than you in the strength of my Mana. As for everything else, I'm lagging far behind you."

He admired Link's profound insight in magic theory and he knew that he had a long way to go before he could reach Link's level of wisdom. But unfortunately, Link's natural Mana was just too weak, and Eliard feared that Link's future paths might be limited because of it.

Although Link had told him that his Mana was low because of a serious injury, Eliard always assumed that this was something Link believed as a way to encourage himself and never took it seriously.

"Alright, alright, let's stop licking each other's boots," said Link, "Here, I've brought you six Earth Spike magical scrolls."

Link then handed Eliard the magic scrolls that he smuggled out of his Mage Tower.

Eliard was a favorite of Moira's and she didn't have many apprentices in her Mage Tower anyway, so Eliard quickly became her chief apprentice who was now in charge of managing the tower's income. Both the income and status of Moira's Mage Tower were roughly equal to that of Bale's.

The magic scrolls and potions that the apprentices prepared, along with the magic materials that they collected were all handed by Eliard, who then sold it. So Link handed over his scrolls for him to sell, which Link thought a most convenient arrangement.

Eliard suddenly turned serious while he carefully examined the scrolls.

"Link, the quality of your scrolls is getting better and better!" said Eliard, "Is this structure one of your new modifications?"

He examined the scrolls, not to check the quality because he knew it had always been superbwhat he was appreciating now was the little details added to the scrolls.

Link glanced at the spot where Eliard pointed out and nodded.

"That's right," replied Link.

These special structures were only present on the scrolls he handed over to Eliard. Those given to Warwick were all normal magic scrolls.

"When I was working on it, I had a sudden revelation how the ordinary scroll writing methods only guaranteed the success rate of magic scrolls production but did not maximize the power of the magic scrolls. So, I tinkered about and made some slight changes. Although the preparation process became slightly more complicated now, the power of this Earth Spike was increased by about 50%, making it much more lethal."

"That's incredible!" exclaimed Eliard, "I'll negotiate with the merchant I sold these scrolls to. These scrolls should be able to get the price of a gold coin. Link, did you know our scrolls have been selling like hot cakes? The merchants told me many mercenaries swear by them. They even gave your Earth Spikes a nickname they call them 'Spears of Death'! If you could write more of these modified magic scrolls, I'm sure our sales would go through the roof!"

Link nodded. He'd heard similar sentiments from Warwick earlier.

"No problem, I will prepare modified Lesser Protective Armor, Basic Sharpness Spell and Lesser Invisibility as soon as possible. I'll bring them with me the next time we meet."

Link didn't bother to hide his true powers from Eliard. He couldn't even if he wanted to anyway, since they'd been having deep discussions of theories in magic in their letters. They were both well aware of one another's skills and knowledge.

Besides, who would refuse to earn more money?

Link himself had never thought that he would carve out a name for himself from this small business of magic scrolls. It was as if he'd stumbled upon a pot of gold when he had least expected it. He had a sudden inspiration to start up a business of selling magic gear and weapons and expand it across the Firuman continent.

If the business thrived, it could turn him into a millionaire!

But of course, Link's main focus was still on learning magic. As for the matter of earning money, he would only regard it as a diversion, as something that would support his studies in magic. But he was not in a hurry about it and was taking it step by step, slowly building his prestige.

"It's a deal then."

Eliard was not worried about the speed at which Link could produce the modified magic scrolls at all.

He put the magic scrolls away and the two Magicians began to enjoy the lunch that Eliard brought. After they had finished eating, they rested for a while, and then they began to exchange their thoughts and experiences in magic as usual.

There was no doubt that Eliard was a genius. On Earth, his IQ would've definitely been more than 200. Link was an Archmage in his previous life, and on top of that was given a boost by the Lord of Light, so his brain power was no less incredible.

Both young men's thinking speed was astonishingly fast and active. One of them would only say a few words, and the other would immediately catch the other's meaning. They would then answer with their own insights, and these insights were often sharp and instructive.

If someone were to overhear their conversation, they would probably think that the two were talking gibberish.

But that's what happened when two extraordinary minds conversed and engaged. Their discussions were always fast-paced, lively and full of creative ideas. It would be best not to try to understand their thoughts as it would only serve to confuse and bewilder.

Because Link had a deeper insightito magical theories and facts, he was the one who took the lead in most parts of their conversation.

"I was studying the Level-1 Fireball spell recently and I think the fireball's magic structure is far from perfect and can be improved at C-position. What do you think about this?" asked Eliard as he sketched a structure onto a piece of goatskin paper.

Link glanced and shook his head, then erased a small portion of the structure that Eliard had shown him and added changes in two different spots.

"Maybe this is better," said Link.

"Oh You're right, that's much better. Wait, isn't that the alpha-structure in the Invisibility spell? Is this an Invisible Fireball spell?" asked the bewildered Eliard.

"Haha, it's something I came up with when I was studying Lesser Invisibility," answered Link, "You see, these changes would greatly reduce the light of the Fireball, which would be useful in making sneak attacks...but this is just a theory. You'd have to figure out the way to actually cast the spell yourself."

Eliard was then lost in his thoughts. He was pondering the feasibility of the structure Link had proposed. He believed that there would be no serious structural issue because Link's recommendations were theoretically and logically sound.

Ah, why must Link's Mana be so weak? If only there was a way to strengthen his innate Mana, he would definitely become one of the best Magicians in the East Cove Magic Academy. What a pity!

There was no jealousy in Eliard's heart. All he felt for Link was genuine compassion and sympathy.

Time flew by, and before the two young Magicians knew it, two hours had passed. Both Eliard and Link felt they had learned so much from their conversation.

Link stood up and stretched, then said, "It's late, I must go back now."

Eliard nodded, then slipped out a letter and handed it to Link.

"My tutor wanted me to pass this letter to you," said Eliard.

Link often asked Eliard's tutor, Moira, questions about magic and Eliard was always the messenger between the two. The correspondence between Link and Moira was nothing new to Eliard.

Link, however, was shocked. Herrera had answered the last questions he sent her only two days ago. Why would she send another letter so soon after the last one?

Had something happened?

## 77. Eternal Darkness, New Avenues of Release

Despite being doubtful, Link received the letter and said, "Eliard, send my greetings to your teacher."

"I will." Eliard kept the items on the stone table and left after setting the date for their next meeting.

Link did not leave immediately. He looked around and after making sure no one was looking, then opened Herrera's letter. There was only a small paragraph on the letter. It was not written in human language, but in a long lost language from an ancient Earth Spirit civilization. Link specifically learned this language in order to converse with Herrera.

"I am sorry to disturb, my friend. The situation this time around is slightly special. Master Anthony has informed me that the academy's Detection Spell once again detected a strange dark energy coming from the Girvent Forest. While it is carefully hidden, the overflowing energy suggests the user might be extremely powerful, probably similar to the standard of a Level-6 Magician. I have already sent the Magic Crow to investigate and will personally interfere once I have gotten concrete evidence. However, to not raise the suspicion of Magician Bale, this will be a secret mission. I may need the asstance of another Magician then. If you are willing to travel with me, please contact me so that I can make the necessary preparations. I will give a good reason for you to take a leave of absence from the academy and predict the journey to begin in a month. This is extremely dangerous. If you truly wish to travel with me, please be prepared."

The moment Link finished reading, the letter combusted with a brilliant flame. At the same time, a new mission appeared in his field of vision.

New mission: Travelling Together.

Mission: Leave the academy when the time is ripe to help Herrera in her investigation into the origin of the dark energy in the Girvent Forest.

Reward: 100 Omni Points.

Link shuddered at the sight of such a hefty reward. This would be a difficult mission. But could he reject Herrera's request? Of course not! Herrera was an Angel of Light, and a strong ally in his fight against the dark forces. If she required asstance, he would gladly render it.

Link accepted the mission.

Luckily, there was still a month before the mission began. By then, Link would have recovered from his weakened state and his Domingo Crystal will be purified. He should also be able to invent a few more Supreme Magical Skills in this period, accumulating a few more Omni Points. He would become an extremely strong Level-4 Magician by then.

This should be enough to deal with the mission.

However, even with so much equipment and spells, Link was still afraid. He remembered that darkness always emerged from new openings whenever another was sealed off. While Link had certain knowledge of the openings up until now, he had no background information on these new openings.

As he continued rewriting history, he was also slowing losing his advantage of knowing the future.

Darkness is always present; it has merely found another way to release its power. I wonder what kind of calamities will be unleashed when it eventually goes out of control. Link sighed.

It was already four o'clock in the afternoon and the sun was setting. Link had a busy day and casually strolled back to Bale's Mage Tower, preparing to take a good rest. When he reached the hall, he saw the apprentices assembling in front of the podium, and Derek seemed to be announcing something important as the manager of the Mage Tower.

Link headed quietly to his seat in the corner and listened.

"All in all, the royal army has issued a huge order, and they have high expectations for the quality, especially the stability of the equipment. We will have to complete the order in time and give our highest quality equipment..." Derek was full of energy and inspiration, but the apprentices listening had a pained expression on their face.

After listening for a while, Link understood. It seemed like the Nordic Kingdom was preparing to launch a revenge assault on the Pralync Kingdom of the Dark Elves in the Dark Forest. Naturally, they would need a variety of resources, such as magic scrolls and potions for their battle.

In the game, after the massacre in Gladstone City, the Dark Elves received divine blessings from the Spider Queen Lolth, and got their hands on a divine weapon. The Nordic kingdom had been suffering defeats ever since.

History is changing, I wonder what will be the result this time? For some weird reason, Link felt especially worried.

As Link was late to the meeting, he went straight to Warwick to inquire more about the mission. "Warwick, what kind of mission is this?"

Warwick was clearly troubled. He fully extended his five fingers and said, "From today onward, everyone will have to write five magic scrolls per day, for a total of 20 days. Our Mage Tower was assigned to write 800 Level-0 Magic scrolls. I will also help with the writing."

Link immediately understood. There were only seven apprentices in charge of writing magic scrolls in the Mage Tower. With the addition of Warwick, that would be eight. To be able to complete 800 scrolls in 20 days, that would mean 100 scrolls per person, thus five scrolls per day.

However, the Mana and energy of the apprentices were limited. The more scrolls they wrote, the higher their chance of failure due to fatigue. Five magic scrolls per day was a huge burden for a low-level Magician's Apprentice.

As a high-level Magician's Apprentice in charge of magic scrolls, Warwick would then have to personally fill in the gaps if the low-level apprentices could not perform.

Warwick felt terrible simply thinking about the days ahead.

Link had an idea. "Are there any specific requirements for the scrolls?" he asked.

"Yes. The army only wants Lesser Sharpness and Lesser Armor supporting magic scrolls."

"But I only know Lesser Armor."

If Link had said that he already mastered both spells, it would cause a great ruckus in the Mage Tower. Mastering a Level-0 spell in two weeks seemed just about right.

"What? You learned Lesser Armor?" Warwick's eyes lit up. He did not factor Link into his calculations because Link had only been writing Earth Spike scrolls all along.

"I just mastered it, and I'm still not too used to them yet. I am afraid of announcing it." Link stuck out a finger and tapped himself lightly. After one second, a pale green glow enveloped his body.

This was indeed the Level-0 spell, Lesser Armor.

Warwick was at a loss for words.

"It's fine, completely fine, just practice more and you will get used to it. Ha, what good news!" That meant a total of nine people will be participating, Warwick felt a weight lifted off his shoulders.

When Derek was done speaking, Warwick assembled the apprentices and announced, "Time is tight and we have a lot of scrolls to make. Begin as soon as possible." He distributed 10 blank scrolls and a bottle of silver ink to everyone.

All the apprentices sighed while they collected their ink and scrolls. Link, on the other hand, kept silent. He was not the slightest bit anxious about the creation of magic scrolls and went back to his room to read.

As for the magic scrolls, he would get to it after he was tired of reading and ran out of inspiration for his thesis; it was simply an easy task.

All good news is usually accompanied by bad news. The next day, an accident occurred. Two magic apprentices were too nervous about the scroll writing task that they burned the midnight oil in an attempt to complete them. Due to extreme fatigue, they made mistakes and caused their Mana to rebound back to their bodies, dealing serious internal damage. While they were still alive due to the relatively low-level of their Mana, they would need about a month to recover. These two apprentices were not allowed to use magic for the whole month.

As such, the number of people writing the scrolls was reduced to a pathetic seven, with one of them being Link, a newbie to the spell. Warwick simply wished no more accidents would happen!

"Five scrolls a day, nothing more, if you feel tired do not force yourself to complete the mission. I will think of a way!" Warwick was afraid his apprentices would overwork and kept emphasizing the issue of health.

On the other hand, Warwick himself was going insane from writing magic scrolls in fear that the order would not be met. He actually wrote eight scrolls in one night, at the expense of his concentration and sanity.

Warwick even planned to purchase some scrolls from the market to make up the numbers. However, the magic scrolls in the market had already been bought up by the army. Even if he wanted to pay royalties for the scrolls, they were nowhere to be found.

What a pitiful guy. Link felt sorry for him and decided to lend him a hand. He could also use this chance to create waves in the Mage Tower.

## 78. As Beautiful as a Work of Art

Bale's Mage Tower, in the main hall on the first floor.

...

"Four scrolls, five scrolls, four scrolls Zach, why did you only submit three scrolls?" asked Warwick, staring at the simple and honest apprentice in front of him while massaging his temple.

"I had rotten luck yesterday. I made the same mistake three times in a row, so I dared not continue after that."

In the process of magic scroll preparation, making a series of mistakes was a sign exhaustion. That meant that one's focus was no longer sustainable. When this happened, the best thing to do was to put down the quill and take a rest. If you were to force yourself to go on working, dangerous accidents were likely to happen.

This was a valuable lesson passed down from generation to generation. In magic, one must take every precaution because recklessness was the main cause of accidents.

Knowing this, Warwick couldn't think of anything to say. But he noticed how sullen Zach had turned, so he had to say something to comfort him.

"Don't worry, I'll find a solution," said Warwick.

"I'm really sorry, Warwick," said Zach, wrought with guilt.

The six Magician's Apprentices then collected all the magic scrolls they produced in a day, including the six magic scrolls that Warwick himself had worked his tail off to produce. Today he received 30 magic scrolls, so when added to yesterday's 35, Warwick now had a total of 65 magic scrolls.

But they only had 20 days, and with this pace, they'd be lucky to be able to produce 700 magic scrolls. Producing 800 was simply impossible!

We're lagging too far behind schedule. Warwick had lost all hopes of completing the task. All he was thinking now was how to break the news to Derek.

Our tutor is a proud Magician. He'd be furious if he found out that we couldn't complete the task. Then he'd lose his temper and make our lives a nightmare! Warwick had already begun to imagine the gloomy days ahead.

Click. It was the sound of Link opening the door of the small room under the staircase. Link came out from with his hands full of magic scrolls.

"Link, how many did you manage to produce today?" asked Warwick, whose eyes lit up instantly when he saw Link.

As he was speaking, his eyes were fixed on the magic scrolls in Link's hands. He started to count them silently.

"It's my lucky day today and I guess I'm starting to get the hang of it. Anyway, I manage to produce five of them," said Link as he handed over the magic scrolls.

Warwick perked up immediately. He did not expect the beginner to have produced five magic scrolls on only the second day. In fact, Warwick himself had only managed to produce two yesterday.

He took the magic scrolls and accordingly examined them one by one.

As always, the scrolls' surface was very neat, and the brushwork of the magic runes was full of a sense of fluidity that was hard to describe in words. The Mana within the magic scrolls flowed in a simple and elegant manner, giving the observer a pleasant feeling.

"These are all high-quality magic scrolls! Excellent job!" Warwick couldn't help but praise. He found that just looking at Link's magic scrolls gave him a sense of pleasure. In fact, he wanted to keep staring at them and was reluctant to put it away.

Naturally, all five scrolls were perfect. Warwick put the magic scrolls down carefully, and then looked at Link's face, and asked with concern, "How do you feel today? Are you tired?"

"No, I'm fine. I don't feel tired at all," Link calmly answered after shaking his head.

"That's good, then. But remember not to be reckless and take a rest when you're tired. Don't ever force yourself too hard," Warwick repeated the same advice. He was still shaken after losing two apprentices.

"I got it," replied Link, with a ghost of a smile on his face.

Producing five magic scrolls was nothing to him. In fact, he actually produced 15 today, but he didn't want to show all of it to Warwick for fear of causing a commotion.

He'd actually only spent an hour and a half to produce those magic scrolls. He even had half a day's time to read the textbook after that, and then spent a long time working on his thesis before coming out of the room.

All in all, the whole business of producing magic scrolls did not affect his studies at all.

On the fourth day, Link doubled his efforts and produced 20 magic scrolls. He spent the whole day working on Lesser Protective Armor magic scrolls. He became so adept at it that he could do it with his eyes closed and not make a single mistake. Link was a perfectionist though and he paid attention to every little detail no matter what he's doing, so his magic scrolls had actually gotten better and better in quality.

When it was time to submit the scrolls in the early evening, Link saw Warwick mired in gloom.

"Warwick, what's the matter?" Link asked.

"Everyone's dog-tired, and we'd only received 28 scrolls today. I'm sure we'll produce less and less every day. If we go on like this, there's simply no way we would ever complete the task!" Warwick sluggishly replied, his body was slumped on the table.

Warwick himself had only produced five scrolls today. After three days of straining himself to produce as many magic scrolls as possible, he was now wrung out like a towel. It was now obvious that he couldn't manage it alone and that he must report to Derek and ask for his help.

After finishing his sentence, he looked up at Link, and saw him holding a huge pile of scrolls.

"Are those really" Warrick was stupefied, he wondered if the scrolls in Link's hands really were magic scrolls. It seemed there were more scrolls now than there was yesterday!

"Luck really was on my side today, and I managed to produce seven magic scrolls. Here you go," said Link, smiling as he gently placed his magic scrolls on Warwick's table.

"What? Seven scrolls? That's impossible!" exclaimed Warwick, jolting up from his languid position.

Seven magic scrolls wouldn't have been such an incredible number if Link was a high-level Magician's Apprentice. But Link was clearly a novice with very weak Mana and had in fact just learned to prepare Lesser Protective Armor magic scroll days ago! How could he possibly produce seven magic scrolls in a day?

Warwick's voice was quite loud just now, and many apprentices heard him and began to gather around. Among them was Matt, who had only managed to produce three magic scrolls each day for these past few days.

"What about the quality of the magic scrolls, though?" asked Matt, who was understandably skeptical. He was a mid-level Magician's Apprentice, but he'd had a run of bad luck these few days, which made him more and more anxious by the day. Even three scrolls a day had required him to stretch almost to his limits. So how could a newcomer who had only arrived days earlier produce more than twice his number?

"Yeah, they're not useless scrolls, are they?" someone else chimed in.

In fact, seven magic scrolls a day, for all the apprentices in the hall, was undeniably impressive. Of all the apprentices gathered there, Warwick who had produced eight magic scrolls on the first day, was probably the only one who could surpass this number.

Warwick was still speechless. He unfolded Link's magic scroll one by one and began to examine them.

As soon as the magic scrolls were unfolded, the apprentices around all broke into muffled cries of wonder.

How could magic scrolls be so pleasing to the eye? Why does the flow of Mana on the scrolls enchant me so much? These were the thoughts running through the apprentices' head after Link's magic scrolls were unveiled.

"They're magnificent!" someone whispered.

These were all Magician's Apprentices, after all, so they knew a high-quality magic scroll when they saw one. In fact, most of them could judge the quality of a magic scroll in one glance. Although these were just Level-0 Lesser Protective Armor magic scrolls, they knew that in order to produce such superior magic scrolls, immense willpower and talent were required.

Suddenly, the apprentices began to view Link in a new light. They couldn't help but respect him for having achieved such a miraculous feat.

Initially, most of the apprentices in the Mage Tower regarded Link as a nobody whose existence was dispensable. But now, their views were beginning to change.

Then, Warwick checked the second magic scroll.

Once he unfurled it, he saw the same smooth flowing magic runes, and the same elegant and harmonious Mana flow. The scroll gave the observer a sense of enchantment that made them unwilling to put it down or look away from it.

"Lord of Light, what a wonderful magic scroll. It's as beautiful as a work of art! I don't think I could ever bring myself to use it," whispered one of the apprentices after a long appreciative sigh.

Creating a magic scroll was like calligraphy, in a sense. When a word was well written, it became a work of art that could be sold for a lot of gold coins. But if the same word was written poorly, then it's no different from the scratchings of a dog, for which no one would bother to give a second glance.

Judging from the apprentices' reactions, Link's magic scrolls were works of art.

After Warwick had checked Link's magic scrolls one by one, he found that all seven were, without exception, of the highest quality. The crowd burstito another wave of exclamations.

If only one or two of the magic scrolls were excellent, then it could still be regarded as a result of dumb luck. But when all seven were incredible, it could only mean that Link was truly talented. The strength of his Mana might be pitifully weak, but from now on no one could deny the fact that he was extremely gifted in producing marvelous magic scrolls!

Link had been in Bale's Mage Tower for more than half a month, but today was the first day that he was truly recognized by the other apprentices.

Little did they know, though, that producing seven scrolls a day was just the beginning.

## 79. The First Loophole in the Fortress

Even though Link was submitting seven scrolls per day, it was still not sufficient to fill in the gap of 100 scrolls. Left with no choice, Warwick went to knock on the door of Magician Derek.

"Who is it?" Derek's voice rang from inside the room. Somehow, he sounded slightly nervous.

How strange, maybe Derek is doing something that he doesn't want others to know? Warwick thought.

Derek was quite introverted and didn't have much talent in magic. He was thus not exactly respected amongst the apprentices.

"It's me, Warwick."

"Why did you come here at this ungodly hour?"

Derek clearly sounded displeased. His footsteps were getting closer and the door slowly opened. Derek stood behind the door with a vexed expression.

The moment the door creaked open, Warwick picked up a faint odor with his sensitive sense of smell.

What is this? It smells slightly like sulfur and a bit like rosin; there is even a slight hint of rotting flesh. This is weird.

Warwick had never experienced anything like this before.

"Be quick. What do you want to say?" Derek rumbled, breaking Warwick's train of thought.

"Oh, the thing is " Warwick was afraid to speak. After mumbling for a few seconds, he noticed Derek's growing look of annoyance and timidly said, "Sir, we may not be able to complete the order on time."

As expected, this sentence caused Derek to frown with annoyance, "What exactly happened? I remember you had eight, no, with the addition of the new guy, nine helpers. 800 scrolls in 20 dasshould not be difficult, am I right?"

"No, we are only left with seven. Hanson and Manster suffered damages from Mana rebound. I am only receiving 35 scrolls per day. Sir, I have been writing five scrolls every day as well. We have all done our best but it is still not enough. We are still 100 scrolls short." Warwick helplessly threw out his hands.

Derek immediately blew up upon hearing this sentence, "Damn it! You idiots! How do you expect me to find extra manpower for you at this time? The departments for potions and low-level magic equipment are also short of people. The entire academy is doing their best to complete the order on time! Do you expect me to personally help you?"

Derek was a Level-2 Magicianto downgrade himself by writing Level-0 magic scrolls was simply a joke! He would not accept it!

Furthermore, he was not adept at writing magic scrolls. His competency in magic scroll writing was probably only the level of a higher magic apprentice. But most importantly, he was busy making money. He was learning a Level-3 spell and was at the final stages of implementing it. He needed to rent the Elemental Pool only available to lecturers.

The rental fee of the Elemental Pool was 100 gold coins per hour and his experiment required three hours of usage. Usually, he neededamnth to earn 100 gold coins.

Hence, he simply had no time to be embroiled in this mess!

Warwick was clearly troubled and misunderstood, he shook his head frantically, "No sir! Of course not! I am just wondering if we could reduce the number of scrolls we need to producefor example 700, no, 750?"

Derek objected vehemently. "The order was discussed and confirmed between master and the army. I have no power to change the contractdamn it, why do I have to deal with this!"

Derek was in a pinch. As the head of the mid-level magic equipment department in the tower, if Warwick made a mistake, the blame would be attributed to Derek instead!

Of course, he would not be stripped of his position as a manager. However, it would probably affect his commission which would delay his Level-3 spell experiment indefinitely.

"What do I do? Master Bale has been acting weirder by the day. The part where I was tasked to procure strange magical resources was especially disturbing. Oh lord, why am I so unlucky!" Derek's mood was at absolute zero.

After pondering for a while, Derek could not think of any good alternatives. If he wanted to facilitate his progress as a Magician, he would have to shoulder some of the weight.

Left with no choice, he said, "I will ask around the other towers to see if they have extra finished scrolls. However, don't count on me for this. Try your best to write more and narrow the gap, understand?"

Warwick nodded gratefully. "Yes sir, I will definitely give it my all."

"Ok, now go!" Derek commanded.

However, reality was often harsh and cruel. On the second day after reporting the situation to Derek, Warwick gave his best effort and wrote six magic scrolls. Together with the scrolls he collected from the other apprentices, he received only 25 scrolls in total. Link was the only one who had not submitted his scrolls.

Oh no, everyone is starting to feel tired and losing their speed. Warwick thought. If this went on, the gap would widen to 200 or even 300 scrolls.

He did not even want to think about that.

As Warwick was feeling helpless, a door at the bottom of the stairs punctually opened. Link stood at the entrance with a stack of scrolls in his hand.

Warwick's eyes widened with delight and he rushed forward.

"Link, how many did you write today?"

Without waiting for the answer, Warwick started counting, One, two, threeeight, nine, ten? Did I count correctly?

Warwick rubbed his eyes and counted again. As simple as the counting was, Warwick simply couldn't believe it.

Just two days ago, Link was only writing five scrolls per day and just yesterday he wrote seven. Now, he was writing ten! This was an amazing exponential increase. Wouldn't he be drained from all this work?

Warwick finally confirmed the numbers after counting them once more. He couldn't help but shout, "In the name of the God of Light, Link, you really wrote ten scrolls! That is incredible!"

This number reverberated through the hall and caught the attention of every apprentice. Everyone's attention was immediately captured and assembled towards Link.

Ten scrolls a day had been the record of the Mage Tower for the past 3 years. To think that someone managed to accomplish it was definitely shocking.

"Warwick, quick, examine the quality of the scrolls!" If all the scrolls were successful products, Link would be too amazing.

Perhaps Link had no talent in Mana and was more introverted, but if he continued to produce high-quality magic scrolls at such an alarming rate, he would definitely earn his place in the East Cove Higher Magic Academy.

Warwick swallowed nervously as he began his examination. Many others came forward to inspect the work as well. Unsurprisingly, all ten scrolls were not only successes, but also of premium quality. The strokes were clearly defined and rounded off nicely with a glossy finish. You wouldn't want to let go of it the moment you held it in your hands.

The most shocking thing was that the ten scrolls looked exactly the same, as though they were printed using the same stencil.

"Link, you really are incredible!" Warwick had great respect for Link from the bottom of his heart. He truly felt that in terms of magic scroll writing, Link was no doubt the best among all the apprentices.

Link merely gave a smile as though this achievement was nothing to be proud of.

"If there is nothing wrong with the scrolls, I'll be going back to my room."

"Yes, please rest well," Warwick hastily replied. He had a feeling that their chance of meeting the deadline now depended entirely on Link.

Link continued to produce stellar work the next day, submitting 13 magic scrolls. Not only had he broken the record of Bale's Mage Tower, he had also broken the record of the entire East Cove Higher Magic academy which was at 12 magic scrolls in a day. The quality of his work was, as usual, still of extremely good quality.

All of the apprentices were blown away!

The news traveled really fast and before long, the whole academy heard of a magic scroll genius in Bale's Mage Tower who wrote 13 premium magic scrolls in a day.

The next day, the news got even more absurd, 13 magic scrolls became 14, and eventually, 15 magic scrolls consistently every day.

Link was known as a monster.

In ten days, Warwick received a total of 420 magic scrolls, out of which, 120 magic scrolls were written by Link. The other six apprentices, him included, only contributed 300. Link's contribution was more than twice the work of an ordinary apprentice.

"It seems that we are not only narrowing the gap, but we might even be able to complete the order on time!" Warwick calculated the number of scrolls in advance and was in awe.

Just then the door below the stairs creaked open again with Link bringing out a thick stack of magic scrolls.

Warwick immediately dropped what he was doing and rushed towards him, grinning from ear to ear.

"Let me carry it. I bought some delicious food from Lecturer Moira's Mage Tower for you. Please go enjoy." Link was now his treasured apprentice; he had to treat him with hospitality.

"Thank you." Link nodded and dug into the feast Warwick had prepared. By the time he was done, Warwick had also finished his examination of the scrolls. Every single one of them was still of premium quality.

"I will be going out for a stroll. I got bored from sitting down too long," Link said. He had been wanting to try out a Supreme Magical Skill he developed recently and needed to make a trip to Herrera's Mage Tower.

"Yes, please go and relax," Warwick spoke in an unusually polite tone.

Derek walked into the tower with a pained expression just three minutes after Link left. The moment he saw Warwick, he hastily asked, "How are the magic scrolls coming along?"

As an official Magician, Derek never mixed with the apprentices. Hence, he was completely unaware of the news circulating amongst them. More importantly, he was extremely busy these few days trying to find an alternative to the magic scroll shortage issue. He was out in River Cove Town trying to purchase magic scrolls for a high price and at the same time, generating monetary resources for his own experiment. It was driving him crazy.

He did his best, but the results were limited. As of now, he only received 20 magic scrolls.

There were only ten days remaining. If he could not find another alternative, he would have to up down his pride and fill in the gaps himself.

He did not expect to be greeted by a jubilant Warwick.

"Sir, I have good news. The gap has been filled."

"What?" Derek was appalled.

"Haven't you heard? A magic scroll genius has appeared in the tower," another apprentice joined the conversation.

"Genius? Who?" Derek was even more confused.

## 80. Now's My Chance!

Bale's Mage Tower

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Not only did he manage to produce 15 magic scrolls a day, but each scroll's quality was this exquisite, too? Derek stared incredulously at the Lesser Protective Armor magic scrolls unfolded on the table in front of him.

Even lay people with no experience in magic would perceive the exquisite beauty of these magic scrolls. In Derek's eyes, as a full-fledged Magician one word ran through his mindperfection.

Even low-quality blank scrolls and ordinary magical ink provided by the Mage Tower could not conceal the preternatural elegance of the silvery magic aura that the magic runes on the scrolls exuded.

The aura of the magic scrolls seemed as graceful and agile as a silvery trout that cruised in a lake bathed in moonlight, while shrouded in the mysterious aura of magic. Derek couldn't peel his eyes away from these scrolls; at times they were so breathtaking that it almost suffocated him.

These sublime magic scrolls are too precious to be touched by the coarse hands of those barbaric soldiers, thought Derek. They should be framed and sold at a high price as works of art instead!

Yes, it would be much more appropriate to sell these as pieces of artwork rather than as cheap weapons. But perhaps even that was not good enough for these unearthly magic scrolls.

Their only minute flaws were the inferior blank scrolls and magical ink, as well as the low-level spell. Nothing could be done about the low-level spell, since the creator of these magic scrolls was only a beginner Magician's Apprentice. He could easily improve the other two factors, though.

Young aristocrats love to collect magical items and wealthy merchants like to use them to decorate their storefronts as well. If I were to sell these to them, I'm sure they could fetch at least 10 gold coins each.

Derek was short of money, so he had to squeeze out the meager entrepreneurial talents that he had out of desperation. In fact, he even surprised himself for having been able to come up with what he considered to be a shrewd idea.

The kid can produce 15 scrolls a day which means that a daily income of 100 gold is a given. As for the kid, I'm sure he'd be happy with 10 gold coins a day.

Derek gently coughed and told Warwick, "Well, I'm relieved there are no apparent problems. Why don't you take these magic scrolls? I bought them in the River Cove Town at a high price. Although there are only 20 of them here, I'm sure they could at least slightly ease your stress burden."

"How much did these scrolls cost?" Warwick hastily asked.

Experience taught Warwick that Derek was a very stingy man, he would never spend money on anything that would not profit him in the end.

But to his surprise, Derek only waved his hand and said, "You don't have to pay me for them this time. Just keep on with your hard work and complete the task."

"Thank you very much for your help, Mr. Derek," said the stunned Warwick, his heart filled with gratitude. Derek replied with a nod.

Twenty scrolls really weren't much at all, but still, it was the equivalent of an average Magician's Apprentices' five days' worth of effort. So now they had 440 completed magic scrolls. In the remaining ten days they'd only need to prepare 360 more magic scrolls which wasn't too much to deal with.

"Where's Link?" asked Derek, "I'd like to meet him."

"He was tired after preparing the magic scrolls, so he went out for a walk," answered Warwick.

"I see. When he returns, tell him to come to my room," said Derek.

"I will," replied Warwick.

Meanwhile, Link was oblivious to how he had been a part of Derek's scheme. Although to be honest, he had deliberately demonstrated his talents in the magic scrolls because he wanted to attract the attention of some high-ranking Magicians in the Mage Tower. If he kept on mingling with low-level apprentices, there would be no way for him to investigate Bale or learn his secrets.

In fact, Link wasn't out for a simple walk either, but was instead going to Moira's Mage Tower. He was going there under the guise of visiting his friend Eliard, but in truth, he was going to conduct magic experiments.

After ten days of preparing magic scrolls, Link had reaped quite a few benefits from the sustained intense focus required in the activity.

Through his stit perfectionism, he learned how to control his Mana more precisely. If he could focus his Mana into a point as small as the breadth of a strand of human hair before this, now he had improved so much that he could focus his Mana to a point as fine as the breadth of a spider's silk.

The smaller the point he could focus his Mana onto, the finer the thread of Mana that would be used to construct spell structures would be. That meant that the Mana consumption for each spellcasting process would be reduced as well and allow for more intricate spell structures to be built.

For example, Link now only needed 0.9 Mana points to release a Glass Orb of the same power, while one Whistle only consumed 3.5 points.

But this wasn't the only benefit Link acquired.

By continuously producing magic scrolls of Lesser Protective Armor, he was hit with an inspiration on how to modify the structure of the spell. After dozens of changes, he finally created a new Supreme Magical Skill modification for the spell and integrated itito the Level-2 Guarding Barrier spell. As a result, he made drastic changes to these spells while also upgrading their levels!

The original Guarding Barrier would cover the surface of the spellcaster's body with a layer of elemental magic which would provide some protection against magic spell attacks. But after modification, a more powerful repulsive field was added on top of the existing barrier, making the spellcaster immune to physical attacks as well.

However, because Link spent most of his time in Bale's Mage Tower, this spell had only been running around in his mind with no chance for him to actually test it. Although he had been running countless simulations in his mind to ensure that there were no serious flaws, the newly-modified Guarding Barrier had now been upgraded to a Level-3 spell. That meant that there would be a higher risk that serious accidents may occur even from the slightest imbalance of energy. Link wouldn't risk testing it out in his room and thought it best to do it in the protective environment of the Elemental Pool.

As he entered Moira's Mage Tower, Eliard was already at the door waiting to meet him. His face lit up the moment he saw Link.

"Link, I didn't expect you to be able to produce magic scrolls so quickly! I tried it myself, but I could never exceed ten scrolls a day, yet you managed to produce 15! That's just scary!" said Eliard.

"I guess I had a lot of practice. I wasn't so quick myself when I first started," said Link, laughing.

"I'm sure a little bit of genius didn't hurt as well. I mean, I could never produce magic scrolls as sublime as yours in a million years." Eliard understood how difficult it was to create magic scrolls, so he knew there was more to Link's achievement than blind practice.

They both chatted and laughed while they walked into the tower. It was Link's first time here, and he noticed how the interior of this Mage Tower was similar to Bale's, except in a slightly smaller scale and with an additional air of compassion and warmth versus the cold and competitive atmosphere in Bale's Mage Tower. Link also noticed how the apprentices here laughed and smiled while they were chatting with each othera foreign sight in Bale's Mage Tower. When they reached the hall, the apprentices all turned to Eliard and greeted him warmly.

"My Prince, is this your friend?" A beautiful female apprentice came up to Eliard and flirtatiously leaned her body on his while giving Link an inquisitive look.

Even though everyone had heard the news of a magic scroll genius in Bale's Mage Tower, very few people knew what he looked like.

"Elena, stop bothering me!" said Eliard as he shoved the girl away, looking somewhat embarsed.

Although his tone sounded cold, Link could sense a tinge of guilt in Eliard's voice. He knew then that the girl Elena must have had him wrapped around her fingers.

Poor Eliard, I guess being handsome does come with its own trouble, Link thought sarcastically.

Link then diverted his eyes to Elena. She seemed to be about 18 years old and she had long flowing pale blond hair. She blinked her large sky-blue eyes a great deal, making her look like an innocent child. But judging from the strength of her Mana, she must already be a high-level Magician's Apprentice. This made her seem mysterious and effervescent.

From Link's first glance, Elena seemed to be both an innocent young girl and a gifted Magician. But by the second glance he immediately discarded his first impression of her. He could sense that she had been putting on act.

The Magician's robe on her body hugged her waist line snugly and she seemed to have spent a great deal of time and effort on her exquisite hairstyle. Finally, there was that affected curiosity she put on when she's around Eliard. Considering how fast she was able to get familiar with Eliard, it seemed she must've understood Eliard's obsessive devotion to magic learning and used it to her advantage. Her only fault was that she was still quite young, so her inexperience had made her acts obvious to Link's scrutinizing eyes. Link thought this innocent-looking girl was not to be underestimated.

Elena, Elena What a familiar name. Link couldn't quite put a finger on where he'd heard that name before, though he felt it was uncannily familiar.

Then, Eliard turned to Link, wordlessly asking for his permission before he introduced Link to everyone in the hall, to which Link nodded in assent. He had no need to hide his identity here.

"Everyone," Eliard began. "This is Link, the magic scroll genius from Bale's Mage Tower. You've all heard about him, haven't you?"

"Oh!" Before Eliard could finish his sentence, gasps echoed through the hall. The apprentices all turned their eyes to Link. They examined Link up and down, eager to find out what a genius looked like.

The apprentices were soon disappointed, though. Because of the greatly improved living conditions in the academy, Link had actually gained some weight and grown slightly taller too, but that did nothing to improve his terribly plain and unremarkable appearance.

"I wouldn't know him from Adam," said one apprentice in a deflated tone.

"He's got a very weak aura," said another, "Honestly, I'm not sure how his Mana could sustain him through the process of preparing 15 magic scrolls."

"I guess the rumors were exaggerated," one of them concluded.

"No, you're all wrong! Eliard is a true genius, so his friend must be great as well!"

That was Elena. She managed to refute the previous remarks while simultaneously flattering Eliard without offending Link.

With all the clamoring voices that erupted after that, Eliard was getting irritated. He thought they were all too tactless and wanted to say a few words in Link's defense.

"Eliard, I don't have much time, let's go," said Link before Eliard could say anything. Link had actually snuck out of the Mage Tower and only had two hours before he must go back.

"Right, follow me." Eliard walked towards the stairs and Link followed him closely behind. No one else was around once they reached the second floor.

"Tell me about Elena. You both seem very intimate with each other. So you've found yourself a lover, huh?" joked Link.

"What are you talking about? I never thought of her that way," replied Eliard, with a wry smile on his face, "But Elena is a nice girl, she's helped me a lot, so Iwell"

"Fine, I get it," said Link, nodding his head. It seemed that Elena really was a sly fox who had identified Eliard's weakness. Shrewdness in a woman wasn't necessarily a bad thing, but it depended on how she used that strength. Link wasn't sure what was going on exactly between Eliard and Elena, so he thought it best to stay away and not to meddle.

The two finally reached the third floor where the Elemental Pool was.

The role of an Element Pool was to control the scale and limit the power of magic spells. When magic spells were cast within the zone of the Elemental Pool, even high-level spells would have the power equivalent to that of Level-0 spells.

This allowed the Magicians to conduct high-energy experiments without having to worry about causing dangerous accidents.

There were three Elemental Pools in Herrera's Mage Tower. The main pool could contain Level-5 magic spells and below, while the other two could contain magic spells that were Level-3 and below. One of the smaller Elemental Pools was open to the apprentices and there was time allotted each week when the apprentices could use it for free. Eliard held the key to this Elemental Pool.

Eliard had 20 hours of free Elemental Pool usage per week. He never used up all the time himself, so Link borrowed his allotted time to conduct his experiment here.

The experiment Link had in mind today was a relatively simple one. He'd only used the Elemental Pool just to be extra cautious, so in the end Link only spent half an hour in there.

Half an hour later, Link's newly-modified defensive spell was fully developed.

The new spell was drastically different from the original Guarding Barrier. After casting the spell, Link's clothes were no longer covered in a glass-like film but was shrouded in a nebulous light instead. The light extended about three feet away from his body. The elemental barrier mingled within the light and when seen from a distance, it had an appearance of a fuzzy white cotton ball.

I'll call it Edelweiss, then, thought Link.

Edelweiss

Level-3 Elite Defensive Spell

Mana Consumption: 25 points.

Spellcasting Time: 0.9 seconds

Effects: Effectively resists both physical and magic spell attacks.

(Note: This is Link's Edelweiss.)

When he was done testing out the new spell, a rather familiar notification popped up, containing two messages:

Player Link successfully created a new Level-2 Supreme Magical Skill. 10 Omni Points rewarded.

The other one was an upgrade mission.

Player has successfully mastered a Level-3 spell and advanced to Level-3. 40 Omni Points rewarded.

Level-4 Upgrade Mission Activated.

Mission Details: Master a Level-4 spell and become a Level-4 Magician.

Mission Rewards: 70 Omni Points

Link's total Omni Points was now at 125 points and there were less than 20 days left before the effects of Ailing Mana would disappear.

By that time, his Maximum Mana would be 1480 points, which meant he could then use the Level-4 Flame Blast spell again. Plus, he even had a Level-5 Universal Crystal now, so he would no doubt experience an exponential leap in his strength soon!

Link was very much looking forward to this.

After leaving the Elemental Pool, Link bid farewell to Eliard and immediately headed back to Bale's Mage Tower. As soon as he opened the front door, Warwick was already there waiting for him.

"Link, Derek wants to see you," said Warwick.

Now's my chance! The moment that Link anticipated had arrived.

## 81. A Frog in Warm Water

Derek's room was on the second floor of Bale's Mage Tower. As he was an official Magician and also managed the sales of low to mid-level magic equipment, he received preferable treatment.

The first thing that caught Link's attention when he entered the room was the small dining area more than 40 square meters wide. On the side of the dining area was a bookshelf. Link took a closer look and only spotted a few magic books, while the rest were simply items such as novels and anthologies, which were of no importance to a Magician.

The number of magic books a Magician had determined his status. From the looks of it, Derek was not doing very well. These Magicians were usually particularly obsessed with money, as it could potentially help them elevate their status.

Link knew with a glance that it would be easy to deceive Derek. He probably only needed a few weeks.

On the other side of the dining area was another shelf which displayed magic resources and craftwork. Link's attention was grabbed by a wooden circular object about the size of a fist. It had tiny dark green spots all over it.

It's a Dormant Forest Spirit Root!

Link recognized it almost immediately. It looked almost exactly the same as the in-game description of the item and as a previous Legendary Magician, Link knew all of the in-game items like the back of his hand.

The forest spirit was a type of magical creature that possessed both the traits of a plant and an animal. Its roots had extremely high absorption capabilities and one only had to bury the sphere and water it and watch it hatch almost instantaneously.

A creature with such strong powers of life naturally contained a lot of magical power, making it a good spellcasting resource.

The Dormant Forest Spirit Root was considered to be a mid-level spellcasting material and was widely used in many spells. Most of these spells were botanical in nature, however, one of them fell into the realm of dark magic.

It was the Revival spell and as the name suggested, it was a spell that allowed the user to achieve immortality.

However, such spells had overstepped the boundaries of the gods. Any mortal who coveted immortality was considered to have fallen to the dark side, as it was impossible to achieve full success. One might be able to achieve immortality, but definitely at the expense of other important traits.

Derek was in charge of procuring magic resources for Bale. This Dormant Forest Spirit Root could only be used by Level-4 Magicians and above. Derek was clearly not strong enough to use it yet, hence it must be for Bale.

It looks like Bale has already fallen to the dark side.

Link sighed. The reason for Bale's obsession with dark magic was simple. Bale was afraid to die and was already at least 60 years old. The only way to extend his life indefinitely was through dark magic.

Derek could never imagine that a simple spellcasting material placed on his shelf would reveal that much information. In his eyes, Link was his money tree. He warmly welcomed Link into his room with an inviting smile, "Come, take a seat and have a taste of my flaming wine."

Derek did not really respect Link as he felt Link only managed to enter this Mage Tower through connections. Deep down, he was even jealous. However, on the account of his gold coins, Derek put on a facade and treated Link extremely well.

Link sat down and appeared nervous as he took a sip of the wine before carefully asking, "Sir, you called for me?" Link's seemingly awkward demeanor bolstered Derek's courage even further. He took out Link's Lesser Armor magic scroll and asked, "Am I right to say that you wrote this?"

"Yes sir," Link nodded.

"It is very well written."

Derek was speaking from the bottom of his heart. He then continued, "However, for such an amazing piece of work, you only receive one silver coin as commission. This is the same as the ordinary, or even low-quality scrolls! It is too unfair!"

Link deliberately showed a movement in his eyes but kept quiet. Derek definitely had a motive for telling him this much.

Looking at Link's expression, Derek chuckled and asked, "Do you want to make a fortune from writing scrolls?"

"Sir, what is considered a fortune?" Link purposely sounded hasty and eager.

Derek laughed. Link's reaction was like a mirror image of his old self. He raised one finger, "I will give you one gold coin for every magic scrollten times what you currently earn! If you can continue writing 15 per day, you will be able to earn 15 gold coins every day. Is that considered a fortune then?"

Link eyes brightened with joy and he nodded ecstatically, "Of course! What exactly do I have to do?"

"You do not have to do anything extra, just continue to produce 15 premium quality magic scrolls every day. Of the 15 you produce, you give me 7 of them and I will replace them with the scrolls I write." Derek was willing to put down his pride and write Level-0 magic scrolls for the sake of earning extra income. Furthermore, the order must not be delayed.

"I guess that's fine" Link took a while before agreeing.

Derek obviously had his eyes set on the market value of his scrolls. This cooperation would tie both him and Link into a mutually beneficial contractthe first step in forming a closer relationship and his opening to investigate more into Magician Bale.

The first cracks had appeared. Link knew that the day in which he exposed Bale's secret was not far.

"I will be going back then. Thank you, sir."

Link acted uncomfortable.

"Remember, the ordinary scrolls do not have to be exquisitely written. Those mercenaries will not be able to appreciate it. However, put in more effort for those magic scrolls that you are giving me. Take care of your health and do not overwork yourself," Derek gently reminded.

"Yes sir, I'll keep that in mind." Link left Derek's room

Derek could not help but chuckle after Link closed the door behind him, "That guy is a treasure!" His advancement to a Level-3 Magician was now fully dependent on Link.

It was a silent night.

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The next day, Derek delivered a stack of high-quality blank magic scrolls and a bottle of expensive golden ink to Link's room. Link also conscientiously wrote magic scrolls in his room and only left when it was four in the afternoon.

Link first submitted the ordinary scrolls to Warwick, before delivering the high-quality magic scrolls to Derek's room.

Derek was already waiting for him. The door opened almost immediately after he knocked. Derek was behind the door with a cheerful and natural smile on his face.

"You have arrived. These are the completed scrolls I suppose?" Derek set his sights on the stack of scrolls Link was carrying.

"Yes, sir." Link handed over the stack of scrolls.

"Please take a rest while I check them." Derek hastily received them and began checking.

He opened the first scroll carefully and stared in awe at the work of art that was displayed in front of him.

On the thick magic paper colored with a natural light green hue, a mysterious and smooth golden stroke seemed to dance with elegance. A harmonious and clean magic aura also emanated from the scroll. At the sides, Link meticulously penned down a different, but similarly exquisite pattern. They looked natural and blended in perfectly with the strokes in the middle. The scroll felt weighted and epic.

This scroll was nearly perfect.

After careful observation, Derek realized that the intricate pattern on the border was not just decorative, but was, in fact, an individual spell.

It was a Level-0 Basic Stabilizing Spell.

This would protect the scroll from any damages and the effects would last until the spell disintegrated.

If this scroll was bought as a collectible, the spell could greatly lengthen its lifespan and allow it to be passed on for many generations to come as a family heirloom.

"Perfect! Absolutely perfect! Link, you are really a genius!" Derek could not help but exclaim. He was initially afraid that Link could not perform up to his standards, but now he was completely at ease. These scrolls could definitely be sold for a high price.

Link acted uncomfortable and nodded, "Then I will be returning to my room."

"Waithere's eight gold coinsyour commission for the scrolls. Take them." Derek paid Link upfront. He was already sure that the scrolls could be sold for a high price.

Link received the gold coins and left the room after politely bowing to Derek.

"How gullible." Derek was extremely pleased with Link's performance.

Little did he know that Link was merely letting him get used to the convenience of such quick money. When he got used to this extravagant lifestyle the magic scrolls were providing him, he would have developed a dependence on Link.Currently, he was like a frog in a pot of warm water slowly brought to boil.

## 82. An Offer You Can't Refuse

Ten days went by like a breeze, and Link had now produced 150 Protective Armor magic scrolls, of which more than half was in Derek's name. The military's orders of 800 magic scrolls were completed on schedule as well. Warwick could finally breathe easy now, and he was deeply grateful to Link.

Warwick had made some progress because of this experience too. After 20 days of intense work stretching his own limit by producing a huge number of magic scrolls, he had broken through his progress ceiling and became a full-fledged Level-1 Magician.

He had two options after becoming a full-fledged Magician. The first choice was to become an independent Magician who would go out and fight in battles, while the second was to continue to stay in the Mage Tower. Warwick opted for the first choice. Thus, there was a vacancy in the position of the person overseeing the production of magic scrolls.

Many apprentices were vying for the position as it came with a lot of perks and boons. Because Derek had the power to appoint anyone to the position, a swarm of apprentices waited at his feet ready to do anything for him. Some female apprentices even threw themselves into his arms and became especially affectionate to him. It was a time when Derek felt he was on top of the world, intoxicated by the unctuous taste of power.

However, on the twelfth day, Link suddenly came into Derek's room and handed him 15 exquisite magic scrolls.

"Mr. Derek, I want to be the head of the magic scroll production," he whispered.

"What?" Derek was alarmed. It was the first time Link had ever made any special demands. His instinct was to refuse him because he had promised the position to an apprentice named Evelyn. For the simple reason, that beautiful girl had promised to be his lover and she would give him whatever he wanted, whenever and wherever he wanted it.

His impulse to refuse Link was stunted by the sudden realization that Link's magic scrolls had earned him a fortune. Every day, he brought Link's magic scrolls with him to Springs City and sold them at the price of 10 gold coins each. Not only did they sell out every day, but people flocked to him looking for more of these marvelous scrolls. Link's magic scrolls turned out to be much more popular than he imagined. Moreover, the capital city was never in shortage of rich people.

In the last ten days, Link had brought him thousands of gold coins of income. It was an amount of money he wouldn't even dare to dream about in the past.

An hour in his tutor's Elemental Pool cost a pricely sum of 100 gold coins, but that was not a problem to him anymore as he now had the money. With Link's magic scrolls he earned nearly a hundred gold coins a day, so he could afford to spend half an hour in the Elemental Pool every day. Because of that, he progressed rapidly and had now mastered a Level-2 spell, Large Fireball. Consequently, he was now a Level-3 Magician.

In the eyes of the Magicians, nothing was paramount to skills in magic. As a Level-3 Magician, his colleagues started to treat him with much more respect. This had given Derek far more satisfaction than any woman could through carnal pleasure.

"Don't worry about it," said Derek, "I've decided to appoint you as the man in charge of magic scroll production. I'll announce it publically tomorrow."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Derek," said Link, putting on a reverent tone. He then took out another magic scroll.

"I've recently mastered the Level-0 Light spell and made slight modifications to its structure to improve its aesthetics. This way people can use the spell as an ornament. I'm sure magic scrolls of this spell would sell much better than Lesser Protective Armor scrolls."

Although Derek showed no signs of being annoyed by Link's demand just now, he still wanted to make sure there were no hard feelings between them. The magic scroll was a present he prepared for Derek to sweeten the deal. But why did he not just offer the present before he made his demand?

Because Link wanted to send a message. He only presented the new magic scroll after Derek had agreed to appoint him to the position that Link desired hinting that Link would repay him for whatever favor that was given to him. The more requests Derek could satisfy, the more presents he would get.

Derek could sense the message Link was trying to give and it left a bad taste in his mouththough he was determined not to show it since Link had the upper hand in the current situation. And so, Derek suppressed the nagging anger he felt and proceeded to unfold Link's new magic scroll.

Derek was startled the instant he opened the scroll, as he was faced with not just simple lines of magic runes, but a horse a horse carved out by countless lines of flowing Mana that looked so real it seemed it might jump out of the scroll at any moment. What was even more striking was how the body of the horse was glowing and the combination of light and shadow conspired to make it look three-dimensional. The eyes of the horse seemed to shine vividly, they were exactly identical to those of a living breathing horse.

"What is it?" asked the stupefied Derek.

"It's a horse," said Link, "But it's also the structure of the Light spell. I've made some minute changes to enable it to display a more impressive and realistic contrast of light and shadow. I've also used a magic-preservation spell on it, so it should last for at least fifty years without fading."

Just as Link had explained, Derek could finally make out the outlines of the Light spell in the structure of the horse. But it was far from the ordinary version of the spell. Link had created something so innovative that no one else would be able to imitate!

Derek could already predict how well this magic scroll would be received in Springs City. Marvelous! I won't let these magic scrolls part my hands without getting paid 20 gold coins for each! thought Derek, full of determination.

Derek's lacking entrepreneurial skills were obvious from this idea. Any shrewd merchant would know that these scrolls could fetch at least a hundred gold coins each!

Of course, Link wouldn't reveal the fact to Derek even if he could hear Derek's current thoughts. After all, producing magic scrolls was, to him, just a way to get closer to Bale. Even if he wanted to start doing it seriously to earn money, he would do it later himself and would definitely not trust a cheapskate like Derek to handle things for him.

"I'll pay you three gold coins for each magic scroll like this," said Derek, pointing towards the scroll in front of him. His previous animosity towards Link had completely vanished after seeing these magic scrolls.

"Thank you, Mr. Derek!" replied Link, not forgetting to put on a look of joy.

When Link left the room, Derek became lost in his train of thoughts. He now realized that Link was more than a simple Magician's Apprentice. He had a vague feeling that he was falling into a trap set by Link. But the problem was, he felt the trap was so alluring that he himself wasn't willing to escape, as it was brimming with gold coins. The ecstasy he felt from owning a mountain of gold coins that he could spend and squander however he wished was something he wouldn't let go of that easily, even if it meant that he was caught in somebody's trap.

"That damned kid, he's got me firmly in his hands!" cursed Derek. He then got up and left the room to find Emily. He had to appease his new lover.

Although he couldn't fulfill his promise to her, he knew the only reason she wanted the position was because she was attracted to the many perks that came with it. And now that he was in no shortage of gold coins, he was confident that she wouldn't stay angry with him for long.

What I wouldn't give to have that nice body of hers all to myself, thought Derek, now lost in his lustful fantasies. He was so eager to meet his lover that he failed to notice how Link had been observing his every move in a corner.

So he's resigned to his fate now, huh? Link could easily read Derek's thoughts just by watching his actions.

Derek was like a frog that Link trapped in a pot of cold water, to which he then increased the temperature so slowly that it would not notice any changes in its surroundings until it was too late. Figuratively speaking, Derek was now a boiled frog no longer a threat or even a slight obstacle to Link.

Link then returned to his own little room. He didn't prepare any magic scroll or read any books. Instead, he started to work on his thesis.

The theories in Link's thesis were the basis of his modification of the spell Edelweiss, which he regarded as a great success. This made Link realize the enormous potential of his unfinished thesis, so he became more motivated to work on it now.

Today was quite a productive day for him. He had a lot of inspirations for new ways to advance his flow of deductions. He had been working intensely for a full hour before he felt exhausted and unable to focus. Link saw no point in straining himself further, so he put down his quill and picked up a textbook instead.

Level-3 spells were still not strong enough for him. Link anticipated the day when the Ailing Mana effects subsided and his Mana would be as high as 1480 points, enough to cast Level-5 spells.

Still, the quality of the spells purchased from the gaming system was just too low. Not only was their power disappointing, the spellcasting speed was too slow as well, which rendered them completely useless in battles. Unless it was absolutely necessary, Link wouldn't waste any more of his Omni Points to purchase new spells from the gaming system. From now on, he would learn and master the spells through his own efforts.

Learning magic was a complicated business. As the theories got more convoluted and impenetrable, the slower Link had to pace himself through each point and each fact. Nevertheless, his progress had been slow but steady.

Time passed, and it was now the dead of night. But in the small space beneath the narrow staircase in Bale's Mage Tower, the young Magician was still hard at work.

Meanwhile, Derek was still busy fooling around with his new lover, the genius Magician Eliard had already gone to bed after a long day, and the angel Herrera was in her own Mage Tower, enjoying a moment of quiet solitude as she sipped at the sweet Dragon Wine imported from the South.

In a city of pleasure paradise called Mollendan in the Southern Free Trade Confederation, a dark-haired girl suddenly gazed up at the night sky. In a sea of bright flickering stars, a dazzling meteor swept across the heavens.

"How are you getting on right now, Link?" murmured the beautiful demon Princess into the chilly air. A gust of wind blew past her, and the girl pulled up the hood to cover her face as she slithered away quickly into the darkness. Behind her, pursuers kept trying to hunt her down.

## 83. Give Me Ten Days

The next morning, Derek announced that Link would be in charge of magic scroll production with a gleeful look on his face.

He had climbed slightly higher in rank ever since he officially became a Level-3 Magician. Link had also displayed his talent in writing magic scrolls. Even Warwick, who was going to leave the Mage Tower, also suggested appointing Link as his successor.

Therefore, even with some objections on the ground, the appointment was relatively smooth sailing.

Warwick then handed over all his responsibilities to Link.

As Warwick explained the duties, Link realized two benefits that he would receive.

The first was a list of contacts he would be getting. He would be able to directly liaise with the magic scroll merchants without going through a third party. This would be extremely helpful in his future plans to earn more gold coins.

Secondly, he would be responsible for the purchase of raw materials in the creation of magic scrolls. This included the entire Mage Tower ranging from basic to high-level quality materials! Official Magicians were usually too prideful to concern themselves with errands like this. Hence, they often let trusted Magicians of lower status handle the job.

From these lists, Link could obtain a great deal of information about the Mage Tower.

After Warwick was done with the explanation, Link sat down and started reviewing the Mage Tower's previous purchases. They were recorded in great detail in a thick notebook.

He perused through the pages and found what he was looking for within minutes.

Warwick bought 30 Taric cow leather for a total of three times in the past 50 days. This type of leather was only used in the creation of magic scrolls Level-5 and above. However, the amount of Taric cow leather the Mage Tower was purchasing was nowhere near normal.

High-level magic scrolls required huge amounts of magic power and were extremely difficult to produce. A Level-6 Magician could only create one scroll a month. There was thus no need to purchase 30 of them every month.

If they were indeed used to create magic scrolls, there would be an insane number of high-level magic scrolls in Bale's Mage Tower. However, Bale clearly did not have the energy and time to create these scrolls.

Then why did Bale order so much Taric cow leather? Warwick might be clueless but Link was certain he knew what was going on.

The production of Taric cow leather took place in the Taric plains to the West. The leather came from a magical beast indigenous to the area. It was only termed as cow leather simply because of its looks, and had, in fact, no connection to cows.

These magical beasts had an affinity to water and were resistant to both droughts and floods. Their skin was mainly used to create high-quality scroll paper, though a certain substance could also be extracted from their skin. However, the latter was not known to many people and was rarely used.

This substance was known as Death Glue; it was widely used in undead magic to glue the different body parts together.

Despite the fact that Taric cow leather was already processed by alchemy, Death Glue could still be extracted from it!

He could only determine that Bale was experimenting with dark magic when he saw the Dormant Forest Spirit Root in Derek's room. However, with this evidence, he could narrow it down even further to determine that it was undead magic that Bale was experimenting with!

"Bale, do you really wish to attain immortality! What an idiot!" Link gently closed the book and sneered.

The only way to become immortal was to become a god! Any other path would inevitably result in the annihilation of your soul.

That was, unless the war between dark and light ended in favor of the dark side and the world fell into the control of the Dark Gods. Only then would Necromancers have a chance to shine.

Bale clearly did not have the liberty of time to wait until then. He also could not tell what the future held. To think that he would abandon everything and walk on the path of darkness, much less trying to cover up his tracks with such juvenile tactics! How foolish!

Link tidied up his desk before informing Matt "I will be going out for an hour."

"Got it," Matt replied.

After all, they were not slaves and were allowed to freely move around the academy.

Link was careful. In order to not raise suspicion, he first brought the notebook back to his own room and hid it in his dimensional pendant. He then walked out of the Mage Tower barehanded and made a few rounds around the common square before stopping right in front of Herrera's Mage Tower.

He was granted a visit ten minutes later.

"I have found the evidence."

Link wasted no time and took out the notebook he was hiding in his dimensional pendant.

Herrera looked through the notebook and asked, "It looks perfectly normal, except for the excessive purchase of high-quality scroll raw materials. What does this mean?"

In the eyes of an ordinary Magician, undead magic was forbiddenone was not even allowed to be in contact with it, much less experiment on something so dangerous.

Even though knowing thy enemy was unobtedly a good tactic, the temptation of undead magic is way too strong. This was especially so for those powerful, but old Magicians who found it difficult to resist the lure of immortality. Magicians thus had to completely ban the use of this magic.

Although Herrera was an awakened Angel of Light, her knowledge of magic was still limited to what she had learned during her time in the mortal realm. She hence had no knowledge of undead magic and was clueless to the alternative use of Taric cow leather.

This might be the reason why Bale was so daring in his purchase of undead magic raw materials.

Link pointed to the Taric cow leather purchases on the notebook and said, "This is the problem!"

"What about it? What is so special?" Herrera asked. Her eyes fixated on Link, puzzled as to what kind of problems Link could possibly have found.

Link was dumbfounded. Based on his knowledge, he should not know anything about undead magic. The fact that he was aware of such information only had one explanation, and that was he had once read a dark magic book.

That was absolutely not allowed.

Link immediately had an idea. He calmly explained the special use of Taric cow leather, the Death Glue and the fact that the glue could be extracted from the leather even after it was processed. He was extremely detailed.

As expected, Herrera asked, "How did you know about this?"

"The God of Light told me so." Link played his trump card.

"I see." Herrera bought his incredulous story!

If it were any other Magician, Link would have been shot down right on the spot. After all, who would believe such an incredulous story of a god bestowing knowledge onto a layman. However, Herrera was an Angel of Light and she firmly believed Link to be the Chosen One. There was nothing shocking for Divine Enlightenment to descend onto the Chosen One.

Herrera was still troubled. "But I cannot report it to Master Anthony. He knows that I have no knowledge of dark magic and will immediately suspect you. He does not believe in Divine Enlightenment."

Link had an idea. "That is easy, you can simply confront Bale and expose his secrets. Following which, he will be flustered, resulting in more mistakes and eventually, a solid evidence of his dark magic experiment will surface. The only downside to this plan was its risks. There was a high chance Bale may silence us for the success of his experiments."

Herrera simply laughed, "Kill me? That is impossible. My magic level might be lower, but he is definitely not my match."

The level of a Magician was usually taken with a pinch of salt in a battle. If a Level-1 Magician could cast his spells fast enough and had good battle awareness, he could easily pierce the heart of a powerful Magician with a Level-1 Ice Spike spell.

If Herrera was so confident, she must have a Supreme Magical Skill trump card in her hands.

"So what do you think?" Link asked.

"Time is tight, I will settle it now," Herrera agreed and grabbed her sapphire staff, prepared to confront Bale.

"Wait a minute," Link said.

"Is there an issue?"

"Can we wait for ten more days?" Link brought up a strange request.

"Why?" Herrera was confused.

"I will have recovered from my weakened state in five days, and I need another five more days to fully replenish my energy. By then, I will have enough power to aid you in the battle. Furthermore, we may find new evidence these next few days. What do you say?"

Even though Herrera was confident, she was still infringing on someone else's home turf. It was safer to travel with a trusted aide.

Herrera thought for a moment and nodded, "Alright, ten days it is."

Herrera was not an impulsive person. She had done her research into Link's background and knew that he was a powerful Magician in battle. She would be way more confident with him around.

## 84. Black Magic was No Laughing Matter

After leaving Herrera's Mage Tower, Link circled the grounds of Bryant's Inspiration Courtyard, making sure he seemed like he was just taking a walk as he always did.

Then, he walked back to Bale's Mage Tower as usual. But when he walked into the tower, he found that there was something different about the atmosphere in the hall.

It was eerily quiet, even the usual din of murmurs was missing. But Link looked around and saw that most of the apprentices were there, so what exactly was going on? Why was it so quiet?

Link then scanned around the hall more carefully and found the reason for the abnormal silence. Right there beside the semi-circular bookshelf was a white-haired old man dressed in a green robe.

The old man's face was full of wrinkles, his stature was very thin, and he must have been at least 70 years of age. The Mana on his body fluctuated in a very restrained manner, making him seem not very powerful at all, and yet Derek and Darris who stood near the old man both looked especially deferential when they addressed him.

That must be the Magician Bale! It was Link's first time seeing the disgraced Magician since entering the East Cove Magic Academy.

He looked much older than he did in the game. In fact, he even seemed weak and frail. His only outstanding features were his eyes which were a deep dark blue, and they exuded a mysterious aura that seemed capable of inadvertently striking terror into a weaker soul. This meant that the old man possessed a formidable power within that shell of a frail body.

His body might be old, but his magic was obviously still on point.

Bale was surrounded by many Magician's Apprentices who were posing questions to the official tutor of all apprentices in this Mage Tower. He wore a kind smile on his face while he patiently answered their questions.

Link hurried back to his room before anyone noticed him. Once in his room, he quickly put the record of purchases notebook on the nightstand.

Finding out that Link had smuggled the notebook out of the tower would certainly make Bale suspicious of Link, and that would mean disaster.

Barely a minute afterwards, someone knocked on his door.

"Link, come out. The tutor wants to see you."

It was Derek's voice.

Link was startled, but he managed to regain his composure quickly.

"I'll be out in a bit," replied Link in a loud and clear voice.

As he opened the door, Link saw how every pair of eyes in the hall turned to him. Many of those eyes betrayed signs of admiration and some, jealousy and envy. But there was one stark exception Bale's chief disciple, Darris, who was standing right beside his tutor. His eyes were staring fixedly at Link with a clear expression of distrust.

Link found it curious since he clearly remembered that he hadn't been interacting much with the chief disciple, and yet, Darris seemed to be inexplicably resentful of him, as though they were sworn enemies.

I'll just be more careful around him, then. Link thought this wasn't the time to ruminate on such trivial matters.

Bale was watching him too, looking very interested in the young apprentice. When Link approached him, Bale greeted him amiably.

"Young man, I have seen your magic scrolls," said Bale, "They are indeed remarkable. I am honored to have such a talented young man as my apprentice in my twilight years. If you are willing, you may remain as my disciple in this tower once you've become a full-fledged Magician."

Just as those words left Bale's lips, the whole hall erupted into gasps and suppressed mutterings. No one admired Link now. Everyone had become envious of the lucky new apprenticesome even resented Link at this point.

Bale enjoyed a high reputation in the kingdom of Norton. He was widely respected as a veteran Master Magician among Magicians in the kingdom. Although these apprentices had been learning magic in Bale's tower, they've never actually been taught by Bale himself. And yet, who would've thought that this newcomer Link would suddenly be noticed by the tutor and was even invited to stay on after becoming a full-fledged Magician by the man himself? Some apprentices found it simply unacceptable and unfair.

What aggravated the matter was the fact that Link's own Mana strength was so low. Had he been accepted by the tutor because of his strength, they would've conceded to the decision. But all Link could do was create beautiful magic scrolls!

If Link's innate Mana wasn't strong enough, while he might be able to become a full-fledged Magician, he would never be able to rise above Level-2. What was so impressive about producing nice-looking magic scrolls when he was stuck at being a Level-2 Magician? Why would Bale take notice of such a weakling?

Even so, none of the apprentices dared to voice their displeasure. It was Bale's Mage Tower after all, so his words were the law. No one had the guts to challenge any of Bale's decisions.

Even Link himself was shocked by Bale's announcement. He never thought that such a thing would happen. As he looked up his eyes were met with Bale's own extraordinary pair. For a few moments, both were staring deep into each other's eyes.

Link's eyes were deep and impenetrable, while Bale's eyes were naturally emitting a dignified aura. In the brief moment that they made eye contact, their different spiritual forces inadvertently collided.

Seconds later, Link lowered his eyes and with a joyful expression said, "Thank you, tutor!"

Bale blinked unwittingly, and his brows were slightly raised.

He had decided to accept the young apprentice as his disciple because he was impressed by his extraordinary magic scrolls. Compared to the other apprentices, Link's skill in creating magic scrolls was indeed spectacular. However, what had really caught Bale's eyes was Link's masterful control of Mana, especially after hearing how Link could engage in such an intense activity as producing magic scrolls for many days in a row.

Being able to tirelessly produce magic scrolls for many consecutive days proved that Link possessed a powerful soul, and this was one of the essential qualities of a great Magician.

Link's weak Mana was not a problem at all because he was still very young. Bale believed that there will be a great development in his innate Mana in the future. Throughout history, there had been numerous great talents who were late bloomers, so a case like Link was not an uncommon one.

Although it was true that the old man had started to delve into the dark art of black magic, his original intention had only been to lengthen his own life. Bale was not an evil man at all. When he discovered a way to guarantee an excellent afterlife for himself, he was naturally delighted, and wanted to find out precisely how he could attain it.

However, after looking into Link's dark pair of eyes, Bale couldn't help but feel a little bit unnerved. He was now sure that Link's soul was very powerful, but in that brief interaction, he'd found that Link's soul might be so powerful that even he could be overwhelmed by its immense force.

It simply made no sense how such a powerful soul could possess such a weak level of Mana!

Bale had to satisfy his curiosity, so he carefully observed Link again and again. Yet Link never showed the same fierce power he did before and he was now just a normal reverent apprentice no matter how many times Bale examined him.

Was I just imagining it? Bale wondered.

In the past, Bale wouldn't let such trivial thoughts linger on in his mind. He wouldn't bat a second eye to it and would completely forget it in a matter of seconds. But those were simpler times when he had nothing to hide.

He couldn't afford to be so carefree now because he was now plagued by a guilty conscience. He was concealing a terrible secret that he couldn't let anyone find out. Therefore, any minute details that were out of place would trigger his suspicion nowadays.

I was too reckless just now, Bale thought. I should've checked the apprentice's background more thoroughly before I make any hasty decisions.

Because of the unruly doubts in Bale's mind fueled by his dark secrets, his readiness to accept Link as his new disciple had been cut in half.

Bale did not realize that although he had dipped his toes inoblack magic with the initial intention of extending his life, the insidious nature of black magic was no laughing matter. It had planted three treacherous demons in Bale's heart: Constant Doubt, Fear of Exposure, and Eternal Greed.

Under the efforts of these three demons, the qualities he possessed in the Realm of Light rapidly collapsed without him knowing it.

Then, Bale seemed to forget what he had just said. His attitude toward Link changed drastically and he stopped talking to him completely. He stayed in the hall for a while longer, doing and saying nothing.

After a while he suddenly turned to Darris, one of his most trusted disciples, and said, "I'm tired now. Let's go back upstairs. When you're free later, tell Link to move out from his room and arrange for him to stay in a new room on the second floor."

"Yes, tutor," replied Darris respectfully.

Bale then stood up, and Darris hurriedly stepped forward to support his tutor's body. They then headed for the stairs and climbed up to the top of the Mage Tower.

"Darris, what do you think of Link?" asked Bale suddenly. They'd reached the third floor and no one else was around.

"I don't know much about him," answered Darris, "He used to be very quiet, and his progress had been average. Had it not been for the military's order for magic scrolls, I wouldn't have known that he had such a great talent for magic scrolls. I hear Derek is close to him, so he should know more about Link than I do." Darris gave a very objective response to the question and he made sure not to mix in any of his personal feelings.

But Bale knew his disciple very well. When he heard Darris's tone as he spoke of Link, his face crumpled into a frown.

"So you don't like him, huh?" asked the Master Magician.

## 85. Threats from the Chief Disciple

Bale's Mage Tower

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Darris looked at the ground and shook his head, "No, Link is an exceptional apprentice, it's just...too sudden. Master, I do not know how to explain this feeling of abruptness...it is almost as if this was deliberately planned."

"Deliberate? Planned?" These two words struck fear into Bale's heart. Many images flashed through his mind.

Could it be that someone has discovered my secret? Link was recommended by my old friend Duke Abel, there should not be a problembut Darris' sixth sense had always been accurate. If he sensed that something was amiss, the chances were that he was right.

After a few moments of silence, Bale spoke, "Since I have decided to take Link as my disciple, I have the right to better understand his background. Help me do some research and report back to me as soon as possible."

"Yes, sir," Darris nodded, "If there is indeed a problem, what should I do?"

Bale listened and shook his head, "Report to me before you do anything. Do not act rashly."

Darris then escorted Bale back to his room and immediately returned to the ground floor to look for Link.

"Let's go, I'll bring you to your new room." Darris was cold towards Link.

"Okay." Link nodded and followed closely behind.

Under the envious vision of all the other Magician's Apprentices, the two of them climbed up the swirling stairs and stopped in front of the outermost room on the second floor.

Darris did not open the door immediately, but instead, stood in front of the door and stared at Link, "Link, there are many secrets in this world, but we do not have to know all of them, especially those that will not cause harm to others, am I right?"

Link was shocked at Darris' awareness of his secretive actions but he still managed to keep his cool.

He replied with a confused tone, "Sir, I don't understand what you are talking about."

Darris sniggered and lowered his voice, "You know exactly what I am talking about. I know the notebook that is used to record purchases of raw materials for magic scrolls is missing. After asking around, I realize you are the one that is in charge of keeping it safe. I also know that you got this position in return for writing magic scrolls for Derek. You probably have a motive, going to such means to get what you want. You must be investigating on my master, and shall I make a guess that you have already found some evidence?"

Link looked at Darris, clearly bewildered and at a loss for words.

When Link found the evidence in the notebook, he was sneering at Bale's failure to cover up his tracks. The sensitivity and accuracy of Darris accusations was thus something he did not expect.

Link looked as though he was frozen in time.

"Please let this go. My master has not fallen, and he will never cause harm to others." Darris stared hard at Link with a slight murderous intent. He seemed ready to engage in a fight if Link were to refuse.

The real reason why Darris was able to pinpoint Link's intentions so accurately was purely coincidental. Link had been performing exceptionally well amongst the apprentices and had caught his attention from a while ago. Darris was thus observing him with keen interest.

However, Link's consistent exceptional performance turned his curiosity into vigilance. This was especially so after Link became the person in charge of magic scroll production.

Darris was fully aware of Bale's experiments inoblack magic. He was, in fact, a competent asstant to his master.

Bale was getting old and did not have as much vigor as before. When he was fully focused on his research, he often failed to cover up the tracks of his ventures into the area of black magic. On the other hand, Darris was young and vigilant. He knew very well that the notebook definitely held evidence of his master's experiments.

If anyone were to express interest in the contents of that notebook, there was a high chance that he was here to investigate on his master. Darris was only surprised that the person tasked with such a dangerous mission was of such tender age and had little to no magic powers.

While Darris was sorting out his thoughts, Link had also figured out the episodes that could have ignited Darris' suspicion. Darris might have been right about his intentions, however he lacked concrete evidence to prove it. Before then, it could only be dismissed as a conjecture.

This also meant that Darris' views could still be easily changed by what he saw and felt.

Link hence decided to stay true to his original statement, "Sir Darris, I still do not understand."

"I truly hope so. I was an orphan and it was Master Bale who raised me as a child and taught me magic. He is like a father to me! Anyone who tries to hurt my master will have to first step over my dead body!" Darris was extremely confident that Link was a spy.

Darris called out his Light Green Rune Staff and a warm glow enveloped the tip of his staff. Before long, the corridors were shaking and getting distorted; it felt as though they were in the midst of a heat wave. This was the power of a Level-4 Magician.

If an ordinary Magician's Apprentice were to witness this scene, he would be petrified with fear. However, Link had way too much battle experience for this tactic to be effective. He knew, for one, that he could not let this confrontation develop into an all-out battle.

It would be for the best if a Master Magician like Bale dabbling in the arts of black magic was settled quietly.

Link thus had to find a way to stabilize Darris' emotions and convince him that his conjecture was incorrect. As long as Darris started to doubt himself, he would be able to buy more time to react to this unexpected confrontation.

Link hence put on an act to be traumatized by Darris' display of magic power. He made sure to tremble while slightly stammering, "Sir Darris, I understand. I will definitely remember your words. Also, I am really not investigating anything. The notebook has always been in my room, if you want to take a look I can always pass it to you."

Link had a fearful and dazed expression when speaking. He looked like he was clueless about what was happening.

"You are a smart person," Darris nodded.

Link seemed genuine enough. He might have really made a mistake by accusing Link of such an act. After all, Link might just be a talented Magician making detailed plans for his future.

"Pass me the notebook now." Darris would erase all evidence.

Link immediately ran to his old room to retrieve the notebook.

After receiving the notebook, Darris spoke sternly, "No one has to know about what happened today, understand?"

"Yes, I totally understand." Link nodded hastily.

"That's good. Now please enjoy staying in your new room." Darris pushed the door open and handed the room key to Link.

Link took the key and ran off swiftly. He looked terrified.

Darris started to believe he could have been misguided. Link might really just be an ordinary apprentice. However, there was no way he could continue staying in this Mage Tower after what happened today.

He had to find a way to get him out.

And the moment he leaves...Darris' eyes shone with a bladed resolve.

"The secret must be safe! Master is getting old and way too kind. Certain things require a clean break." Darris would take no chances. If his master's reputation went down the drain, so would his future.

## 86. Playing with Fire

In Bale's Mage Tower.

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After receiving threats from Darris, Link made sure to keep under the radar and did nothing that might arouse suspicions.

In recent days, he did notiteract with anyone, nor did he even contact Herrera and Eliard. Instead he stayed cooped up in his room all day and all night, ostensibly to prepare magic scrolls.

He'd been consistently producing 15 first-rate magic scrolls a day, and all of them were handed to Derek to manage. He got three gold coins for each of them, thus earning 45 gold coins a day.

From the sales of magic scrolls alone, Link had so far earned nearly 300 gold coins. But wealth wasn't the only thing he gained recently.

Because he didn't have to worry about his safety once he was inside the academy, coupled with the adequate nutrition he got every day, the regular intervals of work and rest and his young age, Link had now also gained considerable weight. He no longer seemed so frail and thin, but had actually grown quite muscular, nicely filling out the tall and lanky stature that he had previously. All in all, Link now looked more pleasing to the eye than he ever did.

And so, five days passed with no incidents.

On the fifth morning, Link felt his body was completely rejuvenated to a point where he felt he was at a different plane of existence. His consciousness and perceptions had now become unusually acute.

He could even hear the spider weaving its web in the corner of the room and the whistling breeze blowing through the window. He could feel the various elements flowing in the air so vividly he could almost see it with his naked eye.

These were the effects of Elemental Sight. It was an ability that a Magician naturally developed once their power advanced to a certain extent.

Check body statistics. Once the thought emerged in his mind, there was a flash on the interface.

Link Morani (Nobleman)

Level-3 Elite Magician

Rate of Mana Restoration: 5 Points per hour.

Maximum Mana: 660 points.

Current Mana: 150 points.

Weapon: Matchstick Wand.

Current Status: Ailing Mana effects subsiding.

Just as I expected! After three long months, the Ailing Mana effects were finally going to be over.

The process of the Ailing Mana effects subsiding would last a full day, and in every hour, Link's Maximum Mana would gradually become higher and higher.

However, because his Mana restoration rate was so slow, his Mana could only recover 9.8 points per hour even under ideal conditions. So even though his Maximum Mana was continuously increasing, his Mana still needed more time to catch up, so he had to be patient and not do anything rash.

At eight o'clock in the evening, the Ailing Mana effects finally disappeared completely.

By then, Link's Maximum Mana was at 1480 points, and his current Mana was at 220 points. In order to completely restore his strength, Link had to wait more than 130 hours, which was more than five days.

My Mana restoration speed is too damn sluggish, Link lamented.

He knew that a Magician with decent Mana strength and talents would only need a day of absolute rest to completely replenish their Mana, yet he needed six long days to do the same. He realized that his Mana restoration rate was the biggest stumbling block to his progress.

Link was carefully considering the best strategies to take while lying in his bed. Finally, he chose to spend his Omni Points, which were currently at 125 points.

70 Omni Points to increase the Mana Restoration rate, he silently thought.

Then, a dialogue box popped up on the interface.

Confirm?

Confirm, replied Link.

Suddenly, Link felt a heat rising from inside his body. It felt as if something had exploded. Soon after the initial burst, a stream of heat then flowed rapidly to his extremities and he felt numb in every spot that was touched by the heat. Moments afterwards, the numbness turned into stinging pain and then the stinging pain morphed into excruciating pain. The pain was so unbearable that Link couldn't hold in his groans and beads of sweat began to form on his forehead, which then dripped down his face in streams.

What was going on? Link was petrified. He had only chosen to increase his Mana Restoration speed, so why was he suffering such a frightening level of pain? Nothing like this had ever happened before.

Then, a notification popped up on the interface. It was an explanation from the gaming system.

Player's choice has exceeded the Innate Talent limit of the physical body. Gaming system is currently modifying player's physical body to accommodate the new changes.

Innate Talent limit? Link had never heard of the term before.

The gaming system then provided a vivid metaphor to explain.

The physical body is like a bucket and Mana is like the water inside it. There is an inlet and an outlet on the bucket, and the limit for the physical body's inlet is 30 Mana points per hour, while the outlet's limit is 500 Mana points per hour. The moment these limits are exceeded, the system must modify the bucket to adapt to the current changes, and this process can cause pain to the player.

Link got it now.

Looking at the data that the gaming system just provided, Link's body must have had a pretty low Innate Talent limit. Link estimated that it wouldn't have been possible for him to rise any higher than Level-5.

At present, a Level-5 Magician might sound impressive, but in the future when there was a drastic increase in the concentration of Mana in the environment, a Level-5 Magician was nothing more than a mediocre Magician.

Strength always came with its own price. Since there was no other way to advance other than to transform this body, Link had no other choice but to grit his teeth and endure the pain.

It felt as if there were countless blades of knives stabbing him from within. His body was trembling madly in response to the pain, yet Link sunk his teeth into his blanket and suffered through the pain without making a peep of sound.

The ordeal went on for more than four hours, and when those blades finally stopped stabbing, Link was soaking in sweat and he came very close to collapsing. Still, he managed to cast a Cleaning spell on his body, then he took some snacks that Lucy had prepared for him out from his storage pendant. After filling his stomach, Link then went to bed and fell into a deep dreamless sleep.

The next moment he came to, it was already dawn.

Once he opened his eyes, Link clearly felt the surging Mana in his body.

His Maximum Mana was now 1480 points, and his Mana Restoration rate was now 79.8 points per hour. He checked his pocket watch and found out that he had slept for 15 hours, so his Mana must be full by now.

Right now, if Link didn't suppress a portion of his Mana, there would be a frightening flux of Mana around his body that would rival even the one that Darsemanated!

Finally, he could once again cast the Level-4 spell Flame Blast that he purchased in Gladstone a few months ago.

Link rose from the bed and changed into a brand new gray robe. He cast a Mirror spell and used it to tidy up his appearance. Then, Link walked out of his room with a strong resolve in his mind.

It was 10 o'clock this morning and when he reached the first floor, Link saw the simple and honest Matt hard at work preparing a magic scroll as usual.

"Matt, I'm going out for a while," said Link casually.

"Uh huh," replied Matt, more as a reaction than a response. He was still focused on his magic scroll. He must not be distracted or else the magic scroll in his hands would turn into trash.

Link left the Mage Tower and headed straight towards the Glory Square near the gates of the academy. There, he then hailed a carriage.

"To River Cove town, please," he said, after paying the coachman handsomely.

Magician's Apprentices were required to present their tutor's permission letter before they could leave the academy. Link had brought with him a permission letter that Herrera had prepared for him previously.

The coachman glanced at the letter, then eagerly received the gold coins and swiftly struck his whip. Very soon after, the carriage started to move and left the gates of the East Cove Magic Academy.

Link was going to fetch the Domingo crystal. A month's time had passed, and the crystal was now purified and ready to be used again.

Once he acquired the crystal, he would then possess a combative strength that no ordinary Magician could even dream of.

...

Meanwhile, in Bale's Mage Tower.

...

Shortly after Link left, Darris went to the main hall on the first floor. He had just got back from outside and he looked anxious and hurried, as if some emergency had occurred.

As soon as he reached the hall, he walked straight to the group of apprentices who were preparing magic scrolls. Coincidentally it was Matt that he approached.

"Where's Link?" Darris demanded.

Matt was jolted out of his deep concentration as he was working on the most critical structure of the magic scroll. He stared helplessly as the magic scroll that he had spent so much effort on failed before his eyes. He was so devastated he was about to cry, and yet he dared not raise his voice or lose his temper with Darris.

"He went out," answered Matt in a deflated tone.

"Out? Where did he go?"

"He didn't say."

"Damn it!" spat Darris, before rushing out of the tower in a flurried state.

These past few days, Darris had been snooping around to dig out as much information as he could about Link. The more he knew of the young apprentice, the more worried he got. Link was beyond any doubt a spy who was sent to investigate his tutor, Bale. Moreover, this kid was no ordinary Magician's Apprentice, but was in fact a Level-2 Magician!

He looked for Link everywhere until he finally got to the stable near the Square of Glory. He found a coachman, then pointed his wand at his heart and coldly asked, "There was a young Magician leaving the academy just now. Do you know where he was headed?"

This coachman was so afraid he was nearly out of breath, but in the end he managed to answer, "Yes, yes, I remember him. He said he was heading to River Cove town!"

Darris then climbed into the carriage.

"To River Cove town, then. And make it quick!" he barked at the coachman.

This was his best chance to eliminate Link now that he was out in the Girvent Forest. It wasn't an uncommon thing for a lone Magician's Apprentice to be robbed and killed in such a place where rogues and bandits lurked behind every bush.

You are bold for a Level-2 Magician! Don't you know that you're playing with fire?

Darris knew that the situation was now approaching the boiling point. He was sure that Link had sneaked out to the River Cove town to report on his tutor's secrets and expose everyone involved. Darris must do whatever it took to stop him!

## 87. Cultivate Your Strength

The Girvent Forest was still as inviting and peaceful as ever. The warm sun rays that shone through the dense overgrowth gently caressed all the souls of the living passing through.

After a period of deceit and vigilance living in Bale's Mage Tower, Link felt exceptionally invigorated by the bright and tranquil Girvent Forest. Everything he saw pleased his eyes even the suspicious people he saw and believed to be bandits. He ignored them and continued on his journey. The carriage reached River Cove Town after an hour.

River Cove Town was still as crowded and harmonious as before. There were people experiencing hangovers right outside the hotel, the market was packed with people, and the town hall notice board still had a bunch of notices posted all over it. The house of the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries lay right at the corner of the town.

The yard looked different. It covered a larger surface area now, and had a lot more wooden houses at its side. Another yard enclosed by a wooden fence had also been built in the forest behind their original yard.

Their home was a lot more crowded than before. Faces unfamiliar to Link could be seen entering their home. A flag had also been erected at the entrance, depicting a picture of a soaring flamingo.

Lucy had been writing to inform him of the situation back at home. Link knew that the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries had been recruiting. They had already gotten more than 20 new members into their band.

The carriage stopped right in front of the house and attracted the attention of many onlookers. After all, it was not every day that you could see a carriage bearing the crest of the East Cove Higher Magic Academy arriving in River Cove Town. They were all expecting to see an old Magician walking out of the carriage.

Link had grown during his time at the Mage Tower and no longer looked as frail as before. He was wearing a brand new robe and with a staff in his hand, he looked just like an official Magician.

Link and Lucy had already been drawn out of the house by the crowd of onlookers.

"Why did you return without informing us?" Lucy was slightly surprised. She took a good look at Link and was relieved. It seemed like life in the Mage Tower had been kind to him.

"I came back to pay a visit. Hey, is this young girl a new member too?" The first person that caught Link's attention when he walked into the yard was a beautiful young girl practicing her archery skills.

A young girl with flawless skin and delicate features would definitely stand out when placed within a group of burly men. She had mediocre archery skills. However, she was indeed blessed with good looks, like a flower waiting for its time to bloom.

Gildern laughed, "I was telling you, my lord would definitely notice out little Rylai when he comes back." He then proceeded to introduce the background of the young girl.

"Rylai is from the Southern Free Distits. She was brought here by the slave vendors and was actually bound for Hot Springs City. Lucy took pity on her and bought her from the slave vendor. You have no idea how much this girl cost us. One hundred gold coins! How expensive!"

Gildern was obviously displeased that such a fortune was spent on a young girl. If not for her good looks, he would never have agreed to let Lucy purchase her. They were not Samaritans with a lot of money to spare, but merely mercenaries who were working hard to get a good life.

Lucy was embarsed. She knew that 100 gold coins was not a small amount and looked at Link uneasily, afraid that she would be told off. When she first saw Rylai in the market, her instinctive reaction was to immediately save her from her cruel fate.

Lucy could almost see the shadows of her past on Rylai's expression. She was certain that the young girl would end up as a concubine of a rich perverted old man in Hot Springs City if she did notitervene. The young girl might be favored by the man for a short while, but the moment the old man got tired of her looks, there was no knowing what would happen to her.

Lucy thought about the similar encounters she had previously and shuddered. She could not bear to let this innocent young girl suffer the same fate. Hence, she disregarded the consequences and helped her almost immediately when she knew she had the ability to. She did not regret her decision.

To everyone's surprise, the smile on Link's face only grew wider. He ignored their incessant chatters and circled around the young girl, observing her from head to toe with an almost invasive gaze.

Gildern could not help but scratched his nose and whispered to Lucy, "I think Link likes this girl."

From the moment he met Link, Link had never shown any interest in women. This held true even for Lucy, who had good looks and a voluptuous body. However, it seemed that Link was just waiting for the right person.

Lucy felt a wave of jealousy overwhelming her and harshly rebutted, "Shut your mouth!"

Rylai was extremely nervous. She knew that Link was a Magician and judging from the respectful way everyone treated him, he was definitely the leader of the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries!

She stopped her archery training the moment she noticed Link's presence. She held the small wooden bow with her pale white hands, hanging her head low and averting direct eye contact with Link. She was like a frightened and confused deer awaiting the judgment of fate.

After observing for a full minute, Link even started touching the young girl! He first gently touched her forehead, before moving on to the arms and back. He even unapologetically felt her legs and hips. Link's actions looked extremely perverted. Furthermore, he had a strange expression on his face.

Gildern was at a loss for words. My lord is acting weird today. Was the lack of the opposite gender in the Magic academy too much for him to bear?

Meanwhile, Lucy thought, my lord is not this type of person, he must have found something! I have always thought Rylai was special! That was also another reason why Lucy was so insistent on purchasing Rylai.

Rylai was now on the verge of tears, and did not dare to even budge. When Link's finger made contact with her body, she felt a certain force entering her body as well. This made her extremely uncomfortable, but she was too petrified to move away.

Finally, Link withdrew his hand and nodded, "Lucy, your money was well spent. This girl has great magic potential."

Gildern's eyes widened in shock. Humans with magic potential were extremely rareto think that Lucy was so lucky!

After rationalizing for a moment, Gildern concluded, "Well, only special individuals are born with such pretty features. Lucy, you have good judgment!"

"Really? I only thought she was slightly special." Lucy was elated.

It was not worthwhile to purchase a beautiful young girl for 100 gold coins, but to purchase a talented child with magic potential for that amount of moneythat was a bargain.

Link nodded. Lucy had a bit of magical flair herself as well, that was perhaps why she found Rylai special.

Originally, Link was planning to teach Lucy magic. However, Lucy was already 28 years old and had no interest in the complex and dry magic theories. On the other hand, Rylai looked no older than 15 years old, the perfect age for someone to pick up magic. She also had more potential than Lucythis was fate.

The moment Link saw Rylai at the corner of the yard, he was amazed at the number of water elementassurrounding her. She seemed to have a body that naturally attracted water element particles causing her surroundings to be filled with 50% more elemental energy.

Link was also not taking advantage of Rylai when he started touching her body. He was using Mana Detection to look into the elemental gates in her body. He realized that water elementals naturally existed in her elemental gates and that in every gate there were flowing streams of natural Mana.

This was exceptional talent for water elemental magic. If he successfully imparted his knowledge to this young girl, she would turn out to be an amazing Magician with a niche in water elemental magic.

As they continued on their journey, they would only meet stronger opponents. In their last battle, Link was already struggling to perform as the only Magician of the group. He had long wanted to recruit another talented Magician. Hence, he decided to take Rylai as a disciple.

"You shall be my main disciple," Link chuckled.

At that moment, another carriage pulled up at the entrance of River Cove Town. Darris alighted from the carriage.

"You may return," Darris signaled the carriage to leave. He then cast an Illusion Spell on himself to disguise as a traveler, asking any passerby he could find, "Hi, I am looking for Magician Link, do you know where he is?"

Darris had done his research. Link seemed to be slightly famous around this area; most of River Cove Town should have heard of his name.

"What a coincidence, he just returned from the magic academy and is currently at the house of the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries."

Darris got the exact location after asking the third person. "Thank you," Darris nodded.

He did not go straight to the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries. His research had revealed that there was no one stronger than Link in that group. The mastermind that instructed Link to spy on his master could not have been there.

More importantly, he could not start a fight with Link in the middle of River Cove Town. That had way too many implications. If he were asked to explain his actions to the academy, he would be at a loss for words.

I will strike during your return trip to the academy.

Darris walked along the King's Lane for five miles before hiding himself in the overgrowth. His plan was simple. He would catch Link alive and force him to reveal the mastermind behind this investigation.

Darris naturally expected Link to resist. However, Link was merely a Level-2 Magician. He would utterly crush him with his Level-4 spells.

## 88. The Turning Point of a Girl's Fate

That day, he stretched out his hand and pulled me out of the swamps of my fate Frost Queen Rylai Gassling.

At the Flamingo Band of Mercenary's headquarters.

...

Link was naturally unaware that he was dragged into someone's secret schemes. In this cabin, he was surrounded by loyal followers who all respected him and even revered him, so he let his guard down completely here.

Upon noticing that the beautiful girl was so frightened that she couldn't move a muscle, Link used Magician's Hand to gently take the small wooden bow from her hands and place it on a weapon shelf near him. Then, he took out a short wooden stick that was engraved with a web of silver magic runes.

It was a basic wand and it could enhance the power of spells by about 20%. He had created it from scratch when he first started learning the art of enchantment.

Link then handed the wand to the stunned girl.

"A bow and arrow doesn't suit you," he told her, "From today onwards, you'll learn magic with me."

The girl was in awe. Her bright eyes suddenly widened to the size of saucers; she couldn't believe what she just heard.

Rylai stared at the wand that Link handed her but didn't dare stretch her hand out to reach it.

"My lord, is it true?" the girl heard herself saying, her voice as quiet as a mosquito.

Learning magic required a lot of moneyonly the aristocrats had the resources needed to do it. She never imagined that one day a mighty Magician would be willing to accept her as a disciple and give her a wand as soon as they met.

It's a real magic wand!

When she was nine-years-old, her father had taken her to the Southern Free Paradise of Mollendan. There, they passed by a shop run by a Magician. At that moment, the young Rylai gazed into the shop, only to see a well-dressed Magician arranging a pile of golden coins into neat rows on the table. There must've been more than 30 gold coins there, yet the only thing he bought was a single magic scroll.

Her father had seen it too, and she remembered how he had turned away from the sight of such unimaginable wealth in regret and sorrow.

This incident had left a deep impression on her young mind. Since then, she had assumed that all things related to magic were settled in gold coins. She was born in an ordinary trader's family; it was impossible for someone like her to reach such heights.

In fact, her father had once told her that even the cheapest magic wands cost more than 50 gold coins. Their family's income, even at their most prosperous, was no more than 15 gold coins a year.

And yet, right now, this strange man with a gentle smile on his face had offered to teach her magic and give her an expensive wand. It was all so incredible that she had to pinch herself to make sure she wasn't dreaming.

"Take it. It belongs to you now," Link insisted.

The beautiful girl was as timid as a rabbit, so Link made sure he spoke only in the gentlest tone to her and even remembered to put on a smile. He then placed the wand into the girl's hands.

As he did so, he noticed how even her hands were so delicate and lovely. Each of her fingers was as long and slender like the green tops of a spring onion. Her hands were so fair and so soft that Link felt sorely tempted to hold them in his own and caress them gently.

Such a lovely girlhow could she not be famous in the game? Link wondered.

But when he thought of it, he could understand why the girl wouldn't appear in the game at all. Had it not been thanks to Lucy's intervention, she would have been sold to a rich man in Springs City as a slave. The beautiful yet completely powerless girl would be treated as the rich merchants' goods that could be bought and sold by anyone who was willing to pay the price. Link was sure that the girl wouldn't survive such a life for long, though, and she would've died after two or three years and end up buried in someone's garden with no name to her grave.

Rylai herself still couldn't believe that any of this was true. Link's assurance had finally given her the courage and though she hesitated for a while, she finally closed her hand around the wand. The moment the wand touched her hand, she felt an inexplicable affinity to it and she clasped the wand to her bosom as if embracing an old friend.

In her eyes, this ordinary wand was as powerful as a king's scepter. Her body trembled slightly and she tried her best to hold the wand steadily in her hand. The wand was light and the runes on it glowed in a mysterious aura. This was a fateful moment in her life, as she was about to take her first step into the mysterious world of magic.

A month ago, her parents were killed and she was taken by the slave traders to the North. She felt that her whole world had collapsed. She thought of her father day and night and she often secretly shed tears for her own miserable destiny. She had lost all hope then.

But two weeks ago, Lucy had rescued her and brought her here. It was as if the glorious Lord of Light had given her a blessing after suffering a harsh fate. She began to practice archery in the hope of becoming a mighty mercenary and one day, she hoped she would seek vengeance for her parents.

But ever since her infancy, she had been cherished and brought up tenderly and lovingly by her parents. She never had to do anything that would require her to exert any energy, so her body had always been very weak. She was only strong enough to handle the smallest bow. Although she practiced hard every day until the skin on the palms of her hands peeled and her shoulder was so sore she couldn't raise her arm, her progress was still negligibly small.

If it hadn't been for Lucy, she might now be the lowest maid in the household. But she couldn't rely on Lucy forever. She resolved that if she was unable to develop any strength that would be useful to the group, she would concede to be a maid or a servant. Then she would bury all her dreams of strength and revenge.

But just as she felt very confused about the future, she was bestowed with a chance to learn powerful magic. She did not know how to describe her luck.

Link laughed and joked as he usually did, as if he'd done nothing special at all.

"I'm hungry. Is lunch ready yet?" he asked Lucy.

"One moment, my lord," said Lucy in a warm tone.

She then wentito the kitchen. Now that Link was back, she wanted to prepare the food for him herself.

Under the respectful gaze of each new member, Link walked into the cabin, but after walking a few steps, he turned back and waved his hand and said to the girl, "Let's go, kid."

Rylai was nervously picking at her lips, but as soon as she heard Link's voice, her body seemed to automatically follow his orders and she quickly got up and followed Link's footsteps.

He's the master who will teach me magic; I must follow him closely, thought the girl.

Rylai didn't mind how Link called her a kid at all, and neither did anyone else in the mercenary band. Although Link himself looked to be about 17 or 18 years old, but his strength was clear to everyone there. All of them looked up to Link regardless of their age.

Meanwhile, Link was talking to Gildern in the cabin.

"Where's Jacker?" he asked.

"Someone found some information about the Cliff of Howling Winds," answered Gildern, "So he went with them to check it out. He should be back after three days."

"Oh, good." Link didn't worry about Jacker's safety. He was a level-4 Warrior and he had magic gear with him. He even had the experience of fighting against a Magician. So even if he did encounter Felidia, Link was sure that Jacker could retreat safely and come back in one piece.

Then it was time for lunch. The food was so delicious that Link savored each bite.

Once he was full, Link turned to Rylai who was still very tense.

"I want to rest for a while," he told her, "Come and find me in my room two hours from now."

"Yes, my lord," replied the girl, nodding earnestly.

"No, don't address me as 'my lord'," corrected Link, gently tapping his wand on the girl's smooth forehead, "From today onwards, I shall be your magic tutor." Link wore a gentle smile on his face and had a warmth in his tone when he was speaking to Rylai.

"Yes tutor," Rylai responded, she was beginning to open up to Link. She glanced up at Link's face and saw that her tutor was a very young man who couldn't be more than a few years older than her. Although he wasn't strikingly handsome, his dark eyes were clear and very enigmatic. Rylai thought they looked like a pair of black diamonds.

Suddenly she realized that she was rudely staring at Link for too long, so she quickly lowered her head while the exquisite face of hers blushed in embarrassment.

## 89. The Turning Point in Her Fate

The young girl was humble and respectful. These were two of the most important traits of a good disciple.

Link was content and went back to his room. Following which, he used a Shaping spell to unseal the path to the attic and retrieve his Domingo Crystal that was laying in the clear vat of water.

After a month, the Domingo Crystal had been completely purified and looked just like a transparent prism.

However, that was all. There was nothing out of the ordinary about its looks. No one would imagine that this was a Legendary tool that could make any Magician go insane.

"Ha, I guess true beauty lies on the inside." Link was extremely pleased.

Link then began to cast a Glass Orb spell. Through the use of this spell, he was able to concentrate the fire elementals in the surroundings. He then transferred the accumulated magical energy into the Domingo Crystal, causing the crystal to glow in a dreamy white light.

Link stopped short of releasing the glass orb, gradually accumulating fire elemental energy. All of this energy was indiscriminately absorbed into the dreamy glow of the crystal.

The Domingo Crystal was like a sponge for magic energy.

After a while, Link stopped the transfer of energy and the phenomenal dreamy glow of white light instantaneously disappeared. The Domingo Crystal was now enveloped by a slightly reddish hue.

Link then spent 320 Mana points to cast a Level-4 Flame Blast spell. The Domingo Crystal shone with a clear crimson glow after the transfer of energy this time. A message appeared in Link's field of vision.

Fire Domingo Crystal.

Capacity: 15% filled

To be only 15% filled after housing a Level-4 spell, it really does have a huge capacity. Link thought.

A Flame Blast spell should be enough to deal with Magician Bale, there was no need to over extend the capacity of the Domingo Crystal and waste any more Mana points. Furthermore, it was a good habit to always keep his Mana more than halfway filled for any emergencies. This was especially true for Link, who had many enemies.

Link then placed the Domingo Crystal back into the dimensional pendant. Two hours later, there was a knock on his door.

Link glanced at his watch and opened the door with the Magician's Hand spell. The door creaked open and a young Rylai sheepishly stood behind the door with a basic staff in her hands.

"Come in." Link waved his hand.

Rylai was extremely nervous and inched forward. Once she entered the room, Link closed the door behind her using the Magician's Hand. The sound caused by the closing door made her jump in fear, causing her to advance even slower.

Magic was mysterious and powerful. Rylai knew that Link had unimaginable power from the stories she had heard since she entered The Flamingo Band of Mercenaries two weeks ago.

She knew that Link consecutively defeated two groups of Syndicate bandits from the Dark Brotherhood. His magic was akin to a Sword of Judgement, feared and respected by all.

Though Link was only a few years older than her, Rylai felt unexplainable pressure just from standing in front of him. This was especially so now that they were alone in an enclosed space. She felt like she was facing a ferocious beast who was prepared to tear her into pieces the moment she let her guard down.

Link chuckled at Rylai's reaction. Whenever he displayed magic in front of a layman, he could always evoke this expression of fear and respect.

Link adjusted his seating position and lay casually in his chair. He then spoke in a comforting tone, "Do you know what is magic?"

"NoNo" Rylai could not complete her sentence, she was way too nervous.

"It can be said to be the brightest pearl bestowed by the Creator. It is the crystallization of wisdom and makes the impossible seem plausible. It is also the only avenue for a mortal to converse with the gods. Do you want to learn such an amazing skill?" Link smiled at Rylai.

"Iwant to." Rylai was completely drawn in. She felt like Link was extending his hands to pull her out of the mire that was her fate. He was like a god delivering his grace to the mortal world.

In that instant, she forgot all her fears and pressure.

Even after she had great accomplishments in magic many years later, this scene would still be etched clearly in her mind. The lazy and young Magician, laying on his chair, opening her eyes to a whole new world.

"Sit down over here." Link knew that he had successfully relieved the tension.

Rylai carefully sat beside him. Between them was a table with three magic books and a magic scroll. Link waited for Rylai to recollect herself, before asking, "Can you read?"

Rylai nodded, "Yes, my father once taught me."

"Good." This was good news. Link would not have to spend time teaching Rylai how to read, which was a foundation for learning magic. He then pushed the magic scrolls towards Rylai.

"Have you used a magic scroll before?"

"No" Rylai shook her head. On the other hand, her eyes were curiously eyeing the magic scroll on the table.

"Open it." Link chuckled.

Link knew that the first step to learning magic was usually the toughest. This was because behind the glory and mysterious facade of magic was a network of complex theories and formations.

Many people with extraordinary magic potential gave up as they could not stand having to learn the mundane basic theories. Link was busy and would not have much time to tutor Rylai. Most of the time, she would have to learn magic by herself. Hence, Link would have to evoke her interest to facilitate her self-study.

Rylai placed the magic scroll on her lap and carefully opened it.

The spell enchanted onto the scroll was a Level-0 spell, Illumination. Link had made alterations to the scroll such that only people with magic potential would be able to activate the spell sealed within.

"Can you see the single glowing rune on the magic scroll?" Link asked.

"Yes." Rylai nodded. Her eyes shone as she held the magic scroll in her hand. She was extremely afraid to move in fear of damaging the scroll.

"Now, clear your mind of any thoughts and focus on this rune." Link was patiently guiding Rylai along.

After ten seconds, the rune glowed with a bright light which flowed to illuminate the rest of the writings on the magic scroll. A ball of light then slowly rose up from the scroll.

"You can control it, am I right?" Link softly asked.

"Yes." Rylai was intrigued. She felt that her spirit was connected tightly to this ball of light. If she willed it to go to the left, it would slowly float towards the left side. It was amazing.

She disregarded Link's gaze and was fully absorbed into the magic, willing it to go further and further away. When the ball of light reached a distance of 45 feet, the connection she had felt previously suddenly disappeared.

The ball of light quivered before disintegrating into the air.

This was not out of Rylai's expectations. However, she was still dumbfounded and trying to process what had just happened.

Link did not disrupt her thoughts and slowly waited till Rylai was done reminiscing about the wonders of magic. "That was the Illumination spell. It is your very first spell. Interesting isn't it?"

"Yes," Rylai cheerfully agreed. That was a mysterious experience.

"However, that spell was not cast by you, but by the asstance of the magic scroll. A real Magician can cast even more powerful spells without the help of any object."

Link then materialized a glass orb in his hand. When he snapped his fingers, the glass orb would disappear and become a gentle ball of light. After one second, the sphere of light would be transformed into a high-pitched Whistle, its sound reverberating through the room.

Rylai was completely awestruck by the seamless transition between the different spells.

"Teacher, what do I need to do?" Rylai spoke after a moment of silence.

"First, read these three books." Link pushed the three magic books on the table towards Rylai.

The books were, The Original Thoughts, Mana the Extension of the Mind, and The Theory of the Foundations of Magic. These three books were called the enlightenment books of magic, widely used to train the foundational skills of budding Magicians using a specific training regime.

"Follow whatever that is stated in the book. I will determine the results of your training the next time I return from the academy. If I am satisfied with your progress, I will teach you how to release your first spell," Link said.

"I understand," Rylai nodded. After Link's stunning display of magic, her fear had turned into curiosity and determination. She was certain that grasping this power would allow her to change her fate.

Link was satisfied when he saw the determination in Rylai's eyes.

He was certain that if Rylai continued to hold this passion for magic, she would become a well-known name amongst Magicians in ten years' time.

All he needed to do was guide her along the way and provide her with opportunities to practice magic.

He had not only accomplished all his duties in River Cove Town, but also managed to recruit a talented Magician. It was time for him to return to the academy.

After bidding his goodbyes, Link boarded the carriage bound for East Cove Higher Magic Academy. He was carrying a bag full of snacks prepared by Lucy for him to munch on along the way. Link kept the window open and whistled while admiring the beautiful scenery of the Girvent Forest. It had been an incredible break from his mundane life in the academy.

However, the good times did not last. Link felt a strong disturbance in the wind element on both sides of King's Lane. He was the target of a high-level spell!

Someone is trying to ambush me! This feeling it is at least a Level-3 wind elemental spell! Link was shocked. He had to think of something fast.

Level-3 Defensive Magic, Edelweiss!

The moment his defensive spell took form, three wind blades at least six feet in length plowed through the forest in a neat formation, heading murderously towards the only carriage in sight. Link was in danger!

## 90. The Cost of Underestimating the Opponent

Once he saw the wind daggers, Link immediately recognized it as one of the spells of the air element Storm of Daggers.

Storm of Daggers

Level-3 Spell

Effects: Concentrated wind energy formed into three extremely sharp daggers. When the wind daggers hit their target, they will break up into countless small daggers, enveloping an area of about 30 feet wide.

(Note: Its nickname in battlefields is 'meat grinder'.)

To ordinary people, there was nowhere to hide from this lethal spell. Even if they managed to dodge the direct attacks of the three wind daggers, they would be faced with the deadly shards hat formed after that. The only fate that awaited them was death.

To a Magician, though, as long as they could cast a defensive spell of the same level, the Storm of Daggers was even easier to block than any other spell of the same level.

The reason for that was simple it was spread outito a big area. The strength of the Storm of Daggers was also too scattered, making it extremely easy to deflect.

With Edelweiss, Link had nothing to fear of the onslaught of the Storm of Daggers. He could even retaliate with his own attacks immediately, although there was a slight problem because the opponent was hiding among the trees. Link could only estimate his location by the trail of fluctuating Mana he left behind.

Right now, what he needed was a powerful spell that would work in a big area. As the thought occurred, Link stumbled on the perfect solution immediately. What would be a more suitable spell to use in this situation than Flame Blast?

Like the Storm of Daggers, Flame Blast's attack was spread outito a huge area, but it was also a level higher than the Storm of Daggers. Link used the Matchstick wand to cast this Flame Blast, so it was not as powerful as the one he unleashed in Gladstone, although it was still a force to be reckoned with.

Because Flame Blast was a Level-4 spell, its spellcasting time could be as long as 2 seconds, which was far too long to leave oneself vulnerable to the opponent's attacks. That's where the Domingo Crystal came in handy.

When Link was in River Cove Town, he imbued enough fire elementito the Domingo crystal for one Flame Blast, and now was the perfect time to use it.

Mana surged wildly in Link's body then rushed into the wand before finally forming into the complex Flame Blast spell structure.

At the same time, under the great attraction of the spell structure of Flame Blast, the Domingo crystal began to glow. The fire elements stored in it came raging out, and there was a strong resonance, quickly forming a large fireball.

Link didn't stay in the carriage in the process. Before the Storm of Daggers hit the carriage, he opened the door and jumped out. He chose where he ran to carefully, which was in the space between the three wind daggers.

In doing so, he avoided the most powerful part of the Level-3 spell and had to only deal with the tiny blades afterwards.

Then he could hear a whistling sound. Two wind daggers grazed past the side of his body and a portion of the daggers scraped into the Edelweiss force field, rustling Link's black hair. When his feet touched the ground, the wind daggers hit the carriage behind him.

One of the daggers sliced through the carriage, splitting the entire carriage into two halves. Another dagger hit the horses and the two horses were cutito four chunks. The last one headed towards the coachman, and a second later the coachman was split in half from the waist.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The three wind daggers then exploded and broke up into small blades. The whistling wind suddenly picked up momentum and became violent. The air was now filled with swarms of tiny blades. The carriage, the dead horses and the coachman's corpse was turned quickly into a mass of minced flesh and crumbling dust.

There were now countless microscopic wind daggers hitting Link's Edelweiss shield. The elements and the force field kept clashing with each other, each clash showing up as a spark on the outer layer of the Edelweiss shield.

Both were Level-3 spells, but while one was broken up and scattered, the other was intact and stable. The small blades had no chance of penetrating the shield; Link was safe without a scratch under the protection of his spell.

At the same moment Link's feet was firmly on the ground, he pointed the Matchstick wand towards the direction that the Storm of Daggers came from and immediately a blindingly bright sheet of light extended from the wand's tip.

It was Link's Flame Blast, unleashed at a breakneck speed. If slowed down, one would then see that the blinding light was made up of an incandescent fireball the size of a soccer ball surrounded by a visible heat wave about three feet thick around the fireball a sign that showed just how blisteringly hot the fireball was.

Link had managed to cast Flame Blast in 1.1 seconds an almost unimaginable speed!

About half a second later, the Flame Blast fireball burstito the forest and exploded.

Boom!

The explosion was ear-splittingly loud. It kept the ground rumbling for a few seconds and it created a powerful shock wave that was visible to the naked eye. It was strong enough to shake and quiver the trees in the forest. This then sent the birds in the trees flying frantically in droves, almost covering the sky in a dark mass.

In the midst of the thundering explosion, Link could make out a scream.

He knew instantly that his spell had hit the opponent and had even seriously hurt the opponent.

He'd cast a Level-4 spell in 1.1 secondsit was so incredibly fast that he was sure that there was no chance for the opponent to hide or evade from the Flame Blast's assault. In fact, even Link wasn't sure if he could survive from such an attack himself because in the absence of preparation. Almost no Magician on the Firuman continent could build a Level-4 defensive spell within 1.1 seconds, unless he was equipped with a powerful magic gear or a defensive Domingo Crystal.

The dense forest in front of him was blown into a mess of wood and leaves. In the center of the explosion, a tree was blown into oblivion and around it there was crater about a foot and a half wide. On the edge of the crater, the vegetation was on fire, making a crackling sound as they burned.

Link then walked up to the craterhe wanted to see who the attacker was with his own eyes. He was capable of casting a Level-3 spell, so Link knew at least that this was no ordinary rogue or bandit.

Link protected himself with the Edelweiss spell and gave himself a boost from the Cat's Agility spell.

Link slowly approached the crater, but he couldn't find a dead body. He searched all around, but the shrubs were all burning, so there was no way that anyone could be hiding behind them. Link continued to look around before he finally found a corpse under a tree...no, it wasn't a corpse, the man was still alive.

He was desperately leaning against the tree, and his clothes were burned to crisp, leaving only a few wisps of rags hanging on it. The exposed skin was burned and blackened too and his hands were tightly clutching a wand, but the wand was already shattered, only half of it remained.

He heard Link's movement, so he opened his eyes which were slightly shut before.

"How did you know Flame Blast? How did you cast it so quickly?" he deliriously asked in a hoarse voice.

Link couldn't be any older than 17, how was it possible that he could master a Level-4 spell? And how did he manage to cast it in such a frightening speed?

None of it made sense to Darris. He never thought that he would be defeated by attacks that he didn't even understand!

If it had been any other magician, a Flame Blast would require 3 seconds to cast. That would be more than enough time for Darris to counter the opponent's spell, or even kill them before the completion of the spellcasting. At the very least, he would've had the time to escape from the center of explosion and he would not have ended up as badly injured as he was now.

But everything happened too fast.

He had just unleashed the Storm of Daggers and didn't even have time to see the results of his attack before he was attacked by the Flame Blast. He initially thought that it was just a very big Level-3 Fireball. If he didn't cast a Level-2 Guarding Barrier on himself before he unleashed the Storm of Daggers, by now he would've been blown to pieces.

It was as if he'd been assuming that his opponent was a defenseless pig waiting to be slaughtered, only to find out that the pig was in fact a powerful dragon that could finish him off in one move!

Link's gaze, however, was fixed on the broken wand in his hand.

"Are you Darris?" he asked.

This greenish wand was made of a special wooden material and Link clearly recalled seeing Darris wielding it in Bale's Mage Tower, so he naturally recognized it at a glance.

Darris ignored the question, his blood-red eyes were staring fixedly at Link.

"You answer my questions first!" Darris then said.

Although it wasn't a direct answer, the response had nonetheless confirmed Link's suspicion. He'd also seen through Darris' plans by the actions he took.

"Since you've made a move against me, that means you must've found out about what I did in River Cove Town," said Link, "I'd only ever used Level-2 spells there, so you must've thought that I was a Level-2 Magician. You used the Level-3 spell Storm of Daggers to attack me and even ambushed me in the carriage but I don't think you intended to kill me at all, you only meant to incapacitate me then squeeze out as much information from me as you could, especially about the identity of the person who sent me to investigate Bale in the first place. The fact that you didn't hesitate to kill the coachman showed that you were out for bloodYou were going to get rid of me and those behind me once and for all, am I right?"

Darris stared at Link in horror as he spelled out his plasstep by step, as if he could see through his soul and read his mind.

Link knew that the look on Darris' face proved that he was right. So he smiled and said, "The only mistake you made was to underestimate my strength."

Then, Link lifted his wand and pointed it at Darris' forehead. His face was cold and emotionless when he said, "Darris, am I right in saying that your tutor is messing with black magic and that you are assting him?"

"So what if that's true?" answered Darris, "Master Bale is only searching for a way to live forever, he never did any harm to anyone, so why should he be punished?"

Darris didn't want to die, but logic and experience told him that it was all over for him. Driven by fear, he began to scream hysterically.

"Are you sure what you're doing is truly harmless?" said Link, shaking his head. "Look at what you did! What did that coachman do to deserve that fate? When he was alive, he was a woman's husband, a child's father, a father's son, he might even be the sole pillar of support for his family, and yet you killed him without even batting an eye! Do you see how cold-blooded you've become?"

"He's just a peasant! So what if I killed a peasant?" Darris pressed on, though there was now much less conviction in his words.

"Oh, yes, you're right. He was indeed just a peasant. Need I remind you who else was just a peasant, Darris? Have you completely forgotten your roots now that you've learned to cast a few spells?" said Link, sneering.

Darris was speechless. Link's words had hit his soft spot.

"Just kill me, then," Darris finally said, "You're the winner, so you can say whatever you want!"

"Oh, you're wrong again, Darris, I'm not going to kill you!" said Link, shaking his head, "Your actions today are the iron-clad proof that Bale was involved in black magic. I will take you back to the academy!"

The moment Link finished his sentence, Darris finally lost all control and shouted in fear.

"No, please, I can't go back," he begged, "I can't betray my tutor! Please just kill me now!"

If he was brought back to the East Cove Magic Academy, he would then receive the punishments for disobeying the rules of the academy and his name would forever be condemned there. He would also be stripped of his magical powers and become an ordinary man who, because of the murder, would then be tried by the civil courts and his neck would eventually end up on a guillotine.

Then, his name would be disgraced for centuries after his own death, and to him, this fate was much worse than death itself!

As it happened, the Mana in his body started to boil up. He was attempting to use magic to commit suicide.

Link sneered at the sight, then kicked him in the neck, which knocked him out straight away.

"What a selfish and hypocritical scum. You can't betray your tutor? Ha! It's your own hide that you can't betray!"

As Link was kicking Darris, a notification popped up suddenly on the interface. It was announcing that the mission of investigating Bale was completed.

Investigation Mission Completed.

Player Rewarded with 25 Omni Points.

New Mission Activated: Expose.

Mission Details: Expose the Magician Bale's involvement with black magic without tarnishing the East Cove Magic Academy's good reputation.

Mission Rewards: 40 Omni Points.

This was another mission that Link was more than happy to accept.

## 91. Tying Up the Loose Ends

Link received a new mission after defeating Darris. He originally intended to bring Darris straight back to the Easy Cove Higher Magic Academy. However, he decided against it after some thought.

The mission states that I am not allowed to ruin the name of the academy. It will be too impulsive if I bring Darris directly to the academy and accuse him in front of everyone, Link thought.

Darris definitely had to be brought back for investigation. However, he could not be openly accused. The implications of a Level-6 Magician and his chief disciple researching black magic together is way too devastating. While punishment had to be met, Principal Anthony definitely did not want word to get out and reflect negatively on the academy.

Anthony would prefer to quietly settle this issue with minimum damage to the academy's reputation.

Link could also be an impulsive teenager and openly condemn Bale and Darris for his own emotional cathass. However, he would not only be criticized for his immaturity, but also not gain any tangible benefits.

It was no longer a problem regarding magic, but one of crisis management. If he could resolve this in a mature manner, he would be able to ganalot of recognition.

After some thought, Link calmed himself down and first cast an Elemental Healing spell on Darris to keep him alive. Following which, he cast a Hypnosis spell on him to keep him sedated for the entire journey.

Link was not planning to leave any traces of their battle as well. After Darris was taken care of, he made sure the Girvent Forest was restored back to its original state.

First and foremost, the giant crater on the ground caused by the explosion had to be filled. It was obvious that the crater was caused by the release of a powerful spell, and any occurrences of magic in the Girvent Forest would automatically be linked to the East Cove Higher Magic Academy. This could ignite dissent amongst the people or even fear of the academy.

Link quickly covered the crater using a Shapeshifting spell.

Secondly, Link had to destroy the evidence of splintered wood and metal bolts from the carriage destroyed by the wind blades. He opened another crater on the floor and buried all these materials before filling it up.

Link then built upon these foundations and erased nearly all the evidence of their battle. Apart from a few burned patches of grass, the forest looked as good as new.

Link made sure to keep his recovery work wholesome enough such that it would look natural to an ordinary human, but not flawless so that any Magician who passed by would still be able to tell what happened. This was to preserve enough evidence to prevent Darris from denying what happened when they reached the academy.

Link then checked Darris' condition. He seemed to be breathing normally and not in any danger.

"Alright, now we will return to the academy!" Link chuckled.

The carriage was ruined but he had magic on his side.

He had 90 Omni Points. After browsing through the spells he could learn, he spent 30 Omni Points to purchase a summoning spell, Wind Fenrir.

Wind Fenrir

Level-3 Summoning Spell

Mana Cost: 150 Mana Points.

Effect: Summons a wind elemental wolf to aid you in battle. Lasts one hour.

(Note: It is a strong battle companion, but can also be used as a mount when needed.)

Link's vision blurred slightly and after two seconds, he had got the spell in his arsenal.

The in-game spell learning system is really convenient! Link thought.

Since he had already recovered from his weakened state, he had 900 Mana Points, 150 Mana Points was nothing to him.

Link held out his staff and filled it with Mana. Immediately, the sounds of howling winds could be heard; the wind elementals concentrated in front of him and kicked up a storm of sand. By the time the roaring winds dissipated, a nine-foot-tall green Fenrir appeared. It looked extremely intimidating with lightning bolts and a piercing gust of wind surrounding its body.

"Good. Sit," Link commanded.

The wind Fenrir instantaneously obeyed. Link loaded Darris and himself on its back and hollered, "Advance!"

The wind Fenrir darted forward with an insane speed of 150 feet per second. There was also little to no turbulence nor uncomfortable strong winds. It was in essence, a comfortable and stable ride.

What a convenient spell.

River Cove Town and The East Cove Higher Magic Academy were only around six miles apart. With the wind Fenrir, they could probably cover the distance in 15 minutes. However, Darris actually woke up in this short amount of time.

He was after all a Level-4 Magician and had a stronger soul than an ordinary human. A Level-0 Hypnosis spell had little to no effect on him, only lasting for less than half an hour.

Darris realized that he was on the back of a giant wolf when he woke up. From his years of studying magic, he naturally recognized this as the Level-3 Wind Fenrir summoning spell. He then turned his head and saw Link.

Link still looked as young as ever, even slightly childish. The Mana that anyone could sense from his body was still low, merely at the level of an apprentice. The only difference was his eyes. They now shone with confidence and experience, vastly different from the humble and careful ones he was familiar with.

Link must have been using some form of magic equipment that concealed his Mana presence, Darris thought.

A Level-4 Magician that was only 17 years old...Darris had always believed that he was a genius. Thinking back, what was he doing at the age of 17? Probably still racking his brains over the simplest magic books and feeling accomplished when he succeeded in writing a Level-0 magic scroll. It was a huge blow to his self-esteem.

"Who was the one who ordered you to investigate on my master?" Darris already gave up struggling.

He knew that he did not even have the chance to commit suicide. From the moment he woke up, Link's staff was placed strategically at the back of his head. A Hypnosis spell would easily knock him out again if he tried to escape.

He only wanted to know who was the mastermind.

Link laughed, "Don't ask me such pointless questions. You will naturally know when we reach the academy. I, on the other hand, am really curious. Judging from your character, you would not normally agree to help your master in his black magic research. What made you take that dangerous path?"

"I am simply grateful to my master" Darris meekly spoke.

"Stop the nonsense!" Link interrupted, "Tell me the truth!"

Based on Link's observation, Darris valued his future over anything else. Research inoblack magic was punishable by death through burning of the body at the God of Light Temple. There was no way he could have risked his life simply because he was grateful.

Darris felt like he had met his mortal enemy. Not only was he defeated, his motives were also completely seen through.

After a moment of silence, Darris said, "In exchange, my master granted me access to Bryant's Scroll of Enlightenment."

## 92. The Scroll of Enlightenment

The reputation of the Legendary Magician Bryant was well-known throughout the Firuman continent, and in the East Cove Magic Academy he was even revered as one of the gods. To think that this magic scroll was created by such an exalted figure and was even given such a name as the Scroll of Enlightenment there was no doubt that this was an extraordinarily priceless treasure.

"Bryant's Scroll of Enlightenment?" Link was stunned. He recalled how there was something like this in the game, too, and in fact, Link had even owned such a thing himself.

There were six Scrolls of Enlightenment in total and each scroll was of Epic quality. Once a player obtained one of these scrolls, they would enjoy a permanent boost and enhancement in their attributes. And if the six scrolls were gathered together, a Legendary Scroll would then be created.

The Legendary scroll was called the Apocalypse Scroll and it could significantly enhance the players' various attributes, especially their Maximum Mana, which could be increased by 100% with the scroll's help. Ever since obtaining the Scroll of Enlightening, Link had never run out of Mana, even after fighting against Boss-level opponents.

Link never expected to find the scrolls here in the real Firuman continent. The revelation of their existence thrilled him to the core.

The scrolls were precious, not only because of their ability to promote the attributes of the owner, but the knowledge contained in the scroll alone was priceless in itself. If one was to study all six Scrolls of Enlightenment thoroughly, it would be the equivalent of inheriting most of Bryant's knowledge and wisdom.

Darris didn't know what was on Link's mind. He thought Link was silent because he anticipated more information from him, so he added, "Yes, my tutor owns a Scroll of Enlightenment. Though incomplete, it still contains amazing magic wisdom. I was able to become a Level-4 Magician at the age of 30, mostly thanks to the Scroll of Enlightenment."

"Just one scroll? That's too bad. What would happen if there was a full set of six Scrolls of Enlightenment?" asked Link.

"The complete set of...six...How did you know there were six of them?!" Darris' eyes widened in shock, as if he had seen a ghost. The existence of the Scroll of Apocalypse was his tutor's greatest secretthe only people in the whole academy who knew of it were him and his tutor alone. How was it possible that Link would know there were six Scrolls of Enlightenment in total?

Darris' expression startled Link as well, though he quickly regained his composure. He'd forgotten the fact that the existence of Bryant's Scrolls of Enlightenment was supposed to be a secret here, but of course he wouldn't bother explaining himself to Darris.

"I know much more than you think I do. You should've gotten used to that by now," said Link.

Darris stared at Link searchingly, only to realize that Link was shrouded in a cloud of mystery. The more he tried to understand him, the less he did.

"Go on, don't stop talking!" Link urged.

Darris was silent for a while longer, forming sentences in his mind before he began again. "You're right that there are six Scrolls of Enlightenment. Legends have it that they contained the ultimate secret to Bryant's ascension to Legendary-level. But too much time had passed since then, and these scrolls were presumed to be lost. However, apart from myself, no one knows that my tutor possesses the scroll. I know the exact location of the reel. If you let me go, I'll tell you about it," said Darris.

Darris saw his chance, and he used the Scroll of Enlightenment as the bargaining chip in exchange for his freedom. To be perfectly honest, even Link was tempted by the deal. Still, after considering it for a moment, Link shook his head and refused.

"The scroll has been in Bale's hands for so many years, yet he is still no more than a Level-6 Magician. It seems that his Scroll isn't so impressive, after all. You might as well just give up, Darris."

"No, you don't understand," Darris added, "The six scrolls are connected, so as long as you have one of them, you can search it for clues of the location of the other five. My tutor is only a Level-6 Magician because the Scroll of Enlightenment in his hands was the most basic one. The other five must contain the secret to ascension to the Legendary-level. Trust me, I'm not lying to you!"

As they got closer and closer to the East Cove Magic Academy, Darris' tone became more anxious and more urgent. He knew that the moment they reached the academy, he would be doomed.

After hearing what Darris had to say, Link laughed and glanced down at him and said, "Do you take me for a fool?" said Link.

"But...everything I said is true," stammered Darris, suddenly with a tinge of guilt in his voice.

"If you could really find the other five scrolls from one scroll, why didn't Bale find them himself after so many years?" asked Link.

"You don't understand," answered Darris hastily, "He knows where the other scrolls are, but he couldn't get to them these scrolls were all in treacherous places, and he was already 60 years old when he received the scroll. He was just too old to do it!"

"I see..." said Link, "And he must've thought that it was too great an opportunity to pass up, so he turned to studying black magic in order to find ways to extend his life and then he would go find the other scrolls. My guess is that he's also promised you that if you helped him find them, he'd let you study the Enlightenment scrolls too, isn't that right?"

Darris was rendered speechless. The truth was almost exactly as Link had described it. As he came face-to-face with those dark eyes, all Darris felt was fear and dread. It was as if the eyes were able to pierce the soul.

Seeing Darris' reaction, a faint smile appeared on Link's face.

"You can stop talking nonsense now, I will never believe you and I don't need you to find the Scrolls of Enlightenment. I'll do it myself."

These scrolls may be very powerful, and perhaps they really could help people to ascend to the Legendary level, but so what? Link had the help of the gaming system, so he would never encounter an insuperable stumbling block where he couldn't advance further. As long as he kept completing the missions he was assigned to, he would continue to earn more Omni Points that would help him get stronger. So, why would he do something so risky as releasing Darris?

Seeing Link's cold and indifferent attitude, the fear Darris' heart melted and turned inoboiling hatred. The resentment of the words from his mouth constantly spray out. The contempt he held inside him then exploded into a flurry of bitter words.

"I curse you!" he started saying. "I curse you to a life of loneliness! I curse you to be betrayed by the people you trust the most! I curse yo"

Snap! Without wasting his breath, Link struck Darris' neck and knocked him out.

Curse? That might work in scaring ordinary people. But to a Magician, curses were nothing more than the last innocuous barks of a dying dog.

Soon, the East Cove Magic Academy's front gates came into view. Link could make out from afar that the gatekeeper Vincent was basking in the sun in his garden.

Vincent had not noticed them yet.

To avoid causing a commotion, Link had long halted the Wolf Storm spell, then he used Magician's Hand to carry Darris into the gates of the East Cove Magic Academy.

When they entered the gates, Vincent finally noticed the blackened and burned body of Darris. He rose from his chair and rushed towards them.

"Link, who is this hapless man? What happened to him?" asked Vincent.

Link bowed respectfully at Vincent as he always did, then said, "When I found him, he told me he was Darris, the Magician Bale's chief disciple. But you can see how bad his condition is yourself, so I'm not sure if he really is who he claims to be. Mr. Vincent, what should I do?" Link thought it was wisest to only inform the highest officials in the East Cove Magic Academy of what Bale and Darris were up to. There was no need to spread the news to the others.

Vincent was stunned when he heard the name. Darris? Isn't he the young gifted Magician of the East Cove Magic Academy? But how did he getito such a ghastly state?

He was almost completely disfigured and unrecognizable, so it was not certain at all if this man truly was Darris. But if it really was him, then he must've been attacked by an unimaginably powerful Magician. But who in the Girvent Forest would have the audacity to attack a Magician from the East Cove Magic Academy? This turned out to be a grave situation after all.

Vincent thought that it was much too serious for him to handle, he must bring the matter up to the dean. "You wait for me here," he told Link. "I must report this to the dean!"

Although it was Link's intention to inform the dean of Bale's and Darris' involvement in black magic, still, he couldn't let Vincent go to the dean now. The dean had never met Link and he never suspected Bale. If it all came down to his words against Bale's, Link feared the dean would completely dismiss everything he said as nonsense. Furthermore, if they acted too hastily, the news might get leaked to Bale and he could easily escape before they got to him.

It was even possible that Vincent might think of doing Bale a favor and notify Bale of the situation first.

And that was just one of the possibilities of how things could go wrong. There were countless other ways where problems might arise.

But Link was prepared for all of it. He took a step forward, and held on to Vincent.

"Mr. Vincent, wait, I think it's better not to inform the dean yet. We shouldn't let anyone else know either, in case it was all a misunderstanding. This person might not really be Darris after all, and that could cause a huge problem."

Vincent realized he was acting too rashly. Link was right. When he considered it carefully, it was indeed unwise to go straight to the dean. He was the gatekeeper, if this turned out to be a mistake, it would cast him in a bad lightand he wouldn't want that!

He was satisfied with his current position as the gatekeeper, where the work was easy, and he got to put on airs too. He was planning to work in this position until the last day of his life, if possible. He wouldn't do anything that might put his position at a risk.

"What should we do, then?" asked Vincent.

"Isn't the Magician Moira the dean's favorite disciple? She's kind and gentle, so I think you'd better find her first. Even if this turned out to be a mistake, I'm sure she won't blame you. If it isn't a mistake, then she could promptly report the incident to the dean without delay, don't you agree?"

Vincent slapped his thigh immediately as he heard Link's explanation.

"You're right, I'll go find Moira now!" he said.

He hurried into the academy and went straight to Moira's Mage Tower.

## 93. The Missing Magician Bale

Half an hour after Vincent entered the academy, a carriage emerged from within the academy. From the carriage, Link felt a familiar calming yet divine magic presenceit was Herrera!

Link heaved a sigh of relief.

The carriage stopped in front of Vincent's security wooden hut. Herrera opened the carriage's window and observed Link with her clear blue eyes. She was clearly surprised by what she saw.

Link had the feather of disguise to conceal his magic presence. In the eyes of others, he was no different from any other apprentice. However, Herrera was the one who had given him the feather and was thus not affected by its effect. She could tell from a glance the huge amount of magic power emanating from Link.

It was at least on par with a Level-4 Magician.

A power worthy of the title, the Chosen One, Herrera thought.

The moment Herrera alighted from the carriage, her attention was drawn to the heavily injured Darris who was laid casually on the ground. His whole body was charred and his features disfigured. Based on his appearance alone, no one would believe that this was once the promising and suave Magician Darris. Even Bale might not be able to recognize his chief disciple in this state.

However, Magicians had a different way to determine someone's identity. The most reliable way to check for a person's identity was through their magic presence.

Herrera cast an Aura of Detection spell on herself and confirmed that the charred piece of flesh in front of her was indeed Darris.

"It seems like he was hit by a Level-4 Flame Blast spellVincent, I need to talk to Link in private." Herrera looked sternly at Vincent.

"I will go boil some water back in my hut."

Vincent did not question her decision.

"Thank you very much," Herrera replied politely.

Only Herrera and Link were left.

Herrera first released a Soundproof Barrier spell to ensure their privacy before asking, "What exactly happened?"

Link narrated his encounters in the Girvent Forest, not missing out on any detail. He recounted the ambush, the battle, his conversation with Darris and finally his recovery work on the forest.

"I cannot prove what I just said as I do not have a memory crystal. However, you can always question Darris when he wakes up. The battle scene at the Girvent Forest is also a telling evidence. They can prove the accuracy of my account." Link said.

Herrera then waved her hands, "There is no need to, I believe you."

There was no reason for Link to lie. Furthermore, there was nothing illogical or suspicious about his account. The fact that Darris was so severely injured outside of the academy already proved the fact that something sinister was going on.

Darris was supposed to be in the academy at this hour. Leaving the academy without any valid reason was definitely something out of the ordinary, especially for a high-ranking Magician like Darris.

"You handled the situation well. It will be for the best if this issue is settled quietly. We cannot harm the reputation of the academy, much less create the dangerous impression that members of the academy are using magic without consideration of the implications. Now that we have concrete evidence, we will bring him to Principal Anthony directly," Herrera explained.

Magician Bale was a member of the six-person council of the academy. The only person of a higher status than Bale was Principal Anthony, making him the only person who had the authority to deal out any punishment to Bale. Furthermore, Magician Bale was also the strongest Magician in the council. In case of any emergencies, Anthony was probably the only person who could put a stop to his madness.

Link nodded and made use of The Magician's Hand to drag Darris up into Herrera's carriage. With a slight movement of his wand, Darris floated up in the air effortlessly.

Only at that moment did Herrera notice Link's new magic wand. While not aesthetically pleasing, she was surprised by what she saw.

"An Epic quality wand, did you make this yourself?" Herrera was shocked.

Based on her calculations, it had not been a month since Link started learning enchanting magic. It was nearly impossible that he could reach this standard in such a short period of time.

It was an insanely fast speed even for the Chosen One.

Link sat down in the carriage and passed his matchstick to Herrera, "Quite an ordinary wand. In fact, I am thinking of getting a new one soon."

He felt extremely accomplished when he first created the wand. However, after this period of training, he had once again deepened his understanding of magic. Looking at the matchstick now, he felt that it was too unrefined.

Herrera carefully inspected the wand and sighed, "I have nothing more to teach you in the area of enchanting magic. In fact, you have already surpassed me in some areas."

Time really did pass quickly. Just two months ago, Link was inquiring about the fundamentals of enchanting magic. Now, he had already become a mid-level Enchanter like her, and had even developed his own enchantment technique.

She returned the wand to Link and said, "There are indeed obvious flaws in this wand. The main reason for that is probably the quality of the material used. I'll tell you what, when this issue is settled, I will bring you down to my storage. If there are any materials that you'd like, I can sell them to you at half price."

"Is that sobut I might not be able to afford them even then." Link looked expectantly at Herrera.

"Getting them for free is out of the question. They are all my treasures."

Herrera shot a glance at Link, displaying her irritation at his attempt at taking advantage of her kindness.

Even though Herrera had not revealed her true self, she still looked extremely beautiful, even more so when she was being teased.

Link's heart raced and he immediately averted his gaze, "How about paying you in installments?"

"Sure," Herrera spoke, "But there will be interest."

"Have you ever considered being a merchant?" Link did not expect Herrera to be this calculative.

"A successful Magician is usually a shrewd merchant as well. How do you think we are funding our magic research?" Herrera winked.

"It seems like I need to devise my own plan," Link agreed. In fact, he had already made some plans in this aspect.

At that moment, they had arrived at Principal Anthony's Mage Tower.

"When you see my master, let me do the talking. Do not speak unless he tells you to. Understand?" Herrera spoke in a serious tone.

"I understand," Link said.

Link noticed that Herrera was slightly nervous. She took a deep breath before towing the injured Darris down the carriage. Link trailed behind dutifully.

Anthony's Mage Tower had a special name. It was widely known as The Heaven's Thorn as it was the tallest building in the academy. There were also three giant floating runic spheres surrounding the Mage Tower, each one a strong magic tool. When activated, they would form a strong Guarding Barrier around the Mage Tower.

Herrera stood at the entrance and lightly tapped the runes on the gate with her staff. When Herrerasstaff came into contact with the respective runes, they would light up in a warm glow. After the third time, the magic gate disintegrated and the path was clear.

A middle-aged man stood behind the gate. Upon seeing Herrera, he smiled cheerfully, "Moira, what brings you here today?" Herrera then replied, "Matthew, I request an audience with Master."

Matthew shook his head, "That is unfortunate. The Principal is not in the academy today. He has departed for Hot Springs City to attend a meeting regarding the upcoming war. The kingdom seems to be choosing Magician candidates to aid them in their fight against the northern borders. He will be back by tonight."

Matthew's attention was then drawn to a disheveled Darris. Being a strong Magician, he could recognize him in a glance. "Is this Darris, what happened?"

This was something out of Herrera's expectation. Their time was tight as Bale might notice Darris' disappearance anytime.

Who knew what a Level-6 Magician was capable of when forced into a corner?

"What do we do now?" Herrera instinctively looked at her only comrade, Link.

This was also something out of Link's expectation. After thinking for a moment, he whispered, "Let's return to your Mage Tower and imprison Darris. After that, we will approach Bale directly."

His voice was extremely soft; Herrera was the only one who heard him.

There was no time to call for a meeting with the six-person council. Furthermore, it would take lots of evidence and investigation before the council would buy their side of the story. By then, Bale would have thought of an alternative.

As such, the best alternative now was to approach Bale directly and catch him off guard. If needed, they could aid each other in combat and secure a victory in a battle against Bale.

Matthew then shot a puzzling glance at Link, "This apprentice is ?"

Herrera had no time to explain. She waved her wand and carried Darris into the carriage.

"Matthew, I have things I need to attend to. See you later."

"Waitwhat exactly is happening?" Matthew was confounded.

But Herrera and Link had already left.

They hurried back to Herrera's Mage Tower and cast a Level-5 Restition Barrier on Darris. After making sure that Darris was unable to escape, they then made a run for Bale's Mage Tower.

Herrera bolted through the front door and headed straight for Derek, "Where is Magician Bale?"

Derek was clearly shocked. He first bowed politely to Herrera before staring curiously at Link, "Master just left the Mage Tower. Link, did anything happen?"

Herrera was bewildered, "What? He left? Where did he go?"

"How would I know what master is up to?" Derek laid his hands out helplessly.

Herrera and Link had a common understanding and sighed. Bale had already noticed.

Although he had clearly aged and lost some focus, he was after all a Level-6 Magician with a keen instinct.

Since he knew that his secret was exposed, there was no reason for him to stay in the Mage Tower any longer, much less in the East Cove Higher Magic Academy. Naturally, he also would not inform anyone of his whereabouts.

Would he return? No one was sure. However, Link knew that if he was placed in Bale's shoes, he would run as far as he could and never return to the academy.

There would not be any immediate implications if a Level-6 Magician wandered out of the academy. However, a powerful dark Magician roaming the World of Firuman in the future was definitely something to worry about.

"We must find Bale!" Herrera was serious. She would not risk losing the life of innocents to black magic.

## 94. Mist Basin

How would one smoke a Level-6 Magician out of hiding?

Herrera had been thinking about this for a few minutes and came up with no solution at all.

When a Level-6 Magician escaped and was bent on hiding his tracks, it was almost impossible to uncover his trails. Herrera was sure that there were no less than a handful of people in the whole world who would be able to do it.

Meanwhile, Link was also turning the problem over in his mind.

Ideas after ideas flickered on and off in his mind as he tried to work out the possible routes Bale could've taken in his escape.

Bale was an old man, so he could discard the idea of him sneaking out on his feet straight away. The only ways he could escape, was either by magic or by carriage.

Would the Level-6 Magician use magic to escape?

If he did, one possible method was through the academy's portal tower. But the cost of transporting through portal towers were sky-high, so unless there was a great emergency as when the Dean used it to go to Springs City to meet with the army Magician for example the portal would not be used at all. Even if Bale had access to the portal tower, it would've left a record of his usage and could even leave traces of where he'd been transported to. That could expose his whereabouts, which made it a bad choice to escape with.

Another important point was that Link suspected Bale was oblivious of the dean's absence from the academy.

The reason was very simple; the dean's actions must've been kept confidential. Even his favorite disciple Herrera was not informed of it, so why would the old and doddery Bale be?

And that meant that Bale feltitimidated by the dean's power. He would never choose an escape route that would attract the president's attention. Just because Herrera couldn't detect any trace of Bale's magic, that didn't mean that the Dean who was a Level-7 Magician couldn't. That ruled out the possibility that Bale used magic to escape from the East Cove Magic Academy.

"Bale must now be in a carriage on the King's Lane, we must chase him," said Link.

For a moment, Herrera was stunned. Not because she was confused by Link's statement she was smart enough to follow Link's reasoning but his words just now had pointed out what should've been obvious to her. It was as if he had roused her from a stupor she was in as she was shaken from witnessing Bale's magic recently.

"Of course, I get it now," said Herrera, "Yes, let's go."

Time was of the essence, so they departed straight away without asking anyone else for help.

In fact, there was no need to get anyone's help as the two were powerful enough to go against Bale. When two Magicians teamed up against one in a battle, they would be at a huge advantage, especially with Link on their side. Although Link wasn't a high-level Magician yet, his spellcasting was still lightning fast and that came very much in handy when in battle against another Magician.

Speedy spellcasting was the most crucial skill in magic battles. It didn't matter how many powerful and impressive spells you knew, if the opponent could attack you with the speed of machine guns, you would lose anyway.

Link was confident that as long as they could catch up with Bale, they could easily defeat him!

Link and Herrera were now walking on the path that connected the Mage Towers of the academy. Because it was three o'clock in the afternoon, most Magicians and their apprentices were busy working in their respective towers, so there was basically no one on the path at all.

They were most likely going to engage in a battle once they've tracked Bale down, so Herrera realized that the cumbersome dress she was wearing was not fit for the task. She suddenly stopped in a remote corner and said, "Give me a minute."

Link was puzzled for a moment and didn't know what was going on.

Herrera didn't explain either, all she did was cast a Level-2 camouflage spell, Shadow Screen, and then a milky mist shrouded her and formed an opaque screen around the remote corner. Link was within the screen as well.

Then, the Magician's robe on Herrera's body came to life and slid right off of Herrera's bod. She was then naked, without a stitch of clothes on her body, right in front of Link, and she acted as if it was the most natural thing in the world!

Link stole a glance before he could stop himself and his heart was pounding hard in his chest as he saw the Herrera's ethereal body. Her fair and flawless skin seemed to glow from within and her figure was even more enticing than Lucy's especially those long and slender legs. She was already 35 years old, but time had not left its mark on her. All in all, her body seemed to have struck the golden ratio.

"Whoa!" Link quickly averted his eyes and turned beet red, "Herrera, you should've warned me in advance!"

By now there was a dark blue soft material wounding around Herrera's body. It then quickly wrapped her body and eventually formed a battle attire, complete with armor.

The fabric glimmered in a light blue aura, and each metal plate of the armor was made of a much stronger metal than Mithril Thorium. Moreover, magic runes covered the whole attire. One would see at a glance that it is an unusually powerful magic gear.

Herrera was at first somewhat confused by Link's remarks, but after a while there was a look of guilt on her face.

"My apologies," said Herrera, "In the Glorious Kingdom there is no gender distinction between the Angels of Light. I forgot how it was different with humans."

Link wanted to say he didn't mind it at all, but he realized that from now on Herrera was probably not going to make the same mistake of getting naked in front of Link again. He slightly regretted reminded her earlier.

After putting on the battle attire, Herrera quickly wrote a letter that briefly summarized the situation regarding Bale and then cast the spell Cheetah's Agility on Link and herself.

It was a Level-2 upgrade of the Level-1 spell Cat's Agility. In addition to greatly enhancing agility, the spell also provided an additional boost of strength, just like the beast it was named after.

After being cast with the spell, their speed suddenly shot up significantly and only three minutes later they were already out of the East Cove Magic Academy.

Once they were at the gates, Link rushed to the small cabin where Vincent was.

"Was there a carriage leaving the academy recently?" asked Link.

"There was one," answered Vincent, obviously confused by Link's urgent tone. He kept staring quizzically at both Herrera and Link.

"It was heading east."

"East?" Link was surprised. The east was where the capital city of the Norton kingdom was. But what was Bale thinking going to Springs City?

"Let's go," said Herrera, "We must catch up with him."

Link nodded, and pointed his wand to the ground, then under Vincent's stupefied gaze he whispered, "Wind Fenrir!"

In a blink of an eye, the Level-3 Wind Fenrir appeared at Vincent's door. The Level-2 Magician Vincent was so flabbergasted his eyeballs almost fell out of their sockets.

What's going on? Vincent couldn't help wondering. Isn't he just a Magician's Apprentice? Isn't he a talentless weakling with no future? How is it possible for him to cast a Level-3 spell?

Vincent had always been putting on airs around Link, but this time, his was so impressed with him his jaw almost hit the ground.

Link ignored the gatekeeper's searching gaze and ordered the Wind Fenrir to crouch down. He then turned to Herrera and said, "Ladies first."

Herrera was extraordinary nimble because of Cheetah's Agility. With swift movements, she handed her letter to Vincent.

"Remember, hand this letter to the dean!" said Herrera.

The letter was just a precaution in case they failed to track down Bale or if something unexpected happened to them. The academy would then have some clues on how to find them.

"Ah, yes, yesI will." Herrera's orders finally roused Vincent back from his daze.

Herrera then jumped onto the Wind Fenrir and Link followed her, sitting behind Herrera. Link telepathically controlled the magical beast. In a swift movement, the Wind Fenrir got up and rushed out at a terrifying speed.

Whooosh!

Link and Herrera had to hold on to each other tightly to stay on the beast. It would've seemed like an intimate position in normal circumstances, but Link of course had no indecent thoughts in his head, as it was filled with thoughts about Bale instead.

Bale must know that there are so many powerful people in Springs City who could easily hunt him down even the dean is there. Bale might as well just surrender himself if he was to flee there. If I was him, would I choose to hide in Springs City? Link contemplated.

And the answer was absolutely not. If Link was on the run, he would head to the Free Trade Confederation in the South instead, for there were many countries there and each country had their own laws that could notiterfere with each other. Although the countries of the confederation were independent, they could also be chaotic and that made the place ideal as a hideout. Bale would not have any problem taking cover there.

Still, they couldn't rely on Vincent's statement alone to determine Bale's whereabouts.

"Magic Trails!" Herrera cast a powerful tracking spell.

Magic Trails

Level-4 Spell

Effects: Detects traces of magic in the environment. It is capable of discerning even the most minuscule remnant of magic.

After the spell was cast, the road ahead of them lit up, and the band of light appeared along the King's Lane, stretching all the way into the distance.

Herrera was overjoyed to see the band of light.

"Great, so Bale didn't use concealing spells to hide his own magic trace!"

This trail was, after all, the Mana that his body emitted.

Link controlled the Wind Fenrir to follow the light trail all the way, and after about 20 minutes, the road forked into two. There were signs on each of the forked paths the one on the right read Springs City, and the one on the left read Mist Basin.

Curiously enough, the magic trail wasn't heading towards Springs City, but went straight to the North towards Mist Basin instead.

Link wasn't surprised. This made complete sense based on the information they had so far. What he didn't expect was how surprised Herrera was.

"What's going on?" she remarked, "Is Bale connected to the Dark Trails in Girvent Forest?"

Herrera had been investigating the dark trails in the Girvent Forest for some time now. She even asked for Link's help more than half a month ago. Her inspection had yielded results recently. She had found that the Dark Trails were most concentrated in the north of the forest where the Mist Basin was.

Soon after Herrera finished her sentence, a notification popped up.

Bale had fled the academy.

Completed mission: Expose.

Player rewarded with 40 Omni Points.

New Mission Activated: The Mysterious Mist Basin.

Mission Details: Investigate the Dark Trails in the basin and search for the missing Bale.

Mission Rewards: 60 Omni Points.

Good grief, it was obvious just by reading the notification how perilous this mission would be. The biggest threat lay in the environment of the basin itself.

Link had great confidence in himself if he was to face an opponent head-on. But the basin was dense with vegetation and the thick white fog would greatly reduce his vision this created the ideal condition for an ambush. Bale would most probably not confront them directly. What's more, it's possible that he had accomplices hiding with him there. To fight against a Level-6 Master Magician in this condition, when everything was working Bale's favor was truly a deadly mission.

If they rushed into it without any plans, there's a good chance that they would be charging head on to their certain deaths.

Even though Link now had 100 Omni Points and even had the Domingo crystal with him, he was still hesitant in accepting this mission. At least not for now, when he had no support except Herrera.

But then, something unexpected happened.

"Let's pursue him! I can sense that something big is lurking under the surface here. We must not let Bale escape!" said Herrera, with no hesitation at all.

"Wait, shouldn't we go back and get more people to help us?" said Link, so surprised that the Wind Fenrir came to a standstill.

"No, we're running out of time. This is the only chance we have to seize Bale. We must at least go there and scan the place and gauge the situation. The moment we sense anything disconcerting, we'll retreat immediately."

Herrera was well aware of the danger, and she made her decision having taken itito account.

Link considered it for a while, and finally nodded.

## 95. Two Puny Opponents

Due to its low geographical position and the lush overgrowth, the Mist Basin was covered permanently in a cloud of white fog. Despite the fog being completely harmless, it greatly affected visibility in the area, making the Mist Basin a perfect hiding spot.

The hunters in the Girvent Forest never once wentito the Mist Basin. If an enemy were to enter the area, any form of pursuit would be halted.

It was an extremely dangerous and mysterious place.

A carriage slowly prodded along the winding and narrow path, braving the uneven ground and thick overgrowth. As the carriage traveled further into the forest, the path became even narrower.

When the carriage was crossing a crater, an axle loosened which resulted in a detached wheel. With an imbalanced support, the carriage stopped in its tracks.

"My lord, we are unable to proceed any further."

The coachman stared at the cascading fog in front with apprehension. There was no way he could tell if there was a slope or a pothole in front as the visibility was way too low. The fact that only a wheel was detached on this entire journey was already a blessing.

However, the coachman had no idea that he was about to meet his end.

A dark green beam of light flashed right through the carriage, ignoring any form of physical segmentation. Under the effect of the sinister light, the area within a radius of 15 feet around the carriage became absolutely clear of fog.

The next moment, the coachman, the carriage and the horses froze in time, before disintegrating into fine white particles.

The only living being left on that winding, misty, forest trail was an old Magician clad in a dark green robe with a white crystal silver staff in his hand.

Magician Bale looked painfully at the pile of white sand and whispered, "I am truly sorry, my friend."

After which, a thick white miasma formed at the tip of the white crystal. Bale pointed his staff forward as the mist slowly began to take form, eventually taking the shape of a white face.

"Bring me to your master!" Bale's voice was weak. He was getting old and could feel the shadows of death creeping closer every single day. He was forced to extend his lifespan with black magic.

His knowledge of black magic was fundamental at best. However, through the course of his research, he found a kindred soul.

To be exact, Bale was approached by this individual. Compared to Bale, this person was a lot more knowledgeable in black magic, especially undead magic. He was hence like a mentor to Bale and as a Magician with a flair for magic, Bale's proficiency in black magic improved by leaps and bounds under his guidance.

The bolt of green light previously was a forbidden magic termed Shattering spell. It was only a Level-3 spell but had way more offensive power than ordinary elemental magic due to the use of dark energy.

The white-faced individual led the way while Bale trailed closely behind. He was traveling at a really fast pace, so much so that Bale had to cast a Levitation spell to keep up.

After traveling for around 19 miles, the thick forest slowly opened up into a huge open space. There was a small lake filled with eerily black water, looking very much like the proverbial gate to hell. On its side was a giant rock more than 90 feet in width and length. A black Mage Tower was strategically built on top of this rock, towering above the entire forest.

The architecture of this Mage Tower was vastly different from those in the East Cove Higher Magic Academy. It was heavily decorated with statues of ferocious and sinister beasts such as howling wolves, scorpions and venomous snakes. There were at least six of these statues on every level.

Magician Bale shuddered at the sight of this Mage Tower. Despite him having a strong soul of a Level-6 Magician, he could only be considered a beginner when it came to black magic.

The white-faced individual continued guiding Bale along a narrow footpath until they reached the entrance of the Mage Tower. The gate of the tower sprung open at their arrival, revealing a hooded black robed Magician surrounded by two dancing green flames standing behind it. He seemed to be expecting them.

"Bale, you seem to have arrived earlier than I thought." The person spoke in a raspy low voice, just like a broken bellow.

Bale was trying to catch his breath. He was indeed losing grasp of his vitality. Despite the use of magic, the long journey had taken a toll on his body.

"Shade, I have been exposed. My time is almost up as well. Please take me into the realm of eternal life," Bale spoke, gasping for air.

"Exposed? You mean you are currently on the run? Are you sure you have no pursuers?" Shade was clearly displeased. After all, he was still within the Land of Light and could easily be exposed to danger.

Bale then spoke slowly, "I purposely lured two of them here. One of them is a Level-5 Magician, and the other, probably a Level-4 Magician. They are the only ones who know about us. It should be easy for you to defeat them using the Mage Tower. Kill them and our secret will be safe."

Bale had been vigilant. From the moment Darris left the academy on his own accord, he had been monitoring the people entering and leaving the academy. Hence, when Link brought back an injured Darris and left for Anthony's Mage Tower with Herrera, he knew it was time for him to leave.

He also knew that Anthony had left for Hot Springs City. However, there were still many strong Level-6 Magicians in the academy. The only thing he could do was to go on the run.

He originally intended to escape to the South, but changed his mind after realizing that he only had two pursuers. "Probably Level-4? You have to tell me the exact strength of my opponent?" Shade hated to deal with uncertity.

"He managed to cast a Flame Blast spell despite being only 17 years old. I highly suspect that he used a magic scroll to aid him in that battle. That means he might be even weaker than a Level-4 Magician. In any case, you have no reason to be afraid of a 17-year-old Magician, am I right?" Bale had never thought of Link as a problem.

Bale had dabbled in magic for the past 50 years and had many Supreme Magic Skills in his arsenal. Furthermore, he had battle experience that only came with age. It would be strange if he was afraid of someone who was young enough to be his grandson.

Shade heaved a sigh of relief.

Age was often an indicator of a Magician's battle prowess. Even if a Magician were to reach a high level at a young age, he would not receive as much respect.

An older Magician would definitely have more spells and Supreme Magic Skills in his arsenal. If the two Magicians do engage in a battle, the older Magician would usually win by a landslide.

"Since that is the case, please enter. I have already prepared the ingredients. You can achieve immortality immediately," Shade invited Bale into his Mage Tower.

Bale bade a silent goodbye to his human self before stepping into the sinister Mage Tower.

The hall was barely furnished. The only captivating thing was the pond at the center of the hall filled with a bubbling green liquid. As the bubbles burst, a dark green miasma was released into the air.

"This is the pool of immortality. You will be able to gain eternal life from absorbing the essence in this pool. In this time, you will descend into a deep slumber and become defenseless. There is no cause for worry, I will fend off the pursuers for you," Shade explained the workings of the pool clearly to Bale.

Bale started doubting his choice. The pool was definitely enchanted with some sort of cursed magic. Did he really wish to abandon all that he worked for in the past 50 years?

However, he once again felt the energy drained from his body. This had happened a lot more frequently in the past few weeks. His life was like a flickering flame that could be extinguished any moment.

"I have no choice. Oh God of Light, please forgive my sins." The moment Bale laid down into the pool of green liquid, the bubbling ceased.

The pool of liquid was exceptionally still. Shade stood guard beside the pool, also completely motionless, even the two green flames that danced around him disappeared.

As time slowly passed, the pool began to bubble yet again, this time even more furiously than before. There were also peculiar movements in the surroundings of the Mage Tower.

All of a sudden, Shade's eyes shone with a green glow and the two dancing green flames bolted out of his iris.

"This is the scent of the living! These two puny little things! Don't think that you can leave as easily as you have arrived."

With the help of his Mage Tower, Shade could extend his spellcasting range to a maximum of 6000 feet. The area within 300 feet radius of his Mage Tower was even termed as his absolute territory.

If anyone was foolish enough to cross that boundary, he would show them the true meaning of despair!

## 96. The Absolute Territory of the Necromancer

At Mist Basin.

...

After brushing a bunch of branches aside, Link saw a black Mage Tower by the lake.

The Mage Tower of the Undead! That was the first thought that popped up in his mind.

Dark colors, strange stone carvings, black magic aura fluctuations the features of the Mage Tower pointed to the identity of its owner.

The Necromancers because they manipulated dead bodies and exploited souls, they were forsaken by the gods of the Light Pantheon.

If a Necromancer was originally born in the Realm of Light, once he devoted himself to the Dark Side and black magic, his soul would forever be forbidden to enter the Glorious Kingdom where the gods of the Light Pantheon resided.

A Necromancer's soul would wander forever in limbo and his life would continue indefinitely in this state. This was their state of immortality.

Herrera then walked towards Link and saw the black Mage Tower through the gaps of leaves. Judging from her reactions, it was clearly the first time she'd ever seen such a building.

"How could such an evil thing be so near to Springs City?!" she exclaimed.

If it had been in the Black Forest in the North, it wouldn't have been surprising at all, but this is right in the heart of the Realm of Light!

"Bale should be hiding in that Mage Tower," Link whispered, "And apart from him, there should be another black magician in there as well. Since he has his own Mage Tower, I'm sure he'll be at least as powerful as you and me. And if there's a Necromancer in there who has probably lived for hundreds of years or more, then I'm afraid even our joint efforts won't be enough to defeat him, let alone defeat Bale too."

When a Magician's Apprentice mastered a Level-1 spell, they would then become a Level-1 Magician. Another Magician who has mastered 10 Level-1 spells would also be a Level-1 Magician. Although they both would technically be on the same level, the latter could easily defeat the former.

Necromancers could virtually live forever, so it wouldn't be surprising to find a Necromancer who was hundreds of years old. Time was on their side and the spells that they could master in that time would make Herrera and Link seem like rookies in comparison.

Link would really like to keep his Omni Points, but at the same time he knew that the current situation was dire. He must make the right choices now or lose his life.

This was the real world; there would be no chance to replay a battle if he lost his life here.

"But if we let him escape this time, we'd probably never find him again," muttered Herrera, hiding behind the bushes, "What if we head to Springs City now and find the dean? If we inform him what we found here, I'm sure he and the Court Magicians would come and help us."

Anthony was a Level-7 Magician and the royal family would generally only appoint high-level Magicians as Court Magicians. If Link and Herrera could get their help, it would greatly increase their chances of winning.

"Good idea," Link nodded, "We must hurry, let's go now."

So they turned around and retreated. The area was dense with vegetation but they decided not to use any magic spells to avoid attracting any attention from the Mage Tower. This made their movements considerably slow.

They had only been walking for about five or six minutes no further than 150 feet when something peculiar happened.

"Something's not right. Don't you notice how the white mist is getting thicker?" Herrera said.

The visibility range by that time was no further than 10 feet. In fact, Link found that he couldn't even clearly see Herrera's face anymore.

Herrera was a Level-5 Magician and an Angel of Light to boother sensitivity to black magic was much superior to Link. Right now, she could palpably feel black energy permeating through the air.

The trace of black magic that she felt was minute, like a drop of ink dripped into a glass of water, yet she felt it all the same.

"The opponent is stronger than I thought," said Herrera, "I'm afraid he's spotted us." Herrera had a Mage Tower of her own, so she knew how powerful a Mage Tower could be. But she didn't expect the opponent to be so perceptive that they would be spotted from more than 200 yards away.

She stopped walking as she was speaking and decided it was pointless to keep on hiding traces of her magic. The Mana in her body burst out, then she started to glow in a white light. The light spread out and as it touched Link's body, he seemed to be lit up as well and was then shrouded in a layer of white light.

Link recognized this spell at once.

Holy light

Level-4 Halo Spell

Mana Consumption: 280 points.

Casting Time: Instant

Effects: The spellcaster acts as the center from which light energy spreads. Any creature of the Realm of Light within the vicinity of the spellcaster receives a protection that will block out 90% of the power from same level magic attacks and a 100% increase in wound recovery rate. Any creature of the Dark Side in the vicinity will experience a 50% reduction in their energy level and an 80% decrease in their wound recovery rate.

(Note: This is a spell that only Angels of Light can cast no mere mortals can master it!)

This was a very powerful halo spell and the effects of the spell were greatly increased the more creatures of the Realm of Light were within its area. When used on a troop of soldiers, they would then become an invincible holy army.

After casting the spell, Herrera quickly said, "They've started to make a move against us, we must move faster."

Link nodded. He then promptly summoned the Wind Fenrir, which was then shrouded in a white light as it came under the effects of the Holy Light as well.

"Get on," said Link.

Herrera leaped onto the back of the Wind Fenrir, then Link followed behind her. The Wind Fenrir howled, then charged forward through the dense forest, leaving behind the Undead Mage Tower in high speed.

It had been more than 4 hours after Link's battle with Darris, and his high Mana restoration rate had come into effect, so Link's Mana was now about 970 points enough to cast three Flame Blast. He did so as soon as he was on the back of the Fenrir, though not as an attack, but only to charge the Domingo crystal.

Because the situation was critical, Link didn't bother to conceal the Domingo crystal from Herrera. She was stunned when she saw the crystal she recognized what it was and how precious it was at the first glance.

Five seconds later, the Domingo crystal was fully charged. In it was stored the fire elements for one Flame Blast, so whenever he needed to, he could now unleash a deadly spell in 1.1 seconds!

It didn't come without a cost, though. The power and speed of Flame Blast would be lethal indeed, but it would also consume twice as much Mana once for charging the crystal and once for casting it.

So now Link was left with 650 points of Mana. He took out a low-level Mana potion to replenish himself. The potion could only increase 100 points of Mana, but it was the only potion he had on hand, so it was better than nothing.

"Stop, drink this instead!" said Herrera. She handed him a bottle of potion.

Link looked at the potion in her hand. It was stored in a bottle made of Mithril and the potion inside was a pure liquid a deep dark blue in color. He knew from a glance that it was a high-quality potion.

After looking at it for a second, a notification about it popped up.

Mid-level Mana Potion

Quality: Timeless

Effects: Provide 500 Mana Points.

(Note: The potion is slightly toxic, so it should only be taken once in two days. People with ordinary skill level are forbidden from drinking it, as it may create a violent Mana fluctuation and sudden death!)

What an incredible potion, thought Link. He took the bottle then bit off the cork and swallowed the potion in one gulp. It tasted a little strange bitter and astringent, and cold in the stomach. Seconds later, the cool sensation rose up from his stomach, and spread to his limbs and throughout his body.

Then Link found that his Mana was almost completely restored, reaching up to 1150 points now. Apart from that, he still had 100 Omni Points on hand.

With full Mana, a charged Domingo crystal, and high Omni Points, Link now felt slightly calmer.

The Wind Fenrir continued to dart across the horizon for nearly half a mile, but strangely the mist in the forest did not clear up at all. Instead, it had grown thicker and almost turned into a solid white wall.

When the Wind Fenrir ran past a place that Link felt was familiar, he shouted a command to the beast, "Stop!"

The Wind Fenrir screeched to a halt.

"What's the matter?" asked the startled Herrera.

"Look," said Link, pointing to the side, where through the thick white mist, there was a glimpse of the lake and they could even hear the soft lapping of its waves.

In other words, the Wind Fenrir had been sprinting for a while now, yet it hadn't been taking Herrera and Link any further from the black Mage Tower but was only circling around the lake beside it.

"The fog blocks the visibility and creates the illusion of us moving in a straight line, but in fact we've been running in a circle all along!" whispered Link.

Herrera understood it now. This was just a normal illusion spell, once discovered, it was very easy to crack.

"Lamp of Truth!" Herrera raised her crystal wand and the amber crystal tip lit up and emitted a beam of laser-like light.

Lamp of Truth

Level-2 spell

Mana Consumption: 25 points.

Effects: Creates a beam of highly penetrative light that will always be straight unless the space around it is distorted.

The beam of light had enough energy that it easily penetrated the thick mist and showed a long, distorted light path in front of them.

The light of Lamp of Truth alwasshowed the true straight line and it was only distorted now because of an illusion created by the opponent. It was actually almost impossible to bend and distort such a huge area of space. The fact that the opponent was capable of such a feat was a testament to his formidable strength. He could probably kill Link and Herrera with a flick of his finger.

"Follow the light," said Herrera, keeping her wand lifted.

Link nodded. He then controlled the Wind Fenrir to follow along the distorted path. It felt as if they were moving in a winding path, but in fact it was the actual straight line.

But they only managed to move for another 100 yards before another oddity occurred!

Suddenly a shadow scuttled out from the grove in front of them. The shadowy figure was unusually tall, at least 13 feet tall, but because the mist was obscuring the view, they couldn't make out its exact features. One thing was clear, thoughthe figure moved very quickly. In a few moments, it was already next to the Wind Fenrir. The shadow slapped the beast with its bare hand and the slap hit right on the Wind Fenrir's head.

Even the massive body of the Level-3 magical beast was not able to withstand the attack. Its head was blown to pieces, and soon after its body began to collapse.

Fortunately, Herrera and Link were boosted by Cheetah's Agility, so they jumped down from the back of the Wind Fenrir just in time. And as soon as they reached the ground, they both shouted simultaneously.

"The undead!"

Link had noticed it because he smelled something rancid, while Herrera could sense the energy of black magic.

In actuality, their battle against the Necromancer began the moment they saw the Mage Tower. Herrera lived up to her name as Anthony's prized disciple. Although she was only one level higher than Link, her battle experience from nearly 20 years of magic research was not something Link could hope to match up to at this point. This was clear from the way Herrera fought.

The thick white mist was making it difficult to determine the exact location of their enemies. While Link was blindly casting his spells, Herrera decided to cast a Level-2 True Sight spell to dispel the mist. What Link had often thought of as superfluous spells were actually useful in certain situations and the ability to maximize their potential was something he still had to learn.

Bryant once said, "There are no useless spells, only useless Magicians." Link could not agree more.

It was neither an intense battle nor one filled with fancy spells. The only challenging part of the battle was the white mist which clouded their sense of direction. However, this could be potentially lethal from another perspective.

If Herrera and Link were ordinary humans with no magic powers, they would be completely helpless in this situation. This would hold true even if they had insanely strong Battle Auras. Hence, even if the kingdom had sent an entire army in an attempt to corner the Necromancer, the likelihood that they would even come close to his Mage Tower was close to zero. And that was the power of knowledge and experience.

Battles between Magicians were often a battle of both might and wit, as well as accurate predictions of the opponent's mentality. That was exactly what this battle was!

The appearance of undead Warriors meant that the Necromancer was finally showing his true colors. This undead soldier was a 15 feet tall giant with a thick exterior and insane strength. Despite being restited by the holy aura, it still destroyed the Wind Fenrir in one hit. Following which, he charged straight at Link, swinging the wooden club it held fiercely at Link.

Link instinctively wanted to dodge the attack, but stopped himself from doing so. One should never follow his human instincts in a fight, especially if the opponent is a Magician. Instincts were far too predictable, and following them would often lead you straightito the opponent's trap.

That was also the reason why some ordinary humans were defeated by Magicians despite being extremely skilled Warriors or Sharpshooters with quick reflexes. They depended mostly on their instincts and brute force in a battle, causing them to fall easily into a Magician's calculations.

The area behind Link was covered in a thick white mist. Link was almost sure that there were other undead Warriors waiting in ambush. If he were to follow his instincts and dodge the attack, he would be dead. However, he also had to fend off the incoming attack.

Link swiftly dodged sideways to extend the time taken for the incoming attack to hit him. At the same time, he raised his matchstick wand and cast a Level-3 Edelweiss spell on Herrera!

Edelweiss was a Level-3 spell and had decent magical and physical defensive power. Although Link was currently in danger of suffering a lethal blow, he was less concerned with the dangers that were currently visible to him. This was because he could already accurately predict when the attack would hit him.

On the other hand, while Herrera looked safe at the moment, would his opponent really ignore a Level-5 Magician and go after the Level-4 one? This was impossible!

Link predicted that his opponent had already planned an ambush on Herrera while she was focused on dealing with the undead giant. He was merely waiting for the right time to strike and deliver a lethal blow.

Link might just be overthinking, however, he would take no chances. His decisions at that moment truly revealed his potential and flair as a Magician.

Seeing that the Edelweiss spell was cast on her, Herrera was clearly surprised and shot Link a puzzling glance. The moment their eyes met, a mutual understanding was reached.

Herrera did not have Link's exceptional ability to make instantaneous and accurate predictions in battle, but she chose to put her complete faith in him.

She then concentrated fully on casting her spell She raised her crystal staff and pointed it at the undead giant, "Shining Net of Blades!"

As an Angel of Light, Herrera naturally had a gift for using light elemental magic. This was the gift that her race was bestowed with.

Shining Net of Blades

Level-4 spell

Mana Cost: 330 points.

Casting Time: 3 seconds.

Effect: Accumulates the power of light elementals to create a net of extremely high temperature able to cut through most objects.

(Note: If the user is an Angel of Light, spellcasting time is reduced by 50%)

That meant Herrera could cast a Level-4 spell in 1.3 seconds. What a convenient gift.

A net shining in white light could be seen advancing towards the undead giant. It was extremely huge, leaving the undead no room for escape. When the net came in contact with its body, it cut through the flesh without any form of resistance, swiftly dismembering it.

A foul odor was released into the air. Without the sustenance of magic, the flesh began to rot almost immediately. It was such a toxic compound to the point that it was corroding the ground beneath, making sizzling sounds and causing more white mist to appear.

At that moment, the predicted attack on Herrera happened. It was slightly later than what Link expected. This should have been due to Herrera's exceptionally fast spellcasting speed. Judging from the normal time needed to cast a Level-4 spell, the time of the ambush was in fact timed perfectly.

This undead was extremely frail and small compared to the giant. It was no more than four feet eight in height and held two daggers in his hands. Its speed, on the other hand, was extremely fast, and got within attacking proximity to Herrera in the blink of an eye.

It was an undead Assassin.

The only thing Herrera could do was to run forward. Under the effect of the Cheetah's Agility spell, she was traveling at an extremely fast speed and managed to put some distance between the attacker and herself.

However, she was still slower than her opponent. The Assassin thrust the dagger fiercely forward, hitting the Edelweiss barrier. The impact of the attack on the magic force field created ripples in the air.

The Edelweiss barrier greatly reduced the attacking speed of the Assassin, but was nonetheless, not enough to completely stop the attack. If nothing was done, Herrera would suffer a stab through the heart in the next second. But she was not alone. Link, who was saved from the giant's attack, could now focus completely on saving Herrera.

Whistle of Death!

A sharp whistling sound pierced through the atmosphere. Link made use of the fire elemental energy stored within the Domingo Crystal to fire a Whistle spell every 0.15 seconds. He fired three consecutive attacks in less than half a second time.

The first attack hit the undead Assassin on the right shoulder.

Link chose his attacking spots very wisely. He did not opt for the frailer but thinner arms, which would have a high chance of missing, especially if his opponent was travelling at a fast speed. The shoulder joint was the fulcrum which would have to be activated to exert force. Hence, not only would it have the same intended effect, it was also a much larger target.

Boom! The whistle penetrated into the undead and ripped off its right arm with a fierce explosion.

In order for the Assassin to move at such a fast speed, its defense was heavily compromised. Without its right arm, the undead lost its power and was easily rebounded by the Edelweiss force field. Herrera was safe!

The second whistle penetrated into the center of its chest, the explosion propelling it in the opposite direction.

The third whistle, on the other hand, flew into the thick cloud of mist beside Link and revealed another incoming undead Assassin. Its speed was comparable to the one that ambushed Herrera.

If Link had chosen to dodge the undead giant attack by retreating backwards, he would have been done in. The Necromancer probably did not expect Link to dodge sideways instead, explaining the delayed deployment of this third undead Warrior.

The third whistle was also something that the Necromancer did not expect. Despite attempts at dodging the attack, the Assassin's right arm was still hit and ripped off by the explosion.

The Assassin continued to advance towards Link, despite the loss of an arm. This affected its balance and greatly reducing its speed. This gave Herrera and Link a lot more time to react.

Link fired two more Whistles. One flew towards the undead Assassin that attacked Herrera, this time destroying it for good.

The other flew towards the Assassin heading towards him, hoping to once again reduce its speed. However, the Assassin was prepared this time. It successfully dodged the attack and headed straight for Link. Herrera immediately hollered, "Heat Ray!"

This was an extremely powerful single target Level-3 spell. A white streak of light flashed across the horizon, penetrating through the undead Assassin's brain.

All undead had a soul flame located in their brains which kept them alive. The intense heat from Herrerasspell instantaneously destroyed the magic structure of the flame and rendered itito a pile of rotten flesh.

The battle was finally over.

This was the high-level battling style between official Magicians. It involved intricate calculations, physical strength and spellcasting techniques. Any mistakes or carelessness would inevitably result in death.

This was on a completely different level than battles between low-level Magicians.

Herrera was still gasping for breath when she took a glance at Link. She was amazed at his battle capabilities; her eyes shone with a gleam of respect.

No wonder he is the Chosen One. To be able to unbind oneself from the deathly chains of the enemy so efficientlyit truly is a wonder to behold, Herrera thought.

Shade was also taken aback, "This young man is somethingAlright, I will challenge the extent of your power!"

It was not an easy feat escaping from the combined assault of his undead trio.However, he had thousands of undead Warriors at his command; he would slowly wither them out.

At Mist Basin.

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After the death of three of the undead, Link and Herrera heard a great deal of noise coming from the forest and they noticed a large number of things approaching them. At the same time, the aura of black magic got more and more intense around them.

What made it that much more shocking was the fact that there was also a sound of wings flapping in the air, which meant that they wouldn't be able to escape by flying either.

There was no doubt that they were witnessing the undead army of the Necromancer!

"The opponent is hell-bent on keeping us here," said Herrera with a deep frown on her face, "Escaping this place is probably next to impossible now."

"The only way we could escape is to kill the Necromancer!" said Link.

Link had seen through the magic being used here now. The black magic he'd seen was very similar to the summoning spells he'd learned in the textbooks. The Necromancer's battle strategy so far hadn't been particularly unique either. The only way to get through all of this was to attack their leader head-on.

"But he's in the Mage Tower," said Herrera in an anguished voice. "And every time we try to approach it, we're hit by an endless barrage of black magic attacks!"

The sound of the undead army's footsteps got nearer and louder. Judging by the sound, there must be more than a thousand of them and they were approaching them from all directions no doubt about it, they were now surrounded.

There was no feasible way for a Magician to attack or defeat another Magician in a Mage Tower. There are Elemental Pools in the Mage Tower, not to mention a large number of magic seals which stored an unimaginable power of magic. Meanwhile, the Mage Tower itself was also resistant to magic attacks. Overall, Link and Herrera's combined powers were not nearly enough to bring it down.

To put it in Earth's terms, Link and Herrera were like empty handed soldiers, while their opponent was hiding in an armed tank. How was it possible for them to defeat the opponent? It was good enough for them to be able to escape.

But the situation that Link and Herrera were facing was much worse than that. Not only was the opponent inside a tank, he was also commanding an army that was inexhaustible in number. Link and Herrera had no way of defeating them all and they were prevented from fleeing. If they went on this way for any longer, they would certainly die off depleted Mana.

After a quick discussion, the two found that they were now in a truly desperate position.

"What should we do?" asked Herrera.

She was already at a loss of what step to take next. She had been continuously casting spells just now, and had depleted 20% of her Mana so far, yet all they've done was kill only three of the undead and they were now confronted with a thousand more! Even if each of the undead was an easy target to kill, their numbers meant that they could use up their Mana to eliminate all of them. And a Magician with no Mana was nothing more than a sheep waiting to be slaughtered.

"We push through as hard as we can and head to the Mage Tower!" said Link, already charging forward. Herrera gritted her teeth and caught her breath, then followed Link.

While running, she reluctantly said, "The Necromancer should at least be a Level-5 Magician, it's impossible for us to break into his Mage Tower."

"It is possible," said Link, "I know a powerful spell, an extremely powerful spell. As long as we can get close to the tower, we'll have a chance of breaking into it!"

He still had one last trick up his sleeve after all the 100 Omni Points.

At this point, the Mana in his body was almost full, so even though the opponent was hiding behind the walls of a Mage Tower, Link was confident that he could force himself in with a Level-8 spell, if only he could get closer to it.

This way, he could topple the opponent's tank with his own anti-tank missile!

Still, Herrera stared at Link in incredulity, doubtful of his claim of this extremely powerful spell.

"It's a divine revelation!" said Link, to convince Herrera.

As an Angel of Light, she had to concede once Link invoked the power of the gods. And so she finally went along with Link's plan.

They were now equipped with Cheetah's Agility, Herrera's Holy Light, as well as the Edelweiss shield. This time, even if the undead ambushed them under the cover of the thick white mist, they were still able to easily handle it.

The good news was that they were close to the lake, in fact they were almost on its shores. After charging forward for a few steps, Link leaped into the lake. As soon as his skin hit the water a cold shiver ran down his spine. He could feel that the lake water contained concentrated amounts of black magic elements. The lake water was so old that if it wasn't for the protection of the Edelweiss shield and Herrera's Holy Light, Link would've frozen to death right then and there.

Herrera followed him into the lake. They had no other place to run to since the land was teeming with the undead. Although they weren't afraid of them, they still couldn't afford to waste their limited Mana on these ghoulish puppets.

The undead were naturally unafraid of the water as well. When they saw Link and Herrera jumping into the lake, each of them followed suit. One by one they made a splash as they entered the water like dumplings dropped into the pot of soup.

But their speed in the water was far removed from their speed on land. In fact, it turned out that none of them could swim, so they sunk like bricks straightito the depths of the lake. Some of them still attempted to chase Link and Herrera as they reached the lakebed, but then their movements were too sluggish to pose any threats there.

"Levitation!"

Herrera cast a spell before she jumped over the lake, which allowed her to hover about three feet over the surface of the lake without a drop of water on her body. She then cast the spell on Link as well and he slowly floated up from the surface of the water.

"...Why didn't you cast this spell earlier?" asked Link with a muddled expression. He was slightly annoyed that she didn't cast the spell before he got himself as wet as a drowned rat.

Herrera couldn't help but smile at Link's look of distress look and she even calmed down a little.

"My bad," she said, holding in laughter, "But you were already in the water before I knew it!" She then pointed the wand in her hand at Link and cast a simple spell to dry him off.

Link couldn't argue with that, so he glided towards the Mage Tower with Herrera close behind.

Even though the thick white mist still obscured their vision, they didn't have to worry about getting lost because the Mana fluctuations around the Mage Tower were so strong that both of them knew where to head without looking.

They estimated that they should be slightly less than a mile away from the dark tower.

After gliding over the lake surface for close to a hundred feet, they realized that the mist on the surface of the lake became denser and denser. By now the visibility range was no more than a few feet, any further than that and it felt as if they were heading into a solid white wall.

To avoid getting lost, Herrera and Link had to move very closely together. In fact, their shoulders were almost touching as they glided towards the ominous Mage Tower.

By now, they both had no idea what to expect or what kind of danger they would facenor did they know what kind of fate was waiting for them in the Mage Tower.

Meanwhile, in the Mage Tower, the Necromancer Shade was looking at the magic mirror which was showing him what Link and Herrera were up to.

"Did they jump into the lake?" said Shade, laughing, "They can't be rushing to their deaths fast enough!"

Shade had centuries of practice in defending the Mage Tower. In all these years, he had fought in countless battles, and he'd killed innumerable Magicians of the Realm of Light who had attempted to defeat him. How foolish of these Magicians to think that he would leave the lake undefended!

Indeed, he had already prepared the final scenes for these two characters on the lake!

"Arise, Inosa!"

Shade was standing in the Mage Tower controlling the magic seals. He then pointed the wand in his hand towards the floor, and Mana shot towards one of the seals, making it glow instantaneously. Then, the aura it emitted started to spin, at first slowly but it gradually got faster and faster. About three seconds later, a stream of magic runes about eight inches thick shot out of the magic seal and headed towards the refracting crystal on the dome at the top of the tower.

As it hit the crystal, the stream of magic runes was reflected and it headed into the depths of the dark and murky lake.

Over the surface of the lake, Link and Herrera noticed the sudden flash of light, and at the same time they could distinctly feel the violent Mana fluctuations coming from Shade. Seconds later, they could feel the water under their feet began to stir. At first, there were ripples across the lake surface, then the ripples became waves and then the waves grew more vicious and more tumultuous.

The raging waves made noises so loud it was almost deafening.

Herrera was stunned by the changes in the lake and Link was alarmed himself. When he got here in the game in his previous life, Mist Basin was already occupied by the Dark Elves, so he didn't encounter the undead army or the Necromancer then.

But he did have a clear memory of the monster that rose from the depths of this lake.

He'd assumed, at that time, that the monster from the murky depths of the lake had always belonged to the Dark Elves instead of the Necromancer and was moved here later by the elves. That was why he'd chosen to jump into the lake. He'd realized too late that the monster had always been here, even before the Dark Elves' army arrived.

This was indeed an unexpected and most inconvenient turn of events.

Link clearly remembered that this behemoth of the depths was named Inosa. It was an Epic-level Boss. The word large couldn't begin to describe it. It was at least a hundred feet tall, and its appearance was similar to the eight-headed dragon of Japanese folklore or the Lernean Hydra of Greek mythology.

This particular monster was a six-headed Hydra. Each head possessed a different magic power, and each was capable of unleashing one powerful Level-5 spell.

The lake water suddenly churned more violently, until finally, there was a loud booming noise. Out from the surface of the water, about a hundred yards away from Link and Herrera, the colossal beast emerged.

The momentum created by the monster's emergence from the depths of the lake was so powerful that even the dense mist on the surface of the lake was scattered and cleared out. Link and Herrera were then able to clearly see the monster.

Link had been prepared for this, so he was not much disturbed by the monster's appearance, though he was slightly surprised by how much more vicious the monster looked compared to the one he saw in the game. It was Herrera's first time seeing it though.

"But this is the six-headed Hydra, the hell dweller!" she exclaimed in a shaken voice after quietly examining the monster for a while. "How did it get here?"

Link realized that this Hydra was of the dragon variant. It's no wonder that it was an Epic-level Boss in the game.

"Do you have a way to deal with it?" Link asked Herrera.

This behemoth was more than a hundred feet tall, plus it was one of the more ferocious types of Hydra. Link figured his Flame Blasts could do no more harm to the monster than a few scratches, let alone defeat it. It would have to be up to Herrera now.

If even Herrera had no way of fighting this behemoth, then he would immediately give up the intention of defeating the Necromancer and spend the Omni Points he had to ganal the force necessary to escape.

He had initially chosen to fight to the end because he believed there was a chance for him to succeed. But as things stood now, Link was smart enough to know that fighting would mean certain death!

Herrera stared fixedly at Inosa. The monster made no move to attack, it was only malevolently baring its teeth in the distance. After scrutinizing it for three full seconds, she finally made her decision.

"It isn't a pure-blood Hydra," said Herrera, "And it isn't that powerful either. I know a spell that could kill it, but it requires a long spellcasting time."

"How much time do you need?" asked Link, no longer hesitating between fighting or fleeing.

"One minute! It's a Level-6 spell that I've just mastered," answered Herrera.

"One minute it is then!" answered Link, "Go ahead! I'll buy you some time!"

Link was not the kind of person to go down without fighting back. They had been pounded with wave after wave of attacks from the Necromancer, so it was their turn to give him a taste of their power!

## 97. A Grand Display of Magic Fireworks

Herrera knew that the Level-6 spell she just mastered was their only hope.

However, this spell was extremely powerful and she was still not used to casting it. She would have to divert all her attention onto the spell in order for it to be successful, leaving her vulnerable to any attacks. The slightest distraction could result in her death from the rebound of her mana and in the worst case scenario, killing Link in the process.

Herrera was fully prepared to give up her life in this battle, as the investigation into Bale's dark magic research was her choice. However, she would not allow Link to be in any dangerhe was the Chosen One!

Herrera sighed and looked at Link apologetically, "I am too impatient. Link, I am so sorry to have dragged you into this."

Link stared at the stirring Inosa 300 feet away and urged, "Don't think too much about it. Let's began preparing the spell."

It was not a time to attribute responsibilities. If they did not take care of the opponent right in front of them, they would be dead before they could determine who was at fault.

"Alright," Herrera nodded.

Since Herrera had to fully focus on casting the Level-6 spell, she would not be able to maintain her Levitation spell and Holy Aura spell. Herrera pointed her staff at the lake and whispered, "Freezing!"

Freezing

Level-3 spell

Effect: Concentrates a large number of water elementals and lowers their temperature down to a freezing state.

A beam of white light pierced the lake and started freezing its surface at a speed visible to the naked eye. Before long, a circular platform more than 60 feet in diameter and 15 feet in thickness was floating on the liquid surface.

Although the platform was bobbing up and down on the water surface, it was very stable and had no chance of overturning.

Herrera then canceled her Levitation spell and landed gently onto the ice platform. She then began to use Shapeshifting magic to create a depression in the platform before sitting in it.

This was to ensure her stability so that she would not be distracted from the movement of the platform.

"I am ready."

Herrera forcefully inserted the crystal wand into the ice, transferring large amounts of Mana into the staff. A pristine white glow emerged at the tip of the crystal staff before enveloping her entire body, forming a dome of light. White flares emanated out of the light dome, illuminating the ice platform.

This was a phenomenon caused by accumulating an insane amount of light elementals.

A powerful magic disturbance could be felt in the atmosphere. A destructive magic was about to make an appearance.

It was still a light element spell, The Edge of Zenith!

Edge of Zenith

Level-6 Light Elemental Spell

Mana Cost: 680 points.

Effect: Gathers the power of light elementals to create a giant blade of light to deal apocalyptic damage on dark magic creatures.

(Note: This spell is for Angels of Light only. It is near impossible for any other race to master this spell.)

The mutated Hydra Inosa immediately sensed the incoming threat. It's six heads roared simultaneously, creating violent waves that crashed in many different directions. One could see air ripples being formed simply from the force of its roar.

Following which, the Hydra advanced towards Herrera. It was extremely fast despite its humongous size, causing tremors in the surrounding areas.

The undead Warriors under the lake seemed to be affected by this war cry as well, moving towards Link and Herrera at a much faster pace.

The movements of these undead were supported with a soul flame controlled by the Necromancer, Shade. Even then, they still retained some of their human instincts.

Some undead regained their muscle memories and started swimming towards Herrera. As time passed, more and more undead floated up to the surface.

Link could clearly perceive the dark aura emanating from the undead. They were as conspicuous as a candle flame in the dark.

Link had to use his magic to stall the undead for a minute.

In the Mage Tower, Shade sneered at the confrontation between Inosa and Link. While Inosa was merely a Level-4 beast, it was considered to be a unique breed.

Not only did it possess an unusually tough exterior, it could also release six Level-4 spells at once, one from each of its heads. Fighting against Inosa would be akin to fighting six Level-4 Magicians at once. Even with Shade's Level-5 strength, he had to spend a lot of effort before he could capture it.

He could not even guarantee his success if he had to do it again.

"My pet will definitely give you an unforgettable time."

Shade stared at his magic mirror with glee. He could already foresee Link struggling to deal with Inosa's violent attacks, and eventually meet his end with despair.

Inosa swiftly reached within a 240 feet radius of Herrera. This was the maximum distance of a Flame Blast spell, and also coincidentally, the range of Inosa's magic attacks.

The six heads began their assault simultaneously, a different colored glow emerging in every one of their jaws. Based on the magic disturbance of these attacks, they were all Level-4 spells!

A huge black ice spear, a dark green corrosive ball, black burning fireballsall of them were extremely lethal offensive magic.

This meant that if Link did not have the means to deal with six Level-4 spells at once, he would definitely be done in.

Link trusted his predictions and fired the preemptive strike. His Flame Blast spell had just taken form the moment Inosa stepped into its firing range. An incandescent fireball struck across the horizon and crashed into the body that connected the six heads of Inosa. This was the area where his spells would be the most effective in restiting Inosa's movements.

Inosa quickly reacted to Link's attack. It fired an attack similar to a thick black phlegm onto the fireball.

Link immediately changed the trajectory of his attack to evade his opponent's interception. However, the black phlegm similarly changed its course of action and stood stubbornly in the way of the explosive fireball. This meant that this spell was also controlled by Inosa's consciousness.

But Link had something else up his sleeve!

He fired a Whistle spell with his bare hands which penetrated into the thick black phlegm before it made contact with his Flame Blast spell.

Boom! The whistle exploded within the thick phlegm. As it was cast with his bare hands, it did not possess even half of its original power. However, the explosion was sufficient to destroy the magic formation of the black phlegm.

Inosa's attack disintegrated into the air, turning into countless black water droplets.

Using low-level spells to break the magic formation of high-level spells was a necessary skill that every Magician should possess.

Inosa was enraged and charged at Link with all the other five heads.

In the face of such an overwhelming attack, a normal Magician would be petrified and overwhelmed.

However, Link was a Magician that had countless battle experiences. He had fought enemies ten times more powerful and fended off magic attacks that were ten times more concentrated. He knew exactly how to deal with such predicaments.

This was nothing compared to what he had been through.

"Whistle! Glass Orb! Whistle!" He continued to cast low-level spells with his left hand, while controlling the Flame Blast spell using the staff in his right hand.

For spells that were more structurally stable such as the black ice spear, Link destroyed them with more offensive spells like the whistle. As for spells that were more loosely constructed like the black fireball, Link exploded them with his glass orbs. He took less than 0.5 seconds to fire all five low-level spells.

Even the fastest spell, the black ice spear only managed to reach a distance of 150 feet in this time before being intercepted by the whistle spell.

The magic structure of the whistle had an advantage in this match up. It had a metallic exterior and was extremely durable. Furthermore, it was also sharp and rotated at a high speed, boosting its penetrating power. These advantages allowed the whistle to penetrate into the ice spear before exploding.

The ice spear was then blasted into smithereens at a distance, the only thing that managed to hit Link being the shattered black ice fragments.

Link achieved the same results with the other four spells.

Boom! The sounds of exploding magic reverberated through the atmosphere, much like a splendid display of fireworks.

Link stood steadily on the ice platform, his expression as calm as still water and his tiny frail body seemingly immovable.

Shade frowned tightly in his Mage Tower. This did not turn out the way he expected it to be.

"Dividing his attention between multiple targets coupled with fast spellcasting speed and accuracy. How did he do it?" Shade felt threatened by Link's battle skills.

The next moment, Link's Flame Blast spell was about to hit its target!

## 98. The Hydra, the Undead, and the Magic Spells

Over the surface of the black lake, the incandescent Flame Blast fireball shot through the air in a long arc. It went past the black water droplets that formed after the Black Phlegm collapsed and the Firework released by the Hydra and hit right at the Hydra's body.

Boom!

It was another earth-shattering explosion. Regardless of its power, Flame Blast was one of the loudest spells among all the elemental spells.

The incandescent flame wreaked havoc to the part of Hydra's body where its six heads were connected. The explosion lasted for five seconds before it completely disappeared.

Under the explosive impact of Flame Blast, the Hydrassix heads looked confounded. The half-formed spells that they were about to unleash in their mouths were disrupted and then collapsed. Its colossal body also lost its balance for a while, and that caused it to wobble about for a few seconds before it could stabilize itself again.

Still, the power of Flame Blast was insufficient to cause much damage to the Hydra. When the explosion died down, all that was left was some shallow scorched marks on the Hydrasskin, which recovered quickly. Then the Hydra shook its six heads and let out a thundering roar and was ready to move forward again.

In the end, one Flame Blast attack could only slow down the Hydra for five short seconds.

Link was mentally prepared for this outcome. In fact, the moment he unleashed the first Flame Blast he already had the second one in the works. They've worked so hard to finally gain the upper hand, so Link would never give the Hydra the opportunity to retaliate!

When the Hydra's body had just returned to balance and was about to move forward and attack Link with another bout of spells, the second Flame Blast shot out from the tip of Link's wand. The spell was heading towards the same spot.

Link's timing was precise and the second attack hit the Hydra right at the second before it regained its footing. The Hydra couldn't block the attack at all, which was why this time there was no need to worry about its counterattack.

Boom!

Once again, another Flame Blast hit the Hydra's body at exactly the same position as before. Right after the explosion, Link went straight back to casting another one.

The third Flame Blast fireball quickly followed the previous one. Under Link's precise control, the second Flame Blast had moved slightly slower, while the third one moved much faster. This meant that the third attack hit the Hydra only about half a second after the second one.

The result was that the third Flame Blast burstito a blistering flame right when the explosion of the previous one was at its peak.

Ka-boom!

An earth-shattering boom resounded across the horizon as the two Flame Blast fireballs lined up almost perfectly to double their tempestuous power.

Wahhh!!

Finally, Link managed to make the Hydra howl in pain!

It was truly injured now and the wound wasn't shallow either. Its gigantic body began to flail and the Hydra started to seem wary of the small opponent in front of it. It then began to step backwards instinctively.

Splish, splash, splish, splash. The monster created huge waves with each of its footsteps.

Aren't you starting to get scared now, little guy? Link sneered silently, though he slightly regretted not being able to cast ten Flame Blast fireballs in a row that would've been adequate to finish this monster off. Still, he had to preserve his Mana, so he had to be satisfied with the little progress he'd made.

After unleashing three Flame Blast fireballs in a row, Link had used up a good chunk of his Mana. He was down to 360 points now, which was only enough for one more Flame Blast. But using all of it up with one spell would just be too risky.

With his eyes fixed on the retreating Hydra, Link focused on a gaping wound on the huge scorched mark near its heads where thick black blood was gushing out. One of its head was almost detached from its neck, and the head was hanging limply from the joint. The eyes on it were still open, but it was basically next to useless.

The Hydra's will to live was ridiculously strong, though. While it was retreating, Link could discern how the gash was already starting to close in and heal. At this rate it would recover and attack them again soon.

Link's Mana was too low now to cast another Flame Blast to create another gaping wound on the Hydra's body, but he had enough Mana still to keep that wound open!

He still had Whistle after all!

Whistle was a spell of his that only consumed 3.5 points of Mana and its specialty was superior penetrative power. Its impressive effective range was at more than 300 feet.

Right now, the Hydra was about 290 feet away from Link, which was beyond the reach of Flame Blast. But it was also too far for the monster's spell to reach Link.

This meant that the ball was now in Link's court.

Link was now standing on the ice sheet. Although the monster was retreating from them, it was still within 300 feet from him, which meant that it was still within Whistle's range.

Ever since casting the last Flame Blast, Link's wand hadn't stopped glowing even for a second. It flashed every 0.2 seconds and one by one the metal spikes shot out from it and whistled through the air, aiming straight for the gaping wound on the Hydra's body.

The Hydrasskin was originally very thick and sturdy. Attacks from Link's Whistle could do nothing more than just tickle it. But now that the triple Flame Blasts had managed to puncture its skin and created an open gash, Link could aggravate its pain and suffering by attacking the wound with his Whistles it would be just like rubbing salt on its wound!

Roar!!

With each attack, the Hydra's roar sounded more like a wail. It began to retreat, increasing in speed until at last it reached beyond Whistle's attacking range. That meant that Link was even further out of the monster's range of attack as well.

All the Hydra did now was stare at Link from afar and roar, perhaps out of anger, or perhaps even out of fear. Its multiple heads kept spewing out the different magic spell attacks at Link's direction although to no avail. Each attack was unleashed at a high frequency, yet they had no effect on Link at all because they couldn't reach him.

And as soon as the monster advanced a little further forward, Link would immediately unleash the Whistle to attack its wound, aggravating its pain, which would then cause the Hydra to step back again.

When placed side by side for comparison, one was a young man who was less than six feet tall, while the other was a terrifying monster standing at a height of almost a hundred feet. One was a Magician who only had enough Mana to cast four Flame Blast fireballs, while the other had an inexhaustible energy to endlessly spit out powerful Level-4 spells. No matter how one looked at it, the disparity between these two sides seemed to be in the order of magnitudes.

Yet, strangely enough, they had now reached a virtual stalemate. There now seemed to be an invisible wall in front of the Hydra which stopped it from advancing further towards Link. And so each second passed by, and Link had now succeeded in delaying 40 seconds.

But the Hydra was not the sole threat that Herrera was facing. Just as Link managed to fend off the Hydra, the undead army then appeared.

These ghouls couldn't break through the thick sheet of ice, so they climbed up from the edge, and then mindlessly and fearlessly rushed toward the center of where Herrera was.

They all completely ignored Link and went straight for Herrera.

With the threat from the Hydra temporarily eliminated, Link retreated to Herrerasside, and his wand began to light up in a higher frequency now. He gave up on using Whistle because it worked on single targets, required longer spellcasting time and consumed too much Mana. It would be too wasteful to use Whistle attacks on low-level opponents like the undead army.

Neither did he use the Level-2 spell Blizzard. The spell was highly effective in blocking the advance of normal opponents, but the undead knew no fear, so even if they were covered completely with ice shards, it would still have no effect on them and they would still be running and charging as if nothing happened.

Link's ultimate choice was the Level-0 spell Glass Orb.

Each Glass Orb consumed only 0.9 Mana points and they each contained the explosive power equivalent to a small grenade overall, the Glass Orb spell was the best weapon to kill the undead!

Under Link's intense focus, he needed only 0.05 seconds to cast each Glass Orb, which would then accurately hit the skull of the undead. The undead was controlled and manipulated through the Flame of the Soul inside its skull, therefore as long as their skulls were blown up, they would either be dead or incapacitated.

There almost seemed to be an endless number of the undead. A steady stream kept climbing up the ice sheet. Fortunately, Link's spellcasting was faster. At a glance, a countless number of blue light orbs seemed to appear simultaneously, and each would hit a different target and then explode on impact.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The sound of the orbs exploding in close succession was similar to the sound of machine guns.

After each of the undead was shot, its head would be blown into pieces, and the Flame of the Soul in its brain would either be extinguished or at least damaged enough to incapacitate it.

When seen from above, each of the undead was like black dots that kept climbing up the ice sheet, then they were immediately knocked down by the light blue orb. Corpses began to pile up on the ice sheet. On the whole, the pile of corpses was gradually approaching Herrera, albeit very slowly.

Link fought with all the might he had left in him, maintaining high spellcasting speed and high accuracy in each shot.

As the seconds ticked by, the throbbing pain in his head became more and more unbearable. Beads of sweat constantly formed on his forehead, then it streamed down his face and flowed into his eyes, blurring his vision.

He knew that he wouldn't last much longer now, but he must hold out for as long as possible, otherwise it would be the end for both him and Herrera.

Time seemed to have come to a standstill, and each second felt like a year to Link. In the last five seconds, the undead army had reached less than 13 feet away from them. The stench of death and decay filled Link's nostrils, and he could see their rotting flesh and their dead eyes in gruesome detail.

Suddenly, one of Link's Glass Orbs missed its target. It should've hit the skull, but it hit the undead in its neck instead.

The explosion caused its head to be half disconnected from its shoulder. The wound would've been grave enough to kill a living person instantly, but on the undead, it seemed to make no difference at all. It stormed ahead as if nothing had happened, while half of its head was hanging off its shoulders!

## 99. The State of Gibraltar

Link was shocked to see an undead breaking past his offensive barrage of spells. A ripple of doubt appeared on his usually calm demeanor. Spellcasting required a lot of concentration. Constructing the complex magic formation, converging elemental energy and locking down a target were steps that had to be executed to perfection.

Link was already at his limit by firing a Glass Orb spell every 0.5 seconds. To be able to fire his attacks in an orderly manner under such circumstances was extremely difficult and unthinkable even to most Magicians. Staying calm was key to achieving success in such situations. If Link was unable to maintain his inner peace, it would reflect immediately on his magic, messing up the tempo of his assault.

Link's Glass Orbs seemed to be firing in a random pattern only because of its fast speed. In actual fact, Link was firing them in a clockwise manner, constantly bombarding the undead and preventing them from crossing the boundary which ensured his safety. However, in the most recent assault, an undead managed to slip through the cracks. If Link were to remedy his mistake, the tempo of his assault would slowly begin to disintegrate.

As a result, more and more mistakes would appear and eventually result in a complete collapse of his spellcasting system. Link might even be lethally damaged by the rebound of his magic if that really happened. Link's battle experience hence allowed him to make the correct decision. He maintained the tempo of his assault and ignored the undead Warrior who slipped through his magic bombardment.

The glass orbs continued firing off from Link's staff at a fast pace similar to drops of rainwater traveling parallel to the ground, preventing the other undead Warriors from making it past the boundary.

As for the undead warrior who managed to escape, Link waited patiently until it was right beside him, before giving it a violent kick on the knee. These undead Warriors were weak, probably only around the strength of a Level-2 Warrior. It also did not expect a Magician to attack using a physical move, and took the full impact of the hit.

Link still had the buff of Jaguar's Agility and possessed unusual strength. He shattered the kneecap of the undead with one hit, causing it to fall helplessly to the ground. However, the undead did not give up. It flailed around on the ice platform and managed to get a slash on Link's thigh. It was an extremely deep cut which revealed the bones underneath.

A sharp pain shot through Link's body which affected his concentration. The violent magic assault took a temporary hiatus which gave the undead an opening to get closer to Herrera.

However, in the next moment, the violent wave of glass orb attacks resumed, and rose to an even higher frequency than before, forcibly pushing back the undead for another 1.5 feet. Link gritted his teeth and ignored the pain from his wound. This time, he included the undead who slipped through the previous wave of attacks into his calculations and fired a glass orb through his brain, effectively remedying his mistake.

Three seconds remaining.

To an ordinary human, three seconds might not even be enough to complete a sentence. However, Link could fire at least 45 glass orbs in this duration.

To Link, it was a painfully long time.

The siege of the undead became fiercer than before, while Link was now struggling with a splitting headache and a burning body. After a long period of concentration and Mana consumption, Link's body was starting to feel exhausted. He was constantly out of breath and barely had enough oxygen to sustain his energy consumption.

He was nearly at his limit.

"One, two, three" Link subconsciously counted the number of glass orbs he fired. He had no idea when he was going to lose consciousness and was relying on his willpower to hang on.

Link's vision had completely blurred. However, at the corner of his eye, he noticed a huge shadow advancing towards the ice platform. It was the hydra that was forced to retreat!Now that it was fully revitalized, it had once again picked Link as its target.

"You still dare to come over?"

Link sneered and fired a whistle in the midst of his routine, risking his life by ignoring the tempo of his assault.

Shhhh! With a sharp piercing screech, the whistle accurately pierced the hydra's wound.

The hydra grunted in pain and stared at Link in disbelief. It once again stopped in its tracks. However, the whistle spell interrupted Link's original battle tempo, causing the undead to narrow the distance between them to merely three feet apart. It would not be long before Link was in range of their physical attacks.

"The time is up!" Link felt a huge surge of energy behind him. He knew that Herrera had completed channeling her Level-6 spell, Edge of Zenith.

Link heaved a sigh of relief. This knowledge seemed to revitalize him with energy, allowing him to resume his magic bombardment to its original state, pushing back the undead once again. Link had cast the Glass Orb spell so many times that it was almost second nature to him. He could already fire them instinctively without focusing much on the formation of magic structure and accumulation of elemental energy.

"It seems like the time I need to construct the magic formation of the Glass Orb spell is now negligible. Did I somehow enter the State of Gibraltar?" Link laughed.

The State of Gibraltar was a special Supreme Magic Skill that referred to a state of the soul after casting the same spell for a long time at an extremely fast pace. It was said that the soul would be integrated into the spell and form a soul magic formation, a rare phenomenon that was rarely seen.

A spell formation appearing in a soul would remove the need to construct any form of magic formation, effectively reducing spellcasting time. Coupled with the Domingo Crystal, Link could almost fire a glass orb instantaneously. At that moment, Herrera rose from her position.

Her body emitted a brilliant glow comparable to that of the sun before condensing into a 150 feet long sword of light. The sword was crystal clear with blinding light emanating from its blade. It swung towards Inosa much like a god passing judgment on a ferocious beast. Without a doubt, Inosa's body was completely severed.

At that moment, Link 's Mana Points were also completely depleted, putting a stop to his State of Gibraltar and naturally, his bombardment of glass orbs. This was the chance the group of undead had been waiting for. They rushed desperately forward, the nearest one already making contact with Link's body.

As Link was about to get overwhelmed by the horde of undead, Herrera's gentle voice rang through the atmosphere, "Sacred Sanctuary!"

Sacred Sanctuary

Level-4 Defensive Spell

Effect: Creates a powerful nine-foot light barrier, extremely effective against the dark forces.

(Note: Angel of Light specific spell)

A glorious light emerged and enveloped Link in a blinding glow. The group of undead were all forced to retreat.

Link was safe.

He took a deep breath and sat down on the ice platform, wiping the sweat from his forehead. In the last 20 seconds, he fired 15 glass orbs per second on average, killing near 300 undead in total.

His Mana Points were now completely depleted. If Herrera were to channel her magic for a few more seconds, he would have had to use the 100 Omni Points he kept as a triumph card.

Herrera entered the protection of the Sacred Sanctuary and immediately rushed towards Link, "How are you feeling?"

"Fine, just that I am out of Mana. What about you?" Link sighed. He still had a splitting headache, but it was a trifling matter compared to the depletion of his Mana Points.

Herrera also had a pained expression, "Mine as well. I can at most cast one more Level-4 spell."

One Level-4 spell had a maximum offensive power of a Flame Blast spell. If it was cast at the right time, it could probably take out 100 undead Warriors, provided that they were clustered tightly together. However, they still had at least 600 undead Warriors circling them at this point, all fairly dispersed.

"It seems like we have to deal with the Necromancer another day." Herrera was disappointed.

The unexpected appearance of Inosa drained them of their Mana. In their current state, even if they could find a way to enter the Mage Tower, they would not make it out alive. Since the chances were slim, there was no reason for them to continue. The 100 Omni Points could be used to help them escape from their predicament.

In the Black Mage Tower.

...

Shade heaved a sigh of relief. Before the battle began, he never expected the two Magicians to put up such strong resistance. He thought he would simply win by a landslide.

In the end, he lost Inosa, his three strongest undead Warriors, and over 300 ordinary undead Warriors. The incandescent Edge of Zenith, and the impossibly fast spellcasting struck fear into his heart. If he had faced them head on, he would have had no chance of winning.

"To attain this amount of strength at such a tender age. What a waste that I have to kill them." Shade shook his head in pity. Despite some losses, he was still the ultimate victor.

On the ice platform, the Sacred Sanctuary was starting to fade. Herrera spoke apologetically, "Link, I should not have dragged you into the war between the light and dark forces. I am sorry."

She should have waited until Link became even more powerful, at least at a level where these undead warriors could do nothing to hurt him. Judging from his growth rate, it should not be a long time. She was simply too anxious and endangered him instead.

Link was confused, "We have not even gotten to the last step, what are you talking about?"

Herrera smiled, "Stop lying to me. Your Mana is completely depleted. Even if you still have a powerful spell up your sleeve, you will not be able to cast it. I am also at my limit and can release at most two more Level-4 spells with the help of a mana recovery potion. There is no way we can escape."

Their nightmare would not end even after eliminating all the undead Warriors in sight. The Necromancer was still nowhere to be seen. They were already exhausted, but their opponent was still completely unscathed.

From Herrera's perspective, this was a hopeless situation!

## 100. No Regrets

Link was confused by Herrera's words at first, but he quickly understood what she meant. He knew that Herrera had misunderstood him. The in-game Omni Point system was definitely something that the people of Firuman would not be able to understand. The most distinguishing feature of the system was its secrecy. No one could determine the potential of his strength unless he decided to purchase a spell with the Omni Points. Only then would it be transformed into real power. As a result, Herrera thought he was lying all along.

"No, listen to me, it's not what you think." Link was already prepared to use his Omni Points to purchase an escape spell.

Herrera shook her head, "Link, you must live!" She had already made her decision upon the realization that they were trapped. She would protect Link with all her might, even if it meant sacrificing her life!

Link was even more surprised after hearing those words. What does she mean? Does she also have a hidden triumph card?

He was just about to probe deeper when Herrera grabbed him by the hand. Link immediately felt a warm power surge through his palms and spreading through his body, slowly becoming one with his soul.

This was an extremely powerful force. In an instant, his fatigue from the high-speed spellcasting previously had disappeared and his splitting headache was cured. Even the deep cut on his thigh was healing at a rate visible to the naked eye.

Link then looked at Herrera in shock. She was getting weaker by the second, her golden blonde hair turning white and her pair of clear dark blue eyes losing the glow it had. She seemed to be transferring some of her core powers to Link.

What kind of power is this? Link was bewildered and struggled to free himself from Herrera's iron grip. However, his body seemed to be fixed in place by a certain force and he could only stare at Herrera unbelievably. "Stop what you are doing now!" Link shouted.

"I am an Angel of Light, and my mission is to asst the Chosen One. Link you must leave this place alive!" Herrera accelerated the transfer of energy. In order to prevent Link from escaping, Herrera hugged him tightly.

Her body was enveloped in an incandescent glow. It was neither glowing with the authority of overflowing Mana, nor from the presence of a powerful spell, but with a kind of brilliance that penetrated deep into Link's soul.

A pair of wings could be seen in the midst of this glory. It was the true form of an Angel of Light.

She is burning her own soul! Link suddenly understood.

A soul was the foundation of life, containing incredible energy capable of powerful magic. An ordinary person would not be able to destroy his soul through any means. However, a Magician could temporarily attain terrifying strength by burning their souls. When Anthony was fighting Demon Tarviss in the game, he burned his soul to cast a Level-8 spell in order to force Tarviss to retreat. This meant that the Magician would disappear from the world forever!

Herrera looked up at Link and smiled, "Master Anthony taught me this spell. He once told me that I would eventually meet a person that I deem worth sacrificing my soul to save in this world. Link, you must live!"

Master also said that while Magicians are strong, we are not gods. We will definitely experience times of despair and moments of helplessness. If we do not want to leave any regrets, why not end our lives in a spectacular blazing glory. Master, I can now fully understand. Herrera thought.

Herrera did not feel a tinge of sadness or longing for the living world. Her smile was vivid and pure, one as untouchable as the pure white lotus blooming on top of a snow-capped mountain. Link was devastated.

He had experienced the Change of the Bloody Moon and many fierce battles ever since he stepped into this world. He had witnessed true darkness and personally ended countless lives as well. He had unconsciously become more unfeeling and cold as the days passed.

In the past few months, none of the things that happened was of great impact to him, including Lucy's torture, the appearance of Rylai and even Darris' ambushall of which merely created slight waves in his stone cold heart.

"I have been chasing greater power all this time. While magic is fascinating, it also has the power to make people lose themselves in the process."

Link had come to a realization. The path of learning magic was a lonely one, one full of temptations and self-discovery.

Link had almost lost his way. He had already forgotten the reason for his pursuit of magic in the first place. He was simply seeking more power for the sake of becoming stronger, even planning to research into the dark Occultic Rune in his dimensional pendant when he had the time. If he continued down this path, he would end up like Bale.

However, Herrera's burning soul scattered the shadows lying in his heart.

Am I really worthy of her sacrifice? The dark forces are growing stronger by the day. In the game, even the God of Light is on the verge of getting destroyed, what must I do? Link asked himself.

The future of Firuman was more uncertain than before. Naturally, Link would not have the answers to these questions. Even the gods were clueless as to what the future held.

What was he meant to do? What would he eventually do? Only time would tell. No matter how the future would play out, Link would never be able to forget this scene.

He felt his Maximum Mana and Mana potential increasing exponentially. He knew that this would increase his power to an unbelievable stage, but he could not accept this power!

A living Angel of Light who was also a powerful Magician would be a strong ally in their fight against the dark forces. Herrera even had the potential to reach the stage of a Legendary Magician!

Link would not allow Herrera to sacrifice herself! Furthermore, it was not even a dead end! Link knew that he would not be able to stop Herrera with normal means.

"Herrera, if you don't stop right now, I'll kill myself!" Link had to use extreme tactics. Link then accumulated mana in his body and was prepared to form a Flame Blast spell in his body. The intense heat of the fireball itself would be sufficient to kill a human.

Herrera was stunned and immediately stopped the transfer of energy. The glow enveloping her body dissipated and a lock of white hair now draped over her shoulders. Link simply hoped that there were no other side effects and that Herrera could recover from this devastating spell.

Supporting Herrera's weak body, Link said, "You fool, why did you not believe me when I said that I have a plan?"

Herrera simply laughed, "I saw it. They were lying in the deepest part of your soul. It was the glory of the God of Light."

Herrera awakened her Eye of the Soul briefly when she was burning her soul, and was able to peer into the deepest part of Link's soul.

It was a strong and pure soul, one only a holy spirit would possess. At the deepest part of his soul was a pure godly power. It was extremely well hidden, and Herrera could only perceive it due to a combination of several factors.

Firstly, it was because she was an Angel of Light. Secondly, Link had opened up his heart to her after seeing her sacrificial act. Lastly, she was unusually calm at that time.

Link was surprised that Herrera managed to see the true origin of his power.

Link then checked his own stats and realized that there were already some major changes.

Link Morani

Level-3 Magician

Mana Recovery Speed: 100/hour

Maximum Mana: 1800 points.

Current Mana Points: 932

Status: Angel of Light Blessing (Permanent) dispels all negative statuses and allows the user to absorb the power of light elementals from the sun, gradually recovering health and Mana Points

Although Link stopped the transfer of power in time, he still received a portion of Herrera's power. However, the thing that caught his eye was his Maximum Mana. It was now at 1800 points!

Link remembered clearly that there was a Level-10 Legendary spell that only needed 1800 Mana Points to cast.

Coincidentally, he also had 100 Omni Points to purchase this spell. He simply had to fully replenish his Mana to cast a Legendary spell! On the other hand, his body had to withstand the toxins from two bottles of mana recovery potion, as each bottle would only recover 500 Mana Points.

He was willing to take the risk.

"Damn you Necromancer. I will show you the power of a Legendary spell!" Link's eyes shone with resolve.

## 101. Dimensional Jump

Even though Link could now purchase a Legendary-level spell, he still had to consider all the possibilities before making a final decision.

Right now, he had two options before him.

Firstly, he could choose to run away. An Angel of Light had blessed his soul, all his attributes were now full, plus he had 100 Omni Points, so escaping shouldn't be too hard for him. Once they were safely out of here, they could then go back and gather reinforcements to kill the old turtle.

From the perspective of safety and survival, this would be the best plan because it involved the smallest risk. Except there was one hiccup Bale and Shade weren't fools. The minute they found out that Link and Herrera had escaped, they wouldn't be foolish enough to stay here and wait for them to come back with reinforcements.

The world was vast, and they could hide anywhere and not be found again. Or they might go straight to the North, to the Dark Elf kingdom they would surely be welcomed there. That would also mean that Norton kingdom's enemy would gain two more powerful Magicians.

The second option was to use the Legendary-level spell, enter this turtle shell of a Mage Tower with Herrera and face the Necromancer head on!

How hard can your shell be? Is it barbed with spikes too? Are you sure those spikes won't turn on you and stab you to death? Well I'll meet you inside your Mage Tower, and we'll see how soft and defenseless the old turtle is without its shell! These were the thoughts that ran through Link's mind as he considered the plan.

Although this strategy had the element of surprise going for it, it was also potentially dangerous. Indeed, it was possibly life-threatening.

The Mage Tower was the opponent's own territory. He'd most likely have a large number of magic seals that he could use. The only way they could defeat them was through a surprise attack where the opponents were caught off guard.

Right now, there were only 13 seconds left before the shield, Sacred Screen that Herrera had cast over both of them would collapse. And outside the shield the undead army was already surrounding them, waiting for the moment they could get to them to attack.

They must decide quickly!

"If I had a way to get us into the Mage Tower," said Link hastily, getting straight to the point, "And we join our forces together to fight against Bale and the Necromancer, do you think we have a chance of winning?"

Herrera's knowledge of magic was much deeper than Link's, so he regarded her views as highly valuable.

Herrera was taken aback by the question, but this time she didn't doubt Link's words. She considered his question for three seconds.

"You haven't used your Domingo crystal, have you?" she asked.

There was a sign of weakness and exhaustion in her voice. Although Link managed to interrupt her blessing just in time, it was obvious that her power was greatly reduced. She would probably need to recuperate for at least half a year before she could fully recover.

Link nodded; even in the direst of situations, he still reserved the fire elements stored inside the crystal, just in case. With it, Link could unleash a Flame Blast fireball in one second!

Herrera then took out a bottle of mid-level Mana potion and gulped it down. This restored 500 points of Mana to her body. She then turned to Link.

"Judging from the Mana fluctuations around the Mage Tower," she said, "The Necromancer should be a Level-5 Magician. Although Bale is a Level-6 Magician, he's old and frail, and his reaction time is much slower than ours. If we attack them when they least expect it, I think we can defeat them!"

In any magic battle, even slight advantages over the opponents could often decide victory or defeat!

The moment Link heard Herrera's words, Link knew no matter how big the risk was in attacking the Mage Tower, it was worth taking.

He immediately went to the spell menu and selected the list of Level-10 Legendary spells. The list then quickly appeared and Link skimmed through it and his eyes were immediately caught by a glowing spell card. There you are!

Dimensional Jump

Level-10 Legendary Spell

Mana Consumption: 1800

Effects: The spellcaster, along with other people or things connected to him will be teleported to any point in space chosen within half a mile.

(Note: This spell can override any magic barrier below the Legendary level.)

This spell was a high-level group teleportation spell, and it allowed for long-distance teleportation even up to slightly more than half a mile. But what was most impressive about the spell was the fact that it was practically unchallenged and invincible.

This reason for this was simple at this point there were very few Magicians who had reached Legendary level, so virtually no one could stop him. He could jump from one point to the next and back again as he wished and jump to wherever he wanted as no one was able to obstruct the spell.

Are you sure you want to learn this Legendary spell? The gaming system asked.

Yes! This was the last trick he had up his sleeve.

Ding! Link saw this bright Legendary-spell card disappear from the interface, and at the same time, he felt an intense heat spread throughout his body, then unimaginable panal over.

Just as Link couldn't hold in his scream any longer, the pain quickly disappeared like a dream. Link assumed that it was some subtle but crucial modification of his body done by the gaming system to allow him to unleash a Legendary-level spell.

Three seconds later, a notification popped up on the interface.

Spell learning complete. The player has mastered Dimensional Jump.

Link could feel the change within his body. He then turned to Herrera.

"My lady," said Link jokingly, "Do you still have any mid-level Mana potions left?"

"Of course." Herrera then took out a bottle. She knew Link's body could withstand the toxicity of one potion now.

"No," said Link, shaking his head as he reached out for the potion, "I need three of them."

Because of Herrera's blessing on his soul, his body was now a blank slate and he could definitely handle a bottle of Mana potion. The second and third bottle might cause some damage to his body, but in this situation, it would be a necessary sacrifice.

What does he need so much Mana for? Herrera was bemused, but this was no time to be asking questions now. She saw how persistent and resolute Link was, so she relented and gave him three Mana potions.

The moment the bottles reached his hand, Link gulped them down without any hesitation. He didn't feel any changes when he drank the first one, but by the second bottle his stomach began to burstito a pain that was so intense that he almost doubled over.

"You're out of your mind, it's going to kill you!" said Herrera, appalled.

"Don't worry, I can handle it!" assured Link with a chuckle, his hand rubbing his stomach. He then cast the Blizzard spell on his belly to freeze it momentarily.

Link's stomach started to feel numb under the spell, and the pain gradually subsided.

He checked his Mana again and found that it had been fully replenished. He then turned to Herrera and said, "Let's prepare for battle!"

"Yes!" Herrera nodded, she wasn't sure what kind of trick Link was going to use, nonetheless she'd made up her mind that she would trust him.

With her wand in hand and her Mana surging, she was ready to unleash a Level-4 spell in 1.2 seconds as soon as she encountered the opponents.

A Level-4 spell in 1.2 seconds that was the miraculous skill she developed thanks to her innate ability as an Angel of Light and her own hard work in creating a Supreme Magic Skill. The only catch was that she could only do it once a day.

Nonetheless, this spell, combined with Link's lightning-speed Flame Blast, had given her the confidence that they could defeat their opponents.

Two powerful Level-4 spells both cast in little more than a second any Magician in the world, no matter how mighty they were, would be hard-pressed to defend themselves against that. And any Magician below the Legendary level would be brought to their knees if they were taken completely off guard by these attacks. In fact, Herrera was sure even the Dean Anthony wouldn't be able to defend himself in this case.

Link smiled then wrapped his hand around Herrera's waist. Her waist felt soft and delicate in his hand and he thought it felt quite comfortable to be holding her like that.

"Hold on tight! We're finally going to meet that turtle of a Necromancer in his shell!"

Herrera took a deep breath and braced herself for whatever she was going to face next. But even so, nothing could've prepared her for what happened next.

"Oh, the glorious Lord of Light!" she couldn't help but whisper.

She saw Link suddenly put the wand away, then stretch his hands out and form into knife-hands. His hands glowed in a transparent water-like aura, but when it extended outito the air, a light blue electric arc appeared.

Soon after, the electric arc began to expand until Link and Herrera were surrounded by it, creating a light sphere. Then the electric arc was dispersed out from the light sphere and into the surroundings.

Then the space outside of the light sphere began to undergo a peculiar change. It got darker and darker, like day turning into night. Then, in the darkness a white feather-like light emerged and it glowed and glimmered like a beautiful aurora.

This fantastical aurora lasted for about half a second and then it disappeared completelythey found that they were now somewhere else.

The dense white mist had disappeared and was replaced by a dark hall instead. There was a dark green pool in the center of the hall, gurgling and bubbling and releasing a purple gas. There was no sign of Bale, but in the corner of the hall there was a brightly shining magic seal, of which in the center stoodamn. He was wearing a large cloak and where his eyes should be there were two green glowing flames that looked like will-o'-wisps.

At this moment, Herrera stood there motionless with a thousand thoughts spinning in her mind.

Wasn't that a dimensional spell? But how did Link cast it with his bare hands? How could he bring another person with him? Didn't we just got teleported from more than half a mile away? But that's an impossibly huge distance!

Herrera was completely dumbstruck. She couldn't understand how it was possible for Link to use a Legendary-level spell. Everything about what just happened had simply undermined all the knowledge about magic that she had acquired so far.

Inside the Mage Tower, the Necromancer was similarly astounded. He had seen everything on the Magic Mirror from the moment Link cast the Legendary spell to the moment they disappeared in the midst of the dense white mist more than half a mile away out of thin air. And now, just moments later, they had materialized right in his hall, right before his eyes.

"No, it's impossible!" Shade was so flabbergasted he stood there with his eyes staring fixedly at the two opponents materializing before him.

This Mage Tower, like any regular Mage Tower, was protected by a magic barrier that would preventitrusion from dimensional spells and teleportation. And that was why he had been confidently looking through the Magic Mirror to monitor their movements without worrying about the possibility of being attacked himself.

But right now, the two Magicians had successfully broken into his Mage Tower when he was in a virtually defenseless state!

## 102. Instant K.O

Necromancy Mage Tower.

...

The only person who understood what happened was Link.

He drank the third Mana Recovery potion without hesitation, overloading his body with more toxins. Even with his abdomen frozen, he could still feel the burning sensation searing through his intestines.

The accumulation of toxins in his body had also begun to affect his nervous systems. He was having double vision and a pulsing sensation in his brain. He was somehow maintaining consciousness through all these discomforts.

Link bit his tongue to jolt himself sober. He could not afford to lose focus now.

Link had 500 Mana Points after drinking the potion as his Mana was completely depleted from the Dimensional Jump spell. He then pinched Herrera on the arm to signal her it was time to attack.

"Charge!"

Link hollered and held the Domingo Crystal in his arms, extracting the fire elementasstored inside the crystal to the tip of his wand, already set up with the magic formation of a Flame Blast spell.

After 1.1 seconds, a burning incandescent fireball appeared at the tip of the wand. Link's eyes darted across the hall, actively searching for Bale while he was channeling the spell.

The plan was simple. Link would keep Bale occupied while Herrera dealt with the Necromancer. However, Bale was nowhere in sight. When the Flame Blast spell was fully formed, Link did not release it immediately in case of any emergencies.

Herrera raised her crystal staff towards Shade and started casting her spell. After 1.2 seconds, she whispered, "The Light of Zenith!"

Light of Zenith

Level-4 Light Element spell

Casting Time: 2.5 seconds.

Mana Cost: 600 points.

Effect: Creates a high-temperature light sword with strong purifying powers. All Level-5 and below spells will be purified directly.

(Note: Herrera's triumph card)

This spell was extremely difficult to master and the original time needed to cast this spell was 2.5 seconds. Herrera not only finished the entire spellcasting process in a second, she even managed to enhance the spell with Supreme Magical Skills. A pure white light sword one-foot-long in diameter appeared in her hand. She swung the sword towards Shade, giving him no time to react.

Flame Blast and The Light of Zenith! How can they cast it so fast! Shade was completely bewildered, the two green flames around him dancing more vigorously than before. Although he knew it was a dead end, his instincts were to immediately set up a defensive spell.

Purple magic runes started surrounding his body, and it only took a second before a defensive barrier was set up. This was even faster than Herrera's Light of Zenith casting time!

"Dark Runic Barrier!"

The reason for the fast casting time was the magic formation Shade had prepared way beforehand. He merely had to activate the magic formation to release the spell. This was his backup plan in case he ever got ambushed.

Dark Runic Barrier

Level-5 Defensive spell

Effect: Generate a barrier with dark element particles before enhancing it with runes. Effective against both physical and magical attacks.

This was the only magic formation Shade had that could be released in his Mage Tower. His other magic formations were all built to release external attacks. He had few visitors and was a Necromancer, he hence fully focused his offensive power to the outside of the tower where most, if not all, of his threats came from.

As a Necromancer, he also could not openly purchase raw materials on the market as well. He had to be calculative with the way he used his limited resources.

This Dark Runic Barrier was to be used in case of an emergency.

To think the day would come so soon!

Boom!

The collision of the light and dark spells caused a deafening explosion.

Although the Light of Zenith was a Level-4 spell, it was enhanced with both Supreme Magical Skills and Herrera's inner gift for light elemental magic. Furthermore, Herrerasstaff was also an item of the Legendsthis spell had offensive power way higher than ordinary Level-4 spells.

Beams of light refracted off the dark elemental barrier and hit the walls of the Mage Tower. The refracted light reduced all it touched to rubble and quickly weakened the strength of the Dark Runic Barrier.

In the end, only one damaged dark rune was left circling Shade.

"A strong light spell indeed, but it was not enough," Shade spoke, sounding defeated. He had already seen the Flame Blast spell that Link had channeled.

Defending against the Light of Zenith did not mean anything. His Dark Runic Barrier could never defend against two consecutive Level-4 spells. He knew he would have lost from the very beginning.

Link had finally given up on his search for Bale. However, he was still wary and kept his Flame Blast spell unreleased, waiting for Herrera to cast a new spell.

Keeping the Flame Blast spell in his arsenal would not only ensure their safety against Bale, but also deter Shade from going on the offensive. Link was not planning to give up that vantage point.

In this time, Herrera did two things. First, she activated her defensive magic equipment, releasing a Level-4 Defensive spell, Light Guarding Barrier.

The spell only took 0.5 seconds to appear, providing protection to both Herrera and Link.

Secondly, she started channeling a new Light of Zenith spell. It would take longer for her to cast it this time, but with the deterrence from Link's Flame Blast spell and the protection from the Light Guarding Barrier, she had more than enough time.

Even if Bale appeared, they would be able to react in time.

Shade was furious to see Link handling the situation with such arrogance. To think that Link would continue to put him down instead of ending the battle with his spell.

"I will make you pay for looking down on me!" Shade started his retaliation. Mana surged into his stage and a black skeleton swiftly took form. This was a Level-5 secret dark elemental spell, Shadowed Skeleton.

If his spell was successful, at least one of them would be seriously injured.

However, Link was still calm and collected.

Link might seem to be bursting with arrogance. However, no one here knew that he was once revered as an Archmage by many!

As an Archmage, he was extremely observant of every move his opponent made. He knew that this Shadowed Skeleton was simply an ordinary Level-5 spell without any Supreme Magical Skill enhancements.

Since it was an ordinary spell, its spellcasting time could be easily deduced.

To be able to tell the spellcasting time from the fluctuation of magic waves was part of the fundamentals of being a Magician.

Link happened to be extremely skilled at this.

Herrera's Light of Zenith spell would take form earlier than Shade's Shadowed Skull spellit should be a 0.3 second time difference.

In this time, Link did not sense any additional magic wave fluctuations in the hall. Convinced that Bale would not be able to change the tide of the battle even if he attacked now, Link fired his Flame Blast spell without any hesitation.

The fireball flew across the hall and struck the remaining dark rune with full force.

Boom! A loud explosion rang through the hall followed by a blast of heat.

Fire elemental spells were known for its offensive power and Flame Blast was one of the most destructive ones. Link's spell penetrated through the weakened Dark Runic Barrier in an instant.

The fireball exploded and engulfed Shade in flames. In the midst of the dancing crimson flames were some black flames, caused by the forced interruption of Shade's spellcasting.

Shade screamed in agony. While he had an immortal body, fire elemental spells were the bane of all Necromancers. Under the burning effect of magical flames, the endless pain directly assaulted his soul.

Furthermore, the interruption of his Level-5 spell resulted in the fearsome rebound of his magic.

Shade could only writhe in pain.

The effect of Flame Blast dissipated after three seconds. Shade collapsed helplessly onto the ground, his robe thoroughly burned; all that remained was a charred skeleton.

His staff was also broken and the green flames in his eyes flickered weakly. He was defeated and had lost all power to resist.

Shade's Mage Towers were next to useless in this direct confrontation.

Link and Herrera made use of their advantage which allowed them to maximize their strength, overwhelming Shade with a calculated outburst of power and perfect cooperation.

Shade could not help but curse, "How can it be! How could I have failed?"

He had a Mage Tower which extended his range by miles. He also had a huge army of undead at his command. His only consideration in battles was how many minions would he be losing.

Complete failure on his side never seemed possible to him. Even if it was Dean Anthony, Shade was fairly certain of his victory as long as Anthony was traveling alone.

However, he was indeed defeated, at the hands of two young Magicians.

"Where is Bale?" Herrera asked coldly.

She still had not released her Light of Zenith, planning to keep it as a threat.

"I don't know," Shade gritted his teeth.

Bale's transformation was almost complete. It was his only chance at turning the tables around. But just as he spoke, Link spoke, "Look, there seem to be something in the pool."

Observation skills were one of the essential qualities a Magician must possess. Link had been looking for Bale this entire time, there was no way the pool could escape his eyes.

Shade was forlorn of hope.

## 103. Big Rewards!

In the Necromancer's Mage Tower.

...

Bale was dragged out of the dark green pool with the Magician's Hand, and the condition of his body was revolting!

The Magician's robe he wore had been completely corroded by the water of the pool, so he was now stark naked. Folds of eroded gray skin were riddled with holes, and in places even the bones and internal organs were visible. From inside his body in between the internal organs, a foul-smelling dark green mucus oozed out.

He was oblivious to what was happening to him and seemed to be in a deep sleep. His eyes had been eroded away, leaving only two black holes where his eye sockets were. But what was most disturbing was the sight of that eerie smile he wore on his grotesque goblin-like face.

Link took a glance at Bale and understood right away what was going on.

"He's turning into a Lich!" said Link, "The transformation is almost complete. He'll wake up soon."

Herrera took a deep breath. Her eyes betrayed shock and disgust, and she turned silent for half a minute. Then she pointed her wand toward Bale and said, "Mana Lock!"

Mana Lock

No Spell Level

No Mana Consumption.

Effects: Seals the Mana in the spell target's body for a certain period of time, blocking the opponent's ability to cast any magic spells.

(Note: The spell's effect is very powerful, but it must be cast when the target is in a state where they cannot resist the spell.)

Bale was currently unconscious, so naturally he was not able to resist. Once the Mana Lock was successfully cast, Bale would no longer pose any threats to them even when he woke up later.

The Necromancer Shade was severely woundedhe'd just been hit by a powerful backfire of the spell and his Flame of the Soul was almost extinguished, so he was now completely incapacitated. It was impossible for him to ever cast spells again; he was lucky enough to still be alive. Only then could Link and Herrera catch their breaths and feel that they were truly safe.

They both looked at each other and noticed how serious the other's injuries were. Especially Link, who seemed to have one foot already in the grave.

There was a deep slashed wound on his leg, his face had a deathly pallor, his nose and his mouth were bleeding, and his hands and feet were trembling wildly from the toxin poisoning of the Mana potion.

Now that everything was over, he stopped straining himself and slumped to the ground. Then he realized that he was so weak that he couldn't even sit up, so he let himself lie down. The toxin in the Mana potion turned out to be much more powerful than he imagined.

Herrera was much better than Link, she was only weakened because she'd used the secret soul spell on Link earlier. Once she saw Link collapsing, she rushed towards him then took out a bottle of pale green potion and gave it to him.

"I'm giving you mid-level detoxification potion," Herrera explained as she was helping Link to drink the potion, "It will save your life now, but you'll need to rest for at least 10 days to fully recover. You must not use magic at all in this period of time, otherwise there will be permanent residual effects from the toxins." As she spoke, she started cleaning Link's wounds.

The wound was caused by the claws of the undead army, so not only was it an external injury, Link was also infected with toxins from the undead. This was the reason why even though Link was injured not more than five minutes ago, it had already started to fester and become swollen and dark green pus had even started to ooze out from it.

If the wound was not promptly dealt with, judging by Link's thin and quite frail physique, it might even become life-threatening.

Seeing the gruesome wound on Link's leg, Herrera's eyes began to tear up. She sat on the floor and held Link up in her arms and then took out a white crystal bottle.

Link looked over and saw the crystal bottle filled with translucent gel-like liquid; the liquid inside exuded a sacred and holy aura.

"Is that holy water?" asked Link softly.

"Yes, it is," answered Herrera, "I brought it with me to deal with any black magic forces and now it really is coming in handy. Brace yourself, it's going to hurt a little."

She then pulled open the cork and dribbled the holy water slowly onto the wound on Link's leg. There was a soft sizzle where the holy water touched the wound. Link saw a glaring white light emerging where from the wound and a green gas spewed out from it as well. A foul stench then spread to his nose, and at the same time he started to feel an incredible pain!

It felt as if someone had stabbed his leg with a knife then turned it around and kept pushing it down deeper into his flesh. Even while his whole body was numb by the toxin poisoning, the pain had managed to pierce through and dominate his whole senses. His body was trembling uncontrollably now, and he was about to let out a scream.

It really did hurt like hell!

But Link still managed to hold in his screams because the excruciating pain was greatly alleviated by Herrera, who was holding him gently in her bosom and was constantly caressing him to soothe his pain.

After about ten seconds, the pain in his leg slowly dissipated. Herrera held him in her arms the whole timeone hand was tenderly stroking his back.

It felt incredibly soothing. Link could smell the gentle fragrance that radiated from Herrera and it was so calming that it felt as if there was a tiny hand that had gently picked up the pain he felt on his leg and threw it far away from him.

A wise Sage had once said that the most comforting place in the world is the peak of a woman's chest. I thought it was just a joke then, but now...I guess it's true. Link wouldn't mind staying this way for a little longer.

After a long while, Herrera gently asked, "How do you feel now?"

"I feel much better now," murmured Link.

The second Link uttered the words, Herrera pushed him immediately away from the gentle embrace. To be honest, he still longed for that gentle touch and would love to experience it for a little longer.

Herrera's face was reddened, which was something that had never happened before. But after blessing Link's soul, she felt their souls were now intertwined and that they could keep no secret from each other. They were now a part of each other, and it confused her.

Herrera then checked Link's wound again.

"It should be fine now," said Herrera, visibly relieved.

"I feel like my strength has recovered somewhat. I think I can stand up now."

Link then tentatively moved his arm and found that the feeling of weakness in the body had been dissipated.

It turned out that the main culprit for the weakening his body wasn't potion poisoning after all, but was instead the toxic residues from the wound that was caused by the undead army instead.

Link didn't expect the toxin from the undead to be so deadly. It was just his luck that Herrera had brought the holy water along, otherwise he would unobtedly be as cold as the ground by now.

After a while, Link stood up with Herrerassupport. He then scanned around at the interior of the Mage Tower.

"What a crude Mage Tower. The whole interior was simply one big hall. The magic materials here are abundant though," said Link after a sigh.

These magic materials were all found in the magic seals. There was Mithril, Celestite, and other precious stones. There were also the bones, fur and hide from a variety of magical beasts and what excited Link most of all was Thorium!

Like Mithril, Thorium was also a Mana-conductive metal and it had the same silvery appearance. The most noticeable difference between the two metals was Thorium's extremely shiny surface, where it gleamed in a silvery light that looked just like the stars in the sky.

Thorium was ten times more conductive to Mana than Mithril. To speak in terms of electric conductivity, Mithril was equivalent to graphite, while Thorium was equivalent to copper.

Mithril was a general Mana-conductive metal in the Firuman continent and was widely used in low-level magic gear. But Thorium, on the other hand, had now begun to ascend in popularity due to its high quality. In fact, any magic gear of Level-4 or higher must now use Thorium as its core!

The value of Thorium was also ten times that of Mithril. One ounce of Thorium would cost about 3000 gold coins. Link then searched the entire Mage Tower and ultimately collected 4.5 ounces of Thorium from the core of magic seals. These were then pulled into threads as thin as the breadth of human hair and then they were bundled up together, forming into a small lump of Thorium the size of a thumb.

In addition to the Thorium, there was also 11 pounds of Mithril. There were still some miscellaneous trinkets and belongings apart from that, and overall, Herrera estimated the total value of their looting to be at least 40,000 gold coins.

To Link, this was a vast fortune!

To Herrera, however, the amount wasn't so impressive.

"This Necromancer is poor for a Level-5 Magician," she said

She had no interest in taking the loot, so she collected them all into a pile and pushed them towards Link.

"Link, you take all of it. Think of it as the reward for your role in investigating Bale," she said.

If it had been someone else, Link would've insisted on an equal share, but with Herrera, he could easily understand and accept her well intention. Since she didn't want the treasures herself and had also intended to give him the gold coins as the rewards for helping her, Link happily obliged. He only had 300 gold coins right now anyway, and that amount of gold coins to a Magician was simply pathetic and insufficient for anything at all. He knew the lootings would definitely come in handy.

He then cheerfully kept all these materials into his storage pendant.

By now, Link's energy had recovered a lot. He was now able to move freely, and his Mana had started to recover at a rate of 100 points per hour. The residual side effects from the Mana potion toxins turned out not to be as serious as Herrera had feared.

Still, this was no laughing matter. For his future's sake, Link resolved to use as little magic as possible in the next 10 days.

At that moment, Bale, who had been lying on the ground all along, began to move. His voice was grumbling in his throat. Immediately afterwards a foul green liquid oozed out of his mouth, and his head began to sway around while his four limbs began to flail in the air.

"He's waking up," said Link as he glanced at him.

## 104. The World's Greatest Illusion

Bale had a nightmare.

He dreamed that he was transported to an extremely dark place, so dark that he could not even see his fingers. He also felt cold, a bitter and painful cold that penetrated through the thick fabric of his magic robe. He shivered uncontrollably. There was a howling blizzard all around him. This blizzard seemed to be alive, entering his body through his nose, ears and mouth, robbing him of his body heat.

Bale instinctively tried to create some sources of heat. However, he could not find his staff nor his magic equipment. When he attempted to cast spells using his bare hands, he realized that the Mana in his body had completely disappeared. It seemed that his magic had abandoned him.

"What exactly happened? Where am I?" Bale panicked.

In this desolate land, Bale resisted the pain of the bitter cold and braved the brewing snowstorm, losing track of time. It seemed like an eternity before Bale realized that he no longer felt the cold. The sinister aura continued to enter his body, though the uncomfortable sensation of cold air inside him seemed to have dissipated. He even felt more energetic than before.

"What happened? Am I going to die?" Bale was unable to understand the situation.

As time passed, Bale gradually realized that his state of vigor was not fading away and he was instead feeling more energetic by the minute. The piercing cold in his body now felt like a cool breeze. It had been a long time since he felt this level of energy.

How can it be? I am almost 70 years old, in my twilight years. Why do I feel like I am back in my twenties? Bale was puzzled. Suddenly, Bale was hit by a flashback.

Undead magicimmortalityShadeI remember now, I was in Shade's Mage Tower and going through the transformation process in the pool. Does this mean that I have already succeeded? Bale thought with glee.

He slowly accustomed to his new body. His body was numb and far less sensitive than before, especially his sense of touch. The only thing that was clear was the cool breeze that surrounded him. Under the effect of this power, he became increasingly energetic.

Is this the power of darkness, it's not as scary as it seems, Bale thought.

Bale felt extremely comfortable in this state and relaxed his body as he waited for his transformation to be complete. However, things did not go as smoothly as he thought. Bale was rudely awakened by a loud bang.

What happened? Isn't Shade protecting the pool? What is the commotion about?

In an instant, Bale felt a tight squeeze on his body by a powerful force that pulled him out of the embrace of the cooling breeze.

What is going on! Bale felt his body being exposed to the air. When he tried to open his eyes, he realized that he could not see anything. He then heard the voice of a young man.

"Master Bale, you look even more revolting now than the rotting corpses I've seen along the way."

It was a familiar voice. Bale had definitely head this voice somewhere. He searched his memory frantically for the owner of the voice. At that moment, another voice appeared, "Bale, you still took this path in the end."

It was an extremely clear and pleasing female voice. In Bale's memory, there was only one woman he knew who possessed this voiceit was Anthony's most cherished disciple, Moira.

The moment he identified Moira, he could slowly piece the puzzle together. He spoke in shock, "Moira and Link? How is this possible? Where is Shade?"

A weak and raspy voice could be heard, "Bale, I have failed."

"Just how many Magicians did the East Cove Higher Magic Academy send? How long has it been since the transformation started?" Bale was bewildered.

Even if the six-man council was present, it was not possible to defeat Shade in a short time if he had utilized the power of his Mage Tower. He was a Level-5 Necromancer!

Shade smiled forcefully, "It's just the both of them, and it's only been 40 minutes."

"But you have the Mage Tower" Bale could not believe his ears.

Shade was prepared to answer but was interrupted by Herrera, "That is enough, Bale. As arsected master of the academy, you chose to dabble in dark magic and even willingly transformed yourself into this hideous creature. You have betrayed the glorious tradition of our academy. You shall receive judgment for your actions."

As this involved the secret to Link's unimaginable power as the Chosen One, Herrera did not want to reveal more information to Bale.

Bale shook this head. "No, please don't. I did not harm anyone; I only want to live! Moira, please let me go. I promise to disappear from this world forever and not appear in front of anyone from the academy. I will stop my research into dark magic as well."

He would be finished if he was brought back to the academy. Even if he was spared the death sentence, he would lose his freedom forever or even have his magic sealed. He would rather be dead.

"I'm sorry but that is not a decision I can make," Herrera refused.

Bale was not going to give up easily, "Moira, please, I do not wish to die. There is still so much I want to know about magic and dying now will leave me with too many regrets. Let me go just this once, give me a second chance to make amendments."

Herrera was slightly moved and fell silent. Before she awakened as an Angel of Light, she was just an ordinary human. As her senior in magic, Bale had given asstance her when she was still learning magic. In fact, she was still wearing a magic bracelet that Bale had given her during her coming of age ceremony.

Herrera was aware of what would happen if she brought him back to the academy. The thought of her once caring and wise senior Magician suffering such punishments pained her. However, it was definitely not enough to change her decision, it simply made it harder for her to refuse Bale's request.

Bale seemed to see some hope in this silence, "Moira, we have known each other for 30 years. I even watched you grow up! You know what kind of person I am; I have never done something against my conscience. Even this time, I did not harm anyone in the process of my dark magic research. Please let me go."

Herrera was at a loss for words.

"Master Bale, I think you are mistaken," Link stepped in.

"Yes?" Bale replied respectfully. He knew that his freedom depended on both Herrera and Link. He had to get on both of their good sides.

Link smiled and continued, "Your mistake lies in the fact that you do not realize the impact the dark forces have already had on you. Those Magicians who fell to the dark side held the same beliefs as you in the beginning. Some were just curious, while others, like you, only sought to gain immortality so that they could continue their research into magic. The majority of them did not wish to cause harm to the world. Shade, didn't you also start your research into dark magic only out of curiosity?"

Even Link was curious about the mysteries of dark magic. He even kept Tarviss' Occultic Rune and planned to study it in secrecy. However, after this incident with Bale, Link clearly saw the corrosive effects dark magic had on humans and had come to a decision. When he returned to the academy, he would find a suitable time to hand over the Occultic Rune.

He might have been able to acquire precious knowledge from the Occultic Rune. However, once he was exposed, he would lose Herrera's trust in him as the Chosen One. Between an Angel of Light who was willing to sacrifice her soul for him and an Occultic Rune which could offer him some insights but at the same time tempt him to the dark sideit was a clear choice which was better. No other option would make any sense.

Shade wanted to rebut but fell silent. It was true that he started his research only out of curiosity, but when he finally realized his mistakes, he could no longer turn back.

Bale was still in denial, "So what? Those Magiciassimply had no willpower. I am different! I am a Master Magician; I can do it!"

Link laughed. The legendary Magician Bryant once said, "A mortal's self-control is the world's greatest illusion!"

Mortals had always placed great faith in their willpower, believing that they could control not only their actions but even manipulate the consequences of such actions. But this was all just a rosy picture they painted for themselves. Even Link had unknowingly been absorbed into the alluring mysteries of magic. If not for Herrera, he would eventually end up on the wrong path as well.

The sight of Bale bursting with self-confidence irked Link. Link then revealed, "Let me tell you something. The potion that you used to complete your transformation was made from the souls of at least 100 humans! You can confirm this with Shade."

"Shade, is that true?" Bale was also startled.

Shade fell silent for a moment before admitting, "In order to balance out the corrosive powers of the darkness, I incorporated the essence of fresh blood into the potion. The blood essence requires at least a ton of fresh blood from humans. However, I only used the blood of slaves."

There were only about five liters of blood on average in a human's body. To extract a ton of blood would mean that 200 lives were taken. This number was way higher than what Link had estimated.

"Only from slaves? How moral and kind of you." Link laughed in disgust. "In order to achieve your immortality, 200 lives were sacrificed, and this was just the first step. Is this what you meant when you said you didn't want to harm anyone?"

"I was unaware of this!" Bale defended himself.

"Stop talking!" Herrera had enough. She looked at Bale in disappointment.

"Master Bale, when you heard that 200 lives were sacrificed for you, you did not show the slightest sense of guilt and remorse. Instead, all you could think of was to shirk your responsibility in the issue. You have already been corroded by the darkness, I will personally bring you back for your judgment!"

Bale knew that all his chances were lost. He finally unleashed the rage that had been building inside him, "Damn it! I am a member of the six-man councilI demand that you release me!" He was merely venting his emotions at this point.

Link stared at Herrera and said, "He has lost it."

"Link, who exactly are you? I am an established Magician, how dare you!" Bale growled in rage.

As an Angel of Light, Herrera felt the need to defend the Chosen One. She gravely commanded, "Bale, Link's true identity is something far beyond your imagination. Be tactful with your words!"

"Go to hell! All of you!" Bale lost all sense of reasoning.

"Let's bring him back."

Shade was seriously injured while Bale was under the effect of a Restiting spell. It was a simple task to transport them back to the academy. Herrera cast a flying spell and brought them back without any delay.

After they left, two dark figures appeared in front of the dark Mage Tower. One of them spoke, "To think that they could defeat Shade."

"It was indeed unexpected. But that might not necessarily be a bad thing. Am I right?"

"Indeed. Although now it seems like we have to find a way to get Bale out of this mess."

## 105. Anthony, the Dean of the Academy

Anthony was 63 years old, but unlike the doddering Bale, his body was still very healthy and strong and his hands and feet were as nimble as a young man's. He was also still full of energy and could most likely live up to a hundred years old.

At seven o'clock in the morning, he was still in the East Cove Magic Academy. But by 8 o'clock he was already in Springs city and he had been discussing with a large group of senior officers about the appointment of an army Magician. By 3 o'clock in the afternoon, he had basically decided on the most suitable candidate.

The expedition with the army would be a challenging task. Although the Magician would receive some special treatments, the expedition would still require a Magician with some physical strength. Therefore, the Magicians involved in the army were no older than 40 years old. In Anthony's view, one person who fit the position the most was Darris, the first genius of the younger generation in the academy.

At the young age of 30, Darris had already advanced to becoming a Level-4 Magician and his future looked very promising. Anthony saw the shadow of his own past in the young Darris, so he wanted to give him this chance to accumulate experience and prestige.

Originally, he had considered his disciple Herrera as well. Unfortunately, she was a woman, so she wasn't suited for the position. In the world of magic, there was no discrimination between men and womenin fact, there were many powerful female Magicians. But in this case, a beautiful woman like Herrera working among the army would probably be a bad idea.

At 6 o'clock in the evening, Anthony attended a sumptuous dinner that King Leon had specially prepared for him. After all the perfunctory greetings and social ceremonies, the time was already 8 o'clock. He then rushed to the palace of the portal tower of the palace, ready to go back to the academy.

So far, everything was in line with his plan, and nothing had happened that had diverted him from his schedule. Overall, he was satisfied with the trip to the capital city this time.

Although Anthony didn't always like to attend these tedious meetings and dinners, he understood that it was his duty as the dean of the East Cove Magic Academy. The whole thing had wasted a whole day of his time, but now that everything was settled, he was eager to come back as soon as possible and hated wasting another second in the city.

Shrouded in the flickering glow of a magic aura, Anthony was finally back at the academy, the place where he spent nearly 40 years of his life. But as he was walking down from the portal tower, Antony frowned as he could sense that there was something amiss with the academy today.

Under the portal rune, Maxim, the Magician responsible for the maintenance of the portal tower, was standing there quietly with his brows slightly creased and his face gloomy. Anthony could instantly sense that something was troubling him.

"Maxim, what happened?" asked Antony with a frown. His white beard seemed to stand on its end, his nostrils were flared, and his thick lips and his round eyes were piercing. He didn't look manifestly angry then, but his features were nonetheless very imposing.

Maxim immediately bowed respectfully to the dean, then said in an overwrought voice, "Sir, there has been a problem."

"What is it?" asked the dean.

Anthony's face sank and the air around his body became depressed. The elements in his surroundings began to agitate while tiny tornados began to form in the air around him these were the effects a powerful Level-7 Magician could exert on his surroundings.

Cold beads of sweat started to form on Maxim's forehead; he knew how tempestuous the dean's temper could be. Even though he had mellowed slightly with age, the oppressive air he exerted now when he was in a bad mood was enough to intimidate anyone. In fact, anyone not used to it might even be scared stiff by it.

"Sir, I don't yet have the details," said Maxim, "but all the Master Magicians have been waiting for you in the Hall of Truth, so you'll get much better information when you get there."

The Hall of Truth was where the academy's most important meetings were held. Only Magicians of Level-3 and higher were eligible to attend the meetings held here. Generally, these Magicians were the elites of the academy.

And right now, all of the Master Magicians were gathered there. Even Maxim, a Level-5 Magician was reluctant to reveal any details himself. Anthony surmised that the cause of this commotion must inevitably be grave indeed. His brows were now tightly knit together just from thinking about it.

He forced himself to maintain his composure and followed Maxim all the way to the northeast corner of the academy, to the Hall of Truth.

Along the way, they met some Magician's Apprentices who seemed to be oblivious to the dire situation looming over the academy. Their expressions bore no worry nor anxiety, and as they encountered the dean, they bowed at him and quickly scurried away.

This discovery made Anthony feel relieved. Although the current situation upset him deeply, he was still glad that the top officials had kept everything concealed from the apprentices. This thereby prevents the problem from being scandalized or spread panic throughout the academy.

Five minutes later, they arrived at the entrance to the Hall of Truth.

The magic barrier of the Hall of Truth had been activated and a purplish, semi-circular barrier enveloped the entire hall. This prevented anyone from the outside to overhear or use magic spells to spy on whatever was happening in the hall.

There was a thick and sturdy magic door in front of the hall. Maxim rushed in front and opened it for the dean. Through the door, Anthony noticed that there were not many people inside. There were only a handful of people there and most of them were white-haired, old Magicians.

Maxim did not enter the hall but stepped aside to let the dean in instead. Anthony took a deep breath and walked into the hall then immediately sealed the magic door behind him.

He glanced around the spacious hall and found that five Master Magicians were sitting at the long table for the academy's High Council. There were six members in the council: Grenci, Fendan, Vossmir, Hanswise, Andorras and Bale all were present, except Bale.

When they saw Anthony, all five rose to their feet and greeted the dean.

In the middle of the hall, a young man stood there with a familiar-looking young woman by his side. After a while he recognized the woman as his favorite disciple, Moira. The young man near her looked very younghe was probably no older than 20 years old. Yet Anthony could sense a very powerful aura surrounding him. He must be at least a Level-4 Magician.

"Who is this?" asked the very surprised Anthony. He'd never heard of a Level-4 Magician who was under 20 years old in this academy. Such a gifted Magician should be renowned throughout the Firuman continent. But who could this be? Could he be Wavier, the famous Magician from the South?

Wavier was a 19-year-old Magician whose Mana had already reached Level-4. He was known as the most gifted young Magician among mankind.

Link then took a step forward and with one hand on his chest and one hand behind him, he bowed respectfully.

"My name is Link Morani," said Link. "I am Magician Bale's apprentice."

"Link? Oh, it's you," said Anthony. "Yes, that's right, I remember reading your thesisBy the way, where is Bale?" Suspicions started to creep up on Anthony. If it really was a big problem, all six members of the council should be present. So why was Bale still missing?

This oddity had made him forget about his wonder and curiosity of the young Magician.

"Tutor," said Herrera, after a long sigh, "Bale is over there."

She then pointed towards the dark corner next to a statue. When Anthony looked over, he saw three figures on the wall, all of whom had been restrained by Mana Lock.

Anthony couldn't see very clearly at first glance, so he approached the figures and squinted his eyes to see better. When he could finally make out the identity of the figures on the wall, he unconsciously drew in a sharp breath.

Among the three, one of them was almost burnt to a crisp, with all the hair on his head charred. His breathing was labored and shallow. He looked terrible indeed, but not nearly as terrible as the other two beside him!

The other two had lost almost all of their flesh and muscle. All they had left was a layer of skin that covered their bones. They looked no different from bare skeletons. One of them had a glowing flame in his eyes like will-o'-wisps. And even though they had been restrained by Mana Lock, Anthony could still sense a faint but piercing cold aura radiating from these two.

"But that's a Lich!" shouted Anthony. "No, Bale, is that you?"

He knew that something terrible had happened, but he still wasn't prepared for such a shocking revelation.

Although Bale's appearance had changed beyond recognition, he was still someone Anthony had known for nearly 40 years, so he immediately recognized the ghoulish figure as his colleague and old friend Bale.

This man moved slightly, then let out a sigh heavy with regret.

"Yes, Anthony," said Bale. "It's me."

As things had progressed to this stage, Bale was now nothing but a heartbroken old man.He was no longer in the frenzied state that he was before.

"What happened?" asked Anthony in a desperate voice. He then walked towards them and pointed his wand at Shade. "Did he trick you?"

Anthony still couldn't believe that Bale, the Magician he'd known for all these years, would embark on the path of black magic.

"It was my own doing," said Bale. "My friend, I'm afraid I've let you down."

By now, Bale had already calmed down. Now that things had reached this point, he realized that whatever he'd done was irreversible, and he didn't even wish to keep on living. What he wanted most right now was a peaceful death.

Anthony sunk into a long silence. After that, he turned to Moira and said, "Moira, tell me what happened."

Herrera nodded. She then began explaining how she had accidentally sensed the aura of black magic on Darris and got suspicious, so she asked Link to help her investigate them. At last when the truth was discovered, Darris ambushed Link but was defeated by him. She then described how Bale had escaped to the black Mage Tower in Mist Basin and how he was defeated and captured there. She spilled out everything that had transpired, and apart from the exact details of the battles they fought, nothing was left out.

When she was done, Anthony took a long hard look at Link. Herrera had kept her words plain and simple, but the grave danger that they must've suffered through was apparent to Anthony. There were some strange points in Herrera's explanations that he found suspicious as well, though this wasn't the time to be asking those questions.

"My old friend," said Anthony as he turned to Bale, "do you have anything to add?"

"I've completely failed as a Magician," said Bale as he shook his head. He seemed dejected and grief-stricken. "I have nothing to say for myself."

"Darris, what about you?" asked Anthony, turning once again to Bale's chief disciple.

Darris had been seriously wounded, and now he had to face Anthony's imposing presence, the situation was almost too much for him that he felt breathless.

"II don't want to die!" he finally said.

Anthony let out a long sigh and wentito silence for a long while. He then turned to the remaining five members of the council.

"Ladies and gentlemen, Bale may have chosen the wrong path, but I believe he had not really committed any serious crimes, and his knowledge and wisdom in the fields of magic remain valuable and impressive. I propose to permanently block his Mana and prevent him from ever being able to cast spells again, and to imprison him in the Tower of Azura. (Note: This is the academy's prison tower for Magicians who committed crimes.) As for Darris, he should be stripped of his magic powers and handed to the River Cove Town court to be tried for his crimes. And as forhim"

"His name is Shade," said Herrera. "He's a Level-5 Necromancer."

"Yes, the Necromancer Shade," continued the dean, "As for him, I judge him to be guilty of the cruelest crimes, and I propose the Purge of Fire as his punishment."

The five Master Magicians then put their heads together and discussed the matter.

Some of them thought Bale's punishment to be too lenient in light of the clear evidence that proved he had indeed murdered a coachman of the academy. Yet, none of them brought this up because they didn't want to offend the dean. Bale was, after all, their long-time colleague, and despite all the wrongs he had committed, no one was willing to inflict harsh punishment on him. After much deliberation, the second most powerful Magician of the academy, Grenci, stood up and announced their verdict.

"Sir, we are all in agreement that your proposal was just and wise," said Grenci.

The matter was of the utmost importance and must only be decided by the highest officials of the academy, so Herrera and Link could only observe on the side and had no right to participate in the decision making. Once the verdict was reached, Bale, Shade and Darris' fates were then sealed forever, with no possible chance of alteration.

Bale hung his head low and said nothing. No one knew what thoughts were running through his head at that moment. Darris' eyes were lifeless by then and soon enough, he couldn't hold out anymore and collapsed to the ground. As for Shade, he was silent throughout the whole incident. He knew that he was finished the second his Flame of the Soul was severely injured, so he had long resigned himself to his fate.

Antony now turned to Herrera and Link and a glimpse of pride cropped up on his usually severe face.

"Both of you," the dean began, "have risked your lives to expose the darkness that lurked within the academy. And you've done it with careful discretion to preserve the good name and reputation of the academy. Your courage and wisdom deserve to be rewarded!"

## 106. Hefty Rewards

The Hall of Truth.

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After Anthony revealed the specific rewards, Link almost let out a laugh. Naturally, with a group of serious high-level Magicians around, he could only keep this joy in his heart and maintain a calm composure.

Anthony was extremely generous. As one of the only two people involved in the mission, Link received 5000 gold coins as a reward.

That was not all.

The most important thing to a Magician was not gold coins. Wealth was simply a means to an end, which was of course, attaining magic-related items such as magic books, magic equipment, alchemy potions, magic scrolls, raw materials and so on.

Apart from the wealth, Link also received 100 pieces of thorium!

Previously, when he looted all the magic equipment from Shade's Mage Tower, he only acquired a total of 123 pieces of thorium. He never imagined that he would receive 100 more in the form of a mission reward. thorium cost at least 10000 gold coins if sold at market price.

With all these magic materials, Link would have a better foundation to work with when he resumed his magic study.

After announcing the tangible rewards, Anthony continued, "Link, although you have already reached Level-4 in such a short time, you are still considered a young Magician. Naturally, you still have not spent enough time with the profound wisdom that is magic. If you are willing, you may choose one of the masters to be your mentor. You do not have to make the decision immediately. You should, in fact, talk to all the masters and only make a decision when you find the best match."

The strength of a Magician was never the main concern when a disciple had to choose a mentor. The mentor's personality, teaching pedagogy and the area of their magic research was often the most important matter. It was also important to findamntor that you could work well with.

Link was elated upon hearing these words. Similarly, the masters in the hall also immediately had a glow in their eyes. Every one of them wanted Link as a disciple.

A Level-4 Magician at a tender age of 17 was a genius that might not even appear once every century. Even Wavier of the South could not compare to this prodigy.

Perhaps this would be the person who would replicate the glorious achievements of Legendary Magician Bryant and attain the pinnacle strength. If they could be known as the mentor of a Legendary Magiciantheir names would go down in the annals of history!

However, Link had already made the decision, "Can it be anyone?"

"The person might not need to be a master as long as you think that they are the best fit. Of course, the masters are definitely good choices," Anthony explained. He too, would like to take Link as his disciple. However, as the principal of the academy, he needed to take a step back and open up this chance up to the six-man council.

"Moira has been answering my queries regarding magic all this time and is therefore in essence, already my mentor. When she was fighting the Necromancer, she also cast a Level-6 spell, The Edge of Zenith, proving that she has also become a Level-6 Magician. Hence, I will like to become Master Moira's disciple," Link said.

This was a decision Link came to after careful consideration of the all the different factors. Herrera would definitely share all her knowledge with him without withholding any information. Furthermore, she was also Anthony's most treasured disciple. If Herrera did not have the answer to a problem Link had, she would naturally approach Anthony. Link would thus benefit from the knowledge of two strong Magicians.

Anthony smiled upon hearing those words. He was a wise man and saw through Link's plan immediately. However, in the presence of all the other masters, he asked, "Will you not reconsider? Master Grenci is very adept at alchemy, while Master Ferdinand is unmatched in the area of fire elemental magic. Master Weissmuller on the other hand, is a master at creating magic equipment."

Whenever Anthony was introducing the niche area of that specific master, Link would bow respectfully. When Anthony was done with his speech, Link said, "Principal Anthony, my magic foundation is still very weak. I would definitely consult the masters when I think I am ready to reach the next level. When that time comes, please kindly take me in."

Even though Link had made it clear that he did not want to change his decision, he still kept his options open. He knew that the knowledge from the other masters was also extremely valuable and that it would help him reach the pinnacle of magic.

Link had already made his choice and he was clearly unshaken. The masters could only watch and feel slightly jealous of Anthony.

Such impressive oratorical skills, Anthony thought.

Anthony had a good impression of Link ever since he heard how Link handled Darris' ambush. Seeing it with his own eyes truly made him fond of this young man. To think that he could remain so calm and collected in front of the strongest Magicians in the academy and at the same time, maximize his interest while being extremely respectful.

In contrast, the Darris that he once valued was not much of a prodigy after all.

If all goes well, this kid will become one the core members of this academy in a few years' time.

Anthony had seen many disciples come and go. Link reminded him of another young man that he saw a few years back. This young man had silver hair and a lean physique. He was good looking and had the bloodline of the ancient Neanderthalensis (Note: An ancestral race known for their magical talents). His name was Wavier; he was the most brilliant Magician amongst the young generation in the Southern Free Trade Confederation.

"It's time to pass it on to the new generation," Anthony sighed, looking contented.

Link would surely laugh if he knew Anthony thought so highly of Wavier. From his knowledge, Wavier was indeed heralded as a prodigy in this timeline. However, his flawed and aloof personality would eventually cause his demise in the future. There was only one true genius in this game, and in the current timeline, he was still unknown. That person was the half-elf, Eliard.

"I presume you are tired, please take a rest," Anthony concluded.

Link and Herrera then left the Hall of Truth. Since he was already officially Herrera's disciple, Link went directly to her Mage Tower. Herrera naturally welcomed him and was prepared to give him a spacious and comfortable bedroom on the third floor of her tower.

Herrera's Mage Tower was a lot smaller than Bale's. There were only a total of four floors and the third level was already the core layer. It was also the layer where the largest Elemental Pool in the Mage Tower lay. The fourth floor was where Herrera herself stayed.

However, Link refused and insisted that he stayed on the second floor together with Eliard. When Link told Eliard that he had also become Moira's disciple, Eliard was elated. Now, there was no need for them to meet at the common square every day. He could simply just go to Link's room to exchange magic knowledge.

He was however, surprised at Link's magic powers. Link had already canceled the effects of the Feather of Disguise; Eliard could feel the strong Mana power emanating from him. Eliard was both shocked and relieved. He had always felt it was a waste that Link did not have the magic talent that matched up to his intelligence. Now it seemed perfect.

He was slightly jealous, though. Link showed no signs of complacency and still treated him the same way as he did in the past. Eliard was thus relieved.

Time flew. It had been a week since Link moved into Herrera's Mage Tower.

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Link originally wanted to surrender his Occultic Rune to Herrera. However, he had been so absorbed in his magic research this whole week, especially reading Herrera's huge collection of magic books. In his free time, he would write his thesis and experiment on new spells in the Elemental Pool.

It did not even occur to him to bring up the Occultic Rune.

Herrera did not have many disciples. The only two official Magician disciples she had were Eliard and Link. After splitting the usage of the Elemental Pool equally, Link had three hours a day to perform his magic experiments. With the Elemental Pool, Link mastered three Supreme Magical Skills in a week. Two of which were ordinary skills, however, the third one was extremely powerful. It concerned the State of Gibraltar.

Ever since he exceeded his limit in the Mist Basin while consecutively releasing multiple Glass Orb spells, he had developed a strong interest in the State of Gibraltar. An idea struck him while he was in the middle of his research and he decided to expand on it.

He had already thought through all the required magic formation and mana flow for the spell. All that was left was to test it out in the Elemental Pool. Link set the room to a "do not disturb" mode and started his experiment.

At this moment, a group of Magicians from the East Cove Higher Magic Academy was preparing to set off for war.

There was a total of 130 Magicians. The youngest was just over 20 years old, while the oldest was 40.

The strongest Level-4 Magician was one of Anthony's disciples named Fischer. He was also the leader of this mission. Around two-thirds of the group was made up of mid-level apprentices. Most of them had limited magic talent and had little to no hope of becoming official Magicians. They were merely trying to gain some merit from the war which would hopefully lead to a better future.

One of them was Marco, an apprentice from Bale's Mage Tower. He boarded the carriage with a dazed expression on his face.

## 107. Links Machine Gun

Many Magicians had left the academy to join the army, though Link took no notice of this as he was busy in a mid-level Elemental Pool. He was skillfully manipulating the magic seal and was engrossed in his spell experiments.

Just as its name would suggest, the Elemental Pool's appearance resembled that of a pool. There were five of them, each housing the five basic elements: metal, wood, water, fire and earth.

Each of the elements was of a distinct color and the colorful pools were placed around the perimeter of the expansive room along with the controlling magic seal. Once the magic seal was triggered by the presence of active Mana, a Level-5 Guarding Barrier would then be instantly activated.

A layer of thin translucent barrier enveloped Link's body. It might seem fragile, but it was indeed powerful enough to protect him from any magic spells that were below Level-5. This meant that even Flame Blast wouldn't be able to do anything to him now.

Link had the power to manipulate the five elements as he wished through the controlling magic seal, into which he then began to pour his Mana into.

By now, a week had passed since the day he was poisoned by the Mana potion and all symptoms had basically disappeared. Thus, Link could now cast any spells without holding back.

The controlling magic seal then guided Link's Mana out of the barrier and into the center of the room. Link was then able to remotely control his Mana and construct any spell structure he wished from it. This time, he'd chosen to experiment with Flame Blast. He'd been using the spell ever since Gladstone's days, yet it was only recently that he truly learned its structure.

He had now received 60 Omni Points for advancing to Level-4, but time had been scarce lately and the spell structure of Flame Blast had been too complicated. So, Link had only been able to master the standard version of the spell.

Because Link wasn't using a wand, the spellcasting was slower than normal. Plus, the spell structure was quite intricate because he had added some of his own modifications to it, so in the end the whole spellcasting process took 3.5 seconds to complete.

Once the spell structure was fully formed, it then attracted the fire element. Under Link's control, it flowed slowly into the spell structure and permeated through it before it began to form a fireball.

This time the experiment was still in its rudimentary stage, so Link's control of the fire element was still very limited. Thus, the explosive power of the resulting Flame Blast was only one-tenth of its full potential.

Once the spellcasting was complete, Link detonated the resulting Flame Blast immediately.

Bang!

A tiny explosion went off and a shockwave spread out through the air. But as Link was protected by the Guarding Barrier, he was completely unaffected by it.

So far, everything went as expected.

But a second later, something strange happened. There was a bizarre Mana fluctuation when the Flame Blast exploded and then, right after the explosion subsided, another Flame Blast emerged.

The new Flame Blast then began to attract fire elements, which immediately filled in the spell structure just as the previous Flame Blast did.

This was a mystery to Link, as he hadn't made any effort to cast a new Flame Blast at all. The only thing he did was keep the flow of his Mana into the magic seal constant.

The newly-emerged Flame Blast then exploded and within a fraction of a second, one more Flame Blast appeared. Link burstito laughter at the sight before him his experiment was a success!

Then, a notification appeared on the interface.

Player attained a new Supreme Magical Skill. 10 Omni Points rewarded. Please name the name spell.

"I think I'll call it Machine Gun," said Link.

Naming of new spell successful.

Machine Gun

General Supreme Magical Skill

Scope: Any spell below Level-5.

Effects: Allows the spellcaster to cast one type of spell in close succession. The spellcaster needs only to construct the spell structure once, as it would automatically emerge from the Mana residue of the previous casting.

(Note: Link's Machine Gun is a high-speed spellcasting technique.)

The real state of Gibraltar involved the engraving of the spellcaster's soul onto the magic seal, which was unobtedly a complex and esoteric operation. Not to mention it was a risky one because there was a good chance that a single mistake might lead to the damage of the soul. In fact, parts of the knowledge associated with this state were purportedly so evil that it could be classified as black magic.

Link's magic skills hadn't yet reached this level, though. His spellcasting techniques were only a shadow of the real thing and were only an application of parts of the theories that described the state of Gibraltar.

With this Supreme Magical Skill, the most time was spent on the first spellcasting as there would be no time wasted on spell structure construction in the subsequent castings. The higher the spell level, the faster it would work and if it was used in conjunction with the Domingo crystal, it was possible to virtually cast spells in an instant.

This is amazing! thought Link, All I need now is a slight upper hand in battles and there would be no way anyone could defeat me!

Link thought of how much time this skill would save him. With the help of the Domingo crystal, he realized that he could unleash Flame Blast in the time it took to blink an eye!

With a high-speed Flame Blast, and several of it in quick successions to boot Link was thrilled at the thought of possessing such a formidable power!

And if he used it on Glass Orbs, he could virtually unleash an unending string of them without using much of his energy at all what a power that would be!

This would certainly come in handy on the battlefield. If he was ever faced with a never-ending onslaught of enemies, with the help of a few Warriors around him, he could effectively form a magic fort with this skill!

Once he'd truly mastered it, he was sure he would use it so frequently that it would become second nature to him.

Link then combined the skill of Machine Gun to every spell he'd ever mastered and practiced using it together. After five hours of hard work and with the help of the gaming system, Link was now thoroughly familiar with this Supreme Magical Skill.

He walked out of the Elemental Pool and stretched. He discovered how tired he actually was he was in no mood to study at the moment. He also had no new ideas to work on for his thesis, so he decided to take a walk to freshen up his mind. But only a few steps later, he thought of the agreement with Herrera.

I should go get a few magic materials from Herrera's warehouse and build new magic gear.

He'd already had some ideas for novel enchantment gear in his mind, plus he now had the 5000 gold coins' reward from the dean, so the time was ripe for new magic gear.

He cast a spell for a magic mirror, then used it to tidy up hishi

He gently rapped on the door as usual, then patiently waited for a reply.

The door would usually open in less than a minute, but Link had been waiting for two minutes now yet it was all silent and the door was still closed.

That's strange. Is she out? But she never goes out anywhere.

Link was about to turn back and leave when he heard the door click open and a voice coming from inside the room.

"Come in, Link, and wait for me in the sitting room," said the voice, "I'm in the shower."

It seemed that he'd come at an inconvenient time, but since he was already there, Link decided it was best to just wait for Herrera.

Link entered the hall and the door instantly closed behind him. He went to the bookshelf and scanned the titles of the books there. Then, he pulled out one that was called Runic Wheels Stacking and began to read it.

Runic wheels were the basis of all spell levels. Link had developed his spell Whistle based on the exploitation of the runic wheels. The field of runic wheel studies were so profound and full of potential that it was almost a branch in magic studies all on its own.

Link was very interested in these kinds of modular theories in magic and he had spent a lot of time and energy on the subject both in his thesis and in his experiments.

The textbook described the many techniques in exploiting runic wheels. After a few pages, he began to be fascinated by the subject and started to be so engrossed in reading it that he was oblivious to the flow of time.

While he was completely preoccupied with the book, he heard a sound nearby. Link instinctively looked up and saw Herrera walking outito the sitting room, fresh out of the shower.

She was wearing a white silk bathrobe that hugged her figures intimately, accentuating those fabulous curves of hers. Link had seen Herrera's naked body before, but that was at a time of emergency, and it was only a quick glance, so neither of them had thought much of it.

But things were different now. Their two souls had intertwined ever since the incident in Shade's Mage Tower. Herrera had tended to his wounds so tenderly then that it was impossible to look at Herrera the same way again. She now had a special place in Link's heart and there was nothing he could do about it. Link wasn't aware of it, but his gaze was completely locked on Herrera now, and he found himself unable to turn away.

"Tutor," Link said after forcefully pulling his gaze away from Herrera, "I must've come at an inconvenient time. I'll come back later."

As he spoke, Link was getting ready to leave. It really wasn't the right time after all, as his focus had been completely diverted from the thoughts of magic gear. He reckoned he wouldn't get much done anyway even if he stayed.

Herrera was intrigued by Link's reaction. She then cast a drying spell on her damp hair, then sat on a chair and brushed her hair in front of a magic mirror that she had just conjured up.

She felt she had nothing to hide from Link. He was her disciple now and he was also a comrade who had fought with her in battles. Not to mention, he was also the person who had been chosen by the God of Light.

"No, stay," she said, "As the Chosen One, you'll be tested with countless temptations in the future beauty, knowledge, strength, power and so much more. You must start learning to fight them now."

Link cursed silently to himself. How could Herrera possibly ask him to resist this kind of temptation?

There wouldn't be a problem at all if it had been any other woman, but with Herrera? She was an Angel of Light, one of the Four Great Beauties voted by the players of the game how could he possibly stand there unaffected with such an enchantress right in front of him?

"Tutor, forgive me for my frankness, but there is a limit to the self-control for us mere mortals. The gods themselves advised against tempting the devil. In the face of a tantalizing temptation, surely the best thing to do is to stay away from it." This was a conclusion he'd reached himself after having pondered about such things a lot lately, induced by the fate that befell the Master Magician Bale.

"Very wise," Herrera nodded in approbation. Then she asked, "But what if you can't run away from it, then? Would you then give in to the temptations?"

Great, now we're actually going to argue about this.

Link sighed as he was reminded of Darris' curse that doomed him to a life of loneliness. Why else would he be having a dry and boring debate with a beauty who just got out of the shower? But as the conversation went on, Link realized that he was feeling more comfortable and at ease.

"If there's no way of escaping the temptation," started Link, closing the book in his hands, "Then one would just have to give in, at least for the time being. Once one was exposed to the same temptations over and over again, the temptation then ceases to be tempting, and over time it would take no effort at all to resist it. In fact, one can become indifferent or annoyed at the enticements that used to hold so much appeal in the past."

As he spoke, he no longer averted his gaze away from Herrera. He was now staring straight at her, pinpointing his gaze on whichever part of her body he desired. It was Herrera herself who had wanted him to stay, after all, so he'd better take the full advantage and drink in the glorious view before him.

But the more Link studied Herrera the more he noticed how much more beautiful she'd gotten lately, possibly because of the awakening of her angelic soul. She was already 35 years old and she had a mature temperament, but her skin seemed more delicate and radiant now and her curves were as alluring as ever. Though she had maintained her seraphic and elegant nature, at this moment she seemed less like a pure angel to Link and more like an enticing devil!

This time, it was Herrera's turn to feel uneasy. She wasn't a hundred percent angel after all apart from her angelic nature, there was a human nature in her as well. By now her face had turned rose red, as though she was inebriated by wine.

"Interesting. I'll be sure to keep what you said in mind in the future," she said. "So why did you come see me today?" she asked, desperate to change the subject, "Do you need anything?"

The question fell like a bucket of cold water over Link's head. He was suddenly reminded of his original intention in coming to meet Herrera.

"I need some materials to construct some magic gear," he said bluntly, "I'm assuming the promise still stands?"

Herrera took a quick glance at Link. Her expressions briefly betrayed her slight dissatisfaction, though she remained as charming as ever.

"I knew you wouldn't forget about that. Yes, of course. Come on, follow me."

## 108. The Art of Earning Money

Although Herrera claimed to have a treasure trove of magic equipment, the real sight of her magnificent storage was extremely underwhelming. Link was prepared to be blown away by the collection but was, in fact, greeted with a container three feet long and two feet wide. It was small enough to be placed under Herrera's bed.

It was difficult for Link to keep his eyes off Herrera, especially when she was only wearing a thin bathrobe. When Herrera leaned over to pull the container from under her bed, her beautiful curves were accentuated by the bathrobe. Link averted his gaze.

He swore to never land himself in this kind of situation again.

Herrera flipped opened the wooden box cover and layers of wooden boards filled with small wooden boxes unfolded itself right in front of his eyes. There were a total of ten layers and at least 100 wooden boxes in this small container. Every wooden box was filled to the brim with little things. The small ones were no larger than a green bean, while the larger items were at least the size of half a fist. There were precious metals and wood, which were basic ingredients for the creation of magic equipment. Link could name some of the materials he saw, but was clueless to the others.

Even if one simply looked at the variety of items present in this chest alone, it was already a large collection. However, the number of items was also amazing.

"The chest is a dimensional equipment enchanted with shrinking magic. For example, this thorium is only the size of a green bean, but in fact" Herrera took the thorium out of the small wooden box and it immediately increased to the size of a thumb.

Herrera was not lying. Her treasure trove lived up to its name.

"Take your pick and tell me what you chose. I will say in advance, the half-price offer is only limited to five items, any more and they will be charged at their original prices." Herrera stepped aside and gave Link some space.

Link was already spoiled for choice. He saw rare metals like thorium, premium silver and Khorium as well as precious wood like rosewood, Aoki wood and Perilla wood. There were also many mysterious meteorites and crystals of different attributes. It was like a physical encyclopedia of magic.

After browsing for a full half an hour, Link finally decided on the materials he wanted to buy.

Herrera calculated and said, "The original price is 20000 gold coins, after the discount it will be 10000 gold coins."

Link had a pained expression on his face. After all, he only picked five items, he couldn't believe his ears.

"This Perilla wood is of the highest quality, made form the core of a Perilla tree that was struck down by a bolt of lightning. Look at its color, its purple metallic glow was perfectly preserved. The lowest market price for such a high-quality piece of wood is 4000 gold coins. This Khorium is also arguably the best anti-magic metal and a good stabilizing agent. Even though it is only 1 ounce in weight, the market price for this is at least 6000 gold coins. This as wellin essence, this is really the cheapest price you will ever find."

Link was at a loss for words. At that moment, he fully understood how expensive magic research could be. Not only did he lose the 5000 gold coins he just received as a reward, he was even 5000 gold coins more in debt!

"If I sell you my current wand, how much can it fetch?" Link took out his matchstick wand and showed Herrera. He was starting to find his wand outdated and was planning to craft a new one anyway. Since he already bought so many high-quality materials, he should make good use of them.

"This wand is pretty well crafted. The only drawback is the low-quality materials used to craft it. If you are willing to sell, I can give you 3800 gold coins." Herrera gave a reasonable price.

Even though the material was of low-quality and the attributes were slightly lacking in luster for an Epic quality wand, the skills required to craft this wand was well worth the 3800 gold coins.

Link, on the other hand, was shocked, "That much?"

He was estimating the price to be around 2500 gold coins. The materials from this wand came from his New Moon Wand and Fire Crystal Staff. Judging from the materials alone, it would be a bargain even if he managed to sell it at 1300 gold coins. 3800 gold coins was simply daylight robbery!

"Of course, how do you think I managed to collect so many high-quality materials? I earned most of my money from crafting magic equipment and making good use of the leftovers from the crafting process. While the materials are expensive, they would be useless without a Magician skilled enough to craft equipment out of them. This is why our skill is the most valuable."

Herrera pointed to Link's wand and said, "If you are willing to spend some time and alter the attributes of your wand, for example changing Might of a Giant to an offensive or defensive magic, this wand will be able to fetch a much higher price. It can probably be sold for 5000 gold coins, or even 6000 gold coins if you have enough fame. People will usually barter and pay using precious raw materials instead of gold coins due to the insane prices of magic equipment in general."

Link was dumbfounded. Originally, he thought his debt of 5000 gold coins would be extremely difficult to pay off. However, after Herrerasspeech, he realized that he was in fact a money-making machine.

He simply needed to concentrate and craft a wand to pay off a debt that amounted to more than what an ordinary human would earn in his lifetime. It was simply amazing!

Link felt that he had come a long way as he looked back on his experiences writing magic scrolls in Bale's Mage Tower.

A successful Magician needed to have a strong magic staff, powerful magic equipment enchanted with defensive or healing spells and also an impressive library of magic books. Most importantly, they needed to have their own Mage Tower!

All of these items required a huge amount of gold coins, tens of thousands of them. A Mage Tower complete with all its functions would, by itself, cost more than 100000 gold coins to build. For example, Herrera spent an estimated 160000 gold coins to construct her mid-level Mage Tower. Furthermore, the Mage Tower still belonged to the academy, Herrera only had its usage rights. She was hence not allowed to alter the Mage Tower to her desires.

Link had always been concentrating on learning magic and ignored planning for his future. As he continued to grow stronger, he would need some plans moving ahead.

I want a Mage Tower that belongs entirely to me! Link thought.

Link was extremely confident in his enchanting skills. After listening to Herrera's words, he immediately took back his matchstick and said, "I will change the attributes accordingly."

"Sure. In a month's time, there will be a grand Magician's market festival held in Hot Springs City. A large number of Magicians from both the Nordic Kingdom and the South will be attending. If you can make the alterations before then, you can fetch a good price with it," Herrera suggested.

The news of an upcoming Magician's market was music to Link's ears. Having just bought a bunch of precious materials, it was the perfect opportunity for him to earn enough money to pay off his debts. There was no time for him to idle around; his eyes brightened as he said, "I will prepare immediately!"

Link left Herrera's room and rushed to the enchanting room on the third floor of the Mage Tower. Originally, only Herrera had access to the enchanting room. However, as Link was her trusted ally, she naturally also gave him the right to use the room to hone his enchanting skills.

Link immediately plunged himself into work the moment he thought of his 5000 gold coins' debt.

He only had one month. He planned to use his available low-quality materials to refine his matchstick wand. He would then use the rare materials he bought from Herrera to make a new wand for himself. He was even thinking of infusing the Domingo Crystal into the wand as well, together with the Perilla wood, thorium and Khorium. He would use up all his high-quality materials in the creation of this new wand.

If there were still materials left after that, he could craft some defensive magic equipment or even some aesthetically pleasing accessories that could fetch a high price at the Magician's market.

As Link was concentrating on crafting his magic equipment, Herrera received a letter from River Cove Town. The letter was from Lucy. Link had once requested that Herrera read his letters on behalf of him while he was busy with his magic experiments. If it was nothing of importance, she would usually reply to them on his behalf as well and would only interrupt him if she required his input.

Herrera opened the letter.

The letter briefly gave an update on the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries and was attached with 1000 gold coins which claimed to be the profits from their endeavors. The letter ended off mentioning the situation at the Cliff of Howling Winds. Jacker seemed to have found traces of magic in the area and he suspected it to be the work of Dark Elf Felidia. If this could be verified, then the Dark Elves could very likely have been there.

Herrera carefully read the letter and frowned.

"Cliff of Howling Winds? How did Link get involved with the Dark Elves?"

Herrera approached Link at night during his break and handed the letter over to him, asking, "Who is Felidia?"

Link was still thinking about the construction of his new wand and simply replied without thinking much, "An enemyhe is one of the main people behind the Syndicateso Jacker found the Cliff of Howling Winds?"

Link finally reacted to the question and immediately read the letter. He pondered for a moment before speaking in a serious tone, "Herrera, I have something I need to tell you."

"Yes?"

Link took a deep breath and took out Tarviss' Occultic Rune from his dimensional pendant. The moment the rune appeared, the brightness of the room dimmed and the temperature dropped by at least five degrees. It was as though darkness itself descended into the room.

He had already decided not to research into this demonic item. He was simply too busy with his research and completely forgot it. Now was a good chance to come clean. Although he was giving up on his research into the Occultic Rune, he would not let it fall into the hands of the dark forces as well. He felt that it would be wise to hand it over to the academy which was far more powerful than he was.

Herrera was shocked. "What is this? Why do you have such a wicked demonic item? Are you studying black magic?"

"I once planned to study it, but I have since given up on that idea. Will you hear me out?" Link's eyes were clear and his expression calm. He placed the Occultic Rune gently on the enchanting table.

Herrera was relieved to hear that. She had once verified with her own eyes the absence of darkness in his soul during the Mist Basin battle. She sat down and nodded, "I am listening."

## 109. Anthony's Notebook

In Herrera's room.

...

Link started his story from his arrival in River Cove Town, to his cooperation with the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries because he was desperate for money and finally to when they defeated the Dark Brotherhood and killed Viktorwhich was where he got the Occultic Rune from. Link explained all that transpired in detail to Herrera without leaving anything out.

"It is almost indestructible," said Link, pointing to the Occultic Rune. "It is a sacred gear of the demons which unobtedly contains a wealth of knowledge about black magic. My initial plan was to secretly study it, hoping to obtain power from it. But recent events have told me that I was too naive to believe that I could attempt that."

"I wouldn't blame you," said Herrera, shaking her head. She was full of relief. "Curiosity is a quality that any Magician worth their salt would have. In fact, it is the thing that drives a Magician forward. You were able to control your curiosity instead of letting it control you, and that is commendable!"

She then circled the Occultic Rune and her eyebrows creased more tightly.

"It has an ominous aura," said Herrera, "This is a serious matter, I must report it to the dean. Link, you should come with me."

"Of course," Link nodded.

Herrera then put the Occultic Rune inside a magic-sealing box then brought it with her as she and Link headed towards the Heaven's Thorn where Anthony resided.

They reached without any incident, and they found the Level-7 Magician in the alchemy laboratory of the Mage Tower, meticulously cleaning a potion pot.

"What's the matter, Moira?" Anthony was obviously glad to see his favorite disciple as the severe lines on his august face softened when he noticed her.

There was no one else in the alchemy laboratory, so Herrera closed the door behind her. She then took out the wooden box, opened it, and put it on the alchemy counter.

The moment Anthony had a glimpse of the sinister object he stood rooted to the spot with his mouth agape.

He then slowly put down the crystal potion bottle in his hands, walked a few steps towards the alchemy counter, picked up the wooden box, and carefully examined the demonic object.

Judging from his expression, he was shocked at first, then pensive, and then slowly he became more and more fascinated as he seemed to sucked in by the Occultic Rune. After a long while he jolted himself back to reality and pulled his attention away from it.

Anthony then closed the box tightly and heaved a long sigh. For some reason he seemed to have aged quite a lot since Link last saw him. It was as if the act of closing the box had exhausted all of his strength.

After a while, Anthony put the wooden box back on the alchemy counter, though he seemed to be doing so reluctantly.

It was only a while after that that he spoke up.

"This object is the wellspring of knowledge in black magic. It is very evil and yet at the same time very enticing. Moira, you should put it away quickly."

Herrera had been worried as she observed her tutor's reaction to the Occultic Rune. She stepped forward quickly to retrieve the wooden box and stored it in her storage bracelet.

"Tutor, are you alright?" asked Herrera with genuine concern.

"I'm fine now," answered Antony as he took a deep breath in relief, "Where did it come from?"

Herrera glanced at Link and he nodded to her. Then she related the events that had brought about Link's discovery of the Occultic Runes to the dean without leaving anything out. Anthony listened attentively and waited for Herrera to finish. He turned around and stared at Link in suspicion.

"Why did you decide to hand it over?" asked Anthony. "You could've kept it to yourself and studied it in secretno one would find out."

As he was speaking, the dean scrutinized Link from head to toe. He was both wary and suspicious of this young man wary because Link had kept the existence of the Occultic Rune hidden from them for quite a while, and suspicious because of his choice to reveal it and give it up now.

The Occultic Rune contained enough secret knowledge in it to make even a Level-7 Magician like Anthony lose his mind. If Anthony had been in the same situation as Link, he would have probably kept it to himself and hid it well, all while continuing to secretly study it. In the brief moment that he came into contact with the object, he experienced first-hand the strong temptations that it drew out, and this made Link's decision even more perplexing to Anthony.

Link's recent achievements had caught his attention, so he had been observing this young man lately. From what he saw, this man's obsession towards magic was in fact even stronger than his, so the charm of the Occultic Rune should have had more effects on Link than it did on him.

"Is that so?" said Anthony, unconvinced. Even so, he couldn't detect a trace of dishonesty in Link's expression.

"I remember the saying, 'Do not stare into the abyss, because the abyss will stare back at you. Do not meddle with the darkness, lest the darkness will pollute your soul'. Sir, I am but a mortal; I don't think I have enough willpower to withstand the abyss' gaze. To be perfectly honest with you, I'm, in fact, still very much interested in this enigmatic object, butbut I am afraid."

He was afraid! Those three words alone contained in them a vast amount of wisdom and humility.

The Occultic Rune was like a glorious mountain of gold with a bottomless abyss at its foot. Most people chose only to focus on the gleaming mountain and ignore the darkness of the abyss, and eventually none of them could escape the fate of getting sucked into the darkness, paying for the promise of glory with their own lives.

After hearing Link's words, Anthony kept silent for a long time. He looked directly into Link's eyes and saw a pair of dark pupils, deep and clear, radiating with both childlike innocence and bright wisdom.

Herrera did not speak either. She was still impressed by Link's words and she found that she had underestimated the young man. He was not without his own flaws, of course, but he had always been trying to use his wisdom to continuously improve himself.

After all, the gods never chose anyone based only on their physical strength and power and Link was the perfect embodiment of the fact.

For a time, the alchemy laboratory was as silent as the grave. Finally, it was Anthony who broke the silence with his hearty laugh.

"Yes, what a great way to put it 'I am afraid!' It's true, I'm afraid, too. In fact, I wouldn't be able to resist the temptation of that evil thing. If I was to be left alone with it, there would be no stopping me from trying to glean as much secret knowledge as I could. I think the best thing to do would be for all of us to face the Occultic Rune together."

"Moira," said Anthony, "You've always been shrouded by the blessed aura of the God of Light. Though you've never mentioned it before, your true identity has always been clear to me. Thus I am sure that among the three of us, you're the only one who can completely resist the evil force of this object, so you should be the one to guard it!"

"Yes, tutor," nodded Herrera.

"But don't let your guard down just yet," Anthony continued, "Even the sun does set beneath the horizon, even the day gives way to the night. There is no saying that the glory of light will be unchallenged forever. Anything can happen in the future. Link and I will be keeping an eye on you, and both of you must keep an eye on me as well. No matter what reason I give you, you must never let me touch this evil thing ever again! And neither should you have any more business with it, Link!"

Anthony's tone was fierce and impassioned as he spoke. He was evidently fearful of the evil powers of the Occultic Rune.

Mortals tended to be at their most vulnerable when they were left alone after all!

A man alone, without any guidance or supervision, was capable of doing anything. This was the reason why Anthony wouldn't trust himself to guard the Occultic Rune alone and instead chose to have all three of them mutually preventing the other two from ever touching the evil crystal again. He was confident that this was the most secure method to prevent anyone from misusing the powers that the Occultic Rune contained.

Link still had one last cause of qualm, though.

"But sir, may I ask why you would trust me to guard it too? Wouldn't the academy's high council be more suitable as the guardians of such a portentous object?"

Although Link was now officially a Level-4 Magician and could hold his own in the battlefields, Link was aware of how much he fell short in the actual understanding of the theories in magic compared to the Master Magicians. He doubted if he could be trusted to guard the Occultic Rune together with Herrera and the dean.

"Don't belittle yourself, young man," said Anthony with a smile, "It would be a terrible idea to let more people know of the object's existence. And those graybeards in the council might even try to get you expelled from the academy."

Anthony raised his hand and interrupted Herrera as she was about to protest.

"I know, it may sound outrageous, but it is the truth. The masters of the high council are old and obdurate. The only things they care about are the rules."

As he finished his sentence, Anthony then took out his wand.

It was an imposing looking wand called the Dean's Decree. It was a sacred gear that was passed down from one dean to the next. It was similar to a king's scepter in appearance, except even more elegant and delicate. Legends had it that the wand was made of the branch of the World Tree from the Elf kingdom. The gemstone on its tip, on the other hand, was called the Rainbow Moonstone and it was a precious gem found in the heart of Mount Chalfield the highest mountain in the Rocky mountain range. All the world's most gorgeous gemstones would be eclipsed by the Rainbow Moonstone's brilliant gleam if they were presented next to each other.

As Link gazed at the wand a notification appeared on the interface.

The Dean's Decree, the Guardian's Wand.

Quality: Legendary

First Effect: The wand holder's spellcasting speed will be increased by 100%.

Second Effect: The power of the wand holder's spells will be boosted by 150%.

Third Effect: The Mana recovery speed of the wand holder will be increased by 200%.

Fourth Effect: Because of the magical properties of the World Tree, the wand holder is able to use a Legendary spell that would resurrect a corpse that has been dead for no longer than a day. This spell is only limited to once a year.

(Note: This is the Legendary Magician Bryant's magic staff, formerly known as Fiona's Hug.)

Link was filled with wonder as he read through its description on the interface.

Tsk tsk, that is quite a list of effects for a single wand!

Anthony then pointed the wand to an empty space beside him, where a black hole then emerged out of thin air. He reached his hand into the void and took out a beautifully decorated notebook.

"Young man, this is my gift to you." He then handed Link a notebook.

"But tutor," exclaimed Herrera, "This is your lifetime's worth of effort!"

Anthony laughed.

"Yes, of course. It's precisely because of that why I must carefully select a successor who will receive this notebook of mine. Moira, please don't tell any of your brothers, or they might get green-eyed with envy."

He then turned around and focused his gaze on Link.

"In this notebook I've recorded everything that I have learned ever since becoming a Magician. I had planned to leave it to Moira after my death, but I'm giving it to you now. And once you're done studying it, you can pass it to Moira then," explained Anthony.

Link's heart almost burst with happiness knowing that Level-7 Master Magician's lifetime's worth of knowledge was going to be handed down to him. The value of this notebook far exceeded that of the Occultic Rune. It seemed he had made the right choice in revealing the truth to Herrera!

He then took the notebook from Anthony very carefully with both of his hands as though it was as fragile as glass.

"I will not let you down, Sir," he said solemnly.

"I have faith in you," said Anthony, nodding. He then suddenly tapped his forehead with his wand, as if considering something.

"Oh, by the way, young man," he said, "I've heard that you are a nobleman's son. Would you be interested in joining the army as a knight?"

"Me, in the army?" Link couldn't quite follow the dean's train of thoughts.

"Yes, you, in the army. The kingdom's army has now advanced far to the North, but I fear they still lack an experienced Battle Mage. If you are interested, I can recommend you to the army and you may join as a deputy commander. You don't have to give me an answer now. There's still time before the army reaches the northern border, and even then, there'll still be many preparations to make. You have two months to think about it."

Link fell silent. He took the matter seriously and took his time considering it.

"Since there is still so much time left," said Link finally, "Then I'd better sharpen up my magic skills now and learn as much as I can before the time comes."

"Go on, young man," said Anthony. Herrera was slightly taken aback by the kindly smile that lit up the dean's face. In all these years as his disciple, she had never seen such a joyful expression on Anthony's face before.

Afterwards, when Link and Herrera were on their way back from the Heaven's Thorn, Link seemed to be deep in thought.

"I still think that something must be done about Felidia soon. The Dark Elf could be working on an evil plot right as we speak. I must take a visit to River Cove Town."

"You've got a point," said Herrera, "Go ahead, then. Be careful on your way, and don't take any brash actions if anything unexpected occurs. Use this to contact me." She then handed him something that was shining brightly.

After examining it closely Link discovered that it was a white feather. He wasn't so surprised because Celine had once given him a similar feather as well. He took the feather then carefully kept it inside his storage pendant.

"Understood," Link nodded.

He did not return to the Mage Tower after that but went directly to the academy stables instead.

## 110. Operating a Mercenary Band

River Cove Town was made extremely lively by a soldier recruitment exercise held by the town hall. Many aspiring soldiers in the areas surrounding the Girvent Forest who were eager to attain military achievements had made their way to town. There were even experienced mercenaries who were tired of the vagabond life, and were seeking to work for a more structured and stable organization.

The crowd had also attracted some groups of merchants, and peculiar gadgets and accessories could be seen being sold on the streets. The people of Firuman loved to shop as well, and all these intriguing items had attracted many tourists to River Cove Town for a few days of fun. As a result, the town became even more crowded, which then attracted the circus, which deemed it as a highly profitable spot to hold performances.

This was the scene that Link was greeted with when he returned to River Cove Town. The two sides of the road were filled with stalls selling a variety of items, ranging from fresh fruits and vegetables to toys and even lucky charms. The previously empty spot just outside of town now had a large carriage, where many exotic animals were performing stunts and attracting many onlookers.

Looking at this scene through the window of his carriage, Link exclaimed, "What a rare sight."

The town was really small and the crowd made it even more difficult for the carriage to maneuver itself through the narrow streets. It took Link 20 minutes to get from the town entrance to the house of the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries.

Compared to before, the house had expanded and had become livelier. Cheers could be heard from the training fields located directly beside the house. It seemed like the members were in the midst of training.

However, Link found a few things peculiar. He realized that the house was still protected merely by a wooden fence and the door was still an ordinary wooden door. Even the damages on the door had not been fixed.

While the number of members had increased, their equipment seemed old and their clothes tattered. Except for the Flamingo necklace that hung around their necks, they looked no different from ordinary mercenaries. Link even saw a few members squatting in the corner of the yard to consume their meals, which only consisted of bread and a bowl of soup. The conditions seemed rough.

Link frowned. "Didn't Lucy say that the mercenary band was making a profit? She even sent 1000 gold coins over to the academy. This does not resemble anything that she told me."

The mercenary band should be earning at least 1500 gold coins to be able to send over 1000 gold coins to the academy. This was a huge amount of money for an ordinary person. It was not possible to earn this amount of money simply accomplishing ordinary tasks. The only possible explanation was a successful raid of a large bandit's hideout.

But as Link looked around the courtyard, there was not a single injured mercenary in sight. This meant that there were no recent battles that mobilized a large group of mercenaries.

Even if the money did come from other sources, some of it should have been used to upgrade their equipment and to repair the yard. It would not even cost much.

Link had come to a conclusion, "Lucy was lying. The 1000 gold coins came from the savings of the mercenary band and were not earned."

Link could figure out the reason for this as well. Lucy probably heard that magic research required a large amount of money and was worried that he would not have enough.

"So this is a loyal follower?"

Although he was used to NPCs being unusually loyal in the game, he was still extremely touched to experience this in real life.

Everyone only thinks about themselves on Earth. It is impossible for a person to be wholeheartedly loyal. They'll be considered a nice person as long as they are mature enough to keep their negative opinions to themselves. However, the World of Firuman values the bonds between people and places great emphasis on status. If a follower swears their loyalty to you, they will never betray you. Link thought about this and sighed.

This sight once again reminded Link that he was no longer on Earth, but in an otherworldly dimension where words and allegiance were, at times, valued over someone's life.

The crest of the East Cove Higher Magic Academy on the carriage was way too prominent. The moment Link stepped onto the lawn, Jacker came out to welcome him.

In comparison, Jacker had definitely become more well-built over the past few weeks and even developed a stern demeanor. His Battle Aura had also become more pronounced, looking more like a true master. However, this stern demeanor was not meant to exert dominance over Link. Jacker smiled the moment he saw Link and bowed respectfully. "My lord, you have returned.

Link smiled and nodded before taking the stairs up to the hall on the second floor. The first thing Link did was place 1500 gold coins on the table. This included the 1000 gold coins Lucy sent him and the other 500 gold coins were from his own savings. Upon seeing Jacker's puzzled expression, Link laughed.

"The mercenary band had indeed grown in size. However, River Cove Town is a small place; it is not possible to earn 1000 gold coins in a week. I presume this was taken from the pool of money we earned previously?" Link smiled and stared at Jacker.

Jacker did not expect Link to return so soon, and even see through their lies so easily. He scratched his head, looking slightly embarsed. "My lord, we were thinking that you might be able to put this to better use than us"

Link shook his head, "I'm not short of money. In fact, look at yourself. You are still wearing your old undershirt and belt. It's time to change them."

Jacker still firmly believed that Link was actually in need of money. He immediately waved his hands and said, "It's more comfortable to wear these old clothes. It's fine, I promise."

Link then pushed the bag of coins towards Jacker and spoke in a serious tone, "Listen to me!"

Jacker immediately sat up and listened intently.

"The development of the mercenary band is not possible without wealth. The battle equipment, training facilities, compensation for death and injuries, maintenance and expansion of the area, as well as rewards and remunerationsthese are all inevitable expenses. If you are to save on these important aspects, what incentives do the members have to continue staying in your mercenary band? They will find it increasingly tough to stay and will rather leave to work on their own as the benefits are simply insufficient. This will be extremely unfavorable to the future development of the mercenary band," Link advised.

This was the truth and Jacker fully understood what Link was trying to say.

"We may be lacking in equipment, but we are very generous with the commission. The mercenary band only takes 10 percent of their total rewardthis is extremely low in the current market," he explained.

Link stopped Jacker right there. "These are only the most basic benefits and can, at most, ensure the daily operations of the mercenary band. In order to bring the development to another level, the mercenary band has to work on their branding and prestige!"

"Branding...prestige?" Jacker was confused, how do you operate on these intangible things?

Link nodded and asked, "What do you think of when I mention the term nobility?"

Jacker was following Link's train of thought closely. He pictured the nobles he had seen in his mind and described them.

"They dress elegantly and lived in huge castles. They travel in their magnificent carriages and have endless wealth and countless fields under their names. They are also proud and haughty, speaking to commoners as though we are second-class citizens."

"And do you aspire to become a noble?" Link asked.

"A little" Jacker was slightly embarsed. It was in fact his dream to one day become a noble. This was simply human nature. If given an opportunity, even the lofty intellectuals who appeared to despise nobility and even wrote papers criticizing them would probably jump on it the first chance they get.

"This is why our mercenary band still has a lot of things to work on. We have to fix the yard and beautify our base. Our members have to wear superior equipment that is also aesthetically pleasing. Rules will also have to be set in place to restit their behavior in public. We have to cultivate a brand name that is powerful, reliable and safe. This is what I meant by operating on our prestige," Link explained.

"This might need a lot of money to accomplish." Jacker was slightly hesitant. However, he was also tempted. The mercenary band that Link mentioned was exactly the same as what he envisioned the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries could become one day. This had always been his dream.

"Then you must keep this money. Since you have already started chasing your dream, do not give up! Give it your all!"

Jacker fell silent for a while before speaking, "My lord, you have always been helping us. What can we do to repay you?"

Link smiled and said, "You guys have been a great help up until now. When the mercenary band becomes even stronger, I still have many tasks for you. Now, keep the money."

His original intent was to use the mercenary band to generate revenue for his magic exploits. However, ever since he realized the economic potential of his enchanting skills, he dismissed this thought.

Link's continued support of the mercenary band was mostly due to the bonds he forged with his comrades, but was also partly due to the fact that he could recruit some helpers that would help him in his grand quest.

The World of Firuman was complex and although magic was powerful, it was nowhere near omnipotent. There were many things that Link could not do due to his Magician identity, which limited his outreach and capabilities.

For example, a Magician would be unsuitable for missions that involved the mining of information. A Magician's identity was too eye-catching for such missions and they would fail miserably at them. However, it would be the perfect job for a mercenary that was practically unknown.

Jacker carefully took the bag of gold coins and took out a scroll. "My lord, there is a stone hut at the Cliff of Howling Winds. It is well furnished with a complete stock of daily necessities. However, there is a layer of dust on the furniture. I presume that it had been empty for at least 10 days when I found it. I searched the room and found this scroll in the corner of the room together with the miscellaneous items."

The scroll was black and was made of black alligator skin. There were exquisite silver markings on the edges. Link stared closely at the scroll and gasped, a coded message scroll?

## 111. A Challenge from the Drifting Magician

Cypher Scrolls these were the common means of communication used by the Dark Elves. They often appeared in the game in Link's previous life, but these were just worthless gray items because the messages on the scrolls were undecipherable, rendering them useless.

Link inspected the Cypher Scroll in detail. What he could deduce from it was the fact that it contained about a thousand words written in Dark Elven letters, although their meaning remained impenetrable to him.

With the help of the gaming system, Link could understand the meaning of each individual word, but a string of words was still incomprehensible. For example, there was a sentence that went the banana peel is bigger than the banana fruit. Link was at a loss as to what these words could actually mean.

This looks like a command letter, Link thought, too bad I don't have the key to unlock this code!

Link then tried to decipher the scroll word by word. But after more than 10 minutes of fruitless efforts, he finally gave up.

Forget it. Maybe I'll have better luck next time, thought Link in frustration. He then put the scroll in his storage pendant.

"We'll stop our investigations into the Cliff of Howling Winds here," said Link, "But you must still pay close attention to any movements in Girvent Forest. If there's any sign of the Dark Elves or if you notice anything out of the ordinary at all, inform Lucy immediately and she'll write to me."

Felidia was a cunning elf. He must've been jolted into action by the mercenaries that Link had hired to investigate him earlier. It wasn't hard for a clever fox like him to come to a conclusion that his identity had been revealed by the raiding of the Syndicate's lairthat must've caused him to hastily retreat.

Link wasn't too worried about the fact that he escaped, though. What he must prevent from ever happening was Felidia's freeing of the demon Tarviss in Girvent forest.

As soon as Link came to that conclusion, a message popped up on the interface regarding the mission to investigate the Cliff of Howling Winds. The dialog box turned red, indicating a failed mission, which meant that the rewards were gone too.

Link could do nothing but concede. He saw no point in beating himself up over it. If he devoted all his time and effort to pursue the rewards from the gaming system, there would be no time to focus on his own progress. Besides, he had no intention of becoming a mere puppet of the gaming system.

Moreover, he was in no shortage of Omni Points. He'd obtained 50 Omni Points from capturing Bale, 20 Omni Points from creating three Supreme Magical Skills, and 60 Omni Points for having truly mastered Flame Blast and becoming a Level-4 Magician all totaling to 130 Omni Points, which was already an ample amount for him at present.

Jacker noted Link's orders and was ready to obey them unquestioningly. Then, one of the mercenaries came over and was waiting to report something to Jacker.

"Go ahead," said Link, "I won't disturb you anymore. Oh, by the way, tell Rylai to come see me, won't you?" Since he was here now, naturally he'd want to check on his disciple's progress.

"Yes, my lord," answered Jacker.

He had expanded the Flamingo Mercenary Troop and strengthened them so that they would become his powerful ally. But a truly powerful mercenary troop shouldn't just have strong Warriors, it needed a Magician as well. Magicians tended to be proud, though, and most of them would not deign to serve alongside a troop of mercenaries, so Link decided to train one himself.

And that was why he had to pay special attention to Rylai.

Jacker had now left the hall. A while later, Rylai came in. Her overall countenance seemed to have improved since last week. Her cheeks had grown fuller and the water element aura around her body had become more pronounced nowit seemed as if she was glowing. Her eyes were especially bright, but at the same time they still projected her shyness and timidity as well, so anyone looking at her couldn't help but adore her.

But this was only her outward appearance. The moment Rylai appeared, Link could sense that her Mana was much stronger than when he last met her. Only a week earlier, her Mana had only just been awakened. In fact, he had to touch her to perceive its existence then. But now, her progress was so obvious that he only needed to be in the same room with her to perceive it.

"Very good." Link nodded, visibly pleased.

"Tutor," said Rylai meekly, though she was elated by the sign of her tutor's approval, "I've also managed to learn a spell."

"Oh, what spell is it?" asked Link, pleasantly surprised.

"It's Dewdrops," she answered.

Dewdrops

Level-0 Spell

Effect: Condense the water elements in the air inobeads of dew.

"Show me, then," urged Link. Although it was just a Level-0 spell, Link was still impressed that the girl could master it in seven days without any guidance or supervision. This was undeniable proof of her talents and potential.

Rylai nodded then pointed her wand at the surface of the table. She took about three seconds to focus her mind before the tip of her wand lit up, shining a ray of light onto the table's surface. A second later, the light disappeared, and dewdrops covered a palm-sized area on the table.

It was indeed the Dewdrops spell.

"Excellent job," said Link. He realized he'd found a bona fide talent in Rylai and it would be a huge waste of her gifts if she were to stay in here with the mercenaries.

It's time for her to enter the academy. Link thought there was no use in dilly-dallying, so he jumped straightito action.

"Go pack up your things. You'll go with me to the East Cove Magic Academy tomorrow morning."

"My lord?" cried the girl in surprise and disbelief.

It was exactly what she had anticipated hearing ever since Link arrived. She had been restless for fear that Link might not be satisfied with her progress. Heaven knew how desperately she had been working on her magic skills in the last week. She knew that this was the only way she could be useful to anyone. And now that Link had agreed to bring her with him to the academy, she knew that her efforts had all paid off.

Oh God of Light, I am going to the East Cove Magic Academy! That's one of the most sacred sites for Magicians!

Although the girl managed not to jump up in joy, her eyes betrayed her excitement with their extraordinary brilliance. Link couldn't help but smile at the sight of the girl's apparent delight.

"You heard me," said Link as he nodded in confirmation. "Now go on and get ready."

"Yes, tutor." The little girl then sprung out of the hall like a deer.

Lucy came back later in the evening. Now only Gildern was still held up by some business outside.

Lucy was naturally delighted to see Link. After the customary greetings, she rushed to the kitchen and prepared a special meal for him herself. She then laid the silverware that were reserved for when Link came back out on the dining table.

But when they all gathered at the dining table, everyone was cheery and relaxed except Lucy. She was the only one who knew that Link had returned all the gold coins he was given and had even added 500 more gold coins to it. She was worried that Link had sacrificed too much for the sake of the mercenary troop and wished he would take the gold coins back with him.

Link was enjoying the sumptuous meal and the company, but when he saw how distressed Lucy seemed, he took out a small lump of Mithril and put it on the table. In front of everyone, he used his skills of enchantment to transform the Mithril into an elegant bracelet in ten minutes. He even fixed Guarding Barrier on it so the wearer could activate the spell three times with the bracelet.

"Here's a gift to you, Lucy," said Link with a smile as he thrust the bracelet towards her. "Will you stop worrying now?"

Link's show of magic skills had left everyone there awestruck. The bracelet could fetch 700 gold coins based on its function alone without taking into account its delicate handiwork and elegance. It wouldn't be surprising at all if someone would buy it at a price of 1000 gold coins!

Rylai who had been witnessing the whole creation process of the bracelet was simply fascinated. She had learned some basic magic skills, so she knew how hard it was to produce such a magnificent object. At that point she truly appreciated how unbelievably powerful her young tutor really was.

"My lord," said Jacker jovially, "It seems you've gotten much more powerful now!"

"Still, you mustn't forget to take good care of yourself, my lord," said Lucy in a stern voice after putting the bracelet away carefully. "I think your health is a little worse than it was the last time you came back."

"I will," said Link with a forced smile, surprised at how perceptive Lucy was for being able to see the remaining effects of Mana potion poisoning in his body.

After that, they all wined and dined merrily and all the core members of the mercenary troop were enjoying each other's company. Then, just as they were about to turn in, a troop member rushed into the hall. He knew that Link was the true leader, so he addressed him directly.

"My lord, there's a Magician outside waiting to meet you. He said he was from the South and that he'd come toto see if you're as good as you're rumored to be."

Jacker's face darkened as soon as he heard this.

"What audacity!" he bellowed out as he rose abruptly from his seat. "I must go out and teach him a lesson!"

"I want to see how good you really are" was a common line used to challenge someone to a duel. It was a trick typically adopted by people who wished to make a name for themselves, because the challenger had nothing to lose by challenging an opponent who was renowned to be powerful. If he lost, then it would only be a testament to the opponent's formidable strength, not his own weakness. If he got lucky and won, then not only would he win the bragging rights, but it would also give him the chance of a lifetime to gain fame and fortune.

This Magician had come to challenge Link's ability himself, possibly because Link's reputation had spread widely. He saw a chance to ride on Link's coattails and move up in the world.

"Calm down," said Link to Jacker as he rubbed his hands together. He then turned to the others and said, "Let him in, and invite him to dine with us. We'll talk about magic skills later after the meal."

## 112. The Vagabond Magicians Challenge

The news of an anonymous challenger created a heavy atmosphere around the dining table.

Jacker's face sunk. He was suppressing his urge to rush out of the dining room to meet this brazen Magician. The Magician was clearly trying to make use of Link for his personal fame. He would not allow that!

Lucy had also put down the knife in her hand and whispered for the servant to bring her the Gale sword. She gently caressed the magic bracelet that Link just gave her

A Magician you say? I wonder which is faster, my sword or your spells?

Rylai, on the other hand, held her breath in fear. She subconsciously tucked her legs closer to her body and leaned towards Link, her eyes darting around the dining room. Occasionally, she would steal a glance at the delicious spread on the table, trying hard to curb her desire to gobble them up.

Sensing that the atmosphere in the room was getting tense, Link laughed, "Don't scare Rylai like that. Jacker, don't make that scary expression, and Lucy, stop holding your sword so defensively. Come, let us eat before we settle anything."

It's merely a challenge from a vagabond Magician. Link had just fought a Level-5 Necromancer recently, this Magician could not possibly be stronger than Shade.

If he was truly that strong, he wouldn't have needed to make use of Link to gain fame. It would be wiser for him to go straight to the East Cove Higher Magic Academy, where his abilities would be acknowledged and rewarded.

Besides, he simply wanted to enjoy his first meal with the mercenary band after his return. He did not want the atmosphere to become unpleasant because of a random outsider.

It would be rude for Jacker and Lucy to maintain their battle stance when Link himself thought nothing of the situation. They were left with no choice but to resume their meal.

Half a minute later, a thin young man stepped through the door. He was around 28 years old and had a pale complexion. The bottom of his Magician robe was stained with spots of mud and he held a dark green wand in his hand. At the tip of the wand sat a huge green crystal the size of a pigeon's egg. Link could tell in an instant that this crystal was a low-level magic jade, while the staff body was made of azure marbled wood. These two materials were commonly used in the creation of magic equipment Level-3 and below.

The glorious sight and aroma of the delicious food caused the young man's nose to twitch uncontrollably. He swallowed a mouthful of saliva which caused his Adam's apple to bob ever so slightly upwards. Link took in all these tiny details and also took the chance to get a sense of the young man's magic aura.

He was not particularly sensing for the intensity of the magic aura. The intensity of a magic aura was usually an inaccurate indicator of the strength of a Magician. A Master Magician that had his Mana points completely depleted would have a magic aura similar to that of an ordinary old man. However, he definitely would not be classified as weak. Not to mention the array of tools that could be used to conceal your magic aura.

Link was trying to get a sense of the texture of the magic aura, something that only an experienced Magician could differentiate. It was something similar to the keen aesthetic vision that an artist would have.

For example, a painting would just be aesthetically pleasing to the ordinary human eye, but an artist would be able to glean more information from it, such as the message the painting was trying to convey.

This was the kind of intuitive and trained perception that would only be possible after a substantial period of immersion into the specific field of expertise.

Ever since Link stepped footito the World of Firuman, Link had been focusing on learning magic and had been through way more battles than ordinary Magicians of his age. He had thus acquired this sensitivity.

After a few seconds, Link had come to a conclusion. The magic aura is not very pure, only that of a Level-2 Magician. It is slightly scattered with traces of wind elemental energy. This is probably the result of not going through formal Magician training. Judging from his appearance, he is not doing very well on his own.

The moment he made this judgment, the in-game system had also conveniently analyzed and displayed the stats of this Magician in his field of vision.

Vagabond Magician

Level-2

Equipment: Green Jade Wand (Ordinary)

The in-game system did not provide much information, in fact, it was not even as much as what Link observed. However, Link was not disappointed. He understood that the system merely played a supporting role in his journey. He had to be able to read beyond what the system could offer in order to attain true strength, a strength that was not dependent on external aid.

After looking at the information of this young man, Link was struck by an idea. He wanted to take this person in as his second disciple. This Magician would be a timely addition to the mercenary band to increase its strength.

It was at this moment the young Magician spoke. He leaned his body over slightly at Link which was the standard greeting procedure between Magicians of the same age.

"My name is Carrido, a Level-2 Magician. I have heard stories about your magnificent exploits and would like to see your magic with my own eyes."

Link looked young and was able to concentrate his magic aura within himself extremely well. He thus did not emanate a strong magic aura. Carrido did not possess the kind of sensitivity that Link had and heaved a sigh of relief upon sensing an average magic aura. Before he met Link, he was actually really nervous.

Link was merely a teenager and looked ordinary from every angle. In comparison, the two Warriors beside him were exerting a lot more pressure than Link was.

Carrido had also inquired about the strength of the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries. He knew that the well-built Warrior was Jacker, a Level-4 Warrior with a strong Battle Aura. The other beautiful woman was Lucy, who struck fear into the hearts of her opponent with her Gale sword.

Both of them were staring at him with a hostile expression.

Despite the heavy pressure, Carrido was not afraid. He knew that Link would be concerned with the reputation of the mercenary band in River Cove Town and would not dare to do anything over the top. He would be safe.

Link tapped his finger lightly on the table to comfort a raging Jacker, before requiting Carrido with the same greeting.

"I am Link. As you can see, we are now having a meal. You look tired and hungry. If you do not mind, would you like to join us? We can talk about magic when we are done."

Before Carrido could reply, Link had already ordered a member to bring over another set of cutlery and food.

Link had a welcoming smile and a polite tone. Carrido was unable to refuse as much as he wanted to. He was a vagabond Magician of humble origins and managed to learn three simple spells with luck and some talent. The two Level-1 spells were Wind blade and Cyclone, while the other one was a Level-0 Illumination spell.

He was powerful in the eyes of an ordinary human, and could easily make use of his magic to make a decent living. However, he knew deep down that he was a down-and-out Magician.

His magic foundation was weak as he had not gone through any formal training. Whenever he went on a mission with a mercenary band, he could earn four to five gold coins per mission on good days. However, he heard that the apprentices in the magic academy could earn the same amount simply by writing a few magic scrolls and not putting their life on the line.

The difference was stark.

Even so, Carrido still persevered and continued to improve his magic skills. He spent most of his money on his magic research. His expenses were high to begin with as he needed to travel to River Cove Town all the way from the South. On the way, he also bought a foundational magic book from a merchant; it was written by a random Level-3 Magician who was academy trained. By the time he reached River Cove Town, he was nearly penniless.

He had no fame in River Cove Town and had difficulties gaining the trust of the citizens. People usually approached the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries when they encountered a problem. His revenue for the past few days was hence pathetic.

He had been eating nearly tasteless food ever since he stepped in River Cove Town. The sight of such a delicious spread almost drove him crazy.

Even though he knew his magic skills were at most ordinary, he was confident in his Wind blade spell and Cyclone spell as he had cast it countless times during his missions. Upon hearing that the Magician from the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries was returning, he had to pay a visit.

He knew that Link was studying in the East Cove Higher Magic Academy and that he was far weaker in terms of his magic foundations. However, he was confident in his skills when it came to actual combat. As long as Link's attention slipped up during battle, he would gain the upper hand.

If news of his victory over Link spread across River Cove Town, his reputation would increase exponentially. That would solve all his monetary problems in one go. As such, he made up his mind and went straight towards the base of the mercenary band. After all, the worst that could happen was for him to be defeated in battle and end up seriously injured.

However, he never expected Link to generously offer him a seat at the dining table.

Logically speaking, Link should be insulted that he barged into the mercenary band without any warning. This was akin to an open challenge! Shouldn't Link be fuming with rage and bombarding him with spells the moment he set foot in the dining room?

This is so strange!

## 113. A Challenge from the Drifting Magician

Although still in a confused state, Carrido sat down at the table where a shiny silver plate was laid out in front of him. On the silver plate was a mouth-watering piece of steak and the aroma that wafted from it was so appetizing that he could no longer hold himself back from tearing voraciously into it.

"How is it? Isn't it good?" asked Link with a smile, "Lucy prepared it herself, it's the best steak you can get in River Cove Town."

"It's delightful!" exclaimed Carrido, "It's the most delicious piece of meat I've ever had!" Grease was dripping down his chin as he munched on the food. A few moments later, he realized how rude he must've been, so he slowed down his eating speed a little.

After hearing this sincere praise of her food, Lucy began to warm up to Carrido and the severe expressions on her face began to soften. Jacker breathed a sigh and relaxed as well. The anger that distorted his face gradually dissipated, which calmed down the highly-strung atmosphere in the dining hall.

Seeing this, the girl Rylai could start to breathe easy again and she was finally calm enough to return to the half-eaten food in front of her. It was, after all, her favorite roasted steak that Lucy had prepared herself, so she wasn't going to waste a single bite of it!

Mmm, you really can't find a better tasting steak anywhere else! Lucy then put another bite into her mouth and slowly chewed it to savor the taste for as long as possible. After a while, she looked around again and saw that everyone was now in a good mood, so she went back to enjoying the food without any more worries.

Meanwhile, Link would chat with Carrido from time to time. He would bring up general news and gossip that was commonly talked about, never touching the subject of magic. Carrido himself didn't want to bring up the matter as it would be rude to do so to someone who'd received him so graciously as a guestall he did was respond to Link's remarks with polite small talk and the atmosphere gradually became more convivial as time went on.

When the meal was over, Link and Carrido were already on friendly terms. Nonetheless, Carrido hadn't forgotten his original intention in coming here. There was no use in delaying the matter anymore, so he decided to bring up the challenge now.

"Mr. Link," he began, as he wiped his lips and chin clean with a napkin that a servant handed to him, "Well, you see, I was here to" He found that he was too embarsed to continue, as Link had been treating him so well this far.

"I understand," said Link with a smile, "You're here to see how good my magic skills really are. Well, I guess I'll show you then."

He then stretched both of his hands out and placed them on the table with his palms facing up.

"Aren't you going to use a wand?" asked Carrido.

Link smiled and shook his head.

"Have you ever seen anyone bring their wand to the dining table?" replied Link.

Carrido now realized how rude he had been just barging in here so suddenly when it was obviously not the most convenient time for the young Magician at all. He reprimanded himself for not choosing a more suitable moment to challenge the young Magician.

"Just keep your eyes peeled, Mr. Carrido!" assured Link.

Just as he finished the sentence, the smile on Link's face disappeared instantly and his eyes looked cold and piercing. In hardly a second later, a Level-1 Whistle appeared above Link's left palm, and a Glass Orb appeared above his right palm.

These two spells appeared almost simultaneously to Carrido's eyes, and what was even more frightening was the fact that they were cast in what felt like less than a second!

In this simple move, Link had demonstrated two skills that Magicians coveted the most the simultaneous casting of different spells and high-speed spellcasting!

Why did Magicians covet these skills the most? Because they meant raw and unadulterated power!

Carrido's jaw almost hit the floor by now. His eyes were fixed on the spells that emerged from Link's two hands and beads of cold sweat began to form on his forehead. The rotating metal spike and the dimly glowing solid fireball were nothing like what he'd ever seen beforethis meant that they were no ordinary spells. These spells were modified by Link's own Supreme Magical Skill and that spelled one thing out loud and clearLink was an unimaginably powerful Magician!

He's a master! A terrifying Master Magician! Carrido's heart almost jumped out of his throat. He knew now that if he were to face Link in a duel, he would be sent to the next life in a blink of an eye, before he could even lift a finger to attack this young Magician!

Moments later, the two spells disappeared and Link turned to Carrido with a smiling face.

"So, what do you think of my magic skills, Mr. Carrido?" he asked.

"Amazing! You're no ordinary Magician! I must concede to your superior skills!" said Carrido, but not without shame and regret. Still, he knew that it was the safest thing to do anyway. He wouldn't want to go up against this young Magician now that he'd seen his power!

Carrido then rose from his seat and was about to excuse himself, but Link stopped him before he could open his mouth.

"Mr. Carrido, I can sense that you are a gifted Magician yourself. Our troop needs someone like you. Would you like to join us?"

Link knew that Carrido was not a bad person by nature and he was not without talents. He was just unlucky enough to be born poor, so he was unable to receive any formal training in magic. When someone like this was given enough training and guidancehe could one day be a helpful and prominent figure in the mercenary troop.

Carrido hesitated for a while, then shook his head.

"No, I'm used to freedom," he replied, "So I don't like to be bound to anyone."

He didn't think that joining a mercenary troop was a terrible idea at all, only that this particular troop seemed a little unpromising. He still had his pride as a Magician, after all, and when he considered it more carefully, he realized that the troop was just too new and too small. He could see that their headquarters weren't too impressive and that apart from a handful of core members, the rest were equipped with very basic gear and weapons.

If he decided to attach himself to such a troop, he feared that there wouldn't be much of a future in store for him.

Link actually understood Carrido's thinking and didn't expect that he would agree to join them the first time he asked anyway. He knew not to take offense from the rejection, but he wasn't going to give it up that easily.

"Oh, I understand. But if you had any problems that I may be able to help in the future, you can always come find me here. By the way, I think you'll find this helpful."

As he spoke, Link used the Magician's Hand to thrust a textbook titled The Magician's Path to Carrido. He knew that the drifting Magician only knew a few spells. Though he seemed to have mastered those few quite well, Carrido still lacked a strong foundation of magic theory knowledge, which was fine if he didn't wish to make much progress. However, if Carrido wanted to improve himself and become a better Magician, he would need to study the underlying theories and structures of magic spells.

Carrido quickly picked up the book, but his hands shook the second he noticed the book's title and author. It was a classic magic textbook written by a Level-7 Master Magician of the East Cove Magic Academy more than a century ago! The difference between this book and the other book he'd spent 5 gold coins on was like the difference between heaven and hell!

He flipped the book open and skimmed through it hastily. Now his whole body was shaking as he could discern how each sentence was packed with wisdom, with not a single word wasted on its pages!

He was sure that after reading this textbook, there would be a big leap in his understanding of magic!

"I...I...can't...it's too precious" mumbled Carrido incoherently.

Carrido was aware of how the deepest and most profound knowledge in magic was locked up within the walls of the few ancient and reputable magic academies in the Firuman Continent. This wasn't a result of any deliberate conspiracies among a tight circle of Magicians, but was in fact caused by the long-term accumulation of textbooks in the libraries of these academies.

Each magic academy invested a great fortune in creating the ideal environment to promote the research done by their Magicians. Once these the research yielded results, the Magicians would naturally record all their findings in their notebooks, which would then be stored in the academy library as textbooks. As time went on, the academy would house an accumulation of invaluable magic knowledge within its library walls.

Thus, these magic textbooks were among the most treasured objects in these magic academies, so they wouldn't just lend it to anyone. The textbook that Link had just offered Carrido, for example, could not be bought with any amount of gold coins, but could only be borrowed by the apprentices and Magicians of the East Cove Magic Academy.

For this reason, the dream of becoming a Magician was an almost impossible one for commoners. Even a rare genius like Eliard had stumbled upon some almost insuperable hurdles before he could enter the East Cove Magic Academy. So, it's no wonder that a Magician with average talents like Carrido would have to walk a treacherous path just he could reach this point.

"I can only lend it to you for one night," said Link with a smile, "So please return it to me tomorrow morning." There was a magic stamp on the textbook that would transmit its location, so Link wasn't worried even if this drifting Magician decided to run off with it.

"Thank you, thank you very much," said Carrido earnestly, "And I'll give your invitation to join the mercenary troop some serious thought." Carrido bowed deeply at Link and gently pressed the textbook to his chest. He then turned away and left the cabin.

Even when he was already out of the Flamingo Mercenary Troop's headquarters and was walking on the road heading back to River Cove Town, the image of the dark-haired Magician still floated in his mind.

He was born a lowly commoner and the only life he knew was the miserable life of a peasant; he knew nothing about honor, chivalry or courtesy. But he knew that the young Magician had treated him with kindness and respect, and that he felt at ease and relaxed when he was around him.

Link had seen through Carrido's situation in a glance, but he never mentioned it aloud or mocked him. Though he had the right and the opportunity to demean and humiliate him, Link had chosen instead to treat him with generosity, as if he were a friend.

It's hard to believe that someone with such a formidable power would be so humble at the same time. Carrido had certainly never met such a person before in his life.

Carrido had a vague premonition that in a few years, the young man would be a bright shining star who would stand a head above all the Magicians of the Firuman Continent.

Have I just met a Legendary Magician in the making? Carrido sighed gently and began to seriously consider joining the Flamingo Mercenary Troop.

## 114. The Magic Consultant of the Mercenary Band

As it was late after dinner, Link decided to spend a night at the base of the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries. He began to recharge the magic equipment that he previously created for the members of the mercenary band. Following which, he used the remaining silver he had to craft new magic equipment for both Jacker and Gildern.

This was to ensure fairness and prevent any form of treatment imbalance. Although Jacker and the rest were not particular about such things, Link simply liked to nip any hidden dangers in the butt before they could flourish. He was done with all these tasks by eight. As it was still early, he began to write some magic scrolls.

The mercenary band needed money to grow, and 1500 gold coins were definitely not enough. Link decided to give them one more push. He still had a substantial amount of magic scroll materials that Derek gave him stored in his dimensional pendant. After the incident, all of these materials naturally belonged to him. Link planned to finish writing them by today.

From recharging and crafting the magic equipment to the writing of magic scrolls, Link allowed Rylai to observe on the sidelines. Although she probably would not understand much of it at this point, it was important to expose her to such skills early. Rylai was both curious and in awe. She sat at the side and stared at Link with her huge blue eyes, holding her breath in fear of disrupting the intricate process. She could not understand what Link was doing, but was still extremely intrigued by the magic involved.

Link would not be writing an ordinary magic scroll todayhe would be writing the Glass Orb spell.

Link was extremely familiar with this spell, so much so that the magic structure had already been engraved into his soul. He picked up the silver magic brush and almost completed the scroll in one stroke. The time needed to write the magic scroll was less than three minutes in total! This was an amazing speed even though it was just a Level-0 magic scroll. If any ordinary Magician were to see this scene, they would definitely be dumbfounded.

Link was not able to fully control the layout of the magic strokes in the first scroll and the resulting aesthetics were thus not to his liking. He modified the scroll to limit its explosive power and gave it to Rylai.

"You can have this."

"Thank you, teacher." Rylai obediently took the scroll and observed the magic structure with greatiterest. She looked like she had just gotten a new toy and couldn't stop fiddling with it.

Link optimized the magic layout on the second scroll and within three minutes, a scroll with beauty comparable to an exquisite artwork was completed. Rylai was immediately attracted to it, her eyes moving away from the roughly made scroll in her hand towards the intricately designed one in Link's hand.

"That is really beautiful." Naturally, young girls would be attracted to beautiful objects. The sight of this scroll made her eyes sparkle like stars in the night sky.

"Haha, this is not for you. We have to make money with these things," Link laughed.

Link carefully marked every completed scroll with a magic marking that was imbued with a magic storage structure. The stamp was in the shape of a soaring bird and exquisitely designed with sketches of the magic brush. It contained a small trace of his magic and was meaningful, elegant and eye-catching at the same time.

"What is this for?" Rylai asked, pointing at the magic marking. Link was an easy-going person in general; Rylai got more comfortable speaking to Link after every meeting and was now not afraid to ask questions.

"This markwell, the people purchasing the scrolls can use this mark to determine its authenticity."

Link had decided to create a brand for himself. He would now add this magic marking to all his creations, be it magic scrolls or equipment. This marking would become the hallmark of a high-quality product. People purchasing items with this marking would also be reminded that this product was crafted by Link. If this succeeded, Link would definitely make a name for himself.

This was not his original idea, though. Many enchanters across the continent were already doing the same thing as its effectiveness had been positively conclusive. Many people who purchased magic equipment did not have a background in magic, they hence relied on the brand name to distinguish the high-quality products from the low-quality ones.

Link started writing at an even faster speed for the next hour, averaging one minute per magic scroll. He wrote 60 scrolls in one sitting, only stopping when he had exhausted the materials that he had gotten from Derek.

He would give these scrolls to Lucy.

Lucy was a shrewd merchant and should be able to get a good price for these scrolls. If she sold it at the lowest price of 5 gold coins per scroll, that would be 300 gold coins' revenue for the mercenary band. For a layman organization, that was substantial income.

However, Lucy is not a Magician. Link was worried Lucy would be at a disadvantage during negotiations, but there were no better choices in the mercenary band.

Link kept the scrolls and brought out some other materials to create a temporary wand for himself. This wand was only of fine quality as it was simply a temporary substitute for the matchstick. It improved his magic power and spellcasting speed slightly.

When Link was done, it was already 10 o' clock. Rylai was already dozing off beside him. Link laughed and told her to rest for the night. Although she was extremely tired, she still tightly held the magic scroll in her hand and refused to let go. Link was slightly amused by the scene.

It was a silent night.

...

The next morning, the base of the mercenary band was once again bathed in the warm sun rays of the Girvent Forest. Link handed the magic equipment to Jacker who accepted it with glee.

He then handed the magic scrolls over to Lucy and told her the specific process of selling the scrolls. Link was once in charge of magic scrolls when he was in Bales' Mage Tower, and was thus familiar with the tricks merchants used. He was extremely detailed in his explanation with regards to bargaining and recognizing swindlers.

Even so, Link was still uneasy. Lucy was an outstanding merchant, but she was still after all, not a Magician. Link would be a lot more assured if there were a Magician in the mercenary band to hold the fort.

Speak of the devil.

Link was just getting worried when the vagabond Magician Carrido came to return the book. He looked extremely tired and had developed a pair of black circles. He must have been transcribing the book the entire night.

When he saw the carriage bearing the crest of the East Cove Higher Magic Academy, his eyes brightened up for a moment before dimming in dismal. Not only were the tuition fees too expensive, he was also not talented enough. In essence, he was not qualified.

However, after a night of consideration, Carrido had made his decision. When he handed the book back to Link, he spoke seriously, "Mister Link, I would like to join your mercenary band."

Link had a bright future ahead of him. Even though his mercenary band had not achieved much as of yet, Carrido was confident that it would developisstrength in the years to come. More importantly, Link was a master in magic and was generous with his knowledge. He would be able to consult Link often if he joined the mercenary band and forge strong ties with him. These were great benefits.

Link smiled upon hearing those words, "Welcome!"

Jacker and Lucy were both open-minded people. The moment Carrido became one of them, they stepped forward to exchange warm greetings with him.

Lucy heaved a sigh of relief, "Carrido, you came just in time. With you accompanying me, I no longer have to worry about being cheated."

Lucy knew that Carrido only had respect and admiration for Link and was thus a trusted ally. He was also a Magician and would be of great help when she put the scrolls up for sale.

Carrido was confused, "I do not understand."

Lucy explained, "My lord gave me a batch of scrolls to sell. I don't quite understand how the market for such items work and may require your asstance."

Magic scrolls? Carrido's eyes brightened. "Can I take a look?" This had clearly piqued his interest.

Lucy stared at Link for approval. Link nodded and said, "Carrido will be the magic consultant for our mercenary band in the future."

Lucy handed a scroll over to Carrido.

One look at the exquisite scroll material and Carrido could already determine that it was a high-quality product. He carefully received and unfolded the scroll. When he saw the magic formation on the scroll, he gasped in awe. Leaving the spell out of the equation, the skills needed to write a magic scroll this intricate were mind-blowing. He fondled the scroll with admiration, not willing to let go of it.

"The skills required to make this scroll is simply unbelievable. I am certain this scroll can sell for at least 20 gold coins," Carrido spoke with conviction.

"What? 20 gold coins? You mean the scrolls would fetch at least 1000 gold coins in total?" Lucy felt that the scrolls just got heavier.

"What do you mean 1000 gold coins? Oh my, all these as well?" Carrido saw the stack of scrolls behind Lucy and couldn't help but walk towards it. He checked the scrolls one by one and could feel a slight dampness from the ink, still not completely dry from last night. The magic imbued on the scroll was very lively as well, suggesting that they were all newly crafted.

But how could 60 such exquisite scrolls appear overnight? Carrido could not wrap his head around it and looked to Link for answers.

Link simply smiled and said, "Carrido, accompany Lucy when she sells the scrolls and use the gold coins to develop the mercenary band. If you have any questions in your magic research, you can write to me anytime. I will do my best to answer them."

Those were the exact words Carrido wanted to hear. He suppressed his curiosity about the scrolls and bowed respectfully.

"I will try my best to sell them for a good price."

Carrido could almost see a halo forming above Link's head.

I've settled what I need to do and the mercenary band now has a Magician to hold the fort while I am gone. This is good news, Link thought happily and boarded the carriage together with Rylai, heading straight for the East Cove Higher Magic Academy.

## 115. Ill Have My Vengeance!

Link was busy studying Anthony's notebook all along the journey to the academy. Rylai, who was sitting beside him was also reading a magic textbook, so it was very quiet in the carriage.

But after more than an hour, there was a sharp whistle outside the carriage. Link knew from the sound that it was no threat to them, so he paid no attention to it. The sound did unsettle the girl, though, so she slowly pushed the curtains of the carriage window aside and looked out in curiosity.

"Tutor," said Rylai timidly after a moment, "It's a carriage from the East Cove Magic Academy. Noit's not a normal carriage, it looks more like a prison carriage. There's a prisoner inside it too. Could he be a Magician?"

But how did a Magician end up being a prisoner? Rylai wondered.

Link was startled by Rylai's descriptions and he looked out immediately, just in time to see that it was Darris.

After a week of recovery, Darris' injuries were almost healed, but because he was treated with basic healing spells, he still had a lot of scars all over his body and even on his face. He was wearing a crude jailbird robe and his limbs were bound by iron shackles. He looked no different from any other common criminal, except for the fact that he was transported in a carriage with the East Cove Magic Academy insignia on it.

Just as Link caught a glimpse of Darris, Darris himself had turned his head around and saw Link, who was wearing a silver-lined ink-blue Magician's robe, sitting in a nice carriage.

Only Magicians of Level-4 or higher could wear the ink-blue Magician's robe. The silver lining on this type of robe was fine and graceful and the material of the robe itself was soft and comfortable. The robe was also protected by a Level-2 Guarding Barrier.

Then, Darris looked to Link's side and saw that he was accompanied by a beautiful young girl who looked so pure and innocent that any man would want to embrace her in their arms. This disparity in fortune between the both of them suddenly filled Darris' heart with painful bitterness.

"I curse you an agonizing death!" he shouted, his eyes bloodshot with animosity as he stared fixedly at Link.

Link shook his head at the pathetic sight before him. He thought nothing of it, as it was just the last cry of a man who'd lost everything. Link wasted no time and went straight back to reading the notebook.

Rylai, on the other hand, was considerably shocked by the scene, but she was also eager to find out what was going on.

"Tutor," she began tentatively, careful not to offend Link, "Why does he seem to hate you?"

"Pay no attention to him," said Link, smiling, "he'll soon be a dead man."

A Magician who had been stripped of his magic powers and was going to be tried for murder as a normal civilian wouldn't be able to escape execution because lay people were afraid of the powers that Magicians possessed. Once a Magician had been found guilty of murder, the civil courts wouldn't keep him alive for fear that he might try to attempt more crimes with his remaining powers.

Even if Darris was not sentenced to death on the spot, Link was sure that he would be secretly killed off afterwards. There was just no way that the court would take any chances with him.

And thus, a prison carriage and a handsome carriage crossed paths, each carrying their occupants towards two very different fates.

Darris' prison carriage continued to move forward. Although Darris had just shouted a curse at Link, it did nothing to distract him from the fact that his fear was deepening as the prison carriage kept approaching the River Cove Town.

Those damned commoners will never let go of me. I'll be dead, I'll be dead for sure. Ah, but I'm only 30 years old! Oh God of Light, why have you forsaken me so? Oh God By that point Darris was about to collapse.

They were now approaching the eastern gates of River Cove Town and the spire of the eastern watchtower was now in plain sight. Only another ten minutes and they would be within the town gates.

"Hey, Armon, how about letting me go, huh?" begged Darris, "I'll give you a hundred gold coins if you'll let me go. I've got the money; I swear I do. Please, Armon"

The coachman narrowed his eyes as he looked at Darris with disdain.

"Give it up, Darris. You just don't get it, do you? Well, let me tell you the truth. The coachman that you killed was named Eddie; he was my brother, my very own brother!"

Darris almost died of a heart attack and his whole body went limp as he realized that all hope was gone. But then, there was an unexpected turn of events!

The carriage was about to take a sharp corner where the trees on both sides of the road were very dense. But just as the prison carriage turned, a faint shadow suddenly flashed out of the woods.

The shadowy figure's speed was as fast as a gust of wind as he circled the prison carriage. In a few seconds, all four Level-2 Warriors escorting the prisoner fell dead on the ground. Shortly afterwards, the black shadow then approached the coachman and before anyone could see how what happened, the coachman fell clutching his throat. As his hands fell away when he hit the ground, one could see that there was a slash across his throat with blood gushing out of it.

Finally, the dark shadow reached Darris' side. With a few banging and clanging sounds, the carriage door was opened. It was only then that Darris could clearly make out the figure's appearance he was clad in a brown leather armor and his face was covered in a mask, revealing only a pair of dark red eyes.

"You're a Dark Elf!" exclaimed Darris. He instinctively flinched away from the black figure. Humans and Dark Elves were sworn enemies, after all. In fact, the Norton kingdom was now preparing to go to war with the Dark Elf Kingdom of Pralync in the Black Forest.

"Don't you want to live?" asked the Dark Elf as he stared straightito Darris' eyes.

"Yes, of course I do!" said Darris as he nodded eagerly.

He'd thought that he was no longer afraid of death. But just as he came closer to the moment when he would be sentenced to death, his will to live had become more and more tenacious. All he wanted now was to be able to live on he was willing to do anything in exchange for his life, even if it meant betraying his own kind and co-operating with the Dark Elves.

So long as I can live!

"Good!" said the shadowy figure. These type of people who wanted nothing more but to save their own lives had always been his favorite type to work with!

He pulled Darris out of the prison carriage, carried him by the collar and jumped out of the prison carriage. Before he left, he took out a magic scroll, activated it and flung it towards the prison carriage. Then, under a murky green flash of light, the entire carriage crumbled instantaneously into fine white sand.

Then, the figure carried Darris into the dense Girvent forest. He bolted through the forest for half an hour without taking any breaks, showing astonishing endurance.

Finally, they reached a clearing where another figure covered in a large black cloak was standingthe cloak covered most of his face. The wand in his hand indicated his identity as a Magician.

Hearing their quiet arrival, the figure turned around and spoke up in a hoarse voice, "Are you Darris?"

"That's me," said Darris as he took a deep breath and tried hard to calm himself down. He believed that these people wouldn't harm him, otherwise they wouldn't go through so much trouble to save him.

"Tell me, then, how familiar are you with the interior layout of the East Cove Magic Academy?" asked the cloaked figure.

Darris remained silent for a while. The question meant that these people were trying to attack the academy. It was also almost certain that they were Dark Elves.

"I've been staying there for 13 years," replied Darris, "I could get to anywhere I wanted within the academy gates with my eyes closed."

"Splendid! Do you want vengeance, then?" asked the Dark Elf again.

"More than anything else!" answered Darris immediately. The image of that proud and arrogant figure in the carriage was now floating in his mind. He remembered how that person was sitting comfortably in a handsome carriage with a pretty young maid by his side, heading towards glory and fame, while looking down on him with eyes that were full of scorn and contempt.

As he recalled the scene, the flame of anger burnt fiercely in Darris' gut and he felt it so violently that his body trembled.

I'll have my vengeance! There's nothing I wouldn't give to be able to kill that scum with my own bare hands!

"Good," the figure said, "Your Mana has been locked completely and I can't reverse that unfortunately, but the Silver Moon Mage Council can. I need you to do me a favor and then, I will give you 1000 gold coins as a reward. You can then bring the coins with you to the Black Forest where you will find someone who will take you to the Silver Moon Mage Council. There, they'll help you regain your powers and you can then come back and dish out your revenge. So, will you help me?"

"Yes," Darris agreed without any hesitation at all.

"Excellent," said the Dark Elf Magician. "So, I need a detailed layout of the defenses inside the East Cove Magic Academy, including the range and scope of the Watching-Eyes, all the rules and passcodes and so on without a single omission. Can you provide that to me?"

"Give me a day's time," replied Darris with a bitter smile. As a Level-4 Magician, an acknowledged genius, and the chief disciple of the master Magician Bale, he had been entrusted with great authority in the academy. He knew every single thing that the Dark Elf wanted to know in minute detail!

## 116. Caged

After returning to the magic academy, Link naturally arranged for Rylai to stay in Herrera's Mage Tower as well.

When Eliard and Link tried to enter the academy in the past, they faced many difficulties. Not only did they had to pay exorbitant school fees, they were also rejected many times because of their perceived inadequate magic talent. On the other hand, Rylai got the opportunity to study magic at the academy without any difficulties as she had Link to pave the way for her.

Rylai's journey in learning magic was indeed smooth sailing.

Link had also returned to his daily routine back at Herrera's Mage Tower. He experimented with new Supreme Magical Skills, learned new spells, and most importantly, began crafting his new wand.Link was prepared to use up all the rare materials he had, such as the Perilla wood, precious thorium, fine gold and even the Domingo Crystal into crafting this powerful wand.

As Link was focusing on the creation of his new wand, Anthony and the Master Magicians from the six-man council had completed sealing Bale's magic powers. As planned, Bale would be sent to the Tower of Azura straight after.

Bale was forced into a sealed carriage which was escorted by four Magicians, at least Level-3 in strength, to the prison in the northwest corner of the valley.

As they were still under the real-time surveillance of the academy's magic eye, the four escorts were extremely relaxed. No one would dare to cause a ruckus in front of such heavy surveillance.

The four of them walked and chatted along the way; their conversations had nothing to do with Bale. In fact, they were merely fulfilling the orders of the six-man council, and had no idea the exact identity of the prisoner in the carriage.

The carriage traveled uphill along the narrow winding paths of the mountains for about five minutes before reaching an empty field at least a thousand square feet in size. In the center of this open field was a pristine white tower. The tower was not tall, only consisting of three floors and about 30 feet in height. From its exterior, it looked just like an ordinary tower and was inconspicuous. However, it was actually home to all the demons, beasts, evil creatures and dark Magicians the East Cove Higher Magic Academy had caught and sealed over the past centuries.

When the carriage arrived, the door to the first layer opened. A masked Magician clad in a white robe walked out of the tower and rumbled, "Bring the prisoner to me."

This Magician was the guardian of the Tower of Azura and was known to be extremely powerful. His power was equivalent to that of a Level-5 Magician. The four Magician escorts wasted no time and obeyed his orders immediately. They unsealed the carriage and dragged Bale, who was clothed in a hooded black robe, out with force.

Bale kept silent the entire time. He did not show any resistance and was almost like a corpse.

He knew that he was going to spend an endless amount of time in this prison and experience extreme loneliness. The group of so-called masters in the six-man council were simply cowards. None of them dared to personally deliver the capital punishment on him in fear that it would sully their prestige. They thus resorted to such torturous means which kept him alive but bound him to an eternal life of suffering.

But what could he do? He had already lost his magic powers as well as his status. His half-converted body was even weaker than an ordinary old man. He was simply waiting for the grim reaper to knock on his door.

Bale sighed. His mind was now blank and numb to the outside world, passively awaiting the torment of his remaining years.

At this moment, Bale felt a tight squeeze on his hand by one of the escort Magicians who was supporting his body. This action felt unusualit seemed to be a hint that something was going to happen.

What's going on? Bale was shocked.

Following which, Bale felt an object being stuffed into his palm. The object was the size of a thumb and was extremely hard, much like a small stone. The Magician escort then clenched his hand into a fist, obviously signaling for him to hold on to the object tightly.

Bale was puzzled as to who would help him. He obeyed and clenched his fingers around the small stone.

The white-robed Magician took out his wand and pointed it at Bale. Bale immediately floated into the air and slowly drifted into the Tower of Azura, following behind the Magician's footsteps.

Bale felt the tower door close behind his back. From then on, his ties with the outside world would be completely severed.

Due to the failed transformation process, Bale had become blind and was unable to perceive his surroundings. He could vaguely feel that he was being led downward into an underground chamber.

After a full five minutes, Bale once again heard the voice of the white-robed Magician, "Master, this is your room. The walls are enchanted with a restitive magic formation. If you don't wish to be hurt, please do not touch them."

Bale then felt himself being lowered onto the ground and a cool breeze on his back. Following which, he heard the sound of distant footsteps, which only lasted for around three seconds before his surroundings fell into absolute silence.

"The room is now completely sealed." Bale sighed. He was still clenching the mysterious stone tightly. To be safe, Bale waited a full hour before releasing his tight grip on the object and stroking it gently with his fingers.

The stone was warm to the touch and the intricate carvings on it could be clearly felt. It should be a type of magic rune. Bale groped these carvings slowly, trying to figure out what type of magic rune this was.

His sense of touch was not as sensitive as before. It took him an hour to finally come to a conclusion, "This is a communication rune stone!"

His magic power had already been sealed and he was unable to utilize the power of his Mana. However, this magic rune could be activated even by ordinary humans.

After fiddling with the rune stone for a while more, Bale found the location of the trigger. He quickly erased the restitive rune on the stone which caused minor fluctuations in the magic fields. Following which, a voice sounded in Bale's head.

"Is this master Bale?"

"Yes, I am, who are you?" Bale replied in his mind.

The voice disregarded his question and asked, "Do you wish to attain freedom and regain your magic powers?"

This was Bale's Achilles' heel. He immediately dropped his previous question and hastily asked, "You can help me?"

"Do you think I am wasting my time now?" The voice sounded like it was smirking.

"But I do not have any magic powers now. Anthony and five other Master Magicians collaboratively cast a restitive spell on me. No one in the Norton Kingdom will be able to dispel it. Furthermore, what is the point of being free if I do not have my magic powers?" Bale sighed.

"Who told you it cannot be dispelled? And who says that I am a Magician from the Norton Kingdom? As long as you believe in me, anything is possible." The voice became slightly muffled, even to the point of being bewitching.

Bale fell silent. He then realized that his situation was truly the worst-case scenario. Even death would be better than the state he was in, thus, any changes could probably only go in a better direction. If that was the case, there was nothing to worry about.

"What do I have to do?" Bale asked.

"You are going to have to..."

The voice whispered in Bale's mind. As Bale listened, he became increasingly horrified. By the time the voice was done explaining, Bale was already shaking his head subconsciously.

"No, this would ruin the entire academy!"

"Do you really still care about the academy? The institution that imprisoned you and took away your magic powers?" The voice rebutted.

"I..." Bale was speechless. He was now a disgrace to the academy. The academy wanted to wash off any connections they had with a Magician who had fallen to the dark side. Even if the academy were to be utterly destroyed and the Magicians killed, it did not matter anymore.

"Do it, Bale. Put aside the friendships, morals and regulations binding you. They are merely hypocritical things that are restiting your freedom. You have to break the chains that are restiting you!" The voice grew louder and more passionate.

Bale kept silent for a long time. At last, he asked, "Who exactly are you?"

"I am the messenger of darkness, muahaha." The voice gradually became lower and Bale felt the stone tremble in his hands before it turned into a fine powder.

In the lonesome cage of claustrophobic darkness, Bale lay motionless on the ground. No one could tell what he was thinking about.

...

In the woods just outside the East Cove Higher Magic Academy, a black-robed Magician was hiding in the overgrowth, standing in front of a magic circle. He seemed to be protected by a blurred figure standing beside him. In the middle of the magic circle was a bright rune stone shooting a faint beam of light towards the sky.

Around half an hour later, the beam of light faded and the rune stone shattered into smithereens. The magic circle had also ceased its operation.

The dark figure immediately complained, "Felidia, do not make me do these things again. Infiltrating the academy was the scariest thing I've ever done in my life!"

"But it worked, didn't it?" This Magician was Felidia, the genius dark elf who once crossed swords with Link.

"It's still too early to determine our success. Who knows if the council idea will really work out? Furthermore, we cannot be sure that the idiot in the tower will follow our instructions."

"Relax, the chancellor is a Level-8 Magician. Even Anthony is not that strong. We have already sown the seeds of despair. All that's left is to wait."

"I hope so."

...

At the same time, Link, who had been staying in the Mage Tower, received a letter from Jacker. From the illegible handwriting, Link could determine that the letter was definitely written by Jacker. He tried hard to make out the message, squinting his eyes at every word. It seemed to be relaying a message from Royal Knight Anthony, complaining that Darris' carriage never arrived.

Link was shocked and immediately went to find Herrera.

Herrera, on the other hand, had already gotten the news some time ago. She had a serious expression.

"Darris is indeed missing. The academy has already dispatched investigators. I believe we will have some leads in the next few days."

"Why was I not informed?" Link had a hunch that this was the work of the Dark Elves.

"You have been busy with your new wand and I didn't want to interrupt your progress. Don't worry and wait patiently for the results," Herrera comforted.

That was true. Link was not godly and could not attend to every single issue in the World of Firuman. He had to spend time improving himself as well...he wished he had more time.

Please let it not be the tide of darkness...not now...

The only thing Link could do was to become even stronger in preparation for the calamities to come.

## 117. The Magicians Fair

Late night in Herrera's Mage Tower.

...

Link was lying in bed reading Lucy's letter. In it, she briefly summarized the whole situation the mercenary troop was facing and what transpired when they tried to sell the 60 magic scrolls from Link. Everything was described in Lucy's unmistakable joyful tone.

As Link had commanded, Lucy and a team of troop members had brought the scrolls to Springs City to sell them at the Magician's Fair. In the beginning, no one would bat an eye at the Glass Orb scrolls because none of the haughty Magicians and wealthy merchants would believe that mercenaries like Lucy and the others could ever get a hold of high-quality magic scrolls.

After a long while, Carrido desperately started to demonstrate the real powers of the magic scrolls by activating one of them in public.

A curious passer-by then bought the first one and half an hour later, they managed to sell the second one. After an hour, a merchant offered to buy all of the scrolls at the price of 1000 gold coins, but someone interrupted and stopped him from buying them all. A fight broke out eventually and Lucy wisely chose to stand aside and notiterfere.

Half a day later, the fight turned into a huge scene and crowds gathered around it to come and buy the magic scrolls. Some of them weren't even Magicians and had bought the scrolls purely as a part of their collection.

Lucy found this curious, so she asked a buyer why everyone was fighting over these magic scrolls and was told that these had once appeared in the capital city some time ago. All the rich merchants were mesmerized by them and they were all snatched up at very high prices. But they suddenly disappeared without a trace for no reason and no one could find them anywhere else, so now that they had re-appeared everyone had to buy them up.

Link knew, of course, that it was Derek who had established a reputation for his magic scrolls.

Eventually they managed to sell 59 scrolls at an average price of 25 gold coins each, yielding them a huge sum of nearly 1500 gold coins in total. All of them were shocked when they counted the money at the end of the day this was much more than they ever expected! They probably wouldn't even have earned this much had they been bandits robbing rich people for a living!

Lucy had also mentioned that many people who did not get to buy the magic scrolls were pestering them about where they got them from. Others offered to help them sell the scrolls. Those who were more attentive, on the other hand, noticed the signature on the scrolls and asked which Magician created them.

This meant that the demands for these magic scrolls were still high and that they would be sold out no matter how much Link could produce them.

Link smiled at this realization because he hadn't planned to prepare any more magic scrolls anytime soon. It was such a tedious task for him. Moreover, now that the mercenaries had earned 1500 gold coins from the scrolls, and they'd got the 1500 gold coins that Link had given them, they should already be well provided for in the next six months. There was no need for Link to return to such a mind-numbingly boring task as creating magic scrolls.

If he was short of money himself, then he'd just produce new magic gear and sell them instead, which would bring in much more profit than these magic scrolls.

Then, Link snapped his fingers and activated the Magician's Hand. A sheet of paper and a quill pen then floated in the air to Link's side. He then began to write his reply to Lucy.

He kept the letter short and straightforward. Apart from reminding Lucy to be careful and not to take any unnecessary risks, he repeated his order to pay close attention to the strange occurrences that might arise in the Girvent Forest. He then reiterated his instruction to inform him immediately about anything they might stumble upon about the Dark Elves.

The academy had made no progress in investigating Darris' disappearance almost a week ago. So far, they'd only found some minor clues that didn't seem to lead anywhere at all.

Still, there was nothing Link could do at the moment, so he focused on his studies here in Herrera's Mage Tower. In fact, he'd gone through whole shelves of books in the library as fast as how sunlight melted the snow. His skills had advanced at a terrifying speed. His current level of knowledge was now in a completely different plane compared to what he knew just a week ago. The present Link could easily defeat that version of Link in a magic battle without much effort at all.

Once Link had finished writing the letter, he sealed it with wax and flung it out of his window. The letter then floated in the air and dropped accurately into the Mage Tower's mailbox near its front door. The messenger would then collect it and deliver it to the River Cove Town the next morning.

The rest of the night then passed in silence.

The next day, Link started his day early with his usual magic spell practice. Once he was tired with that he tried to create a new wand, then he would continue his work on his thesis. And that was how his days were spent as a Magician in the East Cove Magic Academy.

Time flew as Link continued to learn magic diligently every day. It felt as if a day passed within the blink of an eye and now, a month had already passed. The day for the Magician's Fair in the capital city that Herrera once mentioned had arrived.

There was still no news of Darris. It was as if he'd evaporated into thin air and the academy seemed to have given up on tracking him down. In fact, the Magicians tasked with the investigation had been ordered to return and there was nothing that Link could do about it.

Meanwhile, he had successfully created a new wand.

It was a spectacular wand that was dark purple in color with a metallic sheen to it lined with threads of thorium. At the tip of the wand there was a mesh made of gold that encased the Domingo crystal. Once activated by Mana and the elements, this crystal would glow in a bright fiery red light.

The fine gold mesh had a very intricate structure that was shaped like a pair of gentle hands. Meanwhile the crystal was like a bright burning sun. This made it seem as if the pair of hands were gently holding the sun in their palms.

The sun was a star and this star was clutched in a pair of hands hence, Link named the wand the Starcatcher.

Starcatcher

Quality: Epic

Effect 1: Spellcasting speed increased by 60%.

Effect 2: Spell power increased by 70%.

Effect 3: When the Domingo crystal is activated, the elements stored inside will greatly enhance the spellcasting speed. (The Domingo crystal can store enough elements for a Level-5 spell.)

(Note: This is a fearsome wand that is full of vicious attacking powers!)

Of course it was full of attacking powers, Link had created the wand specifically to help him in battles. Its only limitation was that Link was unable to store a spell in it to enable instant spellcasting, although the elements stored in the Domingo crystal did make up for the shortcoming to an extent.

In addition to the wand, Link had also created a thorium ring for himself in which an enhanced version of the Edelweiss spell was stored.

How was the spell enhanced? It was a Level-4 Edelweiss, his latest achievement, which incorporated a recent discovery he made through his thesis. The defensive power of this spell was very close to that of a Level-5 defensive spell. With this ring, he could instantaneously release the powerful Edelweiss shield, and this made it his best self-defense gear thus far.

Link still had quite an amount of Mithril left after creating the wand and the ring, so he created three pieces of magic jewelry from the leftovers, namely a necklace, a bracelet, and a ring. He didn't spend much effort or used any special materials on the jewelry. Their only purpose was to get him some gold coins at the Magician's Fair which he would then use to buy more quality materials.

"Link, hurry up! It's time to go!" It was the sound of Eliard urging Link at his door.

As expected of a gifted Magician, Eliard had now mastered three Level-1 spells and was even starting to dip his toes in some Level-2 spells. Apart from Link, no one had managed this kind of progress for centuries in the Firuman continent's history.

Eliard was going to the Magician's Fair with Link and Herrera. He'd even prepared some magic scrolls to sell there too.

"Yes, coming," said Link. He'd put on an ordinary gray Magician's robe today to hide his identity. It was Herrera's idea, as she thought that one couldn't predict the kind of crowd the fair would attract. It was better not to stand out too much in case it might draw the wrong kinds of attention to them.

Link noticed how Eliard was wearing a plain gray robe himself when he came out of his room. But despite the modest attire, Eliard still looked spectacular as his strikingly handsome face would no doubt entice the stares of the crowd.

"Hurry up, Tutor Moira is waiting for you," said Eliard.

"Alright, alright, let's go," answered Link.

Link and Eliard then walked side by side down the stairs to the first floor of the Mage Tower. Then suddenly, a girl rushed up to Eliard and kissed him passionately on his lips.

This female apprentice was none other than Elena, the person Link had alwasseen as very shrewd and cunning. She had by now successfully gotten under Eliard's skin and became his lover. Eliard seemed to like her enough to give her special tutoring sessions that had helped Elena's magic skills to advance almost to that of a Level-1 full-fledged Magician now.

Since it was Eliard's personal business, as a friend Link couldn'titerfere much with it. He couldn't risk souring their friendship just because of a girl.

"Good morning, Link," greeted Elena in a warm and friendly tone, as she always did.

"Good morning," answered Link with a smile. He had to keep a friendly facade as she was Eliard's girlfriend after all. Fortunately, though, Elena was perceptive enough to know that she should keep her distance with Link. She had wisely not caused him any trouble so far.

The carriage was already waiting for them outside the door. It was a four-seater carriage and there were already two people inside Herrera and Rylai.

Herrera was fond of Rylai the moment they met each other as the girl was adorable and full of a childlike innocence. She was also Link's disciple. Herrera had decided to take her to Springs City so she could show the girl the sights of the biggest city in the kingdom.

Once everyone was in the carriage, Herrera turned to the coachman and said, "Let's go!"

With a crack of the whip, the carriage set out and headed towards Springs City. On the way, Link noticed how many other carriages were also heading towards the same direction. It seemed the Magician's Fair was going to be especially lively this time around.

## 118. Confrontation in the Dark

As Link was on his way to the Magician's Fair in Hot Springs City, another black carriage was similarly, heading down King's Lane to take part in the symbolic festival. If anyone were to peek inside the carriage, they would certainly be horrified to see two Dark Elves sitting leisurely inside.

One of the was Felidia, while the other was an old friend of his who stayed at the Cliff of Howling Winds. If Link were to see this elf, he would definitely be able to recognize him through the scar that ran across his left eye.

His name was Ainos, a genius Dark Elf Assassin. He was only a few years older than Felidia but had already attained the power of a Level-4 Assassin. He could probably achieve a breakthrough a reach Level-5 in half a years' time.

"Feli (Felidia's nickname), our activities in the Girvent Forest are already extremely dangerousto attend a crowded festival in Hot Springs City right after that is close to suicide!" Ainos had a worried expression on his face. In fact, he had been close to breaking down ever since he heard of Felidia's plan.

Felidia was casually dressed and not in his usual black robe. He had tied his natural curls into a ponytail which revealed his devilishly charming face he kept hidden all the time.

If one were to ignore the dark red eyes and the gloomy pale complexion, Felidia was definitely handsome even by human standards.

Felidia was carefully putting a thin layer of foundation on his skin. When the foundation made contact with his skin, the pale complexion turned into one that was healthy and rosy. He was thorough and made sure to leave no areas untouched, dabbing his neck, hairline and even the back of his ears compulsively.

He then passed the paint to Ainos before casting a water mirror spell to check if he left out any areas.

"The Norton Kingdom's Magician's Fair is a major affair and attracts a huge crowd. No one would cause a ruckus or even take much notice of us. Furthermore, a Magician can find all the magic materials he needs in one placehow can I possibly give up on this chance?"After making sure that his foundation was perfectly put on, Felidia then took out two thin circular black crystal pieces and placed them in his eyes. After a few blinks, his pupils had turned black.

After a detailed make-up session, Felidia had transformed into a young man with black pupils and curly brown hair. Ainos also completed his disguise hastily, opting for the brown eyes and golden locks instead.

"I will say this beforehand. If we are exposed, I will be the first one out of Hot Springs City. Don't even expect me to save you." Ainos was still dissatisfied.

Felidia looked at him with puppy eyes and sulked, "You are really going to leave me behind?"

"Get out!" Ainos fanned his hands in disgust.

Felidia laughed before speaking in a serious tone, "Actually, we are not here only to purchase magic materials. We have an important mission to accomplish."

Ainos expression went solemn as well. "Why didn't you mention this earlier?"

"I just received the news. This mission is a secret mission directly from the queen. There has been news that a young high elf of important stature is also going to attend the festival. Our mission is to kill him. Alina is also going to join us this time."

Ainos eyes widened upon hearing Alina's name, "This young high elf is that important?"

Alina

29 years old

Level-5 Swordswoman

Weapon: Sword of Shattered Stars

Alias: Constellations Assassin

(Note: She is the youngest genius swordswoman the Pralync Kingdom has seen in centuries!

Ainos, Felidia and her were considered to be the three musketeers of the Silver Moon Alliance. Among the three of them, Alina was unobtedly the strongest.

She came from a prominent background. Her father was the patriarch of the Norigan family, one of the three largest families in the Silver Moon Alliance. She was also a core member of the Kingdom Warrior Academy, holding the achievement of killing a pure-blooded black dragon by herself. Her talent coupled with her flawless beauty and cold demeanor had given her the accolade of "Dream Goddess".

Ainos was also slightly attracted to Alina. However, the stark difference in their status was too glaring. He hence kept this fantasy in the deepest part of his heart.

To think that the kingdom would send Alina for this missionit seemed like the mission was of great importance.

Felidia smiled, "His name is Phillip, 15 years old, the youngest and most cherished son of the elf queen. What do you think will happen if he is met with misfortune in Hot Springs City?" Felidia looked exceptionally handsome in his human disguise, especially when he smiled.

Ainos eyes lit up. "The queen would definitely be heartbroken. If the prince of the high elves died in Hot Springs City, there is no way the Norton Kingdom could give an acceptable explanation. Even if the high elf queen let the incident slide, this would worsen the already shaky relationship between humans and the high elves. There would then be no chance of an alliance between the two races. However, this has to be handled very carefully. It is easy to get ourselves in trouble."

"Naturally," Felidia laughed, "We will not be the one taking any action. We will merely be working behind the scenes and watch as the human race turns against themselves in an internal conflict. If Phillip is still alive after the chaos, we merely have to deliver the finishing blow."

...

Despite the Dark Elves' plan running ever so quietly, it did not escape the eyes of the Nordic Kingdom's resourceful and observant military.

The southernmost military zone of Hot Springs City

...

A courtyard was barricaded by tall walls and a sturdy gate; the buildings in the courtyard were all made from a sturdy mineral called bluestone. There were sentry posts erected at every key location and even prowlers circling the courtyard in shifts. The whole place simply looked like a military fortress.

The parliament hall on the second floor.

...

Ten middle-aged men clad in exquisite cyan leather armor and a dagger on their waist were seated in a circle around a long table. They had a majestic lion crest pinned onto their neat uniforms.

They looked serious with a calm temperament. The Battle Aura emanating from their bodies was concentrated and deepthey were all masters.

There were a number of documents on the table. One of them pulled out a specific file and said, "The recent pursuit of the Dark Elves has been a success. We have basically eliminated all the Dark Elves in the kingdom. However, there have been traces of Dark Elven magic in the Girvent Forest recently."

He then passed the document to the man seated at the front of the long table, presumably the leader. The leader seemed to be covered with a faint grey aura, masking his facial features. While his armor was also cyan in color, the design and the Battle Aura emanating from him was clearly different from the rest. He also wore a gold cloak to differentiate himself from the rest.

"Duke sir, the recent happenings in Girvent Forest have been recorded in detail in this document. Please take a look."

The person who was honored as Duke picked up the document and started reading. After five minutes, he gently put down the file and asked, "I am interested in this young Magician called Link. To think that he could defeat the Necromancer who was hiding in his Mage Tower. I am curious as to how he did it."

The man who handed him the file previously seemed to have expected this statement and immediately handed over another one.

"We have already done in-depth research into this young man's background. You can view them in this document."

The duke took the file and read with interest. It contained a lot more information than before and it took him a good ten minutes before he was done.

"The youngest son of Hamilton. First appeared at the Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings. Defeated Lund with a Flame Blast spell and is regarded by the Light Maiden as the Chosen One?" The Duke looked at the document with a dubious expression.

"Areve, is this true?" He looked at the middle-aged man beside him. This person was the duke's most trusted aide.

Areve shrugged his shoulders, "There is no reason not to believe it. Even if he is not the Chosen One, it is clear that he is a talented Magician. If the Light Maiden favors him this much, he should not be our enemy."

Herrera was referred to as the Light Maiden in the hexagon military bureau. This was due to her outstanding talent in the area of light elemental magic.

"Well, then." The Duke smiled and tapped his finger on the table. He thought for a few minutes and said, "The Dark Elves must be planning something if traces of their magic were discovered in the Girvent Forest. I believe it is a matter of great importance. Their actions have also become more frequent recently. If my predictions are not wrong, it should be related to Prince Phillip. We have to watch him carefully and make sure he is safe."

Prince Phillip was way too important. In times of a war, in the shadows against the Dark Elves like this, they definitely had to strengthen protection; the hexagon military bureau would not be enough.

The Duke thought for a moment before telling his aide, "I have some matters to talk to Olaf (Commander of the Royal Forest Guards) about. Areve, you take charge."

The Hexagon Military Bureau was made up of Assassins. They were adept at setting up sneak attacks, but lacked direct combat abilities. If they wished to ensure Prince Phillip's safety, they would require the help of powerful Warriors. The Royal Forest Guards fit this role perfectly.

## 119. A Mysterious Woman

Springs City, the royal capital of the Norton kingdom, was a city that had suffered countless wars and attacks, yet it had never failed to recover from them. It had become, as it was now, a city teeming with the hustle and bustle of life.

Facing the ongoing threats of barbarous tribes from the North, the city's walls were built to be both imposing and intimidating to ward off possible invasions. It was at least 160 feet tall, and its gate was 70 feet wide and 140 feet tall. As the carriage entered the city through the gate, Link felt as if he were a tiny ant crawling under a colossal giant's foot.

"Tutor, look!" exclaimed Rylai. "Isn't that a dwarf?"

As the capital city of the kingdom, Springs City was naturally a place where countless walks of life crossed paths. Apart from humans, all other races of the Firuman continent the dwarves, the elves, the goblins and so on roamed the streets here.

Rylai had followed her father around different cities in the South when she was a child, but at the time they lived a life that was always on the verge of danger. They were too busy being cautious that all Rylai could do was catch a hurried glimpse of the sights around her. But now that she knew that her life was in no danger at all, she seemed to have gotten past her grief for the death of her family and her personality started to bloom into a vivacious girl. She was eager to learn and was open to the new sights and sounds around her. Indeed, her presence had lightened up the atmosphere in the carriage and made their journey much livelier.

As they entered the city gates, the carriage headed straight to the Magician's Distit in the southern part of Springs City.

The Magician's Distit wasn't actually a place exclusively reserved for Magicians. In fact, there were as many ordinary city-dwellers there as there were in other parts of the metropolis. The only reason why it was named so was that any Magician visiting the capital would flock there; it was where all the shops selling anything related to magic was situated. Naturally, the Magician's Fair was held there as well.

The journey felt brief to all four people in the carriage because Rylai had kept the journey interesting as she had been pointing and asking questions all along the way. And thus, in what felt like no time at all, they'd reached the Magician's Distit and were now entering the best inn in the area the Blue Hermit Inn.

The inn was already overcrowded when they arrived and most of the inn's guests were Magicians who were here to participate in the Magician's Fair just like them. Luckily, they had the East Cove Magic Academy's reputation to thank, as the inn had reserved a number of rooms especially for Magicians from the academy each year around the time when the Magician's Fair was held. Because of that, Herrera managed to get them two rooms, one for her and Rylai and the other one for Link and Eliard.

When they'd all settled down, it was already around five in the afternoon, so they decided to have an early dinner. After being excited for the whole day, Rylai was now exhausted and she kept yawning after the meal, so Herrera lead her to the room so she could get some rest. The industrious Eliard excused himself to the room as well so he could get back to studying. In the end, Link was left alone in the main hall of the inn.

He didn't feel tired enough to rest yet, nor did he felt like reading, so he ordered a glass of wine and sat in a remote corner of the hall looking around, observing the Magicians who came in and out of the inn.

There were Magicians who traveled alone, some were with companions, while some had come with their disciples. There were even some drifting Magicians who were here to try their luck in making a name for themselves. Link even recognized some of the Magicians in the hall they were from the East Cove Magic Academy. Even so, he'd never talked to them and didn't even know their names, so all Link did was nod to them politely and stayed where he was without making any attempts to approach them.

Learning magic consumed most of a Magician's time anyway. Unless they were staying in the same Mage Tower, the Magicians were usually unacquainted even if they were from the same academy.

Then, a Magician dressed in a gray Magician's robe walked in. He was also donning a wide-brimmed pointy hat and had a long gray beard. The moment he stepped into the hall, everyone turned momentarily silent, then hushed murmurs began to fill the hall.

"Look," someone whispered, "it's the Wand Master Hermira."

"I never thought I'd see him here!" someone else exclaimed. "His wands are simply works of art!"

"Oooh, maybe he's going to unveil his latest masterpiece at the fair!"

Link's interest was piqued at the mention of this name and his head immediately turned to the figure in question. Master Hermira was of course the maestro of enchantment. In fact, the first wand he'd used when he first arrived in this world the New Moon wand was one of the master wandmaker's earliest creations!

Master Hermira was only a Level-4 Magician, yet most renowned pieces of low and mid-level magic gear in the game were his creations. Even Link's first Epic quality wand in the game which he acquired when he reached Level-4 was made by the old man. He was quite fond of the wand and he had used it up until he reached Level-4, so Master Hermira had left a deep impression on Link.

Three minutes after Hermira's arrival, a middle-aged man with ink-blue hair and a well-built body appeared, triggering a wave of excitement among the crowd in the inn hall.

"That's Morrigan!" someone pointed out. "He's the renowned adventurer!"

"Oooh," someone else chimed in, "I wonder what he's brought back this time!"

This Morrigan was evidently a crowd favorite. Many men approached him and struck up conversations with him and he greeted them all with a warm and friendly smile on his face.

Link was familiar with Morrigan too. This man was a Level-3 Magician. He might look unremarkable outwardly, yet, he was in fact a bold and courageous man whose reputation lied in his adventures to the remote parts of the continent. He was known by his many nicknames, among which the best one was probably the King of Explorers. His other ones were the Relic Hunter, the Excavator and some people had even called him the Grave Robber.

To his credit though, Morrigan had indeed been to all corners of the Firuman. He'd left his footprints on most of the monuments and ancient sites on the continent. In fact, you could accurately describe the man as a walking and talking map.

Link took another sip of his wine. He felt the Magician's Fair was definitely going to be interesting this year.

The ripple of excitement caused by Morrigan calmed down gradually and the atmosphere in the hall began to return to normal. Just then, a woman turned up at the entrance. Even in the distance Link could tell that her skin shone like crystal and her eyes sparkled as if they were lit by the moonlight. She was clad in a simple black dress, yet there was something about it that made it look luxurious and elegant despite its modest style.

All eyes were now fixed on the woman. No one knew her name, though, and the hall was dead silent.

Link was also observing the enigmatic woman in the corner of the hall. At first glance, he thought the woman looked beautiful and charismatic, yet the more he looked at her the more his eyebrows began to knit.

He sensed something uncanny about the woman. He could feel that she was concealing her true powers, yet even so, Link could nonetheless sense that she possessed a powerful soul. She was probably even more powerful than a saint or an angel. But what was even more menacing was the hint of dark aura that seemed to shroud the woman's body.

The dark aura was almost pulsating at times it was intense, yet sometimes it was hardly there. Somehow this abnormality sent a chill down Link's spine and it even made his skin feel numb.

It was clearly a red flag!

He'd encountered some imposing figures before the Dark Elf genius Felidia, the Dark Elf General Lund, Occult Viktor yet none of them had ever elicited such a strong reaction from him. His head was then filled with a whirl of questions.

Who is this woman? There's a dark and powerful aura coming from her. The strength of her Mana is on par with that of Level-6 Magician! But she looks too young to be a Level-6 Magician!

Link ran through his memory of the game in his past life but found no one matching the woman's characters. Perhasshe's under disguise, he thought. He dared not catch her attention, so he quickly diverted his eyes away from her and stared at his cup of wine instead.

Then, susurrus whispers filled the entire hall.

"Who is she?" askedamn in the hall.

"Has anyone seen her before?" said another.

"She's no ordinary woman, that's for sure." Those words came from Morrigan himself. It seemed as if he sensed something dangerous in the woman as he quickly averted his eyes away from her the moment he caught a glimpse of her.

"I've never met a woman with such an enchanting air about her in my life!" someone else exclaimed.

The woman in black didn't seem to mind the gazes she attracted all around her at all as she walked gracefully into the inn hall. She wore a radiant smile on her face, so sweet and beguiling that it made her lips look like a blooming rose. Men around her couldn't help but gulp and gasp at such an alluring sight in front of them. Most of them were hardly able to rein in the surge of desire building up inside them.

Not all men had the same reaction, though.

The explorer Morrigan was initially chatting and drinking with his friends at the bar, but the moment the woman appeared, his manner changed. He flinched and shrank away from her, then downed his drink in one gulp and slunk away into the furthest corner of the hall. Then, without a word to anyone, he rushed quietly out of the room.

He went past Link as he slipped out of the inn hall, so Link stood up and quietly followed him. Though he did find the woman suspicious, he was even more intrigued by Morrigan's reaction to her.

Once they were about tity feet away from the inn, the explorer suddenly stopped dead in his tracks and turned around to face Link.

"Who are you?" he barked. "Why are you following me?"

Link turned his gaze back to the inn, revealing a hint of dread in his expressions as he did so.

"I just found it odd," said Link, "how such a bold man like you would be afraid of that woman in black."

Morrigan's face turned pale the moment he heard Link's words. He glanced furtively left and right to make sure no one was spying on them before he made his reply.

"I don't know who or what that woman is," said Morrigan in a hushed voice, "but I know that I could sense an icy and sinister aura emanating from her body. I've sensed this aura before in the ancient ruins in my travels. A word to the wise, kid stay away from her!"

As he finished his sentence, Morrigan hurriedly turned away and fled. Judging from the direction he was heading to, Link could see that he was leaving the Magician's Distit right away.

Morrigan's actions had unnerved Link so he decided to promptly return to the inn, where he found that the woman in black was no longer in the main hall. From what he heard of the crowd's conversations, Link guessed that she must've gone to one of the rooms in the inn.

Link had no idea why, but he suddenly felt an ominous sense of danger looming over him. He then rushed to the third floor to find Herrera and Eliard. He had to warn them about this mysterious and possibly dangerous figure who'd just turned up at the inn. If things didn't seem right, they might even need to leave this place as soon as possible.

But just as he reached the second floor, Link caught a sight of a dark figure in the corner of his eye. He turned his head slowly towards the direction and had the shock of his life when he realized that it was the very same woman in black right there in front of him.

She was standing in the dark corner quietly watching Link. The beguiling face Link saw earlier had now become expressionless, and her almond-shaped eyes were now staring straight at Link, as cold and piercing as needles.

## 120. A Hundred Years of Solitude

In an instant, Link switched to his battle mode and the wand of constellations appeared in his hand. Mana surged into the wand and three glass orbs were formed at its tip in a flash. Under the combined effect of the state of Gibraltar, the Domingo Crystal and his familiarity with the Glass Orb spell, the casting time was almost instantaneous.

Link would release the three glass orbs without hesitation the moment his opponent made asspicious move.

Link's casting speed came as a shock to the woman. She then adopted a less hostile expression, more accurately, a hint of fear could be seen.

"You won't poke your nose into others' affairs, will you?" The woman in the black dress finally spoke. She had a mellifluous voice, the kind that could charm the hearts of many men.

However, Link knew that this voice was also her weapon, a weapon that could bewitch her opponents. It was very likely that a murderous intent lay behind the sweet and delicate voice.

This female Magician could possibly have the powers of a Level-6 Magician. Link did not have the confidence to win against her in a one-on-one battle. He chose to stabilize the situation and not react aggressively.

"I find it troublesome to involve myself in others' affairs. But I am not afraid to do so if required."

"That is a wise choice. However, I do not believe that youthis lady is?"The black-dressed woman stopped in the middle of her sentence, distracted by something she saw at the corner of the third-floor staircase.

At the corner, Herrera stood quietly with her crystal staff in her hands.

Link immediately greeted, "Teacher."

The faint cold aura that was circling the black-dressed woman disappeared entirely the moment Link spoke. She smiled and said, "So this is your mentor, presumably also an extremely powerful Magician. If you will excuse me."

The woman did not return to her room, but instead walked down the stairs to the first floor of the hall. The hall fell silent for a few seconds before turning back to the normal again.

Judging from the quick fluctuation of the sounds coming from the hall, the woman must have left the Blue Hermit Inn immediately.

Link heaved a sigh of relief and felt a breeze of cool air on his back. His undershirt was already fully soaked with his perspiration.

Herrera had a serious expression on her face and asked, "I could feel your magic aura from afar. What happened? Who was that woman?"

Link then recounted his experience to Herrera, starting from the incident in the hall to what just happened on the stairs, leaving out no details. As he spoke, Herrera kept a tight frown.

By the time Link was done, she looked pale and said, "If I had arrived a bit later, you might already be injured."

"Yes, I could feel it too," Link nodded. That cold aura was one of the most uncomfortable things he'd experienced ever since he stepped footito the World of Firuman. It felt like he was being submerged into a freezing lake, the bitter cold penetrating deep into his bones.

If Herrera had not appeared in time, there was no telling what she would have done to Link.

"Teacher, Morrigan mentioned that there was something chilling about this woman's aura. Did you sense anything out of the ordinary?" Link asked.

"I think she's a Magician specializing in secret spells. I can almost confirm that she had also done her fair share of black magic research. As for the chilling auraI would say it is present. In fact, the aura felt like it was born from the vicissitudes of life she had been through. If I am correct, she might be older than both of our ages added togetherpresumably over 100 years old."

Herrera was living up to her name as a Level-6 Magician. She was way more detailed in her observation as opposed to Link's.

"She probably left because she knew she was not strong enough to take on the both of us at once. It is also possible that she was afraid to expose her identity," Link said.

"I agree," Herrera nodded, "Even if she is strong, she probably would not dare to cause a ruckus in Hot Springs City. The most probable explanation for her appearance would be the Magician's Fair. She should be here to exchange some magic materials. Recalling the situation now, she was probably attempting to cast a hypnosis spell on you so that you would forget her existence."

Link mulled over it for a moment. There were many Master Magicians in Hot Springs City, especially so in the Magician's Fair. The woman would only get herself into trouble if she tried to injure him. There was no reason to do something so risky.

"What do we do now?" Link asked.

"What do you think?" Herrera threw the question back at him.

"Let's just pretend it didn't happen. She is not dangerous per se. If she was really planning something dangerous, she would have been more careful of her actions," Link reasoned.

Herrera smiled and said, "Indeed, you will see all sorts of people in the Magician's Faireven some Master Magicians who kept themselves hidden for some personal reasons. This is also partly where the charm of the Magician's Fair lies."

Both of them then returned to their rooms to rest for the night.

Outside the Blue Hermit Inn.

...

The woman in a black dress was hiding in the alley opposite the Inn, observing the situation closely. She waited for a full hour, making sure that no peculiar magic disturbance could be felt before she finally let down her guard.

"Magicians from the Easy Cove Higher Magic Academy? I was too careless," she whispered.

The Magician's Fair in Hot Springs City was a grand festival in the World of Firuman. One could purchase almost every magic material in the world as long as they were willing to pay the price.

Her name was Eleanor, a Level-6 Magician specializing in secret magic. Recently, she was studying a type of secret magic known as prophecy spells and needed some Soul Stones for her research. Hence, she took the risk and came to Hot Springs City, but not without carefully concealing her magic aura.

She did not attempt to change her appearance. She looked exactly like how she did when she was 18 years old. She had preserved this appearance for the past 90 years using forbidden magic, and was extremely pleased with the results.

She had become a Level-6 Magician after 90 years of magic research and had mastered countless magic spells. She thought that none of the Magicians in Hot Springs City could hold a candle to her power. However, it didn't take long before her confidence was shaken.

Both a tomb raider and a young Magician not older than 20 years old saw through her disguise almost immediately. That was not all! The spellcasting speed of the young Magician was simply mind-blowing. With that kind of speed, she might even lose to him in a battle. She didn't even factor in the power of his mentor.

"There are so many geniuses in the world," Eleanor sighed. Her magic talents were average at best, especially her Mana pool. After 90 years of magic research, her Maximum Mana was only at the level of an average 30-year-old Magician. This was her greatest insecurity. However, her 100 years of experience was still not something to be trifled with. She quickly recollected herself.

It doesn't seem like they want to pursue the matter. Eleanor then returned back to the Blue Hermit Inn after some thought.

They seemed like people who could be reasoned with. As long as I don't do anything that crosses the line, they will probably leave me alone.

Eleanor was way more careful the second time she entered the Inn. She no longer flaunted her charming appearance and youth, deliberately putting on an oversized cloak to conceal her voluptuous figure. She did not want any more attention for the day.

Eleanor couldn't fall asleep after returning to her room. As she had been living in seclusion and was researching inoblack magic. She had practically no friends and no one to talk to. As she was feeling bored, she cast a spell, Eye of the Soul.

Eye of the Soul

Level-1 Secret Spell

Effect: Gives the user long distance vision and ignores material barriers.

(Note: This spell is extremely discreet)

Eleanor had developed this habit ever since she started living alone. It would be hard to change it now.

She originally planned to simply look around to relieve her boredom. However, her attention was captured by the young Magician who left a lasting impression on her at the staircase.

She was also interested in Herrera but kept her curiosity under control. She would not risk getting discovered by a Level-6 Magician.

## 121. An Endless Night

The attacking power of secret spells might be inferior to that of elemental and light spells, but they still held an edge over all other types of spells in one aspect its discreet nature.

When Eleanor used the Eyes of the Soul to observe the inhabitants of the Blue Hermit Inn, none of the Magicians there, no matter their levels, were even suspecting of her spell's intrusion. Although there was no denying that her superior spellcasting skills and her inclination for caution had played a big role in the matter as well.

When she was spying on Link's room, neither he nor Eliard had any inkling of her presence and none of them had set up any kind of defense to prevent such an intrusion. In fact, the young Magicians were currently passionately discussing their recent discoveries in magic.

"I've been studying your Whistle spell recently and I've got a question," said Eliard. "Take a look at the joint of this runic wheel. Do you think it would be better this way?"

A big scroll was spread out on the table and on it was the structure of the spell. Eliard took a quill pen and sketched a dozen slight modifications on the scroll, completely transforming the spell structure of the Whistle into something quite different.

These two young Magicians had alwasshared their insights with each other. Link hadn't concealed any of his Supreme Magical Skills from Eliard, so Eliard had now managed to master the Whistle spell. His spellcasting speed was still slightly behind Link's though. Eliard could cast Whistle in 0.5 seconds, which was in fact extraordinary, but it was 0.2 seconds slower than Link.

Link examined the new spell structure Eliard had come up with and realized that although Eliard's thinking speed was still slightly inferior to his, his mind was still full of creative ideas that even he might not be able to think of. This was precisely the reason why Link had always appreciated Eliard's input and opinions.

After ten minutes of silent contemplation, Link picked up the quill pen and added two more runes to the new structure. Then he said, "This should be perfect."

"Yes, of course!" remarked Eliard, his eyes sparkling with excitement. "That's exactly what I was trying to achieve! But I've still got some questions about"

They then began to delve deeper into the minute details of Whistle's spell structure. They left no stone unturned and examined each tiny feature and exhausted all possible methods of modification before putting the matter to rest.

Their minds were then so completely immersed in the discussion that they were utterly oblivious to the pair of spying eyes that were peeking on them all this time.

Eleanor looked on with keen interest. Lay people might find these young men's discussion dry and boring, but a Magician like her knew that what they were talking about was far from dull.

The view provided by the Eyes of the Soul wasn't clear enough to enable her to discern the exact spell structure as laid out on the scroll, but Eleanor could still manage to make out its general characteristics based on the conversation between Link and Eliard.

She had been listening in to these young men initially out of pure curiosity. In fact, she even had a casual smile on her face and was expecting to be bored. However, as their discussion got deeper, she got more and more engrossed in them and was now fixing her whole attention on them.

It was true that they were only discussing a low-level spell, but it was obvious from their depth of knowledge and insight that these were, in fact, two highly gifted young Magicians. The sparks of ideas that they induced from one another were extraordinary and they were alive with imagination and creativity.

Imagination alone was not enough, though. After all, anyone could daydream anyway. But was most impressive about these two Magicians was their ability to turn the concepts and ideas in their heads into real power and strength in the form of a spell modification. While their eyes were gazing up at the stars, they kept their feet firmly on the solid ground that was the true formidable strength that these geniuses possessed!

Eleanor was actually a Master Magician, but even she was entranced by the discussion between Eliard and Link. She was now dying to find out what the spell structure of this strange spell called Whistle actually looked like.

But that was where she was stumped by the limitations of the Eyes of the Soul. If she wanted to increase the power of the spell to make her view of Link and Eliard's room clearer, she would trigger a Mana fluctuation that might go unnoticed had she been dealing with normal people, but she was sure that these young Magicians would detect it in a heartbeat and thus her presence would be exposed.

What a remarkable place the East Cove Magic Academy is! I've just stumbled upon their two young Magicians and they turned out to be such outstanding talents! Eleanor couldn't help but sigh at the thought.

Time flew, and two hours had passed just like that. Link and Eliard had completed their modification of Whistle and were now chatting casually. At this point, Eleanor had lostiterest in them as well. She was now keen to find out if the other Magicians of the East Cove Magic Academy were like these two, so she turned her spying eyes to the other rooms of the inn.

I wonder if they're all just as interesting as these two had been. Eleanor had made up her mind that it would be so.

She looked into a room inhabited by a 30-year-old Magician. He wasn't studying a magic textbook, though, but was in fact fooling around with a prostitute. Eleanor frowned and turned to another room. There were three Magicians in this room and they were sitting at a table happily engrossed in the card game of Noel's Bridge. There were gold coins on the table and rolls of cigars in their hands, while thick smoke filled the room. Eleanor withdrew immediately from the room and spied into a few other rooms, but they were all engaged in debauchery or other leisurely activities. It was as if these Magicians had flung the thoughts of magic out of their minds and were bent on enjoying themselves in the capital city.

I guess I was wrong. Those two Magicians weren't like any other people from their own academy. And so Eleanor's focus was turned back to Eliard and Link.

The two young men were staying in a suite with two bedrooms and a sitting room. They were both in the sitting room at the moment, but they were no longer chatting casually and were instead busy creating new magic gear. Stitly speaking, it was actually the young man called Link who was busy working on his new magic gear while the other one called Eliard was watching him on the side.

Link was still in high spirits and couldn't go to sleep as he was excited about the Magician's Fair tomorrow. He had some raw materials left so he decided to put them to good use and create some magic jewelry.

He was, in fact, making a necklace using the necklaces he'd seen on Earth in his previous life as a model while incorporating some of his own tweaks as well. The resulting necklace was an exquisite work of art as it was a blend of two styles those of Earth and those of this world. But because of the time constraint, Link didn't fix any powerful spells onto the necklace, though, he did manage to attach a Level-2 Guarding Barrier on it.

Eliard had been watching him on the side with deep interest. He was impressed at Link's skills in enchantment and his craftsmanship, but he was even more intrigued by Link's perfectionism. Link was the kind of person who would rigorously control the quality of anything that he was producing and would not forgive even the slightest mistake. As a result, all of his magic gear was flawless and impeccable.

Once the necklace was completed, Eliard took it in his hands and examined every inch of it. It was made of gold and was engraved with runic patterns made of Mithril. It glinted under the candlelight, revealing the silvery sheen of the Mithril that looked like stars in the night sky. Apart from that, there was a teardrop-shaped blue crystal pendant which was glowing faintly as it was filled with Mana.

Eliard admired the necklace so much he was reluctant to put it down. Even Eleanor who was spying on them and couldn't actually see the necklace clearly but was considerably impressed. She might have lived more than a century now, but she was still a woman who loved pretty things as evidenced by her decision to maintain her looks as an eighteen-year-old young woman.

In fact, Eleanor had no resistance against beautiful pieces of jewelry and ornamental objects. She even had the urge to rush to these young men's room right now just to take a closer look at Link's lovely necklace.

Meanwhile in the room, Link noticed Eliard's reaction to his creation and could guess what he was thinking right away.

"It would make a nice a little present for Elena, wouldn't it?" he teased Eliard.

"What? No way! Don't be ridiculous!" Eliard's face was now red with embarrassment. He didn't expect Link to read his thoughts so accurately.

"Stop pretending, you bastard," said Link. "You take the necklace then, but don't forget to pay me with gold coins twice the value of the raw materials!"

"It's a deal." Eliard really liked the necklace. The raw materials for it cost no more than 200 gold coins, which meant that he only owed Link 400 gold coins. He knew by the quality and craftsmanship of the necklace that it could easily be sold at ten times the price of its raw material, so it was actually a pretty good deal.

Eleanor was moved by the scene she just saw. She had witnessed these two young men's staggering talents and seen their diligence, but it was the friendship between the two that impressed her the most.

They both had kind and sincere personalities and they trusted each other very much. There was a strong inexplicable bond between them that worked to improve and encourage each other.

The lonely Eleanor had never experienced a friendship with so much trust and understanding. She had always been quietly studying magic in solitude. Whenever she encountered problems in her studies, she would just roll up her sleeves and try to solve it on her own. Every time she felt sad and lonely, she'd brace herself and suffer through the loneliness as well.

She never thought that there could be someone out there in the world that she could share her thoughts and feelings with, who would read her thoughts the moment an idea crossed her mind and would encourage and support her every effort and actions.

Eleanor's Eyes of the Soul darted between the two young men and finally settled on Link.

Compared to the other Magician, the black-haired young man looked unremarkable. Still, Eleanor found him much more fascinating. In fact, he was the one who had dominated the conversations between these two. There was a certain air about him that contained strength, tenderness, serenity and wisdom, all in one person.

What would it be like to have such a friend? The thought triggered a touch of envy in Eleanor's heart.

Shortly afterwards, both young men returned to their bedrooms. Eleanor's eyes followed Link to his room.

The sight of Link alone in his room gave Eleanor a sudden urge to go find him.

Maybe I should go find him now? she thought.

After observing Link for several hours, she felt that as long as she would talk to him nicely, he might even show her what the spell Whistle looked like, or he might even help her create new magic jewelry. He wouldn't be so rude as to refuse a lady's request, would he?

The impulse was so strong that it gripped Eleanor's heart and put her completely under its control. As she saw that Link was about to fall asleep, Eleanor gritted her teeth and halted the Eyes of the Soul and cast another secret spell Black Raven.

Clouds of gray mist began to rise and envelop her whole body. When the mist settled, a black-plumed raven took her place and it flapped its wings, flew out of the window and headed towards Link's bedroom.

It was a surprising move on her part, but the night was long and endless and her sleep was short. She couldn't stand to do nothing while the nagging curiosity about the young Magician gnawed at her for the whole night.

The black raven entered the room through the air vent in the window and shrouded itself in a cloud of grey mist. It then transformed into the mysterious black-dressed woman. Link was completely stunned at the sight.

Is this person here to silence me? What have I gotten myself into?

"Relax. I mean no harm," the woman said. Link could indeed feel no malice emanating from her magic aura, nor any suspicious fluctuations that may hint at a sneak attack. She did not even hold a wand in her hand.

Nonetheless, Link was still alert.

"I don't think a person who barges into my room so late at night would mean no harm."

Eleanor smiled, accentuating the alluring charm of her beautiful face. She walked to the only chair in the small bedroom and adjusted her sitting position until she was comfortable.

"Just to be safe, I was observing you the whole time; you are of no threat to me, and similarly, I do not want to cause any trouble in Hot Springs City. Furthermore, I specialize in secret magic, if I truly meant to cause you any harm, I would not even appear in front of you. What do you say?"

If they were not in Hot Springs City, Eleanor's normal procedure would be to bring Link back to her Mage Tower for interrogation before erasing his memory. That was what she had done for most of the humasshe had an interest in.

However, that was not possible here. Link had a Level-6 Magician living beside him and there were many other Master Magicians roaming around town. Furthermore, Link was pretty powerful himselfshe had to speak to him as though he was her equal.

Link thought for a moment before putting away his wand.

"So what business do you have here?"

Seeing that Link was reasonable, Eleanor was immediately in a good mood.

"We are all here for the Magician's Fair. Although the fair will not start until tomorrow, I would like to make some transactions with you in advance," she said.

"Oh?" Link was intrigued.

Even though Link was still wary, he maintained a calm composure and no longer displayed any signs of hostility.

Eleanor admired Link's ability to hide his emotions. She took a scroll out from her dimensional ring and said, "I have a magic scroll containing a Level-4 spell. I will give you this in exchange for your Whistle spell. What do you think?"

Exchanging a Level-1 spell for a Level-4 spell was simply a bargain under normal circumstances. However, Link was not a normal human being. If he truly wanted to learn a spell, he could simply purchase it using his Omni Points. He also had access to the complete collection of Herrera's and Anthony's magic books. The Level-4 spell thus had no value to Link, at least not as valuable as the Level-1 spell Eliard and him spent so much time and effort creating.

It was a one and only Level-1 spell that was created through their combined efforts.

Link shook his head and said, "I have no interest in exchanging them."

Eleanor was taken aback, "You should probably take a look at this. This Level-4 spell is called Psychic Shock and was enchanted with my original Supreme Magical Skills. With this spell, you can attack the spirit of all enemies within a 240 feet radius and devastate their willpower."

Link was even more unwilling now. He said, "I am notiterested in such spells. By definition, this can already be considered dark magic."

In the World of Firuman, any spells that directly attacked the spirit was forbidden. This was due to the devastating side effects of those spells which could destroy a person's soul.

The death of the physical body was not something that was feared, as many believed that their souls would finally attain peace in heaven after death. However, the destruction of the soul was different as it would destroy your existence itself, something that was way too horrific to even think about.

Link had no prejudice towards this type of magic, though, he would not personally learn them. This was due to his fear of being even exiled by Magicians of the East Cove Higher Magic Academy.

"Okay then." Eleanor put the scroll away and asked, "What do I have to offer to see the magic structure of your Whistle spell?"

Link was curious as to why Eleanor was so persistent in learning the Whistle spell. He thought for a moment and said, "Something that is unique, I guess."

"What a greedy man!" Eleanor smiled and took out another scroll.

The scroll was brown in color and was enveloped in a glorious silver hue. When Eleanor brought it out, the atmosphere in the room seemed to have stagnated. Its magic presence was so overpowering that Link immediately felt his heart and mind grow heavy, as though he were pressured by an intangible force.

"This is?" Link did not expect a scroll to have such fearsome power.

"Do you know Bryant?" Eleanor smiled with pride, much like a sly fox who had successfully baited its prey.

"Of course!" Almost all sentient beings in the world would have heard of his name. Why else would he be heralded as a Legendary Magician?

"This is the Scroll of Enlightenment that he had left behind. I can let you take a look at it in exchange for your Whistle spell," Eleanor offered.

"It's a deal!" Link agreed without any hesitation.

Eleanor was not afraid that Link would run off with her Scroll of Enlightenment. She passed the scroll to Link and held out her pristine white hands, waiting for Link to pass the magic scroll containing his Whistle spell.

Link handed over the scroll and opened the Scroll of Enlightenment almost immediately. The moment the scroll was opened, it was enveloped in a bright light and an intricate array of rune formations could be seen. The rune formation was formed from many shining light spheres, and each of the spheres was then formed by another complex set of runes.

Link's attention was drawn to the shadows formed by the spheres. To be exact, they weren't even shadows, but runic spirals that were created by chaining tens of thousands of runes into a continuous line. It was a really advanced technique.

In the game, Link merely had to click read and wait for ten seconds before obtaining a permanent stats increase. However, in the real world, he had to study and understand the scroll before he could get the benefits.

Epic quality scroll discovered, do you wish to scan and record? The in-game system asked.

"Of course! Record now!" Link ordered. This was way too complicated for him to read in a short time. He would slowly take his time with the scroll in the future.

The game system was extremely efficient. Link felt like he was in trance and after a few seconds, he could recall almost every detail in the Scroll of Enlightenment.

The moment he was done, the scroll was snatched from his hand. Eleanor said, "I only said for a while. You have already spent way too much time looking at it."

Link stared at the scroll in Eleanor's hands and said, "You're pretty lucky to find that scroll."

"Naturally. But your luck is even better. You possess the most precious gift known to mankind, and that is magic talent." Eleanor spoke with a hint of envy in her voice.

Link asked, "I heard that there is a total of six Scrolls of Enlightenment and combining the six of them will give you a Scroll of Revelation. Do you know exactly which scroll this is?"

At this moment, Eleanor was looking at the magic structure of the Whistle spell. She answered with her eyes still focused on Link's magic scroll, "You are quite knowledgeable. Yes, there are indeed six of them and mine should be the second one. If you can fully understand this scroll, your Mana Recovery speed will at least double."

However, she had only allowed him to take a quick look at the scroll, making it impossible for him to obtain any tangible benefits. On the other hand, she managed to learn a powerful Level-1 spell. It was a good trade.

As it was a Level-1 spell, the magic structure was pretty simple. However, it contained subtle ingenuity and ground-breaking imagination; Eleanor found it extremely fascinating.

She only looked up after a full 20 minutes and said, "This is the most beautifully crafted Level-1 spell I've ever seen. It is pure, clean yet powerful. In order to repay you, I will let you have another minute on my Scroll of Enlightenment. How much you can remember then depends on your capabilities."

She then opened the scroll in front of Link. This time, Link studied the scroll carefully while verifying it with the image recorded by the game system. There were indeed no omissions, the game system captured every single detail perfectly.

It took a full three minutes before Link looked up, despite the original time limit of one minute. Eleanor looked at Link expectantly and said, "It has been three minutes. Shouldn't you give me something else in return?"

Exchanging a Level-1 spell for a Scroll of Enlightenment was an extremely good bargain. Link was in a good mood and chirped, "What do you want? I will do whatever I can to repay you."

"How about helping me craft an enchanted accessory? Something like the one you just showed your friend. The design is simply beautiful." Eleanor's eyes sparkled in anticipation.

She looked exactly like Eliard when he first saw the accessory. In fact, she looked even more excited and fanatical than him.

Link stared and Eleanor and thought, Despite her status as a Magician, the sight of intricate accessories does get her excited.

Link then recalled some certain classic jewelry designs that were popular on Earth and reprocessed them in his mind. After the design was optimized to his liking, he took out some materials and was ready to work.

"Wait a minute; please use my materials."

Eleanor placed gold, thorium and a Cat's Eye Stone in front of Link.

The Cat's Eye Stone was the best conduit for secret magic and was extremely rare. Link took a look at the stone and said, "I do not know any secret spells and I won't be able to make full use of this rare stone. I do not want to waste such a high-quality material."

Eleanor hesitated for a moment before exchanging the Cat's Eye Stone or a fire crystal. The fire crystal had a pure luster and a layer of crimson fiery flame on it. It was much higher in quality than the one he snatched from the Magician Holmes.

"How about a fire elemental spell?"

"Is Flame Blast okay?" Link asked. It would be a waste to enchant a low-level spell on such a good quality material. He had to make good use of it.

"That would be great."

"Come back in a week." Unlike low-level accessories, high-level magic equipment will take a longer time to craft.

"I am expecting great things, Link," Eleanor said with a wink.

A shroud of grey mist enveloped her. When the mist dissipated, she had once again turned into a raven, flying out through the window soon after.

After she left, the encounter felt extremely surreal to Link. A moment ago, Link had still considered her as an enemy. Now, they had already become trading partners and he even obtained the knowledge of the second Scroll of Enlightenment out of this incredibly good bargain.

If not for the spread of high-quality materiasstill laying in front of him, he would have thought it was all a dream.

"What a bizarre world," Link couldn't help but exclaim.

## 122. The Dark Elf Infiltration

Link woke up early the next day. He had agreed to craft the black-dressed woman an accessory imbued with the Flame Blast spell. As he did not want to delay this request indefinitely, he decided to start drafting the blueprint for this accessory while he was still energetic from a good nights' rest.

Ah, the black-dressed womanLink forgot to ask for her name yesterday. After all, he was slightly nervous throughout the whole encounter.

As this accessory needed to be enchanted with a Level-4 Flame Blast spell, a bracelet would be the best choice. Rings and necklaces were often constrained by the lack of space for the carving of magic runes, making it extremely difficult to enchant high-level spells.

The accessory had a complex structure. To ensure accuracy and minimal mistakes, Link meticulously drafted the blueprint, writing down every detail instead of simply imagining it in his mind. The perfectionist side of him then slowly took over.

He was extremely particular about every magic equipment that he crafted. Not only must the details be aesthetically pleasing, the spell enchanted in the accessory must also be done to perfection, meaning it should not merely be an ordinary Flame Blast spell. He had to take into consideration its effectiveness in real combat and then modify it accordingly.

He made sure each magic equipment that he created was unique in its own way.

After some consideration, Link decided to strengthen the Flame Blast spell with a Supreme Magical Skill he had just learned.

Link had to give his all in crafting this bracelet despite it being a complimentary gift. If he had done a perfunctory job, he would have this urge to modify it even after giving it away. Link felt uncomfortable just thinking about it.

I seem to be in the final stages of my Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. Link sighed.

It was 7 o'clock in the morning by the time Link was done with the blueprint. He then kept his writing materials and started washing up.

Ten minutes later, Link met up with Herrera, Eliard and Rylai at the hall.

The Blue Hermit Inn was even more crowded in the morning. Magicians were streaming in and out. Herrera had quite the reputation amongst Magicians. As many of them passed by Herrera, they would greet her with respect.

Link, Eliard and Rylai were all young Magicians. They were thus merely seen as Magician's Apprentices Herrera brought along and did not receive much attention.

After breakfast, Herrera said, "The fair will be held at Jade Street and it is just five minutes away. Let's walk over." Herrera was a veteranshe had taken part in this yearly affair at least ten times. Link and the rest naturally took her advice and followed behind her all the way to Jade Street.

The area around Jade Street was also extremely crowded due to the Magician's Fair. Most of the vendors outside were ordinary vendors or farmers who had hoped to ride on the popularity of the fair to earn some extra income. Most of the items sold by these vendors were low-quality magic materiassuch as silver star flowers and magic iron ore. They were simply walking around to immerse themselves in the bustling atmosphere of the fair. However, it was different for Rylai.

Rylai would often help out in the alchemy lab back in Herrera's Mage Tower. Her job included cleansing magical herbs and brewing herbal potions. Eliard would then give her some commission as the finance manager of the Mage Tower. Just this month, her work had earned her five gold coins. This job had also developed her interest in alchemy and she would conduct her own experiments every now and then.

However, she could not afford the materiassold in the Mage Tower. Her aim for this Magician's Fair was to purchase some cheap materials for her experiments.

She hopped around the different stalls and was clearly in a state of bliss. With her innocent face and three powerful Magicians as escorts, the vendors naturally offered reasonable prices. All of them looked at Rylai with interest and joy, giving her ample time to purchase what she wanted.

It wasn't long before Rylai spent all her savings. Link offered to help her carry her spoils as she skipped forward with a satisfied expression, brimming with confidence about her experiments.

This was an extremely carefree memory for Rylai. Many years later when she already owned her own Mage Tower, she would still smile at the thought of her teenage days.

They reached Jade Street after a relaxing time shopping with Rylai.

Herrera suggested that they split up to search for what they wanted while Rylai accompanied her. Eliard and Link agreed without hesitation. It would be a waste of time if they traveled together since they were not planning to purchase the same materials.

Link passed all the magic equipment he had crafted for sale to Herrera. Herrera then gave him 6000 gold coins as his earnings in advance. With a bag full of gold coins, he started browsing through the stalls in the Magician's Fair.

Similarly, Eliard handed over 100 magic scrolls to Herrera and had over 700 gold coins to spend. This was more than sufficient to purchase low to mid-level magic materials.

Link bought a kilogram of silver from a Level-1 Magician. Just as he was about to purchase wood to craft the body of his staff, he saw a figure at the corner of his eye. Somehow, he found this person vaguely familiar.

But he had almost no acquaintances in the capital.

Link felt something was amiss and pulled his hood over his face before he followed quietly behind. As there were Magicians and magic equipment everywhere in the fair, the magic fluctuations in the air were completely indiscernible. It was impossible to distinguish the identity of the figure unless Link recognized their facial features.

The figure did not seem to notice Link. They would stop every so often to purchase some magic materials before moving forward. As Link got closer, he could discern the features more clearly. This person had brown curly hair and nearly flawless skin. From the side, he looked simply like a handsome human. However, Link was even more puzzled. He had definitely seen this person somewhere!

Who exactly is he? Link tried matching this image with the Magicians he knew in his mind.

Link had not been in contact with many Magicians. Furthermore, most of the Magicians he knew were from the East Cove Higher Magic Academy. If he truly was from the academy, Link would have recognized him straight away.

Wait...that's the Dark Elf! Hishi

His skin color was not natural. It seemed to be covered with a layer of cosmetic product. From the side, his pupils seemed brown. However, Link knew that a Magician could craft color-changing crystal lenses easily!

It was unusual for a Dark Elf to appear in the capital of the Norton Kingdom. There was no need to take such a big risk if he only wanted to purchase magic materials. There must be an ulterior motive.

Link carefully trailed behind Felidia. They walked through half a street to the central area of Jade Street. Just in front of them was the central plaza where both the human density and quality of the magic materiassold was the highest. Link even saw a vendor selling silver dragon heart blood.

The silver dragon was an extremely powerful magical creature. Its blood was usually used to create high-quality ink for the production of mid to high-level magic scrolls.

There were even people from other races mixed into the crowd. Link saw a dwarf selling a magic pistol and an earth spirit selling magic goggles. However, the one that attracted his attention the most was the group of high elves.

High Elves, a glorious race whose hometown, Dawn Island, lay across the ocean from the Norton Kingdom. They were characterized by their crystal clear purple irises, golden hair, defined facial features, slender stature and most importantexceptional magic talent. Almost every High Elf would develop some sort of magic potential. The queen of the High Elves was also a Level-9 Magician who was only one step away from the revered title of Legendary.

There were in total 15 high elves, each of them wearing exquisite and sky blue magic armor. Amongst them, there were three Magicians while the 11 of them were the famous Magic Warriors indigenous to the Dawn Island. Both the Magicians and Magic Warriors were at least Level-4 in strength, making them an extremely powerful entourage.

Beside these High Elves were a team of Warriors from the Norton Kingdom. There were around 20 of them clad in gold shining armor. They were members of the Royal Forest Guards and each of them was at least Level-3 in strength.

And in the middle of this troupe was a High Elf teenager, the reason for all these protective measures.

He was only about 18 years old, his eyes glowing with a slight lavender hue, much like a flawless amethyst. Hishi

"A High Elf noble!" Link gasped. Pure Amethyst eyes coupled with flawless looks were the characteristics of a High Elf noble.

At that moment, Link also saw Felidia quickening his pace and disappearing into an alley.

The appearance of both a High Elf noble and a Dark Elf Magician raised an ominous feeling in Link's heart. A dangerous premonition sounded repeatedly in his mind.

He was just about to catch up to Felidia when he felt a pat on his shoulders. He spun around and saw the black-dressed woman he talked to last night.

"Hey it's you again! What a coincidence!" Eleanor smiled.

Link did not have the time to chat, he urgently said, "I have something I need to attend to"

Before he could complete his sentence, he felt a slight elemental fluctuation among the indiscernible magic aura on Jade Street. This magic fluctuation was extremely well concealed. If not for Link's keen perception, he would not have been able to tell. Link's facial expression immediately turned serious.

This feeling it's the Flame Blast spell! And it is deliberately concealed as well! This is Jade Street!

Link looked around the street. This spell was too well-hidden and no one noticed this slight fluctuation amongst the heat and festive mood of the fair. Link felt a shudder down his spine. If this spell were to explode in the middle of this crowd, the number of casualties would be unthinkable.

However, the magic was about to be released. He didn't have the time to issue a warning!

## 123. Flame Blasts in the Heart of the City!

In the heart of a busy square on Jade Street.

Prince Phillip swept his gaze across the fascinating sights all around him. There was a variety of magic materials laid out in the roadside stalls and the merchants' shouts filled the air while human Magicians dressed in vibrant robes roamed the streets.

There wouldn't be such sights to behold in the Isle of Dawn. Although the island had an area of about 500 miles, its population only consisted of less than three million High Elves, all scattered throughout the island. The island was also rich in natural resources, so its inhabitants had no need to work very hard to get their food and drinks and other necessities. This condition had made the island extraordinarily peaceful and serene.

This was all well and good if you were a life-worn, middle-aged man looking for a quiet place to settle down in. But for a young man full of life like Prince Phillip, the Isle of Dawn was nothing more than a prison.

It wasn't a surprise then, that he was infinitely grateful to escape the island for a while when he was sent to the Norton kingdom on behalf of the Isle of Dawn's royal family. He had to discuss the matters of material aid that his kingdom was going to provide the Norton kingdom as an ally in the war against the Dark Elf kingdom of Pralync.

He had some free time today, so Prince Phillip decided to take the chance to visit the Magician's Fair he heard was going on in Springs City. He saw so many things he'd never seen in the Isle of Dawn here. Although the captain of the guards, Ayrie, who was accompanying him regarded the coarse manners of the humans on the streets with disdain and contempt, Prince Phillip was instead entranced by the passion and lust for life that these people showed.

These humans went about their business with a fire in their eyes. They clearly knew what they wanted and pursued them with steely determination. This was something he admired and had never seen in the High Elves back home. All his kind ever did was repeat the lives that their ancestors had led before them day after day with so much leisure and idleness in their lives that their fragile bones would crumble at the slightest fall.

"I like it here," said Prince Philip, his eyes shining brilliantly as he drank in the dizzying sights before him.

"Your Highness," said Ayrie, the captain of the royal guards, "I think it's time we go back. It's getting too chaotic in the streets right now."

"Let's stay for a little bit longer," said the prince who was still so intrigued by the sights and sounds of Springs City. "We've only been here for half an hour." He dreaded the thoughts of going back to the dull and stuffy palace.

While Prince Phillip was strolling the streets without a care in the world, Link, on the other hand, was sensing a very strong murderous intent in the air!

There was a very subtle fluctuation of elements in the air. If Link hadn't increased his vigilance, even he wouldn't have been able to detect the slight changes he sensed right now. Judging from the movements of the elements, he was sure that a Flame Blast was going to be detonated in a few moments!

But the atmosphere of the street was just too chaotic to pinpoint the location of the looming Flame Blast. He tried to focus all his attention on the slight elemental fluctuation he sensed, but still failed to detect its whereabouts.

In that case, all I can do now is protect myself!

Within seconds, he entered the calm and focused state of mind of spellcasting, in which the flow of time almost came to a stop and the noises of the bustling street quieted down. Even Eleanor's voice who was approaching him seemed to come from miles away. Right now, in his mind, the only thing he focused on was that vague aura that contained traces of Mana, of elements and of some sort of hidden powers. When he focused on it a little longer he began to hear whispers of the soul too.

By concentrating on this bizarre aura, Link could finally locate the source of the incoming Flame Blasts. They were not coming from the surrounding shop houses, nor were they coming from the crowds. Instead, the Flame Blasts were coming from the underground or to be exact, their exact point of origin was the sewers underneath the fountain in the heart of the busy square!

He was sure that there wasn't just one Flame Blast, but three, and it had managed to be triggered so sneakily without causing any major Mana fluctuations because the caster had used magic scrolls and a Domingo crystal!

Yes, he was sure it was a Domingo crystal because he was very familiar with the pattern of the surge of fire elements that were stored in a Domingo crystal.

Three Flame Blasts aided by the use of the Domingo crystal detonated in the sewers right under the square grounds that would be as dangerous as a mine buried under the ground, and its impact would level everything that was within a hundred feet flat to the ground!

There was no time for Link to do anything other than cast the defensive spell stored in his ring to protect himself. He had fixed a Level-4 Edelweiss to the ring, and it should be enough to shield him from the brunt of the force coming from the Flame Blasts.

Eleanor was still oblivious to the looming danger. She waved her lily-white hands in front of Link's eyes in an attempt to wake Link up from his apparent stupor.

"Hello, anybody there?" she teased. "What is wrong with you?"

Link had no time to explain. The explosions will reach them any second now. Right at the moment he triggered the spell Edelweiss, he reached out his arms and clasped Eleanor tightly to his chest. They weren't exactly close friends then, but Link still couldn't just watch her be consumed by the fire of the incoming Flame Blasts right in front of his eyes.

"Hey, you rascal!" she shouted. "What are you doing?" Eleanor was completely taken aback by Link's sudden movements. She had lived more than a hundred years and was never treated in such a way, least of all by a seventeen-year-old boy! She actually found itinteresting.

She had no time to come to terms with that feeling though, as the thundering explosions hit them right at that moment.

BOOMMM!!!

An explosion that rumbled the earth erupted in the heart of the square. Flames burst outward like a demon from hell, devouring and destroying everything that came in its path. At the center of the square, the Elf Guard Captain Ayrie activated a defensive spell at the last possible moment, but instead of saving his own life, he used the shield to protect Prince Phillip.

As for the others in the square the Warriors, the guardsmen, the merchants, even the Magicians who were passing by all were swallowed up by the blistering flames of the explosions.

Some powerful Magicians managed to react at the very last second by casting a defensive spell around them, though none managed to do so before the flames had claimed parts of their bodies. These unfortunate people were now wailing and howling in pain.

Elemental spells contained the highest destructive power among all types of spells, and spells that utilized fire elements were the most explosive of all elemental spells. Moreover, Flame Blast was, in fact, one of the most terrifying spells among fire element spells. Right now, three consecutive Flame Blasts were detonated the resulting power of this move would exceed even that of a Level-5 spell attack!

There was a Level-5 Magician who happened to be in the square, but he wasn't able to protect himself in the face of such an attack as it was too sudden, and it left no time between each Flame Blast. What was worse for him was his location right in the center of the explosion, so even the Level-4 defensive shield that he managed to cast just in time had lasted only half a second before it burst like a bubble and exposed the Magician to all the elements.

In other words, even a powerful Magician was only able to survive half a second longer than the others.

Because there were two rows of shop houses that blocked both sides of the street, the flames of the explosion surged against them like a powerful tide coming in to shore and it reached a hundred feet inside these buildings before it stopped. The impact of the explosions was weaker in the shop houses and the Magicians inside had time to react, so many of them did survive, but most were seriously injured and suffered terrible burns.

The terrifying flames from the explosions lasted for six long seconds. When the fire died down, the formerly boisterous street had turned eerily silent.

Dust and gravel covered the whole area and pieces of charred body parts were scattered everywhere. The remnants of the surrounding buildings flailed flimsily as they were hit by the shockwaves. Terrible cries of pain were heard from spots further away from the point of explosion.

There were, in total, three Flame Blast explosions in those six seconds and they had completely leveled the initially lively and bustling Jade Streetito a scene of hell on earth.

Surprisingly, though, in the midst of the scene of total destruction, three people managed to survive.

The first was Prince Phillip, who was enclosed in a shroud of emerald shielding. He was slumped on the ground, dumbstruck by the sheer impact of the explosions and staring blankly around him at the hellish sight of the remnants of the busy square.

The captain of the guards Ayrie, had cast a very powerful defensive spell equivalent to a Level-6 spell although it wasn't out of his own powers but was, in fact, from a magic gear that the queen had given him in case of emergency.

The other two survivors were Link and Eleanor. They were right at the edge of the Flame Blast's fiery tongue and were protected by Link's Level-4 Edelweiss. They were both flung 60 feet away by the shockwaves of the explosions and were hurled into a shop near the edge of the square. Apart from slight injuries and dizzy heads, they both had managed to escape practically unscathed.

As they lay on the ground in the shattered house, Link tried to get up and activate the Mana in his body. Then, aided by the additional Mana in the ring on his finger, he managed to cast a new Edelweiss around himself and Eleanor.

The use of magic gear like his own ring could speed up spellcasting, but it would also reduce the power of the spell because of the anti-magic properties of the material that made up the magic gear. Still, the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages in this case.

Eleanor, on the other hand, was still shaken up by the swift and violent assaults of the Flame Blasts. She was still dumbstruck and was hiding in Link's arms, her eyes darted around uncertainly and her whole body trembled uncontrollably.

It would be unfair to say that her reactions were because she lacked courage, though. It was just a natural response of someone who had realized that she had just escaped the claws of death by the skin of her teeth.

If she hadn't noticed Link's odd behavior just now and decided to come over and greet him, she would no doubt have ended up as some of these mangled pieces of dead bodies strewn all over the square right now.

While it might be true that she was a Level-6 Magician, she had specialized in secret spells. She was unequipped in facing sneak attacks and lacked the understanding of the effects magic spells had on the soul. Needless to say, she was practically defenseless against the Flame Blasts just now.

Link helped Eleanor up to her feet. He peeked through the gaps of the broken wall and saw an emerald-hued aura enshrouding the High Elf prince in the middle of the now empty square. Then he noticed a group of shadowy figures sneaking up on the prince. There were six of them some of them were Magicians and the rest were Warriors. They all seemed to be humans and each of them was at Level-3 and above.

They were all heading towards the middle of the empty square towards the High Elf prince!

They're going to kill him! Link realized. No, there's more to this. The Flame Blasts just now were aimed specifically at the High Elf prince. This must be the Dark Elves' doing. But why would they target the prince?

After a moment's thought, the motive became clear to Link.

They're trying to put a wedge in the relationship between humans and the High Elves!

In the game, the High Elves of the Isle of Dawn had always been a constant and reliable ally of the human race. When the humans and the Dark Elves declared war with each other, the High Elves sent their princess Mirda to Norton kingdom as the special envoy and had even dispatched tens of thousands of High Elf Magicians to join the army. Without the aid of the Isle of Dawn, it was impossible for the humans to face the Lord of the Deep, Nozama.

I'll never let the Dark Elves succeed! Link vowed.

Right at that moment, a notification popped up on the interface a new mission!

Mission: Rescue

Mission Details: Firstly, save the High Elf Prince Phillip's life! Once that is achieved, investigate the parties involved in this murder attempt.

Mission Rewards: Player will receive 60 Omni Points once the High Elf prince's life is saved, then once the investigation results in a conclusive finding, player will receive a Soul Glyph.

Hmmm? That's an unusual kind of reward. Although there were questions in his mind about this strange new reward from the gaming system, Link had no time to think about it now because those humans were now closing in on Prince Phillip. What's clear as day was the fact that those dying guards around the High Elf prince couldn't possibly fight off those Assassins!

## 124. Its Him!

"The human race is overwhelmed by their desires. This desire has granted them prosperity but will also cause their destruction!" This was mother's evaluation of the human race.

In the past, Prince Phillip only saw the prosperous side of human race and many times yearned for such riches and enjoyment. However, he had now experienced the destruction that came with the benefits first-hand.

In an instant, a bustling central area of the capital was assaulted by multiple explosive and lethal Flame Blast spells. This was simply insane.

Outside of the defensive barrier, the captain of the escort team who was also his best friend, had already vaporized from the high heat. The only evidence of his existence was a broken wand ten feet away. The Magic Warriors were also dead. The only role that their shining magic armor played was to keep their bodies intact under the assault of such high heat.

A Magic Warrior whose skin was completely charred and his eyes still wide open seemed to be staring at Phillip. One could easily tell the shock he suffered before his life was instantaneously incinerated by the blazing flames. He probably could not understand how such a terrible attack could have happened in the Norton Kingdom, much less during the Magician's Market.

Phillip also saw the body of a father and daughter ten feet away. The father instinctively used his body to shield his daughter the moment the spell was released. This kept the body of the little girl intact, but alas, she was still unable to escape the high temperature of the flames.

The little girl was dead, her body painted a cruel black while she curled painfully on the ground.

This apocalyptic scene was a huge blow to Phillip's soul. He perspired profusely and tears were streaming endlessly out of his eyes. He lay helplessly on the ground, too shocked and afraid to even move a finger.

He would return to Dawn Island immediately if he was able to survive this incident. He also swore not step into the terrifying world of humanity ever again. His vision was blurred from the teasstreaming down his face. However, he could still see a few figures walking towards him.

Are they here to save me? Phillip thought. The Royal Guards would probably be the first people to react to such a terrifying assault in the capital.

However, as his vision slowly recovered, Phillip was horrified to discover the exact opposite of what he had imagined.

These people deliberately covered their features and looked at him with a deathly stare. They also lowered their voices while talking to each other.

"He is not dead yet. He is hiding behind the magic barrier!"

"The barrier had already been weakened by the spell earlier. Destroy it and kill him!"

Two of the Magicians then raised their staff and two seconds later, an Ice Spear spell and a Storm of Daggers spell appeared simultaneously, charging towards the magic barrier guarding Phillip.

While Phillip's barrier was a Level-6 spell, it was released from his magic equipment and had been set to an instantaneous release mode. The defensive strength of the barrier was thus compromised to allow for faster casting time, lowering the defensive strength to that of a Level-5 defensive spell. It had already successfully defended against three Flame Blast spell. As the two Level-3 spells collided with the emerald barrier, a large number of ripples immediately appeared. It could not hold out for much longer.

"Don't idle, attack together!" a Magician hollered.

The four Warriors around him brandished their swords and surrounded the emerald barrier. Their swords were enveloped in a deadly Battle Aura as they swung towards the barrier with full force.

Prince Phillip was devastated. The only thing he could do was to grip his magic sword tightly.

He knew that it would be a futile struggle. He was merely 16 years old and a Level-2 Magic Warrior. He stood no chance against a six-man team of Level-3 opponents. He would be instantly destroyed.

As the barrier disintegrated right in front of his eyes, a thought flashed through his mind.

This attack was targeted at me. I was the one who killed my best friend and so many other innocent people.

He was overwhelmed by sadness and regret. If he had known sooner, he would have listened to his best friend's advice and stayed in the palace.

There were three other figures hiding in a rundown house at the corner of the plaza.

They were all talented Dark Elves, known widely as Constellation Assassin Alina, Level-4 genius Assassin Ainos, and Magician Felidia. They were the three musketeers of the younger generation of Dark Elves and were prodigies in their respective fields.

The trio looked at the scene through the gaps in the house. They had to confirm the death of Prince Phillip before they could leave.

"The High Elves really do have a strong magic foundation. Magic equipment that can instantaneously release a Level-6 spell! How incredible!" Felidia whispered in admiration.

Alina kept silent. Her pair of dark crimson eyes were not fixated on Prince Phillip, but were looking in another direction.

"Who is he?" Alina pointed.

A black-haired teenager emerged from the rubble. He was enveloped in a pale light. Closer inspection would reveal that the light was made up of countless tiny runes, blending and working together flawlessly. This magic aura could only be that of a Level-4 Magician.

Ainos looked over and shook his head, "I don't recognize him. Are you sure he was the one who released the Level-4 magic barrier? Perhaps it was released by magic equipment his mentor gave him."

Felidia was similarly attracted by Alina's words. He was originally relaxed and confident but he gasped the moment he saw Link.

"He is Link! I fought against him once in Red Leaves Covehe was extremely powerful!" Felidia whispered.

Ainos was well informed about Felidia's defeat at the hands of a human Magician in Red Leaves Cove. He looked at Alina with a horrified expression, "It's him! He was the one who used the Flame Blast spell to defeat General Lund!"

"So that's the guy?" Alina had an ice-cold stare, "It seems like we are in luck. Let's finish him off while the guards are not here yet."

The Gladstone City attack was extremely well planned and executed. There were almost no mistakes in the entire process. The Death Hand successfully deceived the Norton Kingdom's Mission Intelligence, Section 3, and had complete dominance over the military intelligence. However, the human race still managed to turn the tables around eventually and even heavily injured General Lund. It was rumored that the general was so infuriated by his failure that he killed over 30 slaves within a month.

Since then, the human Magician had been a target of the Death Hand. There was no way the three of them would let him leave here alive.

Alina unsheathed her Shattered Star Sword. The sword was made completely from Khorium and had a purple hue. The sword was slender, much like a saber and was also enchanted with a high-level Sharpness spell. Coupled with Khorium's anti-magic properties and Alina's Level-5 Battle Aura, the sword could pierce through any magic barrier below Level-5.

As the barrier surrounding Prince Phillip was on the verge of breaking, Link made his move. His targets were the Assassins right beside the prince.

His staff glowed and a piercing whistling sound could immediately be heard penetrating through the atmosphere. Within a split second, six hazy light beams were flying towards the human Assassins.

The six-man team was composed of humans that were bribed by the handsome rewards promised by the Dark Elves. They were indeed a strong combination of Level-3 fighters. However, under Link's assault, all six of them were defeated in a second, with an injury the size of a fist at the back of their heads.

All in just one second. They did not have the power to even fight back.

Alina was still observing the situation inside the rundown house. This sight caused her eyelids to bat ever so slightly and stopped momentarily in her tracks. She said, "He won't be easy to take down. Feli, Ainos, we will have to go all out!"

Link was unobtedly strong. However, Alina was fairly confident in her skills as well. Furthermore, she also had the asstance of her comrades. How could a team of a Level-5 Assassin, a Level-4 Assassin and a Level-4 Magician be defeated by merely a Level-4 Magician?

It would be preposterous.

Felidia whispered, "Be careful, he has gotten a lot stronger. My previous battle experience is probably not useful anymore."

Ainos was similarly shocked by Link's high spellcasting speed. He then unsheathed his second dagger and revealed the silver crossbow he had hidden all this time. He was prepared to use his full strength.

"Attack!" Alina was the first to rush out of the house. The moment she left, she immediately activated her skill, Deception Spiral.

With the help of her Battle Aura, her movement speed became incredibly fast. As she advanced, multiple shadows of her seemed to appearit was impossible to distinguish between the real and fake copies.

This was the best way to deal with a Magician who was currently in a state of extreme focus!

## 125. Whos in Real Danger Here?

Amidst the ruins of the square, in the heart of the street.

The swordswoman Alina chose the best timing to make her move.

At that moment, the human Magician had just killed off the hired human Assassins. This was the moment that the Magician would let down his guard, or at least it was the moment when his reaction time would be the slowest.

She was now about 130 feet away from the Magician. With the help of one of her Battle Art skills, Deception Spiral, she would only need 1.5 seconds to cross this distance!

In 1.5 seconds, Link would be within her reach. Then all she needed to do was smash the Magician's defensive spell apart and decapitate him all with a single swing of her sword!

Yes, she was a Level-5 Assassin so there was no reason she couldn't do it! More importantly, she was not alonehe had two strong comrades behind her as well.

Just as Alinarsed forward, the Level-4 Assassin Ainos came out of hiding and instantly raised his arm and took aim. In that hand was a crossbow that was radiating a cold silvery Battle Aura.

Click.

The arrow was now in place, and the magic seal on the crossbow was now activated. At the same time, Ainos had stabilized his aim and locked it on Link's skull.

Whooosh!

For a moment, there was a sudden burst of light that was blindingly bright. Then, an arrow that looked like a silver thunderbolt emerged from it, tearing through the air at a frightening speed towards Link's head.

This crossbow contained anti-magic powers. At the instant of firing, it would also be boosted by the power of a Level-3 spell, which gave it extreme penetrative force. Even if it couldn't completely break through Link's defensive shield, it was sure to weaken it by a considerable amount, so Alina would only have to touch it with the tip of her sword to completely smash the shield.

Once the arrow was fired, the bright magic crystal on the silver crossbow dimmed slightly it was now recharging. The process would take a while, so Ainos would have to wait three seconds before he could fire the next arrow.

At the same time, the Magician Felidia finally stood up.

He made no move to attack, though. He began, instead, to cast a defensive spell.

Of the three Dark Elves present, he was the only to have fought against Link before. He was familiar with this Magician's tactics and strategies and he was confident that the combined forces of the three of them would be able to defeat him. Still, they must be prepared to protect themselves with a shield, otherwise the last counterattack from Link before he died might kill at least one or two of them.

That was why they decided that Alina and Ainos would be the ones to attack the human Magician and he would provide them both with the protection of his defensive spells it was a fail-proof fighting strategy.

About 0.8 seconds later, Felidia used the magic bracelet on his arm to cast a halo spell Dark Fog!

Dark Fog

Level-3 Halo Spell

Range of Effect: 260 feet.

Effects: Specified targets within the range will be shrouded in a thick protective grayish fog which will decrease the power of a Level-3 spell attack by 60%.

(Note: The higher the level of the spell, the weaker the protection, e.g. the power of an attack from a Level-4 spell would only be decreased by 50%.)

Although the defensive spell was only Level-3, it was more than sufficient to protect Alina because she'd only left a window of 1.5 seconds for the opponent to cast another spell. With such a brief period of time, the most powerful spell the Magician could possibly cast was a Level-3 spell. Even if he could cast a Level-4 spell, its power would still be halved by Dark Fog and Alina's own Battle Aura would no doubt protect her from it. There was no reason to doubt that she would be able to counter any kind of attack this Magician would hurl at her!

Within seconds, Alina was now less than fifty feet away from Link. She used her Battle Art to blur her silhouette, making it harder for the Magician to aim his attacks as it was now impossible to pinpoint her exact location.

"No!!!" shouted Prince Phillip helplessly.

The human Magician who had just rescued him minutes ago was now in grave danger and he didn't even have the power to do anything about it!

While he was screaming, the Assassin Ainos' silver arrow managed to pierce through Link's Level-4 Edelweiss. The tip of the crossbow arrow was in direct contact with an opposing force as it penetrated the force field; it emitted a shimmery silver light as its speed was gradually impeded. It looked just like a fish that had jumped into a pool of thick gel.

At last, when the arrow had penetrated the shield for about one and a half feet and only a few inches away from Link's forehead, it was deflected away by the force field. However, the Edelweiss had indeed received some damage because of this attack. The light that had enveloped Link's body was now so dim that it was almost invisible. All it needed was for Alina to poke the shield gently with her sword and Link would be rendered completely defenseless.

Eleanor had noticed just how much danger Link was in as well now. Naturally she wanted to rescue the young Magician who'd just saved her life seeing that he was about to get killed. But she had underestimated the three Dark Elves' formidable power!

Eleanor wanted to cast a defensive spell on Link and protect him, but she instantly realized that there would only be less than half a second of time for her to cast it. By the time she was done casting the spell, the Dark Elf's sword would've cut him down from ear to ear.

In other words, in the face of such rapid attacks, Eleanor, the Master Magician who had been exploiting the mysterious features of secret spells for sneak attacks for a century was now powerless against the Dark Elves. She could do nothing but watch her friend get killed in front of her eyes.

The Dark Elves' battle strategy was like bolts of lightning that would bombard you with attack after attack without giving you time to react. In this case, even if you had the capability to cast a thousand different clever spells, you'd still be defeated as you wouldn't have the time to cast them.

It was not unlike the strategy that Link and Herrera used to knock the old Necromancer Shade to the ground and defeat him at the black Mage Tower.

Eleanor now realized the cruel truth of how it was impossible for her to help Link now. She couldn't understand why, but she suddenly felt a sharp pang in her heart. Finally, after more than a century of utter isolation and loneliness, she'd found a friend in Link. Yet in the blink of an eye, death would soon claim her only friend why must life be so cruel and tragic?

No one could save Link now, that much was clear to Eleanor. The only person left that Link could rely on was himself!

Fortunately, Link turned out to be as reliable as any other help he could get. In fact, he had been brewing up a strategy the moment he saw the Dark Elf swordswoman appear.

The woman was nimble and agile; she was adept at concealing her movements and her speed was swift. It would be difficult to hit her with a spell that had high penetrative power like Whistle, as it would require Link to hit the target accurately. She was also protected by a defensive spell and possessed strong Battle Aura herself as well so any Level-0 spell, even Link's Glass Orbs, would be useless on her.

Moreover, even if he could hit the Dark Elf accurately with his spells, she would be able to block those attacks with her sword anyway. He also had so little time that he couldn't afford to make even the smallest of mistakes, so he would have to give up attacking her with any spell that worked in a small target area.

Which meant that he had one option left his second strongest spell, Flame Blast.

Mana began to flow into his wand and reconfigure into the spell structure of Flame Blast. The fire elements stored inside the Domingo crystal would be a great help to him now as it would save him the time it took for elements to collect and condense at the tip of the wand.

Thus, within one second, a Flame Blast began to take form at the tip of Link's wand. Alina was roughly 30 feet away from Link by then, and she could even clearly make out the roiling heated air around the fireball. An ominous sense of danger overwhelmed her senses and her pupils shrunk to the size of a pinprick.

At this moment, two options stood before her. Firstly, she could retreat and save her life, or secondly, she could fight on until the last drop of her blood was drained from her veins.

A Warrior retreating before a Magician? That would be more shameful than death. The right choice was clear to her now she would grit her teeth and fight till her last breath!

Flame Blasts were indeed powerful and there was no doubt that it was her three consecutive Flame Blasts that had turned the square in the heart of the city into a hell on earth. Still, Alina had the powerful defensive spell that Felidia had cast on her body and besides, she possessed a formidable Level-5 Battle Aura. More importantly, she was now only 30 feet away from the opponent. If Link decided to unleash a Flame Blast here, he would no doubt be burnt to a crisp himself!

The fire element was a wild and explosive element to control. While high-level fire spells were unobtedly fearsome weapons in battles, they were also like double-edged swords that could equally hurt the opponent and the caster!

"Bring it on!" shouted Alina.

She unleashed a burst of Battle Aura which materialized as silver spikes around her body. The bright silvery glint that emanated from her body followed her as she dashed forward at high speed, leaving a trail of faint aura behind her. She looked just like a shooting star falling from the sky.

Unfortunately, she had yet again underestimated Link's true powers.

In truth, Link had another choice. He could use the Legendary spell to transport himself to a spot faraway and escape the attacks virtually unscathed. He could even bring Prince Phillip and Eleanor with him because the Legendary spell was able to transport more than one person. Despite this choice being available to him, Link nevertheless chose to fight head-on with Flame Blast because he had enough faith in himself and was confident that he would thwart the Dark Elves' plans!

In fact, he wouldn't just thwart their plans, he would also defeat them all!

## 126. Instantaneously Routed!

Within one second, the Flame Blast spell took form!

Link released the spell without any hesitation. The spell would land around 15 feet in front of him. Closer inspection would reveal that this Flame Blast spell was slightly different from the ordinary one. It was still wrapped in the same deadly flames, but the magic fluctuation was much more stable. This stable form caused the resulting spell to look just like a translucent light dome.

The fireball landed after 0.1 seconds and caused a huge explosion. At the same time, Alina was still 25 feet away.

Boom! The earth-shattering sound reverberated throughout the street as the incandescent flames started emerging. Then, a stunning thing happened.

The spell did not erupt in all directions, but instead charged only in the direction opposite of Link in a conical formation. The explosion seemed to be obstructed by an unknown force on Link's side. The dancing flames were constrained into a perfect semi-circular arch around him.

Supreme Magic Skill: Single Directional Explosion!

This was an upgrade to the Flame Blast spell Link had been working on.

The translucent light dome surrounding the fireball was not merely a more stable version of the flame, but also a binding field. When the Flame Blast spell exploded, Link could then control the eventual shape of the explosion, containing the explosion to a single directional outburst.

As a result, Link would not be affected by the damaging effects of the spell, while Alina had to bear the full offensive power of the explosion.

What was more frightening was the concentration of power in Link's Flame Blast spell. Even though the spell had been contained by the force field, there was no change in the total offensive power of the explosion. Since it was unable to explode with full power in all directions, all the oppressed deadly fire elements would be compressed towards Alina!

The Flame Blast spell now had a power that was almost Level-5 in strength!

In an instant, Alina felt like she was engulfed in a lava waterfall while she struggled to travel upstream against the torrential current.

Not only was there an endless stream of flame, there were also rubbles and pieces of charred flesh washed up by the force of the spell.

"It's not possible to break through!" Alina made the judgment in an instant and sidestepped, dodging the attack. She escaped the blazing furnace in 0.2 seconds.

However, within those 0.2 seconds while she was in the lava pool, the black mist protecting her was completely shattered and her Battle Aura disintegrated. Her cloak with anti-magic properties was also vaporized, the anti-magic pebbles in the cloak breaking into pieces. Her protective mask was also drenched in blood as a piece of rubble had hit her right in the forehead.

At the same time, she heard a cry of despair behind her. She spun around and saw Ainos being engulfed by the blazing flames 60 feet away.

Ainos' reaction speed and defensive power were not as fast as Alina's. Although the offensive power of the Flame Blast spell had already weakened after spreading out over 60 feet, its surface area was five times larger.

As a result, Ainos did not manage to escape the deadly assault. Following which, Felidia was also affected by this attack.

Felidia was positioned in a much better location. He had enough time to hide behind a broken wall and was much further away from the attack. Hence, he only suffered minor injuries.

However, this was not all. Alina once again felt the violent fluctuations of fire elementals. From the corner of her eyes, she saw a new Flame Blast spell taking form at the tip of Link's staff.

Supreme Magic Skill: Link's machine gun!

Under the effect of magic resonance, the new Flame Blast spell formed almost instantaneously. Due to the three Flame Blast spells fired by the Dark Elves previously, the air was concentrated with fire elementals, this hence catalyzed the spellcasting speed of fire elemental spells. Alina estimated that the Flame Blast spell would be fully formed in 0.5 seconds.

How can his spellcasting speed be so fast! Alina was horrified. This was a Level-4 spell and not some simple Level-0 child's play. It did not make sense!

She only had around one-tenth of her Battle Aura left. It would not be enough for her to escape; her only choice was to fight to the death. Fighting to the death was merely a saying to boost her confidence. To be exact, it should be a futile desperate attempt. Perhasshe indeed had a slight chance of winning, however, it was way too slim. What happened in the next moment completely shattered the final hope present in Alina's heart.

When she once again charged towards Link, she felt an incomprehensible and irrepressible fear in her heart. The fear was so intense that she turned back involuntarily after only charging forward two stepsshe had to leave this terrifying place.

Alina had a strong soul and was able to maintain her sense of reason even when she was struck by extreme fear. She quickly knew that this was not due to her fear of Link, but because of the effects of some sinister spell!

Some distance away, a black-dressed woman was staring at her coldly, her hands holding a purple staff enveloped in a sinister dark purple glowit was Eleanor. Due to the time constraints, she could only use a Level-3 spell, The Heart of Fear.

The Heart of Fear

Level-3 Secret Spell

Effect: Cause the target to be in a state of fear. Seriously inflicted individuals will lose control of their body and scream involuntarily. May cause death from the breakdown of the soul.

(Note: The more strong-willed the person, the weaker the spell)

Alina was a tenacious woman. She recovered from the spell in less than 0.5 seconds and continued her advance towards Link.

However, Link's Flame Blast spell was already fully formed and Alina stood no chance. The only reason she continued her assault was due to her pride and glory as a swordsman.

Even if I must die, I will die fighting and not while on the run! Am I going to die? Alina sighed. She could already feel the blanket of death coming over herit was scalding hot.

At this moment, Alina was suddenly pulled back by a strong force. She realized that everything around her was moving further and further away, creating distance between Link and herself.

Following which, Felidia's voice rang in her head, "Alina, run, go as far as you can!"

This was Felidiasspell: High-Level Vector Throw

High-Level Vector Throw

Level-2 spell

Effect: The upgraded version of Vector Throw. User is able to throw a stone weighing half a ton at the speed of 150 feet per second.

Alina did not weigh more than 200 pounds even with the additional weight of all the equipment. The effect of this spell was strong. She flew through the air at a speed of 240 feet per second.

While she was still in mid-air, she saw Link release the Flame Blast spell towards Felidia.

A blinding flash and deafening blast echoed through the street. The flames still advanced in a cone formation, engulfing Felidia's hiding spot in flames. The next moment, the magic aura surrounding her disappeared.

Felidia was dead.

At the same time, she heard a sharp whistling sound. Her acute senses told her that danger was imminent. Alina saw two small objects flying towards her at high speed. She gasped, "This guy wants to exterminate us!"

Alina finally got the chance to reveal her skills as a swordsman. Brandishing her Shattered Star sword, she dished out 13 slashes in a second, forming a visible net of air ripples in front of her.

The collision of the Whistle spell and Alina's defensive stance caused metal fragments and flames to burst in many different directions. This debris was mostly blocked by Alina's fast reaction and her armor.

However, there were still some that slipped through the cracks and penetrated deep into her thighs and arms. Alina immediately felt a sharp pain shot through her body.

Fortunately, her body had landed safely in an alley 300 feet away. With all the houses surrounding her, she was out of her opponent's field of vision.

The moment she landed, she ignored the injuries on her body and rushed into a house. Following which, she jumped out of a back window onto the streets and deftly maneuvered herself around the streets, quickly disappearing into the crowd.

Alina did not know how to describe her feelings.

Felidia, Ainos and herself were termed as the Three Musketeers of the Silver Moon. For this asssination mission, they were not only the main engineer, but also the main execution members.

To hold such great power when they were merely teenagers was a testament to their strength. They felt like the whole world could be trampled under their feet in due time.

However, they were utterly defeated when the three of them attempted to fight this human Magician. Ainos and Felidia were already dead while she was fleeing in panic. All her confidence and pride were completely shattered by the human Magician called Link.

How can there be someone this horrifying? His spellcasting speed was insane! How do I even explain this situation to the queen? Can I escape from Hot Springs City safely?

Worrying thoughts continued to bubble in Alina's mind. She could not help but be in fear. She was like a dog who had lost its home, desperately running from the dangers of the outside world without any direction.

## 127. Your Highness, Are You Retreating Already?

The gentle breeze carried the scorching air left behind by the Flame Blast. Link stood in the middle of all the rubble as he stared into the direction of Alina's escape. He wanted to chase her down, but soon changed his mind.

Alina possessed a Battle Aura of at least Level-5; her speed was lightning fast and Springs City was a labyrinth of narrow alleys where she could easily weasel through and make her escape. Even if Link did try to chase her down, he might end up being the one who got ambushed instead.

He wasn't sure he could face a Level-5 swordswoman's ambush right now.

Capturing her wasn't the most important thing anyway. He must now focus on ensuring the safety of Prince Phillip. It might look like he won now, but there was no guarantee that there wouldn't be any more Dark Elves lurking around trying to attack the High Elf prince.

With this thought in mind, Link turned around and approached the prince.

Eleanor subconsciously followed him. For no other reason than the fact that those two Flame Blasts Link had just detonated were immensely powerful and they had completely toppled her first impression of the young black-haired Magician.

When she first met him yesterday, Link was, in her eyes, a gifted young Magician with very quick spellcasting and exceptional enchantment skills. He was warm and friendly, while at the same time wise and sensible. There was a hint of awkwardness about him, but all in all he was an amiable young man.

But just now, when they were suddenly attacked, Link had reacted calmly and quickly which had saved her life. He even went on to kill six Level-3 professional Warriors at an amazingly quick speed. Then, when he was surrounded by three even more dangerous opponents, Link managed to keep his calm and killed two of them and force the remaining one to flee without even moving a step.

This kind of combat power was simply terrifying!

Eleanor imagined herself in Link's situation and thought that if she were to face such dire circumstances, she'd probably die at least twice.

Although she was well-versed in secret spells and was in fact a Master Magician, all these spells she'd learned would be totally insufficient to make her last even a fraction of a second in a violent battle.

In this battle against the Dark Elves, another side of the young Magician was revealed to her that cold, resolute and dangerous side, and it had left a much more profound and lasting impression on her mind than what she thought of Link when she first met him.

She had followed him for a few steps before she forcefully pulled herself back and shook her head gently, incredulous of the young man's influence on her.

She was also a master of spirituality, so naturally she understood the reason behind this influence she felt.

He's planted a deep impression on my heart now, thought Elena after a deep sigh. I'm afraid I won't be able to be strong in front of him after this.

She knew that she could never reach Link's level of magic skills, or his wild and bursting energy, or his single-minded determination. The only way she could free herself from Link's influence was to defeat him in a battle with exactly the same tactics as Link had used just now. But that was near impossible, so Eleanor had no choice but to concede to this new influence that she'd never experienced before.

She then turned to the corpses of the two Assassins on the ground nearby. They had been charred to the bones, but because their armor was made of very good materials, their bodies were still held in their original position where they fell dead. These people had almost killed her, so she must get to the bottom of their identities and motives.

Within the first few seconds Eleanor had noticed that both corpses had dark purple blood.

"Dark Elves!" exclaimed Eleanor in shock.

News of the massacre in Gladstone had spread throughout the continent and Eleanor was well aware of it as well. She'd never thought that they would be so bold to sneak into the capital city and create such a raucous here. There was no doubt now that the enmity between the kingdoms of Norton and Pralync would only be solidified and radicalized from this point onward.

Since you're both Dark Elves, I'll just go ahead and use the spell on you with no hesitation then. Eleanor would've paused if they had been human Magicians because of the impacts her spell would have on the souls of the dead, but now that she found out that they were the sworn enemies of humankind, she went on swiftly without any qualms.

She chose to cast the spell on the Magician's corpse. Eleanor waved her wand gently and a gleam of purple light that looked like a pair of phantom hands emerged from its tip. Those hands searched the corpse and reached inside it, where they pulled out a bright orb of white light.

Soul-Searcher

Level-4 Secret Spell

Effects: Obtains a large amount of information about the life history of a person who hasn't been dead for more than three hours.

(Note: This is a taboo spell as it has a great destructive power to the target's soul.)

Without considering the damage that the spell might have inflicted on the unfortunate Felidiassoul, Eleanor grabbed the light orb in her left hand and forced itito the magic golden ring on her finger.

After that, Eleanor could sense a pair of eyes watching her from behind, so she turned around and saw Link's shocked gaze at the sight of her dark magic spell, although he made no attempt to come and stop her.

Eleanor then smiled awkwardly at Link. She knew for some reason that he wouldn'titerfere. Seeing that Link made no move a few seconds later, her smile widened, and she slowly stepped back and headed towards the shambles of rubbles and mostly destroyed buildings. Soon, she disappeared into the narrow alleys without a trace.

The city guards would soon arrive, and they would not like the look of a mysterious Magician using dark magic. She had no choice but to bolt before they could catch her. She was enraged by these Dark Elves who had almost taken her life. Although she was glad that two of them had been killed, there was still that swordswoman who ran away like a coward. She swore by the honor of a Master Magician that she would use her magic skills to hunt that woman down.

Meanwhile, Link turned around and headed towards Prince Phillip. By then, the young prince's eyes were blurred by tears and he was dazed and confused by everything that had just happened. When he heard the approaching footsteps, he raised his head and saw Link. He looked into the Magician's eyes with respect and gratitude.

"Master Magician, thank you for saving me," said the prince, his tone full of reverence and awe, though he still sounded awfully formal.

He was grateful to be alive, but this incident was a rude awakening of the cruelty in the human world. His previous fascination for this world was now violently shattered. All he wanted now was to go back to his homeland, back to the safety and serenity that he had known all his life.

The Isle of Dawn was all that was on his mind now.

"Your Highness," said Link unexpectedly, "have you been frightened by the cruel reality of this world after what has happened?"

"I beg your pardon?" replied the prince, not knowing how else to respond to such a puzzling question.

Link then knelt down in front of Prince Phillip and stared straightito the prince's violet eyes.

"Your Highness," he began earnestly, "there is a vast golden savannah in the southern part of the continent where lions rule as the kings of the grasslands. They lived in prides, and in each pride, there will always be just one adult male lion. This alpha male is the strongest of the pride and rules over the other lions and the other beasts of the grasslands."

Prince Phillip didn't exactly know where Link was going with this, but he was fascinated by his words and was listening to him intently.

Then, Link reached out his hand and patted the thin and fragile shoulder of the young prince before he continued.

"But did you know, my prince," he said, "that every male lion would be driven out of the warmth and safety of their prides by their fathers before they reached adulthood? The would be forced to make it alone in the world, where they might get bullied by the dogs, or they might be forced to eat rotten flesh to survive, or they might get stampeded by the elephants or the rhinos. In fact, some even died before they became a mature male lion. Only when they'd passed all these trials were they able to return to their pride and defeat the alpha male and reclaim their position. Your Highness, you are now just like the lion who'd just left the safety of his pride are you planning to retreat already?"

Prince Phillip was moved by these words. Was he going to run away so soon? Yes, that was the thought he had just now he was going to return to the peaceful and idle life he'd always lead in the Isle of Dawn and he planned to live out the rest of his life in safety and leisure.

But the Isle of Dawn was only a small part of the world, and the High Elves were only one of the many races that lived on the continent. While an ordinary High Elf might choose to live out his life in the peaceful world of the Isle of Dawn, he was a member of the Amethyst royal family, and a prince of the High Elves.

A prince couldn't expect to have the admiration and respect of the people if he didn't honor his responsibilities to protect them and bring glory to the royal family that was his duty as the prince of the kingdom.

And so, the prince wiped away his tears as he stared at the Magician who seemed to be the same age as he was.

"I thank you again for saving my life," said Prince Phillip solemnly. "The High Elves will forever remember this valiant and noble deed of yours! May I know your name, sir?"

These words had proven that Prince Phillip was no longer the terrified boy he was just moments ago and was now ready to step up to claim his authority and honor as the prince of the High Elves.

"My name is Link Morani, Your Highness," answered Link with a smile. "I am a Magician from the East Cove Higher Magic Academy."

"I am Phillip Rodrick," said the prince, "the third son of the Queen of the Isle of Dawn."

Link extended his hand to Prince Phillip, who then held on to it as Link helped him up to his feet again.

This was the portentous moment that was recorded in the history books of the Firuman continent. It was the exact moment that had consolidated the foundation for the glorious alliance between the humans and the High Elves which proved to be one of the most crucial elements that would help the Realm of Light to fend off the Dark Side in the future.

## 128. Anthony You Are Too Damn Lucky!

Central Plaza

...

"Link, are you alright?" A worried but familiar voice rang in Link's ears. When he spun around, he saw Herrera rushing over with a group of Magicians. Eliard and Rylai were also amongst the first few people who reached the incident site.

The destruction caused by the three Flame Blast spells was devastating, creating a hell-like scene. It had also alarmed the entire Hot Springs City. Herrera and the rest were only the first groups of people rushing to the site. Behind them were the Mission Intelligence, Section 3, the Royal Guards and the Royal Battle Magicians, all making their way to the central plaza at top speed.

This incident was way too horrifying. The situation was getting more chaotic as more people arrived. Link stayed vigilant while staying right beside Prince Phillip to prevent any more tragedies from happening. The sight of Herrera and his friends unharmed calmed him down slightly, "I am fine. However, a lot of people are injured. Prince Phillip also requires attention and help."

Herrera's attention was then diverted to the High Elf beside Link. From her accumulation of wisdom, she could more or less infer the cause and motive of the attack. This was definitely a planned murder of a Royal High Elf on the side of the Silver Moon!

She immediately turned and told Eliard, "The situation is pretty serious. Bring Rylai back to the inn to pack up, and leave for East Cove Higher Magic Academy."

The situation was beyond the powers of Eliard and Rylai. If they continued to stay in the capital, they would only become Herrerassource of worry and distract her from the investigation. Link, on the other hand, had once fought beside her and even played a crucial role in the Battle of Mist Basin. She had already considered him a fellow comrade.

"What about you?" Eliard's heart sank. He knew the situation was grave.

"The incident has way too many implications. The kingdom might require my asstance." Herrera was prepared. She was a master of the East Cove Higher Magic Academy and was known by name in the royal kingdom. She was even accorded the title of a Duchess. She naturally had to stay and offer her asstance in the face of such a tragedy.

"Alright." Eliard held Rylai's hand and left the plaza ruins hastily.

As he left, his eyes swept across the plaza ruins. There were two clear lines of impact on the ground and in the middle of those traces were two complete bodies. They were one of the few bodies that managed to remain intact through the incident.

When Eliard first saw the signs, he did not think much about it. However, it hit him after a while.

That was a controlled outburst of energy. It should be the work of Link...has he already reached that level?

Link basically stayed in the academy this whole time, communicating with Eliard over their recent magic discoveries. Eliard had of course heard some rumors of Link's strength but thought nothing of it. However, now that he had seen the aftermath of Link's battle, he was hit with the realization of Link's true power. While they were around the same age, Link had already surpassed him in many aspects, probably even in ways far beyond his imagination.

Eliard quickened his pace at this thought. He could feel the gap widening and had no time to waste. He had to speed up his progress or he would end up chasing after Link's shadow indefinitely.

The ruins had attracted a crowd. Many of them had a look of horror on their faces, stunned by the image right in front of their eyes.

"Who would be crazy enough to do this?"

"Oh my, this is Wand Master Hermira!" Someone had found the corpse of the well-known Enchanter.

"This isMaster Dallas!" Another person recognized the identity of a Level-5 Magician.

Dallas was a wind elemental Magician from the Southern Magician Alliance. He was probably here to join in on the fun of the festival. Little did he know that he would lose his life on such a joyous occasion. The future was truly unpredictable.

People who were around the edges of the attack were still alive but suffered injuries. As they were treated, screams of pain could be heard echoing through the street.

Herrera joined forces with Link to protect the prince and she held her staff out in alert. Two minutes later, the Royal Guards arrived together with a Royal Magician, an acquaintance of Herrera.

"Master Grinth, you have arrived," Herrera greeted.

Grinth was a Level-6 Master Magician. He was 58 years old and hishi

He scanned across the central plaza. When he saw Herrera and Link together with Prince Phillip, he heaved a sigh of relief.

An explosion in the most crowded area of the capital was an unprecedented tragedy. If the prince of the High Elves were to be affected by this incident, it would be a disaster!

It was thus fortunate that the prince was alive and not injured.

Grinth then commanded the Royal Guards beside him, "You, form a team to treat the injured. You guys each bring a team to maintain order."

The guards immediately dispersed to execute their own duties. After giving some instructions to his asstant, he quickly walked towards Prince Phillip. Grinth immediately bowed and apologized for the trauma caused upon reaching the prince. He then looked Herrera and asked, "Moira, what exactly happened here?"

Grinth and Anthony were best friends. As Herrera was Anthony's favorite disciple, Grinth was naturally on good terms with her. Furthermore, not only was she the strongest Magician in the area, she was also standing right beside Prince Phillip when he arrived. It seemed only natural to ask her for information.

However, he had inquired the wrong person this time. Herrera pushed Link forward and said, "I do not have first-hand experience of the situation. This is my disciple Link. When the explosion happened, he was nearby. He is also the one who saved the prince."

Grinth then diverted his attention to Link. He saw a black-haired teenager with a very vague magic aura (Link was concealing his aura) and he was not more than 20 years of age. His heart was immediately filled with a little contempt. Out of respect for Herrera, he said, "Tell me exactly what happened here."

Grinth was a senior in magic. Naturally, Link greeted him with respect before recounting the incident in detail. Finally, he pointed to the two corpses lying in the trails of his spell and said, "There were three Dark Elves involved. One of them ran away while the other two were killed by me. It was an emergency and I did not have the liberty to control my strength. Hence, I was unable to keep them as captives."

Grinth was extremely surprised. Firstly, he was surprised at the Dark Elves involvement in this assault. Secondly, he was both impressed and shocked by Link's battle abilities.

Grinth was not idling while he listened to Link's recount. His sights were set on the plaza ruins and he managed to get a rough understanding of the situation that unfolded. There were six human bodies with a huge open wound on their heads and no burnt injuries. Link claimed that they were asssins which Prince Phillip confirmed.

From their equipment, Grinth could determine that the six of them were at least Level-3 in strength. If Link had used a spell that covered a large area to kill all of them at once, he would not be this surprised. However, Link had chosen to cast six individual low-level spells. From what he had observed, the six asssins were defeated before they even got the chance to react.

What impressive spellcasting speed! Grinth gasped.

He also saw two huge burnt fan-shaped trails which were more than 90 feet in length. From the remnant elemental energy, he could tell that it was a Level-4 spell.

According to Link, he was ambushed by three Dark Elves at that point in time.

To be able to cast two consecutive Level-4 spells in the midst of an ambushwhat kind of skill does that take? Grinth was dumbfounded. As he listened, he carefully observed the young man standing in front of him.

He looks extremely young and is clad in a grey magic robe. He is holding a wand in his hand? A Domingo crystal! What exquisite workmanship! Such a unique rune arrangementis this an Epic wand? Why have I not heard of it before?

The most important equipment to a Magician was the wand. An Epic wand would thus definitely be well-known amongst Magicians. However, this was Grinth's first time seeing this wand. There could only be one explanation which was that the wand was newly crafted.

Anthony kept bragging that there was a genius in the academy who had achieved Level-4 despite his young age. He also mentioned his unimaginable magic talent. Is this the guy?

Originally, he simply dismissed the idea as preposterous.

He had always believed the young man was merely talented. His tender age would suggest that his experience with and understanding of magic was nowhere near satisfactory. However, the battle scene had proved him wrong. The details had proven that this young man was a lot stronger than people of his age. Many of his skills appeared to be original as well, so much so that Grinth was not able to comprehend the battle scene completely.

Anthony is too damn lucky! If it was me, I would have also crafted an Epic wand for him! Grinth could not help but be envious.

If Grinth had known that the wand was created by Link, there was no telling how impressed he would be.

## 129. The Gift from the High Elf Prince

Although he was very much surprised at Link's revelations, Grinth's mind was calm. That was usually the case for a powerful Magician like him; he didn't show any of his emotions on his face.

After listening to Link, he turned towards the corpses behind him and noticed the dark purple blood on them. This was an irrefutable characteristic of Dark Elves and taking Link's detailed explanation into account, there was no doubt that the calamity was the Dark Elves' doing.

"Ira," shouted Grinth, calling for his asstant, "bring a team of guards here immediately and go get us a carriage! Make it quick!" Fear had begun to creep up on him now.

Once his asstant was gone, he then turned towards Herrera.

"Moira, it's not safe here," he said. "We must escort the prince back to the royal palace andI suppose your disciple should come along as well."

Grinth had fully acknowledged Link's strength by now. He would be glad to have him with the company as they escorted the prince back to the palace as he could act as an excellent guard. Moreover, this young man was the direct witness of the attempted asssination and had even saved the prince's life. Grinth was sure that the king would like to meet such an important figure when he heard of the details of the incident.

To this request, Herrera and Link naturally agreed.

Soon, the carriage stopped at the edge of the ruins of the street. Grinth's people surrounded Prince Philllip and escorted him into the carriage and they headed straight to the palace.

The guards then surrounded the carriage all along the journey as Prince Phillip, Herrera, Grinth and Link sat inside. For extra protection, Grinth had cast a powerful Level-6 defense spell around them as well.

They then traveled all the way to the palace without any incident. As they entered the palace gates, a notification popped up on the interface.

Mission: Rescue (First Step Completed).

Player received 60 Omni Points.

Mission's Second Step: Exposing the Dark Curtain, Current Progress .

The reward for the second part of the mission was the mysterious Glyph of Soul. He checked his current progress and discovered that he would've received the anticipated reward had he killed the third Dark Elf. It's a pity the swordswoman managed to escape.

There should be more chances to pursue her later, thought Link, as a way to comfort himself. I've done my best and it's too late to catch up with her now, anyway.

After arriving at the palace, the security guards were taken over by the heavily armored members of the king's guard. Grinth disappeared into one of the many buildings in the palace complex to arrange the royal security affairs. Link and Herrera, on the other hand, were lead to a sitting room in the palace. Grinth had mentioned that the king might want to meet them.

Soon after settling down in the sitting room, a messenger came in to inform them of King Leon's order, though it had nothing to do with Link but was instead an order for the reputed Magician Herrera to join the Royal Council. As an unknown young Magician, Link would have to wait a little longer, alone in the sitting room.

And so, Link was left there all alone in the vast empty room. It seemed as if everyone had forgotten his presence there. Still, Link was above letting such thoughts bother him. He waited there patiently, giving no thoughts to the apparent disregard the courtiers had shown to his reputation.

He clearly understood that only people who had gained the king's utmost trust and confidence could join the Royal Council at this time of emergency. The members of this esteemed council had the highest capabilities, qualifications and reliability. While it might be true that he had shown exceptional capabilities so far, he had still risen too quickly and had basically no established position in society. He hadn't even met the king himself, so it would be impossible for Link to gain the king's trust at the moment.

As he was starting to get bored waiting, he took out his sketches of the Flame Blast enchantment bracelets and began to work on them.

It was intended for the black-dressed woman. Although they hadn't exchanged more than a few words between them and Link didn't even know her name at this pointthe woman had even used a taboo dark magic spell in front of him not too long agohe still wanted to fulfill the promise that he had given to her.

Never mind, he thought. I'll just keep my distance from her from now on.

Flame Blast was a Level-4 spell. In order to fix it to a bracelet he must create a bracelet with an intricate structure and pattern. This wasn't a simple task at all, so Link was quickly immersed in the planning that forgot the flow of time.

Just as he was engrossed in his work on the sketch, Link suddenly heard a sound of soft footsteps beside him. When he turned his gaze towards the source of the sound, he saw Prince Phillip standing not too far away, staring at him.

Prince Phillip was only an insignificant minor character in the game because Link had never even encountered him in his previous life. This might be because the gaming company ignored him, as he played no important roles in the main plot of the game. Or maybe, it was just not his time to shine yet. Anyway, Link's impression of the prince was completely blank before he met him today.

In reality though, this person was a high-born royal prince of the Isle of Dawn, so Link hurriedly bowed when he noticed him in the room and addressed him respectfully as "Your Highness".

As he bowed, Link began to find the prince's presence there a bit strange. Link was only a normal Magician now and he was only a younger son of a minor Viscount. Their disparities in rank were huge, so there was no reason for the prince to come find him here himself. Link had assumed that after he was escorted safely back to the palace, the mission would be over and they would have nothing more to do with each other. So what was the prince doing here?

When Link turned around, he saw a hint of guilt on Prince Phillip's near-perfect face.

"I'm sorry," said the prince, "have I disturbed you?"

"Oh, not at all, Your Highness," answered Link with a smile. "I am an enchantment Magician and I was merely working on my sketches for my next magic gear since I had nothing else to do here. Did you come to see me?"

Phillip nodded and glanced at the sketch in Link's hand as he approached him. The sketch was elaborate and was full of complicated parts and indecipherable magic runes. He couldn't understand a thing on the sketch so he turned his gaze back to Link.

"I am deeply indebted to you, sir," said the prince. "You've saved my life."

"Your Highness," said Link, "I only did what I should've done." Link had estimated that the High Elf prince must have some important business to come and meet him here himself. Although he was curious to find out what the prince's motives were, he posed no direct questions to him and opted to wait patiently for the prince to bring it up himself instead.

Sure enough, Prince Philip shook his head in reply to Link's modest protest and soon revealed his true reason for this meeting.

"Since you've done what you should, then I must do what I should as well," said the prince. "A simple thank you won't be sufficient in expressing my gratitude to you."

As he finished his sentence, the High Elf prince then took out a delicate little wooden box with a greenish-brown hue. Its outer layer was carved inobeautiful patterns of trees and flowers. The prince then thrust the box into Link's hands.

"Here," said Prince Phillip, "it's my gift to you."

The wooden box was the work of a famous carving master among the elves, but that was beside the point. What was most important was the contents of the box. He had no idea what use this object had or what its specialty was, but it was what the Prophet had given Prince Phillip.

The Prophet was a mysterious figure who had originated from the human world. He held a lofty position in the High Elf court and was even respected and revered by the Queen of the Isle of Dawn herself.

Prince Phillip remembered the Prophet's last instruction before he left very clearly.

"The contents of the box are of no use to High Elves," he said, "but it is of immense value to a human being. I'll give this box to you now, so you can give it to the right person when you are in the human kingdom."

"How do I know I've met the right person to give this to?" the prince remembered asking the Prophet.

"If you think the person is the right one, then that is the one you give this to," answered the Prophet. "Just listen to your heart, my prince."

In fact, besides discussing the alliance between the two kingdoms, Prince Phillip had come to the Norton Kingdom expressly for this purpose. The answer given to his question about the right person was vague and confusing, and the prince wasn't sure if he fully understood it. He had been carefully observing many people these days yet none of them had struck him as the right person to give the Prophet's gift to.

If they didn't even make him feel like they were the right person, Prince Phillip assumed that they must not be the right one. That was why the wooden box stayed with him until this moment.

But right now, the prince felt confident that Link was the most suitable and worthiest person to receive the mysterious gift, which was why he snuck out of his room to meet him.

Link had no idea there was so much meaning behind the gift. He thought nothing of what the contents of the box could be. All he thought was that it was a normal gift given to him as a token of gratitude, which he humbly accepted.

"Thank you, Your Highness," he said courteously as he received the wooden box with both of his hands.

"I don't know what else to give you," said the prince with a friendly smile. "But apart from this wooden box, you will now receive the friendship of the High Elves. You'll forever be my honored guest on the Isle of Dawn and you'll always be welcomed there."

"I shall never forget it," replied Link.

"I snuck out just to meet you," said Prince Phillip, "so think it's time for me to go back now before they realize I'm gone. Farewell, Link." As he waved his hand, the prince quickly turned around and went out of the room.

The meeting with Prince Phillip had happened so quickly and seemed to be a bolt out of the blue for Link. When the prince was gone, he began to examine the fist-sized wooden box in his hand, eager to find out what was inside it.

Is it jewelry? Or maybe a type of precious magic material? Link was just about to open the box when suddenly, there were footsteps at the door. Link didn't want anyone else to know of Prince Phillip's gift to him, so he quickly hid it inside his storage pendant.

Not long afterwards, there was a voice calling for him at the doorway.

"Mr. Link, his majesty would like to meet you."

## 130. Time to Mature

The Parliament hall of King Leon.

While Link was waiting in the lounge, King Leon, Duke Abel, Grinth, Herrera and the head of Military Intelligence, Section 3 had all arrived at the parliament hall.

Everyone had a grim look on their faces, especially the head of MI3, Duke Stan. His expression was so gloomy it looked like someone splashed ink on his face.

When Gladstone City was suddenly ambushed and almost taken by the Death Hand, he had already lost much of his reputation and prestige. This time, the Death Hand was once again a step faster than him and successfully assaulted the capital in the middle of a festival. As the military chief of MI3, he was ashamed.

"My lord, I will resign as the head of MI3 as punishment for my incompetence." He broke the silence.

King Leon was usually a reasonable and calm person. However, this time, he was infuriated and lost his usual graceful demeanor.

"Shut up! You will have to leave, but not before you settle the mess you created!"

The hall fell into silence once again. Everyone knew that the king was truly furious.

If word got out that an attack of such scale happened in the capital of the Norton Kingdom during a Magician's Fair, their reputation would go down the drain. The Norton Kingdom would then become the laughingstock of the entire Firuman Continent.

Putting the embarrassing issues aside, they started discussing steps to recover from this assault. They had to give a reasonable explanation to the people of Hot Springs City and assure them that the capital was still safe. If they failed to give the citizens assurance, their insecurities might once again be used by the enemy to plan for an attack of an even larger scale.

Fortunately, there was ample evidence pointing towards the Dark Elves as the culprits. Two Dark Elven corpses were left at the scene, justifying that hypothesis.

"This is already the second time; those red-eyed vampires are going overboard!

"At least Gladstone City was on the borders. To think that they had the courage to infiltrate all the way into the capital and deliver such a cruel blow to the human race! We have to fight back!"

"Your majesty, it is time!"

"But we are not ready."

"You can never be fully ready for a war. The Dark Elves will not wait for us."

A heated discussion ensued in the hall. After a while, they came to a conclusion that revenge against the Dark Elves had to be taken.

King Leon kept silent the entire time, listening intently to the discussion. When a conclusion was reached, he took a deep breath before instructing his asstant, "Stan, I want the Dark Elf who escaped to be captured alive. Do you understand?"

"Yes!" This incident had completely ruined Duke Stan's reputation. If he let this Dark Elf escape once again, he would not even have the face to stand in front of his ancestors

"Areve, this Dark Elf seems quite strong. We will probably need some professionals. You will work with Stan!"

"I understand!" Areve patted his chest armor. He was also embarsed by this incident. The twenty guards that he picked were completely wiped out by the Flame Blast spell assault. They were all elite soldiers that he handpicked for this mission. To think that they were done in before they could do anything.

"We will also have to catalyze the war in the North; we will have our revenge!" King Leon said.

They desperately needed a victory. Only a victory could fully appease the people's hatred towards the Dark Elves.

It was Duke Abel's turn to speak. Abel was the King's brother and was 38 years old, 10 years younger than King Leon. He was energetic and charismatic, making him a good leader. He was also a Level-5 Warrior and currently the general of the Kingdom.

He stood up and gave a cruel smile. "Your majesty, you will attain a glorious victory."

"I hope so." King Leon nodded.

His brother was cruel and ruthless. King Leon was still able to control Abel ten years ago, however, Abel just got more ambitious every year. Just recently, Abel had begun to challenge his orders. King Leon was actually looking for a chance to weaken Abel's military authority in the kingdom but the occurrence of such a tragic incident left him no choice but to put off this plan to a later date.

They then proceeded with the discussion of other issues such as reparations to the people, appeasing Prince Phillip, stocking up enough food, the preparations for war and so on, not missing out on a single detail.

In the end, everyone was assigned a task and left to execute them immediately. King Leon turned towards Herrera only after the last person left the room and said, "I heard that your disciple Link was the reason Prince Phillip is still alive. I would like to meet him if it is possible."

The servant then went to summon Link to the parliament hall.

In the meantime, King Leon continued, "Master Moira, tell me about this disciple of yours, what kind of person is he?"

King Leon had actually already read the report on Link given to him by Duke Stan and had an understanding of Link's achievements. However, he should not judge a person merely from the information he gleaned from the report, even if it was assembled by the head of the Kingdom Intelligence Agency. It was wise to seek a second opinion.

Herrera stood up and greeted the king before saying, "Your Majesty, in my eyes, my disciple is a perfect Magician."

King Leon was slightly taken aback before smiling, "Perfect? That is an extremely high appraisal."

He spoke again after a short pause, "I always knew that he had a rare talent battling with magic, but I never expected him to be this powerful. I have plans to confer him the title of Commander of the Magicians' troop in the North. Do you think he has what it takes?"

Herrera fell silent for a moment before shaking her head, "Your Majesty, he is still young and his power still needs some time to mature. Furthermore, Magicians his age are often rebellious and dislike authority. I feel that he is still unsuitable."

King Leon mused, "Indeed, I was too impatient."

He was not making an empty promise. An incident indeed happened in the North some time ago. When the Magicians' troop fought against the Dark Elf Magicians in a minor conflict, the Kingdom's Magiciassuffered a slight loss.

His niece Annie then wrote him a strength asssment report for both forces. With a total score of ten points, the Norton Kingdom Magician troop would at most score six points on the scale, while the Dark Elves scored an eight.

The strength of the Magicians' troop was often the deciding factor in a war between nations. If their Magicians' troop was indeed lacking in strength, they would likely lose in an official battle as well.

As they were still not in an official war, there was time to make amendments. Leon had been desperately trying to recruit Magicians with combat experience, so much so that he watered down the restitions present in the Norton Kingdom Constitution. Even the vagabond Magicians who only knew a few spells were also paid royalties if they were willing to enlist.

Link's actions in Gladstone City turned the tables around and allowed the Norton Kingdom to achieve victory. His performance on Jade Street was even more amazing; he defeated three strong opponents. Furthermore, he was from the East Cove Higher Magic Academy, making him an officially recognized Magician. This was exactly the person they were looking for.

On the other hand, what Herrera said also made sense. After thinking for a moment, King Leon let go of the idea.

This man was destined to be a towering tree, a pillar of support for the human race. However, he was merely a small sapling at this moment. Although he already seemed to be tall and strong enough, he was definitely lacking in experience. He should be allowed to mature for a longer period of time.

However, he had already decided to make good use of him. It was time for him to getito his good books.

At that moment, the servant brought Link into the parliament hall.

## 131. The Kings Rewards

In the game, King Leon was about forty years old. He had a lean face, a head of gray hair and a gentle nature. Garbed in his luxurious royal garments, he was just the perfect picture of a gentleman.

He was also a wise king no matter which point of view one could judge him from. Although he had the rotten luck of being the king of Norton when it fell to the Dark Side.

"I have never committed any sins or made any grave mistakes, yet why is my kingdom falling into the abyss while it's in my hands?" Those were his last words.

He didn't live to see the day when the Kingdom of Norton collapsed completely. On the eve of the collapse, he was killed by his most beloved niece, Princess Annie who had by then gone mad. Not only was his head cut off, even his soul was sucked into an evil demon device that was in Annie's hands, imprisoning him even in his afterlife.

Because of this, he held the first spot in Firuman's top three most tragic figures.

But right now, none of these events had happened yet. When Link saw the king, he thought he looked just like the king in the game, but with some crucial differences. Because he met the tragic king a year earlier from the main timeline in the game, he didn't have that much gray hair on his head and his wise eyes had not yet been darkened by despair and frustration.

"Your Majesty," said Link in a humble tone. He took a deep bow and performed a ceremonial gesture that a Magician would do to another Magician of a higher rank.

"Take a seat," said the king as he waved his hand. Servants in the throne room then led Link to his designated seat.

King Leon waited for Link to settle down as he looked on with a gentle smile on his face.

"Annie has been telling me about you," he said. "To be frank, I was a bit skeptical when she told me about how you saved her life and the whole city during the massacre in Gladstone. But now that I've heard of what happened here today, I finally believe everything she said about you."

The court Magicians have already divulged everything that transpired in the square of Jade Street to the king everything from what spells were used and the details of what went on in the battle were revealed to him with nothing left out.

King Leon could make out from the reports that there was indeed a very powerful Magician at the scenea Magician so powerful that only a few others in this kingdom could rival his strength. In fact, he might be the only one with these kinds of capabilities right now because the other Magicians were academic scholars. They were obsessed with abstract pursuits like discovering the true nature of reality and the world and thought fighting in battles should be left to the crude Warriors.

That was the reason why the Battle Mages in the army were usually those of average skills and limited knowledge and who knew that they had no future in academia. In addition, they were born into families having low status. These Magicians were looked down upon by the scholarly Magicians and because of that, these Battle Mages would usually hold themselves in low regard as well.

He would be surprised to find another Magician like Link in the kingdom, someone who possessed high talent and battle skills and who had a promising future in academia if he chose to go down that path.

In this regard, the king estimated that the Dark Elf Kingdom of Pralync would also be facing the same problems, though probably not as serious as the Norton Kingdom.

Because of this, King Leon had planned to assign Link to the battlefield in the North as the commander of the Magic Legion in the army.

Meanwhile, Link was still unclear of the reason why the king had summoned him. Thus he decided to respond with utmost courtesy and humility, just to be safe.

"Your Majesty," said Link, "I only did what duty and honor compelled me to do."

"It is just as you said," nodded King Leon, "you did what duty and honor compelled you to do, and so I shall do the same. Alder!"

Then, a white-haired scholar walked in slowly, holding a thick book in his hand as he approached the king reverently. He flipped the book open and placed it on the reading table next to the throne.

The eagle-eyed Link noticed that the book was titled The Land Records of the Kingdom. His heart began to beat faster as he realized what the book title would entail, though he managed to keep a calm facade.

The reason was simple in the Kingdom of Norton, whenever the king was presented with the book, it meant that the king was about to reward someone with a piece of land!

Link was about to receive his own piece of land!

In the game, he was already a Level-7 Magician and had climbed up through the ranks to become the commander of a legion in the army before he was rewarded with his own land. Although it was only a small piece of land with an area of about ten miles, he had received enormous profits from it, plus everyone who inhabited the land would address him as my lord and bow to him whenever they met him. He'd even had young and beautiful maids working in his residence. All in all, it was simply a blessed life to be a landowner.

The king sat on the throne as he flipped through the book quietly. He stopped after flipping more than a couple pages into the book and turned his gaze back to Link.

"There's a wasteland called Ferde Wilderness southeast of the Girvent Forest. The land there is poor and infertile, the climate is insufferable with its constant harsh winds. No one wanted to have anything to do with this piece of land, but if you like, this wasteland with a radius of more than a hundred miles will be yours."

Herrera couldn't hold in her thoughts any longer, so she stood up the minute the king finished his sentence.

"Your Majesty," she said, "please pardon my effrontery, but how could you reward such a desolate land to someone who had made a genuine contribution?"

Herrera had been so happy to see that the king was going to reward Link with land. She knew that such rewards were only given to the best of men, especially to those who had made an exceptional contribution to the military. Link had rescued the city of Gladstone that could be considered as a great military contribution.

And since the king had decided to reward Link for his achievements, shouldn't he be given something decent instead of this ghastly place with no profitable value like the Ferde Wilderness?

The Ferde Wilderness was an infamous desolate wasteland in the Norton Kingdom. Although it was connected to the sea in the east, the sea there was full of jagged reefs which made it an unsuitable site for commercial ports or even small ordinary docks. There would be at least three large-scale hurricanes coming in from the sea every year, and the squalls there could lift a grown man off his feet and carry him off. Needless to say, the soil there was so infertile that even weeds wouldn't grow on it, let alone crops. Although its area was vast, the population there consisted of no more than 5000 people, and all of them had to eke out a living in very poor conditions.

In fact, even robbers, bandits and fugitives who had little choice for the places they could go were reluctant to go there. Only those who were extremely vicious and extremely desperate ended up in the terrible place.

King Leon shrugged and stretched out his hands in a gesture of helplessness in response to Herrera's protest.

"I'm afraid the other pieces of land are already owned by someone else," said the king. "And the rest is either too small or is under too much dispute. So what do you think, Link? If you're unwilling to accept this reward, I can give you gold coins instead. Maybe I can give you ten thousand gold coins and award you the title of Baron, how about that?"

This was his original intention, of course. Link was just too young and his position in society was still unestablished. Though he did make some great contributions to the kingdom, if he was to be rewarded with a piece of land that many coveted, it might elicit hatred and jealousy among his courtiers and bring unnecessary troubles to Link as well.

The king had only offered the land to show him that there was the possibility of being handsomely rewarded if he continued to help the kingdom.

In fact, his real idea was to offer Link a barren land that nobody wanted so he would reject it, and then he would reward him with gold coins instead. This was the plan that the king had in mind, and it was one that he had employed many times before.

Link was amused at how this reward from the king had turned into something that sounded more like a bargain in the market. He had to hold in his laugh, though.

As for the Ferde Wilderness, he knew from the game that it was indeed barren and lifeless. It was, after all, called one of the three worst places in Firuman. Players who were rewarded with this piece of land after their service in the army were all so frustrated that many of them even deleted their accounts because of it.

That was until one player accidentally discovered that the black clay in this territory developed an exceptional anti-magic property when baked inobricks. This player then sold the bricks and made a vast fortune from it. He even made itito the list of top tity richest players in the gaming system, with the nickname of 'the King of Bricks'.

Furthermore, the area of the land awarded to that player didn't exceed 10 square miles anyway. But now the king was offering a piece of land that was hundreds of miles wide to him it was simply a deal he couldn't refuse!

Once he'd made enough money from the bricks, he would then use magic spells to change the squally climate of the Ferde Wilderness to make it more temperate. Who knew, maybe in ten years he could turn the Ferde Wilderness into the Ferde Farm!

However, even though Link was eager to accept the reward, he concealed the excitement and carefully chose the right words to ask the king another question.

"Your Majesty," he said, "may I ask what status I will have as the owner of this land?"

King Leon was stunned upon hearing this question. He didn't think that Link would accept this worthless piece of land. He gave it some considerations and finally came to a decision. Since he wanted this desert-like wasteland so much, then he would grant the young Magician's wish and give it to him.

"You're a cunning young man," said the king, laughing. "You wouldn't own the land as a commoner, of course. How would you like it if I make you a Baron?"

"I would be honored, Your Majesty," said Link. "May I ask if the land and title would be hereditary?"

What a greedy young man, thought King Leon, his eyes widened. While it was true that Link had indeed made a great contribution, but it was far from enough to be worth such a big reward. He'd only offered the title and the land to show his generosity and to encourage the young man to keep up his good work. He never thought that Link would turn out to be so greedy. Who would've thought that land and title would not be good enough for him, and that he would be so bold as to demand them to be hereditary?

Still, things had come to the point where King Leon had no choice but to concede to the demand. No one wanted the wasteland that was the Ferde Wilderness, anyway. Plus, there was no way to create any income or value out of the land. So even if there was honor in the title of Baron, the rewards were little more than a sham once everything was considered.

"Yes, of course," said the king. "Your land and title will be hereditary, so you can pass it on to your future son and he will pass it on to your grandson and so on. Are you satisfied now?"

Link was about to answer the king when Herrera tugged on his sleeve to stop him.

"Link," she whispered, "don't you think it's better to choose the gold coins over the title? That piece of land would only be a burden to you. No amount of magic could transform itito anything close to profitable!"

She was only trying to help Link make the best decision for his own good. No matter how she considered it, it seemed to her that Link was choosing the less favorable option here.

Still, Link's reply to her well-meant advice was a gentle shake of his head.

"Gold coins don't last very long," he whispered. "I'd much prefer a land of my own."

"Your Majesty," said Link enthusiastically as he stood up, "thank you very much for your rewards. I am very pleased and honored to be the recipient of your generosity."

"I'm glad you like it," said King Leon, laughing. At that moment Link was only a naive young nobleman who hadn't seen much of the world in the king's eyes. He might be exceptionally gifted in the area of magic, but he seemed to have very limited knowledge of practical mattersone could even say that he came off as slightly ignorant in worldly affairs.

Of course, owning land was a good thing, but it also depended on the kind of land you owned and its location too. With a place like the Ferde Wilderness in your possession, you might as well have owned nothing.

But this wasn't necessarily a bad thing, either. King Leon liked to have such a talented and capable Magician who was so easy to control under his wing. One never knew how they might come in handy one day.

"It's all settled, then," said the king. "You should return to the academy for now. I will send the letter of declaration and title deed to you soon. As for the awarding ceremony, I'll let you know when I've found a good auspicious day for it."

Since Link was only awarded the title of Baron, there wouldn't be much involved and only the two people present here right now were enough to make the awarding ceremony valid.

"Your Majesty," said Link as he raised to his feet, "I am forever indebted to your generosity."

"It is only my way of encouraging you, young man," replied the King as he nodded gently. "I hope that one day you will be the pride of the kingdom."

These were general words of encouragement that King Leon had said to every young man he'd seen some potential in. In fact, he'd said it so many times before that they were almost a mechanical reflex instead of heartfelt. Nevertheless, whenever he looked back on this precise moment in the future when the Norton Kingdom's safety was in jeopardy, his heart was filled with gratitude.

He thanked his past self for making such a wise investment.

## 132. Reaping All Kinds of Rewards!

Herrera went straight back to the academy after leaving the palace to report on the incident on Jade Street to the dean. Link was only a Magician with no rank or position at the moment, so there was no need for him to hurry anywhere. He took his time staying at an inn in the capital city, waiting for the title deed and declaration letter from the king.

Despite the terrible calamity caused by the Dark Elves recently, the Magician's Fair still went on as usual. Not only did the size of the crowd at the fair not decrease, there were, in fact, more people now who flocked to this part of the city to visit the site of the disaster.

Seeing that the fair was still going on, Herrera had placed Link's Matchstick wand and his other magic gear at a magical equipment shop in Jade Street. Link was sure that someone would buy them up soon enough.

Link stayed at the inn and didn't venture out anywhere at all. He spent all his time in his room working on the Flame Blast bracelet that was meant for the black-dressed lady.

He'd completed the rough sketches for the bracelet in the palace and had spent another day perfecting the details. By early morning of the second day, he was ready to roll up his sleeves start the real work.

He had all the best materials on hand thorium, gold, and Fire Crystals. Furthermore, no one was there to interfere with his work. Thus, Link was able to devote all his energy to the intricate manipulation of the high-quality materials into complicated structure and patterns. As time went by, Link became more and more engrossed with his work that he began to take pleasure in it. There was nothing else in the world that he would rather be doing at that moment.

The whole process lasted for three whole days, after which Link successfully produced a beautiful Flame Blast bracelet with its main body made of gold and its Mana-conducting lines of thorium. The Fire Crystals were used as the nodes that made up the magic seal on the bracelet.

The bracelet was shaped like a Phoenix that would wrap around the wearer's wrist with its head connected to its tail. The Phoenix was well known to die in a burst of flames and rise again from its ashes, so it was a becoming design to use in a Flame Blast bracelet. Each of its feathers was delicately rendered by Link's dexterous skills, and surrounding each feather were lines of thorium while beads of Fire Crystals were placed right in the middle of the feathers. They acted as magic seal nodes, with the biggest Fire Crystal bead making up the eye of the Phoenix. It was truly an immaculate magic gear both in its design and in its function.

The Fire Crystal that was the bird's eye was different from the rest on the feathers, though. The crystals on the feathers had sharp edges so they would sparkle as light danced on the bracelet's surface when it moved. The Fire Crystal that was the eye of the Phoenix, on the other hand, had been polished into a smooth teardrop shape that seemed to radiate with mysterious charm in fact, it was the presence of this eye that had made the Phoenix bracelet look so uncannily life-like.

Viewed simply from the aspect of its appearance, this bracelet was impeccable.

As for the bracelet's functionality, Link had incorporated two very useful Supreme Magical Techniques modifications in the Flame Blast spell that was stored inside the Phoenix bracelet resonance and accuracy. He'd also designed a robust pattern for the runic lines so that the spell wouldn't be misfired or destroyed unless if it was bent and distorted by an external force.

And finally, there was the signature Link had left on the bracelet. Although it was just a gift he still thought leaving his signature on his work was a must because each piece of work successfully produced was a source of pride for the enchantment Magician. And so Link left his signature on the inside of the bracelet where it would be hidden when worn.

Now the bracelet was complete. Link's heart was filled with pride as he inspected the finished product. He even felt slightly reluctant to give it away to someone else.

He then put away the bracelet and went back to his work table to check the materials that he had left. He discovered that he had an ounce of thorium, 3 ounces of gold and 15 pieces of cut Fire Crystal left.

Naturally, Link kept all these materials for his own use in the future.

This was the time he really understood how much money an enchantment Magician could make. He no longer wondered how Herrera could earn enough profits from her enchantment skills to buy a huge amount of magic materials. Even the leftover materials could be sold for an ample amount of gold coins.

As his work was now done, all that was left was to wait patiently. Link was confident that the black-dressed woman would soon come to meet him, so in the meantime, he stayed in the inn reading his magic books. When he had time to spare, he would take the wooden box given to him by the High Elf prince out and examine it.

The wooden box was lovely and very well-made with some masterful carving done on its surface. Imagine Link's confusion then, when he opened it and discovered that there was nothing but a thumb-sized white stone inside.

Yes, it really was just an ordinary-looking stone and nothing else. The stone's only unique feature was probably its somewhat smooth surface, but other than that, Link simply couldn't see what was special about this rock.

He couldn't detect a trace of Mana or spot any runic patterns on the stone and there were no jolts of energy fluctuations coming from it at all to put it simply, the white stone was indistinguishable from any other old rock you could find by the riverbank.

The prince wouldn't play a joke on me, would he? Link wondered. What was he thinking giving me this white stone?

Link was confounded and couldn't think of any reason why the prince would bestow him such an odd gift. After scrutinizing it for a while, a notification suddenly appeared on the interface.

White Stone (Indestructible)

Quality: Unknown

Effects: Unknown

(Note: A gift from Prince Philip.)

Well, at least it was true that the stone was indestructible. Link had actually tried to use enchantment techniques to change its properties and appearance, but none of his current tricks had had any effects on the stone. If it hadn't been for this strange property, Link would definitely have thrown the stone into some corner and leave it there a long time ago.

Could it be made of a material with too high a quality that it is beyond my capabilities to do anything to it? Link wondered. Could something like that exist, though?

After examining it for a while longer Link finally gave up with a long and deep sigh. He then closed the lid of the wooden box and put it back in its place. The was the first time he'd come across such a mystifying object ever since arriving in this world.

A day later, a messenger from the palace finally delivered the declaration letter and title deed from the king. Though these were only meant to be official documents, they were nevertheless of such a high quality that they seemed to be luxurious ornaments. The documents were stamped with the royal seal which had magic properties and were so intricate that they were extremely difficult to forge. Most importantly, these documents plainly stated the king's declaration that Link was now a Hereditary Baron of the Norton Kingdom whose seat of power was at the Ferde Wilderness.

The title deed had also clearly marked the boundaries at the south-eastern and north-western edge of the Ferde Wilderness, leaving no opportunities for disputes.

One thing worth mentioning was how King Leon seemed to be afraid that the new Baron would be too poor, so he put the coastal seas on the eastern side of the Ferde Wilderness under Link's ownership as well. Although the sea there was full of jagged reefs and unsuitable to be turned into ports, at least it was teeming with fish and other sea creatures that made some degree of fishing activities possible. Though it was impossible to get rich by relying on this alone, at the very least the new Baron wouldn't starve to death.

King Leon is indeed a considerate and generous man. Link then continued to examine the official documents with a contented heart when the idea of going back home suddenly popped up in his mind.

This body that his soul inhabited was a younger son of the Viscount Hamilton Morani. He'd left home for more than a year now and had successfully entered a prestigious magic academy and had even been awarded the title of a hereditary Baron. It was time for him to go home.

He wasn't going back to show off his glorious achievements, of course, but only because he realized that there was still a duty that he must fulfill back home.

There was no reason to worry about his father he was a Viscount after all, who had children and grandchildren to look after him. The person Link was worried about was in fact his mother.

Link's mother wasn't the Viscount's first wife, who had died after bearing the Viscount two sons. He then felt lonely so he married Link's mother, who bore him a daughter and another son. This youngest son was Link, of course, while the daughter was Link's own elder sister who had now come of age but because the Viscount could only afford to give her a small dowry, no suitable man had asked for her hand yet.

The Viscount's first wife came from another powerful noble family. Her eldest son was the Viscount'shi

Link remembered how they finally succeeded in driving his mother out five years ago. She was ousted from the castle by his eldest brother and was now living in a small cottage in the countryside. His sister was allowed to remain in the castle as she could be used as a tool to solidify a political alliance by marrying her off to a suitable family.

These were some of the rotten affairs going on within the Morani family. Link had no intention of interfering in it. He couldn't change the past, but he still had the ability to improve the present. He had the ability to support his mother now, so he planned to make the appropriate arrangements to enable her to come and live with him. Link just couldn't bear to let her live out the rest of her poor life alone and uncared for.

It wasn't that Link was determined to help her out of any emotional attachment since he'd never actually met her, but only because it was the most righteous thing to do.

The Hamilton estate was in the Pufferfish County about a hundred miles north of the Girvent Forest. It shouldn't take too much time to go there, thought Link.

He then started to write a letter home, briefly summarizing his current situation and mentioning the date that they could expect him to be home. Once he was done he dropped itito the mailbox at the entrance of the inn.

When he returned to his room, he could sense something different in the room, as if there was a foreign presence there.

He scanned the room but didn't see anyone there. Then suddenly, he noticed something from the corner of his eyes a black raven perched proudly on his reading table with its beady eyes staring intently at Link.

"I knew you'd come," said Link as he closed the door. When he turned back around, Eleanor had already transformed back into her human form.

"Is my gear ready?" she asked as she picked up a tool of enchantment on the table. She noticed the debris left on the tool and could guess the answer to her question herself. "I'm guessing it is, huh?"

Link nodded then handed over the Flame Blast bracelet to her.

Eleanor's eyes widened the moment she had her eyes on the bracelet. She turned it over back and forth gently in her hands, visibly getting more and more impressed by Link's creation. She handled the bracelet very carefully as if afraid that she might break it.

"Don't worry," said Link with a laugh. "I've made it to be sturdy enough. It won't break as long as you don't hit it with a hammer."

Link's remarks went unnoticed as Eleanor continued to be deeply enchanted by the Phoenix bracelet. She tried wearing it on her wrist and found that it felt just right it was neither too tight nor too loose, and it even felt smooth and luxurious as it brushed against her skin.

"It's marvelous!" exclaimed Eleanor. She loved it the moment she set her eyes on it. She'd be more than willing to wear the bracelet all the time even if it didn't contain any magical power.

Oh, that's right. I should check the spell in this bracelet too. Then, the more she examined the bracelet the more astonished she was at its superior quality.

"There's something different about this Flame Blast," remarked Eleanor. "Is it the same kind that you used in that battle? Oooh, but you didn't just improve its accuracy, you've incorporated suchsuch a sublime structure for this spell!"

She then turned her gaze away from the bracelet and stared at Link with wonder.

"Aren't you worried that I might learn your secret skills from this bracelet?" she asked.

This single bracelet would compensate her lack of direct combat skills. With it she would be able to cast Flame Blast in no time at all she shuddered just from thinking about possessing such terrifying power.

"You can do whatever you want," replied Link with a shrug. "I just have to do my best once I've set my mind to do something, otherwise I won't be able to go to sleep at night."

He'd only incorporated two Supreme Magical Skills in the bracelet, after all, of which the combined value was minuscule compared to that of the Scroll of Enlightenment. Besides, he wasn't planning on stopping his progress anytime soon. He would surely be learning countless more powerful spells than Flame Blast in the future. Flame Blast wasn't even the best weapon he had in his arsenal anyway, what had given him the crucial edge in battles were in fact his lightning-fast spellcasting and the aid from the gaming system.

Eleanor thought differently, though. She kept admiring the exquisite bracelet and sighed. This quality far exceeds my expectations, she thought. It seems I've struck gold in this deal.

She then handed the Scroll of Enlightenment over to Link.

"I've studied this scroll thoroughly," she said. "I don't think I could glean any more knowledge from it than what I've already learned. I'm giving it to you in return for saving my life."

Even without the exquisite bracelet, the debt of gratitude Eleanor owed Link for saving her the other day in Jade Street alone was great enough that she was willing to give up the scroll for him.

"But isn't this?" Link was momentarily stupefied. Even though he had memorized every detail of the scroll before, so he possibly had no need for it but The scroll was nevertheless invaluable because he could use it to look for the five remaining Scrolls of Enlightenment. When he thought of this point, Link immediately decided to accept Eleanor's gift.

"Alright," said Link, "I'll accept it. Thank you."

Eleanor nodded her head, albeit not without a heavy heart. This scroll was her most treasured possession that had been with her for the last tity years. She was slightly upset that she had to part with it after all these years. Still, it was too late to change her mind now, so she took a deep breath and held back her emotions.

"I've got something else to tell you," she then said. "Do you remember the Dark Elf swordswoman who managed to escape?"

"Of course I do," replied Link, stunned by Eleanor's sudden question.

"Well, I've caught her," she said.

"Where is she?" asked Link enthusiastically.

"Leave Springs City and head back to the East Cove Magic Academy," she said. "I will meet you on the way. Be careful not to let anyone follow you, the MI3 people are hot on her trail right now."

"Understood."

## 133. Glyph of Soul

Link took a carriage out of Hot Springs City to the outskirts. After paying the fare, he traveled on foot for a few miles before a black raven perched itself on his shouldersit was Eleanor.

"Turn left at the next corner," the raven whispered.

The path in front was a narrow, winding and dark road into the forest. Link was slightly hesitant. After all, he was not very familiar with this woman. If he were to go into such a remote place with her, he risked walking rightito a trap.

However, he quickly dismissed this thought as preposterous. He rationalized that there was no need to go to such lengths if she truly wanted to kill him. She could have easily done so on Jade Street when he was preoccupied with the three Dark Elves. Furthermore, she wouldn't have given him access to the Scroll of Enlightenment.

Link then walked towards the alley in confident strides.

Eleanor was slightly puzzled. "Aren't you afraid that I will harm you?"

Link smiled and said, "You specialize in secret magic. If you had wanted to harm me, I would probably already be dead." Secret spells were not built for direct combat. However, they were extremely lethal when used in sneak attacks. Many times, the victim would not even realize how they died. This was true even for Magicians. Eleanor simply laughed.

After round 600 feet, they entered the deepest part of the forest. The overgrowth was getting thicker by the moment, devouring the path they were on.

"Are we there yet?" Link asked.

"We are still five miles away. I presume you would have learned some traveling spells by now?" Eleanor spoke with a hint of disapproval in her voice. How could a Magician like Link travel simply by walking?

Link only knew one such spell. He began to summon his Wind Fenrir. His speed increased exponentially after riding his summon. In two minutes, they reached a stream in the middle of the forest.

"There is a hunter's hut straight ahead. It's right there, do you see it?" Eleanor asked.

It was a small, wooden hut that was built to offer passing hunters refuge for the night. The roof was full of algae and the wooden doors were filled with decaying holes.

When they reached the front of the wooden hut, Eleanor jumped down from Link's shoulders and turned into her human form. As Link entered the room behind Eleanor, he saw a huge bed in the room. A female Dark Elf could be seen restrained on pieces of rotten beast hide infested with worms. The rope used to restrain her seemed to be glowing slightly, probably enchanted with some sort of sealing spell. Under the effect of this magical rope, the Dark Elf was unable to move.

When she heard movements coming from the door, she immediately turned and threw a deathly stare in that direction with her pair of crimson eyes.

However, this was only directed at Eleanor. When she saw Link, her expression changed to one that was shocked and dumbfounded, her eyes involuntarily showing signs of retreat. The battle at Jade Street against Link had completely destroyed her pride.

Eleanor sat down on a broken stool and stared pitifully at the Dark Elf on the bed. She then began her introduction, "I have already done my research. The three Dark Elves that day were Felidia, a Magician, Ainos, an Assassin, and lastly, this woman. She is Alina, a Level-5 Assassin and apparently a famous figure in the Pralync Kingdom. She also has a prominent background, being the daughter of King Norigan. Many people call her the Constellation Assassin."

Link was appalled. He thought, it's no wonder that they were strong. They were the Three Musketeers!

In the first two versions of the game, the three of them wreaked great havoc on the human race. The eventual collapse of the Norton Kingdom could definitely be traced back to their actions. To think that the Three Musketeers would suffer such a fate in this timeline. Two of them were already dead while the other was now a captive under his hands.

He then saw a sword lying on top of a small table. If this person was indeed Alina, this sword would be the infamous weapon, the Sword of Shattered Stars.

He unsheathed the sword and a blast of cold air immediately engulfed the atmosphere. The sword shone brightly even under the dim sunlight as the entire sword body was made of thorium. Link carefully studied the sword and gasped. How extravagant, this is a fine piece of work.

"Don't touch it with your dirty human hands!" Alina shouted in rage. She said this sentence in human language.

Link pretended not to hear her and brandished the sword right in front of her. He then spun around and asked Eleanor, "I can probably guess the motive of their mission. It was to asssinate Prince Phillip and sow discord between the human race and the High Elves. Am I right?"

Eleanor nodded. "Of course. Their plan was almost flawless. It is a shame that they met a monster like you."

"Did you manage to get any other information?" Link asked.

Eleanor simply smiled and said, "I did, but you might not like the method I used to get this information."

"You are referring to the Soul Search spell I suppose. I don't really dislike it as long as it is useful," Link laughed. While the Soul Search spell indeed belonged to the realm of dark magic, it was still a useful spell. In fact, he even learned it while he was playing the game. Although he would not voluntarily learn the spell in this timeline, he definitely would not dismiss its effectiveness either.

Eleanor looked at Link carefully and found no trace of disgust or disapproval on his face. She was puzzled. "This is a forbidden spell. Shouldn't you be horrified and accuse me of being a dark witch?"

The Sacred Land of Light had an irrational fear of dark magic and that was exactly the reason Eleanor was alone all these years. Her life was basically a game of hide-and-seek with ordinary humans. Whenever she felt exposed after staying in a location for too long, she would immediately relocate to ensure her safety. Even her Mage Tower was instantly mobile.

"Stop testing the waters. Truthfully, I am not a fan of such spells and thus would not attempt to learn them. However, I have no right to ask others to do the same. I am sure the vengeful souls on Jade Street would have no qualms about you using such spells on the Dark Elves. There is then no reason for me to oppose the use of such spells."

Link was open to the discussion of dark magic. After all, every successful person in the world would have some dirt under their nails. If Link were to follow the rules stitly, he would never have been able to defeat the dark forces.

He then continued, "What did you find?"

"Alright then. You are the weirdest person I've ever met. But I guess it is for the best. If you don't mind, take a look at this." Eleanor passed him a scroll.

The scroll looked extremely ordinary. After opening it, Link realized that the scroll was filled with characters from the Dark Elf language. The arrangement of the characters was interesting as well, lining up in a specific formation that seemed to dictate their relationship with one another. Link came to an understanding after a few looks.

"The original copy of the Dark Elf's secret code?"

"That is what I think." Eleanor shrugged her shoulders, before speaking in a regretful tone, "It is unfortunate that we did not come across any secret messages. This thing is too valuable."

Alina was completely startled. She was clear of the consequences if the secret code fell into the hands of the human race. Careful and intelligent use of the secret code would be a devastating blow to the Death Hand and even might even destroy the entire Pralync Kingdom.

Her instinct was to immediately destroy the scroll. However, her strength was completely restrained and all she could do was cast worried glances in Link's direction.

Link smiled and said, "We don't have any secret messages. However, MI3 would have a lot of them. We can just pass this to them." He carefully studied the secret code and memorized the all the contents of the scroll. He did actually have a secret message scroll with him and could decipher it with the help of this treasure. However, there was no need for Eleanor to know about this.

The secret code was the most valuable loot in this mission. Link then turned his attention towards the Constellations Assassin, thinking of how to dispose of the Dark Elf.

Eleanor chuckled, "Are you hesitant to kill such a beautiful young girl?"

Alina indeed had an exquisite face and a voluptuous body. She would be considered a rare beauty even by human standards. However, that was all a facade. Her true form was a ruthless and crazy Assassin, as evidenced by the destructive ambush in Jade Street.

At the same time, she was an extremely talented Dark Elf Assassin. He could not let such a strong opponent live.

Should I kill her directly? Or should I remove her combat powers instead and turn her into a disgrace of the Dark Elves? After some thought, Link raised the Sword of Shattered Stars and placed it over Alina's chest.

He would end it once and for all!

Alina could see the shadows of death looming precariously over her. She stared at Link furiously and said, "Link, you will suffer the endless pursuit of the Death Hand the moment I die. I will be waiting for your soul in hell!"

Link simply laughed, "I guess you will have to be very patient." He gently pushed the sword down and the sharp blade effortlessly pierced through Alina's heart, ending her life.

Eleanor then spoke in a regretful tone, "To think that a princess would die in such a rundown place. If we had given her to MI3, she would have fetched a huge price."

"She has seen too much. If she was handed over to MI3, you would also be in danger."

Link had considered that option before killing Alina. However, this would not only reveal Eleanor's connection with dark magic, he would also be embroiled in the dark magic mess. The risks definitely outweighed the benefits.

Of course, Link was not about to leave without getting any rewards. The moment Alina breathed her last, a message appeared in his vision.

Mission: Rescue Second Step (Completed)

Player receives one Glyph of Soul.

Glyph of Soul

Level: 5

Effect: Player can choose to store a spell Level-5 and below in the Glyph of Soul. This will greatly reduce the time needed to construct the magic structure. This will not reduce the strength of the spell.

(Note: This is perfect for Magicians who want a fast spellcasting speed.)

Link was elated, this is too good to be true!

## 134. The Flaming Hand

Alina's lifeless body was set on fire and burned to ashes. Link then spread the ashes across the surface of the stream in the middle of the forest and let her remains flow away with the course of the water.

And that was the end of the Three Musketeers of the Silver Moon.

Her sword was made of solid gold and the magic seal on it contained a lot of thorium, so Link used his enchantment skill to isolate these elements and divide them equally between Eleanor and himself.

From there, Link now had ten pounds of gold and another ounce of thorium, which in total was worth the eye-watering amount of 20,000 gold coins.

Once everything was settled, Link and Eleanor then parted ways at King's Lane near the Girvent Forest.

"I've repaid my debt to you for saving my life with the Scroll of Enlightenment. I've even helped you in deciphering the code in the original scroll and found Alina don't you think you should show me a bit more gratitude?"

Link thought she had a point there, he never expected to have gained so much by acquainting himself with a person he had assumed to be evil. The Scroll of Enlightenment, the Glyph of Soul, the secret code documentLink had acquired all this with Eleanor's help and they were all extremely useful items!

His skills in enchantment were something he was proud of the most right now, so he made Eleanor an offer.

"I'll make you another magic gear then," he said.

"Good!" replied Eleanor. "My left arm feels a bit empty at the moment, I think another bracelet there would be nice, but I don't feel like forking out the gold coins for the price of the materials."

"Alright, I got it," said Link. "I'll start working on it the moment I get back to the academy. Write to me when you want to get it and I'll send it to you."

"It's a deal," said Eleanor. "Make sure this new bracelet of mine is as exquisite as my Phoenix bracelet, or I won't forgive you for it!" She caressed the beloved Flame Blast bracelet on her wrist lovingly as she spoke, although she had now renamed it as her Phoenix bracelet.

"I will try my best," said Link with a pursed smile.

They then waved goodbye to each other and Link turned down King's Lane. Eleanor stood in the forest watching Link's figure disappear gradually.

"Link, my name is Eleanor!" she shouted when Link was almost out of sight.

Link didn't turn back around but waved his hand to indicate that he'd heard her. He walked on until finally his figure was blocked behind a tree and disappeared completely.

Eleanor sighed softly as she turned around and headed into the depths of the Girvent Forest.

Now I'm alone again, she thought.

Meanwhile, Link walked along King's Lane alone. He could encounter someone anytime on the road so he didn't summon the Wind Fenrir to avoid alarming a passer-by, so he continued to walk all the way back.

After about ten minutes of walking, an oxcart came up behind him. He gave the peasant driving the oxcart a silver coin and hopped on it. The oxcart moved sluggishly, so he only reached the academy late in the afternoon.

It was winter at the time and the weather hadn't been so good on that day as well. There were even some snowflakes drifting in the wind. Once he stepped down from the oxcart, Link gathered his sleeves and pulled up the hood of his robe and entered the academy.

It had been such a cold day, in fact, even Vincent was absent from his usual spot in the garden. He had kept himself warm inside the cottage instead. When he heard someone's footsteps at the gates, he opened the window to take a look outside. Once he discovered it was someone wearing the Magician's robe of the East Cove Magic Academy he decided there was no threat to be found and closed the window.

As he treaded the snow-covered path in the chilly wind on his way back to his Mage Tower, Link suddenly thought of his mother again.

Her name was Lilith. She was 40 years old this year and she was a woman so kind and gentle that one might think she was weak. Link wondered how she was getting along now in that small cottage in the countryside.

There were alwasshortages of all kinds in that cottage, thought Link. I wonder if she had enough coal and firewood to protect her from this cold. How are the servants treating her? Does she even have enough clothes or food to survive this season?

Although she was just the mother of this body that his soul inhabited and was not his actual blood relation at all, the memories of her still remained in his mind, making it hard for him to bear the thoughts that she might be suffering a hard life right now.

I've refused the offers from the dean and the king to join the army, so there shouldn't be any reason blocking me from visiting her. Pufferfish County isn't so far away from here, anyway. I'd better pay her a visit.

As he came to a decision Link's footsteps began to quicken. He reached the Mage Tower right when Herrera was giving a lecture to the apprentices in the hall on the first floor. When she saw Link, she nodded at him and continued her lecture. Link took a seat in the hall and went on to study a magic textbook there.

Half an hour later, Herrera's lecture was over. She then walked over to Link.

"Is everything in the capital city settled?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Link. "I've gotten hold of some things that I must inform you of, but I can't do it here." Link was using the softest voice possible to prevent anyone from overhearing him. He was talking about the secret code document that Eleanor had given him. He knew that the authorities would find it very useful.

"Let's go to the top floor," Herrera said.

Once they reached the top floor, Link took out the cypher scroll and the secret code document, although the secret code document wasn't the one Eleanor gave him but was a copy that he made on the oxcart. He did this to protect Eleanor's existence from the authorities.

Herrera was oblivious to this small detail. She examined the scrolls for a while and discovered that they were indeed very important documents.

"Where did you get these?" she asked full of shock.

"One of my followers accidentally discovered this cypher scroll at the Cliff of Howling Winds," explained Link. "While the secret code document was given to me by the black dressed woman." It was too late to conceal Eleanor's existence, but he decided that he wouldn't reveal the friendship between them just yet.

"Black-dressed woman?" asked Herrera, more and more confused now. "Do you mean that mysterious Magician?"

"Yes," answered Link. "She was at Jade Street when the Flame Blast explosion happened and barely managed to escape death because of it. I guess she gave this to me because she believed that I could somehow defeat the Dark Elves who had almost killed her." It wasn't the whole truth, but Link sounded convincing when he uttered it because he believed it was a necessary lie and his conscience was clear.

As expected, Herrera believed him. She put the cypher scroll and the secret code document side by side and began to compare them. She did this for a few minutes before her eyebrows furrowed and she turned her gaze up to Link.

"It says here," she began with a grave tone, "that the Dark Elves are planning something called the Black Moon Conspiracy and they mentioned a Dark Elf called Felidia But there was no mention of what the plan was about and who was going to be involved"

Link hadn't found the right time and place to translate the codes himself, so he started doing so now. He discovered that the information on the cypher scroll was short and simple. Apart from the words Black Moon Conspiracy and the name of the now dead Felidia, the only other key information on the scroll was a date April 4.

It was now January 3, about three and a half months away from the date mentioned. Although it wasn't stated explicitly on the scroll it was very likely that the date was to be the operation date for the Black Moon Conspiracy.

Nevertheless, a date was far from enough information. They still had no idea what the Black Moon Conspiracy was or which part of the Norton Kingdom would be targeted.

"We need more information," said Herrera. She suspected that something terrible was going to happen, something that would eclipse the tragedy that happened on Jade Street recently.

"Tutor, don't you think we should hand these documents over to the MI3?" suggested Link. "They've always dealt with the Dark Elves in the Death Hand, perhaps this would provide them with vital information."

Link realized that the course of history had deviated from the original version in the game more and more now that he could no longer predict the future. There had never been such a thing as the Black Moon Conspiracy in the game so Link guessed that it might concern the East Cove Magic Academy, although he decided to keep quiet about it for now as it was only a speculation.

"You're right," agreed Herrera after thinking it over for a few moments, "we should hand it over to MI3." Herrera then gathered the scrolls in her hands and was ready to leave. "We are in a dire situation. I must report this to the dean right away. Only he has enough power and authority to take the right steps quickly."

Link nodded in agreement. The dean's help would be crucial right now.

"Tutor," said Link before Herrera left, "in five days, it'll be the Winter Veil Festival. I'd like to visit my family and spend half a month with them. I'll be on my way soon."

The Winter Veil Festival was the most important festival in the Firuman calendar. It was the occasion when everyone who had ventured out of their hometown would journey back for a reunion with their families.

Herrera was slightly taken aback by the sudden change of topic, but eventually she nodded.

"Be careful on the road," she said. "And don't forget to study and practice!"

"Yes, tutor," answered Link.

Link then went back to his room and packed his luggage. There wasn't much packing to do as he didn't have much to bring, plus he could just put everything inside his storage pendant. A few minutes later, he was done and ready to go, so he bid farewell to Eliard and arranged some studying plans for his disciple Rylai. He left the academy early morning the next day, heading north to the Pufferfish County.

It was still peaceful and quiet in the Girvent Forest when he was traveling through it along the King's Lane. But unbeknownst to Link, ten miles away three Dark Elves in disguise were entering Springs City.

Of the three, one was a Magician, one was an Assassin and the other was a Warrior. All of them were Level-5. They were the retainers of the Norigan Familia who had come down south in the Norton Kingdom to rescue the clan leader's beloved daughter the swordswoman Alina.

Link was oblivious to all this as he was engrossed in an advanced magic textbook in the carriage. It was titled The Flaming Hand and its content was devoted to the eponymous spell.

The spell caught his attention because even though the Level-5 Glyph of the Soul would allow him to engrave any spell that was lower than Level-5, it would be a big waste to do so. The only way to make use of such a priceless reward from the gaming system was to engrave a powerful Level-5 spell on his soul with it.

The Flaming Hand was a Level-5 spell with a frightening power. Apart from that, when mastered the spellcaster would be able to accurately control this spell to cause devastating effects. It was indeed a terrifying weapon when used in a battle.

Naturally though, because of its powerful affects, the rate of Mana consumption was abnormally high as well.

It was unlike any other spell Link had mastered so far in the sense that it consumed Mana continuously, not just at the moment of casting like the rest. When there was no opponent present, the spell would consume 10 Mana Points per second to sustain it. When facing an opponent, the rate of Mana consumption would increase the higher the opponent's level was. For example, when fighting against a Level-5 opponent, the spell could consume as high as 100 Mana Points per second. If the opponent was a Level-6 Magician though, then the spell would be virtually useless since the Mana consumption rate would be so high that the opponent would be able to defeat you in one move.

Link couldn't afford this rate of Mana consumption in the past, but he now had 200 Omni Points and a 1900 maximum Mana limit.

It was a mystery to Link, but ever since receiving Herrera's angelic blessings, his Mana had recovered rapidly, especially when he basked in the sunlight. In slightly more than a month, his maximum Mana limit had increased from 1800 to 1900 points.

Link thought this must be the side effects of receiving the blessings from an Angel of Light.

Since his Mana wouldn't be a limitation now, he naturally wanted to begin mastering the extraordinary spell immediately.

In the middle of the night. Hot Springs City, the Magician's Distit, Central Plaza ruins

It had been a week since the day of the tragedy. The dead bodies and rubble had already been properly disposed of. A variety of tools and materials could be seen laying on the ground around the destroyed architectures. The city had begun recovering from the incident and was in the midst of reconstruction.

However, the huge crater near the fountain at the center of the plaza was still present. The fragments of charred flesh stuck in between the cracks on the ground and the two visible trails of Link's Flame Blast spell served as a stark reminder of the cruelty of the attack.

A shadow draped in a large cloak emerged from a broken hut. He then crouched down and carefully observed the rubble and trails on the ground.

After a moment, the shadow spoke, "These stones have a blackened surface and show signs of melting. They seem to spread out in a conical formation. This person had cast a single directional fire elemental spell, at least Level-4 in strength."

Another figure behind him replied, "It does not matter what method he used. He will definitely be dead. Did you find any traces of the princess?"

"No need to rush." The shadow said before materializing a wand in his hands. A moment after he raised his wand, the tip of the wand was enveloped in a light purple glimmer which was almost invisible to the naked eye. The light then diffused over the plaza ruins.

After 20 seconds, a silver glow appeared on top of a hut at the corner of the plaza

"It's the Silver Moon blood! It's from the princess!" The shadow quickly said.

The Silver Moon blood was commonly known as the Holy Demon blood. It was a unique trait of the three largest familias in the Pralync Kingdom. The blood contained certain special magic properties that made it detectable by a specific spell.

The moment he spoke, two figures rushed out from behind and traveled hastily towards the hut.

These three people were the masters of the Norigan Familia. Their mission was to rescue Princess Alina from the clutches of the human race.

Of the two figures who rushed out, one of them was equipped with two long swords. He was a Warrior and was traveling at a slow pace. On the other hand, his comrade was outrageously fast and stealthy, much like a cloud of smoke. The moment the Magician finished his speech, he was already at the hut marked by the Silver Moon blood.

He was an Assassin that specialized in tracking. He was revered as a battle hound.

He squatted down and observed the blood carefully.

"Parson, Norisa, this is the princess' blood. The blood stain was oval in shape and unevenly dispersed. This meant that the princess was traveling at a fast speed at that moment. It seemed like she headed west."

He spoke while following the trail of blood, soon arriving at the alley Alina was in the previous day. The Magician and Warrior followed closely behind him.

Traces of Alina became more obvious and voluminous as they entered the alley. Blood stains, slightly sunken footprints and the dent in the walls caused by a heavy landing. Although a week had passed and such traces were almost undetectable to ordinary humans, it was easily captured by the Assassin.

The trio traced these trails through half the city until they reached the most western Prince Bill Area.

Prince Bill Area was the affluent distit of Hot Springs City. It housed many beautiful parks decorated with towering trees and small round shrubs regularly trimmed. The trio lost all clues in one of these parks.

"All of the traces are gone. This is strange, the princess seems to have disappeared into thin air." The Assassin was perplexed.

The Magician who had kept silent all these while spoke, "No, the situation is weird. I feel the remnant magic fluctuations of a powerful Magician."

Dark Elves had a natural talent for night vision. The blanket of darkness and silence over the park had in fact heightened Magician Parson's senses, allowing him to detect even the faintest of magic fluctuations. He walked around the park in a circle before stopping behind a piece of wood.

He had actually already felt this mysterious aura at the plaza ruins. However, due to the explosions of several Flame Blast spells and the bustle of the city in the morning, the aura was extremely disorienting. On the other hand, the situation in the park was different. There was only one clear magic aura around the area, much like a flaming torch in the darkness.

"The magic aura here is the mostitense! Hedel, come and take a look."

Hedel was the name of the Assassin. He walked towards the wood and circled around it before suddenly reaching out his hand, making a grabbing action. When he retracted his hand, he was holding a strand of black hair.

"It's a woman'shi

Magician Parsons, on the other hand, felt something was amiss. He took another glance before raising his staff to cast a detection spell on the hair.

Under the effect of the spell, the hair immediately exuded a faint white glow. This glow was similar to a mist slowly being released from the strand of hair. As the mist dissipated into the hair, the strand of harsemed to lose its luster.

"This is not a normal human girl. She is a secret magic Magician that is way older than 20 years old. If I am not wrong, her target is the princess."

He then looked around before pointing at the ground 15 feet away from the wood, "These should be her footprints. Try to see if you can locate her."

"Alright." Hedel began to wander around the area, sometimes even laying on the ground for closer observation. After around five minutes, he spoke, "I have found it. This way."

The two of them once again followed behind.

The trio went all the way out of Hot Springs City. Several times, Hedel lost all clues of the princess, but with the help of Magician Parsons' keen senses, they would quickly get back on track.

After a moment, they stared at each other.

"The princess had been held captive by a secret Magician and was brought out of the capital. The situation is grave." Magician Parsons frowned. He knew that secret Magicians were also usually known as dark Magicians.

Although the Dark Elves had a higher tolerance for black magic than the human race, they also had a deeper understanding about the cruelty and unpredictability of such magic. If the princess was subjected to torture under such magic, she would likely lose all rationality even if she was not dead.

"Don't think too much. Our mission is simply to save the princess! There are still clues!" the Warrior Norisa spoke.

"That's right." Hedel nodded and rushed forward.

It could be inferred from the traces that the secret Magician stuffed the princess onto a carriage before bringing her out of the city, heading west along King's Lane.

After an hour of tracking the clear trails of the carriage, Hedel spoke, "They alighted from the carriage. The princess' footprints can be seen for a while before disappearing."

Parsons then spoke, "That is normal. The secret Magician is a female and probably does not have much physical strength. She should have cast a levitation spell. Her footprints alone will suffice."

Hedel squinted his eyes and traveled along the forest alleyway. After a while, he gasped. "Parsons, what kind of beast is this? It is humongous!"

The forest pathways were getting more uneven and difficult to maneuver around. The appearance of a giant beast's footprint was thus a shock to Hedel. The situation seemed to be more complex than he imagined.

Parsons crouched down and carefully observed the footprints. After a few minutes, he spoke, "These are the footprints of a summon called Wind Fenrir. There is a new source of magic aura herein fact, this is the second time this aura appeared. The first time was in Hot Springs City when we were investigating the plaza ruins. He should be the person who released the single directional Level-4 fire elemental spell."

"Could it be that he is an ally of the secret Magician?" Warrior Norisa immediately made the connection.

"Very likely." Parsons had a serious expression on his face. When they were collecting information in Hot Springs City, they had a quick overview of the events that unfolded on Jade Street. A human Magician seemed to have defeated the princess.

To think that the Magician would once again appear on the princess' trails outside of Hot Springs City together with the secret Magician. This would only mean that the princess managed to make her escape but eventually became his captive. The princess was probablyParsons did not want to continue down this train of thought.

His two other comrades also had a sunken expression on their faces.

The clear footprints from the Wind Fenrir made the tracking process a lot easier. The trio reached a small hut beside a stream after half an hour. The moment they stepped in front of the hut, Magician Parsons' had a livid expression.

He felt the aura of death.

He kept silent and entered the hut. The first thing that caught his attention the moment he entered was the huge blood stain on the bed. He cast a detection spell and the blood stain immediately emitted a silver hue. It was the princess' blood.

Assassin Hedel similarly found many clues. He exited the hut and traced the trails all the way to the stream, where he came to a conclusion on Alina's outcome

"She was killed. Her body was burned to ashes and then scattered into the running stream." Hedel spoke calmly, though his pair of dark red eyes was already burning with a faint glimmer of Battle Aura.

"Is it possible to track the whereabouts of both the Magicians?" Norisa held his sword tightly. Since the princess was already killed, they would have to avenge her in some way.

Parsons did not reply immediately. Instead, he circled the hut three times before concluding, "The secret Magician was extremely careful. She erased all clues that could allow us to trace her whereabouts. However, the young Magician will not be able to escape! He is a Magician from the East Cove Higher Magic Academy called Link. He is quite a famous person in this area. Let's go pay him a visit!"

"I will gouge his heart out right there!" Hedel smiled cruelly.

Parsons shook his head, "No, we should bring him back to the North and present him to the King. The King will show him what exactly is cruelty!"

"Yes, Parsons is right. We cannot let this Magician die so easily." Norisa gritted his teeth.

On King's Lane.

Link was completely unaware that he was being watched. He had now reached the outskirts of the Pufferfish County the estate of his father, the Viscount Hamilton Morani.

In front of him was the Clearwater River, which was a river of about 300 feet wide where various types of ships frequently sailed. After traveling along the King's Lane for a few hours, Link was now approaching a great bridge.

The bridge was called the Great Hamilton Bridge. It was built by the Viscount and had always been a source of pride for him. The toll tax collected from the ships that sailed pass this bridge on Clearwater River was about 500 gold coins per year, and it was the main source of income for the Morani family.

It could be said that this bridge had provided the whole of the Morani family with all their necessities and luxuries.

Link's carriage was now on the Great Hamilton Bridge. He looked outito the distance and saw a castle on the hillside. This was the Morani Castle where Link's physical body had spent his first fifteen years.

It's been two years now, thought Link. I wonder if my eldest brother is still as bossy as before. Is my second brother's lust for women constrained now by any measure? I hope my sister didn't get bullied much.

Link's elder sister was his only full sibling, so they were very close with each other when he was still living in the castle. When he was little, his sister was always there to protect him and take care of him, but as he got older Link turned into a quiet and reserved young man while his sister became more and more worried about her own future, so they weren't as close as they used to be now.

Link didn't dwell on these thoughts about his family for long, though. Soon enough his attention was focused back on the magic textbook in his hands.

The Pufferfish County was about a hundred miles away from the East Cove Magic Academy. He started the journey yesterday morning and stayed at an inn by the road for a night. It was now the evening of the second day; Link had been continuously studying the Level-5 spell, the Flaming Hand. By now, every minute detail of the spell's structure had been firmly planted in his memory.

He'd never practiced it in the Elemental Pool though, so Link didn't dare to use it indiscriminately yet. This was a Level-5 fire element spell, not only did it contain a frightening amount of power, the fire elements that made up the spell were also notoriously difficult to control. This meant that the slightest mistakes he made might result in a cataclysmic explosion!

This is a powerful spell that needs to be controlled very precisely, Link pondered. It would make a good weapon to attack opponents with and an excellent defensive spell. Maybe I should engrave this spell on my soul with the Glyph of Soul.

Once the spell was engraved on his soul with the Glyph of Soul, he could then cast the spell without constructing the spell structure in his mind. All he had to do was trigger his Mana and wait for the elements to converge and condense and the spell would take form perfectly every time how simple would that be?

But this is just the regular version of the spell, thought Link. If I'm going to engrave a spell with the Glyph of Soul, I'd better modify it with some Supreme Magical Skills first to make the best of it.

With his fast thinking speed, Link managed to study The Flaming Hand from cover to cover in a single day. This meant that he had a whole day left to ponder on how to improve the spell with Supreme Magical Skills, of which he now had some rough ideas.

The inspiration for these ideas came once again from the space-time thesis that he had been working on. At present, Link had developed his thesis to a point where he had hit upon the profound layer of the truth fabric. It had yielded him with unexpected insights that led to his extraordinary innovations which had helped in gradually enhancing his strength and power.

It was no exaggeration to say that this thesis had become a treasure trove for Link where he could pick out invaluable pieces of knowledge from it every once in a while.

Too bad there isn't any Elemental Pool here so I can't test the spell yet. Link was itching to try out the spell now, but he knew that it was a taboo thing among Magicians to test out new spells in public. He wasn't planning on becoming a laughing stock among the Magicians just because of some slight mistakes he might make in trying out a new spell.

Just as he was about to put down the textbook The Flaming Hand and was going to turn his attention to Bryant's Scroll of Enlightenment, a notification suddenly appeared on the interface.

Link found the notification slightly odd. It was one that he'd never seen before.

Would you like to simulate spellcasting?

"Simulate spellcasting?" Link was surprised. "Explain to me what it is."

The gaming system can asst the player by simulating the process of spellcasting in the realm of consciousness. This way the player can verify the feasibility and effectiveness of a spell.

"You can do that too?" asked Link, bewildered. "Why didn't you tell me earlier?" Link had to wait for his turn to use the Elemental Pool to learn the spell Flame Blast. Had the gaming system told him about such a magnificent feature that he could take advantage of, it would've saved him so much time.

Player's soul strength was not strong enough in the past. The simulation might cause some damage to the player's soul.

"Is it strong enough now, then?" Link asked. "When did it get stronger? Why didn't I notice it?

When you confronted the Necromancer Shade, you surpassed your own limit. Then when you received the blessings of the Angel of Light, there was an ascension in the strength of your soul.

Link understood it now. He had broken through his own limits as he was fighting against the undead, that was why he had such a splitting headache then. Then Herrera had sacrificed parts of her own soul to help heal his soul, which made him recover not only to his previous strength but made it even stronger than before.

Seeing that it would take more than an hour to arrive at the Morani Castle, Link estimated that he would have enough time to master one spell in the meantime.

"Start spellcasting simulation now," he instructed the gaming system.

As soon as the words came out of his mouth, the spell structure of the Flaming Hand appeared right in front of him.

This was a Level-5 spell, so its spell structure was complex and intricate, much more than that of the Level-4 Flame Blast. The Flaming Hand was another spell that was based on runic light wheels. It contained five light wheels and there were more than a hundred runes on each wheel. If he used the same spellcasting technique as the one shown in the simulation earlier, Link estimated that he would spend 4 seconds on spellcasting even when he had already mastered it.

In real battles, taking four seconds to cast a spell was enough to create an opening for an Assassin or a Warrior to kill him more than ten times.

Then, Link saw clouds of red gas flowing from all directions into the bright red frame of spell structure, creating a giant Flaming Hand of which each finger was thicker than an elephant's leg. The hand was glowing white and there were spirals of red-hot flames surrounding it while its surface was roiling with heat waves. By the looks of it, if the hand was holding a man inside its palm, it could completely vaporize the man in less than a second.

In the field of vision, Link saw a red-colored atmosphere flowing in from all sides into this red magic structure, forming a large flame giant with a finger two times larger than the elephant's leg. The color of the hand was incandescent and surrounded by a red fire. The flame, on the outside, was a billowing heat wave.

"It's not bad, but it's just the regular version," said Link in his own realm of consciousness. "I'll modify it."

As soon as he had the idea, the Flaming Hand in front of him disappeared and turned into its basic spell structure. Link then began to modify it based on the ideas that he had when observing the regular version earlier.

He had been playing with the ideas of ways to modify the spell a dozen times in his head, so he took less than five minutes before a completely new spell structure was created.

After checking it one last time and confirming that there were no defects, Link said, "Simulate spellcasting."

The spell structure began to oscillate, and the red flames began to pour in. Soon afterwards, the Flaming Hand began to take shape and was about to come into its perfect from when suddenly there was a flash of light and the Flaming Hand scattered and collapsed.

Simulated casting failed. The new structure was flawed.

Link was not discouraged, though. He knew that it would take more than one trial to succeed.

"Can you repeat the process?" asked Link. "And make it slower too."

Yes.

And so, Link once again observed the whole process when the Flaming Hand collapsed. The speed was slowed down by 5 times so Link could very clearly see the whole process unfold and identify where it had gone wrong.

Link finally spotted all the flaws after a few seconds. He pondered on a solution for about three minutes, then started to make slight alterations. This time, he spent about ten minutes on it. After making sure that everything was in place, he once again said to the gaming system, "Simulate spellcasting."

The red gas flowed into the spell structure once again, but this time no accidents happened. The giant hand appeared, although its appearance slightly differed from the regular version. Its surface was still an incandescent white, but it was glowing very dimly and the roiling waves around it were now controlled. The barrier between the Flaming Hand and the air around it was now clear-cut. Additionally, there was a transparent force field around the giant hand.

This force field wrapped around each finger of the Flaming Hand. Under the influence of the fire elements on the force field, red rings of fire appeared around these fingers.

The texture of this novel Flaming Hand was similar to that of Link's Glass Orbs. The reason being that both spells condensed all of their fire elements tightly inside their cores.

Splendid, Link thought. Now I can completely control the flame and direct it to explode at the exact time that I wish it to. There are still some flaws here, though. The control of the flame's energy is still imperfect, but I can change that.

Link liked spells that he could control, which was why he had developed the Flame Blast with high target accuracy and the Glass Orb with almost all of it fire elements constrained inside the orb. Right now, he wished to create a modified version of the Flaming Hand of which he could completely tweak its surface temperature to his desire.

After the completion of its basic structure, he now began to make the final improvements to the spell.

It took him more than half an hour this time. After modifying it five times, Link was finally content.

Though half an hour might seem like a brief period of time, Link had actually spent more time because he was in the realm of his own consciousness. Because Magicians usually possess fast thinking speed, one second in the real world was like a hundred seconds in their realm of consciousness. Link, on the other hand, had such a lightning fast thinking speed that one second in the real world could be as long as 200 seconds in his realm of consciousness. Combined with the boost he received from the gaming system, that was how he managed to modify a spell in less than an hour.

"Now," said Link, "imprint this spell onto the Glyph of Soul."

Are you sure?

"Yes."

As soon as he made the reply Link felt as if something was slamming against his head. He could almost hear a clanging sound in his head, as if someone was hitting on a big brass bell. He had a throbbing headache when he finally regained consciousness. Nevertheless, the Flaming Hand's structure had been clearly imprinted in his mind and he could recall it with all its minute details in no time at all.

He had a feeling that as long as he triggered his Mana he could construct the structure of this Level-5 spell instantaneously. Then, a notification popped up on the interface.

Player acquired a new soul spell. Please name the spell.

"Call it the Vulcan's Hand", replied Link. He had wanted to call it the Buddha's Palm but he thought it sounded too grandiose and arrogant to name a spell he created himself something like that.

Player successfully created a new Level-5 spell the Vulcan's Hand. Player receives 10 Omni Points and now has 210 Omni Points in total.

Link took a quick glance at the notification then made it disappear. He rubbed his throbbing temple and closed his eyes to rest for a while. About ten minutes later the carriage gradually slowed down and came to a stop.

"Mr. Link," said the coachman, "we're at the castle gate now."

Link opened his eyes and peered out of the carriage window and discovered that he was now at the Hamilton family's castle gate. By now the guards on the castle wall had noticed the carriage approaching the moat, though they made no move to lower the bridge.

"Who goes there?" shouted one of the guards. "Report the name of the gentleman in the carriage!"

"Tell them it's Link Morani," said Link to the coachman, who then shouted the reply.

The guards on the castle wall were taken aback by the name given by the coachman. They knew that the Viscount's third son had left the castle to study magic a long time ago and were surprised at his sudden appearance now.

Why did the young master come back so suddenly? Did he hear that the old Viscount was sick in his bed and rushed back to make sure he got his share of the inheritance?

The Morani Castle was located at the highest point in Puffer County. As long as one was standing in an open space with an unobstructed view, they could see the castle clearly.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon. Three Dark Elves carefully disguised as humans were traveling on horses along Hamilton Bridge. As they lifted their heads, they got a clear view of the castle.

The three of them were powerful and had excellent vision. Not only did they get a clear view of the castle, they also saw a turquoise carriage traveling up the hill towards the castle.

"Look, it's a carriage from the East Cove Higher Magic Academy. The person inside must be Link," Hedel spoke. They rushed here the moment they heard that Link was returning back home. The sight of a carriage bearing the academy's crest confirmed their suspicion.

"Quick, we'll go catch him now!" Norisa gripped his sword tightly.

"There is no hurry," Magician Parsons said as he looked at the distant carriage and castle. "This is his family castle where his loved ones reside. We have to deliver the greatest pain to him to avenge the princess. We will wait till its dusk before we sneak into the castle and kill his family members right in front of his eyes. Then, we will burn down his family castle and destroy everything he ever owned!"

"Fantastic!" Hedel smacked his lips in satisfaction. The Dark Elves were blessed children of the night. As an Assassin, he was thus the reaper when dusk fell.

Link's carriage moved towards the castle at a steady pace. While the Morani family was not well-known, the respective heads of the family had been lords for the past 300 years. There was a lot of thought putito the construction of the castle over all these years.

The perimeter of the castle was surrounded by a 15-foot-deep trench. As it was situated on higher ground, there was no water in the trench. Instead, the trench was deliberately filled with wooden spikes. The castle walls were made of a hardy material called Star Stone to defend against external attacks. The wall with the suspension bridge was further reinforced with magic runes. Link could tell in one look that those were anti-magic runes and sturdy runes. After entering the castle gate, one would be greeted by a plaza filled with weapons such as crossbows, catapults and other instrumentals in castle defense. The plaza was surrounded by another layer of tall walls and lead to the second castle gate.

If an enemy were to break through the first layer of defense, they would be trapped within the plaza and greeted by a deadly rain of arrows. There would be no escape.

As Link continued to observe the castle, he felt that the castle was simply a war fortress. If it was stocked with an adequate supply of food and some combat masters, it could probably serve as a defensive foothold for at least one and a half years.

At this moment, the carriage had arrived at the inner castle's courtyard. There was a small garden in the courtyard decorated with neatly trimmed greenery. This slightly dispelled the dark and humid atmosphere present in the castle. The main castle gate lay behind the courtyard. Link saw three people standing in front of the main gate, awaiting his arrival.

There were two women and one man. The two women were dressed in tattered and thin clothes, causing them to shiver in the cold winter. They constantly rubbed their hands against each other and stamped their feet to keep their bodies warm. As Link got closer, their facial features evoked Link's memory and he finally recognized them.

The women with the distressed and worried expression were Lilith, the mother of the true Link Morani. The disheveled lady beside her was his elder sister Molly, and the last person with a head of white hair was the housekeeper of the Morani family, Trevor.

Mother is in the castle? This is unexpected. Link thought. As for his eldest brother, it was normal for him to not appear due to his revolting temperament. Similarly, his second brother was a Kingdom Knight and was on duty at the Silver Fortress in the North. It was thus natural that he would not be around as well.

The carriage stopped right in front of the main gate. Link opened the door and alighted with grace.

Link did not want to be looked down upon by his family members. He wore his turquoise magic robe bearing the crest of the East Cove Higher Magic Academy and had two rings on his hand. One of them was an intricately designed ring bearing the defensive spell, Edelweiss. The second one was a ring given by the King that would affirm his status as a Duke. The Wand of Constellations he deliberately held in his hand also constantly emitted a mysterious and glorious glow.

This was extremely effective. Lilith's eyes lit up the moment she saw her son in this manner. She immediately felt relieved, the signs of distress previously shown on her face dissipated. His sister Molly had also regained some spirit, covering her mouth in shock. They probably did not expect their incompetent brother would grow this much. The contempt on Trevor's face had also greatly lessened, changing into that of respect and awe. He bowed and said, "Third young master."

"Is this really you, Link?" Molly doubted her own eyes. The Morani family had always placed emphasis on physical strength and walked the path of the knight. Link, who was frail and weak from young was thus despised.

However, the young man standing in front of them was lean and confident. He was dressed in a glorious robe and had the demeanor of an extremely powerful Magician. This was the exact opposite of the impression she had of her brother.

"It's me," Link smiled. Even though he did not hold special feelings towards these two women, memories of the true Link Morani were still present inside him. He couldn't help but feel some sort of intimacy.

He walked forward and hugged his sister and mother respectively. When he embraced his mother, Link found the poor woman trembling. He then looked at her and saw tears flowing down her cheek as she stared hard at him. She murmured, "That's good, my son has finally grown up. He looks promising."

Link felt a twinge of pain in his heart. He let out a small sigh before recollecting himself. He turned towards the coachman and handed him five gold coins. "Al, please take a rest. You will have to stay in the castle these few days. Sorry for the trouble."

The moment the coachman saw the gold coins, his eyes lit up. Five gold coins were the equivalent of six months of his earnings. He was elated and spoke with excitement, "Thank you, sir."

Housekeeper Trevor gasped at the sight, he gave the coachman five gold coins as a trip?

The entire Morani family merely had an annual income of 700 gold coins. With this income, they had to further split it amongst the 300 over people in the castle. The most generous reward the Duke offered in the past year was five silver coins. To think that Link could offer ten times that amount off the mark; it exceeded his expectations in every way.

The winter breeze was making the cold unbearable. Link could not watch as his mother and sister turned pale in the howling wind. He said, "Mother, sister, let's go in."

"Alright, alright." Lilith's only focus was on her son. She would follow whatever Link said.

As for Molly, she was similarly shocked by Link's lavish action. Her allowance for the entire year was merely six gold coins. She still remembered her struggle when she wanted to purchase a skirt that had cost one gold coin. It took her half a month to come to a decision. She clearly did not expect her brother to tip a coachman an amount that was almost equivalent to her yearly allowance. How extravagant!

She followed closely behind Link with a stunned expression, her eyes staring at her brother the whole time.

On the way, Link told the housekeeper, "I want to see my father, bring me there."

Trevor instinctively said, "The Duke is currently weakno visitors are allowed."

That was far from the truth. While the Duke was indeed physically weak, it was Hamilton's eldest son, also the person next in line for the position of Duke, Wharton Morani's instruction that the third young master was not allowed to visit the seriously ill Duke.

The reason was simple. He was afraid some of the inheritance would go to Link.

In the past, Trevor would say these things with ease. However, before he could even complete his sentence this time, his speech was interrupted by Link's cold stare. There was not the slightest bit of emotion in those eyes. He immediately felt pressurized the moment their gaze met.

He panicked and sweat broke out on his forehead. He subconsciously muttered, "Third young master, this is your brother's order."

Link sneered. He knew exactly what Wharton was planning. The Morani family's inheritance was sparse to begin with. If Wharton had to split this inheritance with him, Wharton's portion would definitely become smaller. However, Link had no interest in such an insignificant inheritance.

He calmly spoke, "I request to see my father, and not my brother. Lead the way!"

"Yes" Trevor found himself completely subservient to this young man and agreed immediately. The moment he spoke, he was horrified. Since when did the third master become so powerful. This is weird.

Now that he had agreed, there was no reason to delay the process. Trevor led the way with a pained expression.

When they reached the staircase, a figure appeared on the second floor. A voice came in that direction, "My dear brother, you have finally returned. I missed you so much."

Link looked up and saw a burly young man walked down the stairs.

The man was in his early tities. He had shoulder-length brown curls and neatly trimmed stubble. He was well-built and wore a brand new black robe with a high-quality fur vest. His shoes were made of exquisite deer leather, and the accessories he wore were double the amount of the total his mother and sister wore altogether.

The sight of this person struck fear into the hearts of his mother and sister. They immediately bowed their heads like a deer shivering in the face of a lion.

This was the eldest brother of the true Link Morani, the successor to the throne, Wharton Morani.

He slowly walked down the stairs and observed Link with greatiterest. His smile grew wider by the minute and said, "My dear brother, it seems like you have learned your magic well. Look at your beautiful wand, let me have a look at it."

He then proceeded to grab the wand from Link without asking for his permission. This was an old habit. His third brother would never refuse his requests.

However, that was Link from the past.

This pampered bastard meant nothing to him now.

Link's mana surged into the wand, causing it to glow in a blinding light. Under the illumination of this light, Link looked at his arrogant brother and said, "This is not something you should be touching, Wharton."

A Magician's wand is like a Warrior's sword. It should never be in the possession of another person, not even for a moment.

Wharton's expression immediately changed. His face darkened and with his hands still stretched, the brilliance of a strong Battle Aura enveloped his body. He advanced forward, "Why is that so? Have my little brother lost all respect after learning some magic?"

He specialised in the Morani's family Ice Battle Aura and was already a Level-4 Warrior. He was confident that he would be considered a formidable foe even if his strength was compared across the Kingdom. On the other hand, his brother had only studied magic for less than a year.

How strong could a person get after merely a year of practice? The blinding light is probably just something flashy.

He then made an extremely unwise decision.

The next moment, a brilliant light enveloped Link's body and a Level-4 Edelweiss spell was instantly released. Link controlled the energy field carefully and made sure not to injure his mother, sister and the housekeeper. However, on Wharton's side, he deliberately enhanced the strength of the forcefield.

Boom! Wharton was caught unguarded and his whole body was knocked back.

"You little punk! How dare you attack me!" Wharton was enraged. He had been holding the reins in the Morani family for a few years. Even his father dared not go against his will, much less his third brother who had always been meek and frail. To think that he could retaliate!

The anger inside him was overflowing. He charged forward following an explosion of his Battle Aura. He had to teach this disobedient brother a lesson!

At the Morani Castle.

Wharton was so enraged that he'd lost all his reasoning capabilities. All he wanted to do now was to attack Link somehow.

Link was quite surprised at the degree of his brother's wrath. He'd always known that Wharton had a bad temper and that he was always the boss in the castle where his words were the law. But he didn't expect Wharton to descend to such a tyrannical point. This was no longer just haughtiness and arrogance it was madness!

Link felt he must teach Wharton a lesson in place of their father, in case one day he might step on the wrong toes and cause irreversible damage to the family.

It was true that Wharton was a Level-4 Warrior, but he wasn't holding any weapons at the moment, and neither was he wearing his armor. Link, on the other hand, had a whole arsenal of spells at his beck and call to choose from Glass Orb, Whistle, or even Flame Blast either one of these would've killed Wharton in less than a second.

But of course he couldn't, and wouldn't, do that. After considering it for a while Link decided to use the latest spell he'd learned the modified version of the Flaming Hand, Vulcan's Hand. This spell would completely overpower his bastard of a brother and immobilize him without hurting him.

But then, just as Link had come to his decision, a figure appeared out of nowhere and was lunging towards Link and Wharton. The figure's body was shrouded in Battle Aura of exactly the same color as Wharton's, only even more intense.

It turned out that the figure wasn't aiming at Link, though. Instead, the mysterious figure went straight for Wharton.

Wharton was caught unaware himself and didn't have the time to defend himself from the assailant. He was forced to step backwards for five or six steps, after which the assailant pinned him down against the wall behind him.

Wharton did not expect it to be shocked, and then he was knocked back by the figure. He took five or six steps back and was finally hit by the figure on the wall.

It was then that Link could finally make out who this figure was. He was over six feet tall with a body as sturdy as a bear and a rough and craggy appearance that seemed to be about 25 years old. He was Link's second brother, Clyde Morani.

"This is the first time we three brothers are reunited back at home," he said angrily, staring straightito Wharton's eyes, "yet this is how you, the eldest brother, welcome us?"

"You bastard, let me go!" By now Wharton had calmed down slightly. He continued to struggle but Clyde had eased his grip on him. Soon enough Clyde let his brother go and took a few steps away from him.

Now that Wharton was free from Clyde's grasp, he suppressed the burning rage inside him with all his might and shot daggers at him with his stare. Then he straightened his clothes and turned back to Link.

"So you think you can play me like a puppet now that you've learned a few tricks in the magic academy, huh?" sneered Wharton. "Don't you forget that I'm the master of this castle and no one is allowed to disobey or disrespect me. If you've got a problem with that then you're welcome to bugger off!"

Then Wharton turned around and strutted out of the hall without waiting for Link's reply.

Link frowned deeply as he massaged his eyebrows. In this brief interaction with his eldest brother he could clearly see that Wharton was pompous and arrogant, impulsive and impatient, and worst of all, ignorant and unwilling to compromise his needs for anyone else. In short, he was just like those typical spoiled sons of noblemen.

Meanwhile, Link's second brother Clyde apparently couldn't stand Wharton as well as he spat on the spot where Wharton had stood.

"Sooner or later the family will fall in his hands!" shouted Clyde.

He was a knight of the kingdom who was stationed in the White Silver Fortress which was a hundred miles north of the Black Iron Fortress, and the second largest fortress in the kingdom.

He had heard that his father had fallen seriously ill, so he asked for special permission by the captain to come home in time for the Winter Veil Festival. He'd also got wind of the rumors about his little brother on his way back that he had shown exceptional progress in his magic skills and was about to come home as well. So, Clyde was very much looking forward to seeing everyone back together for the first time in a long while.

Although he hadn't liked Link much in the past, it was only because he despised his little brother's weakness and passivity. He would never bully Link himself. Now that he was a knight of the kingdom and had been stationed away from home for a long time, he had started to value the unity and strength of the family even more than he had ever done.

The reason was simple. If the bond within your family wasn't strong or if none of your family members was a prominent figure, you could be easily manipulated by another more powerful family and be robbed of all you had.

The appearance of a prominent figure within a family depended entirely on luck, which was very hard to alter. The unity among the family members, though, could be worked upon. This was the reason why Clyde highly valued the importance of love and harmony in maintaining the strength and position of the family.

And yet, the first thing he saw after rushing back home was the sight of his elder brother in all his arrogance bullying his little brother in front of the rest of the family. This angered him very much and triggered him to act out in the way he did.

Now that Wharton had left, Clyde then calmed himself down for a while and turned to his little brother.

"Not bad, kid," he remarked.

Clyde had been out in the world for many years, so his mind had been broadened unlike Wharton who had remained here all his life. Clyde could easily see from that little trick his little brother had used on Wharton that Link's spellcasting was impressively swift. He even had a decent control of the spell that he cast. To have achieved this much within a year was really not bad at all.

However, in Clyde's view, Link's magic aura was still very dim, so his level mustn't be all that high at present. He'd managed to fend off Wharton probably because the latter had been caught off guard. Still, it was more than enough for now. They finally had a Magician within the Morani family, and this pleased Clyde very much.

Link, on the other hand, had known Clyde to be a frivolous man who loved to chase after women. He remembered how he would flirt and try to court every beautiful lady he met. But apart from that there was no serious flaw in him at all. He'd ignored Link in the past but had never done anything to make his life miserable the way Wharton had been, so Link had no hard feelings for Clyde at all. He saw Clyde smiling at him so his expressions softened as well and finally ceased the Edelweiss shield.

"It's just a little trick I learned," he told Clyde with a smile. He then turned to his mother and patted her hand gently. She was pale and shaken by what had just happened.

"It's alright, Mother," Link reassured her, "Wharton was just confused for a moment."

"I heard Trevor say that father's body is getting weaker," said Link. "Is he ill? What happened?" He hadn't received any news from home lately and had no idea at all what was going on within the household.

"Father fell off a horse two weeks ago," said Clyde, his face now turned grave and glum. "He was relatively fine when it happened, but his injuries worsened the next day. The priest had visited him several times now but there still wasn't much improvement in his conditions. I hear his body was too weak to withstand a strong healing divine spell."

The basis of divine spells was to stimulate the body's own potential to repair and heal itself. The priest would only say someone could no longer withstand a healing spell when that person was nearing their limit and could no longer be saved.

Link was understandably shocked at this revelation. He hadn't expected to come back at such a crucial time. He'd assumed that Wharton was preventing himself from seeing the Viscount because he didn't want Link to develop a close relationship with their father. But now it seemed that he might just be worried about the old man's health and didn't want Link to disturb him. Now it's no wonder why Wharton's temper had been so explosive.

"Let's go see him," said Link.

Clyde nodded, and the two brothers then made for the old Viscount's room together.

Their father's room was on the second floor of the castle just a few steps away from where they were. Just as they were approaching the door, Link saw the priest walking out of the room followed by the castle's servant, though they didn't seem to notice the two brothers approaching yet.

"The Lord of Light has summoned the Viscount," said the priest to the servant, "he might stay alive for another week but no longer. You must all be prepared for what might happen soon."

Clyde had heard the priest's every word loud and clear. He quickly rushed up to him in long strides.

"Is there no way to save him at all?" he asked with a pleading voice.

The priest was initially shocked at Link and Clyde's presence. He then looked around and realized that they were all members of the Viscount's family, so he shook his head gently in reply, with an expression on his face that signified helplessness.

"The Viscount is already unconscious and his Life Aura is now almost extinguished," he said. "I'm afraid I am powerless against the will of the Lord of Light."

The priest then gave a slight bow and left.

Clyde let out a long sigh and they all stood there silently. The two brothers then entered the Viscount's room. Link saw his white-haired father lying almost lifelessly like a sheet of paper on the king-sized, carved oak bed. His breathing was irregular and very slow, and his face was ashen and pale. He didn't look much different from a corpse.

Link knew at a glance that the priest had overstated his father's condition. By the looks of it, the Viscount wouldn't last much longer than three days, and there was no longer any hope that he would ever rise from his coma. Wharton shouldn't have bothered preventing him from seeing his father as it would've made no difference at all.

The two brothers stayed in their father's room for a while without uttering a single word. They still stayed silent as they walked out of the room. Link didn't exactly feel sad, but he did feel the depressive air that was clouding the atmosphere.

They then passed the time wordlessly for a while. Then the clock chimed six in the evening it was now dinnertime in the Morani castle.

Although Link's eldest brother wasn't exactly keen on celebrating his return to the castle, he still ordered the servants to serve up quite a lavish meal for everyone.

There were only five people in the dining hall the three Morani brothers, Molly and Link's mother Lilith. Wharton sat at the head of the dining table while Clyde was sitting on his right. Link took a seat in the middle of the table's length. He then turned to his mother and sister and was shocked to find that they were standing aside timidly with uncertity, looking at Wharton as if afraid of his disapproval.

"What are you standing there for?" Wharton barked. "Sit down!"

Only then did Lilith and Molly dare to take their seats. Link frowned at this sight as it made him suspect that Molly and his mother weren't even allowed to sit at the same table with Wharton when he wasn't home. It was only his speculation, though, so Link decided not to say anything about it for now.

A few minutes later, Wharton broke the silence of the dining hall.

"Molly," he began, taking his time with each word, "Father's health is deteriorating as we speak, we mustn't delay the engagement any longer. It is what he had decided on before he collapsed into unconsciousness."

Molly was slowly cutting up the venison steak on her plate when she shuddered suddenly at the mention of the engagement. Her face instantly turned white as a sheet and she was so upset that not a sound escaped from her lips.

Lilith seemed like she had something to say but she stopped herself before she opened her mouth. The doleful crease between her eyebrows was even deeper now.

"Wharton," said Link after putting down the knife in his hand, no longer able to hold in his thought, "what engagement are you talking about? Why don't I know anything about this?"

Wharton harrumphed and continued to chew the piece of meat in his mouth slowly, making no haste to answer Link's questions.

"It is father's decision," he said finally. "The man asking for Molly's hand is the eldest son, Baron Arrow from Delta County. It is father's last wish."

"No!" Molly shrieked suddenly, finally finding her voice. "It is not father's wish! You've coaxed him into it!" Her eyes were just as deep and dark as Link's and they were now brimming with tears, making them look just like pools of ink.

She then turned to Link and looked straightito his eyes.

"That Delta County Baron's eldest son is a madman!" she told him. "He suffered a serious injury from a horse-riding accident and ever since then he's been torturing women for pleasure. He's had three wives and they all died because of his barbarous treatment! I will never marry a man like that!"

Molly had been observing her brother ever since he arrived. She found that there was something different about him now that made her trust him even more than she ever did when he was just her baby brother. He seemed much more like a leader and a reliable man. She might just be grasping at straws, but she felt that only Link could save her from this cruel fate.

The crease between Link's brows deepened as he listened to his sister, though he made no replies and just sat there brooding. Wharton, on the other hand, couldn't take it much longer.

"Shut up!" he yelled as he slammed a fist onto the table.

Molly stopped speaking immediately and bit her lips so hard they started to bleed, though she dared not defy her brother's command. He was still the most powerful man in the castle after all.

Wharton sniggered derisively, then he turned to Link.

"My dear brother," he said, "Baron Arrow is so kind to welcome our sister into his household without a dowry. Not only that, he even offered us a thousand gold coins in return. His son may have misbehaved from time to time but I'm sure he's no madman. Molly will be fine as long as she is careful. Anyway, this is what father wanted."

Link paid no heed to Wharton's words. He looked over to his mother and sister and saw how one was sorrowful and the other tearful. Link put down the fork in his hand and wiped his mouth with the napkin beside his plate. He knew what he should do now.

"I disapprove of the arrangement," said Link.

Wharton was visibly seething with anger, his eyes bulged out as if they were about to explode out of his head.

"Come on, let's not quarrel," Clyde interrupted. "We'll talk about it after the meal. Let's enjoy the food for now, alright?"

Wharton snorted at Clyde's remarks. He still resented his brother for the opportunity he had to go off into the world and become a chivalrous knight while he was stuck in this castle.

"My dear brother," he began, "you mustn't forget that your armor and weapons had cost the family 1500 gold coins. That's three years' worth of our income! Think of how much our family had to sacrifice for you, we've even gone into debts with "

"Alright, that's enough!" Clyde slammed his knife and fork onto the table and stomped out of the dining hall. He had no plan to stay there and suffer through another one of Wharton's dreadful lectures.

Wharton burst out in laughter like a child who'd just won a fight. Now it's time to deal with the other younger brother.

"The decision is final," he told Link. "What you think of it means nothing whatsoever."

"I think you've got it wrong, brother," said Link with a laugh. "I wasn't telling you what I think, I will act on it too. I will bring my mother and Molly back with me."

"Don't be silly!" Wharton retorted disdainfully. "How do you plan to take care of them? You're just a Magician's Apprentice who's only been learning magic for a year. I doubt if you could even take care of yourself! Whatwhat is that?"

"You obviously haven't noticed this ring on my finger, have you?" said Link, smiling as he raised his hand to show Wharton the Baron seal from the king. "King Leon has given me this ring as proof that I am now a Baron with my own estate. Now that father will soon be gone, I will bring my mother and Molly back to my estate with me and take care of them myself."

Link's words hit Wharton like a ton of bricks as he sat there dumbstruck and unable to make any reply. Meanwhile, Link's mother and Molly's eyes shone with jubilant surprise.

Just then, they were interrupted by Clyde's urgent scream from the outside of the castle.

"We're under attack!"

The Morani family's castle.

Clyde was in a state of depression when he came out of the dining hall.

While it looked glamorous being a Kingdom Knight, a knight with a noble background had to pay for his own armor. In order to preserve the reputation of the Morani family, the old Duke spent a huge amount on his set of magic armor.

When he started using this set of armor, Clyde indeed received stares of admiration. However, as his military achievements had not been outstanding these five years, he did not receive many rewards for his actions, and was thus still wearing his old armor.

The magic formation on his armor had lost its effects a long time ago. Furthermore, the armor also looked dilapidated from all the repairs and wars it had been through these years. Clyde looked nothing like a Knight of noble descent wearing it.

But he still had to wear it, making him a target for ridicule.

His years of experience on the battlefield had allowed him to ignore these condescending stares and voices. Putting those aside, he had been looking forward to returning home, hoping that his family would make him feel better. Little did he expect that his family was also in shambles.

His elder brother was only concerned about his inheritance and position, his younger brother had become defiant after learning magic, his sister was not sensible and his father was on his deathbed. These series of unfortunate events weighed on Clyde's heart like a heavy stone. He wished to find something that he could release his rage onto.

He continued moving forward past the courtyard to the outer plaza and then climbed the castle wall. It was snowing, causing the air to be cool and refreshing. Looking out from the highest point of the city walls, a panoramic view of Puffer County could be seen.

Clyde took a deep breath and immediately felt better.

At that moment, he saw two horses riding towards the castle in the distant. Who would visit at this hour? As he thought to himself, the two figures quickly arrived at the suspension bridge.

"Open the door, we are special envoys from King Leon. We are here to find Magician Link." A voice rang from below the suspension bridge.

The castle guards looked at Clyde, waiting for his approval.

While Clyde had his doubts, they were merely two individuals. Furthermore, they were acquainted with Link and claimed to be King Leon's envoys. There should be no harm in letting them in. If they were lying, the over 200 soldiers in the castle would be enough to give them a memorable lesson.

"Open the door," Clyde ordered.

With the clicking and clacking sounds of the wheels, the suspension bridge was slowly lowered. The two figures waited patiently for the bridge to be completely lowered before making their way in.

The clatter of the horses' hooves became more prominent as they traveled on the bridge into the castle. Everything looked fine.

Quickly, the two figures reached the gear hinges of the suspension bridge.

At that moment, everything changed.

A wooden stick suddenly appeared in the hands of one of the figures. As he pointed it at the hinge, the gears around it shattered. The suspension bridge now could not be closed!

This was a Magician. He destroyed the bridge with his spells!

Clyde was horrified and immediately unsheathed his sword, yelling, "Infiltration!"

His years of fighting experience had told him that Magicians were the hardest to deal with in battle. One must never lose focus when fighting against them. In order to secure a victory, one should either plan a sneak attack or wait till he exhausted all his energy. Now that the sneak attack was impossible, they had to go with the latter.

He immediately ordered, "Shoot your arrows! Kill them!"

The enemy was at the plaza, surrounded by the tall castle walls. There were no lesser than 50 soldiers on the castle walls raining arrows down on them. This would surely deal some damage to the enemy.

However, the moment Clyde gave his command, one of the figures was suddenly enveloped in a blue light. This light was peculiar. It started as a soft hue enveloping the Magician before spiraling outwards in a radius of 15 feet. At the 15 feet mark, the light stabilized and many mysterious patterns could be seen flowing in the light dome. These patterns were similar to thorns but were more exquisite and abstruse.

When this light appeared, the two figures accelerated and went across the 90 feet plaza in a second. In the blink of an eye, they reached the gate leading to the courtyard.

The speed was so fast that they managed to dodge all the arrows fired by the soldiers. The inner gate leading to the courtyard was also left wide open as they had no time to close it.

Clyde's eyes widened at this sight and had a look of disbelief. "It's the Blue Thorn Battle Aura!"

The Ice Blue Thorn Battle Aura was a Legendary style that originated from the book, Battle Tactics of the Blue Thorn. It was a secret trade of the Silver Moon Dark Elves, specifically the Norigan Familia.

This Battle Aura was extremely powerful and would surround the user with a halo of thorns. This halo had two functions: one was to greatly increase the speed of the user and his comrades, while the other was to repel the enemy's attacks.

Warriors who mastered this battling style would be able to face five other Warriors of a similar level without getting defeated. The more allies the user had, the stronger the battle aura would be. If there was a Knight in the Calvary team who had this Battle Aura, the combat strength of the entire troop would increase exponentially!

That was the reason why Battle Tactics of the Blue Thorn was termed as one of the ten Legendary Battle Aura books of the Firuman Continent.

It was rumored that there were several versions of this Battle Aura. However, they all shared a similarity which was that this Battle Aura itself was extremely selective. This was true even for the most basic version. If the soldier was not talented enough, forcing the Battle Aura on him would not only be ineffective, but also damaging in some cases. It was said that even the eldest daughter of the Norigan Familia did not make the cut to learn this Battle Aura.

The person in front of him was exactly the unique talent that managed to master this art.

Clyde felt a chill down his spine the moment he recognized this Battle Aura. "These two people are definitely Dark Elves. But why would such powerful Dark Elves appear in Puffer County?"

He had a premonition that the Morani Family would not be able to escape their impending doom.

The moment this thought surfaced in his mind, hysterical screams echoed through the castle. Clyde spun his head and saw a shadow moving at an unimaginable speed through the mist. When he swept past a soldier, the soldier would either grab his neck or heart with a pained expression before collapsing. Despite the lack of light, Clyde could still clearly see warm blood gushing out of the wounds.

"It's an Assassin!" It was too late to stop the two figures that charged through the plaza. He hollered and rushed towards the direction of the Assassin.

His entire family would be killed if he continued to stay out of the fight!

He unleashed his Battle Aura and reached the Assassin within three charges.

At this moment, he saw a black aura enveloping the Assassin, whose hands were already stained red from the countless lives he took. When Clyde reached his side, he had just removed a dagger from a soldier's heart. The blood spurted a distance of three feet and some of them even splattered onto his face. He licked the blood off his face with a bloodthirsty gaze.

"Go to hell!" Clyde growled and swung his sword.

There was no collision. The Assassin was extremely nimble and managed to dodge his attack with ease. He then charged forward, aiming his dagger at Clyde's heart.

Clyde immediately retracted his sword to defend himself.

The collision still did not occur. The Assassin spun the dagger in the middle of the attack and Clyde felt a blow to the back of his head. He instantly felt dizzy and lost all strength, staggering forward for a few steps before collapsing onto the ground.

A raspy voice sounded behind him, "You will die, but not now."

In order to exact revenge for the princess, he would kill the Magician's family members right in front of him!

Clyde was horrified. He felt extremely weak, so much so that he couldn't even move his fingers. This should be due to the effect of his opponent's Battle Aura, which destroyed his bodily functions.

He could only lay helplessly on the ground as he watched the Assassin massacre the soldiers. He even saw the two figures who charged through the plaza.

They had already reached the castle courtyard, where more screams of terror could be heard. They were merciless and extremely efficient, evident from the frequency of the screams.

Clyde was trembling when he thought, they are here to find third brother. But how did brother provoke the Silver Moon Familia? To think that he attracted such powerful enemies. Will this be the end of the Morani Family?

The Dining Hall

Link and Wharton immediately stood up upon hearing the warning siren.

Wharton shouted, "Bring me my sword!"

He was a Level-4 Warrior, a powerful foe by normal standards. If anyone was insolent enough to attack his castle, they would have to bear the brunt of his sword.

The servant immediately brought him his sword. It was an intricately designed sword decorated with rubies as large as pigeon's eggs.

Wharton heroically rushed out of the castle the moment he got the sword.

Link felt strange. The terrifying amount of screassuggested that the enemy was strong. Link then turned around and ordered Housekeeper Trevor, "Bring mother and sister to the wine cellar."

Trevor hastily replied, "Yes."

Lilith threw a worried glance at her son and said, "What about you?"

"There is an infiltration. Naturally, I will have to deal with them. Don't worry mother, they are not strong enough to defeat me."

"But you have only studied magic for a year." Molly was still pretty knowledgeable. According to normal standards, one year was barely enough to lay the foundation for the practice of magic.

"Stop babbling! Quick! Move!" Link's face sank.

As the two women were fairly soft-spoken and meek, they immediately gave in to Link's pressure and followed obediently behind the housekeeper to the cellar.

However, they barely walked a few steps before a scream sounded at the entrance of the dining hall. Following which, a figure flew into the room. This unexpected event caused the two women to scream subconsciously.

Link stared at the figure and was surprised to find out that it was Wharton.

The elegant robe he had worn was now tattered. He suffered many injuries on his arms and legs and was drenched in blood. Every single attack seemed to accurately sever his arteries, causing huge amounts of blood to gush out from the wounds. He could only helplessly lay on the ground and moan in pain.

Link frowned and materialized his staff before heading out of the dining hall.

Two figures appeared at the front door. More accurately, it was the two Dark Elves. One of them was a Warrior, while the other was a Magician. The Warrior's sword was stained with blood. It seemed like Wharton's injuries were caused solely by him.

"Leave! They are extremely strong!" Wharton shouted. He seemed to still have a conscience in times of emergency.

Link pretended that he did not hear Wharton. Sensing no eagerness to attack from his opponent, Link maintained his sitting position and placed his Wand of Constellations on the table. He then spoke coldly, "Two distinguished guests, would it be possible that I move my family to a safer place?"

The Dark Elves were definitely here for the incident of the Silver Moon's Three Musketeers. This battle would not end until one side was completely eliminated. From the tactics they used to torment Wharton, it could be seen that they harbored intense hatred towards Link and had great confidence in their abilities.

Since he was their target, the opponent probably would make him their first priority. It hence did not matter if his family were to be moved to a safer position until he was defeated.

Sure enough, the Dark Elf Warrior nodded, "It is possible. However, they cannot leave this hall. We have to let them view the glorious sight of your demise."

Link still maintained a calm expression and waved his hands at the shivering servants behind him, "Help the master up and bandage his wounds."

The servants immediately did as they were told.

At this moment, another Dark Elf appeared at the dining hall entrance. This Dark Elf was an Assassin and carried a person in his hands. It was his second brother Clyde.

Link then pointed at him and said, "Let him view the battle from the sidelines."

The Assassin looked at his comrades with a puzzled expression. Parsons then said, "Throw this person to the corner. Let him use his full strength."

Their aim was to defeat Link even when he was giving his all. Only then would he suffer true despair.

Hedel nodded and threw Clyde more than 60 feet away with just a slight fling of his hand, all the way to the inner wall of the inner hall.

Free of all constraints, Link could finally battle with ease.

## 135. Where Do You Think Youre Going?

Although he was ready to make his move, Link still had to choose his timing carefully.

He wore a faint smile on his face as he sat calmly at the table, looking nothing like a man preparing for a battle to the death. Once Clyde's wounds were properly dressed by the servants, Link reached out his hand and tapped it gently on the table. He then turned to address the Dark Elves.

"Gentlemen," said Link, speaking slowly and clearly, "may I ask for the name of the person you are avenging? Is it Felidia? Ainos? Or is it the swordswoman Alina?"

The three Dark Elves were visibly agitated at the mention of the last name. The Warrior Norisa immediately stepped forward with his sword glowing in an icy-blue light, and the Blue Thorn Battle Aura was now activated as well.

"Listen closely, you bastard," he said, "we are avenging the death of Lady Alina!"

"Ah, so you're Prince Norigan's errand boys," replied Link. "Well then, prepare to die!"

Right at that moment, Link launched his attacks! Three Whistles suddenly appeared and headed straight for the three Dark Elves. Link had been quietly constructing Whistle's spell structure while he struck up a conversation with the Dark Elves to buy some time. He didn't just cast one Whistle in this brief window of time though, but three, each on for each of the Dark Elves!

As for the wand that remained untouched on the table well, who said that Magicians must hold the wand in their hand to use it? Link was controlling it easily with just his Mana without the need to physically touch it at all.

The three Whistles hissed through the air with a piercing, high-pitch noise. Their speed was unimaginably fast, so fast that they reached a few feet away from the three Dark Elves within a tenth of a second.

Link had cast the modified version of Whistle that he and Eliard had been discussing and finally came up with. The power of the new version of Whistle was at least three times that of the original one.

The three Dark Elves could not have foreseen such a sudden attack. They were all caught off-guard and had no time think of a way to counterattack. All they managed to do was unleash a defensive shield.

Although Ainos' Blue Thorn Battle Aura was able to deflect attacks to some degree, it was most effective in close combat and not long-distance attacks like Link's spells, so he instinctively raised his sword to block the oncoming Whistle.

The Magician Parson, on the other hand, immediately cast a Level-4 shield spell around his body to protect himself.

Only the Assassin Hedel thought he would be smart enough to avert the attack from Link. He used Flash to step aside, hoping to dodge away from Link's Whistle.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The three Whistles exploded almost simultaneously and they were followed by a scream of pain. Who was the one screaming? It was no other than the only Dark Elf who was confident in his own skills to evade Link's attacks Hedel.

Yes, Hedel was a Level-5 Assassin and his speed was indeed unimaginably fast. Still, he wasn't fast enough compared to Link's reaction speed.

Link had initially aimed each Whistle at each of the Dark Elves when he cast the spells, and all three of them had sensed Link's murderous intent so they each made the moves to protect themselves. But just as the Dark Elves were making their moves, Link had changed the trajectories of all three Whistles at the very last moment he aimed all of them at the one with the weakest defense, Hedel.

Link remembered a well-known war strategy in his previous life that you must always do the exact opposite of what your opponent expected you to do in order to win a war or a battle. He used that principle just now to completely catch the Dark Elves unaware.

Link couldn't possibly be this dexterous with other spells for now, but he'd been using Whistle for long enough that his depth of understanding of the spell was unfathomable.

Link hadn't directed the three Whistles to follow Hedel. Instead, he had directed them towards the direction that he predicted the Assassin to run to and detonated it there!

For a moment the whole place was lit up by the flames of the explosions and metal fragments scattered about all around Hedel's body. The Assassin was wearing a thin anti-magic leather armor that protected him from most of the force of the impact. Yet, they did nothing to protect him from the countless metal fragments that resulted from the blasts.

Thousands of metal fragments pierced through Hedel's armor and skin. His body was now covered with gaping wounds while his face was pockmarked with bloody gashes. Not only was blood spewing out of his body everywhere, both of his eyes were now nothing more than two bleeding holes.

As expected, though, the Level-5 Assassin possessed a strong survival instinct. Although his wounds were grave, Hedel still managed to cling on to life and escaped death. He'd even remained on his feet even though both of his eyes were now blinded. Link would no longer be facing any threats from him now, and he was finally able to breathe a little easier as one dangerous opponent out of three had been practically eliminated.

Just then, the Magician Parson and the Warrior Norisa began their counterattacks.

Although they were stunned for a moment by Link's unexpected attacks, they had no time to help Hedel. Once they realized that Link had played a trick on them, they went straightito attacking mode and charged towards Link.

Norisa used the Battle Skill, Charge to rush up towards Link. He didn't have a shield with him, but he was wearing a light chain mail and had the protection of the Blue Thorn Aura. At that moment, he was like a war chariot that barged through everything in his path the table, the chairs and the wooden planks on the floor were all left in pieces in his trail.

He was only about seventy feet away from Link with his speed, even with the furniture in the hall in his way, Norisa could reach him within half a second.

Meanwhile, Parson took a step back to get himself behind the Warrior Norisa. He then began to construct a spell structure. With Norisa's help, he would have just enough time to cast a powerful spell, so he chose the Level-3 spell, Ice Spear!

He was most familiar with this spell, so he could cast it at the lightning speed of 0.4 seconds. He'd also modified it with Supreme Magical Skill so its power was increased to Level-4, making it the best choice for a battle with such an unpredictable opponent.

In the face of the Dark Elves' counterattack, Link did two things.

First of all, he activated the Edelweiss shield with his magic ring. This Level-4 defensive spell was not the most necessary step, but Link activated it nonetheless just in case. Although it might not be able to completely block the Dark Elves' attacks, the force field might slow them down and reduce their power if they managed to break through the shield, which would give him extra time to react.

Secondly, he activated the Level-5 spell engraved in the Glyph of Soul the Vulcan's Hand!

It was Link's first time using the Glyph of Soul in a real battle. It felt wonderful. The moment his intention to cast the spell emerged in his mind he felt momentarily stunned and the complicated spell structure of the Flaming Hand that had been modified with Supreme Magical Skill appeared immediately at the tip of his wand.

The Level-5 Domingo Crystal was right at the end of Link's wand and it was filled with fire elements inside it. Once the Vulcan's Hand's spell structure appeared near it the fire element inside the crystal flowed rapidly to fill the spell structure, and in no time at all, the formidable Level-5 spell was completed. It took Link no more than 0.1 second even less time than a blink of an eye!

By then, Norisa had only reached 30 feet away from Link when he saw a giant hand appear right in front of his eyes. It was glowing faintly in white and its size was ridiculously huge. Each finger of the hand was even bigger than his thigh and was encircled by rings of red, hot flame.

As the giant hand appeared, it rushed towards Norisa with an astonishing force and an even more frightening speed despite its size. Even before it could reach him, Norisa could already feel the roiling heat that came from the hand and it made his knees wobble in fear.

What kind of monstrous spell is this? Norisa's face was now as pale as a ghost and there was but one thought in his mind run!

But no matter how fast he was, he could never outrun the Vulcan's Hand, which was made up almost entirely of fire elementals. The fire element has no weight therefore it had no inertia, and so could accelerate from the stationary state to the speed of a storm in no time at all. It was also able to change directions swiftly as Link willed it without a hitch. The Vulcan's Hand might be colossal in size, but it was still surprisingly agile and quick.

Soon enough, the Warrior Norisa was caught within the grasp of the giant fiery hand!

The Vulcan's hand was so colossal in size that the Warrior now looked just like a tiny mouse. He was now completely engulfed by the flames and one couldn't see a trace of him from the outside.

At the same time, all Norisa could see now was a red sea of flame all around him. He found that he couldn't move at all because the fiery hand was exerting an enormous pressure on him. What was even scarier was the rapid speed at which it was closing in one him.

"The bastard is going to roast me to death!" Norisa then concentrated all of his force and energy to activate the Blue Thorn Battle Aura in a single explosion and the aura around him suddenly burstito a brightness that was three times its normal intensity.

Bang!

It turned out that Norisa wasn't too shabby at all. With that explosive burst of his Battle Aura, he managed to smash and disperse the fire elements in the Level-5 Vulcan's Hand!

Yet it didn't come without a cost to the Warrior. His clothes were now burnt to tatters, and the anti-magic chain mail armor was now glowing red and almost destroyed. Hishi

By then, not only was he no longer able to charge on, it had taken all of his energy just to stay conscious and aware under such scorching temperatures. No matter how strong he was, he would need at least a few seconds to regain his composure and make an attack.

At this point, the Magician Parson finally completed the Ice Spear. Spiraling spears of ice then shot out from the tip of his wand and headed towards Link.

The Ice Spears were about seven-feet-long and as thick as an egg. It spiraled rapidly as it flew towards Link at a terrifying speed. If Link was hit by the spear, even the Level-4 Edelweiss shield would not completely protect him from its impact, and that would give the Dark Elves an opening to follow up with another attack.

Still, Link had his own way to deal with this.

Once again, he triggered the Glyph of Soul and was momentarily stunned, then the intricate structure of the Vulcan's Hand appeared at the tip of his wand. There the fire elements scattered by Norisa recently was then gathered and took the form of a new giant fiery hand.

The Ice Spear was only halfway in its trajectory when the new Vulcan's Hand was fully formed, and they both slammed into each other in an explosive clash of elements.

The Vulcan's Hand was initially glowing dimly, but once it came in contact with the Ice Spear it burst out in a brilliant light. The Ice Spear then instantaneously became a mist of vapor.

What else would you expect when a mere Level-3 ice spell hit a Level-5 fire spell?

With the Ice Spear vaporized, the fingers of the Vulcan's Hand curled up like a cow's tongue and promptly swallowed the Warrior Norisa who disappeared into its palm.

Then, without any hesitation at all, Link immediately raised the temperature of the Vulcan's Hand, especially in its palm area. The giant fiery hand than brightened so much that everyone in the hall was almost blinded.

This meant that the temperature of the Vulcan's Hand had been raised to a blistering degree!

This time, there was no way that Norisa could ever escape the Vulcan's Hand's grasp. In fact, the spell had re-emerged so quickly within 0.2 seconds that he hadn't even had time to recover from the previous attack yet.

Then, an inhuman scream could be heard coming from the inside of the Vulcan's Hand. It was a ghastly scream, but it was brief and abruptly ended.

Needless to say, it was the sound of Norisa getting burned to death.

Right now, out of the three Dark Elves, one was dead, and one had been incapacitated. The Magician was the only one left standing now. All this had happened within three seconds the time for the average person to breathe in and out!

Another second passed, and the Vulcan's Hand in the great hall opened up its palm again, from which a charred body that looked like a big lump of coal came tumbling out. As the corpse hit the floor, it crumbled into countless smaller pieces the powerful Level-5 Warrior was now nothing more than clumps of coal and ashes.

Wharton gulped at the horrifying scene before him. He now realized that his brother had been merciful to him when he attacked Link earlier in the day.

Meanwhile, Clyde's eyes were as wide as saucers as he stared at his little brother who hadn't moved an inch from his position at the dining table as if the dinner hadn't even been interrupted at all. He couldn't imagine how powerful his brother had become now.

Just minutes before, Clyde had been thoroughly defeated by that Assassin within a few seconds, and the Assassin didn't even seem to have exerted much effort either. He was after all a henchman of the Norigan Familia who possessed the Blue Thorn Aura, yet Link managed to defeat him without touching him at all not to mention the fact that he hadn't even stood up from his chair!

What kind of power was this? How did Link get so mighty in such a short period? These questions kept running through Clyde's mind and he really couldn't come up with any explanations for them.

Not only was he shocked and awed by the human Magician's power, he was also quaking in his boots. The Vulcan's Hand had now completely broken Parson's fighting spirit. It was a spell of at least Level-5, and yet the human Magician had cast it instantaneously! It was simply beyond Parson's imagination, and he'd never faced such a menacing assault before!

How could he possibly defeat an opponent of this level?

"Retreat!" shouted Parson to the Assassin Hedel. He then waited for no one and bolted straight out of the great hall of the castle. He wasn't afraid of death, but he must remain alive, so he could bring the news of what just happened back to the Black Forest.

Although Hedel was completely blinded and his body was bruised all over, he knew that Norisa had been killed by the sound he heard. He was aware that Parson was making a run for it, so he instinctively wanted to flee himself. He staggered and stumbled and tried to run out of the hall. But he only managed a few steps before he fell down and face-planted on the floor.

He tried to get back on his feet but before he could even try, another Whistle exploded right next to his thigh, breaking the bones immediately. An excruciating pain spread through his body. All Hedel could do now was hug his thigh and screech in pain. He was no longer the master of darkness that he used to be.

Meanwhile, Parson had reached outside the hall. He was now out of Link's line of sight, although his confidence was now completely shattered and all he could think of was to escape as far away from the human Magician as he possibly could.

He went to the furthest corner and began casting a flying spell the Level-3 Ashen Hawk. He would not stay here and suffer the same fate as Norisa or Hedel, instead he would escape the terrifying human Magician by flying into the sky!

Two seconds later, the spell was finally completed. A gray billowing cloud of smoke then formed into a giant bird. Parson quickly climbed up and the bird swiftly took off into the sky. Parson finally breathed a sigh of relief as he thought that he was out of the human Magician's range now, but this relief hadn't lasted for more than a second when he saw that the Magician had walked out of the great hall.

The Ashen Hawk had flown no more than tity feet then.

"Where do you think you're going?" shouted Link.

He pointed his wand at the sky, after which the Vulcan's Hand immediately followed in its direction. In no time at all the giant fiery hand grabbed the Ashen Hawk into its palm and pulled the bird along with the Magician down to the ground.

Did you think that I'd just let you fly away from my grasp, Parson? Not a chance!

## 136. Powerful and Wealthy

The harrowing battle lasted merely four seconds and ended with Link's complete triumph.

The Dark Elf Magician was not dead or even injured. The Flaming Hand spell was carefully controlled such that it only destroyed his spell, but dealt no harm to his body.

However, Parsons had lost all energy to resist. He cowered within the giant palm of flames, revealing only his head. He closed his eyes awaiting his final judgement.

On the ground, Assassin Hedel held his broken leg in pain. His voice had become hoarse from his screaming. He had also become extremely weak due to the loss of blood. He whimpered helplessly while he lay on the bed of cold snow.

Link thought for a moment and came up with a solution to deal with the two Dark Elves.

They must die. However, it was not time yet. He needed to get some information out of them before he would end their lives.

He snapped his fingers lightly and released a Glass Orb spell towards Hedel. The glass orb positioned itself right beside Hedel's ears before exploding. The shockwaves from the explosion entered Hedel's brain without any obstruction, causing him to faint almost immediately.

Link then ordered a servant, "Remove all his clothes and equipment. Shave hishi

Link did not shave his head merely to insult him. It was due to the Assassin's common habit of storing their triumph card in the most unexpected areas, including their hair. This was what made Assassins dangerous even if they were nursing a broken leg.

The servants all looked at each other in fear. They were merely ordinary people who had not seen a Dark Elf in their lives. Furthermore, they just witnessed this Assassin take the life of countless soldiers and servants in the castle. None of them had the courage to approach the injured Assassin.

"I'll do it!" Clyde spoke. He was a Warrior and knew exactly what Link was thinking.

He stepped forward and removed Hedel's body armor. He then picked up Hedel's dagger from the ground and skillfully shaved his head with a few clean strokes. After making sure that there were no hidden weapons, he then began to bandage his wounds.

A Level-5 Assassin who was well versed in Battle Aura possessed a strong vitality. After the initial treatment of his wounds, his breathing stabilized and he was out of danger.

Clyde then used a rope to bound Hedel tightly, making sure that he could not even budge before looking at Link. He asked, "Brother, what should we do next?"

His brother had shown outstanding battle prowess. If a family simply wanted to survive, unity was all they needed, However, if they wanted to make their name known throughout the continent, a powerful individual would be required.

Link was such a person!

In the military, the strong were naturally given respect and power. Since Link had shown his overwhelming strength, Clyde's attitude was completely different from before and he was not uncomfortable in showing it.

Link was no longer a "defiant kid just after learning a few magic spells". In his heart, Link was now a genius, a calm and terrifying Magician that could bring prosperity to the Morani Family.

He would definitely follow him to the ends of the earth.

Link thought for a moment and threw a low-level recovery potion to Clyde. "There are still many tiny metal fragments in the Assassin's body. Even though his condition has stabilized, it is only a temporary measure. Feed him the potion."

Link had considered the benefits before taking this action. By leaving the Dark Elves alive, he would be able to obtain valuable information about the Pralync Kingdom. By keeping both of them alive, he could even validate their statements through comparison.

"No problem." Clyde obediently opened Hedel's mouth and fed him the recovery potion.

Link then turned his attention to the Magician now that Hedel's issue was settled.

The Magician had completely given up. He simply stayed helplessly in the Flaming Hand and had a pained and fearful expression on his face.

Link immediately cast a Mana Lock spell on him.

This was a spell he learned from Herrera. It needed the complete cooperation of the target for it to be successful. It was an extremely strong spell and it was impossible to rely on one's own willpower to break free of the restitions. This was at least true for the Magicians he had seen up till now.

Link was not completely sure that the spell would succeed. He took a chance seeing that Parsons was currently dejected and filled with disbelief and fear. When Parsons realized that something was amiss, the shackles were already locked in place.

A Magician who lost his magic powers was nothing more than an ordinary human.

Link then released his Flaming Hand and Parsons fell onto the ground with a blank expression on his face. Link knew that he would offer no more resistance.

Link then stepped forward and released The Magician's Hand, using it to remove the magic equipment from Parsons body piece by piece, starting from the staff to the defensive magic ring, the dimensional bracelet and the crystal headwear, leaving nothing behind.

When this was done, Parsons presented no threat even to the most defenseless of humans.

"Second brother, bring the two prisoners to the dungeon and lock them up. Remember to lock them up separately, do not allow them to interact with one another," Link ordered.

"No problem." Clyde obeyed and carried each prisoner in one hand before swiftly transporting them to the underground dungeon.

Only Wharton, Lilith, Molly, Trevor and a few trembling servants were left in the courtyard.

Wharton stared at Link with complicated feelings. He kept silent the whole time.

Link ignored him and turned his attention to the servant, "What are all of you doing! Bring the injured master to his room. Also, Trevor, summon the priest from the county.

"Yes."

"Yes, third young master."

"Will do."

After a flurry of obedient replies, the servants hastily went to do what they were told, as though they were instantly unlocked from their previous shackles.

As for Wharton, his mouth opened a few times, clearly feeling the need to speak to Link. However, despite the many attempts, he was unable to let out an audible sound. He did not manage to say what he wanted to in the end.

Link's transformation was too drastic. He was no longer the little brother he could bully, but an unfathomable powerful Magician. Thinking on his previous attempt to suppress him, Wharton couldn't help but feel ridiculous. He must have looked like a clown.

At the same time, he was overcome with embarrassment and rage. He did not know how to face Link.

After he was brought back to his room, only Lilith and Molly were left.

Their feelings were much simpler and direct. After the initial shock, only joy and relief remained in their hearts. In Lilith's eyes, no matter how powerful Link became, he was still her son.

She witnessed the entire battle and saw a confident and powerful Link dominating the battlefield. It reminded her slightly of the old Duke when he was younger. No, in fact, her son exceeded the old Duke in every way.

She was incredibly proud.

Lilith smiled as Link walked towards her. Tears of joy flowed down from her eyes. Her son had finally become strong enough to protect her after all these years. She no longer had to suffer in this cold and cruel household.

Molly felt both joy and respect at the same time. She lowered her head and averted Link's gaze the entire time. She felt that the gaze was incredibly oppressive. When Link stared at her, she instinctively bowed before realizing that Link was simply her younger brother.

"Brother" She could not continue her sentence.

Link concealed his magic presence seeing the slight expression of fear on their faces. His expression was then restored back to the gentle and inviting smile he had previously.

He spoke softly, "The castle is slightly messy, I will have to let the servants clean it up. Mother, sister, please go rest in your rooms."

"Oh, alright." The two woman then headed back to their rooms.

There were only a few servants left and around twenty soldiers who were lucky enough to survive the massacre. At this moment, Clyde had also returned.

Link then said, "Clyde, the castle needs to restore its daily operations as soon as possible. The losses have to be calculated as well."

Clyde patted his chest and said, "I will take care of it!"

He then took the remaining soldiers away while Link followed closely behind.

The three Dark Elves were indeed powerful. They merely took a total of five minutes from their initial attack to when they reached the dining hall.

In this time, they killed a total of 180 people, less than 10 of whom were servants while the rest were soldiers. There was even a Level-3 Family Knight among the casualties.

This efficiency was astonishing.

When the bodies were finally accounted for, the plaza was almost filled with dead bodies. There were close to no injured pronel, all of them were killed in a single blow.

The mood was heavy.

Link also felt apologetic at the sight of this scene. He was the reason the three Dark Elves made their way to the Morani castle. He had indirectly taken the lives of these soldiers. He sighed before speaking, "They were all loyal Warriors. Their souls have reached the heavens. In order to ease their worrying hearts, I have decided to compensate their families for their deaths."

The soldiers who were lucky to be alive listened intently. Clyde, on the other hand, had a worried look on his face. This was a huge number of casualties. If they compensated the families at the standard rate of eight gold coins per soldier, that would add up to 1400 gold coins. Their family did not have this amount of wealth.

He wanted to remind Link about their economic predicament but was unable to in front of the surviving soldiers. He could only stare at Link anxiously.

Link saw Clyde's uncomfortable movements but ignored them completely. He faced the soldiers and continued, "Every dead soldier will receive 20 gold coins in compensation while every servant will receive 15 gold coins. For all those surviving servants and soldiers, you will be rewarded with ten gold coins each."

This caused a commotion within the 20 surviving soldiers, clearly excited over the news. However, some of the veteran soldiers had a look of suspicion on their faces. They clearly did not believe that the Morani Family would have this much money.

Clyde could no longer contain himself. After all, it was better to stop this atrocity now than to lose their reputation because they could not come up with enough money for the compensation. He pulled Link over and whispered, "Third brother, our family does not have this much money this is..."

Before he could continue, Link used action to contradict his words.

A crisp sound of metal colliding against one another echoed through the plaza. Under the illumination of the surrounding light from the torches, a blanket of shimmering circular objects covered the snow ground.

They were gold coins, a huge amount of them!

Link had asked for 6000 gold coins in advance from Herrera previously. However, before he could spend this money, an accident happened. He thus had over 5000 gold coins left in his dimensional pendant. This was merely 4000 gold coins, not even his entire fortune.

Link then rebutted, "Brother, I guess this would be enough?"

Of course!

In fact, everyone in the plaza was staring at the golden phenomenon on the snow-covered ground. Two of the Warriors who were not completely dead suddenly seemed to be filled with energy, coughing and desperately signaling to their surviving comrades that they were still alive. Link cast an Elemental Healing spell on each of the soldiers who escaped from the clutches of death at the sight of this golden wonder.

All the suspicion in their hearts dissipated completely at the sight of these gold coins.

"Brother, use these to settle the compensation issues. As for the rest of the money, use them to repair the castle.

"Yes, no problem!" Clyde no longer knew what to say. He had this sudden realization that all his worries were nothing in front of his younger brother.

To the surviving soldiers, they would be loyal to anyone who gave them enough compensation. Furthermore, it would be for the best if their master was both generous and powerful at the same time. They could not let this great opportunity slip past them.

A Warrior started chanting the first name of the Morani family. Soon, the entire plaza was chanting in excitement, "Morani! Morani! Morani!"

Clyde looked at the excited faces around him and his heart burned with a newfound passion.

When he returned to the Silver Fortress, he would confidently announce, "I am from the Morani Family, the brother of Link, the great Magician!"

## 137. Torture? Theres No Need for That

Link's actions had given Clyde great confidence. Although Clyde's career in the army hadn't been quite so successful, he was still a proud and upright man and a member of the Morani noble family.

The first thing Clyde did with the 4000 gold coins from Link was to give each of the soldiers 10 gold coins. None of the soldiers had ever touched such a large amount of money. They were both happy and anxious because they were worried that they might misplace the gold coins. In the end, some of them even resorted to hiding the gold coins in the crotch of their pants to make sure that no one would ever steal them!

Now with all the soldiers satisfied, Clyde could then lead and control them with ease. They didn't take long at all before order was completely restored in the castle. The traces of blood had all been washed away, and to prevent the spreading of plagues, the names of the fallen soldiers were recorded and then their bodies were cremated.

By midnight, even the damaged drawbridge was fully repaired. The gates of the castle were then closed. Had it not been for the fact that there were significantly fewer people in the castle now, no one would've noticed any signs that they had been attacked and that fierce battles had occurred there just hours ago.

But these were trivial matters, and naturally Link took no part in any of it. When everyone else was busy restoring order to the castle outside, Link was in the castle's dungeon, and facing him right now was the Dark Elf Magician.

Link wanted the two Dark Elves to speak. In this situation, the most commonly used method was torture but Link had no interest in using such a barbaric and not to mention bothersome method. No, there was no need for that. There was a much easier way, albeit a more cunning way, to make the Dark Elves spill out everything they knew.

The Magician had just been completely defeated, so he was now at his most vulnerable state when his mental strength and will were at their weakest. It wouldn't stay that way for long, however, as Magicians' minds were notoriously robust. Link knew that if the Magician was to be left alone through the night, his will and determination would've recovered by tomorrow morning. That was why he mustiterrogate him now.

In the dark, damp dungeon, Link sat on a chair while the Magician Parson sat against the wall ten feet away.

Link said nothing at first, he only stared into Parson's eyes those deep red eyes of a Dark Elf which had gone dull because of confinement. After more than ten seconds Parson finally couldn't stand Link's stare any longer, so he looked away.

"Is the Death Hand preparing to attack the East Cove Magic Academy?" asked Link suddenly. He used a very gentle tone and showed no trace of hostility, and it sounded just as if he was chatting with a friend. Link had even used the Elvish language to speak with the Dark Elf Magician with an accent that sounded quite authentic as well.

"It's uh it's nonsense!" Parson responded. He stopped himself and denied Link's claims just in time, but then it was too late as his initial reaction had proven that what Link had suspected was true.

Link had now gotten what he wanted.

"Don't think that I know nothing about your plot to attack the East Cove Magic Academy," he said with a cold smile on his face. "You've even got a plan called Black Moon Conspiracy, and Felidia was involved in it, isn't that correct?"

"You're wrong! There's no such thing!" Parson was in doubt now. His eyes darted around the cell uncertainly even while his lips were vehemently denying Link's words.

In truth, Parson was only a retainer of the Norigan Familia, so he hadn't much information about the Death Hand or their activities. At this point, though, much of the Pralync Kingdom's secret information had been leaked to him indirectly. He didn't pay that close an attention to all of them, but he'd gleaned more than enough from casual conversations with his comrades.

That was how he knew that the Death Hand was focusing their efforts on the East Cove Magic Academy, because that is where more than 70% of Norton Kingdom's best Magicians came from. Once they destroyed the academy and eliminated their Magicians, the army of the Norton Kingdom would be considerably weakened by at least four times by the absence of the Magicians' aid!

And this operation, called the Black Moon Conspiracy, had involved the Magician Felidia. According to rumors, the operation had been going on for quite a while and everything had gone smoothly, with only one last step left.

But how did this human Magician find out about this secret operation? He couldn't come up with any ideas for the moment, in fact he was suspecting that there might be a mole or a spy within the highest officials of the kingdom's government.

"You've come so far to avenge Alina's death," continued Link, "so I'm guessing you must've heard of the mysterious master Magician friend of mine, isn't that right?"

"Of course I have," answered Parson. He felt there was no longer any need to keep any secrets from the human Magician, as he might just kill him and have that mysterious Magician friend of his to obtain his memory from his soul anyway.

"Yes, she had the ability to use the Soul Searching spell," said Link with a cunning smile, as if he could hear Parson's thoughts. "It is such an evil spell, don't you think? I don't really like those kinds of dark magic spells, but she still is a friend of mine, after all. If I asked her to come and help me with the promise of some rewards, I'm sure she would gladly comply."

""

Parson began to panic. He had just witnessed Link's awesome power in the battle against him, so his mental strength was still fragile. Link only had to play a little trick on him and he would bend to Link's will.

Parson kept gulping and said nothing for more than ten seconds.

"Promise me," he said finally, "that after telling you what you want to know you'll give me a quick and painless death."

"No problem at all," said Link. "How about a cup of Green Hylia Wine?"

"It's a deal, then," said Parson with a nod. "I must tell you, though, that I'm just the Norigan Familia's retainer, not a member of the Death Hand. I may know some things they were up to, but don't expect any details from me."

"Is the Assassin the family's retainer as well?" Link asked.

"Yes, he is," answered Parson, not bothering to keep any more secrets. "The Warrior was one too."

"Understood," said Link as he patiently listened to Parson. "You may continue."

Parson let out a long sigh before he continued to speak.

"There was indeed a plan called the Black Moon Conspiracy," he finally said. "Its target was the East Cove Magic Academy, although I have no idea how they were going to implement the plan. All I know is that once the plan was successful the academy would be reduced to ashes."

"Anything else?" asked Link, just as calm as he had ever been. No one could ever guess what was in his mind at that moment.

"Yes, you!" said Parson. "The Death Hand had put a high price on your head. They've announced it to the public that whoever could bring your head to them they would be rewarded with ten thousand gold coins! Not only that, but the Magicians of the Silver Moon Council and Prince Norigan had also contributed to the rewards as well. Now anyone who could bring your head back to Pralync would receive a tailor-made magic gear of epic quality along with the title of a hereditary duke that came with fifty acres of fertile land!"

"Who would've thought that this ugly head of mine would be worth so much?" Link said while rubbing his neck.

"Ha! You won't walk this earth for much longer than I will," sneered Parson. "Soon enough I will see you in hell. And don't ever expect yourself to enter the gates of heaven after you're dead, because the moment they cut off your head the servants of the Lady of Darkness will drag you straight down to hell!"

Link remained unmoved by these words. He was aware that powerful men had enemies, and as the saying went, only those who hadn't stood up for anything made no enemies. Now that he had attracted such hatred from the Dark Elves, it must mean that they had finally acknowledged his power.

He should be proud of that, not afraid.

"Is there anything else?" Link asked again.

"No!" replied Parson, who then turned silent and would say nothing more.

Neither did Link have any more questions to ask Parson. He got all the information he needed for now. As for the Black Moon Conspiracy, he guessed it might have more or less the same objectives as the incident in the game. When it all came down to it, the only person who had the ability to reduce the East Cove Magic Academy was the demon who was captured and chained by Bryant Tarviss.

The only question he had now was how the Dark Elves were going to release Tarviss without the Occultic Runes. Then, just as he was considering the matter, a notification popped up.

Mission Activated: Investigation

Mission Details: Find out the details of the Black Moon Conspiracy.

Mission Rewards: 80 Omni Points.

Naturally, Link accepted the mission. Parson was now no longer of any use to him. He then used the Magician's Hand to float a cup of Green Hylia Wine towards Parson's direction.

Parson took the cup of wine into his hands without any hesitation. He then defiantly stared at Link so intently that it seemed he wanted to engrave the image of the Magician who had defeated him onto his soul before he died. Then, Parson swallowed the wine in one gulp. Seconds later, a peculiar smile emerged on his lips, then his body was bent over and he fell down to the ground with a heavy thud.

Parson was dead.

Link ordered the prison guard to clear away the dead body. He then headed towards Hedel's cell.

Hedel was now awake, but his wounds were too grave that he was writhing on the floor. Link swept his gaze all around the cell after stepping into the cell, wearing a merciless smile on his face while he was at it, although his body remained motionless.

"I've just killed Parson," said Link.

"I didn't expect you to keep him as a pet," replied Hedel sneeringly.

"He told me many things before he died," Link continued, ignoring Hedel's jeers. "I find what he told me about the Black Moon Conspiracy especially interesting. He said that you were preparing to release the demon Tarviss so he would destroy the East Cove Magic Academy."

Link's ruse had once again brought results as Hedel's eyes were widened suddenly and he stared blankly at Link with a puzzled look.

"But Parson wasn't a member of the Death Hand," Hedel said in a surprised tone. "How would he know anything about the Black Moon Conspiracy?"

As a notoriously powerful Assassin, Hedel must've been involved with the Death Hand before. Plus, he was a high-profile professional Assassin, so he would have slightly more access to secret information within the organization compared to Parson. He wasn't a part of the members who would implement the plan himself, so he didn't have the deepest knowledge of the details of the Black Moon Conspiracy. He knew, of course, that the demon Tarviss would be released, but as for the method of the release, Hedel had absolutely no clue.

The response Link got from the Assassin confirmed Link's speculation of the connection between the Black Moon Conspiracy and Tarviss. He decided to play one last trick on Hedel.

"I was just kidding," Link said. "Parson isn't dead. He'd actually just sworn his loyalty to me!" He then broke outito a mischievous laughter.

"That's impossible!" shouted Hedel. "You're speaking nonsense! You're just lying to me, aren't you?" Yet somehow Hedel believed that Link truly knew what he was talking about. But the Black Moon Conspiracy was a top-secret operation, how could this human Magician ever find out about it?

Link burst out in laughter again. It was just as he expected. This Assassin was just another Norigan Familia retainer, so he wouldn't know much more than Parson did. Link was satisfied with the information about Tarviss that he managed to winkle out, and he knew that there wouldn't be much more to tease out from Hedel. Thus there was no point in keeping Hedel alive now, so he promptly unleashed a Whistle and blew the Assassin's head clean off his neck.

It appeared that the Black Moon Conspiracy was now the most urgent matter that must be dealt with immediately. Although there was still some time before the set date of April 15, no one could predict what might happen before the time came, not to mention how clueless they were of the methods the Dark Elves would employ to release Tarviss. Link realized that he must inform Herrera of this matter as soon as possible.

After careful consideration, Link decided that he must rush back to the East Cove Magic Academy first thing the next day.

## 138. Links Worldview

Link was planning to leave the next morning. However, an unexpected incidentiterrupted his plan.

The old Viscount breathed his last at 4 o'clock in the morning. After all, this physical body was still a true Morani. He could not simply leave when such an incident happened.

As it was not safe to send messages through the mail, he would have to notify the academy of the Black Moon Conspiracy at a later date. Fortunately, this plan would only be putito action on April 15th. There should still be enough time after he was done with the funeral.

At six in the morning, the mourning bells of Puffer County rang. The low and deep rumble of the bells echoed throughout the entire county. This sound proclaimed the death of the old Duke and at the same time, signified the automatic succession of a new Duke.

The same thing had happened in Puffer County for many years. However, this one was special. Other than the low rumbling of the bells, another news made its way into the county, one which involved the Duke's youngest son, Link.

No one in Puffer County was actually concerned about the death of the old Duke. Death was but a natural process especially when one got old. Furthermore, the county had already seen the death of many Dukes, everyone was already numb to such events. On the other hand, everyone was talking about the ambush on the Morani castle last night.

It was the topic of everyone's conversation.

"Did you hear? The Morani family was assaulted by enemies. In order to exact revenge, the enemy charged rightito their castle and killed many people!" The person speaking had a look of excitement. After all, there was no one in his family who was affected by the massacre. It was thus simply an interesting story for him.

Someone next to him then joined in the conversation, "Of course! The youngest son of the Gillum Family was killed, but their family is now rich!"

"Rich? What do you mean? Can dead people become wealthy as well?" Another person asked curiously.

"Don't you know? The young Duke compensated the family of every deceased soldier 20 gold coins. For example, the Yaeger Family had four sons, two of which were guards at the Morani castle. After they died in the massacre yesterday, the Yaeger Family received 40 gold coins! I heard that young master Link was the one who provided the gold coins."

"Link? The youngest son of the Duke that doesn't even dare to whisper on the streets?" This news was appalling.

"Yes, it's him! He is now an extremely powerful Magician and has boundless wealth!"

It was all over the streets. No matter how the conversation strayed, it would eventually converge on how wealthy Link was.

There was no helping it. Puffer County was extremely poor. If even the Duke was poor, the people of the county would definitely suffer in poverty.

Many people in Puffer County had never seen gold coins in their lives. The news of a family getting a full 40 gold coins in compensation got everyone excited. Many even wished that one of their family members died in the massacre.

Human life was worth nothing when compared to wealth.

The news became more and more outrageous as it spread throughout the entire county. There were even multiple versions of the story as it got passed through word of mouth. One of them even mentioned, "Magician Link can move the mountains and oceans with his power. He can even turn stone into gold, thus allowing him to have boundless wealth."

As for the death of the Duke, no one even bothered.

Link, who was originally unknown and weak, became famous overnight in Puffer County. In the castle, Link and his two brothers were busy planning the Duke's funeral.

Link's job was to provide the funds required for the funeral. After taking out 4000 gold coins previously, he still had around 1300 gold coins left. At the same time, Magician Parsons had 1600 gold coins stored in his dimensional bracelet. He then took 500 gold coins from his pool of gold coins to fund the funeral.

Link had resolved the Morani family's biggest issue, which was the lack of money. He then left the superfluous preparations to Wharton and Clyde. His mother and sister also offered to help out in the process. Link was thus relieved of all his duties.

The World of Firuman was in chaos and human life was not worth more than a blade of grass. Even the funeral held for a noble was also very simple. The entire funeral would only take one and a half days to complete, including the one day where the people of Puffer County would pay their respects to the old Duke for his service.

As Link had nothing to do in this period, he stayed in the study room the old Duke used to reside in to continue his magic research.

He mainly studied the Scroll of Enlightenment that he had gotten not long ago. When he felt inspired, he would then take out his thesis to work on it. When he felt tired, he would continue his sketch of the magic bracelet.

The black-dressed womanno, it's Eleanor. Eleanor was of great help at Jade Street, he would have to repay the debt by making a beautiful and powerful bracelet for her. At the very least, the quality needed to be better than the Phoenix Bracelet that he had crafted previously.

If he got tired of all these three things, he would take out the white stone Prince Phillip had given him and observe the intricate patterns with interest and awe.

Even though Link did not know how to use the stone, the stone had a smooth and shiny exterior and was definitely an object of beauty. Link simply treated it like a toy.

The day quickly ended while he was busy doing these four things. In the evening, the servant came with a message that dinner was ready.

The people at the dining table were exactly the same as the previous day. Although Wharton was heavily injured, he was still a Level-4 Warrior and possessed strong vitality. Coupled with the healing powers of the priest, he could already move freely without any external aid.

Upon seeing Link, Wharton kept his arrogance in check and greeted him with a smile. His knees were also trembling, probably from last night's injury, or perhassomething else?

Lilith and Molly had nothing to fear when they saw Wharton in this state. They were extremely relaxed during dinner, no longer carrying the look of fear and apprehension like last night.

Clyde took out 300 gold coins and pushed them towards Link, "These are the remaining gold coins. The compensation and repair works cost a total of 3700 gold coins."

The 300 gold coins filled the money sack to the brim. Wharton stared jealously at the golden treasures while eating his favorite roasted geese. He was however, not focusing on the delicious flavor of his favorite food, but instead, thinking about keeping the gold coins for himself.

However, he was afraid to even move an inch as Link was present.

Link did not keep the money sack. He snapped his fingers and cast the Magician's Hand, adding 200 more gold coins into the sack, making the total 500 gold coins. He then pushed the money sack back towards Clyde and said, "Brother, you should keep this money. You will need this when you go back to the Silver Fortress."

Clyde was a person of good character and was competent. He was also a blood relative and was definitely trustworthy. Even though he did not accomplish much in the Silver Fortress these few years, it was probably due to his lack of wealth which restited his actions.

Link had no reason not to support him.

The God of Light wanted him to save the world. These outrageous missions would ignite the burning passion of any online gamers. However, Link was now a calm Magician and could rationalize the situation clearly. In order to save the world, he had to be down-to-earth and let his actions speak for themselves.

One of the methods to do that was to improve his reputation, creating connections with everyone that he could, creating a strong alliance. This was his worldview ever since he stepped into the World of Firuman.

In fact, this was also the reason he chose to accept the Ferde Wilderness as his territory. If he could successfully turn the wasteland into a prosperous city, his reputation would increase exponentially. At the same time, talented individuals would also join his territory as word got out, allowing him to create an even stronger alliance.

Back to the main point.

Upon hearing Link's offer, Clyde was elated and took the money sack back without hesitation, "Third brother is really generous! I will politely accept it then."

It was true that he was running out of money. He had less than 10 gold coins left in his pocket. When he was out hunting or drinking with his friends in the Silver Fortress, he had to constantly watch his spending. These 500 gold coins were just what he needed.

This made Wharton extremely envious. He could no longer contain himself and asked, "Brother, I heard that you can turn stones into gold?"

"No." Link knew exactly what Wharton was planning. He simply shook his head and replied curtly.

While Wharton was also his blood brother, his character was nowhere near Clyde's. Wharton was extremely selfish and manipulative. Link could not hurt him as he was still a family member, but he could choose to stay as far away from him as possible.

His attitude came as a shock to Wharton.

Link ignored him and continued, "It is father's funeral tomorrow. After the funeral, I will return to the academy immediately. Mother and sister, you two will accompany me."

The two women were relieved and extremely happy to finally be released from Wharton's demonic clutches. They immediately nodded in agreement.

Wharton did not expect Link to be leaving so soon. He still hadn't received any benefits or money from his wealthy brother! He immediately said, "The Winter Festival is coming, why not leave after that?"

"No." Link once again gave a short and curt reply. The rage inside Wharton was building up.

Link turned to Clyde and said, "Brother, my land is just at the Ferde Wilderness. It is not too far from here. You are always welcomed to visit."

"The Ferde Wilderness? No problem at all, I will visit whenever I'm free. Please entertain me when the time comes," Clyde laughed. Even though the Ferde Wilderness was pretty barren, Link was a comfortable person to speak with. Going to the Ferde Wilderness was definitely a better choice than to stay in this oppressive castle and face Wharton's mood swings.

Wharton could not contain his rage anymore and sneered, "That is just a piece of barren land. I had higher expectations."

Link looked at Wharton and spoke in a serious tone, "It is a barren land now, but in three years, everything will change."

The mining of the anti-magic soil, changing the climate using magic and developing sea trade routes were just some of the plans he had for his land. In a few years, he would definitely see that the Ferde Wilderness become a land of miracles.

Link's declaration seemed extremely impossible and arrogant. If this happened yesterday, Wharton would have ridiculed him and dismissed his ideas as preposterous. However, he was at a loss for words now. His third brother had abilities completely beyond his imagination. He had no idea what kind of miracles he could achieve next.

Even Clyde was worried at Link's confidence, "Third brother, I have complete faith in your abilities. However, building an entire settlement from scratch requires a huge amount of gold coins. Is that even possible?"

Link nodded, "It will be."

He already had everything planned. He would first make sure the Ferde Wilderness could stand on its own by constructing basic infrastructure. These were all essential investments and would take up to around 40000 gold coins. He would then start to mine the anti-magic soil and exploit their market value to boost the economy. When the economy of his territory began to take off, he could then fully focus on expanding it to a larger scale.

Therefore, first step, 40000 gold coins.

Time to earn some money when I get back to the academy, Link thought.

## 139. His Fame Will Spread Throughout the Firuman Continent

Overall, the atmosphere during dinner in the Morani Castle on the second day of Link's return was quite pleasant.

After the meal, Link went back to studying the Scroll of Enlightenment in the privacy of his room and even managed to use the materials he had brought with him from the academy to create a rechargeable defensive spell magic ring. This ring would allow the insertion of the same spell into the ring even after it had been used.

And so, the night passed with Link spending his time in solitude and hard at work.

By nine in the morning the next day, the funeral for the old Viscount went on as planned. His body was then put to rest under the ground around noon while the priest chanted holy readings. And thus, the whole matter was settled.

Soon, the carriage from the East Cove Magic Academy was ready as well. Luckily the coachman was a perceptive man who wentito hiding the moment he felt there was something awry last night, and so he survived the Dark Elves' attack unscathed.

Before they set out, Lilith and Molly went to their rooms to pack up their things while Wharton and Clyde stood in the courtyard to bid farewell to their brother. As they were waiting for Link's mother and sister, Link handed the ring he created last night to Clyde as a parting gift.

"I've just made this defensive magic ring for you," Link told his brother. "Wear it on your left forefinger. When you want to use the spell, just firmly press the surface of the ring with your thumb and you'll be good to go."

The ring was made with Mithril and it looked outwardly plain even though its inner workings were complex and intricate. Link had produced it with the utmost care to ensure that it was of the highest quality that he could manage, though he didn't want to make it look too expensive to avoid attracting petty jealousies from the other knights which might cause his brother trouble.

Clyde beamed at the mention of a magic gear. He put on the ring and thought it felt just right it was neither too tight nor too loose, while the ring itself was not too big and fancy that it might lure any unwanted looks.

"Try the spell," said Link.

Clyde then went on to press his thumb on the surface of the ring and immediately a shroud of faint aura enveloped his body. It was the defensive spell that Link had added his own Supreme Magical Skill modifications the Edelweiss.

Level-4 Edelweiss was a bit too complicated to be fixed into the ring, so Link was forced to use the Level-3 version of the spell. Once he was sure that Clyde knew how to release the spell properly, Link then waved his wand over the ring and recharged the ring with his Mana, while at the same time explaining the spell to his brother.

"This is a defensive magic ring," he told Clyde, "and it will protect you from any attack that is Level-3 and below, whether it's a magic spell or the blade of a sword. It can also decrease the power of Level-4 attacks to some degree. You can use the spell five times. After that, just find a Magician who accompanied the army and tell them to direct their Mana into it and it'll be just as good as new."

Clyde knew instantly from Link's explanation that this ring could mean the difference between life and death for him in a battlefield. He was sure that the ring must be worth more than a thousand gold coins. Clyde was immensely grateful to his little brother, yet he just couldn't find the right words to say. In the end he just stayed silent and vowed to himself that he must now work hard and become an outstanding knight in the army so he wouldn't let his brother down!

Meanwhile, Wharton was watching his two brothers on the side. His eyes were green with envy for the ring on Clyde's finger, but he knew that he mustn't expect Link to show the same courtesy to him as he had treated him poorly in the past.

To his surprise though, Link suddenly walked up to him and handed him another Mithril ring that looked identical to Clyde's.

"Regardless of what had happened in the past, you are still our eldest brother," said Link. "This ring is just like the one I gave Clyde. Use your thumb to activate it. You can use it five times as well. I won't bother to explain the rest." Link had no intention of pleasing Wharton with the gift, he merely wanted to make sure that Wharton would have no cause of jealousy or displeasure, which might in the end bring trouble to Link in the future.

Wharton stood there motionless and unsure of how to respond. He wanted the ring more than anything else, yet he feared that Link might be playing some kind of a magic trick on him, so he hesitated to reach out his hand and take the ring.

"What are you waiting for? Just take it!" said Clyde, annoyed at Wharton's distrust of his own flesh and blood.

Wharton finally came to his senses. He reached for the ring and clutched it in his hand tightly, afraid that Link might try to take it back.

Link had no time to entertain Wharton's behavior so he turned his back from his brother the second he took the ring and walked away without saying another word.

Wharton noticed Link's cold manners and suddenly felt embarsed of his own narrow-mindedness.

"Have I really been that cruel to you in the past?" Wharton suddenly asked.

Just then, snowflakes started to fall from the sky. The bitingly cold, winter breeze whistled across the courtyard and the cold pierced through the skin like little blades of knives. Lilith and Molly were both ready now and had reached the entrance of the castle's great hall with their luggage. As they came out, a gust of wind blew against them, causing both of them to shiver like leaves.

Link looked over and noticed that while the clothes his mother and Molly were wearing looked quite thick, they were made of cotton from the South which couldn't protect them from the cold in the least.

Such clothes couldn't be worth much more than five or six silver coins. Even merchant families with a little more affluence in the River Cove Town wore better clothes than that. Come to think of it, even the coachman's livery was made of much better materials than his mother and sister's clothes, yet they were the Viscount's wife and daughter!

Obviously, this was another one of Wharton's doing.

Link turned to Wharton with a frown. He really couldn't be bothered to say anything more to him now. Forget it, he thought. Mother and Molly won't be coming back to this oppressive castle again anyway. Once we reach River Cove Town, I'll just buy them the nicest and thickest clothes I can find. It won't cost me more than 100 gold coins.

Wharton felt Link's sharp gaze and moved his lips as if to say something, yet the normally loquacious Wharton suddenly found himself tongue-tied and unable to find the right words to say. For the first time in his life, he felt so ashamed of himself that he wished he could burrow a hole in the ground and hide in it.

"Mother, Molly, let's get in the carriage," said Link. The East Cove Magic Academy's carriage was equipped with a warming magic seal where it was comfortably warm as spring in there all year round.

The two ladies were still quivering from the cold as they rushed towards the carriage. The both gasped the moment they entered it and were immediately enchanted by the wonders of magic.

Link then waved goodbye at Clyde and followed his mother and sister into the carriage as well.

Once they were all settled inside, the coachman cracked his whip and the carriage slowly drove out of the Morani castle.

Clyde stood there in the castle courtyard watching the exquisite blue carriage slowly disappear out of sight. He then let out a long sigh and turned to his elder brother beside him.

"I don't know if you've noticed it, Wharton," said Clyde, "but it's obvious that sooner or later Link's reputation and fame will spread across Firuman. The good name of our family will rise to glorioushi

Clyde had seen in the past two days how exceptionally powerful his little brother really was. He'd seen so many young men touted as the next big thing or the young genius in the army, yet none of their skills could compare to his own little brother!

Once he'd said all he had to say to Wharton, Clyde walked quietly back to the great hall of the castle.

Meanwhile, his brother Wharton stood there with his mouth agape, unable to make any response. He rubbed his head gently while his other hand was holding the magic ring from Link. It was clearly a ring with a smooth surface, yet somehow, he could've sworn that it felt prickly in the palm of his hand, as if he was holding a sharp needle in his hand.

The carriage moved swiftly and in no time at all, they'd left the Morani castle far behind.

"Mother, Molly," said Link, "the Ferde Wilderness is too desolate to inhabit right now, and I haven't settled into the place yet. But I do have a cabin that acts as the headquarters for my troop of mercenaries in the Girvent Forest near River Cove Town. Would it be alright if both of you stay there while I make my estate more hospitable?"

The late Viscount and his eldest son had ruled over her life like tyrants for the past couple of decades now, and naturally not once did they ever ask for her opinion on any matter. She almost shed tears of happiness when she heard her own son asking for her opinion with such a gentle and respectful tone.

"Of course it is, dear," said Lilith. She had just turned forty years old recently, yet her face was already covered in wrinkles and lines. It was a testament to the hard life that she had to endure ever since she married into the Morani family. But she had been intensely happy ever since Link returned to the castle two days ago. Finally, she could smile earnestly from the bottom of her heart, and it made her face bloom like a flower as she now looked much younger as well.

Link's elder sister Molly nodded her head as well. She would turn 22 this year, yet she had never set foot outside the Morani castle before. Both her father and her eldest brother had treated her as if she was another one of their belongings to be traded as they saw fit and never shown a trace of respect for her as a human being. This kind of life had made her self-esteem very low and she grew up to be a shy and timid young woman.

But Link was radically different. Her little brother had spoken to her in a gentle tone, he was respectful to her. Even when Link was being harsh to her, it was all because he cared and was worried about her. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Link had given her a new lease on life.

Molly could never have foreseen how her 22nd year would turn out to be the most blissful year of her life so far.

Lilith had been the fairest maiden in Pufferfish County when she was young. That was the reason why the old Viscount had noticed her and asked for her hand. Unfortunately, Link had inherited none of her good looks, unlike Molly, who looked almost identical to her younger self. Molly had a head full of black curly hair, her eyes were onyx black, her skin was as smooth as butter and her figure was youthful and lithe. The warmth in the carriage and the happiness and relief she felt to have escaped from the clutches of her father and elder brother had now brought back the color to her face and made her look positively angelic.

Link sighed gently as he thought of his mother and sister's fate. They were both normal people with no talents or abilities, and they'd suffered through so much bullying inflicted on them by his late father and Wharton. Link vowed that from now on he would provide them with a safe and happy life where they would be free of any worries.

He then promptly took out two silk pouches and filled them with 50 gold coins each, which he then gave to his mother and Molly.

"Both of you take these gold coins," said Link. "Use it to pay the servants once we reach River Cove Town. Then I'll buy you some new clothes, jewelry and the like later."

Lilith accepted the gold coins without any questions. She knew that Link had given them more than they needed, but she could just save them for Link in case he needed them later.

For Molly, though, it was the first time she'd ever seen that amount of money and she was hesitant to accept it.

"But Link," she said, "this is just too much! I don't think we'd need this much to pay the servants. Besides, don't you need them to build your new estate? Shouldn't you save these gold coins for that instead?"

"Stop worrying so much and just take the money," Link said to his sister. "I'll find the way to build my estate, so you don't have to worry about it. Right now, you must focus on adapting to your new life."

"Alright, then," replied Molly. She then took the money pouch from Link with a light and gladdened heart. She never knew how good it felt to be spoiled by a family member who cared for her happiness.

For the rest of the journey, Link didn't even read or study his magic textbooks as he usually did. All he wanted to do was chat leisurely with his mother about what he'd encountered and experienced out in the world. Molly was listening to them quietly at first. Then she gradually loosened up and joined in the conversation occasionally. All in all, the three of them had a pleasant journey to the River Cove Town as everyone was finally relaxed and happy.

As Link was bringing his family back to River Cove Town, a carriage with a green leaf emblem was entering the East Cove Magic Academy. Inside was a middle-aged man with plain looks but magnificent clothes who was holding a Mithril necklace in his left hand and a magic bracelet in his right hand, both with an exquisite flying bird mark on them, signifying that it was made by Link. The man's name was Warter. He was the owner of the prosperous Green Leaf Merchant Firm.

As he stepped into the academy, Warter was immediately confronted with the awesome sight of tall and pristine Mage Towers reaching up into the clouds. Yet there was only one thing in his mind.

This Magician Link has been creating piece after piece of magic gear that could even put the old masters to shame, thought Warter. If I could somehow persuade him to work with me, my fame and fortune would no doubt spread throughout the kingdom!

As a consummate merchant, the wonders of magic and spells meant nothing to him, and neither did he have any real respect for Magicians. There was only one aim in his mind, and that was to get all the money there was on the Firuman continentito his pockets.

## 140. Monetary Incentive

When Link reached River Cove Town, the carriage stopped right in front of the base of the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries. Link was surprised to find Lucy already waiting for him at the entrance. It seemed like the mercenary band had once again extended their influence over River Cove Town. That was good news.

It had been a month and the base had undergone great changes. The yard was expanded to an area three times larger than before. The nameplate was also replaced by one made of pure copper, with a logo of the flamingo outlined by silver wires above it. The wooden fence had also received an upgrade to a wall made from boulders. There were now two gates before the main entrance of the mercenary base. The first layer was a wooden door entangled with vines and copper nails. The second layer was a steel fence. This not only improved the base defensive capabilities but was also aesthetically pleasing. The mercenaries walking in and out of the base were clad in a wolf leather armor and a premium steel sword. This equipment was almost on par with the military. They looked extremely high-spirited and walked with confident strides.

This was the mercenary base that he had envisioned. It seemed like it was not a wasted investment.

Link was extremely satisfied.

The moment he alighted from the carriage, Link smiled at Lucy and commended, "This is better than what I expected."

"It is the result of spending a huge amount of money. We spent nearly 1000 gold coins on just 200 members." Lucy was very satisfied with the results as well. She just felt that it was slightly extravagant.

Link laughed, "Gold coins are meant to be used. If we save them all, they will just be useless metal chips."

Lucy bit her lips reluctantly. She knew that she could never persuade Link to save his money. She could only try to save as much as she could on her side in case of emergencies.

At the same time, Lilith and Molly also alighted the carriage. Link then introduced them, "This is my mother, Lilith and my sister, Molly. They will be staying with the mercenary band for a while."

Lucy immediately greeted Lilith and Molly with respect the moment she knew they were Link's close relatives. She then introduced herself, "Madame, Miss, I am a follower of my lord, Link. I am a Lucy, a swordswoman."

Lucy was wearing a premium alligator skin armor and had a magic sword enveloped in a light white glow on her back. She exuded a valiant and elegant aura, one that was completely different from the sweaty and rude mercenaries that Lilith was used to. She couldn't help but commend, "This is fantastic. This lady looks extremely suave."

Lucy felt uncomfortable listening to this comment. Since she became a mercenary, she was described as a cold-blooded beauty, an ice rose and other elegant names fitting for a woman. This was the first time someone described her as suave. She kept her displeasure in as the comment came from Link's mother.

Molly was slightly afraid as Lucy's presence was way too intimidating. She felt like she was facing a giant, the oppressive aura charging straight towards her. Molly stood behind Link the entire time, stealing glances at this beautiful woman every now and then.

Molly was extremely envious of Lucy. Lucy was independent and strong and furthermore, she seemed to be her brother's capable asstant.

My brother has really made it. He has so many followers. On the other hand, I accomplished nothing. Molly suddenly felt inferior. She blamed the life of fear and manipulation that she had in the castle.

Link led Molly and Lilith into the mercenary band. On the way, he carefully gave some instructions to Lucy. By the time they reached the hall, Link handed a huge bag of money to Lucy. There was a grand total of 1000 gold coins in the bag, dedicated to Molly's and Lilith's spending in the mercenary band.

Lucy received the money bag and gave Link the assurance he needed, "Rest assured, my lord. I will make no mistakes. Madame and Miss will be provided with only the best!"

Link had complete faith in Lucy's competency. He then turned and assured his family members that he would visit them often.

After his family members settled in, Link's face became serious as he talked about issues regarding his territory development.

"Lucy, the king has conferred me the title of a Baron. The Ferde Wilderness in the Southeast is now my territory. I am planning to invest resources into the development of this area. Before that, some preparations have to be done."

Lucy was slightly startled before a look of excitement appeared on her face. Since Link had become an official noble, as his follower, she would have the chance to become an official female knight.

Knights were also considered nobles by normal standards. Lucy was born in a rural village and becoming a noble was something that only happened in her dreams. She was extremely relieved that she had chosen to follow Link.

Lucy was not concerned about how barren and remote the Ferde Wilderness was. No matter the state of the land, it was still a territory that belonged solely to Link. They simply needed to spend more effortito building and developing the land. Thinking back, they similarly built their mercenary band from scratch. Nothing was impossible as long as Link supported them!

She immediately asked, "My lord, what do you need me to do?"

"The initial stages will be pretty simple. Send a few capable people to map out the Ferde Wilderness terrain. I will also need them to indicate the presence of any criminals, bandits or forces that are in the area. My aim is to make sure that ordinary people will be safe even when they walk on the streets at night. They should not have to fear about the possibility of an attack."

"Not a problem. The map will at most take a month," Lucy assured. This was a task that mercenaries were most capable of.

Link nodded. "That would be great. After the map is completed, start to chase the bandits out of the area. You, Jacker, Gildern and the rest may have to increase the training intensity of the mercenary band."

Lucy's heart was racing. She had gotten the underlying message of this mission. Link was prepared to make the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries the guardians of the new territory. If they were successful, they would become an official mercenary band, and she would be it's general!

With a pair of glimmering eyes, Lucy straightened her body and declared, "My lord, the Flamingo Band of Mercenary will be the sword in your hand! We will not disappoint you."

Link nodded and said, "Alright. I have some urgent matters to attend to and have to leave for East Cove Higher Magic Academy immediately."

He had settled all the matters he wanted to and bade his family goodbye before leaving the mercenary base. The three women naturally sent him off and watched as he boarded the carriage.

With a few kicks of the hooves, the carriage was headed towards the academy.

Lucy watched as the carriage moved further away till it was out of her field of vision. My lord is getting busier; he seems to be always in a hurry.

Her gaze then fell onto Lilith and Molly and she immediately felt better. Link had left his mother and sister in her care, suggesting that he had complete faith in her. Also, this might mean that Link would come back more often in the future.

Lucy then gently urged, "Madame, Miss, please follow me."

East Cove Higher Magic Academy

Warter had already reached the entrance of Herrera's Mage Tower. This was not his first time in the magic academy, however, it was his most nervous one yet.

Before he knocked, he couldn't help but think, Will there be other merchants who have already approached him? What will I do if he refuses? What if he offers a ridiculous condition?

He was feeling uneasy.

He was usually calm and collected, but the success of this trip was way too important for him

Link's enchanting skills were top notch, so much so that words could not capture the beauty of his products. He was a true enchanting master, especially when compared to the other enchanters who acquired fame through marketing techniques instead of real skill.

Furthermore, there was a sudden influx of high-quality magic equipment and intricate magic scrolls in the market. All of them had a special magic marking on them. Warter gathered important information from these traits.

This young Magician was at his peak and at the same time, he desperately needed money!

This meant there he would still be crafting a huge amount of magic equipment for sale. If Warter could strike a deal with Link, his Green Leaf Merchant Firm would definitely benefit, and make their name known outside of Hot Springs City. They might even expand their influence outside of the Norton Kingdom and become a threat to the merchants of the Southern Free Trade Alliance.

He was naturally nervous in the face of such a huge opportunity.

After three whole minutes of apprehension standing at the entrance, he took a deep breath and gently knocked on the tower door.

He made sure the sound was light. He knew that all the Magician's Apprentices were arrogant and did not like to be disturbed.

After a few seconds, the door opened. A beautiful and cheerful little girl stood behind the door and stared at him curiously. She asked, "You are?"

Warter had seen many people in his life, but it was his first time seeing such an exquisite little girl. It took him a moment before he replied, "Warter. My name is Warter and I am in charge of a merchant firm. It is called the Green Leaf Merchant Firm and I am here to look for Magician Link."

"Looking for my master?" The little girl was Rylai. She frowned slightly upon hearing Warter's words and shook her head. "That is really unfortunate. My master is not in at the moment."

"Ah" Warter was disappointed. However, he still had not given up all hope, "Can you tell me where he went?"

The little girl was vigilant and replied immediately, "That is not possible."

Her master had many enemies. That was why Auntie Moira repeatedly reminded her that she should never inform others about her master's whereabouts, especially to outsiders.

Warter looked at the little girl's determined expression and knew that he could no longer get any information from her. If he were in Hot Springs City, he might be able to exchange some information using gold coins. However, his wealth was nothing in the magic academy. All the Magicians here would merely look down on him and continue on with their daily tasks. He was already fortunate to be able to hold such a long conversation with this girl.

Warter's heart sank. He thought that he had found a huge opportunity, but it did not work out in the end. He couldn't help but sigh from the disappointment.

"Thank you." Warter was prepared to wait at the entrance of the academy until Link returned. He would not let this be a wasted trip. To his surprise, he saw a black-haired young man walking towards him the moment he turned around.

At the same time, the voice of the little girl rang from behind, "Master, you are back so early this time! Didn't you say it was going to take half a month?"

That person was none other than Link.

Warter's ears pricked up the instant he heard Rylai uttering the word "tutor". A friendly smile appeared on his face and he instantly bent his head forward and rushed up towards the figure the girl had just addressed as tutor.

"Sir," he said reverently, "it is such an honor to meet you."

Warter glanced at the man before him as he spoke. What he saw was a very young-looking man with black hair and black eyes whose looks were plain and unremarkable. Had it not been for the ink-blue Magician's robe he was wearing and the wand in his hand, Warter was sure this young man could disappear on a busy street full of people. The only striking features on this young man were his eyes.

His eyes were exceptionally dark, yet they were so clear that they seemed to glow. At first sight, Warter thought they shone with the innocence of a child, but after getting a closer look, he realized that they were, in fact, as deep as and as dark as the night sky. They were so deep that one could never fathom the bottom of their depths no matter how long they stared at them.

Just then, Warter suddenly felt a certain kind of frightening pressure exerted by the eyes on him. He was taken aback by the mysterious power this young man exuded and was forced to look down to avoid those terrifying eyes.

I guess the rumors were right, he thought. Magicians do indeed have powerful souls that could shatter a weak-willed spirit with a glance.

As a merchant, Warter had, in his younger years, been a traveling salesman who'd journeyed all around the kingdom. He'd seen many things in his travels, so he realized how mistaken he had been in underestimating Link just because of his young age.

"Who are you?" asked Link, slightly puzzled at the presence of a stranger in the Mage Tower.

"Oh, forgive my manners. I'm Warter," he said. "I own the Green Leaf Merchant Firm, and I've come to discuss matters of business with you." As he spoke, Warter slid out the Mithril necklace in front of Link. He could guess by Link's reaction that it was indeed his creation.

Link could see through Warter's motives for coming here in a heartbeat. He must've been attracted by his own enchantment skills and wanted to use them to attract more gold coins into his pockets.

For what it's worth, this man is shrewd, thought Link. But even though he was impressed with the man's cunning, he would still need to prove his sincerity to Link before he would agree to cooperate with him. Besides, Link was in a rush to meet with his tutor on urgent business right now, so he had no time to entertain the merchant's proposals just yet.

"Follow me," said Link.

"Ahyes, sir." Warter saw that there was hope so he acted even more reverent now and followed closely behind Link into the Mage Tower.

Rylai kept talking to Link all along the way, telling him about the recent happenings in the academy, then asking him questions about magic. Link replied now and then with a smile constantly on his face. He listened intently to Rylai's retelling of what occurred in the academy while he was gone. As for her questions, Link managed to answer them all in short and clear replies while Rylai listened to him with bright shining eyes, her face showing the utmost respect for her tutor.

Once they reached inside the Mage Tower, all the apprentices they walked past would immediately bow at Link no matter what they were doing at the time. On their faces Link saw a hint of respect and awe that hadn't been there before. Link found this change curious, although he didn't get to ask the question before Rylai offered the answer herself.

"Everyone heard of what happened in Jade Street, tutor," she said. "You saved the High Elf prince's life and even defeated three Dark Elves! All the Magicians in the academy were impressed with you even Dean Anthony had lavished praise on you himself!"

Two days ago, the king had sent special envoys to the academy to deliver Link's rewards and publicly announced his contributions to the kingdom, so the matter was public knowledge now. Naturally the Magicians in the academy could understand the significance of Link's achievements even more than lay people as they were more rational and had more knowledge of what went on in magic battles.

Three Dark Elves one was a Level-5 Warrior, one was a Level-4 Magician, and the other one was a Level-4 Assassin made up the infamous Three Musketeers of the Silver Moon. They were the leaders of the younger generation of Dark Elves in the Black Forest and were feared all over for their formidable power. And yet, Link had single-handedly killed two of them and forced the remaining one to flee for her life how could anyone possess such a mighty force?

The Magicians were proud people, especially among their peers. Regardless of their talents, they would always be driven to compete with each other. But this time though, Link's achievements were just too exceptional that they knew there was no way they could ever compare. Magicians of the same age as Link were still competing to see whose magic scrolls were better and who could produce more of them. Meanwhile, Link Link had already reached the point where his talents had eclipsed that of the notorious Three Musketeers of the Silver Moon and were acknowledged by King Leon himself!

How could they not respect such an exceptional figure?

The Magicians outside Herrera's Mage Tower were somewhat more reserved in their show of respect to Link. But everyone knew him well here inside the Mage Tower; they even took pride in the fact that a godlike powerful figure had emerged in their own Mage Tower, so they weren't shy at all in showing him the utmost respect that even bordered on reverence.

This was just human nature, although, in Warter's eyes the sight was quite a bit more astonishing. He grew ever more worried now about the future that might be in store if he ended up cooperating with such a prominent figure.

Has he achieved such a degree of fame and reputation already? Warter mused. What kind of ridiculous demands would he make of me?

Although Link was proud of the respect he earned from the Magician's Apprentices in the academy, he was quiet and introverted in nature so there was not a trace of arrogance in his expressions. He even bowed slightly in return to all those who bowed at him along the way.

Warter immediately sighed in relief at this sight. He seems like a humble young man, he thought. He shouldn't be too difficult to deal with if we do end up working with each other.

With those thoughts in his mind, Warter followed Link right up to the second floor of the Mage Tower. Once they reached the top of the stairs, Link turned around and addressed Warter with an apologetic tone of voice.

"Mr. Warter," he said, "there is an urgent matter that I must report to my tutor without delay, so I must leave you for a moment. Would you mind waiting in the hall?"

"No, no problem at all!" Warter hurriedly shook his head in reply.

"Rylai, please take care of Mr. Warter while I'm gone," said Link.

"Leave it to me, tutor," replied Rylai. She then smilingly turned to Warter and said, "This way, mister. You should try a popular beverage here in this Mage Tower, it's called 'Living Bubbles' and it's amazing. I'm sure you'll love it when you try it!"

"Um yes, I'll try it. Thank you," replied Warter reluctantly. He didn't have the heart to refuse the offer. He wasn't sure if the young girl was right in guessing that he would like it by the sound of the name given to this drink.

Meanwhile, Link was already climbing up the stairs towards the top floor. He could hear the sound of the Elemental Pool being used as he passed it. Link knew that it must be Eliard inside working hard as always.

Once she reached the fourth floor, Link took out his wand and activated the runes on Herrera's door. He was lucky this time as the door opened after a few seconds. Voices could be heard coming from the sitting room which got Link curious as he didn't expect Herrera to have company. He quickened his footsteps slightly and rushed up into the sitting room.

The moment he made the turn around the wall between the door and Herrerassitting room, Link was met with the sight of two people there well, to be exact, there were actually a human and a young female dwarf there. From the way she dressed, the dwarf seemed to be a Magician as well.

Link focused all his attention to sense both of their Mana energy. In seconds, he could see that his tutor, Herrera had reached the early stages of Level-6, while that dwarf was already at the pinnacle of Level-6 and would break through into Level-7 soon. This meant that she was even more powerful than Herrera!

Link was shocked by this knowledge. What was going on now? Was Firuman so full of young gifted Magicians that they could be found anywhere? This dwarf girl couldn't be more than 18 or 19 years old! How could she possess such powerful Mana?

The two people in the room turned their heads towards Link immediately as they heard his footsteps.

"Speak of the devil," said Herrera with a gentle smile on her face without a hint of surprise at all. "Here you are."

The dwarf girl, on the other hand, showed great curiosity in her expression as she looked Link up and down. She was slightly more than three-feet-tall, just around the same height as an eight or nine-year-old human girl. She had a face that looked noble and dignified and her skin was as smooth as the surface of a vase. What stood out the most, though, was her light blue eyes that looked so bright and pure that they could even make someone think of gouging them out and treasure them like a pair of jewels.

"So that's your favorite disciple, huh?" said the dwarven girl with a chuckle. "He looks so plain and ordinary." Her voice was cipand somewhat similar to a human child in its innocence, yet it was mixed with a more mature depth as well, giving it a quaint and unforgettable quality.

Herrera knew that she was just joking, so she made no response to her jibes and went on to introduce her to Link.

"Link, this is Elin," she said, "the Lady Fortuna of the Yabba race."

The Yabba race was the official name for the group of people humans commonly called dwarves, admittedly with a hint of ridicule and contempt. Lady Fortuna on the other hand...Link shuddered at the mention of these two words. Now it was no wonder that she was exuding such strong Mana.

Lady Fortuna of the Yabba race was a genius Magician born of the power of mystical destiny. Her most powerful talent was in the secret spell of prophecy, and because of this the Yabba people held her in very high regard.

In his previous life, Link encountered Lady Fortuna eight years after the release of the game. By then, the Yabba race was almost completely wiped off of the face of the earth by the Dark Elves and the Army of Darkness. Their Lady Fortuna was completely different from the innocent little girl in front of him. She had suffered through unspeakable torture by the Dark Side and had been so disfigured that she hid herself under a thick cloak.

"The glory of light is dead. Darkness has descended. All I see in the future is a world completely covered in pitch-black darkness." Those were the words players would hear from Elin as they first chanced upon her, and she would utter them in a voice that was steeped in sorrow.

Link had once completed a series of tasks Elin had issued in the game which involved the searching and collecting of magic materials. Once all the materials were gathered Elin would reveal the very last prophecy in her life.

In her prophetic vision, the Lord of the Deep Nozama and his army had descended upon the Realm of Light and the human race was on the verge of annihilation. All the ten thousand Magicians in the High Elves Magic Legion were killed in battle. The entire Realm of Light had entered the apocalypse.

After seeing this final vision, it was as if Elin's Mana was exhausted of its limits and her soul had reached a breaking point. She would then sacrifice the remnant of her soul to the player and give them an eternal blessing to always uphold the virtue of the God of Light.

"I give up, forgive me."

Those were the last words Elin whispered before she collapsed and died. Her black cloak fell away and revealed a body so mutilated by torture that it was a miracle she hadn't shattered to pieces long before.

This was one of the top ten most harrowing and heart-breaking missions in the game. Countless female players shed bitter tears for Elin's tragic death and went on to swear with fire in their hearts that they would save the world.

Link himself had been deeply shaken by the incident. He could clearly recall how he vowed to himself that he would not rest until Nozama was defeated!

But that was another world in another life, things might turn out differently here after all. Link immediately shook his head to wake himself up from his brooding and bowed respectfully at Elin.

"It's an honor to meet you, Madam," said Link.

"No, no, no!" interjected Elin jokingly while shaking her head. "Don't call me 'Madam'! I'm only a 25-year-old little girl!" The Yabbas usually had a lifespan of up to 150 years old and they only reached adulthood at age 30, in which case Elin was in fact a girl and not yet an adult.

Link's face almost turned crimson with embarrassment as he noticed the faux pas he'd just committed.

Herrera noticed how awkward things were getting, so she swooped in to the rescue.

"Stop it, Elin," she said. "Didn't you come all this way just to meet him?"

"Alright, Winnie, I'll stop teasing your favorite disciple," said Elin. (Winnie was the name Herrera's closest friends called her by.)

"Winnie wrote in her letter to me saying she'd found the Lord of Light's Chosen One," said Elin, her playful expressions now all gone and replaced with a serious one. "I have to admit that I didn't believe her at all. That is why I've come here to meet the person who'd won such high praise from Winnie."

By then, Link had managed to calm himself down. He walked slowly to a chair nearby and took a seat.

"But the God of Light works in mysterious ways," Link said, smiling. "How would mortals like us ever manage to see through his schemes? I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I don't know how to prove to you if I'm really the Chosen One."

"Don't worry," said Elin, "I have my own method." As she spoke, Elin took out a stack of cards that seemed to be of pristine quality. The cards even shone slightly with the aura of magic, giving it a mysterious air.

As Link stared at the cards a notification appeared on the interface.

Tarot Cards of the Soul

Quality: Epic

Effects: A tool of divination created with the power of Lady Fortunassoul. There are a total of 66 cards, and this tool has a strong prophetic power.

(Note: This is an item exclusive to Lady Fortuna.)

"I need a drop of your blood," said Elin as she laid out the Tarot cards one-by-one on the table.

The fourth floor of Herrera's Mage Tower.

There were a total of 66 tarot cards in Elin's deck. She divided them into two separate rows, one with 22 cards and the other with 44 cards. They were placed face down on the table in a fan-shaped formation.

As Elin needed a drop of blood for her spell and clearly meant no harm, Link stretched out his hand. She skillfully pricked Link with a silver needle and a drop of blood appeared at his fingertip. The blood then floated in the air and dispersed into a cloud of mist the moment it was directly on top of the tarot cards.

Elin closed her eyes and flailed her hands randomly within the blood mist. From time to time, she would vocalize a few words with a trembling voice. "Abasalo...ji..."

If one were to ignore the increasing intensity of the mysterious aura surrounding her, she would look downright insane.

After half a minute, the blood mist hovering on top of the tarot cards splitito two portions as though it was alive, each charging straightito a separate row of cards. Elin then opened her eyes. She looked slightly drained and the soft green glow in her eyes seemed to have dimmed greatly. Before she flipped open the tarot cards, she said, "The cards can predict your future. I have heard that you have chosen a barren land as your territory. If you are indeed the Chosen One, the Yabba race would offer you some help in the development of your land."

"What if I'm not?" Link smiled. If the Yabba race was willing to help, it would exponentially speed up and improve the development process.

The Yabba people were the most outstanding magic mechanics in the world. They had ridiculous achievements in the area of architecture, building a large number of buildings that were magnificent enough to be termed as wonders. Their help would not only improve the quality, but also the speed of Link's territory construction.

"If you aren't then the deal is off." Elin gave a cheeky smile before pulling out the cards selected by the blood mist. She then avoided Herrera's and Link's gaze before checking them carefully.

As she flipped open the cards, she explained, "The power of fate is extremely delicate and mysterious. Any minute changes may affect the result drastically. Therefore, I am the only one who can look at this. Wait a minute, this is" Elin eyes suddenly widened, her gaze alternating between the cards in her hand and Link, who was right in front of her. She looked as if she had seen something incredible.

She had two cards in her hand.

The first card was the main card, showing a bright sun in the middle. This was the best main card anyone could hope for as it symbolized hope, light and inner peace.

The second card was the auxiliary card. This card showed a king holding a scepter, representing authority, passion, sincerity and creativity.

This was also the best auxiliary card!

From all the prophecies Elin had done, these cards were only chosen in extremely rare cases. Even if they were, only one of them would appear, while the other accompanying card would usually be something extremely poor.

Elin, who specialized in the power of prophecy, knew very well that it was almost impossible for these two cards to appear at once. This was due to the innate contradictory properties of these two cards.

If a person had great authority, he was bound to be absorbed into the vortex of power struggle. Coupled with his passion and creativity, it would be almost impossible to achieve inner peace.

This was merely one aspect of the contradiction. A wise person might be able to reconcile the differences between these two cards and find the fine balance. However, there was another important reason that prevented the concurrent appearance of the two cards.

That was the hidden meaning behind this pair of cards.

When the sun, the scepter and the king appeared simultaneously in a person's fate, it only meant one thingthey would become the Savior!

What was a Savior?

Even when the entire world was on an unstoppable trajectory towards the abyss and every living creature was suffering a tragic fate, the Savior would be the only person that possessed the power to put a stop to the madness!

It was important to maintain inner peace when practicing prophecy spells. Elin had been trained to never show her emotions no matter the results she saw from the cards.

Even when she was predicting her own fate which showed that she would go through great suffering and even the destruction of the entire Yabba race, she only frowned ever so slightly and felt a twinge of sadness in her heart.

However, this was an exception. When the person destined to be a Savior was right in front of her, she could no longer stay calm. This was because her fate, the tragic fate of her entire race could be altered!

After a full 30 seconds in shock, Elin suddenly moved and quickly mixed the cards in her hand into the rest of the tarot cards on the table. She then hastily shuffled the deck to make it impossible for anyone to tell the two cards she had just picked out. Even though he was the Savior, his power still had not fully matured. She had to keep the results of this prophecy to herself in order to protect him!

"What's the matter, Elin?" Herrera was clearly shocked by her exaggerated actions. What kind of prophecy would make a Level-6 Magician this flustered?

Elin had slightly regained her composure and gave a slight cough before continuing, "I'm sorry, Link. The cards showed that you are not the Chosen One."

"That is not possible!" Herrera was puzzled. She had seen the brilliance of God in the depths of Link's soul. "Elin, could you be mistaken?"

Elin was immediately enraged. She shouted with a flushed face, "Do not insult my prophecy magic! It is never wrong!"

"Alright, alright, I'm sorry," Herrera hurriedly apologized.

Elin did not pursue the matter any further and turned to look at Link, "However, since we are friends, the cooperation might still be possible if you are willing to pay. When I return back to the Yabba Mountains (The hometown of the Yabba race, North of the Norton Kingdom, Adjacent to the Dark Elves Forest), I can still afford to send you a batch of our finest engineers."

Link thought it was an extremely good plan. He was totally not concerned about the issue of the Chosen One. To him, it was nothing more than a title.

Even if he was the Chosen One, the God of Light would not be able to descend onto the World of Firuman to aid him in battle. If he wasn't, the game system would still continue to help him navigate through this unfamiliar world. In any case, Herrera was already certain that he was the Chosen One. It was enough to see that the result of Elin's prophecy was not sufficient to affect her judgment.

As for Elin's offer to help with the construction of his territory, Link was extremely elated. He nodded in excitement and said, "Money is not a problem. I can fund the construction with my enchanting skills."

Herrera nodded as well. "Link has outstanding talent in enchanting magic. His enchantment speed is extremely fast and he never fails to create exquisite designs. He is very skilled."

Elin had no doubt about Link's abilities at all. She immediately nodded and said, "If that is the case, I will start selecting the engineers the moment I return."

"Thank you." Link was satisfied.

"Just a small gesture," Elin replied. She then fell silent and stared blankly into her deck of tarot cards, huddling in the chair.

Elin's actions were definitely out of the ordinary. However, Herrera chose to leave her alone and turned towards Link. "You are back early this time. Did anything happen?"

Link nodded and took out a sword, staff and a dagger from his dimensional pendant. They belonged to the Dark Elf Warrior Norisa, Magician Parsons and Assassin Hedel respectively. Lastly, he took out Parsons dimensional bracelet and placed them on the table.

Dark Elves equipment were extremely recognizable by their characteristics. They were always black or bright red in color and would be enchanted with a layer of dark aura.

Herrera's eyes widened upon seeing this equipment. She asked, "What's going on?"

Elin, who was in a daze, also took a glance at the equipment before staring back at her deck of cards. However, her tiny ears were already erected, clearly interested in the background of these weapons.

Link then explained in detail his trip back to the Morani castle. As he mentioned about the Black Moon Conspiracy, Herrera already had a tight frown on her face. By the time he reached the part about Demon Tarviss, Herrera was unable to contain her fear anymore and covered her delicate mouth with her hands.

"Tarviss? Didn't he get banished by the Legendary Magician Bryant?"

It was Link's turn to feel perplexed. There was a discrepancy between the history he knew and the current timeline. In the game, Tarviss was merely sealed in an unknown area within East Cove Higher Magic Academy. Had he truly been banished in this timeline?

They were two completely different scenarios.

However, it didn't take him long before he understood. The incident happened over 100 years ago and the story had been passed down through many generations. There was bound to be some deviation from the original. As Herrera had not entered the core layer of leadership in the Magic Academy, it was natural for her to not know the truth.

Link then said, "Why don't we convey this message to Dean Anthony?"

"We have to; I will go now!" Herrera was flustered. Demon Tarviss was a Legendary creature. If the Dark Elves were successful in releasing him, it would definitely be a catastrophe, probably one that could destroy the entire magic academy.

She immediately stood up and left before turning back to collect the Dark Elves equipment Link had brought back with him. She then turned to Elin and said apologetically, "Elin, I have something urgent to attend to. I cannot accompany you anymore."

Elin simply smiled and started putting away her tarot cards. Then she jumped down from her chair and said, "That's fine, please get busy. I should also be returning to the Yabba Mountains as Link probably needs my engineer team soon. Can you let Link send me off?"

"Of course. Link?"

"Yes, master." Link stood up and respectfully ushered Elin out of the hall, with Herrera following behind. When they reached the first floor, Link saw the merchant, Warter drinking at the bar. He seemed to be enjoying himself.

Link ignored him and continued walking towards the entrance.

When they exited the Mage Tower, Herrera made a beeline for the Heaven's Thorn while Link accompanied Elin as they walked along the path leading towards the Griffins Railing.

Elin had restored her previous cheeky and cheery demeanor. She smiled at Link and said, "Link, I've heard that the Ferde Wilderness is extremely barren. Apart from having no natural resources, there are also all kinds of heinous criminals hiding in the area. Isn't it very expensive to develop the land there?"

Link threw his hands out helplessly and said, "That is a fact."

"Do you want me to help you?" Elin looked at Link with a haughty expression. She seemed to think she had a vantage point over Link.

"I think I have the solution to the problem." Link pretended not to hear her.

Elin pouted, "You're such a boring man. After all, I am still your senior. It is only polite to give you a gift on our first meeting. This is for you! It can probably sell for some money."

She made a slight action with her hand and a glowing red metal enveloped by a red mist appeared in her hands. The metal was almost as large as a fist and would occasionally sparkle under the sun.

"This isa Fire Star Thorium!" Link was shocked.

Fire Star Thorium

Quality: EpicMetal Summary: Fire Star Thorium is the perfect alloy consisting of thorium

and fire elements which act as a superconductor for Mana. It has a very stable structure that makes it ideal as a component for eternal magic seals. It is especially effective for fire element spells!

(Note: It can only be found in Tybo Volcano at the Yabba Mountain Range.)

Not only was there no other place in the world to get Fire Star Thorium, it was also a type of metal that could not be created artificially. It was precisely for this reason that the metal was inconceivably expensive. In the world of humans, only most of the users of the metal were high-level Magicians, and it was rarely available in the mass market.

The metal was priced at 2840 gold coins pronce in the Magician's Distit in Springs City, and it was one of the very few precious metals that was worth more than a thousand gold coins pronce. Almost no one else other than the high-level Magicians could afford or had any use for such a ridiculously priced item.

What reason would Elin have for bringing out a lump of Fire Star Thorium that was as big as a baby's fist? Thorium was an extremely dense metal, only a cubic foot of the metal would weigh close to a ton, so that lump of Fire Star Thorium Elin had there must weigh more than two pounds!

At that moment even the ever calm Link was flabbergasted. This lump of Fire Star Thorium must cost at least around a hundred thousand gold coins! Even the annual income of the royal Abel family was only 130,000 gold coins! It was just a gift that was too precious and too expensive for Link to accept in good conscience.

"No, I can't accept this," Link said.

This wasn't just about the gift being too precious. There was no free lunch in the world, so he knew that he would be under some kind of obligation if he received this gift. Although Link wanted the Fire Star Thorium more than anything, he was afraid that he might have to spend all his life to pay for this debt of gratitude.

Nothing could prepare him for the way Elin reacted to his refusal, though.

Elin had been smiling and laughing just moments ago, yet the second she heard Link, her expression changed. She silently put the Fire Star Thorium back in her pouch, then tugged at Link's sleeve and looked up at him with those pair of eyes that were brimming with tears.

"Why don't you want my gifts?" she said with a pout. "You despise me, don't you?"

"" Link just couldn't wrap his head around this little dwarf's moods. One minute she was happy and joking around, and next minute she was crying and throwing tantrums. How would he deal with this girl?

"That's not I didn't mean it that way" Link tried to explain.

"Yes you did!" Elin then exploded into a loud wail. "AaahhhI know you despise me! You must think that I'm too short and I'm too small and that's why you don't like me!" Elin's voice was very loud now, and she'd attracted the wrong attention from everyone around and causing them to misunderstand the situation.

Several Magicians who just happened to pass by had heard Elin's words and they suddenly gave Link and Elin a peculiar kind of gaze that showed their confusion of the kind of drama going on between the two.

Can humans and dwarves have that kind of relationship? Some people thought. But the size is just wrong

Isn't that the famous Link who's in the limelight recently? How did he attract a dwarf girl?

Morality is dead! That was the idea that came into the head of an old-fashioned gentleman Magician passing by.

Although none of these Magicians had voiced their thoughts, their gazes were enough to express what they were thinking in their heads. Link never thought that he would be caught in such an embarrassing situation, even less so with a powerful Level-6 Master Magician all because he'd refused her gift!

For a time, Link was so confused that he could neither stand still nor walk away. Once Elin saw how her actions had produced an effect on Link, she smiled mischievously and stopped her crying for a while.

"So, are you going to accept it now?" she said as she leaned forward. "If you still refuse then I'll keep on making so much noise you'll be the talk of the town tomorrow."

"give it here then," said Link as he massaged his temple with his fingers. He was considerably shocked at how adept Elin was at getting her way.

Link's words had just left his lips when he felt something warm touching his hand. He turned to look at it and realized that Elin had slid the lump of priceless Fire Star Thorium into his palm.

The Fire Star Thorium was naturally warm, yet now Link somehow felt as if it was a lump of hot coal and he just wanted to throw it away as far as he could. But then he turned around and saw Elin's doe-eyed face. Even though he knew that she had faked her crying, he still couldn't help but feel sorry for her. She had looked genuinely miserable with the teasstreaming from those innocent blue eyes, not to mention how childlike she looked when she sniffled with her pert, little nose. She looked nothing like someone who'd just put an act on.

This sight had reminded Link of the tragic history of the Yabba race in the game. He then thought of the fate of this young dwarf who was also the mighty and wise Lady Fortuna, and he could instantly understand the desparse must be keeping hidden behind her tantrums and jibes.

This little girl is a prophet, so she must've seen a vision of the future, Link thought. She must've seen the unspeakable suffering she must go through, not to mention the catastrophe that would befall her people. What she is doing now is probably her way to find a reliable ally for the Yabba race But why did she choose me?

The moment this question occurred in his mind Link was reminded of Elin's strange reactions when she picked out the Tarot cards earlier.

I got it now, that prophecy earlier must've proven that I really am the God of Light's Chosen One. Elin had to conceal the details of the prophecy because she feared the knowledge would disrupt the path of destiny that dictates the events of the future.

When he thought of it this way, all of Elin's actions before this now seemed logical.

She indicated that she would help me set up a team immediately and created an opportunity for us to be alone to give me this invaluable Fire Star Thorium. Even though she verbally denied my identity as the Chosen One, her actions were more than enough proof that she supports me.

Link sighed as he realized Elin's true motives. He was reminded of that fire in his soul he felt when he received Lady Fortuna's blessings from her soul in the game when he completed the last task that she set out for the player.

I must defeat the Lord of the Deep, Nozama!

That was what he thought then. With that strong conviction, he marched forward in the game and eventually led his comrades to successfully defeat Nozama before he descended upon the Realm of Light.

Now that he really was in this world, Link wondered if he would shirk away from such a terrifying mission? No, he would not. It was too late for that now.

That being the case, what reason would he have to refuse the Yabba people's offer of alliance? Hadn't his principle in doing things always been to gather as many available helpful forces as possible anyway?

With this thought in mind, Link became calm and the fog in his mind completely cleared away.

He then placed the warm lump of Fire Star Thorium inside his storage pendant. His mood was now back to normal. He even managed to smile a little as he patted Elin's head gently.

"Don't worry," he said, "I will never forget how much you've helped me today."

Can his mind be that sharp? Elin thought with surprise. She could sense the changes in Link's manners as she raised her head to look up at him. She saw how the eyes that could see through a soul had now turned into a pair of kind and gentle ones. She immediately understood that Link had guessed her true motives.

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have forced you, but I" Elin said no more. She knew that Link understood her sentiments perfectly.

Initially, when she saw the vision of her people's fate, she suppressed her emotions because she knew that she only had the power to see the future but none to change it. In that case, all she could do was accept the fate.

But now that she found the savior who would rescue the world from eternal darkness, she had begun to hope again. All the emotions she'd once suppressed exploded in one moment when she was acting up a scene just now. To be frank, even Elin herself was surprised at her almost mad behavior.

"You saw it, didn't you?" whispered Link. He was no longer angry at Elin for what she'd done. If it had been him in her shoes, Link thought he might do something a hundred times worse than what Elin did if it meant he could save his own people.

Elin shuddered for a moment at Link's question, but she soon found the words to reply him with.

"Will you save us?" she asked.

"To the best of my ability," replied Link. "The Yabba people are noble. The Realm of Light cannot afford to lose you."

Link and Elin's exchange would sound completely mysterious and perplexing to an outsider, but this was a conversation between one person who could see into the future and another person who had experienced the future before after all.

These two had powerful souls as well, so they had no need for many words, as that only accounted for a small part of their communication. Instead, they relied heavily on each other's gaze, expressions and the intonation of their voices which all conveyed more truthful and sincere information compared to mere words.

Because of that, both of them could now understand each other's thoughts and feelings, although they did not mention it out loud. The result was that both man and girl were already aware of each other's meaning, but they haven't said it out loud yet.

Those few short sentences had set a solid foundation of an alliance between the two, and now Elin had returned to her normal behavior. She wiped her tears with a slight feeling of embarrassment as she followed behind Link to the Griffin's railing and then stepped onto the Griffin's back.

"Link!" Elin turned around and called out just as the Griffin was going to take off. "The sun will soon set beneath the horizon, and the light in the sky is nothing but just an afterglow."

"But the sun will rise again," replied Link.

Link's words brought a smile to Elin's little face, and her crystalline eyes shone again with the vibrancy of life. Although her lips were smiling, there were still signs of tears on her face. At that moment, she looked just as if she had walked out of a painting.

Then, the Griffin took off and rushed into the sky, flying into the distance towards the North. Link stood there watching the Griffin fly further and further away until it was nothing but a black dot in the sky. Only then did he turn away and head back to the Mage Tower.

He now had another valuable item in the storage pendant. This small lump of metal could smash the financial hurdle that prevented him from building his estate in one stroke. But as an enchantment Magician, would he ever use such a priceless material on a magic gear and sell it to someone else? Most definitely not!

I guess it's time to replace my Star Catcher wand, thought Link. Maybe I'll improve it a little and replace the Domingo crystal with a more superior crystal. It's an epic quality wand made with high-quality materials, so it should fetch me at least 20,000 gold coins. Then maybe I'll create a few pieces of jewelry to sell along with it, and that should cover the initial funds for my estate oh, right, the merchant from Green Leaf Firm is waiting at the Mage Tower. I'd better get myself a good deal out of him.

Soon, Link was back at the Mage Tower. Warter was still sitting at the bare in the hall on the first floor, and in front of him was indeed a glass of the popular beverage Living Bubbles. Warter seemed to be enjoying himself with the bubbles that jumped around in his mouth.

As for Rylai, she had long gone to one of the tables in the hall and was hard at work studying a magic textbook.

Link had to walk right up to Warter before he realized that Link had returned.

"I'm sorry, sir," Warter said hurriedly, "are you free to see me now?"

"Yes, let's go to my room," replied Link. "We'll talk there."

"No problem at all." Warter then followed behind Link close at his heels.

Once they reached inside the room, Link poured two cups of water and placed it on the table. He then waited for Warter to settle down in his seat.

"I'm guessing my magic gear has caught your attention," said Link. "Before we move on, I have some questions for you. What is the scale of the Green Leaf Merchant Firm? Also, how do you plan to cooperate with me? Do you have any prominent figures who are your patrons that would guarantee the safety and continuous operation of your business?"

These three points were the most important factors in a business deal in Firuman, and Link's questions were all scrupulous and necessary. Warter was shocked at how wise this young man turned out to be. He knew just from these questions that no one would ever be able to take advantage or play tricks on Link.

Unfortunately for Warter, though, the Green Leaf Merchant Firm was only active in Springs City. It was basically an unknown entity outside of the capital. Furthermore, the firm only had one patron in the whole kingdom and he was just an old count who might not be able to protect the firm if it was ever faced with any serious threats.

In short, the firm's network was still in a primitive stage.

Warter began to feel his hopes of cooperating with Link diminish. Nevertheless, he still remained calm and polite with Link and started to tell Link of the history and current status of his merchant firm.

"This is how things stand, Mr. Link" Warter then wentito every detail that concerned his business venture and responded to each of Link's questions clearly and patiently. When he was finished, he sat upright and expected Link to respond with the simple yet portentous word "no".

Link drummed his fingers gently on the table when Warter finished speaking as he considered his options.

"What is your proposal, then?" Link then asked.

The moment these words were uttered Warter immediately knew that he had a chance.

"The moment you hand over your magic gear to me," he began, "I will pay you at an ordinary market price on the spot. Once it is sold, if there is a premium, I will pay you 10%no, 15% of the selling price. That is to say, we won't just sell your creations for free, we would also pay you the additional gold coins we earned as well!"

Link was glad as he listened to the plan. He realized that this was no ordinary money-hungry salesman!

If all Warter wanted was to profit from Link's magic gear, he would've shown him the door right now. Yet this man was a visionary. He wanted to use Link's magic gear to build up the reputation of his firm and expand his business, and he didn't mind paying Link a high price as well. A man with such an entrepreneurial spirit was way ahead of his time! Someone like him could end up getting all the gold coins on the continentito his pockets if he was given the right opportunity. Naturally, Link wouldn't mind giving such a man just that opportunity.

"I want 20% of the profits," said Link. "That's not all, though. Your firm's background is too weak. After joining you, the East Cove Magic Academy will become your firm's official patron."

"It's a deal!" exclaimed Warter jubilantly.

## 141. Anthonys Confidence

Link had just gotten a stable source of income and settled the export for his future magic equipment. This would mean that the initial funding for the building of his territory was solved. He was naturally in a good mood. On the other hand, in the Heaven's Thorn, Dean Anthony was deeply troubled.

In the parliament hall on the third floor of the Mage Tower, the Dark Elves' equipment was laid out on a circular table. On the other side of the table sat Anthony and Herrera.

"Premium gold magic sword, an anti-magic dagger and a Spiral Focus Wand. These are all very valuable equipment." Anthony carefully checked the Dark Elven equipment one-by-one. He then frowned tightly.

"Master, did you find something?" Herrera asked.

Anthony nodded and floated the golden sword gradually towards Herrera. He carefully positioned it such that the hilt was right in front of her eyes.

"Look carefully. Do you see the iris flower carved onto the hilt?"

Herrera took the sword into her hands and squinted her eyes. Indeed, she saw an exquisite and secretive marking of an iris flower. There were even miniscule petassurrounding the marking and each petal was engraved with another set of complex magic runes.

"The magic runes on the petals are extremely complex. This marking is almost impossible to forge. It belongs to the Norigan Familia, one of the three big Silver Moon Families. The dagger and the staff were all engraved with the same marking. These weapons are extremely well-made, probably produced for the core members of the Norigan Familia."

Anthony then waved his hand and the golden sword floated back towards him. He held the blade of the sword with his two fingers and the hilt with his other hand and did a snapping movement. His hands suddenly glowed with a blinding light and the sword was broken cleanly into two parts the next instant. It was as though he was breaking a loaf of bread.

The fractured surface of the sword was still smooth, showing no signs of violent and deliberate destruction.

Anthony wore the reading glass hanging on his chest and squinted his eyes, carefully observing the fractured surface. After half a minute, he nodded and did the same with the dagger and staff. He then declared, "The flow of power left certain special traces that could be detected from their weapon. It is often possible to tell the strength of the wielder simply through observation of their weapon. I can determine that the owner of these weapons were all Level-5 professionals."

"Level-5? Three of them? How did Link achieve victory?" Herrera was shocked. Link merely told her that there were three Dark Elves who were slightly powerful. However, she had never expected them to be this strong!

She had once fought alongside Link and knew his strength first hand, especially his insane spellcasting speed. He once destroyed a huge group of undead Warriors that could easily overwhelm any professional Magician. However, those undead Warriors were merely Level-1 to Level-2 in strength. This time, he was confronted by three Level-5 professionals of different class. If she was the one in that predicament, she would be lucky enough to make it back alive. How did Link return to the academy as though nothing serious had happened?

Anthony smiled and continued, "You have underestimated him. Look at this sword. The outer layer of the sword shows traces of melted metal. This would at least take the power of a Level-5 fire elemental spell to achieve."

"Master, are you saying that Link has already mastered a level-5 spell?" Herrera was once again startled. Link had just reached Level-4 a month ago. To think that he had learned a Level-5 spell in just a month.

Anthony kept silent and put down the weapons. He then turned his attention to the dimensional bracelet and quickly found the iris flower marking on it. He then opened the bracelet and saw a magic book in it.

The book was titled Fusion Techniques of Dark Elementals. He then smiled. "This crafty boy took away all the valuable stuff and deliberately left the dark magic book inside to show his innocence. How cunning."

Anthony then concentrated the fire elements in the air and engulfed the magic book in flames, instantly burning it to ashes.

He then told Herrera, "Link has unobtedly become a Level-5 Magician. He has at least mastered a Level-5 spell and has the capabilities to stand up to three Level-5 professionals from the Norigan Familia. This can only mean that Link has an extraordinary understanding of magic."

Anthony's mind was on the northern battlefield as he said those words.

More than half of the Magiciasshould have already reached the battlefront. The incident at Jade Street seemed to have thoroughly enraged the king and catalyzed the attack against the Dark Forest. The Magicians of the academy had also participated in the attack.

In the most recent battle, three Level-2 Magicians form the kingdom were engaged in a battle with one Level-3 Dark Elf Magician. It was reported that the Dark Elf Magician managed to escape with heavy injuries despite being outnumbered, killing one Magician and heavily injuring another in the process. The injured Magician also seemed to be in trauma, and would not be able to battle for the next month.

This was almost too embarrassing.

In comparison, Link was so much more valuable.

Anthony could not help but exclaim, "The Kingdom has been too peaceful. The younger generation simply does not have enough battle power. The academy's goal is to develop Magicians who are both wise and powerful. However, the truth is that very few people are interested in the latter, many of whom do not even know how to apply the knowledge they have learned. The gap between us and the Dark Elves is widening."

Herrera then reminded him, "Master, Link also mentioned something about the demon, Tarviss. Didn't he get banished a long time ago?"

This jolted Anthony out of his thoughts. He nodded, "The truth is that he didn't. He was way too strong and Bryant did not have the power to banish him back to the abyss. He could only choose to seal him away, and the sealing spot is none other than the East Cove Higher Magic Academy."

As the dean, he was well informed about the secrets the academy kept through the generations. The information regarding Tarviss was one of them.

This gave Herrera a shock. She said, "Link mentioned that the Dark Elves were planning to break the seal and destroy the academy. This is the essence of their Black Moon Conspiracy. Master, is this situation very serious?"

Strangely enough, there was not a hint of worry on Anthony's face. He shook his head, "That is not possible. Even I do not know the exact location of the seal. The location had been lost through the generations. If I do not know, there is no way the Dark Elves could know."

"What if they chanced upon it?" Herrera was still worried.

Anthony smiled and shook his head once again. "Even if they got the exact location, they would not be able to break the seal. The power of the seal is extremely strong. The academy has a total of 36 Mage Towers and every single Mage Tower is a part of the seal. Unless the Dark Elves have the capability to destroy half of these Mage Towers, the seal will definitely remain intact."

This would mean that the Dark Elves had to destroy 18 Mage Towers. Every Mage Tower at least had a Level-4 Magician residing within, and the total number of official Magicians in the academy was well above 200.

Furthermore, Dean Anthony's predecessors had been strengthening the defense of the academy every generation. One such example was the massive Level-7 defensive magic formation that could be instantly activated.

This defense was almost unassailable. Even if all the Dark Elf Magicians from the Silver Moon Alliance came, the academy would still be able to hold its ground.

This was the source of Anthony's confidence.

"This Black Moon Conspiracy is purely a plan that the Dark Elves took for granted. There is no need to worry too much about it. What we should focus on now is the war in the North. The king is eager to achieve a victory to offset the negative impact from the Jade Street massacre. The first wave of soldiers has already set off. However, the operation is very hastily planned and executed. I am worried that something might happen."

As one of the strongest Magicians in the Norton Kingdom, Anthony was informed first hand of the situation in the North. There had been a mix of good and bad news amongst the messages that he got. However, he could never feel truly at ease.

He had been keeping this uneasiness within him the past few days. Now that his most precious disciple was here, he took the chance to voice out his discomfort and changed the topic to the war in the North. He was not exactly worried about the Black Moon Conspiracy information that Herrera brought up.

Herrera, on the other hand, was optimistic about the situation in the North. "Master, the situation is not that bad. Our attack this time is also a surprise for the Dark Elves. They should also be unprepared for it."

"I hope that is the case," Anthony sighed.

Anthony then put the fragments of the weapons into the dimensional bracelet and handed it over to Herrera. "Link did well this time. I have already placed the reward in the bracelet. Tell him that while developing his territory is important, he should not delay the progress of his magic research. If not, I will personally request for the king to reclaim the territory!"

"Yes, Master." Herrera took the bracelet and stared inside it curiously. She was immediately at a loss for words.

She had no idea when her master placed the rewards into the bracelet. It was filled to the brim with premium gold ore that could be refined into tens of thousands of gold coins. Apart from money, he also included a huge pile of Mithril ore which would probably become seven pounds of pure Mithril after extraction. All these items were worth at least 30000 gold coins in total.

"Master seems to have a lot of confidence in Link. He is so generous this time." Herrera felt extremely happy for Link. Link should probably have enough money for the development of his land after this.

Herrera was just planning to leave when she stopped in her tracks and said, "There is one more thing I have to tell you. Lady Fortuna Elin met Link just now."

"Oh, how were the results?" Anthony was slightly interested. He had heard many things about her gift in prophecy magic. However, he was not a fan of such magic. He had always thought they were slightly lunatic in nature and not dependable.

"She seemed to have seen something incredible. Her attitude towards Link completely changed." Herrera was incredibly sensitive. She would not be easily fooled by Elin's words.

Anthony laughed loudly and gave a casual comment, "It seems like the young man has gotten himself a new tiny little ally."

## 142. Ill Have to Rely on Myself, Then

"Oh, by the way," said Herrera, "this is your reward from the dean."

Upon returning to the Mage Tower, Herrera took out her storage bracelet and handed Link his reward. Link immediately gasped after catching sight of the reward.

"Why is the dean so generous with me?" asked Link. "He'd just given me a golden ore, and now I get 20,000 gold coins as well?"

By rough estimations, Link discovered that the gold in the ring and all its other components and the fragments of the Dark Elves' weapon would wipe out his funding problems immediately.

"The dean thinks highly of you," said Herrera with a smile. "You mustn't let him down."

"Of course," said Link.

Link had defeated and killed three mighty Dark Elves, plus he'd even brought back the important information about the Black Moon Conspiracy, so Link felt that he had indeed made a great contribution to the academy. Thus, he accepted the rewards and kept them in his storage pendant with good conscience as he knew that he had earned them.

"What did the dean say about the Black Moon Conspiracy and the demon, Tarviss?" asked Link.

"The dean said that the academy's defense is impenetrable," answered Herrera immediately. "Besides, the location of the seal of the demon, Tarviss has long been forgotten, so even though he will keep an eye out for the Dark Elves, there was really no need to be too worried about the Black Moon Conspiracy."

Link's eyebrows creased intensely as he heard Herrera's reply.

The incident of the demon, Tarviss' escape had really happened in the game, so it was obvious that the Dark Elves knew of his location. Even though things were slightly different now in this world, the Dark Elves' ability to release Tarviss was unquestionable.

The demon's destructive power was unparalleled and not to be trifled with. In the game, even Anthony's powerful spell that he cast by burning parts of his soul had only managed to injure the demon and force it to flee. Now with the information in his hands, he chose to ignore the threat of the Dark Elves' plot and say that the defense of the academy was perfect and impenetrable?

That is just a tad too ridiculous!

Seeing Link's reactions, Herrera felt the need to say something in her mentor's defense.

"The dean is very busy lately," she said. "He's fully preoccupied with the matter of the war going on in the North. He's always in the academy anyway, surely the Dark Elves wouldn't attempt anything too bold as they would be facing him."

Herrera was extremely respectful of the dean. She fully trusted his wisdom and strength, so if he told her that there should be no reason to worry too much about the Dark Elves' secret plot, then that meant that they really didn't pose that much threat. Her own fear and anxiety over the matter had reduced accordingly as well.

Link was a little worried with how relaxed Herrera seemed about the dangerous plot, yet he stopped himself from trying to argue about it with her.

Both Herrera and Anthony were natives of the Firuman continent, so their perspectives were radically different from Link's. Herrera and Anthony had never received any external information other than what they'd seen and heard in their lives, and they'd spent most of their lives in this academy after all, so it was no wonder that they would regard the academy as the safest place in the kingdom. If Link had been in their shoes, he was sure that he would agree with them too. The only reason Link knew any better was because he'd witnessed the catastrophic release of the demon himself in the game.

When he thought of it that way, Link completely gave up his urge to persuade Herrera otherwise. The lines of worry on his face gradually faded as well, and he finally managed to nod at Herrera's remarks.

"If that's how the dean sees it, it must be no problem then," said Link. "Excuse me, tutor, but I've just remembered that there are some things I must go deal with now."

"Go ahead," replied Herrera, relieved that Link didn't try to press the matter of the Dark Elves.

Link then turned around and walked away from Herrera.

Link and Herrera had met in the corridor on the third floor of the Mage Tower, so Link continued walking down the corridor while he mused about the next course of action that he should take.

Tutor and the dean both can't see just how much danger we are in right now, he thought. But how should I convince them? I must find evidence but where could I find such a thing?

Just as Link was still deep in his thoughts, trouble arose.

Link came to the East Cove Magic Academy often in the game in his previous life, so he used to be very familiar with this place. Even so, the game and reality were different. The real East Cove Magic Academy was many times bigger than the one in the game, not to mention that there were many more minute details here as well. Link hadn't been here for more than a few months, and he spent most of his time studying in the Mage Tower, so he was still quite unfamiliar with the real East Cove Magic Academy at this point.

Not only was the place still quite foreign to him, he hadn't even known many Magicians in the academy as well.

Still, he walked on while thinking about the problem. He walked all the way from the third floor to the first floor, then out of the Mage Tower, walking aimlessly through the academy.

Just take a walk if you feel you're at a dead end about something that was the habit he developed when was working on his thesis.

Without knowing it, Link had been walking for ten minutes now and he'd reached Bryant's Inspiration Courtyard. Although it was still winter now and the snow still blanketed the ground, the flowers in the courtyard were still in bloom under the influence of a magic seal.

Link walked up to the willow tree where he often discussed magic with Eliard and sat down on a stone bench there. He looked at the leaves wafting in the wind idly for quite some time while he brooded about the problem. Yet, after half a day's time had passed and he made no progress at all. He even started to feel discouraged for the first time.

There are just too many things that I don't know, he thought.Must the academy embark on its old path to destruction? Can it be that it is fate and I can't do anything about it?

Link caught himself mere seconds after the idea arose in his head. He stamped out such a frustrating and fatalist thought out of his head immediately.

I've become hotheaded, he thought. There's no point in brooding about this now, the Black Moon Conspiracy is going to happen on April 15, so I still have nearly three months. Even if I can't find out the exact details of the plan, I can still muster up enough power to fight the demon Tarviss in three months' time, can't I?

Link's eyes lit up the moment this thought occurred to him. It felt as if the clouds had given way to the clear and bright sunlight now.

Yes, I must defeat the darkness with light! Link realized. If the Dark Elves planned to release Tarviss to destroy the academy, then I'll just kill him when his chains are unshackled! If Tarviss was a Level-8 demon, then I must learn spells that are at least Level-8 as well.

Link then had a thought of checking his own status, and in a blink of an eye the gaming system displayed it on the interface.

Link Morani (Hereditary Baron)

Level-5 Elite Magician

Mana Recovery Rate: 110 Points per Hour

Maximum Mana Limit: 1910

Current Weapon: Starcatcher Wand

Current Omni Points: 210 Points

Link then had a thought of checking the list of Level-8 spells. Immediately afterwards the interface displayed rows of bright shining cards of Level-8 spells, of which Link thoroughly examined one by one.

The Glorious Annihilation consumes 4600 Mana Points, the Flaming Sky, 4800 Mana Points, the Frost Dragon requires 4900 Mana Points to summon. Time Cage would consume 4800 Mana Points, the Holy Dragon's Blessings, 1300 Mana Points But auxiliary spells like some of these are useless against the demon, and they consume so much Mana!

The higher the level of the spells, the greater the difference of Mana consumption between each spell. As a general rule, auxiliary spells would consume far less Mana than attacking spells.

This was so among the Legendary spells as well. Link's Legendary spell Dimensional Jump only consumed 1800 Mana Points, yet any attacking spell of this level would require at least 9000 Mana Points!

The demons were a race of fighters, they had very high resistance to magic attacks and exceptional strength and vitality, not to mention almost indestructible armor. Once Tarviss got released from his chains, he would instantly raze the whole academy to the ground like an invincible war chariot.

For such a strong opponent as Tarviss, the weak attacks of auxiliary spells were basically no threat to him at all. The only way he could be defeated was to attack him instantly with the strongest offensive spell in the arsenal without giving him time to breathe.

But the demon's resistance to magic is extremely high, thought Link. Even if I modify a Level-8 spell with Supreme Magical Skills, I wouldn't be able to strike him down in one move anyway. And Level-8 spells consume so much Mana that I won't be able to increase my maximum Mana limit to accommodate two Level-8 spells in three months As a matter of fact, I don't think Tarviss would give me any chance to cast two Level-8 spells anyway.

Link then discovered many key details after further consideration. For example, if he wanted to cast two Level-8 spells, he could cast the first one as an ambush attack, then the second one would have to be a direct attack on Tarviss. A Level-8 demon like him would have lightning-fast responses, so if Link wasn't able to cast the second spell quick enough than he would be dead. Even the Legendary spell Dimensional Jump wouldn't save him then. The only reliable plan, then, was to master a defensive spell able to protect him from spells up to Level-8, which meant that Link must now increase his maximum Mana limit to accommodate three Level-8 spells to be able to fight against the demon Tarviss.

But instead of wasting his Mana on three Level-8 spells, wouldn't it be better for him to master a Level-9 spell?

He then checked the list of Level-9 spells on the interface. But then he almost jumped out of his skin when he took the first glance of the list Level-9 attacking spells requiredamnimum of 7000 Mana Points! Not to mention how difficult it would be to try to master a Level-9 spell in three months! Thus, Link began to lose hope in this plan.

The higher the spell level, the more complicated it is, plus there were some other major hurdles as well, and that first hurdle was at Level-6. Typically any Magician who'd managed to surpass the Level-6 barrier would be called a Master Magician.

Why?

Because there was a drastic increase of difficulty in Level-6 spells. Link had seen the spell structure of some Level-6 spells, and he knew that even while he could master the Level-5 Flaming Hand in two days, he wouldn't be able to master these in at least half a month, and even then he would have to forego meals and sleep and devote himself solely to the spell!

There were now six Level-6 Magicians in the East Cove Magic Academy, and Anthony was the only Level-7 Magician here. It had been this way for the past ten years, in fact there were only two Level-7 Magicians in the whole kingdom, with the other one right now stationed in the royal palace.

Meanwhile not even one Level-8 Magician could be found in the whole human world. There was one Level-8 Warrior, but the power of a Warrior was far beneath that of a Magician, so they couldn't be compared at all.

And now Link was hoping to master a Level-9 spell within three months if he ever let anyone know of this intention of his, they'd surely think he'd gone crazy.

If he used the gaming system to spend 90 of his Omni Points to purchase a Level-9 spell, he'd still be unable to afford the 7000 Mana Points needed for it. Moreover, that spell would only be the regular version without any modification at all. If he used that spell to fight against a peerlessly powerful and almost invincible demon, then he might as well just jump off a cliff because it would give him the same result anyway.

Even mastering a Level-8 spell would be tricky in just three months' time, I couldn't believe that I would master a Level-9 spell in that time myself! Link then smiled cynically and shook his head in near exasperation.

Nevermind, I'll stop worrying about this for now, thought Link. I'll just do what I can and work as hard as possible. Whatever happens, at least I've done my best. Link's face showed a steely determination as he stood up and was about to head back to the Mage Tower. There wasn't much time left, so he must start working now.

But just as he was on his way back to the Mage Tower, Link noticed something he never could've expected.

It was a familiar figure among the willow trees not too far away from where he stood. He blinked and squinted to try to see the figure better and discovered that it was Eliard's lover Elena.

It wouldn't have been such a strange sight to see Elena around the academy, but she was standing in a remote area of the willow grove where most of her body was concealed behind the tree trunks and the shrubs. Had Link not accidentally looked in that direction, he wouldn't have known that she was there.

And what's most perplexing of all was the fact that she wasn't there alone. Right there beside her was a man.

The man was dressed in a luxurious fur coat and seemed to be a man who's well-to-do. He was most probably a merchant from Springs City. He was standing very close to Elena, it was a distance that was too intimate; Link got very suspicious of them now. He took a few steps back and hid behind a willow tree and began to listen in on their conversation.

Because of the distance, Link could only hear the tone of the voice but couldn't make out exactly what they were saying. He didn't dare to use any magic spying device either as he was afraid that they might be able to sense the Mana fluctuations.

Link thought Elena's tone was poles apart from the one he often heard when she was around Eliard. Her current tone of voice was cold, haughty and even tinged with a slight sense of guilt. It sounded to Link as if it was the voice of a graceful and noble queen. Meanwhile, the merchant's voice was soft and gentle, and despite looking like a successful and wealthy merchant, his voice sounded very submissive and humble when he addressed Elena.

But isn't Elena just the daughter of an average merchant family? Link wondered. Why would that rich merchant treat her as if she's the queen?

## 143. Total Annihilation

Elena was Eliard's lover. This was hardly a secret, especially in Herrera's Mage Tower as they had started cohabitating.

In their daily conversations, Eliard would often commend how gentle and kind Elena was. He would even proudly discuss Elena's outstanding performance at night when he was in the mood.Whenever the topic was on Elena, Eliard had an expression of bliss, as though he had the whole world in his palms.

He had completely become a servant to love.

Even though Link did not have a good impression of Elena, she was, after all, Eliard's beloved partner. He could only stay as far away as possible.

Other than being scheming and materialistic, Link originally thought nothing of Elena. It was not surprising if you thought about her background, as she came from a family of merchants. However, the situation unfolding right in front of him was triggering all the emergency bells in his head.

After talking to the merchant for around ten minutes, Elena suddenly embraced the merchant and kissed him on the lips. The kiss lasted for three seconds before Elena let go of the merchant and walked away nonchalantly. The merchant, on the other hand, stayed in the forest and stared lovingly at Elena's disappearing shadow.

Link had a clear view of the entire scenario from his angle. He immediately frowned, Eliard is definitely unaware of this. However, he will realize it sooner or later, I am afraid

Thinking back on the look of bliss on Eliard's face, Link was certain that Eliard would be devastated.

"Should I tell Eliard?" Link was having a headache.

Link had no evidence of the incident. If he had told Eliard directly, Elena would likely deny all accusations and use her charm to trap Eliard in her web of lies. As Eliard was blinded by love, he would definitely believe her side of the story and turn his back on Link.

However, if he chose to ignore and keep it a secret from Eliard. Eliard was sure to be devastated when he realized the truth. Judging from his character, he would probably not harm Elena, but wallow in self-pity and despair alone.

Love is indeed a volatile and luxurious good. If it does not turn out well, it might even destroy a talented Magician, Link could not help but exclaim silently.

After thinking for a moment, Link had decided to first observe Elena and get a deeper understanding of her personality. If he deemed her character to be seriously flawed, he would then find chances to give subtle hints to Eliard.

He then stayed in the forest for another five minutes until both the merchant and Elena were completely out of sight. He then walked back to Herrera's Mage Tower. The moment he opened the door, he saw Eliard and Elena on the first floor.

They were flipping through magic books in the corner. From time to time, Eliard would guide Elena along and answer her queries. Elena would then look at him in adoration, to which Eliard would always give a warm and tender smile in return.

Link even saw Elena wearing a necklace that he had created. As he recalled Eliard's expression that day when he was asking for a favor, Link could not help but sigh.

At that moment, Elena gave a quick peck on Eliard's cheek while he was absorbed in the magic book. Eliard then broke outito a silly smile. That was almost Link's limit and he immediately left the hall while trying to erase those memories from his brain.

For the next few days, Link spent almost all his time on his magic research. When he felt tired, he would delve fanatically into crafting magic equipment. The equipment would then be passed to Warter for sale. Occasionally, Lucy would write to inform him on the progress of the Ferde Wilderness' initial development. Link did not participate physically in the entire process, merely writing back to Lucy and sending back another 5000 gold coins as funding. This was so even when the mercenary band started missions to clear up the bandit's hideout in the area. At the same time, Link had also been observing Elena.

He placed a secretive magic formation at the tower gate. As long as Elena left the Mage Tower alone, her unique magic fluctuations would activate the magic formation which would then send a signal to Link. If she was leaving with Eliard, the magic formation would stay dormant. Whenever Link received a signal, he would follow behind stealthily.

Time flew and it was two weeks since the first time Link caught Elena in the forest. In this period, Elena left the Mage Tower alone for a total of eight times. The duration was always a standard 30 minutes and her reason of absence was always that she needed some fresh air.

In these eight separate instances, Link saw a different side of Elena.

She would always meet a merchant in secret in the forest. Furthermore, there was more than one merchant that she was seeing! Link had counted a total of six different merchants with prestigious backgrounds. Each of those merchants having a close business relationship with a Master Magician in the academy. However, Elena seemed to be able to keep her multiple intimate relationships a secret from each of her lovers. Every merchant seemed to be bewitched by her charm.

Not only was her private life complicated, but Link was horrified to discover that Elena had many faces. While she was gentle and kind towards Eliard, she could be cold, elegant, seductive or even submissive to the other merchants. She displayed each character naturally and with ease. There were almost no flaws in her facade.

This woman is really something. She definitely has a more complicated background. Her merchant background was simply a farce!

Link was extremely careful every time and kept a distance between Elena and himself. He also did not use any magic, causing him to miss out on the content of their conversation. However, based on what he had observed, he had already developed suspicion towards Elena's true identity.

Link's continued attempts at tracking Elena were no longer an act simply to help his good friend. He felt that Elena was a huge threat, even to the point of suspecting that she was connected to the Black Moon Conspiracy. This was due to her multiple secretitimate relationships which seemed to point to something more sinister.

Link then used a Supreme Magic Skill he had recently grasped to set up an extremely well-hidden magic formation to eavesdrop on the conversation.

This magic formation came in handy soon after. One day, as Link was just preparing to test out his new ideas in the elemental pool, the alarm from the tower entrance rang again. Elena had left the Mage Tower on her own.

Link immediately ran out of the elemental pool and left the Mage Tower after three minutes.

Link hastened his pace the moment he left the Mage Tower, taking the shortcut towards the Inspiration Courtyard before finally reaching the forest Elena always held her secret conversations in. He made a detour and entered the forest through another entrance before squatting down in a good hiding spot.

After three minutes, Elena had arrived. There was already a merchant awaiting her arrival. This merchant was none other than the one Link saw two weeks ago.

The moment their gazes met, Elena and the merchant embraced each other and kissed with great passion. This lasted a whole two minutes. All the sounds Link got from his eavesdropping magic formation were panting and slurping sounds. He felt unusually irritated by it.

It felt like an eternity before the two of them finally got their hands off each other. Elena's voice could then be heard. She spoke in a cold voice, "My knight, what good news have you brought me this time?"

"My dear queen, you will definitely be satisfied. I have successfully bribed a Level-4 Magician from Ferdinand's Mage Tower. Look what he gave me."

Link stole a glance and saw the merchant handing a scroll over to Elena.

Elena opened the scroll and looked satisfied. She smiled seductively and said, "Very well my knight. The master will definitely reward you. I will reward you as well."

The merchant then spoke hastily, "Oh, my queen, thank you so much. May I know when I can redeem your gift?"

After a few seconds, Elena spoke, "Not here. How about this. I will be going to River Cove Town to settle some things tomorrow. You can wait for me in the hotel."

"Thank you so much, my queen." The merchant sounded as though he was going insane.

Both of them then carried on with their disgusting conversation. The merchant praised Elena continuously while Elena carried herself like a queen, belittling the merchant yet enticing him with seductive words.

Link ignored these superfluous things. His attention was captured by Elenassecond sentence"master"? That sounds like a term used by followers of a dark cult. Could Elena be a spy from a cult?

Link's eyes widened upon the realization. I cannot let this Elena accomplish what she wants. It sounds like she will be headed to River Cove Town tomorrow. That would be perfect!

Link had to take action.

As for EliardLink looked at the memory crystal he had activated to record the entire scene. He sighed regrettably. It is better to end some things quickly even though they might be painful. Let's just hope Eliard can recover.

At that moment, Elena bade goodbye to the merchant and they once again got drunk in each other's passionate embrace.

As he had gotten Elenassubtle permission, the merchant was extremely daring. He slid his hands into Elenasskirt without any resistance. This lasted for five entire minutes before they reluctantly separated from each other. Elena then tidied up her hair before leaving the forest. The merchant then walked the other way with a dazed expression.

Link did not return to the Mage Tower immediately. He waited patiently in the forest before following behind the merchant.

Elena was Eliard's official partner and was a member of the academy. She would not be able to go too far without the academy's permission. However, this merchant was a free individual not bounded by the academy's rules and was just about to leave the academy. Link thus decided to start his investigation from this merchant.

The merchant continued walking towards the stable where he parked his carriage. Taking advantage of his ignorance of magic, Link cast a Level-0 magic marking on the merchant and exited the academy ahead of him. After he was out of the sight from Guardsman Vincent, Link then hid in the forest beside the pathway in wait for the merchant.

Around ten minutes later, a carriage bearing the magic fluctuations of Link's magic marking arrived at the entrance.

This place is still too close to the academy. It's not a good time. Link waited for the carriage to drive past him before casting a Cat's Agility spell on himself and followed closely behind.

After around ten minutes, Link felt comfortable with the distance and was prepared to strike.

At that moment, a strange thing happened. A group of bandits suddenly rushed out from the forest and killed the coachman. They then attempted to break open the carriage door violently. From their bloodthirsty expression, it seemed like their target was the merchant.

"Are they trying tosilence him?" Link was appalled. The issue was way more complicated than he had ever imagined.

## 144. A Woman Who Put Fear into Links Heart

The scene took place just 200 feet away from Link. He quickly made a decision.

That merchant mustn't die, neither can I let those robbers die. I have some questions to ask them!

By that time, the robbers had pulled open the carriage door.

"Is it gold coins that you want?" shouted the horrified merchant in panic. "I can give you however much you want! 100 gold coins? 200? A thousand?"

"Stop wasting your time," the robber sneered. "Once you're dead, all your money will be ours!" Then the robber stabbed a dagger right at the merchant's heart.

Surprisingly, to both the robber and the merchant, the dagger hadn't touched the merchant's skin but was stopped by a white shining shield that appeared out of thin air. The robber could feel a strong deflective force coming from the dagger. Now, not only was he unable to stab the dagger through the shield, he even had difficulties in holding on to the dagger's hilt.

Clang!

The dagger was suddenly pushed out of the robber's hand and flung far away by an inexplicable force. Even the robber himself lost his balance and fell off from the carriage.

"What's going on? What's going on!" the robber screamed in shock and terror. He simply couldn't wrap his head around what just happened.

The next moment, he saw a dozen white lines in the air, followed by a series of small explosions. Then all he could hear was the sound of his brothers screaming in pain. When he turned around, he discovered that all his brothers who had been with him had fallen to the ground. He didn't know if they were dead or alive, but this was just too horrifying!

The sight before him had made the robber's blood run cold. All he could do was stand there with his jaw dropped so low that one could fit a duck's egg into his mouth! Then, he saw a young man wearing an ink-blue robe walk towards him. This man was shrouded in a faint white aura, and he looked so mystifying that the robber was wakened from his stupor.

"Please spare me, Master Magician!" he pleaded. "I won't do anything to cross you again! Please spare me!"

Link was disgusted at the sight of this robber who had an ugly wolf tattoo on his cheek. Within a few seconds he'd thrown all his dignity away and begged for mercy to save his own hide. Link had no sympathy for a man like that.

"Get up!" said Link. "Carry all your men into the woods. If you attempt to run away from me, then you'll get a real taste of my magic power!"

As he spoke, Link unleashed a Whistle onto a big boulder beside the road. The boulder was a brown mudstone of about three cubic feet in size, so it wasn't a particularly hard material. The moment Link cast the Whistle, it shot through the air with a high-pitched screech and hit right in the middle of the boulder.

Bang!

The boulder was now reduced to crumbling fragments of rocks that were sent flying through the air. The robber was just an ordinary Level-1 Warrior, so he wasn't at all accustomed to this level of power. He gulped continuously as he watched the big boulder get reduced to clumps of clay. His face was getting green with fear now and all the thoughts he had of running for his life were extinguished. He then began to obediently carry the bodies of his brothers into the forest one at a time.

Meanwhile, Link walked up to the carriage and looked inside. He discovered the merchant sitting there shaking like a leaf. There was also an unpleasant smell inside the carriage the merchant had pissed himself in fear. Link frowned deeply in repulsion at the offensive stench.

"Get up!" Link scowled at the merchant. "Drive your carriage into the forest right there."

They weren't that far away from the academy gates, so parking it on the roadside here would make it too conspicuous and that might attract unwanted attention.

The merchant didn't dare to defy Link's orders, so he clumsily climbed into the coachman's seat and tried to drive the carriage. It was obvious that he'd never done it before, but after a struggling for a few minutes, he finally got the carriage moving. Meanwhile, Link helped maintained the horses' movement by casting a few Fireballs near them to scare them and force them to move forward. In the end they managed to get the carriage into the forest after much effort.

The three of them then walked out onto a small path in the forest. Link stood leaning against a big tree trunk and slowly poured his Mana into the Memory Crystal that he'd always been carrying around lately. This Memory Crystal would record everything that happened here all the voices and images as well. This would later be useful as an important piece of evidence when Link decided to expose Elena's covert actions.

"Tell me," Link barked at the robber, "who ordered you to kill the merchant?"

"Nono one," the robber answered, waving his hands in denial, "I just wanted to rob his money"

"Do you take me for a fool?" Link's wand then lit up and a Glass Orb flew out of its tip and headed towards the robber's head. It stopped abruptly a mere couple inches in front of the robber's face. Then, Link gradually loosened his control over the fire elements in the Glass Orb, transforming it from a dimly glowing orb to a gradually brighter fireball. Even the air around it started to roil up from the intense heat and the robber'shi

The robber was now so scared that he stood there rooted to the ground; large beads of cold sweat streamed down his forehead and he kept gulping in fear while his eyes still darted around uncertainly. Yes, he was afraid of Link, but this fear was still not enough to make him spill the identity of the person behind this.

"Don't try my patience!" warned Link. He once again let loose his control over the fire elements in the Glass Orb. With a frightening whoosh, the Glass Orb's surface turned into flames. The robber's face was burned by the fire which made him recoil instinctively.

"I don't know who she was," he suddenly spilled out, no longer daring to be silent, "but she ordered us to wait by the road for a carriage to pass by. If that carriage made this stone glow, then she ordered us to kill everyone inside it." As he spoke, the robber slipped out a thumb-sized stone from his pocket with lines of runes on its surface. It was unobtedly a magic rune stone.

Link noticed that the robber used the word "she", so the person behind this must be a womanit was most likely Elena.

He didn't touch the rune stone, but instead just examined the runes on its surface from afar. After a while, a notification about the rune stone appeared on the interface.

Green Rune Stone (Auxiliary)

Quality: Fine

Level-3

First Effect: When a specific magic indicator appears within 300 feet of the rune stone, it will be activated and emit a light.

Second Effect: Detects all Mana fluctuations that appear within 300 feet of the rune stone and converts this information into a simple signal that will be sent to the main rune stone within a range of three miles.

'A specific magic indicator'? Link wondered. His eyebrows furrowed at the thought, then he turned towards the terrified merchant beside him and cast a Level-2 detection spell on him.

A light spot appeared with a trailing light behind it. This spot of light then flew over to the top of the merchant's head and its trailing light turned into a sheet of light that then curled into a halo-like ring over the merchant's head. Then the halo shone a light down the merchant's body, surrounding him with a thin blanket of light.

Soon, glowing white runes appeared on the merchant's chest, proving that someone had stamped a magic indicator there. There was another spot on his back where a patch of small gray runes appeared.

Link then focused his Mana and directed it to the gray runes to destroy it. Once that was done, the rune stone in the robber's hand immediately stopped glowing. That proved that this patch of gray runes was the signal for the robbers to attack him. But who would attach this to the merchant's body?

Link thought it must be no one else but Elena. She was the only one who had been intimately close to the merchant in the willow grove in the academy, so she had plenty of opportunities to stick this magic indicator onto the merchant's back. Now that he was sure of this point, Link began to see the big picture.

Now that Elena had gotten her hands on the scroll that Link assumed contained important information, she'd completed her aims and had no more use for the merchant. She had promised the merchant an ultimate prize, which the merchant assumed to be a night of carnal bliss with Elena, but in fact, what Elena meant was that she would kill him off because he was useless to her now.

As for these robbers, they must've been the people that she had hired earlier to do the dirty work for her. This way, it was impossible to link the merchant's death back to Elena. Even if Link had figured out her plans, he still didn't have any solid evidence that would prove her guilt beyond any doubt.

What was even more frightening was the fact that Elena had taken every precaution so meticulously. Not only did the rune stone serve the purpose of making sure that the robbers got the right person, it also served as a warning signal in case her plans might be found out as well. Link knew that by now Elena was already aware that her plans had gone awry. She must be thinking of a way to save herself by now. Moreover, this would give her time to destroy any evidence that might incriminate her.

Link also believed that even if he returned swiftly to the academy right now and present the Memory Crystal as an evidence, all he would achieve was to put himself into trouble. It might even prevent him from learning her real motives forever.

No one can say she's not thorough! Link thought.

All these things, Link understood in a matter of seconds. He then cast a Glass Orb and knocked the robber out with it. Then he turned to the merchant who'd pissed himself once again.

"That Elena woman that you're so charmed with is a poisonous snake," said Link. "She's the one who hired these robbers to kill you. If you still want to live, go back to the academy with me and expose her crimes!"

Although he didn't have enough material evidence against Elena right now, Link could easily prove her guilt if this merchant would cooperate and expose what she had done.

To Link's surprise, though, the merchant responded to him with a shake of his head and a sorrowful expression on his face.

"No, I can't do that," he said. "She is my queen. If she wanted my life, then I'll give it to her."

As he spoke, the merchant who had been so timid up till now suddenly drew a dagger out of nowhere and was about to stab it at his own heart.

"Farewell, my love!" the merchant shouted.

Link couldn't just let the man die right in front of him, so he quickly used the Magician's Hand to grab the dagger just in time before it struck the merchant's heart.

"Don't be stupid!" Link shouted. "She just used you like a dog! Why would you want to throw your life away for her?" Link just couldn't understand what this man was thinking. He wondered if Elena had used a dark magic spell on him, but strangely enough he couldn't detect any trace of dark magic aura from his body at all.

"I'd be the happiest man if my queen thinks of me as her dog," said the merchant wistfully. "AhI know she loves me, but she's a holy maiden, so she can't be with me. She must've wanted me dead because she didn't have the heart to reject me in person"

"" Link was speechless for a while when he heard the man's lament. He thought this man might have some kind of a brain damage. Nonetheless, his attention was caught by a couple of words the merchant had used to describe Elena.

"Holy maiden? What do you mean by holy maiden?" Link asked.

"Stop trying, Mr. Magician," said the merchant as he turned around to face Link and gave him a wry smile. "I will never betray my queen."

After finishing his sentence, the merchant went on to slam his head against the metal part of the carriage in an attempt of suicide.

The first suicide attempt might have been an impulsive action, but to try it for a second time meant that this man really wished to die, so it would be pointless to stop him now. The merchant had really lost his head to Elena, so much so that he would actually commit suicide when he found out that Elena wanted him dead.

What a pathetic man! And what a terrifying control Elena had on this man's heart!

Link didn't bother to stop the merchant as he tried to kill himself again. He used a lot of force this time and soon enough Link could hear a splat! It was the sound of the merchant's head being smashed. His lifeless body fell limply to the ground he was dead.

Link stared at the dead body with fear and apprehension. It wasn't the sight of a fresh corpse that disturbed him so much, he was just scared for Eliard.

How far had Elena's charm worked on Eliard? If this is the degree at which a man could be controlled by her, what would happen to Eliard if something happened to Elena?

Link didn't dare to imagine the possibilities of what could happen then.

## 145. Elenas Countermeasure

East Cove Higher Magic Academy.

While Link was rescuing the merchant, Elena was reading a book silently in the hall. She was alone as Eliard was in the elemental pool experimenting on a Level-2 spell he newly learned. He was extremely busy these days.

When magic fluctuations could be felt from the luminous green rune stone, Elena was shocked and her face immediately sunk.

"Have I been exposed?"

She held the rune stone tightly in her hand. The rune stone was originally cold to the touch. However, due to the constant information and vibrations from the magic fluctuations, it had started to become warmer.

When she covered the stone with her hands, she could prevent the magic fluctuations from being felt by anyone else. She could also determine the type of spell used from the special way the rune stone would react to different spells.

The current fluctuation pointed to the presence of explosive spells around the other rune stone. Whenever a spell was caste, there would be a sharp increase in magic fluctuations, allowing Elena to accurately determine the strength and frequency of the attacks.

At the start, Elena felt two extremely strong magic fluctuations back-to-back. Her heart almost skipped a beat. "This is a Level-4 spell! This Magician cast two Level-4 spells in less than two seconds! What fast spellcasting speed! Are two Magicians fighting against each other?"

In fact, it was Link who had consecutively cast the Level-4 defensive spell, Edelweiss, twice.

Following which, the rune stone emanated a series of weak but extremely fast fluctuations. There were a total of 12 fluctuations in less than half a second. Elena was horrified. "This is the strength of a Level-1 spell. Who could have cast 12 spells in half a second? Could it be?"

There was only one Magician in the entire academy who could cast Level-0 spells at such a frequency. That person was Link, the Magician staying in the same Mage Tower whom she had avoided the entire time.

She then felt another few instances of Level-1 and Level-0 spells. This carried on for around ten minutes before the rune became dormant.

Elena's heart sank.

"It could only be him. No one else could cast two Level-4 spells in less than two seconds. Hasn't he been in the Mage Tower all this while? How could he possibly find out?"

Elena was confused. She had already taken precautions to avoid him. To think that she would still be busted by him. However, she knew that she had no time to worry about the details. She had to think of a countermeasure before Link returned to the Mage Tower. Elena stayed calm and immediately weighed her options. From the day she entered the academy, she had been preparing for this day in case she ever got exposed.

She stood up and put away the magic books she was reading.

The apprentice beside her was puzzled and asked, "Elena, we still have a lot of time left. Why did you stop?"

"I am feeling slightly unwell and wish to rest." Elena gave a slight smile and spoke in a gentle voice. She even tried to sound weak and managed to make herself look pale.

The apprentice was completely fooled and immediately nodded, "Please rest. After all, health is the most important."

"Thank you." She then proceeded to the second floor and greeted a few other apprentices on the way. When she reached her room, she immediately entered the room and closed the door behind her.

The room was large by normal standards. It was made up of a common space and two bedrooms, as she was cohabitating with Eliard. She immediately peeled off her facade and her expression of pain and weakness changed into one that was cold and unmoving. She entered her bedroom and took a thick magic book from the top layer of her bookshelf, where she hid three separate scrolls in the cover compartment.

These three scrolls contained detailed blueprints of the internal structure of the six most powerful Mage Towers in the academy. The information included the Detection spells, Defensive spells, and Offensive spells used by the tower and the workings of their respective elemental pools.

If one were to plan their attack based on the information recorded, their ambush would be a lot more efficient. Furthermore, if they could point out the weakness of the Mage Tower from the blueprint, they could take down the Mage Tower in one hit!

There were six Master Magicians in the academy, and their respective Mage Towers would be the pivotal buildings holding the fort in the case of an attack. If the Dark Elves were to destroy them, the academy's defensive strength would be reduced by at least tity percent!

The blueprint of Bale's Mage Tower had already been taken care of. Elena was simply tasked with bringing back the blueprints of the other five central Mage Towers. She had carried out her task efficiently, already securing three of them. She did not expect to be exposed at this crucial juncture when victory was already in sight.

These scrolls should have been sent out a long time ago. However, after the incident in Gladstone City, the Norton Kingdom started their ruthless extermination of the Dark Elves as well as anyone who had pledged allegiance to the Dark Brotherhood and the Syndicate. This destroyed all her connections outside of the academy and left her alone on this highly dangerous mission. She could only keep these scrolls in a safe place until she received new instructions.

However, her life was at stake now.

"I have to send the blueprints out, but how? Link is rushing back right now, I don't have much time." Elena's heart was pounding as she pranced around the room. Her brain was working at top speed, thinking of a way to escape the academy safely.

After a while, she was suddenly struck with an idea, "That's it!"

It would be difficult for her to deliver the blueprints herself, but she could use Eliard's help! Eliard was Link's best friend. If she left the academy together with Eliard, Link would have to think twice before attacking her as Eliard's safety would be compromised. Furthermore, she could also use Eliard as a hostage when the time came.

Elena then formulated a detailed plan before she put away the scrolls into her robe. She then left her room and headed towards the elemental pool on the second floor.

She should not be disturbing Eliard as he was experimenting with his new spell. However, time was short. Elena pinched her thighs with full force and a sharp pain shot through her body, causing her eyes to be full of tears.

She then activated the runes on the door. When the runes lit up, she feebly said, "Eliard, can you come out for a moment?"

Within ten seconds, the door to the elemental pool opened. Eliard walked out with wet hair and ice residue on his hands. There were also many tears in his magic robe. He looked completely disheveled.

He must have forcefully interrupted his experiment at the most crucial moment.

Elena felt a tinge of guilt upon seeing Eliard's pale face, but suppressed her emotions almost immediately.

Eliard on the other hand, didn't think much about the incident. The moment he saw the pained expression on his lover's face, he gently asked, "Elena, what happened?"

Elena clutched her abdomen with her hands and beads of cold sweat could be seen on her forehead. She spoke with a pale face, "My stomach hurts and I have no idea why. The recovery potions didn't help as well"

"How did this happen! I'll take you to the church in River Cove Town now!" Eliard scooped Elena off her feet and briskly walked towards the Mage Tower entrance.

Magic could accomplish almost anything in the World of Firuman. However, healing was something that magic had limitations in. Priests were the only ones who could cure serious injuries or illnesses. Hence, a Magician would still have to consult a priest if they fell sick.

As the East Cove Higher Magic Academy did not have piss, they would have to go to River Cove Town, which was exactly what Elena wanted.

Eliard ran all the way to the stables with Elena in his hands. By the time he reached, he was already sweating and panting.

Eliard immediately paid the coachman a whopping ten gold coins and shouted, "To River Cove Town, double up!"

With the monetary incentive, the coachman's actions were also unusually swift. He led the horses out of the stable, hooked them onto the carriage and with a resounding whip, the carriage sped out of the academy.

In the carriage, Eliard held Elena's hand with one hand while gently rubbing her stomach with another. He whispered, "Why did this happen. Was it because of last night?"

"Don't say that." Elena's pale cheeks suddenly flushed with a tinge of shyness.

Eliard felt extremely guilty and reprimanded himself in his heart. His expression also grew gentler by the minute. At that moment, he felt that this woman meant more to him than the world, even more than magic, which he loved so dearly.

He could not explain the phenomenon as well.

In the beginning, Eliard did not feel much affection for Elena, merely noticing that she was an understanding and kind girl. However, as they spent more time with one another, he gradually grew accustomed to her companionship. He then started developing feelings for Elena. There were times when he would feel jealous when he saw her chatting and joking with other male apprentices.

When she inadvertently showed her seductive expressions, there would be a huge desire to make her his own. He still remembered the feelings of bliss when they shared their first kiss. He also remembered the ecstasy he felt when they were connected for the first time.

Now, he was already inseparable from her. If she was met with an unfortunate accident someday, Eliard had no idea how he was going to take it.

The carriage quickly sped through the gate and onto the King's Lane.

The East Cove Higher Magic Academy's carriages had four windows, each of them made from clear crystals. One would have a clear view of their surroundings even when sitting in the carriage.

Less than half a minute later, Elena saw a familiar figure riding towards the carriage on a Wind Fenrir.

The figure seemed to have noticed the magic aura in the carriage as well. He gradually slowed down his speed and turned his Wind Fenrir sideways to block the entire King's Lane, preventing the carriage from moving any further.

The coachman was horrified and immediately stopped the carriage.

Elena then narrowed her eyes ever so slightly. She knew that this was the most crucial moment.

## 146. Was It True? Or Was It All a Lie?

On King's Lane.

Link saw through the transparent crystal window of the carriage that it was Eliard and Elena inside. Link sighed quietly. He knew that Elena would be using this trick on him.

Eliard was Link's best friend. Elena must've known that Link would never do anything to put Eliard in harm's way. Link was secretly impressed at how cunning Elena had been by using Eliard as a hostage.

By then, Eliard had also noticed Link as well; he was not aware of the real situation yet and was curious about Link's actions.

"Link," he called out as he opened the carriage window, "what are you doing here?"

Link's eyes never left Elena. At that time, she was leaning closely against Eliard's chest and her face looked very paleshe seemed to be in pain, but Link knew that it was just a ruse. He noticed that Elena had rested her hand on Eliard's heart all this time, never moving it away even for just an inch.

She was wearing a magic bracelet on that hand. If Link wasn't mistaken, the bracelet should be the one that contained a Level-1 Whistle. There were some rough and clunky parts on the bracelet that confirmed Link's suspicion that it was Eliard's own handiwork.

Link was sure that if he ever made any moves that would threaten Elenassafety, she would immediately release that Whistle straight at Eliard's heart, killing him in an instant. Link feared he might not be able to stop Elena in time if she did that since the magic bracelet was so close to Eliard.

This time, it seemed Eliard really was in trouble. Link mustn't make any rash movements.

"Get out of the way, Link," said Eliard. "Elena's really unwell, I must take her to the priest immediately!" Eliard could feel Elena's body shivering in his arms. He thought she must really be suffering in pain right now.

Link let out a long sigh and shook his head gently. He then pointed his wand at Elena.

"Eliard," he said, "she must not be allowed to leave the East Cove Magic Academy!"

"What are you talking about?" said Eliard, completely flummoxed. "What is going on here, Link?" He was getting more and more worried about Elena's illness and wanted to get help for her as fast as possible, yet Link was here blocking the way. At that moment, even though Link had always been his best friend, anger was beginning to brew in Eliard's heart.

Link squinted his eyes to focus on Elena's every movement. Then, without moving his gaze away from her, he took out the Memory Crystal from his pocket.

As Link's Mana slowly flowed into it, the amber-like yellow crystal began to glow faintly. Then a play of light and shadow appeared in the air near the crystal, showing Elena's amorous rendezvous with the dead merchant in the willow grove.

The crystal in Link's hand was of high quality, plus Link's own control of his Mana was unparalleled. These factors combined to make the scene displayed so incredibly clear and life-like that they were no different from a hologram.

Link didn't show the entire scene that went on in the willow grove as he wanted to protect Eliard's feelings. All he showed were several seconds of them kissing and that was it. He knew that even that was more than enough.

After just a glance of the scene Eliard seemed as if he was hit by a ton of bricks. He just sat there completely struck dumb!

Elena really didn't expect that Link would use this trick. The originally pale face of hers now got deathly pale where not even a tinge of color was on her face anymore. Eliard, in contrast, had gone red in the face. Even his eyes seemed to be bloodshot now. Elena could clearly feel Eliard's hands shaking now.

This Link really is something, Elena sighed. He's left me no room to defend myself at all. I'm afraid I won't be leaving here alive.

After a while, another scene emerged from the Memory Crystal. It was the scene when the merchant committed suicide on the King's Lane.

"Elena is not the innocent girl you think she is, Eliard," said Link after the scene ended. He then put the crystal back inside his pocket. "It's likely that she might be involved in some evil cult as a holy maiden and was plotting something that would undermine the security of the East Cove Magic Academy. Therefore, she must not be allowed to leave here before everything is investigated!"

Link had noticed Eliard's appearance by now and he felt very sorry for him, but there was no other choice. This must be done. Eliard seemed to have heard Link's words, but he hadn't made any response just yet.

"Elena," he finally whispered to her in a desperate voice, "please tell me this isn't true."

Elena didn't dare to look straightito Eliard's eyes. The scenes from the Memory Crystal was so clear that there was no way she could get away with accusing them as forged and untrue. And so, all Elena could do was look down. Her lips shook slightly as if she wanted to say something, yet they both stayed that way for a while and no one said anything.

Eliard had been the perfect gentleman with her. Even though she couldn't feel the same way that he felt for her, she still couldn't find any flaws in him to attack him with. And so, she stayed silent.

"You're not ill at all, are you?" asked Eliard. He wasn't an idiot. As a matter of fact, he hadamnd so brilliant that he was almost unparalleled, so everything was quickly clear to him now after what Link had shown him. "Elena, you faked your illness to trick me inobringing you away from East Cove Academy, didn't you?"

His eyes swept over Elena's delicate face. It was the face that had once given him bliss and joy, yet all he felt now was fear and even a hint of hatred.

In the end, his eyes fell on the hand that clutched on his chest. Those fingers were so slender and delicate, the skin so fair and smooth, and her arms were so round and soft. Her hands were so beautiful that he had held them lightly in his own hands and admired them endlessly many a night.

Yet now, Eliard's gaze was only fixed on the magic bracelet on her wrist. It was a gift from him that he made for her himself.

"Now that Link has found out about you, are you going to threaten him with my life?" Eliard's eyes were now becoming cold and emotionless. All the warmth he felt for her was gone now. How could there be such a cruel and heartless woman in this world?

Finally, Elena discarded all her pretenses and smirked at Eliard. She raised her head haughtily and the tenderness in her eyes had now completely disappeared and was replaced with cold ruthlessness.

"Eliard, you simple fool," mocked Elena, still clinging to Eliard's heart. "I've been pulling the wool over your eyes all this time and you've always been happily following me around. Let me tell you, that bastard in the scene wasn't the only one, I actually have four other lovers as well!"

Eliard's face was now turning purple. He gritted his teeth in anger, but because he was naturally mild-tempered he still couldn't find any vicious words to attack Elena with.

"Why?" That was the only word Eliard finally managed to utter after being stunned for a long time.

"There is no reason. I just like to play with you. I think you look stupid!" Elena's words became even more vicious.

After saying that, instead of looking straightito Eliard's eyes, she turned to Link and laughed in his face.

"You are better than I expected," she said. "I don't mind getting caught by such a mighty talent like you. But let me be clear, I have no intention of going back to the academy. If you want to bring me back, then you'll have to bring back two dead bodies one is mine, and the other is Eliard's!"

"A single magic bracelet is no threat to me," said Link, narrowing his piercing eyes at Elena with a gradually boiling temper.

"Haha! Did you think that I would kill him with this pathetic bracelet?" jeered Elena. "I've slept with this idiot so many times that I've fixed so many things into his body now. I'll be honest with you, I'm not much of a Magician, and my skills in magic spells aren't all that impressive. But divine spells, especially dark divine spells, are just my forte! I could easily put someone as unguarded as this idiot easily under my control. Remember this, if I die, then the divine spells in Eliard's body will explode as well!"

Link was shocked and suddenly caught up in a dilemma. The merchant had called her a holy maiden after all, so it should be natural that she would have knowledge of some powerful divine spells. Link took her threasseriously and knew that he mustn't make any moves that might cause harm to Eliard.

But can he let this woman go? Obviously not!

And so, for a time, the two sunk into silence with either side not willing or able to make any move.

Then suddenly the usually silent Eliard exploded in anger.

"Did you think that I would be afraid of death, Elena?" he roared. "Then you're sorely mistaken!" He then swiftly began to cast the spell, Whistle right as he spoke, completely undeterred by the possibility that Elena might counterattack. He was ready to fight till the death, and he must kill this wicked woman with his own hands!

Elena immediately began to fight back by directing her Mana into the magic bracelet. Because she relied on magic gear to cast the spell, she would complete much faster than Eliard. In this case, she would be able to unleash a Whistle within 0.1 seconds at this speed, there was no way that Eliard would have enough time to defend himself. The only one who could respond in such a brief moment would be Link.

Link focused his gaze and entered instantly into the calm state of spellcasting. The world in his eyes now seemed to move very slowly. With the wand in his hand pointing at Elena, he directed his Mana into it and instantaneously set forth a translucent ball of light that immediately hit the bracelet on Elena's hand.

"Silent Disarray!" uttered Link under his breath.

Silent Disarray

Level-2 Spell

Mana Consumption: 60 points.

Effects: Disrupts the spell structure of spells at Level-2 and below to impede the target's spellcasting.

(Note: This special magical structure requires precise control of Mana. Spellcaster must be of Level-5 or higher in order to master this spell.)

This was a spell that Link had just mastered recently, so he could cast it almost instantaneously. When Link's Silent Disarray was completed, Elena's Whistle was only half-formed, and so Link's spell managed to make the spell structure of Elena's Whistle collapse and thus, the spell disintegrated.

That didn't deter Elena though. When her Whistle failed, she suddenly slipped out a dagger with her other hand at the speed of a lightning bolt and was about to fling it towards Eliard's heart.

It was obvious that this woman had gone through the training of an Assassin's combative skills. She had slipped out the dagger with such acuity and speed, plus the dagger's material had anti-magic properties so low-level spells would be useless against it. High-level spells, on the other hand, would take too much time to cast.

Link weighed his options for a moment and soon discovered that the only way to stop the blade in time was to stun Elena.

Link had always been decisive and he was even more so now. So, within the blink of an eye, Link waved his wand and unleashed a Glass Orb that headed straight to Elena's hand that was holding the dagger. The blow's aim was to attack Elena's arm so that the threat of the dagger could be diminished.

Link used his high-speed spellcasting skills here and he used the Glass Orb spell which he was very familiar with. Moreover, he'd also borrowed the strength of the Domingo crystal by using the elements stored inside it, so Link only spent 0.01 seconds to cast the second Glass Orb.

The Glass Orb shot through the air and exploded near Elena's ear. It was Link's plan to knock Elena out with the shockwave of the explosion. While it was true that he mustn't kill her because of the threat of the dark divine spells inside Eliard's body, but there was no reason why he couldn't make her unconscious!

Bang! Bang!

Those were the explosions of two Glass Orbs that were unleashed almost simultaneously. The hand that held the dagger was directly hit by the impact of the Glass Orb, rendering it useless in holding on to the weapon. Meanwhile, the other Glass Orb that was aimed at Elena's ear hadslightly missed the target that Link was aiming for.

It was unclear whether it was a coincidence or if it was intentional, but Elena had leaned her head at the very last moment towards the Glass Orb near her ear. It was supposed to explode 60 inches away from her, yet now it exploded in half that distance, which was close enough to kill her!

Elena's head was blasted with the full impact of the explosion. Although she had a thick head of hair that might dampen the explosive impact slightly, blood still came streaming out of her ears, immediately staining half of her body in red.

Even with such a serious injury, though, Elena still stayed conscious.

Those big pair of eyes had now gone dull, but they stared fixedly at Eliard's face with the same warmth and tenderness that had been there before. There was even a weak but sincere smile on her face now.

"Forgive memy love."

Those were the last words that parted Elena's lips. Then, with the gentle smile still on her face, she died.

Nothing happened to Eliard, though. He did not blow up into pieces the way Elena had threatened would happen. There was no change in his body at all.

Eliard slumped down to the ground. Then, he seemed to suddenly think of something and rushed up to Elena's body and held it tight against his chest. He then raised his head up to heaven and bawled at the top of his lungs, his voice drenched in sorrow.

He felt he could understand Elena now. She was a priestess of a dark cult and was on a certain mission, so she had to use her charms to lure the men to use them to her advantage.

But Eliard was sure that she loved him. She had ridiculed him and used cold and vicious words with him when her secret plot was about to be revealed to the world because she wanted to taunt Eliard into killing her.

What other choice would she have?

"Ahhhhhhh!!!!!"

If someone had pierced a knife through Eliard's heart right now, the pain would still have been less than what he currently felt.

My love is dead. My life is over, thought Eliard as he clung to Elena's lifeless body.

Meanwhile, Link was also shaken by what had just happened. He looked at Elena's corpse and then at his friend Eliard who was suffering in immense pain. His eyebrows knitted so closely together that they were joined into one.

Did she intend to die? Were her feelings for Eliard sincere? Or was it all just a ruse?

What was true? Or was it all a lie? Even Link wasn't so sure now.

## 147. The Downfall of a Genius

The King's Lane

Eliard was devastated. He held Elena's corpse in his arms and fell into a state of despair.

Link could not bear to see his best friend in such great pain. It was a heart-wrenching moment. As for the coachman, he simply stayed in the corner and was too scared to move.

However, even though he was paralyzed with fear, he was also the only person who had no connection with the issue. His awareness and judgment were not as seriously affected as the rest.

His gaze alternated between Link, Eliard and Elena's corpse when all of a sudden, he saw a faint glow emanating from Elena's corpse, which disappeared quickly after circling once around her chest.

The speed of this light ball was extremely fast. Everything happened in the blink of an eye. When the coachman tried to look more closely after rubbing his eyes, all that was left was a body covered in blood.

Originally, the coachman wanted to report this phenomenon to Link, but immediately dismissed the idea. These Magicians would kill without batting an eyelid in the heat of the moment. This is too horrifying. I would be better off if I stay out of this.

Link was too preoccupied and shocked by Elena's rashness to notice this minute detail. Furthermore, he was completely focused on Eliard and paid no notice to Elena's corpse. As for Eliard, he was thoroughly devastated and had practically no awareness of his surroundings.

The coachman lost sight of the light ball instantly. He did not realize that it had floated to the back of the carriage. The light emanating from it was dim, much like a highly transparent glass orb. It was also very small in size, only about the size of a thumb. It carefully evaded Link's field of vision and slowly drifted into the forest beside the carriage.

It took its time and slowly bobbed up and down till it had covered a distance of about 300 feet. It then accelerated to a speed almost ten times faster than its original, leaving shockwaves and wind in its path. It traveled straightito the depths of the Girvent Forest.

After a while, a farm appeared in its field of vision. There was a beautiful manor in the middle of the farm. It should be the property of a small noble family.

The farm did not cover a large area. There were about 30 households over the 1000-acre land. In the farms beside the village, one could see many farmers hard at work, and at the northwest corner of the farm under a large tree was simply a cemetery built simply from wooden fences.

There were over ten people surrounding the cemetery. A pale-faced female corpse laid on the ground while a man cried uncontrollably while holding her in his arms. From his muttering, one could determine that the deceased woman was his wife who died from difficult childbirth. There were two farmers beside the body who were hard at work digging a pit to bury the woman.

The woman was dead for less than a day. As it was winter, the body still looked as though it had some vitality.

The dim light started traveling even faster upon this sight and rushed into the body of this young woman.

The man was still holding his wife's body while lamenting about her tragic life. However, the next moment, he let go of the body and stared at it with a horrified expression. His lips moved but no words came out of his mouth.

"What happened, Joseph?" Someone asked.

"Lisa seemed to have moved a while back." The person called Joseph sounded slightly uncertain. His wife had already stopped moving, causing him to suspect that it was all his illusion.

"Don't be too sad, Joseph. Lisa has already gone to heaven," another person comforted.

Joseph agreed with his gaze still glued to his wife's body. At that moment, the body moved again. Her chest even showed faint signs of breathing, validating the presence of life.

Joseph was extremely convinced this time. He was surprised and elated and immediately placed his ears on his wife's chest to listen for a heartbeat. He then heard faint but clear thumping sounds!

Joseph was ecstatic. He shouted, "Lisa is not dead. She is still alive! She has returned from the dead. Oh God of Light, thank you for your kindness!"

How can someone come back from the dead? Everyone thought Joseph was going insane from the depression and looked at him with a compassionate gaze.

However, as Lisa's breathing became more visible and showed more obvious signs of life such as coughing, no one doubted Joseph's words anymore.

"Oh my god, Lisa really is back."

"But I saw her die with my own eyes!" A middle-aged woman screamed in horror. She was a midwife and had delivered countless babies. She had never seen a woman come back to life from a difficult childbirth!

"This must be the blessing of the God of Light! He must have been touched by Joseph's love." This was an illogical explanation. However, in a world where gods were proven to have existed and even appeared throughout the annals of history, this was a sound and persuasive argument.

Finally, an old man walked out. He was Joseph's father. He said, "Alright Joseph. Lisa may have been resurrected. However, she is still very weak. Take her back home immediately!"

"Yes!" Joseph was extremely happy and he felt as though he had unlimited energy. He hugged Lisa and ran all the way back home.

In his embrace, Elena sighed. Master's magic is indeed powerfulbut this body was too heavily damaged. Also, she seems to be an ordinary village woman. She must have been bounded to many menial tasks and household chores every day. It might not be easy to escape from this place.

She then started to recall her past memories. When Elena's physical body suffered lethal injuries, she expelled her soul from that body and left. However, that was not before she took a close look at the contents of the scroll using the Eye of the Soul.

The soul was the most basic and pure state of life, with the ability to record any information with objectivity and faith. In other words, a person in that state would have an eidetic memory.

As Elena recalled, bits and pieces of the contents would slowly appear in her mind. Every detail was clear and defined. She had a look of satisfaction on her face. That's a relief. Although it had been a dangerous mission, I somehow completed it perfectly. Most importantly, I seemed to have destroyed a brilliant Magician in the World of Light. This is extremely worth it!

With Eliard's sensitivity, he must have thought that I deliberately took the attack. He must be devastated and might even fall into depression. He has also just turned 18, which was the golden period for any Magician to increase their strength. If his depression could last for a couple of years, his magic achievements would definitely be substantially reduced in the future. This would mean that she had gotten rid of a potential enemy.

It was even possible that he might turn against Link. Elena could not help but chuckle at that thought.

How perfect. Elena was proud. Perhaps I will feel slightly bad for deceiving Eliard. No, he is an enemy, I must be ruthless! Show no compassion and pity in the face of an enemy. This is master's teachings!"

Link could only sigh as all the light went out in Eliard's eyes. It wouldn't help to simply stay on King's Lane. He turned to the coachman and said, "Let's return to the academy."

"Yes, Mr. Link." The coachman immediately nodded. Link was pretty famous within the academy and he had long heard of his name.

The carriage turned in the opposite direction and slowly made its way back.

Along the way, no one spoke. Even the horses seemed to have detected the repressive atmosphere and trotted as lightly as possible.

When they arrived back at the academy, the carriage stopped in front of Herrera's Mage Tower. Link stepped forward to open the carriage door as Eliard dragged his feet towards the Mage Tower with Elena's bloody corpse in his arms.

When the Magician's Apprentices in the hall saw the situation, many of them exclaimed or screamed in horror.

"Oh my god."

"What happened?"

"Elena just said that she was feeling unwell, how could she have"

Eliard ignored all the comments and simply walked towards the staircase.

Herrera was bound to know if such a serious thing happened in the Mage Tower. As Eliard climbed the stairs, she appeared at the platform on the second floor.

"Eliard, what happened?" Herrera stared at the bloodied corpse with a look of disbelief.

In her eyes, Elena was a conscientious and hardworking student. She also had a flair for magic. She was even optimistic about her relationship with Eliard, confident that it would become a beautiful story she could tell to her next batch of students. How did things turn out like this?

Eliard did not answer the questions and simply walked past Herrera. He had no idea why he did that. His only aim now was to satisfy his stubborn inner self and bring Elena back home, to the small room where they had spent countless happy moments together.

As Herrera did not get an answer, she then looked at Link, "What is going on?"

Link smiled bitterly and said, "Master, I need to tell you this in private."

"Alright. Come to my room." Herrera walked towards the highest floor while Link followed closely behind.

When they reached the hall at the highest floor of the Mage Tower, Link took out his memory crystal and activated it. Images of the event in the Girvent Forest appeared. The talks Elena had with the merchants in the forest, the suicide of the merchant on King's Lane, all of them were displayed clearly in front of Herrera.

Herrera had a look of disbelief on her face. "This is Elena?"

This was the complete opposite from the obedient and hardworking Elena she knew!

"It should be her if she doesn't have a twin sister." Link threw his hands out helplessly. It seemed as though he had successfully stopped Elena. However, he felt that something was amiss although he could not point out exactly where.

"Do you know the contents of the scroll?" Herrera did not dwell much on Elena's deception. Her main concern now was the scrolls, which were the most important object of the incident.

"I have no idea. I guess the scrolls are still on Elena's body. When I stopped her, she was about to escape. However, it might not be easy now that Eliard is devastated." Link could totally understand Eliard's actions. If he were to be in Eliard's shoes, he might have already gone insane.

"What exactly happened that made Eliard so depressed?" Herrera could feel that Eliard was not in a good shape.

Link then recounted the incident at King's Lane in detail. When he was done, Herrera fell silent.

It took some time before she sighed, "I have no idea if Elena had true feelings for Eliard. However, I know that it will be difficult for Eliard to recover given his personality."

Eliard was sincere, generous and even a little stubborn. Once he decided to go into a relationship, he would definitely put all his emotions into maintaining it. Now that his partner had willingly died for him, he might be stuck in this whirlpool of remorse for his entire life.

In other words, a talented Magician like Eliard might meet his downfall because of Elena.

Upon hearing Herrera's words, Link immediately recalled the merchant who willingly died for Elena. He suddenly felt a chill down his spine.

The merchant was merely an ordinary person and was, naturally, easily manipulated. However, Eliard was a world-class genius and was way more difficult to control. That might be why Elena adopted the destructive approach to ruin him.

And it looked like she was successful.

Had her ability to manipulate people reached that level?

So is she really dead? Link was starting to feel unsure.

## 148. Fistfights and Friendship

Eliard had been staying in his room all the time after coming back to the Mage Tower. He didn't eat or drink. He just sat there staring at Elena's body in a daze. No one knew what he was thinking about.

On the second day, Herrera searched Elena's body and found three scrolls containing the detailed map of the internal layout of the Master Magicians' Mage Towers.

Eliard looked on numbly throughout the entire process. He didn't stop Herrera from her search, but neither did he speak to her or make any movements at all. He just sat there motionless like an inanimate sculpture.

No one disturbed him after the discovery of the scrolls, because they had caused an uproar throughout the entire academy.

Even prominent Magicians in the Master Magicians' Mage Towers could be bought with gold coins, and it turned out that they had sold the secrets of three Mage Towers! The whole academy was shocked by this terrifying revelation.

The dean, Anthony was understandably furious when he got wind of this news. He was now afraid for the safety of the academy, which was why he presided over the operation to cleanse the academy of traitorous and corrupt Magicians once and for all. The Magicians who had sold the academy's secrets were naturally stripped off their magic powers, their memories of the Mage Towers wiped out of their minds and they were cast out of the academy.

All the merchants involved in the plot suddenly disappeared off the face of the earth. This wasn't the academy's doing, though, but was the work of the MI3. The East Cove Magic Academy was within the Norton Kingdom's territory after all, when something terrible happened there, rumors said that the king himself had taken special interest in this matter.

After the purge, Anthony and the other members of the academy's high council began to rectify the gaps in the security system of the academy and planned confidential measures to make sure that something like this could never happen again.

Link held no important position in the academy, so he had little to do with all these follow-up measures. Besides, he'd already received generous rewards from the dean, which was the pass to enter the dean's Mage Tower anytime he wished. Plus, he was allowed to use the Level-6 Elemental Pool in the dean's Mage Tower up to six hours per week and the permission to freely browse any books he liked in the dean's library.

It was just what he needed right now.

Although the traitors in the academy had all been rooted out and it seemed that the dark forces had been thwarted, Link still felt an indescribable uneasiness in his mind. This type of unease always drove Link to forget everything else and focus on learning magic and advancing his level.

With this obsessive determination, Link had made immense progress in a short time, but it was still not good enough for him. Once Link began to learn a Level-6 spell, he realized that he had far underestimated the difficulty in becoming a Master Magician.

Link now knew what a nonsense fantasy it was to try to reach Level-8 in three months. It would be a miracle if he could even master a Level-7 spell well enough to know how to use it in a real battle in that time.

This discovery caused Link to become quite exasperated.

Still, Link's true strength was in his unrelenting attitude towards something that he'd set out to do. No matter what kind of difficulties he faced, even if they seemed to be insuperable, he would never give up even though he might feel frustrated. He would just quickly adapt to the current situation then find the best solution in order to move on.

Thus, although he didn't know if he could achieve his goal, he never stopped working hard to try to advance his level to the highest point that he could muster.

Link slept for six hours a day and didn't drink or eat but depended on magic spells to maintain his body's health. He would cast the spell, Elemental Cure on his body once in the morning and once before he went to sleep at night, and that was enough to let him go through the day.

That was how his days went by for the past week. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Link had completely immersed himself in the world of magic spells and had completely given up the joy of life.

Late one night after the tiring week, Link was walking back to Herrera's Mage Tower in utter exhaustion from the Heaven's Thorn. Just as he was approaching the Mage Tower's entrance, he saw Eliard standing there waiting for him.

Within a week, the originally well-built Eliard had become emaciated and his dark blue eyes were now deep-set and dull. Even his skin had gotten grayish. He looked nothing like his former self.

"Eliard, why are you so?" Link was at a loss for how to face this friend of his. Even with all things considered, Link was still the one to cause Elena's death. There was no way for him to avoid this fact. Admittedly part of the reason why Link had been obsessively learning magic all this while was to avoid meeting Eliard.

A faint smile appeared on Eliard's face. He looked at the tired face and bloodshot eyes of his friend's and shook his head gently.

"You don't have to blame yourself, Link," he said. "You did the right thing. I don't blame you for it at all."

It had been a week now and Eliard had given it much thought. He had resented Link for a time, but it only lasted for a few hours. He understood well that Link had done what he should do to protect the safety of the academy. The one at fault wasn't Link, it was Elena. Still, Eliard couldn't bring himself to blame Elena either. She's dead now anyway.

In the end, the only thing Eliard hated was his fate. He couldn't understand why fate had to torture him so. Fate had brought him to a woman he loved, yet it also snatched her away so quickly. Nothing could be crueler than that!

Meanwhile, Link felt no sense of relief at all after hearing what Eliard just said. He grew even more worried instead and felt he had to say something.

"I"

"I've decided to give up on magic," said Eliard suddenly.

"What did you say?!" Link's eyes opened wide in shock at Eliard's words. This was the Magician whose level of genius was one that the world hadn't seen in five hundred years! In the game when Link had reached the Legendary Pinnacle level and was about to fight against Nozama, Eliard had begun to prepare himself to ascend to the level of Archmage while he was only 36 years old!

But now this would-be earth-shattering genius was talking about giving up magic, all because of a woman? This is preposterous!

For what felt like hours, Link just stood there dumbstruck, hardly knowing what to do or how to respond.

Eliard then took out a pouch from his sleeve and used the Magician's Hand to hand it over to Link.

"Here are the 1300 gold coins that I owe you," said Eliard. "I'm paying it all back to you now. Thank you for your selfless help in the past, II'm very sorry!"

"" Link stared at the coin pouch floating in front of him as all kinds of emotions began to stir up in him.

What was Eliard thinking? He's giving up magic and paying off his debts to Link because he wanted to completely sever the friendship between them? All because of a woman from a dark cult? So now that Eliard was heartbroken he was just going to abandon magic just like that?

Anger started to rise up in Link as well. He flung the pouch violently to the ground then rushed up towards Eliard and grabbed his collar.

"You're a coward, do you know that?" Link shouted in Eliard's face. "You're a motherf\*cking coward!"

Eliard shoved Link away and his face turned stone cold.

"This is my decision; it's got nothing to do with you!" said Eliard. "If I didn't learn magic, then I wouldn't have met Elena. If it wasn't for magic, Elena wouldn't have died! Magic killed her!"

Those words were the last straw for Link. He was now desperately learning and practicing magic so he could gain enough strength to fight against the Level-8 demon, and he was ready to sacrifice all the joys in his life to achieve that. Still, there was a thread of hope in him that had got him through all the hardships he faced so far, and that hope had sprung from the fact that he knew he wasn't alone in this fight. He knew that apart from himself there was a genius Magician whose talents could one day save the world from the forces of darkness. He knew that once this young genius grew up and had developed his skills to its full potential, he would be a powerful ally who would fight against the Dark Army with him side-by-side.

And now that damned bastard actually thought of giving up magic?

The flame of anger in Link's heart had gotten to the such an untamable point that he no longer cared about Eliard's feelings.

"You're wrong! It wasn't magic that killed Elena, it was her evil cult!" Link shouted. "If she didn't get killed this time, then she would've died the next time! If she didn't die because of me, then someone else would've killed her once they found out her secret plot! Either way, she would've died anyway!"

Thwack!

As soon as Link finished his sentence he was seeing stars for a moment from the punch to his eye and his cheek was burning with pain from the hit as well.

"You wanna fight?!" Link lunged forward and punched Eliard on his nose till it was gushing out with blood.

Eliard had gotten furious by now. Not only did Link cause Elena's death, he'd even uttered such despicable words, and now he wanted to fight back? And so Eliard punched Link back one more time, this time making him completely punch-drunk with the brunt force of Eliard's fist.

Link wasn't about to just take the punches like a rag doll, though. He threw another hook to Eliard's chin, causing him to lose his balance and he fell to the ground. Then, he went down on the fallen Eliard and prepared to punch him some more.

To Link's surprise, Eliard's response was extremely quick. While he was still on the ground he managed to kick Link with both of his feet and knocked Link down as well. Then, as both of them were now on the ground, they started to fight like dogs with one person punching and the other kicking, then one socked the other with his elbow and the other responded with his knee. This went on for a few minutes, neither party was willing to be the first person to stop.

Link had been leading an easy life in the past few months, so although he was still not as strong and muscular as Eliard, he had gained considerable physical strength and was no longer the scrawny kid that he used to be. Eliard, on the other hand, had gotten much thinner and weaker in the past week, which meant that both of them were now fighting as equals. Neither of them had used magic, though, because they knew that once magic was involved the other party might get killed. Even though they were both angry at each other they still had no wish to kill each other yet.

Both of them had been storing much anger and frustration all this while, so now they treated each other as punching bags to release the pent-up emotions inside them.

After a few minutes, the entrance door of the Mage Tower was suddenly opened and the crystal lamp hanging over the door lit up as well. Then, Herrera's wrathful face emerged out from the inside of the Mage Tower.

She had rushed down here from her room in a flurry. She was still wearing her nightdress and her hair was messy as she just got out of bed. She reached the Mage Tower entrance only to see two of her proudest disciples brawling on the ground like common street dogs.

Link's face was swollen to the size of a pig's head, one of his eye sockets was black and blue and his lips were cracked and bloody while the Magician's robe on his body was torn to tatters. Eliard's conditions were even worse as his body had been weakening for the past week. When Herrera emerged from the door she saw Link sitting on Eliard and bashing into his face with his fists!

At this moment, Eliard's face was even more swollen than Link's, his nose was dripping with blood which stained the clothes on his chest red. One of his eyes had ballooned almost to the size of a peach and it was obvious that Eliard couldn't open it anymore. That strikingly handsome face of his was now such a mess that it wasn't even human-like!

Not only that, but all around them hundreds of gold coins scattered and rolled about. Three shoes were seen nearby the last one was still on Link's left foot.

What a scene it was!

"Enough, both of you!" bellowed Herrera in rage.

Among both of them, one was already a genius Magician who had begun to attract fame and reputation in the outside world. Meanwhile, the other was a young Magician with nearly perfect innate talents in magic and limitless potential to develop in the future. The fact that two outstanding talents had emerged in the span of a few months was indeed a miracle, yet now both of them ended up wrestling each other in the dirt was such a shame! If rumors of this incident ever spread out they'd be the laughing stock of the whole kingdom!

Now that they saw their tutor, Link, who had long tired out his arms, stood up immediately. His strength by then had almost reached its limit and his fists could no longer throw any more punches. He was sure that if they persisted any longer he would be completely overwhelmed by the physically stronger Eliard.

Eliard was as worn out as a pair of old boots himself, so he clambered up onto his feet and stood in front of Herrera right beside Link. They both bent their heads down, staring at the ground like children who knew they were in trouble and were about to be punished.

Herrera was initially about to explode in anger, but when she saw how innocently child-like Link and Eliard looked, she suddenly found it all amusing instead. She must keep a stern appearance, though.

"Tidy up these things on the ground and get yourselves back to your rooms!" she said sternly.

At that moment Herrera felt as if she was a foster mother of two immature young boys.

Herrera was arsected tutor to both Link and Eliard, so they quickly and quietly obeyed her command and went about picking up their shoes and the gold coins that scattered about everywhere on the ground.

Link picked up his right shoe and tried to put it back on, but just then he happened to glance at Eliard who was squatting on the ground trying to put on his shoes as well. Link saw how the face that used to be the envy of men and the adoration of women now looked as swollen as a pig's! Link suddenly found it so hilarious that he erupted into uncontrollable laughter.

Eliard saw how Link's face was further disfigured with his laughter and couldn't hold back his laughter either. Soon enough the two friends were both laughing at each other's ridiculous faces.

But after a while, Eliard was reminded again of his own fate, which caused him to cry. He wept for the loss of his beloved Elena, he wept for the hard times he had to endure ever since his parents abandoned him on the streets when he was just a baby. He sat on the ground and wept and wept at his tragic fate until the initial sobs turned into howling wails.

Link and Herrera looked at each other then at Eliard in sympathy. Link then started to pick up all the gold coins with the Magician's Hand as he was too tired to do it himself. It only took a few seconds before all the gold coins were collected in the pouch. He then put the pouch into the storage bracelet he got from the Dark Elf Magician, Parson. This storage bracelet had been purged of all dark magic auras and had even been slightly modified by Link himself so no one could ever recognize its Dark Elven origins anymore.

All traces of anger in Link's heart had subsided after the brief fistfight.

"Here, take this," said Link as he slipped the storage bracelet onto Eliard's wrist.

"Take it with you and go outside and explore the world for a while. You'll feel better soon enough. But don't ever think about giving up on magic again."

Eliard said nothing in reply, he just nodded in agreement.

The fight just now had also cleansed Eliard's heart of all anger and resentment towards his friend. Looking back, he finally realized that things hadn't been so bad that he must give up everything in life and run away.

Elena was still the love of his life, of course, and he naturally still ached and grieved for her loss. But that didn't change the fact that she was dead now and will alwasstay in the past. Link was right, he should go out of the academy and explore the world and get a change of scenery for a while. He knew that it would certainly help him recover and feel better then.

As for magic, Eliard now realized that it was not the cause of Elena's death after all. Without magic, Elena would've died of the blade of swords or daggers or the arrows, or maybe even of the dark divine spells that Elena was involved with. Eliard knew more than anyone else how cruel this world could be.

Eliard understood clearly now that giving up magic would be tantamount to giving up his own life.

"Aren't you building your new estate, Link?" asked Eliard suddenly. "I could go there and help you out."

Link was momentarily stunned, but he recovered himself quickly and gave Eliard a firm nod. Once he'd put on his shoes, he stood up and walked towards Eliard then extended a hand out to him.

"It would be my pleasure," said Link.

Eliard reached out to catch Link's hand and got himself up to his feet. He suddenly realized that Elena wasn't as perfect as she had been in his imagination after all. Instead, it was this friend of his here who'd been like a brother to him all along who was the one person he could rely on whenever he's in trouble.

## 149. The Awakened Prophet White Stone

Eliard was extremely decisive. He immediately set off the next day with Link's letter in hand.

At the moment, the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries were destroying the bandit's hideout in the entire Ferde Wilderness with the help of Magician Carrido. Carrido did not go through official magic training and lacked a comprehensive understanding of magic. Many a times, his strength was not sufficient.

Eliard, on the other hand, did not have this problem. He was a Level-2 Magician and had a solid foundation in magic. With his help, the process would be a lot smoother.

In the letter, Link specifically instructed Jacker to take special care of Eliard. It would be fine if they slowed down the clearing process, but Eliard must be kept safe.

Link strongly believed that Eliard would recover from this state of depression after making some new friends and training together with the mercenary band.

As for Link, he was still completely focused on magic. Everything else was secondary.

Now that Eliard's matter was resolved, Link could focus entirely on his magic research, increasing the efficiency exponentially. He gradually spent more time on it until he merely slept four hours a day.

Herrera was horrified at the sight of such insane dedication. She was afraid Link's body would not be able to withstand such intense hours. However, after failing to persuade him to take more rest, she started giving Link strange potions said to nourish the body and forcing him to drink them.

Link had no choice but to drink them. He did not expect them to really be effective. When he felt his energy getting boosted, he was pleasantly surprised and delved into his research with even more fanaticism.

The days flew by. After 20 days, Link had made huge progress with his biggest achievement being a thorough understanding of the magic structure of a Level-6 spell.

He possessed the precious Fire Star Thorium and preferred fire elemental spells in general. This Level-6 spell was naturally also fire element based, called the Fist of Firomoz.

The Fist of Firomoz

Level-6 spell

Effect: Concentrates fire elementals into a giant fist. It possesses terrifying offensive power!

(Note: Inspired by a scroll fragment left in the mortal world by Flame Titan Firomoz)

The Titans were an extremely powerful ancient civilization. It was rumored that they had not gone extinct. However, Link had never met any of them even when he was playing the game.

The reason he chose to learn the Fist of Firomoz was simple. This spell was basically an upgraded version of his Level-5 spell, The Flaming Hand. There were many similarities in the magic structure of both spells, giving Link the inspiration to unify the good ideas in both of them.

A fist and a hand. If the fingers of a hand were tucked in, wouldn't it become a fist?

He should have mastered a Level-6 spell in half a month. However, Link spent almost a whole month at it instead, due to his stubbornness in putting the innovation into practice.

He had already achieved the initial success. All that was left was the execution.

As it was a Level-6 spell, the elemental pool in Herrera's Mage Tower would not be sufficient. Link then headed towards the Heaven's Thorn to conduct his experiment.

In order to prevent any careless mistakes, Link gave himself a good rest the night before.

Early in the morning, Link could be seen rushing to the Heaven's Thorn. The door opened quickly after a few knocks and Selasse, Herrerassenior in magic, stood behind the door.

"Why are you here so early today?" Selasse was Anthony's disciple. However, his magic talent was ordinary at best. He had only achieved the strength of a Level-3 Magician even though he was almost 40 years old. His expertise lay in the literary world. He had already written more than ten poetries well known across the Norton Kingdom. He was an extremely talented person as well. He was also kind and amiable. Usually, he would be Link's host whenever Link decided to visit the Heaven's Thorn.

"Is the sub elemental pool occupied today?" Link asked. The elemental pools in the Heaven's Thorn had the best functions in the entire academy. It was always fully booked and would rarely have any empty slots.

Selasse smiled and said, "You are the first one today. You have 90 minutes."

Ninety minutes was already very generous. On normal days, Link would only get 50 minutes in the elemental pool, which was already a long duration on the account that he had a good relationship with Anthony. Other Magicians usually only got 30 minutes in the elemental pool and would have to apply for it a week in advance. They could not simply enter and use it as freely as Link.

Link then followed Selasse into the Mage Tower. When he reached the hall, he saw two people clad in purple robes. They seemed to be waiting for someone.

Their magic robes had many unique characteristics. They were light purple in color and extremely thick. There were patterns similar to that of a bramble sewn onto their sleeves with silver threads. On their chest was a picture of a roaring lion. At the same time, the surface of the magic robe seemed to be covered in a layer of a special, sticky liquid.

Link recognized this magic robe. It was a magic robe of the Norton Army Magicians. The sticky layer of liquid was a defense spell specially developed by the Royal Magicians in the Kingdom called Tenacity. As the Magicians climbed in rank, the color of the robe would change ever so slightly and the strength of Tenacity would also increase.

There were a total of six levels: Basic Tenacity, then going into Mid-Level Tenacity, High-Level Tenacity, Heroic Tenacity and finally, Endless Tenacity.

This defensive spell could defend against both magical and physical attacks. It also had excellent stability and strength. It was rumored that the strongest Endless Tenacity could defend against a Level-6 offensive spell head-on.

From the magic fluctuations coming from these two Magicians. They should be in the Mid-Level Tenacity stage. They also had the presence of a Level-3 Magician, probably Elite Magicians in the Kingdom. They were casually chatting and seemed to be in a good mood.

"Are they any good news about the war in the North?" Link asked curiously. If they had lost the war, the two Magiciasshould have been depressed and silent. The gleeful look on their faces could then only mean one thing.

Selasse then introduced them with a smile, "We are victorious in the Battle of the Ice Peak. The Kingdom army charged ferociously ahead and left the Dark Elves unprepared. We have already secured three consecutive victories. The rest of the Kingdom's army was also converging to the Ice Peak to support the war and continue our winning streak."

Link was relieved and elated to hear this news. This was a victory unheard of while he was playing the game, which was proof that he had indeed changed the course of history.

"That is good news; it is indeed time to teach them a lesson. However, the Kingdom is still rather unprepared. Isn't it too risky to go all out in this state?" Link was still slightly worried. He felt that the Kingdom was being too rash and arrogant, probably due to their bolstered confidence from the consecutive victories.

Selasse shrugged his shoulders and said, "I don't know much about the military. I would believe that the generals have their reason for doing this."

"That is true." Link nodded. He was not well-informed about the situation in the North. He was thus in no position to comment on the general's decisions.

He then turned his attention away from the Royal Magicians. He had limited time in the elemental pool and had to make good use of it.

While Link was observing the Royal Magicians, they also noticed his presence in the hall.

The two of them were originally Magicians from the academy. However, they left the academy two months ago for the war in the North. At that time, Link was still not famous.

In the Battle of the Ice Peak, the two of them performed exceptionally well and had gotten credit for their achievements. They were promoted to a first-class captain and a second-class captain respectively. This time, the reason for their return was to apply for more magic materials from the dean, while also giving him an overview of the current situation.

Both of them felt extremely puzzled that such a young Magician was able to enter the Heaven's Thorn.

"Arthur, who is that young man?" one of them asked.

The person named Arthur knew slightly more than his comrade. He said, "He is Link, a member of the Morani family and the disciple of the great beauty Moira. I heard that he is already a Level-4 Magician. He is extremely talented."

"Level-4what talent. However, I don't reckon he will do well in a real-life battle. He looks so young and inexperienced."

"Who knows." Arthur shrugged his shoulders. "It does not matter even if he is bad in combat. With his talent, he would definitely reach the upper echelons of the academy in the future. He might even become a member of the six-man council. He would not even need to go on the battlefield."

"Alright, what a blessed life." This Magician sighed with a slight look of contempt on his face.

He had already spent more than two months on the battlefield. In that period, he had survived seven battles and killed 15 Dark Elves. He was no longer the rookie Magician in the past. Those Magicians who were still studying in the academy or had just graduated from the academy were all termed as rookie Magicians.

Hence, despite Link's fame in the academy, he was merely an inexperienced rookie Magicians in his eyes.

Link had already disappeared into the staircase passage. Arthur then waved his hands and said, "Alright let's stop talking about him. Romey, now that the situation in the North is optimistic. I might get promoted to a general after the war and even wear a magic robe enchanted with Heroic Tenacity."

Romey laughed, "You shouldn't stop there. My aim is the Endless Tenacity magic robe!"

## 150. The Revived Prophetic White Stone

At the Heaven's Thorn Mage Tower.

The Elemental Pool here was slightly larger than the one in Herrera's Mage Tower, although the layout and the function were still identical. The positions of the various runes on the controlling magic seal were basically the same as well, so after nearly a month of use, Link now knew every inch of this Elemental Pool like the back of his hand.

Because it was the same type of spell as the Flaming Hand, the Fist of Firomoz also had similar Mana consumptions pattern with the former spell. It consumed 100 points of Mana in spell structure construction and 15 points per second to maintain it in normal conditions, which meant that it would consume 900 Mana Points per minute. When in active battles though, it would consume as much as 30 points of Mana per second or even 50 points per second if the battle was especially fierce.

Link's current maximum Mana limit was 1950 points, so if he used this spell in a battle all of it would be depleted within one minute. This was just not good enough for Link, so after some consideration Link decided to spend some of his Omni Points to increase this limit.

Link had 210 Omni Points at the moment. There was one active mission left which was the mission to investigate the truths behind the Black Moon Conspiracy. Although he had rooted out the mole in the academy, Elena, he still received no notification that confirmed the completion of this mission, and so naturally he hadn't received the rewards as well. This was one of the main reasons why Link had felt uneasy all this while

"System, raise the maximum Mana limit using 100 Omni Points."

Are you sure?

"Yes!"

In a blink of an eye, Link felt a warm surge in the depths of his body. He felt no pain this time. Instead, it actually felt quite comfortable, as though the dry desert sand was quenched with a torrent of reinvigorating rain. Every single cell in his body seemed to be singing in joy at the upgrade.

This wonderful feeling lasted for five seconds. Link then checked his own status and found that his maximum Mana limit was now 2950.

Now that's a maximum Mana limit fit for a Level-6 Magician!

Then, Link checked his Mana recovery rate and discovered that it was currently at 100 points per hour. It wasn't too bad, so Link decided not to change anything about it.

So now Link still had 110 Omni Points. He thought it best to keep these points as a spare, just in case he didn't have enough power when the demon, Tarviss was released and needed the extra Omni Points to purchase a high-level spell.

Now that his maximum Mana limit was raised, Link then began to experiment with the spell.

He focused all of his spirits and entered the state of absolute calm that was spellcasting. Bit by bit, his Mana was directed into the controlling magic seal. Because this was a Level-6 spell, its structure was more complicated and intricate by twofold, and now it was even more so because it had been modified slightly by Link. The number of runes used in this spell was as high as 989, with the complexity in its connections and stacking structure at a degree that was unimaginable for ordinary Magicians.

Even Link whose soul's strength was far beyond that of the average Magician still didn't dare to commit any mistakes while constructing the spell structure. In the end, he spent five full minutes to complete the links and connections between the 989 runes in the Fist of Firomoz's spell structure.

A brilliant array of light spots then appeared on the controlling magic seal. At a glance, it looked very similar to the map of constellations Link had seen in his previous life. Soon afterwards the magic structure began to oscillate and the fire elements in the pool responded to this immediately as the Fist of Firomoz began to take form.

The speed at which the fire elements surged was so rapid that there was a whistling sound in the air which was unlike any other spell that Link had mastered so far.

Yet, this was only the scaled down version of the Fist of Firomoz simulated in the restited environment of the Elemental Pool. Had it been used in actual combat, the speed at which the fire elements converged in real time would definitely have been a terrifying sight to behold.

Then, Link suddenly recalled the Level-6 spell Herrera had used in the Mist Basin called the Edge of Zenith, where she cut down the mighty giant hydra in one single move. He didn't pay much attention to it then, but right now he truly appreciated the Level-6 spell's intricacy and complexity not to mention its awesome power.

It was a totally different experience from the game.

Although the game was an immersive holographic online system with very sensitive controls that made it feel life-like, it still paled in comparison to the details and subtlety of actually being in this world.

The Level-6 Magician will be called a Master Magician, thought Link. Not just because of the extreme difficulty in the process of level advancement, but also in the power of the spells. What a terrifying power these spells contain!

About 20 seconds later, after the elements were fully assembled, Link noticed that the amount of fire elements in the pool had dropped by 80% and was replaced by a giant Flaming Hand that curled its fingers into a fist emerging from the middle of the Elemental Pool.

Because it was just the miniature version at only 10% of its full form, the fist was only about ten square feet in size. It was glowing very faintly and was enveloped by rings and rings of red-hot flame. This was a type of force field that Link had modified into the spell which would help Link control the fire elements in the spell, so they would explode at the very precise moment that he wished them to.

Attack! Link directed the spell through the magic seal.

The fire elements in the fiery fist immediately got agitated and radiated a blinding ray of blue light. The light coming out of the fist was as bright as the sun at noon when one wouldn't be able to look directly at it.

When the Fist of Firomoz was used to attack an opponent, the fist would rush towards the target at an unimaginable speed within the range of 300 feet and anything that stood in its way would be leveled to the ground.

In the game, this spell was Link's favorite to use against city walls because with a single punch, the walls would crumble down like a house of cards, creating a beautiful yet at the same time terrifying effect that would strike terror in the enemies' hearts.

Transform! Link gave out another command to the spell.

For a brief moment the flaming fist dimmed its brightness and slowly opened up its fingers one-by-one, which in the end formed into a giant hand that seemed to be ready to claw into something.

It was not the Fist of Firomoz anymore now, but was instead, a new spell modified with Link's Supreme Magical Skillan upgraded Level-6 Flaming Hand.

This kind of modification was totally unthinkable in his previous life in the game. But now that he was in this world, Link was able to create this brand-new spell by fusing his deep understanding of the structures and properties of the Flaming Hand and the Fist of Firomoz and transformed them into a uniquely powerful spell.

Link's heart was filled with a sense of accomplishment when he finally saw the new spell in its full form.

Return to normal, ordered Link with a thought. He must ensure that there were no defects in this spell whatsoever.

The upgraded Flaming Hand then clenched into a fist, but just as it was returning to its former shape, a problem emerged.

The originally stable flames suddenly wavered as the fire elements within it vibrated violently. Link could feel even then that the spell structure was beginning to collapse.

He tried with all his might to stabilize the spell structure but realized only a second later that the problem was too big to control. He might even break his arm if he persisted, so he decided to let go of the spell and let it collapse.

Boom!!!

The Flaming Hand was only halfway in its process of turning back into a fist when it disintegrated and exploded. Fortunately, this happened in the Elemental Pool so Link was protected from the force of the explosion and was unharmed. The scattered fire elements then flowed back into the pool under the guidance of the magic seal with no incidence.

Then, Link began to examine the structure of the spell closely.

"System, activate the playback of the spell formation," Link ordered the gaming system.

Link could've just used the system to perform the simulation of the spellcasting like he did when he was on his way back to Pufferfish County, but he chose to use the Elemental Pool to experiment on the spell as the simulation would exert too much energy from his soul and give him debilitating headaches afterwards. There wouldn't be any problem, though, if he only used the simulation to replay the process of the spell formation.

There was a bright flash on the interface. Soon, the whole spellcasting process was re-enacted before Link's eyes starting from the surge of Mana, to the interactions between the magic runes, the synergy between the runic wheels in the spell structure and so on. Every detail, however minute, was shown without any omission.

After three minutes Link finally found the source of the problem. He started fine-tuning to fix the spell structure which took ten more minutes, and then he went right back to experimenting.

This time, the Fist of Firomoz completed six movements in half a minute until it collapsed with another boom.

Link persisted and tried one more time.

He fixed the spell structure then tried casting it again. This time it completed 13 moves before it collapsed.

Link tried one more time.

This time it managed until the 19th move, then collapsed.

One more attempt.

Another collapsed spell

Link had completely forgotten how much time had passed in the Elemental Pool. He was surprised that no one had come in to remind him of the time today.

Neither did he remember how many times he had been modifying and fine-tuning the spell.

The spell in front of him was now as flexible as a real human hand and could move in a variety of delicate movements just like a real hand. Apart from being able to do things that even a real hand couldn't, such as bending a finger backwards until it touched the back of the hand, there was no difference between the front and the back of the giant hand, so it was futile to use the concepts of the palm and the back of the hand with this spell. In fact, even the fingers could transform into the palm and the palm could just as easily splitito multiple fingers.

After experimenting it for a period of time that even Link wasn't sure how long, he had successfully performed hundreds of different movements perfectly with the giant hand.

Ah, I've finally mastered it! Link thought proudly.

Then, a notification appeared on the interface.

Player successfully created a new spell, 20 Omni Points rewarded.

Player successfully became a Level-6 Master Magician, 120 Omni Points rewarded.

Please name the new spell.

Ah, it feels nice to be rewarded, thought Link. Then he suddenly noticed that something was amiss. He didn't recall getting rewards for advancing to Level-5.

"System, where are my rewards for rising up to Level-5?" Link asked the gaming system.

Player used the system's spellcasting simulation program when advancing to Level-5, which consumed an extremely high amount of energy from the system. The Omni Points from the rewards were used in place to repair the system of the depleted energy.

"Then why wasn't I informed about it?" asked Link, his face darkened. He should've gotten at least 50 Omni Points from the level increase and it was gone just like that. Had he known that it would come at such a high price, Link wouldn't have bothered using such an expensive way to learn a spell.

System is unable to answer this question as the issue is still unresolved.

"" Link was thrown off by such a perplexing response from the system. He didn't have any desire to press the matter further either, because even though the spellcasting simulation had come at such a high price, it was ultimately worth it. It was because of that Level-5 spell that he managed to defeat three Level-5 Dark Elves, after all, so Link decided to just let the matter slide.

As for the name, Link considered it for a while and said, "I'll name the new spell the Titan's Hand."

Spell successfully named.

Titan's Hand

Level-6 Master Spell

Mana Consumption: 14 points per second in normal conditions, 29 points per second in active battles.

Effects: This is a versatile spell that possesses great power and is perfect for close-distance battles both for attacks and defense.

(Note: Link's masterpiece!)

Link was gladdened by the information he received in the series of notifications, especially of those two descriptions of "Master Magician". It wasn't just in a game now, Link had actually earned the title of a Master Magician by his own crazy amount of effort, and he couldn't help but feel proud of himself.

Link then cast Elemental Cure on himself as he felt quite exhausted now. He then sat down and rested for a while to regain some energy before walking out of the Elemental Pool. When he opened the door, he discovered that it was all quiet outside without a single soul in sight. Link looked out the window and was shocked to see that the sky had turned dark outside.

"Has it been so long?" Link wondered. "But why didn't anyone remind me of the time?" He remembered that he was only allowed to use the Elemental Pool for 90 minutes, but by the looks of it he'd spent the whole day inside! He walked into the great hall on the first floor where the lights were still on and saw Selasse sitting there alone at his desk writing.

When Selasse noticed Link approaching he looked up at him with a pair of eyes that glowed with admiration and respect. Not only that, but he then stood up abruptly and gave Link a bow that Magicians of lower levels usually gave to other Magicians of higher levels.

"Master Magician Link!" greeted Selasse.

Master Magician? Link was stunned and puzzled at how this Magician would find out he was already at Level-6.

"When your stay in the Elemental Pool almost reached 90 minutes, I was going to go in there to remind you of the time, but was prevented from doing so by the dean," explained Selasse. "The Elemental Pool in this Mage Tower has a very stit control system, and it detected your experimentation with a Level-6 spell. Now that you've come out, it must mean that you've successfully mastered a Level-6 spell, isn't that right?"

Selasse then stared at Link with eyes full of awe and respect. Magicians who were able to advance to Level-6 were few and far between, but a 17-year-old Magician who'd achieved that level was simply unprecedented. Selasse realized that he was standing in front of a living legend!

Oh, this is worth writing an epic poem about! Selasse thought. I've even got the opening sorted out, this is how it should go the sky of magic was dark and barren, no stars had shone since the time of Bryant, and lo! Said the God of Light, let Link be born and he'll shine bright!

Selasse didn't care what anyone else thought, all he knew was that he was quite proud of the poem himself.

"Yes, you're right," said Link, feeling more and more awkward with Selasse's strange stares. He then hurriedly added, "It's pretty late now, I must go back and get some rest."

"Oh, go ahead, Master Magician!" replied Selasse. "You must take care of your precious body!"

"" Link had no idea how else to reply to this Magician-Poet so he just took the opportunity to flee and return to the safety of his room.

Link was relieved that there was no one else bothering him all the way back to Herrera's Mage Tower, so Link went back peacefully to his room. He looked at the time and found it was only nine in the evening. Usually he would still be studying his magic textbooks at this hour, so naturally he didn't go to bed yet and just took out a book called The Path of the Master and started to read it.

After a while, Link took out the white stone the High Elf prince gave him and played with it in his hands just out of habit. But a while later he discovered that there was something wrong about the stone this time.

The normally plain and ordinary white stone was actually glowing faintly in a white aura!

"Huh, what's going on here?"

## 151. The Awakened Prophet White Stone

Originally, Link had already given up on the white stone he received from the Prince of the High Elves as he simply could not find anything special about it. The dim glow emanating from the stone was thus a pleasant surprise.

He carefully observed the stone for a long time but to no avail. Apart from the faint glow that it was emitting, it was no different from its dormant state.

Link was not about to give up so easily. He then took out the magnifying glass he usually used during enchanting to observe extremely small-sized runes.

This magnifying glass was a necessary tool for every enchanter. Link had also made some modifications to it, allowing him to increase the magnification to a scale 50 times larger. He was able to clearly see runes that were less than 100 nanometers in size with the help of the magnifying glass.

Link had also attempted to view the stone through the magnifying glass previously. However, the surface was still smooth and uninteresting at that time. Link was thus unable to get the information that he needed.

But things were different now.

The magnification coupled with the glowing light of the stone, Link finally got a glimpse of the true nature of the stone!

Through the lenses, the stone's surface still looked smooth, not having the slightest indent. However, there seemed to be a voluminous number of light spots on the surface.

As the light spots were too small, it was impossible to get a good look at their shape even under 50 times magnification. One could only determine that the spots were arranged according to a certain pattern.

Could it be runes? How can runes be so small? Link was in disbelief. He concluded that the runes were so small that they fell out of the measuring range of nanometers. That could be the only reason why his magnifying glass was unable to even get an approximate shape of the rune.

What should I do?

Link then turned his attention to the magnifying glass. He needed to create one that possessed an even higher magnification, something that would be termed a microscope.

Link had a good knowledge of the optical theories on Earth. He simply had to stack two high convex lenses with high magnification power together. Coupled with Link's magic knowledge, this would be an easy task. He could even challenge the limit of optical theories by using the magic to strengthen the magnification strength of his new microscope.

Link immediately got to work. He took out a few crystals and first refined them using transformation spells until they were completely transparent. He then made use of the Higgs Field to reshape the crystals. In a moment, two high-quality convex lenses were made.

Link did not bother with the structure that would hold the lenses in place. He simply used the Magician's Hand to keep the two convex lenses stable in the air while he made adjustments to their positions. After checking that the magnification was around 1000 times, he was satisfied.

Link then adjusted the light in the room and placed the white stone under his simple home-made microscope.

Under the magnification, it was clear that the light spots were runes. However, they were not composed by merely a single rune, but a circle of them with each circle containing at least hundreds of runes. Even under 1000 times magnification, Link could not determine the exact shape of these runes.

"This stone has at least 1000 over light spots, meaning that there are at least 1000 circles of runes. This is only the surface of it, I have not even delved into its internal structure. What person could have made this monstrosity! Could it be God?"

Link could not help but swear at the sight of the complexity. This was completely beyond his imagination.

Link was bursting with curiosity and once again refined his microscope. This time, he increased the magnification strength to 2000 times. This was the limit. If he increased the strength any further, there would be visible signs of diffraction which would seriously impede his observations.

Link took a deep breath and stared through the microscope again.

This time, he got an extremely clear view of the runes. The rune circles were arranged in a manner that he could not comprehend. He could recognize a small part of the individual runes within the circles. However, much of it were runes that he had not seen in his life! There were also some indistinct shadows beneath the surface, suggesting that there were more layers to the stone.

"Unbelievable! This is unbelievable!" Link repeated the words countless times. After he became a Level-6 Magician, he thought that he already had a general understanding of magic in the World of Firuman. Even if it was something new, it could not possibly go too far away from this framework that he knew. However, this white stone had shown him a brand-new horizon, making his previous achievements seem extremely insignificant.

"My knowledge is merely a drop in the entire ocean!" Link could not help but exclaim. An unfathomable ocean of knowledge lay right in front of him in the form of a white stone.

At that moment, Link felt some lights flashing in his field of vision. It was the in-game system providing him with information.

It was the information of the white stone!

The Prophet White Stone (Uncharged)

Quality: Legendary

State: 0.1/100

Effect: When this object is fully charged, it could greatly enhance the power of a particular spell. The strength of the spell would increase by three levels.

Limitation 1: This object can only be used for three times.

Limitation 2: Only spells Level-6 and above can be enhanced.

(Note: The secrets of magic are endless.)

Link did not expect this to be a Legendary item. Furthermore, the effect of this item was simply insane. If he could enhance the strength of his spell by three levels, his Level-6 Titan's Hand could be directly strengthened to a Level-9 spell. He could then defeat Tarviss in just a single hit!

Link immediately became excited and even heaved a sigh of relief.

Although he had successfully mastered a Level-6 spell, the Titan's Hand after a month of insane practice, the continuous high intensity of magic research had left him burned out and even made him slightly tired and disgusted of magic. Many a times, he wanted to escape from the academy and his stash of magic books and live a life of relaxation.

If learning a Level-6 spell required this much effort, he would absolutely go insane if he tried to learn a Level-7 or Level-8 spell.

He only persevered because he knew of the imminent dangers.

However, he did not expect such a useful item to appear in front of him at such a crucial moment.

Who is the prophet of the High Elves? He seemed to know exactly what I needed. This stone could enhance a spell by three levels, a power just enough to defeat Tarviss.

Link was slightly curious but stopped thinking about it soon enough. He believed that the person harbored no hostility and when the time was ripe, he would naturally meet this Legendary person.

The imperative was then to charge up the white stone.

Link attempted to charge his mana into the stone. The stone immediately reacted to the inflow of mana and absorbed in like a sponge. It had an almost insatiable appetite for mana and at the same time, the glow surrounding it became slightly stronger.

Link continued charging the stone until he exhausted all 3000 Mana Points. The stone now glowed slightly brighter, much like the brightness of a firefly.

Link the observed the state of the white stone.

Prophet's White Stone (Uncharged)

State: 3/100

Link was horrified. This stone was a bottomless pit. It needed 1000 Mana Points to recover one state point!

On second thought, the stone had an incredible effect. It was only natural that the Mana Points requirement would be enormous. Link then accepted it without any issue.

Link's current Mana Recovery speed was 100 Mana Points per hour. His Maximum Mana was 2950 points as he had just become a Level-6 Magician. Compared to his Maximum Mana, his Mana recovery speed seemed to be lagging behind.

Use 100 Omni Points to increase Mana recovery speed, Link thought

A warm glow enveloped his body and after it dissipated, Link's Mana recovery speed had increased to 200 Mana Points per hour. He now needed less than a day to fully recover his Mana Points.

If Link used all his Mana Points in charging the Prophet's White Stone, he would be able to charge it fully in a months' time. By then, it would still be one month before the bloody April 15th.

Link took a long breath at this thought. Screw Tarviss, the Black Moon Conspiracy and screw the Dark Elves as well, I can finally rest.

Link put away the white stone and lay peacefully on his bed. Within a minute, he drifted quietly into the world of dreams.

The sleep was unusually blissful. In his dream, he met the Demon Princess Celine. She was smiling gently at him, causing his heart to flutter.

The next morning, Link recalled the dream with fervor. He then cast a concealing spell around him and took out his treasured black feather. The feather automatically floated after appearing in the air, with many translucent light balls swirling around it. It was exceptionally beautiful.

Link couldn't help but think about Celine. He seemed to see the playful and charming face right in front of him as he thought, Celine, I have already caught up to you.

He was now a Level-6 Magician and had a strong foundation in magic. He would no longer be a burden to Celine.

His only problem was that he had no idea where Celine was. After some thought, Link decided that he would track Celine down the moment he settled the issues in the academy and in his territory.

He had to tell her that she would be safe on his territory!

Link then put away the feather and washed up before heading down to the first-floor hall.

The hall was still crowded as usual. The only thing different was everyone's look of surprise when they saw Link. This had nothing to do with his achievements, but one that had something to do with the time. Link had been the first person to wake up and the last person to sleep in the entire Mage Tower for the past month. However, it was already 9 o'clock in the morning and he had just woken up. It was extremely peculiar.

"Master, are you free today?" Rylai walked up and asked timidly.

She had accumulated many questions over the past month. They were not terribly difficult questions and she could get her answers from any of the more experienced Magicians in the Mage Tower. However, she felt that their explanations were always vague and not as defined as Link's. She hence kept all the problems and decided to consult Link one day.

"Of course." Link felt slightly guilty. He had been too busy and had neglected his disciple. He patted Rylai's head gently and pointed to a table nearby. "Let's sit there."

Link then took Rylai's notes and started browsing through them. He then stared at his disciple with a somewhat surprised expression, "Have you started learning Hydrotherapy?"

Hydrotherapy

Level-1 Support spell

Effect: Creates a water bubble that contains a large amount of water elementals and air. When the target is within the water bubble, their recovery ability will increase significantly.

"Yes, but the structure is complex and I don't understand some parts of it." Rylai was unusually nervous. She felt that the intangible pressure from her master had become even stronger. She was afraid to even speak.

Link immediately sensed Rylai's apprehension and understood almost immediately. He had used 200 Omni Points consecutively and his strength had increased exponentially. This sudden increase in pressure was bound to scare Rylai.

Link started to contain his magic presence and concealed much of the pressure emitting from his body. He then looked at Rylai again and noticed that the tension on her face had largely dissipated.

Link had never learned Hydrotherapy. However, he had a good knowledge of magic and could understand this magic structure in one glance. He could also tell the exact places Rylai had doubts in. After thinking for a moment, he then began to answer them one-by-one.

Rylai listened intently to Link's teachings. Meanwhile, the Magician's Apprentices around them stared enviously at Rylai. She was one of the newest and youngest apprentices in the Mage Tower. To think that she would have the honor to be taught personally by a Level-4 Magician!

Even though Rylai had accumulated many questions, Link answered all of them within an hour. Following which, under the respectful gaze of Rylai, he began to formulate a study plan for her. At that moment, an apprentice walked towards them with a merchant behind him.

Link turned around and saw a familiar faceit was Warter.

Link had been enchanting equipment whenever he was tired of his magic research for the past month. He had almost used up all the materials he had and created nearly 20 pieces of Level-2 to Level-3 low-level magic equipment. His total profit was more than 20000 gold coins and the Green Leaf Merchant Firm's reputation had also soared. From the gleeful look on Warter's face, one could tell that he had also earned his fair share from this collaboration.

Warter greeted Link before saying, "Mr. Link, I am here to collect the equipment."

"Oh, right." Link was prepared. He handed over a necklace and a ring. Both of which were intricately crafted.

Warter carefully put them away into a wooden box. He then handed over a letter to Link. "I have a letter here. A lady I met had entrusted this to me."

Link felt strange and immediately opened the letter. A tight frown then appeared on his face. This was a letter from Eleanor and only contained one line of words. She wanted to meet him alone in Hot Springs City.

At first glance, Link thought that she was simply here for her magic bracelet. That would not be a problem as he had already crafted it. However, there was something amiss. The handwriting on the letter was extremely sloppy and there were even visible pass in that line of words. This could only mean that the writer was not in a calm state of mind.

But Eleanor was a Level-6 Secret Magician. While she might not be able to maintain calm in all situations, what caused her to delve into such panic? She was either in great danger or was under pressure from someone to write the letter.

Many thoughts flashed through Link's mind. Finally, he decided to make a trip to Hot Springs City. After all, not much could instill such fear and panic into a Level-6 Magician.

He then stood up and told Rylai, "I am going out for a while. If Master Moira asks, tell her that I went to Hot Springs City."

"Alright." Rylai nodded.

"Mr. Link, I am also about to return to Hot Springs City. The carriage is pretty empty. Shall we go together?" Warter immediately offered.

"That would be great."

## 152. The Demons First Appearance

The weather in the Girvent Forest was nice and sunny that day and the rays of sunshine felt luxuriously warm and rejuvenating to bask in. Link was in Warter's carriage on his way to the capital as he listened to sweet birdsongs from both sides of the King's Lane. The pleasant sights and sounds outside the academy had relaxed him considerably from the anxiety he felt caused by Eleanor's urgent letter.

Link played with the wand in his hand out of boredom and soon enough his unsteady heart began to settle. He currently had two spells fixed with the Glyph of Soul and one powerful Level-6 spell, so even if he had to face a Level-6 Assassin he was confident that he could defeat him easily. Besides, they would be in Springs City and Link believed that the person who'd put panic in Eleanor's heart would be so brazen as to chase her rightito the heart of the capital city.

It was quite a distance between East Cove and Springs City so after having calmed down considerably Link began to chat freely with Warter.

"Mr. Link, you wouldn't believe how popular your creations are in the capital," said Warter, wanting to strike up a conversation with Link as he noticed that Link was a bit quiet in the carriage. "Those noblemen who know nothing about magic are lining up to pay a fortune for them. They even sent their servants to wait at my door so they could be the first ones to buy your magic gear the moment I got them back to my shop."

"Are they really that popular?" asked Link with a laugh, visibly improving in his moods. "But if they didn't know magic and aren't fighters, then what do they buy my creations for?"

"To use them to woo their beloved ladies, I presume," replied Warter. "Your handcraft is as close to perfection as any ever existed. Did you know that people in the capital call you the Soaring Bird Master?"

Soaring Bird Master? Link wondered. Ah, it must've come from the signature I left on my creations. But what a vulgar name!

"Anyway, there are some customers who were genuine users of magic," continued Warter. "Some of them are Magicians, others are Warriors. They thought that although your handcraft is nothing short of exquisite, the spells are all of low levels. They would really like you to create some magic gear that was incorporated with higher-level spells. They'd be willing to pay for the materials themselves and have even given a specific price offer." Warter was the kind of person who would always come back to talking business no matter the time or occasion, as he did now when he brought up matters of business just as they were chatting casually.

Link considered it for a while and thought this was indeed a good deal.

"What price did they offer?" he asked.

"For Level-4 defensive gear such as shields and the like," began Warter earnestly, "they'd pay you 2000 gold coins for the enchantment work, not including the spending on materials. I could still haggle the price of course. Meanwhile, for attacking gear like swords and such, they'd be willing to pay 3300 gold coinsI don't think I could give you a detailed enough explanation verbally. Please give me a moment, I've prepared a list of specific orders for you."

Warter then slipped out a scroll and handed it to Link, who opened it up and was immediately startled at the list he was holding in his hands.

It was such a professionally prepared list. Not only did it distinguish the various types of equipment and weapons, but it was also neatly categorized by level and types of spells. There was even an extra charge for modifications by Supreme Magical Skills and an order for the creation of a wand.

For a Level-4 wand of fine quality modified with Supreme Magical Skills to give it an attacking boost, the price would be 5000 gold coins. If its quality was epic, the price would be increased to 8000 gold coins. Plus, Link wouldn't have to pay a single copper for the costs of materials.

What an unbelievably good deal!

Link wasn't so naive, though. After perusing the list, he turned to Warter with a laugh.

"That is a well thought out list! It's only been a month, how did you run into so many potential buyers?" With such a comprehensive list Link wouldn't believe that Warter hadn't made any extra effort in drawing in new customers himself.

Warter chuckled nervously at Link's question and came clean right away. He was only an ordinary man, after all, he wouldn't dare to lie through his teeth to a Master Magician like Link.

"I did pull some strings myself," he confessed. "I would get some benefits from these deals as wellabout 100 gold coins for every order"

100 gold coins, so that was what Warter got for making these deals for Link. It was nothing compared to what Link made from his magic gear, but it was still a massive amount of gold coins for the average merchant.

Warter didn't know that was how Link felt, though. He spoke very timidly in fear of Link's disapproval.

But he was wrong in that regard about Link. Although he was a Magician, Link wasn't completely ignorant of how businesses were run. He knew and appreciated Warter's help in doing the legwork for him in getting him such serious buyers which had saved so much of Link's energy. Link felt that Warter had earned every copper of those 100 gold coins. He also realized that their cooperation would only flourish and expand if both of them made profits from it.

"I like this plan, it's an excellent plan. We'll go with it," said Link. "You'll prepare a list just like this for me from now on, but don't take too many orders. I can only handle three per month, and no spells above Level-5."

"That is not a problem at all!" said Warter, relieved and overjoyed. "I'll prepare a list for you every month, then." Three pieces of magic gear per month, that would make him 300 gold coins richer each month! It wasn't all that much, to be frank, but this cooperation with Link would greatly expand the reputation of his merchant firm which was his aim after all. He'd already felt this benefit after only slightly more than a month of cooperation with Link.

Meanwhile, Link began to consider expanding his production scale of magic gear. He couldn't possibly do that alone, of course, so must now find a helper.

The best helper would be a Magician's Apprentice, Link mused. But right now, there's only Rylai. I wouldn't waste her talents on such a menial job, though. Besides, I don't have my own Mage Tower yet, and my collection of magic textbooks is still too small, so I wouldn't attract any gifted apprentices to be my discipleNow that the building of my estate has started, it's time to think about building my own Mage Tower as well

Link was now a full-fledged Level-6 Master Magician and had more than 60,000 gold coins in his pocket, so the time was ripe for him to consider building his own Mage Tower and start receiving his own Magician's Apprentices now.

After discussing business matters, Link and Warter went back to chatting casually along the way to Springs City. The topic they lingered on the most was none other than the war in the North, or rather, Warter was the one speaking while Link listened to him intently.

Warter was a well-informed merchant who kept up with the latest updates about the war in the North. He could recount the developments on the battlefields with baffling details.

"Overall, things are looking good for our side at the moment," said Warter. "It seems that our army could always accurately guess the enemy's next moves and attack them accordingly. I must say that the MI3 is doing a particularly good job, they seem to have outplayed their counterpart, the Death's Hand, by the looks of it! I'm sure we can chase the Dark Elves back under ground where they came from soon enough!"

Link listened then laughed quietly at this report. He knew that the cypher scroll he'd discovered had more or less aided in the successes of the army.

Warter, on the other hand, shone with excitement and pride of his kingdom's apparent victories. He was very optimistic in his predictions of the war's future outcomes. Link himself heartily hoped that such a situation would continue until the final and decisive victory was achieved.

Time passed quickly during the chat. Without them realizing it, several hours had passed and the massive walls of Springs City already loomed in the distance.

Even though there had been a tragedy on Jade Street not too long ago, the authorities had handled the situation very well, and everything was repaired swiftly afterwards. This, coupled with the continuing victories reported from the battlefields in the North, had helped the populace of the city recover from the shocks of the tragedy and move on with their lives.

They did more than move on, though. Link had heard people talking optimistically of the war in the North all along the way from the academy to the capital city. There was even a premature festive atmosphere in the air where people danced and celebrated the future victory of the Norton Kingdom and the seemingly assured demise of the Dark Elves.

Link looked on with slight worry at this blatant and irrational optimism of the people in Springs City. It just struck him the wrong way and made him feel more anxious at the hubris the people were showing.

Still, he had no intention to rain on their parades, so all he did was look on in silence while the town folks carried on in their merry ways.

Soon, the carriage had reached the Blue Hermit Inn of the Magician's Distit where he was to meet up with Eleanor. Link put on his hooded cape and covered his face with the hood, then he bid farewell to Warter and climbed out of the carriage.

Link didn't enter the inn straight away, though. He cast a detection magic and checked for any suspicious auras within the range of 300 feet around the inn. Only when he was sure that it was safe then he walked into the inn through its front entrance.

"I am looking for a lady by the name of Eleanor," he said in a low, deep voice when approached the innkeeper at the counter inside. "May I know which room she's staying in?"

The innkeeper was accustomed to people with Link's attire because that was how Magicians liked to dress anyway, so he took notice of it.

"Miss Eleanor is indeed staying here," he answered, "but I will have to ask you a question before I am allowed to tell you her room number."

The Blue Hermit Inn was famous for its stit safety protection measures for its guests. This must be the reason why Eleanor had chosen this place to stay in. Link estimated that Eleanor had instructed the innkeeper to ask him a question that Link would know the answer to.

"Go ahead," said Link.

"Which bracelet is Miss Eleanor's favorite?" asked the innkeeper.

"The Phoenix bracelet," answered Link without having to think about it.

"That is correct," said the innkeeper with a nod. "Her room number is 350, it's at the end of the corridor on the third floor. If I am not mistaken she hasn't left the room yet today."

So Link went up to the third floor and found the room with the number that the innkeeper had informed him of. Link hid behind the stone wall outside the room and reached out his hand to knock gently on the door, just in case someone inside might attack him as he was standing there waiting to be let in. The possibility that this might actually happen was slim, but someone who was able to terrify a Level-6 Magician like Eleanor must be formidable indeed, so it wouldn't hurt to take every precaution he possibly could.

"Who is it?!" said a familiar voice from the inside of the room. It was definitely Eleanor.

"It's me, Link," he answered. "Are you safe now?"

The moment his last word was uttered, the door opened with a click. Eleanor emerged from behind the door, her face was a picture of terror and trepidation at first, but once she discovered that Link really was there she calmed down gradually.

"Oh, thank the Lord of Light!" she exclaimed. "You're finally here! Come in!"

Link nodded and followed Eleanor into the room. He was still on full guard, though.

"What happened exactly?" he asked the moment they settled down in the sitting room.

"I was hunted down by a horrifying black shadow," answered Eleanor, still slightly trembling in fear as she talked about it. "If it hadn't been for the Phoenix bracelet, I would've died in the middle of the Girvent Forest. That's why I'm taking refuge here in the capital city. I don't think thatthingwould dare to follow me into Springs City."

Eleanor's expressions as she recounted her experience made Link feel the fear she still felt even right now of the opponent she had faced in the Girvent Forest.

"Tell me more details about what happened," said Link.

"Sure," nodded Eleanor. "The last time we parted ways, I wentito the Girvent Forest and stayed there. Nothing happened for a while until about a month ago, when suddenly I sensed the presence of a strange soul. I was curious, so I followed the scent until I found it. I saw that soul enter the body of a dead young woman, bringing her back to life! I've never seen this kind of magic before and I didn't know how it happened, so I kept following her to find out. On the third day, I saw that reborn young woman meeting secretly with a black shadow. The shadow thing was very perceptive, the moment I made a slight noise it instantly detected my presence and hunted me down. None of my magic had any effect on it, so I persisted until it let its guard down a little and attacked it with the Flame Blast in the Phoenix bracelet. That worked on it alright! It was almost blown off into the distance! I think it was quite seriously injured, so I quickly ran here to escape from it. I could still feel, though, that it was still lurking somewhere in the darkness waiting for me. I'm sure that the moment I leave this city I will be toast!"

"You mean it could resist your spells?" asked Link in surprise. "What did you mean by a black shadow? You referred to it by the word 'it', does that mean that you don't think it's human?"

"It was definitely not human," answered Eleanor. "I don't know what it was, but it had red eyes and a black knife-like protrusion on its arm my head was nearly cut off by that thing!"

As she spoke, Eleanor lifted her chin to show the cut wound that mysterious ghoul had left on her skin. Link examined it and saw a very deep cut with a very strange bloodstain surrounded by black web-like scars around it. It was a truly ghastly sight.

Eleanor seemed to be in pain just by this slight movement of raising her chin as her tears began to roll soon after Link examined it. Eleanor didn't understand why but she had become so fragile in front of Link and was ashamed of herself for crying over such a small matter.

"The wound hurts really bad, and it's full of dark elements," she said. "The elements seem to be alive in its own way. I should probably go to the piss and let them have a look at it, but you know that would cause some problems because of who I am. I've tried washing it with holy water but the wound hasn't recovered one bit in three daysit's even gotten worse instead."

Link started to examine the wound even more closely now with a detection spell. Under the light of the spell, Link could clearly see the dark arsemanating from the wound. It seemed to have felt threatened by Link's spell and recoiled even deeper into Eleanor's skin. This made Eleanor shriek loudly in pain.

The pain must really be unbearable to cause this powerful Master Magician to cry out in such a manner. In Link's mind, there was only one thing that could cause Eleanor such harm.

"I'm afraid you've been attacked by a demon," said Link as he sat down. "Not just any demon, though, but a pureblood demon from the abyss."

"What?!" screeched Eleanor in utter shock. "But aren't demon creatures of a different realm of existence?" Eleanor's face was completely drained of color now.

## 153. Sacred Silver

The races who worshipped the God of Light in the World of Firuman had a term for all dark creatures who hailed from the abyss. They were collectively termed as demons.

Just as how there were many races in the World of Firuman, there were also different kinds of demons in the abyss varying in strength. Not all demons were as strong as Tarviss or the Lord of the Deep, Nozama.

However, there was still no denying that demons possessed combat capabilities way above that of the races in Firuman. This applied to every single demon, more specifically, it was termed the "Abyssal Attribute".

In most cases, it would be difficult for a Firuman race to defeat a demon if they were of the same level of strength.

In the room of the Blue Hermit, Eleanor's face sank upon hearing that she had encountered a pure-blooded demon. She panicked and said with the tears rolling down her face, "I've heard that it is impossible to dispel the demonic forces and the victim will be continuously eroded by it till they become a demonic puppet. What do I do now?"

Eleanor was speaking the truth. If she did not find Link in time, the situation might have been unsalvageable. At this point in the timeline, demons had not begun their large-scale invasion into the World of Firuman. People hence had no idea how to deal with damage and wounds caused by demons. Usually, those who were corroded by demonic forces were met with tragic deaths.

In the game, players could often see an entire village of demonic puppets caused solely by the corrosion from the demonic forces.

This situation continued until a brilliant bishop named Diego Benson discovered a strange metal that could restrain the powers of the demonic forces.

This strange metal could not be found naturally. It was created synthetically and was called Sacred Silver.

Sacred Silver

The general term for all holy metals.

Effect: The flawless product from the fusion of silver metal and the power of light. Has the ability to restrain demonic forces.

(Note: The higher the quality of the metal, the better the effect of the Sacred Silver.)

What were silver metals? Normal silver and Thorium could all be considered under the umbrella term, silver metals. After one processed them using some secret techniques, they would then become Sacred Silver.

If Eleanor had been injuredamnth ago, Link would have been clueless on how to dispel the demonic forces. Although he knew that Sacred Silver worked wonders in restraining demonic forces, he had no idea how to refine them.

However, in the past month, he had been researching on methods to help him gain an advantage over Tarviss. Naturally, he would also have taken time to research on Sacred Silver. Coupled with the help of Anthony's extensive library of magic books, he had successfully made his first batch of Sacred Silver.

Upon seeing Eleanor's pitiful expression, he then comforted, "Don't worry, I can cure you."

"Really?" Eleanor was elated. She would have treated those words with suspicion if anyone else had said them. However, Link was different.

"Rest assured that you'll be alright," Link said once again with confidence. He then took out the bracelet that he promised to craft for Eleanor previously and handed it over. "Here, the bracelet that I promised. It contains a Level-4 Edelweiss spell that I recently modified."

Link put in a lot of effortito this bracelet. Under the stressful circumstances of learning a Level-6 spell, he still took half an hour every day and half a month in total to complete the product.

The body of the bracelet was made of pure gold, while 80% of the runes were made from ordinary Thorium. The remaining 20% were made from the extremely precious Fire Star Thorium.

The bracelet also had an intricate design. The bracelet was in the shape of a dragon with its wings tucked in. This dragon had a slender and long body instead of the giant and bulky ones people were used to. It was somewhat similar to an oriental dragon. The runes carved onto the bracelet were mostly silver in color and contrasted well with the dark gold main body of the bracelet, making them shine like the dragon's scales. One could also see crimson hues being reflected off the bracelet due to the runes made from Fire Star Thorium.

As the effect of Fire Star Thorium was extremely strong, the bracelet emitted a light crimson hue that sparkled with silver brilliance. One look at the bracelet was all someone needed to determine its quality.

Eleanor's attention was immediately captured by it and she seemed to have momentarily forgotten about the pain from her wounds. She took the bracelet and observed it carefully. Upon seeing the Fire Star Thorium, she gasped, surprised at Link's generosity.

"What is it called?" Eleanor could not help but ask. She would not name it herself this time. Such a work of art should only be named by its creator.

"Since you have one that is called the Phoenix Bracelet, let's name this the Dragon Bracelet," Link laughed.

In his eyes, the bracelet had these statistics.

Dragon Bracelet

Quality: Epic

Effect: Contains the Level-4 Defensive spell Crimson Edelweiss. Able to defend against both magical and physical damage. At the same time, the burning forcefield generated can damage enemies that come within a 15-foot radius of the user. The offensive power of the flames is Level-4 in strength.

(Note: Link's gift)

Eleanor was in love with the bracelet. She immediately wore it on her arm and concentrated her mana into the bracelet. When the Edelweiss spell was activated, a translucent crimson circle surrounded her body.

As the crimson circle began to increase in size, it came into contact with a desk on its side. Upon collision, the crimson circle burned through the desk without any resistance, leaving a huge circular gap in its wake. There were also sparks generated from the process and in an instant, the entire desk was burned to ashes.

Eleanor kept silent as she observed the full power of the defensive spell. After which, she exclaimed, "Link, your enchanting magic is just extraordinary, this is close to a miracle!"

This was the first time she saw anything like this after living for a century.

Link smiled with not a hint of complacency. After seeing the complexity of the Prophet's White Stone, the pride that he had generated ever since he stepped into the World of Firuman was completely shattered.

He said, "We need to treat your injury immediately. I'll purchase the ingredients needed for the treatment. Be back in a while."

"Oh, how long will it take?" Eleanor's attention shifted from the bracelet immediately.

"Around one to two hours."

"One or two hours?" Eleanor was persistent.

Link felt that it was a strange question and something unbecoming of a Master Magician. However, considering that she was afflicted with what would be deemed a mortal injury, he patiently replied, "I will try my best to come back earlier. No promises though."

"Alright then. Please be quick." Eleanor nodded reluctantly.

Link then left the room. Almost immediately after the door closed, Eleanor began to look forward to Link's knock on the door.

That was of course, impossible. She then pranced around in the room, flipped through a few pages of a magic book before throwing it to the side and staring out of the window. She hoped to see Link in the crowd, but alas, she was unsuccessful.

Overwhelmed by disappointment, Eleanor sat down on her chair again and different scenarios flashed through her mind. On one hand, she was afraid that Link might have lied and left her alone, defenseless and injured. On the other hand, she was also afraid that Link might encounter the demon or even get knocked down by a carriage along the way.

All kinds of strange ideas began popping out of her head, causing her to feel extremely uneasy. In the entire Hot Springs City, Link was the only person she trusted.

After what seemed like an eternity, she heard a knocking on the door. Link's voice echoed through the room, "I am back."

Eleanor heaved a sigh of relief and rushed for the door.

"How was it?" She asked.

"It went very well." Link shook the bags of ingredients in his hands. They were a bottle of scared water, a piece of silver and many different bottles of strange liquids respectively.

Link then placed the items on the desk and started mixing them together while explaining to Eleanor the principal behind Sacred Silver.

"Sacred water contains the power of light, the nemesis of all demonic forces. However, scared water has its limitations. The power of light will be greatly diminished by the soft and gentle properties of the water elements. It would thus be futile if you applied sacred water directly onto the wounds."

Link then poured the sacred water into a huge cup and submerged the silver into the solution. He then poured a bottle of blue liquid into the cup which caused the entire solution to boil. Before long, the silver was melting at a speed visible to the naked eye.

"Is this blue liquid a solution that decomposes metallic substances?" Eleanor was after all, a Magician with some background in enchanting magic.

"Yes, it's role is to break down the silver particles into gold particles. However, that alone is not enough." Link then poured a few other bottles of liquid into the cup and started shaking them.

As the cup moved, the solution inside the cup started changing. After around ten minutes, the liquid had divided into two clear layers. The upper layer was a clear and transparent liquid like ordinary water. The lower layer was a silver viscous liquid similar to mercury.

Link cast the Magician's Hand and carefully extracted the upper layer of clear water, leaving only the viscous silver liquid in the cup. Upon closer inspection, one could see a faint glow being emitted from the liquid, exuding a cold and sacred presence.

"This is Sacred Silver, the fusion of the power of light and silver metal. Borrowing the sharp characteristics of the gold element, the power of light within the sacred water can be heightened to its limits."

As Link spoke. He cast the Higgs field spell and fished the ball of viscous silver liquid out of the cup. He then began to shape the liquid until it became the shape of a scalpel before hardening it. The liquid had then transformed into a little silver knife shining with brilliance.

"Here, lie on the chair while I treat your wounds. It will be slightly painful, please endure it."

"Alright." Eleanor had complete faith in Link. She sat on the chair and lifted her chin, exposing the horrible wound on her neck.

Link then used the Magician's Hand to control the Sacred Silver knife and cut off the dead flesh surrounding the wound piece by piece. This process was extremely painful, especially when the power of light on the knife clashed with the demonic forces in the wounds. As the knife made contact with the wound, sizzling sounds could be heard and green smoke would emerge. It was a terrible scene.

Eleanor gritted her teeth as she stayed motionless. Teasstarted flowing out from her beautiful pair of eyes.

It took Link over 30 cuts before he removed the corroded flesh from the wounds. Now that the demonic forces had been completely dispelled, he then put away the knife and asked, "How do you feel?"

"There is this burning sensation. However, the numb feeling is already gone," Eleanor said. She knew that this meant the demonic forces had completely been dispelled.

"That sounds great." Link then took out a bottle of clear sacred water and used the Magician's Hand to create a ball of water. He then used it to gently rub Eleanor's wound until the blood and dirt were completely removed before bandaging the wound with a clean white towel.

Eleanor heaved a sigh of relief after all was done. She wiped her tears and said in an embarrassing tone, "I have cried more today than in my entire life. It was really painful."

Link then put away his tools and laughed, "I have heard that women are made of water. I used to not believe it, but maybe now I do."

"Tsk. You are still young, don't talk like an adult." Eleanor glanced at Link in displeasure.

Link shrugged his shoulders and stayed silent. He did not want to continue the subject and said, "You mentioned that a soul was reborn using a corpse in the Girvent Forest aroundamnth ago. Can you bring me to the village?"

The moment he asked the question, Link felt a flash of light in his field of vision. It was the previous task that required him to investigate the details of the Black Moon Conspiracy.

This was an obvious clue. The soul that was resurrected was related to the Black Moon Conspiracy!

"There might be a demon outside of town"

"I have the Sacred Silver. Furthermore, my fire elemental magic is extremely effective in restraining these abyssal creatures." Link was never afraid of demons. No matter how strong they were, they would still be burned to ashes under the wrath of his flames.

"Alright then. I'll take you there. The person made me so miserable, I need my revenge!" Eleanor said with vengeance.

## 154. The First Confrontation with the Demon

Link and Eleanor did not rush out of the capital city the moment Eleanor's wound had been treated. Instead, they stayed in the Blue Hermit Inn and rested there for another day.

In the meantime, they both discussed matters of magic with each other. Eleanor's profound insights in secret spells helped Link gain new knowledge and perspective, while Link's own expertise and creativity in his use of elemental spells surprised Eleanor as well.

Then, on the second day, with the help of the holy water, the cut wound on Eleanor's neck had basically closed, while Link's own Mana had recovered to its fullest state. At the same time, he'd also refined and created three more pounds of Sacred Silver, albeit using ordinary silver instead of Mithril this time. This kind of Sacred Silver might not be as good as those made of Mithril, but it was still effective enough against the power of demons.

Once everything was ready, Link found them a carriage and off they went out of Springs City.

Then, on their way in the carriage, Eleanor suddenly thought of something.

"They called that young woman in the village Lisa," she said, "but that's not the woman's real name. I think the demon called her Elena."

"What did you say?!" asked Link, startled by this revelation.

"Well, it sounded something like that, though the demon's voice wasn't clear," said Eleanor. "It could be Lena or AinaI was too far away anyway, so I couldn't hear them well enough."

Link sunk into silence for a while, apparently brooding over the newly gained information.

"Do you remember the exact dates of the day you noticed the soul, Ellie?" asked Link.

"Of course I do! My memory isn't so bad despite my age!" answered Eleanor. "It was about28 days ago, so it must be January14th." Unbeknownst to her, Eleanor had just mentioned the date that sent a cold shiver down Link's spine.

January 14 was the day when he accidentally killed Elena.

"Do you remember the exact time you noticed it?" Link asked more eagerly now.

"Was it in the morning or the afternoon? What time was it?"

"It must've been about three in the afternoon," answered Eleanor.

Link took a deep breath then let out a long sigh after hearing Eleanor's answer. It was just as he expected now. He had destroyed Elena's body that day, but her soul had survived and escaped, then found a new body and was reborn again. And now that she was reborn she even managed to contact a demon. By the looks of it, although Link wasn't sure exactly how she did it, he knew that Elena must've taken the detailed plans of the inner layout of the Mage Towers in the East Cove Magic Academy with her.

The puzzle pieces had formed into a complete picture now. The nagging suspicion Link had felt all along was also confirmed.

"What a sly, devious and malicious woman!" cursed Link before taking in another deep breath. He had gone through the massacre in Gladstone, he'd killed countless robbers and even some Dark Elves with his own hands, yet he still shuddered at the thought of facing such a crafty opponent as Elena.

He felt the most sympathy for his friend Eliard right now. He had been used and manipulated by the woman. Not only was his heart and spirits broken, he'd even thought of giving up magic because of her!

By then, the carriage had already reached the gates of the capital city and was about to leave its safety. Link and Eleanor then got out of the carriage, paid for the fare and continued their journey on foot.

There were still many people passing by on the King's Lane since they were still so near to the capital city gates, so the demon hadn't appeared yet even though Eleanor had begun to feel its presence now.

"I'd faced it directly before, so I know the scent of its soul," said Eleanor. "He's definitely lurking behind the trees of the forest near us, staring, waiting for the right time to pounce on me." Eleanor then looked outito the forest beside the road and could distinctly feel a sharp sense of danger. The memory of the confrontation three days earlier was still fresh in her mind and it filled her whole being with fear.

Link nodded at Eleanor's words, but he felt no real threat from this demon at all, and the reason was simpleif Eleanor could injure him even by using the weakened version of the Flame Blast in the Phoenix bracelet, then this demon was simply no match for him.

They both walked on for another couple of miles along King's Lane. It was then ten in the morning. It's a pity that on that day the sun was blocked by a sky of thick clouds, so it was impossible for Link to use the sunlight to weaken the demon's power.

By then, even Link could feel the anomalous aura in the surrounding. It felt distinct, as if a pair of eyes in the darkness were following him around fixedly.

"It doesn't even bother to hide its own scent!" exclaimed Eleanor. "I wonder if that's out of arrogance or ignorance?" Eleanor turned to Link for his opinion. If he knew how to use the Sacred Silver to cure her wound, then he must know more about demons than she did.

Eleanor wasn't disappointed then, when Link answered her confidently.

"It's neither arrogance nor ignorance," he said. "It just thought that there was no need for it."

"What does that mean?" asked Eleanor, slightly confused.

"The abyss where the demons come from is a jungle world where you either kill or get killed. To survive there, you must bare your fangs and show off your strength as much as possible to intimidate other people and discourage them from attacking you. This demon must've thought that everyone here was weaker than it, so it felt no need to hide its presence. My guess is that it thought it was the king in this jungle."

"Oh, so they're just like wild beasts!" Eleanor finally found a suitable metaphor to describe the demons.

Link nodded in agreement. There was more about the demons that he hadn't told Eleanor, of course. For example, he knew that demons were divided into two categoriesthe high-level demons and the low-level demons.

The low-level demons have lower intelligence, their nature was closer to a wild beasttheir combat tactics were more instinctive rather than rational and strategic, and their strengths overall weren't all that terrifying. As for high-level demons, well to put it simply, 99% of the horrifying demons in the legends told from generations to generations in Firuman were high-level demons!

Judging from the current situation, the demon in the Girvent Forest seemed to be a low-level demon. Although it would be foolish to underestimate its strength, Link felt that he didn't have much to fear from this beast. An average professional fighter might not be able to defeat it, but if it was a joint attack by three fighters and above then the demon would surely not be able to survive.

For one thing, though, the demon still showed some restraint as it did not attack them when they were still in broad daylight and in the midst of a crowd on the King's Lane earlier. This meant that it was afraid of being discovered for some reason, causing him to stalk them in the darkness all this while without making any moves to attack them.

Finally, Link and Eleanor reached a place isolated enough that no one was around or likely to pass by.

"Let's go into the forest," said Link. There was no point in circling around avoiding the demon forever. Their best chance was to deal with the demon head-on.

"Understood," answered Eleanor with a nod. She moved instinctively closer to Link as they entered the forest as it somehow made her feel safer.

They both plodded through the Girvent Forest for another quarter of a mile before they heard the sound of footsteps and snapped branches. Then a mighty beast sprung towards them out of the blue at an unimaginably high speed.

They were facing a demon after all, so Link didn't dare to take its attacks lightly. He rushed forward to a spot where the vegetation was relatively sparse and shouted to Eleanor, "Activate the Guarding Barrier!"

As soon as he finished the sentence Link's body was shrouded in the Crimson Edelweiss, while Eleanor had also activated her dragon bracelet. Thus, they were now both enveloped in a translucent bubble that glowed faintly in red.

Just then, a tall black figure burst out towards them from the dark forest. This figure was humanoid, although it was about seven feet tall and its skin was as black as ink.

At this moment, a tall black figure burst out in the forest.

This figure was humanoid and taller than seven feet. The surface of its body was dark with no pores. There were countless strange dark green runes on its skin, while on the outside of its arms there was a knife-like protrusion that seemed to be shrouded in a cold aura.

As soon as it rushed towards them, its red eyes shifted between Link and Eleanor, then it seemed to have recognized Eleanor and identified her as its target. Eleanor immediately stretched out her wrist and pointed it at the demon.

"Flame Blast!" she shouted.

This was the only spell she knew that had an effect on the demon. With a loud boom, a fan-shaped high-temperature flame then surged forward towards the demon.

However, this demon seemed to have remembered this trick by Eleanor, so the moment Eleanor raised her arms, it immediately dodged to the side at a phenomenal speed and escaped from the attack.

"Did you think I'd fall for that twice?" said the demon in a strange, unclear voice. Even as it spoke, its speed had not slowed down one bit. It then jerked its legs and shot towards Eleanor, at the same time stretching the blade-like protrusion on its arm towards her.

This time, the demon wouldn't fall for the same trick again. With one stroke, the demon would cut off her head!

Eleanor was too late in triggering the second Flame Blast, but she still didn't hide or dodge away from the demon. Firstly, because she still had a defensive shield around her, and secondly, because she knew that Link was right beside her.

The demon didn't take any notice of the young man beside Eleanor at all. What could such a small fry do to a demon anyway? The demon quickly closed in on Eleanor and was now only about tity feet away from her. At that point, he let out a roar and leaped up into the air.

In its expectation, its violent strike would surely crush through the woman's magic shield, which would then leave her completely vulnerable to his arm blade attack. The woman's head would be off her shoulder soon enough, then no one would ever know the secret between it and the holy maiden.

As for the young Magician who was with her, he would just have to take the hit of maybe one or two of the boy's spells. But that wouldn't matter at all, because his skin was highly resistant to magic, so at most, the spells would just leave him some scratches.

Oh, how wrong the demon had been!

Just at the moment when he leaped up, a giant hand with rings of red-hot fire grabbed him and held him mid-air, rendering him completely unable to move.

It was a spell Link had cast with his Glyph of Soulthe Vulcan's Hand.

"Ahhhhh!!!" The demon was completely caught off guard. It then unleashed an explosive amount of energy in its attempt to escape the fiery hand's clutch. The explosive energy came out as a powerful burst of black aura which was so mighty that it managed to scatter the fire elements of the Vulcan's Hand!

Demons naturally had very strong battle force and their reaction was incredibly speedy. That was why Link didn't use the high-temperature version of the Vulcan's Hand.

Not bad, thought Link. This demon could withstand the power of a Level-5 spell, and the dark energy inside it is quite strong as well! A demon's dark energy was almost bottomless and could never be depleted like a Magician's Mana. This was the reason why demons were the most formidable foe a Magician could ever face!

Although the Vulcan's Hand had now scattered, the demon didn't rush forward even though he'd escaped from the giant hand's grasp. Once its feet reached the ground the demon swiftly dodged sideways to avoid Eleanor's second Flame Blast.

The scorching flames licked the demon's skin, but it seemed to have made no harm to it at all. This was thanks to the demon's excellent instinct, as it quickly unleashed a burst of dark energy right before the Flame Blast hit it, otherwise its skin would surely have been crisp.

The fact that it was able to escape unscathed from Link and Eleanor's joint attacks meant that this demon would be one of the most powerful and formidable fighters in Firuman.

"Ha! This trick again? Pathetic!" Then, demon once again lunged towards Eleanor.

Then it was like a replay of the previous scene, as just when he moved forward another giant fiery hand caught it and held it in the air just as before. The demon's limbs grappled the air as it struggled to get away, it now looked just like a kitten that was held in a hand.

"I'll make you scatter again, stupid hand!" After getting attacked twice by the same method the demon erupted in anger. It bellowed as it unleashed another explosion of dark energy, this time its scream seemed to ring through the whole forest. Once again it managed to disperse the Vulcan's Hand, but this time he could sense the moment his feet reached the ground that something was shooting towards it from behind. It was a Whistle. Not the normal Whistle though, but a Sacred Silver Whistle!

"So, you're finally trying a new trick, huh?" jeered the demon.

The demon immediately felt the threat coming from behind and blocked the Whistle just in time with its arm blades.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Because of its strong combat instincts, the demon blocked all of Link's Whistles with frightening precision and speed. But that wasn't all the Whistles could do.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The Whistles exploded and sent fragments of Sacred Silver flying through the air. The flames from the explosions seemed to have swallowed up the demon's whole body.

But Whistle was ultimately just a Level-1 spell, so even though the metal fragments were quite deadly to humans and Dark Elves who had very low defenses, they were really no threat to the demons who had very strong and hardy skin.

All the demon felt when the metal fragments hit it was a slight prickly pain. It bent his head to examine its skin for a while and noticed that there were some shallow wounds, but that was nothing to get worried about. What was scary was how these cut wounds couldn't close up and how the dark energy around its body was slightly hampered and impeded now.

Those were the effects of the Sacred Silver.

The demon was momentarily stunned. It had never been attacked by anything like this before.

Just at that moment, Link triggered the Glyph of Soul and the Vulcan's Hand that had just dispersed re-emerged and once again clutched the demon's body in its palm.

"Ellie," shouted Link, "the Sacred Silver Whistle!"

Eleanor had mastered Whistle ever since Link had given her the scroll that contained its spell structure at the Magicians' Fair a while ago.

Eleanor was no longer afraid of the demon when she saw it clambering helplessly in Link's giant fiery hand. Her attitude and performance at the time were finally at the standard of a Level-6 Master Magician.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!

One-by-one, the Whistles shot out of Eleanor's wand at a speed on par with Link's Whistles. She'd cast three Whistles in one second, and under her control they all headed towards the demon's head.

Bang, bang, bang!

The Whistles exploded, bringing about more Sacred Silver fragments all around the demon.

The strange attack had just wounded the demon not too long ago, so when it was hit with the same attack again the demon got even more confused. It had never faced this kind of spell before and had no idea how to defend itself from it. All this time his instincts had helped him win every battle, but once he's forced to face a novel attack the demon was stumped. With this dampened response it was then unable to disperse Link's Vulcan's Hand.

Which meant it was the perfect timing for Link to kill the demon!

A steady whistle rang out of the Vulcan's hand. It tightened its grasp on the demon abruptly, while its palm suddenly burst out in an intense bluish-white lightit was the fire elements of the Vulcan's Hand finally breaking outito its wild nature!

"Aaaaahhhhh!!!" the demon howled in pain. There was an explosion of the dark demonic energy around it again, protecting it from the screaming heat of the fiery hand. But by then, the Vulcan's Hand had already fully exploded and released an immense implosive force that pushed inwards at the demon, canceling out the outward pushing forces the dark energy had exerted on the Vulcan's Hand.

And so, the demon could no longer disperse the Vulcan's Hand this time, it could only resist its force.

However, although the dark energy in its body was immense, it still had its limits. The demon had already used a significant amount of energy in scattering the Vulcan's Hand twice and was now continuously exerting energy to protect himself from the Vulcan's Hand's force. It had already expended a great chunk of its energy reserve.

Finally, after ten seconds in the grasp of the Vulcan's Hand, the demon had emptied its dark energy. The flame then began to burn his body directly, and clouds of blue smoke billowed out. The scream in its throat then began to change its pitch and became so inhuman that it would curdle the blood of anyone who heard it.

The burning continued for another three seconds while the demon continued to scream. Just then, Link halted the Vulcan's Hand.

Thump!

A charred body covered with blue smoke slumped to the ground. The demon's skin was completely burned, and its raw flesh and blood were exposed. Surprisingly, the demon could still move. It squirmed on the ground, still attempting to escape, and its speed was increasing gradually.

Even its injuries were recovering in front of Link and Eleanor's eyes! What a tenacious will to live!

Unfortunately, though, its time had come.

Swish swish swish swish.

Link cast four Sacred Silver Whistles towards the demon and they quickly pierced through its hand and both its legs. Then the Whistles exploded simultaneously, nailing the demon to the ground.

The Sacred Silver in these four Whistles were refined from Mithril, so the effects on the demon were much stronger than the previous ones, enough to overpower the demon's defenses and pierce deep into the demon's body. Once the Sacred Silver made contact with the demon's blood, it would then suppress the dark energy inside its body.

This time, the demon would have no choice but be honest and spill out everything he knew.

## 155. The Pillar of the Dark Elves

Demons were creatures from another dimension. They would not simply appear in Firuman out of thin air. Someone must have opened a portal to the abyss and summoned them.

Where was the location of the portal? Who was the summoner? These were the things Link wanted to know.

After casting an unmodified Edelweiss spell onto himself, Link walked towards the demon and raised his wand. A Sacred Whistle appeared at the tip of his wand. The whistle spun at a high speed and released a piercing screech through the atmosphere. Visible air ripples could be seen around it. Link positioned it only around two feet away from the demon. As long as Link release the spell, the Sacred Whistle would pierce into the demon's skull and deal a fatal blow.

The demon was evidently becoming nervous. His bloodshot eyes stared at the whistle defensively.

Link stared silently at the demon with a smile on his face. He was familiar with the temperament of demons. When they were in good health and at the peak of their strength, they would be arrogant and explosive. However, when they lost all these advantages, they would not hesitate to abandon their pride and integrity to beg for mercy.

Survival of the fittest was the way of life in the environment they were brought up in. Anything else was secondary as long as they could stay alive. This was especially true for low-level demons. In the abyss, they were often bullied and repressed by the stronger high-level demons. Their pride had long been trampled on and destroyed.

After ten seconds, the demon could not maintain his composure anymore. He screamed, "I surrenderI surrender!"

Link had a look of satisfaction while Eleanor stared at him with a puzzling expression. She did not expect the wild ferocious demon they had just fought would say such cowardly words.

Link kept the scared whistle spell on hold and asked, "Who is your summoner?"

"Aymons de Romilson. He is a Magician like both of you. He is Level-7 in strength.

"What about the location?"

"The Horton Tower to the North. In the middle of Kuroshio Lake. I arrived in this world around ten days ago."

"What is your purpose of coming here?"

The demon showed signs of hesitation and fell silent.

The Sacred Whistle at the tip of Link's wand immediately dashed out and pierced through the abdomen of the demon before exploding inside his body. This injury would not be lethal but would cause unimaginable pain to a demon's body.

Around 0.1 seconds after the release of the first Sacred Whistle, Link was already prepared with another one fully charged at the tip of his wand. It seemed as though the previous release was all but an illusion.

However, the pain was about as real as it could be. The burning sensation in his abdomen caused the demon to flail around on the ground in pain. He immediately roared his reply in fear that he would once again be subjected to the same treatment, "To protect the Holy Maiden. Yes, it is to protect her!"

"Her name?" Link replied almost instantaneously. This was to give the opponent no time to construct his thoughts and thus forcing him to speak the truth.

"Elena," The demon mentioned a familiar name.

"If you are protecting the maiden you should know the person of contact. Are they the Dark Elves?" Link asked. There was no point in simply protecting her. Elena had already gotten the structure of three Mage Towers of the academy. She must have been tasked to deliver them back to their base. The low-level demon in front of them would definitely not be enough to accomplish this task. The Dark Elves must have sent someone else as a point of contact.

"Yes...oh no actually Ahh! Yes, there is one! He is a Dark Elf named Lawndale Markins. I came here together with him!" The demon grimaced in pain as his moment of hesitation had once again earned him a blow of the Sacred Whistle.

"Where are they now?" There was not a hint of emotion in Link's voice or face. But there were already violent ripples in his heart. If Felidia, Alina and Ainos were the three musketeers of the Silver Moon, then Lawndale Markins and Aymons de Romilson would be the two pillars of the Dark Elves!

They were not extremely talented individuals nor did they accomplish any feats in the game. In fact, they even seemed mediocre at their very best. However, if one were to look down on them, they would definitely suffer the taste of defeat.

They belonged to the group of people who would never make mistakes and advance their motives carefully step-by-step. One would usually call these people strategic geniuses.

A race would need people like the three musketeers to raise morale. They were important people as well, although they were more like the icing on the cake. There would be no serious ramifications if they did not exist. However, if people like Aymons who could stabilize and analyze the situation clearly did not exist, a race might face complete destruction.

"The fight with the Dark Elves has only just begun," Link sighed.

However, Link concealed his emotions extremely well. The demon could not see through his expression. Furthermore, the fear of being tortured had already put him under great pressure. He could only speak the truth now.

"In Chestnut Village. I beg of you please kill me. I have already told you all that I know." The demon was clear of his situation. He knew that he could not escape from Link alive. All he wanted was a quick and painless death.

Eleanor softly whispered, "Chestnut Village was where I found Elena. I know the exact location."

Link nodded slightly and asked, "You said that Elena was a Holy Maiden. Which God is she serving?" This was what Link wanted to know.

However, the demon repeatedly shook his head, "I have no idea. I truly don't. It was Lawndale who called me here. He calls her the Holy Maiden and therefore I do as well. Why would I bother to ask who she serves?" This was the truth. He said it without hesitation.

"How strong is Lawndale Markins?" This was the last question. According to history, the Lawndale in this timeline had not fully matured. He should even be slightly weaker than Felidia.

"He is extremely weak! I can destroy him with one hand! His magic is a joke. If he did not know my real name, I would have smashed his skull a long time ago!" The demon lashed out, confirming Link's suspicions.

Link had already asked all his questions. He reckoned that the demon had outlived its usefulness and fired the Sacred Whistle straightito his skull.

The demon jerked violently before he became completely motionless. Following which, a huge amount of black smog emerged from its body. This gas corroded everything along its way and in the blink of an eye, the land had turned into a polluted marshland. The surrounding vegetation withered at a speed visible to the naked eye, while the ground turned into a noxious concoction of poison and mud. For the vegetation that was slightly further away, they escaped death narrowly, though, the color of their leaves and bark had turned many shades darker. It was extremely ominous looking.

This gas extended to a full 30 meters before dissipating.

Link knew that if he left this land as is and let the powers of nature purify it, this land would take at least three years before it would return to its original state.

Eleanor's eyes widened in horror. "How terrifying! The Legends have stated that after our forefather killed a powerful demon, the poisonous smog would pollute lands even hundreds of miles away. I have always thought they were exaggerating. Now, it seems like they were speaking the truth."

Link nodded. "We were lucky that this demon was not strong. We can purify this easily with flames. Eleanor, I need your help for this one. Use the Flame Blast spell."

"I understand."

The two of them stood with their backs against each other and started using the single directional Flame Blast spell consecutively.

The boiling magma flowed through the lands and roasted everything along its way. The soil was swept violently through the currents while the vegetation was burned to ashes. Amongst the violent fluctuations of energy, the demonic forces were decomposed into a more basic elemental energy.

When they were done, green smog could be seen rising from the ground. However, the ground had already turned from an ominous black color to one that was normal. There might still be some residual demonic energy here, but those were negligible.

After the purification, Eleanor led the way while Link followed behind. They made a beeline for Chestnut Village.

On the way, Eleanor introduced the situation to Link. "Chestnut Village is not huge. There are only about 200 people in it. It is a small farmland that belongs to a noble in the area. After a month of observation, I realized that Elena is extremely good at hiding her identity. She looks just like an ordinary countrywoman, Lisa in front of everyone else. I could find no flaws in her acting. If not for the fact that I've seen her resurrection first hand, I could not have imagined that she was the Holy Maiden."

Link could totally imagine the situation. He once stayed with this woman for several months in the same Mage Tower and failed to find any flaws in her disguise. Even a genius like Eliard was played like a pawn by her hands. She was a dangerous woman.

Link then asked, "Did you see the Dark Elf, Lawndale Markins?"

"No. I have no idea if he made contact with the Holy Maiden. I did not notice his existence at all. He must have been concealing himself well."

"This Dark Elf is not very powerful. However, he is extremely vigilant. As the demon contractor, he should be fully aware that the demon is dead. We need to hurry."

Link summoned the Wind Fenrir and sat behind Eleanor after helping her up. The Wind Fenrir then darted out like a gust of strong gale, charging straight towards Chestnut Village upon Eleanor's directions.

Chestnut Village.

Elena felt slightly uneasy. As a countrywoman, she was weaving using the spinning wheel in her room.

In order to play a variety of roles, she learned a number of skills. Weaving was an essential skill that all countrywoman needed to know. As a veteran actress, she was of course, well-versed in it.

The spinning wheel creaked with a routine rhythm, but Elena's mind was completely not focused on her current activity.

Four days earlier, the demon found a person peeping at her. He had not returned after giving chase for such a long time. It was starting to feel strange.

"Did something happen?" Elena felt uneasy. However, she had to maintain her composure and not show any signs that could reveal her true identity. Her role as a countrywoman had greatly restited her movements. Furthermore, she had lost all her powers due to her resurrection.

At that moment, a faint figure appeared in the dark corner of the room. A soft voice then rang in her head, "Elena, leave now. Darl is dead. We have been exposed."

This came as a shock to Elena. She had witnessed the demon's power first hand. Who could have killed him in the Girvent Fores?

However, now was not the time to be worried over such things. In fact, after knowing that Darl as dead, she felt unexpectedly calm. She then spoke, "Lawndale, do not care about me. I have no powers now and would only slow you down."

She still intended to leave. However, she had no powers and had to be sure that Lawndale truly wished to protect her and take her away. If he left her to her own devices in the middle of the road, she would be in trouble.

"How can I do that? You are the sacred Holy Maiden. You must stay alive. Stop hesitating, come with me!" The voice sounded determined. He then walked out of the dark corner and revealed his appearance. It was a Dark Elf about 25 years of age. He looked extremely ordinary and his eyes did not have the usual evil charm that most Dark Elves had. In fact, there was a hint of loyalty in them. He pulled Elena's hand and dashed out of the room.

"But I will slow you down," Elena once again spoke in a delicate voice.

Lawndale had a passionate expression on his face and assured, "Don't worry, I will see that you are safe even if it meant sacrificing my life!"

Upon hearing those words, Elena bowed her head and gently whispered, "Thank you, Lawndale."

A smirk then appeared on her face as she thought, What a gullible young lad.

However, as Elena was feeling satisfied, she did not realize that the Dark Elf who was holding her hands so firmly was staring at her with a look of mockery.

Using slutty tricks to deceive me? I am only doing this out of respect for master. If I am successful, good for you. If I am notyou are merely a disposable prostitute, Lawndale thought with disgust.

## 156. A Tough Opponent

When Link and Eleanor arrived at Chestnut Village it was already after three in the afternoon. Thick dark clouds covered the sun in the sky making it quite dark; it even seemed as if a storm was brewing as gusts of wind swayed the trees around the small village till they flailed helplessly in the air.

"It's going to rain soon," said Eleanor gloomily as she looked up at the sky. "If they fled through the forest the rain would wash away all their tracks; we might not be able to follow them then."

Link frowned as well. He didn't expect to encounter such bad weather today.

To prevent from shocking the villagers, Link had stopped at the edge of the forest and halted the Wind Fenrir. They then continued the journey into the village on foot.

The villagers here had hardly ever received any visitors from outside the tiny remote mountain village, so when Link and Eleanor appeared they all flocked to see these strangers who looked so different from them. The children were particularly boisterous around them. Most of these kids didn't wear any clothes at all and they ran about in front of Link and Eleanor with their naked little butts fully exposed.

The children loved to gather around Eleanor and stared at her with wonder. This was completely understandable because of Link's unremarkable looks, so they naturally found nothing about him that was admirable. Meanwhile, Eleanor was dressed in a black Magician's dress that was made with luxurious materials. She had an extraordinary looking bracelet on each of her delicate wrists and her face was simply enchanting. To the villagers, she was no less magical than an angel who'd just stepped out of a painting!

Eleanor had lived a solitary life for the past century, so she was quite moved by the experience of being surrounded and admired so closely and openly by so many people. Even though she was the center of everyone's attention then, Eleanor was also staring at the villagers in wonder herself.

"I've heard that a woman in the village had received the God of Light's blessings and was resurrected," said Link to a farmer he just approached. "We are here on a pilgrimage to witness the Lord's miracle. Would you tell me where we can find her?"

Once the farmer and the other villagers around him heard Link's words they all lit up with a smile that was full of pride and honor. Although they'd always flocked to the visitors from the outside world that they occasionally received, experience taught them to be wary of outsiders as they might bring harm to the village. Still, these two visitors were pilgrims, so they must be pious followers of the God of Light, therefore they couldn't come with any intention to harm them.

Then, a young man stepped up closer to Link and introduced himself proudly.

"By the glory of the God of Light, it is true, stranger," he said. "There is indeed a woman in this village who was resurrected. She's my wife, Lisa. Both of you follow me, she would be glad to tell you what she saw in heaven."

Link and Eleanor looked at each other then followed the young man.

The houses in the village were very simple with wooden doors, thatched walls and thatched roofs. Each family had a small courtyard. Link followed the young man for about three hundred feet on a road heaped with a sludge of cattle and sheep dung. Finally, they stopped in front of a small courtyard.

"Here we are, this is my home," said the young man happily. He then shouted, "Lisa! Lisa! You've got visitors!"

They waited there for a while but there was no response except for an old brown dog who came out from the backyard after hearing its owner's voice.

"That's strange," said the man, confused. "Where is she?" He pushed the door open and checked inside the house. Lisa should be spinning the yarn inside at this hour, but as he entered the house all he saw was a vacant wheel without any yarn and no sight of his wife.

"Lisa? Lisa?" The young man was starting to get anxious. He walked out of the house and headed towards the courtyard to tell the visitors about his missing wife, but when he came out he discovered that the two strangers were gone as well.

"Huh? Where did they go?" remarked the young man in growing perplexity. "Lisa, where are you? Lisa?" The young man then continued to call out her name all around the house, but the only response he got was silence.

Meanwhile, outside in the courtyard, Link and Eleanor were both enveloped in the faint aura of a high-level Invisibility spell. They saw how the young man still couldn't find his wife and his face had gradually become darker and gloomier.

"She must've got wind of the news that we're coming," said Eleanor. This wasn't surprising to Link at all. The minute he knew that Lawndale was involved he realized that they shouldn't expect much from this trip to the Chestnut Village.

Lawndale was still unknown at the time, but Link knew even then that he was a much tougher opponent to deal with than Felidia. This Dark Elf knew its own strengths and limits and he knew how to work around them. He would never take any unnecessary risks or make any rash decision. All in all, this was a sharp, precise and decisive Dark Elf that must not be underestimated.

Eleanor stayed silent. Her eyes were as black as Link's and they were now glowing faintly in a purple aura as they were keeping a close eye on the little wooden house where Lisa or Elena was supposed to be.

Eleanor was using a tracking spell to track her.

Half a second later, she turned away from the house and walked towards its backyard. Link understood that this meant she had picked up on the woman's trail, so he followed right behind Eleanor.

Just then, the man in the yard had grown panicked and was calling wife's name over and over again, his voice heavy with worry and fear. Moments later, a white-haired old man and an old woman started to join the search and was calling out Lisa's name as well. They must've been the young man's parents.

Link let out a heavy sigh at the sight of those people searching for someone Link knew was gone forever. To Link, he was only pursuing Elena to thwart the Black Moon Conspiracy which might have worried him very much but once it's over he would move on from it easily. To this family, though, especially to the young man, this would be a great tragedy that they might grieve over for the rest of their lives.

They'd lost the young woman Lisa once, but she'd come back before they came to terms with her passing. Now that she's back for a month she's gone once again and the whole family would have to go through the grieving process all over again. This kind of torment was enough to make a man go crazy!

Link sighed, then grabbed ten gold coins from his storage pendant and floated it through a window into the house using Magician's Hand. This amount would be enough for the young man to find a new wife and begin his life anew. Link didn't know how much it would help but he hoped that it could at least slightly alleviate the pain the young man and his family would have to suffer in the future.

Eleanor gave Link a look when she noticed what he was doing.

"It was the man's fate to lose his wife," she said. "Things like this happen all the time all over Firuman, and it happens to countless men and women. There's nothing you can do about it, it's just a fact of life."

"Why did you have to make such a fuss over a small act of kindness?" replied Link. "I just felt sorry for them and wanted to help in any way I could, that's all."

Eleanor was taken aback by Link's words and stared at him wordlessly for a while.

For the past century or so, Eleanor had come across so many self-professed moralists who spouted all sorts of noble ideals. But she was sure that when these men were in the same position as Link was now, five out of ten would've just ignored the family and moved on indifferently. Four of them might offer them some comforting words, while one of them might give them some money, albeit not without letting everyone know how kind they had been to the less fortunate. Eleanor had never met anyone like Link in her long life who would just leave the money to the family without letting anyone know, all because he felt sorry for them.

Perhaps this was the reason why a Master Magician like Eleanor had always trusted Link unconditionally and knew intuitively that he would never betray her.

She then silently grabbed five gold coins from her storage ring and flung itito the house through the same window.

"This should be enough for him to get a beautiful new wife," she said. Fifteen gold coins were indeed a fortune for a farmer's family, it might even be such a big amount that it would bring them trouble, although Link said nothing of the matter and just smiled at Eleanor.

The two then continued to follow the trail. They did not use any magic spells to increase their speed because the Mana fluctuation would interfere with what already weak scent they left. Soon after, they were lead into the forest behind the village. When they followed the trail for about a quarter mile, Eleanor suddenly stopped in her tracks.

"What's wrong?" asked Link, he thought Eleanor's tracking spell should be able to detect the trails without any problems seeing that she was a Master Magician specializing in secret spells.

"It's strange," said Eleanor, frowning, "but the trail has been divided into two, and I don't know which one we should follow." She hadn't been worried about not being able to detect the trails, it wasn't for no reason that she was a mighty Level-6 Master Magician. But now that the spell was leading her to two different trails, she was simply flummoxed.

"Just choose any one of them, then," answered Link after thinking about it.

There was no other choice, anyway. Eleanor then chose the trail on the left, and so they followed it for a while and then she stopped abruptly again. Her eyebrows almost knitted to each other now.

"The trail forked into two again," she said, full of frustration. "What's going on here? Did she know how to duplicate herself?"

"Just choose another trail, then," said Link, who now began to feel confused as well. Too bad this was the only way they could trace them, and Link himself wasn't proficient in tracking spells, so he could only rely on Eleanor in this case.

They had no other choice, so Eleanor chose the trail on her right and they walked along for another half mile. This time not only did Eleanor stop suddenly, but her jaw was dropped as well.

Right there, in front of them, was a very familiar sceneit was where they first started to notice the trail had divided into two!

"We're running around in circles!" said Eleanor. "What exactly is going on here?"

Link stood there in silence, contemplating the matter. Then, a few seconds later, he had a revelation.

"Although Elena was good at manipulating men," he said, "I don't think she'd think of this trick. This must be the Dark Elf's doing. I must admit that it's an ingenious planwhat he did was he just deliberately wandered around in the forest. There was a 50% percent chance each time the trail divided that we would choose the wrong trail, which would then lead us back to the original spot, and that would give him more time to make his escape!"

It was such a simple plan in pLinkiple but when it was combined with the complex terrain of the mountainous forest here, this trick could waste a lot of the pursuer's time. Even if Link and Eleanor had known from the start that this trick had been used, they'd still have to bet on luck and choose a trail randomly. Obviously, Eleanor's luck wasn't so good today as she'd chosen the wrong route, which had taken them back to where they started.

Eleanor had a sharp mind herself, so she immediately understood what the Dark Elf was planning just from Link's simple explanation. Still, she had some points she didn't quite understand.

"But how could he be so sure that we'd choose the wrong path?" she asked. "What if we did choose the right path? Wouldn't that just waste the time that he could've spent on escaping?"

"I'm afraid it isn't that simple," answered Link with a gentle shake of his head.

Link knew from the game that Lawndale was a man who took no risks. Link guessed that even if Eleanor had chosen the right trail she would still be stumped by another trick further down. Besides, the possibility that Eleanor would choose the right trail twice was smaller than one in three anyway, so there was a good chance that they could buy some time in their escape.

"So what do we do now?" asked Eleanor.

"We'll continue the chase," said Link. Since their scent was still there, it must mean that they're not that far away, so they still had a chance to catch up.

"Alright, then," answered Eleanor.

The two then continued their tracking of Elena and the Dark Elf, this time choosing different trails from the ones they did before.

After more than half a mile, Eleanor stopped for the third time.

"There's a fork in the trail again," she said. "I hate this damned Dark Elf bastard! Which direction should we choose now, left or right?"

"Can you sense any difference between the two trails at all?" asked Link.

"No," answered Eleanor, shaking her head. "The scent they left was too sparse and dispersed."

After listening to Eleanor's reply, Link started to get more serious and examine the traces left on the ground himself. Because he'd been spending a lot of time learning the art of enchantment, he had become especially observant, much more so than the average Magician. This was because he must make sure that there was no mistake at all in his spell structure, not even the smallest magic rune, otherwise the magic gear would fail.

Link couldn't detect the scent in the atmosphere that Eleanor was following at all, but he could still detect the physical tracks that Elena and the Dark Elf left on the surrounding such as footprints, snapped branches, bent blades of grass and so on. If he examined them closely enough, there were clues there that would be helpful in tracking them down.

Because the forest floor was covered in fallen leaves, the footprints could not be relied on as there was no difference at all between the footprints in both trails. Fortunately, though, the snapped off stems of trees did provide him with valuable clues.

Link could judge how long the tree stems had been snapped off by their freshness. Those that were newly broken off would still be moist, while those that had been broken off a long time ago would have dried off, and so he could judge the length of time since Elena and the Dark Elf had passed the trail.

In this case, the difference was minute, but it was enough for Link's eyes to discern.

"Let's follow the one on the right," said Link after examining the trail for three minutes. "They passed through this way about forty minutes ago."

"Alright, then," said Eleanor, who then promptly followed the trail that Link had chosen.

They then walked on for about half a mile. Then, the trail forked into two again. At this point they were beginning to suspect if the Dark Elf knew a spell that could divide himself into two identical bodies.

"This is not good," Eleanor spread out her hands helplessly. "There are two trails again."

"Don't get frustrated," said Link calmly. "We'll just keep moving forward."

And so, they followed the trail and persisted on for half a mile. No new tracks appeared, and Eleanor's frown began to deepen, but Link started to smile instead.

Seeing that Eleanor was about to give up, Link realized he had to say something.

"He didn't walk in circles to confuse us this time," said Link, smiling, "he just walked forward as he normally would. There are two trails here, because one was used by the Dark Elf when he was coming in this direction, while the other trail is the one he is currently walking on. If I'm not mistaken, they shouldn't be too far away from us now."

Lawndale had been in the Chestnut Village for quite a while and he was very familiar with Norton Kingdom, so he must've made thorough preparations for an escape route in case their plans were found out.

Eleanor was still skeptical, though.

They walked on for another half a mile when Link noticed new tracks on the ground.

"Elena's new body must've slowed them down to a crawl!" he said with a laugh. "We should catch up with them in no time."

They then went further for few more minutes. Then, Link noticed there was a woman by the roadside. A dagger was stuck in the back of the woman's head and blood came gushing out of the wound. She looked as if she had just died, though her eyes were stuck open and her face was frozen in an expression of shock.

Eleanor's eyes widened as she realized who it was.

"It's Lisa!" she exclaimed, horrified. "Who killed her?"

"It must've been the Dark Elf, he must've thought that she's dragging him down, so he discarded her," said Link, squatting down in front of Lisa's body to examine her wound. He then shook his head. "There's no denying that the Dark Elf was cold-blooded. It's far too late to save her, she's dead."

"The Dark Elf shouldn't be too far away from us now," said Eleanor. "Should we increase our speed?" She'd seen how cold and calculative this opponent was, and she was sure that without Link's help there was no way she could catch up with him.

"There's no use," said Link, shaking his head. "We won't catch him today."

"Why not?" asked Eleanor, slightly puzzled. But just then she felt a drop of water on her face and she couldn't help but sigh. "Seems like it's going to be a heavy rain."

The rain would definitely flush away all traces of the Dark Elf's trails. Had the Dark Elf still brought Elena with him, she would've slowed him down enough that Link could probably find a way to catch up with them. But now that Lawndale had gotten rid of the burden, there was no hope they'd ever catch up with him.

He checked his mission status on the interface and discovered that it was still incomplete. When they were investigating and following the trails, the notification box of the Black Moon Conspiracy mission did flash up on the interface from time to time, though Link couldn't make out any details in the notification at all.

In the end, Link had been outplayed in this encounter with Lawndale, who managed to stay a step ahead. He learned today how important it was to not take the strong and prominent figures in this world lightly, or else they could slip out and escape right under your nose.

## 157. The Final Step

They were unsuccessful in tracking the Dark Elves. However, they killed the demon and determined Elena's true whereabouts. Link then bade farewell to Eleanor and returned to the academy to report the Lawndale incident to Herrera.

Herrera valued Link's opinions and immediately reported the matter to the dean. Upon hearing the news, it was rumored that Anthony was so furious and shocked that the crystal glass he was holding fell out his hand and shattered into pieces.

The alert level of the entire academy was already very high. This time, they raised it even a notch higher, upgrading every single pivotal Mage Tower in the academy.

They seemed to be preparing for a formidable enemy.

The amount of attention the academy placed on this issue gave Link a peace of mind. In the days that followed, he simply charged the Prophet white stone whenever he could while continuing his magic research, trying to improve his knowledge as much as possible before the fated day.

He had a practical goal, which was to shorten the casting time of his Level-6 spell, the Titan's Hand. While the spell had great offensive power, Link still needed at least five seconds to cast the spell even with the help of the in-game system. The combat utility of the spell was thus, heavily compromised.

This was the awkward part about being a Magician. The higher the level of the spell, the more complex the magic structure. Although the strength of the spell would increase exponentially each level, so would the casting time.

During a battle, the higher the level of the opponents, the lesser the advantage a Magician had over other professions. This was true all the way until a Magician attained the Legendary status.

Link simply needed to reduce his spellcasting timeeven 0.1 seconds would be a significant reduction.

The East Cove Higher Magic Academy was recovering well from their minor setback.

On the other hand, Dark Elf Lawndale had just narrowly escaped from Link's pursuit. He did not dare to stay in the Girvent Forest any longer and made his journey all the way back to the North.

Around half a month later, Lawndale returned to the Black Lake.

This was the core area of the Black Forest. Although the Norton Kingdom was advancing fastito the territory, their vanguard forces were still at least 500 miles away. Hence, this area was still safe.

After circling around the lake for half a mile, Lawndale saw a dock ahead. No boatman could be seen on the pier, although a few wooden canoes could be seen. Lawndale casually embarked onto a wooden canoe and tapped his toes gently onto the magic circle engraved on it. As mana surged into the magic circle, the water elemental spell that was enchanted onto the canoe was instantly activated.

The small wooden canoe darted out and headed towards the island in the center of the lake steadily but rapidly. There was a Mage Tower on the island called Horton Tower. This tower belonged to his mentor, Duke Aymons.

Aymons was a Level-7 Magician, and his parliamentary status in the Silver Moon was only secondary to the Chancellor. The demon that accompanied him to the Girvent Forest this time around was also summoned by his mentor.

After 20 minutes, Lawndale stepped onto the island. The island was filled with dense overgrowth, and one could vaguely see shadows drifting amongst the thick mist. These shadows were all tower guard demons who were summoned by his mentor. Their strength was around Level-3 to Level-4, and their battle abilities were almost three times higher than ordinary soldiers of their level.

Lawndale charged his staff with mana which caused it to glow in a light purple hue. This was a magic marking. Under the effect of this magic marking, he would not be attacked by these demonic creatures.

He then stepped cautiously into the forest. After ten minutes, a tower with a similar exterior to that of a castle appeared in his field of vision. The tower was surrounded by a circle of tall walls, and a 12-foot-tall demon stood aloofly at the entrance of the gate.

Not only was the demon tall, but there was also a thick layer of demonic scales surrounding his tough exterior. There were almost no gaps in this dense armor and a knife shaped horn grew from its skull. He looked extremely intimidating as he held two giant swords which were larger than Lawndale himself in his hands.

This demon was called Bruttan, a Level-7 Demon Warrior. He was the strongest demon his mentor had ever summoned, and probably had the power to crush the entire army of Firuman Warriors if he wanted to.

Lawndale greeted the demon with respect and said, "Dear Bruttan, I would like to speak to my mentor."

The demon looked down condescendingly at Lawndale and rumbled with disdain, "Little one, didn't you bring Nobi together with you? Where is he?"

"Nobi was met with misfortune. I was just about to report to my mentor regarding this issue."

"What? Who could have killed Nobi? He might have been a bit of a joke, but his power is not something that you mortals can ever hope to match up to. Tell me who did it!" Bruttan stared at Lawndale with bloodshot eyes, his pupils burning with violent tendencies.

Lawndale felt pressured by the intimidating gaze, so much so that he felt difficulty breathing. He tried to remain calm and said, "Dear Bruttan, I need to see my mentor."

At that moment, a voice rang from the Mage Tower, "Bruttan, let him in."

Upon hearing the sound, Bruttan's intimidating stature dissipated. He muttered a few words under his breath before obediently clearing the path for Lawndale.

Lawndale heaved a sigh of relief and entered the tower. Once he was inside the castle walls, he finally saw his fellow Dark Elves. Some of them were his direct seniors and juniors, while others were servants that he had grown close to in the past few years. He immediately felt a lot more at ease.

As one of the Magiciassaw Lawndale, he pointed to the tower and said, "Mentor is waiting for you at the rooftop balcony. Please make your way there."

"How is he feeling?" Lawndale whispered.

"I cannot tell. Probably not too bad," the Magician replied.

"Alright. Thank you." Lawndale needed to prepare himself.

Lawndale climbed up the winding grey staircase to the rooftop balcony. The balcony was extremely wide and was enveloped in a translucent light dome. Through the dome, the area within a six-mile radius from the Horton Tower seemed to be brought infinitely closer without any compromise on the details.

An old man clad in a grey robe stood silently on one side of the roof. He did not turn his body even when he heard some noises behind him. He simply spoke softly, "In my dreams, the Dark Lady brought me a message. She mentioned that the Lord in the South is extremely displeased with your action of killing Elena."

The Dark Lady and the Lord in the South were all god-like presences. For a mortal to have angered a godthis was absolutely not good news.

However, there was no hint of fear on Lawndale's face. He calmly explained, "The situation then was dire. If I hadn't killed her, she would have ended up in the hands of East Cove Higher Magic Academy. If that truly happened, I am sure the Lord in the South would be even more unhappy."

"Yes." Aymons nodded. He then turned around, revealing his face filled with wrinkles and a pair of white pupils. He was already blind.

"Nobi could not be considered weak. Who could have killed him?" Aymons asked.

"I was in a hurry then. The downpour that happened erased most of my evidence of escape. I only managed to catch a glimpse of him from afar. It should be that guy."

There was no need for names of descriptions. As Lawndale's mentor, Aymons knew exactly who he was talking about. He said, "This is your first time dealing with him. What do you think?"

Lawndale recounted his experience in the Girvent Forest, and his eyes twitched ever so slightly. "I am not his opponent in a direct battle as of now. However, I am confident that our mental capabilities are on par. Although there is one area where he is stronger than me by leaps and bounds."

"Tell me more." There was no hint of emotional fluctuations in Aymon's voice.

"He is not a one-man team. He has already gathered a powerful alliance around him. I have done my research and realized that he has allies in the academy, the mercenary band, MI3, the merchant world and even a Level-6 Secret Magician. There have even been rumors that he is on good terms with Princess Celine. Not only is he open-minded, but he is also humble. I could not feel even a hint of the usual arrogance that Magicians had on him. He can always accurately determine the talents of others and is highly charismatic. These social skills are what makes him extremely dangerous."

This plan was meant to be carried out in secret; Chestnut Village was an extremely remote area. Nobi was originally only tasked to track down a Level-6 Secret Magician. However, Link's appearance messed up the entire plan.

Who would imagine that an official Magician from the highly prestigious East Cove Higher Magic Academy would have connections with a secret Magician that had once dabbled in the dark arts? This was the preposterous scene that happened right in front of Lawndale's eyes.

This made Lawndale feel extremely vulnerable. He felt as though Link had multiple tentacles, some of which he was still unaware of. If he ever stepped footito the Girvent Forest, he might be done in by any one of them as long as he made a single mistake.

It was almost impossible to defend against such tactics.

Aymons stayed silent for a long time before speaking again, "The Dark Lady once told me that the God of Light found a new Chosen One amongst the people of Firuman. Originally, I thought nothing of it. It would at most be another Bryant. However, it seems that the situation is more dire than I have imagined."

The Legendary Magician Bryant; all mortals would have heard of his righteous name and probably revered him in his endless glory. However, the people who were familiar with the true history knew that the reason Bryant could achieve such extraordinary feats was only partly due to his gift. The other reason was the blessings of God.

He was the previous candidate chosen by the God of Light.

Furthermore, while Bryant indeed became the Legendary Magician that everyone respected and loved, he was eccentric and a hopeless romantic. He spent his whole life tangling with a High Elf woman, and even made a rash decision out of love.

Bryant could serve as a deterrent to the dark forces and good role model for the people of Firuman. However, he did not know how to surround himself with allies. No matter how strong Bryant became, it was impossible for him to change the world. In fact, a demon named Tarviss was all it took to wear him down.

However, this new candidate was something else.

Lawndale then followed up, "What do we do then?"

Aymons shook his head. "We must treat this person seriously. However, the priority is to first destroy the Norton Kingdom Army who is currently heading north."

Lawndale looked at Aymons with a surprised expression, "Mentor, are we going to activate the God item?"

Aymons nodded, his grey-white eyes turning towards the crystal screen on his side. "The time is almost ripe. The East Cove Higher Magic Academy is the final step."

The moment the academy fell, the Norton Kingdom would lose most of its defensive power. Their magic capabilities would also be reduced by at least 50%. Coupled with the power of the God item, it would be easy for the Dark Elves to reverse the situation.

"Mentor, are you saying that we need to bring forward the Black Moon Conspiracy? But the old guy in the Tower of Azula might not be ready."

"Oh, the old guy is merely a sacrifice," Aymons laughed.

## 158. The Looming Crisis

At the Azura Tower of the East Cove Magic Academy.

The squat, white tower was like a silent old man, standing there soberly on the hillside overlooking the entire East Cove Magic Academy.

It was a place where those that were wicked and evil were cast away from the outside world since time immemorial. Over the course of centuries, countless secrets were buried in the tower where even the dean of the East Cove Magic Academy couldn't possibly unearth.

What went on inside the white tower? What did the prisoners inside think, plan and do? No one knew.

Bale sat cross-legged inside his cage in the white tower. Outwardly it would seem that he sat there motionless, doing nothing. The guards in the tower who were responsible for maintaining the prisoners' elemental balance walked past him without batting an eye.

Yet they didn't realize that Bale was very much active on the spiritual level. He was communicating with some of the prisoners kept in the tower's dungeons deep underground.

"Did you expect me to believe a sock puppet like you?" a gloomy voice rang in Bale's head. "Did you really think that I'd believe you could help us escape?" The owner of this voice had been imprisoned in the dungeons for 300 years, so the 70-year-old Bale was, in his eyes, a little boy still playing house.

"I guarantee it with my soul," Bale vowed. "I will find a way for us to escape."

"Ha! To hell with your soul! It's probably worth a few coppers!" sneered another voice. "Still, your plan doesn't sound half bad. If Tarviss was released, then the whole East Cove would surely be brought to ashes."

"So what if the East Cove was brought to ashes? That's got nothing to do with me," this voice was exceptionally brutish, as its owner was a magical beast with a high level of intelligence. "That pathetic group of people who call themselves Magicians locked me down here for two hundred years! I can't wait to go out and eat them all!"

"Of course the academy has nothing to do with you, you're just a wild beast!" replied another voice. "But I'm a member of the academy, those who'd locked me up are all gone, so I have no more reason to hate the academy."

"That's right," rang out a chorus of voices, "I won't trust a plan with a wild beast in it!"

"Who are you calling a wild beast!" the magical creature's voice boomed. "When I get out I'll bite off all of your heads!"

"You motherf\*cking animal!" another voice responded immediately.

For a time, the group of monsters who had been locked up in the tower for decades or even centuries began a war of words with each other in Bale's mind. They'd all forgotten the reason why they were having a discussion in the first place.

Bale's head was about to explode at the chaos that erupted. It wasn't the first time he'd used the Spiritual Nexus to communicate with the prisoners of the Azura Tower. Yet, every time these monsters got together they always ended up in dispute, so they never really came to any kind of agreement.

He then ended the Spiritual Nexus spell, and all the voices in his head disappeared immediately. The world was coldly silent again.

What should I do? thought Bale while he massaged his temple. He had recovered the Mana in his body up to 70% of his former strength and even his eyes had restored its function. This was unobtedly good progress.

With this level of strength, he could probably cause a bit of ruckus in the Azura Tower, but nowhere near collapsing and destroying it. Right now, he probably couldn't even defeat the tower guards who walked past his cell every day. Their attack strategy was very simple, all they did was continuously shoot an Elemental Arrow, which moved at an incredible speed and contained the power equivalent to a Level-6 spell.

Once you were surrounded by a large group of guards attacking you with various types of Elemental Arrows, it didn't matter how high your level was or how powerful you had been. In fact, even the dean Anthony himself wouldn't be able to escape unscathed under these circumstances.

There was only one way to destroy the Azura Tower and escape from here, and that was to release the demon Tarviss. And the only way to do that was to unite the powers of all the prisoners in this tower, but these prisonerswell, they all came from different places and different backgrounds, so it was tricky to keep them on the same page, to say the least.

Just as Bale was brooding hard on the matter, he felt a shake in his consciousness. Immediately afterwards, he thought he saw a burst of white light in the depths of his mind, and the burst was so intense that all he could see was the bright white light.

He then completely lost consciousness.

After a while, Bale opened his eyes again. These were the eyes of a Lich which looked like a pair of faintly burning green flames. This light was different from before, though, because the body was now inhibited by someone else.

Not bad, thought the new Bale. The old geezer has been working hard. His strength has recovered so much in just a matter of months.

Bale didn't understand what happened before he was knocked out, but it was actually related to the communication runes earlier.

The Dark Elf Silver Moon Council leader Manrod, a Level-8 Magician with unparalleled skills, was so far the strongest of all Magicians, second only to the Queen of High Elves.

With communication runes, Manrod could send voices into Bale's mind. He could also naturally transmit other things into his mind as well, including, when the situation warranted it, a direct telepathic control of Bale's body.

But this kind of control over Bale's body came with great limitations as well, the most important one of which was time. It wasn't that Bale's body couldn't withstand this method, instead, it was Manrod's own soul that wouldn't be able to tolerate the enormous load that this method would exert on him. If he ever exceeded his limits, his soul would immediately collapse.

I can only stay here for three days, thought Manrod. But the success of the Black Moon Conspiracy hinges on this plan, so I mustn't waste it.

There was originally no need for him to undertake such a high-risk mission, but the plans had changed since the Norton Kingdom's army had turned out to be so strong. The Dark Elves had suffered several consecutive defeats and lost many strategic advantages. If the war dragged on this way, it was possible that the Pralync Kingdom could never be saved even with the activation of the divine gear.

And so, here he was.

He combed through Bale's memories and quickly grasped the situation in this prison tower.

It's full of a bunch of idiots, Manrod thought with a bitter smile.

There was no use in talking reason with such idiots. What would've worked best was a show of superiority, power and confidence. They would quickly trust you if they're convinced that you possessed these things, then they'd start to believe that you really could get them out of here.

Unfortunately, Bale lacked the strength to do this, so he was stuck with using reason to convince these idiots, which naturally would always result in bickering.

Manrod then checked the power that Bale's body possessed, then he chose to once again cast the secret spellSpiritual Nexus.

Spiritual Nexus

Level-6 Secret Spell

Effects: Constructs a very secretive communication network by connecting the spellcaster with the souls around him through mysterious Mana energy.

(Note: Do you want to communicate with people covertly? Then learn this spell.)

As soon as the spell was cast, Manrod noticed spots of light all around him. He knew that each of these light spots was a soul, and these souls were all of the prisoners in the Azura Tower.

These souls were connected to the network one by one, and each of their voices started to ring loudly in Manrod's head.

"You bastard!" said a voice. "I was just in the middle of my sentence, why did you stop the damned spell?"

"You little bastard," said another voice, "can someone like you really get us out of this shithole of a place?"

"Kid, I'm telling you," said a different voice, "I can promise to cooperate with you, but if it involves releasing Tarviss, then I'm out!"

The voices all mingled together into a buzzing noise, but Manrod still stayed silent calm and only waited for the voices to settle down a bit before he chimed in.

"I won't say much," he finally said, "just take a look at this magic seal plan." As he spoke, he transmitted the magic seal plan to each and every mind of the souls there.

"What is this damned thing?" said the ferocious magical creature. He only had faith in his fangs and claws, so he never cared about any magic seals or whatever this thing was.

The others were different, though. Most of the prisoners in Azura Tower were Magicians. The moment Manrod sent out the magic seal plan, these Magicians only had to take a glance at it before they understood its substance and gravity. In just a few seconds they all sank into a deep silence.

Yes, before they were captured and locked away in this cursed tower, most of these prisoners were the strongest and most gifted of their time. You could find Level-6 Master Magicians everywhere in this tower, there were even some Level-7 Master Magicians, although none of them were at Level-8. Still, the moment they saw the magic seal plan, most of them were dumbstruck.

For a long time, the noises in Manrod's head were reduced by 90% as most of them stayed quiet.

About half an hour later, one Magician finally spoke up.

"With this thing, I'm sure we can finally get out of here," he said.

"But Tarviss would still be released" replied another.

"I don't care about the academy," said a different voice. "All I care is to get out of here!"

"I'll participate in the plan!" said one eager prisoner.

"Hey, what the hell are you guys talking about?" asked the magical beast. "What are you participating in?" He could feel that this time they had a real plan that had a chance of success. This was an opportunity to regain freedom and roam the world again. As a magical creature with high intelligence, there was nothing he desired more than to breathe the air of freedom again. He could still remember the little female beast with her beautiful fur in the warm forest of the south. That soft body, that charming roarhe remembered every little detail even after centuries of imprisonment.

Manrod ignored the wild beast and continued to address the Magicians.

"If there are no objections," he said, "then we'll begin the operation tonight. Any questions?"

It was all silence for a moment in Manrod's mind, then someone finally replied.

"Yes," the voice said, "it would be best if we do this at night."

"Agreed," replied a chorus of voices.

"Hey, don't forget about me!" said the beast. "Take me along with you, I'll participate as well. What are we going to do? Hello?" The beast's voice had lost its fierceness and became quite anxious now. It sounded as if everyone was leaving without him. He didn't want to be left in this sodden place!

Even though they'd been fighting and bickering all along, they were still together for centuries now, how could they just leave him out of such a nice-sounding plan? That's just cruel!

Still, no matter how hard he tried to voice his opinions, nobody paid any attention to him.

Then, suddenly, a hoarse voice rang through Manrod's head.

"I won't do it," said the voice. "I'll stay here. It's not too bad in here, anyway."

"Ha! Are you sure?" Manrod didn't understand what the owner of the voice could possibly be thinking in making that decision.

"Yes, I'm sure," said the voice, calm and resolute. He then added, "All of you do realize that this plan will annihilate the entire East Cove Magic Academy, don't you? No, not only that, but after Tarviss is released, the whole Realm of Light would be turned to ashes and dust. I, Vance, may have committed more than a few crimes in the past, but I will never take part in a plan this evil. And you, are you sure you're the same Bale that we heard before? You sound like two different people. What exactly is going on"

Before Vance could finish his sentence, Manrod broke the connection of this soul to the network, thus his voice completely disappeared from everyone else's minds.

"We'll be fine without him," said Manrod. "I for one want to get out of here. Who else is with me?"

"I am!"

"For freedom!"

"Hey, what about me?" the magical creature chimed in again, but still no one took any notice of him.

"Very well, then," said Manrod. "We'll begin the operation this midnight!"

## 159. Fastest Spellcasting Speed in History

March 18th

The cold winter had passed, and the warm rays of the sun had once again graced the World of Firuman. When Link opened the window in the morning, he could smell the distinct fragrance of vegetation nourished by the heavy rain last night.

From afar, Link saw that the Willow Forest beside Bryant's Inspiration Courtyard seemed to be covered with a layer of yellow velvet edges. When the spring breeze blew, the petals would be carried along with the wind like snowflakes in the air. Under the warm embrace of the sun, the moisture in the wet ground continued to evaporate, pushing the petals around in the air. The slow and graceful whirlwind of petals was indeed a sight to behold.

Link also saw many other apprentices who woke up early to view the flowers or for the couples, a romantic getaway on the morning of spring. Some others found a remote spot to concentrate on their magic research. From time to time, cipand hearty laughter could be heard.

The current East Cove Higher Magic Academy indeed looked a setting from a fairy-tale.

Link involuntarily smiled and looked out from his window for a few minutes before returning to his desk.

He first brought out the Prophet's white stone and began charging it with mana. It took barely a few minutes for Link's Mana Points to be completely depleted. A light sound was then emitted, and the material of the stone started to change.

The stone was originally opaque and white in color. However, it had turned into a clear and brilliant crystal with many shining spots sparkling inside it. It was like peering into an endless bounty of stars in the sky.

Link then checked its status.

Prophet's White Stone (Fully Charged)

State: 100/100

Uses: 3/3

Link heaved a sigh of relief. It is finally charged.

He then took a short rest before picking up the quill to dip it in the pot of ink right beside it. He then started to expand on his space-time thesis.

He had been struck with inspiration last night in his dream. He had to write it out as soon as possible before his memory faded.

The thesis had been expanded to a level that was way higher than before. After six months of tireless effort on Link's part, the thesis had reached an incredible stage. It was extremely tough to understand and even to the point of being obscure.

The question that inspired this paper was extremely simple. Why would a stone fall?

Every person on the continent should be able to understand this simple problem, and this basic question was the basis of Link's entire thesis. However, the current state of the thesis had already contained ideas that were almost beyond the intellectual capabilities of a normal human.

Even if Link were to publish his paper to the world, there would only be a handful of people who would be able to understand it.

You could not even understand it even if he gave it to you for free. That was how arrogant the thesis itself was.

This situation was akin to letting an ordinary person on earth listen to a world-class physicist's deduction process of his theories. One would be lucky enough to recognize all the symbols they were looking at, much less understand the entire speech.

That was the truth about Link's thesis.

When Eliard came to visit a few days ago, he took a glance at Link's recent discoveries and gave up after half a minute. He then had a look of frustration on his face.

Herrera also used to be interested in the thesis. She would often request for the newest copy and even discuss with Link about the details of the thesis. However, ever since she got the latest paper a month ago which took her three whole days before she grazed the surface of the contents, she stopped reading the thesis entirely.

It was way too difficult. She felt as though her mind was exploding when she read it. It had turned from being a joyous task to one that was torturous.

Link could only depend on himself now that no one around him would be able to give any constructive comments anymore. He felt like he was walking in a pitch-black wilderness. What will he find and achieve? He had no idea.

After half an hour of deduction, Link arrived at a beautiful formula. It was the perfect expression for a spatial curl.

He admired his work, but his expression quickly turned pained. What a waste! This spatial curl can totally be the basis of an ultra-long-distance transmission machine. However, the required magic compression level is way too high. It is impossible for a human to reach that level of strength alone. They would need a variety of equipment made from extremely high-quality materials. I predict that 10000 gold coins would not even scratch the surface of the cost to build such a transmitter.

He could only temporarily shelf his idea as it would be impossible to realize this dream in the near future.

Link then continued expanding on his thesis and quickly became immersed in the process. He would often frown and had various quirky expressions on his face. Sometimes, he would put down his quill to wonder about the many mysteries he was going to discover, completely neglecting the passage of time.

After a while, Link arrived at another formula. His quill came to a sudden stop as he stared hard at his new product. Around ten minutes later, he broke out in laughter.

"The Gods have blessed me! I have been thinking about how to increase the spellcasting speed of the Titan's Hand. To think that I have achieved a breakthrough in my thesis!"

Link had already mastered the Level-6 spell Titan's Hand for a month. However, he had never used it in battle. Even when he was facing the demon in the Girvent Forest, he merely used the Level-5 spell, the Fire God Hand.

The sole reason for that was the slow casting speed. It needed a full five seconds for the spell to be fully formed. Amidst a battle between high-level opponents, this casting speed was simply a joke.

Unless someone was protecting him while he channeled the spell, this Level-6 spell had practically no actual combat value. Furthermore, there would always be shortcomings when one depended on another person for protection. Link hated the feeling when his life depended fully on the performance of others.

Hence, his main aim was to increase the Titan's Hand spellcasting speed. However, he had not been able to obtain a new Glyph of Soul from the in-game system. This greatly reduced the limit to which his spellcasting speed could be heightened. After half a month of research, he had only hastened the spellcasting time to four seconds.

The breakthrough that he got from the thesis was thus enough to make him ecstatic.

I know of a machine gun Supreme Magic Skill and a Glyph of Soul spell that could be released almost instantaneously. If I can combine them all together with the space dispersion field, I can reduce the casting time to less than a second!

The theory behind this was simple. Link would first release a Fire God Hand enchanted with his Supreme Magic Skill, the Machine Gun. Under the effect of the Glyph of Soul, he could almost release the Level-5 spell instantaneously. He would then cancel the Fire God Hand immediately which would trigger the magical resonance effect of the machine gun, creating a new Fire God Hand spell.

The original cause and effect would be that a Fire God Hand spell would call out another Fire God Hand spell. However, Link's idea was to make use of the space dispersion field effect to call out a Titan's Hand spell instead.

This would not be feasible for spells which were completely unrelated. However, the Fire God Hand spell and the Titan Hand spell were two almost homologous spells. It would totally work!

Link wasted no time and began to design the spell immediately.

He was the main architect of the Machine Gun, the Fire God Hand spell, the Titan Hand spell, as well as the space dispersion field. He thus had a good understanding of these respective components and began working quickly.

It took merely two hours for his design to take shape. By then, it was only 10 o'clock in the afternoon.

He checked his Mana Points and realized that it had already recovered to 600 points. Link thought for a moment and drank a mid-level Mana Recovery Potion to recover 500 Mana Points. He then dashed to the Heaven's Thorn excitedly. He desperately wanted to test out his hypothesis.

If he succeeded in this attempt, he would have made the record for the fastest Level-6 spell in the entire history of Firuman. Even those Magicians who had worn countless equipment that increased their spellcasting speed previously in the game were unable to reduce the spellcasting speed of Level-6 spells to less than two seconds. His hypothesis might allow him to release one almost instantaneously!

The world is really filled with possibilities! Link could not wait to get started.

He made a quick dash to the Heaven's Thorn. He was now a celebrity in the academy and would attract everyone's attention.

Many Magicians on the way would greet him to which he replied in kind. He then rushed off at an even faster speed, causing the Magicians on the way to have a perplexed expression on their faces.

"What is Link up to again?" Someone asked.

"He is the kind of person who only thinks about magic all day long. It is pretty boring to be honest." A beautiful female apprentice pouted.

"I remember you saying that he was charming last time. What happened? Did you get rejected?"

"None of your business!"

Link ignored all those statements and made a beeline for the Mage Tower. He was already panting and gasping for breath when he reached the Heaven's Thorn. After seeing Selasse, he immediately asked, "Is the sub-elemental pool empty?"

Selasse helplessly said, "Someone just entered. You'll have to wait for half an hour."

"Oh" Link was disappointed. This was the inconvenience of not having a Mage Tower of your own. One would have to wait even to further their own research. This made him desire his own Mage Tower even more.

Link could only wait.

However, Selasse then continued, "The dean had instructed me that if there is a need, you can use the main elemental pool reserved especially for him. It is currently empty."

Link's eyes glowed as he said, "Can I really?"

The main elemental pool in the Heaven's Thorn was Level-9 in strength and was termed the Celestial Pool. It was well-known throughout the entire Norton Kingdom and even the human race. The only other elemental pool that was comparable in strength was the elemental melting pot in the sky city that belonged to the Magician Alliance in the South. This Celestial Pool was usually reserved only for the dean's usage.

"Of course. It is the dean's instructions. I'll bring you there."

Link hastily followed behind.

The main elemental pool was on the fifth level. Link was dumbfounded by the spectacular sight.

The entire fifth floor was made up almost entirely by the Celestial Pool. The room was 500 square feet in size, and the elements amongst the pool seemed exceptionally concentrated. From afar, there seemed to be no fluctuations in the elements at all, much like staring into mirrors of many different colors. The materials used to ensure the stability of the magic formation were also extremely rare. This spectacular sight almost blinded Link.

In the fire elemental area, Link saw the Fire Star Thorium. In the water elemental area, he then saw the Aquatic Silver that was reflecting sapphire brilliance off one another ever so confidently. The earth elemental area naturally had the Fissure Crystalthey were all extremely expensive materials.

Link could not even begin to estimate the cost needed to create an elemental pool of such scale. This was the hallmark of a kingdom's strength, and definitely a strategic battle resource. Link had the confidence to build a Level-6 elemental pool from scratch. However, an elemental pool the level of the Celestial Pool was another question altogether. Judging from Link's current strength, he could merely stare and watch in awe.

Let's stop thinking about it and start experimenting. Link took a deep breath and stepped into the elemental pool.

Selasse gently closed the door behind Link and immediately was inspired to write a new poem.

He took out his notebook and started writing with fervor.

He is always disheveled, hishi

## 160. The Calm Before the Storm

In the Celestial Pool of the Heaven's Thorn Mage Tower.

There weren't many innovative changes to the structural spell this time, so the whole modification process went smoothly. In merely one hour and a half, Link had completed his Supreme Magical Skills modification on the spell to improve its spellcasting speed.

And now, it was time for him to give it a final test.

Vulcan's Hand!

As soon as the thought emerged in Link's mind, the Glyph of Soul caused a momentary stun throughout Link's body for a fraction of a second, then the spell structure of Vulcan's Hand emerged fully formed on the surface for the controlling magic seal. Just before the fire elements began to coalesce, Link halted the process abruptly, and in that instance the Machine Gun Supreme Magical Skill took effect and his Mana began to reverberate!

The surface of the magic seal flashed in a dim white light, which was then closely followed by the emergence of the Level-6 Titan's Hand and the roaring fire elements which then gathered and converged to form a miniature version of the Titan's Hand.

Link then tested a variety of movements using this miniature Titan's Hand. Eventually he tried about 200 different movements with it and they were all a success.

It's finally perfect, thought Link with a smile. After all the experiments, his Mana had been depleted down to less than 200 points. Had he not drunk a vial of potion before, it would've been down to zero by now.

Just at the moment when he stopped the spell, a flash of light appeared on the interface. Link took a look at it and discovered that it was a congratulatory notification.

Player successfully broke through the spellcasting speed limit for Level-6 spells. 50 Omni Points rewarded.

Player successfully created a new Supreme Magical SkillInter-Spell Resonance. 20 Omni Points rewarded.

With 70 newly earned Omni Points, added to his existing 150 points, Link now had 220 Omni Points. He was always careful not to spend too much of his Omni Points as they might come in handy during emergencies.

"Since you caught me breaking through the limits," he said to the gaming system, "that must mean that you recorded my spellcasting time. So how long exactly did I take?"

0.65 seconds. You have the potential to decrease it further by 0.1 seconds.

Link was very satisfied with 0.65 seconds. It was fast enough even if he had to fight against a Level-6 Warrior. As for the potential to decrease it further by 0.1 seconds, Link was sure that he would achieve that naturally just by practicing anyway. Thus, Link made a decision to call it a day. He looked at the time and realized that it was only half an hour before noon. He'd been busy all morning, and his stomach began to rumble in hunger, so he left the Celestial Pool to get himself an early lunch.

When he reached the great hall on the first floor of the Mage Tower, Link noticed the servants bringing food to the table. Selasse and the dean's other disciples were all at the table ready to start the meal.

"Link!" Selasse greeted Link when he noticed him. "Want to have a meal together?"

Link thought it rude to refuse. Besides, it wouldn't be his first time to dine here at the dean's Mage Tower, so he went over to Selasse and the rest of the Magicians there and joined them at the table. The servants then promptly provided him with a plate and a set of cutleries.

"Have you been so busy that you can't even trim your beard, Link?" a Level-5 Magician called Ivan teased.

Link immediately cast a magic mirror and checked himself with it. At a glance his craggy unkempt face with his untrimmed beard made it seemed as if he'd aged ten years in the last month!

"Ah, you're right!" said Link. "I guess it's time for me to visit the barber!"

"You can cut your hair anyway you want," said Selasse, "but don't completely shave off all of your beard. Otherwise you'd look like a teenaged boy and no one would believe your actual skill level and they might underestimate you!"

The Magicians around all nodded in agreement to Selasse's remarks. Link felt quite uncomfortable having his beard being the center of attention. He mumbled a few words in acknowledgment then pounced on the bread rolls which had just been served up by the servants.

"I'm starving! Let's eat!" said Link enthusiastically, eager to change the subject, to which all the Magicians at the table erupted in laughter.

During the meal, a few of them didn't just talk about magic and spells but chatted about their past experiences as well. All of them were the dean's disciples and they were all in their prime, the oldest being only 41 years old. With the exception of the poet Selasse, these Magicians were all of Level-4 and above. They've all traveled extensively and had seen much of the outside world. Most of them had achieved glorious fame and reputation and were regarded as the Elite Magicians among the human realm.

Link listened keenly to the tales told by these Magicians and gained a lot of new insights from their adventures and rich experiences.

"Have any of you heard," said Ivan suddenly, "of the rumored signs of a high-level demons in the capital city of Leo Kingdom by the Southern Magician Alliance?"

"How reliable is the rumor?" said Selasse, doubtful of the story's veracity. If there really were high-level demons, they would've caused certain cataclysms that would be hard to miss. Yet, the academy had not heard of such reports recently.

Link's ears pricked up at the mention of this strange incidence. To his knowledge, no high-level demons should appear around this time. Even if they did, shouldn't they be found here in Norton Kingdom? Why did they turn up in the South instead?

"Who cares how reliable it was?" said Ivan, who at the time had thought nothing of the rumor other than an amusing hearsay. "It's none of our business anyway. I hear there were signs of not just one demon, but three of them! And you wouldn't believe this, but they said one of those demons was so beautiful she managed to charm Wavier's socks off! You all know the Wavier, the Magician in the South, don't you?"

"Of course," replied another Level-4 Magician named Arthur. "He's the darling of the Magician Alliance!"

"Let me tell you," continued Ivan with a mischievous smirk, "they also said that Wavier was so besotted with the she-demon that he was soon overcome by lovesickness and didn't care to sleep nor eat! He'd gotten so thin now that the president of the alliance got so worried hishi

"What a character!" exclaimed Arthur with a hearty laugh. "This Wavier was reported to be a man whose talents the world hadn't seen in a century, but who would've thought that his taste in women was just as unique!"

Several other Magicians broke out in laughter at this remark as they all took this rumor to merely be a funny story. Only Link sat there quietly focusing on the food on his plate. He had, in truth, sank deep into thought and was brooding about the rumor from the South.

A high-level demon beautiful enough to charm Wavier off his wits, mused Link, could it be Celine? Link suspected that this she-demon in the rumors must really be Celine, and the other two must've been the demon soldiers her father had ordered to capture her back to the abyss.

Link wasn't too pleased to hear of Wavier's lovesick behaviors. He was also greatly disturbed by the thoughts of Celine being all alone while two of her father's demon soldiers were pursuing her aggressively. If only he could drop everything and run to the South to find her now!

But he knew full well he couldn't do that. Not while the academy was still shadowed by the threat of the Black Moon Conspiracy and the release of the demon Tarviss. Yet knowing this didn't make him feel the urge to go to Celine less in any way at all.

After that, when Ivan and the other Magicians had moved on to other topics Link couldn't pay attention to a word they said any longer. He wolfed down his food, said goodnight to everyone, and left the Heaven's Thorn alone.

The sun still hung high in the sky when he came out of the Mage Tower. The glorious sunshine and the fact that he had solved the spellcasting problem of the Titan's Hand had coupled to loosen Link up gradually. He took a walk around the academy for more than ten minutes, then when he walked past a barbershop he was suddenly reminded of Ivan and Selasse's remarks on his appearance. Celine wouldn't like to see me looking this haggard either, Link thought. And so, he decided to enter the barbershop and have hishi

In the end, Link had hishi

To his surprise, he met Herrera and Rylai on his way back. They were holding hands and strolling towards Bryant's Inspiration Courtyard, looking as if they were taking a casual stroll after the meal to admire the beautiful scenes of spring.

Rylai called out to Link immediately as she noticed him. Herrera, on the other hand, seemed to see through Link's worries and anxiety after taking a glance at him.

"You've been so busy lately," said Herrera, "why don't we take a walk together to the square considering how beautiful the weather is today?"

Herrera thought it would be such a shame if one was to stay cooped up in the Mage Tower when spring had bloomed so beautifully after a season of harsh winter.

After a moment's consideration Link nodded and agreed to accompany the two women for a walk to Bryant's Inspiration Courtyard. He needed some time to relax and clear his mind after all, so a short walk wouldn't hurt.

Once they reached the outskirts of the courtyard, bunches of bright yellow catkins rushed up into view and the fresh fragrance of the newly grown grass and leaves filled the air. Rylai fluttered about the courtyard like a butterfly while Link and Herrera walked slowly behind her, chatting freely.

"The dean told me that you've mastered a Level-6 spell," said Herrera suddenly. "Is it true?"

"Yes, it's the Fist of Firomoz," said Link with a nod, seeing no point in hiding it from Herrera. "I've managed to modify its spell structure as well."

Herrera sighed after hearing Link's reply.

"I have nothing more to teach you, then," she said. "I don't think it would do you any more good to keep on staying in my little Mage Tower either. Have you any plans for the future?"

The question had been on Link's mind a lot lately. As his level continued to increase, his repertoire of spells became more and more complex as well. The East Cove Magic Academy might have a wealth of rare and valuable textbooks, but Link feared they were still insufficient in quenching his thirst for more knowledge. He found that he couldn't find any books that would answer his questions as easily as he did before. More and more now it was up to his own reasoning and experiments that would solve the problems he faced in magic theories and spells.

Could it be time for him to graduate from this magic academy?

"My estate was almost completely purged of robbers and bandits now," said Link after a moment of silence. "I think it's time I leave the academy and focus on building my estate after April 15th."

Another plan on his mind that he didn't mention to Herrera was his resolution to go south after the affairs of his estate had been straightened out. He must find Celine somehow.

"Not a bad idea," said Herrera, half expecting Link's answer. "The Ferde Wilderness isn't so far away from here. If there's any problem at all just send a letter and I will do my best to help you."

"Thank you, tutor," replied Link sincerely. Herrera had been a great help to him ever since he started learning magic. He didn't think it would be possible to advance to Level-6 so quickly had it not been for Herrerasselfless and patient guidance.

"Don't mention it," said Herrera with a gentle smile. "I only did what I should as a tutor."

Just then, the sound of Rylai's sparkling laughter reached their ears. When they turned to her direction, they discovered that she was happily playing with a magic kite that a Magician's Apprentice had just given her.

As they looked further, they saw how there were many other Magician's Apprentices in the courtyard enjoying themselves with their own magical toys as well. Some had kites just like the one Rylai was playing with, while others brought their own magical dolls or magical pets. Those who were slightly older either took a walk around the square or stood there watching the younger ones play with relaxed and happy faces. Everyone seemed to be basking in the magnificent early spring weather, giving the atmosphere an overall pleasant and cordial air.

Link drank up the jolly sight in front of him with a light heart for a while. But gradually the unnerving anxiety that bubbled underneath began to rise up to the surface, and the sight before him ceased to be pleasant anymore.

In the game in his previous life, Bryant's Inspiration Courtyard at this moment had become a wasteland with a huge gaping hole in its middle, while the Mage Towers around it that once stood tall and proud had been reduced to ashes and rubbles. All the trees within the area of the academy were leveled to the ground, the fresh blooming flowers were withered and trampled on and the entire ground of the academy was covered in a layer of dark greenish-black aura.

Corpses of dead Magicians were strewn all across the entire area, most of them were too disfigured to identify. Chief among them was the corpse of Anthony the academy's dean, whose body was riddled with holes because he had burnt his own soul as the last resort to fight against the demon Tarviss. Strangely enough, his body still stood there stiffly, his eyes were now hollow and blackened by the fire that burned his soul, yet they were frozen there, looking over at the scene of the academy's total destruction before him.

It was a scene full of sorrow and despair.

The East Cove Magic Academy's obliteration was a huge blow to the Norton Kingdom's overall strength. Because of this, the kingdom was in shortage of powerful Magicians who would've been a crucial strength in the war and the kingdom was so weakened that it collapsed under the Dark Elves' attacks, never to rise up again.

Will the same thing happen again this time? Link couldn't help but worry.

Link had no answer to this question. The mission of investigating the Black Moon Conspiracy still remained unsolved in the gaming system, proving that the enemy was still moving the plot forward in ways that Link hadn't yet discovered.

If the demon Tarviss was released, how will I fight against him? The best thing to do is to lure it out of the academy and kill him then, but will I succeed? Who knowsall I can do is to give it everything I've got and fight to the death

"Link Link!" said Herrera just as Link was deep in thoughts. "What's wrong?"

"Huh?" Link was suddenly jolted back to reality. Herrera's flawless face was illuminated by the brilliant sunlight right in front of his eyes, yet Link could detect a tinge of worry in her expressions.

"It's nothing," said Link shaking his head. "I was just thinking about the demon Tarviss. What if"

"There are no more what ifs about that!" Herrera interrupted, her eyebrows furrowed but she shook her head assuringly. "The academy has undertaken the best security measures. Even if Tarviss was released, we are now well-equipped and ready to face him!"

Link nodded. He was slightly pacified by Herrera's assurances. He'd changed many things ever since arriving in this world. Besides, he wasn't fighting alone, there were many powerful people fighting against the forces of darkness just like him. Furthermore, he now had the help of the Prophetic Stone, so there really was no need to worry himself sick.

"Tutor! Aunt Herrera!" cried Rylai as she ran towards both of them with a face that shone with happiness. "Come, follow me! There are Golden Orchids in full bloom over there. They are just the loveliest things!"

A Golden Orchid was a rare plant species that was renowned in Firuman for its beautiful and dignified flowers. It was also the national flower of the Norton Kingdom.

Rylai's joy and innocence were so infectious that Link and Herrera were soon in a much better mood. They both cast away their gloomy worries for the future and followed the girl with smiles on their faces.

When the future generations looked back at the history of the East Cove Magic Academy through the archives, they would remember this day as the last glimmer of peace and harmony before the dark days that were to come.

The 18th of March, the 1057th year of the Holy Calendar, marked the first day of the war between the Dark Army and the Realm of Light. It was known throughout history as the Spring Night Battle. The day was filled with joy and harmony, but no one knew that it had been the last moments of calm before the monstrous storm that was to hit. Apart from a handful of high-level members in the academy, almost no one knew that there was a looming darkness that was about to engulf the academy and indeed, the whole Realm of Light.

On this fateful night, a diabolical storm swept across the East Cove Magic Academy. Many young Magicians died in their sleep, oblivious to the end of what had snatched their young lives so quickly in the silence of the night. Several Mage Towers that once stood so majestically were razed to the ground.

This was also the day the Magician Link Morani unleashed his unrivaled power for the first time. This battle had thrust him officially onto the stage of warfare between the good forces of light and the evil forces of darkness, marking the day when the first lines of his own epic poem were written down. Selasse Moormont, historian and Magician of the East Cove Higher Magic Academy.

## 161. The Black Moon Conspiracy

Link managed to take a break from his hectic schedule for two hours under Herrera's invitation. He then returned to the Mage Tower to do some casual reading and even slept early at eight o' clock. It was a relaxing day.

Link originally thought he could have a good rest all the way till the next morning. However, his heart palpitated at an insane rate in the middle of his sleep. He screamed and sat up immediately in shock.

He then touched the back of his pajamas and found it to be soaked in cold sweat. He could also still feel the effects of the frantic palpitation he experienced. It did not reduce in intensity despite the fact that he had awakened.

Magicians possessed strong souls and would never feel flustered for no reason at all, even more so for powerful Magicians like Link. This sudden outburst of panic must definitely be some kind of premonition. Link's soul had been strengthened by the God of Light and had reached the level of a sacred spirit. Herrera had personally validated the fact. His intuition to danger was thus unusually strong.

He immediately donned his blue magic robe and opened the curtains to take a look outside. It was completely dark, and nothing could be seen. Link spun and looked at the clock before realizing it was ten minutes to midnight.

At that moment, as Link was starting to get sober, the feeling of panic had begun to subside. If an ordinary Magician were to encounter such a situation, they would probably doubt their own judgment and miss the best chance to escape.

However, Link was different. He was sure that something dangerous was approaching. Seeing no suspicious movements through his window, Link rushed out of his room after taking his wand and Prophet's White Stone. He then checked his Mana Points.

Only half full at 1500 points? That is not enough! Link wanted to replenish his Mana Points using a mid-level Mana Recovery Potion. However, he put the potion back into his dimensional pendant after some thought.

His Mana Recovery Speed was 200 points per hour. He also had 220 spare Omni Points which would allow him to instantly refill his Mana Points if needed. The potion should only be used if he was left with no choice.

Link headed for the highest floor of the Mage Tower without hesitation. He ran all the way to the top and reached Herrera's doorstep half a minute later. He then raised his wand and tapped the runes on the door frantically.

The runes started sounding in succession, accurately reflecting the panic in Link's heart.

"Who is there!" Herrera's voice was transmitted through the magic runes.

"Mentor, it's me!" Link shouted.

Ten seconds later, the door opened. Herrera appeared only wearing a nightgown with her hair disheveled, holding her crystal staff defensively. Link noticed that her forehead was also drenched in perspiration, her eyes shining with fear.

"Mentor, you had a nightmare as well?" Link asked. Sudden palpitations and nightmares were premonitions that Magicians would get in the face of impending danger.

Herrera nodded. "I dreamed that the academy was in flames. A few people were laughing wildly, but there were bodies everywhere! It was too terrible!" Herrera's voice trembled as she spoke. It was clear that the dream was emotionally traumatizing.

Powerful Magiciasseldom dreamed. However, once they did, their sightings would often come true, especially those with a strong connection to their life.

Link immediately said, "Mentor, I am afraid this is the Black Moon Conspiracy. We have to take precautions!"

Herrera was startled for a moment but quickly recollected herself. She used a hairband to tie her disheveled hair into a ponytail and tapped her staff lightly on her shoulders. Similar to the time when she gave chase to Bale, her nightgown was immediately replaced by a blue battle magic robe.

Link could not help but catch a glimpse of Herrera's body once more. Fortunately, he had experience with this spell and immediately shifted his gaze.

Herrera took ten seconds to change before speaking, "Let's go to the rooftop and see what's going on."

"Alright."

The size of Herrera's Mage Tower was not huge. However, it was still decent in terms of height. Standing 60 feet tall, one would be able to get a bird's eye view of the entire academy, apart from the Heaven's Thorn and the Spiral Mage Tower.

The two of them quickly reached the rooftop. For some reason, the darkness was especially suffocating, and despite being extremely dark, the moon and the stars were not visible. It seemed as though the sky was shrouded in a thick layer of clouds, though closer inspection would suggest that the air did not contain the oppressive feeling usually present during a cloudy night.

It was indeed very strange.

Standing on the rooftop, the two of them cast their views across the entire academy.

"The Eye of the Civet!" A pale, yellow light appeared at the tip of Link's staff, and two wisps floated into their bodies. Their eyes were then immediately shrouded in a faint amber glow.

The Eye of the Civet

Level-2 spell

Effect: Gives the user cat-like night vision and allows them to see through the oppressive darkness

This Level-2 spell was something that Link learned in his spare time. With his strong magic foundation, he could leanalow-level spell simply in a few attempts. It was not something that would take up a lot of time and effort.

Under the effect of the spell, their field of vision immediately became clear. The academy was displayed as a clear, black and white world.

The Revelation Square that was crowded in the morning was totally empty. The entire academy was also extremely silent. After circling her gaze around the academy, Herrera shook her head, "I see nothing special. What about you?"

Link similarly saw nothing out of the ordinary. However, the rooftop of every other Mage Tower was similarly bustling with activity. People could be seen staring down from the rooftops, and faint magic rays were also present.

"Look, it's the other mentors; they have also felt the danger!" Link exclaimed.

The East Cove Higher Magic Academy was not a low-level Magic Academy like Flemmings. It was filled with powerful Magicians who naturally had a stronger premonition for danger. However, as they could not figure out the exact source of threat, everyone had gone to the rooftop to observe.

At that moment, a giant light ball appeared above the Heaven's Thorn. This light ball was like the sun, slowly rising to the point of 600 feet above the ground. This light ball illuminated the entire East Cove Higher Magic Academy.

"Mentor released a giant illumination spell. He had also sensed the danger." Herrera seemed to have calmed down slightly. With the help of a Leve-7 Magician, the academy should be safe.

Link nodded. It seemed that his warnings were being taken seriously. After the academy wentito red alert, their crisis reaction speed had increased exponentially. This was excellent.

In the game, one of the main reasons the academy suffered such a tragic defeat was due to inadequate preparation. When they realized that Magician Bale was dabbling into dark magic, the council immediately went to confront him which caused him to go berserk. Bale then accidentally smashed the seal that contained Tarviss, giving the academy no time to react.

This time, the academy had made ample preparations. There should not be any problems.

In response to the giant illumination spell cast by Anthony, all the other Magiciasstopped concealing their magic presence. In an instant, powerful magic fluctuations covered the entire school, much like candle lights in the night.

Herrera also released her full power, causing the air around the rooftop to become distorted. Link estimated that her Maximum Mana would be around 2800 Mana Points. Standing in the midst of this distortion, Link felt as though he was trapped in a heatwave, the constant splitting of images making him dizzy.

This scene was much more intimidating than the one where Bale's chief disciple Darris tried to exert pressure on him in the corridor. This carried on for about three seconds. After the signal was released, Herrera once again concealed her power, and the air around the rooftop became normal again.

However, the moment the air ripples disappeared, Link felt something was amiss.

Link immediately turned to look at the suspicious area. At the edges where the giant light ball could barely reach, there was supposed to be a white tower. However, other than a ball of darkness, there was nothing.

Link originally thought he was mistaken. After checking it for a few times, he then gasped in horror. The white tower had disappeared

"Where is the white tower?" Link pointed to the general direction while asking Herrera.

"What white tower? Oh you mean the Tower of Azulaheywhere is the white tower?" Herrera exclaimed, clearly shocked by the disappearance as well.

The white tower was not a conspicuous building, especially in the night. However, as much as it wasn't eye-catching, it could not have disappeared into thin air. The Tower of Azula had imprisoned countless demons and powerful creatures. If anything happened, it would be a total disaster!

When Link and Herrera were still in shock, a ferocious roar could be heard coming from the direction where the Tower of Azula once stood. A huge sonic wave traveled towards the direction of the academy.

"I am finally free!"

Link then saw a 12-foot-tall Giant Cyan Tiger leaping out of the shadows. This tiger was surrounded by translucent cyan flames and ran at breakneck speed. It charged straight towards the academy the moment it was released.

"Little guys, I am here for your brains!" The tiger laughed hysterically, leaving air ripples behind him as he charged at a pace faster than sound. It was an extremely intimidating momentum.

Herrera paled upon seeing this creature. She said in a trembling voice, "It is a Wind Tiger, a Level-6 Magical Creature"

The tiger itself was not the reason she had such a horrified expression. It was because the appearance of this tiger could only mean one thing the Tower of Azula was already destroyed.

Sure enough, after the appearance of the Wind Tiger, many shadows emerged, each one of them having a strength equivalent to that of a Level-6 professional. There was a total of 20 shadows that appeared, five of which even had the magic presence of a Level-7 professional.

This was a terrifying sight.

Link felt terrified as well. However, he said optimistically, "Although there are a lot of powerful people, we have our Mage Towers. They will not be able to breakthrough our defenses!"

The moment he said those words, a huge explosion happened on Bryant's Revelation Square. A huge crater appeared as rubble flew in all directions. An almost suffocating presence could be felt from the crater. This presence was so concentrated it almost felt like a solid object. It was filled with bloodthirst, chaos, and rage. As the presence swept through the Mage Towers, it caused great emotional damage to all Magicians. Even Dean Anthony was unable to escape the wrath of this presence, his giant illumination spell instantly extinguished by this overwhelming force.

Herrera looked as though she was going to faint, muttering, "Tarviss, Level-8 in strength...he has escaped."

## 162. The Terrifying Giant Demon!

At the East Cove Magic Academy.

Because of Tarviss' sudden appearance, the Magicians of the academy had been rooted to the spot with fear and terror. Even the prisoners who had just broken free from the Azura Tower weren't pleased with the sight of the demon's release.

"Lord of Light, what have I gotten myself into?" remarked an escaped Level-6 Magician prisoner. "I'm not staying here!" The Magician then cast a flying spell and took off into the sky, fleeing the scene as far and as quickly as he possibly could.

"I'm no match for this demon," said another escaped prisoner who was a Level-7 Necromancer. "Gentlemen, let's hope we never meet again!" Suddenly, a pair of wings flapped open on his back, and he flapped the wings a few times before taking off into the air just like the previous prisoner, leaving the academy within seconds.

The rest of the escaped Magicians responded similarly. They'd finally regained their freedom after being locked away in that damned tower for centuries; there was no way they would act like fools and stay here in the academy and face certain death.

In just a few seconds after the release of the demon Tarviss, only three of the escaped Magicians were left. Of the three, one was Bale who was controlled by Manrod, another was the Level-7 Lich, and the third was a Level-6 Magician.

Oh, and of course there was the roaring magical tiger who charged straight towards the East Cove Magic Academy the moment he gained freedom, hell-bent on getting his revenge. He didn't retreat for a single step after the appearance of the demon Tarviss. Instead, he was excited to see such a powerful potential ally.

"Excellent," he said enthusiastically. "I was just in need of a strong ally! You must be the demon Tarviss. Good! I will stand by you tonight, and we'll devour all of these puny Magicians!"

The magical tiger's voice was loud enough that all three Magicians at the Azura Tower heard him clearly. They fell into momentary silence after hearing the tiger's words.

"I bet," said the Level-7 Lich finally, "the little kitten will get trampled to death by Tarviss soon.

"Haha, no," said the Level-6 occult Magician. "Lord Tarviss will utilize the tiger's power while it is still useful. Only when he is no longer of any value to him will he then eat it up." The occult Magician was only wearing a pair of pants while his upper body was completely naked, exposing a body ripped with muscles and dark brown skin. Countless occultic runes covered his whole body, and his eyes were pure onyx black without any signs of the white of the eyes. These features of his cut a strikingly peculiar figure even among all the other prisoners of the Azura Tower.

Manrod, on the other hand, had little interest in the Wind Tiger's fate. He stared at the other two Magicians there and laughed.

"I know you," he said, "aren't you the Bloodmage Talon?"

"Indeed, I am," replied the occult Magician with a laugh. "I didn't expect anyone to still remember me even after two hundred years."

"Of course you're still remembered," said Manrod. "You are, after all, the Magician who sacrificed thousands of souls to the demon god in the Leo Kingdom in the South. You are infamous all over the big continent. Although, I don't understand why they didn't completely purge your body and soul"

"Purge me?" replied Talon with a sneer before continuing with boastful pride. "They wanted to do that, for sure, but they didn't have enough power to do so. You may think that I'm just a Level-6 Magician, so I couldn't have been all that powerful. But the Master had bestowed me with an undying soul. That meant that if they destroyed my body, all they would achieve was to unshackle my soul from its bodily prison so I would be invincible and free! Hahaha!"

"Undying soul?" said Manrod, who then nodded. "Not a bad deal at all. Are you staying here for revenge?"

"Why else?" replied Talon. "I've been locked up in here for 200 years. Now that I've got my freedom back and even got to meet Lord Tarvisswhat better time to take sweet revenge?" Then, Talon rushed straight towards the site where Tarviss was emerging.

Manrod then turned towards the Level-7 Lich.

"What about you?" he asked. "Why are you still here?"

The Lich turned around to face Manrod. His bluish ghostly flames in his hollow eye sockets flickered as he let out a cold, mirthless chuckle in answer to Manrod's question.

"I'm only a casual observer," said the Lich.

Manrod recognized the Lich the moment he heard his voice.

"You're Vance!" he said. "The man in the prison who didn't want to escape!"

"You're right," replied the Lich. Suddenly his body was blanketed in a layer of pale white mist, and from the thick mist emerged a hazy voice that said, "I have a feeling that Tarviss will die tonight. I can't wait to see how he'll die"

As he spoke, the Lich's body gradually faded from view and blended into the mist. Shortly after, the mist itself slowly dissipated. When it vanished completely, the Lich was gone as well.

Manrod knew, though, that the Lich didn't go anywhere. He was still around here, masking his presence and aura.

"What a strange fellow," said Manrod with a shrug. He took no notice of the Lich's words. If Tarviss was alone in facing the attacks from the whole academy tonight, there might've been a slim chance of him dying. But Tarviss wasn't alone. The academy would have to face Manrod as well.

Manrod controlled Bale's body and rushed straightito the heart of the East Cove Academy, ready to help Tarviss.

Black fog billowed out of the giant gaping pit in the middle of Bryant's Inspiration Courtyard. Everything that came into contact with this black fog was destroyedthe trees and plants wilted and withered, and even the dirt turned inoblack ashes. In a short period, the square had completely turned into a blackened wasteland.

Although it was a horrifying sight, this was the best opportunity to attack Tarviss. The Magicians of the East Cove Magic Academy were no cowards. They sensed that it was the best moment to defeat the demon and reacted accordingly.

"Attack!!!"

Then, an eye-catching column of light emerged out of Heaven's Thorn that focused on the hole in the squareit was a signal for the target of the Magicians' attack.

Shortly after, a large beam of light with a diameter of more than 10 feet rose from the tops of the six Mage Towers. Each light beam from each Mage Tower was of a different colorthere was green, blue, yellow, white, red and goldeach representing a type of element.

These light beams pierced through the clouds and converged 500 feetito the sky into a dark purple beam of light that was about 70 feet in diameter. The power of this combined elemental light energy was so great that the Magicians could feel the warmth emanating from it from the ground. The light beam was so intense that it brightened up the whole sky until the night seemed to have turned to day!

But that wasn't all.

The position of the light beam was right above the Heaven's Thorn, where another intense white beam of light emerged and converged with the dark purple beam. Immediately afterwards, a tsunami of Mana fluctuation spread out from this light beam. The whole sky seemed to have become agitated by it, so much so that flocks of birds took up to the sky and fled away from the nearby Girvent Forest while wild animals there were driven to panic in droves as well. Even the inhabitants of the River Cove Town could feel the unsettling vibrations in the air at the time.

This was Anthony's prepared attack to fight against the demon Tarviss. He had borrowed the power of the six Mage Towers of the academy and his own Heaven's Thorn's strength to synchronize and combine into a formidable Level-8 attack spell!

The dark purple light beam in the sky began to oscillate. Then, after two seconds the multi-element light beam of more than 10 feet in diameter struck precisely at the hole in the center of the Inspiration Courtyard.

It was the joint attack that accumulated all the power of the entire East Cove Academy, and it hit directly at the demon Tarviss just as he was still inside the hole before he was completely unfetteredthere was no way for him to escape this attack!

But then, an unexpected accident occurred.

When the light beam was half-formed, a strange silvery mirror suddenly appeared in the sky. This mirror was very thin and was almost unnoticeable, but it was far from weak and fragile. Not only did it stop the light beam completely from piercing through it, but the light beam was also reflected on the mirror's surface, and the direction of the light beam was deflected away from the hole where the demon was chained.

It was now directed towards the Heaven's Thorn!

Crash!!!

Although the dean, Anthony had cast a defensive spell around the Mage Tower earlier, it was only a Level-7 spell which was as protective as a thin film of soap in the face of the Level-8 combined attack of the entire Magic Academy. The light beam pierced straight through the shield and the Mage Tower and was directed precisely at the Celestial Pool inside.

The Celestial Pool contained a huge reserve of elements which were aggressively agitated by the Level-8 light beam. A series of explosions followed, causing crucial damage to the structure of the Heaven's Thorn.

Then, under the heavy stares of the Magicians across the academy, the towering Heaven's Thorn which had stood proudly for hundreds of years was snapped in two from the middle!

A few seconds after that, there was a burst of the dean's aura. Just before the explosion started, though, the aura then disappeared completely.

"No!!!!" shouted Herrera.

The Elemental Pool was the core of every Mage Tower. The dean must have been in the Celestial Pool in order for him to unleash such an immense burst of aura that Herrera had detected just now. And now that the Elemental Pool of Heaven's Thorn had been attacked and multiple eruptions had spread throughout the tower from it, something terrible must've befallen the dean!

Even Link was shocked by this turn of events. He had felt a sense of relief when he sensed the sheer power of the dark purple light beam and had allowed himself to hope that Tarviss would surely be defeated by this attack. It was, after all, an attack that was on par with a Level-8 spell which was certainly a match for the Level-8 demon. Who was to expect that it would be reflected and redirected to the main source of the academy's powerthe dean's Mage Tower?

There wasn't a shadow of a doubt in the minds of everyone presentthe Heaven's Thorn would surely collapse!

"Farewell, Anthony," said Manrod with a confident smile as he stood in the willow woods watching the Heaven's Thorn tumbling down from itshi

As he spoke, the physical body that he embodied began to rot and wither at a rapid speed. In no time, all that was left was a puddle of blood and gore. Manrod had burned Bale's soul and thoroughly exhausted the physical and spiritual capabilities of this body to cast a Level-8 spellthe Ultra Reflector.

Ultra Reflector

Level-8

Effects: Reflects and redirects an attacking spell towards the direction that the spellcaster desired. Especially useful against light elemental spells.

With just one move, Manrod had successfully killed Anthony who was the academy's most powerful Magician and also destroyed the East Cove Magic Academy's most powerful Mage Tower!

There was now no leader among the East Cove Academy Magicians now. Not only that, but they've also lost their strongest attack power. Now, Manrod believed, the Level-8 demon Tarviss would teach them a lesson they would never forget!

Right at the moment, the East Cove Academy Magicians were stunned by the horrific turn of events, a deep, terrifying, earth-shattering voice came out from the big gaping hole in the middle of the square.

"Finally Freedom!!!!"

Immediately afterwards, a huge hand that was nearly two feet long emerged and clawed at the edge of the hole, sending dust and debris flying. Then, another hand emerged, followed by an unimaginably huge head.

Eventually, a colossal demon whose body was about 22 feet tall stood in the middle of the Inspiration Courtyard. The demon's skin was ember red, with many fleshy tentacles on his chin. There were countless dark gold magic runes, and his body emanated a black flame-like dark aura while his blood-red eyes reflected a three-foot-long light column.

Although Tarviss had been sealed in the hole for 400 years, his strength was still at Level-8he was definitely still the strongest and most formidable being in Firuman!

For a time, the entire East Cove Magic Academy fell into an eerie silence. Even the Wind Tiger who had been so bold a few moments ago stopped dead in his tracks and began to instinctively step backwards. The demon might not be that much bigger than it, but he was emanating such an intimidating aura that was simply petrifying!

The demon's loud voice resounded across the academy. Tarviss apparently still remembered his arch nemesis Bryant as the first thing that came to his mind the moment he was released was to take revenge!

"Where is Bryant?" shouted the demon. "Where is he hiding?"

No one answered his question. The Bloodmage Talon was already kneeling on the ground in front of Tarviss, worshipping him.

Even Herrera herself was shocked witless by this colossal demon. Her eyes were opened wide as she stared haplessly at the demon while Link was at her side repeatedly trying to shake her back to her senses.

"Tutor!" cried Link urgently. "The Mage Tower isn't safe anymore. We must direct everyone to leave this place!"

Now that the Heaven's Thorn had collapsed, no other Mage Towers in the academy had enough power to stop Tarviss anymore. If they remained in the Mage Tower, there would only be one outcome for themdeath!

And sure enough, just as Link finished the sentence, Tarviss who was getting more and more angry as he got no response to his questions suddenly lunged forward. The dark demonic power around his body had condensed into an unimaginably gigantic black shadow that was about a hundred feet tall. This humongous shadow collided head-on with a Mage Tower nearby.

Crash!!!!

The Mage Tower fell as if it was a toy at the impact of the collision with the demon.

Who could stop such unworldly strength?

Herrera was jolted back to her senses and rushed down the rooftop and began to direct all the Magician's apprentices in her Mage Tower to flee immediately. In that chaos, she did not notice that Link had not followed her down the rooftop. He stayed there and watched the total carnage caused by the demon Tarviss across the East Cove Magic Academy. He listened to the dying screams that emerged from the collapsed Mage Towers. Then, his eyes began to focus, and all his attention was intensified on one thing.

He was now in the absolutely calm state of spellcasting.

## 163. The Slayers Hand

The East Cove Higher Magic Academy, Midnight

Tarviss strode ferociously towards the Pivotal Mage Tower. Along the way, he swung his arms wildly which caused the demonic forces surrounding him to also destroy everything in sight. An ordinary Mage Tower was immediately severed into two pieces, causing the elemental pools to explode and the cries of fear to intensify. The East Cove Higher Magic Academy was in total chaos.

"Bryant, if you continue to hide, I will destroy this place together with the people!" Tarviss shouted.

He naturally didn't get his response; Bryant was no longer in this world. This made Tarviss even more enraged.

The Mage Towers were not simply standing there and waiting to be destroyed. They were actually retaliating with their offensive magic spells, shooting Level-6 spells towards Tarviss consecutively. However, in the face of a Level-8 demon, these Level-6 spells were merely a bunch of fireworks. They could not even penetrate through the demonic forces that were surrounding Tarviss.

At that moment, every Magician in the academy had the same questions in their mind.

Who could stop this demon? Is Dean Anthony still alive?

Dean Anthony was the psychological pillar of the academy. No one knew whether he survived the assault of the Level-8 spell. The appearance of this terrifying demon had further plunged the Magicians into despair. Many had already given up hope.

But, the truth was that Anthony was still alive.

At the last moment, Anthony teleported away from the Heaven's Thorn. He was currently around 0.6 miles away from the academy. Although he escaped the majority of the attack, his teleportation spell still took a bit too long to cast. In that moment, he suffered some drastic injuries from the shockwaves of the Level-8 spell.

When the shockwaves reached him, the defensive spell in the elemental pool automatically defended against some of the impact. However, the Level-8 spell managed to penetrate through the barrier and grazed his body, causing his legs to vaporize almost immediately.

He was now lying in the Girvent Forest, gasping for breath from the pain in his legs. He was on the verge of losing his consciousness.

But he persevered.

Five seconds later, Anthony moved. The Legendary staff in his hand glowed slightly and created a pair of wings on his back. He then made these wings vibrate at high speed and flew back to the academy.

He was the dean of East Cove Higher Magic Academy. As long as he was still alive, he had to stop the Level-8 demon causing fear and destruction on his home ground. He had to defeat the demon, even if it meant burning his soul.

There would be something in this world that was worth sacrificing your soul for. To Anthony, the East Cove Higher Magic Academy was his life!

The Academy.

The Wind Tiger had long escaped into the Girvent Forest upon Tarviss' arrival. He had given up all thoughts of revenge and ran for his life.

This demon is slightly scary. I am not his opponent, so I will be better off finding beautiful ladies in the South.

Blood Demon Talon stood and watched from afar. His strength was not sufficient to even take part in this battle. He merely commended, "What great power, Sir Tarviss. Yes, destroy this damn academy!"

Tarviss never got the response he wanted from Bryant and had already descended into insanity. As another Mage Tower came into his field of vision, he saw a pathetic Magician standing on its rooftop.

"Pitiful mortal! Taste my fury!" Tarviss bellowed and widened his steps, charging towards the Mage Tower.

Tarviss envisioned the situation to be as such. He would slam his fist down on the Mage Tower and smash it to smithereens. In the process, the Magician would cry in despair and devastation, the perfect testament to his strength.

That Mage Tower was Herrera's.

Herrera had already left the Mage Tower together with her apprentice. She held Rylai's hand tightly and was running as far as she could from the demon. They had no clear destination, all they could think of was to escape.

This was true for all other Mage Towers. Herrera could see many other Magician's Apprentices on the run.

She suddenly heard Rylai cry out, "Where is mentor? Why is he not here?"

Herrera was taken aback and looked behind her and realized Link was indeed missing. At the same time, she saw the demon rushing towards her Mage Tower.

Herrera instantly panicked. She had no idea where Link went. However, she had a hunch that he was still in the Mage Tower, which was about to get destroyed!

Faced with the overwhelming power of a Level-8 demon, she had no idea what to do.

Just then, Herrera felt an incredible magic fluctuation from the rooftop of her Mage Tower. This fluctuation was extremely terrifying. Its appearance distorted the air a 30-foot-radius around the rooftop. The shockwaves from this distortion went even further, leaving its impact on the soul of every Magician in the academy.

In an instant, all the cries and screams of fear seemed to have vanished.

Even Tarviss did not expect such a turn of events. In his eyes, the Magician on the rooftop was merely an ant, to think that he would suddenly show such incredible strength.

This would probably be how it felt when one stamped down on an ant only to find out that it was a metal nail.

Tarviss halted his advance and asked, "Bryant?"

It had been too long. His memory of Bryant's power had already blurred. However, the young man standing right in front of him felt somewhat familiar.

There was no reply.

Following the terrifying outburst of energy was an incredible concentration of elemental energy. This attraction force was so great that even the elements in the elemental pools were not spared. Almost all the fire elementals in the academy seemed to be flying towards Herrera's Mage Tower.

At that moment, the Mage Towers who were casting fire elemental spells onto Tarviss were instantly interrupted. Every fire elemental Magician was also surprised to find that they could no longer cast spells.

A giant fire elemental hand then appeared on the rooftop.

The palm was extremely condensed, looking just like a crimson crystal. It was surrounded by a forcefield and slowly converged into lines of runes which connected themselves to the Magician casting the spell. This palm was so huge that the fingers themselves were 18 feet wide and 60 feet in length. Despite the fact that Tarviss was 90 feet tall, he seemed tiny in the face of this giant palm.

The moment the palm appeared, it charged straight towards Tarviss. It traveled at an incredible speed and was also extremely flexible.

"Bryant, finally!" Tarviss bellowed. He thought that this was his mortal enemy, Bryant and charged headlong into the palm.

The collision caused a large explosion in the air. A huge shockwave spread through the entire academy, and visible white ripples appeared in the air.

Every Magician's Apprentice covered their ears instinctively. Those who were stronger physical managed to hold their ground and remained standing. However, those who were physically weak fell down upon the impact of the shockwave.

The collision created a blanket of dust which obstructed their vision of the battle scene.

Amongst the dust cloud, sounds of explosions could still be heard. One could only imagine the intensity of the battle going on within. Around half a minute later, the dust cloud dissipated and an illumination spell appeared on top of a pivotal Mage Tower.

Under the illumination of the light, everyone could finally see the battle scene clearly. They were all shocked by the scene in front of them.

The crimson red hand was grabbing Tarviss tightly in its grasp. As much as Tarviss struggled and repeatedly released his terrifying demonic energy, he seemed to be unable to break through of its death grip.

Everyone knew exactly how violent and destructive Tarviss was.

To think that this spell could defeat Tarviss in a battle of strength. What power was this? A Magician who could create such an offensive spell must have been extremely wise! He was definitely a great Magician!

Oh, great Magician!

"In the name of the God of Light, Tarviss is restited!"

"It did more than restit Tarviss. It is clear that Tarviss is weaker than this Hand of God!

"Who is this Magician?"

The Magicians who stayed in their respective Mage Towers and were prepared to give up their lives in this final fight against Tarviss got the best view of the situation. They not only had a clear view of Tarviss, but also the Magician who was fighting on par with this demon.

A blue robe could only mean that he was of medium rank. Which middle-ranking Magician could possess such power?

However, someone recognized him from the color of hishi

"He looks like Link!"

"How can it be? He just used a Level-9 spell! Only a Level-9 spell could have such terrifying power!"

The Magicians were both pleasantly surprised and confused. They could not figure out what happened.

At that moment, the Wind Tiger merely reached the edge of the academy. As he looked behind him and saw the terrifying scene, cold sweat broke out on his forehead. Damn, lucky I didn't charge straight in. Who would have thought this human infested academy would have a Level-9 Magician? This is even more terrible than the abyss!

Blood Demon Talon who was just praising Tarviss also became speechless.

For a Level-8 demon to lose in a one-on-one battle with a Magician from East Cove Higher Magic Academydid the Queen of the High Elves come visit?

In the shadows, the Level-7 Magician Vance carefully observed this legendary battle. The blue flames in his eyes seemed extremely agitated, vibrating at a fast pace.

"Ah, what a beautiful spell. I did not think that the academy housed someone like this. It seems like Tarviss is in trouble." He then left after speaking.

The outcome of the battle had been decideda Level-9 spell that was cast by a talented combat Magician. There was no way Tarviss could turn the tables around.

Tarviss was boiling with rage. He once again released his power while giving a low rumble, the demonic force that used to surround him visibly getting weaker.

"Get off me!" He shouted as he flailed his arms, trying to push the giant hand apart.

This time, he was successful. The palm opened and Tarviss quickly escaped. He then turned around and charged with full speed towards the Mage Tower where the accursed Magician was residing in.

He might not be able to compare with the Magician's spells, but he had more than enough power to destroy his physical body.

However, it was clear that Tarviss was naive.

The hand that he just escaped from instantly retreated back to the Mage Tower. While it was returning to the tower, the hand clenched into a fist, and as though it was charged with power beforehand, it punched with full force towards Tarviss.

This blow was inspired by the Fist of Firomoz spell!

Bang! The loud explosion echoed throughout the academy.

Tarviss felt as though a locomotive hit him. He immediately fell to the ground. However, the fist did not stop there. It continued to advance as Tarviss sank deeper into the ground.

Bang! Rumble! Tsssss!

The ground shook and a fissure 90 feet in length, 30 feet wide and 12 feet deep appeared.

This hit was the decisive blow. It destroyed the demonic forces surrounding Tarviss and had completely destroyed his willpower. He lay flat on the ground and was unable to even get up.

Link was still going to finish him off.

The Titan's Hand descended from above and grabbed tightly onto Tarviss' body. It then began to tighten onto Tarviss as Link activated the explosion spells he enchanted onto the fire elements in the center of the palm.

This attack was inspired by the Level-5 Flaming Hand spell!

Tarviss was feeling groggy from the previous assault and could not react in time. When he felt physical pain from the attack, it was already too late. The power of the Titan's Hand had already been heightened to its limit.

Tarviss was extremely clear of the horrific powers of a Level-9 fire elemental spell as he was once a Legendary professional. When he felt the extreme temperature of the hand far beyond the tolerance limit of any lifeform, he knew he was finished.

Under the restition of the Titan's Hand and the explosive power of the fire elements, the inner environment of the Titan's Hand was akin to a high-pressure melting pot currently baking a huge Level-8 demon.

Under the pressure of such extreme temperature, Tarviss' body began to glow. This was due to the insane amount of fire elements rushing into his body and destroying the integrity of his cells.

He opened his mouth to scream but to no avail. Instead of a loud rumbling sound, flames emerged from his mouth, followed by his eyes, ears, nose and finally his skin.

Around ten seconds later, the fire elementals in the hand were completely used up. The Titan's Hand then released its grip, and a liquid similar to lava began flowing from where Tarviss once stood. That liquid was the remains of the demon who once terrorized the World of Firuman.

The fact that Tarviss was not vaporized by the heat was a testament to the hardiness of his body.

This was the scene Anthony was greeted with when he finally rushed to the entrance of the academy. The entire academy watched this legendary scene with looks of admiration and disbelief.

Around the debris of the Heaven's Thorn, Selasse, whose legs were completely squashed by the rubble climbed out with great effort. He then took out his notebook and started writing with trembling hands, My words are pale in the face of such an event. They are completely incapable of expressing my feelings. However, I can confirm one thing. I believe that, in the near future, East Cove Higher Magic Academy will usher in the first Legendary Magician ever since its establishment!

## 164. Conquering the East Cove Academy

On the Mage Tower rooftop.

Link leaned back against the railing and almost slumped down to the floor. The process of killing the Level-8 demon might seem easy to an onlooker, but in truth, the attack Link had just unleashed had cost him an unimaginably immense amount of energy that left him completely drained.

Tarviss was incessantly bursting with power, so Link must continuously direct his Mana into the Titan's Hand to maintain it as well. The Mana consumption rate, in this case, had soared up to 200 points per second!

In less than two minutes of fighting, Link had spent 220 Omni points to obtain an unlimited maximum Mana limit. He then drank two bottles of a mid-level Mana potion. Only then did he manage to kill the demon Tarviss, and even then, the demon had died right before the moment Link completely exhausted his store of Mana.

Mission: Investigate Black Moon Conspiracy (Failed)

Player successfully killed the demon Tarviss. 200 Omni Points rewarded.

These two notifications flashed into his view on the interface. Link now had 200 Omni Points, yet instead of celebrating he didn't even want to move an inch. He had overexerted himself in draining his Mana, and he was sure that the Mana potion he'd drank was now poisoning his body. All this had left him without even an ounce of energy to lift a finger at the moment. Maintaining a powerful Level-9 spell had been taxing his spirits as well, and he felt it was too much effort to even stay awake.

After some time, Link heard sounds of rushing footsteps approaching. It was followed by a familiar voice that was full of worry and anxiety.

"Link!" said Herrera. "Are you alright?"

Link didn't have the strength to even turn towards her at this point. All he could manage was curl up his lips slightly in an effort to smile, but before that could happen, he was overcome by a sudden hazy sensation and blacked out immediately. But just before he completely collapsed, he heard Herrera's panicked voice again.

"Oh no!" said Herrera. "He drank two bottles of Mana potion! The toxins have spread into his bloodstream!"

Herrera had helped him the last time he drank too much Mana potion. She was now in the academy where she could get help from other people easily, so Link was sure that there wouldn't be any problem for her to help him this time. As a result, he fainted knowing that he was already in safe hands.

When Link woke up again, he found himself lying on a bed. He looked around and realized that he was in his room in Herrera's Mage Tower. He could feel that the bed sheets and the blanket that were covering his body were clean and cipas if they had been recently changed. They even smelled fresh and fragrant. Link then noticed that he felt fine apart from feeling a little weakened and dizzy.

Link then sat up in the bed and discovered that the clothes on his body had been changed as well. His storage pendant and his protective spell magic ring were both still on his body, while his wand was placed on the table right beside the bed. Just as Link was about to climb out of bed, the door was pushed open, and Herrera walked in. She was pleasantly surprised to see Link already awake and rushed towards him immediately.

"How are you feeling?" she asked with concern.

"Not too bad," answered Link. By then, he was already out of bed pacing slowly back and forth in the room. "I feel a little dizzy, but that's about it."

As soon as he said that, Herrera's face turned slightly angry.

"Of course you'd feel dizzy," she said, gently but firmly reprimanding Link. "You overdosed on Mana potions again. This time you didn't use a spell to freeze your stomach, so the poison had spread into your bloodstream and flowed to the rest of your body. If it weren't for Master Grenci who managed to cure you with the Hundred Herbs medicine in time, you would've surely died!"

Master Grenci was one of the six members of the academy's high council. He was the best Alchemist in the entire East Cove Magic Academy. A Hundred Herbs medicine was his most treasured possession which was an epic-level poison antidote. It was an item so priceless that no amount of money would be able to buy it, and Master Grenci had treasured it more than any other of his creations.

"I must go thank him personally," said Link, full of gratitude.

"There's no need to hurry," said Herrera. "You can do that once you've fully recovered. I hope this will teach you not to do anything so risky next timebut I'm afraid that wouldn't ever happen."

Herrera's eyes began to redden. She knew more than anyone else how dangerous a situation Link had put himself in on that fateful night was. She still shuddered in terror as she thought about it. God of Light only knew how much anxiety this young man, who had no thought of his own safety, had caused her!

Link noticed the genuine concern in Herrera's expressions and felt both grateful to her and ashamed of himself for having put her through this. He walked slowly to the window and pushed the curtain aside to look out.

The weather was excellent this day. The sky was as bright as a blue jewel, rays of sunlight shone down like a heavenly golden waterfall, basking the whole academy in its shimmering glory and warmth.

From this point of view, Link could see the scars of destruction left by the demon Tarviss on the academy. Several Mage Towers had fallen and were reduced to rubble, and a large number of workers were busy clearing the space. A handful of Magiciasstood aside guiding and helping the process with some magic spells. He could hear the sounds of their chattering voices sometimes while the workers were all hard at work sweating profusely; even the Magicians were covered in dirt and dust.

Further away, Link could see that the hole in the middle of Bryant's Inspiration Courtyard was filled up while some Magicians were busy dispelling the traces of demonic aura left by Tarviss there.

At this moment, the East Cove Magic Academy was just like a wounded old tiger licking its wounds and taking its time recuperating.

"Tutor," said Link after a while, "the dean"

It was pure chaos at the time, so Link had no idea what had befallen the dean other than the fact that he sensed the sudden disappearance of Anthony's aura that night. Still, Link was unwilling to believe that a mighty Level-7 Master Magician would be killed so quickly and easily.

Herrera walked towards the window and smiled gently.

"The dean survived," she said. "He used Burst to escape in the nick of time. He has lost both of his legs, though."

"Oh, thank goodness!" exclaimed Link, visibly relieved now. To a soldier, losing limbs would be a great tragedy as they would have some difficulty in taking care of themself. Yet, to a Magician, this was nothing but a cause of mere inconvenience.

"The academy lost six Mage Towers that night," Herrera continued, "the Heaven's Thorn was one of them. Nineteen full-fledged Magicians died in battle, 130 Magician's Apprentices were killed, and countless other people were injured. But in the end, it was not all in vain because the demon Tarviss had finally been killed!"

As she spoke, she turned her head towards Link and her eyes shone with gratitude.

"It was all thanks to you, Master Link!" she exclaimed.

"It was only my duty," answered Link who was slightly unnerved by Herrera's gentle and crystalline eyes staring straight at him. "Besides, you are my tutor; you shouldn't call me Master."

"I'm no longer your tutor, Link," she replied. "You have graduated. You are the most outstanding Magician the East Cove Magic Academy had ever produced!"

Link was stunned at Herrera's generous praise, but then she interrupted him before he could make any reply.

"It's almost noon now," she said. "Go put on your Magician's robe and get yourself ready for lunch."

"Yes, tutor," said Link, suddenly realizing that he was quite hungry. He turned around and took a glance at the garnet Magician's robe laid out on the table. As he approached it, he was immediately taken aback by its superior quality.

"Is this for me, tutor?" he asked incredulously.

He recognized the astounding quality of the robe's material at a glance. After further inspection, he discovered that it was made with Golden Fire Silk with many mysterious looking magic runes made with the world's softest Mana-conductive metal, Oester Silver. When he examined it more closely, he discovered that the spell structure on the robe was a Level-6 booster spell called Clear Thoughts.

Just as he was looking at the robe, a notification popped up on the interface.

Flame Controller

Quality: Epic

First Effect: Speeds up the rate of fire element accretion by 50%.

Second Effect: Boosts the resistance towards elemental spells by 100%.

Third Effect: Fixed with the spell Clear Thoughts, which when activated will restore 2000 points of Mana to the caster in five minutes. A gap of 48 hours is required before the spell can be re-cast.

(Note: This is a special gift from the East Cove Magic Academy!)

This was obviously an invaluable robe! For a Magician who had an affinity towards flame and fire like Link, this robe would be like a pair of wings given to an already mighty tiger, which would make him almost invincible! The spell Clear Thoughts would be especially helpful to him because it would greatly compensate for his biggest weakness that was his lack of Mana.

"Of course it is yours!" answered Herrera. "It is a special gift to you in return for saving the academy. The Golden Fire Silk was Master Ferdinand's prized possession, and the Oester Silver was from the dean. Meanwhile, Master Weissmuller was the one who made the robe with his own hands. And now, the robe is yours."

Link made no more pretenses to be polite and quickly took off his clothes and slipped into his new Magician's robe. It felt luxurious against his skin, and the superior style and quality of the robe was even more obvious now that he wore it. Because the robe could accumulate fire elements in the air, Link's body now seemed to be emitting a faint glow and because the fire elements were gathered on top of Link's head. It seemed as if Link was wearing a flaming crown.

Link then cast a magic mirror to check how he looked. He was momentarily stunned at the majestic appearance of the robe and even thought that it might look too ostentatious on him. But he changed his mind moments after as he thought there would be no point in keeping a modest appearance now that he'd advanced this far. Besides, the dean, the six members of the academy's high council, and Herrera herself all wore extravagant robes, so it was no big deal that he was one wearing one himself.

"King Leon had sent a special tailor to help work on the robe as well," said Herrera, whose eyes shone brilliantly as she laughed. "He's obviously done an excellent job here."

Not only was the robe simply gorgeous to look at, but it also enhanced Link's presence and charisma while also underlining his calm and collected appearance. Link looked unobtedly like the king of fire in this robe!

After that fateful night, no one questioned the profound acuity Link had on magic spells that involved fire elements. He was indubitably Firuman's greatest master of fire spells.

"How many days have I been unconscious?" Link asked, suddenly realizing that such a magnificent robe must've taken some time to prepare.

"Not too long," answered Herrera reassuringly, completely understanding Link's sudden confusion. "Only about three days."

The academy must've exerted enormous efforts in preparing such a Magician's robe in the short span of three days. Link almost felt as if he'd conquered the East Cove Magic Academy by defeating the demon Tarviss.

Later, Link followed Herrera out of his room and into the hall on the first floor, where Link was faced with a shocking sight.

Anthony, Grenci, Ferdinand, Weissmuller and the rest, not excluding all the Magicians in the academy who were of Level-5 and higher were present in the hall. All 37 people were waiting for Link.

Upon seeing Link, Anthony took the lead in standing up. His wounds had now healed almost perfectly thanks to a Priest's divine healing spells. He was fixed with a pair of magical prosthetic limbs which allowed him to move just as he always did.

"Our hero is here!" he exclaimed joyously.

Everyone was sitting in the hall initially, but they all rose to their feet immediately upon seeing Link. Then, Anthony took the lead again in giving Link arsectful Magician's bow which was traditionally performed by a Magician of lower level to a Magician of a higher level.

Link was slightly dismayed by this treatment as he was only a Level-6 Magician in truth. The only reason why he could cast the Level-9 spell, Titan's Hand was because of the Prophetic White Stone's help. Meanwhile, the dean was a genuine Level-7 Master Magician, so Link felt he didn't deserve this kind of gesture at all.

The dean smiled gently as he noticed Link's obvious unease.

"We are aware that the Prophetic White Stone's power helped you," he said, "but, it alone would be useless in the hands of anyone else but you. None of us could control a Level-9 spell, let alone use it to defeat the Level-8 demon Tarviss. But you did it, and you've saved us all. That is the truth, and that is all that matters."

He then turned around and addressed everyone else in the room.

"Make way for Master Link!" he shouted. "Today the seat at the head of the table belongs to him!"

The Magicians in the hall then shuffled aside to make way for Link. On the dining table, he saw that a variety of scrumptious dishes had been laid out. They had obviously got wind of Link's recovery and made these special preparations just for him.

"Don't worry, Link," Herrera whispered, "this is everyone's way of showing their gratitude to you. You've earned their respect."

Link knew this, of course. He also knew that it would be a sign of disrespect if he were to turn down the dean's generous gesture.

"Thank you," said Link, returning the Magicians' bow respectfully. "I am moved by the generosity you have shown me today."

He then walked to his seat at the head of the table.

There was neither boastful arrogance nor exaggerated modesty in his expressions. He cut a strikingly calm figure against the backdrop of festive moods in the hall. Overall, he seemed like a man whose maturity far exceeded his young age.

None of the Magicians present were younger than 35 years old. In fact, Herrera who was the youngest there apart from Link was already 36 years old herself, while most of the rest had grey hair and beards. Naturally, they had been worried that the respect shown to such a young Magician would make him vain and conceited.

Just think aboutithis was the person who could control an advanced Level-9 spell and defeat the mighty demon, Tarviss. For all they knew, Link could be bloated with pride right now!

But then Link's actions began to put them at ease. Once he'd taken his seat, everyone started to dine, and the atmosphere relaxed considerably. The crowd began to chat freely about magic and spells and Link himself would say a few words to the dean. In a few minutes, the tension in the air began to loosen, and everyone started to enjoy themselves.

After the meal, the table was cleared, and Anthony suddenly clapped his hand to get everyone's attention; the air became tense again. Link was surprised and didn't know what to expect next, but just then, Master Grenci walked up to him and placed a notebook in front of him.

"Master Link," he said, "this is a notebook that contains all the knowledge I've discovered throughout my life. I hope you may find some inspiration from it."

Then, the rest of the high council membersFerdinand, Weissmuller, Hanswiser, and Andal all handed each of their own notebooks to Link, all reiterating Grenci's hope to one day inspire Link.

Link had stood up at this point. He did not refuse the Master Magicians' gifts. He knew that these contained precious wisdom that could not be found anywhere else in the world. They would be an invaluable help to him in advancing his magic skills.

Link bowed deeply each time he received a notebook. He was aware that this was the highest honor that could be bestowed upon a student of the academy. This meant that he had now been recognized as a stellar Magician by the most respected Magicians in the academy.

By now, although it wasn't explicitly stated that Link was the best Magician in the academy, the fact that he was presented the notebooks of the Master Magicians meant that he was implicitly recognized as one. Only three other people had ever received such an honor in the long history of the East Cove Magic Academy, and all three of these people had gone on to become the academy's dean.

In total, Link received 37 notebooks that day. He then bowed to the Magicians again and took out a notebook from his storage pendant and placed it on the table.

"I've recorded all of the Supreme Magical Skills that I've ever created in this notebook," he said. "It also contains some of my theories and deductions that I've accrued from the first day I started to learn magic. I would like to gift it to the academy so that anyone can read and study them. I hope it might one day inspire you to make new discoveries and advance your magic skills as well."

"Wow!"

The hall was now echoing in gasps and surprised exclamations by the Master Magicians. They soon erupted into warm applause. They had not expected him to give them anything, yet Link had gifted them with such a priceless item. Naturally, everyone there now found Link to be admirable and deserving of their respect.

There was not a trace of a doubt that Link was a peerless genius. His spells were full of innovation and creativity apart from being incredibly powerful. For that reason, his notebook was without question the most prized possession of the academy. It would be a great help to the Magicians of the academy as they advanced their levels.

Link himself wouldn't lose anything by giving this away. The Supreme Magical Skills he developed were indeed powerful. If he were to make this knowledge accessible to the Magicians of the academy, then that would only mean that more of them would become stronger and better Magicians who would fight better in the war against the dark forces in the future. That could only be a good thing.

Herrera looked on quietly as the scene unfolded in front of her among the crowd; she was deeply moved inside. She had watched Link grow up from a skinny Magician's Apprentice in tattered rags who had bloomed into such a powerful and formidable Master Magician who might one day become the next dean in slightly more than half a year. It was nothing short of a miracle.

Still, Herrera knew that as the God of Light's Chosen One, this was only the beginning. Link would be creating even more miracles in the future, and Herrera couldn't wait to see what they would be.

What miracles will he make next in the Ferde Wilderness? Herrera wondered with anticipation.

## 165. Only Stones Were Left

A loud rumble startled a flock of seagulls casually relaxing on a cliff. On the coast, the crashing waves created a tall water pillar that sprayed water in all directions. Under the shining rays of the sun, a faint rainbow could be momentarily seen.

A few figures with stark differences in height stood on the cliff.

The tall people consisted of Link and the captain of the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries, Jacker. The shorter people were the Yabba race. The leader of the three-man team was called Aberdeen, the supervisor of the waterway development project. The two people standing by his side were his asstants.

This place was located on the East Coast of the Ferde Wilderness called the Tigers Cliff. It was an extremely tall cliff with a concave area 900 feet wide and 90 feet deep in the middle. The slope after the concave area was gentle, making it easy to walk onto the coast from this area.

If this cliff did not exist on this coast, it would have made an extremely good spot to build a port.

In order to develop his territory, Link would require a lot of resources. The most economical and efficient way to do this was through the sea. Therefore, once Link had a basic understanding of the situation, the first thing he did was request the Yabba engineering team to open the seaway.

Staring at the crashing waves, Link asked, "How long will it take to build a usable waterway?"

Previously, all these matters were left in the hands of the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries. Link merely gave some general instructions through letters and did not have a clear picture in his mind. Now that he was personally involved, he would have to inquire the experts and make sure that the project was done to his standards.

Aberdeen knew that the young man in front of him was a gold mine and a powerful Magician. He would not be able to deceive him. Aberdeen then adopted a serious tone and said, "We have already sent divers to explore the area. The whole area within 50 nautical miles from here is filled with reefs. However, only the ones within a 2.5-mile radius from the Tiger Cliff have to be removed. In order to clear up this area, the estimated time will be two months. We have already started, and it will be done in a months' time."

A month sounded good.

Link then pressed on, "Do we need to mark a safe sailing route for the area outside of the 2.5-mile radius then?"

Aberdeen patiently explained, "There is no need to. Nowadays, every ship is enchanted with some basic water elemental magic runes. An experienced captain would be able to judge the depth of the water in front of them from the change in the brightness of the runes. As long as the reefs are not too densely populated, they'll be able to avoid them with ease."

Upon hearing these words, Link immediately knew that he had complicated the situation in his mind. In the real world, people would often look for the most economical and reliable ways to solve problems. Furthermore, he was a complete novice at sea trade. If he probed too much into the methods of the experts, he might unknowingly make a joke out of himself.

"So what would be the estimated cost?" Link asked. This was something he had to keep track of.

"4827 gold coins. This is an extremely accurate cost. The Yabba race has always been fair in our pricing, especially to our good friends." Aberdeen patted his chest and quoted an extremely specific number.

Link, on the other hand, had his own ideas. "I would like the harbor to have enough room for expansion as well. If we manage to do well in the future, we would then be able to develop it without much hassle."

Aberdeen then had an embarsed expression on his face. "Sir, if that is the case, we will have to level all the stones under our feet. The workload would immediately double "

"My budget is 10000 gold coins," Link said as he stuck out one finger with confidence.

"Consider it done." Aberdeen's eyes immediately glowed as he spoke.

He then turned around and started discussing with his two asstants. His asstants held a blueprint each in their hands, and after a moment of whispering and flailing of arms, Aberdeen said, "Sir, that would increase the time required by another half a month."

The addition of work naturally meant that more time was needed. Link nodded without question. The group then walked back along the Tiger Cliff before they went their separate ways. Link then followed Jacker all the way back to the camp on a horse.

Jacker looked like he wanted to say something on the way.

Link noticed it immediately and understood his concerns. He laughed, "Jacker, are you afraid that we will not have enough gold coins?"

This was exactly what Jacker wanted to say. He turned around and looked at the port which was under construction. "Sir, including the money you spent on the port, the total cost for the development of the Ferde Wilderness has already amounted to 30000 gold coins, and this is only the beginning."

Not long ago, they had just cleared all the bandits out of the area and built a small camp for themselves. In the blink of an eye, 30000 gold coins were spent. The speed at which they were depleting their resources was simply insane!

Jacker had never seen such extravagant spending before. Apart from him, Lucy and Gildern were also horrified, and even Magician Carrido also started having doubts. While Link could indeed earn money with his enchanting skills, it was not enough to keep up with their spending.

They were afraid that Link would deplete all their resources before the Ferde Wilderness could even take flight.

Link laughed, "This is a necessary investment. If we save now, we will only spend more next time."

Jacker's lips seemed to move ever so slightly. He was usually a straightforward person, however, some things were really difficult for him to putito words.

Link laughed loudly and teased, "It has only been a few months since I last saw you. What happened?"

Jacker smiled bitterly and decided to confide in Link with a worried expression on his face, "My lord, the Ferde Wilderness is really barren. No place in this area can be used to grow crops. There is also gravel and stones everywhere. Apart from a few weeds, there are no trees and rivers in sight. It is also often a victim of hurricanes, and this barren land provides absolutely no shelter. Can such a place really prosper?"

They originally arrived at the Ferde Wilderness with confidence and passion to develop this land together with Link. However, that was when they were unfamiliar with the situation. In these few months, their enthusiasm had been completely devastated by this desolate land. Food, clothing and even wood had to be transported from other areas. There was no helping this barren hellhole.

Link merely laughed without a hint of worry.

The natural environment of the Ferde Wilderness was indeed lacking. However, if that were not the case, he would never have gotten such a huge piece of land.

Furthermore, the Ferde Wilderness had its benefits as well. Apart from the anti-magic soil, it had an extremely strategic geographical position. It faced the sea and Dawn Island, the home of the High Elves. It had relatively easy access to the southern countries and was close to the capital of the Norton Kingdom in the North. These were acceptable conditions.

As for the natural environment, he simply had to change it.

That would totally be possible in the World of Firuman. As long as one was willing to part with their gold coins, anything was possible. Link currently had 120000 gold coins in his bag. Part of this fortune was earned from his enchanting skills, while 80000 gold coins was the reward from the Magic Academy in the name of helping him develop his territory.

"Relax, Jacker. In ten years, the Ferde Wilderness will definitely turn into a bustling Ferde City," Link assured.

At that moment, the camp came into sight. Link whipped the horse harshly, signaling it to accelerate towards the camp. Jacker, on the other hand, still saw no hope in the territory. He simply sighed and followed closely behind Link.

The camp was called the Scorched Ridge. Although it was merely a temporary camp, Link still had to spend nearly 6000 gold coins for its construction.

The camp was built on high ground and was enclosed by a circle of tall castle walls built from boulders. There were a total of two gates in the castle wall, one of which led to the sea, while the other opened to the Girvent Forest.

The castle wall encircled an area almost 900 feet in radius. A watchtower was also built at the highest point to survey the surrounding area. Below the watchtower were the wooden huts where the mercenary band and workers lived in.

Link alighted the horse and handed the reins over to the soldier on one side before walking towards a large wooden building.

This wooden building was the administrative building of the camp. It had two stories and covered more than 600 square feet. Link could see working pronel hurriedly entering and leaving the building. As Link approached the building, a studious-looking young man immediately came to welcome him. He was Link's extremely competent secretary called Joshua. Link had hired him from River Cove Town.

He held a piece of document in his hand and reported clearly to Link, "My lord, the academy has given their reply. This is a handwritten letter from Anthony."

'Read it to me," Link said.

"Yes," Joshua nodded and continued. "The letter mentioned that your vision is not practical. It is impossible to change the natural environment of the Ferde Wilderness simply by using one Mage Tower. In order to achieve this goal, you need a magic formation formed by at least five powerful Mage Towers with a Master Magician stationed in each one of them. This, similarly, would not be achievable in the near futurethe academy can offer to build a Mage Tower for you at half the price, but will be unable to satisfy your request."

It was indeed not practical. One Mage Tower would cost at least 100000 gold coins to build. Five Mage Towers would then add up to 500000 gold coins. Furthermore, it required a Master Magician to be stationed in every one of those Mage Towers. This plan was insane.

Link walked along while Joshua read the letter out to him. When he reached his study room, he had fully understood the message and sat down with a frown on his face. "That is not good news."

In order to develop the Ferde Wilderness, the port was a key component. However, the other key component was to change the climate. These were indispensable parts of Link's plan. The Ferde Wilderness was, on average, hit by four mega-hurricanes and ten smaller hurricanes every year. If this was not changed, it would be impossible for this place to flourish.

A Mage Tower was also an important component in Link's personal growth. Although he had graduated from the academy, there was no limit to magic research. If he wanted to further his strength, he needed a Mage Tower of his own, preferably one similar to the scale of the pivotal Mage Towers in the academy.

Now that the academy was unable to help him, Link had to find an alternative.

The young secretary then brought out another letter. This letter had a magical imprint on it, suggesting that it was a secret letter. Joshua handed this letter to Link and said, "My lord, this letter just arrived."

Link cast a glance and realized that the letter had a magic imprint that glowed ever so slightly. The envelope was made from tough bear leather. There was even a self-destruct rune at the back of the envelope. As long as the letter was opened in the wrong way, it would explode. But what was the correct way to open this letter? There were no explanations or instructions.

Link carefully observed the letter and decoded the meaning and position of each rune. After half a minute, he had broken the code. It was a Malfoy style lock that was intricately designed. However, as long as one was familiar with the conditions, they could easily decode it.

A few months ago, Link might have been stumped by this code. However, after reading through the notes given to him by all the Master Magicians in the academy, his magic foundation had reached a new level. This magic rune lock was a piece of cake for him.

After five or six minutes, Link tapped his fingers lightly on the runes and imbued them with different amounts of mana. After tapping the titeenth rune, all the magic runes instantly disappeared, and the letter automatically opened.

Before he pulled out the letter, Link could not help but wonder, who is playing charades with me? This is pretty interesting.

## 166. The Thousand-Year-Old Lich

Link took out the letter and examined the crude map drawn on it. At a glance Link realized that he was very familiar with all the landmarks in it. After closer inspection, it turned out that the map was of the area around Scorched Ridge.

There was a red line on the map that extended southeast from the Scorched Ridge and ended at a place called Shark Bay, where on the map a line of words was written.

I can help you transform the climate in the Ferde Wilderness, but you must come alone. Are you brave enough?

Link couldn't help but smile cynically as he read those words.

HmmmIs this a trick to trap me or is it someone who can't be seen? Link wondered.

The person who'd sent him this map had used an intricate Malfoy runic lock, which meant that the sender was a Magician and judging by the quality of the runes and the level of the spell used, probably a Level-5 or higher Magician at that.

Such a Magician wouldn't waste his time pulling a prank on Link.

Besides, Shark Bay wasn't that far from Scorched Ridge anyway, only about 5 miles on the road, so Link decided he would go there and see what was up.

There was a possibility that he might encounter some dangers there, of course. But he had mastered the spell Dimensional Jump and still had two more chances to use the power of the Prophetic White Stone, he even had 200 Omni Points now, so even if someone had set up a trap and ambushed him, he was confident that no one in this world could kill him easily.

Another possibility was finding someone who really could transform the climate of Ferde Wilderness. Achieving that would mean that a huge chunk of problem Link was facing now would be solved!

With this in mind, Link thought there really was no reason for him not to go and find this mysterious person at all.

It was midday at the time, and the weather was pleasant. Link greeted his clerk Joshua then promptly left the campgrounds alone.

Once he was outside the camp, Link summoned the Fenrir Wolf and almost flew straight to Shark Bay. With the speed of the Fenrir Wolf, he covered the distance of five miles in only about six minutes.

As he approached Shark Bay, a cliff emerged into view. Link hopped down from the Fenrir Wolf and ran up to it. He discovered a ring-shaped beach around the cliff, but there was no one there save for a few seagulls.

Link walked along the cliff but still couldn't find anyone there. Just as he was starting to get suspicious, he sensed a Mana fluctuation. He quickly turned around and noticed an almost transparent figure emerging from a crack in the cliff stone.

Link understood why this mysterious figure had wanted him to come alone the moment he saw him. Had any normal folk caught a glimpse of this figure, they would've been frightened to death by the figure's appearance.

This figure was a Lich, a pure Lich, whose body was now completely skeletons without an ounce of flesh on it. The bones looked strangely beautiful, though, just like jade stones. In his eye sockets, there were bluish flames from which extraordinary spiritual energy and Mana emanated. From this Link could gauge that he must be at least at Level-7 and was as strong and powerful as Anthony, the dean of the East Cove Academy.

This strength wasn't enough to intimidate Link, of course. He calmly canceled the Wind Fenrir and walked towards the Lich.

"May I know your name?" asked Link when he was about tity feet away from the Lich.

Lichs were creatures of darkness, most of them were evil in nature and regarded other lives as their own playthings. Still, Link sensed something special from this Lich. The dark energy he sensed from him was, in fact, pure and serene, just like the tranquility of midnight, and there was not a hint of evil in him at all, completely unlike the aura he sensed from the Necromancer Shade and Bale who had transformed into a Lich previously. Hence, Link decided to stay his hand and approached the Lich.

"I'm Vance," answered the Lich.

"Huh?" Link thought he had heard of the name somewhere before. He tried to recall it carefully; then something jumped out in his memory. "Are you the person who founded the studies of Battle Aura?"

Was that possible? According to the historical record, the Lich would have to be about a thousand years old to be the founder of Battle Aura studies! Yet this Lich was only a Level-7 Magician, so how could it be possible for him to live so long?

Even Legendary-level figures couldn't live this long. The king of underground organization Morpheus himself was less than 500 years old, and he was always making sacrifices to the demon god. Why? Because he knew that he would soon expire!

To Link's surprise, Vance nodded.

"I didn't expect you to know me," said the Lich. "What an honor. You must be wondering how I manage to live this long. I'm afraid I can't explain it to you in detail right here, and now, all I can say is that I made a deal with a demon god in the Sea of Void after committing a deplorable sin and was locked up inside the Azura Tower for the last 400 years.

Demon god was the collective name of low-level gods of darkness, they were usually low-level Demi-Gods, and there were hordes and hordes of them. There were at least a hundred different real names of these demon gods that were known in the dark corners of Firuman. As long as one knew one real name of these demon gods one could summon them through a special ritual and make a deal with them.

These deals were usually sinister and bloody in nature, which meant that Vance's past wasn't as clean as his calm aura might suggest.

This was no surprise to Link, though. History had recorded how Vance had tried to study Battle Art and Battle Aura by conducting horrific experiments on live Warriors. He might have been the founder of Battle Art studies, but that didn't necessarily mean that the method he used to achieve it was acceptable. According to legends he mysteriously disappeared without a trace in the end. Now Link knew that he had actually made a deal with a demon god and transformed into a Lich.

To put it simply, Vance was a mad genius who had committed some questionable deeds but wasn't purely evil in nature.

Link didn't mind such a figure, although he was still hesitant to associate himself with him. Still, the Lich had promised to help solve an urgent problem for him in the letter, and he didn't want to turn him down before at least getting to know him first. After a few seconds of silent contemplation, Link decided not to waste any time beating around the bush here.

"Did you say you can solve the climate problem for me?" Link asked.

Vance chuckled in a hoarse voice when he heard Link.

"I met an interesting young woman in Girvent Forest after escaping from the Azura Tower," said Vance. "She told me that you are an open-minded young mind who wouldn't turn me out the moment you see me, that's why I decided to come here. Apparently, she was right about you."

"Is that woman called Eleanor?" Link asked. He was considerably alarmed by this revelation. "You didn't hurt her, did you?" Eleanor had been a good friend to him and had helped him a great deal many times before. Link didn't want any harm to ever come to her.

Vance shook his head in reply.

"Am I such an evil person in your eyes?" he asked Link. "No, you've misjudged me. All I ever desired was to learn the truth. Yes, I may have used barbaric techniques to achieve my goals, but wasn't it all worth it in the end?"

Link was relieved to hear that Eleanor was fine. That was all that mattered to him. He didn't care to trouble himself with this old Lich's past mistakes.

"What do I have to do in return for your help?" Link asked.

"You are a smart one indeed," said Vance with a laugh. "That made it so much easier. Well, to begin with, I've just regained my freedom not too long ago, so I don't have any wand with me at all. Neither do I have access to any materials to create one"

It seemed the Lich had seen one of Link's magic gear and realized that this was one of his fortes.

"That won't be a problem," said Link. "I'll create one for you as soon as possible, and I promise you it will be just as good as my own." Creating wand wasn't that big a deal for Link anyway.

"And then," the Lich continued, "I must first reclaim my underground palace, but that is not something I could ever achieve alone. I need some help."

"Your underground palace?" asked Link suspiciously. "What happened to it?" Link was beginning to think that the Lich was demanding too much out of him.

"I had been imprisoned for 400 years. At first, I thought the world outside was too noisy and complicated, so I decided to just stay inside the Azura Tower forever. But since I'm out now, I have no choice but to find a place to go. I had once built an underground palace, so I made up my mind to go back there. I discovered, however, that it had been taken over by a group of Necromancers. Their leader is a terrifying Level-6 swordsman Necromancer, and all his underlings are tough as they had mastered the Battle Art that I had developed a long time ago. This Necromancer swordsman even had the control of the magic seal in my underground palace. In short, I could never defeat them alone."

"But a wand is already worth 20,000 gold coins," said Link plainly. "And you still want me to help you reclaim your underground palace. Don't you think you're asking too much of me?"

Link had achieved some reputation for himself by now. He was sure that even without this Lich's help he would be able to find another way to solve the climate problem anyway. He could go to the Isle of Dawn, for example, and find help there. The High Elves were renowned for being powerful Magicians, after all, so Link was sure that he would find someone there who could help him.

Vance chuckled and rubbed his bony palms together, making a clunk noise as he did so.

"I may have asked too much," said the Lich, "but once my underground palace is reclaimed, there would be rewards for you. There weren't many gold coins there, but there are many magical materials and seven types of Epic-level Battle Art scrolls. I've been storing them there for all these years, yet I have no use for them, so if you want, you may choose any of the Battle Art scrolls that you like, or you could just take them all. As for the magical materials, we can divide them equally between us! By the way, this solution I have for your climate problem is in a book I kept in my underground palace, so I must go back there to get it."

As he heard this, Link's interest was suddenly piqued. Vance was the founder of Battle Art studies after all, so there was a high chance that he was telling the truth. The seven Epic-level Battle Art scrolls would be of little value to a thousand-year-old Lich like Vance, but to Link, these items would have inestimable value in helping him develop the strength of his troop!

"If what you said is true," said Link after having weighed the matter for a while, "then we couldn't possibly defeat them alone. I must find another helper.

An underground palace would be nothing like the outside world. The terrain and interior would be complex and labyrinthine which would hamper his ability to fully exert his magic power. Furthermore, the opponent would be a skilled swordsman who was familiar with the terrain and had developed considerable strength while being backed up by numerous tough underlings. This wouldn't be an easy battle to win.

The best helper, in this case, would be a strong fighter who wouldn't be disturbed by the presence of the ghoulish Lich and smart enough to think on his feet.

After much deliberation, Link thought the best person he could find to help them here was Celine, the demon princess. Not only was she a mighty Magician, but she was also experienced in martial skills which would come in handy.

"I don't have any problem with that," said Vance. "But how long would you need to find this helper?"

"I'm not quite sure," answered Link. "She's in the south at the moment, but I'll try to summon her. If I get no response, then I might need to go down there and find her myself. My estimate would be about a month."

"That's fine," said the Lich. "I wish you luck in finding her. Oh, by the way, do you happen to have any spare wand that I could use while I'm waiting for the new one?" Vance stretched out a hand towards Link as he spoke.

Link did have a spare wand, although it was far inferior to the main wand that he's currently using. He had created this crude wand with spare Mithril just to practice his craft, but since Vance seemed to need a wand so urgently, he took it out from his storage pendant and tossed it towards him.

Vance took the wand and tested it with a few simple spells. He seemed to be muttering something under his breath as he cast the spells and the bones of his mouth made a rattling noise as he did so.

"This is the worst wand I've used in over a thousand years," said Vance finally. "But it's better than nothing, I guess."

Link didn't take the Lich's jeering remarks to heart. He then summoned the Wind Fenrir again and turned towards the Lich.

"I'll try summoning her the moment I get back," said Link. "I hope everything goes well."

"Good," said Vance. "I'll be here in Shark Bay for a while. Oh, yes, I've been locked up for so long that I'd forgotten most of the Battle Art techniques. But I do remember oneImperial Conqueror. It's a fire element, Battle Art. Think of it as a sign of my sincerity."

As he spoke, Vance handed Link a magic scroll.

Link opened the scroll and glanced at it for a while. He thought it was an exceptional spell, albeit with a ridiculous name.

"It's a good spell but isn't the name a bit silly?" said Link.

Vance smiled slyly in reply, and his upper and lower jaw bones clunked and rattled as he did so.

"But those simple-minded Warriors wouldn't learn it if it didn't have a name that sounds impressive!" he said.

Link made no reply and hopped onto the Wind Fenrir's back.

"I will prepare the wand for you as soon as possible," he said. Then he promptly turned the wolf around and sped back to Scorched Ridge.

Link was the only Magician in Scorched Ridge at the moment because Carrido was in River Cove Town and Eliard had gone back to East Cove Magic Academy. Hence, Link wasn't worried about anyone sensing any Mana fluctuation he might cause. Once he reached his own wooden cabin, he took out the black feather Celine had given him and cast a small fireball to burn the feather.

The feather burned quietly and slowly in a gray flame. It burned continuously for three minutes; then the flame burstito an intense brightness for a slight moment, then it puffed out and was extinguished immediately.

In the meantime, Link could not sense Celine's aura at all. This aroused an unsettling concern in his heart.

Link wasn't a rookie Magician as he used to be. He knew that the burning of the feather was a summoning process that required the receiver to reply to his summoning with their aura. Yet he hadn't sensed a trace of Celine's aura at all just now, and this worried him very much

He remembered the rumors he heard about the appearance of three high-level demons in Leo Kingdom and Link's ever-calm heart was agitated for the very first time.

Had anything bad happened to her? Link wondered. What's going on with that lovesick Wavier, could he do anything to harm Celine? Something's not right. I must go down to the south and find her!

## 167. The Chosen Path of Two Genius

Although Link had already made the decision to search for Celine in the South, he could not simply leave his territory. The entire development of the arearsed on his decisions. He thus had to make some arrangements before he could leave.

This took him three full days. In this period, he left enough gold coins and made basic arrangements of the development plans for the next three months.

Unfortunately, right after he was done with the preparations, the Ferde Wilderness was hit by a huge hurricane. It was an extremely serious one with rumors of people getting swept off their feet. The sea waves crashed violently against one another, and torrential rain terrorized the land. The territory was even greeted by hail. Everyone stayed in at the Scorched Ridge, shivering in their own homes while praying for the blessing of the gods. They were afraid this hurricane would destroy their fragile wooden houses.

Link disregarded the advice of Lucy and the others and stubbornly set out in the abominable weather. He summoned the Wind Fenrir and started charging southwards. Along the way, images of Celine flashed across his mind. His memories of her in the game and in this reality became intertwined.

Aren't you afraid of me? You know I'm a demon! On the rooftop of the Gladstone City clocktower, Celine teased him while exuding her unparalleled charm.

I can't choose my birthright. However, I can choose the path I want to take! Celine eyes shone with resolve in the game as she said this sentence.

My father? He is merely a piece of crap in the abyss! She frowned whenever she said this.

Oh, Link, you are really an interesting Magician. I think I might have fallen in love with you. Heh, oh my, did you take that seriously?

Fool, I love to see the dazed expressions of you mortals.

The memories flashed through his mind with unusual clarity. Link felt a fire burning in his heart.

"Celine, I'm coming!"

He accelerated, bringing his speed to a maximum.

The wind roared as he sped into the boundless horizon.

A flash suddenly appeared in the sky as a thunderbolt struck the ground. Hailstones were mixed into the raindrops which mercilessly crashed down upon Link. Despite the protection from the Edelweiss spell, Link appeared to be struggling against the forces of nature. Many times, he would fly off the back of the Wind Fenrir as the view of the terrain was terrible.

After each fall, Link would summon a new Wind Fenrir while in mid-air to prevent himself from getting injured. He would then continue charging forward without reducing his speed.

At that moment, Link was no longer the Magician who shook the world with his name. He was also no Duke or Master of a territory. He was merely a young man following his heart.

There were six countries in the South, each of them on a much smaller scale than the Norton Kingdom. The total size of the six kingdoms was merely 1.5 times that of the Norton Kingdom. In order to defend themselves against the Northern Lions, these six countries formed an alliance called the Southern Free Trade Confederation.

Within the six countries, the Kingdom of Leo was ranked the last in terms of general strength and was also the smallest. It merely covered 800000 square kilometers. However, despite its size, the Magician organization located at the southern distits of its capital, Opal City, had made its reputation throughout the entire Firuman continent. This organization was the Southern Magician Alliance.

Unlike the tall Mage Towers that were preferred by people in the North, the Magicians in the South did not find such structures appealing. Instead, they preferred to build majestic castles.

The Southern Magician Alliance's base was essentially built from a huge group of castles. It covered an area of 30000 yards and had six pivotal castles set in a six-star array formation. The perimeter of the castle was filled with residential homes, where the workers and merchants with connections to the Magician Alliance lived. There were about 5000 of such people, including servants, coachman, horse trainers, scroll merchants and so on. It looked just like a city of magic. This was where the Alliance's youngest genius Magician, Wavier, studied magic.

Wavier was 21 years old and had elegant silver hair and eyes. In three months, he was expected to achieve a breakthrough and reach Level-5. This achievement would be an unprecedented one in the history of the alliance. He had hence earned the right to use the Merlin's Wand.

If all went according to plan, Wavier's road to success had already been set. His strength would continue to rise, probably even reaching Level-8. If he managed to attain that strength, he would then very likely become the next dean of the alliance.

However, an incident two months ago completely messed up the rhythm of his progress.

Wavier woke up as usual in the morning and ate breakfast casually. Following which, he headed straight to the library in the alliance. He had gotten an epiphany regarding multi-cast spells last night and needed to validate them with the wisdom of his predecessors to ensure that they were viable. He walked into the long corridor outside his room; there were many other Magicians who had woken up early. After seeing Wavier, they all bowed respectfully to which Wavier replied in kind. When he reached the Elottison Square right outside the castle, a sentence caught his attention.

"Did you know the investigation team has returned?" This was from a Magician's Apprentice.

"Oh, what's the situation?" Another person asked. Wavier was immediately intrigued and slowed down his pace.

"We sent ten people over, but only three made it back alive! It was said that they found connections between the demons and the Syndicate. That damned group of thieves are covering up the footsteps of the demons."

"The Syndicate is really disgusting!" Another Magic Apprentice was immediately enraged. He waved his fist in the air.

The two apprentices left after this short conversation. On the other hand, Wavier immediately changed his direction and headed directly to his mentor, Master Hanlott.

Master Hanlott was a Level-6 Magician. However, he was already 60 years old and did not possess as much energy as before; he would only wake up at 9 o'clock every day. Wavier would probably have to wait for a while before he could see him.

Master Hanlott's room was on the first floor. A young female servant was standing in front of the door. Upon seeing Wavier, she spoke respectfully, "Sir, the master is still sleeping. Please wait a moment."

"Alright." Wavier found a seat in the hall and started reading a magic book.

Previously, he could get immersed in a magic book quickly, to the point where he would become oblivious to his surroundings. However, he seemed to be unable to do so today. Two months ago, traces of demons appeared in the capital. He had personally participated in the investigation; one time, he saw a young girl. Despite only getting a glance, he felt as though he was struck by something amazing. The whole world seemed dull when placed beside this beautiful young girl of brilliance and vigor.

After that, he felt as though he was sleepwalking and made many mistakes along the way. Realizing that something was amiss, he voluntarily withdrew from the investigation team. Although the girl was proven to be a demon, it still did not change Wavier's impression of her.

How can such a beautiful young girl be a demon? Although Wavier's eyes were stuck onto the magic book, he was replaying images of that fateful encounter in his mind.

It was at an ordinary market in Opal City. The girl was wearing a light blue linen dress and carrying a hand-woven basket. She was bargaining with a few farmers and looked just like a girl-next-door. There were many of such young girls in Opal Cityshe was just slightly prettier.

However, Wavier was somehow mesmerized by her the moment their gazes met.

The eyes shining with brilliance, the teasing shape of her nose and the way her crescent brows shot up when she noticed him in a dazeit was as though Cupid had shot an arrow right through his heart.

I wonder where she is now? Is she hurt by any of the Magicians? Did shekill anyone? Many possibilities flashed through his mind. He felt terrible.

Suddenly, a voice rang in his ear. "Sir? Sir?"

"Oh?" Wavier was jolted out of his thoughts and looked up at the servant.

"The master is awake. You may visit him now."

"Oh, alright," Wavier replied as he put away the magic book that he had barely read. He followed the servantito his master's room.

Hanlott's room was simply decorated. He had never been one that liked extravagance or wasteful designs. Minimalist and a basic lifestyle was something that he had always believed in. His favorite robe was the plain, white robe that he was currently wearing.

The moment he saw his talented disciple, Hanlott smiled. "Sit, my dear lad."

He liked to call the young Magicians that he was close to lads. He admired the youthful vigor that was emanating from them.

Wavier sat on a wooden stool beside the bed and said, "Master, I heard that the investigative team suffered great losses this time around."

Hanlott's face sank upon hearing this news. He nodded. "The demon is strong."

"Did we kill the demon?" Wavier asked.

Hanlott shook his head. "We seriously injured one of them. However, the demon had two other companions. Despite activating the Sealing Barrier spell, we were unable to stop them from escaping."

"Diddid they see the female demon?" This was not a question befitting of the situation, but Wavier could not resist.

Hanlott frowned and stared hard at Wavier, speaking in a serious tone, "Young lad, that is a dangerous thought."

"Master" Wavier tried to explain himself but was interrupted by Hanlott.

The old man's face had a stit and grave expression; his eyes shone with the bladed resolve he once had in his youthful days. "Wavier, you have a bright future; do not ruin it! I want you to swear in the name of the God of Light. Swear that you will never be entangled with that demon woman!"

"Master!" Wavier wanted to defend himself, but Hanlott continued staring at him with a stern expression.

In this mental battle, Wavier eventually gave in and whispered, "In the name of the God of Light, I swear, that I will never have any contact with that demon woman. If I ever see her, I will...kill her without any thought."

Hanlott was finally satisfied. He patted Wavier on the shoulders and said, "Good, young lad. Remember, the more beautiful a demon, the more charming and sinister she is. People who are charmed by these vicious creatures usually don't have good endings. I do not want my talented disciple to fall under the hands of a demon."

"Thank you, Master." Wavier felt slightly frustrated, though he also felt gratitude for his master's guidance.

"Alright, go focus on your magic research. Try to get to Level-6 fast and become a Master. Don't let the complacent bastards at East Cove Higher Magic Academy look down on us." Hanlott said as he patted Wavier on the shoulders as a form of encouragement.

Wavier nodded his head and left Hanlott's room. When he closed the door behind him, he sighed and felt the energy leaking out of his body. It was as though he had lost something of great importance in his life.

She is a demon; it is impossible between the both of usforget about it. Wavier shook his head and continued walking towards the library.

...

Opal City, Market. A common residential house.

Although the Magicians had found some of her traces, Celine had not left Opal City, not even the crowded market area. She merely changed her hiding spot.

It was indeed dangerous to stay so close to the Magician Alliance. However, those Magicians were also her guardians. Their presence would ensure that the demons behind her would not do anything rash.

Celine was on the second floor of the house, nursing her injured arm. This was an injury caused by a spiraling magic knife last afternoon. The injury was extremely deepso much so that the bones were visible. Fortunately, the Magicians had arrived on time and saved her from her predicament. If not, she would have already been sent back to the abyss.

The wound was stained with the aura of the abyss, and the surrounding flesh had been corroded. She had to cut these pieces flesh off quickly, or she would go insane from the effects of the aura.

Using her knife, she carefully chipped at the pieces of rotten flesh around her wound. This was extremely painful, causing her to shiver uncontrollably with cold sweat on her forehead. However, she gritted her teeth and held on until she was sure that all the corroded flesh was removed. Only then did she lean on the wall feebly and sigh.

She briefly tied her hair which was drenched in perspiration and stared at the roof with her pair of beautiful, moist eyes. There was a spider web in the corner of the roof which had caught an unsuspecting bug. Despite the worm's painful struggle, it seemed to be unable to escape from its predicament. Meanwhile, the spider was closing in on its prey.

Am I the bug who has been caught in the web?

Celine felt devastated. She was all alone in this world in her struggles. Her only friend was all the way in the North and would not be able to come to her aid. She was almost at the limit.

Link, what should I do? A dark-haired young guy seemed to appear right in front of her eyes. At the same time, she seemed to hear his voice whispering, "One cannot choose their own birthright, but they can choose the path they want to take."

But why is my path so rugged and winding? Celine closed her eyes as a teardrop flowed down her cheek.

## 168. The Story of an Upright Tiger

Link rushed down to the South from Ferde Wilderness in haste. He crossed the Black River and finally passed through the borders of Leo Kingdom in only three days' time. He had kept this journey a secret, being careful not to let anyone in the world know of his whereabouts.

Once he reached Leo Kingdom, he slowed down his speed and went through a forest where there were no inhabitants to enter into the heart of the kingdom. Then from there, he hired a carriage and headed towards Opal City where there had been reports of high-level demon sightings.

To conceal his identity, Link put on an extra hooded cloak made of ice bear hide on top of his extraordinary Flame Controller Magician's robe. He wouldn't even bring out his wand if there was no need for it. Right now, Link looked nothing more like a wandering Magician.

Leo Kingdom was a rich and prosperous country with expansive mercantile activities. Hence, the roads in the heart of the kingdom were well-paved, safely flat and spacious as well. The roads here were indeed just as good as the King's Lane in Norton Kingdom, so the carriage had been traveling very smoothly and managed to cover quite a large distance in a short time.

In front of them was a city that was sprawled along a river where from afar, one could see tall spires reaching towards the clouds. As they approached the city, they came up to a stone bridge which looked very narrow but had very heavy traffic. Apparently, one must pay a bridge toll before crossing, which created a bottleneck in the traffic there. It made the movements of the carts and carriages very slow.

Link got bored waiting in the carriage, so he took out the Battle Art scroll Vance had given to him and began to study it. This Epic-level Imperial Conqueror Battle Art was indeed a very advanced technique. Moreover, it had been invented by Vance, the founder of Battle Art studies himself. Yet, Link had never come across this peculiar spell in the game before, and he couldn't find it in the gaming system's spell menu either. Thus, Link quickly became engrossed in studying the Battle Art spell.

Tsk, tsk. The deep understanding of the human body and the way in which power is integrated within it is obvious in this spell, Link couldn't help but think. The founder of Battle Art studies really is unrivaled!

Although this spell was a type of secret spell, Link had a deep interest in the studies of Battle Aura and Battle Art; he found it to be potentially very useful. Lucy, Jacker, Gildern and the rest of the Warriors in his mercenary troop would benefit greatly if they were to be exposed to the proper training and cultivation of Battle Art. Once the strength of his allies advanced further, Link's own power would naturally increase as well.

After studying half of the scroll, Link began to form his own opinions on the techniques adopted in it.

This is indeed extraordinary, but it would demand too much of the elemental purity of the practitioner. Not only would one need to have exceptional physical strength, one must be mentally strong as wellthis would mean that it would take massive amounts of effort to progress.

Link realized further that a practitioner of Imperial Conqueror must have a perfectly honorable nature and not have a trace of darkness in their heart, in addition to a steely and relentless determination. From what Link had observed of the members of his mercenary troop, the total number of people who were suitable for this technique couldn't be more than ten. Jacker might be able to practice it to its full performance. While the others could attempt it too, their progress would be so limited that they'd only be wasting their energy and time.

This technique's practicality is just too poor, thought Link. Although it is highly effective in improving individual strength, it doesn't do much in improving the overall strength of a troop. If only there were a technique that would allow anyone to practice it and use it to develop their skills to a great resultthat would be just great!

Improving the strength of ten people by twofold was always better than improving the strength of one person by tenfold. This was a crucial principle that could mean the difference between victory and defeat in a war!

Right at that moment, the idea of creating a common practice method for the mercenary troop began to take root deep inside Link's mind. It was only a vague idea at this moment though, because he still knew very little about Battle Aura and Battle Art.

Link then continued to study the scroll. Just as he was fully immersed in it, he suddenly heard a loud roar that sounded as if it had been made by a wild beast. The roar was like thunder that reverberated through the air and almost shook the earth. It had come from the forest that fringed the Opal City, and that one roar had caused flocks of birds to flee into the sky.

The ferocity and the intimidating volume of this roar sounded familiar to Link's ears.

The people in the carts and carriages that were lining up to pay the bridge toll erupted into discussions of what the source of the sound could be, making it harder for Link who was still inside the carriage to listen to the roar clearly. He then threw a silver coin to the coachman and gave him an instruction.

"Lev," Link called out, "go and ask around about the loud roar just now and find out what kind of beast made that sound."

"Yes, sir!" Lev was elated by the silver coin. He then quickly dashed off to investigate the matter.

Ten minutes later, Lev ran back with the news he'd gathered.

"My lord," he said, "people are saying that a magical beast has come to the outskirts of the city. It was said to be a big tiger that stood 13 feet tall. It had arrivedamnth earlier and had eaten a few people here initially, but it then disappeared without a trace. No one could find it; only roars could be heard coming from the forest from time to time."

"Is that so?" asked Link, whose curiosity was now deepened. "But why would it behave that way? Are there any other rumors about it?"

"Yes, there are quite a few rumors about it," replied Lev. "Some people say the rich merchant Olidor had purchased a tiger fur coat made from the fur of this magical beast. Some people say the beast was from the demonic realm and was sent here to scout the situation in this realm. Other people say"

Lev continued to recount a dozen other rumors he heard from the townsfolk. All turned out to be mere speculation with no real value and a very low possibility of being true. Link couldn't make head or tails of all this hearsay.

Later, Link paid the bridge toll, and the carriage drove up onto the bridge. When they reached the middle of the bridge, another thundering roar was heard coming from the distant forest. This time, the roar sounded much angrier than the first one and Link thought it sounded even more familiar now.

There mustn't be many magical beasts in this continent that had the form of a tiger and was this powerful. Link had even encountered one such beast himself a month agoWait, he remembered it now!

Could it be the Wind Tiger that escaped from Azura Tower? Although he framed it as a question, at that moment, there was no doubt in Link's mind that he got the beast's identity right.

The reason of Link's confidence was that the Wind Tiger's strange behavior in the East Cove Academy that night corroborated with this tiger's odd behaviorif the tiger had been trying to disappear or hide inside the forest, then why was he making so much loud noise all day?

When the carriage had crossed the bridge, there was once again a roaring sound that rang out from the forest. This time, the beast sounded as if it was in pain.

Is it hurt? Link thought with surprise. But who could harm such a mighty beast?

A Level-6 Wind Tiger would have an unimaginably powerful body and formidable combat skills. Moreover, even if it had met an opponent that it couldn't defeat, it would've been able to flee at super speed. Its name wasn't for nothing, after all. According to legends, a Wind Tiger could move up to 300 miles per hourthat's twice the speed of Link's Wind Fenrir. In fact, that's much faster than a sports supercar!

The carriage was fast approaching the city gates by now. Link suddenly overheard some townsfolk talking about the Wind Tiger near his carriage.

"Did you hear that?" said one of them. "That must be the sound of some powerful master capturing the magic tiger!"

"Did the city mayor hire someone to do that?" replied the other. "No, it can't be. I haven't heard of any such rumors."

"Who cares? As long as that beast remains in the forest, we won't be at peace anyway. It's good news that someone finally tried to chase it away or capture. Better yet, I hope someone would kill the beast."

As they spoke, there was another roar coming from the forest. This time, it sounded even more in pain.

Link was genuinely unnerved now. Someone who could hurt the Level-6 Wind Tiger so much that it would cry out in pain and be unable to flee from must at least be at Level-7!

Even Link knew he wouldn't be able to achieve such a feat himself. If push came to shove and he must defeat the Wind Tiger, then he would have to rely on the Prophetic White Stone's power. Even then, he wouldn't be able to stop the tiger from fleeing!

But are Level-7 Magiciasso widespread in Firuman that they can be found anywhere now? Link brooded. He found the matter utterly curious until finally, a possible explanation popped up in his mind.

It can't be one of the escaped prisoners of Azura Tower, can it?

He clearly remembered that on that day, among the escaped prisoners were a big group of Level-6 Master Magicians. Their number was in total no less than twenty. Apart from them, there were five Level-7 Master Magicians; then, there was one who was able to cast a Level-8 deflective spell. Once Vance was excluded from this total count, there would be four Level-7 Magicians left who were currently at large.

Magical beasts had notoriously hardy physical strength. Their flesh and blood, their bones and their fur were all precious magic materials. It would be no wonder that this Wind Tiger would be targeted since he made no attempt to conceal his presence; he emitted such ear-splitting roars announcing its whereabouts to the world.

Once he thought of it this way, Link thought he must get to the bottom of the matter himself now. Those escaped prisoners were mostly shady characters who'd committed serious crimes against the living. They were also exiled individuals who wouldn't find a place where they were accepted in mainstream society. These types of people would eventually fall in with the dark forces, which would one day be enemies that Link would have to eliminate.

Even if he couldn't defeat the opponents now, it's best that Link investigate the matter and gather as much information as he can now.

"Lev, stop the carriage," Link ordered. "I've reached my destination." He then opened the front window of the carriage and threw five gold coins to Lev before the coachman could make any reply.

Lev was naturally stunned once he'd seen the gold coins. He stopped the carriage immediately, where Link then hopped out the carriage and walked away. He didn't enter the city gates, though, but headed instead towards the forest.

Roaaaarrrrr!!!

It was another beastly cry from the forest, although this time it sounded less like a roar and more like a whimper.

Link cast the spell, Cheetah's Agility on himself to increase his speed and energy. He then concealed his presence with a high-level invisibility spell which masked the sounds of his footsteps, his scent, his Mana as well as rendering his body invisible. Once completed, Link then rushed straight towards the direction where the roars had originated from.

Roaaaarr!!!

Link could sense that the beast was getting weaker now. It sounded as if it was not too far away from him now. Link estimated that the Wind Tiger was probably only a mile away.

Link ran for another three minutes. Then finally, he reached the battle site.

He was at the banks of a small creek in the forest. Trees around him had been uprooted and fell flat to the ground. He could sense that the energy of wind elements and dark elements had recently clashed violently here. There, on the rocky banks of the creek, lay a bloodied tiger, breathing laboriously and struggling to keep itself alive.

Not far away from him stood three people. Two of them were Warriors, each wielding a shield. The remaining one was a Magician shrouded in a thick black fog of dark energy, himself clad in a black cloak that covered his whole body.

The Magician stood right beside the Warriors' shield, as a rope-like stream of black mist poured forth from his wand and entered into the wounds on the Wind Tiger's body. The mist corrupted its flesh and blood with its dark, demonic aura.

The tiger was too weak to do anything but groan in pain. It was obviously suffering excruciating pain at the moment, yet it did not struggle or attempt to move at all. It must've been completely drained of its energy.

After a while, Link could accurately estimate the levels and strengths of the three men there.

Two of them are Level-6 Warriors utilizing dark Battle Aura, thought Link. That's something I've never encountered before. That Level-7 Necromancer, on the other hand, is definitely a Lich. He's definitely from Azura Tower, and he's using a Level-7 Occult transformation spell!

A notification popped up on the interface. Link took a glance and saw that it was a new mission.

Mission: Stop the Occult Transformation

Mission Details: 1. Kill the occult opponents and save the Wind Tiger. 2. Investigate the identities of the three occult opponents.

Reward 1: 100 Omni Points.

Reward 2: Soul Stamp (to be used on Battle Animal)

Well then, thought Link. Having seen the contents of the notification, he then accepted the mission without hesitation.

Forest, Rocky Creek.

The Wind Tiger gasped for breath while he spoke spitefully, "Andrew, I recognize you bastard. Heh, you are clever enough to bring two other helpers. If you had arrived alone, I would have absolutely defeated you!"

"Idiot!" The Necromancer named Andrew sneered and diverted his focus back to demonizing the tiger.

The Wind Tiger had given all hope. He merely said, "Andrew, don't be too complacent. Don't think that joining the Syndicate will make you invincible. You are a prisoner of the academy and will be caught by them soon enough! I don't believe that you can defend against a Level-9 spell!"

Andrew merely mumbled coldly, "The academy is in the North. We are currently in the South; they wouldn't give chase all the way here."

The incident at the East Cove Higher Magic Academy was indeed shocking. He was almost certain that the academy would be destroyed when Tarviss appeared. However, the final results of that battle almost threw him off his feet.

It seemed like a genius who possessed the qualities of a savior had appeared in that damned academy and defeated a Level-8 demon single-handedly. Andrew had originally planned to loot the remaining treasures from the academy after the destruction. However, upon hearing the news, he immediately ran southwards without hesitation.

From his knowledge, he was not the only one who had done so. After the terrifying news got around, all the prisoners who managed to escape from the Tower of Azula went as far as they could away from the Norton Kingdom. A good handful of them went towards the Dark Forest, while a majority of them decided to head southwards where the pursuing hands of the academy could not reach.

This was something to be expected. The Magician was rumored to possess Level-9 strength, suggesting that he was only one step from being promoted to a Legend. Furthermore, he was able to defeat a demon, a race that was known for their natural talent in combat.

As much as the prisoners had faith in their skills and battle experience, this power was not something to be trifled with.

The Wind Tiger could feel that the dark forces had begun to corrode his internal organs. While he was already disheartened, he still would not admit defeat and give Andrew the satisfaction.

"If the Syndicate were to extend their influence to help Morpheus attain the rank of a god, you would have to travel northwards. You will then meet him once again."

"Shut your mouth!" Andrew shouted, looking visibly irritated as he increased the rate of his demonization spell.

"What can you do? What more can you do to me?" The Wind Tiger rebutted. Since he was going to lose consciousness, he was not about to give Andrew an easy time.

A Shield Warrior beside Andrew then whispered, "My lord, do you need me to cut off his tongue?"

Andrew nodded. It was not required for a warbeast to speak. He might as well take away this ability now and save himself the frustration.

The Shield Warrior marched forward with his sword. As he reached the Wind Tiger, he smashed his shield mercilessly onto the tiger's jaw. Under the full impact of the force, the weakened tiger could only scream in pain, causing his mouth to be wide open. Making use of this chance, the shield warrior then pushed his shield into the open jaw, forcing it to stay open. The scene was extremely brutal.

"I'll remember you now. You are dead! You hear me?" The Wind Tiger screamed with a muffled voice. Although he still sounded harsh, his eyes were glued to the sword in the Warrior's hand, his eyes showing a hint of fear.

He had never imagined that a mighty Wind Tiger could suffer such a cruel fate.

"What a sad life I've lead! After being imprisoned for 200 years, I returned home only to find my wife and children either missing or dead. Now, I am even going to lose my consciousness and freedom! Why"

The thought of his miserable fate caused tears to roll down his cheeks. Although his cries sounded weird from the shield keeping his mouth open, the tears were real and visible. The Shield Warrior ignored those cries and stuck his sword deep into the tiger's throat, prepared to sever the tongue.

At that moment, something happened!

A scream could be heard in the direction behind him. It was the voice of the Necromancer who just joined the team! The Warrior then heard a warning cry.

"Ambush!"

Ambush?

Before he could react, a huge fist had appeared from the side of the stream and was charging towards him at high speed. It was barely visible to the naked eye and was covered in incandescent flames.

As his shield was stuck in between the tiger's mouth, he was unable to retract in time to defend himself. His sword was also naturally unable to withstand such an attack. At the last moment, the Warrior threw his sword away decisively and crossed his hands in front of his chest while squatting in a stable position. This was the defensive position a Warrior took when they were preparing to release their Battle Aura.

Furthermore, as a pivotal Level-6 Warrior of the organization, he had defensive magic wrist guards on both his left and right arms. He could activate them for a total of three times to defend himself from surprise attacks.

The moment his hands crossed, the magic on the wrist guards was activated. A light tinkering sound could be heard, and a Level-4 circular light elemental shield emerged in between his body and the incoming giant fist.

He had assumed that his Battle Aura coupled with his Level-4 defensive spell and his anti-magic armor would be enough to withstand the collision with the spell.

However, he was wrong.

At the moment when he completed his defensive preparations, the hand changed its form. The spell changed from a charging fist to that of a hand trying to grasp its target. The offensive flames of the hand had also been transferred to the center of the palm.

This hand then gripped the Warrior tightly in its fiery embrace.

The Warrior's light elemental shield could only defend against single directional attacks. Under such immense pressure from all directions, the protection it offered to the Warrior was close to zero. This had rendered much of the preparations the Warrior had done ineffective. He was totally at a loss when the hand managed to get a grip on him.

In an instant, he could feel his Battle Aura being consumed rapidly by the violent assault of flames. Although his armor had anti-magic properties, it was not strong enough to withstand a Level-6 fire elemental spell. The temperature of the armor rose rapidly and soon glowed with a crimson hue.

As the Warrior thought he was about to meet his doom, the hand released him from its deathly grip and went in the other direction. Along the way, it once again changed form back into a charging fist and collided with a spiral spike spell cast by Andrew.

Spiral Spikes

Level-5 spell

Cost: 700 Mana Points

Effect: Highly Corrosive. Able to corrode 50 ordinary humans instantly in one hit.

Andrew released this Level-5 spell almost instantaneously, a testament to his strength and control over his magic as a Level-7 Magician.

The fire elements in Link's spell and the dark elements in Andrew's spell then began to contradict one another in a destructive battle.

A low rumble could be heard from the point of collision. The Spiral Spike disintegrated first as it was the lower level spell. However, the dark energy that erupted after its disintegration had greatly damaged the stability of the flaming fist. The spell eventually collapsed as well and started causing explosions in the area.

Using a low-level spell to deal with a high-level spell was a necessary and basic skill for combat Magicians.

It seemed as though Andrew was successful.

Andrew thought so as well. He pointed to the forest at the side and commanded the Shield Warrior beside him, "He is right there. Charge towards him; I will cover you!"

The Shield Warrior nodded. He had already seen his opponent who was currently hiding behind a large tree. He followed the command and charged forward while holding his shield in a protective stance. A thick and stable layer of dark elemental Battle Aura engulfed his body, and he took courageous strides forward.

However, something horrific happened after he took only a few steps.

The flaming fist that had just disintegrated began to reorganize itself at an insane speed. He did not manage to take any more steps before the fist was fully formed. The familiar incandescent glow once again penetrated through the forest and charged towards him at full speed.

Neither the Shield Warrior nor Andrew were prepared for this.

Who in the world could cast a Level-6 spell in less than half a second?

Andrew had prided himself on being able to cast a Level-5 spell instantaneously. However, the anonymous Magician hiding in the forest completely crushed him in a battle of spellcasting speed.

The fist collided with the Shield Warrior as he was hesitating whether to take any more steps forward.

A loud and dull collision sound echoed through the area.

The dark Battle Aura of the Shield Warrior had served as a defensive barrier against the violent invasion of the flames. However, the Shield Warrior was unable to defend against the powerful impact of the flaming fist that could even break through solid concrete walls.

He flew backwards in the direction of Andrew, who was only nine feet away from him.

Andrew was caught totally unprepared. Before he was hit by the Shield Warrior, he instinctively cast a Level-2 Ice Shield spell.

This low-level spell was smashed to smithereens the moment the Shield Warrior collided with it. However, it managed to absorb some of the impacts and reduce the damage of the impact on Andrew. As the Shield Warrior landed on Andrew's chest, he could clearly hear the cracking sounds from where he determined was his ribcage.

He was slightly relieved I would have been dead if I was not a Necromancer!

However, the next moment, his relief turned into horror. He could see the flaming fist charging straight at them. His opponent was giving them no time to react and wanted them dead!

Damn it! Andrew pressed the magic ring on his hand, and he was instantly enveloped in a veil of water.

Transportation spell, an essential escape spell that any high-level Magicians needed to have in his arsenal.

This Magician was a monster. He was done with the mission.

In the instant his transportation spell was formed, he saw the Shield Warrior being caught by the flaming hand. He then heard half a scream before he was teleported miles away.

Although he didn't manage to see it, Andrew could imagine the state of the Shield Warrior after the scream.

The moment he landed safely, Andrew cast his second escape spell without hesitation, The Shadow of the Mist.

Shadow of the Mist

Level-5 Dark Spell

Cost: 653 Mana Points

Effect: Turns the user into a ball of dark energy, giving him unimaginable speed.

Similarly, Andrew cast this Level-5 spell almost instantly. His body turned into a cloud of white mist, and he quickly escaped maneuvering through the woods. Along the way, Andrew could not help but exclaim, "Who was that Magician?

Although his opponent had the upper hand of a sneak attack, they had three people on their side!

Two of them were Level-6 pivotal Shield Warriors from the Syndicate, while he was a Level-7 Magician. To think that the battle would end overwhelmingly in the favor of his opponent with him narrowly escaping and his two other comrades dead. This was too horrifying.

The suppressive atmosphere in the woods, while his opponent was casting his spells, was almost suffocating. This was the second time he felt like this in the 400 over years he had been alive. The first time was 300 years ago when he was facing a young Bryant. He was similarly defeated and had to escape in fear.

Andrew was not the only one in shock. On the riverbed, the Wind Tiger witnessed the entire scene. He spit out the shield that was stuck in between his jaws and swallowed his saliva in fear. He then said with a trembling voice, "Is he the one?"

The Magician who was clad in an ice bearskin cloak walked out from the forest under the watchful eyes of the Wind Tiger. The hood of the cloak covered most of the Magician's head, concealing his face. As he walked, hints of garnet Magician's robe beneath the outer cloak were revealed, and in his hand, the Magician was holding an exquisitely well-made wand.

At first, the Wind Tiger saw the figure but still couldn't recognize the mysterious Magician's identity. But, the heavily wounded Warrior beside him was much quicker in this regard.

"That's the Starcatcher wand!" he shouted. "And you're wearing the Flame Controller Magician's robe! You're Link!"

This Warrior had been a core member of the Syndicate, so he was familiar with the weapons and gear of the strongest figures in the continent. Furthermore, Link had been the one who had completely wiped out the Girvent Forest branch of the Syndicate and single-handedly killed the demon Tarviss, so naturally, the Syndicate took special notice of any news and information about him.

It was no wonder then, that the moment Link appeared the Warrior could easily pin down Link's identity with just a few details exposed.

Link had planned to remain anonymous in front of these people, but the moment he heard the Warrior's words he went silent for a while and decided to pull down the hood of his outer cloak. The moment he did that the fire elements that revolved around the Flame Controller were suddenly revealed in all its glory. These elements flowed all around Link's body and then gathered at the top of his head, forming a visible crown of flame.

The snowy white bearskin cloak, the bright red fiery aura, the glorious crown of flame and the intense fluctuations of Mana energy around Link's body all combined to carve a striking figure whose power and talents were most obvious to even the least experienced of observers.

Just as it was on earth, an intimidating external appearance was very useful in the world of Firuman as well. With a presence that Link radiated then, the last remnants of defiance in the Warrior's eyes were now gone and were replaced instead with a look of fear and awe.

There stood right in front of his own eyes, the very person who had crushed the Level-8 demon Tarviss with a magical fiery hand. Even though the Warrior was himself an elite member of the Syndicate and was respected and feared by thousands of people, he still couldn't muster up the courage to hurl insults at such a mighty figure.

"You shouldn't be here!" was all he could manage. "Why are you here? Shouldn't you be in the Ferde Wilderness?"

The intelligence network of the Syndicate had done a very good job apparently, even though they still weren't good enough to outplay someone like Link.

Even the Wind Tiger was stunned! It had seen the Magician who had defeated the demon Tarviss that night, yet this man still exceeded all its expectation. Never in its dreams had it ever imagined that anyone could drive Andre into a corner and force him to flee in just a few attacks!

That was truly impressive!

Link approached the Warrior until he was about 20 feet away from him. He then bent down his head and looked down at the Warrior.

The armor on his body had mostly been scorched by the Flaming Hand earlier. There were burn wounds all over his body, although some traces of Battle Aura still remained. Albeit, it was now far too weak to pose any threats to Link.

He then examined the armor closely and discovered that it was pure black with an engraved insignia on the chest. It was an inscription of a dagger with six drops of blood trickling from itthe insignia of the Syndicate. The six drops of blood signified this Warrior's level and position in the organization.

"The Syndicate, huh?" Link remarked.

The Warrior made no reply.

"The Shadow Shield?" added Link.

Previously in the game, Morpheus had by this point ignited the Sacred Fire. Because of the powerful MI3, the Norton Kingdom in the North was still largely unaffected by the rise of the Syndicate. But here in the South, the whole region had by now fallen into the tight grips of this evil organization.

This was due to the emphasis on trade and commerce by the six southern kingdoms, which meant that their military power was weak. Moreover, these were only six small kingdoms who couldn't amass enough power and resources on their own to fight against such an expansive organization like the Syndicate. Thus, the southern kingdoms became the fertile grounds for which the Syndicate grew in power and influenceso much so that they were said to be ubiquitous here.

Meanwhile, the Shadow Shield was an elite branch of the Syndicate which comprised of shield-wielding Warriors.

"How do you know anything about the Shadow Shield?" asked the Warrior with terror in his eyes. This wasn't something that a Magician from the North should know about!

"Oh, I wasn't sure earlier," said Link smilingly, "but now you've confirmed it."

The Warrior was left speechless. This kind of interrogative technique was one of the first things he'd learned as the core member of the Syndicate. How embarrassing was it to inadvertently leak the secrets of the organization by falling into such a benign trap!

Now that the matter was confirmed, Link noticed a notification lighting up on the interface. He looked over at it and realized that it was the message of a completed mission. He'd now earned 100 Omni Points and the Soul Stamp. Link showed no discernible reaction to this news and turned back towards the Warrior.

"I don't feel like fighting anymore today," he told the Warrior. "But I'm not letting you go either. You know what to do, don't you?"

The Warrior breathed a long sigh of relief at Link's remarks. He knew that there would be no chance of him defeating this Magician and no chance of escaping alive. If he continued to fight him, it would only bring more suffering and pain to himself. The only choice left for him was to commit suicide.

The warrior then took off his armor and promptly stabbed a dagger straightito his own heart. With one decisive move, the dagger pierced through his skin and flesh and struck his heart. The Warrior then slumped to the ground, dead by his own hands.

The Wind Tiger watched the scene with shining eyes, his heart filled with awe and respect for the Magician.

He uttered a few words and the Warrior obediently killed himself without a protest, thought the tiger. What a fearsome man!

Once he'd made sure that the Warrior was dead, Link then turned his attention to the Wind Tiger.

"Do you have a name?" asked Link.

"Yes," replied the tiger proudly. "My name is Dorias."

"I see," replied Link tersely. He circled around the weak and heavily wounded Dorias and discovered that it was not in mortal danger.

"I'd really like to know," said Link again, "what you were thinking hanging around a forest that was so near to a big city. Don't you know how bottomless the greed of humans can be and what danger that would bring you?"

"Oh, but Master," lamented the tiger after a long sigh, "you don't know the pain of a broken heart!"

As it spoke, the tiger dragged itself to the banks of the creek and slumped down haplessly. Not a trace of ferocity could be found in its eyes, only the wistfulness of memories.

"Enlighten me," said Link, his interest now piqued.

Dorias' eyes concentrated as he tried to recall the events that occurred all those years ago. He lay there silently for a while before finally spilling out his story.

"Did you know that this whole region was a lush forest 200 years ago?" began the tiger. "Back then, I was the king of this forest. Us Wind Tigers were few in numbers and were spread far apart. Every full moon night of the spring we would all gather together and feast on small animals, engage in conversation and play games together, forming tight bonds among our kind and finally choosing a mate for the year."

As the tiger reached this point in his story, its head slumped sorrowfully and hung limply over its shoulder.

"At the time, I had a mating partner who'd been with me for more than a decade," said Dorias. "Her name was Ora, and she was my queen. She had thick and soft fur that was pure green in color and a slender figure. I'm always intoxicated by her gentle eyes, and even after all these years, I can still distinctly recall that surge of pleasure I feel when I'm mating with her. I'm the strongest of my own kind, and I could alwassustain it for a full minute. A full minute! Can you believe that? I know all my brothers could only sustain it for half a second! Yet now everything is gonemy queen, my children, my homeeverything has been buried by time and belongs to the unreachable past now."

Then, the Wind Tiger turned around to face Link with a face distorted by grief and pain.

"Human Magician," he addressed Link, "you will never understand the depths of my despair. I have nowhere to go now. Why don't you bring me back to Azura Tower? Although it can get quite boring in there, at least no one would bother me."

Well, then, now that the tiger had spilled out his story; Link began to understand the motive behind his seemingly odd behavior earlier. He stared at the thick black fog that surrounded the tiger, then he reached for his wand and pointed it towards Dorias.

"Expulsion!" he chanted.

Expulsion

Level-5 Spell

Effects: A high-level dispelling spell that can expel very strong magic from a target.

This was a spell Link recently mastered in his spare time. It was from a notebook written by Master Magician Grenci where he recorded invaluable lessons he'd learned and his precious experience along with his Supreme Magical Skills. Naturally, Link found the spell to be interesting, so he took the time to master it.

Once the spell was cast, a fist-sized light orb radiating with the colors of the rainbow took form at the tip of Link's wand and flew straight towards the Wind Tiger Dorias. It danced around the tiger for a while, showering it with its glorious light. Everywhere the light hit on the tiger's wounded body the remnants of dark energy and dark elements that remained inside were squeezed out and scattered into the air.

Once the spell was complete, Dorias' body was completely purged and purified, and not a thread of dark elements remained. It moved its body tentatively and started to stand on its feet. It then began to walk in circles. At first, his steps were wobbly and unstable, but soon enough, it regained its footing and gained its speed again. Even the wounds on its body were almost healed now, and the bleeding had completely stopped. He was recovering at an astonishing speed!

It must be stated that one of the reasons for its speedy recovery was the Wind Tiger's own relentless will to live. It then stopped in its track and turned towards Link.

"Master," it said, "did you come down south to eliminate those fugitives?"

"No," answered Link as he shook his head. "I had another plan in mind." Even so, Dorias' question had reminded him that there were still some mighty and, most probably, evil escaped prisoners still at large. He should do something about it.

As for this magical beast, he had at firstitended to keep it as a battle animal and used the Soul Stamp to control it and keep it in its place. But now that he'd heard the beast's story, Link had started to empathize with Dorias, so much so that he felt uncomfortable using the Soul Stamp on it.

The reason for this was simple, it wasn't so much out of sympathy, nor did he intend to let this beast go free. He just felt that for such an upright beast who also possessed high intelligence, there would be no need to use the Soul Stamp or any other spell to get his loyalty. Instead, a few simple psychological tricks would suffice.

Link made a move as if he was about to leave, but then turned his head around at the last moment.

"The human world is full of cruelty and greed," he said to the tiger. "It's too dangerous for a magical creature like you. You should escape and go as far away from here as possible and don't come back. Also, don't commit any more crimes."

After that, Link pulled up his hood and simply turned around and left.

Dorias was caught off guard by Link's actions. This was completely unlike what he'd expected to happen. This Magician had saved his life and banished dark elements from his body, yet he just left him here before he could even say thank you?

"Hey, wait!" shouted Dorias. "Are you mocking me?" Dorias was a mighty Wind Tiger after all! He would never just run away from his obligation to repay a debt of gratitude!

Link ignored him and just kept on walking. He soon entered the forest and continued heading towards the South. After about half a mile, he heard the rustling sound of light and swift footsteps following him. Soon the loud voice of the tiger emerged out of the silence of the forest.

"Hey! Human Magician!" shouted the Wind Tiger. "Where are you going?"

"Why would that concern you?" asked Link, concealing a smile.

"Of course it concerns me!" answered the tiger. "You saved my life! I can't just leave you! This isn't the way I, the honorable Wind Tiger Dorias, should behave!"

Link smiled secretly but remained unmoved in his words.

"Don't worry about it," he said. "It was no big deal."

"It's no big deal to you, but it was a matter of life and death to me!" answered the tiger. "BesidesI have nowhere else to go. And now that the Syndicate had put a price on my head, it won't be safe for me to move alone. Why don't you let me go to the Girvent Forest and hide there? I won't harm anyone, I promise!"

Although Dorias could be a little too upright and naive sometimes, it was still very clear of the tight situation it was in at the moment. It was aware that the world was a dangerous place for a magical beast. Right now, there must've been countless other pursuers who were out to capture it. If it still remain as a lone tiger, there was no hope for it to survive!

If it wanted to live, he would have to find strong allies. Obviously, the Magician in front of him was a man powerful enough to save him. Furthermore, he had saved its life, yet did not demand it to do anything for him in return. Dorias was sure that this was the kind of man he could trust!

Link knew Dorias was in his hands now.

"How about we work as a team?" suggested Link. "I will protect you and give you shelter, and you will become my Warrior. Once we return to the North, I will let you stay in my estate. I will order my people to prepare food for you that would suit your taste, groom your fur, trim your nails, clean your teeth and so on. If you want to, I can even send my people to find you some wives. Would you like that?"

"That doesn't sound too bad at all!" answered Dorias, his eyes shining brilliantly. He never even dreamed of such luxurious treatments! Tsk. He might even get a few wives and would have people serving him all the time. Just thinking about it had made his mouth water!

"Very well, then," said Link. "If so, then kneel down now and let me ride on your back to the Opal City in the South."

"Alright; you're not that heavy, anyway." Dorias then somewhat reluctantly let Link step on his back. He would only allow this for someone like Link. Had anyone else make this kind of demand to him he'd eat them up in one bite, even if they had saved his life!

The Wind Tiger's speed was indeed as fast as it was rumored to be. At first, Dorias was jogging slowly as his body was still weak from the attacks. But then, Link cast the Elemental Cure on Dorias, so its speed accelerated very quickly as its body healed. It had taken them less than two hours to traverse the distance of about a hundred miles, and they were now at the gates to Opal City.

"There's the headquarters of the Southern Magician Alliance in the city," said Dorias. "It's full of Magicians there; I can't go near it."

"Fine, wait for me here," said Link. "I'll be in the city for a while."

Link then hopped down the tiger's back and entered the city gates. His perceptive soul had now detected the tangled mess of dark energy inside the city even from here.

There are definitely demons from the abyss in this city! Link thought. Good. That means that Celine isn't far from here then.

In a Southern Magician Alliance Meeting.

Right at the moment when Link entered the city, a brand new investigation team had just left the Mage Castle and was entering the Opal City as well. The team comprised of 30 people and was led by Master Magician Hanlott. Among the members of the team was one of Hanlott's disciple, Wavier.

"The demons are evil entities that must be exterminated," said Hanlott before their departure. "Whoever stands in our way in this mission will be regarded as our enemy, whether it's the Syndicate or anyone else!"

"Exterminate the demons!" echoed the team members.

Wavier had joined his colleagues in shouting those words as well, even though he was unknowingly gripping his Merlin's Wand tightly in his hand. An image of the woman who had stolen his heart popped up in his mind.

Forgive me, thought Wavier as he gritted his teeth. This is my duty; it is what I have to do.

Hanlott didn't notice his disciple's odd behavior. He could only sense the high spirits and full enthusiasm shown by the Magicians in his team and was deeply satisfied by it.

"Let's go!!" shouted Hanlott. It was his last command before they left the Mage Castle and head for the Opal City.

## 169. The Mighty Festival of Endless Slaughter

Opal City Market.

There was a famous pawn shop in the area with a peculiar name. The shop was called the "Little Pawn Fish." The asstant had an honest look on his face while the shop owner always had an inviting smile. They seemed ordinary enough.

However, this was all a farce. This shop had a hidden secret on the second level. The second level seemed to be the shop owner and asstant's bedrooms. However, closer observation would reveal that the second floor seemed smaller than what it looked like. One could not specifically point out exactly which part of it was peculiar, although there was something visibly not right about the building.

The pawn shop had no customers today. This was a common sight. One would usually not see long lines at a pawn shop. However, once they managed to strike a deal, they would probably earn enough to support themselves for a long time. Hence, only a few customers would enter the shop occasionally for business matters.

The entrance to the pawn shop was usually a one-way ticket. The people who entered the shop planning to strike a deal often do not appear again. One also could not find any traces of the person in the shop. It was as though he had evaporated into thin air.

Where did the person go? No one cared. The market was filled with people who had come from other poorer distits and areas. Everyone was only concerned with their own livelihoods.

At that moment, a figure clad in a full body, gray cloak entered the shop. He then spoke in a raspy voice, "The shadow engulfs the world!"

Upon hearing those words, the inviting shop owner respectfully greeted him and said, "Sir, this way please."

The mysterious figure nodded and headed towards the second floor. They walked along the corridor till they reached a dead end. The mysterious figure then gently pressed the wooden wall with his skinny and sinister finger. All of a sudden, the plain concrete wall became a shining wall filled with glowing runes. The man then pushed the wall with all his strength, causing the wall to move backwards, revealing a narrow staircase leading down towards the basement. Faint voices could also be heard traveling upwards.

This was the entrance to the secret underground chamber. Who would have thought that the secret entrance to a basement would be built on the second floor instead of the first? The staircase was well hidden in the gaps of between the two walls. It was extremely narrow. However, as this mysterious figure was very skinny as well, he could walk through the stairs with ease.

There was a sharp bend along the staircase. Once one got past the bend, dim flickering candle lights could be seen, and the voices would become more prominent. One could even hear strange breathing sounds.

The mysterious figure then walked towards the secret underground chamber.

This chamber was extremely hugeit was at least 60 feet in length and width. There was a table in the middle of the room with a candle stand on top of it. Under the dim illumination of the candlelight, one could see five vague figures sitting around the table.

To be exact, it was two humans and three demons.

The three demons had a stature similar to humans apart from their hideous appearance. One of them had two big axes as his arms instead of hands, one was a giant lizard in a human form, while the other was a giant toad also in the form of a human. When this creature breathed, one could hear strange bubbling sounds as the vesicles on the side of his cheeks expanded. The vesicles also seemed to hold black a sinister-looking liquid.

When the mysterious figure appeared, an Assassin wearing a crimson armor whispered, "Andrew, you are late."

The leather used in the production of this armor was extremely special. As he moved, one could see traces of blood mist emanating out of it. The presence of this mist concealed much of the Assassin's presence and made the contours of his body vague. Even in such close proximity, it was difficult to determine his exact position.

"You cannot blame me, Bren. There has been an accident along the way." The mysterious figure was Andrew, the Necromancer who was just defeated by Link.

"Accident? What about the two shadow shields I sent as your protection?" The Assassin named Bren was in disbelief. Andrew was a Level-7 Necromancer. Furthermore, he had specially equipped him with two Level-6 Shield Warriors. There should have been no one in the entire Leo Kingdom who could stand up to such strength. What kind of accident could have happened?

Andrew sat down and sighed. "Something happened when we were trying to capture that Wind Tiger. An outrageously strong Magician appeared out of nowhere. The three of us couldn't even scratch him. The two Shield Warriors are already dead. I had to use all my power in order to escape."

"Magician? One versus three? Did you recognize him?" Bren did not accuse Andrew right away. He knew that one could not simply look at the results. Although Andrew indeed messed up their plans this time round, he had to first determine the threat they were up against.

Andrew helplessly laid out his hands and said, "The battle happened too quickly. It was a sneak attack, and I did not get a good view of his spells. However, he only used one spell the entire battle. It was a giant handmade of fire elements. It looked like a Level-6 Fist of Firomoz spell. Though in the middle of the battle it did change form"

"A flaming hand?" another figure that was under a cloak suddenly spoke. The sound was exceptionally delicate, like that of a young lady.

"Yes, Lina. It was a hand of fire." Andrew shrugged his shoulders as he commented. Although the Magician was young, she was a High Elf, a race with natural talent in magic. She was merely 40 years old but had already attained Level-6. He treated her with the utmost respect.

Upon hearing Andrew's words, the High Elf called Lina turned to Bren and said, "The one from the North seems to have arrived."

Bren was horrified, "The one from the North? You mean the Demon Slayer, Manipulator of Flames, Link?"

Lina nodded.

Andrew immediately understood his defeat. "No wonder he was so strong."

He fled early that night and did not witness the entire battle. After hearing the terrifying news of the appearance of a Level-9 Magician, he made his way to the South at full speed. Hence, he naturally did not recognize Link's signature move.

He then heaved a sigh of relief. He thought he had really gotten old and weak such that any random Magician could make a fool out of him easily. He had been frustrated and depressed this whole time. However, after knowing the true identity of his opponent, he felt a lot more at ease.

He was still strong. The only reason he lost was because his opponent was way stronger!

Bren had nothing to say as well. In the face of an opponent who had just crushed a Level-8 demon, Andrew had proved his strength simply by escaping unscathed. To have met that person during their mission was simply their bad luck.

At the same time, he was met with new problems. He looked at the demon in front of him and said, "Ballie, this is bad news, The Magician who killed Tarviss might very well be here for Princess Celine."

The demon with axes was the leader of the three demons. He was the strongest at Level-6. If he had to fight against a human of a similar level, he could probably take on up to five of them at once due to his combat talent as a demon.

However, he was not confident enough to face off with a Magician who could defeat even Tarviss. He had no faith in his own abilities and said with a trembling voice, "What proof do you have that he is here for the Princess?"

Bren took out a scroll and threw it towards Ballie, "This is his information, given to us by The Death's Hand. In Gladstone City, Princess Celine once saved his life. The fact that General Lund failed in his attempt to kill him was partly due to the Princess' intervention as well. Based on this connection they had and his unknown motive for coming down south, what do you think?"

Ballie fell silent. One could tell his unease and fear from his heavy breathing.

The lizard demon then whispered, "Leader, he is alone. We have an entire group behind us."

The lizard demon then turned towards Bren and said, "You can't just watch for this one. You also have to help."

Bren stayed silent while Lina, who was sitting beside him started shaking her head. "We will notitervene directly. The most we will do is to aid in your retreat if needed. You should know that he is not our only opponent. If we deal with him, we will also make enemies with the Magician Alliance, and Opal City is its headquarters!"

Bren silently acknowledged Linasstatement.

However, Andrew suddenly commented, "I think this is a chance!"

"What?"

"How is this so?" Everyone in the room looked at him, awaiting his speech.

"You see, Link is here for Princess Celine. He is definitely here to save her. However, the Princess is a demon and the target of the Magician's Alliance. As long as we sow discord between the two parties, Link would become enemies with the Magician Alliance. We just need to wait for the perfect chance when both sides are terribly injured. We might even secure a total victory!"

A glimmer of hope appeared in everyone's eyes. However, Lina merely sneered and disdainfully said, "Andrew, if you think he will be fooled so easily, I think you have underestimated his power."

Andrew stood firm to his views, and he defended them. "There is a risk to everything. This is especially true for Master's goal. If we don't take any risks, we will never get any results! Bren, what do you say."

Before Bren could speak, the axe demon immediately replied, "My master's promise still holds. As long as Princess Celine is brought back safely, he will support your master with all his might."

This speech was like a sharp knife that immediately severed the hesitation in Bren's heart. "May the shadows engulf the world. This plan is possible, though we need to plan it in great detail."

Andrew's face then broke outito a satisfied and sinister smile. While he could not defeat Link alone, with the help of so many powerful people and the Magician Alliance, it might be possible. Even if Link were to defeat everyone, his reputation would go down the drain. It would be devastating for him either way.

Although Lina had differing opinions, she knew that the plan was set in stone, and nothing she said would change their decisions. She then pulled down her hood, revealing her pale flawless skin and an expressionless face.

Bren ignored the overly cautious female Magician and laughed, "This will be a mighty festival of endless slaughter!"

...

The extermination team of the Magician Alliance had already reached the area outside of Opal City marketplace. They started splitting up into groups of four except one which was formed by only Hanlott and Wavier. There were a total of eight groups.

"Our informant has identified the hiding place of the female demon. We will seal her escape routes. Remember, once you see the target, go all out and exterminate her. Do not hesitate!"

Hanlott cast a glance at his own disciple, Wavier as he said these words. His motive of bringing him on this mission was to sever the impure thoughts running through the mind of his talented disciple once and for all.

It was his responsibility to guide his disciple up the correct path.

Wavier could feel the pressuring gaze coming from his mentor. He did not evade it this time round and stared back, his eyes shining with resolve.

"Good." Hanlott was satisfied, "Commence attack!"

## 170. Dark Undercurrents in the Opal City

In Opal City.

After entering the city, Link found a dark corner to change into another attire. He took off the Flame Controller Magician's robe and the ice bear cloak and changed into a very plain-looking gray long robe. He then used a non-toxic alchemy potion to dye hishi

Once that was done, Link began to snoop around the city for any news of unusual events that recently occurred. He'd spent a hundred gold coins within half an hour doing this, after which his understanding of the underworld in Opal City had deepened. He'd also gathered much information about Celine's current plight.

Celine must now be hiding somewhere in the downtown area, Link surmised. There are still three demons here, and they had the aid of the Syndicate. This isn't good news for Celine at all since the downtown area is where the Syndicate's influence is overarching. At the same time, the Magician's Alliance placed many of their people in that area. The moment Celine appeared she would instantly be traced by both the Syndicate and the Magicians Alliance there.

This was the information he gathered so far. In this situation, even if Link actually found Celine, he would still have no idea where to hide her. The walls and the streets were full of spying eyes all waiting to catch her in their traps.

Link then quietly contemplated the matter for ten minutes after considering all the information he'd gained.

He had a plan.

Link immediately put his plan into action. He circled and wandered aimlessly through the downtown area for a while. He wentito the big streets and small lanes, and each time he stopped at a crossroad, he would stop in the middle and write down some special runes in the hidden corners of the wall using his specially created quill pen and invisible ink.

The pigment of the ink was a special invention made by the master alchemist, Grenci. It was great for quickly jotting down secret runes. Link had found this in Master Grenci's notes and thought it might come in handy someday.

The shapes of the runes Link jotted down were somewhat complicated, but Link could jot it down perfectly in about three seconds. Once that was completed, the invisible ink would penetrate into the stone wall and leave no trace of the rune to be detected from the outside.

At every large intersection, Link would leave about eight to ten runes on the wall, spending a total of one minute doing it. At any small intersections, he would leave about two runes there, spending no more than ten seconds there. Then, Link would continue to walk down to the next junction before anyone could suspect that there was anything amiss about him.

The entire downtown area of Opal City was a circle of about half a mile wide, with six main streets comprising of 3 vertical streets and three horizontal streets. There were also more than ten small lanes and alleys and about a hundred intersections. Link had left runes at every one of these intersections without a single omission.

Then about an hour later, when Link had walked through half of the downtown area he suddenly came across a shop called Little Fish Pawnshop from which he could sense a dark abysmal aura.

So this is where you bastards are hiding, huh? Link jeered. Not bad at all, I must say.

It would be nearly impossible for the average Magician to detect this very faint aura through the hustle and bustle of the busy commercial area of the city. But to Link, the strength and power of the demons were as clear as a flaming torch under a black moonless night sky. He could easily sense the presence of the demons from about three hundred feet away.

One of the reasons why he was this perceptive of the demons was his strong soul which had been boosted by the God of Light. The other reason was because he had dealt first-hand with a demon before, so he had become familiarized to the aura and presence of the demons from the abyss.

Link circled around this pawn shop and left more than 30 secret runes there as he did so. When he had completed a circle and was once again at the shop entrance, he saw a figure clad in a loose black cloak entering the shop.

So you're here as well huh, Andrew? Link thought. You're quite fast!

Link had managed to arrive so quickly because he had the Wind Tiger that could cross the distance of a hundred miles in two hours. Andrew was only an hour later than him, which meant his speed was quite impressive. (Note: Because the flying spells were too conspicuous and were very likely to incur dangerous accidents, they were not the most efficient mode of transportation and were rarely used by Magicians. The Wind Tiger, on the other hand, was quite safe and could reach a destination a speed that was only second to teleportation.)

Link turned away from the pawn shop and walked down towards the next block to leave more secret runes. Another hour had passed when he'd almost drawn secret runes at every intersection of the downtown area. Link reached a place near the city gates where he saw a group of Magicians at the entrance.

Is that the demon-catching team from the Magicians Alliance? Link wondered. It seems that they've begun their operation. Have they sniffed out the demons' hideout? Or did they find Celine?

Link was deeply troubled by this possibility. He observed the tity-strong group of Magicians closely and slowly took a step back to blend into the crowd. He then quickened his pace and rushed towards the merchant bank in the downtown area.

He'd noticed earlier that the bank was the tallest building downtown; he could observe the whole area from its rooftop.

Link reached the bank very quickly, and he cast a high-level invisibility spell on his body. He then walked into the bank as if he had stepped into his own house, not worrying about concealing his presence at all. He then headed towards the staircase inside and finally reached the attic within half a minute.

The attic was occupied. There was a small bed, a tiny desk, and various other daily necessities. Most importantly, there was also a young man writing at the desk. Link walked up behind the young man and glanced at the words he was writing. He discovered that he was a novelist busy at work. Link read a few lines of what he'd written and found out the hard way that this young man wasn't in the process of writing the next literary classic at all. He was, in fact, writing a vulgar erotic novel that involved the depraved act of bestiality between a man and his mare.

The Magician's Alliance team was fast approaching the area, which meant that Link had no time to waste now. He pointed his wand at the young man's head and chanted, "Slumber."

The young man's head slammed into the desk, and he fell straight to sleep. Link hurriedly closed the door and made sure that it was locked. He then canceled the invisibility spell and walked to the front of the attic window. There, he turned around and pointed his wand at the floor and chanted, "Clean."

The stains and dust on the stone floor were immediately cleared out and what was left was a clean, polished floor that shone as new. Link took out his magic quill pen and started to draw a magic seal on the floor. He didn't use the invisible ink for this magic seal but had opted instead for silver ink. One by one, the almost perfectly drawn runes appeared on the floor. After about three minutes, Link had successfully drawn 246 magic runes which created a complete magic seal.

After that, he put the wand away and sat cross-legged in front of the magic seal.

He pointed with his finger at the controlling runes. Mana started to flow into the seal and lit up the runes in the magic seal one-by-one. Once Mana had filled up the magic seal, a layer white silvery light appeared on top of the magic seal. It was as clear as water, and its form altered rapidly. After five seconds, the scene of the whole downtown area was represented there on the surface of the magic seal right in front of Link's eyes.

There were a few moving spots in this real-time map. Each spot was of a different colorsome were red, others were green or blue, and there were also black smoky light rings. These all represented four different important class of strengths: professional fighters below Level-4, Magicians, demons, and Warriors.

This spell was called Heaven's Eye, and it came from Anthony's notebook.

Heaven's Eye

Level-4 Secret Spell

Mana Consumption: 420 Points

Effects: Through the remote interaction of the magic seal and detecting runes, the spellcaster will be able to see everything that happens within the area where the secret runes have been left. The spellcaster can also communicate with a target who is within the area through telepathy.

(Note: This is a highly covert spell, but it also requires the spellcaster to have an immensely robust soul.)

There would hardly be anyone else whose soul was more suitable for this spell than Link. He was currently using the spell to observe a vast area of a city, which was something that had never been attempted before. Had Anthony known the scale that Link was utilizing his spell, his eyes would've popped out of their sockets as it was far beyond the spell creator's own imagination!

Link scanned quickly through the entire map and finally found an extremely restrained black orb that just lay there unmoving in the attic of an ordinary city-dwellers house. Link instantly recognized this aura as none other than the Demon Princess Celine Flandre!

I've finally found you, Celine. A smile cropped up on Link's face, although it quickly dissipated as Link noticed that the group of Magicians he saw earlier weren't heading for the lair of the demons. Instead, they were now surrounding the area where Celine was hiding. By the looks of it, they must be spreading out in order to block all the possible escape routes that Celine could use.

In other words, these Magicians had begun their operation because they'd found Celine's exact location.

If things went on like this, in ten minutes all of Celine's possible escape routes would be blocked, and she would have nowhere to run. If that happened, the only way Link would be able to save her was to attack the Magicians Alliance head on. If he did that, although he might be able to save Celine, trouble would follow him. He might even be expelled from the Realm of Light!

No, that wouldn't happen. He still had time; he could still save Celine now.

Link took a deep breath and focused his eyes on the black orb that represented Celine. He directed his Mana to the black orb and began to speak in his mind.

Celine, it's me, Link.

Immediately afterwards the black orb showed intense fluctuation, and soon enough, a pleasantly surprised voice emerged in Link's mind.

Is it really you, Link? Celine asked. Where are you?

There's no time to explain now, replied Link. You're in grave danger. You must listen to me and do as I say. Leave the attic now by jumping out of the back window. That's right, jump out now!

From the lights on the map, Link saw how Celine had done exactly as he told her to immediately and without any hesitation. He sighed in relief at this. Now that he knew Celine trusted him, there was a higher chance now that he would be able to take her away from Opal City.

At that moment none of the members of the Magicians Alliance team noticed any changes in Celine's actions. They continued to close in on her previous location and tried to block every possible path which she could use to flee.

However, somewhere else the Syndicate had detected the anomaly. Five minutes later, Bren received a report from his underling.

Signs of the Princess' movements discovered.

Bren creased his brows in confusion. He thought that it must be a mistake. Link hadn't yet appeared, so why did the Princess make a move without him?

"Lina," he instructed a High Elf Magician beside him, "check the current movements of Princess Celine."

"As you command," replied Lina plainly.

She then took out a clear crystal ball of about six inches in diameter and grasped it in both of her palms. A moment later, the crystal ball lit up and inside it was a scene of the downtown area.

The scenes changed several times until it stopped at the scene where a blonde-haired girl appeared.

"That's the Princess," said Lina after taking a glance at the girl. "She must be in some kind of disguise, but she can never trick my eyes."

"Do you recognize the area?" Bren asked the demon, Ballie. "Prepare for action now, and head to the place immediately. Don't ever let the Princess die at the hands of that group of Magicians. But remember, if Link doesn't appear then you don't appear as well, except as the very last resort."

Ballie stood up and waved his hand impatiently at Bren.

"You didn't need to say anything," he said. "I know what I should do."

He then turned to his two underlings and ordered, "Let's go!"

"Master," said Bren to Andrew once the three demons had left. "To be perfectly honest, I don't trust the demons. They tend to be so impulsive. Didn't you see how they barged out just now"

But Bren had forgotten how smart and careful Andrew was.

"I'll be watching over their actions," he said as he got up to his feet. "I will never allow those idiots to drag the Syndicate into the dumps."

Bren nodded. How could he forget that Magicians were smart people after all?

At that point, Opal City's downtown area still looked calm, and everything went on as usual. The streets were crowded with people, and merchants and customers were busy buying and selling. None of them seemed to notice the dark undercurrents that were roiling in the underbelly of the city.

The Magicians were then busy setting up their nets and were getting ready to pull in the big fish. The Syndicate was preparing to be ambush the predator that lurked in the dark and was getting ready to pounce at the very last moment. Celine, who was the prized prey in this situation, was moving quickly but stealthily through the streets of the downtown area where they were densely packed with people.

By this point, some Magicians had noticed that there was something wrong and began to change their directions towards Celine. All the possible escape routes that could save Celine were rapidly blocked off, though Celine remained oblivious of the fact. There would be no point in knowing it anyway, because all she had to do was listen to the voice that was guiding her in her mind.

Celine trusted Link with all her heart.

But who would emerge as the winner ultimately?

Nobody knew. Even Link who was safely hiding in a secret spot was in a cold sweat. All he could do now was to trick the two powerful forces to play a dangerous game against each other.

## 171. Help from an Outrageously Powerful Being

Opal City

"That demon has realized our plan," a Magician said as he saw a blonde figure skid past him on the streets. He recognized her immediately. He did not identify her through her features, but the aura emanating from her body

"Give chase!" the Magician beside him shouted.

This group of Magicians then started chasing the blonde figure. At the same time, a Magician in the group activated a rune stone he held tightly in his hand. The rune stone then began to shine and emit powerful magic fluctuations. This fluctuation was stable and regular. It spread throughout the entire market distit of Opal City, sending a clear message to all the Magicians currently stationed there.

"The demon is between Leiden Road and the Altai Mountain; we will go over from the South!"

"The north exit will be sealed as well."

"Activate the barrier; seal the exits!"

One magic fluctuation followed another as the Magicians transmitted information amongst one another. The 30 over Magicians on this mission seemed to be operating efficiently with strong chemistry. They formed an almost impenetrable network of blockades, swiftly encircling Celine in their grasp.

Link's voice constantly sounded in Celine's mind. Stop, someone is blocking the road in front. Head left immediately and jump over the stone wall. It is not very tall.

Just as Celine jumped over the stone wall, she saw a group of Magicians running towards her. These Magicians were all at least Level-4 in strength and the leader was even a Level-5 Magician. If Celine were to be involved in direct combat with them, she might be able to achieve a narrow victory, but at the same time, she risked meeting the backup groups that would arrive soon after. She would then be trapped in a hopeless situation.

Therefore, she could not be held back by a battle.

"Damn it, the target leaped over the wall and is now in Wyeth Street," one person in the group saw Celine's actions and cursed.

The moment Celine leaped over the wall, Link said, Stay put and wait. Ten, nine, eight, sevenokay. Now go back to the other side of the wall and walk along the same road.

Celine once again leaped over the wall. The group of Magicians had long ran off in another direction, going on a detour to the location they thought Celine was at. Who would have thought that Celine would turn back to a previously dangerous spot.

This had allowed Celine to tear a small hole in the almost impenetrable defense set up by the Magicians.

Alright, now continue going forward. Do you see the exchange building two blocks away? Run towards itwait, retreat! Hide in a shop and pretend to be buying something.

Celine immediately backtracked and ran into a shop. It was a hat shop, and she grabbed one frantically and placed it on her head. She then stared at the mirror on her side to act like a customer trying on a hat.

Five seconds later, a group of Magicians ran across the street she was supposed to cross. They missed Celine just like that.

Alright, now go out and run 90 feet in front of the intersection. Then hide in the clothing store, Link ordered.

Celine followed the instructions accordingly. She had no idea how Link was doing all these. However, after many close shaves with the Magicians, she had complete confidence in Link and executed her actions with conviction. Sure enough, the moment she entered the clothing store, another group of Magicians ran past the street and missed Celine by a few seconds.

Bren and the High Elf Magician Lina was observing Celine's actions through a crystal ball. After seeing the skillful maneuver of Celine through the City, Bren had a tight frown on his face. Something was not right.

Lina then spoke, "Do you feel like she has eyes on the back of her head?"

"It's not even just that! It seems as though she can foresee the future. She is playing hide and seek with the Magicians," Bren commented.

This was not the first time he had crossed swords with the demon princess. He had a good gage of her abilities. Previously, when the Magician Alliance sent a ten-man investigative team to crack down on her location, she was already at her limits.

However, now that the number of Magicians had increased to 30, she had gotten the upper hand instead. It was all too strange.

Lina smiled, "Bren, don't you feel that someone is giving her directions in the dark?"

"You are saying...?" Bren was increasingly horrified by the prospects.

"He should already be here." Lina had a smile of disgust and mockery on her face as she sneered. "Andrew's plan was crap to begin with. It would be enough for him to give directions from afar. He did not even have to appear physically."

Bren's face sank. Lina was completely relentless with her words. If Andrew's plan was really crap, then as the person who agreed with it wholeheartedly, it must have reflected really badly on him.

However, he knew that it was not a time to lose his temper. He said, "What do we do now? The Magician Alliance seems to be useless. Are we really going to let this demon princess get off the hook?"

Lina did not answer. She kept her eyes fixated on the crystal ball. After ten minutes, she suddenly spoke, "The tables have turned."

Celine seemed to have run into some trouble.

Two people could be seen in front of her. One of them was old and frail while the other had silver eyes and hair. The two of them were not deceived by Celine's disguise. They directly blocked Celine's path of escape.

A hundred and fifty feet behind the two of them was the exchange building of Opal City's market distit. Celine was now 60 feet in front of them. In the crowded market distit, all the Magicians had gotten news of the new location and were making their way here rapidly.

Although the fish was agile and nimble, the net was cast too far and wide. She was eventually captured.

Bren's eyes widened. "This group of Magicians will not let her live. Link will then have to appear physically to save her. Alright, Hanlott had started casting his spell. Hang on; Link is going to appear soonDamn it! Why did Ballie charge out!?"

The scene depicted on the crystal ball was extremely clear. The first few people who rushed out in Celine's defense was not Link, but Ballie and his two asstants. Ballie had his own concerns as well. To him, the Syndicate's plan towards Link was only second in terms of priority. His main concern was still his master's order.

When he left the abyss, his master had only one request: "Bring back my daughter. She must be alive!"

The princess had to be alive. If she was killed, who could withstand the rage of the master? Therefore, to hell with the Syndicate, Bren, Andrew, and Lisa. This group of Magicians was about to kill the princess; he had to protect her life!

The three demons rushed out together and couldn't have cared less about Celine. As long as she was alive, they could always find her again. However, these two dangerous Magicians had to die!

Hanlott and Wavier originally thought victory was already in sight. They did not expect back up forces to arrive at this crucial moment. Three Level-6 demonsan axe demon, a lizard demon, and a toad demoncharged towards them from three different directions.

"Damn it, Wavier; Defend!" Hanlott shouted. He then canceled the spell he was casting to prevent mutual mana disturbance.

Wavier had quick reactions. Mana surged into his Merlin's Wand and caused the strong Epic Wand to glow in five different colors. A rainbow dome then appeared, surrounding Hanlott and Wavier in its defensive barrier.

This was the spell stored inside the Merlin's WandElemental Sanctuary. It was a Level-6 spell that could be cast instantaneously, possessing extremely strong defensive strength.

The barrier was formed in the nick of time as the three demons reached their side. The demons then ferociously attacked the defensive spell as Ballie shouted to Celine, "Princess, please leave! Do not care about us!"

Celine was speechless. She never intended to save them anyway.

Once again, Link's calm voice sounded inside her mind, Bypass them and enter the attic in the exchange building. There will be a transmission magic circle inside.

Celine was euphoric. She quickened her pace and bypassed Hanlott and Wavier.

Hanlott had also heard Ballie's screams. He now knew that this female demon was a key figure in the demon world. Otherwise, the three demons wouldn't have called her the princess and risked their lives to save her.

"Wavier, stop that demon! Leave this place to me!"

Hanlott then let out a low bellow as mana surged into his staff. The howling sounds of the wind could immediately be heard as he shouted, "Wrath of the Storm!"

Wrath of the Storm

Level-5 spell

Cost: 900 Mana Points

Effect: An extremely strong wind elemental spell. It can create a high-speed rotating cyclone that will fling the targetito the air. The wind blades will then chip at the target's flesh continuously.

One-and-a-half seconds later, this Level-5 spell had taken form. A huge cyclone surrounded Hanlott's body. At the same time, he made use of the power of the wind to fling Wavier in Celine's direction together with his Elemental Sanctuary spell.

This intricate spellcasting technique not only prevented the interference of mana between their spells, but also closed the gap between Wavier and Celine. It was a testament to Hanlott's strength.

The three demons did not expect to be attacked all at once and were caught off guard. They were then flung 30 feetito the air by the cyclone and continued rotating in mid-air. Apart from being unable to retaliate, their flesh was also constantly chipped off by the countless wind blades menacingly attacking them. Fortunately, these demons had a tough exterior. This spell would merely render them immovable and slightly injured.

On the other side, Wavier had reached a comfortable attacking distance after the help of his mentor. The figure that he had missed day and night was finally right in front of his eyes. However, he had to kill her with his own two hands.

What was the most cruel thing in the world? That would be having to kill a girl that you fell in love with at first sight.

That was the exact mission Wavier was tasked to accomplish.

Celine had felt the incoming danger and unsheathed her sword. However, even before she brandished her sword, her defensive preparations had already broken Wavier's heart.

He wanted to stop and turn back. However, the words of his mentor, the oath he took in the name of the God of Light, the strange looks he got from his fellow Magiciansall of these images started flashing through his mind. They then coalesced into a strong and powerful voice, She is a demon, don't have any mercy! This is all for the cause of justice!

This voice was so strong that Wavier momentarily forgot the pain of his own soul. He raised his Merlin's Wand and began charging it with mana, activating the Level-6 offensive spell stored within.

Elemental Disintegration!

Elemental Disintegration

Level-6 Combined Elemental Spell

Cost: 1020 Mana Points

Effect: Combines the mysterious forces of all the elements and ignores any defensive power from Battle Auras. Directly disintegrates the elements within the target's body.

The only drawback of this spell was its inability to lockdown on the target. It would thus easily miss when fired from afar.

However, Wavier was now merely nine feet away from Celine. Even if Celine were a swordswoman who prided herself on her speed, she would still be slower than a Magician's thought process.

An invisible power began to emanate from the wand before accumulating into a giant translucent ball. A beam that emerged from this translucent ball and flew straight towards Celine. The moment the attack was released, Wavier felt a great deal of remorse in his heart. However, what's done was already done. There was no going back.

Wavier was completely dumbfounded, and his eyes seemed to be robbed of its usual glimmer. He closed his eyes as he could not bear to see the results.

However, in the next moment, his mentor roared in frustration, "Damn it, it's a transportation spell! Some powerful being is helping her in the shadows!"

Wavier was pleasantly surprised. He opened his eyes and saw an elemental image of the female demon after the transportation. A quiet and beautiful smile seemed to have appeared on her face in the final few moments of the transportation.

She did not know any transportation spell. Someone must have helped her along the way. But who?

Wavier suddenly had mixed feelings about this. He felt some remorse, pain happiness, and even jealousy.

Who the hell did this? Another demon? Why did she have such a calm smile? Was it someone that she loves?

Wavier was extremely frustrated, and his whole being was cloaked in a deadly gloom.

In a dark alley, Andrew seemed to witness Wavier's mood transformation. He was first shocked before a sinister smile appeared on his face. "His soul seems to be damaged. That means"

He had no idea why he was so elated. He also ceased to care about the demons who were still thrashing about in the air and left the scene.

## 172. We Must Be Flexible to Achieve Great Things

A flash of light suddenly appeared out of thin air with a buzz in the forest on the outskirts of Opal City. From that point of light, two people emerged and fell to the ground from the height of six feet above the ground.

It was Link and Celine who had escaped here with the help of the spell, Dimensional Jump.

To prevent from being transported to the top of a big tree, Link had set a good destination point in advance before he entered the city. It was slightly above a nice clearing in the forest where he had parted ways with the Wind Tiger earlier.

Thud! Thud!

Link and Celine had fallen on a bed of soft grass, so neither of them were badly hurt. They were both still in a daze which was a common side effect of the people who had just been through Dimensional Jump.

Celine was a strong Warrior, so she felt nothing from the fall at all. Link, on the other hand, wasn't much stronger physically than a layperson, so he was still seeing stars for a while after the fall.

As he lay on the ground to recover, Link felt a weight pressing on his body and the light that was streaming into his eyes got blocked. He opened his eyes and saw that Celine was half leaning on top of his body and was looking down at him. The distance between their two pairs of eyes was no more than eight inches.

Link noticed how even at such a close distance Celine's face still looked smooth and delicate like the surface of jade stone. Her black eyes were clear as crystal and as vivacious as young fawns in the forest. Her arched brows gave off a flirtatious charm, and her lips were as red and shiny as red pomegranate seeds.

It's no wonder that she was one of the top four most beautiful characters in the game! She looked perfect no matter which angle you look at her from.

"You saved me this time, Link," whispered Celine. The gentleness in her voice echoed in her eyes as she looked straightito Link's eyes.

Link almost fell into a trance and had the urge to reach out his hand to caress Celine's cheek but was afraid that it might be inappropriate. Although when he thought about it, wasn't it the perfect moment for at least a kiss?

But reality never turned out to be as perfect as imagination.

Just as Link was enjoying the moment, a rough and crude voice suddenly rang out near them. It was the Wind Tiger.

"What are you waiting for, Link?" shouted Dorias. "Your woman is ready to mate with you!"

The voice had appeared so suddenly that it gave Celine the fright of her life. When she turned around, she saw the green-furred giant tiger who just jumped out of the forest. She quickly jumped away from Link and pulled out her blue crystal sword.

"What's up with the beast, Link?" she asked.

By that point, even Link himself was a bit annoyed at the tiger.

"That's Dorias," he answered as he sat up. "It's a Wind Tiger. It was the one who had brought me here to the South."

"This is Celine Flandre," Link then told Dorias. "She's mygood friend."

"Oh!" replied the tiger. He then stared at Celine with keen interest and even circled around her. Suddenly he turned up his nose and turned back to Link and asked him, "Argh! Why do I smell dark energy from her?"

Celine's face darkened as soon as she heard those words. She had always regarded her true origin the greatest shame in her life. Still, her aura and inner force were things that she could not conceal, and they were the things that anyone who'd encountered her would point out without fail. Although they didn't always mean it as an insult, it still caused her to be upset.

The perceptive Link knew instantly what Celine was feeling and thinking the moment he saw Celine's eyes darkened. But he didn't think he should evade the subject this time, so he decided to explain the matter plainly and honestly to Dorias.

"Let's get moving," he told Dorias immediately after getting up to his feet. "We must make for the North now; I'll explain everything about Celine on the way."

"Fine, then." Dorias took another glance at Celine and realized he must've hurt the girl's feelings, so he stopped pressing the matter entirely and crouched down to let Link climb onto his back.

Link then signaled to Celine to climb up as well. Once they were both safely settled on the tiger's back, Dorias then promptly headed towards the North.

"Celine's father is the Lord of the Deep, Nozama" explained Link.

Dorias was so shocked its feet almost got tangled and lost its balance.

"What did you say?!" he exclaimed. "The Lord of the Deep Nozama? You're not jiving me, are you?!"

Even though Dorias was a magical beast who had lived for over 400 years and had lived to witness countless powerful figures, Nozama still remainedafter all these years and all that he'd seenone of the top three most fearsome figures in the whole wide world.

To Dorias, Nozama was the kind of powerful figure who could topple the whole Firuman continent upside down with a flick of his finger! Even 300 years ago, in the time of the legendary Magician Bryant, Nozama was infamous throughout Firuman for his frightening power, and the demon Tarviss was, in fact, his underling!

Although the demon couldn't descend upon the Firuman continent himself, legends said that he would transform himself into an ordinary human form and walked the earth, leaving many half-blood spawns behind.

Of these descendants of his, some possessed mediocer talents with only a low level of dark energy in their bodies, while some were said to be extraordinary geniuses who could each set off a wave of terror and destruction throughout the continent. When he thought of this point, Dorias sneaked a look at the girl on his back. He thought the legends must be true and that the girl riding on his back must be one of the most talented descendants the Lord of the Deep had ever had.

"Celine's father had always tried to capture her and bring her back down to the deep abyss," Link continued. "He'd even sent some demon minions of his here to do so. The reason I came down here was to rescue her from them."

"But, how will she escape a powerful figure like the Lord of the Deep for the rest of her life?" asked Dorias.

Celine noticed how Dorias showed neither scorn nor hatred towards her, so she began to relax. She then shook her head gently in reply to the tiger's question.

"If I fail in the end," she said, "then I would rather choose to die by my own hands."

"You truly are a tenacious girl!" replied Dorias. He then continued without thinking. "It's no wonder that Link likes you!"

Celine blushed and turned towards Link. She saw that his face was full of smiles and that, for some reason, cheered her up immediately.

"Still," Dorias continued, "the problem of Nozama will still loom over us like a big dark cloud. Link, have you thought about how you're going to deal with his demon minions?"

Dorias wouldn't worry about any other people, not even the Level-7 Necromancer Andrew, because he had faith that Link would have no problem in defeating them. Nozama, thoughJust the mention of his name was enough to make Dorias' knees buckle and the courage drain completely out of its body. In fact, Dorias found that he was shaking at that very moment!

This was a very real problem indeed. Celine half-turned her head and glanced at Link herself. She was surprised to find that the smile still lingered on his face.

"Nozama isn't as frightening as you might imagine," said Link calmly.

"Don't be stupid, Link," said Dorias in disbelief. "Nozama? Not frightening? You must be joking!"

Link remained unperturbed by Dorias' reply.

"Right now," he began to analyze, "I'm already able to fight against a Level-8 demon, and I'm still very young. My strength still has a large room for improvement. In a year or two, I might even face a Legendary-level demon. Moreover, this isn't a battle that I will fight alone. Right now, I'm building my estate and my own army. If Nozama dared to send his demon minions, then I will kill them all. I believe that after ten years, even if Nozama came here himself, I will still face him without any fear."

Link had said those words with full confidence, and he knew that the confidence wasn't misplaced or just an illusion of grandeur on his part.

One very simple reason was the fact that the deep abyss where the demons came from was of another realm. The demons must expend a huge amount of energy just to enter this world. According to legends, in order to send the demon Tarviss into this world, a total of 1000 souls of high-level demon Warriors were sacrificed. Such a high price was something that even the great Nozama could not afford to pay easily.

In other words, merely one talented daughter was not worth such a sacrifice.

Dorias was sure it would burstito maniacal laughter had these words been spoken by anyone else. It might even bite their head off afterwards for being so conceited. Still, because they had come from Link, the mighty Magician who had recently killed Tarviss the Level-8 demon, he felt that those words carried much weight and credibility and deserved to be taken seriously.

"Alright, alright, I get it," said Dorias good-humoredly. "I know you're a powerful figure yourself!" He then said nothing more and kept on running.

Link was sitting comfortably behind Celine on the tiger's back, his arms hugging the surprisingly slim waist of the demon Princess. Celine had made no protests at his gesture, making him enjoy the ride back to the North with an unimaginably gladdened heart.

After a while, he decided to break the truth to Celine of his motives.

"Celine," he said, "I need your help to do something once we've reached the North."

"Go on," responded Celine with a smile. Although it was true that Link had made a great leap in improvements since she last saw him, she was still at Level-6 herself and was far from useless dead weight.

Link then explained everything from the events leading up to him being awarded a piece of land by the king and his need to change the climate of his estate, up to his meeting with the Lich Vance, and how he promised to help him reclaim his underground palace.

"The underground palace is a complex labyrinth," said Link finally. "I need the help of a Warrior with outstanding skills, so I thought of you."

"Then you've found the right person," said Celine, clenching her delicately pinkish fist in the air keenly. She couldn't be happier to help Link.

Dorias shook his head as he heard Vance' name and the description of this figure.

"I know the bastard," said the tiger. "He was the only one in the Azura Tower who refused to leave. He was even less willing to take part in releasing the demon Tarviss. Had it not been for the fact that the tower had been blown up into pieces, I'm sure he'd still be there wasting away in that damned rotten place."

"What? Is that true?" asked the surprised Link. He was glad to hear of this account of Vance because he had been suspicious of the Lich. But after hearing what Dorias had to say about him, he felt he knew more about the Lich now and started to reconsider him in a new and more positive light.

By the looks of it, Vance might actually be a decent person who was worth cooperating further with. After all, the Lich was the man who had founded the studies of Battle Aura and Battle Art. So, who could be better in helping Link to develop a special Battle Art that could be practiced by everyone in his troop of Warriors?

Meanwhile, Celine was curious about this figure herself.

"Did you say that this Vance is a Lich?" she asked.

"A Lich my ass," replied Dorias. "He's just a skeleton!"

Celine turned around to face Link and smiled at him.

"A Lich, a magical beast, and now me, a demon," she said. "Link, aren't you afraid that we'd get you into trouble?"

"Hahaha, don't worry," replied Link with a smile. "It's no big deal. I can handle it."

Link's remark wasn't out of arrogance; it was only out of the self-confidence and the faith that things would all work out fine. In the past, he'd been afraid to come into contact with anything or anyone associated with dark magic, and these people were, to the average Magician, just the kind of people that he must avoid like the plague. Yet now, he'd seen through the situation and the consequences that everyone was in much more clearly.

He had been afraid to associate himself with dark magic because he feared that he would be sucked into the darkness and had his wisdom and judgment affected by the darkness himself. He also wanted to protect his resolve and his principles so that he might never deviate from the main purpose that he had been sent here in the first place.

He didn't want to associate himself with the Magicians who practiced dark magic or to any creatures who had been involved with dark energy, because he was worried of the public opinion and his reputation.

In the past, he was only an insignificant Magician's Apprentice of the East Cove Magic Academy, so such a negative reputation might indeed be unfavorable to his growth and progress as a Magician in the future. This was because he could easily be ousted and banned from the world of magic simply because he'd made one Master Magician suspicious of him. Even Herrera might easily discard of him and send him away had she found out that he was involved in less-than-savory things like dark magic.

But now, he had gained his own reputation and status and was no longer an insignificant weed on the ground. He was a mighty oak tree that stood proud and tall among the others. His words alone carried great weight and influence throughout the Norton Kingdom and maybe even the whole Firuman continent. By this point, he had little cause to worry himself about such petty matters as a little criticism from the public.

As the saying went, when the water was too clear there would be no fish. If he, as a lord in his own right, were too rigid with rules and too obsessed about towing the line there wouldn't be much hope in his future. The most important thing to do when attempting something important was to amass alliances and forces from as many areas as he could.

Now, it was the Lich Vance who was able to help him to transform the climate of his estate. He now believed that Vance deserved his full trust, so Link would cooperate with him without any hesitation or misgivings about the Lich's shady past.

It was as the popular saying went: a true hero did not concern himself with the past, only the present.

As long as Link knew the limits that he would never cross, even if the truth were exposed, no one would be able to punish him for anything. At most, someone might exhort him about the matter, and Link already had a way to deal with thishe would just ignore them!

Seeing how confident and calm Link had become now, Celine couldn't help but recall the events during that fateful night in Gladstone.

He was still a young boy then, she thought. But in a blink of an eye, he has now become a noble lord with a high reputation as a Magician across Firuman. Ah, how time flies, and how quickly he has changed. Celine wasn't too disturbed by these turn of events, though. She just settled down calmly and found herself a comfortable space right there in Link's arms.

The three of them chatted and laughed for the rest of the journey. Dorias' body had almost healed perfectly now, so his speed had improved and was as lightning fast as it had once been when he was in his prime. And so they headed to the North.

...

At the same time, Opal City had descended into utter chaos. The demons had appeared on the streets and were in a fierce battle with the Magicians. About 236 civilians were caught up in the scene, of which 127 were dead. It was simply a massive disaster!

Soon, the whole city was overcome with panic. The people were in fear while the leaders pointed their fingers at the Magician's Alliance and accused them of misusing magic. The Magician's Alliance, in turn, retorted that it was their duty and highest priority to exterminate the demons and that the deaths of the civilians were unintended but inevitable. While it was a pity that many innocent people were caught up in this event, the Magician's Alliance had promised to make compensations to the families.

The leaders of the kingdom then replied that human lives could not be measured by gold coins. The Magician's Alliance had been too rash and allowed too much power, so there must be an established royal decree that would limit the activities of these Magicians. This statement received widespread support from the people as soon as the word spread out.

The people didn't care whether there had been demons or not; what they knew and clearly saw was that the unlucky people had died horribly, or they were heavily injured because of the Magicians.

At last, the Magicians Alliance had to relent and give in to the pressure from the authorities above and the common people below.

Meanwhile in the underworld, as the highest authority of the Leo Kingdom's branch of the Syndicate, Bren was not happy of their limited success in constraining the Magician's Alliance at all. His face was as dark as the blackened bottom of a pot because Princess Celine had once again slipped through their fingers. Furthermore, all three demons were now killed by the Magician's Alliance, so he no longer had the aid of the Lord of the Deep, Nozama anymore.

Overall, everything had been an utter failure!

It was true that he knew where Celine had fled to, yet he couldn't think of a way to pursue her in the North. Besides, Bren knew that it would be crazy to attempt to recapture Celine from the hands of that bastard.

The members of the Syndicate knew how stormy Bren's mood was at the moment, so they all avoided him the moment he approached.

Meanwhile, the Necromancer Andrew had gone out every day and wouldn't come back for about twenty hours. He'd wear a maniacal smile on his face every time he returnedonly heaven knew why he would act so bizarrely.

## 173. What Dreadful Weather

Two days later, Dorias entered the Ferde Wilderness together with Link and Celine.

After running through the area for around ten minutes, Dorias could not help but comment, "Link, is this truly your territory? This is the most barren land I've seen in my entire 400 years in Firuman. You cannot even find a proper place to take a dump in this place."

Celine also frowned at the sight of this territory as she said, "This is a lot worse than what I've imagined."

Along the way, Link had warned the both of them that the territory was extremely barren so as to prepare them psychologically on what to expect. Celine and Dorias originally thought that it was normal for a wild plain to be barren and thought nothing much of it. However, it was still difficult for them to accept it the moment they saw the Ferde Wilderness' true form.

This was more than just barren. The whole area was simply a pile of rubble that seemed to be unsalvageable no matter how much gold coins one invested.

Although Link was ambitious and already had a detailed plan in his mind, it was undeniable that the current situation was unsatisfactory. He simply laughed, "It will get better. This is just temporary."

As those optimistic words were said, the weather began to change. It was only a few gusts of wind at the start, but ten minutes later, the wind started howling, and one could distinctly feel the raindrops splattering onto their bodies. It did not take long for the weather to completely turn hostile, into a storm with hailstones and lightning. What a way to welcome two new guests into the area.

"No wonder you wanted to change the climate." Celine gasped as she was horrified at this sudden change in weather. Dorias immediately activated his wind elemental shield and protected them from the rainwater and the hailstones. However, an ordinary person would be powerless in the face of such weather. It would not be possible to grow crops or house farmers in this area.

As Dorias carefully trod through the mud, he asked, "You mentioned that there would be people serving me. Can I just not take up your offer? Just let me go to the Girvent Forest and hide to the end of my life."

Dorias felt that this place was extremely unsuitable for a Wind Tiger to call home. His lifespan would be shortened by 100 years.

"We had a deal. Are you going to go back on your words? What about the pride of the Wind Tiger clan?" Link rebutted.

Dorias roared in despair and continued forward helplessly. He felt as though he had been deceived. He was unable to go back on his words as he had to protect the legacy of the Wind Tiger clan. Furthermore, Link had promised to find him some female tigers as companions.

The Scorched Ridge appeared in sight after half a day.

Although there were no Magicians in the Scorched Ridge, Link was not about to take any chances. Before they entered the camp, Link handed an intricate pendant over to Celine.

"This is an aura concealing pendant. It can also double up as a dimensional storage pendant if you'd like."

This was a pendant Link crafted in the carriage while he was heading south. Although it was arsed work, Link still ensured it was delicate and aesthetically pleasing so that it would not trigger his Obsessive Compulsion Disorder.

The pendant was created from Khorium and shone with a lavender hue. There was a hint of thorium used as well, which gave it speckles of silver much like the stars in the night sky. Finally, Link used a high-quality Dokun stone to create the dimensional storage function in the pendant. The stone was milky white in color and was polished almost perfectly by Link, making it crystal clear and smooth.

Celine loved the pendant at first sight. However, she did not take it from Link's hand. Instead, she lifted her chin slightly and spoke with her back facing Link, "Put it on for me."

Link smiled and gently put the pendant around Celine's slender neck. From his angle, he could vaguely see the enticing scene right under Celine's blouse.

Link was suddenly flustered and immediately averted his gaze and changed the subject, "Dorias, do not lose your temper when you get to the camp. Also, don't joke around too much; you might cause panic amongst the people."

"Alright. Just don't forget what you promised."

Link then turned to Celine and said, "Do not showcase your powers as well. Just stay secretive."

"Then what will be my identity?" Celine looked at Link expectantly as she asked.

This question was tough. Link thought for a moment and said, "You are a friend I brought back from the Southa very good friend. That's all."

He wanted to make their relationship sound more intimate, but at the same time, he was afraid that Celine would be unhappy. It would also not be right to make it sound as though they were strangers. Hence, friends would be the most valid term.

Celine simply agreed; it was impossible to tell from her expression what she felt about this identity.

It had merely been four dassince Link left the Scorched Ridge. However, the weather in this period had been disastrous. From afar, Link could already see potholes and planks of wood being blown off the rooftop by the strong gale. There would occasionally be a figure that would appear only for a few seconds, only to rush to the next shelter they could find.

It was impossible to continue with the building for the harbor in this weather. Link was also sure that all the other developments were also halted. Everyone was probably staying in their homes and waiting in a state of boredom.

This is not looking good. The climate problem has to be resolved as fast as possible! Link felt that it was a pressing problem that had greatly affected the progress of his territory development.

When Dorias reached within a 150 feet radius of the castle walls, Link could hear the blaring sounds of the alert siren echoing through the Ferde Continent. It seemed like the Flamingo Band of Mercenaries were still vigilant despite the bad weather.

A moment later, the castle guard who was originally taking shelter in the corner of the castle wall rushed outito the storm. Ten seconds later, Jacker also appeared on the castle wall in full battle armor.

Link was extremely satisfied with this reaction speed.

At that moment, Jacker caught a glimpse of Link riding on top of the giant tiger. He wiped his face drenched in rainwater and raised his hand to signal the archers on guard, "It is the lord, put down your weapons!"

Upon knowing that it was Link, the tense atmosphere immediately dissipated.

The pressure coming from a giant beast more than 12 feet tall was immense. However, seeing that their lord was sitting comfortably on its back, there should be no complications. In their eyes, the lord could accomplish almost anything. Even if he came back riding on the back of a giant tiger with a beautiful lady by his side, there was nothing to be surprised about.

As Link entered the Scorched Ridge, Celine and he dismounted from Dorias' back. Jacker, Lucy, and Gildern were already waiting in the storm to welcome him.

Link waved his hand and said, "Don't just stand outside. Let's talk in the house."

He then spoke to a mercenary captain, "Find some workers, a decent number of them. Build a big shed within an hour for Dorias over here. This is an urgent arrangement and remuneration will be given accordingly."

Link then passed ten gold coins to this mercenary captain.

The workers in his territory were all people who came over from the Girvent Forest to earn money. His words as the lord of the Ferde Wilderness held no power over them as they were not citizens of this area. He hence had to use gold coins to mobilize them instead. As for the exact payment, they had a detailed agreement. For example, a task like this which required the workers to be mobilized instantly and to work in the storm would garner the workers at least one silver coin in remuneration.

Link had never defaulted on his payments. Therefore, although the conditions here were tough, there were a number of workers who had decided to make the Ferde Wilderness their base.

"Yes, sir." The mercenary captain said and immediately went off to organize the required manpower.

Link then turned to Lucy. "Get the chef here to roast an entire cow for Dorias. Oh, Dorias is the name of this tiger over here."

Dorias then spoke, "One is not enough. I need two cows. It doesn't even have to be cooked; just give it to me, I am starving."

His ability of speech came as a surprise to everyone present. However, this meant that it would be possible to converse with him, making him a lot less intimidating.

Lucy then immediately went over to the barn for the cows. Dorias followed closely behind as he was simply starving.

The rest of the people entered the house.

Once they reached the hall, Link introduced, "This is Celine Flandre, a Magician's Apprentice of mine, and a good friend."

The Magician's Apprentice part was something Link thought of on the spot. He had remembered that Celine once studied magic in the Flemmings Magic Academy. Following which, he then introduced Jacker and the rest to Celine.

They exchanged greetings as Celine responded with a warm smile on her face. Link observed the expression on her face as he wanted to see her thoughts. However, his usual keen observation skills seemed to have failed him this time round. After failing to get what he wanted, he eventually gave up.

Lucy then came back, and Link introduced her to Celine officially this time.

Lucy had a much sharper expression on her face. After alternating her gaze between Celine and Link, she gave a smile and passionately welcomed, "Celine, look at how pretty you are."

These were the exact words Link's mother Lilith used on her that day.

Celine smiled and said, "Miss Lucy, you are a beauty yourself as well."

Lucy simply sighed, "I am already old."

As Lucy spoke, she subconsciously looked at Link. Link, on the other hand, was preoccupied as he was talking to Jacker. Celine could observe the hint of disappointment in Lucy's eyes and immediately went on guard. Not good! Lucy will be a formidable enemy; She seems to like Link as well!

Link was totally oblivious to this psychological battle going on and sat down on the long table before saying, "The climate here is simply horrible. However, I have found one solution. In a week's time, I will be leaving once more, and when I am back, we can start work."

This had helped to boost the morale of the commanding team. A glimmer of hope could be seen on everyone's faces as Link said those words. Although the territory was indeed barren, there was hope after all. The only thing troubling them was the climate, which they had no idea how to resolve. Link's announcement was thus a huge relief.

The atmosphere immediately lightened up as everyone started giving their opinions on the future development. Link listened intently and occasionally interrupted. At the end of the meeting, they came up with a few feasible things they could work on.

At that moment, a person appeared at the door. It was Magician Carrido.

Carrido had been staying in the Girvent Forest recently as he was currently responsible for magic affairs. He was the middleman between Link and Merchant Warter, handling all the magic equipment Link crafted and Warter's payment to the territory. Hence, he would not be in the territory most of the time.

He greeted Link respectfully before handing him a dimensional pendant "Sir, these are the earnings this time around."

Link took a look and found 15000 gold coins within the pendant. It was once again a good trade. After thinking for a moment, he handed his dimensional pendant back to Carrido and said, "Take this money to East Cove Higher Magic Academy and find Master Magician Weissmuller. He is an expert in creating magic puppets. Tell him I want a giant puppet that can do traditional tillage work." Weissmuller's proficiency in magic puppet creation was evident in his notes. The first person Link thought of when he wanted a magic puppet was naturally him.

Carrido did not understand it at first. "Magic puppet for tillage purposes?"

Link explained, "Yes, I have already observed that the inner area of the territory has soil that is completely arable. We simply needed to get rid of the layer of gravel around 2 feet thick on the surface."

Usually, the soil on the surface of any plot of land would be arable. However, the Ferde Wilderness was a peculiar place where the surface of the ground was covered in gravel instead. The arable soil of this land was hidden underneath the two-feet-thick layer of gravel. This magic puppet would thus be responsible for turning the soil over. Furthermore, Link was also prepared to exploit the anti-magic soil that could be found on this land.

Carrido nodded and said, "I will work on it immediately."

"There is no hurry. Take some rest." Link waved his hand before handing over a magic book titled Breath of the Wind to Carrido. He then said, "This book should be helpful to you. Take some time to read it."

Carrido was immediately filled with gratitude. He took the book and carefully put it away.

The magic books that Link recommended were usually of another level. He had already read five of such books by now and had a completely different understanding of magic as he did in the past. He could now be considered half an official Magician due to Link's tutelage.

After a few discussions over superfluous stuff, Link then started arranging a place for Celine to stay.

Lucy said, "The camp is currently full. Miss Celine can stay with me for now. She can move in to the new wooden houses when the construction work is complete."

Link thought that it was a good idea and looked at Celine, to which she nodded with a smile. It was a good chance for her to test out Lucy's true intentions. After which, Link left the hall and returned to his room to craft magic equipment for Warter. He also had to create Vance's magic staff. As the climate problem was indeed pressing, he had to quicken his pace and complete the underground chamber mission as fast as possible.

As Link exited the wooden house, he saw Dorias sitting comfortably under a shed while munching on a large piece of barbecued meat. He looked as though he could swallow the cow whole including the bones. There was also a piece of raw, bloody meat beside him, to which he ignored completely.

It seemed like this creature had already been subdued by the chef's barbecue technique.

## 174. The Mad Genius Vance

One week's time had passed in a blink of an eye. Meanwhile, Link was cooped up in his wooden cabin creating magical gear all along.

Once he'd received the notebooks from the Magicians of the East Cove Magic Academy, Link's enchantment skills had now broken into a whole new realm. Within a week, he'd managed to create two epic quality magical gear, comprising of one Level-5 wand and another Level-5 bracelet fixed with a defensive spell.

The bracelet was for Celine, of course. It was so exquisitely made and Celine adored it so much that she couldn't put it down for a second.

Afterwards, both of them then headed to Shark Bay to meet up with Vance.

The passage into the underground palace would be too narrow for Dorias to pass through, so there would be no point in him following them. Thus, the tiger remained in a protected area specially built for it in Scorched Ridge. Link had also fulfilled his promises to Dorias and ordered his people to feed him, groom his fur, clean his teeth and polish his claws. He'd even dispatched people to find a female Wind Tiger across the continent.

Shark Bay was only about five miles away from Scorched Ridge, so even as Link and Celine strolled casually, it only took them half an hour to arrive.

Celine's eyesight was as sharp as an eagle's; she saw a white skeleton lying on the surface of the stone cliff from afar. The skeleton seemed carefree and nonchalant as he lay there, even the Mana it emitted was very faint and weak while the eye sockets were dark and hollow with no signs of the ghostly flames. To put it simply, the skeleton looked exactly as if it was a dead body that had been there for decades and decomposed there.

"Is that him?" asked Celine uncertainly. "Doesn't he look toolaid-back?

"Yes, that's him," answered Link, nodding. No one else could have such a smooth and shiny jade-like skeleton.

Once they approached the skeleton, Vance still lay there and made no attempt to get up. The only response he made was lighting up the ghostly flames in his eye sockets, but even then, only faintly.

"Oh, you're here," he said. "You're earlier by a few days than what I'd expected."

"Are you hurt?" asked Link as he stared at him suspiciously.

"Hurt? No!" replied the Lich as he folded his bony hands above his chest. "No, I was bored and had nothing to do, so I lounged around for a bit."

Vance still lay there as if he was never going to get up.

Link furrowed his brows slightly when he heard Vance's response. He could feel a thick sense of apathy from the Lich. If he could fall asleep so calmly on a cliff in the wilderness, wouldn't he sleep for years and years once he'd reclaimed his underground palace?

Link then took out the wand with the Magician's Hand out from his robe and handed it to Vance.

"Here," he said, "it's your wand."

The flames in Vance's eye sockets turned much brighter again, and he sat up and took the wand into his hand. He thought Link's enchantment skills had turned out to be pretty good as he noticed the subtle details on the wand that displayed its exquisite quality.

"Tsk tsk, your basic skills are quite solid," said Vance. "You've even thought to use thorium, that's not a bad material at all. Ohand the Mana structure isAh, wonderful. Quite wonderful!" His tone had become livelier and more impassioned now, and the languidness in his aura was reduced by half.

Vance stood up and tested the new wand by casting a Level-1 dark magic spell called Ball of Decay on the cliff stone. As the Mana fluctuated, a fist-sized gory greenob appeared and hit the surface of the cliff. A buzzing noise followed, and a basketball-sized pit then appeared on the stone surface.

"So, it works very well with dark magic too!" praised Vance immediately. "I must ask, kid, have you learned dark magic before?"

Link shook his head in reply.

"That's not it," said Link. "I've only just come to learn the basics of secret spells from the Master Magician, Eleanor, so I thought I might incorporate itito the wand."

"Ah, no wonder, then," said Vance. "Does it have a name?"

"Gray Flame," replied Link. "Gray to signify its support of secret spells and dark magic. Flame because it is specialized in attacks and offensive spells." In his eyes, these were the strongest aspects of the wand.

Gray Flame

Quality: Epic

Effect 1: The speed of Mana unleashing is increased by 80%.

Effect 2: The attacking power of elemental spells is increased by 60%. The attacking power of secret spells is increased by 80%.

Effect 3: Fixed with one Level-5 spellthe Flaming Hand. (There is a Mana channel in the wand where a small number of dark elements could be mixed into the spell, forming a more powerful attack of the Gray Flaming Hand.)

(Note: This is a gift for the Lich Vance.)

"Excellent," said Vance, very satisfied with his new wand. "It's only slightly less powerful than my original wand." He then turned towards Celine and glanced at her for a few seconds then furrowed his brows.

"A demon Warrior?" he asked.

Compared to the past, Celine had now been able to adapt to this kind of attitude. As long as Link didn't mind her true identity, though, she couldn't care less what other people thought of her. She also had no intention of worrying herself sick about leaving a good impression on those people who treated her with this attitude.

Celine then squinted her eyes and addressed Vance with a menacing tone.

"You might like to know, Lich," she said, "that I am very good at cracking bones."

"Now, now, calm down," said the Lich with a grin. "I was only stating the obvious. I've got no problem with it if Link trusts you." He then clapped his bony hands which made a rattling sound.

"Let's go!" said Vance. "Time is of the essence!"

"You lead the way, then," said Link as he stepped aside.

"No problem," replied Vance. He took a few steps forward then leaped down the cliff. He didn't use any flying spells or even floating spells as he jumped.

Sure enough, three seconds later there was a crackling noise of crunching bones on the white sandy beach down the cliff. Vance had disintegrated into a pile of bones on the ground.

""

Link and Celine looked at each other with horror. They couldn't figure out what kind of tricks Vance was playing on them. Did he just commit suicide?

Just then, the scattered bones began to move and gathered together, finally reuniting to form the immortal Lich again. He then climbed up to his feet and waved at them.

"What are you waiting for?" he shouted. "Come on down!"

That was indeed a shocking behavior. Link couldn't figure out why the Lich had to act in such a way. Although his body might be invincible and able to re-form into its original state, would it hurt to cast a simple floating spell? Wouldn't that save more time ultimately?

Anyway, Link didn't think it necessary to bring up the point as Vance had turned out to be fine. He then cast a floating spell on himself and was about to do so on Celine as well when he saw her open up her own wings and jump down the cliff. And so, he followed her and jumped down as well.

Soon, they were all on the beach under the cliff.

"Now we'll just move south along the beach," said Vance, leading the way as Link and Celine followed him from behind. It was going to be a long journey ahead.

"Vance," said Link, "what are your plans once we've reclaimed your underground palace?"

"What else can I do?" answered the Lich. "There's an ice stone coffin in there, so I'm just going to lie down in it and sleep."

"" Celine found Vance's logic very odd indeed. "If that's all you want to do, then why bother reclaiming the place? Wouldn't anywhere be fine to sleep in?"

"You don't understand," said the Lich with a smile.

Link said nothing, although he felt that he could understand the Lich's reasoning somehow.

This person had once been a mad genius in the past. In his pursuit of the truth, he had tried every method possible without spending a thought for morality or ethics. And yet, he was not an evil person by nature, so he regretted his past crimes. Although he was mad, he had, in fact, lived and survived long into the future.

Still, he was now a Lich and had been imprisoned in the Tower of Azura for more than 400 years. His passions had all been exhausted, and he was now only a ghost of his past self. Dorias had mentioned that he didn't even want to come out of the tower, which meant that this person was not much different from a walking corpse.

Then why did he want to return to the underground palace so badly, though? Could it be to recapture a lost memory? Or was it just because he wanted a safe place to sleep forever? Who knew?

Surprisingly, the Lich smiled and spoke up once again after a period of silence.

"Young lady," he said, "you're right in thinking that I could sleep anywhere. I could sleep right there on that cliff for a hundred years without moving. But there are too many precious things in my underground palace that it would be a waste to just let it rot there. Someone must take them out and use them."

After that, Vance looked at Link and smiled.

"You, boy," he said, "you still lack a proper Mage Tower. But don't worry, once we've got my underground palace under control, you can take anything you want in there. There would be enough in there to help you build a grand Mage Tower. I must advise you not to ask the help of anyone from the East Cove Academy in building it, though. Those Magicians just won't do; they'd waste too many materials. To build the perfect Mage Tower, you must find a High Elf."

Link was speechless as he heard Vance's words. Did the Lich just say he could take anything he wanted from the underground palace and that he was looking for a place to go to sleep? There was something odd in those words; it was almost as if Vance was relaying his last words.

Link couldn't hold his tongue any longer.

"You don't really want to reclaim your underground palace, do you?" he asked.

"Why that's absurd!" answered the Lich with a smile. "Why wouldn't I want to? How can I stand by doing nothing while those barbariasstomp around my palace with their dirty feet?"

Even so, there was still something odd and unconvincing in his voice, as if he was still concealing parts of the truth.

"I feel as if the Lich no longer wants to live," whispered Celine. "How long had he been alive?"

There was lethargy and guilt that Celine could sense clearly from this Lich. It wasn't the kind of urge for relief from suffering that she herself felt from being constantly hunted down and oppressed. Instead, it was an indifference to life that was caused by having lived for too long and experienced too much until all passions and interests had been extinguished and exhausted from the heart.

"He's lived for a thousand years," answered Link with a frown. He'd wanted to ask for Vance's help in guiding him to create a Battle Art that could be practiced by anyone in his troop, but now it seemed his dreams were too big.

"So he's a thousand-year-old Lich" murmured Celine, stunned by the revelation. "No wonder"

Meanwhile, Vance waved his hand at the two to urge them to move along.

"Stop chatting and hurry up, both of you!" he shouted. "We're almost there. Those Necromancers aren't that easy defeat!"

Link and Celine said nothing; they just quickened their paces and caught up with Vance. They walked along the beach for about 15 miles until they encountered a big pile of rocks. Vance glanced at it and immediately cast a spell.

"Traceless!"

Traceless

Level-4 Master Spell

Effects: A group invisibility spell that can also almost completely mask the sound and scent of the targets.

(Note: An original spell invented by Vance.)

A sheet of water-like, translucent aura flowed out from Vance's wand and scattered out to enshroud all three of them. In that instant, an outsider looking on would see that they suddenly disappeared into thin air.

"What's going on?" asked Link. He stared at the pile of stones but didn't notice anything suspicious.

Vance then pointed to a black beetle crawling among the heaps of rocks.

"Do you see that bug?" asked Vance.

Link and Celine looked over in that direction and saw a small beetle the size of a thumb. Its outer shell was glowing and very eye-catching, although it was otherwise a common-looking bug. It was seemingly indistinguishable from any other bugs while also not emitting any Mana or magic aura. Had it not been for Vance, Link would definitely walk past it.

"What's wrong with it?" asked Link humbly. In the area of black magic, Vance was definitely a much superior Magician to him.

"This is a Death Beetle created by a secret method," answered Vance. "It's a high-level detecting device used by high-level Necromancers. This looks like a very active beetle; it can't have been released for more than an hour, which means that there's another guest in my underground palace now."

"What should we do with the beetle?" asked Link.

"Let's just crush it," said Vance. He then turned towards Celine. "Young lady, I need a drop of demon blood for my spell."

## 175. This Girl Has an Interesting Bloodline!

Vance needed only one drop of blood. Upon hearing that request, Celine gave it to him without any hesitation. She concentrated her Battle Aura onto her hands and lightly squeezed it. A drop of fresh blood then formed at the tip of the finger.

She acted way too fast. It was too late by the time Link wanted to stop her. Link then sighed as he thought about how Celine was a lot more trusting than him.

If a Level-7 Lich were to ask for a drop of his blood, he would think it through carefully before deciding whether to agree to his request. This act was extremely risky. A drop of blood could be used to play many tricks on the victim in dark magic.

Fortunately, Vance had no ill intentions. Upon getting the drop of blood, he pointed his fingers at the Death Beetle and whispered, "Blood Mist."

The drop of blood flowed towards the beetle and exploded in mid-air into a ball of pale blood-red mist. The beetle was crawling around freely before the mist covered it. However, after it was hit by the mistit seemed to be unaffected by it at all.

Link and Celine stared at Vance, waiting for him to explain. Both of them had a foundation in magic; it was impossible for them to not notice if the spell had taken effect.

Vance was embarsed at his failure and scratched his smooth skull with his bony fingers, emitting a screeching sound. After a while, he looked at Celine and said, "Your blood has issues. You are not a pure-blooded demon."

"My mother is a human." Celine nodded. For Vance to have been able to tell this just from a drop of blood was a testament to his strength.

"No, that's not all!" Vance stared at the remaining drop of blood on Celine's fingertips and immediately salvaged it with his fingers and placed it in his mouth.

Following which, he grinded his teeth against one another. After half a minute, Vance shouted, "How could this be? This is unbelievable! Oh my god!"

Link and Celine exchanged glances as they did not know what would make a thousand-year-old Lich like Vance so agitated.

Vance started circling Celine as he asked, "Celine, do you still remember your mother? What did she look like? What traits did she possess?"

"My mother? She was really pretty and looked quite similar to me. Also, she was very nice to me most of the time. However, she would get angry at me for no reason sometimes. ThenThat's all! From what I remembered, she is simply an ordinary lady."

As time passed, when Celine reminisced about her mother, she no longer felt the burning hatred she did for her father. Currently, she merely cherished the memories she once had with her mother. It was not to say that the hatred completely disappearedit was merely buried deeper as part of her life experiences.

"No, that's not right. She is definitely not an ordinary lady. Your blood possesses an extremely mysterious power. I feel like I have seen it before. Let me thinkDamn it. I can't remember! Oh my god, my memory is horrendous. It has been too long."

Vance knocked his skull with full force, creating a loud hollow sound. From the looks of it, it appeared he would only give up after he smashed his skull into smithereens.

Link had to stop him, "Alright, Vance, it is fine. What we have to do now is to deal with this beetle!"

Vance stopped and cast his glance back at Celine, ignoring Link's words. Even though it was only a pair of green flames staring at her, Link could still feel the passion and drive within those eyes.

"Celine, listen to me, you are a miracle! Your blood possesses two extraordinary powers. One of them is extremely pure demonic power, while the other one is an exceptional mysterious force. I cannot pinpoint it, but I am sure you will reach terrifying heights in the future."

Link was slightly surprised as well. He only knew that Celine's father was a powerful figure. However, he did not expect her mother to be so prominent as well.

Celine seemed to be less surprised than expected. She fell silent for a while before turning to Link and said, "I believe this is why my father is so bent on pursuing me despite the countless children he left on the World of Firuman."

Link looked up as though he was reminded of something and said in a serious tone, "Yes, your father probably knew about the truth of your mother's strength."

These two sentences seemed extremely disconnected for people who had no knowledge of Celine's background. Vance then asked, almost in a trance, "What do you mean? Who is Celine's father? If it is such a pure demonic power, I'm afraid he must be a Legendary status individual?"

Link stared at Celine, and upon her approval, Link said, "Celine's father is the Lord of the Deep, Nozamas."

The moment Link mentioned that name, Vance gasped as the cold air shot through his skull, emitting a slight whistling sound. No one knew how he managed to accomplish that with two rows of empty ribcage.

It took Vance three whole minutes to recover from his state of shock. He then stared at Link and spoke with a very serious tone, "I can assure you that once Nozama gets hold of Celine, something terrible will happen. Link, you have to stop this from happening!"

"I will do my best."

"No, not just do your best. There can be no slip-ups. If not for the fact that she is a good-natured girl, I would even suggest that you kill her right now." Vance said these words unapologetically.

Link fell silent upon hearing those words while Celine's face turned a sickly pale. She had realized that she had underestimated her father's determination to seize her all this time.

Would her father have spared if she possessed such value? Would Link have enough time to grow stronger?

She had no idea.

However, this was not what Link was thinking about. He was a lot more optimistic. He would always deal with the situation at hand first. As for problems that may appear in the future, he would deal with them when they come.

After all, who knew what could happen in the future? For all you might know, your current efforts might be the preparing you for failure.

He pointed at the beetle and told Vance, "It will be fine; let's settle this beetle."

"If we do not have demonic blood, let me think" Vance started patting his skull again. Sooner or later, a dent would appear in his head.

This time, it only took half a minute. Vance then said, "I have another idea."

Following which, he stuck out his finger and rubbed it onto Celine's crystal blue sword. He immediately shaved off a pile of bone dust. After collecting the dust, Vance threw it in the direction of the beetle and said, "Skeletal Jungle."

These bone dust completely covered the beetle. Eventually, the exterior shell of the beetle was completely covered with a layer of white powder. The spell took effect this time. The beetle immediately began to spin around, while the feelers on its head twitched uncontrollably. It then fell off the stone after a few moments of struggle.

"Alright, this little guy is now blind."

Vance smiled proudly and signaled for Link and Celine to catch up. He then led the way.

After walking for 60 feet, they saw another Death beetle. Vance then skillfully used the same tactic to blind the beetle before he continued forward.

Around 150 feet later, a 15-foot-tall stone appeared right in front of them. An even taller cliff sat behind the stone. Vance then said, "The entrance to the underground palace lies behind this stone. It is filled with deathly spirits and detection spells I placed many years ago. Even my Traceless spell will not be fully effective in that place. We have to be prepared for battle.

"I understand." Link took out his Starcatcher Wand while Celine held her crystal blue sword tightly, leading the way.

They walked around the huge stone and true to Vance's words, they saw a four-foot-tall and four-foot-wide entrance. They then entered the underground palace, and after walking for 30 feet and making a turn, they saw a ball of mysterious purple light on the walls. Under the illumination of the sinister light, one could see uniform indentations on the walls. Within each of those indentations was a skeleton, standing motionless.

Vance immediately reminded, "Be careful, they are all alive and are Level-3 in strength. Do not disturb them if possible. You will also trigger all the Skeleton Warriors in the area if you awaken one of them."

Celine trod extremely carefully as she was leading the way. Link helped to look out for traps as well, although he had a question, "How about the person who infiltrated just a moment ago? Why didn't he awaken these Skeleton Warriors?"

Vance then whispered, "I'm afraid he knows some high-level infiltration skills. You must know that the best way to deal with Skeleton Warriors is to not awaken them. This is not a very difficult thing to do, especially when they are all low-level undead."

"I understand."

The three of them then moved forward carefully. The deeper they wentito the palace, the more spacious the cave. When they reached a depth of around 300 feet, the corridors became 15-foot-tall and 30-foot-wide. The pillars on both sides also became smoother. There were even more lights attached to the walls, providing more illumination.

"Take note; the Security Hall lies ahead. There are some security beasts I created dwelling inside. They are actually undead created from the body parts of many ferocious beasts. You guys might not like the way they look, but do not underestimate their strength! They can go against a Level-5 Warrior head-on!"

While Vance was speaking, the three of them reached the entrance of the Security Hall.

One could already see the security beasts at the entrance. These creatures were not motionless like the Skeleton Warriors. They patrolled the area constantly, completely blocking their way forward.

These security beasts indeed looked very peculiar. Link could clearly see the mouth of a wolf, the claws of a tiger, the tail of a crocodile attached to every one of them. They were formed from the body parts of at least 10 different animals, and the joints connecting those parts seemed extremely amateur and roughly made. It seemed as though they were merely tied up with a rope. A thick, viscous green substance also dripped from the joints.

Link could not help but comment, "Vance, I have issues with your taste."

Vance then rebutted, "This is not about taste. I must first give priority to the feasibility of these security beasts, and not their aesthetics. After 400 years, the number of security beasts has already been depleted by 90%. There used to be 300 of them roaming around. Now, there are only 30 of them left."

"How should we get past? Do we sneak across, or use brute force?" Celine ask.

"There is no way to sneak across; these creatures are sensitive"

"Then how did the other fellow get past?" Link asked quizzically.

"That would only mean that that person is a friend of the magic swordsman. He is not their enemy." Vance laid out his hands helplessly as he gave a bitter smile.

Link then stared at the security beasts and estimated their strength. He then said with a worried tone, "There are 30 security beasts around here. That would mean a total of 30 Level-5 Warriors. They are also well-dispersed. It will be difficult to deal with all of them.

"Don't worry, I have already figured it out. Celine and you will block them. You only have to stall them for ten seconds. I will cast a Level-6 control spell to halt their movements"

"Shh" Celine interrupted Vance before she positioned her ear in the direction of the Security Hall. She then said, "Listen, someone is speaking. It's getting closer, do you think they are coming out?"

"That is a possibility." Vance was immediately excited.

"Then we will just wait and see," Link smiled as he said.

## 176. Lets See Whose Traps Are Better

As the voices got closer and closer, the three of them relied on Vance's Traceless spell to hide silently in the shadows of the hall entrance, patiently waiting. At this moment, they were like hunters lurking in the shadows, ready to lunge and attack the prey at the right moment. After a few seconds, the voices became much clearer. One of them was deep and dark sounding, laced with a hint of anger.

"Get your ass out of here!" said the voice. "Go back and tell your master that unless I die, there is no way he'll get anything from me!"

"That's the bastard Necromancer swordsman that took over my underground palace," whispered Vance. "His name is Dorians, and he's a typical cheapskate!"

The other voice then emerged. This one sounded cold and eerily calm, clearly none too pleased by the other's words.

"Dorians, you must understand," said the other voice, "this isn't a request but an order. If you disobey this order, then you will face the master's wrath! There would be no use for regret then!"

"Your master is nothing but a bandit!" roared Dorians. "Let him come then! I've got so many sturdy Warriors under me; I've got armed beasts, and I've got axe-wielding Warriors! In this underground palace, no one's a master but me!"

The other voice went silent after this outburst by Dorians. Now their footsteps approached Link, and the other two got closer and closer. After about ten seconds, two figures emerged from the entrance.

One of them was very tallabout 7 feet tall. He was wearing a dark purplish-red war armor, and through the faceplate, sat a pair of eyes that were glowing in bluish white light. They were glowing so bright that they seemed to be emitting a five-inch-long light column. His weapon was an extraordinary giant sword, of which the hilt was made into a shape of a demonic goat's head. The goat's eyes were made up of two black crystals which emitted a strong Mana fluctuation.

The other figure was wearing a luxurious black robe, covered by a large hooded cloak. This was the standard attire of a Magician. The figure was also holding an oddly-shaped wand in his handits main body was a pure black rod while at the tip of the wand was a small skeleton. A pair of greenish flames were burned in the eye sockets of this small skeleton.

"That Warrior is Dorians," whispered Vance. "He's got a strength of a Level-6 Warrior, and that sword of his was my precious treasure. I called it the Giant Sword of Gloom. Not only is it an impressive slashing weapon, but it's also a magic wand. Its core contains compressed Mana where I stored two spells: one was the Level-5 offensive spell, Soul's Attack, and the other was the Level-4 defensive spell, Crystal Shield."

Vance stared at the Magician in silence for a while to try to identify him.

"I know the other bastard as well," said Vance. "He's called Morestern; he's a Level-7 Voodoo Magician who escaped from the Azura Tower as well. I didn't think he'd find a master so quickly, hahaha."

Link didn't pay much interest in those words but was instead staring keenly at the Magician's skeleton wand. This wand had looked so familiar to him. Link was sure that he'd seen it in the game before, although it might look slightly different from the one in the game. Link had no way of confirming his suspicions, but he knew that there must be something significant about the wand.

"Vance," said Link, "do you recognize the wand in Morestern's hand?"

"The wand?" replied Vance. "Let me see" Vance then diverted his flaming eyes from the swordsman towards the Magician. After scrutinizing it for about ten seconds, Vance seemed to jump in shock suddenly.

"Link," said the Lich in a perturbed voice, "I'm afraid there's no way we can win this fight today. We should go back for now."

"What do you mean?" Celine asked the exact question in Link's mind.

"I've been too rash!" said Vance as he slapped his head in annoyance. "Morestern has a very powerful wand in his hand. Its full name is the Night's Stare, the Dark Arbiter's Wand. Among all epic-quality wands associated with dark magic, it is definitely one of the top three most powerful wands. Its biggest strength is that it allows the wand holder to instantaneously cast one Level-7 spell per day."

Instantaneous spellcasting? And a Level-7 spell at that?!

Link and Celine stared at each other. They both realized that this meant the opponent could attack and instantly kill at least one of them with only a single move. And if the opponent used Dorians' underlings to trap them in the middle and cast a wide-range attacking spell on them, then Link was sure not even his Dimensional Jump could save them then.

Furthermore, such a small battle wouldn't warrant the use of the highly invaluable White Prophetic Stone. All in all, this powerful opponent was just too much of a hassle to fight, and the best thing they should do now is to escape. They all saw how the two figures were now only about 100 feet away from where they hid; it was their last chance to run.

"Let's hide out in the cave for a while," whispered Link. "Once the Magician's gone, we'll come back and deal with the Swordsman."

"That's the only choice we have," said Vance nodding.

They then started to furtively escape.

But they'd only taken three steps when they noticed the Voodoo Magician stopped dead in his tracks as though he sensed something. He then directed his eyes straight towards the spot where Link and the other two were hiding.

"What's wrong?" asked Dorians impatiently. He hadn't sensed anything yet.

"It's probably nothing," said Morestern. "But I feel as if something is awry." He withdrew his gaze in Link's direction and continued to walk forward.

Only the gods knew how soaked Link and Celine were in cold sweat. They looked into each other's eyes and could clearly see the gratefulness to their luck. Even Vance was so frightened that they could hear his teeth chattering.

The three of them then continued to make for their escape under the cover of Traceless. They moved as fast as possible, even faster than Dorians and Morestern.

Dorians walked Morestern to the entrance of a hall, and they both stopped there.

"Go back and tell your master," said Dorian, "that everything in this cave belongs to me. He's got no claim on this place. There's no need to send any more messengers here. From now on, we are enemies."

"You'll regret this, Dorians," answered Morestern in a flat tone that showed no trace of emotion at all.

"Ha! Yes, I do regret ever letting you into my underground palace!" retorted Dorians with a cold jeering tone. He then turned around and walked out of view.

Morestern then continued to walk out of the place very slowly, not posing any threat to Link and the rest in their escape. By the time he'd reached the entrance, all three of them had safely hidden behind a giant boulder in a cave almost 200 feet away.

Link, Celine, and Vance had been hiding in the cave for five seconds when Morestern walked out of the entrance and cast a flying spell without any pause or suspicion and flew out towards the sea. Flying spells weren't safe to be used above land where someone might spot you, and so Morestern's direction was quite a normal decision that a Magician would make.

"We're safe now," said Vance. "He's gone. We should go back into the underground palace and deal with Dorians now."

Link had no objections to that, of course. He had no concerns about Dorians now that he'd seen the man. Right now, with the Voodoo Magician gone, Link was certain that the three of them could easily take down the Necromancer and his underlings and reclaim the underground palace.

Still, he felt there was something wrong with the Voodoo Magician. He thought it wouldn't be too great an idea to barge into the underground palace now while Morestern had just been gone a few minutes ago.

"We will eliminate Dorians for sure," said Link. "But I think we should wait for another half an hour, just to be on the safe side. We should wait here and see if there are any more changes next before going in."

Celine agreed with this suggestion. Her gaze was still locked on the direction the Voodoo Magician had flown in.

"To be honest," she said, "I was sure the Voodoo Magician had seen us. That man scares me for some reason."

"Let's wait, then," said Vance with a nod. He didn't actually feel the way Celine did, but he didn't mind waiting. Patience was one of the things you came to possess once you'd lived for a thousand years.

The three of them then waited patiently by the sea. After about ten minutes, Celine saw the figure of a man flying in the sky.

"Someone's up there!" she said pointing upwards. "He's back!"

Link looked up and saw a vague black spot in the sky. The spot quickly approached them, and the outline of the figure was soon clear to his eyes. It was indeed Morestern who had returned after seemingly flying away.

"Tsk tsk, what a sinister fellow!" remarked Vance. "He must've discovered us just now but pretended that he didn't." Vance was counting his luck as he realized that he almost fell into the sly bastard's trap. Had they stormed into the underground palace just now they would've been cornered from the inside of the palace and the outside as well. There was a high chance that all three of them would be dead then.

Soon afterwards, Morestern dropped down at about 300 feet away from the underground palace secret entrance. Link and the other two all noticed how they couldn't detect the slightest Mana fluctuations from Morestern's body. The cunning Magician must've used a camouflage spell or magical gear to mask his own aura and Mana in order to sneak up on them from behind!

Morestern landed on the surface of the sea and walked on the water all the way to the entrance of the underground palace without any stutter in his steps.

Behind the boulder, Vance was thinking of how exciting today had been. Think about it; they are ambushing an ambusher! He felt alive and exhilarated for the first time in literal eons.

"What do we do now?" Vance asked Link. "Do we follow the bastard underground?" He'd now acknowledged Link's extraordinary brains.

"There's no need for that," answered Link, shaking his head. "That man could instantaneously cast a Level-7 spell; if we follow him now, it'd be too risky for us. All we need to do now is to ignite a little fire."

"Ignite a little fire?" asked Vance confusedly.

Celine instantly understood Link's intentions, and this made her grin.

"Dorians and Morestern didn't seem to like each other very much just now," she said. "Dorians didn't lift a finger out of respect for the master, but if he were to see Merstern sneaking back into his underground palace after having seen him off, what do you think he'd do?"

Once Celine put it this way, Vance began to understand what Link meant. He rubbed his smooth skull and sighed.

"Oh, how I feel old," he lamented. "It seems my brain has rusted after such a long dormancy. I don't think I can catch up with you young people!"

Then after considering the matter for a while, Vance suddenly laughed and made a suggestion.

"I'm also a dark Magician like that Morestern, you know," he said. "And my skills and power are on par with him as well. Obviously, I'm the best person among us three to ignite this little fire. You just watch me, kids!"

After speaking, Vance then stealthily sneaked into the underground palace that he had built himself a long, long time ago.

## 177. The Start of All Mistakes

Morestern's idea was simple.

He had noticed a few uninvited guests in Dorians' underground palace. His plan was to hide in a safe place while this group of intruders fought Dorians. The best situation would be for both of them to be gravely injured, weakening their battle capabilities. He would then appear and reap all the benefits.

This was a perfect plan!

After casting a high-level Invisibility spell on himself, Morestern slowly creptito an alleyway in the underground palace. This was already his third time passing through his route. He clearly remembered the position of the two skeleton Warriors at the side of the alleyway and skillfully avoided them. Following which, he quickly reached the security hall.

The hall was extremely quiet as Dorians had returned to the depths of the underground palace. In the hall, the security beasts patrolled the area tirelessly, not giving anyone the opportunity to sneak into the palace.

"If the security beasts are still here, it means that they have yet to arrive in this area. Are they a group of cowards that would be discouraged by a minor setback?"Morestern could not understand.

This was strange. A Magician who could cast such an exquisite and delicate concealing spell would definitely have a strong magic foundation. He must at least be a Level-5 Magician. Such people were usually resilient and ambitious; how could they have given up so easily?

"Perhaps I was too earlybut that is not possible either. I left almost immediately. If the other party had not given up, they should already be in the palaceThis is bad!" He gasped.

Morestern suddenly thought of another terrible possibility. While he had noticed the presence of his opponents, he had failed to consider that they could have noticed him as well. Similarly, while he had thought of reaping all the benefits without lifting a finger, his opponents also might have predicted his actions.

If this group of intruders was, in fact, waiting for me to enter this palace againNo, I have to get out immediately! Morestern started panicking.

Morestern was a strong and quick-witted Magician as well. In a moment of negligence, he had placed himself in danger. However, the moment he realized something was amiss, his instinctive reaction was to first ensure his safety.

Alas, it was a battle between powerful Magicians. One would lose the entire battle if even one small mistake was made. The possibility of a comeback was close to zero then.

At the moment when Morestern was prepared to leave, he saw a pale purple light ball charging straight towards him from the dark alleyway behind him.

A Level-4 dark magic spell, Shadow Decay! Morestern was shocked by this sudden attack and immediately cast a defensive spell in response. Three dark green light spheres then appeared and started spinning at high speed around his body. This then created transparent ripples which made use of the three light balls as nodal points to create a light dome.

Defensive Spell: Three-Sided Barrier

Level-4 spell

Cost: 410 Points.

Effect: Creates a strong barrier that can defend against physical, elemental and mystic attacks.

(Note: Morestern's pride and joy)

Vance and Morestern were both Level-7 Magicians. In the current Firuman Continent, this was almost as powerful as one could get. Furthermore, they were both monsters who had lived for countless years. The moment they cast spells, it usually would not be a spell lower than Level-4. They could also cast all of them instantaneously, making them extremely formidable foes.

However, Morestern was once again caught off guard.

The Shadow Decay spell that Vance had cast made a sharp turn at the last moment and exploded in the alleyway behind Morestern.

A huge explosion sound could be heard, as the dark purple miasma dispersed in all directions.

Morestern was completely dumbfounded.

Hmm? The security beasts all stopped in their tracks and turned towards the door in the hall.

In that direction stood Morestern. While the Three Sided Barrier on his body was not emitting a strong glow, it was eye-catching enough in the dark underground chamber.

The security beasts immediately let out a wolf-like howl and charged towards Morestern. It was a terrifying sight to see over 30 Level-5 Warriors charging straight towards you. Despite Morestern being a Level-7 Voodoo Magician, he was slightly flustered.

He knew that his opponents were not merely these beasts. There was a strong dark Magician that was still hiding in the shadows. Furthermore, the magic swordsman Dorians would also prove to be quite troublesome.

"This is bad!" Morestern gasped. He realized he was caught in a trap.

He did not have much time to think. The security beasts were charging at top speed. He only had around one second to think of the best alternative before he would taste the wrath of their sharp claws and ferocious jaws. Morestern then raised his staff and pointed it towards these beasts, "Enhanced Cobweb!"

Enhanced Cobweb

Level-4 Spell

Cost: 290 Points

Effect: Creates an extremely adhesive cobweb. It is a very strong restitive spell.

The web was flung towards the beasts much like a fisherman casting his net. It did not take much effort for Morestern to trap all the beasts in his restitive spell. The accuracy and spellcasting speed was a true testament to Morestern's strength as a Level-7 Magician.

This was indeed a powerful spell. Although it was only Level-4, its adhesive effects were incredible. Once someone was trapped in the web, the speed of their movements would be greatly reduced. It would be a miracle if anyone could move three feet forward within a second while under the effects of this spell.

Now that he was temporarily out of danger, Morestern heaved a sigh of relief. He did not continue his assault on the beasts as he was still wary of his opponents, who were still hiding in the shadows.

This was way too dangerous. He had to retreat.

As he retreated, Morestern remained extremely vigilant. As long as he felt a threat to his safety, he would immediately locate his opponent and cast his wide-ranged instantaneous Level-7 spell without hesitation. After around 30 feet, Morestern still could not locate his opponent. The Magician seemed to be like a phantom, disappearing right after they fired that Shadow Decay spell at him.

Damn it! This was their plan right from the start! To get me trapped! This was the thing Morestern was most worried about.

At that time, a ferocious roar came from the depths of the palace, "Who is the one making a ruckus in my palace!"

It was Dorians' voice. This was followed by the sound of rapid and heavy footsteps. At the same time, the walls in the palace started glowing with a slight magical light, illuminating the area. There was now nowhere to hide.

Apart from that, the skeleton warriors who were lying dormant within the walls of the palace had also been awakened. Their eyes shone with a bloody sinister glow and, they walked out of the walls with swords in their hands, blocking Morestern's path of retreat.

Furthermore, Morestern also realized that a ghostly blue hue was covering the exit of the underground palace. He knew from a glance that this was a Level-7 area sealing spell, Shadow Fortress. The appearance of this area sealing spell had pushed Morestern to his limits.

At that moment, Dorians appeared in the security hall. He was accompanied by Warriors clad in a black body armor who held a giant black axe in their hand.

They were Dorians' prided Black Axe Fighters. The average strength of the Axe Fighters was Level-5. There was even a third of them who had reached Level-6!

If an army of such strength appeared in the Norton Kingdom, it would be enough to cause a huge ruckus. However, Dorians clearly did not want to be in the spotlight. His life goal was simple. He merely wanted to stay in the underground palace together with his vast wealth. Whoever dared to disrupt his peaceful life and riches would be his mortal enemy!

The moment he saw Morestern, he furiously bellowed, "Morestern, I did not think you would be the one! You despicable thief!"

"This is a misunderstanding; listen to me!" Morestern tried to explain.

"There is no misunderstanding! I only trust what I see. This time, you have angered me. Be prepared to taste my wrath!" A strong dark aura emanated from Dorians as he saw his security beasts being trapped in the cobweb.

He then raised the dark elemental sword in his hand and pointed it accusingly at Morestern, "Warriors, slice him to bits!"

Gwwahhhh! The Axe Fighters roared and charged towards Morestern. They adopted a dispersed formation to reduce their susceptibility to spells.

"Damn savages!" Morestern was enraged as well. He knew that explaining himself would be futile now. He could only depend on his own strength.

He raised his staff and waited till the Axe Fighters reached the golden distance for his spellcasting range before he shouted, "Corrosive Nova!"

Corrosive Nova

Level-7 spell

Cost: 3200 Points

Effect: With the caster as the center of the spell, this releases three bursts of extremely corrosive energy within one second. This spell has a certain impact to it and can blow off any obstacles it encounters along the way.

(Note: Morestern's killer spell!)

The spell was not one that was exceptionally flashy. Three green, light circles emerged from Morestern and gradually expanded in all directions.

However, the offensive power of this spell was insane.

With Morestern as the center of the destruction, everything within a 180 feet radius was immediately blown in all directions. As the targets were in mid-air, they would be corroded and disintegrated by the corrosive power of the spell. By the time they reached the ground, they would already be reduced to a pile of white dust.

The skeleton warriors and the security beasts were the first to suffer direct annihilation. The Black Axe Fighters then followed, as the spell instantly destroyed over 30 of them. The remaining ten over Axe Fighters had noticed something was amiss and immediately retreated, narrowly escaping death.

As the three corrosive magical waves subsided, Morestern looked at the piles of white dust on the floor with pride. He then stared coldly at Dorians, "Warrior, do you really think you are strong? You are nothing more than ants in my eyes."

Dorians was indeed shocked at this outburst of offensive power. He was glad that he did not charge forward impulsively. However, he then laughed, "How many Level-7 spells can you cast? I am sure you are almost out of mana points by now."

As he sniggered, he commanded the remaining ten Axe Fighters, "Kill him!"

The Black Axe Fighters charged forward without a shred of fear in their hearts.

Dorians did not attack. He merely went back to the depths of the palace. He was not retreating but calling out his triumph card. The most terrifying force in this palace was not Dorians, nor was it the Black Axe Fighter. It was something that usually hid itself in the depths of the underground palacean extremely powerful being that Dorians could never hope to match up to.

As he left, Dorians took a good look at the powerful Magician as he whispered, "Morestern, prepare to meet your death!"

Morestern gritted his teeth as he looked behind him. The area sealing spell, Shadow Fortress was still present. It had only been slightly weakened by the offensive power of the Corrosive Nova spell, causing the light to dim a little.

He also had no time to be concerned over the spell. The Black Axe Warriors were now only 90 feet away and were about to release their Battle Aura.

Morestern cursed, "Damn! That's too many things to deal with."

Under the effects of the Shadow Fortress, he was unable to use his transportation spells. It seemed like he was destined to stay behind.

However, Morestern still had the pride of a Level-7 Magician. Despite knowing that it was the end, he did not give up.

Twenty Black Axe Fighters would not be enough to defeat me.

As this thought flashed through his mind, the fastest three Black Axe Fighters had already started charging towards him. They also raised the giant axes in their hands which were now enveloped in a black aura. They seemed to be putting in all their power into this attack.

Morestern was prepared. He immediately pointed his staff at his attackers and hollered, "Get out!"

Level-4 spell, Single-Directional Blast!

A huge force exploded right in front of the three Black Axe Fighters. The timing of this spell was also perfect, exploding at the time when the fighters were at the peak of their charging speed, which incidentally, was also when their sense of balance was at their worst.

They were immediately flung in the opposite direction as the Battle Aura from their axes exploded towards the ceiling. That was not all. While they were flung backwards, they also crashed into many of their other comrades, hitting ten other fighters along the way.

As a Level-7 Voodoo Magician, Morestern was adept at cursing others from the shadows. However, this did not mean that his combat skills were to be trifled with. After all, he had lived for hundreds of years and had developed many Supreme Magic Skills. He would not be an easy foe even in direct combat.

"What a bunch of dumb savages!" Morestern said as he stared at the tumbling Black Axe Fighters. He then started putting all his focus into destroying these muscle-minded creatures.

Outside the underground palace, Vance could be seen retreating right after casting that Shadow Decay spell.

As the three of them felt the strong magical fluctuations coming from the underground palace, they looked at each other in awe.

"This Voodoo Magician is really powerful!" Link commented.

"A bit on the dumb side though," Celine laughed.

"He is actually a very intelligent person. He merely made one mistake. However, if he is still getting entangled with Dorians' Warriors, then he would have made a second mistake." Vance smiled as he rubbed his chin with his slender skeletal fingers.

"Why do you say so?" Link was curious.

Vance gloated, "Apart from the security beasts, there is also a magic puppet in my underground palace. In order to create this puppet, I spent nearly 20 years and an insane amount of materials. In essence, it is a perfect combat machine. Even I will not be able to defeat it."

Link and Celine stared at each other as they mourned for Morestern in silence.

## 178. The Invincible Magic Puppet

Thud!

The last of the axe-wielding Warriors finally fell. He was dead before he even hit the ground. Morestern heaved a long sigh of relief and reached his hand out to pull down the hood of his tattered cloak. Just then, a bone cracked and the body that had been attacked by the axe of a Warrior earlier almost collapsed to the ground.

"Ah, it's time to find a new body," said Morestern.

This wouldn't be a big problem to him though, as he had killed almost all of Dorians' men. Once he got out of here, he'd just find a safe place to rest for a while then come back once he'd recovered slightly and kill Dorians. Then, the underground palace would be his.

This turned out to be quite out of my expectations, Morestern thought.

He looked around at the corpses strewn all across the ground and couldn't help but feel proud of himself. He hadn't been out for hundreds of years; who would've thought that he'd still be on top of his game?

After a short rest, Morestern then walked towards the exit and was prepared to get out of the underground palace. The Shadow Fortress was still active, but it wouldn't be any problem for him to cancel it now, as there wouldn't be anyone else in here to pose any threat to him.

The Mana in his body was close to depleted now, so Morestern took out a bottle of fluorescent potion and swallowed it in one gulp. It was a high-level Mana potion which was highly effective in replenishing a body that was almost out of Mana back to its full capacity. He then lifted his wand and directed the Mana towards the skeleton at the tip of his wand and caused a huge Mana fluctuation to appear in the passageway.

Morestern was about to use the remaining Mana in his body to cast the Level-7 attacking spell in his wand to deactivate the Shadow Fortress. But just as the spellcasting process reached halfway, a thought emerged in Morestern's mind which made him pause.

If those people who were lying in wait for me are outside, he thought, then wouldn't it be suicide for me to use the Level-7 spell now?

Once he thought about it, Morestern gritted his teeth and decided to sit down inside here instead of going out. He knew that there were three people waiting to attack him, and one of them was a powerful dark magic Magician who was actually inside this underground palace. Meanwhile, Dorians' underlings had all been eliminated, so there was only Dorians left to deal with.

His body was weak now, so it wouldn't be a good idea to fight Dorians. The best plan for him was to just wait here quietly and recover his strength and not arouse Dorians' suspicion so he wouldn't come out.

As he thought of this, Morestern closed his eyes and entered into a half-conscious meditative state to accelerate his body's healing rate.

But just then, he heard footsteps coming from the depths of the underground palace.

Tap tap tap

The footsteps were light and regular, and they didn't sound that fast.

Morestern was naturally stunned. He opened his eyes immediately and saw a skinny figure walk out of the big entrance. The shadowy figure was about five feet and six inches tall. The figure's silhouette seemed quite slim and feminine; the only pity was that her chest was too flat. Morestern could now discern that she was wearing a long dress that was covered in shiny scales, while in her hand she was holding a four-foot-long sword. When he looked at her face again she noticed that her skin was as smooth and fair as porcelain, and her features almost flawless. The dark black eyes shone with beguiling charm ah, this was indeed a true beauty!

"You are?" Morestern asked in a daze.

He wasn't one to be so easily fooled by someone's outward appearances, of course. This young woman in front of him was indeed beautiful, but strangely enough, he couldn't sense any Life Aura from her at all. Neither did her body emit a Mana fluctuation. In other words, she was no different from a non-living lump of rock.

The young woman's face showed no trace of emotion as she walked towards Morestern in her neither-fast-nor-slow pace. Once she was about 160 feet away from him, she suddenly spoke up.

"Target: Voodoo Magician. Height: five feet, eight inches. Body weight: 150 pounds. Strengths: secret spells. Threat level: two stars."

"?" Morestern didn't catch all of what she said and just sat there dumbstruck by it all. Still, he was prepared to unleash an attack the moment he was sure this young woman was going to be a threat to him.

He activated a three-phase barrier, then lifted his wand and pointed it towards the young woman and chanted, "Elemental Collapse!"

A water-like translucent sheet of Mana then shot towards the strange young woman.

Ding!

The body of the young woman suddenly became blurred, and she bent backwards until her body was almost horizontal as she escaped the attacks of the Elemental Collapse with unimaginable speed.

She can't be that fast! Morestern thought, although he didn't seem to panic at all. If this woman could dodge an attack from a focused-range spell, then how about trying to dodge his wide-range attack?

"Spiderweb!" Morestern decided to slowly toss the web this time just to gauge her speed.

The moment the white light of the spell appeared, Morestern suddenly discovered that the young woman disappeared!

"Where did she go?" remarked the flummoxed Morestern.

Then, he felt a cool sensation on his forehead as if something cold was piercing through his skull. At the last moment, he saw the beautiful face of the young woman right in front of him. The last image he saw in his mind was that of those clear, charming eyes of hers.

How is this possible? Why didn't my protective barrier work?

Those were the last thoughts in Morestern's head. He was dead immediately afterwards, and the Spiderweb that he cast collapsed with him.

"Mission completed. Threat eliminated," said the young woman. Her voice was as pure and innocent as a lark's. She then turned around and walked back into the underground palace.

Tap tap tap

She kept a leisurely pace as she walked, as if she was just enjoying an afternoon stroll in the park.

Ba-dump!

Morestern's body slumped to the ground. He was dead, dead at the hands of a nameless opponent.

...

Outside the underground palace.

"Morestern is dead," Vance suddenly said. He had been following the situation inside the underground palace closely all along.

He'd left several detecting runes inside earlier, and these runes were telling him that the powerful Level-7 Voodoo Magician's Life Aura had been completely extinguished.

"Was he killed by the magic puppet?" asked Link.

Vance nodded his head. "I think so," he said. "If these runes aren't mistaken, there should only be two fighters left in the underground palace. One is Dorians, and the other is the magic puppet."

"Can we storm inside now?" asked Celine.

"Any time now," answered Vance. Vance glanced at the direction of the underground palace and saw that Morestern's Shadow Fortress was still there. "It takes Mana energy to sustain the Shadow Fortress. Now that Morestern's dead it should collapse soon. We should wait here for a while."

Link took the opportunity to ask Vance a question that had been bugging his mind.

"The magic puppet of yours seems quite powerful," he said. "Tell me more about it."

"Well, of course she's powerful!" exclaimed Vance with visible pride in his expressions. "She's called Nana. Her body was made with Gibb's Gold which can withstand extremely high and low temperatures. She's as close to indestructible as is physically possible. The magic seal on her body was made with thorium gold which is the best Mana conductor in the world. I'd also put 1028 units of Solon memory magic seal in her brain so she could learn from combat experience and evolve so she must've gotten stronger."

"Wait, wait, wait a second," interjected Celine. "I didn't get most of what you just said there. Can't you use plainer words?"

"Alright, then," said Vance. "There are two things that are her strongest points. Firstly, her speed, her extreme speed. She usually likes to walk at a strolling pace, but when she needs to, she can accelerate her speed up to an explosive point and move at a quarter mile per second."

Celine gulped at the revelation. She was now a Level-6 Warrior and could be considered as one of the best Warriors on the continent. But even if she were to spread out her wings and dive down from the sky, her speed couldn't be any faster than a tenth of a mile per second. That meant that she was still four times slower than Nana!

Even Link was stunned and incredulous.

"But that's faster than the speed of sound!" he exclaimed. "Are you sure you didn't exaggerate this?"

"I did no such thing!" said Vance, looking even more proud of his creation now. "In fact, that was her speed 400 years ago! Don't forget that Nana can improve and evolve, so to be frank, even I'm not sure how far she's advanced now. Which is why I must remind you, Celine, that you must only be on the defensive with her, never attempt to attack her!"

Celine rolled her eyes at the Lich's remarks. She's not so foolish or insane to ever attempt to attack a monster with such a speed. Not unless she wanted to die, anyway!

"What's her second strength, then?" asked Link.

"Her second greatest strength was attacking the opponent's weakest point," said Vance. For fear that the two couldn't understand the technical terms, Vance used his bony finger to draw a very simple magic seal on the ground.

"Look at this," he said. "This is the Level-0 defensive spell, Basic Shield. When the spell is cast, a light shield will appear around the caster's body. Isn't that right?"

Both of them nodded their heads.

"Viewed on the surface," continued Vance, "this light shield seems smooth and uniform, but in truth, there will be some points on the shield where it is much weaker than the other pointsDo you follow?"

Celine frowned as she couldn't understand much of it. Her knowledge in spell foundation was not her strongest suits. Link, on the other hand, nodded keenly, although his brows were still furrowed.

"The points of different strengths do indeed exist," he said, "but they are usually unstable and don't exist for long. Every weak point can only last for as long as ten microseconds. How can Nana ever utilize this point?"

Vance nodded his head at Link's question.

"The fact that her speed can reach a quarter of a mile per second," he began to explain, "proves that she has an extremely fast reaction speed. In truth, 400 years ago, her reaction speed had reached 0.002 seconds. In other words, two microseconds."

"That fast?" asked Link, completely astounded.

After coming to this world, Link's most powerful advantage had been his terrifying thinking speed. He'd once measured that his limit was around one microsecond, and he couldn't sustain that kind of thinking speed for longer than two seconds. Yet now, he'd met a human-made puppet whose reaction time was almost as fast as his own! He must concede at this point that Vance truly was a genius who should be very proud of his inventions.

"Link," said Celine, "I think I'm a little frightened by this." Although she didn't actually understand the specifics of this puppet's strengths, she still felt that the reaction speed of two microseconds and the moving speed of a quarter of a mile per hour were just too staggering to think of.

She would have no hope to fight against or even defend herself against someone with such speed. She might even get killed within a second and not even know what hit her!

"Don't worry," said Link after thinking about it for a moment. "I'll protect you from behind."

There were three of them, and one of them was a Level-7, thousand-year-old Lich who was also the magic puppet's creator. There was no reason why they couldn't defeat a single magic puppet, was there? Link's own reaction time was also dangerously quick too, so he should be able to protect Celine without a problem.

"Alright, then," said Celine. She knew that Link would never give her empty promises, so now that he'd given her his word, she was finally relieved.

Just then, the faint blue light in the underground palace flashed ever so slightlythe Shadow Fortress had collapsed.

"It's time," said Vance. "Let's go."

Once again, Vance cast Traceless on all three of them and led the other two into the underground palace. Celine gripped at her blue crystal sword tightly and followed behind the Lich closely. Link was the last one to enter behind Celine. All three were highly focused as they prepared to fight against the invincible magic puppet.

Underground Palace.

After walking for around 150 feet, they saw a body on the ground which had its arms severed.

"It's Morestern." Vance whispered.

Celine quickly squatted down to observe the injuries on the Voodoo Magician's body. After glacing up and down, she could not help but gasp, "What fast attacking speed!"

From the shape and depth of the wound on Morestern's forehead, Celine, who was a swordsman, could accurately determine the terrifying attacking speed of the magic puppet. It was a level that she could only hope to reach.

Meanwhile, Vance and Link were observing the magic traces left on the scene.

Vance pinched the piles of white dust on the ground and cooed, "This old guy seemed to have cast a Corrosive Nova spell before he died. From the residual magic fluctuations, this spell was released extremely quickly. I estimate the total casting time to be only around 0.2 seconds. The Dark Arbiter is really a powerful wand."

Link pointed to a set of footprints on the side and said, "This small footprint was probably left by the magic puppet."

Vance looked over and nodded. "That's right. Nana's image is that of a 17-year-old girlDon't think of it that way! The only reason why I used this image was to bewitch the opponents!"

Link shrugged his shoulders and decided not to comment on that decision. He continued to observe the traces on the ground. After a few minutes, he said, "After the magic puppet killed Morestern, she left immediately. After around half a minute, Dorians appeared again. He came right over hereThis should be the place where the wand was. He picked it up and left."

Link then switched an angle to view the traces as he continued, "From the footprints on the ground, there were two outbursts of power. The first one was here, where the puppet moved horizontally for three feet, and her attack was dodged; one Elemental Disintegration spell was released. She then started fighting back."

Link spoke as though he had witnessed the battle scene first hand, explaining along the way. Link then walked up beside Morestern's body. He saw a white gelatinous substance and dabbed his finger in it. After taking a sniff, he continued, "When the magic puppet retaliated, Morestern was just about to release the Cobweb spell. Vance, how fast do you reckon Morestern actually needs to cast this spell?"

Vance knew that Link was estimating the power of the magic puppet and was hence willing to cooperate. He observed the white substance and said, "I have seen him cast this spell once. He was extremely fast. This level of completion should have taken less than 0.1 seconds."

"Less than 0.1 seconds? That is too vague. I need it to be more specific," Link pressed.

Vance thought back on what he saw and reported an accurate number, "0.08 seconds should be about right."

Link then measured the distance between the two outbursts of power and frowned. He then said, "The distance between the two footprints is 150 feet. If the magic puppet had attacked while Morestern was casting the spell, her speed could be estimated to be at a terrifying 2000 feet per second. Vance, you were totally right, this magic puppet has evolved greatly."

Celine was horrified, "If we consider the starting step and the landing action, her top speed would be much greater than 2000 feet per second. This is insane!"

This outburst of energy was comparable to a short distance teleportation spell.

Vance gave a bitter smile and said, "Nana seems to have exceeded my expectations. What do we do now?"

Vance was not confident in going against such fast reaction and attacking speed. He would be courting death! Not to mention how embarrassing it actually was to be defeated at the hands of his own creation.

Celine turned to look at Link.

Link stayed silent. From the current data they had, he quickly calculated the power limit of the magic puppet. After around three minutes, he said, "It will be a bit tough, but we still stand a chance. For example, when traveling at such a high speed, she will not be able to change directions. This can be seen from the battle traces."

To change directions while traveling at 2000 feet per second would generate a huge centripetal force that would put great pressure on the magic puppet's body. Even if her body were hardy enough to withstand such pressure, the ground beneath her feet wouldn't be able to provide enough friction to make the direction change. This was not merely dependent on the power of the magic puppet, but also the environmental restitions.

He looked at Celine and said, "Give me the bracelet; I have to make some alterations to this spell."

The bracelet contained a Level-5 Crimson Edelweiss spell. As the creator of this spell, Link naturally had a good understanding of this spell. He was extremely clear that this spell also contained a magic inflection point which would last around 0.06 seconds. This was sufficient time for the magic puppet to deliver a fatal blow. In order to ensure Celine's safety, he had to compress the duration of the magic inflection point to within 0.01 seconds.

Celine handed her defensive bracelet over to Link. Link then sat down on a piece of rubble and took out the best material he had brought with him, the Fire Star Thorium, before he started to replace the ordinary Thorium in the bracelet with this high-quality material. The process was extremely fast and could be done with a simple replacement spell. It merely took ten minutes. Following which, Link used a Higgs Field spell to carefully repair the tiny flaws in the bracelet. As time was tight previously, he did not polish this bracelet to his usual standards. He originally thought that no one in the world would be able to take advantage of such minor flaws. However, now that this puppet had appeared, he would have to defend against it.

The entire bracelet had around five flaws. Although they were all inconspicuous alone, their effects would stack and render the eventual Crimson Edelweiss spell imperfect. Ordinary people would not be able to feel any difference between the two. However, a strong Magician would be able to tell simply from the magic fluctuations that was emanating from the bracelet.

After Link completely refined the bracelet, Vance, who was observing the whole time, could not help but applaud, "This bracelet is beautiful!"

Link smiled and put the bracelet on Celine's wrist. The previous bracelet he gave Celine was around the same quality as the Dragon's bracelet he gave Eleanor. However, the quality of the bracelet now was much higher than that.

"Now, I do not have to worry about the magic puppet breaking through the magic inflection point," Link mentioned as he held Celine's smooth and soft hands. Link did not wish to let go of it as he caressed it gently.

Celine merely smiled and did not pull her hand back.

Link then turned towards Vance while holding her hand. "Instant spellcasting requires complete focus. There can be no distractions in your heart nor any fluctuations in mood. Only then can flawless spells be released."

"I'll do my best."

Vance rubbed his smooth skull and suddenly lacked confidence. It was simply enough for a thousand-year-old monster like himself to feel no distractions in his heart. However, for one to have no fluctuations in moodAs long as one was still alive, that would be almost impossible to do during combat! This request was fundamentally anti-human!

Now that the preparations had been done, the success of their mission would depend entirely on their reaction on the spot.

"Alright, let's enter."

The three of them progressed forward.

As they passed through the security hall, a long and winding corridor appeared. There were magnificent statues on both sides of the corridor, and the ground was made entirely of black jade. It was a sight to behold.

"This is what an underground palace should feel like," Link said with a smile.

"This is merely the beginning," Vance spoke with pride.

As they walked along the corridor, they could feel that they were walking along a slight upwards slope which brought them higher towards ground level. After two whole rounds, a huge copper door appeared right in front of them. The door was at least 30 feet in height and 24 feet wide. Glorious scenes where the God of Light created the world were inscribed on both sides of the door, giving the door an intense historical and epic presence.

Celine was pleasantly surprised at the sight, as she stared at Vance once more. "I did not think that you had such good taste."

Link agreed.

Vance felt extremely satisfied.

The door was left ajar, and they passed through it without any obstructions. Behind the door, was an extremely spacious hall that was more than 2000 square feet. The ground was carved out of obsidian, and in order to maintain the stability of the hall, 20 thick pillars each the width of two adults were built. Similarly, intricate statues were carved into each of these statues for aesthetic purposes.

The three of them progressed, using the pillars as cover. After around 60 feet, they heard voices in front of them.

"Master, is this fine?"

From the voice, one could easily tell that it was magic swordsman Dorians.

But wasn't he the master of the underground palace? How could there be another one? Who exactly was this master? The three of them were puzzled.

At that moment, a crisp voice sounded.

"Joint magic rune lubricated level 89%, beneath expectations. Number two, restart!"

"Yes, Master." Dorians voice once again sounded as brushing sounds followed.

As they listened to the conversation, an incredulous look overcame all of their faces. They had gotten it wrong the whole time. Dorians was never the master of this palace. This true master of the palace was the magic puppet, while Dorians was merely her servant. It suddenly all made sense. How could Dorians face a Level-7 Magician without any fear, and why he would be such a cheapskate and be willing to stay in this palace despite being a strong magic swordsman?

The thing that was keeping him here was not the wealth, but the magic puppet!

Link then looked at Vance. "Nana is your creation. Why is it not listening to you?"

Vance helplessly laid out his hands and said, "I have no idea as well. Four hundred years ago, Nana was merely a magic puppet that I created. How could I know that things would turn out like this?"

"Then, can you still give her an order?" Link asked.

Celine also looked at Vance expectantly. As long as there was a chance for her to avoid battling with this magic puppet, she would take it.

Vance said regrettably. "I'm afraid not. I don't look like who I was 400 years ago at all. Furthermore, before I was imprisoned, I had set Nana into a state of slumber. Now that she has awakened, I'm afraid that something must have happened."

Four hundred years was a long time. It was true that many things could have changed.

Link took a deep breath before saying, "Then I guess there is no other way. Let's do this. I will commence the ambush while Celine helps me defend against any unprecedented attacks."

"Got it." Celine stood in front of Link as she spoke with resolve.

Link then started concentrating his mana. He was about to cast the Level-6 Titan's Hand spell.

Link could cast the spell in 0.5 seconds. This was already considered an extremely fast speed. However, the moment he started concentrating mana, the magic fluctuations broke through the veil of their concealing spell. Nana's voice then echoed through the hall.

"Intruder alert! Threat level: 3 stars!"

Following which, a young girl with an exquisite appearance and huge, clear eyes appeared.

Celine was extremely cautious of Nana. The moment she saw Nana, she instinctively activated her Level-6 bloodline spell, Obsidian Shield. This spell was extremely special, as it would notiterfere with other spells that were being cast at the same time. Furthermore, it could also be activated instantly. After activating this spell, Celine then triggered the Crimson Edelweiss spell. Link had given the bracelet a mana retention ability which allowed mana to be stored and thus allowed the spell to be cast instantaneously whenever Celine willed. Hence, within 0.1 seconds, the Level-6 Obsidian Shield was covered by another Level-5 crimson forcefield.

The moment these two spells took form, Nana's attack arrived.

A figure appeared right in front of the Crimson Edelweiss spell. She rushed into the forcefield, ignoring the burning heat from the forcefield. Although the heat seemed to have no effect on her, the forcefield seemed to have lowered her speed greatly.

However, her speed was still fast by normal standards. The dagger in her hands then struck like a venomous snake, piercing through the Edelweiss spell before piercing through Celine's second layer of defense, the Obsidian Shield. It was about to hit Celine's body anytime soon.

This was not an attack that took advantage of the weak points in the spell. Nana merely used brute force to break through two high-level defensive spells.

Link was horrified. How can she have such destructive offensive power!

Nanasspeed was ridiculously fast. Even with the combined protection of Crimson Edelweiss and the Black Crystal Shield, it would still be difficult for Celine to effectively defend herself.

She did not step backwards because Link was behind her, which would mean that it would inevitably put him in a very dangerous situation. Her only choice was to move slightly sideways in the hopes that she could avoid the brunt of the impact herself.

This confrontation happened within a fraction of a second. Even Vance's reaction time was too slow to do anything, as Mana was still stuck in his Gray Flame wand and the spell just wouldn't form quick enough.

It wasn't that Vance's spellcasting was too slow, it was just that Nanasspeed was too terrifyingly fast!

The same was true of the Necromancer swordsman. When Nana and Celine clashed, he was a hundred feet away from them and hadn't even had time to pull out his sword yet.

The only one there who could make any meaningful response was Link.

Seeing that Celine was in danger, Link's heart suddenly beat much faster. The next moment, the world around him began to slow downhe was now entering the state of absolute calm that allowed him to cast spells at an ultra-high speed. In this state, anything that had nothing to do with the immediate surroundings of the battlefield was cast out of Link's mind. All he could see now and be focused on was Nana and the sword in her hand.

The sword advanced inch by inch towards Celine. It encountered the Black Crystal shield on its way, and at such a high speed, the shield acted like a real crystal; it broke on contact with the sword, and fragments of the shield scattered about a quarter of an inch before they evaporated and dissipated into dark elements.

Link could now see Nanassword very clearly. He didn't know what material it was made of, but its blade was dark blue, and there was a thin blue electric arc hovering on the surface of the sword. Once the electricity made contact with any kind of shield, the shield would be rendered completely useless.

There are still 0.05 seconds left before the tip of the sword touches Celine's body, Link thought. I still have time!

At this point, Link had cast the Titan's Hand, and under his precise control, the giant fiery hand made up of pure fire elements quickly went around Celine's body and grasped the magic puppet Nana in its clutches. When the giant hand had wrapped around half of Nana's body, a thought suddenly occurred in Link's headshe's resistant to extreme temperatures!

Once he thought of this point, Link promptly changed his plans. He'd originally set the fiery hand to stretch out and grasp Nana, but now he directed the giant hand to clench into a fist and take the form of the Fist of Firomoz and increase the speed to its maximum limit to punch Nana from the side.

Link had calculated that this blow would send Nana flying right before the edge of her sword hit Celine's body! Unfortunately, in the next moment, the magic puppet Nana responded to Link's attacks; she suddenly pulled back the sword that was about to pierce Celine. Now, without the force field of Edelweiss and the Black Crystal Shield in the way, her sword moved at an impossibly fast speed. In a fraction of a second, it struck the Titan's Hand.

Nanasshort sword then pierced through the Titan's Hand and immediately Link could feel that he'd lost control over the fire elements in the spell and the fiery hand began to explode.

She didn't attack the weakest point in my spell, Link realized. She directly attacked the critical point in the Mana structure and shattered the stability of the spell instantly. She's evolved much further than Vance expected!

Although this could be considered as attacking the weakest point, Nana's move just now was almost ten times more powerful than any magic spell. When this kind of attack was coupled with her high resistance towards extreme heat, Nana had turned out to be a Magician's arch nemesis!

Link watched helplessly as the fire elements in the Titan's Hand began to collapse and explode, while Nana had pulled back her sword and once again thrust it towards Celine.

But this time, Celine had gotten enough time to respond. She raised up her Blue Crystal sword and assumed the defensive stance.

Still, she could only block Nanassword. Celine could only rely on her solidified Battle Aura to protect her from the exploding fire elements from the Titan's Hand as both the Crimson Edelweiss and the Black Crystal shield had both been destroyed.

The Titan's Hand was a Level-6 spell, and the force of the explosive fire elements from this spell was no weaker than a full force Level-4 Flaming Blast. If Celine were to be struck by the brunt of the impact from the explosion, her Battle Aura would surely be depleted. It might even send her flying, leaving an opportunity for Nana to pursue and attack her.

Link must not let the Titan's Hand explode!

The moment that thought popped up in his head, Link activated the Soul's Glyph and his Level-5 Vulcan's Hand began to take form. Within a microsecond, Link used one of his Supreme Magical Skills, Machine Gun to transform the Vulcan's Hand's spell structure using Mana resonance. Combined with the collapsing fire elements in the air, it formed into a new Titan's Hand.

And so, the fire elements started to reorganize, re-stabilize and instantly formed into the clenched fist shape of the Fist of Firomoz and struck hard at Nana.

This type of attack was obviously something Nana couldn't have predicted. Then, a crisp yet somehow urgent voice emerged from her mechanical throat.

"Target's behavior deviated from initial estimation," she said. "Recalculating new strategy!"

Link couldn't care less what she was doing. All he knew was that her reaction had now slowed down for a fraction of a second.

Bam!

The Fist of Firomoz struck squarely on Nana's body. The impact was so powerful that it sent the magic puppet flying a few feet away.

While her body was still in mid-air, she was in her most vulnerable state; another idea popped up in Link's mind. The movements of the Titan's Hand followed his control precisely and changed from the fistito a stretched out hand which then clutched Nana and gripped her tightly in its palm.

Then, with a smooth and instantaneous motion, the hand then started to implode on itself.

She's heat-resistant, huh? Then let's see if she could hold up to the scorching temperature above 5000 degrees Fahrenheit in the center of the fiery hand!

"Extreme heat detected," said the magic puppet. "Heat dissipation process started."

Right after those words were heard, there was a pronounced sizzle within the Titan's Hand. Then suddenly, a hole appeared in the fiery hand, and a dark blue sword emerged from it. Then, the magic puppet whose whole body had now completely turned a burnishing red jumped out of the Titan's Hand, seemingly without any serious damage.

"Impressive!" exclaimed Link.

The Level-6 Titan's Hand could reach a temperature that would melt steel when it imploded. Yet, the magic puppet escaped from its clutches virtually unscathed. It seems that the material Vance had used called Gibb's Gold really was the toughest metal!

At that moment, Celine had already reactivated the Crimson Edelweiss and the Black Crystal Shield. Meanwhile, Vance who was standing near a huge pillar had already completed the casting of a spell.

"Metal Decay!" he shouted as he pointed his wand towards Nana. A grayish ray of light shot through the air and struck her.

Metal Decay

Level-6 Master Spell

Effects: Produces an extremely corrosive ray of light. This is the arch nemesis of all metals.

(Note: This is one of Vance's proudest spells.)

This spell was similar to the spell Elemental Collapse that Vance had cast on the cliff earlier, only with one crucial difference this spell exerted a spiritual control on the target which prevented them from dodging the ray of light, meaning that there was no way for a target to evade this attack!

Still, what happened next was utterly shocking.

Nana seemed to realize that she couldn't possibly evade this spell, so she made no attempt to step back or sideways. Then, there was whoosh sound, and her body mysteriously disappeared out of thin air. When she appeared again, her sword was already thrust towards Vance's head and was about to pierce through his skull!

Everything had happened too fast that Vance had no time to respond at all. In fact, he was still controlling Metal Decay andamng at Nana when he realized that she was now right in front of him.

But while Vance couldn't respond, Link definitely could. In truth, Nana only seemed to disappear in Vance, Celine and Dorians' eyes. Link's eyes could still follow Nana's every step in that moment. Just as Nana was rushing towards Vance, Link thought up another way to go against her.

As he focused his mind, he began to do two things simultaneously. With one hand, he controlled the Titan's Hand and transformed itito the Fist of Firomoz and struck it at the Necromancer swordsman Dorians. Meanwhile, his other hand was casting the Magician's Hand.

The Magician's Hand's target was not Nana, but was instead aimed at Vance. To be precise, it was aimed at the eye sockets that held his Soul's Flame.

Crack!

Vance's skull dodged Nanassword at the last possible instant as it was detached from the rest of his skeleton. Under Link's control, the skull, along with the Lich's wand, Gray Flame, was sent flying towards himself.

It was only then that Vance finally had time to respond, and he realized that Link had saved his life as it was hanging by a thread.

His skull and his wand were placed in Link's hood on his back. The view was somewhat limited from here, but that was fine since he could easily use the Magician's Hand to raise his skull and leave it floating beside Link. After that, he then used the same spell to get his wand back to his side.

There was no time to thank Link for his heroic rescue, so Vance immediately cast another Metal Decay and aimed it at the magic puppet. She was purely made up of metal, which meant that it would mean certain doom for Nana. But just before Vance could cast the spell, Nana once again utilized her ultra-speed and escaped.

At the same time, there was a loud boom which came from the Titan's Hand that struck the swordsman Dorians at an incredible speed. Dorians was flung far away like a canoball due to the impact, and his whole body slammed into the wall half a second later which then left a huge human-shaped indentation there.

He was limp and motionless when he fell to the ground. The blue light glow from his eyes became very faint. It was obvious that he'd been seriously injured.

Link then prepared to unleash another strike at Dorians to send him straight down to hell.

However, the magic puppet Nana once again launched an attack, although this time her aim was not Link or anybody else's body, but Link's Titan's Hand instead. There was another sizzle, and in no time at all, Nana successfully destroyed Link's Titan's Hand for the third time and thus saved Dorians' life.

As soon as the Titan's Hand collapsed, there was another bang coming from her position, and it turned out that once again she was rushing towards Celine in breakneck speed and had now broken through the newly reformed Crimson Edelweiss and Black Crystal Shield.

This magic puppet was simply a machine of destruction hell-bent on eliminating her every target. She was now on a direct collision course with Celine, and her speed exceeded even that of a supercar. If Link, Vance, and Celine did not join all their forces together, there would've been no chance for any of them to defeat her.

Luckily, Celine was already prepared for Nana this time. Her Blue Crystal sword was positioned precisely where Nana's attack will hit her, and shortly after, her sword and Nana's own sword clashed, producing a loud clang.

Then, cracks appeared on the blade of Celine's crystal sword. The cracks started to spread out like a spider web, and her body was flung backwards by the terrifying forces of the impact.

Link almost jumped out of his skin when he saw what had transpired. Although Celine's sword wasn't of epic quality, it was still an extremely high-quality weapon made with a type of magic crystal that was as tough as the metal Khorium. The fact that it was cracked just showed how frightening the force of the attack was!

She must've aimed the attack at the weakest point of the sword! Link realized.

Meanwhile, Nana was not done with Celine. She rushed forward towards her and was about to give her the last blow.

Link had by then re-formed a new Titan's Hand and was about to block Celine from Nana's attacks, but to his surprise, there was another loud boom. The next thing he knew, Nana had changed her direction and target and was now rushing towards him!

"Target locked," said Nana with her eerily calm voice. "Threat level, five stars. Must eliminate as soon as opportunity arises!"

Link had successfully thwarted her attacks by then, so she had learned to treat him as the primary target whose elimination was her highest priority.

At that point, Celine's body had been struck by a violent force and was flung far backwards. She was then completely powerless and couldn't even maintain her own body's balance, let alone unleash an attack at Nana.

On the other hand, Vance was still casting his Level-6 spell Metal Decay and would need at least another second to complete it. Even if he was to forcefully stop the spellcasting process, there was still nothing he could do to cast a powerful enough defensive shield between Nana and Link.

This meant that Link was all alone now.

His only defense against Nana was the Crimson Edelweiss. Yet, Link had seen many times how this spell was simply useless against the force of Nanasspeed and power.

In truth, even if Link could block himself with another Titan's Hand at this moment, Nana could still break through it so easily that it would make no difference at all.

Which meant that at this point Link's death was almost certain!

Underground Palace

The crisp voice rang across the underground palace, "Mission complete. Threat eliminated."

Nanasslender blade pierced through Link's chest as fresh blood poured out of the wound caused by the pale blue sword. Link held Nana's blade in his hand as he weakly smiled.

"Just a bit more, heh."

The next moment, Link became an elemental phantom image together with Celine, who was still airborne, and Vance's skull and headless body, who was in the middle of casting a spell. At the very last moment, Link made use of his fast reaction speed to avoid Nana's fatal attack and decisively activated his Dimensional Jump spell to escape.

This magic puppet was way too scary. It was impossible to defeat her even when the three of them joined forces. They could only escape and come back after formulating a more detailed plan.

After a light sound, the three of them disappeared from the underground palace. Nana was surprised at this turn of events. This was the first time she encountered such a peculiar situation since she was created. She stood there motionless for a few seconds before speaking with the crisp voice, "Confirm that the threat is still not eliminated. Target has been marked. Starting pursuit."

A sound of an air blast could be heard, and the next moment, she had disappeared from her location and appeared at the entrance of the hall. Another loud air blast echoed through the underground palace and Nana had begun her pursuit.

On the cliff outside the underground palace, Link, Celine, and Vance appeared out of thin air.

This was Celine's second time experiencing the Dimensional Jump spell. She managed to recollect herself quickly enough. However, Vance was still experiencing some dizziness as his skull rolled about on the ground. If not for Link's quick reaction, his skull might have already fallen off the cliff.

Picking his skull up and placing it back on his body, Vance creaked his thousand-year-old bones and finally regained his soberness.

He immediately asked, "That was a Legendary spell?"

"Sort of." Link nodded.

Vance gasped and said unbelievably, "I have heard that you are the Chosen One. It seems like they were not lying."

Link smiled bitterly and said, "Let's not mention this for now. I feel that we are still not out of danger."

As he spoke, he covered his wound with his hand and started concentrating water elements to seal his wound in ice. Although the wound did not damage any vital organs, it severed a few blood vessels and was extremely painful.

After the sealing was complete, Link cast an Elemental Healing spell on himself before drinking another high-level healing potion. That was when he was finally satisfied with his recovery process. He now merely had to find a priest when he got back to the Girvent Forest for a complete recovery.

The moment he felt safe, Celine immediately pointed to an area below the cliff and screamed, "Look, it's that magic puppet!"

"I knew it!" Link was almost speechless and stood up, "We cannot defeat her now, let's go!"

Link was not going to overestimate his abilities once again. Vance and Celine were similarly horrified by the extent of Nana's power and naturally did not have the confidence to win in another fight. They hence agreed to escape together with Link immediately. However, the magic puppet was traveling way too fast. It was impossible to outrun her on ground. Link then asked Vance, "She can't fly can she?"

Vance smiled bitterly and said, "Probably not. I did not give her that ability. But who knows?

"Then let's fly."

Flying spells were something that Link had in his arsenal. He summoned a Storm Eagle.

Storm Eagle spell

Level-5 Ordinary Spell

Cost: 100 Mana Points for summoning, 10 points per second afterwards.

Effect: This is an extremely fast flying spell.

Link originally learned this spell so as to travel faster while he was rushing from one location to the next. Three seconds later, a pure wind elemental giant eagle appeared in front of them.

"Hop on." Link mounted the eagle. Upon seeing that Celine was about to fly with her own wings, he said, "Celine, conserve your energy."

"Alright." Celine then landed gently on the eagle's back. The last to mount the eagle was Vance.

The eagle howled and spread its wings majestically. It then jumped into the air and immediately flew in the direction of the sea.

This was not Link's choice. While the storm eagle was fast and could cover over 1000 miles in an hour, Link was still not confident that they could shake off a magic puppet whose top speed was at 2000 feet per second.

"Let's hope that the puppet doesn't go that fast in the water." Link smiled. To think that two Level-6 and one Level-7 professional would be thoroughly defeated by a human-made objectthis was more than just embarrassing.

After flying for merely a few seconds, Vance reminded, "Link, faster! She is catching up to us!"

Link was still trying to get the giant eagle to speed up when he was shocked by Vance's words. He looked behind him and saw that Nana was already on the cliff. She then leaped off the cliff decisively and charged straight towards them.

Using her top speed of 2000 feet per second, her leap was almost like a canoball. The distance between both parties was rapidly narrowing.

However, the magic puppet was unable to fly. It was clear that she was traveling in a parabola curve. Link then commanded the storm eagle to make a sharp turn. Within a second, the beautiful, young puppet reached a distance close enough to launch an attack. However, as she could not turn in mid-air, she was just about to miss her chance.

The three of them on the eagle heaved a sigh of relief. This puppet had an overwhelming speed and presence. Even Link felt pressured when fighting against it.

However, something strange happened.

The magic puppet threw something into the air. Link observed the whole process carefully and realized that it was a large stone. As the stone flew into the air, the puppet's body made a sharp turn in mid-air! She then flew at top speed towards the eagle!

The hell? She made use of momentum and physics? This puppet is ridiculous! Link thought.

Momentum was one of the three standard laws of energy conservation on earth. Rockets made use of these theories in order to fly in a vacuum. These laws applied to the World of Firuman as well. When Nana threw a rock in the opposite direction of where she wanted to go, it was as though a rocket jet had been activated. Naturally, her body would veer towards the direction opposite of where she threw the rock.

This was an unexpected turn of events. As Nana closed in on the three of them, Link was at a loss for what to do. They were about to collide headlong.

Everyone was speechless. How could this puppet be so ruthless!

Link was the first one to react. He immediately canceled the storm eagle spell and grabbed Celine by the waist. He then raised his wand and cast a Vector Resistance Field spell onto Nana.

Vector Resistance Field was a Level-1 spell. It was a low-level spell and was not all that powerful. However, there was an occasion for every spell, no matter how useless it might seem. This Vector Resistance Field spell was near perfect for this situation.

The atmosphere blurred for a moment as the forcefield crashed into Nana from the side.

Nana was extremely fast on the ground. However, she had just used the stone in her hand and was in mid-air where there was no friction for her to capitalize on. She was thus unable to avoid this spell and suffered the full force of the collision.

The puppet then veered slightly to the side while Link made use of the opposing force of the impact to glide past Nana.

Both of them then crossed each other in mid-air as the distance between them once again widened.

Nana was out of options this time around as she fell helplessly into the sea. Link then once again summoned the storm eagle while in mid-air before commanding it to catch Vance, who was currently floating casually using a levitating spell.

With a loud splash and the crashing of waves, Nana fell into the sea. The three of them watched in fear from the eagle's back.

"Will she still be chasing us?" Celine asked, still in shock from the previous encounter.

"I have no idea. I indeed set her to endless pursuit mode the previous time though" Vance was completely confused. Four hundred years ago, he was only a little wary of Nana's power. However, he could not bear to destroy this product that he spent so much time constructing as well. He hence commanded Nana to go into a deep sleep. Little did he know that 400 years later, not only did she awaken, she had also evolved to a point where he could not even retaliate in a direct battle.

Vance felt extremely dumb to have created a magic puppet that he could not control.

Link looked at the seabed and carefully observed the ripples on the surface of the water. He then sighed and said, "The endless pursuit mode is still ongoing. She is still running while under the water. Vance, we seemed to have been marked in a way that she can locate us no matter where we go. Do you know what kind of marking it is?"

"I do. But it is impossible to remove it." Vance awkwardly smiled.

"Why do you say so?"

"The marking is on you. When Nana pierced her sword through your body, the metal particles on her blade entered your bloodstream. These particles are extremely small. The only way to get rid of it is to dranal of your blood."

Draining blood? This was not earth where one could get a blood transfusion anytime they wanted. This meant that they only had two choices now. The first one was to run for the rest of their lives until the puppet malfunctioned. The second was to destroy the puppet.

As for escaping from her pursuit, that would be impossible.

"Why not the both of you leave while I lead her into the Norton Military Fortress?" Link said. He could not defeat this puppet alone. However, he believed that the power of the entire army would be enough to suppress her.

"It wouldn't work." Vance smiled bitterly.

"Why?" Link was confused.

"She is not just a simple-minded puppet. She is extremely intelligent and can determine danger. She will never enter the fortress alone. Unless you are prepared to spend your entire life in the army, she will definitely find a chance to face you off in a direct battle." Vance hated how well he designed this puppet. To think that he would be unable to find a flaw in this design.

Perhaps there was one in the past. However, in the 400 years when he was away, this flaw had probably already been covered up by her evolution.

"Are we really going to live our lives on the run?" Celine could not believe that this was how she would die.

Vance fell silent and looked at Link. Link knew exactly what Vance was thinking.

"You want me to use a Level-9 spell to deal with her?"

It was definitely possible to use a Level-9 spell to destroy the puppet. However, it was wasteful and extravagant to waste a Level-9 spell on an artificial being.

"I don't think there are any other alternatives," Vance sighed.

"No, let me think about it." Link started recollecting the battle scenes in detail, hoping to find a flaw he could capitalize on.

Using his eidetic memory, Nana's actions replayed in his mind like a movie scene. After around half a minute, Link's eyes lit up.

"I've got it!"

It took ten points of Mana per second to sustain the Storm Eagle, which meant that 36,000 points of Mana would've been consumed within an hour. Link's current maximum Mana limit was 5200 points, but because of the series of attacks he unleashed earlier, he was now left with only about 2400 points of Mana.

In other words, if he were to keep on maintaining the Storm Eagle in the air, he'd be completely depleted of Mana in less than four minutes. The Mana consumption rate of a high-level flying spell was simply astronomical. This was one of the crucial reasons why flying spells weren't the most practical spells to use in battles.

Fortunately, though, Link had come up with a way to deal with the magic puppet Nana.

Link made the Storm Eagle climb higher up into the sky.

"How much time do you need to cast Metal Decay?" Link turned around to ask Vance.

"Ummmabout 1.8 seconds," answered Vance while scratching his smooth skull. He could guess what Link was planning to do. "While the spell can really cause damage to Nana, she'd never give me enough time to cast it on her."

"I suppose so," said Link, nodding his head. "That's why you must increase your spellcasting speed."

Vance was speechless for a moment.

"How do you expect me to cast a spell faster than that?" he asked Link. "That's my limit!"

"Do you remember Morestern's wand Dark Arbiter?" asked Link. "It's in the underground palace, and right now the only one who is there is the weakened Dorians"

"Link and I will distract Nana," said Celine immediately as she caught up to Link's plans, "and you'll go get the wand!"

"Exactly!" Link glanced at Celine with gratefulness in his eyes. It felt great to have someone on his team who could quickly understand what he intended to do.

Vance's teeth clattered for a few seconds, and he said nothing as he considered the plan.

"That sounds like a decent plan," he finally said. "But that wand needs a whole day's time to recharge after casting a Level-7 spell. Besides, you don't have much Mana left; are you sure you'll be able to hold Nana at bay?"

"I can carry him," said Celine. She could easily stay in flight for as long as ten hours or more without expending much energy anyway.

"That's unnecessary," said Link. "I've got a way to stall her. Celine, the wand is the key to our victory. You must go get it with Vance."

It would be too risky for one person to venture into the underground palace due to its labyrinthine structure. If Dorians had a functional brain between his ears, he could easily defeat Vance with sneak attacks. With Celine's help, though, there shouldn't be any problem for them to get the wand.

Although Celine was anxious of Link's safety, she saw how resolute he was and thought there wouldn't be any point in making protests, so she nodded in agreement with the plan.

At that point, the Storm Eagle had reached the highest limit of its flight at about 20,000 feet which took it 20 seconds to ascend. Looking down from here, the inky dark sea looked vast and endless. Wads of cottony clouds floated all around them. If it hadn't been for the dangerous situation that they were in, they would've appreciated the sublime view very much.

"Let's do it then," said Link. "Celine, take Vance back to the underground palace and get the wand. Take this rune tag with you, and you'll know my precise location wherever you are."

"Be careful, Link," Celine said as she took the rune tag from Link.

Link nodded. Then, Celine spread out her black wings and grabbed the almost weightless Vance and flew away from the Storm Eagle.

Immediately afterwards, Link canceled the Storm Eagle spell and cast a levitating spell on himself.

Levitation

Level-0 Spell

Mana Consumption: 2 Points

Effects: Makes the spellcaster's body as light as a feather, light enough to walk on water. When in the air, the spellcaster will fall at the maximum speed of 1.6 feet per second for about ten minutes.

Why 1.6 feet per second? This speed was as slow as the average walking pace, and it would take about three and a half hours to fall from the height of 20,000 feet to the surface of the sea. With this leisurely speed, Link could easily summon the Storm Eagle again and use it to climb up 20,000 feet within 20 seconds before he hit the surface of the water. Using this technique, Link would have no problem floating in the sky forever!

Moreover, Link wasn't that far away from the underground palace, probably about 20 miles, so it shouldn't take too long for Celine and Vance to return with the wand. Once they returned, all they needed to do was stall Nana for a day to wait for the Dark Arbiter wand to recharge. Then they'd defeat the terrifying puppet.

As he was floating in the air, Link used the spell Eagle's Eye to check the situation on the surface of the sea. He must make sure that Nana was still following him, otherwise it would mean that Vance and Celine were in serious danger.

From what they'd seen so far, the magic puppet clearly possessed near-perfect combat skills, but her strategic planning still left something to be desired. From there Link could spot her weak points where he could utilize to defeat her.

Nana was still following Link at high speed. She's obviously locked her target on Link, as she thought that he was the most dangerous opponent with a threat level of 5 stars. Therefore, her primary goal must be to eliminate Link.

Haha, keep on following me, then, thought Link.

The Level-0 Levitation spell consumed only two points of Mana and required no additional Mana to sustain at all. With nothing to do and all this time on his hands, Link nonchalantly slipped out Bryant's Scroll of Enlightenment and began to calmly study it.

He'd studied more than half of the scroll and had made many great discoveries from it. According to Eleanor, the person who managed to study the whole scroll thoroughly would experience a doubling in the rate of Mana recovery. That would surely come in handy for Link now as his Mana was running quite low. That's why he decided to study the scroll now.

After having drifted in the air for a while, luck seemed to be on his side as a storm started to brew on the surface of the sea. With a body that was as feathery light as Link's now that he was under the Levitation spell, the slightest gust of wind from the storm kept him aloft for much longer and even helped him gain a bit of height as well.

He then used the spell, Eagle's Eye and watched the surface of the sea beneath him. He noticed how Nana struggled to catch up with him and couldn't help but laugh at her. What an adamant puppet she was!

Soon, though, Link found that the situation wasn't so funny anymore.

The wind was getting stronger and stronger as the storm brewed on. The clouds got much thicker now and had transformed from white fluffy puffs to dark, menacing clusthat harbored thunder.

A bitter smile cropped up on Link's face as he realized that he'd forgotten the most crucial fact when he meticulously planned his strategy to fight Nana. He'd failed to take into account the fact that they were in the coastal area of the Ferde Wilderness where the climate was notoriously temperamental.

Lightning soon flashed in the clouds, and the sound of thunder rumbled Link's guts. Before the sublime majesty of mother nature, Link was as insignificant as a speck of dust. The average flash of lightning was equivalent to the power of a Level-7 spell. He'd die instantly if he ever got hit by one of these lightning flashes.

Just in case, Link cast the spell Edelweiss to protect himself, then he summoned the Storm Eagle and began to ascend to its highest limit at 20,000 feet where he would be safe from being struck by lightning. Yet, the storm was just as violent there as it was below, and Link's body was blown about like a leaf. There was no way for him to check the situation down there on the surface of the sea at all. Neither did he know where the wind of the storm would blow him to.

And so, Link drifted in the sky for about three hours when he was finally blown out from the storm, and the clouds gradually cleared out, once aganalowing him to see the dark blue sea below. Then, Link immediately cast the Eagle's Eye spell and checked the situation below him. After a while, he sighed in relief at the sight of Nana still chasing after him from below.

What a relentless magic puppet, he thought. And she still hadn't lost sight of me after all this time. Not bad at all.

At that point, Link noticed a cluster of islands in front of him. There were about 30 or so islands there of different sizes. Among them, the biggest one probably had an area of about five miles. Lush forest covered most of the islands and colorful birds danced around, filling the air with bird calls and chirpy bird songs. Then, in one corner of the forest, Link saw a wild Griffin catching its prey.

Link had no intention of landing on the island. He just slowly floated above it, taking his time enjoying the beautiful view.

What a strange island, he thought.

Most of the islands were full of wildlife, yet on the southeastern corner, there was a black island where even grass and weeds wouldn't grow. It seemed as if the whole island was cursed. Link tried to sense the aura of the strange island, but he couldn't detect anything out of the ordinary coming from the place.

How odd. If no one were chasing him then, he'd dive straight down and explore the place from corner to corner. Unfortunately, Nana was still hot on his trails, so he couldn't afford to go down there.

Right at that moment, a shocking sight caught Link's eyes. He saw how Nana came up on the shores of the island where her speed increased miraculously on land. There was no sign of fatigue in her movements at all. Link was shocked. He was only hovering at 2,000 feet above the island. Nana could easily leap up from the ground and reach him at thishi

He soon reached the height of 20,000 feet. The cluster of islands had shrunk into the size of pebbles at thishi

I should be safe from her here, Link thought.

He then cast the Levitation spell on himself and continued to drift in the air.

Suddenly, though, Link heard an unusual gust of wind behind him. He drew in a sharp breath when he turned around and saw a Griffin flying towards him at high speed. Sitting on its back was none other than Nana herself!

She's a smart puppet, alright, thought Link bitterly. Now that she's found herself a Griffin to fly on, things are no longer as simple as before!

The Griffin's flying speed wasn't actually that fast at only about 200 miles per hour. But the more critical point was that it had high endurance and wouldn't have any problems flying in the air for more than a dozen hours.

Link might have recovered some of his Mana when he was under the Levitation spell, but now that he had summoned the Storm Eagle, he could probably maintain it for no more than five minutes before he ran out of Mana again.

At this point, Nana would catch up to him soon enough!

I must kill the Griffin! Link thought.

He made no more attempts to flee from Nana and waited for her to approach him mid-air.

Half a minute later, Nana had driven the Griffin to about 300 feet away from Link. He could clearly see that the Griffin was reluctantly following Nana's orders only because her powers had overwhelmed it and rendered it helpless against her will. Three hundred feet was the range limit of Link's Whistle. The Griffin had no protective gear around its body, so Whistle was more than enough to cause damage to its body.

Link focused his eyesight and activated the Crimson Edelweiss in his bracelet just in case. Then, he raised his wand and directed his Mana into it, casting five Whistles in a row, taking 0.08 seconds for each of them.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh

The Whistles tore through the air and headed straight towards the Griffin.

The magic puppet Nana quickly blocked the Whistles at an unimaginably fast speed. A series of dings rang out in the air. Nana had quite effortlessly deflected all of Link's Whistles from the Griffin.

What Link found even more shocking was how nimble and agile Nana's movements were. Not only did she cut off Link's Mana from the Whistles, making it impossible for him to control them, she'd also used her tremendous power to deflect the attacks right before the Whistles exploded.

The Whistles had now been flung out about 50 feet away before their spell structures collapsed which triggered their explosions. At that distance, even with the metal fragments in the air, they posed no threats to the Griffin whatsoever.

It was the first time Link had ever seen one of his most powerful attacks get deflected so easily!

As expected from a magic puppet that's evolved over 400 years, Link thought. Ah, her combat skills almost make her indestructible!

But naturally, Link had other attack strategies up his sleeve other than Whistles alone. He still had his Glass Orbs, which could do nearly as much damage to the Griffin as Whistles could.

Mana flowed into his wand once again, and Glass Orbs took form at an indescribably high speed. With the help of the Domingo crystal, Link managed to cast 50 Glass Orbs per second.

For a moment, there were countless lines of light between Link and the Griffin.

Nana blocked the attacks with her sword as she did before. The Glass Orbs burst like soap bubbles as they hit the blade of her sword. And in no time at all, none of Link's Glass Orbs remained.

Nanasswordsmanship was flawless indeed, but there was one tiny problem that was out of her control.

Because of the succession of explosions were so near to the Griffin, the creature was completely spooked, and it fled instinctively away from Link, overruling Nana's command no matter how much she tried to subdue it.

The Griffin escaped further and further away from Link, and Nana fixed her eyes on him as if she had made a certain decision. She stood up and used the Griffin's body as the springboard to leap forward towards Link.

Nana had witnessed Link's reaction speed many times by now so she knew that there was a chance that she could hit him this way. But still, this was her only chance!

Meanwhile, Link entered the state of absolute calm that was the spellcasting state. He amassed all of his energy and attention and dared not relax for even the briefest fraction of a second. He knew that the slightest mistake he made would result in death when faced with such a terrifying opponent.

Nana was insanely fast; she was now only 16 feet away from Link. Seeing this, Link immediately raised his wand and cast the defensive spell, Vector Protective Force Field.

The Level-1 spell got to work instantly and flung the magic puppet away from Link. At almost the same time, Link saw a black stone getting hurled at him by Nana, evidently as a direct attack. Although it was only an ordinary stone, once in the hand of the terrifying magic puppet, it turned into a menacing weapon that shot through the air towards Link at the speed of 2600 feet per second.

In truth, the speed at which a stone traveled would always be faster than the speed that the thrower was moving at. Therefore, because Nana herself was moving at 2000 feet per second, it only made sense that the stone that she threw was moving as fast as a rifle bullet!

This didn't pose much of a problem to Link, though. He was sure that his Crimson Edelweiss was sturdy enough to deflect the stone. Once the stone hit the edges of the shield, it was met with a ring of scorching light. The heat from the light ring slowed it down at first, then the stone burned up into flames and began to disintegrate. 0.01 seconds later, Link discovered that there was something strange about the stone. Its surface looked normal, but at its core, there were tiny blue sparks of electricity.

Link had seen those sparks before. They were on that dark blue sword she'd used earlier, and they had a strong anti-magic effect.

It seemed that Crimson Edelweiss alone wouldn't be enough to stop this stone!

""

Things were looking bad!

By this point, Link didn't have any time to do anything to counter the incoming attack. At the very last second, he cast a Level-0 defensive spell, Mage Armor and instantly, a pale green glow enveloped him as the armor took form.

Bam!

The stone smashed into Link's stomach. It was less than two pounds. When it reached Link's body after having broken through Crimson Edelweiss, its speed was no more than 30 feet per second.

The problem was that Link's bodywas not much stronger than that of the average person's.

Link was thrown completely off balance by the impact, and all he could feel was the excruciating pain in his stomach. His black eyes dulled, and he almost lost consciousness for a while, although he soon recovered.

What truly horrified Link was the strange sensations he felt in his stomach as if an alien force had penetrated into his body and interfered with his Mana.

Then there was a flash on the interface showing a warning from the gaming system.

Player has been afflicted. Current state: Mana Disorder.

Estimated total recovery time: three hours.

At that instant, all magical functions in Link's body were shut down. He could only manage to maintain the Levitation Spell and activated the defensive spell in his bracelet, in case Nana flung her sword at him when he was in his most vulnerable state.

Fortunately, Nana cherished her sword too much to throw it away at Link, so he was safe in that regard. Link sighed in relief and floated down towards the cluster of islands below. While he was in mid-air, he took a deep breath and relaxed his body to speed up its recovery time.

What a fearsome magic puppet, Link thought. Her battle intuitions are amazing! I can't waste any more time playing cat and mouse with her.

Link decided not to run away any longer. There must be more than one Griffin on these islands, so there was a high possibility that Nana would catch another one to chase him with. Once she caught up with him, there was no saying what she would do then.

It's time to end this battle once and for all. Link took out the Prophetic White Stone from his storage pendant. If nothing else happened within these two hours, then he would use it to end the battle as soon as his feet landed on the ground.

He'd planned on saving a Level-9 spell originally; it's too bad that it wouldn't be possible now.

Meanwhile, Nana was similarly falling to the ground because she'd been struck by the impact of Link's Vector Protective Force Field. Her falling speed was extremely fast, but she fell right on one of the islands.

Boom!

A crater of about eight feet wide and five feet deep was created on the spot where Nana hit the ground. Still, she stood up and dusted her body off as if completely unhurt. She then turned around and entered the forest to look for a Griffin, while not forgetting to keep an eye on Link, who was slowly drifting downwards from the sky.

## 179. A Bizarre Island

It had been an hour; Link floated in the air using a levitation spell. He had been slowly descending and was now at an altitude of 6000 feet. He had also recollected himself in this period.

Although the Mana disturbance effect had not completely worn off, his spellcasting speed was now back to its original state. The only side effect left was the inevitable flaws that would appear in his spells due to the status he was afflicted with. It would be fine to use such spells on ordinary people. However, it would be disastrous to have such a flaw when dealing with Nana.

If he did not have the Prophet's White Stone in his hand, he would not have even had the slightest chance of escape, much less turn the tables around.

Nana was designed to calculate every detail of a battle down to the specifics. She was so perfectly created that even a combat master like Link felt pressurized and shackled.

Four hundred years of battle experience is really a force to be reckoned with. Link did not feel defeated, though. He believed that given enough battle experience, he too would have the same impeccable knowledge of combat as Nana.

The sounds of flapping wings could be heard. Link looked behind him and saw Nana on another Griffin. She was hovering at a distance 600 feet away, staring at him in waiting. Link was highly focused, though he stayed still the entire time. He displayed a relaxed and calm demeanor as he floated down slowly.

Nana also kept her distance and lowered her altitude slowly, matching Link's movement.

The previous two battles that happened mid-air ended in her failure. This meant that the odds of her defeating Link in the air were not high. She would thus wait for Link to land before making her move. The land was her home ground. She could kill her target in just a single strike.

"Target is locked in. Target is currently landing190018001700" the crisp voice constantly rang from Nana as her clear eyes were fixated on Link. It seemed pure and innocent enough, though it would probably feel like the reaper's incarnate if one was the target.

After half an hour, Link's altitude and been reduced by another 3000 feet. The islands beneath him had become clear. He could see the flora and faunas on the island clearly. Furthermore, he was pleasantly surprised to find that his landing spot would be right on the black-colored island.

How coincidental. Link smiled. He had around 1900 Mana Points and could probably maintain the Titan's Hand for 20 seconds. This should be enough to deal with Nana.

At that moment, the subtle howling sounds of wind appeared again. Link then felt a familiar magic fluctuation. As he turned his head, he saw Celine and Vance returning from their mission. Vance held a staff with a black skull perched at its tip. It was none other than the Dark Arbiter. This was good news. If they could make it through the day, this would be the key to their success. However, the plan now had to change.

"Link, how are you?" Celine whispered as she stared at Link's pale face with a worried expression.

"Just some minor injuries," Link answered.

Nana had also noticed their arrival and immediately adjusted her position to ensure her safety. On the other side, Link made use of this chance to cast the Clear Thoughts effect on the Flame Controller's Robe. The Clear Thoughts effect would recover 2000 Mana Points. In this battle where a split second could determine life and death, more Mana Points was always useful.

After activating the special effect, a pale heat wave enveloped the robe. It was as though Link's body temperature suddenly rose to an insane level, making it slightly intimidating.

Nana had never seen such a phenomenon before. She expected Link to release a strong spell. She immediately retreated 300 feet behind her.

She is, after all, just a magic puppet. Although her battle experience is useful, there is a limit to her knowledge. Link felt that his chances were getting better.

Taking advantage of this, Celine successfully reached Link's side.

Vance then cast a levitation spell on everyone so that Link could focus his attention on Nana. They then floated down slowly.

"Link, what is the plan now?" Vance stared at Nana, who was currently riding a Griffin. The Flame of the Soul in her eyes jumped around actively. This puppet was too intelligent; they were even losing their air-borne advantage.

Link had decided, "Once we land, I will release a Level-9 spell."

Although he was relieved that Vance and Celine were back to support him, it had been proven that their combined power was still not enough to deal with Nana. Now that he was injured, it was impossible to delay the battle until the Dark Arbiter's effect reset the next day.

A Level-9 spell was the only course of action.

Celine interrupted, "Perhaps we can kill her Griffin."

Link smiled bitterly, "I've tried. She is very protective of it. No matter what I did, I was not successful. Furthermore, I am now under a Mana disturbance status. The strength of my low-level spells is reduced by at least 50%."

Upon hearing those words, Celine gave up on her idea.

Vance was speechless as well. He had heard rumors about Link when he was at his full power. It was said that the scene was akin to a storm of low-level spells mercilessly raining on his opponents. To think that Nana was able to defend against this ferocious magic storm! He probably would not be of much help even if he were to be present in that battle.

Vance was still bitter that they had to waste a level-9 spell on a puppet. He said reluctantly, "We can just let Celine bring us on the run."

Before Link could speak, Celine shook her head and answered, "My speed will be much slower than the Griffin if I had to carry two people with me. This applies to my endurance as well."

Vance then laid out his hands helplessly, "I guess we have no choice."

The three of them kept silent as they slowly descended.

Ever since Nana got a Griffin as her aid, they lost their airborne advantage. They even lost their advantage to cast the first attack as there was a limit to their spellcasting range. Nana was extremely cautious and would retreat the moment she felt something was amiss. She would not give them the opportunity to release any spells.

Hence, both parties were merely waiting to land before engaging in a fierce battle.

Time passed quickly, and before long, they were only 300 feet above the ground. Under them was a bizarre looking black-colored island.

Suddenly, Link felt that something was amiss. His hand seemed to feel heavy. More accurately, it was his fingers that were feeling the weight. It was as though something was pulling on it. Link was confused. He quickly realized that this pulling sensation came from the Baron's seal on his hand.

Link's instinct was to immediately observe his Baron's seal. However, the moment he moved, he felt a subtle tingling feeling coming from the ring. He also felt the same sensation coming from the defensive ring he wore. This would not have been possible without Link's sensitivity. It felt as though a mini electric current was running through them.

But why would there be a current in mid-air?

As they continued on their descent, Link felt the pull on his Baron's seal becoming more prominent. This ring was not made from a good material, merely from cheap iron.

Wait a minuteIron?

This downward force was almost similar to the attraction forces from a magnet. Is this really a magnetic force?

Link then looked at the black colored island. He observed that the island was in fact a huge, black, rocky reef that was around 900 feet in diameter. There was some scattered gravel on the surface of the island which looked extremely strange. Link saw that one of them seemed to be hanging precariously from a cliff without any form of external help. This was a violation of the rules of physics.

Link was suddenly inspired. "Could this be an Ever-Magnetic Island?"

They were merely 150 feet above ground level and the attraction forces pulling on the Baron's seal were getting stronger by the minute. Link had to put the ring away into the dimensional pendant as it was becoming too much to bear. He then tried to raise the Starcatcher wand in his hand.

The Starcatcher's main body was made almost entirely of premium Gold and Thorium, both of which were metallic substances. The moment he moved the wand, he felt that the surface temperature of the wand would experience a slight increase.

When metallic substances cut through magnetic lines, electric pressure resulting in voltage will be produced. If a loop is created, then a current would be produced. As the wand is irregular in shape, there could be a vortex that forms in its inner structure, causing the temperature to rise. I merely made a slight movement with the wand and such obvious temperature difference could be felt. Just how strong is the magnetic field on this island to have such a powerful current conversion rate?

This was the theory of using magnetic forces to generate electricity on earth. Although the exact specifics might be slightly different in Firuman, the general theory was the same. In fact, this was the theoretical basis for most lightning elemental spells.

Link was then struck by an idea. He stared at Nana 600 feet away and realized that she was made entirely of metallic materials. This island would be where she would meet her demise!

Link was excited and immediately said, "Did both of you feel it? This island is special.

Celine felt nothing but a slight headache. This was a normal physical abnormality under the presence of a strong magnetic field.

Vance, on the other hand, was slightly more sensitive and gasped, "How interesting! This island is a mine for extremely strong magnetic materials!"

"Perhaps we have a chance against Nana here." Link turned to Celine and asked, "Do you have any spare swords?"

"Of course." Celine took out a one-handed sword made of gold.

"That would be fine. We will commence our battle against Nana right here," Link's eyes glowed as he declared.

This island was extremely special, and Nana would certainly have no experience in dealing with magnetic fields. The lack of any battle experience on Nanasside would be their greatest advantage. Furthermore, even if she had the relevant battle experience, it would be futile. The fact that her whole body was composed of metallic materials would mean that her movements would be limited on the island!

## 180. Youre Impeded Here!

Buzz Buzz Buzz

Once they'd landed on the ground, Celine, Link, and Vance all activated their defensive spells. They took the same positions as they did in the underground palaceCeline was in front, while Link and Vance stood side-by-side behind her.

Nana had reached the ground too. She stared at Celine who was standing in front and estimated her strength.

"Target locked," said the magic puppet with her uncanny voice. "Threat level: 2 stars."

The instant she finished speaking, there was a loud boom in the air. Nana had used her deadliest movethe Ultra-Speed Charge!

In previous battles, whenever Nana used this move, she'd appear as if she'd vanished out of thin air to the eyes of those with slow reaction time. This prevented her opponents from estimating where her attack would come from, which would naturally render them helpless and defenseless.

But this time there was a problem!

Moments after Nana seemed to disappear, a mysterious figure glowing in red light appeared suddenly. Not only that, but Nana who was supposed to charge at full speed straight towards Celine was resisted by an unknown force. It threw her off balance and flung her away from her target just when she was about 30 feet away from Celine.

Because of her extreme 2000-feet-per-second speed, she'd sliced through the outrageously strong magnetic field of the island which caused a terribly high electric current to run through her metallic body.

The force of the electric current was equivalent to being struck by a lightning spell!

What was even more frightening was how her body got magnetized by the electric current, which then caused her body to interact with the magnetic field of the island even further. That was what threw her off balance.

"Huh?" Celine's stunning pair of eyes widened at the sight of Nana's accident. It was something she'd never expected to occur.

Link and Vance had predicted this outcome, though. They wasted no time and each cast their own attacking spells!

"Titan's Hand!"

At the instant when Nana was flung away from them, Link's Titan's Hand quickly caught up to her and changed into the form of Fist of Firomoz and slammed down violently against the magic puppet's body.

Bang!

Nana's body was struck just as she was about to hit the ground, and the impact sent her flying again at high speed. She kept on intercepting the magnetic lines of the island which would generate more electricity in her body.

The magnetic force converted kinetic energy into electric energy, and once the electric current ran through Nana's body, it would then be converted into a huge amount of heat. In other words, this meant that the extremely high levels of kinetic energy (due to her extreme speed) would eventually be transformed into an equally high level of heat!

The higher the temperature of Nana's body, the more intensely her body would emit the red light.

"Body temperature will soon exceed limit," said the voice coming from Nana's body. "Begin heat dissipation! Begin heat dissipation!"

Soon, Nana did not dare to move at high speed even though she wasn't completely comprehending what was going on. Her most lethal weapon, her speed, was now canceled out by the Magnetic Island.

Finally, Vance now had enough time to cast his spell. 1.8 seconds later, he pointed his wand towards the magic puppet and shouted, "Metal Decay!"

A gray light shot out from the wand and went after the magic puppet. Nana immediately detected the great threat coming from this ray of light, and she instinctively dodged it with her lightning speed, causing another boom to reverberate through the air as she seemed to disappear once again.

Only this time, she was forced to reappear a mere seven feet away.

The red light on the surface of her body had now turned white, proving that the metal that made up her body had reached an extreme temperature that was close to its melting point.

Sizzle sizzle!

The Metal Decay finally caught up with her and struck her chest. Thick white smoke billowed out from the spot, and a fist-sized gaping hole appeared where the ray of light hit her body.

Nana just stood there motionless now, and the mechanically crisp voice once again emerged from her body.

"Fatal damage detected on the body," the voice said. "Begin repairing process."

"Repairing process failed," the voice continued. "Performing memory backupBackup successful. Hibernation process initialized. Mission to protect master has failedfailedfailedfailed"

Then, Nana's body trembled and flailed about violently for a few seconds before her head and arms got detached from the main body and dropped to the ground. The rest of her body just stood there without any signs of life or movement left in it.

"Is she defeated now? Just like that?" asked Celine, hardly able to believe it. Somehow it had seemed a little too easy.

Link nodded and heaved a long sigh of relief.

"She's gone into hibernation," he said. "We've won."

Vance, on the other hand, said nothing. He stared at the motionless magic puppet wordlessly for quite some time before letting out a long sigh.

"I built her in my daughter's image, you know," he finally said. "And now she's dead by my own hands."

As he spoke, he slowly approached Nana and made a move to examine her more closely.

"You should probably cast Metal Decay on her one more time," Link reminded Vance, "just in case she's not totally destroyed."

"That wouldn't be necessary," replied Vance. "That last attack from me was aimed at her Mana core."

The old Lich seemed to have fallen into a deep melancholic mood. He completely ignored Link's dissuasion and insisted on approaching Nana's lifeless body. He then stretched out his bony hand and softly touched her face.

Crack!

The magic puppet's body jerked suddenly, and her arm shot straight towards the Lich's skull.

Vance's skull was indeed very tough, but it was still far less sturdy than the metal that made up Nana's body. If Vance were to get struck by the full force of Nana's arm, his head would be blown to bits, and the Flame of Soul in his head would be instantly extinguished.

Nana's arm still moved too fast for Vance to respond appropriately, and he could only watch helplessly and brace for the incoming impact.

Just then, a dim red glow appeared around Vance's bodyit was Link's Crimson Edelweiss!

Nana's arm was immediately slowed down by the shield's force field, and it finally stopped completely four inches away from Vance's skull. Half a second later, the arm was deflected away by the force field.

Nana's head jerked up sharply, and her clear eyes stared straight at Link. Then a hoarse voice emerged from her body.

"Mission failed," the voice said. "Residual energy exhaustedTarget threat level: 5 stars5 stasstars"

Then, as if all the life force had been drawn out, Nana's body collapsed completely to the ground, and all the segments came apart. This time, it seemed that she really was totally destroyed.

Only then did Vance manage to react to what was happening. He touched his smooth skull with his bony fingers and felt that his Flame of Soul was still burning. He did not expect Nana to still be able to attack him like that. It was indeed a close shave for him just now. He could easily have just died in that instant, not knowing what hit him.

Originally, Vance wouldn't have minded dying at all. But now that he'd fought through such a thrilling and fierce battle with Celine and Link, he found that he still very much wanted to live after all.

The sun still shone upon the earth, he realized. There are still worthy things to live for, like trust among comrades and loyalty in friendship.

This battle had really turned Vance's rusty and nihilistic views of life completely upside down.

"Thank you, kid," Vance said to Link with a wave of his hand.

"You're welcome, old man," replied Rinc.

Both then looked at each other and felt there was a newly formed trust between them. Suddenly, they both erupted into hearty laughter. Celine looked on at them curiously. She turned to Link, then to the old Lich, but couldn't work out what they both found so funny.

Then, Vance squatted near Nana's remains and began to carefully examine the magic puppet's body. He wanted to see how she had evolved and what had happened in the last 400 years.

Link, on the other hand, began to study the magnets on the ground. He picked up a piece of black stone and observed it closely. He found that it was, in fact, greenish black and had a strange spiral pattern on its surface. When he placed it closer to his nose and took a whiff, it smelled somewhat pungent and metallic. Then, an idea popped up in his mind, and he quickly turned around to Celine.

"Cut it in half with your sword," he said. "I'd like to see its cross section."

Celine then swiftly pulled out her sword, and as the blade glinted in the sunlight, she quickly cut the magnetic stone cleanly in half. The cross-section was smooth like that of a metal and was completely different from the usually rough surface of an ordinary magnetic stone. Upon seeing such a cross-section, a big grin appeared on Link's face. He realized that he was going to make a fortune!

Link had once read of a type of metal in a textbook on magic materials back when he was in the East Cove Magic Academy. The metal was called Gyromagnetic Iron, and it was described as having a pungent smell and had spiral patterns. Its magnetic field was a hundred times stronger than that of the ordinary magnets.

When this kind of metal was ground into powder and mixed into a dissolving potion, then put through a certain process, the result would be sparkling ink, which was a type of electrical ink. A small vial of this special type of ink would cost about ten gold coins. The capital to produce it was only three gold coins, containing in that small bottle no more than one ounce of Gyromagnetic iron.

Yet, this Magnetic Island surely contained thousands and thousands of tons of Gyromagnetic Iron. If he could turn them all into sparkling ink, Link realized that he'd be making a mountain-sized heap of gold coins!

But it wouldn't be so simple of course. The price of sparkling ink would drop drastically if there were a large amount of it on the market, probably as low as one gold coin or even one silver coin per vial. Even so, it would still make a huge fortune for Link.

When he thought of this, Link got so elated that he couldn't help but laugh heartily. He leaped up into the air then took Celine into his arms and danced.

"Hahaha, Celine!" he shouted, "this island will make us so much money that there'll be more than enough to build my estate now!"

Although Celine had no idea of the Gyromagnetic Iron's true value, she was still very happy to see Link so joyful.

Link let go of Celine eventually, but he still held her close. Now that he'd found the perfect excuse to be affectionate to her, he wanted to prolong the blissful moment as much as possible. At that point, Link felt his chest could just burst from the joy he felt, and his whole body was overcome with a tingling sensation while the wound on his body no longer gave him any pain.

Celine's cheeks blushed till they were as red as apples. She let Link hold on to her without any complaints. In fact, she was holding Link's hand herself.

Crack! Rattle!

The sound from Vance's skeletal body jerked Link and Celine rudely back to reality. They then quickly separated from each other when they realized the awkward positions they were both in. This made Vance rub his smooth skull and laugh cheekily.

"Oh, don't be shy," he said. "It's nothing to be ashamed of."

Celine lowered her head and said nothing. Link tried to calm himself down quickly and wiped the grin off his face.

"Did you find anything interesting about the magic puppet?" he asked, desperate to change the subject.

Vance nodded his head. "I think I've found the reason why I lost control of her," he said.

Link suddenly became interested. "Can you solve it, then?" he asked.

"That would be slightly difficult," answered Vance. "I can't do it alone. But if you're willing to help, I think we can revive her and turn her into a frightening combat machine."

"What if you lose control of her again?" asked Celine. It was a crucial problem that they couldn't afford to ignore. This magic puppet had pushed them all to the point where their lives were hanging on a thread, after all. It made them shudder even thinking about it.

"That's where the difficulty lies," said Vance, scratching his head and looking over to Link. "What do you think?"

Link considered the matter for half a minute.

"I don't really understand the principle that underlies a magic puppet's inner workings," he said, "so I can't give you a meaningful opinion now. Let's just bring her back with us first."

Vance nodded in agreement.

"That is a wise choice," he said. "I don't have any objections to that. Once we return, I'll hand you my notebook which contains notes and descriptions of the magic puppet so you can study it."

## 181. The Vast Treasures of the Old Necromancer

The group of islands in the middle of the ocean was a distance away from the Ferde Wilderness. If Celine had to make two 380 miles' roundabout trip to ferry them back to camp, she would definitely be drained of her energy. Luckily, there was a group of wild Griffins on the island.

They grabbed a Griffin each after intimidating them with their powers and commanded them to fly back in the direction of the mainland.

The Griffins were fast. Within two hours, the three of them once again arrived at the entrance of the underground palace. The moment the three Griffins regained their freedom, they flew off immediately, looking clearly startled and in fear. They then proceeded all the way into the deepest area of the underground palace without any obstructions.

Vance carefully observed the furniture in the underground palace and said in disbelief,

"This is a surprise. Everything here is intact. Even the position of the chairs has not been changed. If not for my memories of the past 400 years, I would even feel that I just left this place a day ago."

Link laughed. "This is the work of your magic puppet. This place is her sanctuary, and her only goal is to protect the integrity of this sanctuary."

Speaking of Nana, Vance sighed, "She was so overprotective that she even forgot who I was."

Under the influence of all this familiar furniture and scenery, memories started flashing through Vance's mind. He ran around in this magnificent hall while mumbling things to himself.

"This scrollOh! It's an unfinished spell. To think that it is still kept half open, like how I left it when I left this place!"

"This chair was my favorite. Nothing has changed, not even the dust that settled...Oh, the activation trigger is still active. It still has not rusted."

He pressed the trigger, and all of a sudden, machinery sounds could be heard from the back of the wall. In a few seconds, a wall on the left side of the hall started moving backwards before going deeper underground.

Behind the wall was a space 15 feet deep. There were three antique chests placed within the space. Each of the chests was huge, measuring at three feet tall and six feet wide. From the design of the chest, it could be determined that they were painted 500 years ago when the Assyrian Dynasty was still in power.

Vance beckoned to Link and Celine, "Come over here. Look at my treasures."

He wentito the hall and opened the chest on the left. Layers of wooden shelves then emerged from the chest, amounting to an astounding 20 layers. Every layer then had over 40 boxes which were stuffed with items.

"This is a Vochit-style chest. It is the most stable dimensional chest which compresses items in a 50:1 ratio. There is a total of 800 boxes in this chest which are filled with a variety of rare metals and materials. For example, this piece of Thorium is close to 1.5 kilograms."

Vance then took out a piece of Thorium. It was originally the size of a thumb. However, when it was exposed to the original atmosphere, it expanded to the size of a fist, the silver brilliance nearly blinding anyone in sight. Link once saw a similar chest in Herrera's room. However, that chest was nothing compared to the current one right in front of him. Looking at the brilliance emanating from all the rare materials, Link could finally understand why Vance said his wealth was enough to even build a Mage Tower similar in scale to the Heaven's Thorn.

Celine merely stared with her mouth slightly opened. She could not believe that a man could accumulate this much wealth.

Vance was extremely satisfied and laughed with glee, his bones clattering as his body shook. "I made a fortune in those dasselling my Battle Aura books. Those nobles would purchase them from me regardless of the cost. I was once the world's wealthiest businessman."

He then walked towards the second chest and opened it. This time around, rows of books appeared in the chest. The books were all intricately designed with jeweled hardcovers and high-quality paper. One could even feel magic fluctuations from the books, suggesting that some of these books had records of powerful magic formations.

There were at least 300 books in total. Link randomly picked out a book titled The Insane Microscopic Universe. After browsing through a few pages, Link saw a formula which attracted his attention. It was almost identical to the one he had been racking his brains over in his thesis. After a few more pages, Link saw even more identical content. He shared some similar ideas with the author of this book, and there were even some details inside which he hadn't thought of.

Link already felt inspired after just a few pages. "This is just priceless!"

Link had a real look of euphoria on his face. The rare materials which almost blinded him merely made him slightly excited. However, these magic books were simply a wonderland.

Vance once again laughed with pride. It was an achievement to make a genius such as Link lose his usual calm demeanor. He then opened the last chest. This chest was a lot more empty, housing a few intricately designed scrolls. Vance browsed through these scrolls one-by-one as he caressed each of them with his bony hands. He seemed to be reminiscing about some good memories.

He smiled emotionally. "The Battle Aura scrolls and all my research journals are housed here. Although it is not as voluminous as the other two chests, this took me at least 200 years to complete. I even had to carry the bad reputation as the Heartless Butcher."

Link walked over and opened a scroll. The scroll was titled Earth Shattering Storm Style. What an extravagant name! He then opened the other scrolls and counted a total of 16 scrolls, most of which were Epic in quality, some of them unfinished.

After introducing all his treasures, Vance then spun towards Link and said, "I have no use for such things now; you can have them all."

Although Link had expected this, when he finally heard it from Vance's mouth, he was still overwhelmed with gratitude. "Old man, I have no idea how to thank you."

Vance laughed, "The best way to thank me is to put them to good use. Use this knowledge and wealth to create the best territory there ever was!"

At this moment, Vance seemed to have remembered something. He patted his head before walking to the middle chest and taking out three magic books. He then took out a few scrolls and a journal from the right chest, passing all of them to Link. "These have all the knowledge regarding magic puppets. Take them back for your research. Also, my underground palace has already been exposed to some powerful dark figures. It is not safe to put these chests here anymore. You have to take them away as soon as possible."

Naturally, Link would.

Following which, Link and Celine became movers as they made many trips to carry the spoils out of the underground palace. It was not a small amount, and there was a limit to the amount their dimensional equipment could store. They hence had to make three trips before they emptied Vance's treasures.

After the hard work, the three of them rendezvoused at Shark Bay. At this moment, Vance held a handwritten book in his hand. This book was extremely thick and was titled Treasured War History of the Ancestors.

He smiled when he saw Link. "The last thing is the terrible climate at the Ferde Wilderness."

Link was startled when he saw the book. "Are you telling me the answer is right in this book?"

Vance smiled. "It's very likely." He opened this thick book to somewhere in the middle and pointed at a paragraph of words. "This day, the Storm Lord and the Earth Lord fought at the beach. This battle lasted three whole days. The two powerful lords were both heavily injured as they unleashed their final attack. The Storm Lord destroyed the physical body of the Earth Lord in one swing of his sword. However, he eventually succumbed to his heavy injuries and fell at the same place."

After reading it, he looked up at Link. "Do you see it? The Ferde Wilderness was the exact location of their battle. The gravel littered around the entire Wilderness is the fallen body of the Earth Lord, while the terrible hurricane that plagued this land is caused by the remnant soul of the Storm Lord."

Celine felt that it was strange. "Isn't this just a legend? Do you really believe it?"

Vance was not amused. He merely looked at Celine and said, "Young girl, legends are actually history that has been either dramatized or modified over the years. The truth often lies behind these legends."

Link was lost in thought. As a Magician, he had once read about the history of the World of Firuman. He knew that the World of Firuman had changed over the years. Tens of thousands of years ago, there was a golden era were many Legends walked the ground. The strongest of those Legendary professionals were termed as lords.

The Storm Lord and the Earth Lord could just as well be such powerful beings. Although no one knew the exact reason for their fight, it could really explain the uncanny geography and climate of the Ferde Wilderness to a great extent.

After thinking for a moment, Link said, "I have heard that in the golden era, the lords were extremely powerful beings. Most of them would have attained an indestructible spirit which allowed them to remain on the earth in some form even after the death of their physical bodies. Does this mean that if we can find the remnant soul of the Storm Lord, we can stop the appearance of the random hurricanes?

"You are absolutely right!" Vance snapped his fingers. He then flipped to another page on the book and pointed at a chunk of words, "The Lion Heart King came to this Wilderness when suddenly, a hurricane ensued and blew sand across the entire area. The king then lost his way and reached a mysterious canyon while trying to maneuver out of the terrible weather."

The Lion Heart King was a figure from 2000 years ago. He was a great king that loved adventure, and legends of his exploits could still be found circulating amongst the world of Firuman. Although some of the stories were made up, the passage that Vance read had revealed two important pieces of information: Firstly, the soul remnant of the Storm Lord might very well still be present. Secondly, it was probably still hidden in some canyon. Link was prepared to follow this clue and find a canyon with the presence of strong wind elements.

Celine then raised a question, "The Ferde Wilderness is huge. However, no one seems to have heard of any storm canyon."

Vance nodded. "The canyon is certainly not in the Ferde Wilderness. However, this history has pointed out that these hurricanes seem to have an origin.

Having a direction that might be false was better than having no direction at all. If one could see through the mist covering the truth, they could very well expose the true history.

Link frowned and thought for a long while before saying, "There is a Wind Tiger in my territory that is especially sensitive to wind elementals. Perhaps I can task him to find this origin for me."

"That is a good idea." Vance closed the Treasured War History of the Ancestors and handed it over to Link. "This is the only copy. You can read the rest of the stories in your free time as well. Many of these stories have value to them."

"Alright." Link was interested in this book already.

Link and Celine then returned to the camp afterwards. Vance then found a remote place within the Ferde Wilderness to call home. As for where that location was, he was unwilling to answer. He did, however, give Link a transmission rune to contact him whenever needed. They had also agreed to research on the theories of magic puppets together in the future.

Link naturally had no opinion on this arrangement. After returning to the Scorched Ridge, he first headed towards River Cove Town to heal his wounds. He then approached Dorias and tasked him with a mission.

"What? The origin of the hurricane?" Dorias had been living a good life and seemed to be slightly relaxed. When he heard Link's words, he subconsciously starting sniffing the air in the atmosphere.

After a while, he nodded. "The wind here is indeed different. I will look into it now."

He was extremely efficient. Upon finishing his sentence, he leaped from the ground and sniffed the air while walking in a specific direction, quickly making his way out of Scorched Ridge.

It wasn't too nice for him to do nothing while he lived off Link's resources. Furthermore, he had been extremely bored these few days. He could take this chance to go out for a walk.

## 182. Windy Cove

Dorias had gone out for three days. On the second day, there were two violent storms that seemed to come out of nowhere in Ferde Wilderness. On the afternoon of the third day, Dorias dragged himself back, and he seemed to be acting strangely.

As soon as he arrived, he rushed back to the big shed that Link had built specially for him.

"Give me some roast meat and make it quick!" he shouted. "I'm almost starved to death! Make sure you add hot peppers and sea salt to my meat!"

At that point, Link was studying the design blueprint of the magic puppet in his room. When he heard of the commotion outside, he stepped out of the wooden cabin and saw some of his servants pouring a bucket of clean water onto Dorias' body. The water that flowed from his body was full of mud and dirt.

"Where have you been?" asked Link as he approached the tiger. "Did you fall into a mud swamp?"

Dorias shook his giant head and wore a strangely proud expression on his face.

"I've found the source of the storms," he revealed. "It was on a bizarre island out in the sea, probably about a hundred miles away from here. It had been quiet and calm before I reached the island, but the moment I set foot on it, a violent storm formed very quickly. I was almost blown into the sky by the storm!"

"An island a hundred miles away from here?" asked Link. "Did you notice any cliffs or caves there?"

Dorias stared at Link in shock.

"Oh, so you know about the caves on the island?" he asked.

Link was in fact reminded of the records in the book War History of the Ancestors where King Lionheart said that he was blown adrift to a cave. It seemed that this description was true and that he was, in fact, blown from the mainland to the island in the middle of the sea.

Once he'd found the target, Link felt that half of the problem was solved. He decided that what he must do now was to go and see the place for himself.

"I'll take you there when I'm full," said Dorias. He could guess exactly what was on Link's mind.

The head cook of the camp was very good at his job. He'd roasted two cows perfectly to Dorias' taste, so naturally, he wanted to savor every bite of food he was served. Once he'd picked all the bones clean, he burped loudly and shook his fur dry.

"Let's go," he said, turning to Link.

Link relayed the appropriate orders to his clerk, Joshua before climbing onto the giant tiger's back. They sped all the way towards the sea.

Once on the beach, Link saw that the harbor was under construction. The Yabba people were truly as efficient as they were rumored to be. It hadn't been more than half a month since they arrived, but Link could already see the rough structure of a port. If they kept on working at this pace, the harbor would be ready to use in less than a month.

The construction of the estate is on the right track now, thought Link. And I've got all the magic materials and gold coins in place. Now, it is only the matter of solving the climate problem!

Meanwhile, Dorias had already reached the edge of the shore. He then roared, and his body was immediately shrouded in glimmering blue light. Then, the tiger jumped down the cliff, and when his feet touched the surface of the water, it was as if he'd landed on firm ground. He proceeded to run as fast as the wind on the surface of the sea.

Dorias proudly shook his head to and fro against the wind as he ran.

"What do you think of my moves, Link?" he asked.

"Very smooth," answered Link with a smile.

Roar!!! Rooooaaarrrr!!!

Dorias then got more adjusted to the new surface he was running on and his speed gradually increased. It only took him under an hour to travel the 100 miles' distance. Soon enough, Link spotted a black dot over the horizon.

"Do you see that? That's the place," said Dorias. "It looks like a desert island and seems normal from afar. There was nothing out of the ordinary around it either. But as soon as you get 300 feet to the island, there's a huge gust of wind so strong that you almost can't stand it. I tried it twice when I got here, and it resulted in the same outcome both times. It really is very strange."

Link had no idea what was going on himself. He only waited to approach the island himself and experience it first-hand.

Soon afterwards, they were both on the island. It was a bleak and barren place where not even grass could grow. There was a sandy beach near the shore while the inner part of the island was made up of rusty, brown stones that were so heavily weathered they looked like honeycombs.

From afar, these stones seemed to form into caves where gentle breeze blew from their depths.

"Everything still seems normal here," said Dorias, "but once we walk further into the island things will change drastically."

Dorias crouched down a little as he walked on slowly and cautiously as if bracing for the sudden appearance of a violent storm. Link jumped down from the tiger's back and cast the Crimson Edelweiss spell on himself as protection. He then walked slowly forward while remaining close to Dorias' side.

After walking for about 30 feet, Dorias suddenly wiggled his nose as if he smelled something in the air.

"Did you sense that?" he asked. "The wind has changed."

It was an obvious change. At first, it had only been a mild breeze that they could hardly feel, but now the wind started to blow more quickly. It was strong enough to blow up the grains of sand on the beach. Without the Edelweiss spell, those grains of sand would've gotten into Link's eyes by now.

"Looks like the island has woken up," whispered Link.

"Exactly!" replied Dorias. "It's as if there's a ferocious beast in the cave and our presence disturbed its slumber."

Dorias then crouched down even lower to the ground and moved even slower. He squinted his eyes to prevent the sand from getting into his eyes. At that moment, he looked just like a cat who was ready to pounce.

Link and Dorias then walked for a further 150 feet. The gusts of wind had now turned into a storm that whistled and howled and picked up stones and sand into the air. Through the Edelweiss shield, Link could feel waves of air pressure coming from the wind. He was sure to be blown off into the distance by now if he hadn't cast a defensive spell earlier.

Dorias also began to release the blue aura around him. He crouched down almost to the ground now and would shake his head from time to time to remove the sand and stone that got caught between his fur.

"Link, it's getting a bit unbearable for me," said Dorias. "Are we still going to move forward?" Dorias had to stretch out his claws and dig deep into the ground to prevent from getting blown away by the storm. Even so, his body was visibly moving backwards, and he'd left a long deep channel on the ground where his claws were dragged backwards by the wind.

Link fared better as the Edelweiss shield helped protect him from most of the wind's power. But even he felt quite overwhelmed by the storm's sheer force. He turned around and could see nothing else in the surroundings except sand and stones.

After focusing his eyes for a while, Link could see that thick clouds were already taking form in the sky. Soon, dark clouds gathered, and a huge storm was looming over them.

It wasn't just gusts of wind around the caves now. Instead, the whole region seemed to be caught in a strong hurricane!

Link felt a wave of panic surging over him.

Is this how the storms in Ferde Wilderness are formed? Link thought. Is this place really hiding the souls of the ancient lords? But thousands of years have passed since then; how could their powers still be this ferocious?

Whoosh! Whoooosh!

The storm got louder and stronger. It now sounded like the roar of an immensely strong giant. The clouds gathered in the sky and almost completely blocked the sunlight from penetrating to the ground.

"You should stay back now, Dorias," said Link. "I'll go on for a little bit further." Link thought he'd be able to handle the storm for just a little while longer. He'd come to solve the climate problem in the Ferde Wilderness, so he couldn't back out before reaching his limits.

"Be careful, Link," yelled Dorias. He then turned around and ran towards the sea. He then jumped into the water and hid there, only keeping his head above the water to keep watch on Link from afar.

He didn't know what would happen next, but his big eyes were full of worry and apprehension.

Meanwhile, on the coven island, Link continued to move forward. The force field of Edelweiss was pulled back by the wind, making it look like a comet's tail behind Link. The force field in front of Link had been compressed and weathered by the storm until all that was left was a thin layer.

If he pressed on this way, Link knew that Edelweiss could only protect him for another 30 feet or so.

Link activated the Glyph of Soul and cast the Vulcan's Hand. Then, he quickly canceled the spell and used the Mana structure resonance to transform itito the Titan's hand.

Whoosh!

A giant hand appeared in front of Link's body, protecting him from the force of the storm.

A Level-6 spell would naturally be more stable than the Level-5 Crimson Edelweiss. Link found that he could now step forwards more easily now that he was protected by the Titan's Hand.

Link wasn't sure how long it took, but suddenly he felt that the pressure exerted on the Titan's Hand suddenly seemed to ease up. It wasn't because the strength of the wind decreased though, but rather because the storm's power had reached the point where it could slash like knives. Without the Titan's Hand, the storm would've behaved like a thousand blades of knives that surrounded Link, and he would be slashed all over his body.

Also, Link noticed that all the sand and stones that were blown up into the air had cleared off, leaving only the pure power of the wind elements.

Maybe everything that could get picked up by the wind has been blown away, Link thought, leaving only smooth boulders here.

Link didn't dare to peek his head around the Titan's Hand to see what was happening in front of him. All he could do was walk on forward.

After another tity steps or so, Link felt that the screaming wind around him had reached a totally unbearable point. It sounded as if he was standing right next to a jet engine!

Even the Titan's Hand was about to reach its limits. Although Link used all his powers to focus on strengthening the force field in front of him and change the form of the Titan's Hand into the more stable fist shape, he could still see that a trail of red-hot fire elements was blown behind him.

The spell would collapse any moment now.

Link realized that it would simply be suicidal for him to keep moving forward. He stopped and tried to estimate the situation around him. He could see much better here than before, but still, his view was distorted as the rapid air flow became transparent ripples.

Finally, Link noticed a faint frosty white aura on the ground where he stood and the stone walls around him.

There must be a light source ahead, not too far away from here, thought Link. But what could it be? Link was very curious but did not dare to risk his life finding out. If he took any more steps further, the Titan's Hand would surely collapse. Then, what would surely follow would be him getting minced to small bits by the violent wind around him.

Should I go back now? Link thought.

Despite the clear danger, Link was still a little hesitant and unwilling to go back. He'd come so far and so near to finding out the truth. Going back now would mean that he still couldn't solve the climate problem in his estate and that he'd have to come back here again.

He considered it for three seconds, then took out the White Prophetic Stone.

The violent climate of Ferde Wilderness was now his last hurdle in building his estate. If he couldn't solve this problem, then there would be no way for him to develop his power and build up his army. Elin, the Lady Fortuna, had warned him that the sun was about to sink under the horizon, so he mustn't waste any more precious time.

Therefore, he felt that using the Prophetic White Stone now would gain him huge and invaluable progress, so he proceeded without any more hesitation.

His Mana began to flow into the stone which caused it to emit a transparent water-like aura. This aura then flowed into the Titan's Hand in front of him, strengthening it within a second and turning it from a tattered force field into solid protection while its size was tripled as well. However, Link's Mana consumption rate increased five times now, and he was expending as high as 200 points of Mana per second.

"Clear Thoughts!" chanted Link as he activated the special powers of his robe. He then took a bottle of high-level Mana potion from his storage pendant and drank it all up in one gulp.

While a mid-level Mana potion could restore 500 points of Mana, high-level Mana potion could restore 1000 points of Mana instantly. Coupled with the effects of Clear Thoughts which boosted his Mana recovery rate, Link estimated that he would be able to hold out for another half minute.

If I can't reach the end of this cave after 20 seconds, Link thought, then I'll be on my way out!

With that decision made up in his mind, Link walked on behind the protection of the Level-6 Titan's Hand.

One second, two seconds, three seconds, four seconds

The frosty white light got brighter and brighter, the wind became stronger and stronger, and the floor got so smooth that it was starting to be slippery. Link had to struggle just to take a step forward now.

Ten seconds!

Link's Mana consumption rate had reached 300 points per second now, while there were only about 2600 points of Mana left in his body. In two more seconds, he would have to use the spell, Dimensional Jump to get out of here.

Just as he took the last step forward, he noticed a sudden change!

It was as if he'd broken through the layer of a barrier. He could no longer hear the wind's howl nor feel the pressure exerted on the Titan's Hand. He'd entered a calm and silent place.

There were wind elements here, and they were very densely packed too. But instead of being violent and vicious, these wind elements were gentle and calm. There was a frosty white light here as well, and it was so bright that Link couldn't look at its source directly.

Link carefully canceled the Titan's Hand and slowly turned his eyes in the direction of the light source.

A second later, his eyes widened, and he stood there in a daze.

"Isn't this?"

## 183. Arbiter of Storms, Master of Lightning, Silencer of Realms

This was the end of the canyon. The walls of this area were pure white in color and glistened when light was reflected off its surface. The area was also saturated with wind elements. They were so concentrated that they became visible to the naked eye, floating around Link like a thin veil.

In the center of the area, lay the origin of this spectacular phenomenon. Through the blinding brilliance, Link could see a magnificent and elegant rustic sword.

It was a one-handed sword!

It was suspended gracefully in the air and was around 3 feet long. It seemed to be formed from shimmering white crystals. There was an oval-shaped translucent dent in the center of the sword. Within this translucent area, glowing circular air currents stirred slowly while emanating a powerful presence. Around the sword, the wind elements were as docile as a sheep.

Link merely stared at the sword for a second before he felt a huge pressure coming from it. This pressure was so intimidating that he was almost forced to kneel on the ground to give respect to this almighty sword.

"What a strong presence!" Link was surprised and withstood the pressure with all his might. He did not avert his gaze, nor did he succumb to the intimidation.

Three seconds later, the information of the sword appeared in his field of vision.

Arbiter of Storms, Master of Lightning, Silencer of Realms! (Sword of the Storm Lord)

Quality: Legend

Status: Depleted (8/100) (Down to 20% power)

Effect: Owner of this sword will wield the power of storm and lightning. Any wind and lightning elemental spells or Battle Aura cast by the owner will see a 1000% increase in power and gain 30000 feet in attacking range. The offensive power of area of effect attacks will be 30% of the owner's attacking power.

(Note: Only a true master can fully control its power.)

Link was practically dumbfounded when he saw the sword. He knew this sword by name while he was playing the game.

In the game, this sword was not casually neglected on an island. Instead, it was segmented into three partsnamely the hilt, the damaged blade and the wind elemental core. One could only assemble these pieces as loot drops from the three final world bosses. Furthermore, the drop rate for these items was abysmal. Even after painstakingly collecting the parts, one would still have to spend a great deal of effort to clear a story called Prestige of the Dwarf Master repeatedly. Only when they had reached a certain level of mastery for the storyline would they be able to craft a sword completely depleted of energy.

Finally, the sword then had to be charged with mana points which would once again require a lot of time. The final in-game stats of the sword were also modified for balancing purposes, though there were similarities between the both of them.

In the game, the effects of the sword were to increase the strength of all wind and lightning elemental attacks by 300%, as well as increase the attacking range by 150 feet. Despite the great reduction in stats, it was already considered to be one of the strongest weapons of all time.

Amongst the billions of players who played the game, only around 20 of them managed to get ahold of the sword. If a wielder of the sword were to appear in town, they would immediately become the center of attention.

The power of this sword simply knew no bounds. No matter what profession you were, as long as your main element was wind or lightning, this sword would immediately make you one of the strongest players on the server. As long as one had basic playing skills, it would not be a problem to fight against three other players of the same level and supposedly same strength.

If the owner of this sword were to meet a bunch of rookies, he could even destroy a group of twenty easily.

The sword was already near perfect in the game. However, the beauty and incomparable brilliance it had in real life were simply astonishing. The sword had revealed the true terror and gloriousness of a top-tier Legendary weapon in reality!

When the sword was fully charged, it would grant the wielder a 1000% increase in strength and 30000 feet in attacking range. The wielder could then easily destroy an entire troop of soldiers with this weapon. They merely hand to swing the sword to call upon the surging thunder and howling winds. In a matter of seconds, a battalion of opponents would lay motionless on the ground.

That would be insanely cool.

Link felt a desire to walk up and claim the sword as his own. He suppressed the intense pressure emanating from the sword and stretched out his hand towards the hilt of the sword.

He succeeded! His hand wrapped around the hilt as a feeling of satisfaction overwhelmed him. However, a reprimanding voice suddenly rang, "Mortal, you are facing the weapon that once belonged to the Storm Lord. What qualifications do you have to wield me!"

"This isa sword spirit!" Link was startled. What other surprises would this sword bring?

"I have broken through your wind elemental barrier and successfully grabbed the hilt of the sword. From that perspective, I am more than qualified," Link replied.

"Mortal, you have a strong soul. However, you are still too weak. That is really disappointing. If you were to wield me having such measly power, it would be a disgrace to my predecessor!" The voice rang again, not willing to admit that Link was qualified enough to wield him as of yet.

Link fell silent and tried to pull the sword out from its position. However, no matter how much strength he used, the sword merely levitated in the same spot and would not budge. He then started charging mana into the sword but to no avail. The moment any mana touched the sword, it would be greedily consumed by the sword which had a vast mana storage capacity, rendering it ineffective.

What a pity that he could not claim a powerful weapon that was right in front of him!

However, since a sword spirit was present, it meant that Link could strike a deal with him. After thinking for a moment, he said, "Alright then, I will not attempt to wield you. The aim of my trip is to find the origin of the hurricanes, the menace that is destroying my territory. That origin is none other than you!"

"Origin of hurricanes? Menace?" The voice sounded doubtful.

Link did not speak and let images of the Ferde Wilderness flash through his mind. He believed that the sword spirit would be able to see these images as well.

"Do you see now? Because of you, my territory has become a barren land. As the lord, I have to improve the situation!"

The sword spirit fell silent for a while before speaking again, "This was not my intention."

"Then what is it?"

"My original intention was to release my power to search for the next Storm Lord. It is such a shame that mortals are getting weaker by the day. After waiting for ten thousand years, no one even managed to reach this place. You are the first one to have succeeded. But look at your measly power! What a disappointment!" the sword was clearly dejected.

The sword spirit seemed to be highly intelligent. This meant that it might be possible to reason with him.

Link then suggested, "You want to look for a new Storm Lord while I need to protect my territory. What do you say we make a deal? You will seal your powers while I will bring you around the mortal world. One day, when you find a suitable candidate, I will hand you over to that lucky person."

The sword spirit did not reply immediately, and Link waited nervously.

After around half a minute, the majestic voice once again sounded, "Your idea is not half bad."

Link then heard a light, clanging, metallic sound as the elegant blade suddenly lost all the brilliance it was emitting. The pure white crystals that used to glimmer were now pale white rocks, and the mysterious air ripples in the middle of the sword had disappeared. The veil-like layer of wind elements had also dissipated entirely. Link then picked up this sword from the ground.

This sword looked extremely ordinary now. It was simply a hand-crafted sword that looked slightly more aesthetic. If Link were to auction it in Hot Springs City, it would probably fetch at most ten gold coins.

"From now on, I will enter into a state of slumber. No matter what situation you are in, I will not offer my power to help. If you die in an accident, I will find another carrier myself. However, if you die of old age and happen to have any descendants, you may hand me over to them."

"It's a deal!" Link nodded as he tried to put the sword away into the dimensional pendant. However, he was not successful.

The voice the sounded again, "Don't humiliate me by putting me in such low-level magical equipment! Just carry me along on your waist like a normal sword."

Left with no choice, Link secured the sword onto his waist. Luckily, the sword was light and only weighed around two kilograms.

He then stared at the sky once again and felt the cooling sea breeze. The dark clouds and thundering bellows had all disappeared, revealing the clear blue skies that were supposed to have graced the island.

It seemed like the era of bad climate in the Ferde Wilderness was over.

Link heaved a sigh of relief as he walked out of the canyon. Halfway through, he saw Dorias walking towards him.

Dorias was unable to grasp the situation. Just a moment ago, he witnessed a storm that seemed to even tear a gap through the dimension. However, the next moment, the entire world seemed to be enveloped in warm fluffy clouds and comforting sunshine. The peculiar wind that once plagued this island had also disappeared without a trace. This was strange.

"Link, what happened?" Dorias asked.

"Do not reveal anything about me." Before Link could speak, the sword spirit gave a stern reminder.

Link needed to make up an excuse on the spot. "There is an extremely powerful Storm Lord in the depths of the canyon. I have already defeated him, and all is well."

Dorias was immediately overwhelmed with respect, "Is that true? You are really something! Is this sword the weapon of the Storm Lord in question?"

This was truly what Dorias felt. He had attempted many times to enter the canyon but only managed to reach the halfway point before he was forced to turn back. If the opponent was able to create such strong winds consistently, just how strong would he be in combat?

To think that Link was not only able to reach the end of the canyon but also defeat the Storm Lord. This was the strength of the man Dorias had chosen to follow!

Link was tickled by Dorias' reaction and nodded. "That's right. This is his weapon. What do you think? Beautiful isn't it?"

Dorias then shook his head. "It is a piece of crap. I have seen at least 10000 similar low-quality swords in my lifetime."

He then automatically squatted down to let Link mount onto him easily.

As Link mounted Dorias, the voice of the sword spirit once again appeared, "I don't like this hideous creature. Don't let me see him next time."

What is going on? Link was speechless. Didn't he mention he was going into a state of slumber? Why is he still so talkative?

"He has no manners!"

Link had nothing to say to the sword spirit's arrogance and pride.

Link then relaxed as Dorias brought him all the way back to the Ferde Wilderness. Along the way, Link admired the beautiful scenery while he appreciated the brilliant weather. With the issue of bad climate off the list, Link once again felt the passion and drive to develop his territory.

Half a day later, Link and Dorias reached the campsite. The moment they reached the outskirts of Scorched Ridge, they could hear many voices and saw a huge figure lying in wait for them. The moment Link saw the figure, he was elated. East Cove Higher Magic Academy was indeed efficient. They had already brought him the magic puppet that he had ordered.

It seemed like everything was going according to plan. Link smiled and said, "Let's speed up. I have to see how the magic puppet performs."

## 184. A Thing or Two About the Estates Development

Once he returned to his own estate, Link was welcomed by two familiar figures from the East Cove Magic Academy. The first one was his good friend Eliard who he hadn't seen for a long while now. The second was Rylai, the lovely girl who was his disciple.

Eliard was about to approach Link the moment he saw him but stopped in his tracks as he was shocked by the sight of the giant tiger. Dorias scowled when he noticed this.

"What a coward," he scoffed.

Once Link had hopped off his back, Dorias then raised up his head high and proud as he strode haughtily towards his own shed.

Well, there were so many strangers today so he must act his best to impress them!

Meanwhile, Link approached Eliard with a big smile on his face.

"How did you find time to come visit me this time?" asked Link, patting Eliard's back.

Eliard had been greatly motivated to dive his nose back into studying magic when he heard that Link had defeated the demon Tarviss with a Level-9 spell. Once he got back to the academy, Eliard began to study with the same obsessive single-mindedness that Link had once shown in the past.

Eliard chuckled in reply and pointed at the giant magic puppet next to him and pulled Rylai over.

"I heard you spent 15,000 gold coins ordering this big guy from the academy," Eliard said, "so I came here to see whether you got your money's worth or not. Besides, Rylai wanted to see her tutor, so I brought her with me too."

Rylai stepped forward and respectfully bowed to Link.

Link realized that he'd basically let his disciple study on her own and entrusted her to Herrera all this while. He suddenly felt guilty for neglecting her.

"Why don't you stay here for a few months?" suggested Link to Rylai as he patted her head gently. "I'm in the process of building my estate now, so there'd be much for you to see and learn."

"Yes, tutor," replied Rylai. She had been concerned that her visit would be an intrusion upon her tutor's time, but now that she'd heard from his lips that her arrival was welcomed, all the anxieties she felt disappeared from her mind and a sweet smile cropped up on her face.

"You may go explore the place now," said Link, patting the girl's shoulder. Rylai then began to wander around the Scorched Ridge camp.

There are so many interesting things to see here! Rylai thought with excitement. Like that giant talking cat, for example. What a funny creature!

Eliard looked around Scorched Ridge and turned back to Link.

"You've really become a land-owning lord now," he said earnestly. "And you're only the same age as I am, yet you seem so much more matured and have so much more charisma than I do."

"These are just superficial things, though," replied Link with a smile. "They don't mean everything. Come on, let's go see the Plowing Magic Puppet."

They both then walked up to the magic puppet, and Link circled around it, carefully observing every detail.

The magic puppet was about 15 feet tall and had a humanoid upper body while two huge iron plows made up its lower body. Its whole body was made of anti-magic clay, and it looked as if it were made of ceramic. The whole surface of its skin was covered in magic runes, while a big magic crystal lay in the middle of its chestthis was its Mana core.

Link made sure to examine every detail of the magic puppet. He nodded occasionally and sometimes furrowed his brows slightly as he inspected the magic puppet. It basically met his requirements, but the artistry that wentito it wasn't as delicate as he'd hoped. Because of his perfectionist nature, Link was slightly disappointed by this, but then he knew that this kind of working magic puppet need not be perfect in its structure. He decided not to voice this minor complaint he had.

Meanwhile, the Magician's Apprentice who was responsible for the delivery of the magic puppet stood by nervously.

"This Plowing Magic Puppet can plow five feet deep into the soil," he started to explain. "As long as it is continuously supplied with Mana, it will be able to work 24 hours a day non-stop for at least a year."

"How efficient is it?" Link asked.

"In the case of Ferde Wilderness," he replied, "if it is working a flattened plain, then it can plow 100 acres of land in 24 hours. If it's working in a sloped area, then it will manage more than 80 acres a day."

A hundred acres in 24 hoursthat meant 3000 acres a month, and 36,000 acres per year. It sounded good, but it would still be too slow due to the vastness of Ferde Wilderness.

Link decided to keep the magic puppet and see how it worked out. If he were satisfied with its work, then he'd order a few more of these.

"It satisfies my requirements," he finally said to the apprentice. "Please send my thanks to Master Weissmuller. He's solved a big problem for me."

Judging by his Mana and his attire, it seemed that the man was a mid-level apprentice and an insignificant figure in the academy. Once he'd heard Link's response, the apprentice then gave Link a reverent Magician's bow.

"We are pleased and honored to help you, Master Magician Link," he said. "Since you are satisfied with the magic puppet, then I must excuse myself and return to the academy."

"Wait," Link hurriedly replied. "I am planning to build a large Mage Tower on my estate. I've prepared all the gold coins needed too. Please bring this news back to East Cove Academy."

Although the old Lich Vance had advised him to get the help from the High Elves to build his Mage Tower, Link must disagree with him in this regard. That's because Vance had approached the problem purely from a scholar's perspective, while Link was not merely a Magician now but a liege lord as well.

Because he had been trained in the East Cove Magic Academy and achieved his fame and reputation there and was even considered as a candidate for the future dean, he couldn't just ask for someone else's help when he was building his own Mage Tower. If he did that, it would be as if he'd cut his ties with the academy.

Not only that, the relationship between him and the academy would then run a risk of turning sour because of that.

Link couldn't afford to lose such a powerful ally as the East Cove Magic Academy.

Yet, to be frank, the High Elves did indeed possess a great understanding of magic, and their skills were truly invaluable in building Mage Towers. So what should Link do?

Link thought that the best way for him to go about this was to let the East Cove Magic Academy to help him build the main structure of the large Mage Tower but still leave a lot of room for future expansion and upgrades. Then one day, he'll find the opportunity to get the help of the High Elves to modify his Mage Tower.

That's what a wise lord would do.

Meanwhile, as soon as they heard the news that Link was going build a Mage Tower, and a large one at that, the apprentice's eyes shone with envy and admiration while even Eliard showed deep respect for his friend's achievement.

Building their own large-scale Mage Tower was any Magician's loftiest dreams!

"Don't worry, Master Magician Link," said the apprentice, "I will bring this news back to the academy immediately."

"Good," replied Link. "Here's your reward." Link then handed over a coin pouch to the apprentice.

The apprentice knew the moment he took the pouch that there were at least 20 gold coins in it. That was more than what he got for working hard in the Mage Tower for a month! He thanked Link with the gladdest heart and rushed back to the East Cove Academy immediately.

"Tell Magician Carrido that I'd like to see him," Link ordered a guard nearby.

"Yes, my lord," said the guard. He then swiftly turned around and rushed to get the Magician.

Soon, Carrido arrived.

"This is the Plowing Magic Puppet," Link told Carrido while pointing towards the magic puppet. "It can plow as deep as five feetito the ground, and its operation is very simple. Take it to the flat plain in the southern part of Scorched Ridge and test how efficient it is."

"Yes, my lord," answered Carrido. He circled around the magic puppet once to understand the general operation of the magic puppet. Then, he activated it and brought it away.

Only then was Link free enough to talk to Eliard, who was waiting for him at the side.

"I'm sorry for making you wait," he said. "Let's go inside."

"Not a problem at all, Link," replied Eliard. "You've always been busy even when you're in the academy. I'm used to it."

The two then chatted freely as they walk into the wooden cabin. Suddenly, Eliard noticed a dark-haired woman with a fascinating air about her walking out of the cabin.

"Who's that woman?" he asked, slightly surprised.

Celine stayed here on the pretense of being Link's apprentice. Still, her unique aura and temperament naturally set her apart from other people, so she was apt to be noticed as soon as she appeared.

Noticing that Celine was wearing her camouflage pendant, Link didn't need to worry that Eliard might notice anything odd about Celine.

"Her name is Celine Flandre," said Link with a smile. "She's agood friend of mine, and she's staying here to learn magic with me."

"A goodfriend of yours?" said Eliard confusedly. He then noticed the twinkle in Link's eyes and was even more surprised. He'd always thought that his friend had no interest in women. It turned out that he'd just never met the right person after all!

"Ah, I get it now, Link" he answered with a good-humored laugh. He said nothing more about the matter and continued to talk to Link about magic as they usually did.

Once they'd gotten inside the cabin, Eliard took out his own magic notebook and consulted with Link about the questions and problems that he encountered recently. Link gave his answers and guidance clearly as he always did, and Eliard reaped many benefits from their discussion.

Time flew by quickly, and the two Magiciasslowly changed the subject of their discussion from magic to the war in the North of Norton Kingdom. Link didn't know as much as Eliard on this subject, so he was basically just listening while Eliard was the one talking most of the time.

"Ah, it seems that the war has gotten into a deadlock," said Eliard.

"What do you mean?" asked Link intently. He'd been busy all this while with his own affairs that he was relatively clueless about what was happening in the North.

Eliard gulped and let out a long sigh before answering. He looked more than a little worried about the war.

"Two big battles happened recently, and they were both violent and terrible," Eliard began. "It is said that 20,000 Warriors had died in those battles. Even some of the Battle Mages had suffered great injuriesmany had even lost their limbs. Some of them returned to the academy, and I went to visit them. Many of them lost their legs and arms, and one of them got his chin cut off! They said it was because the Dark Elf Assassins were trying to slash the Magician's throat, but he was fortunate enough to lower his head in time and escaped with his lifeHow brutal!"

Eliard shook his head again and again, his face full of sympathy and regret.

Because of his outstanding magical talents, Eliard was relieved of his military service and was able to concentrate on learning magic in the academy. Although he was grateful for this, he couldn't help but feel guilty that he was hiding in safety while the kingdom was at war. To combat that feeling, he dove into his studies even more obsessively so as to relieve that guilt.

"With 20,000 Warriors dead and even more wounded," said Link with a deep frown, "doesn't that mean that the kingdom is losing the war?"

"Not exactly," replied Eliard. "It's more of a mutual defeat. The Dark Elves have suffered serious losses as well, but their resistance had gotten much more intense than before now. Every battle was fought fiercely and harshly that countless lives were lost and even more blood was shed with every mile that we advance to the North."

After that, the two friends fell into deep silence for a while.

"Maybe the king has gone too far," said Link finally. "The best thing to do now would be to stabilize and strengthen the line of defense. We shouldn't advance north anymore."

"While that is true," said Eliard with a bitter smile, "now that blood has been shed, everyone has one thing in mind, and that is to kill. The ball has started rolling, and it's very hard to stop it. I heard that the army is obsessed with the thought of chasing the Dark Elves back into the dark underground where they came from. Any suggestions of stopping would be instantly silenced."

After speaking, Eliard seemed to sink into deeper misery.

"You haven't seen how things are in Springs City recently, Link," he said. "When I was there, I saw how the townspeople had been spurred by the victories in previous battles that they were stunned by recent setbacks. Now all they wanted was revenge. To be honest with you, Link, I'm really scared"

The people had been blinded by rage and wanted nothing but to shed more blood now. That's the scariest thing that could happen when a kingdom went to war.

Once the people wanted nothing but to bleed the enemy, things could get to the point where they'd fight until their enemies died or until they died themselves.When a kingdom got to this point, the people would get so fanatic that they'd forget the wisdom of taking a step back to save themselves. It would make it much easier for the enemy to break in through the cracks then, and there would be a high possibility that the whole kingdom would collapse. (Note: refer to the history of World War II Germany.)

There's nothing much that Link could do in this regard. The royal army was composed of aristocrats, and the more military power a certain noble house provided, the more power they had. Link had little to no power right now. Moreover, he hadn't contributed much to the war in the North, so he basically had no right to speak about the matter.

The only thing he could do now was to develop his own strength and that of his troop.

"Let's not talk about this anymore," said Link. "Why don't you stay here for a few days? We still have much to talk about."

Link was the pride of East Cove Magic Academy now, so naturally, the academy would put his matter as their priority. Which was why only four days later, the academy had sent a Mage Tower construction team consisting of two Master Magicians, eight high-level Magicians, and 25 mid-level Magicians to Scorched Ridge.

Hence, the construction of Link's Mage Tower formally started.

## 185. What a Waste of Talent

The Ferde Wilderness had become extremely muddy due to the continuous rain in the past few days.

A carriage from East Cove Higher Magic Academy was traveling unsteadily on the muddy road. Despite the added stability from a wind elemental balancing spell, it was not enough to fully offset the turbulence from the journey. Along the way, many Magicians who were physically weaker or had motion sickness threw up from the discomfort. This continued for two whole days before their destination finally came in sight. Everyone heaved a sigh of relief.

Master Grenci and Master Ferdinand sat in the first carriage. Amongst the six-man council, the two of them were the youngest, with Master Grenci at 58 years old, and Master Ferdinand at 54 years old. They were considered to be prodigies of their era and had attained the status of Master fairly early in life. Even so, this journey had proved to be a painful one for them as well.

As he looked at the barren camp from the window of the carriage, Grenci sighed, "I feel that the king should not have given Link this territory. A title would have been enough! A genius like him should stay in the academy and put all his energy into magic research."

Ferdinand had a more jubilant character and was generally more open-minded. He laughed, "I don't mind it actually. I just find it amazing how many stones there are on this land."

"I feel you." Grenci stared at the barren land where not even weeds were able to take root and once again complained, "This will be my first and last time stepping foot onto this land."

If he had to make another trip here, he might not survive the turbulent journey.

Ferdinand smiled and said, "Old fellow, we are entering the camp soon. Please watch what you say when we meet Link. Don't put him down while he is at the peak of his enthusiasm."

Grenci was extremely grumpy from the uncomfortable journey and immediately retorted, "Why can't I say anything? Not only will I comment on this barren land, but I will also persuade him to return to the academy. It will be a complete waste of his talent to stay in this hellhole."

"Alright, alright, do what you see fit." Ferdinand knew exactly how stubborn his friend was and left him to cool down.

The carriage wheels made clacking sounds as it grazed onto the gravel. Under the monotonous rhythm, the carriages entered the Scorched Ridge.

The roads within Scorched Ridge had been treated and smoothened out upon Link's orders. It was thus a lot more comfortable to travel on. The moment the carriage entered the area, many onlookers gathered to welcome the army of Magicians. Among them, Link, who was wearing the Flame Controller Robe, stood out.

Rylai and Eliard stood beside him, while Jacker, Lucy, Gildern, Carrido and the rest of the mercenary band stood in an orderly manner behind.

The coachman pulled the carriage to a stop and Magicians walked feebly out of the carriage.

Before he alighted, Grenci whispered, "Look, he is still mixing around with those vulgar mercenaries. This isHow uncultured!"

Ferdinand was speechless. Although he knew that Grenci was a kind and caring person at heart, Grenci simply could not keep his mouth on a leash. He would often say hurtful words without first processing them in his mind.

This might be seen as being direct and sincere by some, but also offensive to others.

Upon alighting the carriage, Grenci attempted to restrain his negative feelings about this land and forced a smile on his face. As the strongest member of the six-man council, Grenci led the troop and walked towards Link. He then gave a reluctant expression and said, "Link, this place is way too barren. I have also heard that the weather is terrible. How long will it take to build a decent territory out of this wasteland?"

He still did not manage to keep it in, although he had toned it down greatly.

Link smiled apologetically and bowed. "It has been a tough journey, Master Ferdinand, and Master Grenci. I have already started the building of a road which would connect to the King's Lane. The latest completion date would be next year. Come, I've already prepared a place for both of you to rest."

It must have been a terrible experience for the two old masters to travel on the bumpy road. Link hence thought that it was natural for them to give negative comments at the start. He then turned around, signaling the Magicians to follow him into the wooden houses that they rushed to build these few days.

Along the way, Ferdinand walked towards Link and asked, "The dean had mentioned that you'd like to alter the climate using Mage Towers. Have you found an alternative?"

Link shook his head as he was not allowed to speak of the Storm Lord. He then pretended not to have a solution and said, "I have no idea as well. However, the climate these few days has been amazing. There was even spring rain yesterday! I feel that the bad climate here has been exaggerated by others. It is actually not as bad as one would think."

"Oh, that is good news." Ferdinand did not have a good understanding of the situation anyway and decided to simply believe Link.

Soon, they arrived at the wooden houses. The wooden houses had a very simple exterior. Although everything was brand new, the living conditions were still a far cry from the Mage Towers which the Magicians were used to.

Link knew this well and felt even more apologetic. "The accommodation is not very up to standard. However, I have already set up a temperature stabilizing magic circle in every room. I will also ensure that the room is kept clean. I hope everyone doesn't mind."

Grenci felt even worse after looking at the shabby wooden house. He knew though, that this was not meant to be a relaxing trip and simply endured the unsatisfactory living conditions.

Ferdinand, being himself, simply laughed, "This is already amazing. I am satisfied."

The moment he said those words, the Magicians around him could not voice out their opinions despite having qualms about the wooden houses. Furthermore, they could not possibly change their living conditions.

Everyone then entered the room to rest as they were extremely tired from the troubling journey.

Master Grenci and Master Ferdinand were assigned to an independent wooden house. This was probably the best building in the entire camp. It had two stories and was 210 square feet. It had two bedrooms, a living room, and even a balcony on the second floor.

Before he entered the wooden house, Grenci was filled with dissatisfaction. However, the moment he stepped into the house, he could feel a warm, soothing fragrance wafting into his nose. He was immediately rejuvenated, and the fatigue in his body was dispelled instantly.

He then looked at the interior design of the wooden house. It had wooden-tiled flooring, a small wooden table with a few chairs around it, and a small bookshelf. They were all brand new and delicately crafted. The room was also extremely clean as promised, going for a minimalist design concept which calmed the senses.

Grenci was a direct person. He looked at the room with satisfaction, and a smile finally appeared on his face. "This is pretty good. It seems like Link had put in some effort."

Ferdinand nodded. He had found the temperature stabilizing magic circle and was in the midst of observing it. He then commended, "This magic circle is the work of a genius! Look at this; it seems to be a Sorlen structure which can control the temperature of the room extremely precisely. I can bet that this was Link's idea."

Grenci curiously stepped forward. After half a minute, the feeling of pity once again overwhelmed him. "As I was saying, Link seriously should stop developing this barren land and focus on his magic research. What a waste of talent."

"Alright, alright, old guy. You have repeated that many times. Let's rest. We still have to find the geographical node for the location of the Mage Tower tomorrow."

"That's true."

After the group of Magicians had settled in, Link welcomed another unexpected guest. This person was none other than the head of the Green Leaf Merchant Firm, Warter.

"Why have you come here personally? I should have already sent you the magic equipment this month through Carrido. Am I right?" Link was perplexed and asked quizzically.

Warter laughed heartily. His merchant firm had made great progress in this period, and he looked a lot more refreshed and well groomed. He smiled and said, "I heard that you are preparing to go all out in the development of your territory?"

Link laughed, "You are truly well-informed aren't you. That is true. My harbor is almost complete."

The completion of the harbor would mean that sea trade could commence. Sea trade was a hundred times more efficient than land trade routes. Link could then import huge amounts of resources for the development of the Ferde Wilderness through the sea and also export his goods through the same way. It was all within his calculations.

Warter then said, "I have met many nobles in this period doing trade. They are all extremely interested in what you are doing. Here this is a list of the specialties in each of their territories. See if they have anything that you need."

Link took the list and saw the names of at least 40 nobles. Some of them were from the Norton Kingdom, while others were from the Southern states. Below their names, were the materials and prices that they were offering. For example, Duke Beverly in the North of Hot Springs City could offer more than twenty yeassupply of red beech wood. Duke Garland from the West of Girvent Forest could then provide granite. Many other nobles were then willing to provide food and water, some even willing to sell slaves as labor workers.

Link carefully perused the list and found many items that he needed. He could not help but be impressed by Warter's keen sense of opportunity.

He then passed this list to his secretary and said, "Warter, this is of great help. However, I am busy with the construction of my Mage Tower and probably cannot personally be in charge of this. Please approach Lucy to discuss more details."

"No problem at all."

"Oh, one more thing," Link suddenly remembered an important issue and exclaimed. His territory was in need of citizens. Within a hundred-mile radius of his camp, the indigenous people of the Ferde Wilderness added up to merely 2000 people. This was way too little manpower.

"Please continue," Warter immediately said. He had a hunch that this was going to be something big.

"My territory needs more manpower and a bigger population. However, the condition of the land is just too poor to attract anyone to come on their own accord"

Before he could complete his sentence, Warter had understood the situation and continued, "You need to purchase slaves?"

"That's right, a lot of them. Do you have any connections?" Link smiled and asked. Warter was indeed a shrewd businessman. He was right when he chose to work with him.

"Do you have any requirements for these slaves?"

"Preferably young and strong."

"What about race and gender?"

"Human race would be the best. As for gender, preferably half of eachNo, a bit more males than females. I need manpower for the development of my territory. I need males to do the physical labor." Another reason that Link did not mention was that he was hoping to recruit some soldiers from these slaves.

Warter fell silent for a moment before saying, "There are not many slaves present in the Norton Kingdom. Even if there were, they are all Dark Elves, which you probably would not want. However, the Southern Free Trade Alliance has loads of them. There is often friction between the nations and thus resulting in many prisoners of wars who are usually taken in as slaves. The nobles would probably be willing to trade them off for money. I will contact you again."

"Many thanks."

Warter was an extremely efficient person. He immediately left after all was done to find Lucy for negotiations.

Link was then alone in his study room, planning for the future.

He had to construct his Mage Tower, develop his territory and expand his territory's population. The gold coins required would definitely be astounding. He had to find more ways to increase his revenue.

It was probably time to bring out the anti-magic soil.

## 186. The Unusual Soil

The merchant Warter moved very quickly. He didn't waste a single minute and began to take Link's orders and his 20,000 gold coins around the continent the same night Link had given him the instructions. He went about very excitedly because he knew that with the construction of Link's estate going on, his Green Leaf Firm would expand at an explosive rate. This would then bring him inexhaustible money. Then, his dream of building a business empire would no longer be pure fantasy.

Because of this, Warter worked very hard!

The following morning, the Magicians of the East Cove Academy also began to work on the construction of the Mage Tower. They wandered around the Ferde Wilderness, not just for fun of course, but to look for the Geodetic Nodes.

When a Mage Tower was built on the Geodetic Nodes, or in full the Geodetic Elemental Equilibrium Nodes, it would greatly stabilize the flow of the Elemental Pool inside the Mage Tower and make it much safer. This was the reason why every Mage Tower in East Cove Magic Academy was built on very stable Geodetic Nodes.

No matter how busy Link was, he'd always find time to study Vance's notes on the magic puppet. On the other hand, Eliard had been following Master Ferdinand around to learn from him.

Thus, a week passed by with everyone busy in their own work and duties.

Everyone had heard of the rumors that the climate in Ferde Wilderness was notoriously bad and that storms and rain were commonplace here. But surprisingly, in the past week, the weather had been mild and sometimes even better than the weather in the nearby Girvent Forest.

Within that week, it was pleasant and sunny for four days, and while it did rain for three days, it was merely mild drizzles, the kind that was common in spring. There hadn't been any thunderstorms or heavy rain at all.

Those Magicians who had just arrived didn't find it too odd, but the mercenaries and the original inhabitants of Ferde Wilderness who had experienced extreme weather here started to circulate the rumor that Lord Link had the "hands of God" that could control the weather.

Master Grenci was inspecting the grounds of Ferde Wilderness with an Elemental Compass in his hands. He was working in a separate section of the land from Master Ferdinand. Within the week, they'd pinpointed the locations of the Geodetic Nodes and were now determining the best place for the site of the new Mage Tower.

Just as he was walking, he suddenly heard a loud clink clank noise from afar. When he raised his head in the direction of the sound, he discovered that it was the giant magic puppet plowing the land on the hillside.

What a terrible craftsmanship from Master Weissmuller, snorted Grenci. He then prepared to walk away in the other direction with his asstants.

He'd just taken a few steps when he heard loud booms coming from behind him. After a while, there was a loud clang followed by thick billowing smoke coming from the same hillside he'd seen the magic puppet earlier.

Grenci was stunned, but he soon recovered.

"Ha! Seems like the damned magic puppet's broken down!" he yelled. "What an embarrassment the old man Weiss' craftsmanship is to the East Cove Academy!"

Although Grenci had specialized in alchemy himself, the Plowing Magic Puppet wasn't that complex, so he should be able to fix it if the cause of its breakdown was just some small problems.

"Let's go see what's going on here," he said, waving to his asstants. He then cast a wind floating spell on himself and floated over to the hillside with very little effort.

There, he saw the magic puppet hoisting itself up with its arms while its two plows were stuck deep in the ground. The soil that had been dug up behind the magic puppet looked greenish black and contained no big clumps of stones at all.

"Huh? But this is just normal soil!" said Grenci. "How did the magic puppet break down when it's only working with this? Weiss' skills can't be that bad, can it?"

He'd sneered at Weissmuller before, but in fact, Grenci had deep respect for the old master's artistry. That was why he thought the magic puppet must've broken down because it had been working on tricky terrain. But judging by the looks of it, it seemed that the magic puppet had simply just broken down for no clear reason.

He walked carefully around the magic puppet and still couldn't find anything wrong with its components. He scratched his head in wonder.

Weiss may be an unreliable old man, he thought, but he's always meticulous in his work. What's going with this magic puppet, then?

Just when Grenci couldn't wrap his head around what was happening there, a Level-4 Magician beside him suddenly pointed something out.

"Master Grenci," he said, "do you notice something odd about the soil that's been turned out?"

Grenci found the question intriguing. He kneeled to the ground and took a clump of the soil in his hand then closely inspected it.

It was greenish black, felt very sticky, and its grains were very fine. When Grenci sniffed at it, he thought it had no detectable smell at all.

Wait, something's odd here. Mana, yes, the soil seems to be able to block Mana.

Grenci put down the soil and wiped his hands clean. He then took out his wand and pointed it towards the soil on the ground.

"Fireball!" he chanted.

Just as the fireball struck the soil, Grenci could sense that its spell structure was disrupted. Even though he'd strengthened his control over the fireball, it still exploded earlier than he wanted it to.

Bang!

It wasn't a big explosion, and the fire elements simply sizzled away and disappeared. But what took Grenci by surprise was the fact that there were no signs of an explosion on the ground at all, not even a small dent. It seemed as if the soil was completely unaffected by Grenci's fireball.

"It's high-quality anti-magic soil!" exclaimed Grenci.

Now he understood why the Plowing Magic Puppet had broken down. As it plowed into the ground, the soil had interfered with the Mana and spell structure in the magic puppet's main body. It was fine for a while, but as the interference wore on, more and more anomalies accumulated in the magic puppet's body, leading to its eventual breakdown.

Although the specific properties of this soil had yet to be carefully tested, Grenci still couldn't help but sigh at the big field of at least 30 acres that had been plowed by the magic puppet.

Looks like the whole piece of land was made up of this soil, he thought. Link won't have to worry about having enough gold coins to build his estate anymore!

There were many uses for the anti-magic soil. It could be used to construct sturdy city walls, make magic puppets, build Mage Towers and so on. From now on, all Link had to do was sell the soil and he'd be able to make a big fortune for himself. This way he'd be able to complete the construction of his estate in no time at all.

Could it be God's plan?" Grenci wondered. He felt that Link's luck had just been too miraculous.

Having figured out the reasons for its breakdown, Grenci could then easily repair the magic puppet. It only took a few simple steps as well. He only needed to wipe away the anti-magic soil on the magic puppet's crucial Mana points, then add a protective cover on top of it and repair any damaged magic runes. In less than 20 minutes the giant magic puppet could then restart its work without a hitch.

"Ero, bring some of this soil back to the camp," he instructed one of his asstants, "and report this incidence to Master Link."

"Yes, Master Grenci."

An hour later, the Magician reached Scorched Ridge with the soil. Within five minutes, this greenish black soil was placed on Link's table in his study.

"Master Link," said Ero with notable excitement in his voice, "Master Grenci had told me that it possessed superior anti-magic properties." He couldn't help but get excited by this discovery as he'd seen with his own eyes how the magic puppet had turned up this soil in the whole vast field.

Link merely looked at the soil, and there was no change in his expressions at all. It wasn't that the soil wasn't good enough for him, only that he'd expected this discovery. He took the soil sample and pretended to examine it closely. Then, he smiled and gave Ero a nod.

"This is good news indeed," he said. "At least we won't have to purchase anti-magic bricks from other people to build the Mage Tower now."

"I'm afraid you'll have much more than you need for the Mage Tower, Master Link," said Ero. He greatly admired Link's calm demeanor, and he knew that he wouldn't be able to keep his cool if he was Link. Even though Ero hadn't much to do with this anti-magic soil, he was still thrilled by its discovery as he felt that he'd just witnessed a historic moment!

Yes, with a field of this soil, Master Link could even build a magnificent city here on his estate!

Link merely nodded, then he turned to his clerk Joshua.

"Tell Carrido I'd like to see him," he instructed.

Carrido was his magic officer, and although his actual level wasn't high, Link trusted his abilities. He knew that whatever he handed to him would be settled without a problem. Currently, Carrido had become an important helper of his like Lucy and the other mercenaries. As long as the matter was related to magic, Link would always entrust it to Carrido without any hesitation.

Soon afterwards, Carrido arrived.

"My lord, what happened?" he asked.

Link pointed at the soil sample on the table and smiled.

"That giant magic puppet dug that precious thing out of the ground," he told Carrido. "Come and look at it. It's anti-magic soil."

Carrido's face immediately brightened up. All this time, he'd been working for Link and had seen and learned many things in a short span of time. He knew full well how valuable this type of soil was.

Carrido stepped forward and examined the soil carefully.

"My lord, this is an excellent high-quality anti-magic soil," he said. "It is of very high purity. We can sell it as it is for ten gold coins per ton, or we could turn itito higher-value products and sell them at 50 gold coins per ton or more. Where was it found, my lord? I'd like to go there and take a look."

It seemed that Carrido had taken the affairs of the Ferde Wilderness as his own affairs now. Although he was still learning magic, his priorities had slightly shifted now. He found that as a magic officer, there was no need for him to have the deepest knowledge in magic. What he needed to pay more attention to was to properly carry out Link's affairs and business.

Carrido was highly optimistic about Link's future, so he was sure that as long as he carried out his duties as Link's magic officer well, his own future would be bright as well.

"He knows the exact location," said Link, pointing at Ero. "Follow him."

"Let's go, then!" said Ero enthusiastically.

Once he'd seen Carrido, an idea popped up in Ero's mind.

Maybe this anti-magic soil is my chance to shine as well, he thought.

Ero's talents could only be regarded as slightly above average. He'd turned tity this year but was still only a Level-2 Magician. In the future, he estimated that he'd only rise up at most to Level-4, so why should he waste away in the academy? Why couldn't he come out and have a better future working with the genius Magician Link instead?

With this idea in mind, Ero eagerly took Carrido to the location where they discovered the anti-magic soil. Along the way, he kept asking questions about Carrido's roles in Link's estate.

Corrido was no fool; he knew instantly from Ero's attitude that the Magician had the idea of coming to work with Lord Link in his mind. Although he didn't mind that, he also felt slightly threatened by this.

I guess I can't neglect my studies in magic now! Carrido realized. Sooner or later there will be more and more Magicians coming here looking to work for Lord Link. If I don't upgrade my skills, then soon enough I'll be squeezed out of the core position in Lord Link's workforce. Then I'd be in trouble!

With this thought in mind, Carrido suddenly turned to another direction and headed towards Jacker's camp.

"Hey, you're going the wrong way!" said Ero, slightly confused by Carrido's actions.

"I know," replied Carrido with a smile. "But I think Lord Link would want to know the specific volume of the soil, so I should go find some mercenaries to help us make the right estimates."

Ero was impressed with Carrido's shrewdness.

His magic skills are at a lower level than mine, Ero thought. But he seems to be much more efficient and practical than I am. I have much to learn from him.

"Wait for me!" shouted Ero as he quickened his footsteps and tried to catch up to Carrido.

With these thoughts in their minds, the two people naturally worked in a more motivated state and thus got the job done much quicker too.

Seven hours later, a preliminary report about the anti-magic soil was placed on Link's desk.

"My lord," said Carrido, visibly excited, "according to our preliminary estimates, the field that contained the anti-magic soil has an area of about 2000 acres and an average depth of more than a hundred feet. We weren't able to reach the deepest limits where the soil could be found, but it is definitely more than 200 feet. The most conservative estimate of the anti-magic soil's total weight was about 70 million tons or so."

Seventy million tons wasn't a bad figure at all. If the news of this discovery spread out through the kingdom, the price of anti-magic soil would probably nosedive and would probably be sold at the same price as cabbages.

But still, even if the price dropped to a few silver coins per ton, Link would still be able to earn quite a fortune from the anti-magic soil.

Viewed from an individual's point of view, these numbers might seem large and impressive, but Link's main goal was to build a magic capital where all things related to magic would be focused here. In that case, he would still need a lot more gold coins.

"In that case," said Link, "work together with Lucy and set up an exploratory team." He decided to dig the soil and just sell it as it was. Right now, he still had about 70,000 gold coins left, but the construction on his estate was going on at a rapid pace, and his gold coins were used up at an alarming rate. He must now find a stable source of income as soon as possible.

"Yes, my lord!" answered Carrido. "I'll see to it immediately!" He then promptly rushed out of the room and went to work straight away.

Link leaned back in his chair. He wasn't thinking about the soil at all but was instead ruminating about the magnetic island he found in the sea.

The gyromagnetic iron would make a good source of income as well, thought Link. Unfortunately, the island isn't in my estate's territory. Once I've settled everything here, I must establish a navy troop and colonize the island!

It wouldn't hurt to earn more gold coins, anyway.

## 187. The Chariot Overturns

It was impossible to hide the news that a giant mine of anti-magic soil was found in the Ferde Wilderness. It was as though a giant boulder was thrown into a small pond. The ripples would quickly spread in all directions.

For an ordinary lordto have chanced upon a goldmine like this would definitely make them go slightly insane and drunk with happiness.

However, Link was an exception.

In his eyes, these gold coins were merely tools for the construction of his capital of magic. His final goal was to accumulate a strength powerful enough to turn the tide of any battle around. The day the anti-magic soil was discovered, Link calmly analyzed the situation and decisively mounted Dorias and headed directly to Hot Springs City, the capital of the Norton Kingdom.

The benefits from the anti-magic soil were far too great. If he chose to hoard all the benefits, he might be in trouble and end up not getting any.

For starters, King Leon would definitely demand a portion of the economic benefits. This was due to the war the kingdom was in against the Dark Elves. The war expenses had reached an all-time high, and the kingdom had never been so in need of money. If Link decided to resist this demand, his future as a Magician might be jeopardized.

Furthermore, if optimistically he could really hoard all the economic benefits for himself, his reputation would also suffer a huge blow. He would be branded as a cheapskate or a Scrooge.

How would he gain more followers then?

After some consideration, Link decided to take the initiative and head to the capital before the news spread.

As Dorias was a magical beast, he naturally could not enter the capital.

Link made Dorias stop in the Girvent Forest right outside the capital and said, "Linger around here for these next few days. Don't go too far away though. I might need to be here for a few days."

"No problem," Dorias said, and he was in fact, elated. From his knowledge, there were also creatures of the tiger species in the Girvent Forest. Although they did not belong to the family of Wind Tigers, Dorias could not care less. He then hopped away ecstatically.

Link then walked into Hot Springs City after donning a robe. Upon reaching the entrance, Link saw an eye-catching conscription notice attached to the bulletin board. A large group of onlookers was attracted to this news board as well. From their accent, one could tell that they came from other provinces.

Link decided to stop and listen to what they had to say.

"I heard that the kingdom had won many wars and many civilians have been given the title of a knight."

"I've heard similar things. A man in the neighboring village rode into his hometown on a large horse while wearing shiny battle armor. He looked amazing!"

"The king is really generous. Two gold coins for a basic salary every month while killing a Dark Elf would garner you five gold coins right away!"

After ten minutes, Link felt shaken by the common conception amongst the civilians. He realized that only the superficial and good news were being conveyed to the civilians, carefully packaged to seem alluring and enticing. Link heard no discussion on the fact that 20000 people died in the war as well as rumors of a stalemate.

The kingdom had also used gold coins as their main tactic to attract men into the army. Two gold coins per month would mean 24 gold coins per year. There were at least 100000 soldiers in the kingdom's army. This meant that the kingdom needed 200000 gold coins per month just to pay off their military expenses. Link had not even considered food, equipment, and compensation, all of which required a great amount of money as well.

Link then walked into the city and was horrified to hear even more misleading news.

"Have you heard? Those Dark Elf bastards dared to resist us! They are simply courting death!"

"Relax! We will definitely secure victory. Just like before, the Dark Elves are merely struggling till their deathbeds."

"Oh, have you heard? There will be some Dark Elves slaves arriving in the next few days. I've heard that the Dark Elven ladies have skin as pure and white as jade. Hehe."

"Have you heard"

The rumors all had one similaritythey were simply too optimistic. The citizens had not considered the possibility of failure. Link could finally understand Eliard's woes. Eliard's concerns were extremely accuratethe entire kingdom had fallen into a state of frenzied optimism. Link could see the kingdom as a speeding chariot on the road to nowhere, possibly even a dead end.

This scene was extremely shocking. When he reached the gate of the palace, he felt an unexpected chill on his back. He tapped it lightly with his hand and realized he had been breaking out in a cold sweat. This was not due to his fear, but due to his awareness. He had been too aware and could clearly see where the kingdom was heading towards.

Link walked forward in a trance and suddenly heard the sounds of clanging metal. The guards at the gate had blocked his path with their weapons.

"This is forbidden grounds to unauthorized pronel!" The guards frowned at Link.

Link pulled down his hood and allowed the Flame Controller Robe to emit a crimson red hue before speaking. "I am Magician Link. I request an audience with the king."

Link's expression was way too terrifying, and his name was even more so. The guards immediately bowed with respect and said, "Sir, please wait for a moment. I will report your arrival immediately."

They then ran at full speed into the palace.

Ten minutes later, the guard returned with a Kingsguard Knight following behind. The moment Link's face came into view, he was also taken by surprise and bowed, "I am Olaf, in charge of the Kingsguard Knight. Sir, please come with me. The king is waiting."

Link's achievements were made known to the entire higher echelons of the kingdom's security forces. News of a Level-9 Magician would strike fear into anyone's heart, much less the presence of one. Link simply nodded and followed Olaf deeper into the palace.

Link had walked through this path before. He followed the familiar path forward and quickly arrived at the parliament hall. There were two people in the hall. One of them was King Leon, while the other was Kingdom Magician Grinth.

In just a few months, Link felt that King Leon had gained many strands of white hair. His forehead seemed to have a permanent crease over it as well, exuding a lethargic demeanor. While Grinth looked slightly better, he was also not in good shape.

"It seems like the war in the North is going even worse than what Eliard had imagined.

Link interrupted their thoughts. "My King, Master Grinth," Link said as he walked up and gave a slight bow. As they were both Master Magicians, he did not need to give a full formal greeting.

King Leon and Grinth bowed in return. Leon then signaled to the servant at his side. With a wave of his fingers, the servant immediately took a chair and placed it behind Link.

After Link sat down, King Leon finally smiled and asked, "Master Link, I've heard that you have been busy with the development of your territory. What brings a busy person like you here today?"

Link smiled in return, "It is precisely because of my territory that I'm here."

King Leon then frowned. "What happened to the territory? Do you need more funds?"

In the past, King Leon would have been absolutely willing to support Link. However, now that the war in the North was not going well, the finances of the kingdom were in bad shape. He did not have any spare money to aid Link in his quest.

In fact, he was troubled over the military expenses for the next month.

Link could detect the minor changes in King Leon's expression. He was not at all surprised at his concerns. A war required a great deal of funding. The war in the North had already lasted for six months. Despite the kingdom's vast reserves, six months of continuous spending would more or less empty out all the finances.

Link then took out a sample of the anti-magic soil from his dimensional pendant and passed it to the servant. He said, "Sir, this is anti-magic soil that I discovered in my territory. From the looks of it, we have it in large reserves."

"What?" King Leon was suddenly jolted out of his fatigue. "What did you say? You found anti-magic soil in your territory? A huge reserve of it as well?"

At that moment, the servant brought the sample to King Leon. He merely gave it a few glances before handing it over the Grinth.

Grinth carefully observed the soil and confirmed, "Sir, this is high-quality anti-magic soil. Such a product can probably sell for ten gold coins per ton on the market right now."

King Leon's eyes glowed at those words. He looked at Link and hastily inquired, "Master Link, you mentioned a great reserve?"

"Yes, probably around 70 million tons," Link replied.

King Leon and Grinth both gasped at this number. If this anti-magic soil could be sold for ten gold coins per ton, 70 million tons was a terrifying amount. Although the revenue from this product could not be calculated simply like that, it would definitely still be a substantial amount.

However, another problem followed. The Ferde Wilderness belonged to Link. As it was Link's territory, anything that was discovered on that land would naturally belong to him as well. The kingdom would have no say in the issue.

King Leon immediately regretted giving the entire Ferde Wilderness away back then. If he had known, he would have kept that gold mine for himself. But now that it had come to this, it was useless to dwell on it any further.

Grinth was in a better state of mind and asked, "Master Link, so the aim of your visit is...?"

Link then took out a document that he prepared and handed it to King Leon using the Magician's Hand as he said, "Sir, this is a huge piece of revenue. I know that the kingdom now requires a huge amount of wealth for the war. This is a transfer agreement. I am willing to transfer 60% of all proceeds from the sale of this anti-magic soil to the kingdom as a form of support."

If this were during peacetime, Link would probably only transfer 20% or even none at all. If it were an ordinary war, Link would transfer 40% of all proceeds. However, as he had knowledge of the future, he knew that this was a war between the light and dark forces where the human race might even face extinction. Therefore, Link decided to transfer 60% of all proceeds to support the war in the North, hoping that they could at least hold out for a while longer.

King Leon was pleasantly shocked. Ecstasy flashed through his eyes followed by an expression of disbelief. Why would anyone in this world hand over such great wealth willingly? Sixty percent would mean that out of the 70 million tons of anti-magic soil, 40 million would belong to the kingdom. With this money, his problems with the military expenses would be settled.

Although Link had already brought the documents with his Duke's stamp on it, Leon was still in disbelief. He said, "Master, isn't this...a bit too much?"

Even if Link were to keep this a secret, the moment Leon knew of this gold mine, he would still use various meassuch as taxation to reap economic benefits off Link. However, now that Link was so willing to part with his wealth, King Leon felt embarsed by his generosity.

Being offered money and getting it through sinister means were two completely different approaches after all.

Furthermore, Link had generously transferred 60% of the proceedings. He had originally only expected 40% as it was, after all, Link's territory.

Link spoke in a serious tone, "Sir, from the incident at Gladstone, I have come to realize that human lives are worth less than weeds to the Dark Elves. The war in the North holds the fate of the human race. It cannot fail. My power is limited, and I cannot give much practical help. Now that I have discovered this anti-magic soil, I naturally want to help."

Those were Link's heartfelt words. He also needed a stable environment for the development of his territory. Hence, spending some money to ensure stability and peace was actually part of his plan. They complemented each other perfectly.

King Leon was extremely grateful!

If someone merely gave slight aid to the kingdom, Leon would be happy, though he would not remember this incident for life. However, Link's offer was a timely rescue package in the midst of a financial crisis. The kingdom recently suffered a defeat in the North, and the situation was at the worst since the war.

With this huge amount of money, he could now purchase supplies from the northern countries and seek asstance from Dawn Island. He could even recruit soldiers from other races to join his army.

All in all, with such a large sum of money, his confidence in the war was restored!

King Leon stood up from his throne and felt his eyes getting moist. It had been yeassince he felt this way. He muttered, "Master Link, the kingdomI am"

He choked on his words and seemed to be unable to continue.

Link could tell how King Leon felt and immediately interrupted, "Sir, the document would be my vouch. The first proceeds will soon arrive. I have other things to take care of and shall take my leave now. Please excuse me."

Link then got up to leave without waiting for Leon's reply.

As Link was about to leave the parliament hall, Leon suddenly shouted, "Master Link, wait!"

"Anything else?" Link asked.

King Leon exchanged glances with Grinth. After Grinth nodded, Leon said, "There have been some surprises in the North. I think you need to know this."

"Oh?" Link raised his eyebrows. He knew that his generous move had paved the way for his entrance into the core layer of the Norton Kingdom.

## 188. The Dark Serpent, the Lady of Darkness Noose

Link returned to his seat and waited for King Leon to speak.

"Leave the hall," ordered King Leon to the attendants and courtiers.

Everyone promptly got up and left, while the last person to leave closed the great door behind them. King Leon then turned to Grinth who was still beside him.

"Master Grinth," he ordered, "let Master Link see the Magic Image."

Grinth nodded and took out a scroll. He used the Magician's Hand to push it towards Link, who then opened it up and studied it for a while. Link discovered that there were brownish red traces of blood on the scroll which showed a detailed image of a Dark Elf. The background of the image was a dark and gloomy forest, while the Dark Elf was covered all over with leather armor and was wearing a masked hood on his head. Only the Dark Elf's eyes were exposed, and he was in a lunging position which made the bloodthirst in those eyes even more pronounced.

At first glance, there didn't seem to be anything special about this Dark Elf. But as he studied it closely, Link found spotted some anomalies. The most obvious thing he noticed was the eyes, which were dark red like any other Dark Elf's. But, the more he examined it, the more clearly he could see the tiny magic runes on the pupils of those eyes. The Dark Elf's hands were strange as wellthey weren't ordinary fingers but were claws instead, and the nails were as sharp as a beast's.

"That is a magic image sent back from MI3," Grinth said. "A Magician sacrificed his own life to get it."

Link was immediately stunned the moment he saw the image because he already knew what it was. Still, he maintained a calm expression.

"Is this Dark Elf powerful?" asked Link.

"Very powerful!" answered Grinth with a grave voice.

King Leon sat there on the throne with a deep frown on his face, saying absolutely nothing. This revelation came as no surprise to Link at all. In the game, the army of Norton Kingdom never won any battle where this type of Dark Elf Assassin appeared.

But Link must keep the pretense that he knew none of this.

"Please explain," he said to Grinth.

This time, it was King Leon who answered him.

"The information we got from the MI3 is that this type of Dark Elf is very fast, possesses robust and sturdy Battle Aura, and are wild and bloodthirsty in nature. Their individual strength is equivalent to a Level-6 Warrior, and they tend to act in groups. They almost seem tireless and could be active for days without rest. They specialize in asssinating our officers in the army or the Battle Mages. The MI3 had tried to set traps to capture them, but so far we'd lost more than a hundred elite members of MI3 without capturing any of them. This image is the only thing we've got for now."

Link nodded and looked down at the image again. Although the image was very clear, it still wasn't detailed enough for Link, so he cast the Eagle's Eye spell and continued to examine it even closer. While studying the image, Link raised his wand and started drawing with it in the air.

A white light appeared at the tip of Link's wand; it was as if the air was his drawing board. The wand moved in the air and left indelible light markings in its trail. About a minute or so later, Link stopped drawing with his wand, while in the air he left a circular magic seal that contained about a hundred magic runes.

Then, something strange happened.

The shadows in the darkest corner of the hall gradually expanded, and the magic lamps seemed to be shrouded in a layer of black fog, dimming the lights considerably. It now felt as if a black mist permeated through the whole hall.

King Leon was visibly disturbed by this change.

"These aredark runes!" exclaimed Grinth in alarm. "Master Link, what's going on here?"

Link waved his hand at the magic seal to scatter the runes. He'd just used a virtual simulation technique he found in Vance's notebook. It wasn't a very powerful technique, but it did look impressive to those who'd never seen it.

Once the magic runes in the air disappeared, the black mist in the hall vanished, and everything returned to normal.

"These runes are on the pupils of the Dark Elf in this image," explained Link. "I don't know its specific roles, but judging from the bizarre effects it produced just now, we can assume that the Dark Elf's body has been transformed by dark magic in some way."

Grinth gasped.

"Do you mean to say that the Dark Elf was transformed by the occult?" he asked.

Grinth's tones had changed now when he addressed Link. He used to think that Link was just too young to have a deep understanding of the magic theories. But from what he'd seen so far, he was forced to acknowledge him as a true Master Magician and regard him as an equal.

"Yes, the occult," replied Link, "but not just the ordinary kind of occultic magic. You see, there were no concrete connections between the magic runes I've just drawn earlier. That's completely inconsistent with the universal rule in normal magic runes. It's as if their mere existence was enough to influence the dark elements in the environment, which means that they are incredibly powerful."

Grinth's face turned as white as a sheet. He could already guess the meaning of Link's explanation but was too afraid to be sure about it.

"You mean they're"

"They're not just normal dark runes," said Link. "They're divine dark runes!" The former came from the powers of mere mortals, but the latter came from the gods of darkness, and the difference of power levels between the two was as vast as the sky!

"But if they truly are divine dark runes," said Grinth, "then only a priest can create them. How can a mortal Priest create such a powerful divine spell?"

The divine spell was powerful enough to turn a group of fighters into Level-6 Assassins. This frightening level of power was unheard of in the Realm of Light!

"That is true," continued Link, "an ordinary divine spell would require a priest as the mediator to take effect. Because piss are mere mortals, the power of divine spells would be greatly reduced. To create a Level-6 Dark Elf Assassin would require an enormous amount of power and energy that it would simply be impractical. Therefore, my guess is that they've somehow got their hands on a dark god-level device."

Link's tone was very plain as if he was simply stating dry facts from a textbook. But he'd constructed a theory with almost irrefutable logic and finally came to an earth-shattering conclusiona dark god-level device!

If these words leaked out of this hall, they would have enough power to set off a storm of chaos in the whole Norton Kingdom or even the whole Realm of Light. In Firuman history, whenever a god-level device appeared, it would surely mean that the entire world was about to usher in a huge change that could possibly change the world forever.

So far, no one had discovered any god-level devices in the Realm of Light. The most powerful device would be the holy-level device called the Holy Grail which was preserved in a Church of Light in the holy city of Sarana.

Even though Grinth already knew that Link was right, he still wanted to cling to the last thread of hope and refused to believe it.

"But who would be willing to sacrifice so much just to bring the god-level device to this world?"

While the existence of god-level devices was undeniable, because of their unworldly power, it was against all the rules of the Firuman kingdoms to bring it to this world. Thus, maintaining the existence of such a device would require unimaginable resources and energy. Once this energy was exhausted, the god-level device would be immediately squeezed out of this plane of reality.

Thus, in the mortal world, a holy-level device was the most powerful device that could stably exist.

Link sighed. He knew who was responsible for bringing the god-level device into this world, and he knew the consequences as well.

In the game, this dark god-level device was called the "Dark Serpent, the Lady of Darkness' Noose," and it was the Spider Queen Lolth's weapon. The only reason why it could be brought to the mortal world was because the Dark Elves had sacrificed 10,000 souls when they attacked Gladstone.

But the Change of the Bloody Moon didn't happen in this world, yet the Dark Elves still managed to bring about this god-level device. There could only be one explanation for this, that is that they've found another race of people to sacrifice!

"I think," Link whispered, "the Dark Elves must've used the sacrificial method to bring this device to the mortal world."

"Sacrificial method? To summon a god-level device?" asked Grinth, still incredulous. "But that would need at least 10,000 souls!"

Link only replied with one word.

"Gladstone."

The word sent a chill down Grinth's spine. Kin Leon refused to understand it at first, but after a while, all the blood was drained from his face, and his face looked pallid.

Yes, a year ago the Dark Elves had plotted a sneak attack on the town of Gladstone. It was an atrocious plan, but even though some people were sent to investigate the Dark Elves' true motives behind such an act, no convincing conclusions had ever been reached.

But now, Link had made step-by-step deductions through the existence of the dark runes in the Dark Elf's eyes and concluded that there must be a dark god-level device in the mortal world. Thus, he'd now found the horrifying reason behind the attack in Gladstone.

The Dark Elves had attempted to massacre the innocent souls in Gladstone and sacrifice them to summon the dark god-level device then use it to launch an all-out war on the Realm of Light.

If the Dark Elves' plan had been successful, then the Norton Kingdom would be suffering the most brutal blow by now. Any possibility of a counterattack or minor victories would merely be a joke then.

There was still one last shred of doubt in King Leon's mind.

"Master Link," he asked, "are these all just your guesses?"

Link nodded. He couldn't deny that he had absolutely no proof to back up his claims no matter how sure he was of the truth in them.

"But, Your Majesty," Link said, "there is a simple way to confirm my theory. We only need to investigate whether there were any other massacres in the North. They can't hide such a thing completely. Maybe the MI3 could find some traces of"

Before Link could finish his sentence, King Leon slumped hopelessly into the throne. Cold beads of sweat saturated his forehead, and his eyes turned as dark and bleak as a storm. Link's words must have been a great blow to him, even though Link wasn't exactly sure why.

Link turned to Grinth for the explanation but soon found that even the Master Magician wasn't in the best condition himself. His face was ashen gray, and both of his hands were gripping his wand. It seemed as if all his senses took leave of his body and all he wished for was death.

"What's going on?" asked Link.

Grinth chuckled cynically for a long time before answering Link. His laugh sounded more like a grievous cry when Link listened to it.

"Actually," said Grinth in a hoarse and bleak voice, "we've received some reports from the North. Have you heard of the Icefield Barbarians?"

"Yes," answered Link. "They are a race of people who lived for generations on the Icefield Island and they hunt whales for a living." He'd read about them in books, but these people were primitive and did not participate much in the affairs between kingdoms, so no one paid much attention to them.

"Well," continued Grinth, "three months earlier, our army received pleas for help from these people. They said that the demons had descended upon their island and massacred most of its inhabitants. They were hoping that we'd be able to help them. No one took it seriously at the time because they were just barbarians. Besides, our army was already engaged in a plan to wage war against the Dark ElvesBut who would've thoughtWho would've thought that things would turn out this way!"

In other words, the Icefield Barbarians had been massacred instead of the citizens of Norton Kingdom. As a result, the dark god-level device was here, and the Norton Kingdom had to suffer the apocalyptic consequences that were to come.

What a sign of karma at work!

King Leon rubbed the corners of his eyes with his fingers, wiping away the tears that he'd quietly shed. He then turned to Link and spoke to him almost with a tone of humility.

"Master Link," he began, almost as a plea, "do you think we have any chance to win this war?"

The young Magician had displayed incredible wisdom and insight in front of his eyes. He'd managed to guess the Dark Elves' terrible plots with the minimal number of clues and infer the existence of a dark god-level device while staying calm and collected through it all.

The existence of such a figure made King Leon slightly hopeful. Perhaps there was some truth to the rumors that he was the God of Light's Chosen One. Perhaps this young man could one day save the Realm of Light.

Link didn't say whether they could win or not.

"Your Majesty," said Link, waving the blood-stained scroll that contained the image of the Dark Elf in his hand, "the future cannot be predicted. Whether we win or lose depends on our present efforts. We haven't yet reached the lowest point, so, first of all, we must capture the Occult Dark Elf Assassin and study its weakest points. Then we'll be able to handle the dark god-level device. Do you agree with me, Your Majesty?"

"But these Dark Elves are too strong," said King Leon, "and their combat skills are at an unimaginable level. They work in groups, and they move incredibly fast. Even the Dawn Swordsman Karnose couldn't capture any of them."

The Dawn Swordsman Karnose, a Level-8 Warrior, was the strongest Warrior in the Norton Kingdom and perhaps in the entire human realm. He'd always been stationed in the palace, but judging from the king's words, he must've been sent to the battlefield in the North too. This just proved how dire the situation had become for the Norton Kingdom!

Link interlaced his fingers in front of his chest and fell into silent contemplation for a few seconds.

"I will go north myself," said Link finally.

"Huh?" King Leon and Grinth looked at each other in shock. Ever since defeating the Level-8 demon Tarviss, Link was recognized by the whole Realm of Light as the most powerful Battle Mage. What a formidable team they would make if he could work together with the Dawn Swordsman!

It could be said that if these two couldn't succeed after working together, then no one else in the whole realm could either!

"When can you make the journey, Master Link?" asked Grinth.

"I would need a week to get my affairs in order before leaving," Link answered.

"Of course! Of course!" said the king, he'd stood up in excitement by now. "Please let me know what I can do for you, Master Link. I'll do my best to satisfy you!"

"Then please make sure no one knows of my movements and whereabouts, Your Majesty," said Link.

Link was hesitant to go north himself, but it seemed that Norton Kingdom's army was about to collapse in defeat in front of his eyes. Link could no longer stay out of the action and do nothing at this point.

## 189. Crafting a New Magic Wand

After exiting the parliament hall, Link followed behind Grinth and went straight towards the Mage Tower in the palace. He wanted to borrow the enchanting chamber in the Mage Tower to craft a new wand.

In the Norton Kingdom, the strongest Mage Tower would be the Heaven's Thorn, which lay in the East Cove Higher Magic Academy. The one next in line would be the royal palace Mage Tower which Link was heading to.

This Mage Tower belonged to the royal Abel family and was situated in the heart of the capital. The extent of this Mage Tower was thus directly related to the reputation of the royal family. It was extravagantly decorated with a famous rooftop garden at the top of the spiraling tower. Flowers on the rooftop garden would be changed every month to ensure that they stayed in season and in bloom.

The Mage Tower hence got its name, the Miracle Garden.

After entering the Mage Tower, Link saw many royal Magicians clad in silver white robes. These Magicians were all at least Level-3 in strength and had a complacent expression on their face, especially those who were young. Despite their respectful bows towards Link, a trace of disdain could be seen in their eyes.

That expression seemed to be saying, "While I am inferior now, I might become stronger than you in a few years."

All of them seemed to scoff at the Storm Lord sword that hung from Link's waist, their glances deliberate and arrogant.

A Magician carrying a sword aroundwhat an invalid.

This was understandable.

Magicians who were able to become official Royal Magicians were all genius in their own right. Even students from East Cove Higher Magic Academy looked forward to becoming a member of the Miracle Garden one day.

It would be even more amazing if one were young. Coupled with their ambitious attitude, it was completely normal to behave that way after seeing Link. Link did not feel anything from their gazes.

Grinth, on the other hand, was afraid that Link would be unhappy. When they met the third arrogant young Magician, he whispered, "Master Link, they are all young people and may be a bit unthoughtful. But they are all good people at heart."

As he spoke, he seemed to have forgotten that Link was actually even younger. In fact, many Magicians were still apprentices when they were Link's age.

Link merely smiled and said, "No harm. It's just a small matter."

Under the defiant and brazen gazes, Link entered the main enchanting chamber of the rooftop garden. The enchanting chamber had many professional tools. Grinth took Link around the enchanting chamber while introducing their facilities. He saw a spectrometer, an intricate Higgs Field machine arm, an extractor, and many other high-end enchanting tools. He was extremely satisfied.

Grinth introduced with pride, "This is the best enchanting chamber in the entire kingdom. Even Weissmuller's Cauldron of the Gods back in East Cove Higher Magic Academy cannot compare. Let's not even talk about the Southern Magician Alliance. Their enchanting skills are simply inferior."

This was the truth. However, this did not mean that the South was useless. There was a saying, "Intricate Enchanting of the North, Euphoric Alchemy of the South." They simply focused on different aspects of magic.

"Then, I will get started," Link said.

"Alright, please get busy. If you require any materials, as long as we have it in our stores, I will retrieve it for you. Even if we don't have them, we will procure it for you as soon as possible."

Link nodded, "I will inform you in due time."

Grinth then shut the door to the enchanting chamber behind him.

Complete silence then descended onto the enchanting chamber. Link did not proceed to craft the wand immediately. He first carefully took out all the materials he had from the dimensional pendantthe Fire Star Thorium, the Hedel High-Grade Fire Crystal, Broken Moon Gold and ten other rare materials. Apart from the Fire Star Thorium which was a gift from Lady Fortuna Elin, the rest of them were from Vance's treasured collection.

Link then took out a scroll and an exquisite quill before recollecting himself and starting on a design for his new wand.

The situation in the North was changing rapidly. He thus only gave himself one week of preparation time. It was impossible for him to learn another strong spell in this time. Hence, in order to improve his strength as much as possible, he could only improve the weapon he was using.

The weapons that Magicians used were none other than magic wands. The Starcatcher had already been phased out ever since Link attained far greater powers. It was time to craft a new one.

Link quickly gotito a state of concentration and squinted his eyes as he poured his creativity into the design. While he was designing the wand, the properties of the various materials he would be using, the magic notes of the various masters in the academy, the unparalleled wisdom in Vance's magic books, and the impossibly difficult space-time thesis that he was writing flashed through his mind.

Link's mind was just like a huge melting pot, and his knowledge was the various ores that were being thrown into this incinerating solution that was Link's burning wisdom. These ores were quickly melted and fused together, eventually forming a flawless piece of alloy.

Time passed in the enchanting chamber as Link sat there seemingly motionless. After 30 hours, Link finally put down the last stroke onto the paper.

Looking at the design of the wand on the scroll, Link sighed, "It's done."

For an ordinary enchanter, the enchanting process was probably the most important part of crafting a wand. However, for a master enchanter like Link who wanted his wand to achieve the Epic rank, the most important process was the design.

After the design was done, all that was left was the physical labor.

He was still lacking in a few materials. Link hence approached Grinth and gave him a list of materials that he needed. Grinth stared at the list as his eyebrows raised ever so slightly. He did not give an answer right away. The problem lay not so much in the price of the material, but the difficulty of even finding some of them.

"Is there a problem?" Link asked.

"Not a problem. Please give me a moment while I procure them for you." Grinth left quickly. This concerned the fate of the kingdom, and he would make sure Link got all the materials he needed.

After concentrating for over 30 hours, Link was feeling slightly tired. He took the time to rest as Grinth was looking for the materials. He cast an Elemental Healing spell on himself before rubbing his forehead gently. He then closed his eyes and sat in a chair for a short nap.

Four hours later, Grinth came back breathlessly with a beautiful wooden box in his hand. "Master Link, I have finally gathered the materials. Please take a look."

Link opened the wooden box and did a comprehensive check. He then nodded in satisfaction. "That is very complete. Thank you."

"That's nice to hear. Please continue," Grinth panted as he said. He was already over 60 years old. All that running he had to do while procuring these materials had taken a toll on him.

Link once again did not start immediately after returning to the enchanting chamber. He decided to first familiarize himself with the tools that he had not used before. Although they were slightly more comprehensive than the ones he was used to, they operated on the same basic principles. Link tested them out separately and only started after he was fully familiar with their workings.

Each material was analyzed, deconstructed, and treated with magic. Link was extremely focused the entire time, his eyes unblinking and his hands steadily maneuvering across the different materials. His movements were so coherent that it felt like a stream of flowing water.

As time slowly passed, the wand started taking form.

Link had completely lost track of time. Just when he felt he was at his physical limit, the magic wand in his hand emitted a slight tinkling sound. Following which, a crimson light enveloped the wand, and many flaming runes appeared in the air.

The runes quickly multiplied and spun at high speed around the wand. They revolved faster and faster till one could no longer see the runes individually. They now looked just like circles of light circling outside the wand. In this dome of light, the wand floated in the air and buzzed with a soothing sound. A myriad of crimson brilliance then started emanating from the wand. These lights looked like silk threads and multiplied around the wand, eventually forming a pupae of flames.

Link seemed to be completely unsurprised by this phenomenon. He merely stepped back and observed the scene with satisfaction. This phenomenon lasted for a whole minute before the pupae of flames suddenly burst open. A flaming crystal wand then appeared in the air.

The whole wand seamlessly fused together and had a translucent, royal texture to it. Countless fire runes circulated within the internal structure of the wand and a fine burst of red light would occasionally appear on the exterior. One look at the wand was enough to impress anyone.

It was simply gorgeous!

The amalgamation of countless rare and treasured materials together with Link's skills and wisdom had resulted in an Epic wand bound to shake the World of Firuman to its very core.

"Oh?" a surprised voice rang in Link's mind. It was the voice of the sword spirit of the Storm Lord. He continued, "This wand is not too bad. It is pretty interesting."

After the Storm Lord commented on the wand, he then asked, "I have a question."

Speak. Link rubbed his forehead, feeling slightly lethargic.

"I have at least seen tens of thousands of people from your territory all the way to the capital. However, I have not found a single person strong enough. In fact, they are all weaker than you. What happened to this world?"

Link took some time to reply due to his fatigue and said, I have no idea as well. If you want answers, look for them yourself.

"Alright then. What a peculiar era." After the sword spirit said this, he stopped talking for good.

Link then held his wand in his hand. The moment he touched the wand, new information appeared in his field of vision.

Player has crafted an Epic wand. Omni Points + 100. Please name the wand.

Link thought for a moment and said, "Burning Wrath of Heavens."

He then saw a flash before information of his new wand appeared in front of him.

Burning Wrath of Heavens

Quality: Epic

Effect 1: Increases strength of elemental spells by 150%.

Effect 2: Increases the speed of concentrated fire elements by 200%.

Effect 3: Able to activate the Flaming Surge effect. Under this effect, the caster can choose to deplete 1500 Mana Points to instantaneously cast a Level-7 fire-element spell. The strength of this spell will be increased by 300%. (The charging time for this effect will be ten Level-5 fire elemental spells)

(Note: The work of Master Enchanter Link)

This was a wand that Link crafted especially for himself. Effect two would be used to replace the effects of the Domingo Crystal, while effect three would ensure that Link had a powerful spell in his arsenal to tide him through a crisis. As long as he could successfully cast ten fire elemental spells that were above Level-5 in strength, the Flaming Surge effect would be recharged. This effect was even stronger than the Dark Arbiter staff that Morestern carried!

As he felt the warm, mellow touch of the wand, Link let out a sigh of satisfaction. This was really a priceless treasure!

Link walked out of the enchanting chamber after resting for a moment. After walking only a distance of 30 feet, Link saw a white-haired old man staggering up the stairs. It was not Grinth, but Anthony, the dean of the East Cove Higher Magic Academy.

"Dean?" Link was slightly puzzled.

## 190. We Cant Afford to Lose You!

A few months had gone past since Link last met the Dean Anthony. Hishi

Obviously, the terrible war in the North had not only plagued the minds of King Leon and Grinth aloneeven the dean of East Cove Academy had now sunk into deep melancholy because of it.

Because he walked with the aid of magical prosthetics, Anthony moved very slowly.

"I heard you're going north," said Anthony.

Link wasn't surprised that the dean would know this. He was an important figure in the kingdom, while Link had been a student of the East Cove Academy. Naturally, Anthony had the right to know of his decision to go north.

Anthony walked up to Link and was about to say something when he was suddenly distracted by the wand in Link's hand.

"What is that?" he asked.

"It's my new wand," answered Link. "I call it the Burning Wraths of the Heavens." He then handed over the wand for the old dean to inspect.

Anthony carefully took the wand inoboth of his hands and examined it very closely. After ten long minutes, he gently stroked the wand and turned back to Link.

"This has to be the most powerful wand to be created in the last hundred years," he said softly, full of awe. "The Burning Wraths of the Heavenswhat an apt name!"

He then paused in silence for a few seconds before continuing.

"May I have the honor to add a suffix to its name?" asked the dean.

In normal circumstances, it would be an honor to the student if the dean bestowed a name to their wand. But now, the tables had turned. Anthony felt that it would be a great honor for him if he were allowed to name a wand so powerful from such an outstandingly talented student.

To Link, though, a name was just a name. This wasn't the first epic-quality wand he'd created, and it wouldn't be the last either. What the dean asked for was but a small request to him.

"Dean Anthony," he said, pointing to the smooth surface of the wand, "you can engrave the name of the wand right here."

Anthony was instantly glad to hear it. He thought silently for a while before activating the Higgs field and carefully carving elegant runic characters on the wand. There were 13 runes in total, and the full name of the wand was "The Burning Wraths of the Heavens, Scepter of the Flame Controller."

Once the dean was done, Link looked at the wand again through the gaming system. He then noticed that the wand's name had now changed to "The Burning Wraths of the Heavens, Scepter of the Flame Controller."

Link thought the name sounded portentous enough. He liked it very much.

"I heard you're going north," said Anthony again after returning the wand to Link. "I'd planned to give you my wand to use on the battlefield, but now it seems that it would be unnecessary. Burning Wraths is a much better weapon for you."

There were powerful wands, and there were weak wands, but the best wand for a Magician wasn't necessarily the most powerful one. What was most important was that the wand suited the spellcaster's individual strength. For instance, if Link were given a wand that specialized in secret spells, then it would be useless no matter how well-made it was.

"But I have something else for you," continued the dean with a smile. "Here, it's a vial of medicinal potion."

As he spoke, Anthony slipped out a clear vial that was glowing red. Through the crystal surface, Link could see that the vial contained a similarly red potion inside it. What was more peculiar was how the potion seemed to exert a mysterious kind of pressure on Link as soon as the dean took it out.

"What is it?" asked Link. This time, it was his turn to be surprised. He did, in fact, know what kind of potion it was, but he just couldn't believe that the dean would be so generous to him.

"This is an epic-quality potion called the Red Dragon Queen's Blessing," said the dean. "The previous dean, Level-9 Master Magician Ambron once saved the whole race of the Red Dragons more than 400 years ago. This potion was the gift the Red Dragon Queen bestowed upon him. There were three vials of this potion in total. 230 years ago, the Necromancer Andrew had launched an army of the undead to attack the Realm of Light, so one vial was used then. 156 years ago, the dragon, Aloz from the North went on a rampage, so the second vial was used up. Now there's only one bottle left, and you should use it to protect yourself in the North."

As the dean explained, a notification appeared on the interface.

Red Dragon Queen's Blessing

Quality: Epic

Effects: After drinking this potion, the drinker will possess the essence of the Red Dragon and enter the Red Dragon Magician state for ten minutes.

Red Dragon Magician State: Instant spellcasting for all elemental spells of Level-7 and below. 500% increase in power of all elemental spells below Level-9.

Side Effects: Once the Red Dragon Magician State ends, the drinker of this potion will experience an elemental rejection state where the Magician will not be able to cast any elemental spells. This effect will last for a year.

(Note: Have a taste of the dragon's power when you drink the potion!)

These effectsThis potion was simply like a cheat code in games!

However, the side-effect of this potion was a bit harsh as well. For a Magician who specialized in fire-elemental spells like Link, not being able to use elemental spells for a year would mean that he would be completely powerless and vulnerable for a whole year.

But it would still be worth it though. Because, in that ten minutes when the potion took effect, it would be possible for a single Magician to completely reverse the power balance in a war and change a near defeatito a victory!

In the face of such a powerful potion, Link felt slightly hesitant to receive it.

"But Dean Anthony," he protested, "this potion is too powerful for a Level-6 Magician like me. I'm afraid that I'll only be wasting its immense potential."

"No, you won't waste it at all," said Anthony, shoving the vial of potion into Link's hand. "Take it first, then listen to me."

Link had no other choice but to take the potion with both of his hands at the dean's insistence. He could feel a burst of numb sensations in his palm as he held the vial. That was a testament to the potion's incredible power.

"This potion has been stored in the Alchemist Tower all these years," the dean explained. "The release of Tarviss had happened so unexpectedly that I didn't have the time to take it. But now when I think about it, drinking this potion wouldn't have been enough for me to defeat Tarviss anyway."

Once he got to this point, he turned to look straightito Link's eyes, and his tone turned graver as it had never been before.

"You saved the East Cove Magic Academy, Link," said the dean. "You are qualified to use this potion. You'll be encountering great dangers when you're in the North. What I mean to say is thisany Warriors can die, even the elite ones. As a matter of fact, it wouldn't matter much if the Dawn Swordsman Karnose died in battle. But you must live, Link! We cannot afford to lose you! You are Bryant's true successor who will decide the fate of humanity. The kingdom needs your strength now, so I can't stop you from going north, but I can still do my best to give you more power."

Finally, the old dean patted Link's shoulder.

"You are the pride of East Cove Academy, Link," he said. "You must live!"

Link didn't know how to respond to this, so he merely nodded.

"I will do my best," he said briefly.

"I believe in you," said the dean. He was about to reach out his hand to stroke Link's head but changed his mind suddenly as he thought it might not be appropriate. So the dean just turned around and left.

Because the magical prosthetics weren't very flexible, the dean walked very slowly and quite awkwardly. Link watched the dean's back as he slowly walked away from him and he gripped the vial of potion in his hand tightly.

This was the real world now, not just a game. These responsibilities on his shoulders were very real too, and they felt immensely heavy.

After standing in the hallway for a long while, Link kept the potion in his storage pendant and walked out of the Miracle Garden. He then saw someone waiting for him in an East Cove Academy carriage outside the garden. When he approached the carriage, a woman climbed out of itit was Herrera.

The Light Angel looked weak and as pale as a sheet as she approached Link.

"I hear you're going north," she said. "This is for you."

Link took it and discovered that it was a rune stone. The rune stone's surface glowed in a milky white light while pronounced Mana waves lingered in the air around it. This made Link'shi

"Ifif you get caught in danger and are unable to escape," whispered Herrera in Link's ear, "activate this stone, and you'll find an endless amount of light energy in there."

Link could clearly feel Herrera's weakness from that distance. He knew that she must've paid a great price in order to get him this rune stone.

"I understand," said Link simply with a nod of his head.

Herrera said nothing more. She just waved her hand at Link and walked back to the carriage. Link could see that Dean Anthony was sitting in the same carriage too. It seemed that they'd both heard the news of him going north and came together.

The carriage soon drove away from the palace. Link's eyes followed it all the way until it went out of his view.

Then, Grinth walked up to Link from inside the palace.

"It's been five days now, Master Link," he said. "Is there anything else that you need to prepare?"

"I must go back to my estate," said Link, quickly regaining his senses. "I'll have to make some arrangements there. I'll head up north straight away in two days and meet up with the Dawn Swordsman there."

"I see," said Grinth with a nod. He then gave Link a formal Magician's bow and said, "May the Norton Kingdom's glory shine on forever!"

"May the Norton Kingdom's glory shine on forever!" answered Link.

Then, a royal carriage rode up beside Link. He climbed into it and left the royal palace.

An hour or so later, Link reached the outskirts of Springs City.

"Stop the carriage," he shouted to the coachman. "My mount is waiting for me here."

"Yes, Master Link," said the coachman reverently. He then promptly put the carriage to a halt.

Link got off and went straightito the Girvent Forest. He probably walked for about a mile before taking out his wand and pointing it to the sky and cast the Level-2 spell Wind Blade. Five minutes later, there was a sound of hurried footsteps. Soon after, Dorias appeared.

"Hey, what took you so long this time?" asked the tiger. On his face was a deep and contented smile.

Link almost laughed at the sight, as he knew what it meant.

"Did you find a tigress?" asked Link.

"I did," answered Dorias, "but I was just playing around. Those ladies were too boring for me."

"" Link was speechless for a while. He then climbed onto the tiger's back and said, "You won't get cold feet once we return to Scorched Ridge, will you?"

"Are you kidding me?" said the tiger. "I, the mighty Dorias, never get cold feet and never"

Before he finished his sentence, he tripped up on a mound of dirt in front of him. He almost toppled over but regained his balance just in time. Link quickly cast a floating spell on him which saved both of them from getting flung outito the distance.

"Oops, my bad! Hahaha" said Dorias, slightly embarsed. He then stopped boasting for the rest of the journey.

After running in the forest for about half an hour, Link suddenly sensed a strange aura from a particular direction.

"Let's head in that direction," he told Dorias. "It seems like there's a friend waiting for us there."

Dorias quickly turned a corner and ran in that direction for half a mile. They then reached a clearing in the middle of the forest, and there stood Eleanor clad in her black dress leaning against a tree trunk with both her hands clasped on her chest.

She took a glance at Dorias and was a little surprised, but her eyes quickly turned to Link, and she smiled warmly.

"I hear you're going to the North?" she asked.

"How did you know?" Link was astounded. He'd expected Anthony and Herrera to find out; but how did Eleanor get wind of this news?

"Have you forgotten that I'm a Magician specializing in secret spells?" replied Eleanor. "The wind in the forest, the currents of the stream, the songs of the bird, the souls of the deadI hear all the stories they tell. Anyways, here, take this."

Eleanor threw a scroll at Link.

"It's a Dimensional Scroll," she said. "If you're in grave danger, open the scroll, and it will let you enter the World of Shadows. You must be careful when you use it to escape, though. There are nightmarish creatures in that world that you must watch out for."

This scroll might really come in handy. Link took the scroll and kept it in his storage pendant straight away.

"Thank you," he said.

"And now you owe me a magic gear," said Eleanor. "Create a storage pendant for me."

"No problem." Link snapped his fingers and gently patted Dorias' neck. He then picked up his speed and headed towards the Ferde Wilderness.

After running for a while, Dorias could no longer hold his tongue.

"Are you going to the North, Link?" he asked. "But the battlefield can be really dangerous!"

"I must go. I have no other choice," said Link.

Dorias fell into silence for a while.

"ThenI'll go with you," he finally said. "Don't expect me to join in the war, though. I'll only be there to take you away if you are in danger."

"That's good enough," said Link. Naturally, he wouldn't mind having another means to escape danger.

When he came to think of it, Link realized that he now had four great helpers. Now, he felt that even if he were specifically targeted by the Dark Elves, he'd probably still end up safe and sound.

Dorias was extremely fast. After little more than an hour, he'd covered the distance of about 150 miles. Link could now see the outlines of the Scorched Ridge terrains.

"Don't go back there yet," said Link suddenly. "Turn that way. I'm going to meet an old guy."

Although he now had many ways to protect his life, Link was still a bit uneasy. He still wanted to meet the thousand-year-old Lich Vance and ask for his suggestions.

He directed his Mana into the communication rune stone, and within ten seconds there was a response from the stone. Link sensed its message for a few seconds; then, he pointed his finger in the air.

"Turn that way," he told Dorias.

## 191. I Have to Let Her Rescue You

Vance had witnessed the downfalls and successes of many heroes in the over 1000 years he had been alive. He was truly the one that had experienced fully what life in Firuman could bring.

Link naturally thought of consulting this old experienced undead before he faced the Divine Gear.

Following the instructions of the transmission rune, Link walked all the way to the seaside before heading north along the coast. After he passed by the harbor that was near completion, he had to run another three miles before he finally found Vance in a small cave at the edge of the seaside.

He was sitting on a boulder in front of the cave and seemed to be thinking about something. From afar, he merely looked like a deserted corpse.

Dorias did not recognize him. The moment they reached the cave, he laughed and said to Link, "Look at this skeleton! How interesting! He was able to maintain this posture after being dead. I'll blow his head off."

Dorias then prepared his claws and was about to use Vance's skull as a ball.

The moment his claws were raised, a bolt of lightning appeared in the sky. With a terrifying rumble, the lightning struck directly at Dorias claws. Dorias then retracted his claws due to the intense pain and stared at the skeleton with disbelief. "Strange. There is something going on with this skeleton!"

Vance then awakened as the Flame of the Soul in his eyes lit up. He then looked at Dorias with teasing eyes and smiled as he said, "Link, is this your pet? It seems interesting enough."

Dorias wanted to rebut but was harshly interrupted by Link.

Link jumped down from his back and was extremely straightforward, "Old guy, I need a favor from you."

"If someone like you sasso, I presume it must be real trouble. What is it?" Vance patiently replied.

Link then reported the findings of the royal palace in detail, from the abnormal Dark Elves to the Dark Divine Gear and finally, his decision to go northwards. He then said with no confidence, "Honestly, I don't know if I can do it."

Vance did not have any expression on his face after hearing that. He nodded his head slowly. "This is truly a troubling issue. Please give me a moment."

Vance lost his usual casual and even slightly insane demeanor, sinking into his vortex of thoughts and concerns. This state lasted for more than half an hour before he finally said, "The Dark Elves worship the Spider Queen Lolth. This god is known for using a whip as her weapon. The name of this weapon is the Dark Serpent, Lady of Darkness' Lasso. If the Dark Elves have truly gotten Divine Gear, it could only be this one."

Link knew that he had found the right person the moment he heard those words!

He then asked, "Do you know the exact nature and properties of this Divine Gear?"

Although Link knew the properties of this exact Divine Gear in the game, the likelihood that there would be differences was high. For example, the Storm Lord sword in his hand had starkly different stats than the one in the game. It was a lot more overpowered in the World of Firuman. Link had not trusted the in-game stats that he remembered ever since that incident. If he continued to do so, he would meet his end one day without even knowing the reason why.

Vance shook his head. "That is a weapon of the gods. How would a mortal like me know its exact nature? However, this is not the first time the Dark Serpent has appeared in this world. There have been a few legends connected to it."

"Please tell me." Link was humbled.

"Please give me some time." Vance once again descended into a meditative state and took another half an hour before he finally opened his mouth. "It was rumored that the Dark Serpent was extremely poisonous and could release highly toxic substances. For the people whom it recognized, it could transform them into the perfect Warriors. However, this venom is extremely lethal to its enemies. If an enemy were to be afflicted with the poison, there would be no possibility of survival, and even his soul would be disintegrated."

"That powerful?" Dorias instinctively shrank behind Link.

Vance continued, "Alas it is just a weapon. After entering this world, there must be a host. While this host would be controlled by the weapon, they would also be empowered to a terrifying extent. It was rumored that only Dark Elves who carry the royal blood of the Silver Moon could withstand the power of the Divine Gear. They would then become unparalleled Warriors."

"How strong would that be? Legendary status?" Link was horrified.

"I don't know." Vance shook his head.

Link was slightly disappointed. However, another voice rang in his mind, "Not legendary status, merely the strength of a Level-9 professional. How can a puppet ever reach legendary status?"

This voice belonged to the sword spirit of the Storm Lord sword.

Are you sure? Link asked.

The sword spirit was infuriated, "What do you mean! This is the truth! I have experienced at least ten times more things than the skeleton in front of you! I have even fought against the Dark Serpent before!"

Link was suddenly curious. Who won?

The sword spirit fell silent for a moment before replying, "I'm too lazy to tell you."

Link was, however, desperate to know the true extent of the Dark Serpent's power. Wait, you said that you once fought against it. Please tell me what kind of power it wields and how to defend against it!

There was no reply. This sword spirit would come and go as he wished; his behavior was completely unpredictable. After asking a few more times in his mind and getting no response, Link could only give up.

In this period, Vance had also not been giving any more information. Link guessed that that was probably all of Vance's knowledge and said, "Old guy, I will then be returning to my territory. Will you be bored staying here?"

Vance shook his head and spoke with a calming voice, "I face the sea every day and enjoy the beautiful view of the sunset and birds diving into the water. Please don't worry about me."

"Oh, then goodbye." Link mounted onto Dorias and went back to his territory to make some final arrangements.

After making sure that Link had gone away, Vance immediately jumped down from the boulder he was sitting on and ran back into his cave. In the cave lay Nana's destroyed body. Originally, he had agreed to modify Nana together with Link after Link had gotten some basic knowledge about constructing magic puppets.

Therefore, Vance had put off touching the magic puppet all this while.

However, the situation was different.

As he entered the cave, Vance could not help but reprimand, "This young guy is truly arrogant. To think that he wants to fight against the Divine Gearhe will definitely be dead!"

However, after that outburst, Vance sighed helplessly, "The appearance of the Dark Serpent is bound to be a sweeping disaster for the entire world. Who would be able to escape this tragedy? Will I be able to live through it? If one is unwilling to become a puppet of darkness, it will only be a matter of time before they are dead"

He walked towards Nana and squatted down to inspect the damage done. After a long while, he then took out his Dark Arbiter wand and started casting a transformation spell.

He already knew the reason for Nana's outburst and could easily repair her. The only reason why he didn't do it sooner was due to the promise he made with Link.

But now it seemed like he had to.

"Young guy, don't blame me for not waiting. If I don't repair her in time, you will definitely be dead going to the North all alone. I am letting her save your sorry ass."

Vance had once spent 20 years creating this magic puppet and was thus familiar with every single one of her structures. He repaired Nana at an astounding speed.

Under the effect of the transformation spell, Nana's wounds healed, and the frozen pair of clear eyes started regaining consciousness.

A crisp, clear voice appeared from Nana once again, "Nana is starting upMemory damageNana has no more targetsNana has no more targets"

"It's still too early to wake up. Sleep and don't cause trouble." Vance then lightly patted her head with his hand enveloped in white light. With a light touch, Nana once again fell into a deep slumber.

Link was, of course, unaware of Vance's plan. He had already returned to his territory.

Not far away, the foundation of the Mage Tower was already being set. Further away, one could even see a tall giant magic puppet plowing the land.

Scorched Ridge was also unusually crowded. One could see that the path leading towards the Girvent Forest was filled with pedestrians ten times the normal amount. Some of them were carrying baskets and holding their children's hands. Many of them seemed to be moving as a family. From the number of items they were carrying, they appeared to be moving locations. Many makeshift tents used for camping purposes were also set up in the area around the Scorched Ridge.

Link had been too busy to notice this previously. Now that he had realized this, he felt strange.

Dorias was surprised and said, "That's a lot of people."

"Let's take a look."

## 192. The Lords Absolute Power

The appearance of Link riding a 13-feet-tall giant tiger really shocked the people who came across them. Some ordinary people went timid and stopped in their tracks, some stepped slowly backwards, and some even cried out in fear.

Fortunately, Dorias made an effort to look as gentle and non-threatening as possible. He walked along the road in an orderly manner and shook his head gently from time to time. After a while, the people there slowly calmed down and got a little less nervous around him.

Soon, they could hear different voices talking about the giant tiger.

"Lord of Light!" exclaimed one voice. "Look at how big the tiger is! It can easily swallow a whole cow!"

"Is the lord sitting on the back of the tiger?" asked one voice.

"Oh my god!" said another voice. "Look at how his body is shrouded in flames! He's terrifying!"

"Will he chase us away?"

Link listened closely to the words spoken by these people. His eyes scanned the whole area slowly to catch every detail.

He found that these people on the road were all wearing tattered clothes. Their faces were pallid, and their bodies were weak. They don't look like free country folks who came here looking for work from the Girvent Forest. Rather, they seemed to have dragged their families and their meager belongings to escape from something.

Are they refugees from the North? Link wondered. No, it can't be. Norton Kingdom's army has been winning the battles in the North, haven't they? The recent stalemate is mostly happening in the Black Forest. How could there be refugees, then? The clothes these people wore doesn't make it look like they're from the North either

Besides, even if there were refugees from the North, they'd first appear in the Girvent Forest up north, wouldn't they? Why come to Ferde Wilderness first instead?

Just then, Gildern appeared. He was now the scout commander in the area and was responsible for investigating the happenings around this place.

Link hopped down the tiger's back and walked over to Gildern.

"What's going on here?" he asked. "Where did they come from?"

"My lord," Gildern hurriedly answered. "I was just about to report this to you."

"Go on, then," Link said as he walked into the territory with Gildern following behind him.

"These are the refugees from the Delonga Kingdom in the South, my lord," Gildern explained. "The Delonga Kingdom and its western neighbor, the Southmoon Kingdom are now at war. The Delonga army has lost many battles and even more lives and territories. As a result, these people had to make their escape and run from the occupied land, my lord."

Two kingdoms in the South were at war? Link's chest suddenly tightened as he came to a realization.

It's already happened! Link thought.

At this point in the game, because the Norton Kingdom was too preoccupied with the war with the Dark Elves in the North, it had no time to control the minor southern kingdoms. At this point, the Syndicate ran wild in the South, and they kept fanning the fire of disputes between the southern kingdoms to provoke them into conflict. In the end, the whole southern part of the continent descended into chaos and bloodshed.

In this world, things were slightly better, although there seemed to be the same trend happening in the undercurrent of events. Link was afraid that history would soon repeat itself again now.

Link let out a long sigh and thought of Elin's words.

The sun will soon sink under the horizon.

Link knew that he had no power to control what happened in the South now, but he was still puzzled by some questions.

If they wanted to escape, he wondered, why didn't they take refuge in the deeper parts of the Delonga Kingdom? Why come here?

His estate was known across the continent as a bleak and barren place. What did they expect to find here? Were they going to eat dust to survive? Besides, surely the Delonga Kingdom wouldn't be happy to know that their citizens had escaped to the Norton Kingdom, would they?

Fortunately, Gildern had figured everything out from his inquiries.

"This must have something to do with Warter, my lord," he said. "Warter had been to the South frequently, buying slaves. He'd spread rumors all around that we are lacking people here in Ferde Wilderness. He'd probably spread the news of the anti-magic soil discovery as well, giving the impression that we are wealthy. These refugees probably thought they'd be safe here, that's why most of them sneaked through the borders of the kingdom by the Black River and reached here eventually."

Link's estate was indeed short of people, so in Gildern's eyes, their arrival had been a good thing.

While Link had the same opinion as well, as a liege lord, there were many more things for him to consider. He had to view it from the perspective of his estate's development as well. If anything went wrong at this point, it would send a cascade of negative effects into motion and ultimately influence his estate's future.

Link gazed around at the refugees on both sides of the road and fell into silent contemplation.

These refugees all knew that Link was the Magician lord of the land. They all stood humbly before him with their heads bowed down. When Link's gaze fell upon them, they all became restless, as if awaiting a verdict that would decide their fate.

The children all looked malnourished and weak. Their little faces were dirty, and the clothes they wore were nothing more than tattered rags. They held tightly to their parents' clothes with wonder and fear in their eyes. They seemed curious and wanted to get a closer look at Link, and yet they were afraid of the strange man, so they quickly darted their eyes away from Link. They were just as fearful as little rabbits.

Seeing that Link had not spoken, even Gildern had begun to feel nervous now. Although he'd become Link's follower not too long ago, at that time, Link's reputation had risen higher and higher, and his power kept expanding at a shocking rate. Even his aura was so terrifying now that it could inspire anyone with fear.

Suddenly, there was a change in Link.

He lifted his finger and pointed at a young man not too far away from him.

"Catch him and bring him here!" he ordered two soldiers beside him.

"My lord, what" Gildern muttered in bewilderment.

Link interrupted Gildern's sentence with a wave of his hand and motioned to the soldiers to obey his orders immediately.

Right now, the mercenary troop had transformed into the armed guards of the Ferde Wilderness. Link was the lord of the Ferde Wilderness and a powerful Master Magician, so he wielded absolute power over the soldiers in the troop. The two soldiers then rushed towards the young man with haste.

The young man panicked and was about to turn around and run away. But that was foolish of him, of course, since there was another soldier merely a few feet away from him who instantly kicked his leg and made him fall splat to the ground.

The two strong soldiers then rushed over and seized him and took him to Link. They made the young man kneel on the ground in front of him.

The atmosphere was extremely tense, and all the refugees went silent. Some babies seemed to sense the fear in the air and opened their little mouths to cry. But before they made a sound, their cries were muffled by their mothers who held them closer to their chests.

Link said nothing to explain himself. He took out his wand and used the Magician's Hand to rip open the front part of the young man's clothes, exposing his bare chest. The young man was well-built and looked very strong, completely different from what a starving refugee would look like. Then, over his heart, there was a tattoo of a dark green dagger with seven drops of blood dripping from it.

The young man's face changed suddenly. His whole body tensed up, and there was a faint Battle Aura emanating from his body. No one knew where he got the dagger that suddenly appeared in his hand, and he then sprung up abruptly and lunged forward to stab the dagger at Link!

It all happened so quickly and unexpectedly that all everyone could do was gasp in horror. Gildern's eyes bulged out, and he tried to pull out his sword to rush up and block the dagger, but he was an archer, so his speed couldn't compare to that of an Assassin.

Just then, a faint white light appeared around Link's body. It was the Level-4 Edelweiss. A moment later there was a blur in the air in front of Link's body where the Vector Resistant Force Field appeared.

Bam!

The Assassin lost his balance when he lunged forward and was blocked by Link's shield. He was knocked back a few steps before a whoosh was heard when a terrifying giant Flaming Hand appeared which grabbed the Assassin and held him in its palm. Horrible screams then escaped the lips of the Assassin which rang through the whole area.

A second later, Link stretched out the giant hand which made the Assassin fall slumping to the ground. He wasn't dead yet, and the burns on his body weren't so serious, but his Battle Aura was completely burnt out.

He fell to the ground panting and stared at Link with eyes that were full of terror.

The refugees around Link watched the scene silently. Many of them gulped in fear. They now gazed at Link as if he were the most fearsome person they'd ever met. Some children even burstito tears. The scene that displayed the Magician lord's power had been seared into their memories, and in that instant, they knew that Link was a man who was "invincible" and who possessed terrifying "godly powers."

That's exactly the kind of effect that Link had expected. He cast a voice amplifier spell on himself and took a few steps towards the Assassin.

"Are you a spy sent by the Syndicate?" Link asked with a voice loud enough that everyone could hear.

The young man's face was pale, but he remained silent, which meant that the allegation was true.

The refugees then wentito an uproar. It's no wonder why the lord would suddenly launch those terrifying attacks since the young man turned out to be one of those infamous Syndicate thieves. With this revelation, the fear in their hearts was greatly reduced.

Link observed the reactions of the refugees. He found it satisfactory. He had no intention of showing his terrifying power just to intimidate these people at all.

"Take him away and hang him at the north gate!" ordered Link at the soldiers beside him.

The soldiers obeyed his orders immediately. Not long afterwards they could hear a brief scream from the northern gate of Scorched Ridge. The Syndicate's spy was dead.

Throughout the process, all of Scorched Ridge was silent.

Link's actions had left a deep impression on the refugees' minds. In their eyes, this Magician lord had godly eyesight and was capable of fearsome magic powers. He was also very decisive and would have his orders carried out as soon as they were given. Thus, right now the refugees were as docile as a flock of sheep before Link. They felt that they were completely at his mercy.

When Link sensed their reactions, he knew that he'd achieved what he expected to do. His face suddenly turned warm and kindly. He had many reasons for doing what he just did. In fact, killing that spy from the Syndicate was merely his secondary goal.

These refugees had arrived too early in his estate's development stage. They hadn't seen true order being set up, and the construction in the area was also still in operation. In other words, with the large influx of refugees into his estate, there was a chance that the area might become too chaotic.

Once this happened, it would be difficult to solve in a short span of time. It could only be gradually improved over time. Therefore, the wisest thing to do now was to establish the absolute power of the lord in order to avoid the conditions in his territory to descend into chaos later.

That was why Link acted the way he did the moment he arrived. He used the most impressive spells to remind everyone that he was the lord of this land and that he would make sure that order was installed in this area.

After the severe act, now it was time to show the people his kinder and gentler side.

Having dealt with the Syndicate spy, Link walked to a high mound where everyone could see him and began his address.

"I, Baron Link Morani, the lord of the Ferde Wilderness, welcome you to stay in my territory. Here, as long as you obey my rules, you will lead good lives as free people."

The refugees heaved a sigh of relief in droves the moment they heard Link's speech. Their tightened heartstrings began to loosen, and they calmed down and began to whisper among themselves.

"The lord is such a young man," whispered one of them.

"The rumors are true," said another, "his magic really is powerful!"

"He's not just fearsome and majestic, he's also very wise!" commented one of the refugees. "Did you see how he recognized the thief from the Syndicate with just a glance?"

Link knew that he'd done well after hearing these remarks. Now that his work here was done, he decided that it was time to leave.

"Summon all officials for a meeting," said Link to Gildern. "I have some important things to arrange with all of you."

## 193. Such Measly Power Is Easy to Dispel

Gildern was pretty smart and could vaguely understand Link's motive. He admired how Link managed to make this decision. He could feel that they were no longer the small mercenary troop they were in the past. They were now in charge of developing a territory with great prospects. Their decisions might determine the fate of thousands of people. This meant that they had to handle everything that happened in the territory more cautiously as compared to before.

Recollecting Link's handling of the situation, he felt extremely inspired. He hence ran to execute it immediately.

After Link reached the parliament hall on the second floor, the core members Jacker, Lucy, Gildern, Carrido, and Celine arrived within 15 minutes.

Amongst the five of them, four had followed Link very early in his journey. Celine was the only one that joined recently. Although she did not show any capabilities in terms of combat power, she seemed to be extremely smart and was on good terms with Lucy. Celine would often give Lucy inspiring advice and solved many problems regarding the territory. She had proved herself to be a capable person.

"Please take a seat."

Link nodded to the five of them to acknowledge their presence. When he saw Celine, he felt a warm fuzzy feeling in his heart and smiled.

Link immediately went straight to the point and said, "I will have to leave the territory for a while. Before I leave, there are some things that I have to arrange."

Everyone listened carefully.

"Firstly, I have already seen the refugees. Most of them are ordinary people. However, to be able to get past the Black River and travel all the way here is a testament to their adventurous spirit and courage. If we manage them well, they will definitely prove themselves to be excellent citizens."

Link had no reason not to take these refugees in.

Upon hearing this, Lucy said, "I'm afraid we might encounter some problems with the Kingdom of Delonga. They are essentially still citizens of that kingdom. If they request that we hand them over, we have no reason to refuse."

This was truly an issue. Although the Ferde Wilderness could simply give an outright rejection, they would still have to trade with the Delonga Kingdom in the future. It was not cost-effective to make that move. The mercenary band had grown over this period. They all now understood the dangers without anyone specifically voicing them out. However, their experience of dealing with these issues was still limited. Jacker, Gildern, and Carrido all frowned at the thought.

Celine then interrupted, "I have an idea."

Link smiled as he said, "Please continue."

Celine said, "Please think. The Kingdom of Delonga has suffered a defeat in the war. They might even have to pay reparations to the South Moon Kingdom in the future and will definitely be in financial crisis. If the Kingdom of Delonga truly wants to claim their citizens back, we can simply purchase them using gold coins. They should be very happy with this trade."

The relationship between two nations boiled down simply to interests. As long as their interests aligned, anything was possible.

The Ferde Wilderness would never run out of gold coins after all.

Lucy thought for a moment and commended, "That is a good idea. There is no problem then."

Link also nodded. He then continued, "The Syndicate in the North is running rampant trying to spread their sinister doctrines. They will probably try to infiltrate our territory. Jacker, please make sure that the Syndicate does not extend its reach into our territory."

"I understand!" Jacker's voice was low and reassuring. As the military commander of the territory, he had been practicing even harder to meet that expectation. He had already reached Level-4 and was about to breakthrough to Level-5, becoming the strongest Warrior in the entire territory. This was already a significant strength. However, as the one holding the highest military power in the entire territory, it was still lacking.

The limitations of Jacker's power lay in the Level-3 Secret Battle Aura Link taught him. It was merely a low-level Battle Aura skill, and Level-5 was probably the maximum anyone could go practicing that skill. It was preposterous to even think about reaching greater heights.

Previously, Link was also out of options. He could only find the Level-3 Secret Battle Aura in the game system. However, he now had seven Epic Battle Aura scrolls and many other ordinary ones with him. It was time to bring them out.

"That is all for the refugees' case. Now let's move on to the next issue."

As Link spoke, he brought out a scroll and gave it to Jacker. "Open it."

Jacker was slightly puzzled by Link's actions. After browsing through the scroll briefly, his eyes widened and immediately stood up, "My lord, tithis is way too valuable for me!"

Jacker had a natural affinity for the earth elements. Link hence gave him a scroll named the Ares Tactic, an earth elemental Epic Battle Aura stance that focused on defensive techniques. Jacker had already learned how to read. Although he could not understand the technique at a glance, he knew that it was a terribly strong Battle Aura the moment he saw the named Ares Tactic. He was extremely honored to be entrusted with such a piece of treasure.

Link merely smiled before giving Lucy a wind elemental Emperor Duel Battle Aura scroll and Gildern, a fire elemental Overlord Tactics Battle Aura scroll.

"This is only meant for the three of you. No spreading of the scroll without my permission," Link commanded.

"Yes, my lord!" The three of them answered immediately. A single scroll would be able to be passed off as a treasured heirloom in a strong, noble family. To think that Link could produce three of them at once. However, Link was still not done. He then took out over ten more ordinary Battle Aura scrolls and handed them to Gildern and Jacker.

"There will be more people coming to the territory in the future. We will have to increase the scale of our army and scouts inevitably. If you see any powerful and competent people, you can reward them with these Battle Aura scrolls. Those with exceptional talents can then be temporarily considered to read these Epic Battle Aura scrolls. You can pass the name list to me for the final deliberation."

Jacker was the captain of the army while Gildern was the captain of the scouts. Their eyes flashed with excitement upon hearing those words. With these Battle Aura techniques as a foundation, both of them believed that the strength of their army would increase exponentially.

They then started discussing some other superfluous things which took the rest of the day. The meeting ended in the evening.

Link had not gotten any rest in a long time. After dinner, he was prepared to have a good night's rest and set off to the North the next day. The moment he lay on his bed, he heard knocking on his door. The sound was light, almost as if they did not want to disturb anyone else. From the magic fluctuations, Link could tell that the person behind that door was Celine. He opened the door with his Magician's Hand without any hesitation.

Celine then quickly entered the room and closed the door behind her. Seeing Link lying in bed in just his pajamas, she felt slightly embarsed. She got these thoughts out of her head before asking, "Are you seriously going to the North?"

Link was speechless. He felt that King Leon was not doing a good job keeping his mission a secret. How else would everyone around him know what he was going to do?

"Who did you hear this from? That's not true" Link denied.

"I gave Dorias a roasted lamb leg, and he told me everything," Celine silenced Link in just one sentence.

"What a gluttonous overweight cat." Link smiled bitterly. He was, however, certain that Dorias only gave in because the other party was Celine. If it had been anyone else, he would have stayed silent even if they had brought him 100 roasted cows.

Celine said, "Let me accompany you."

Link immediately shook his head. "No, that is a terrible idea. You cannot be exposed, especially in the North. If that happens, the Norton Kingdom army and the Dark Elves will both become your enemies."

Celine rebutted, "But have you ever thought what would happen if I stayed here? My father might send ferocious demons to your territory and cause a disaster."

Link fell silent immediately and frowned. This was indeed a problem that he had neglected. Although sending a large army of demons to Firuman required a huge amount of resources, Celine had a special type of bloodline which till this date, no one knew the value of. What if it was indeed so valuable that Nozama would risk anything to get his hands on it?

Seeing Link's reaction, Celine grabbed his hand and pleaded, "Don't worry bout me. I will just follow you around and hide in the shadows. I'll only appear if you are in danger. What do you think?"

Link still did not reply. Although having Celine with him always put him at ease and allowed him to reach his maximum potential, this mission was way too dangerous. However, if he were not at Celine's side, she would similarly be in danger from her father's pursuit.

As he was at his wit's end, a voice rang in his mind, "What a strange little girl."

This voice came from the sword spirit who claimed that he was too lazy to talk to Link and would enter a state of slumber. Link naturally was not petty enough to care about such things. The moment he heard this, he then remembered Vance's evaluation of Celine's blood. He then asked in excitement, What do you mean?

"She reminds me of a man named the Soul Dominator. She has a very similar aura and might be a descendant of that powerful manI cannot be sure unless I taste her blood."

Link was also very curious about the mystery of Celine's blood. He then thought of an idea and took over the Storm Lord's sword he had placed on his bedside, asking, "Celine, what do you think of this sword?"

Celine thought Link was hesitating as he fell silent after her proposition. She was taken aback by the sudden change of topic. Nonetheless, she still took the sword over and brandished it slightly before handing it back to Link, "Not too bad. Don't try to change the topic; you have not agreed to take me with you."

Link smiled awkwardly and continued, "This sword is not only beautiful, but also very sharp. Look at its blade."

"How is that possible, this blade is obviously blunt." Celine's attention was once again brought to the sword by Link. She took the Storm Lord's sword over and ran her fingers gently over the blade. It was rounded and definitely blunt. To be honest, she had been wondering why Link carried it around with him everywhere he went.

Suddenly, she felt a sharp pain in her fingers and pulled her hand back. She then looked at the supposedly blunt blade and saw a drop of her blood on it.

"That is odd; it is indeed sharp." Celine was now completely absorbed by the sword. She observed it with interest and stopped pressing Link on the matter about him going to the North.

In this period, Link patiently waited for an answer.

Half a minute later, the sword spirit said, "I was right. She is a descendant of that man, a direct descendant at that. There can be no other reason how her bloodline could be this strong."

Link's curiosity was piqued, What kind of person is the Soul Dominator exactly?

"He belonged to neither the light or the dark side. Amongst the Legendary professionals, he had the deepest understanding of the principles of the soul. He could even create a soul directly and also destroy them with ease. My master and the Soul Dominator were good friends. In fact, I owe it to him that I can be speaking to you right nowI kind of owe him a favor."

The sword spirit spoke with nostalgia. He then fell silent before continuing, "This young girl also has dark energy mixed into her blood. This is terrible, simply a blasphemy against the Soul Dominator. I won't allow this to happen; I am going to dispel it to return the favor."

Can you do it? You won't injure her right? Link was not convinced.

"Hmph! You ignorant mortal!"

As soon as he spoke, the Storm Lord's sword in Celine's hand started glowing in a white light. The light was dim and entered Celine's body through her arms. Following which, Celine fainted immediately.

Link hurriedly went over and laid her on the bed.

Furthermore, after Celine fainted, the Storm Lord's sword levitated into the air and pierced right through Celine's heart with a swoosh. Streaks of lightning then enveloped the sword and continuously poured into Celine's heart.

Link looked at the entire scene with horror. If not for the fact that Celine was still breathing and no visible wounds or even blood could be seen, he would have absolutely destroyed the sword.

In order to prevent any magic fluctuations from leaking, Link cast a concealing barrier spell over the wooden house. The situation in the wooden house then became more intense than ever.

Dark energy poured out constantly from Celine's heart. However, the moment it appeared, it would be instantly dispelled by the streaks of light around the sword. At first, the dark energy was extremely concentrated and strong, but as time passed, this energy grew weaker until the last trace of dark energy disappeared.

At that moment, the Storm Lord's sword removed itself from Celine's chest. Link ran over and was surprised to see no visible signs of damage, not even on her clothes. It was as though the Storm Lord's attack was a phantom blow that passed through matter.

A weak voice then rang in Link's mind, "The dark energy is extremely strong. I am certain that it is from some strong demon. If this young girl had already attained Legendary status, there would have been no hope. However, it was still within my power to dispel the dark energy within her as of now. I have dispelled most of the dark energy and have also sealed the remaining. Now, no one can ever trace her from her bloodline.

"What about her powers?" Link asked.

"Power? You mean that measly bit of power? I naturally dispelled it together with the dark energy. But this is only temporary. Without the oppression of the dark energy, the power she inherited from the Soul Dominator will start to awaken."

Link then stared at Celine and realized that she had begun to undergo physical changes. Her hair color had turned from pure black to a deep purple while her skin had become crystal clear with a white glow. The faint evil presence emanating from her previously had also completely disappeared.

Link then carefully opened Celine's eyelids and realized that her irises had also turned a deep purple. Even Celine's trademark the little demon fangs under her lips had also disappeared.

Celine started breathing faster, and before long, she was awake.

"What happened?" Celine sat up with her hand on her forehead as she gasped. She was still slightly confused at first, but upon realizing that she was lying on Link's bed, her cheeks immediately flushed, and she got up in a hurry.

"You passed out and then"

"Do not mention anything about me!" The sword reminded.

"And I sealed the dark energy in your body. You are now an ordinary human." Link thought of an excuse on the spot.

Celine could feel the changes in her body as well. The surging dark energy within her had completely disappeared. She had mixed feelings at the beginning, happy that she had finally gotten rid of her detestable dark past, but also disappointed that the power she worked so hard to build up was now gone.

Link comforted, "Without the bloodline of the dark energy, the demons will not be able to find you. This means that you are now safe in the territory. As for the North, you don't have to go now, do you?"

"YouOh, how infuriating!" Celine did not know how to react and stamped her feet all the way out of the room.

"I'll be going back!"

Link did not ask her to stay and watched as she disappeared into the hallway. He then thought for a moment and was still worried about leaving Celine alone in the territory. He then went to look for Dorias.

"What, you are not letting me go to the North? I'd be happy not to!" the tiger exclaimed. "Protect Celine? Oh, rest assured that no harm will come to her!"

Link then went back to rest feeling satisfied.

The next morning, Link bade farewell to everyone in the territory and summoned the Wind Fenrir in front of the on looking crowd before riding his way to the North. This suave action caused the new immigrants and refugees to look on with admiration and respect.

## 194. The Ghouls of the Black Forest

On the Icy Peak of the Black Forest in the northern part of Norton Kingdom.

More than four months ago, the Norton Kingdom's army thwarted the first attack from the Dark Elves at Icy Peak. From then on, they charged straight forward through the forest and into the Pralync Kingdom.

As they moved forward, Icy Peak also changed from being a battlefield to the rear camp of the Norton Kingdom's army. Now after months of construction with almost unlimited funding, it had become a large-scale fortress.

Today, the weather was as terrible as usual with the dark clouds in the sky and the biting wind whistling through the air. The low temperatures here could easily freeze people's ears off their heads. Nonetheless, the guards of the fortress dared not take their duties lightly even in such weather. A team of soldiers patrolled the outer walls of the fortress. The soldiers rubbed their hands and stomped their feet to keep warm, but their eyes remained sharp and vigilant as they guarded the northern wall of the fortress.

The Black Forest was gloomy and bitingly cold. When the wind blew through the forest trees, it would make an eerie howling sound. Moreover, the forest seemed to be packed with crows which would appear suddenly and caw loudly.

It was as if the Black Forest was haunted!

Just then, the soldiers heard the clip-clop sound of horses approaching the fortress. The guard captain immediately shouted an order, "Everyone, on guard!"

The soldiers gripped their weapons tightly. The archers nocked their arrows, while the other soldiers locked their eyes on the direction where the horse was approaching. If they noticed anything wrong at all, they would not hesitate to attack instantly.

The horse approached closer and closer, and after about half a minute, a group of knights emerged from the dense forest. There were a total of 13 knights, and all their armor had been stained red with blood. The knight in front was clad in dark green armor, and he was carrying a bleeding and dying Magician on his saddle.

"I'm Falcon, Royal Knight of the Norton Kingdom! Open the gate!" shouted the knight who was carrying the Magician.

Falcon, a Royal Knight of the kingdom, was a Level-6 Warrior and the captain of the vanguard. His weapon was the Holy Cross sword. Once Battle Aura flowed into this sword, it would light up in a holy, silver light that was unique to the sword.

The soldiers looked at the sword and waited for another five or six seconds. After determining that Falcon was not pursued by any enemies behind him, they slowly opened the gate of the fortress and let him in.

The knights sped through the fortress gate before it closed up again immediately as all of them had entered. Not a single second was wasted.

Once they were all inside, Falcon carried the dying Magician down from the saddle of his horse and gave him to the knight beside him.

"Quick," he ordered, "take Artor to the priest!"

The knight then held the young Magician and ran towards a small chapel of the fortress. The Magician, Artor was slashed in the neck, but fortunately, none of his vital veins were cut, so he was still alive.

Falcon continued to gallop more than 150 feetito the fortress square before dismounting. He gave the horse to a soldier nearby while he himself rushed into the command hall.

Inside the hall, there were loud voices from different figures of various positions. Some were generals and officers, while others were clerks and soldiers. They were all discussing their strategic plans.

Falcon walked to the entrance and wiped the blood traces that had been frozen to ice off his face.

"My lord," he loudly said, "the vanguard camp has been attacked!"

All of a sudden, the hall fell silent. Everyone's eyes turned to Falcon. Duke Abel, who sat at the head of the long table, turned to Falcon with an expressionless face.

"What did you say?" he asked. "Repeat yourself!"

Falcon rushed into the hall with signs of panic still in his eyes.

"Those ghouls blinded our guards early this morning, my lord," he reported. "Then the Black Tooth Legion of the Dark Elf army suddenly launched an attack on our camp. There were 5000 soldiers in the vanguardbut only 13 escaped."

The ghouls were a terrifying group of Dark Elves that suddenly appeared on the battlefields since the war started. Their speed was as fast as the wind, they were almost invisible, and their strength was inexhaustible. Ordinary swords and weapons could never kill them, even when their vital points were struck down. In short, these ghouls were close to supernatural!

Only 13 soldiers in the vanguard camp escaped out of 5000. In other words, the entire camp was annihilated.

Duke Abel's face turned hard and cold.

"What about Karnose?" he asked Falcon. "Wasn't he in the vanguard camp? Where is he?"

The Black Forest was where most of the ghouls lay; that was the area around the vanguard camp. To help combat them, the Dawn Swordsman was sent there. As the only Level-8 Warrior in the kingdom, he was deemed as the best person who could eliminate the threat of these ghouls. But no matter how powerful the Warrior was, in the end, he was just one person, while the total number of ghouls wasn't clear. So far, according to reports, there were more than a hundred of them now. The presence of the Dawn Swordsman could do nothing but temporarily suppress the wild attacks of the ghouls.

Falcon's eyes turned red as he thought of Karnose.

"I don't know, my lord," he said. "To protect us and make sure that we escaped from the camp, Lord Karnose decided to remain there and fight. As for what happened to him now, II don't know."

It had gone so quiet at this point that a pin dropping on the floor would echo throughout the hall.

The people here had been through wars before, so they knew its harsh brutality well. They knew that even if Karnose was an invincible Warrior when faced with an army, the most he could do was kill a hundred of the soldiers. He still wouldn't be able to escape certain death himself.

In other words, the top Warrior of Norton Kingdom had now almost certainly died in battle.

Silence lingered in the hall. No one made a sound for three minutes. Then, Duke Abel stood up and took a deep breath then looked around at all the generals in the hall.

"It's time to shrink the line of defense!" he said coldly.

At present, there were 190,000 soldiers in the North divided into ten regiments. These regiments were centered in Icy Peak which then formed a defense line facing the north of Black Forest. The vanguard camp, on the other hand, was kept 50 miles further north of the fortress.

Once the vanguard camp was attacked, there was now only one legion left to protect the fortress. The situation had become a little too dangerous. If the defeat had come from a normal battle, the Norton Kingdom army would certainly be able to counterattack from the flanking sides of the battlefield and teach the Dark Elves a harsh lesson. But now that these ghouls came into the picture, things had gotten a lot trickier.

These ghouls hid in the Black Forest and were almost untraceable. The scouts from the MI3 weren't able to fight against them, and all that encountered the ghouls had died with very little exceptions.

So far, the number of scouts in the forest kept dwindling, and the army received less and less information. By now, the links between various regiments had almost been cut off by these ghouls which made fighting a war that much more difficult.

In this case, the safest strategy was to retreat the line of defense. Duke Abel still had some doubts about the decision, but now that the best Warrior in the army had fallen and the entire vanguard camp was annihilated, he had to make up his mind.

The generals had nothing to say, either. Everyone knew that at this point it was basically impossible to fight on. They'd even begun to draw up orders to get ready to withdraw.

Duke Abel then turned to a man wearing gray leather armor beside him.

"Karnose might still be alive," he said, "I want you to send out a search party and find news of Karnose."

That man was Dilo. He was the commander of the scout team of the MI3. He was responsible for collecting information on the battlefield. A month earlier, he did an excellent job and had almost squeezed the life out of the Dark Elf army. But ever since the ghouls appeared, the tables were turned completely.

Dilo frowned when he heard Duke Abel's order.

"My lord," he said with a lowered voice, "the Black Forest is infested with the ghouls. If we send more people outito the forest, there would only be more people dead."

He did not say this out of cowardice. He'd seen what happened in the last half month how with every team of scouts he sent outito the Black Forest only about 10% survived and came back alive. At this point, all the news the king and the army received was in exchange for the scouts' lives.

Naturally, as the leader of these scouts, he was sad to see his elite members sacrificed one-by-one.

But Duke Abel got furious as he listened to Dilo's reply.

"Stop your excuses!" he spat. "This is a military order! Find him at all costs!" He was well aware of the dangers in the Black Forest. Still, Karnose wasn't just a Level-8 Warriorhe was the source of morale for the entire army.

If even the Dawn Swordsman had fallen, how would the rest of the army find any courage to continue to stay in the North? How would they fight on in this war?

"As you wish, my lord," said Dilo. He had no other choices. Then, he rushed out of the hall and began to carry out the orders.

To everyone's surprise, Dilo returned again to the hall after ten minutes.

"What's the matter?" Duke Abel asked impatiently.

"My lord," said Dilo in a hushed voice as he walked up to the duke. "The princess insisted that she wants to join the search party. I came to ask you for your advice."

""

The Iron Duke's jaw dropped for a few moments. He wanted to tell Dilo to refuse his daughter's request, but just as he was about to utter the words, he discovered that everyone in the hall was watching him. They must've heard of what happened now.

He hesitated for a while, but finally, Duke Abel gave Dilo his decision.

"Let her go," he said with a trembling voice. "Don't treat her any differently from other members of the team. The search and rescue of Karnose is the most important thing."

His daughter, Annie, was now only a Level-4 Assassin. In the past, this level would be considered powerful. But now with the ghouls around, sending someone of her level outito the forest would practically be a death sentence for her. Yet now, he could do nothing to stop it; it was the price he had to pay for being the commander of the army.

Duke Abel then stood up and announced, "I must go get some rest."

He turned away from the command hall as all eyes watched him leave silently. The Iron Duke seemed to have aged ten years in the last few minutes. Even his walking gait had gotten weak now.

"Dilo," the duke's adjutant whispered, "you must not let anything happen to the princess."

"I will do what I can," said Dilo with a thin smile. In truth, it was too late for him to do anything now.

The news that the vanguard camp was attacked and that the fate of the Dawn Swordsman was unknown couldn't be kept a secret for long. When the search party left the Icy Peak, all tens of thousands of people in the fortress had heard of the news by then.

For a time, the air in the fortress was extremely tense. Although the main force of the army had not been lost, their morale suffered a deep plunge. At that moment, the Black Forest had become less of a battlefield, but more of a deep abyss that sucked lives into its deep and dark underbelly.

No more than half an hour after the search party left, a figure clad in a loose black cloak walked out from the forest near the fortress. It was Link.

He'd just arrived, so he knew nothing about the current situation.

He stared at the strong and magnificent fortress in front of him and couldn't help but admire it.

"They've built such a large fortress in less than six months' time," he exclaimed. "What a feat!"

He then quickened his pace and approached the fortress gate.

## 195. To Think It Would Be Someone as Prominent as You

Ice Peak Military Fortress

In order to keep his mission a secret, Link stood in front of the fortress door clad in a low-level magic robe. He then shouted at the guards on the outer wall. "I am Mirose, a Magician from the East Cove Higher Magic Academy, here to join the army."

"Prove your identity!" the captain of the outer guards replied. He did not receive any news that a Magician from the academy would be arriving at the fortress today. If it were an ordinary Warrior, he would not even bother entertaining him. He might even order for him to be killed if he got too close. However, the other party now was a Magician; he had to be cautious.

Proving my identity? Link was slightly stunned at this request and thought for a moment before replying, "I am friends with a disciple of Dean Anthony named Marco. If you do not believe me, you can testify with him."

Although his mission was a secret, King Leon had already arranged everything beforehand. The alias Mirose was also one that they decided on together so as to ensure consistency.

The guard captain hesitated. He knew Marco personally and, in the past, such an action would be enough for him to let his guard down. However, the situation now was extremely tense. How would he know if this person was not a Dark Elf spy?

He then said, "Please wait while I get Marco here."

He then immediately turned around and walked towards the Mage Tower in the fortress. Link naturally could only wait outside the castle wall.

Ten minutes later, Magician Marco appeared on the castle wall with a perplexed look on his face.

Mirose? Who is that?

He received news two days ago that the academy would be sending a young Magician named Mirose over to the fortress. This news was exceptionally strange. He could not understand why the academy would send merely one Magician over. It would be fine if that Magician were strong and famous. However, MiroseCould it be a name of a Magician's Apprentice?

From the castle wall, Marco looked down and saw a young man standing right outside the castle wall, looking at him with an inviting smile on his face.

Marco could recognize this person just from a glanceblack hair and black eyes with a youthful demeanor. There was only one person in the entire academy who looked like thatthe new Master Magician Link Morani!

He was, after all, a Level-4 Magician and could maintain his composure. Although he was excited and surprised at Link's arrival, he did not show any of those emotional fluctuations on his face and said, "He is someone from the academy. Let him in."

With his testimony, the guard captain was naturally relieved and ordered the guards beside him, "Open the gate."

The rattling sounds of gears could be heard as the drawbridge was lowered slowly to pave the way for Link's entrance. Before Link could enter the fortress, Magician Marco had already come out to welcome him.

After reaching Link's side, he looked around to make sure no one was looking before whispering in excitement, "Sir, I have been informed that a combat Magician would arrive. To think that it would be someone as prominent as you!"

Link had already made his name known throughout the Magician world reaching the status of a master at a tender age of 18 years old. His accomplishment of defeating a Level-8 demon with a Level-9 spell had also proved his overwhelming strength, just shy of reaching the Legendary status.

Under his dazzling brilliance, Wavier of the South, Eliard who managed to become a level-3 Magician in half a year, and other Magicians who call themselves genius all dimmed in comparison.

Link smiled meekly and corrected, "I am not a master. I am Mirose, a Level-2 Magician. Have you forgotten?"

"Oh, yes, yes. It is Mirose." Marco nodded.

Link headed into the fortress while Magician Marco followed hastily behind like a follower.

"Where is the Dawn Swordsman? Bring me to him." Link did not waste a single moment. He knew that the longer he stayed in the fortress, the likelihood of his identity being exposed would increase.

He was the nemesis of the Dark Elves, the criminal who killed the Constellation Assassin of the Norigan Familia. If the Dark Elves had noticed his arrival in the Dark Forest, they would definitely pursue him with all their might.

However, this sentence caused a frown to appear on Marco's face, his melancholy obvious.

Link suddenly got a bad premonition and said, "What happened?"

Marco whispered, "The pioneer group that the army sent out had been breached and annihilated by the Dark Elves. Kanorse had chosen to be the defensive force for that mission and is nowhere to be found. The Duke had sent out a rescue team for this purpose alone. Even Princess Annie went along this time around."

Link as startled at the news and paused, "When did this happen?"

"Just an hour before you arrived. The rescue team was just dispatched. However, the Dark Forest is infested with ghouls; I'm afraid this mission will also" Marco did not complete his sentence, but his meaning was clear.

Link captured a single word in his entire speech and asked, "Ghouls? You mean the things that recently appeared in the Dark Forest?"

An expression of fear immediately appeared on Marco's face. "Yes, that's them! They are way too strong! The entire army is in a state of despair. The ghouls have nearly taken over the entire Dark Forest!"

Upon hearing those words, Link fell silent and stopped moving forward. He then heard the rattling sound of gears coming from behind him. The guards were retracting the drawbridge.

"It seems like I need to take action now. Marco, tell them to lower the drawbridge. I am setting off now." Link walked towards the fortress gate.

"LinkI mean, Mirosealone?" Marco followed behind Link hastily as he signaled for the guards to lower the drawbridge.

"No, I will catch up with the rescue team and move together with them. The Duke made the right decision. The Dawn Swordsman's current state cannot be ambiguous! In fact, he must live!"

He needed the strength of the Dawn Swordsman to deal with the enhanced demonized Dark Elves called ghouls.

In ten years, the Dawn Swordsman would still be the strongest Warrior in the World of Firuman. By that time, he would have reached the highest Legendary level and be conferred the title of a Divine Swordsman. Eliard and he would be collectively called the two saints of the human race, serving as the two psychological pillars in the war.

These were sufficient reasons for Link to go out of his way to rescue Kanorse.

At this moment, the drawbridge had already been lowered. Link then cast a Cheetah's Agility onto himself and rushed out of the gate. He then cast a Level-0 levitation spell which increased his speed drastically to 150 feet per step. He then floated with ease down the slope of the Ice Peak, hastily making his way into the Dark Forest.

Before long, he reached the boundaries of the Dark Forest and seemed determined to enter the dangerous foothold of the Dark Elves.

A troop of guards looked at him from the castle walls with a stunned expression on their faces.

"That Magician is entering the Dark Forest alone? Is he insane?"

"Is he trying to commit suicide?"

"Did anyone of you realize that his spellcasting speed is extremely fast?"

"So what if he is fast? He is alone!"

The captain of the guards had already made his way down the castle walls and walked towards Marco. He then asked curiously, "Sir, what is going on with this Mirose guy?"

He had only just arrived but left immediately for the Dark Forest. What is going on?

Marco then stared as Link's figure disappeared into the shadows of the Dark Forest. He then shook his head, "Warrior, this is not something you should know."

If the Dawn Swordsman Kanorse was the pillar of support to all Warriors in the Norton Kingdom, then Link, the Magician who single-handedly defeated the great demon Tarviss would be a Legendary figure revered by all combat Magicians.

If he could not save Kanorse from this predicament, then possibly no one could.

...

The Dark Forest

Thirty-Five Elite Scouts clad in black leather armor rushed towards the enemy's base under their disguise and concealment. They were heading towards the vanguard camp to rendezvous with the surviving troops before infiltrating the enemy's base together to save the Dawn Swordsman.

The Scouts' eyes shone with a bladed resolve, though not a shred of hope could be found in those eyes. From the moment they entered the Dark Forest, they were prepared to give up their lives.

Caw! Caw! Caw!

A crow flew across them, seemingly mocking this group of human scouts who was overestimating their abilities.

The sound of their feet sinking into the thick layer of snow on the ground accentuated the sinister atmosphere of the Dark Forest. Among the scouts who were traveling in a scattered formation, four of them were gathered together. In the middle of this group was Annie Abel, the only daughter of the Iron Duke. She was closely protected by three guards surrounding her, ready to take any lethal blows for the princess the moment danger struck.

Although Annie did not want this to happen, this was her father's arrangement. She could only accept disdainfully.

All of her subordinates had already lost their lives in this northern war of the Dark Forest. The previous time when they were met with danger, almost all of the comrades delved into a frenzy trying to protect her with their own lives, creating opportunities for her to escape.

At that moment, she saw Aldivin's head getting completely severed by a ghoul. The blood from his neck spurted nearly three feetito the air as his eyes from the severed head still shone with camaraderie and rage. She also saw Molly's petite body being torn in two by the ferocious ghouls. Despite the brutal treatment she was subjected to, she still held on tightly to the ghoul's leg, even so after she had lost consciousness. She had seen way too many sacrifices. Yet, she was still alive.

She then looked at the scouts surrounding her. She saw three pairs of eyes bursting with youth and hope for a better tomorrow. They were just like Aldivin and Molly, people who were supposed to be enjoying the vibrancy of their youth.

Annie could not help but feel a sharp ache in her heart upon seeing those faces. The scene from that fateful night was still etched deeply in her mind. Her heart convulsed with despair, seemingly dripping blood with every beat.

She hated that she was of noble blood. If not, she would have fought to her death with the ghouls as well. That would probably be better than living while shouldering the sacrifices she had witnessed and endless pain she was going through.

Suddenly, the captain of the scouts raised his hand to signal for them to stop. The scouts then immediately froze in their tracks before finding cover to hide.

Annie then hid behind a fallen tree.

The forest had become exceptionally quiet. The chirping of the birds and screeching of the insects had instantly disappeared, leaving only the sound of the howling wind. It was as though all life in the Dark Forest had momentarily vanished into thin air. Annie then stole a glance at the tree she was hiding behind. She saw a small lizard who seemed to be moving in an eccentric manner. It quickly hid inside the fallen tree, as though it was afraid of something. It was not just the lizard. The ants, caterpillars, spiders and all other small insects were fleeing the area in fear.

Annie had once witnessed such a scene. She knew what was happening.

Her heart thumped violently and held her dagger tightly in her hands. Although it was still not sufficient to kill a ghoul, her dagger smeared with holy water would pose a threat to the ghouls.

The atmosphere had instantly become oppressive. Annie saw that all of the scouts clutched their daggers tightly while their bodies trembled. This was not due to the adrenaline before a battle, but due to fear.

The strong gust of wind could be felt followed by the sighting of a shadow moving at high speed.

Annie gave a long sigh and surprisingly felt more calm than ever. They had been discovered. The ghouls were here. This would be the final battle of her life.

## 196. A Magicians Wisdom

The three ghouls seemed to be bursting with unbridled fury and pride when they first appeared. However, they were defeated in an instant and were now flinching around helplessly on the ground.

If they hadn't witnessed the scene with their own eyes, no one would have believed it. Hence, when this Magician clad in a grey robe emerged from the back of a tree, the scouts who were lucky enough to survive involuntarily walked towards him. Their hearts were filled with deep gratitude and admiration.

In the Dark Forest where danger and despair lurked in every corner, there was nothing more reassuring than the support of a powerful Magician.

Both the scout captain and the vice-captain did not survive the assault. The remaining scouts were all around Level-4 in strength, and as the daughter of a duke and the strongest scout alive, Annie hence assumed the position of temporary captain.

Link was still wearing his hood at this moment, causing Annie to not recognize him. She merely felt that this figure was somewhat familiar, though she could not point out exactly why. She walked forward and bowed respectfully, saying, "I'm Annie Abel. Dear Magician, thank you very much for your help."

She was also extremely grateful to this Magician. However, she was still devastated as the three young guards who were protecting her did not make it through the assault. This made her extremely guilty and depressed.

"I'm late. Sorry for the delay," the Magician replied in a low voice. Annie's eyes brightened upon hearing this voice. It was familiar as well.

She recollected herself and carefully observed the man standing in front of her. The more she looked at him, a figure started forming in her mind.

A faint voice started appearing in her headcould it be? No way!

He was now a Master Magician and the lord of a territory. There were even rumors that he would be one of the candidates for the next Dean of the East Cove Higher Magic Academy. How could such a prominent figure come and fight on the frontlines of the war against the Dark Elves? Even if he really wished to asst in the war, he should be positioned within the fortress as a defensive triumph card.

In the next moment, Link took off his hood and revealed his true identity. As he stared at Annie's astonished face, he introduced, "Princess Annie, I am Magician Mirose. I will be assting you in the search for the Dawn Swordsman."

As he spoke, he winked at Annie to signal that he did not wish to reveal his status.

It really is him!

Annie was just about to shout his name when she saw his signal. She then swallowed her words and said, "Oh, it's Mr. Mirose. I am extremely honored to be able to fight alongside you."

The familiar voice and face instantly dispelled half of the heaviness in Annie's heart.

He actually came. The person who pulled Gladstone out from the clutches of the Dark Elvesthe person who saved her life twice in a row had really arrived. At this moment, Annie felt as if her soul had found an anchor.

This feeling was as though a person drowning in a river and getting swept by raging currents suddenly found a solid tree branch to grab hold of, dispelling all feelings of panic and despair.

Link, on the other hand, did not feel these emotional fluctuations. Annie was simply a good friend in his memory. Furthermore, they had not met for over half a year and had grown apart.

After greeting them, he then turned to the scouts beside him and said, "Although these three ghouls are already seriously injured, they are still alive; don't kill them. Send them back to the Ice Peak. We are going to study them and find their weaknesses."

Upon hearing those words, Annie immediately selected ten scouts and said, "All of you and this group, bring these hideous creatures back."

"Yes, Your Highness." The scout quickly used ropes to secure the ghouls together, and before long, they were prepared to return to the fortress.

Link walked over and took out a scroll and three bottles containing a thick silver liquid. He then walked up to a scout and said, "The bottles contain Sacred Silver while the scroll is enchanted with the Blessing of Light. If you meet any ghouls along the way, activate the scroll and smear the Sacred Silver onto your weapons. This should be enough to scare them away."

The scouts valued Link's advice greatly and carefully took over the precious Sacred Silver and scroll.

After that, Link turned to Annie and said, "Ten scouts might not be enough for a safe return trip. We need at least 15. Your Highness, you should return as well."

There were 21 scouts who survived the onslaught. If 15 of them were to return, there would be six left for the mission. Coupled with Link's power, this should be enough to rescue Kanorse. Furthermore, as they were infiltrating the enemy's base, a larger group might not be beneficial.

"I will not go back!" Annie shook her head firmly, "'Your Highness' does not exist during a mission. We are all simply scouts from MI3."

Link fell silent for a moment. Since the other party was not willing, there was no forcing it. He nodded. "That's fine as well."

After which, he then randomly selected five scouts and said, "You guys go back as well. Remember that the ghouls have some sort of mutual connection between them. They should already know that their comrades are gravely injured and will be on your heels. I will try to delay them for half an hour. In this time, you guys will have to rush back to the fortress at top speed. No stopping along the way! Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir!" The scouts replied in unison.

At that moment, Link's word was their command. He had a lot more power than Princess Annie as he had just displayed his unparalleled power against the ghouls. He was the absolute most powerful being in the Dark Forest.

This offensive power was what soldiers on the field looked up to!

"Alright, get going!" Link pointed in the direction of the Ice Peak Fortress.

The 15 scouts then carried the three gravely injured ghouls and rushed straight towards the Ice Peak Fortress.

Link stared at the remaining six scouts and said, "We have to do something to buy them some time."

"Please give your orders!"

Annie spoke with arsectful voice as well. She realized that the young man in front of her was no longer the shy reserved person she knew in the past. He was still as powerful and calm as ever, though he seemed a lot more dependable and firm now.

The other scouts stared at Link with admiration, waiting for his orders.

Link then said, "Pass me your daggers."

The six scouts passed their daggers to Link without hesitation. Link then took out a bottle of Sacred Silver in liquid form and activated the Magician's Hand. The 12 daggers then instantly levitated into the air before arranging themselves neatly in front of Link.

These daggers had anti-magical properties. However, Link's abilities had long surpassed such ordinary anti-magical enchantments. They were all useless against his spells.

After the daggers were arranged properly, the silver liquid floated out of the bottle. This Sacred Silver was created by Link himself and was able to maintain its liquid form due to the Higgs Field Transformation spell that Link was adept in. As the Sacred Silver made contact with the atmosphere, it quickly turned into a near transparent film. This transparent film then swiftly coated the daggers held in a neat formation. Following which, a large number of magic runes appeared in the air. These runes rotated quickly in the air while getting closer to the daggers with every spin until they finally wrapped themselves onto the daggers evenly.

The scene looked just like many fireflies dancing around the levitating daggers.

Three seconds later, Link then raised his Burning Wrath of Heavens Wand and pointed it gently at the daggers in the air, "Magic Stabilize!"

Crisp Metallic sounds reverberated through the forest as the runes knocked themselves onto the surface of the daggers, engraving their powers on the ordinary weapons. With each sound, a clear rune symbol could be seen appearing on those daggers.

Around three seconds later, all the runes in the air disappeared, and the appearance of the dagger had changed completely.

Originally, these daggers were grey and black in color. However, they were now dark silver and a row of beautiful rune engravings could be seen running through the middle of the dagger. The runes also shone with a slight silver hue that was exceptionally clear in the Dark Forest.

What was more incredible was that all 12 daggers looked exactly the same.

The scouts all looked at the scene with disbelief. They had never seen such mysterious, enchanting magic in their entire life. Even Annie was dumbfounded at the sight.

This was actually pretty normal, as Link had already mastered the art of enchanting. For a simple enchanting processes like this with not much technical difficulty, he could do it simply with a few waves of his wand. He was too used to it.

With another action of his hand, the 12 daggers slowly floated back to the hands of the scouts.

He then said, "I have enchanted Sacred Silver onto these daggers. The ghouls would not be able to regenerate as fast if you wound them with these weapons."

Their regenerative abilities were one of the ghoul's greatest advantages.

After that, Link waved his wand again to activate the Magician Hand.

Under the surprised expression of all the scouts, the crossbows and arrows scattered around the floor all started drifting towards Link and were once again arranged in a neat formation in front of him. Link quickly swept his gaze over these weapons and decisively threw five thoroughly damaged crossbows and 20 unusable arrows away. He was then left with 20 usable crossbows and 160 crossbow arrows.

Link then once again displayed his powerful control of magic. There seemed to be countless invisible hands working on all these weapons at once, putting the arrows back into the trigger and fixing the acceleration mechanism all at the same time.

Within two minutes, the 20 crossbows were all as good as new.

Link then took out another bottle of Sacred Silver and started creating many transparent films in the air before coating the crossbows the same way he did with the daggers. Half a minute later, the crossbows had all turned dark silver though there were no changes in their physical appearance.

With a gentle flick of the wand, the crossbows flew towards the scouts. They got two crossbows each, evenly distributed amongst the remaining members.

"Take care of them. They will be your weapons against the ghouls."

The scouts mechanically took over the crossbows as they were still in awe of Link's abilities.

These crossbows were usually termed as a disposable weapon. It was extremely troublesome to fit the arrow onto the crossbow again after firing. Usually, it would take around half an hour to fix one crossbow. However, the Magician in front of them fixed 20 crossbows and even enchanted them with Sacred Silver in less than three minutes.

What he was doing was no less than a miracle.

Right after the preparations were complete, Link felt a magic fluctuation in the atmosphere. He felt a few dark creatures moving at high speed towards them. It was the ghouls!

"That was fast!" Despite his preparations, Link was still surprised at their speed.

He raised his wand and methodically cast a spell at each of the scouts. A ray of light then flowed towards the scouts like streams of water, causing them to vanish from sight.

Finally, Link then entered the stealth state himself.

A voice seemed to appear out of nowhere from the seemingly empty forest. "The ghouls are here. There are four of them. They are definitely here to observe the battlefield. Hide yourselves well and wait for your chance to launch attacks. Don't worry about them retaliating; I'll stop them!"

At the last sentence, Link's voice had already become muffled, and it was impossible to tell exactly where it was coming from.

Link's inspiration for this stealth spell came from Vance's concealing spell. However, he had made some alterations to make it a more flexible spell for individual use. The sound technique was called resonance reverberation, a spell he learned from the magic notes that the Master Magicians from the academy had given him.

Link was well versed in all these small magic tricks after being exposed to a great deal of magic materials. This included the Higgs Field spell that he just used to create the Sacred Silver.

This was where the foundation of a Magician lay.

Link had already started combining the expertise of many masters of his era, even becoming a master in his own right. Although his strongest spell was still only a Level-6 spell, his combat powers had at least double since the time he slew Tarviss.

In the forest, the scouts lay quietly in wait.

This time, they only had eight members. However, the despair that once consumed them had now turned into ambition and rage, fueling their actions. They were all looking forward to the arrival of the ghouls, as they now had an extremely powerful leader.

It was time for revenge!

## 197. Cat and Mouse

"There's someone approaching in front!"

Behind a thicket of bushes, the Occult Dark Elf popped his head out and twitched his nose in the air.

"There's a strong smell of blood" the Dark Elf reported. "There's the smell of human bloodand the blood of our kindThere's the stench of the evil God of Light as well."

The bush behind him rustled, and out emerged another Occult Dark Elf.

"Our comrades must've been injured, Darco," he urged. "We must go and help them."

Right after speaking, the Occult Dark Elf swiftly rushed forward.

The one called Darco hesitated for a while. In the past, he would've followed behind his comrade without the slightest pause. But now, there was a thick smell of bloodthirst in the air that was so intense that it gave him an ominous sense. There was another rustling noise behind him. Another fellow Occult Dark Elf had emerged and quickly followed the first one. He was surprised to see Darco still standing there not moving.

"Darco, what are you waiting for?" he asked. "Let's go!"

As he spoke, another Occult Dark Elf emerged. He said nothing, but he looked at Darco confusedly. His eyes seemed to be asking the same question as the previous Dark Elf.

Darco sighed and began to follow his comrades hesitantly.

The four Occult Dark Elves ran wild in the Black Forest. Their speed was lightning fast, and their footsteps were almost silent. Wherever they went, birds and beasts went silent while the bugs and snakes evaded them.

Half a minute later, their speed finally slowed down. The smell of blood in the air was very pronounced. A little further away, they saw several human corpses lying on the ground.

"We're near the battlefield now," one of them said. "I can only see human corpses. Can any of you see bodies of our soldiers?"

"No."

"Me neither."

Darco finally caught up to them, and he observed the corpses more carefully. He hid in the most secretive spot and observed for two minutes, then suddenly pointed to a certain direction.

"Look there!" he said.

The other three Dark Elves looked where Darco pointed and saw a pile of intestines among the branches. Judging by the scent, it belonged to their comrade.

Their faces turned stormily dark, as they realized what they saw.

No matter how strong they were, to have the intestines dragged out must mean that their comrade was suffering a serious injury. While he might not yet die, there was no way he could ever fight again.

"Those human scum must've dragged this soldier's body away," yelled one of them. "We must chase after them and crush them!"

"Wait, calm down," whispered Darco. "I can sense something wrong here."

"But we must not let our soldier's body fall into the humans' hands!" another Dark Elf spat out, turning to look at Darco with eyes full of disdain. "This is the great leader's command!"

"Are you scared, Darco?" asked a Dark Elf suspiciously.

"No," answered Darco, "but I feel that we should be more cautious" The suspicion in his comrades' eyes made it difficult for Darco to continue. But he couldn't deny the strong, ominous sense he was feeling then, even though he couldn't quite put his finger on what exactly was wrong.

His comrades had by then become impatient of his dilly-dallying.

"The facts are very clear here, Darco," the Dark Elf beside him coldly said. "Our soldiers met the human scouts, and some of them got defeated because there were too many humans. What we must do now is seek revenge!"

The Dark Elf who'd just spoken was the strongest among the four. After he finished his sentence, he stood up and waved his hand at the others.

"Let's go," he said. "We must increase our speed and kill every last one of those humans!"

He was the first to rush forward. The other two then followed him without any hesitation. Darco had no other choice, so he finally followed them in the back. The four Dark Elves did not anticipate the ambush that was waiting for them in front, so they just followed the scent that was in the air and chased after the trails of the humans.

Three seconds later, the first Occult Dark Elf stepped onto a battlefield and found another human corpse. He immediately stomped on the corpse's skull and crushed it to bits. A second later, the second and third Dark Elf arrived. Then, Darco was there as well. They were eager to catch up to the human scouts, so they ran even faster now, not suspecting at all that their might be a trap set up for them in front.

Just then, they could hear a buzzing noise in the air. The three Dark Elves charged onward when out of nowhere, transparent ripples in the air appeared. The ripples didn't cover a big area, but they were big enough to envelop all four Dark Elves inside a bubble.

It all happened so suddenly that it was impossible for any of them to make an appropriate response.

In a flash, the four Occult Dark Elves felt as if they were being pushed forward by a mysterious force. Because they were moving at such a high speed, their bodies spent 75% of the time in mid-air. Just when the transparent force field appeared, it caught them when three of the Dark Elves were in mid-air.

As a result, these three were caught completely off-guard. Even though the pushing force wasn't that strong, it was enough to make them lose their balance. Only Darco managed to avoid the trap. When the force field appeared, his feet were safely on the ground, so he had enough time to crouch down and stabilize himself. The force field wasn't strong, and he possessed the strength of a Level-6 fighter, so naturally, he could dodge the attack easily.

"Careful, it's a trap!" he immediately shouted.

His heart was already filled with shock and alarm as he shouted the warning. After receiving the Lady of Darkness' blessings, they'd been nearly invincible in the forest and were the ones who'd always attacked the humans. Now that the situation was reversed, he couldn't help but suspect that something was awfully wrong.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

The three Occult Dark Elves were flung out and slammed into the trees. The impact wasn't serious. There wasn't even a scratch on their skin, although they did get annoyed for falling into such a simple trap.

"Damn it, it's a Magician's trap!" said one of them.

"Come out, you bastard! I'll tear you into pieces!"

"I detest Magicians the most! They're weak, and they like to play dirty tricks!"

During their fall, the three Occult Dark Elves didn't feel that they were in much danger, but they did become furious. Just when they landed on the ground and were getting back up on their feet, they were hit by another wave of attacks!

Clack, clack, clack!

A strange sound suddenly emerged out of the silent forest. In the next moment, a silvery net made of Sacred Silver appeared out of nowhere. This net captured the three Occult Dark Elves within it and because they hadn't fully recovered their balance; there was no way for them to escape.

Then, there was a sound of metal piercing through flesh followed by the loud cries of the three Dark Elves. These ghouls who were supposed to be invincible were wailing in pain so loudly that it rattled the leaves in the trees.

The tough leather of their armor, their thick skin, and their strong muscles had cushioned the impact of the arrows piercing through their skin, preventing them from harming their vital organs. However, these arrows could still cause excruciating pain that was comparable to hornet stings!

"Ahhh! The damn humans! Kill them! Kill them!"

The three Dark Elves still had some ability to move. They'd already noticed the attackers in the bushes and tried to pull out the arrows from their skin while screaming murder at the attackers. Still, they had been injured after all. Their injuries were quite deep as well because the damned arrows turned out to be poisonous and seemed to suck the strength out of their bodies.

Their running speed was considerably slower now. It was no longer the kind of speed that no one could hide from anymore.

"Shoot!" Annie shouted.

The effects of the attack were alarmingly successful. This gave the scouts a great deal of confidence. Each of them had two crossbows, and one had already been shot, so it wasn't loaded. They then immediately shot with another crossbow and another silvery net emerged and headed towards the Dark Elves.

One of the Dark Elves stumbled as he attempted to dodge the net and the arrows shot straightito his eyeball, piercing as deep as five inches into his skull.

A brief scream escaped the Dark Elf's mouth, but it abruptly ended as he fell to the ground. Although he was still writhing about, it was obvious that he'd lost consciousness.

Darco was horrified at the sight of his comrades in pain and dying. He was the only one who escaped the ambush unscathed. He yelled out in fury and charged towards the scout nearest to him.

He was uninjured, so his powers were still at its full potential. He burstito full speed. In the eyes of a Level-4 Assassin, he would seem like a hazy shadow.

In the past, such a ghoul could easily kill eight human scouts in less than half a minute.

But this time, the situation had changed.

As soon as Darco took his first step and his body was aloft in the air due to his speed, a transparent ripple appeared in the air in front of him and slammed his body forward. Darco lost his balance immediately and was flung forward. Although the force wasn't that great, it happened at just the right moment, causing Darco to fall into the trap completely.

Half a second later, when Darco's body landed, he learned from his comrades and did not hurry to get up on his feet. Instead, he rolled on the ground until he reached behind a tree, then slowly got himself up.

The look on his face was now full of horror.

He discovered that behind those scouts was a powerful Magician hiding in a dark corner of the forest! The Magician's level might not be that high, but his ability to find the right moment to unleash his attacks was simply terrifying. With him, the lightning speed that used to be his strongest skill was now wasted.

For a time, Darco hid behind the tree, not daring to make a single move or to attack the scouts. But even if he didn't move, that doesn't mean that the scouts would do nothing but wait.

He only stood there for two seconds when he heard the horrifying screams of his comrades again. He took a quick peek and saw that one of them had a large hole in his chest which had been filled with a silvery liquid. The Dark Elf was struggling madly to get the liquid out of his chest and was writhing in pain on the ground. It was truly a horrifying scene.

Ever since receiving the God's blessings, Darco had never felt afraid before. But at this moment, his blood had run cold.

The puzzling tactics, the hidden Magician, the fearless scoutsall these things had finally made Darco's courage fail. With a grievous sigh, he turned around and escaped from the battlefield as fast as he could. He was not their match; he must run now and report this to their leader!

However, he'd only taken a few steps before the force field appeared again. What was truly frightening was that Darco had anticipated this move and was prepared for it, yet he was still hit by the force field anyway.

Bam!

Darco was flung through the air.

He didn't give up and climbed up to his feet and started running again. But then the force field reappeared and struck at him again. Darco got up and ran again; then he fell again. He got up once more and ran only to fall yet again. He was like a mouse caught in a cat's paw. No matter how much he tried to escape, he just wasn't successful. No matter how much he tried to dodge or hide, or even crawl on the ground to escape, nothing worked. As long as he exerted the slightest amount of effort to escape, somehow the opponent was able to thwart his moves!

In short, he was now completely at the mercy of the opponent.

After his 30th attempt, Darco fell to the ground and was motionless. He was neither injured nor tired, he just gave up and accepted his fate.

How could there be such a frightening Magician in this world? Darco wondered in full horror.

## 198. A Precarious Situation

Plop, Plop.

The three half-dead ghouls were dragged into the middle of the open space by the scouts.

It was undeniable that the vitality of these ghouls was simply rule-breaking. One of them suffered an arrow through the eye and judging from the severity of the injury; his brain must have been damaged. The other two had their heart completely squashed, and all three of them had Sacred Silver running through their blood. Despite these grave injuries that could kill an ordinary human a hundred times over, they were still breathing and very much alive!

Link came out from his hiding place but still kept his distance from the ghouls. He stood beside a tree around 60 feet away.

Annie walked towards him and whispered while staring at him expectantly, "My lord, what should we do with the three of them?"

As she had mentioned, Your Highness did not exist in the Dark Forest; there were only scouts from MI3. Since Link was now the captain, she had to address him as lord.

If this happened in the past, Link would have felt uncomfortable. However, he was now a true lord of a territory and had many followers behind him. He was already accustomed to the hierarchical system in the World of Firuman

He said, "We have no need for the three of them. Burn them with fire."

No matter how strong their life force was, burning them to a crisp was bound to work.

The scouts then collected dried branches and piled them up before throwing the three ghouls into the middle. Link then threw a fireball which ignited the flammable dried branches, starting the fire.

Under the intense heat of the flames, the three ghouls instinctively struggled and tried to escape. However, the moment they got out from the range of the fire, the scouts would use wooden sticks to push them back into the inferno. After ten whole minutes when the scouts could already smell the aroma of barbecued meat, the ghouls finally stopped struggling and fell dead.

This kind of life force had totally broken the power balance in the World of Firuman. Only the strength of a Divine Gear could accomplish this.

After dealing with these three ghouls, a scout came to report, "My lord, there is another ghoul lying over there. He is not moving."

Link naturally did not forget that guy. After all, he personally destroyed his will to fight.

"Let's go take a look."

The scouts surrounded Link to protect him and headed towards the ghoul who appeared to have no visible injuries.

Link stopped when they were still 60 feet away from the ghoul. The scouts also became more vigilant and were prepared to guard against a sneak attack from the motionless ghoul.

Annie was slightly worried and asked, "Should we shoot a few arrows to cripple him before doing anything else?"

"There is no need to," Link shook his head before telling another scout. "Please retreat in case he attacks."

Link then headed forward himself.

Annie immediately dissuaded, "Link...Sir Mirose, please be careful."

This was different from the sneak attack before. Link would have no distance advantage walking towards the ghoul like this. Even if it were to engage in a direct battle, the ghoul at his full speed could very likely give Link a mortal injury.

The scouts were also anxiously looking at the Link, afraid that something would happen to him. If he were to die, the six of them would not be able to deal with this ghoul.

Link motioned for everyone to stay calm as he continued forward. The distance between them continued to shorten, 45 feet, 40 feet, 35 feet; Link seemed to have no intention of stopping.

Darco originally had harbored no hope of surviving. However, the Magician had actually revealed himself. Furthermore, he had actually cast no defensive spells over himself. This was a god-sent opportunity!

The will to fight once again burned in his heart, "I might not have been your opponent while you were hiding in the shadows. However, now that you have appeared without any protection, I can always fight you now!"

He tightened his muscles and started accumulating his energy. The moment his opponent was 30 feet away, he would unleash all his energy and smash his head in a single strike! In his eyes, the Magician seemed to be defenseless while brazenly moving forward33 feet, 30 feet. Now or never!

Roar! Darco opened his mouth and bellowed before hurling himself towards Link.

"Arrogant Magician, Die! UhUhWhat is thisWhat the hellMy stomach"

After traveling only half the intended distance, Darco suddenly grabbed his throat in pain. A silver ball seemed to have entered his mouth while he screamed his war cry, swirling down into his stomach.

Following which, an unbearable pain could be felt in his abdomen. This was an extreme form of pain, as though countless knives were slashing their way through his body. He could not help but grab his stomach in suffering.

"No! No! I am a Warrior of the Lady of Darkness! I will not be defeated by this pain! I'm going to kill you!" Darco held his abdomen as he walked towards Link in small steps.

He felt as though something had contaminated his blood and his power was drained by this mysterious substance. He was getting weaker every step he took. The moment he took his fifth step, he could not hold on anymore and fell on his knees with a thud. The Magician now stood six feet away from him, unmoving. He could reach the opponent with just another step. Clearly, he needed to just hold on for a while more to defeat his opponent! But alas he failed!

This six-foot distance seemed like an insurmountable chasm at that moment!

Looking at the faint smile on the Magician's face, a deep sense of frustration and despair overwhelmed Darco. "All my actions were within his calculations. I simply cannot defeat him."

From the start, he had been suppressed by this Magician. This Magician did not use any fancy techniques. In fact, all he used were ordinary techniques known to most Magicians.

Darco's confidence was completely shattered.

In order to keep his trump card a secret, Link did not bring out the Burning Wrath of the Heavens Wand. Instead, he took out an ordinary silver wand and activated the Magician's Hand with a slight movement of his wand. The ghoul was then lifted by his chin into the air.

"Can you understand the common tongue?" Link asked.

The ghoul's eyes could be seen to avert Link's gaze. He seemed to be avoiding the question, suggesting that he could understand Link perfectly well.

"What is your name?" Link asked.

There was still no answer.

Link's wand glowed faintly which caused the little silver ball that the ghoul swallowed to wreak havoc once again.

Darco held his stomach in pain and bent his waist. He rested his head on the ground as though he was begging for mercy and said, "I'll speak, I'll speak! I am Darco!"

"Our camp was attacked by the likes of you. We have an extremely strong Warrior called the Dawn Swordsman. You should be familiar with this name?"

This was the reason why Link left this ghoul alive. He needed someone who could give them a lead. From his observations, this ghoul was slightly more intelligent and would thus be easier to reason with.

Darco shook his head, "I'll not say."

This sentence had, in fact, revealed additional information. By saying that he refused to reveal any information, it meant that he knew the details regarding Kanorse.

All that's left was to extract the information from him.

Link turned to look at Annie, "Your Highness, does MI3 have any tools to make him speak?"

Annie winked as she already knew Link's plans. She then smiled, "I am not very good at such things. But we have loads of these people in MI3; what do you say, Larson?"

A scout walked out, chuckling while playing with the dagger in his hands, "My lord, we would usually cut off the meat from the target's body piece by piece while making sure that they remain conscious. Of course, if we were dealing with ghouls, we would first enchant the dagger with Sacred Silver. I assume he would have the time of his life."

Darco swallowed a mouthful of saliva upon hearing those words. He had experienced first-hand the darned power of this silver metal. He could still feel the burning sensation in the abdomen. If that material was used to cut off his fleshHe did not even want to think about it.

Link shook his head and said, "I'm afraid that won't do. These ghouls have such a strong life force. If we cut them off piece by piece, how long will it take?"

The moment his voice fell, another scout jumped forward and said, "My lord, we have six people over here. If we work together, I'm sure we can cut off all the meat within five minutes. Furthermore, we can experiment if a ghoul can still live after losing all his flesh."

Beads of perspiration appeared on Darco's forehead.

Link then made an expression which suggested that he was considering the feasibility of this method. In this period, the perspiration on Darco's forehead became even more prominent as the stress he was feeling increased exponentially. He feared that the next moment Link spoke, he would be sentenced to this cruel and terrible punishment.

Darco did not dare to take any risks. His psychological defensive barrier had been completely breached and shouted, "I surrender! I'll tell you everything you want to know."

Link exchanged glances with the scouts. What a perfect cooperation that scared the wits out of this pathetic ghoul.

"Alright. Is the Dawn Swordsman still alive?"

"Yes, he is. However, he is gravely injured and has been brought to the Skeletal Fort."

"Skeletal Fort?"

Link was familiar with the Skeletal Fort. In the game, the Skeletal Fort was a huge story mission that contained many powerful enemies. The strongest boss in the fort was none other than the wielder of the Divine Gear, the Dark Serpent.

Although the wielder was unable to fully utilize the power of the Divine gear, the fact that the Divine gear was in her hands was enough to make her a world boss.

Link had totally no confidence in defeating her in a direct battle. In fact, Link would be lucky enough to escape alive if he ever faced that person in a battle.

Link then asked in a fearful voice, "What are you going to do to him?"

"Our boss seems to admire him, saying that he is the strongest Warrior on the continent. He has earned the right to receive the blessings of the Lady of Darkness."

Upon hearing those words, the scouts exchanged glances. They did not know the existence of the Divine Gear and merely felt enraged at those words. However, what Link felt was a chill down his spine.

Ordinary Dark Elf Warriors could already become Level-6 ghouls under the effect of the Divine Gear. If the Dawn Swordsman were to be demonizedwhat strength would he attain?

Who else could defeat him?

Even Link would not have the confidence of defending against him. It would definitely be a nightmare. The situation was going completely out of control. However, he knew that he had no choice but to do everything in his power to stop it from happening.

He immediately asked, "Where is the Skeletal Fort?"

"No, I cannot say any more. The boss will kill me and enslave my soulI cannot do thisJust kill me! Kill me now! Ah! Lady of Darkness, I did notitentionally betray you! They forced me to!"

As Darco continued speaking, he became more incoherent in his speech. His expression was dazed, and his tone was showing a hint of madness. He was really going insane.

The scouts from MI3 all had experience in these situations. Upon seeing the ghoul in this state, Larson immediately walked up to Link and said, "My lord, he has been broken. There is no point in doing this any further."

Link had noticed as well. He then ignited the Sacred Silver within Darco's body, and thin silver light rays pierced him from the inside out.

Darco then fell to the ground, motionless.

"Burn him, and we will move forward to the Skeletal Fort."

After which, Link began collecting the Sacred Silver crossbows and fixed them once again to prepare for the next battle. The scouts then started collecting firewood to burn the ghoul.

Quickly, everything was settled, and the scouts were ready to move out.

Link stared at the scouts and said in a low voice, "I have no idea where the fort is, and I cannot guarantee that this mission will be a success. We will run into many enemies along the way. Everyone, are you sure you want to follow me on this dangerous mission?"

"For the Norton Kingdom!" The scouts replied in unison. Their eyes shone with a bladed resolve.

"Alright then, let's go!"

## 199. A Truly Extraordinary Man

It was late in the afternoon, about four o'clock, and the sky had begun to turn dark. Because of the dense foliage, the Black Forest was now already as dark as the middle of the night. The bushes on the ground rustled, and four pairs of eyes that glowed dimly in red appeared on a clearing in the forest. On the ground, there was a pile of ashes, and among the ashes were four corpses burnt toa crisp.

The biting, cold wind whistled through the trees.

"These were our soldiers," said one of them.

"The damned MI3 wouldn't have this kind of strength," said the other. "Who killed them."

"They made no attempts to hide their trails at all," said another one. "Look, here's their footprints. We should catch up to them and find out who they are. Sino, Finville, both of you come with me. We'll hunt them down. Alan, go back to the Skeletal Fort and report this to the great leader!"

"Yes, sir!"

The figures splitito two directions. One of them rushed into the depths of the Black Forest, while the other followed the visible trails into another direction. About three minutes later, when the dark shadowy figures completely disappeared, a voice emerged in the darkness.

"They really fell for it, Lord Mirose!" said the voice in a hushed tone, suppressing obvious joy.

Soon afterwards, several figures emerged from behind a bush. It was Link and the rest of the search party. They didn't hurry to leave the spot after killing off the first group of ghouls. The waited nearby instead to ambush the second group of ghouls.

As for the footprints that the ghouls found, it was actually Link who'd left them there and wanted the ghouls to find them. This was a similar technique the Dark Elf Magician Lawndale Markins had used on him previously. Link and the scouts had circled a large area of the Black Forest and then came back to the original spot. That meant that the ghouls who had gone following their trails would eventually come back to this spot.

As for the ghoul who went back to Skeletal Fort, he would lead the way for Link and the scouts back to the Dark Elf's main lair.

Link looked in the direction of the lone ghoul and smiled.

"Well," he said, "now we've found ourselves a reliable guide."

His plan was a huge gamble which depended heavily on luck. If the ghouls hadn't decided to take these actions, then it would all go to waste. But fortunately, these ghouls weren't that smart, so everything went just as Link had planned.

As he spoke, Link cast the spell Cheetah's Agility on everyone.

"Let's go!" he said. "I hope our luck is good enough that we'll encounter the prisoner's cart that carries the Dawn Swordsman on our way."

And so, a group of people began to move as quickly as the wind in the forest. Soon, seven people disappeared into the depths of the Black Forest.

When Link and the others in the search party were following the ghoul into the dark bowels of the Black Forest, some of the scouts had been ordered by Link to bring back the captured ghouls to Icy Peak Fortress.

"Open the gates!" the scout yelled outside the fortress wall. "We've brought back captured ghouls!"

Ghouls? And captured too?

The guards on the walls were naturally frightened. The news they'd received so far about the ghouls were of how scary and invincible they were. What they'd seen were the Warriors and scouts getting pursued and killed by the ghouls and never the other way around. How was it possible for anyone to ever beat such fearsome creatures? And they'd managed to capture one alive as well?

This couldn't bea trap, could it?

The captain of the guards stood at the arrowslit and craned his neck to peer down and look out at the people outside the gates. He saw about a dozen scouts whose attire convinced him that they were indeed members of MI3. There were even one or two faces among them that he found familiar, whom he'd seen only hours earlier as they left the fortress with the search party for the Dawn Swordsman.

They couldn't be spies working for the Dark Elves.

"Where are the ghouls?" he asked. "Let me take a closer look!" There was still a possibility that these scouts were under the ghouls' control.

The scouts then raised up the ghouls who'd been tied up like slaves so the captain could see them more clearly.

The captain of the guards leaned over and looked down. Some soldiers were curious too, so they leaned down and tried to catch a glimpse as well.

In truth, a ghoul didn't look much different from an ordinary Dark Elf, anyway. The only obvious distinguishing feature of a ghoul was the hands. An ordinary Dark Elf's hands looked similar to that of a normal human being's, but a ghoul's hands were full of claws instead of nails.

The captain still looked doubtful, so the scouts raised the ghoul's hands to make it easier for him to discern them.

After several hours of recovery, these ghouls had regained some vigor and were now struggling to free themselves and were even growling in their deep voices.

"Do you see it now?" asked a scout. "This one had his heart ripped out and completely defeated by the Magician, but these bastards still live on and just refuse to die."

The guards' captain had seen everything plainly with his own eyes now, and while he gasped in astonishment, all the doubts in his mind vanished. He ordered the suspension bridge to be laid down.

"Report this to the generals at once," he whispered to one of the soldiers around him. "Tell them the scouts have captured some ghouls."

No matter what had been going on lately, this was still great news for the Norton Kingdom's army.

When the suspension bridge was laid down, and the scouts brought in the three ghouls into the fortress, a large crowd of soldiers began to flock to them. They'd heard news of the ghouls all day every day, but only a few of them had ever seen what a real one looked like. Now that there was a chance, they must find a way to catch a glimpse of them.

Even the captain of the guards came to them. He didn't care much for the ghouls now. They looked just like normal Dark Elves except with claws on their hands anyway. Instead, there was something more important that he must find out from the scouts.

"Didn't you go out to search for the Dawn Swordsman?" he asked one of the scouts that he pulled aside. "Why are you here, then? Where's the princess? Why isn't she here?"

In these circumstances, it seemed that the likeliest scenario was that the search party encountered the ghouls on their way and managed to defeat them. But at the same time, there must've been some fallen scouts who were killed in the process. The fact that the princess wasn't here could only mean that she died in battle!

The princess was the Iron Duke's only daughter. If she died in battle, then that would surely create a huge problem.

The scout shook his head.

"The princess is fine," he said. "She's gone to save Lord Karnose with Lord Mirose."

"Lord Mirose?" asked a soldier there. "Who's that?"

"A Magician!" answered another scout who'd overheard the question. His tone was full of awe and respect. "He's an extremely powerful Magician!"

"Make way!" shouted a soldier. "Make way for the Grand Duke!"

As soon as they heard the words, the soldiers stepped aside immediately, making a path for the duke.

In fact, the duke hadn't arrived on his own. The generals, officers, Battle Mages and even the magistrates had followed him along.

For the soldiers, ghouls were merely frightening creatures in the darkness of the forest. They were merely curious to see what these ghouls looked like and that was all. But for those in the upper ranks of the army, these captured ghouls represented an extremely significant sentiment!

Duke Abel pushed his way through the crowd and finally saw the ghouls. He then searched through the group of scouts with his eyes, desperately trying to find his daughter.

But there was no sign of the princess among the scouts. This discovery hit him like a ton of bricks, and he sank into a dark pit of despair immediately. Was his daughter, who was often rebellious and impossibly stubborn, yet ultimately his affectionate little sweetheart, really gone forever?

For a moment, Duke Abel's eyes turned prickly hot. He found that it was difficult for him to breathe and it felt as if he were about to faint. If his adjutant hadn't quickly held him, he would have collapsed in the middle of the crowd.

After about ten seconds, the duke was finally able to calm his emotions enough to address the scouts.

"You've done an excellent job," he praised the scouts with a hoarse voice. "Now go get some rest."

He had no desire to ask them for any details of the battle. It was too soon for him to hear of the brutal way his daughter must've died, and he had no intention to shed tears in front of these soldiers.

Fortunately, the scouts fully understood what the commander must've felt. One of them quickly stepped up to inform the Duke of what had truly happened.

"My lord," he said, "the princess is safe. She is now with Lord Mirose, and they are on their way to the Black Forest to search for Lord Karnose."

"Huh?" replied Duke Abel incredulously. "What did you say?"

"Princess Annie is still alive, my lord," repeated the scout. "She is still continuing the search and rescue mission. We were merely ordered to send these ghouls back to the fortress."

Duke Abel heaved a long sigh of relief; then he took in a sweet breath of air into his lungs. Somehow, the world seemed bright and beautiful again. He then let out a full hearty laugh.

"Excellent! Excellent!" he exclaimed. "That is good news indeed! Now, tell me exactly how the battle went. I'd like to know how you captured these damned creatures!"

Then, the same scout began to explain in detail of what happened from the time they encountered the ghouls and the sudden appearance of a Magician, to how they eventually defeated the ghouls and captured them. He elaborated on the Magician's arrangement for them to bring back the ghouls while the rest went on to rescue the Dawn Swordsman. Not a single detail was left out.

"He was very powerful," said the scout about Link. "He merely waved his wand gently in the air, and the ghoul's chest exploded!"

"He had a way to prevent the ghouls from dying," explained another scout. "Look at this one's chest. It's filled with a silvery liquid the Magician called Sacred Silver."

"He called himself Mirose," said another scout. "I will respect him for the rest of my life. I feel that every word he said was true."

"That's right," agreed another scout. "I felt like I could die for him!"

The group of scouts spoke simultaneously, and their words got jumbled up until it was quite difficult to make out what they said. But Duke Abel didn't stop them. He'd grasped the big picture of what had happened in his mind.

A young Magician had suddenly appeared when the search party was in the gravest danger. Then, he managed to kill three powerful ghouls instantly. If he hadn't heard the story from the scouts' mouths, he would've thought that it was more of a legend and less of a true account of events.

But everything they said was true, of course. And this proved that an extremely powerful Magician had come north. But who was the Magician? Why wasn't he informed of the fact?

The duke then turned to face the Magician Marco and looked straightito his eyes as if to ask him the question without saying a word.

"My lord," whispered Marco, "we must speak in private."

Duke Abel nodded gently before turning back to the scout.

"You've all worked very hard," he said. "Go get some rest. Later, there will be rewards for you. Come, get these ghouls into the chapel and let the piss see them."

A few soldiers then stepped forward and took the ghouls into the chapel. The scouts were now relieved and happy as they went back to their barracks to get some rest. On their way, they kept talking about what happened in the forest and about that powerful Magician called Mirose.

Duke Abel and the officers all went back to the command hall. Once there, the duke and the Magician continued walking until they reached a private room on the second floor.

"Will you tell me the identity of the Magician now?" asked the duke with a reproachful tone.

"My lord," said Marco meekly, "it was not my intention to conceal it from you. He only just arrived, so I just found out myself."

"You just found out?" asked the duke. "You must've known at least three hours now. Why wasn't I informed all that time?" Duke Abel was almost enraged at this point. He was the commander of the royal army, after all. How could he not have been informed of the arrival of such a powerful figure? It was outrageous!

"It was not my intention, my lord," continued Marco. He knew that he had no other choice but to inform the Duke of the truth now. "It was an order from my mentor, the dean of East Cove Academy. He thought that the less people who knew of this Magician's identity, the better, because he did not come here to join the army, but was instead on a secret mission"

Duke Abel waved his hand to stop the Magician.

"Alright, alright," he said. "Now tell me, who exactly is he?"

"The new baron of the Ferde Wilderness, my lord," answered Marco.

Duke Abel's eyes widened, and he went silent for a long while.

"I didn't think he'd come here himself," he finally said.

In one move, he'd defeated three ghouls comparable to Level-6 Warriors and even possessed the power to prevent the ghouls from dying.

When he thought of it, Duke Abel finally sighed in relief. Now that his daughter was going to rescue the Dawn Swordsman with such a powerful Magician, then he shouldn't worry too much about her safety anymore.

Still, things were far from safe.

"That young man has an infinitely promising future," said Duke Abel after a long contemplation. "He cannot die in the Black Forest. We must do what we can. Once we've shrunk the line of defense, we must launch a full attack from all fronts!"

"But, my lord, is that wise?" asked Marco, surprised. "The threat from the ghouls are still far from eliminated."

The Duke smiled.

"It's only a ploy to distract the Dark Elf's attention," he said. "What are you worried about?"

Marco finally understood the duke's meaning and smiled.

"You're right, my lord," said the Magician. "I just failed to understand your true intentions just now."

## 200. Arduous Progression

The Dark Forest was situated in the North. As they progressed further northwards, the colder the climate became.

Although it was already late spring, the Dark Forest still felt as though it was stuck in the harsh northern winter. The sky was permanently shrouded in dark clouds and snow would float down from the sky ever so often. There was a thick layer of snow on the ground as the chilling wind howled, piercing and cutting the faces of everyone who dared to brave this unforgiving climate.

This was already the third day into the mission. They had gone 186 miles deeper into the Dark Forest and had infiltrated into the heart of the Dark Elves Pralync Kingdom.

The scouts trudged on in the thick snow. The snow was knee deep, and every step was extremely tedious. It took a great deal of effort to pull out their feet from the thick snow.

Under the terrible conditions, the scouts still had to cover their footprints with a branch every step of the way, causing their progress to be extremely slow.

Fortunately, the messenger ghoul was not traveling at a fast speed as well. He also did not attempt to hide his footprints in the snow. Coupled with the fact that Link had locked onto his scent, they didn't have to worry about getting lost.

As they walked, a scout suddenly let out a low rumble. He had stepped on an empty plot of land and was about to be fall into the thick layer of snow.

"Levitation!"

With a small gesture, a levitation spell was enchanted onto this falling scout, stabilizing his body. The people around then carefully walked towards him and threw him a rope to grab hold of. They then pulled him out from the thick snow.

The sloshing sounds became painfully audible as piles of accumulated snow fell into the pothole the scout had fallen into. Quickly, a hole four feet in radius and 21 feet deep could be seen. The bottom of the pothole was filled with rocks while its sides and top were infested with overgrowth. This vegetation was what held up the thick layer of snow previously, forming a natural trap.

This scout heaved a sigh of relief after reaching solid ground and said with gratitude, "Thank you, my lord."

Without that levitation spell, he would definitely have broken a bone or two. Suffering that sort of damage in this hellhole was no different from a death sentence.

Link nodded and said, "Be careful."

Following which, he stepped on top of a rock and cast an eagle eye spell to extend his vision northwards.

Link could see that right in front of them lay a few snow-capped, rugged hills. As he went further north, the trees became visibly shorter in height with half of them being submerged under the thick snow. This then slowly became an open field where vision was unobstructed.

The road in front would become even more difficult. Without the cover of the tall trees, the likelihood of their exposure would increase exponentially.

Furthermore, this was the heart of the Dark Elf Kingdom. Link could not use levitation spells to increase their traveling speed as it would leave magic traces, allowing his opponent to track them down easily. That would be akin to suicide.

After a while, Link had decided on the way forward. He said, "Head this way. Use the rope and tie it around your waist. Chain everyone together so that no one will be in danger."

"Yes, sir." The scouts hollered and immediately got to work.

Taking advantage of the time used to tie the rope, Link walked towards Annie and whispered, "Can you still hold on?"

To improve their agility, the scouts usually wore leather armor. Although their current armor had been made deliberately thicker to combat the cold climate of the North, its ability to retain heat was still average at best. Coupled with the harsh chilling wind, the scouts would not be able to last long even with the protection of their Battle Aura.

At this moment, all the scouts wore a pale and weary expression. Annie was especially affected as her petite physique had caused her to be more susceptible to the cold. Her face seemed completely drained of vitality and would shiver form time to time.

"Not a problemI can hold on," Annie whispered. It somehow made Link feel even more uneasy.

He then took a look at the other scouts. Although they were in a better state, they still looked extremely tired. In fact, he was also starting to feel the effects of the climate and the long trek on his body. If they continued to give chase, they might even fall to the weather before they meet the Dark Elves.

Unless they were courting death, getting warmth from magic was out of the question. The only thing Link could do was to cast an Elemental Healing spell on everyone from time to time to replenish their energy.

"This is not going to work. We need to find a place to rest." Link searched the surrounding area but only saw piles of snow and towering trees around. There was no resting area in sight.

"Forget it. Let's move," Link said as he was out of options.

The group then continued northwards with several accidents along the way. Fortunately, the rope would prevent the person from falling into the pothole, ensuring their safety.

After half a day, Annie was clearly showing signs of fatigue. She staggered as she walked and seemed to be in a state of semi-consciousness. The only reason she was still moving forward was due to her strong willpower. The other scouts were also shivering uncontrollably from the cold. The person least affected was Link as his magic robe could keep him relatively warm.

At this moment, a small hill appeared in front of them. At the foot of the hill seemed to be a snow covered wooden shed. Link cast an Eagle Eye spell on himself once again to double check his observations.

It truly was a wooden shed. It looked rundown and had no windows at all. However, it should be enough for a temporary shelter.

"Let's go there and rest for the night," Link said as he helped Annie along the way towards the shed.

The scouts naturally agreed to his idea and all staggered behind Link as they made a beeline for the shelter.

The trees were getting sparser, causing the group to feel the full effects of the chilling wind. This wind hailed from the northern arctic region, freezing everything along its way.

One could risk getting frostbite if they even opened their eyes fully in this damned hellhole.

Although the wooden shed looked near enough, it still took them half an hour before they reached the shed. Every step took a great deal of energy out of the group.

The wooden shed had a typical Dark Elven architectural design. It was colored in basic dark shades and was strangely contoured. There was even a small skull carved on the door. However, this wooden shed had already been abandoned, and only half the wooden door remained. Half of the roof had also collapsed from the weight of the snow. Luckily, the other half was still holding up strong, offering some protection from the howling wind.

After entering the shed, Link pointed his wand at the corner of the shed and said, "Sanitize."

Whoosh! A curtain seemed to have flown over the corner, bringing all the dirt and dust together with it. Link then stared at the structure of the wooden shed and used the Higgs Field spell to fix some portions that he was uncomfortable with, reinforcing the stability of this rundown shelter.

The scouts did not idle around as well. There was some abandoned furniture in the wooden shed, consisting of a few tables and chairs. While most of them were already unusable, some of them were still in good shape. They then used the damaged ones as firewood and started cleaning the good ones.

After a while, a fire was started in the middle of the wooden shed. The temperature of the shed immediately rose by a few degrees, bringing much-needed warmth.

A scout even found a broken wok. Link took a look and started fixing it with magic. The scout then proceeded to fill the fixed metal wok with snow to boil a pot of water. Link saw this scene and remembered that he still had some food in his dimensional pendant given to him by Lucy. He then brought it out and split half of it with the scouts. The other half were meat-related snacks which he threw into the wok as part of his meat soup preparation.

Although Elemental Healing could replenish energy, it could not bring the joy and satisfaction that comes from real food. This was especially so when Link's food looked extremely delicious. He brought out stuff like smoked ribs and spicy lobster, causing the scouts to smile with glee. As they ate, their bodies which were on the verge of collapsing slowly recovered vitality.

Annie hid in the corner as she stretched her hands out close to the fire. Occasionally, she would eat a few snacks, and some vitality gradually returned to her face. However, she was generally still weak.

Link suddenly thought of a snow bear fur cloak in his dimensional pendant seeing her in this state. Though it would be inconvenient to wear it while traveling, it would be the perfect clothing now.

He then took out the coat and placed it gently on Annie. Annie the shot him a grateful smile, the gentleness in her eyes almost overflowing.

Link returned the smile and turned to the scouts before saying, "We are already very close to the arctic region, which lay at the end of the Dark Forest. The Skeletal Fort shouldn't be too far away now."

The scouts listened as an oppressive silence enveloped the wooden shed.

The scouts knew first-hand about the insane strength of the ghouls. The ghouls were already scary enough as they werewhat would that suggest about the Skeletal Fort which was the base camp of these frightening creatures? Their leader was also residing in that cursed place! Every step closer to the Skeletal Fort was a step towards their demise.

Link continued, "It is getting late. We will rest here for the night and set off early in the morning. If we do not meet the team carrying the Dawn Swordsman along the way, we will grab a stray ghoul from around the Skeletal Fort to extort information."

"What if the Dawn Swordsman is already in the Skeletal Fort?" Annie asked.

This was a practical question. If the Dawn Swordsman was already inside the enemy's base, do they continue with their rescue mission? What if he was already demonized to the point of no return?

All of this depended on Link's decision. All the scouts stared at Link in wait for his answer. His decision would decide the fate of everyone in the wooden shed.

Link fell silent as he chewed on the spicy lobster dish. He felt that the usually delicious meal was not savory at all. In fact, it was extremely bitter and unappealing. This was a difficult decision and a heavy responsibility as it not only concerned the lives of everyone in the shed, but also the outcome of this war.

The scouts waited patiently for Link's answer.

After ten whole minutes, Link finally came to a decision. He said, "If the Dawn Swordsman has already reached the Skeletal Fort, we will also have to give it our all for the mission. My plan then would be to cast long distance spells from afar to distract the enemy while all of you infiltrate the base to find Kanorse. If he is already demonized by the time you find him, forgo the mission immediately and leave the Skeletal Fort. If he is still alive, rescue him. I will definitely delay the enemy for you."

The scouts nodded their heads in agreement.

This was an extremely dangerous plan. Both Link and the scouts would be putting their lives on the line for this mission. However, since this was Link's decision, they would give him their full support.

Annie asked, "Mirose, if the Dawn Swordsman is already demonized, is there any way to save him?"

Link shook his head and said, "If it were an ordinary demonization process, there would still be a chance. However, it is different this time around. There will be no going back. There should be a short period of weakness right after the demonization process is completed. If anyone of you has the chance, kill him using the Sacred Silver."

The demonization process this time was done using Divine Gear. How could a mortal's willpower fight against an object of the gods?

This made the atmosphere heavy and depressing.

Apart from the sightings of a few Dark Elves village, they were simply traveling on barren land this whole time. They had found no traces of the Dawn Swordsman or even the trails of the team that was in charge of bringing him back to the Skeletal Fort.

This could only mean two things. One was that they had missed the team that was holding Kanorse in custody. The other was that he had already reached the Skeletal Fort.

Both were bad news.

Everyone fell silent as they watched the crackling flames in their fireplace. After a while, the aroma of the meat soup Link had cooked earlier wafted into their noses. The mood was lifted slightly as they enjoyed the rich, savory broth. Link also drank some to warm his stomach.

Before long, the sky darkened. Link and his fellow comrades had been chasing ghouls for countless days without any rest and were all drained of energy. They leaned on the walls of the rundown wooden shed to rest.

Link felt tired as well. As he felt slightly cold, he curled his body into a ball to retain more of his body heat. However, he suddenly felt his body getting warmer through the night, as though a soft body was snuggling up on him. At the same time, a thick bear fur coat was covered over him as well.

It was Annie.

Link did not reject this act of goodwill in his semi-conscious state. The two of them huddled together and enjoyed the warmth brought about by the fur coat.

It was a silent night.

By midnight, Link suddenly felt a strange magic fluctuation and woke up in shock. His ears picked up sounds of people shuffling through the thick snowfield. The sound grew closer by the minute, seemingly heading towards the wooden shed they were residing in. There seemed to be two people talking in the Dark Elven language.

"It's freezing! Curse this damned weather." This was a raspy voice.

"Tch, if you said you were freezing to death in the past, I may have believed you. Now that you have received the blessings of the Lady of Darkness, you are simply making excuses!" Another voice teased.

"Damn you. I am the one carrying this fellow the whole time. Why don't you try carrying them instead? This damned Warrior is so heavy. I can guarantee you that the armor on their body is at least 220 pounds! Ah! I need rest."

Link was excited upon hearing those words. A Warrior who was currently being carried by a demonized Dark Elf...Armor weighing more than 220 pounds...It must be an extremely strong Warrior. Might it be the Dawn Swordsman?"

Link was ecstatic. Were they really ahead of their opponents?

## 201. Mortal, Youre Not Qualified to Know My Real Name

The scouts in the old shabby cabin had all woken up.

None of them moved, though. They all looked to Link and waited for his orders. Everyone chose to turn a blind eye to the fact that Princess Annie and Link were huddled together in the same snow bear cloak. In a situation where their lives were constantly at risk, it was merely a trivial matter, hardly worth the time to mention.

Annie's face was flushed, but the light inside the cabin was too dim so no one could really see it.

Link, on the other hand, felt there was nothing to feel awkward about at all as they were only trying to keep warm. After listening to the sounds carefully, he'd determined that there were only two ghouls. He then made the gesture that they'd agreed beforehand was the signal to prepare for battle.

The ghouls weren't Magicians, so he didn't have to worry about them sensing the Mana fluctuations in the air. Thus, Link took out his wand, which was now glowing dimly, and cast the Traceless spell which worked on the whole group of people. And so, the scouts instantly vanished from the cabin.

The room now became totally silent. The scouts held their daggers tightly in their hands and waited patiently for the ghouls to arrive. They could clearly hear the voices outside the cabin. The ghouls had sensed that there was something wrong inside the cabin.

"Do you smell that?" asked a gruff voice. "Smells like tasty meat."

"Wait, it's not just that," answered the other voice. "I can smell the stench of humans too! Be careful; I hear an extremely powerful human Warrior had come to the forest."

The footsteps outside the cabin slowed down almost to a halt, and their voices became very soft. The ghouls were now slowly feeling their way into the cabin.

In that quiet moment, Link saw a notification flash on the interface. He looked at it and discovered that it was a new mission.

Epic Mission Series Activated: Skeletal Fort (Difficult)

First Step of Mission: Rescue

Mission Details: 1. Kill Occult Dark Elves. 2. Rescue the foreign Warrior. The foreign Warrior must live.

Mission Rewards: 100 Omni Points.

The words of the mission were written in a blood red color, and it was constantly flashing too. This gave off a feel of urgency and extreme danger.

The Skeletal Fort was indeed very dangerous. The gaming system didn't have to use special fonts for Link to realize that. Still, he ignored the danger signs and accepted the mission. Nevertheless, Link found this mission quite puzzling. Rescue the foreign Warriors? Could it be that the one outside the wooden cabin wasn't the Dawn Swordsman Karnose?

At that point, the soft footsteps had reached the door of the cabin. The scouts inside all raised the crossbows in their hands and pointed them at the old, shoddy wooden door.

Link took out his Mithril wand as well. He focused all his attention and waited patiently for the ghouls to appear.

1 second, 2 seconds, 3 secondsFinally, a strongly-built shadowy figure appeared at the door with eyes glowing dimly in red. It was a ghoul!

He glanced around the inside of the cabin and saw no one there. That made him relax immediately, and he turned to his companion.

"There are signs of burning firewood," he told him, "but no one's here. Did you see anyone nearby?"

"There's no one nearby," answered another ghoul from outside the cabin.

"They must've left then." The ghoul then turned around and was about to leave the cabin.

The ghoul was not paying attention to the situation inside the cabin and had let his guard down. This was an excellent opportunity to attack!

Without the need to wait for Link's orders, all scouts began to attack immediately!

Catcha! Catcha!

Whoosh! Whoosh!

The sound of the crossbows broke through the silence. Then, a holy net dense with arrows rushed towards the ghoul without giving it any room to dodge the attack.

The scouts were only 15 feet away from this ghoul. At this distance, the crossbow would have terrifying penetrative power. Because the ghoul was standing right in the door frame, it was very easy for the scouts to aim precisely at him.

The ghoul's eyes, heart, neck, and his other vital parts were all struck by at least five arrows.

Within two seconds, this unlucky ghoul was pierced through by 18 arrows. Both of his eyes were struck by four arrows and each of those arrows pierced through as deep as five inches into his skull. They looked like two chopstick holders.

With these kinds of injuries, there was no chance for the ghoul to survive no matter how strong his vitality was. He groaned in pain briefly, and his knees buckled immediately. His whole body was flung backwards by the sheer force of the numerous arrows.

Once he'd fallen to the ground, his body wriggled and jerked slightly although they were closer to convulsions than actual body movements. It was obvious that he was gravely injured and wouldn't be able to get up and fight anymore.

But there was another ghoul outside the cabin.

Initially, the ghoul was about to follow his companion into the cabin, but he'd been horrified by the unexpected attack. His friend had been killed within seconds by attacks that came out of nowhere.

He'd never seen such a frightening thing before!

"Ahhh!!!!"

The ghoul let out a strange, distorted scream of fear. All of his courage left him in that moment, and he turned around and fled the scene immediately.

But he'd only taken a step when a mysterious force hit his body and made him lose his balance. He was flung out and fell heavily to the ground.

The scouts in the cabin were already chasing after him when they noticed that he was about to escape, but now that they saw him falling to the ground, they wasted no time and took swift action!

They nocked their arrows, shot them, and killed off the already fallen ghoul.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh!

The scouts' aim were all very precise, so even when the ghoul was still falling in mid-air, his body had been struck by a series of arrows. When he landed, he was basically unable to move. His fate was not unlike that of his companion's.

With the two ghouls eliminated, Link waved his hand at the scouts and ordered, "Burn their bodies."

The scouts immediately rushed up and plucked out all the Sacred Silver arrows from the ghouls. They then piled up the wooden boards from the shabby cabin and ignited them into a flame. Afterwards, the corpses of the two ghouls were thrown into the fire.

Recently, they'd encountered two waves of attacks by ghouls in the forest, and this was how they always handled their corpses, so they were used to it and could do it quickly and efficiently by now. Meanwhile, Link walked to the door of the wooden cabin and saw the Warrior captured by the ghouls.

Because it was the middle of the night, it was very dark, and Link could barely see that the soldier was clad in an oddly shaped dark armor. The Warrior was very tall, almost seven feet tall, and judging by the curves of the Warrior's body; it turned out that this was a female Warrior.

Usually, a women's petite figure meant that they were usually Assassins, Archers, swordswomen or other kinds of fighters that relied on techniques other than brute strength. Very few women had ever become Warriors because it was very difficult for them to advance much in their levels seeing that Warriors tended to rely heavily on pure physical strength.

Yet here was a female Warrior, and she was in fact still breathing. Judging by the way the ghouls were acting, it seemed that they were taking her back to Skeletal Fort.

To have the ghouls be interested enough in her that they were taking her back to Skeletal Fort must mean that her strength was quite impressive. Hence, there was no doubt now that she was a powerful female Warrior. It turned out that she really was a rare breed.

Because she was a woman, Link felt it inappropriate to check her injuries himself, so he pointed his wand at her and cast a floating spell.

The Warrior then floated in the air.

Link then used the Magician's Hand and carried her from the snow-covered ground into the cabin near the fire.

"Why don't you go and check her injuries?" he asked Annie.

"Sure," she answered.

Annie approached the Warrior and noticed that there were traces of blood on her head, so she tried to take off her helmet to check for injuries. Strangely enough, no matter how hard she tried to remove the dragon's head helmet with two delicate horns sticking out of it she just couldn't remove it from the Warrior's head.

"That's strange," Annie remarked. Then she carefully examined it and half a minute later turned to Link who was nearby and said, "It's not a helmet. It's a part of her body."

Link was stunned for a moment. Then he noticed how dim the light was in the cabin so he cast a light spell to illuminate the place better so he could see more clearly.

Then he really was taken totally by surprise. He discovered that not only was the helmet-like thing a part of her head, but the so-called armor on her whole body was, in fact, not armor at all.

At a glance, the Warrior seemed to be wearing an elaborate and luxurious scaly armor. But once examined closely, these scales all turned out to be her own skin!

The deep dark red scales covered most of the Warrior's body. Where there were no scales, the exposed skin still looked quite bizarre. It was red like the scales, yet it shone in the light and had a metallic luster. Link tried patting the skin with his wand and discovered that it made a clanging sound as if it was made of the same material as steel armor.

"What on earth is she?" Annie had never seen such a creature before.

By then, the other scouts had also finished their tasks, so they started walking into the cabin as well. They saw the strange Warrior by the light of Link's spell, and all found her fascinating and completely unlike what they'd ever seen.

"Look at her head," said one scout. "It looks like one of those dragons in the legends. Do you think she might be a Dragon Warrior?"

"Now that you mention it," said another, "that might really be the case."

"My lord, what exactly is she?" asked a scout.

Link knew exactly what she was. She was from the Dragon Clan. Furthermore, she was not an ordinary Dragon woman at all.

Her scales were fine and delicate, her dragon horns were curved and looked like steel, and her skin had a metallic sheen to it as though it was pure steel. There was no doubt aboutithis Warrior was a pure-blood Dragon woman.

Pureblood Dragon People were no different from real dragons. The only difference was that when Dragon People were born, they were turned into humanoids by a magical process and were fated to keep that form for the rest of their lives. The Dragon People were very powerful Warriors and were roughly on the same level as high-level demons!

What Link found curious, though, was that from what he knew, Dragon Warriors lived in a hidden world called Dragon Valley and they rarely if ever entered this world at all. So how did this Warrior end up in the Black Forest? And how did she get herself captured by the ghouls?

"She really is a Dragon Warrior," said Link with a nod.

The Warrior's body didn't look as if she suffered many injuries. There were some wounds, but they were all shallow and not life-threatening, except for the one on her head. When Link raised her head and examined it carefully, he found that the wound was on the right side of the back of her skull. The wound was dark and swollen, although there wasn't much blood flowing out. It must've been the result of being hit by a blunt weapon, probably one of the ghoul's hammer.

Judging by her breathing pattern which was smooth and strong, Link knew that the Dragon Warrior's life was safe, so he started to cast spells to heal her.

He first cast Elemental Cure, then took out a bottle of high-grade medicinal potion. He then let Annie open her mouth before he slowly poured the potion into it.

Gulp gulp gulp

The Dragon Warrior instinctively swallowed the potion. This meant that her injuries really weren't that serious.

After that, Link stood up and told everyone, "We've killed the two ghouls here, so we must leave this place now."

As he spoke, he cast a spell to make a stretcher out of the wooden planks found in the cabin. Then, he placed the Dragon Warrior on it and ordered two scouts to carry her as they moved to a new place. They left the wooden cabin while carefully covering the footprints they left in the snow.

"Follow me," said Link. "There's a huge boulder over there. We can find shelter from the cold wind there."

The boulder was about half a mile away, and just as the group had walked about a third of the way, the Dragon Warrior suddenly coughed gently. Her breathing then turned rapid, and her body slowly began to move. She was waking up.

Only a little more than ten seconds later, the Dragon Warrior opened her eyes. The first thing she saw was how unfamiliar her surroundings were. Then, she noticed that she was carried on a stretcher by a few human beings while a young man whose attire looked as if he was a Magician walked beside her.

It was a bizarre scene for a Dragon Warrior.

The last thing she remembered was that she came to this forest by the orders of the Queen who commanded her to investigate the power imbalance in the forest. She then encountered four ghastly beasts that kept refusing to die no matter how much she attacked them. Then, after a long battle she finally defeated them and was about to escape, but four more of the same beasts had found her, and she was overpowered and knocked unconscious.

The problem was, shouldn't the Black Forest be the Dark Elves' territory? How could there be humans here? Besides, these humans don't seem to be all that strong. Yet, how did they save her from those ghastly things?

A flurry of questions swirled around in her head. She was about to open her mouth and ask them but was stopped by the young Magician.

"This isn't the right time to be talking," he whispered. "Take some rest for now. We'll talk once we've reached a safer place."

"I can walk," she said. She'd collapsed because she'd been too tired. But now that she had recovered some of her strength, there would be no problem for her to walk now.

She then struggled up from the stretcher and managed to get on her feet. She still felt slightly dizzy, but it wasn't too bad that it would affect her movements. She then followed the scouts quietly all the way.

Just then, a notification popped up on the interface.

Rescue Mission Completed.

Player rewarded with 100 Omni Points.

Second Step of Skeletal Fort Mission Activated: Get Assistance.

Mission Details: Acquire the support of the Dragon Warrior.

Mission Rewards: 100 Omni Points.

With Link's current strength, 100 Omni Points was just an average amount, neither too much nor too little. He didn't know the true strength of this Dragon Warrior, so he wasn't sure if it was worth it. But, he trusted that the gaming system must have a good reason to turn itito a mission.

It was just like in Gladstone when the gaming system would guide him step-by-step. In the end, he managed to complete a mission that at first seemed impossible to accomplish.

Right now, Link had decided that he would attack Skeletal Fort, so he accepted the second step of the mission without any hesitation.

Then, he turned to the Dragon Warrior.

"I'm Mirose," he said. "What's your name?"

To his surprise, the Dragon Warrior just glanced at him for a few moments without answering.

"Mortal Magician," she said, "you're not yet qualified to know my real name. But since you've saved me, you shall call me Felina."

## 202. Your True Identity

The group quickly reached the bottom of the cliff.

This cliff was six feet tall and had a three-foot depression. The depression managed to shelter the ground below from snow which left a hollow center, forming a natural snow cave. It was a good place to temporarily hide from the chilling wind.

Everyone heaved a sigh of relief when they finally entered this warm haven.

Felina then finally got a chance to ask the burning questions in her heart. She wentito an outburst, asking a series of questions, "Where am I? Who are you guys? Where are those bastards?"

Link naturally answered them in order.

After listening to the narrative, Felina stared at the humans around her in disbelief, "You people merely have a Level-4 Battle Aura. Look at your weak physique! Furthermore, your Battle Aura could at most support five battle skills. And this Magician over here, although you are Level-6 in strength, it seems impossible for you to deal with two of those monsters at once. Don't you think?"

She had personally experienced the battle prowess of those creatures. They were unusually difficult to deal with and simply would not die even after countless mortal wounds had been inflicted on them. They would be up and about in a few minutes after being gravely injured.

They were clearly only Level-6 in strength. However, they were able to completely destroy her, a young genius Warrior of the Dragon Clan. How could these weak and messed up human beings defeat them when she couldn't?

Annie was immediately infuriated. This Dragon Warrior had been arrogant from the very beginning and seemed to be bent on calling them mortals and derogatory terms that were hard on the ears. Now, she was even questioning their combat strength. It was time for her to fight back.

"You underestimate us. Sir Mirose had once destroyed three ghouls in less than half a minute's time. The two ghouls who managed to capture you were also defeated by us in less than 20 seconds. Their bodies still lay in the wooden shed we were residing in just now. If you don't believe us, you can turn back and take a look with your own two eyes!"

The scouts also started defending themselves.

Originally, they had a good impression of the female Dragon Warrior due to her gorgeous battle armor and good figure. However, all she said were words of despise and distrust. It was the last straw when she started questioning Sir Mirose's power.

"The princess is right. You can look down on us, but not on Sir Mirose! He was the one who saved your life just now!"

"Doesn't the Dragon Clan know the concept of gratitude?"

"I am a mortal alright. But you were captured by the ghouls as well. How strong can you be!"

Everyone started criticizing Felina's arrogant behavior. She then fell silent before apologizing, "Alright, I should not have said those words. I am sorry. But I am still curioushow did you guys do it?"

Annie was just about to speak when she seemed to remember something. She then turned to look at Link who gave a nod of approval.

Annie then brought out her dagger which was treated by Sacred Silver and said, "Do you see something different on this dagger? There is Sacred Silver on its surface, which can thoroughly destroy the regeneration abilities of the darned ghouls. We are also in possession of these crossbows, also treated with Sacred Silver. It can fire ten Sacred Silver arrows in four seconds. Furthermore, we have a powerful Magician with us. Now, do you think we have the power to defeat the ghouls?"

Felina observed the Sacred Silver weapons with interest. These silver weapons seemed to be enveloped in a sharp, brilliant force of light. It was peculiar, warm, yet aggressive.

She then nodded. "If Sacred Silver is truly the answer to theseghouls, then I believe that you guys can defeat them. I once again apologize for my actions. Thank you for saving my life."

Now that Felina's arrogance was kept in check, Link said, "As far as I know, Dragon Warriors rarely communicate with the rest of the world, unless something peculiar is happening. If you trust us, perhaps we may be of help."

His mission was to successfully get Felina's asstance.

Although he could capitalize on the prideful nature of the Dragon Clan to demand her of her asstance in return for saving her life, it would definitely leave a bad impression on Felinasside. This was hardly what Link wanted; he wished that the other party would offer to help on her own accord.

He thus had to build some sort of bridge between them.

Upon hearing these words, Felina hesitated.

If this happened when she first arrived in the Dark Forest, she would definitely sneer and give them the cold shoulder. She might even look down on them and head into the Dark Forest alone. However, now that she had seen the true terror of this hellhole, a few reliable partners would be extremely helpful.

This group of humans just saved her life and seemed to have the tools to deal with the ghouls. They could be of some help along the way.

However, she still could not put down her pride, "My mission is extremely dangerous. You guys might lose your life over it wait a minute."

She then got an idea and stared straight at Link before asking, "This place is the heart of the Pralync Kingdom. Isn't the Norton Kingdom at war with the Dark Elves now? Since you guys are here, might you be on a mission? Maybe I can help as well."

It was the truth the Link had saved her life. She would have a peace of mind if she could return the favor.

Upon hearing these words, the scouts were elated. Link was simply euphoric; it seemed like this Dragon Lady had a much better personality than he imagined.

He then added, "The Dawn Swordsman Kanorse had been captured by the Dark Elves. We are originally here to rescue him. However, the chances seem to be slim."

As he explained, Link started smiling bitterly, and the scouts around him also had a grave expression on their faces.

"Dawn Swordsman? You mean the strongest Warrior in the Norton Kingdom, Kanorse?" Felina was shocked. Although the Dragon Clan kept themselves hidden from the rest of the world, they were still concerned about the important events that were happening, including the emergence of outstanding talents amongst other races. The Dawn Swordsman was one of those people.

He was only tity-five years old but had already attained the strength of a Level-8 professional. He was rightfully termed as the strongest Warrior in the Norton Kingdom, or even the entire human race. He was indeed a rare talent.

Even the prideful Dragon Clan was surprised at the growth of the Dawn Swordsman. In fact, Felina had been craving to challenge the Dawn Swordsman while she was trapped inside the Dragon Valley. She had always hoped to one day complete with this said genius and determine who was stronger once and for all.

To think that he would be captured; are the ghouls really this strong?

Link nodded to confirm her suspicions, "I think that no one else can be termed as a Legendary Warrior in Firuman."

Felina was truly taken aback. Her eyes naturally emitted a silver radiance; hence, one could easily notice whenever she blinked her eyes. However, her eyes at that time were unblinking and wide opened. She was finding it difficult to accept.

"Even he was not able to stop the ghouls?"

Link continued, "That is not true as well. He was only captured after facing an army of them. We have discovered that he was sent to a place called the Skeletal Fort. Following which, an extremely powerful and evil being there will demonize him, turning him into something like a ghoul. If I am not wrong, they probably captured you for the same reason."

"Skeletal Fort?" Felina stared at Link. Link's words had sent shivers down her spine.

"Yes, the base of the Dark Elves houses the boss of the ghouls. Her powerI'm afraid it has gotten to point where mortals cannot hope to comprehend."

"Strength that cannot be comprehended? Immortal ghouls?" Felina seemed to be absorbed in her thoughts. She mumbled, "If the Dawn Swordsman were to be demonized, that would be a nightmareThe ghouls are already so strong; what kind of power could their boss possibly have? How could this world have such terrifying power?"

No one told her the answer. Link and the scouts remained silent.

Felina did not expect her questions to be answered as well. She had somehow deduced her own conclusion, muttering, "The queen had mentioned that a destructive power was upsetting the balance of this world. She had sent me to the mortal world to investigate this matter. This Skeletal Fort should be the source of that power! Ghouls should not have existed in this world!"

Link listened, and when she reached the part about the ghouls, he gave a helpless sigh. Ghouls really should not exist in this world, but alas, that was the power of a Divine Gear.

The World of Firuman was using its power to reject the presence of this Divine Gear. In order to maintain the stability of this Divine Gear, the Dark Elves sacrificed at least one hundred thousand lives!

Suddenly, Felina stared at Link. "Do you know the exact location of the Skeletal Fort?"

"I roughly know the coordinates. In fact, we were planning to infiltrate into the enemy's base after a night's rest," Link answered.

Felina's eyes widened yet again at this brazen declaration, the silver radiance in her eyes shining brilliantly. She said, "Going straightito the base to rescue someone? Just the few of you? Isn't this a suicide mission?"

Annie then said, "The Dawn Swordsman cannot be demonized. We have no choice but to do our best to prevent that from happening."

Link then laid out his hands helplessly and said, "There is never a choice in wartimes."

Felina then sighed and shook her head once more. "This mission is bound to fail. I shall not even talk about the few of you. You guys are far too weak. And you, Magician Mirose, unless your combat powers can match up to the Demon Slayer, I suggest that you forgo this mission. Don't sacrifice your lives in vain."

Her words seem a little strange. What did she mean by matching up to the Demon Slayer? Who is this Demon Slayer?

Link was slightly confused by those words. He felt as though he had heard this title somewhere before, although he could not exactly remember who it was referring to.

This was understandable as well. After defeating Tarviss, he had been extremely busy with either his magic research or the development of his territory. He paid no attention to other people's evaluation of his achievements. While the title Demon Slayer might seem familiar, he did not make the connection to himself.

On the other hand, Annie's eyes widened with glee. She then said to Felina, "You are saying that if the Demon Slayer was present, we might have a chance?"

Felina nodded. "If he was indeed here, coupled with my Level-7 strength, it might be worth a try."

Upon hearing those words, the remaining scouts sighed helplessly. The Demon Slayer was a noble with his own territory. He was also a Master Magician of the East Cove Higher Magic Academy. A person of his status and position would definitely not risk his life to come to this hellhole.

One could only hope for such miracles in their dreams.

However, Annie's eyes glowed even brighter as she turned to look at Link. This gaze was so hopeful that Link felt slightly disturbed by it.

"Who is the Demon Slayer?" Link asked as he felt something was amiss.

"He is none other than the lord of the Ferde Wilderness," Annie said excitedly.

"Oh" Link patted his forehead and suddenly understood the situation. To think that they were referring to him all this while. When the title Demon Slayer came out of the mouth of a Demon Warrior, he immediately associated it with some sort of heroic and historical figure. He had never thought it would be him.

Since Felina had already mentioned it herself, Link did not wish to conceal his identity anymore. He turned to Felina and said, "I think I can give it a shot."

"This is not funny, Magician," Felina frowned as she sneered.

Link smiled and said, "Mirose is only my alias. My real name isLink Morani."

The scouts swallowed a mouthful of saliva upon hearing those words. Annie stared at Link with pride written all over her white and pretty face. This young man was a hero in her heart.

Felina then opened her mouth and was once again in shock. It took her a while before she continued, "No wonderSo it is you after all."

It all made sense why they could deal with the ghouls. She was just thinking how such a powerful human Magician could appear out of nowhere without the knowledge of the Dragon Clan.

The Dawn Swordsman was the strongest Warrior in the human race, and Felina still had the guts to challenge him to a battle. However, she had no intention of doing so if she was facing the Demon Slayer. This was because he had once defeated Tarviss. She would not have been able to defeat Tarviss even if her strength doubled.

The moment she said this sentence, a glow appeared in Link's field of vision. It was a mission.

Step Two: Completed.

Player Omni Points +100

Step 3: Stealth or Force?

Task: Break through the obstructions of the Dark Elves and reach the Skeletal Fort.

Mission Reward 1: 100 Omni Points

Mission Reward 2: Elemental Affinity Bloodline (Note: Under the effect of this bloodline, all elemental spells cast by the user will have their strength increased by 50%)

Link sighed and once again accepted the mission.

## 203. Pinched to Death

There were two types of white color in the area between the northern polar fields of the Black Forest, each distinct from the other. One was the bright and clear white, a color of purity. This was found in the snow of the North. The other was the dull white color that came with a touch of blood, like that found in bones. And the Skeletal Fort was fortress made up purely of piles of bones.

Whose bones?

Well, the great leader would tell you that as a tribute to the Lady of Darkness, the Skeletal Fort contained the bones of at least 20,000 souls. These souls were all burned to release an infinite amount of power. Their bones and skeletons were then preserved and used to build a white fortress with the length and width of 160 feet and the height of 160 feet as well.

And at the top of the fort was a bony, white hall.

At the head of the hall was the Skeletal Throne made of ivory, mammoth's tusks. Whenever there had been any major events, there a shadowy figure would appear on the throne enshrouded in a black flame.

And right now, it was one of those times where an important event had occurred.

On the Skeletal Throne sat a graceful shadowy figure, and at the same time, a sweet and pleasant voice floated in the hall.

"There's a big mouse in the forest," said the voice, "and I don't like it at all. Right now, the mouse has brought its friends too close to the fortress, yet none of my cats could catch them yet. Bruttan, Maule, will both of you be willing to catch these mice for me?"

Bruttan, a Level-7 demon was more than 13 feet tall, and his skin was black and thorny with a dagger-shaped horn on his head. He wielded a pair of giant swords each about ten feet long. He used to be a Warrior guarding the Magician Aymon's fortress. After the god-level device, Dark Serpent came to this world, he became the Warrior guarding the Skeletal Fort by Aymon's command.

Maule, a Black Dragon Warrior with Level-7 strength, possessed amazing stature and was no less powerful than a demon. His swordsmanship was almost perfect, and he was the Skeletal Fort's main Swordsman.

Upon hearing the order, both of them bowed respectfully at the throne and said, "As you wish, Messenger of Darkness!"

Just as they spoke, there came a sudden loud scream from outside the hall.

"Ah! Aaaah! Kill me! Just kill me!!!!"

The voice carried a great amount of strength behind it, enough to shake the entire Skeletal Fort. Even Bruttan and Maule's faces showed a trace of uneasiness.

The source of the scream that rattled the fortress was the top human Warrior, the Dawn Swordsman Karnose who had just been captured and broughtito the Skeletal Fort.

Only the dark shadowy figure on the Skeletal Throne remained unaffected.

"Oh, it seems that dear Karnose is not happy," said the figure. "I must go down there and comfort him. Both of you may leave now."

Then, the shadowy figure stood up, and her slender waist tited like a snake as the figure walked slowly and casually down to the dungeons under the Skeletal Fort.

Bruttan and Maule looked at each other for a moment then turned around and left the hall. When both of them reached outside the Skeletal Fortress, there were 40 ghouls behind them, along with more than 200 scouts from Death's Hand and close to 3000 soldiers.

"Maule, we'll get half of the soldiers each," said Bruttan. "Let's see who catches those mice first."

"Hahaha, alright," replied Maule, "but what would the winner get?" in his eyes, Bruttan was nothing but a brute. Without his strength, he was basically useless. It'd be fun to see such an idiot lose to him.

"Well, let's see" answered Bruttan, squinting at the Dragon Warrior as he considered the matter. To be honest, he'd never liked the bastard. "If you win, then I'll always obey you from then on. But if I win, you don't have to obey me; I just want to give you a big old slap in the face."

"Good! It's a deal!"

The two then divided the soldiers among themselves equally and parted ways.

Just a mile outside the Skeletal Fort, there was a slightly elevated mound in the forest where its peak was covered completely with snow. Link, the Red Dragon Warrior Felina, Annie, and the rest of the scouts all huddled together inside a makeshift igloo made of snow. They poked a hole through the snow and observed the movements in the Skeletal Fortress from there.

"So many bones! And so many guards!" exclaimed Annie, hardly able to contain her shock. The actual sight and scale of the Skeletal Fort had totally exceeded her imagination.

The surrounding area around Skeletal Fort was very flat, and there, one could clearly see more than 10,000 soldiers spread across the plains. Although each soldier was only comparable to a Level-1 Warrior, once their number reached 10,000, they were nevertheless a fearsome force.

"These soldiers won't leave," whispered a scout. "We can't possibly sneak into the fort."

There were just too many of them. And the closer they got to the Skeletal Fort the more heavily guarded the area was. Even if they used an invisibility spell to sneak into the place, they might still bump into a soldier who would then expose their presence.

At the moment, Bruttan and Maule stepped out of the fort in front of everyone.

"Link," Felina whispered. "They must've sensed that we're here and sent a team out for us. We could soon be discovered here."

There were just too many people on their side. There was no need for any fancy searching techniques al all with that many people. All they needed to do was search every inch of the land, and there would be no way for Link and the rest to stay hidden.

They'd been staying in the same place for more than half an hour now. Link had mostly been silent all this while. Then, suddenly, he spoke up.

"Karnose still maintains his conscience," he whispered. "He hasn't been completely transformed by the occult yet. He can still be saved, but we must rescue him soon."

"But how?" asked Annie.

Felina only shook her head.

"Things have gotten to a more frightening point than I'd expected, Link," she said. "I don't think we can save him."

Link pretended he didn't hear it. He knew that it wasn't that the Red Dragon Warrior was unwilling to rescue Karnose, she merely didn't believe that they would succeed. If he could show her a plan that might work, he was sure that she would join in.

"We'll use the old plan," said Link. "I'll attract the Skeletal Fort's attention, and you'll sneak into the Skeletal Fortress and rescue the man. Felina, you must go too, but you're too strong so they might slow you down. You should act alone."

Felina bit her lips and furrowed her brows in doubt.

"This plan is too risky," Felina said. "There's still that ghoul leader in the fort. If we don't tempt the leader out, we'll have no chance at all."

"I know," answered Link. "But this is the only feasible plan we have. Well, we don't have much time, the Black Dragon Warrior will soon get here. All of you, get ready to sneak into the fortress. I'm leaving now!"

"Link. Be careful!" Annie urged.

"Wait!" Felina stopped him. "They've got too many people with them!"

Link ignored her. He jumped out of the snow igloo without a single hesitation and walked away without hiding his own Mana. He first cast the Cheetah's Agility spell then another spell to make his weight as light as a feather. And so, he almost flew all his way down from the mound.

On his way, a red glowing aura surrounded his body, followed by the Flame Controller's robe and his Burning Wraths wand.

He would be facing countless strong enemies soon, so he must utilize all his powers and all the help he had.

Right now, he had 300 Omni Points and a 6100-point maximum Mana limit. His Mana recovery rate could be as high as 220 points per second. With the aid from the Flame Controller's robe, the Burning Wraths of the Heavens wand, the Light Rune Stone, the Red Dragon Queen's Blessings, the Dimensional Scroll and the Prophetic White Stonehe had enough tricks up his sleeve to perform a symphony of magic!

The Black Dragon Warrior Maule could sense Link's presence immediately. He erupted into a big laugh.

Well, look at that, he thought. I've found the mouse first. Get ready to be my slave, Bruttan!

He then unleashed his Battle Aura in an explosion and charged towards the target at full speed.

There was only one target, and his Mana showed that he was just a Level-6 Magician. Maule was sure that he could easily cut this mouse up into pieces alone without anyone's help!

"Hahahaha! Prepare to get a taste of my swords!"

The swords in Maule's hands began to be enshrouded in a black flame. It was his inexhaustible Black Dragon Warrior's power. The invincible body of the Dragon People gave him the supernatural strength that allowed him to squash all his enemies in battles.

Link didn't have a single thought of retreating. Instead, he sped up even more, and the distance between him and the Black Dragon Warrior closed in ever more quickly.

On the peak of the mound, everyone else was covered in a cold sweat, especially Felina. She knew very well how powerful that Dragon Warrior was. He was a full level higher than Link, and he was followed by countless ghouls, Assassins, and soldiers right behind him.

This was like one single man facing off with an entire army. There was no doubt in Felina's mind that Link would soon be dead.

In the blink of an eye, the distance between Link and the Black Dragon Warrior was already less than 300 feet.

The black flame on the Black Dragon Warrior intensified. The moment the distance between them reached 200 feet, Maule would unleash a burst of his Battle Aura instantly. It didn't matter whether it would hit the target or not, he just wanted to interfere with the Magician's spellcasting. His Battle Aura was inexhaustible anyway, so he didn't have to worry about wasting it.

Unbeknownst to him, Link had already outpaced him.

At the distance of 300 feet, he'd done two things. Firstly, he'd activated the Clear Thoughts effect from the Flame Controller's robe. With Clear Thoughts, in five minutes he would recover about 2000 Mana points, which would then allow him to cast spells at their full power. Secondly, he'd activated a special effect from his wand, the Burning Wraths of the Heavens, that was the Flame Torrents! The Flame Torrents consumed 1500 points of Mana, and it allowed instantaneous spellcasting of any fire elemental spells below Level-7, while also increasing the spell's power by 300%. To recharge it, he must cast spells of Level-5 and above at least ten times.

But Link's wand was already charged at the moment, so he could instantly activate the first Flame Torrents now to boost his first spell.

Boom!

A giant hand appeared in the air, and each finger was about three feet thick and 15 feet long while the whole hand was about 30 feet long!

This Titan's Hand was boosted by the Flame Torrents, and its power was 300% higher than usual. It was also enhanced by the Burning Wraths wand's effect and had a further 150% boost from there. In total, the Titan's Hand was 450% more powerful than usual.

When a Level-6 spell's power was increased 4.5 times its normal strength, it would be comparable to a Level-7 spell. This made the flames of the giant hand turn blue, but because Link had controlled its power to prevent it from exploding, the brightness of the Titan's Hand's flame was not thatitense. In fact, it now merely had the sheen of metal.

The fire elements in the spell now looked like they were made of metal elements. This showed just how compacted the spell was!

The moment it appeared, it transformed into the shape of a fist immediately. Its surface now emanated a blue light so bright that you couldn't look at it directly. Then, in the blink of an eye, it traveled across 300 feet and crashed into Maule.

Wow, what fast spellcasting speed! Maule thought in amazement as his Battle Aura burst was unleashed.

Bang!

The Titan's Hand was slightly impeded by Maule's burst of Battle Aura, but the fiery hand did not collapse at all because the burst of Battle Aura had hit the part of the fist where its structure was most stable and solid. Furthermore, the Titan's Hand's own power was equivalent to that of a Level-7 spell, so it was impossible for Maule's Battle Aura which was also at Level-7 to destroy it in one move.

And thus, Maule's only chance at defeating Link had come to pass.

In the next moment, he was hit by the Titan's Fist squarely. There was a loud boom as he was hit by the brunt of the impact. Maule only had time to explode his Battle Aura to protect himself, but it was completely insufficient as he was sent flying a few feet backwards.

In that process, Maule's Battle Aura received crucial damage and was momentarily at its weakest point.

And that was when Link hit him again with an even more powerful attack. He took the chance when Maule was still in mid-air and changed the Titan's Fist back into the Titan's Hand and caught up with Maule immediately. The giant hand now held Maule in its palm and increased its temperature to its highest extreme.

This was Link's signature attack, and no one had ever been able to survive it!

"AhGahHowHow did" Maule couldn't even finish his sentence before his whole body was turned to ashes by the Titan's Hand's scorching temperature.

Everyone else watched in awe at the scene that just unfolded.

It was as if Maule had only been pinched gently by the fiery hand. But in no time at all, the proud Warrior's life was pinched out of his throat and turned instantly to ashes.

Could he be that powerful? Felina stared at the scene in a daze. She knew that there was a disparity of power between Link and herself, but she never expected the gap to be so bigeven though she was the Dragon Clan's most talented Warrior!

There on the mound, a powerful opponent was killed within seconds. Link couldn't help but burst out laughing. He watched the ghouls, Dark Elves, and skeleton soldiers rush up the hill towards him. He kept the strengthened version of Titan's Hand under his complete control and rushed forward without the slightest hesitation.

This Black Dragon Warrior was only his appetizer!

Now, let the real battle begin!

## 204. Listen to the Cackling of Fireworks

Twenty ghouls rushed forward up the hill.

Unfortunately, they had no experience in dealing with the Titan's Hand spell. Coupled with their low intelligence, they rushed forward in close proximity of one another, forming a cluster and rendering them easy targets of the spell.

"Titan's Fist!"

The Titan's Hand which just exterminated a Dark Dragon Warrior immediately turned into a fist, and with the sound of a loud explosion, the fist charged mercilessly towards the formation of ghouls.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

A series of collision sounds could be heard. The ghouls were all at Level-6 and simply could not withstand the impact of a Level-7 spell. They were thus instantaneously knocked into the air by this terrifying impact.

This scene was somehow similar to something one could see in a bowling alley. The moment the ball hit the pins at the end of the lane, the pins would scatter in all directions from the heavy impact.

Whoosh. In mid-air, the Titan's Fist once again turned into a hand and started grabbing all the ghouls in the air. The moment it captured a ghoul. It would release a high-temperature heat wave to instantly melt those damned creatures.

"Ah! Oh my god! Arrghh!" Cries of despair rang through the snowfield.

At that moment, Link was truly using his full power.

In his eyes, time seemed to be moving slower than ever. The ghouls who were knocked into the air were moving slowly through the atmosphere as though they were helium balloons, allowing him to take his pick as to which one he wished to burst first.

Under the effects of such focused and high-speed spellcasting, Link's eyes became a lot brighter and incomprehensible. A closer look would reveal a faint silver glow that surrounded his pupils. This was the brilliance of the soul that had escaped the chains of the physical body after the soul operated at its maximum capacity.

From other's perspective, they could only see the many after images of a blue, giant hand 150 feet away. The speed at which the hand was moving was way too fast for the naked eye to capture. The hands even looked unreal, and through this tangible deception, the hand was destroying ghouls at a speed no one could ever have imagined.

Within three seconds, the after images suddenly disappeared and formed back into an unmoving one floating in the air. The ghouls who were knocked into the air also never landed back onto the ground again. They were all turned to ashes in the short period of time while they were airborne.

You seem to be proud of your strong life force? What about your unlimited supply of Battle Aura? I can simply burn you to ashes with temperature that can even melt metallic substances!

After the extermination of these ghouls, the ordinary scouts of the Death Hand were next.

These were elite scouts that were all at least Level-4 in strength. This was an extremely strong army by any standards. However, in the face of a terrifying Magician, they were all as helpless as a crying infant.

"In the name of the Lady of Darkness, this is not happening!"

"This is not possible! How can a human attain such strength!"

"Run! We are no match!"

Their leader Maule was already dead. They had also witnessed the Magician exterminate the Warriors blessed by the Lady of Darkness. These ordinary Dark Elves had lost all will to fight and ran for their lives.

On the other hand, the skeleton Warriors only retained their most basic cognitive skills and knew not what fear was. They hence continued charging up the hill in mechanical movements.

After eliminating the ghouls, Link was extremely relieved. He had placed great emphasis on exterminating the ghouls. If the fight got protracted and he did not manage to kill all of them, the result of this fight might have been entirely different.

However, these ghouls had already become a thing of the past.

After killing these darned creatures, Link then withdrew from his extreme spellcasting state and canceled the Level-7 Titan's Hand spell.

This was not due to the strength limitations of the spell, but due to its insane mana consumption. During the battle just now, Link's peak mana consumption shot up to 220 Mana Points per second and 55 Mana Points per second on average. If Link continued using the spell, he would only last for around two more minutes.

Despite the disappearance of the Titan's Hand, Link continued to cast spells. He pointed the wand towards an escaping Dark Elf Scout and shouted, "Flame Blast!"

The Flame Controller Magic Robe increased the spellcasting speed of his fire elemental spells by 50%. His Burning Wrath of the Heavens Wand would increase his elemental charging speed by 200%. The combined effects of these two pieces of equipment gave Link an amazing spellcasting speed even without the Domingo Crystal.

It merely took 0.7 seconds for the Level-4 Flame Blast spell to take form. An incandescent fireball more than four feet in diameter emitting a blinding light then appeared.

"Explode!"

The 150% power boost to the Flame Blast spell was significant. The strength of the Flame Blast spell now was comparable to the one he released in Gladstone when under the effects of the Magical Murmurs potion.

In an instant, the fireball flew into the center of the group of Dark Elf scouts

Boom!

An earth-shattering bang reverberated through the snowfield. Unbridled flames and visible heat waves swept through the area where the explosion occurred. The thick layer of snow on the ground was also flung into the air together with pieces of severed limbs torn off from the great impact.

The Flame Blast spell was still a terrifying offensive spell even though the spell was considered somewhat low for a Magician of Link's level.

Link's control over his Mana Points had already improved vastly from his time in Gladstone City. He only used 260 Mana Points in comparison to the original 320 Mana Points when casting a Flame Blast spell of the same scale of power.

This single blow at least sent half of the Dark Elf scouts into oblivion.

Link the checked the remaining Mana Points in his body. He estimated that he had 5100 Mana Points left, which was a sufficient amount for any battle. If he merely cast Flame Blast spells, he should still be able to release 20 of them.

He then stared at the distant Skeletal Fort and thought, I don't believe you can still feel safe in the fortress after I made such a commotion.

He then moved forward and threw a Flame Blast spell while traveling.

Boom! Another earth-shattering explosion echoed through the open terrain. Anyone within a ten-mile radius should be able to hear such a loud, disturbing noise.

The Dark Elf Scouts were basically exterminated. There were only a few of them left surviving. Even then, those who survived had already lost the will to fight, merely yelling and fleeing crazily into the distance.

As the skeleton Warriors saw this horrifying scene, all of them started charging towards Link. This included those that were originally guarding the Skeletal Fort.

This then created lots of unguarded spaces at the boundary, giving an opportunity to infiltrate the previously impenetrable fortress.

On the hillside, Felina then whispered to the scouts, "I'll set off now; follow behind!"

Link had already done what he could. She would not pull him down.

Annie then exchanged glances with the scouts and nodded, "Let's go. We will act as well."

The scouts then crawled out stealthily from their hiding spot and snuck into the Skeletal Fort.

On the side of the battle, Link was running to prevent himself from being surrounded by the skeleton Warriors. At the same time, he fired Flame Blast spells at spots where the skeleton Warriors were clustered together.

Boom! Boom!

Every ten seconds or so, a Flame Blast spell would appear and shatter hundreds of brittle skeletons Warriors.

This was not all.

Link was not only attacking the skeleton Warriors but also closing the distance between himself and the Skeletal Fort. He appeared to be charging straight towards the base camp.

This clear movement of aggression could be easily seen and even heard by the people around.

Demon Warrior Bruttan was one of these people. He had witnessed the entire battle scene from afar on top of a slope.

He had seen the hyperactive Maule who had just made a bet with him being reduced to just a pile of ash. He also saw the Magician kill 20 ghouls, a terrifying group of opponents that even he would have problems dealing with, in less than five seconds. The Magician was slaughtering the Dark Elves and skeleton Warriors as though they were livestock.

This was simply incomprehensible.

"Should I interfere?" Bruttan questioned himself. A few seconds later, the answer appeared in his mind, "I would rather not. I will definitely die if I charge forward right now."

However, that was not a choice as well. If the bratty young girl in the Skeletal Fort were to see his nonchalance, he would still be in trouble. He then quickly thought of a plan and shouted to the ghouls and Death Hand scouts beside him, "This Magician is way too arrogant, to think that he would dare to attack the Skeletal Fort. Let's go and kill him!"

He brandished the sword in his hand and pointed it in Link's direction.

The ghouls and Dark Elves behind him exchanged glances. They had also witnessed the entire battle scene and knew first-hand the inhuman strength of this human Magician. Wouldn't it be suicide to charge forward?

However, the leader had already charged forward. They had no choice but to follow as much as they didn't want to. After a while, though, they all felt something was amiss. The leader seemed to be running slowly today. They could actually keep up with him easily. This was strange. Oh, he's running slowly to avoid fighting the Magician...thought the scouts.

No one exposed Bruttan's dirty trick and simply followed behind him, heading slowly but steadily towards the Magician.

The Skeletal Fort

In the musty dark hall in the basement, a shadowy figure of a graceful snake seemed to be entwined with a human man of a strong build. The man was stripped completely naked, and his limbs were constrained by ropes, hanging star-shaped from the wall.

The figure slowly crept along the man's body as a sinister but gentle voice constantly sounded, "Kanorse, listen. Someone is setting off fireworks. Those pathetic mortals have come to send you off."

Kanorse wheezed and panted heavily. His eyes were blood red, and a myriad of ominous black aura seemed to be drilling in and out of his body, looking as though countless small black snakes were crawling all over him.

Upon hearing the detestable sound, he shook his head slightly to remain conscious and spoke with a muffled voice, "I will not yield! I will never give in and become a demon! I will nevernever"

"Oh. Haha! What a foolish mortal. You really think that fireworks boy will be able to save you? No, no, soon his soul will become a beautiful display of fireworks as well."

As she spoke, she slithered down from Kanorse's body and headed towards the exit of the hall.

When she exited the hall and walked up to the first level of the Skeletal Fort, she raised her voice slightly and hollered, "My dearest, are you hungry?"

Sssssss

A venomous hiss replied to her bewitching voice. Following which, a giant black-scaled snake at least three feet in width and 80 feet in length slithered out from the dark corner of the hall. The moment the giant snake reached the figure, a blinding brilliance shone from its scales. By the time this light dissipated, a black whip with a snake head at its tip had appeared in the hands of the figure.

Wielding the whip, the figure headed straight for the entrance of the fortress. It was then she saw a black-robed Magician awaiting her arrival.

The black-robed Magician sniggered upon seeing her and said, "Master, the person outside is the Demon Slayer."

"Oh, Talon, are you sure?"

"Definitely. I have seen him in combat during his fight with Tarviss at the East Cove Higher Magic Academy. I am extremely familiar with his magic fluctuation." The person talking was Blood Demon Talon, the escaped prisoner from the Tower of Azula."

"Are you confident in defeating him?" The figure asked.

"Previously, I wouldn't have been able to. However, now that I have received the blessings of the Lady of Darkness, coupled with the power of this powerful magic staff, I am more than confident in doing so."

"Alright then. Go ahead while I offer support from the fortress." The figure smiled at Talon with an alluring expression.

"Wait for my good news!"

Upon saying that line, a blood red miasma enveloped Talon's body. He then flew at breakneck speed out from the Skeletal Fort.

The figure watched as Talon prepared for battle, moving to the rooftop of the Skeletal Fort for a better view.

Upon reaching the rooftop, she saw the ball of blood red miasma already a mile away from where she last remembered. It was rapidly closing the distance between itself and the Demon Slayer.

She then sniggered, and she said, "Oh mortal, you have always overestimated your abilities. I shall wait and see which of you two is stronger, and more suitable to become my humble servant."

Her voice was still as bewitching and dreamy as ever.

## 205. The Showdown Between the Master Magicians

On the icy fields in front of the Skeletal Fort.

When the dark red fog appeared, Link had stopped using his Flame Blast spell.

He'd now cast a total of five Flame Blasts, consuming about 1800 Mana Points. Because of the Clear Thoughts effect from his robe, his Mana was constantly recovering. Thus, his Mana was now at 3600 points, slightly more than half of what he started with.

The dark red fog moved quickly towards him, and it caused a mysterious fluctuation in the air as it traveled across the distance.

An Occult Magician! Link realized. A very strong one, too! At least Level-7!

The thought had just popped up in his mind when the dark red fog reached about 400 feet away from him and condensed into a blood-red, shadowy figure. The figure condensed even more and eventually became solid. It was now a person wearing a black robe.

In that process, Link could feel that there was an explosion of Mana like a lightning flash in the sky. Immediately afterwards, a blood-red light ring appeared in front of the black-robed figure.

As soon as that happened, alarm bells rang in Link's mind.

It's a Level-7 spell, and it's extremely dangerous!

Link knew that this must be something the opponent unleashed using special magic gear, possibly a tremendously powerful wand!

The blood-red light ring rapidly expanded in the air. In less than half a second, its diameter had reached about 15 feet. Furthermore, a large number of silky strands of blood appeared in the air surrounding it at the same time.

Link was alarmed at the sight. He'd recognized this spell now. At the same time, a notification popped up on the interface showing the spell's specific information.

Blood Rays

Level-7 Master Spell

Mana Consumption: 3900 Points

Effects: Creates a terrorizing light ray with a diameter of three feet and the range of 500 feet. This ray of light will circle around the spellcaster once and shoot out towards the target. Unless the target has the protection of an anti-magic shield that works against spells higher than Level-7, then the target will be disintegrated into a fog of blood.

(Note: You can't escape from this spell!)

Had Link been a Warrior, he would definitely turn around and flee by now. He'd run as fast as possible until he escaped the range of 500 feet from this Magician, then he'd be safe.

But he was a Magician.

If it had been a few months ago, Link would be utterly helpless against this spell. The only way out would be to use Dimensional Jump and escape. But now, he was a full-fledged Master Magician.

Within seconds, Link had found a way to deal with this frightening spell. He focused his attention and entered the spellcasting state. Then, he pointed his wand at the space in front of him and chanted, "Spatial Distortion!"

Spatial Distortion

Grade-less Dimensional Spell

Mana Consumption: 230 Points

Effects: Distorts the space and diverts the movement direction of all types of physical materials or energy forms.

(Note: Mortals, if you value your life, don't bother trying to understand the principle underlying this spell.)

This was Link's own dimensional spell. The principle around this spell was derived from his own space-time thesis and Vance's notebooks. On the surface, it didn't seem complicated at all. But, any ordinary Magician would melt their brain if they attempted to understand the complex theories that made this spell possible.

The Mana in Link's body quickly surged into the wand and took the form of an extremely intricate and mysterious spell structure. At first glance, this spell structure might even seem simple. The Mana it consumed wasn't all that much either, nothing more than a normal Level-4 spell. This made it possible for Link to complete the spellcasting within 0.01 second.

Then, as his intention directed it, the spell structure began to oscillate at high speed.

A strange occurrence then followed. In the oscillation process, no elements responded to the spell structure at allno basic elements, no light elements, no dark elements nor any secret elements were reactive to this spell structure.

Immediately afterwards, the air in front of Link appeared to change. Noa more accurate way to describe it was that the light in front of him was tited, and at a glance, there seemed to be a giant lens in the space in front of Link.

In the instant when this lens appeared, the Blood Ray struck it.

"Ah!!!!"

There was a roar of anger, and the thick ray of light shot out and hit Link's body.

The greatest advantage of using a light spell was that its speed was basically as fast as the speed of light. Once it was aimed and shot out, there was no way for the target to dodge it.

But precisely because of that speed, though, it was difficult for such spells to be controlled after it was cast. The aim must be locked before the spell was unleashed because once it's out, it would be impossible for the spellcaster to control it.

A moment later, the light column had reached Link, and it inevitably fell into the distorted space.

Then, something peculiar happened.

Once the Blood Ray entered the lens, the originally straight ray of light suddenly bent and took a turn around Link's body. Although the scene looked shocking, Link was actually completely unharmed.

The Bloodmage Talon was surprised for a moment and couldn't understand what he saw. He thought that maybe Link had used a teleportation spell to send the ray of light away, but he'd never expected Link to directly break down his attack like that.

But this is a Level-7 spell! Talon thought. How did he? Could it bea spatial spell?

As a Master Magician, it wasn't difficult for Talon to see through Link's tricks.

Of all the types of spells, only one kind could be used against spells of any level.

It could deflect any spells no matter the level, with the same amount of efficiency. For instance, even if Talon cast a Level-8, or even a Level-9 spell at Link, as long as it was a light spell, it would always get bent and distorted away from Link.

That was what set spatial spells apart from the rest.

This kind of spell was so powerful that every Magician dreamed of mastering it. Alas, these types of spells were notoriously difficult to master, difficult enough that it would make most Magicians give up!

So far, the only spatial spells that normal Magicians could master were those used to create storage gear, such as storage rings and storage pendant and so on. Yet, those that could be used in battles were of such high difficulty that you would have to be an unrivaled genius to be able to grasp its principles enough to learn it properly. So, as soon as he saw Link used this spatial spell, Talon immediately discarded his underestimation of the Magician in front of him.

It was no exaggeration that people called this Demon Slayer the true successor of the Legendary Magician Bryant!

At this point, Talon had completely condensed into his human form. He stood about 300 feet away from Link. This distance was the range limit for normal Magicians. If he took a step backwards, he'd be able to dodge the opponent's attacks. If he took a step forward, he'd be able to kill the opponent directly with his attacks.

He began to carefully observe Link, looking for another opening to attack him. His mind was so focused and preoccupied that he didn't have time to cast a defensive spell to protect himself. This was because the moment he did so Link would immediately attack him and force him into a defensive position. That would give Link the upper hand.

Talon knew that he still had a huge advantage over Link. The Skeleton Warriors were still surrounding Link and attacking him tirelessly. This meant that his attention was diverted, and there was always a chance that he would make a mistake as he fought off the Skeleton Warriors. And when that happened, Talon would pounce on him immediately!

On the other side, Link was also observing Talon.

The Magician in front of Link had eyes that glowed red. His whole body was clad in a black robe, and the peculiar wand in his hand shone with a strange green glow.

The singular wand had a cat's eye stone on its tip, and this stone was carved into a face that was screaming in horror. The green glow was from the eyes of this face.

Link recognized this wand. He locked his gaze with his opponent's every move, and the Glass Orbs kept emerging non-stop from the tip of his wand, crushing the heads of any Skeleton Warrior who dared to approach him. At the same time, he opened his mouth to utter the opponent's wand's name.

"The Century's Nightmare," Link said, "the Soul Taker's Wand."

Link had dealt with Morestern before. His wand, the Night's Stare, the Dark Arbiter's Wand, was the third most powerful epic-quality dark magic wand. But this wand, the Century's Nightmare, was the fifth.

Judging from this fact, the Magician was able to quickly cast a Level-7 spell earlier because of this wand.

"Demon Slayer," sneered Talon, "you have a big reputation yourself."

As he spoke, his eyes still carefully observed Link's movements, waiting for him to make the tiniest mistake as he unleashed his Glass Orbs.

Link didn't rush, though. He was as calm as ever, and he was waiting for an opening to attack his opponent as well. He then took a glance at the Skeletal Fort behind the black-robed Magician.

"There's someone extremely powerful in that fort behind you," he said. "Why didn't they appear? Why did they send such a weak opponent like you to fight me?"

Talon was stunned and angered.

"When you bite the dust by my own hands," he threatened, "then you'll see how weak I really am."

At that moment, Talon suddenly noticed a movement in the corner of his eye. His eyes shone immediately when he discovered that it was Bruttan, and he was rushing towards them. In no more than half a second later, Bruttan would be joining this battle.

When that time came, there would not be a chance for this Magician to defeat both of them at once!

"You are strong, I'll give you that," said Talon with a smirk. "But you made a grave mistake in coming alone. You will meet your end soon, Demon Slayer!"

But just at this point, something unexpected occurred.

Link suddenly made a mistake. The Glass Orb that was supposed to crush a skeleton soldier's skull had missed the target, and in the end, it only broke the skull in half. The Soul's Flame inside the skeleton's brain was not extinguished, so the skeleton managed to break through Link's line of defense.

Link seemed to panic, and that's when Talon's eyes lit up.

Now was his chance!

It was a rare opening, and as long as he managed to cast a spell before Link, he would surely kill him. Almost subconsciously, Talon's Mana surged into his wand, and he prepared to cast a spell.

But just at this moment, Talon suddenly noticed a smile in the corner of Link's lips!

He was taken by surprise, so his movements slowed down by a fraction of a second.

Was that mistake deliberate? Talon wondered. Was that a trap? Or does he have another trick up his sleeve?

Doubts and hesitations were hazardous to a Magician when they were in battle, especially when both sides were Master Magicians.

No one knew what spells the opposing Magician would cast next. Sometimes, even when one Magician clearly had the upper hand, they could still be toppled and defeated at the very last second.

Link's strange smile had made Talon hesitate, and he suddenly didn't want to take any risks. He could just wait a dozen or more seconds, and Bruttan would be there. Then, he would certainly defeat Link with half the risk and effort.

He must be patient.

But could Talon afford to hesitate at such a crucial moment in the showdown between two Master Magicians?

## 206. A Duel Between Master Magicians

A person who had become a Master Magician by virtue of their own efforts was definitely someone to be feared. They would by no means be an easy opponent!

Blood Demon Talon was an old undead magician who had lived for hundreds of years. He had accumulated many battle experiences over the years. In the face of such a veteran combat Magician, Link dared not make even the slightest mistake. He might be defeated in the next second if he was careless!

Similarly, Blood Demon Talon was also wary of Link's actions.

The moment he showed hesitation in attacking Link, he knew that he had made the wrong move!

This guy is truly sinister. This is his real killer move!

Due to his slight hesitation, he had unconsciously lost a bit of his control over the Mana surging through his wand. This energy would then descend into a state of temporary stagnation. In the Magician world, this phenomenon was commonly termed as Mana Inertia.

He would then have to wait if he wanted to use this Mana again.

For a Master Magician, the time taken for the state of Mana Inertia to pass was merely less than a tenth of a second. However, in this one-tenth of a second where Talon was experiencing a delay, Link seized an opportunity to attack!

To be precise, this opportunity was created by Link himself.

The Glyph of Soul trembled slightly and resonated with Link's magic fluctuation. In an instant, the Titan's Hand appeared and charged towards Talon at full speed.

Talon gritted his teeth disdainfully as he knew that his hesitation had cost him his offensive advantage. He had now gone the defensive side of the battle.

However, he did not panic, he thought, Bruttan is close by. It will be less than ten seconds before he arrives. I can do this.

In the face of the merciless Level-6 spell, the Titan's Hand, Talon decided to make a swift retreat instead of fighting it headlong. At this moment, the perfect distance he had deliberately kept between the both of them since the beginning of the battle had shown its miraculous effect.

He was 300 feet away from Link, and a spell like the Titan's Hand was considered to be a long-distance controlled spell. Usually, a distance of 300 feet would be the limit of such spells. He merely took a few steps backwards and was safely out of the attacking range.

As Talon retreated, he had already recovered from his state of Mana Inertia. He still chose to fight with a conservative strategy. Instead of aggressively trying to destroy Link, he cast a defensive spell on himself.

As time was tight, the defensive spell he cast was not an exceptionally powerful one. It was only Level-4 in strength and was not meant to defend against Link's trademark spell, the Titan's Hand. It was merely to protect him from the magic shockwaves that would occur from the casting of a powerful Level-6 fire elemental spell.

Bruttan, you have to hurry!

Talon was looking at the tall and powerful demon from the corner of his eyes this whole time. It was clear that the other party had noticed the opportunity and was running at full speed. However, he was still too far away.

Talon continued to retreat while he started charging a spell in preparation for a counter attack. This was not meant to defeat the opponent, but to instill fear in him to buy him time until Bruttan arrived.

It could be said that Talon's reaction to Link's attack was flawless. It would be near impossible for any Magician to take him down quickly if he had this type of awareness in battle. They might even be defeated while thinking that they still had the advantage if they were not careful.

However, something out of the ordinary still happened.

At this moment, his opponent cast a spell that was completely out of his expectations.

"Dimensional Jump!"

Link multitasked and made use of the in-game system to activate the Legendary support spell while controlling the Titan's Hand.

One thousand and eight hundred of his precious Mana Points were instantly used up by the in-game system. With a light humming sound, a white light enveloped his body before he disappeared from his current spot.

Talon was slightly shocked at this action but rationalized Link's actions; this guy was not stupid after all. He knew that his situation was desperate and decisively escaped. However, how far can you go with this spell? You are still dead!

Another light humming sound could be heard, and a white light appeared once again. This time around, the white light did not appear in the distance as Talon predicted, but merely 90 feet behind from Talon, exactly at his blind spot.

Talon merely felt a slight magic fluctuation behind him and suddenly felt fear in his heart. He had not yet understood what just happened.

His instinctive reaction was to turn and look behind him. And it was this instinctive reaction that cost him his chance of escaping.

Link had lost all connections with his Titan's Hand spell while he was casting the Dimensional Jump spell. He knew that the Titan's Hand should be in the midst of disintegrating at this point. However, the disintegration process would take time as well. In an instant, after Link teleported himself, he would regain connection with the Titan's Hand. However, at this moment, the Titan's Hand had already completely disintegrated. It was impossible for Link to form it back up again.

But this was not what Link was aiming for all this while. It was not the spell he needed, but the fire elements that made up the spell. This would greatly reduce his spellcasting speed for the next Titan's Hand as he saved the time needed to accumulate elemental energy!

Glyph of Soul, magic resonance, Titan's Hand!

Within 0.1 seconds, a whole new Titan's Hand appeared in the air. From an outsider's perspective, it was as if the disintegrated Titan's Hand was immediately formed into a complete one again out of thin air.

Furthermore, Link was merely 90 feet away from Talon at this point. The question of spellcasting distance ceased to exist.

Not good! Talon did not expect such a resolute attack from Linkusing a teleportation spell commonly used for escaping as an offensive one instead. Is he truly notitending to run away?

It was true that Link now had no chance of escaping. However, before he would meet his doom, Talon would very likely be killed first!

"Damn it! This crazy bastard!" Talon still had one triumph card left. This triumph card lay in the powerful wand he had in his hand. He shouted, "Scream of Fear!"

Scream of Fear

Level-6 Spell

Cost: 1950 Mana Points

Effect: Deals heavy psychological damage to all enemies within a 270 feet radius. The effect of this spell depends greatly on the willpower and mental strength of the targets.

(Note: Do not use this spell on opponents with extremely strong willpower.)

A dark purple light started spreading in all directions with Talon as its focal point. The Skeleton Warriors around Talon were naturally unable to withstand this strong psychological impact, and the Flame of Soul immediately extinguished from their eyes, rendering them into a pile of brittle bones.

Well, this was the unintended side effect of the spell. Not a big deal.

In Talon's mind, Link would at the very least be slightly affected by this spell and lose his concentration for a moment. This would likely lead to a rebound of his Mana or even the disintegration of his spell, giving him an opportunity to retaliate.

However, nothing went according to his plan.

Talon had once again made a mistake. In fact, he should not have used spells that targeted a person's mental well-being in these crucial circumstances. There were simply too many variables in these spells, especially when he did not know the exact mental strength of his opponent.

He had witnessed Link's perfect control over a Level-9 spell. If a Magician was able to control such a powerful spell just shy of Legendary status, naturally, they must have had a strong soul and willpower.

It was not that Talon did not remember this scene. The fact that Link had consecutively exceeded his expectations in this short battle had already completely destroyed his usual combat mentality.

That was the reason for all his mistakes.

When the dark purple light passed through Link's body, Link merely felt a slight impact on his brain as though he were hit on the head by a small object. There seemed to be no other effects as he continued focusing on his Titan's Hand spell.

Boom!

This attack hit Talon from a higher angle, smashing him rightito the thick layer of snow on the ground. The snow was instantly melted by the Titan's Hand and crushed Talon's body all the way into the ground.

Talon was merely a Magician. Although his body was slightly more resilient than ordinary humans, it was hardly enough to withstand the full impact of a Level-6 spell. His body exploded like a bubble upon the heavy impact and was immediately roasted into a crisp by the heat of the Titan's Hand spell. Following which, Link saw a translucent light ball appear from Talon's body which quickly flew away in the opposite direction.

"Is this the physical manifestation of the soul?" Link frowned. The traveling speed of the soul was way too fast. Link was not fast enough, nor did he have the time to pursue it. This was because an extremely powerful demon was quickly closing in on him; Bruttan was now 600 feet away.

At this moment, Link had less than 1000 Mana Points left in his body. However, he still had 300 Omni Points, which would be more than enough to deal with this hideous demon.

He turned to face the demon as the tip of his wand glowed in a warm light. Link was waiting for his opponent to rush in before he made the first attack. However, something peculiar happened. This demon stopped in his tracks and started retreating. The ghouls and Dark Elf Scouts behind him followed as well, instinctively walking backwards.

It was a funny sight as they stared warily at Link while the retreated. They continued this way until they covered a distance of 300 feet, before turning their backs against Link and running for their lives.

The Dark Dragon Warrior was already defeated, and Blood Demon Talon had already become a pile of barbecued, minced meat. They were both defeated in an instant. They would only continue charging forward if they were masochists.

Link merely laughed and did not give chase to this group of jokers. He simply turned and looked at the Skeletal Fort.

"Auselia, you can't just ignore this. Am I right?" Link chuckled.

Auselia was the name of the wielder of the Dark Serpent in the game. Link believed that in the World of Firuman, it would be no different.

In the Skeletal Fort,Auselia seemed to have felt Link's gaze. She stared at Link from a distance and said, "The Demon Slayer...He is even more perfect than I have imagined."

She lowered her head as she caressed the whip in her hand, before gently whispering, "My darling, you should be very satisfied with his soul. Am I right?"

Ssssss. The whip in her hand gave a sinister hiss. It longed for such a delicious and powerful soul.

"Then, I will capture him personally!" Auselia smiled bewitchingly.

Upon saying those words, she stood up and walked towards the edge of the rooftop. She did not stop when she hit the edges. Instead, she merely continued walking and took gentle strides across the atmosphere.

She did not cast any spells in this whole process. She simply levitated gracefully in the air, seemingly taking a leisurely stroll through the park. However, she was, in fact, heading towards Link at an insane speed.

Compared to the Magician right in front of her eyes, the Dark Dragon Warrior, Blood Demon Talon, Demon Bruttan, and even the Dawn Swordsman paled in comparison. She would gladly give them up.

While she was in mid-air, Auselia turned to look at the Skeletal Fort. She could feel the presence of a few outsiders in her territory. She then sneered, "Magician, are you attracting my attention so that your companions can save the Dawn Swordsman? That is a pretty good idea, although it may be a tad too naive."

## 207. If You Cant Fight, Flee!

Good. Now Link had lured out Auselia, the guardian of the god-level device. Felina and the rest should have no problem-saving Karnose in the fortress.

Just as Auselia walked out of the Skeletal Fort, there was a notification on the interface.

Mission Completed: Sneak in or Storm in?

Player is rewarded with 100 Omni Points.

Player receives the Elemental Affinity Bloodline.

Fuse Bloodline now?

Link did not answer the gaming system at once, as he thought of the terrible experience he had with body transformation previously.

He watched the looming figure of Auselia.

"How long would the transformation take?" he asked the gaming system.

Half an hour.

"Not now, then," answered Link, as he began to retreat.

Right now, Auseliasstrength was far beyond Link's current powers to fight, so he decided to run for now.

But of course, in order to ensure that Felina would successfully rescue the Dawn Swordsman, he must not run so fast that Auselia couldn't catch up to himWell, forget that. It was clear as day to Link now how frighteningly fast Auselia was!

Link thought of an idea.

"Increase maximum Mana limit," he instructed the gaming system. "Use 200 Omni Points."

Not only that, but Link also took out the high-grade Mana potion and gulped it all down. Right now, his Mana had increased to 4135 points. Then, Link unhesitatingly activated the Dimensional Jump.

He'd now burned 1800 Mana points in one move. White light began to enshroud Link's body, and an instant later, he was half a mile away from where he stood.

He looked back and saw how Auselia's figure had shrunk to a barely visible dot in the vast white snowy field.

Without wasting a second, Link continued to run.

"Lightweight!"

"Cheetah's Agility!"

With the aid of these two spells, Link jumped down from the top of a snowy slope, and he then floated in the air like a feather. After drifting like that for about 100 feet, his body started to drop. But just before he landed, he gently tapped against the snowy ground and that gave him the momentum to float further. And that was how Link managed to flee without leaving a trace of his footsteps on the snow.

His speed was still quite fast at almost about 70 feet per second. Still, it was far from quick enough. From what he'd seen, Auselia was as fast as the Wind Tiger at about 650 feet per second. Compared to that, his speed was like that of a crawling turtle. She would catch up to him soon enough.

As expected, when Link finally reached the bottom of the slope which was about 650 feet away, ten seconds later, Auselia was already waiting for him there.

"Why are you running, Link?" she asked with her enchanting voice. "Don't be afraid of me. I won't hurt you."

Auselia's voice gave Link goosebumps all over.

In the game, although her real name was Auselia, no one called her by it. She was more popularly known as the Serpent Lady. It was said that there were many players who were charmed by her voice. Some even got turned just by listening to her speak, while others were enticed by the way she tited her slender waist as she walked. Many players even created fan videos with lewd contents with titles like, "The Day the Serpent Lady and I F\*cked."

But that was just the game players' craze which Link himself had never taken part in. Especially now, when the Serpent Lady was trying to drag him back to the fort to transform him into an occult being. The only sensation her voice triggered in him was dread and loathing. He wanted nothing more than to get as far away from this woman as he possibly could.

Unfortunately, it was impossible to run away from her now. Even if he summoned the Storm Eagle, he wouldn't be able to fly that far away since his Mana was running low.

But Link still had some tricks up his sleeve.

He watched Auselia slowly and casually walk down from the snowy slope. He then took out the light rune stone that Herrera gave him. This rune stone contained an immense force. Judging from its aura, Link estimated that it should have the same power as a Level-7 spell. However, even this was far from enough to injure Auselia. Without some cunning adjustments, it probably wasn't enough to even slow her down.

After taking out the rune stone, Link still didn't use it straight away. First, he cast another spellSpatial Distortion!

About 0.1 seconds later, a spherical lens with a diameter of about 6.5 feet appeared near his body. It looked just like a giant transparent glass marble.

That was the first step in Link's strategy.

Then, Link activated the light rune stone.

The light energy that it contained was triggered, and a white light suddenly appeared on the surface of the rune stone. It expanded and then erupted, but just before the eruption occurred, Link quickly threw the rune stone into the giant distorted space beside him.

Once the rune stone reached the center of the sphere of distorted space, a bright explosion of light appeared. But what was strange was that the light was distorted and trapped inside the space, never escaping from the sphere. If the rays of light were conscious, they would think that they were traveling in a perfectly straight line, but to those observing from the outside, the light was actually just circling around in that closed sphere of distorted space.

The reason for this was simplethe space within that sphere had been bentito a ring!

At that moment, it seemed that the sphere was barely emitting any light, so it looked just as transparent as before and just as harmless.

On the snowy slope, Auselia kept on walking leisurely. She didn't think much of Link's actions as she thought that they were far too weak to pose any threat to her. In her eyes, right now it was just as if her little pet was playing with its toy. There was no reason for her to interfere with its games at all.

But soon enough, it didn't look so innocent to her anymore. The transparent ball near Link only gave off a faint light, and it looked harmless right now, but that was exactly why Auselia was stunned. Light energy was one the most difficult forces to control in the world. Once it was unleashed, there was no turning back, nor was there any way to control its path or behavior. But this Magician in front of her was using his dimensional spell to control the power of an immense source of light energy as deftly as a horseman would tame a wild horse with a bridle!

That just demonstrated astonishing wit and power!

"Ahwhat an exquisite, beautiful, innocent and wise thing you are, Link," she said. "But, I'm afraid your playtime is over."

As she spoke, Auseliasspeed suddenly accelerated to full speed and her outline suddenly become hazy. She then moved so fast that she seemed more like a streak of light as she rushed towards Link.

Link just stood there not moving at all. His eyes suddenly focused and turned extremely dark. He was now entering the spellcasting state.

At that moment, everything in the world seemed to move at a glacial speed, including Auselia, whose speed at the time was so fast that normal people wouldn't be able to see her clearly. But, she still wasn't the fastest opponent that Link had ever fought against. Auseliasspeed was, in fact, only half as fast as Nana's.

Although this speed was still frighteningly fast, even Nana had never been able to launch a sneak attack on Link, so what chance did Auselia have?

Link's gaze was fixed on Auselia, and his spirits were calm. At the same time, he controlled the distorted space which helped him compress and control the light energy within it.

The process lasted for about half a second; Link knew that he'd reached the crucial point while Auselia was now only 100 feet away from him.

"Go!" shouted Link.

In that instant, the trapped light energy suddenly found a spot where it could escape the distorted space, and immediately, all the energy that was enobed inside now surged out through this small aperture.

In Auselia's eyes what she saw was this: Link held a wand in his hand, and in front of the wand was the giant crystal light ball. In the center of this ball, there was a purple light. When viewed from the side, this purple light didn't seem all that bright, but it did look compressed. Auselia had thought that this light didn't pose any threat at all because the power that she sensed from the light ball didn't feel thatitense. But when this purple light hit her body, she could feel that it was extremely hot. She instinctively put up a Level-7 dark energy light shield.

She knew that this light wasn't bright because it was infinitely condensed and focused. When viewed from the side, it looked quite dim, but when viewed directly, it was bright enough to blind the observer's eyes. `

Buzzzz!!!

The ray of light penetrated through the Level-7 shield as if it was as thin and fragile as a soap bubble.

Bamm!!!

Auselia's forehead was directly struck by the ray of light, creating a fist-sized hole through her skull. Because of this, she lost her balance immediately and was flung out away from Link. When her body was still in mid-air, Link clearly saw a black film of light around her body which kept her protected. Link knew that even with a hole through her skull, Auselia would still not be dead. The forces from the god-level device still protected her. Auselia was the Dark Serpent's puppet now, so she wouldn't be defeated quite so easily. With Link's current strength, there was no way that he could destroy this layer of defense around Auselia's body. Link estimated that even the presence of another Legendary Magician wouldn't guarantee that they'd be able to defeat Auselia.

Through the black film around her body, Link could see that the hole in Auseliasskull was rapidly healing and growing into new pieces of brain, muscle, blood veins and so on. This great leader of the ghouls had ten times the recovery rate compared to normal ghouls. Even a hole through her skull was just a small injury because she was no longer an independent life form. She was now a slave to the god-level device's!

Nevertheless, Link's attack still had an effect on her. She would experience severe headaches and be in a confused daze for a while. Judging from the speed of her wound's healing, it would probably take Auselia a minute to regain her senses.

This was the golden opportunity to reactivate the teleportation spell.

Buzz

A white light enveloped Link's body, and he vanished from the spot. A moment later, he reappeared, but he didn't escape further south. Instead, he was now at the Skeletal Fort's gates.

Auselia would soon regain her senses, so Link rushed into the fortress while killing off the Skeleton Warriors he met on the way.

"Felina!" he shouted. "Annie! Larson! Get Karnose and come out now!"

Three seconds later, Link saw Felina rush out from the great hall on the first floor. She led the way wielding her weapons which were two giant dragon claws, and behind her, Annie and the rest followed. Annie and the other scouts were supporting Karnose who seemed to be enshrouded in a layer of dark energy.

Karnose seemed to maintain a shred of consciousness, but his eyes were red, and his body twitched unnaturally from time to time. It seemed that he was in a terrible condition.

Seeing that, Link felt a foreboding sense of danger. But now, there was no time left to dilly-dally, so he cast a Flame Blast at the hundreds of Skeleton Warriors.

Boom!!!

The Skeleton Warriors were all crushed to pieces, and Link rushed forward to join up with Felina and the rest.

Once he reached them, he immediately took out the Dimensional Scroll from Eleanor.

"Follow me, everyone," he whispered. "We must leave here through another realm!"

Realms could be understood in earth terms as dimensions. There were many dimensions in the universe, some expanded infinitely, some constited themselves to form loops. Generally, humans could only survive in expanded dimensions, and those were the fundamental dimensions of our world.

A Magician, on the other hand, could enter looped dimensions as well, and these were known as the alternate realms.

In theory, there was an infinite number of alternate realms. Not all of these realms were suitable for life, though. In fact, only about ten of them were conducive to life.

But to enter an alternate realm, one would need a key.

The Dimensional Scroll that Eleanor gave Link was one such key. With it, one could then enter the realm of the soul. It could be very dangerous there, as you would see dead wandering souls, nightmarish creatures that devoured souls and so on. Nevertheless, right now this dangerous place was better than the real world where Auselia was pursuing them.

After all, entering the realm of the soul was the only way Link and the rest could escape from the Skeletal Fort and return to Icy Peak Fortress.

The rest of them who weren't Magicians didn't completely understand these concepts about alternate realms or dimensions, though. The scouts were completely flummoxed; Annie could understand parts of it, while Felina was completely familiar with it. She was the first person to respond to Link.

"Understood," she said with a nod. "Bring us in then!"

Link nodded then activated the Dimensional Scroll.

A soft whoosh followed, then the entire scene before them changed in an instant.

The rough terrain of the surrounding didn't change much, but there was no more Skeletal Fortress, no more cold wind, and no more snowy fields. The countless Skeleton Warriors had vanished as well, but everything was replaced by a huge city.

The city was full of people who looked like the Icefield Barbarians judging by their appearances and attire. Their expressions were very odd. They looked numb, their eyes were blank, and they walked around aimlessly. They even ignored Link and the rest when they walked past them.

The strange thing was that all their scalps were burnt or scalded.

"What kind of a ghostly place is this?" asked a scout.

"This is the Skeletal Fort in the realm of the soul," whispered Link. "These are the souls that hadn't been swallowed by the Dark Serpent yet. Let's move quickly now; we'll take a detour to the North. Be careful not to let yourself be seen by the Dark Serpent."

Auselia herself was not so frightening, what was frightening was the god-level device in her hands, whose attacks could easily pass through the barriers between different realms, so they must always be cautious.

## 208. Soul Realm

Auselia could return to the Skeletal Fort anytime. The Divine Gear that she wielded indeed possessed terrifying power. Link and his group hence ran at full speed within the Soul Realm.

Two minutes later, they had successfully gotten out of the heart of the chilling and brutal Pralync Kingdom.

However, this was still less than a mile away from the Skeletal Fort. This distance wasn't far enough as they could still be easily located by the Dark Serpent. They had to keep moving forward.

"Speed up! Pick up the pace!" Link urged.

However, the others seemed to be struggling. They were not even traveling faster than an ordinary human.

"Link, my Battle Aura seems to be depleted," Annie said with a frown.

"My feet feel like lead. How can I only have such little strength?" Felina said as she trudged forward with Kanorse on her back. This would be an easy feat in the Physical Realm. However, in the Soul Realm, she felt completely exhausted after carrying him for only a short distance.

Link kept his gaze in the direction of the Skeletal Fort as he explained, "The change in the realm means a change in the principles and laws of the world. In the Soul Realm, the dominant physical force that we are used to will be suppressed. Instead, the power of the soul which we often overlook in the Physical Realm will be greatly magnified. In the Soul Realm, as long as one holds on to hope and faith, he will be granted unimaginable power."

Everyone was confused with Link's speech. They exchanged glances and saw the perplexed expression on each other's faces.

They could understand each and every word. However, when they were linked together to form a sentence, it seemed like some indecipherable code. This was embarrassing.

When Link got no reply, he turned around to see the dazed expression on everyone's faces and patted his forehead apologetically. He then decided to demonstrate it directly, "Watch carefully!"

Following which, they could see streaks of white light enveloping Link together with a dome of mild flame surrounding his exterior body. This was not a blinding brightness, but a mellow and gentle hue that extended to a foot around Link.

Before this, everyone was preoccupied with escaping and did not seem to notice this phenomenon. They now realized that Link was not the only one with this special veil over him. Every one of them possessed it as well, although none of them had a hue half as bright as Link's.

After some sort of comparison, among the eight of them, Link had the strongest glow, followed by Felina, who had a veil almost half as bright as Link. The third was Kanorse, although Kanorse's situation was slightly strange.

He was enveloped in a layer of greyish light instead. Closer inspection would reveal a few black snakes slithering in and out of his body. It looked extremely sinister.

Link explained as he ran forward, "This is commonly called the Light of the Soul. The stronger the soul, the brighter the brilliance, and thus the stronger you will be in the Soul Realm. Kanorse's situationdoesn't look too good."

Felina nodded in agreement as she was the one carrying Kanorse this whole time. She said, "His body feels ice cold, and I can vaguely hear a sinister hissing sound coming from his body. I'm afraid he is close to becoming completely demonized."

Hearing what the people beside him was saying, Kanorse unexpectedly spoke. He muttered in an extremely weak voice, "No, I can still hold onhe will not swallow my consciousnessah"

If he was still half-conscious, that meant that there was still hope.

Link stretched out his hand and leisurely fished the heavy and well-built Kanorse from Felinasshoulders. The ease at which he did the action made Kanorse seem as light as a balloon.

Everyone was dumbfounded at this action. What terrifying strength! After all, Link was a Magician. After being with him this entire mission, the scouts had a good understanding of his power and his physical strength. He definitely did not possess enough strength to lift Kanorse with such ease.

"Now you see. This is the power of the soul. I did not use much strength. I simply thought that I wanted to bring him over, and I imbued that action with enough trust and willpower. Following which, I was able to bring him over easily."

The scouts still seemed to be confused over this strange phenomenon, while Annie and Felina seemed to be thinking about something.

After a few seconds, Felina similarly stretched her hand and took over Kanorse from Link's shoulders. She seemed to be doing it with relative ease as well. She then laughed heartily and said, "I see what you mean now. Magician, you are indeed really knowledgeable."

Link nodded, "That is correct. Alright, we need to speed up. Trust me, all of you will be able to do it!"

These scouts were all elite scouts from the Norton Kingdom. After two successful demonstrations, they were able to achieve some sort of success with movement within the Soul Realm and were able to pick up the pace. This was especially so for Annie. Her speed in the Soul Realm was even faster than her top speed in the Physical Realm, allowing her to trail behind Link and Felina with ease.

"This is amazing."

"How interesting."

"Hey Magician, if I believe that I am able to fly, will I really be able to fly in the Soul Realm?" Felina asked.

Link shook his head and answered, "That would be difficult. The laws of physics that bound the Physical Realm also apply to the Soul Realm. You would be able to fly if you believed hard enough, but it would come at a great cost. There is a limit to the power of the soul as well. Alright, we have to speed up, the master of the Skeletal Fort should be catching up soon."

They then began their escape with solemn expressions on their faces.

After half a minute, everyone suddenly felt that their hearts were especially heavy, as though a large stone was placed upon it. They then looked upwards and saw that the original grey sky had turned a few shades darker. The more terrifying thing was that their speed seemed to have decreased greatly, their legs feeling as though they were trudging through mud.

"What is happening?"

"How is this possible?"

"Is it here?" Felina turned to look at Link.

Link had a serious expression on his face as he turned to look at the sky above the Skeletal Fort. The rest followed his gaze and were horrified at what they saw.

A black-scaled anaconda at least 15 feet in width and more than 600 feet in length had appeared in the sky. It seemed to be levitating in the sky as though it was weightless.

The brilliance on its body was even more terrifying. From afar, it looked as though its body was encircled in pitch black flames from hell. Under the influence of these flames, the skies within a ten-mile radius had all turned many shades darker.

It looked as though the end was coming!

At this time, they were only a little more than a mile away from the Skeletal Fort. They could still clearly see the actions of this giant anaconda. Instead of chasing after them, the giant anaconda made a sucking action the moment it opened its mouth.

Immediately, they saw many souls flying towards the terrifying mouth. Although these souls looked emotionally numbed, they still gave a desperate scream of despair when they knew what was going to happen to them.

This was the cry of the soul and was especially traumatizing to an ordinary human. The scouts were completely heartbroken by the scene, and even the Dragon Warrior Felina went pale from the heart-wrenching scene.

Annie asked Link in a trembling voice, "Why is it devouring souls?"

Link signaled for everyone to keep running as he explained, "I have injured the wielder of the Divine Gear, Auselia, just now. In order to rescue Auselia, it had consumed some of its internal power. For a Divine Gear to maintain a stable presence in the World of Firuman, it needs to have a constant supply of energy. Alas, souls are the largest and most efficient source of energy one could ever find in this world."

Link decided to stop hiding the facts and came clean with what he knew.

The moment everyone heard this speech, they all staggered and tripped over their steps.

What did they just here? Divine Gear? Isn't it just a giant snake? Since when did it become a Divine Gear? What is their correlation?

Felina was as shocked as any one of the scouts. She suddenly remembered something and spoke with a voice that trembled violently, "The Dark SerpentThe weapon of the Spider Queen, Lolth? Oh, God of the Dragons, bless me, no wonder it could destroy the balance of the world! It is a Dark Divine Gear. To think that I am fighting against a Divine GearI must be mad!"

This was an even greater blow to the scouts. They had always thought the person in the Skeletal Fort was merely an extremely powerful Magician. They had never imagined it would be a Divine Gear at work.

Thinking back upon their actions of infiltrating the Skeletal Fort, everyone felt a chill down their spine.

"What do we do now? We will not be able to defeat the Divine Gear. We will not be able to escape," a scout cried in despair with a hint of whimpering in his voice.

Everyone looked at Link. The Magician who had gotten them safely out of many predicaments and seemed to be extremely knowledgeable was their last source of hope.

Link still had a calm expression on his face and not a shred of doubt could be seen. This was massively reassuring.

He spoke calmly and said, "Don't panic. There is nothing to fear. Although it is a Divine Gear, it is still merely a weapon and has its limitations. Look at it now; it seems to be alive in the Soul Realm, devouring souls like no tomorrow. In fact, it is merely a projection of the Divine Gear in the Physical World. Most likely, Auselia is currently using the weapon to absorb souls. Most importantly, she doesn't seem to have noticed us yet."

The Divine Gear was indeed strong. However, Auselia was not. The Divine Gear could bestow Auselia with many powerful skills, but it would not be able to increase her intelligence. This was Link's chance.

After hearing Link's words and making sure that the Divine Gear was merely absorbing souls while staying stationary, they managed to somehow suppress their feelings of fear.

Link then clapped his hands and encouraged, "Alright, we simply have to keep running until we are out of danger."

There was nothing more to say, and they ran for their lives at top speed.

Link followed behind the group and would look behind him from time to time to glance at the Dark Serpent's movements. As he watched, an in-game message appeared in his field of vision.

Triggering Epic Series Mission: Skeletal Fort Step 4

Mission: Escape

Content: Escape from Auselia's pursuit; Kanorse must stay alive and remain conscious.

Reward 1: 200 Omni Points

Reward 2: Level-7 Glyph of Soul

Two hundred Omni Points was not much. However, the Level-7 Glyph of Soul was extremely enticing. Link had once enjoyed the convenience that came with the Glyph of Soul and simply could not give this up. He accepted the mission without any hesitation and continued to run.

After two more minutes, he realized that the Dark Serpent in the sky had already stopped the devouring of souls. It started looking around and after ten seconds or so locked its gaze in Link's direction.

Link was horrified. Could he be exposed? However, it did not take him long before he realized what was happening. The Dark Serpent was not looking for him, but Kanorse. Kanorse was enveloped in the power of the Divine Gear, allowing the opponent to locate him easily.

In other words, if they did not dispel the snake venom in Kanorse's body, the group was akin to holding a torch in the darkness. They would never escape Auselia's pursuit.

This was horrible!

However, more horrible things started happeningthe Dark Serpent in the sky started moving towards them!

Felina also realized the peculiar actions of the Dark Serpent and could not help but cry out, "It is coming towards ussuch insane speed! What do we do?"

This was a Divine Gear. They had no intention of going up against it in a direct battle.

Link had naturally realized this as well. In fact, he had found more details, saying, "Don't panic, it's not the end yet. We are in the Soul Realm, and the opponent is unlikely to know where we are. Look at it; it is still looking for us!"

Everyone immediately looked over, and sure enough, the Dark Serpent was slithering around in the air without any direction. Although it was traveling in the correct general direction, it would sometimes make a wrong turn and was not exactly advancing towards them.

"Alright, we are heading north right now. We have to run at full speed. The moment we go past the Dark Forest and reach the Ice Peak Fortress, we will have won the battle!"

Everyone was excited at the thought and followed Link's footsteps. They made a detour before heading north.

In the Soul Realm, they were progressing at a much faster pace. They could cover 150 feet per second. As the distance between the Dark Serpent and the group widened, they regained confidence and their ability to run at an even faster speed. After running for more than half an hour, the Dark Serpent was already completely out of sight.

Link encouraged, "See, the Divine Gear is not as terrifying as we thought."

Upon seeing this scene, everyone heaved a sigh of relief and moved even faster forward.

After another hour, they had already covered over a hundred miles and were well into the Dark Forest. Many trees appeared in the Soul Realm, and in addition to the fact that there was no snow on the ground, the surface of the trees was also emitting a faint light. It looked almost exactly the same as the Physical Realm, only a bit dimmer.

Suddenly, Felina came to a stop and gasped, "That is weird; did you guys see a shadow run past?"

## 209. The Alternate Black Forest

In the alternate Black Forest of the Soul Realm, the light was dim, yet the trees were glowing faintly. When one stared into the distance, everything merged into a muddled haze, and there was no way to discern anything clearly at all.

After hearing what Felina had to say, everyone stopped in their tracks and looked around suspiciously.

Just as the crowd was on alert, the strangest noise emerged out of nowhere.

"Caw cawCaw caw cawHahahaha"

It sounded like someone was laughingand it sounded as if the monster that was laughing was standing right behind them.

Everyone was shocked. Link was no exception.

Swoosh! Clang!

Everyone pulled out their weapons and held them tightly in their hands. They stood in a circle with their backs against each other and their eyes facing the source of this bizarre laughing noise.

Link cast an Illumination spell, although its effect was very weak in the Soul Realm. The brightness of the spell was less than one-tenth of its original and wasn't much brighter than a firefly.

Link tried to improve things by focusing all his attention onto the spell.

Get brighter! Get brighter! Get brighter! he chanted in his mind.

Then, a strange thing happened. The light seemed to hear Link's thoughts and quickly got brighter. Soon, the magic light was bright enough to illuminate an area with the radius of about 20 feet. Further in the distance, it looked as if a thick fog blanketed over everything, turning the surroundings into a single blurry picture.

"Do you see anything?" asked Link. He was looking left and right trying to catch anything out of the ordinary. Still, he couldn't find anything.

"No."

"I don't either."

"That's strange," said Felina. "I clearly saw it just now. It was about seven feet tall, it had a large head, and it moved at lightning speed."

"Are you sure you didn't just imagine it?" asked Annie.

"Are you doubting a Dragon Warrior's eyes?" retorted Felina coldly, displeased with Annie's question.

Link believed that Felina saw what she thought she saw.

"Which direction did you see it?" he asked. If it had been other people who saw the dark shadow, Link would probably suspect that they'd made a mistake. But Felina was a Level-7 Warrior; there was no way that she would make such a silly mistake.

Felina pointed to a bush nearby that was more than three feet high.

"Over there," she said. "I saw it stand by the edge of the bush watching me in the corner of my eye. But the moment I turned to face it, it ran away."

Link directed the ball of light towards the bush that Felina had just pointed to. The area around the bush then became illuminated, and everyone's eyes turned to its direction to observe its surroundings.

"I don't see any signs of anyone passing through here," said Annie a few minutes later. "What about you guys?"

"Me neither," answered the scouts, all shaking their heads.

Things seemed to get stranger now. Based on Felina's descriptions, the shadowy monster had a large head and moved at a fast speed. It was impossible for someone like that to leave absolutely no trace behind."

"But that's impossible," said Felina, flummoxed. "I did see it very clearly. How could this be?"

Link sensed that something was not quite right.

He couldn't find any explanations for what was happening. He'd entered the alternate realm before in the game to complete some missions, but each time the journey was brief and uneventful. Simply said, he'd never experienced anything quite so odd as the situation they were currently in before.

He just didn't know what to expect here anymore. What creatures dwelled in this realm? What would happen to them? He just didn't know. He had a vague feeling that they were being watched by some creature, but he had no idea how to deal with it.

If they continued this way, Link feared that something bad would happen.

Link looked up at the sky again through the gaps between the branches and leaves. It was dark and gray, and he could feel a certain pressure which indicated that the Dark Serpent still followed them; it was not that far behind.

This completely crushed their decision to use this path to return to the physical realm from here.

"Let's move closer together," he said after considering it for a while. "Make sure none of us get separated. Felina, you walk in front, I'll walk in the back, and Annie, you and the rest walk in the middle."

The Soul Realm might contain some kind of power that affects the mind. Among them, he and Felina possessed the strongest souls, so they would be the most resistant to that kind of influence. It was wisest to let the scouts walk in the middle.

Everyone nodded silently and adjusted their formation, then continued their journey.

As they went deeper into the Black Forest, the trees got denser, and the forest got darker and darker. If it wasn't for the faint glow that the trees emitted, the wouldn't be able to see their own fingers stretched out in front of them.

HahahaHahahahaha

Just when they least expected it, the laughter was heard again, and it almost gave them a heart attack.

Soon after, in the middle of the party, a scout called Eric suddenly turned around and stared into the dense forest then smiled.

"Oh, Ally, my dear daughter" he murmured. "You're still alive! Ally"

He was about to walk away from the rest of the group and into the depths of the forest.

The other scouts hurried forward and pulled him back while shouting his name.

"Eric! Wake up!" they yelled. "Eric! Eric! Get it together!"

They slapped his face as they shouted his name, but the scout didn't respond to them at all. The eerie smile remained on his face; it was as if he was in a state of bliss.

After a while, his body no longer moved, then a faint shadow slipped out of his body which then flew quickly into the forest, vanishing from their view. When they looked at Eric again, they found that he'd stopped breathing.

"He's dead," said Larson. He looked at Link with eyes full of horror.

The expressions on the other scouts were no different.

The whole forest turned dead silent for a while. This realm had now gotten even scarier than they'd expected.

"That's what it looked like!" Felina shouted suddenly. "The dark shadow I saw earlier moved with the same speed as the shadow that came out of Eric's body!"

Felina's voice helped Annie regain her senses. She then carefully inspected the direction the shadow moved earlier.

"There's no sign on the ground at all," said Annie.

"Was it Eric's soul just now?"

"He was murmuring the name Ally just now," said Felina. "Who's Ally?"

"Ally is the name of his dead daughter," answered a scout who was Eric's friend. "She'd fallen into the river and drowned because of Eric's negligence. He'd always blamed himself for her death."

"Then was it Ally's voice just now?" asked Felina. "Or was it something else that pretended to be Ally to lure Eric?"

The scouts all stared at each other, each imagining scarier things in their heads.

"I've got a bad feeling about this," said Felina to Link. "What should we do now?"

Link frowned deeply now. He looked up into the sky and saw that it had become dark and heavy with clouds. Nonetheless, the pressure he felt from the Dark Serpent was much relieved from what he felt before. They must be quite far away from the Dark Serpent now. This made Link decide to take out the Dimensional Scroll again.

"I don't think we should stay long in the Soul Realm," said Link.

He then directed his Mana into the scroll, and a mysterious aura emanated from the scroll and spread outito the surroundings. Then, just as a drop of ink spread in a glass of water, the world gradually turned brighter, and the colors became more vivid. The white snow appeared, and the frigid wind began to whistle through the air.

Even though they knew that they were still in the Dark Elves' territory and were still chased by someone with a god-level device, the sight of this familiar realm made everyone heave a sigh of relief.

"God of Light!" shouted one of the scouts suddenly, "we've entered the Dark Elves' mass grave!"

Because of the ongoing war, the Dark Elves' graveyard had a large number of corpses that were just dumped here to rot. Some of them were humans, and some were Dark Elves, while hanging from the trees were many executed human soldiers.

A gust of wind blew through, and it brought with it the unbearably rancid stench of decaying corpses.

"This is a cursed site!" exclaimed Felina with a scowl. "Let's get out of here now!"

Naturally, there was no reason to stay in this place for long. After identifying the right direction, they then continued to journey south. However, not long afterwards, Felina suddenly began to tilt her head as if to listen more carefully to a sound in the air.

"Link, listen!" she whispered. "Someone is chasing us. They're very fast, and judging from the footsteps, I think there must be about 30 of them."

Link cast the spell Civet's Ear on himself and tilted his head to listen as well. Seconds later, he turned back to Felina and the rest and frowned.

"This is bad," he said. "By the sound of their footsteps, they must all be ghouls. There's one demon Battle Mage with them as well. They must've discovered us. I think the mistress of Skeletal Fort must be among them too."

Link's outstanding memory meant that he could recognize the same person again after only hearing their footsteps once. That was how he knew that the demon was the one who had previously retreated on the fields near the Skeletal Fort. Even though he wasn't the most courageous fighter, the demon was still at Level-7, so he mustn't be underestimated.

"We are about three miles away from them," said Felina. "With the ghouls' speed, I'm afraid it's too late for us to run."

There were seven of them. Link didn't have much Mana left, and although Felina was a Level-7 Warrior, she was still outnumbered. The four scouts were all Level-4 Assassins, so they were no match for the ghouls. Karnose, on the other hand, was on the verge of transforming into a demon. Not only was he unable to fight, he was dead weight at the moment.

It seemed that they were cornered into a dead end in this realm!

"We'll enter the Soul Realm again," said Link after some contemplation. "Once we've evaded them, we'll come back. That's the only choice we have."

Everyone looked at each other and nodded silently, resigned to their fate.

Link once again took out the scroll, triggered it with his Mana, then the world's color faded again and transformed into the dark, gray and creepy alternate Black Forest.

"Let's move as fast as we can to get as far away from the ghouls as possible!"

In the Black Forest of the normal realm.

Auselia who was chasing Link and the rest at full speed suddenly sensed something. She stretched out her hand to stop the ghoul beside her from moving.

"Those mice have run into a hole again," she said. "This isn't fun anymore."

"What should we do then, Messenger of Darkness?" asked Bruttan.

Auselia went silent for a while before answering.

"I need a Magician who can enter the alternate realm," she finally said. "We're only about 50 miles away from the Black Lake. Why don't you go back to Horton Tower and fetch me Master Aymons? I need his wisdom."

"I'll be on my way immediately!" answered Bruttan eagerly. He knew that Auselia was unhappy with him, so he must show his enthusiasm now. After receiving the order, he quickly turned around and rushed towards the Black Lake.

Auselia stared at the Black Forest in front of her and pursed her lips. She seemed to have gotten into a gloomy mood.

"My precious," she whispered as she gently caressed the whip in her hand, "I'm very sorry, darling. I haven't gotten you a fresh soul yet. But don't worry, it won't be long now. Yes, it will soon come to pass."

At the same time, a solitary young lady walked along the southern border of the Black Forest. She had a pair of pure and bright eyes, and her facial features were exquisite. She wore a lovely sleek blue dress, and she had a small sword on her waist. She stood at the edge of the Black Forest and looked up at the tall spruce of the forest. Suddenly, she stopped moving completely.

"Master's information is lost, re-testingTesting failed"

The expression on her face was dull and emotionless. Soon her cipand toneless voice emerged again, "Enable probability analysisStart fuzzy tracking"

After a pause, the young woman rushed into a direction in the depths of the Black Forest.

She was very fast, and after moving only about 10 feet, there was an explosion in the air. Then, the young woman disappeared into the forest. Wherever she passed, the birds flew away, and the small creatures hid in their burrows and nests as if a ferocious beast had just crawled past.

## 210. May The People Who Love Me Suffer No Despair

Not long after entering the Soul Realm again, Link felt his heart palpitating at an insane rate, as though he was being targeted by a ferocious beast.

This was the premonition of a powerful Magician.

Something must have gone wrong, Link thought.

The Dark Forest in the Soul Realm appeared as sinister and gloomy as before. The usual cool forest breeze, cheerful chirping of the birds as well as the majestic growls of the beasts were absent. The forest seemed dead and silent.

Looking at the road ahead, Link knew that he had to do some preparations to add one more trump card to his hand.

He then checked his current status. He still had 200 Omni Points and an Elemental Affinity Bloodline that he still had not activated.

The Omni Points should definitely be kept for extremely crucial moments. However, the Elemental Affinity Bloodline would be a convenient and useful buff for any battles ahead. All elemental spells he cast would have their power increased by 50%, and while this would not work as well in the Soul Realm, it would have a pretty decent effect in the Physical Realm.

The only problem with this was the great pain that accompanied the transformation process. This pain would render him completely incapacitated.

As he was hesitating, an in-game message suddenly appeared in his field of vision: Pain can be reduced by extending the time required for the transformation

Oh? There is such a choice? Link was tempted and asked, On the grounds that it wouldn't affect my thinking processes, how long would the transformation take?

Two hours.

Confirm transformation! Link thought.

Upon giving approval to the in-game system, Link felt a sharp pain shot through his entire body. It was as though a pebble was grinding all his organs with just the right amount of force to cause extreme discomfort.

When this feeling first struck Link, he was breathless and almost lost consciousness. It was only after ten minutes that Link slowly grew accustomed to the pain.

It was still an acceptable level of pain similar to when he overdosed on the Mana Recovery Potion. Link tried not to focus on the pain and observed his surroundings instead.

As he was not paying attention to his surroundings previously, he did not realize that they were now within a cloud of thick fog. The visual obstruction of the mist, coupled with the natural dim lighting of the Dark Forest, caused their vision to be limited to a nine-foot radius.

"Look, there is a dark figure in the mist!" A scout suddenly pointed at the area beside them and shouted.

Everyone immediately turned to that direction and could clearly see a dark figure skidding past them at an incredible speed.

Felina's description was correct. The figure was indeed around six feet tall and had a strong physique. It was also extremely fast.

Link also saw the creature; he probably saw it in greater detail than everyone else. In his eyes, this figure had a pair of glimmering golden eyes. It was human-shaped with claw-like hands and a long slender tail behind its back.

It really is a Nightmare Beast!

Link had seen similar beasts in the game before. He remembered these creatures were termed as Heart Demons in the game. Although they did not possess strong battle capabilities, their auras had an extremely peculiar and powerful property. Under the effect of their auras, people would lose their rationality and would easily fall into the soul trap they had carefully prepared. The victims would then become the delicious meal of this Heart Demon.

The best way to deal with these creatures was to travel in groups. If they looked out for one another, the chance that they would fall into such traps would greatly decrease.

However, this Heart Demon had just eliminated a scout using its sinister tactics. It must be an extremely powerful one. They still had to be wary of it.

Link then immediately shouted, "Don't panic! This is a Nightmare Beast. Sacred Silver weapons are equally effective against it. Prepare yourselves and commence attack the moment it appears!"

Everyone's confidence was bolstered by Link's words. Their greatest fear was their lack of knowledge of this mysterious creature that dwelled in the Soul Realm. Now that Link had already analyzed the situation and even provided them with the means to deal with the creature, the fear in their hearts had mostly dissipated.

The mist became thicker as they progressed forward. Before long, the visibility in the area was reduced to a six-foot radius.

They huddled together so as to not get lost in this dangerous place. They continued in this state for around half an hour before another accident happened.

Kanorse, who had been lying on Felinasshoulders all these while, started roaring loudly. His roar was strange, sounding extremely violent and ferocious, as though he were an unrestrained beast.

Claws had grown from his usually cleanly trimmed fingers, and as he frantically struggled to get out of Felina's grip, the sharp claws grazed Felina's back a few times. The sound of classcratching against bare flesh was extremely unnerving.

"Ah!" Felina could not suppress Kanorse's strength any longer and screamed in pain. She then instinctively threw Kanorse off her back. The moment he made a hard landing on the ground, he growled ferociously at the group before preparing to flee into the forest.

However, after just a few steps, he placed his hands on his head and knelt on the ground before bellowing, "No! No! I will not fall! I am Kanorse! The strongest Warrior!"

He had obviously reached his limit.

Link immediately rushed towards Kanorse and handed over a bottle of liquefied Sacred Silver to him while he was still conscious. He then shouted, "Drink this! Now!"

Using Sacred Silver to suppress the powers of darkness was an extremely devastating method. Link would not have used it if it were not the last resort.

Kanorse grabbed the bottle as though it was his saving grace and gulped it down without any hesitation.

The moment the Sacred Silver touched his mouth, it started sizzling and white mist could be seen appearing from his mouth. Kanorse then started howling in pain while he continued to pour the remaining Sacred Silver into his body. By the time he was done, the flesh around his mouth had already been completely corroded by the Sacred Silver.

It did serve its purpose after all.

The dark aura that was surrounding Kanorse had diminished greatly, and the blood red hue covering his eyes seemed to have faded as well. However, the Sacred Silver had also destroyed his body.

He became extremely weak and laid helplessly on the ground as he stared at the sky, muttering, "Oh God of Light, please save my soul! Please!"

As he repeated the lines over and over again, two streaks of tears rolled down his cheeks. The strongest Warrior in the World of Firuman was broken. He did not want to fall to the dark side. He definitely did not want to become a ghoul that would kill off many people of the human race. But he was going to lose it soon!

Everyone stayed silent while Annie walked up to Felina and prepared to bandage her wounds.

Kanorse's outburst had left a deep cut on Felina's back. Her armor was already stained with blood by the time Annie reached her side.

"Hold on, use the Sacred Silver dagger to first cut off the surrounding flesh," Link ordered.

Felina knew that this was to prevent the dark forces from infecting her mind as well. She hence endured the pain while Annie started working on the wound upon Link's instructions.

Fortunately, Annie's actions were quick and finished the treatment of the wound in less than five minutes.

"Thank you," Felina whispered.

She felt no anger looking at Kanorse, who was now lying powerlessly on the ground. Instead, her heart was filled with pity and regret that such a genius was about to fall to the dark side.

She shook her head and said to Link, "I'm afraid Kanorse will not be able to make it back to the Ice Peak Fortress. Even if he did, they might not be able to dispel the dark forces in his body. Am I right?"

This was the truth. Everyone fell silent, and Kanorse's face sank.

Previously, he was clueless about the powers of the Divine Gear and thus had the confidence to go against it. However, his confidence and beliefs as the strongest Warrior in the World of Firuman were now slowly collapsing.

Kanorse turned to look at Link as he spoke with a hoarse voice, "Magician, kill me. Don't let me become a monster."

Everyone stared at Link, waiting for him to come to a decision.

The main goal of their mission was to rescue Kanorse. However, they had now reached their limits. Unless a god descended on the world, there was no way to change Kanorse's tragic fate. The only way they could prevent the situation from getting worse was to kill him on the spot.

Link stayed silent. Unless he was really left with no choice, he would never give up on Kanorse.

However, how should he dispel the dark forces corroding his body?

He set his sights on the 200 Omni Points he had left. In order to suppress the demonization process of the Divine Gear, the spells of mortals would be useless. The only spells that would work would be Legendary spells.

Two hundred Omni Points would be enough to purchase a Legendary spell. Link clearly remembered one that could be used to dispel the dark forces while he was playing the game. The only problem would be his Mana Points. He was now left with 1500 Mana Points and would not be able to cast the spell even if he purchased it.

What should he do?

Link opened the list of spells that he could purchase in his mind and found the Legendary spell card he was looking for, glowing radiantly in many different colors.

Forbidden Mystery. Great Purification

Level-14 Legendary Spell

Cost: 140 Omni Points

Mana Cost: 11000

Effect: Dispels all dark spells and forces within a 3000-foot radius.

The insane Mana Cost of this spell made Link shiver in fear. His Maximum Mana now was merely at 8100 points. He would still be 3000 Mana Points short even if he was at his best.

It was impossible for him to activate this spell.

What should he do?

"Ah!! I cannot hold on anymore!" Kanorse once again bellowed. The effect of the Sacred Silver was truly short-lived. It merely lasted for a few minutes before the deadly poison of the Dark Serpent started raging in Kanorse's body once again.

His eyes became blood-red and dark runes could be seen circling within them. The claws on his hand were also growing at a speed visible to the naked eye.

"Kill me! Kill me now!" Kanorse looked at Link, as though pleading him to end his life.

Clang! Felina brandished her Sacred Silver dagger and walked towards Kanorse before placing it right under his chin. She then looked at Link and said, "Magician, we are running out of time!"

Link was still hesitating.

The strongest human Warrior, Two Saints of Mankind, Legendary Swordsman, the Pillar of the World of Lightall the accolades that Kanorse would be conferred with in the future flashed across his mind.

"Link!" Felina urged. She was about to lose her grasp over Kanorse.

"Master!" the scouts shouted.

"Kill me! Stop hesitating! Quick!" Kanorse spoke in a muffled voice. He could feel his consciousness being consumed by a giant snake.

Link gave a long sigh and walked up to Kanorse before kneeling down on one knee. He then placed a hand on Kanorse's chest and whispered, "Warrior, hold on, I will dispel it for you."

Although this was a curse from a Divine Gear, its power would definitely have been suppressed by the laws of the World of Firuman. If Link were to use a Legendary spell, it should be enough to dispel this wretched dark force.

Link decisively bought the Level-14 support Legendary spell.

"Link, you are not joking, right?" Felina asked in disbelief.

While Link was the strongest combat Magician in the human race, he was still a mortal. How could he say that he can dispel the power of a Divine Gear?

Link then gave a reassuring smile and said, "Don't forget that we are in the Soul Realm. As long as you believe in your actions, anything can happen!"

If they were in the Physical Realm, he would never be able to cast this Legendary spell with his current strength. However, they were in the Soul Realm. As long as he had enough conviction, he would be able to do whatever he wanted.

Many thoughts flashed through Link's mind.

Will I be able to cast it? Yes, I can! My soul is comparable to that of a sacred soul! Link thought.

There is no free lunch in the world. There is bound to be massive side effects using the power of the soul to cast a Legendary spell. The question is if it is worth it.

Link asked himself an extremely tough question. The essence of this question was simply, For what reason do humans live?

Many faces flashed through Link's mind. Celine, Eliard, Rylai, Herrera, Jacker, Lucy and many others he had met on his journey.

May the World of Firuman never descend into darkness. May the people who love me see no despair! This was the answer Link found.

He could never support the entire World of Firuman with his own power. The world was made up of many different creatures and races. Fighting this war alone would never work.

Link made this choice not merely based on his emotions, but also his wisdom.

After Link went through this introspection process, his conviction became exceptionally firm.

The next moment, a multi-colored brilliance appeared on his body. Following which, this brilliance extended through his entire body, almost making him look sacred.

A few moments later, this brilliance descended onto Kanorse, who stopped his mindless struggle almost instantaneously.

Kanorse opened his mouth and took a deep breath. His eyes were wide open, though out of focus. He felt as though he had seen the light. Countless blessings of light were raining down upon him from the void of this world.

In an instant, his agitated heart found respite.

The multi-colored brilliance continued expanding with Link as the focal point. It rushed past Felina's body and through the scouts.

In this brilliance, the thick mist was completely dispelled. The Nightmare Beast that was hiding in a corner disintegrated into a cloud of green smoke. His scream of pain soon followed.

An extremely strong energy wave seemed to surge through the Soul Realm and expanded in all directions. The creatures of darkness within the Dark Forest were frantically escaping the area.

Even if I have to give everything I've got, I will continue on the path I have chosen!

Link felt immense pressure and pain on his soul but chose to ignore them all and continued on his Great Purification spell without hesitation.

Amongst this endless brilliance, Felina's eyes widened and looked at Link in disbelief. She understood that this power had exceeded the limits of a mere mortal.

Annie stared at the pained expression on Link's face and wept while trying to stifle her cries.

The remaining scouts were already kneeling on the ground from the impact of this spell. They felt as though they had seen the incarnation of God.

...

Dark Forest, Physical Realm.

Aymons had arrived at Auseliasside. He was casting the Realm Conversion spell at the moment when he suddenly halted his actions. The spell he was casting was interrupted as well.

"What happened?" Auselia asked.

Aymons shook his head. "Nothing. I felt slightly flustered for a moment. It must have been my old age."

He then continued casting the spell.

Five seconds later, the surrounding world seemed to be robbed of its vibrant colors. Auselia, Bruttan and the group of 30 ghouls were all transported to the Soul Realm.

Aymons did not enter the Soul Realm together with them. His voice rang through the atmosphere, "Your Highness. You will be able to stay in the Soul Realm for three hours. Three hours later, you will be automatically transported back to the Physical Realm. If you wish to return before that time, please call my name."

## 211. Youve All Been Very Naughty

The glorious aura filled the sky for five seconds. After that, the brilliant light slowly dissipated, leaving only Link's figure.

Link knelt on the ground. On the interface, rows and rows of notifications popped up. Once he took a glance at them, he realized that they were all reminders from the gaming system.

Player begins to burn his soul. Emergency protection started.

Clearing all reserve Omni PointsBegin consuming 500 reserve Omni Points.

All Omni Points consumed.

Elemental Affinity Bloodline transformation suspended, converted into 350 Omni Points. Begin consuming Omni Points.

All Omni Points consumed.

Player currently has 200 Omni Points. Begin consuming Omni Points.

All Omni Points consumed.

Purification spell completed. All reserve energy from gaming system consumed.

After reading this series of information, Link felt the emptiness in his body which was bereft with Mana and heaved a sigh of relief. Fortunately, he'd only consumed the reserve energy, and his soul did not suffer any damage. Link regarded this as incredible luck.

"Link, are you alright?" asked Annie with a worried tone.

Link turned around and saw the concern in Annie's face which warmed his heart.

"I'm fine," he said. "But I can't cast any high-level spells for a while."

In fact, he still had about 500 points of Mana, but considering the strength of their enemies at the time, this amount of Mana was basically useless.

Felina walked over to him too, and she looked quite alarmed.

"Was that a Legendary-level spell?" she asked.

"Perhaps, I'm not sure," answered Link. "It was a spell that I created when I was learning magic." It was something that he just couldn't explain, so he just had lie about it.

"I'm sure it was," insisted Felina. "I've seen Legendary spells, so I would know. I never expected a mortal to be capable of such force!"

The scouts nodded eagerly. They knew nothing about Legendary spells, but from what they sawhow the darkness of the realm of the soul was dispelled, how the sky was now cleared and how the white fog that blanketed everything was now goneif that wasn't Legendary, then what was?

Link couldn't say anything in response. He merely stretched out his hand and shrugged.

"Oh" Karnose's voice alarmed everyone. It seemed that he was waking up.

The purification spell had been successful. The signs of dark magic and the dark forces had been purged from his body, and the claws on his hands had vanished. Even the blood in his eyes was now gone.

But the powerful divine source of the dark energy was evident when they saw that although it was expelled from Karnose's body, it was not destroyed. It merely turned into a pool of black liquid on the ground near the Warrior.

This black liquid would even move. Parts of it even took the form of a snake and would move threateningly as if it was ready to attack anyone at any time.

Naturally, everyone stayed away from this black pool of liquid. Felina stretched out a hand to Karnose to help him up, but Karnose didn't seem to need any such asstance. He leaped up to his feet with surprising agility, almost as if he'd never been injured.

Then, he turned to Link and with his fist on his chest, gave Link a formal Warrior's bow.

"Master Magician," he said, "thank you for saving me. From now on, for as long as I live, you may summon me any time you wish, and I will fight for you!"

Just moments before, he was desperately hopeless. But at the very last moment, he saw the infinite brilliance of the glory of light. It was as if the heavens extended a giant hand down to him and plucked him out of the dark abyss.

He could only repay such kindness with his own life.

But Link merely responded with a wave of his hand and a cynical smile.

"I'm afraid you spoke too early," he said. "We're still trapped in the Black Forest, and the Dark Serpent is still following us close behind."

Karnose's face turned grave and serious. He looked around and only saw the Assassins' daggers and the Red Dragon Warrior's dragon claws. He couldn't find a sword anywhere.

"If only I had a sword to fight with," he remarked.

"What?" exclaimed Felina, glancing at the Warrior up and down. "Are you strong enough to fight now?"

Karnose nodded.

"The dark forces may have controlled my body," he said, "but it had also repaired my injuries. Now that I'm purged of all the dark forces and all my injuries healed, why can't I fight? Although my Battle Aura isn't at its strongest yet, I'm sure I can kill a few ghouls now."

Link's eyes suddenly lit up. Karnose was a Level-8 Warrior. With his strength, they could probably get out of the Black Forest now.

Moreover, he did have a sword with himthe Storm Lord's sword. He was just about to grab its hilt and hand it to Karnose when a voice interrupted him.

"Stop!" said the sword's voice. "He's not worthy of me yet!"

Can't you let him wield you for a while? Link asked. Only until we escape the Black Forest. Or are you afraid of the Dark Serpent?

"Me?" retorted the sword. "Afraid of that snake?"

Then what's wrong with letting him wield you for a while? Link asked.

"You don't understand," replied the sword. "It's not that I'm afraid of fighting against the Dark Serpent, but I'm not suitable for it. I'm too weak now, but the Dark Serpent is infinitely strong. The moment I come in contact with it, I'll be smashed to bits."

Link thought this argument made sense. He dismissed the idea of lending the Storm Lord's sword to Karnose, but there was another idea in his mind.

Link still had 500 points of Mana left. It wasn't enough for him to fight himself, but it was sufficient for him to use Higgs Field to conjure up a sword using the Khorium in his storage pendant.

With this idea in mind, Link took out the materials from his storage pendant and turned to Karnose.

"I'll make you a sword," he said. "Tell me the kind of sword you're used to. Wait, we can talk while we walk."

Karnose saw the Khorium in Link's hand, and his eyes lit up. Khorium had excellent resistance to strong forces. Even without any magic fixed to the sword, one that was made with this material would be a good weapon on its own.

"I like a single-handed sword" he began, "Well, one that looks like this sword on your waist would be good enough, but it would be nice if it was slightly longerYes, exactly this size!"

As the Warrior described his ideal sword, Link was using the Higgs Field to create one with Khorium right before his eyes.

"I'd like the hilt changed a bit, yesjust like that," Karnose continued. "I'd like a sharp axe at the backand the blade should be thicker, and it should be serrated hereThat's good, yes. Just like that! Excellent!"

Ten minutes later, Karnose held the sword in his hand and tried swinging it in the air. He smiled with satisfaction.

"Judging solely by how it feels in my hand," he told Link, "this sword that you hurriedly created in a few minutes is the best sword I've ever used!"

Felina glanced at him.

"Link is the most famous enchantment master in the continent," she told him. "Such a simple creation would, of course, be an easy task for him."

As she spoke, she showed the defensive bracelet that Link made to the Warrior.

"Look," she said. "I've got one of his creations too. A friend had brought it back to me from the mortal realm as a gift."

Link didn't expect his reputation in the art of enchantment to spread so far that it reached the Dragon Valley and even became Felina's treasured possession. It was indeed an honor.

"We don't have much time," said Link, smiling. "If we are lucky enough to escape from this place and return to the Norton Kingdom, I'll create a magic sword for you, one that's much better than this."

"You will?" asked Karnose, his eyes shining, although he suddenly smiled cynically moments afterwards. "But I'm afraid I don't have enough gold coins to pay you"

"I'll persuade King Leon to reward you," said Link, still smiling. "so don't you worry."

There was no incident along the journey as they walked on.

With the powerful Warrior Karnose here among them, the scouts were relieved. Even Felina was visibly more relaxed. They continued their journey for more than half an hour until Link suddenly felt something awry. He looked up into the sky and raised his eyebrows.

"Something's not right," he said. "They're chasing after usand they're very fast!"

There were no more signs of the Dark Serpent in the sky, but that heavy black aura kept extending towards them constantly.

After a few moments of careful observation, Link finally understood what was going on.

"Auselia has entered the Soul Realm," said Link. "We can't stay here. Let's get out immediately!"

Everyone nodded silently.

Link took out the scroll and activated it with some Mana. After a while, the world transformed from the grays and blacks to more colorful tones. The chilly wind and the white snow once again reappeared.

Link cast the Level-2 Cheetah's Agility on himself.

"Quickly! Move at your full speed!" he shouted. "We've reached halfway, another 150 miles and we're safe!"

As long as they entered the Norton Kingdom army's fortress, Auselia would then be forced to stop. Her god-level device might be able to kill thousands, but there was one huge flawthe natural world rejected this device, so the more energy it consumed, the more unstable it became. Once it reached its limits and had insufficient energy, it would just pop out of existence.

When that happened, there wouldn't be much that the Dark Elves could do except cry about it.

Everyone knew this was the critical moment, so they ran wildly and as fast as their feet could take them. Although Link had cast the Cheetah's Agility spell on himself, his speed was still much inferior to the scouts' and even slower compared to Felina and Karnose's speed. The two Warriors each lifted one of his arms and carried him through the forest, pushing him forward at incredible speed.

They must've been moving at half a mile per minute.

They ran this way for a full hour before Karnose and Felina stopped almost at the same time.

"She's caught up with us," said Felina, looking back at the dense forest behind them. She sighed, thinking that it must be time for them to fight to the death.

"Ha! I guess it's time for my sword to drink some blood!" said Karnose, not feeling a trace of fear. He'd seen and experienced so much by now that he understood that as a Warrior, his aim was not to live long, but to die with honor and dignity!

Honestly speaking, Karnose was quite a decent man, after all. His face was firm and not bad looking, and his whole body was shrouded in a strong masculine aura. With this look and that spirit, any maiden in the kingdom would gladly throw themselves into his arms.

Another talented genius with handsome looks, thought Link, slightly bitterly. What a cruel world.

Link remembered that he didn't have much Mana left so he would be quite useless in combat.

"They've got many ghouls on their side," said Link. "I'll stand by and try to pin them down for you."

He then spent 60 points of his Mana to cast a single target Traceless spell and found a place to hide. Although they seemed to have fallen into a desperate situation, he would never give up easily.

No one knew what would happen in the future. But if they persisted, even for a second longer, there was always a chance that things could take a turn for the better. Many miracles had occurred in this world, and they always happened at the very last second!

Annie cleaned her dagger solemnly and applied the anti-freeze grease on her crossbow. She gently blew off some dust from the crossbow and smiled. This was probably going to be her last battle. To die with Link, Karnose and Felina would be the highest honor as a fighter!

All the other scouts were in silence. They began to check their weapons as well, and they started to find a good spot to hide, getting ready to ambush the enemies.

They were proud to have persisted to this stage as they fought against a god-level device. There was nothing to regret now.

After about a minute or so, a figure shrouded in black flames appeared. It was the guardian of the Dark Serpent, Auselia.

She had 50 ghouls behind her, along with the Level-7 demon Warrior, Bruttan.

Their force was immensely superior to Link's group. Both Felina and Karnose went slightly pale, but they looked at each other and Karnose simply discarded all his worries and laughed.

"Let's see who kills the most ghouls!" he shouted.

"Hahaha! You're no match of mine!" said Felina, playing along with it to give herself more courage.

Auselia noticed Karnose then.

"Ah, look at you," she said with that sickly-sweet tone of hers. "Karnose, Link you've all been very naughty. How could you break your promises to me?"

## 212. What is This Thing?

You would never understand how terrifying Auselia was if you had never faced her in a battle!

When you were going up against her, the immense pressure from the Divine Gear would be enough to make anyone kneel on the ground in awe. Even powerful beings like Felina and Kanorse felt that their hearts were especially heavy upon seeing her, as though a huge stone was crushing their willpower.

"Go, my servants, teach them a lesson!" She hollered.

Auselia did not go onto the frontlines. Instead, she stood cautiously at the back while ordering the ghouls to charge forward.

The ghouls were extremely fast, especially when they were charging forward. They could cover a distance of 250 to 300 feet in one second. Ordinary people would only be able to see a phantom of their true body.

In the past, the ghouls had made use of this advantage to kill many human soldiers. However, things would not go so smoothly this time around.

By the time the fastest ghoul reached the halfway mark, an air ripple had already appeared beside them. This air ripple was six feet wide and 15 feet long, appearing out of nowhere.

Boom! Boom! The ghouls were completely unprepared for this attack. The fastest ghoul lost his balance and flew out of his charging trajectory.

He then proceeded to knock at least five other ghouls out of their trajectory as well.

Following which, the sounds of arrows being fired from the Sacred Silver crossbows rang through the atmosphere. The scouts had already cooperated with Link for a few times and had developed some sort of chemistry with his battle tempo. They would seize the perfect opportunity to fire a burst of arrows, bringing down the ghouls who were knocked into the air by Link's attack.

The moment these ghouls fell to the ground, they were already seriously injured and had lost their speed.

"Kill them all!"

Kanorse's ability to capture the perfect opportunity to strike was also extremely useful in this situation. Half a second before the first ghoul touched the ground, he had already started charging into the heart of the battlefield. By the time the ghoul landed and was struggling to get back up on its feet, Kanorse was already brandishing his sword in front of them.

With a clean swing of the blade, the ghoul's head was mercilessly severed.

The ghouls had an extremely strong life force. However, that was under the premise that their entire body was more or less intact. Without their heads, the main organ for their cognition and coordination, they were immediately rendered useless.

Kanorse's body was like a whirlwind. He spun his body as he dodged the attacks while accurately severing the heads of the ghouls that came his way.

His movements were extremely coherent. The dodging and attacking moves smoothly interlinked with one another, forming a graceful war dance.

His Battle Aura skills were near perfect as well. Before he swung his sword, there was no hint of Battle Aura on it. It stayed this way even after he swung it. It was only until the moment when the sword made contact with his opponent that he unleashed his Battle Aura, erupting his energy instantaneously.

This Warrior knew how to accurately manipulate his energy while conserving it at the same time!

Within three seconds, Kanorse swung his sword five times. There were no fancy sword stances or skills involved, but it was exceptionally effective. He beheaded one ghoul with every swing of his sword and executed all the ghouls that were thrown his way.

"Tsk tsk. Kanorse, you truly are a perfect Warrior." Auselia's eyes shined upon looking at the way Kanorse fought. She then turned to Bruttan and said, "Dear Bruttan, please stop his naughty tantrum before he cass any more trouble."

Bruttan nodded as his demonic Battle Aura erupted. His body was immediately cloaked in a layer of dark flame, and the two nine-foot-long swords in his hands became two pillars of pure dark energy.

"Die, Warrior!" This giant launched an attack towards Kanorse.

However, when he reached the halfway mark, a crimson figure blocked his way. It was the Red Dragon Warrior Felina.

She was originally more than five foot seven in height, already an astounding height when compared to a female human. Furthermore, she packed a strong physique to begin with. When she stepped in front of Bruttan, she had somehow raised her height to a massive ten feet five and enveloped herself in a crimson Red Dragon Battle Aura. She charged forward as she flung her dragon claws in rage, leaving strikes of fiery red shadows in its wake.

"Demon, your opponent is me!" After increasing in size, Felina's voice also became exceptionally bright and loud.

Bruttan was taken aback and immediately blocked the attack with his sword.

Clang! Two loud, metallic collisions could be heard as the conflicting Battle Aura clashed into one another. Bruttan and Felina then both took a step back. They seemed to be on equal footing.

Auselia stared as her eyes grew even brighter, "Another powerful Warrior. It seems like it's harvest day."

At this moment, it seemed like they reached a stalemate.

Kanorse had completely sealed off the ghouls while Link constantly interfered with the battles using his Vector Field spells. The scouts, on the other hand, were picking up the loose ends while Bruttan was caught up in a tough fight with Felina.

The two Level-7 Warriors seemed to have endless Battle Aura. They constantly released their Battle Aura without any thoughts on conservation. Many times, a ghoul crept closer to give some asstance to Bruttan. However, before he could render any help, he was heavily injured and blown away by the explosion of Battle Aura, some of them even had their body parts severed from the terrifying shockwaves.

After a few tries, even the ghouls gave up trying to intervene in this absurd battle.

On the other side, Kanorse was killing the ghouls with extreme efficiency.

Previously, when he was fighting against the ghouls, no one dared to provoke him and ran away as soon as they saw him on the battlefield. However, these ghouls were now rushing straight towards him.

Naturally, he would crush them under his overwhelming power.

The ghouls were beheaded in asstematic manner as though they were just sentito a slaughterhouse. Their heads rolled about lifelessly on the floor while their headless bodies still twitched and flailed about on the ground, reeling in from the shock of getting beheaded. This scene was a testament to the power of the strongest Warrior of the human race.

Within one minute, Kanorse had beheaded 15 ghouls. That was an average of one ghoul every four seconds.

This was an astounding result, and all the scouts around him stared at this scene in awe. They had already depleted all their arrows and were now guarding Kanorse's back with the Sacred Silver dagger in hand.

Kanorse, on the other hand, knew that this was not purely due to his strength. He knew that the reason he could kill these ghouls with such ease had a lot to do with the elusive magical force field that would appear from time to time.

While these forcefields seemed inconspicuous, it would often be cast at the most appropriate time, affecting the ghoul's sense of balance in the air. It could even be said that the ghouls were often sent flying rightito his blade.

The situation seemed extremely optimistic. However, Link, who was currently hiding in the shadows only felt despair and anxiety. His gaze was fixed upon Auselia, who had not made a move up till now. He was thinking of countermeasures in his mind.

However, he had almost exhausted all his options. Link was not a god and was close to his limits.

Is this the end? Link frowned tightly.

However, he suddenly heard the rustling of leaves in the distance. He then paid closer attention, and after listening for a moment, a smile emerged on his face. Vance that old bastardTo think that he would do this without first discussing it with me. I will have a good talk with him after I get back.

Since a powerful aide was coming, the only thing he had to do now was to stall time.

Auselia had also realized the reason for this stalemate.

She sighed, "This is not good. My dear servants will be killed if this carries on. Dear Link, it seems like I have to personally discipline you."

As she said these words, she turned her body to face a tree at the side of the battlefield, chuckling, "Are you going to come out yourself, or do I have to personally drag you out?"

Link's Traceless spell had completely no effect on Auselia, the wielder of the Divine Gear. However, he most certainly would not surrender. He turned his body around and hid behind another tree.

"One small sapling will not be enough to defend against my baby."

Auselia smiled once again as her figure vanished from her location instantaneously. The next moment, she had already appeared at the edge of the tree, flinging her whip menacingly. She then set her gaze in Link's direction before lashing out an attack with full force.

There was nowhere to hide from the attack of a Divine Gear!

Clang! A figure suddenly appeared and blocked the Dark Serpent's attack. It was Kanorse. He had rushed back in the most crucial time and defended Link against Auselia's assault.

However, he had also paid the price for his action.

The Khorium sword in his hand was extremely sturdy. However, it was still material from the mortal world. After blocking this attack, a series of spider web-like cracks appeared on the sword. It seemed like it would shatter anytime soon.

Kanorse stared at his sword in shock and quickly turned to look at Auselia, focusing his gaze on her. While putting up a guarding position, he said, "Sir, please leave, I will block her!"

"Block me? What qualifications do you have?" Auselia laughed as she lashed out another attack.

Kanorse lifted his sword to block the attack.

With a crisp metallic snap, the Khorium sword was immediately shattered into fragments. The whip then continued on its trajectory with full power, landing right on Kanorse's body.

Kanorse immediately vomited a mouthful of blood before his body jerked violently. He then collapsed weakly to the ground. Just one attack from the Divine Gear brought him to the brink of death.

"Dear Kanorse, you are too annoying; I have to punish you slightly."

Auselia smiled as she lashed her whip. With this action, the tip of the whip transformed into the head of a snake. The snake then opened its mouth and revealed its poisonous fangs, glistening dangerously in the dark. It then charged straight towards Kanorse.

"Demon, you still have to get past me!" With a loud bellow, Felina freed herself from Bruttan's grip and charged straight towards Auselia from behind her back.

Swish! Auselia immediately retracted her whip. This speed was extremely fast.

Felina was taken aback by this reaction speed and immediately raised her dragon claws to protect herself.

Clang! The dragon classhattered into pieces followed by Felinasscream of pain. Her hands were drenched in blood and trembled involuntarily from the impact.

Felina lost all her combat abilities in one single strike.

Bruttan arrived soon after. He sung the giant sword in his hand and with a muffled bang, the sword landed right on Felina's head. Felina then vomited blood from the heavy impact before losing consciousness.

The scouts were horrified at this scene and instinctively decided to retreat and defend their stronghold. However, while the ghouls were unable to deal with Kanorse, they could totally deal with the Level-4 scouts. In a matter of seconds, the scouts were all tragically defeated by the ghouls, and they lay on the ground weakly. No one knew if they were still alive after the brutal assault. Annie was the only one lucky enough to rush to Link's side before the ghouls got to her.

Upon seeing this scene, Link helplessly sighed and said, "Let them go and I will go back with you."

"Oh? Give me a reason to." Auselia stared at Link with interest.

Link the calmly said, "The Dark Serpent can make me your servant. However, it would also remove any shred of intelligence and rationality from my brain. If you let them go, I will swear in the name of the Lady of Darkness to serve the Dark Elves."

"Oh? That is a wonderful idea." Auselia was clearly intrigued.

If a Magician were to become her mindless servant, he would truly be quite useless. However, if the other party voluntarily agreed to serve her, the Dark Elves would gain a Magician with almost infinite potential. To get a Magician of this caliber in exchange for the lives of a few Warriors was indeed a good bargain.

Kanorse roared, "No, Master! You cannot do this!"

Annie had the most extreme reaction. She took out the dagger and was prepared to drive it rightito her heart. Link would no longer have any reservations if all of them were dead.

It would definitely be a catastrophe if Link were to become a Magician for the Dark Elves. Compared to this, her life meant nothing.

However, when she was only halfway through her suicidal act, Auselia prevented her from doing so.

Auselia gently grabbed Annie's hand as she said, "My dear, you cannot die. If you die now, Link might not be willing to go with me anymore."

Annie stared at Link with a tear-stricken face as she shook her head.

Kanorse stared into the sky and slammed his fist onto the ground with all his remaining energy as he roared. His voice was filled with helplessness and pain.

However, Auselia was only concerned with Link. This Magician was a perfect specimen. If such a treasure could belong to the Dark Elves, it would be her greatest harvest.

"Swear it." Auselia stared at Link keenly.

"Let them go first!" Link's voice was calm, and his face showed no signs of fear. No one could guess what he was thinking.

After ten seconds, Auselia finally decided to agree to Link's conditions. As long as this Magician was willing to return with her to the Skeletal Fort, she would be satisfied. She then stared closely in case Link had other tricks up his sleeves, "Alright"

Before she completed her sentence, a young girl wearing green battle armor with exquisite features appeared in the Dark Forest. A crisp voice emerged from her body, "Master discoveredMaster Danger Rating: 5 Star. Commence rescue mission!"

"What is this? A magic puppet?" Auselia was taken aback.

## 213. The Threat Has Been Eliminated

When Nana appeared, everyone except Link was stupefied.

What was happening? How did this delicate young woman come to the evil and sinister Black Forest?

Bruttan just waved his giant sword around and leered at Nana as if she was the most enticing thing he'd seen in a while.

"Hey! Look!" he said gruffly. "It's a pretty little doll! I can't wait to squash her to death!"

He then charged forward at Nana. His nearly 15-foot-tall body weighed more than a ton. Even his steps rumbled the bushes and trees around him.

Nana, on the other hand, was only slightly more than five feet tall. She was also slender and petite. She looked as if Bruttan could easily trample her to death without any effort at all.

The ghouls didn't even take any notice of Nana. They were waiting eagerly for Bruttan to finish her off.

Only Auselia sensed something out of the ordinary.

"Bruttan, be careful," she warned.

"Don't you worry" said Bruttan with a grin.

Before he could finish his sentence, he suddenly heard a bang in the air. Soon, the young woman had vanished.

"Huh? Where did she go?" Bruttan's eyes widened. His expressions had changed. He finally felt that something was wrong.

Whoosh.

The leaves on the trees suddenly fluttered. Half a second later, Nana's body reappeared, and she almost caught up with Link now. Her sword's edge was on Auselia's forehead, but it was blocked by a layer of flowing black crystal.

It was the god-level device's protection.

Even so, Auselia was now frightened. She'd never expected the magic puppet to have such terrifying force. She had no time to respond to this attack at all, and if it wasn't for the Dark Serpent, she would surely have been pierced through her skull again.

That's impressive, Auselia thought. But it's still not good enough.

Auselia then pulled her whip back and struck it on Nana's body.

Bang!

Another air explosion, and right before the god-level device hit her body, Nana had once again disappeared, bringing Link, who was right beside Auselia, with her.

Half a second later, Nana and Link reappeared 300 feet away. Her hands were holding Link's head, and there was a magic force field around Link's body which protected Link's neck from breaking due to her sudden burst of speed.

"Master's life is safe," said Nana with that clear mechanical voice. "First part of mission completed. Nana will get Master out of the Black Forest."

Link was surprised. Is the magic puppet going to save him alone? That would be bad. He couldn't just leave Karnose, Felina, Annie and the rest of the scouts here to die!

"Go save them!" he immediately said. "This is my order!"

Nana was about to take Link away and run, but when she heard Link's words, she instantly paused.

"Analyzing Master's authority" she said. "Authority level one. Nana will execute Master's order."

Boom!

The wind whistled, and Nana's body disappeared from Link's side.

"Be careful of her!" Auselia shouted. Her voice had a tinge of panic in it, and she'd long discarded that flirtatious tone now. This is normal, though. No one could stay calm when they could have almost died seconds ago.

Half a second later, Bruttan suddenly wailed in pain. His whole body was thrown out, and one of his legs had been snapped cleanly off from his body. His black blood was dripping from the wound.

Even demons were living things as well, so the amputated leg unobtedly caused Bruttan excruciating pain. Bruttan held on to the wound and screamed as loud as he could, no longer able to fight.

Nana stood at the spot where Bruttan was.

"Target number two has been mutilated," she said. "Threat eliminated."

"Go stop her!" shouted Auselia. At the same time, Auselia instinctively stepped backwards and began to retreat.

Even the ghouls knew fear. They clearly saw how fast the magic puppet was. She was so fast that one didn't have even time to even react. How were they supposed to fight her?

But it was Auselia's command, so they had no choice but to charge at Nana and surround her.

Boom!

Nana vanished again.

A second later, four of the ghouls suddenly felt a mysterious impact on their bodies. They reached their hands out and grabbed their necks and slowly fell to their knees. After a second, a line of blood appeared on their necks, and soon, the heads of all four ghouls slipped off of their shoulders.

Nana appeared outside the circle of ghouls.

"Go to hell!" shouted Auselia with both shock and fury. She charged towards Nana while striking her whip at her.

Boom!

Another air explosion and the whip once again struck empty air. Nana escaped Ausellia's attack by a close shave. Half a second later, three more ghouls stopped dead in their tracks, and soon their skulls all fell off of their shoulders too.

"Aaaah!" screamed Auselia, frantically charging at Nana. She wasn't slow at all, at a speed of 900 feet per second. For a living thing made of flesh and blood, this speed was horrifyingly fast.

But Nana was still twice as fast as her!

Auselia's god-level device whip could almost destroy anything in the physical world, but despite all her efforts, she just couldn't hit the magic puppet.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam!

Four more ghouls were killed mysteriously. Every time Nana dodged Auselia's attack, she would the attack the ghouls at high speed. After a while, only ten ghouls were left in the forest.

These ten ghouls stared at each other. Although they were still obeying Auselia's command and was surrounding Nana, their steps had turned slow, their actions were hesitant, and their minds were in a state of panic.

This was a hopeless battle! They were no match for the magic puppet!

If this went on, the only thing that would happen would be them getting killed by this horrifying magic puppet. Perhaps even their great leader might not survive!

Auselia finally realized that she would never be able to catch up to this demon puppet. She was no fool; she knew it was time to change her tactics. She then changed her direction and charged towards Karnose who lay on the ground.

With a hostage, she might be able to force the magic puppet to confront her.

However, this idea was only good in theory, because reality turned out to be crueler than Auselia thought.

When she was 50 feet away from Karnose, she suddenly noticed a burst of explosive gas flow around her. Soon, Karnose had vanished from the ground. Half a second later, Karnose reappeared about 300 feet away.

The next one to vanish was Felina, then Annie followed, and finally the two surviving scouts. Not only that, but while the magic puppet saved those people, she had also killed all ghouls at the same time.

Auselia was always a step behind Nana. Her speed was just too slow for this magic puppet!

Now that the hostage strategy had failed completely, Auselia exploded in rage. Never had she ever been tricked and teased this way. She was the guardian of the god-level device! She would not be insulted this way!

She then shrieked with a voice that pierced through the air, and she pointed the whip in her hand to the sky.

"I won't let any of you escape!" she shouted. "You'll all stay here! Swallowing Storm!"

Swallowing Storm

Dark Magic Divine Attack

Effects: The Dark Serpent will open its mouth and begin to swallow the souls of all creatures with ten miles.

(Note: Once this spell is launched, the repulsive effects from the physical realm on the Dark Serpent will double, and the Dark Serpent's powers will be reduced by 80%.)

This was a mighty Battle Art, and it was an attack that no one could evade.

"She's lost her mind!" exclaimed Link when he realized what Auselia was doing. His face had turned pale.

There was such a move in the game as well, although it worked at the range of only 700 feet. The real version affected an enormous range of ten miles! With this degree of power, it seemed that there was nowhere to hide!

Besides, once this kind of attack was launched, the device in Auselia's hands would be virtually destroyed. If she wanted to restore its power again, then she had to summon the dark god's power by sacrificing more souls, and even then, she might not succeed.

This was because the realm of Firuman had marked the characteristics of this device, and so would reject it the moment it tried to cross the dimensional barrier.

The long whip in Auselia's hands became erect, and it stood straight towards the sky, shrouded in violent black flames. These black flames surged into the sky and condensed instantly to form the ghostly figure of a giant serpent. The serpent was about 300 feet long, and it opened up its wide jaws, looking as if it were about to engulf the earth.

Link immediately felt a strange pulling force, as if something was trying to tear himself out of his own body.

He turned to look at Karnose and the others. A faint shadow appeared around each of them, probably their souls. It seemed that the Dark Serpent would soon suck their souls out of their bodies!

This was the power of a god-level device, and no mortal could resist it! Link took out the Dimensional Scroll and directed his mana into it.

"Let's go!" he shouted.

Then, the entire world turned gray again, and everyone had reached the Soul Realm.

But to their horror, Link found that it was all in vain because even in the Soul Realm, there was a Dark Serpent so humongous that it covered the whole sky. Its jaws were also wide open, and it was swallowing all souls around him.

The same calamity was happening in this realm. That showed the sheer scale of a god-level device's destruction!

All realms were attacked at the same time, and there was nowhere to run and nowhere to hide!

In the physical realm, Nana stopped and didn't follow the others into another realm.

"Target is using unlimited power," she said. "Threat level, six stars. Begin search for weaknessesNo weakness foundBegin inquiries into historical records of battle strategyStrategy acquiredBegin execution."

After an explosion in the air, Nana's body vanished. She then reappeared near Auselia. The sword in her hand glowed with a blue electric spark, especialyl at the tip of the sword where the spark was blindingly bright.

Stab!

Nana pierced through Auselia's eyebrows.

The black flame flowed to Auselia's eyebrows, blocking Nana's attack.

But Nana ignored it and stabbed at the same position on Auselia's head. Then she repeated it for the third time, fourth time, and fifth time. Her movements were lightning fast as usual, stabbing Auselia more than a hundred times a second.

Two seconds later, something strange happened.

The black flame on Auselia's forehead became extremely thin as if it could be broken through soon.

Nana kept at it and continued to stab through Auselia's forehead with increasing frequency.

Auselia finally felt the vibrations on her forehead. It felt as if the god-level device would soon fail to block the magic puppet's attacks. The defensive shield around Auselia's forehead was about to be shattered.

"This is impossible!" Auselia exclaimed.

She dared not take any more risks. She looked at Nana and suddenly decided to terminate the divine attack of the Dark Serpent and used her whip to strike the magic puppet in front of her.

Bang!

Nana responded quickly. After the last stab of her sword, she quickly launched her body from the spot and escaped.

Crack!

The shield on Auselia's body was finally shattered by Nanassword. Her forehead was now pierced through, and she collapsed to the ground.

Bang!

There was another loud crash. A large tree in the forest was broken in half by the impact of Nana's body. On her back, there was a huge whip scar, and around it, a crack began to spread across her body.

She didn't completely dodge Auselia's counterattack, it seemed. With just the slightest contact with the god-level device, her body had almost crumbled to dust.

She fell to the ground, and the clear, pure eyes of hers looked straight up to the sky.

"Mission completed," she said, her clear voice had turned hoarse. "The threat has been eliminatedNana's body has broken downBegin backing up informationPrepar"

The crack in Nana's body expanded, and soon afterwards, Nana's whole body crumbled to the ground, leaving only a pile of metal fragments.

## 214. The Divine Gear Is Finally Defeated

The moment Auselia canceled the Divine Skill, the giant snake in the Soul Realm disappeared immediately.

Link detected the changes in the situation and brought everyone back to the Physical Realm.

He happened to see the badly-beaten Nana lying at the spot where he landed. He then saw Auselia lying on the ground around 150 feet away with a penetrative wound right through her skull.

Strangely, there was no black crystal-like brilliance around Auselia this time around. The black aura that permanently shrouded her body previously had also disappeared. The wound on her forehead did not seem to be regenerating as well. She lay lifelessly on the ground and seemed to have died for good.

The Dark Serpent which she had always kept close to her had disappeared as well.

Felina had also woken up. Upon seeing this scene, she weakly said, "There is a legend in the dragon clan that each Divine Gear possess a spirit that will choose its own master. If it happens to find its current master unsuitable, it will abandon them without any hesitation."

Kanorse then said, "You are saying that the Divine Gear had lost faith in her after she was defeated by a magic puppet?"

It seemed to be the only explanation.

Link then walked towards Nana's remains. The Divine Gear truly had fearsome power. Nana's body was completely fragmented, and the only body part still intact was her head. Even this part did not escape completely unscathed. There were many cracks on the head as the pair of clear eyes stared back lifelessly at Link.

"She saved us." Annie walked up with a pained expression on her face.

Link felt regret and gratefulness in his heart as he put away these remains into his dimensional pendant. He then turned to his remaining teammates and said, "It seems like we are safe for now. However, we cannot stay here for long. Let's leave."

Everyone was heavily injured and supported each other along the way. Link was also left with not many Mana Points. He merely cast a Level-4 Traceless spell to cover up their presence before they slowly trudged towards the South.

There were no accidents along the way. When the group finally met a scout from MI3 in the forest a day later, everyone heaved a sigh of relief.

A message then appeared in Link's field of vision.

Step 4 of Skeletal Fort Mission Escape: Completed

Reward 1: 200 Omni Points (Given 60 days later)

Reward 2: Level-7 Glyph of Soul (Given 60 days later)

This was extremely good news to Link, apart from the fact that he had to wait 60 days before his reward would arrive.

The scouts escorted him along the way, and the group emerged from the Dark Forest a day later. A huge war fortress greeted them the moment they walked out of the lush overgrowth.

They were reaching the Ice Peak Fortress.

As Link watched the drawbridge slowly being lowered at the entrance, his heart was filled with the euphoria of escaping from that situation alive.

As he turned to look at Kanorse, Kanorse felt his gaze upon him and returned the glance with a smile. He then laughed, "Magician, you still owe me a sword."

Link smiled before saying, "You will have to first tell the King to settle your payment. I can offer to craft a tailored sword for you, but the price of it would definitely be well above 10000 gold coins."

Kanorse then smiled bitterly and said, "That's really steepHow about I give my life in exchange for the sword?"

"I'll welcome that any day." Link smiled.

Both of them then laughed heartily.

Felina, who was standing beside them also turned around and said, "Master Link, come to the Dragon Valley when you have the time. The issue with the Divine Gear is not yet settled. We need your input."

Link thought for a moment before replying, "Make it a month later. I will need some time to rest after returning to the South."

He was also thinking about repairing Nana. This magic puppet was way too powerful. It would be a waste not to repair it.

Felina nodded in understanding. She had been pushed to the brink of death several times throughout this mission to the Skeletal Fort. Even her Dragon Claw weapon was utterly destroyed. She was also completely exhausted from the mission and would not be able to return to her full power without a good amount of rest.

At that moment, the drawbridge was finally lowered. Behind the bridge, Duke Abel, some senior officers, as well as Magician Marco were already standing in wait. When they saw the returning group, they walked forward in big strides.

Duke Abel searched the returned group quickly, and his face softened the moment he saw his daughter. He then walked up to Link and bowed respectfully before saying, "Master, thank you for the hard work."

Link then returned a Magician's bow and replied, "I'm just doing my job. Sir Duke, I have many findings to report from this mission. I will write a detailed military report in due time."

"Please enter!" Duke Abel said excitedly. This was first-hand information in dealing with the Dark Elves. Furthermore, it would be coming from an extremely wise Magician. The reference value of this information would be huge!

As the group entered the fortress, the sight of the Dawn Swordsman caused cheers and smiles to break out from the crowd.

As for the Red Dragon Warrior, none of the human Warriors displayed any signs of disgust or fear when she walked past. They simply stared at her curiously. As long as the Dawn Swordsman was still alive, it would not matter even if the sky was falling apart, much less the appearance of a peculiar Warrior.

As Link observed the scene, he could not help but be impressed by Kanorse's status in the military. He was simply reveled as the God of War. It was no wonder Duke Abel would insist on sending a rescue team even under such difficult circumstances.

As they reached the command hall in the center of the fortress, Link wasted no time and reported all his findings from this mission to the North in great detail. He described the incidents with the ghouls, the Skeletal Fort, the Divine Gear and its wielder, Auselia meticulously. He then introduced Felina to wrap up his entire report.

Link made an extremely objective report, including an estimate of every opponent's strength. When he was done with his speech, the entire command hall fell silent.

Everyone was shocked by two things.

Firstly, they had finally realized how the Dark Elves were able to create a lifeform as terrifying as the ghouls. To think that they would have harnessed the help of a Divine Gear! This was terrifying enough! Secondly, they were equally surprised that Magician Link was able to rescue Kanorse from the hands of Auselia, the wielder of the Divine Gear. They not only escaped her relentless pursuit but also defeated her using the help of Link's magic puppet.

This was equivalent to a mortal attaining victory in a challenge against the gods. If not for the fact that Link was standing right in front of them, no one would believe it!

From this perspective, the Divine Gear would not be that terrifying. After all, it had already been defeated.

After a while, Duke Abel said, "Master, according to what you said, the Divine Gear's location is now unknown. What do you think is the most possible thing that happened?"

Although the person standing in front of him was not even 20 years old, Duke Abel adopted an extremely respectful tone, almost being too humble. This was because Link's battle achievements were simply too outstanding to ignore.

Link had been thinking about this along the way and had his rough predictions. He said, "I feel that the Divine Gear's disappearance would only be temporary. The threat is still at large. It will probably choose the second wielder after a while, and after this painful lesson, the second wielder will be someone wiser and more experienced. It would be terrifying to go up against such a Dark Elf. The Dark Forest is already not safe. I suggest to give up on the Ice Peak Fortress and retreat to Orida Fortress in the South.

One of the Mid-Level Officer was dissatisfied with Link's suggestion. From a Warrior's point of view, destroying the Divine Gear was the only way to completely eradicate the threat. "But this would not resolve the root of the problem; we should destroy"

Before he could complete his sentence, Duke Abel shot him a stern glance before bellowing, "Silence until Master is finished!"

The Officer's face paled, and he immediately swallowed his words.

Link then continued, "I need everyone to recognize two facts. Firstly, it is impossible to destroy a Divine Gear. Secondly, it is not possible for the Divine Gear to stay in this world forever. It is depleting its energy every second and minute it exists, even as we speak."

As he reached this point, he looked across the hall and made sure that his words were taken seriously. He then continued, "The kingdom has operated the iron-walled line of defense with Orida Fortress as the strongholds for 300 years. It is extremely strong and sturdy. Based on my observations, we need to hold on for at most a year before the Divine Gear would be expelled from Firuman. The advantage the Dark Elves have will then automatically disintegrate into nothingness. I feel that this strategy will be the safest in the current circumstances."

Everyone in the hall fell into deep thought.

Link made it extremely clear that his strategy was indeed one that was the safest at the moment. No one would dare to claim total victory over a Divine Gear. As long as one made the slightest mistake, the entire Norton Kingdom might fall into the terror of the abyss.

A voice broke the silence. It was Kanorse. He stood up and said, "I have personally witnessed the power of the Divine Gear. Hence, I agree with Master Link's strategy. The Ice Peak Fortress is a temporary Fortress. The anti-magic properties of the castle walls and the detection range of the surveillance eyes are miles away from those that we have at the Orida Fortress. It will be difficult to hold our defense in this area."

Annie then followed up, "I feel that retreating is the best option as well."

Everyone in the hall broke out in fits of discussion. Ten minutes later, Duke Abel knocked his hand lightly on the table to halt the discussion and said, "I will consider this carefully. We have 10000 soldiers in the Ice Peak Fortress. It is impossible to organize a retreat immediately. We will need to arrange this in waves. Furthermore, the final decision lies with the king."

Although he merely said that he would consider this option, Duke Abel was already completely convinced. He had no confidence in facing against the Divine Gear.

At this point, the military report meeting was adjourned, and Link followed Magician Marco to the Mage Tower after biding his goodbyes.

On the way, Magician Marco said, "Master, we have carefully studied the ghouls. The Sacred Silver that you have brought seemed extremely effective. However, I feel that there are still rooms for improvement."

Link nodded his head and said, "I am not an expert in alchemy, but I will be staying here for another two days or so before making a trip to East Cove Higher Magic Academy. We can discuss how to deal with these wretched beings in this time."

The Dark Serpent possessed a Soul Devouring Divine spell. The army would not be safe even if they were to retreat to the Orida Fortress. He had to discuss a strategy to deal with this spell with the Master Magicians of the East Cove Higher Magic Academy.

Marco was elated and replied, "That would be perfect."

...

Two days earlier, north of the Dark Forest.

Half an hour after Link left, a white-haired, white-eyed old man clad in a black robe arrived at the battlefield.

He was Magician Aymons.

Looking at Auselia's body, he sighed and said, "You are a great disappointment to the Dark Lady. The Divine Gear is tied closely to the fate of our race. It is not something that you use just to vent your anger. Please, be at ease."

He then squatted down and gently closed Auselia's eyes, which were wide open. Aymons then stood up and spoke to the surrounding woods, "Come out Dark Serpent."

With the sound of rustling leaves, a huge snake appeared from the overgrowth.

Aymons stretched out his hand. The giant snake then bumped into Aymons' arm before turning into a whip. Aymons then held this whip as he walked slowly into the depths of the forest. He then added, "This time around, I will definitely find you a better candidate. What do you think about my disciple Lawndale?"

Sssss. The whip first nodded before shaking its head.

Aymons then sighed, "He is indeed the best candidate. However, once he becomes the wielder of the Divine Gear, his lifespan would be shortened to only half a year. That would be a waste. Let me thinkhow about Muddafi?"

The whip shook its head once again.

"Muddafi won't do as wellThis is difficult. Why not let me pick some volunteers, and you can choose one yourself?"

Ssss. The whip nodded its head lightly in agreement.

## 215. The Emerald Circle

At the Icy Peak Fortress.

Two days flew by, and with Link's help, the Battle Mages in the Norton army were able to make great progress in coming up with countermeasures against the ghouls. One of them was the invention of a new crossbow.

In the courtyard of the fortress, Link, the Magician Marco, Annie and a few other scouts were experimenting with this new weapon. A number of quick-moving targets were set in front of them, and these targets moved back and forth at a speed close to 300 feet per second as a scout stood about 150 feet away. The scout held the crossbow in his hand and just pulled the trigger in the general direction of the moving target without actually trying to aim precisely at it.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!

Arrow after arrow shot towards the moving target out from the crossbow at high frequency and speed, almost at about five arrows per second. The arrows didn't always move in a straight line, though. Some of them moved in an arc-shaped trajectory, some in S-shaped paths, yet all of them hit squarely onto the moving target without fail.

Five seconds later, the crossbows were then out of arrows. The scout slammed his hand hard onto the main body of the crossbow, which prompted a metal box to jerk out from it. The scout then added new Sacred Silver arrows into this box and pressed it back into place until there was a click sound. Then, the scout once again raised the crossbow and aimed it at the target. The whole process of replacing new arrows took no more than two seconds.

The trigger was pressed once more, and a shower of arrows rained down towards the moving target. Not one arrow missed.

Soon, the arrows were emptied again, but the scout didn't stop shooting. He refilled the arrows for the third time, then the fourth, then the fifthuntil finally, when he refilled the arrows for the twentieth time, the crossbow was finally trained to its limits, and the strings broke in a discorded twang.

The moving target stopped at the same time. By now, it was pierced through by so many arrows that it looked like a porcupine.

Another scout rushed up towards the target to check it.

"489 arrows hit the target," he reported after a few minutes. "And 309 arrows hit the runes."

"That's 97% of all 500 arrows!" exclaimed Marco proudly. "We managed to hit a high-speed moving target at that high a rate, and 60% of them hit the critical points on the target. This is near perfection!"

This newly modified crossbow was almost entirely based on Link's ideas, so he was quite pleased and relieved with the results achieved. The scouts around him were excited by this outcome as well. To them, this new weapon could mean the difference between life and death on the battlefields.

"If this weapon gets adopted by the army on a large-scale," said Annie, "there would be no reason for us to fear the ghouls! We'd only need five people in a troop to use this weapon to make a huge difference!"

But Link was still far from satisfied. He thought this weapon still had a lot of room for improvements. If only he had more time, he'd come up with a way to use fire elemental spells to modify the crossbows into something akin to a machine gun.

But that wasn't the most practical idea. The cost of developing such a weapon would be too high to be a common weapon used in the army. This crossbow might not be the most ideal weapon, but it did strike a balance between efficiency and cost.

If it were to be produced large-scale, one of these crossbows would cost about ten gold coins while a Sacred Silver arrow would cost about 1.5 gold coins each, totaling at about four gold coins per box of arrows. King Leon might have to burn a hole in his treasury to arm all the MI3 scouts with one crossbow, but it was still a bearable cost and one that would be worth it ultimately since it meant the survival of the kingdom.

"It's time I head back south," said Link.

"I'll walk you to the gates," said Annie as she approached Link.

Link nodded, then the two walked together towards the stable in the fortress. Annie remained silent along the way until they reached a hidden spot near the stables. Then, she stopped abruptly and turned to look at Link.

"The god-level device can swallow thousands and thousands of souls in one swoop," she whispered. "Do we have any hope for victory, Link?"

She raised her head and looked up at Link, her face fraught with worry.

Link fell into silence for a while. The Dark Serpent had a wide range of attacks at about ten milesthat's as powerful as a nuclear weapon. With this weapon alone, the outcome of a war might be completely reversed, and the fate of humanity would be decided.

There was no way for the Norton Kingdom to win without first eliminating the threat of this weapon.

"This is indeedamnacing problem," said Link. "Once I return to the South, I will report this to the king and all the Master Magicians in the kingdom so we might come up with a solution."

"But we are ultimately mere mortals," said Annie, her voice still hushed and fearful. "Can we ever fight against the power of divine gods?"

Link could understand her anxiety, so he patted her shoulders gently and smiled.

"Have you forgotten that we've defeated the god-level device once?" he asked. "Don't worry, once I return to the South, I'll build a much stronger magic puppet."

Annie seemed to gain strength from Link's smile, and the vivacity returned to her face instantly.

"When will you come back to the North?" she asked with anticipation.

"I'll be here when I am needed," he replied.

"Good!" exclaimed Annie. "I'll be waiting for you."

Link then turned around and headed towards the stable where a few Griffins were kept. The magical beast was renowned for its remarkable endurance and speed, so it was the ideal transport to get him back to the South quickly and safely.

"Goodbye, Link," said Annie wistfully.

Link waved his hand and walked into the stable.

"That girl likes you." Link looked around in search of the source of the voice. It turned out to be Felina.

The Dragon Warrior had been recuperating in the fortress for two days, so she was virtually healed. She was leaning on the stable door with her hands folded in front of her chest, staring at Link with a smile on her face. Looking at her now, Link realized that she could remove the armor scales on her body. Apart from her extraordinary height, Felina now looked indistinguishable from any human being, even though her eyes were silvery and were emitting a faint glow as well.

If Link were to be candidly honest, he would say that Felina looked quite attractive. She had a beautiful figure even though she was extremely tall. Her body was well-proportioned, and her curves were alluring, not to mention her legs which were amazingly long and slender. Overall, she looked like a picture of vigorous health.

Link gave Felina a look and said nothing in response to her remark. He knew that Annie liked him, but he also understood that he must be cautious with the way he responded to her. Annie was a good friend of his, the last thing he wanted to do was hurt her feelings.

"Have you been standing here all along, waiting for me?" he asked, trying to change the subject.

"Yeah," admitted Felina. "No other human in this fortress is worth waiting around for anyway."

"Is there anything you wanted to tell me?" asked Link.

"I heard you're going back to the South," said Felina, "I'll give you a ride back, we'll discuss matters on the way."

"You'll give me a ride?" asked Link, confused.

"Of course; come with me." Felina then climbed up onto the roof of the stables, and Link followed closely behind.

Once they were both on the roof, Felina's body suddenly glowed in a red light. At first, it was dim, but soon it burstito a flame, and her body rapidly grew and expanded until she transformed into a red dragon almost 30 feet long. The Griffins in the stables were spooked by her sudden change and flew away in fear. Even the stableman in charge of the Griffins was so shocked he almost pissed his pants.

Felina shook her head gently and lowered her body to Link.

"Get up," she told him.

Fortunately, Link had seen such a sight before in the game, so he wasn't so perturbed by Felina's transformation.

In the game, the players who had acquired the Dragon Warriors' co-operation could occasionally ride on the dragons when they needed it. Most of the Dragon Warriors who were willing to give humans a ride were the younger ones who were more open-minded and didn't regard such a favor as shameful or insulting to their dignity.

Link then climbed up and sat on the back of Felina's neck, his legs gripping tightly to her body to stabilize himself. Once he was settled down, Felina took to the sky immediately and headed to the South.

"Nothing ever surprises you Magicians, huh?" teased Felina with a laugh. "I thought my transformation would've elicited some reaction from you, yet you didn't even bat an eye!"

"Well," replied Link, "dragons aren't foreign to us Magicians. We've always been reading about you in the textbooks. But anyway, why didn't you transform and fly away in the Black Forest? You'd move much faster this way!"

Felina grinned.

"There was a shadowy bird patrolling the Black Forest skies," she said. "I'd be a fool to fly there. Besides, there was that crazy woman chasing after us as well. I'd move faster if I flew, but I still wouldn't be faster than her."

"Well, you've got a point there," said Link. "The Black Forest really was a dangerous place."

"One question," said Felina, "how are you planning to fight against the Dark Serpent?"

"I'll go back to my magic academy and discuss the matter with the Master Magicians there," answered Link.

"You mean the East Cove Magic Academy?" asked Felina.

"Yes," said Link. "But I'll also be asking the court Magicians for their input, and the Magicians from the Southern Magician Alliance as well."

To Link's surprise, Felina laughed at his answer.

"I'm afraid you'll be disappointed," she said. "As far as I know, the human Magicians have a superficial understanding of magic, and your history of learning magic is only about 2000 years old. The magic you've learned was all derived from what the High Elves, the dragons, and the Yabba race taught you. I really don't think you'll come up with any solution by consulting with human Magicians."

What Felina said was all true. Link had read the historical chronicles, where it was recorded that the present human race were the descendants of the Herde people from 3000 years ago. In the first thousand years of their history, they were merely savage barbarians, until two thousand years ago when there was a devastating catastrophe in the Firuman continent known as the "Mana Cataclysm." Magic knowledge and skills began to flow from one civilization to the other due to the shared fate that had befallen all races which forced them to work together in order to survive.

Even now, although the humans had achieved many astonishing feats in magic, they still lagged far behind the others in terms of their fundamental understanding of magic.

Stitly speaking, the Dark Elves were also considered to be an ancient race, but they had undergone too many changes and disasters; a lot of their traditions had disappeared. But they were still much stronger than the humans.

"I'll just try my best," said Link. "If it doesn't work out, then I'll find another way."

It was all Link could say.

"That's admirable of you," said Felina. "Who knows? Maybe you'll find some inspiration from the pile of historical records you humans keep!"

Felina then paused and flew in silence for a while before she began speaking again.

"You know," she said, "there is an organization comprising of tens of thousands of high-level Magicians from the magical races called the Emerald Circle. The members of this circle are at Level-4 or higher, and more than 500 of them are Master Magicians. If you can't find any countermeasures to fight against the Dark Elves in the Norton Kingdom, you should try and seek help from the Emerald Circle."

Link was dumbstruck for a while. He didn't expect to reach a point where he could get in touch with such a high-level group of Magicians as the Emerald Circle so quickly.

In the game, when the war between the Realm of Light and the Dark Army had reached its peak, the Emerald Circle was the main force that fought against the Dark Army. Link himself was a member of this prestigious circle when he reached the Legendary Pinnacle stage and was fighting against Nozama. His position in the Emerald Circle at the time was second only to its leader, Eliard.

"Hey, are you still listening?!" asked Felina.

Link was jolted back to the present.

"Yes," he replied. "Thank you for the tip. Do you know how I can get in touch with the members of the Emerald Circle?"

"Go find the Lady Fortuna," answered Felina. "She's a member of the circle herself. I'm sure she'd be delighted to guide you. You know, she thinks very highly of you. I've never seen her praise anyone this much before. She must've gone crazy."

"Got it," said Link. "Thank you, Felina."

The red dragon then flew faster and had traveled about 250 miles in under an hour. She landed near the Girvent Forest to let Link down.

"We'll part ways here," she said. "Remember, I'll meet you at your estate in a month and take you to the Dragon Valley. The Queen has taken an interest in you."

"Alright, I understand," said Link. "Farewell, then."

Link then waved goodbye at Felina on the ground as she took off. The dragon circled above him in the sky for a while then turned and left. Link also turned around and proceeded to walk along the King's Lane and headed towards the East Cove Magic Academy.

He didn't summon the Wind Fenrir for fear of causing alarm to anyone who might encounter him. On his way, a carriage rode past him, so he paid the coachman two silver coins so he'd let him hitch the ride at the back of the carriage where the other servant was sitting. He then had a relatively pleasant ride for the rest of the journey.

There were two merchants in the carriage, and Link could hear their conversation from where he sat. At first, they were only discussing matters concerning their businesses, but as the journey continued, one of them suddenly said something that shocked Link.

"Did you hear?" said the merchant. "The Magician Wavier in the South has gone insane! I heard he killed his tutor and more than ten other Magicians from his magic academy and even used black magic in Opal City which killed hundreds of people there! He's now escaped without a trace!"

The other merchant hissed, completely taken aback by the news.

"You're not kidding me, are you?" he said. "Where did you hear this from?"

The merchant had asked the exact questions that were on Link's mind.

## 216. A Stunning Beauty

In the carriage, the merchant started flaunting his knowledge with pride.

"Hey, did you know? I just came from the South. Geez, that place is really in a mess. The Delonga Kingdom and the Southmoon Kingdom are in the middle of a fierce war, while the Doska Kingdom is filled with members of the Syndicate. The only safe places left are the Leo Kingdom and the Golle Kingdom. To think that such misfortune would befall the Leo Kingdom! How worrisome! My merchant group had to hire 30 mercenaries and also plan our return trip together with other groups before we dared to leave the area."

"Don't say things that I already know. I just want to know about Wavier," another merchant urged.

Link also paid extra attention to this piece of information.

The merchant then said, "Alright. Don't rush me. This is what I've heard. It was rumored that Wavier had rented an apartment in the city and was secretly experimenting with dark magic. However, he was soon discovered by his mentor. Following which, they gotito a heated argument, and you know how capable Wavier is in combat. His mentor was killed right on the spot together with the accompanying Magicians. This happened in the crowded downtown area and implicated hundreds of innocent people as well. In essence, this is an extremely serious case. I've heard that King Leo is already preparing to punish the Magician Alliance severely."

Another merchant then nodded in agreement and said, "The Magicians from the Alliance are way too outrageous and arrogant. Weren't there demons in the city just a while ago? What did the Magicians do? They merely said that accidental injuries were inevitable and compensated the victims with their filthy gold coins. This is really infuriating!"

"Alright, let's stop talking. The Easy Cove Higher Magic Academy is just in front. These Magicians have all the means to eavesdrop on our conversation. Let's not let them hear us."

"If it were up to me, I feel that Magiciasshould not even exist in this world. They are all monsters! God knows what they do in secret! They might even be scheming to destroy the world for all we know," another merchant muttered under his breath before falling silent.

Upon hearing these words, Link sighed. This was the image of Magicians in the eyes of the ordinary citizen. They respected Magicians but at the same time, also feared them and treated them with suspicion and wariness.

Naturally, these were just the prejudices of the ignorant. There were still many wise and insightful people in the World of Firuman that recognized the value of Magicians. Hence, Link was not that surprised or even disgusted. He was, however, shocked at the fall of Wavier.

In the game, Wavier was the most brilliant Magician in the South. However, he gradually lost his shine and intellect until he finally became a nameless, ordinary Magician.

Even when the world's Mana concentration increased by leaps and bounds in the later versions of the game, he still only managed to become a Level-9 Magician. This carried on despite many of his peers being able to attain the Legendary rank. He was never able to achieve that breakthrough.

Link had met him a few times. His impression of Wavier was that he was an honest, decent and extremely hardworking person. In the late game, he even became obstinate and was unwilling to accept any new forms of magic or thinking.

He also had an extremely significant feature in the early-mid game, which was complete respect and adherence towards his mentor.

Some players hence dubbed him as "the genius who never grew up."

However, to think that he would personally kill his mentor and even all the accompanying Magicians was horrific. From the information he heard, Wavier even disregarded the lives of innocent citizens in the downtown area. What happened?

An ominous foreboding rose in Link's heart. Is the tiger out of the cage and ready to step back into the forest?

There was no doubt that Wavier was a genius. When Link headed south to rescue Celine previously, he had gotten a glimpse of Wavier's strength. Wavier was probably the only Magician in the alliance that made him feel slightly pressured.

If such a genius were to lose his shackles and unleash his insanity on the world, the level of destruction he would cause would be terrifying. This news made Link feel extremely uneasy.

At this moment, the coachman's voice rang, "Hey, young lad. We have reached the academy."

Link was drawn out from his thoughts and jumped out of the carriage before saying, "Thank you."

The coachman then gave a hearty smile and said, "Get going. Don't listen to the nonsense the two guys inside were saying. We have no clue about what is happening in the South. However, our own Magicians from the East Cove Higher Magic Academy are still fantastic. They would never do such immoral things. If you can enter the academy, please study hard."

He then waved goodbye to Link, and with a swing of his whip, the carriage started moving towards River Cove Town amidst the trotting sounds of hooves hitting the ground.

Link's mood was suddenly lifted.

He then turned and walked towards the academy. Since he was already here, there was no reason to conceal his identity any further. With a thought, his body was enveloped in a crimson glow. By the time this brilliance faded, he could be seen donning the Flame Controller's robe.

The gatekeeper Vincent saw him from a distance away and bowed from afar.

Link then nodded before walking into the East Cove Higher Magic Academy.

After stepping through the entrance, Link stopped in his tracks to admire the view of the academy.

From this angle, he could see that the ruins and destruction caused by Demon Tarviss had already been cleared. At the spot where the Heaven's Thorn once lay, a new Mage Tower was being built. The same went for all the other Mage Towers that were destroyed during the catastrophe. All of them seemed to be getting an upgrade and looked more majestic than before.

The reconstruction speed seems fast. King Leon is exceptionally generous this time, Link thought in glee.

The East Cove Higher Magic Academy was akin to the magic hub of the Norton Kingdom. It was incidentally also the place where Link achieved his greatest accomplishments in magic till this date. King Leon naturally had to give something in return when Link had generously offered him the anti-magic soil on his territory. East Cove Higher Magic Academy hence benefited greatly from this deal.

Link felt excited and inspired by the positivity in the academy and walked forward with big, confident strides.

He was already a well-known figure in the academy. When he walked into the plaza, Magicians around the area would bow in respect and stay in that posture until he walked past them.

After a while, Link saw a familiar figure. Upon closer inspection, he realized that it was Dean Anthony's disciple, the poet Selasse. Link was just about to find the dean and shouted, "Hey, Selasse, wait for me."

Selasse was elated to see Link the moment he turned around and said, "It is an honor to see you. What is the aim of your visit today?"

Link's mission to the North was kept a secret. There were only a few people in the kingdom who knew about his actions. Selasse was only informed of his territory development plans which explained his question.

"I was free today and wanted to see the dean. Is he in the academy right now?"

"Ha, you have found the right person. I'll bring you there," Selasse warmly invited Link to follow him.

He led the way as Link followed behind. The two of them walked past the Mage Towers of the academy and finally stopped at Bryant's Inspiration Courtyard.

The courtyard felt slightly different from before. There were no Magician's Apprentices walking around, and there were even the Kingsguards stationed around the area. From afar, one could see many fancy tents erected to shield the people inside from the glaring sunlight. There were also many handsome lads and beautiful ladies sitting under the tents while donning their glamorous costumes. Under the largest tent, Link could see King Leon, Dean Anthony, the Master Magicians as well as Herrera.

There was another person sitting beside King Leon. It was a young woman that looked around 20 years of age. She had a pair of amethyst colored eyes and light golden-brown locks. Her pointed ears paired perfectly with her features which made her absolutely stunning.

If one were to contrast her beauty with the human race, the average looking King Leon would be akin to a farmer that had been working in the fields his whole life. Dean Anthony then simply looked like an old geezer from the countryside while the young female Magiciassitting around her were completely overshadowed by her beauty. The contrast would be apparent to anyone.

The only person who still maintained her brilliance in the presence of this beauty was Herrera.

Selasse's eyes widened as he stared at the scene and said, "Oh, there are two moons in the sky tonight. One is clear and pristine, while the other is gentle and mellow. It must be God's blessing that I can witness such a beautiful sight."

Link fell speechless at Selasse's words and patted his shoulders to draw him back into reality. He then whispered, "That elven woman is a Royal High Elf. Didn't Prince Phillip just visit a while ago? Why are they here again?"

Link deliberately kept some information hidden. In fact, he recognized this High Elf. She was one of the four great beauties in-game, Princess Milda.

In the game, she was the goddess of the otakus, and her fan page had more than 50 million followers. After seeing her in real life, Link felt the game did not do her beauty justice due to the limitations of the graphics display.

Selasse was still slightly intoxicated as he replied, "That is the High Elf Princess Milda. As our ally, she has brought with her a team of Magicians to help us defend against the Silver Moon Alliance. Speaking of which, your action of saving Prince Phillip that time helped catalyze this as well."

Link was slightly stunned upon hearing this news, but this was quickly followed by joy. He thought, History has really changed. The High Elf Magician team had arrived in advance in this timeline. This calls for a celebration!

He was just worried that they might not be able to deal with the assault of the Divine Gear. The arrival of the High Elves was truly a timely addition to their forces.

At that moment, the captain of the Kingsguard, Olaf saw Link and immediately turned towards the tent where all the important guests were held.

...

In the tent.

King Leon placed great emphasis on the help rendered by the High Elves. He had personally come to the East Cove Higher Magic Academy to receive the High Elves Magician team. He was feeling extremely enthusiastic and was passionately holding a welcome ceremony to celebrate their arrival.

There were people dancing and singing at the ceremony. It almost felt like a festival.

Milda seemed to be very satisfied, judging by the smile on her face. She would tell a few anecdotes about life on the Isle of Dawn to King Leon, Anthony and Herrera every so often. The atmosphere seemed harmonious.

However, there were still many High Elf Magicians behind her.

These Magicians had an arrogant and impatient look on their faces. From their perspective, the cultural performances of the human race were simply too coarse and vulgar for their liking. It was like poison to their ears and eyes!

They were merely trying to be courteous. If not, all of them would have left a long time ago.

"My lord, I believe it is almost time," Milda said as she gave a warm smile. She had already put on this facade for a long time. It was becoming unbearable.

King Leon, on the other hand, felt extremely elated. He had not felt so relaxed in a long time. However, after seeing the tired expression on Milda's face, he said, "Alright, I will have to trouble you in this period of time. Please feel free to tell us if you have any requests. The Kingdom will try our best to fulfill your needs."

"Thank you very much for your hospitality." Milda was extremely polite, following which, she asked, "Do you happen to know when Magician Link will return from the North? I have to thank him personally for the incident regarding my brother."

King Leon had a proud expression on his face when Link's name appeared. He said, "It won't be long. We have news coming from the North this afternoon that Master Link had already returned to Ice Peak Fortress."

As he spoke, he saw Olaf walking towards him.

"Your Majesty, Magician Link is here. Look, he is right there." Olaf pointed in Link's direction.

Everyone in the tent immediately turned their heads in that direction, especially the High Elf Magicians. Their movements were almost unanimous. Their eyes were all set on a figure clad in a crimson robe not far away from where they were sitting.

To the kingdom, Link had just returned from a highly secretive and important mission. He was bound to bring back valuable information that would aid them in the war. It was thus something that they would look forward to.

To the High Elves, Magician Link had become famous even in the Isle of Dawn. Prince Phillip rained prass about him when he returned to the Isle of Dawn, even calling him the genius of the Norton Kingdom. Furthermore, he was the Magician who slew Demon Tarviss using a Level-9 spell. Even the prophet had offered his compliments to this young guy.

The High Elves had prided themselves on their accomplishments in magic. In their eyes, the human race had always been inferior. How could they not be surprised when such a prominent figure suddenly appeared in the human race?

## 217. Cant Do it in Three Years

"Ah, Master Link is already back? Please let him in!" King Leon was very happy.

He had received news from the North. Not only had Link found a way to fight against the ghouls, but he had also rescued Kanorse and defeated the one with the Divine Gear. This greatly lowered the pressure on the kingdom.

This was a never-seen-before accomplishment.

Now, the High Elves thought so highly of them, making King Leon feel much better.

To be honest, as the king of the humans, he was stressed when faced with the High Elves and their long history of advanced magic. Without taking other aspects into consideration, their queen had a Level-9 Master Magician. This was extraordinary power, and she had countless other Master Magicians as well.

Faced with such strength, King Leon had no confidence at all.

Now, a Magician like Link had appeared that could impress the High Elves. It was good, very good. Link was the nation's treasure.

Seeing Link come over, King Leon stood up from his seat. Dean Anthony and the other Master Magicians went to welcome him as well. Seeing this, Elf Princess Milda also followed out of politeness and stood beside the king. She studied the incoming Magician as she walked.

He had black hair, average features, and average height. If not for his Magician's robe, no one would be able to recognize him in a crowd. As he walked closer, Milda finally saw some characteristics. The man's Mana was quite strong, only a little weaker than Anthony's. His eyes were very black and very clear. At a glance, they looked like a child's, but at closer inspection, they also seemed deep.

After observing, Milda nodded subtly. She thought, He's quite talented, even if he were in the Isle of Dawn.

She then turned to look at the magic legion she had brought. This time, she had brought 50 Magicians. They were all young and under tity years old. She brought them out to become more experienced.

Of these Magicians, the lowest was Level-4. She was the highest, at the peak of Level-7. She was only a hair away from Level-8. Other than her, there was a Magician at Level-7 and fifteen at Level-6. This group was much stronger than the entire Norton Kingdom put together, but it was just the tip of the iceberg for the High Elves.

Sensing the princess's gaze, one of the young Magicians looked eager for action. His name was Morrowson. He was the third son of the Rosshander familia. He was 27 years old, and he was a Level-7 Magician. He was one of the best Magicians of the younger generation.

Milda looked back and motioned to Morrowson to stay put with her eyes. The polite and sweet smile appeared on her face again.

The king had arrived beside Link. He intimately grasped Link's hand. Laughing, he said, "Master, you've really helped me greatly this time. Otherwise, the northern war situation would be troublesome. Come, come, sit beside me."

King Leon was too welcoming, and Link could only hold his hand and follow the king to the seat. Dean Anthony and the other Master Magicians who had been sitting there were all forced one seat to the side. Thankfully, Link's performance had convinced the other Magicians. Otherwise, this action would have created some enemies.

After sitting, King Leon introduced with a smile, "This is the eldest daughter of the Elf Queen, Princess Milda. She is also a powerful Magician."

Link nodded at Milda. "Your Highness."

Milda smiled and replied, "Thank you for saving my brother Phillip. He alwasspeaks of you."

Link also smiled. "It is my duty. Prince Phillip has already thanked me and even gifted me a Prophet White Stone. Your Highness must not worry over this matter."

His response was very formulaic. It was most suitable for this situation.

"Your words are so direct." Milda covered her mouth and laughed. She was honestly too pretty. Her smile was beautiful too, like thousands of flowers blooming at once.

Link realized that everyone around him was awestruck. Even Anthony had to turn away, affected by Mildassmile.

King Leon acted unnaturally as well. He smiled and said, "Dancers, musicians, don't just stand there. Start dancing and playing."

But before the music could begin, a voice suddenly said, "Your Majesty, I have a request."

King Leon turned around and saw a High Elf Magician in the tent nearby stand up. He bowed politely and said, "Your Majesty, I heard that Master Magician Link's spells are very unique and no one in the Norton Kingdom can surpass him. We are very curious. May we witness it?"

King Leon was taken aback. He turned and looked at Princess Milda.

Milda smiled sweetly. "Your Majesty, we High Elves are a tribe of magic-workers and thirst for spells. We were all in awe after hearing about Link."

King Leon was conflicted. He knew Link was powerful, but he was still too young. The elves seemed prepared. He said he wanted to witness Link's spells, but it was actually a challenge. If Leon could not sense the danger, he would fail as a king.

The High Elves took pride in their magic. Hearing that a genius had appeared in the Norton Kingdom, they were obviously upset and wished to fight.

They were allies, but deep down, there were still rivalries and conflicts.

Anthony also sensed the elves' ulterior motive. He chuckled and said, "Link has just returned from the North. The travel must have been hard. Why don't we do it another time?"

At the side, Herrera nodded as well. Smiling, she said in her smooth and gentle voice, "Master Link's spells are too dangerous. It is not suitable to demonstrate them at an event like today. What if he hurts someone? Your Majesty, I think Master Link has something important to discuss with you, don't you think?"

Hearing this, King Leon began to follow Herrera's flow. However, the High Elf was adamant. He stood up and walked out while introducing himself.

"I am Morrowson from the Rosshander familia, a Level-7 Magician. I've heard many stories about Magician Link and am very curious. Anyway, this won't take much time."

With that, he took out a small Mithril ball. His wand glowed, and the ball hovered before him. It began to produce different complex imagesbirds, horses, flowers, and more.

Every image was realistic without even a sliver of a flaw.

That was not all. Multitasking, Morrowson demonstrated his transformation spells and spoke to the silent Link at the same time, "Mr. Link, I heard that your enchantments are very advanced. What do you think of my Higgs Force Field?"

Objectively, Morrowson was using it very well. Even Link was not at his level. He still had not spent enough time learning magic and never trained in these showy techniques.

With this, the enchantment master from the East Cove Magic Academy looked uncomfortable. Even Master Weissmuller, who specialized in enchantments, could not use transformation spells as easily as Morrowson.

This situation was different now. The opponent was very strong and showed that he was challenging the other. If Link didn't accept it, it was a blow to his ego. If he did, he would lose.

Awkward.

The enchantment masters of East Cove Magic Academy were all silent. Dean Anthony whispered to Link, "Just use something you're good at to deal with him. These small techniques aren't important."

But Link frowned. He did not like these meaningless spells. He could sense that the High Elf was doing this out of arrogance. However, after all those life-or-death experiences, Link had pride and restraint for his spells.

Once he cast a spell, he must get something in return, either money or a life. He did not like performing in front of everyone for the sake of it.

Seeing that he was not speaking, Princess Milda guessed that he did not dare to accept the challenge and was a bit disappointed. "I see. Your reputation was probably just exaggerated by the human race. I knew that humans couldn't have any official Magicians. They're all amateurs."

Of course, she only thought that. She couldn't say it out loud. Instead, she reprimanded, "Morrowson, what are you doing? Mr. Link just returned from the northern battlefield. Can't you let him rest? Step down. Demonstrations can come later."

Morrowson shrugged. "As you wish, Your Highness."

He put away his Mithril ball with disappointment and prepared to return to the High Elves' tent. The atmosphere was heavy, and the human Magicians were all embarsed. King Leon felt humiliated as well and didn't know what to say.

"Wait." Link stood up.

Morrowson stopped and smiled. "Mr. Link, did you prepare a skill?"

Link's smile faded. He shook his head and said, "It's not a skill. It's just a small trick."

With that, he took out his wand. Manarsed in. Half a second later, the air before him trembled. A round three-foot-wide spatial lens appeared. Then, Link took out a Mithril ball the size of a finger and flicked it towards the mirror. After the ball entered, the mirror began to distort. It folded and overlapped like a high dimensional space demonstration. It was indescribably complex.

It was maintained for three seconds before the mirror disappeared. Link reached out, and a black grain dropped into his hand. Flicking his hand, he activated the Magician's Hand. The black metal grain floated towards Morrowson.

"It's just a small trick, but I'm sure you wouldn't be able to do it even after three years."

With that, many humans involuntarily gasped. Link had spoken so arrogantly but if the High Elves could beat him, he would be so embarsed.

However, the High Elf had a strange expression.

The moment the mirror appeared, Morrowson's expression changed and it was not just him. The princess and the Magician legion in the distance all grew serious.

The reason was simple. Link had used spatial magic to compress the Mithril to one-hundredth of its original size. Spatial magic had always been the most difficult type of magicnot just for humans, but also for High Elves. There were only a few who could do it.

Not everyone with Mana talent could perform this magic. It required extremely high insight. In this regard, humans were not too far behind the High Elves.

Link's words were not polite, and Morrowson was discontent, but after this, he could not argue. He nodded and said, "Master Link's trick is very powerful but please take back what you said about three years!"

Then his expression darkened, and he stopped speaking. Holding the compressed Mithril ball, Morrowson stalked back to his seat.

He had embarsed his race.

He would go learn spatial magic this instant!

## 218. The Divine Skill is Impossible to Defend Against

Link was being polite when he mentioned that Romilson would take at least three years to learn a Spatial Magic spell. In fact, he should have mentioned that he would not master it in his lifetime.

There were, of course, Spatial Magicians amongst the High Elves in the game. However, they were all known by name, and the total number of Spatial Magicians amongst the High Elves never exceeded five at any point in time. Romilson was never part of this exclusive and powerful group.

Link had once run errands for Romilson while he was playing the game. Coincidentally, these missions were those where Romilson had tasked Link to collect materials required for Spatial Magic experiments. He was trying to master Spatial Magic with fervor.

However, after Link had worked hard to collect all the materials, Romilson's experiment eventually ended in failure, and he never managed to master Spatial Magic.

Link could still remember what Romilson said after his experiment failed, "Oh, God of Light, why would a thing as torturous as Spatial Magic exist in this world!"

Following which, he would burn all the magic books and materials he had painstakingly collected for his experiments.

Link was confident enough to say so because of this exact mission that he had taken.

After Link had spoken, not only did Romilson not retort, the High Elf Princess Milda also fell silent. The reason was simple. In the game, although Milda knew a few Spatial spells, that was only after she had attained the Legendary rank. Furthermore, she had only mastered the most basic of Spatial Magic and was far from achieving anything outstanding.

At that moment, she still had not mastered any form of Spatial Magic. In fact, she had once tried to learn this torturous branch of magic but gave up after just half a year. She almost went through a mental breakdown during that period of time due to the difficulty of this magic.

However, Milda deeply regretted her actions back them. If she had persevered on the path, she might have been able to reclaim the dignity of their race in front of these humans. She would have stood up immediately and shouted, "Look at how arrogant you are. Isn't it just some little tricks? Anyone could cast those simple spells!"

But she could not. Her entire Magician team including herself were completely clueless about the workings of Spatial Magic.

"That is amazing. Sir Link has really opened our eyes to a new realm of magic." Milda smiled dryly while the rest of the High Elves followed suit. There was a hint of bitterness and disdain in their expressions.

This was a huge blow to the reputation of the High Elves. If this incident ever got out, they would definitely become the laughing stock of all the races in Firuman.

On the other hand, while King Leon was clueless about magic, he could tell from the High Elves' reaction that Link had completely overshadowed them. He then laughed heartily and said, "Master Link, Romilson is young. Don't get too worked up over this matter."

Following which, he then turned to Milda and said, "Milda, our Master Link is known for his bad temper. Please don't take offense. From my perspective, I don't think Romilson needs three years for this spell. One year would be more than enough just to learn one spell. Am I right?"

Milda was completely dumbfounded by King Leon's speech. After all, he had completely no knowledge about magic. She could only reply with an awkward and embarsed smile.

Dean Anthony had a shocked expression on his face. As an established Magician, he could understand the difficulty of the little trick Link just performed. Why would the High Elves eat humble pie if not for the ridiculous difficulty of Link's performance?

Seeing King Leon's attempts at lightening the atmosphere, Anthony echoed, "Your Highness Milda, Master Link, and Romilson are both young lads. Isn't it normal for young people to learn and compete with one another? I say let bygones be bygones. Your Majesty, it will be nightfall soon, shall we adjourn for the day?"

This was the exact sentence King Leon was waiting for. Now that the human race had defended their dignity in front of the High Elves, there was no need to embarrass them any further.

He nodded and said, "The dean is right. Milda, shall we end this celebration?"

"At your command," Milda said as she wished to leave this place immediately.

King Leon immediately waved his hand and commanded the musicians and dancers to leave. Everyone around the desk then stood up and prepared to leave the premises.

Link had more important things to take care off. The things that happened moments ago were insignificant compared to what he wanted to say. He merely performed a few tricks and defended the dignity of the human race. It would at most become an interesting anecdote in the near future. However, the war in the North was a more pressing issue altogether.

He then whispered into King Leon's ears, "Your Majesty, the issue about the Dark Divine Gear is pressing. Why don't we start discussing countermeasures in the Heaven's Thorn while the High Elves are present?"

King Leon immediately felt a shiver down his spine. He was well aware of the details of the military report Link gave in the North. Naturally, he was also knowledgeable of the dangers the Divine Gear posed. This issue was related to the fate of the Norton Kingdom.

He recollected his stern demeanor and relayed Link's message to Milda.

Milda naturally agreed. What happened previously was merely a small matter. When it came to serious matters, it would be important to put aside personal emotions. A Magician who was unable to accomplish this would be unfit for the upper echelons of the kingdom.

She nodded sternly and whispered to the attendant beside her. This attendant then immediately ran towards the High Elves' Magician team to relay the message.

On Link's side, he was also explaining the situation to Dean Anthony and the concerned individuals. Following which, an entire team made up of powerful Magicians headed towards the Heaven's Thorn.

Although the construction of the Heaven's Thorn was not complete, the parliament hall in the tower could already be used. Upon reaching the long table, King Leon naturally sat at the head of the table, followed by Dean Anthony, who sat by his side and then Link. They were then followed by the respective Master Magicians of the academy and lastly, the high-ranking Magicians. There was a total of over sixty people in the hall.

Amongst them, those who were less than Level-5 in rank could only stand as they were not offered seats.

It was the same situation on the High Elves side. Milda was sitting beside the king followed by Romilson and then the high-ranking Magicians.

After everyone was seated, King Leon coughed slightly and said, "We will be discussing strategies to deal with the Divine Gear, the Dark Serpent. We will need powerful spells in response to the Divine Gear. As I am not well versed in the area of magic, Master Link will speak on my behalf."

The mention of the Dark Divine Gear sent shivers down the spines of the High Elf Magicians. All of them immediately put their contempt for the human race at the back of their minds and listened intently.

Link nodded and pointed his wand in the air. After a beam of light shot through the air, the appearance of the Dark Serpent emerged in the form of a hologram. It was a black whip in the shape of a snake.

"This is the Dark Serpent. It is extremely powerful. In order to summon it, the Dark Elves sacrificed at least 150000 Icefield Barbarian souls. In the North, I witnessed a fortress made entirely out of bones of the deceased. They term this the Skeletal Fortress. Upon entering the Soul Realm, I could see the captive souls of the Icefield Barbarians floating around the area."

While he was speaking, Link changed the display to show the appearance of the Skeletal Fort.

At this moment, everyone had a look of disgust and shock on their faces, especially the High Elves. They had lived a life of peace and decadence on the Isle of Dawn. They could never have imagined such cruelties existed in the world.

"150000 lives? How could the Dark Elves do such things?"

"The Spider Queen is an Evil God! She will definitely be defeated!"

"A fortress made out of bones. If not for the fact that I witnessed it with my own eyes, I would never have believed such evil existed!"

With a light thud, Link, placed another wand on the table. This wand exuded a dark presence and the Cat's Eye Stone at its tip had been delicately carved into the shape of a horrified human face.

Dean Anthony immediately recognized this Epic Dark Magic Wand. He shouted, "Century's Nightmare, the Soul Taker's Wand!"

Link continued, "This is the weapon of a Dark Magician that I defeated at the site. It is extremely powerful. An ordinary person will probably be bewitched the moment they come close to it. However, what I want to say is that the Divine Gear is a hundred times, or even a thousand times stronger than this. The wielder of the Divine Gear, Auselia, had once attempted to unleash the Soul-Devouring Divine Skill. From my observation, this Divine Skill has a range of 11 to 13 miles."

Everyone fell silent upon hearing this information. Everyone stared at the Dark Wand on the table and tried to imagine the power of the Divine Gear in their minds.

A Divine Skill that possessed a range of 13 miles was truly a catastrophe!

After a long while, King Leon spoke with a terrified expression, "I have no idea how to deal with this specifically. However, we need to have a countermeasure to this Divine Gera. If not, we will definitely lose this war."

Milda then looked at Link and said, "Since the Divine Gear is so powerful. May I ask then, how did Master Link escape?"

"I relied on a magic puppet that I had accidentally acquired." Link then tapped his wand lightly in the air again, and Nana's image appeared in the air. He then continued, "This magic puppet is extremely powerful and possessed a fast attacking speed. Making use of its sneak attack, we managed to kill the wielder of the Divine Gear, which allowed us to escape alive. However, the Divine Gear has a spirit of its own. The moment it realized that its host was killed, it hid its presence straight away. I was hence unable to bring it back with me."

Link deliberately left out Nana's origin in his account. It was a normal sight for a Magician to have his own magic puppet. Hence, no one questioned him further on this matter.

After listening to this account, Milda wentito deep thought while all other Magicians fell silent.

Was it possible to defeat a Divine Skill using mere mortal techniques?

Even after bringing together the strongest Magicians in the Norton Kingdom, as well as a team of elite Magicians from the younger generation of the High Elves, no one had any ideas that could turn the situation around.

They responded with silence.

Anthony was the first one to speak, "I feel that I need to make a trip to the library."

The moment he said that Romilson sneered and said, "Dean, I don't think that hitting the books will give you an answer. The Dark Serpent has appeared a total of three times throughout history. Due to the effect of the Dimensional Rejection, it will change its form every time it enters the World of Firuman. Hence, we will be facing a brand new Dark Serpent. The previous methods will not work."

This demonstrated the in-depth knowledge the High Elves had about the history of this world. They had been around for more than 10000 years and had never lost connection with any of their culture and ancestors. They had detailed records of everything that ever happened in this world.

In this regard, the human race which had only been around for a short time and were constantly agonized by war and conflict could not even hold a candle to the High Elves.

Anthony merely moved his lips in disdain before falling silent after listening to Romilson's sarcastic words. While his tone was infuriating, it was the truth. Furthermore, it was not a time for personal emotional disputes.

After ten minutes, King Leon still heard no suggestions that could bring any changes to the current situation. Even Link fell silent. The boundaries of magic were limitless; he still had a long way to go before attaining the level of a god.

Lastly, King Leon frowned as he said, "We cannot delay this any further. Master Link, are you sure that the Divine Skill can only be activated once?"

"I am sure."

Milda also added, "This dimension will automatically reject the power of the Divine Gear. Hence, it can only be activated once."

King Leon then stood up and said, "Well then, I will start preparing now. I need to make sure that the kingdom is still strong enough to defend itself against the Dark Elves even after the destruction of an entire troop."

Magicians had their own way of dealing with problems, and King Leon also had his own response to this issue. When magic could no longer provide an answer, he had to consider the number of sacrifices he needed to make.

This was truly a cruel and helpless choice.

If they could not find a way to deal with the Divine Skill, it meant that one of the main troops of the kingdom would definitely be destroyed by the Soul Devouring Divine Skill of the Dark Serpent. What King Leon had to do was then to ensure that he could swiftly organize a new line of defense after the catastrophe in place of the casualties, preventing the kingdom from being breached.

Milda also had a serious expression on her face as she said, "I have to make a trip back to the Isle of Dawn. I think I might find some useful answers there."

The High Elves and the Dark Elves were mortal enemies. The moment they engaged in conflict, they would not stop until one side was completely defeated, that was, to the point of eradicating their entire race. The Norton Kingdom was now a shield for the High Elves. If this shield was broken, the High Elves would also pay a heavy price of losing many of their comrades.

Hence, the High Elves would do their best to ensure the integrity of this shield.

This was what they needed to and had been doing for the past tens of thousands of years. The only thing that changed was the name and ownership of this shield accompanying the rise and fall of many kingdoms.

"I thank the High Elves for their help in this matter," King Leon spoke respectfully with a heavy heart.

It was not necessary to continue the meeting any further. Everyone stood up with a pained expression on their faces.

Annie then asked, "Link, what plans do you have?"

Link had already formulated a plan in his mind. He did not plan to keep it in and said, "My magic puppet was destroyed while it was attacking Auselia. I will try my best to repair it. Although the Divine Gear is invincible, it's wielder is not. Perhaps, my magic puppet can once again create a miracle."

Link did not witness the entire battle between Nana and Auselia. However, if she had already done it once, why not a second time?

This was Link's interpretation of the solution to deal with the Divine Gear. It might not be the most reliable way, but as long as there was a chance of success, it was worth trying.

## 219. Spatial Magicians Are All Monsters

After the conference, Link politely rejected Anthony's invitation. He prepared to return directly to his territory and find Vance. He needed Vance's help if he wanted to repair Nana.

Coming out of the Heaven's Thorn, Link began thinking of how to repair Nana.

He had dealt with Nana before and was certain about this magic puppet's strength. She was extremely fast and had almost 700 years of battle experience. She reacted quickly and was exceedingly sensitive to enemies' weaknesses. Her body was strong; basic elemental magic was mostly ineffective on her. Bottom line, she was practically a perfect soldier.

Link thought for the entire way but could not think of any areas to fix. Vance had spent twenty years creating this magic puppet, and it definitely couldn't be underestimated.

That simplified things. Since he couldn't fix it, he would just strengthen it, pushing Nana's limits as far as he could.

She was fast, wasn't she? Then he'd make her even faster!

She couldn't turn at her max speed, right? Then he'd think of a way to make her turn!

She wasn't sturdy enough and was destroyed by the Divine Gear, right? Then he'd make her even stronger!

Following this train of thought, countless ideas immediately appeared in Link's mind. The magic knowledge he had learned recently popped up like bubbles. They combined, burst, and combined again, creating various crazy and unique ideas.

"Yes, I'll hurry back and recreate Nana!" Link was excited now. He sped up and went towards the stable of the East Cove Magic Academy.

Halfway there, a voice suddenly sounded behind him, "Mr. Link, wait for me."

The voice was crisp like marbles rolling on a plate. This unique and beautiful voice belonged to the Elf Princess Milda.

Link slowed down. He turned to see Milda jog over alone. Probably due to the running, her translucent cheeks were now pinkish. She was as beautiful as a painting.

"How may I help you?" Link was confused. He hadn't really interacted with the princess yet.

Milda reached Link's side. She exhaled deeply and adjusted her breathing. She quickly recovered her ladylike composure and smiled, saying, "I'm here because of the spatial magic spell you just used. The spell is very unique. From what I know, there are no books about spatial magic in the East Cove Magic Academy. Where did you get the knowledge?"

Link continued walking towards the horse stable. Rather than keeping it a secret, he admitted, "The academy doesn't have any, but I've been deducing a spatial thesis for a year. I've had some results recently. The spatial magic spell is one of them."

Milda followed Link. Hearing this, she was shocked. "So you created the spell yourself?"

In the field of magic, improving spells and acquiring super spell techniques was already very difficult. Creating spells was even harder. If he was able to create an obscure spatial magic spell, it was a bit frightening.

This meant he had a shocking amount of magical insight. This man had surpassed countless Magicians!

Milda was forced to admit that this young man truly had a special characteristic. "Can I see your thesis?" She was curious about the thesis Link was deducing.

"Now?" Link glanced at the stable in the near distance. "I'm preparing to return to my territory. Now might not be the time."

"Oh" Milda glanced at the stable as well. She wanted to use her status as a princess to make Link stay here longer. However, she remembered that this wasn't the Isle of Dawn and Link wasn't her citizen. If she used her status but Link ignored her, she would be embarsed.

Thinking more, Milda said, "Wait for half an hour, alright?"

"Fine." Link nodded. Half an hour was not long.

Milda lifted her skirt and jogged back. After around twenty minutes, she returned. There were two High Elf Magicians; one of them was Morrowson.

Running back and forth, Milda's face was even redder now and sweat beaded on her forehead. Panting, she said, "Let's go. I'm returning to the Isle of Dawn. I heard that there's a port on your territory, so I'll just go from there."

At the moment, she was so beautiful that Link had to lower his eyes. He nodded. "I'm honored."

The two High Elf Magicians, Milda, and Link arrived at the stable where Link found a large carriage. There was a small table inside. It was usually up against the wall and could be flipped down when needed.

After the four settled in, Milda flipped the table down and reached out her slender hands at Link. "Where's your thesis? Show me." Worried that Link would be unwilling, she added, "I won't read it for free. I heard from your dean that you want to repair your magic puppet. I have The Heart of a Puppet written by a Level-9 Master Magician. How about we trade?"

As she spoke, she pulled the book out. Link flipped through it and was captivated.

Earlier, he had read the magic puppet material Vance gave him when he had time and was mostly done with it all. There were only some details he needed to purify. This book before him explored an entirely different train of thought. He only looked at a few pages, but Link could already sense the author's unique intelligence.

"This is a very good book," Link praised. He took out the spatial thesis from his dimensional storage gear.

The thesis was no longer the few pages it once was. Now, it was at least one hundred sheets of intuitive breakthroughs, most of it containing Link's own symbols, markings, and various changes. It was extremely complicated, but it was Link's simplified version. If he wanted to write each deduction step in detail, it would probably be 300 pages.

Of course, Link would never do that. He had already written the critical steps. Those who could understand would naturally understand. Those who couldn'tprobably had no talent for spatial magic to begin with.

After handing over the thesis, Link started focusing on The Heart of the Puppet. Milda opened the thesis and started reading with her two Magicians.

The carriage fell silent. The only sounds were the clacking of hooves and wheels.

After around half an hour, Link had completely immersed himself in the wisdom of The Heart of the Puppet. The three High Elves, however, had knitted brows and painful expressions. They seemed to be enduring the world's cruelest torture.

The Magician whose name Link didn't know had already given up. He started looking at the scenery outside the window. Compared to the obscure and incomprehensible thesis, the scenery was much more enjoyable. At least his head wouldn't burst.

Milda and Morrowson were still at it. Using the symbol index Link had made, they studied the thesis bit by bit.

It was pretty simple in the beginning. They felt comfortable, but this easiness only lasted around ten minutes. Ten minutes later, the content had entered a purely rational territory. What did that mean? It meant that it was logical, but many conclusions were completely opposite of the common knowledge that one received by perceiving the world. (See the Theory of Relativity.)

As Level-7 Magicians, Milda and Morrowson could understand purely rational theories. But there were so many changes and Mana equationshow could someone deduce this?

The logic in this was incomprehensible!

After struggling for half an hour, Milda gave up. As a Level-7 Magician, she could sense the deep wisdom in this thesis, but it made her head hurt. She felt like she would die if she kept reading.

She checked her progress; she'd only read a portion, around twenty pages. There was still a lot more left, but Milda did not have the courage to look.

Only Morrowson was still persevering. He had been humiliated by Link once and was stillust over it.

He thought, It's just spatial magic, isn't it? The thesis is right here, and we're all Magicians. You can write a thesis; you're skilled. I can't but does that mean I can't read it?

With this supporting him, he readone page more than Princess Milda.

That single page took him one hour before he could kind of understand it. Halfway through, the thesis had taken some kind of drug and suddenly became extremely obscure.

"Mr. Link, how did you deduce this Mana equation? I don't think it's right," Morrowson said, pointing at an equation.

Link did not reply. He was focused on the book in his hand.

"Mr. Link? Mr. Link?" Morrowson called.

"Ah, what's wrong?"

"I asked if there's a mistake here," Morrowson said, pointing at the equation. Beside him, Princess Milda glanced in curiosity. She hoped Morrowson had found a flaw so they wouldn't be completely defeated.

Link glanced at the equation and asked in confusion, "Where?"

How could it be wrong? If it was wrong, how could he use the inaccurate result and perform the spatial magic?

"Look hereherethe change is illogical. Doing this will cause turbulence in the Mana," Morrowson said decisively.

Link took another glance and pointed at the parameters. "You've underestimated them."

"Uhoh!" Morrowson hit his forehead. It suddenly made sense and his face reddened. He had misunderstood the writing; it was totally embarrassing.

Link ignored him and went back to his book.

This made Morrowson feel slightly better. Gritting his teeth, he continued reading. After another half hour, it felt like his head was splitting. He was going to break down. Looking up, he saw that Link was still immersed in the magic puppet book.

He whispered to the princess, "Your Highness, the thesis is getting harder and harder. I can't finish it."

Milda also snuck a glance at Link. Seeing that he wasn't paying attention, she whispered, "Shh, don't say it aloud. It's embarrassing. You two, use the magic image and make a copy. I'll bring it back to the Isle of Dawn."

This thesis was valuable; that much was obvious. They just didn't have the talent to understand it.

"Okay." The two High Elves got to work on copying the thesis.

It was around 150 miles from the East Cove Magic Academy to the Scorched Ridge of the Ferde Wilderness. The carriage was quite fast as well. Even at a slow pace, it could travel tity miles in one hour. After four hours, the Scorched Ridge was in the near distance.

Here, Link had finished The Heart of the Puppet. He sighed in satisfaction. "Such a good book. There are some flaws, but it doesn't affect the wisdom contained."

Milda's beautiful lilac eyes widened. "You finished it?"

"Mostly. There are some specifics that I must look into with detail when I get back."

Hearing this, the two High Elf Magiciasstared at each other and then gaped at Link as if he were a strange beast.

The Heart of the Puppet was written by a renowned High Elf Master Magician. He was Level-9, and this book was infamous for being obscure in the Isle of Dawn. Most Magicians had to read it with a mindset of going on an arduous journey. They needed at least half a year to get a basic idea.

Now, this human Magician had only spent four hours reading it. It was frightening.

Milda was reading this book too, but she struggled with it. Seeing how relaxed Link was, she was in disbelief. Taking the book, she pointed at a Mana equation and asked, "What do you use this isometric Mana equation for?"

"To manage the magic puppet's intelligence," Link answered matter-of-factly. Then he said, "Actually, it has a small error. Magic puppetitelligence created with this equation will occasionally have locked logic. I think if you change it like this, it might be useful, but this is just a thought for now"

Link began talking happily while the three High Elves listened in confusion. Milda could understand some of it. From what she comprehended, Link was right.

"Okay, spatial Magicians are all monsters!" Milda closed the book. She completely acknowledged Link's magic talent now.

Morrowson felt the same. Clutching his head, he asked painfully, "Mr. Link, what equation did you get the spatial magic from?"

Link shrugged. "To be honest, my spell involved all the results from the last twenty pages. If you're interested, I can point them out"

Morrowson quickly stopped him. "Thanks, but no thanks. I'll take my time, really."

He had given up deep down. If the first half was this hard, he felt a migraine coming just from imagining what the results of the last twenty pages were like. He would have to apply the difficult theories to the spells and use it with ease too.

I'll just continue learning my elemental magic then. I never want to touch spatial stuff again in my life! So what if I embarsed myself in the East Cove Magic Academy? It's better than killing myself over this.

At this time, the carriage arrived at the Scorched Ridge. After a week of absence, there were many changes.

The surrounding stone lands had been plowed into the soil, people had already started planting crops, and there was more foliage on the barren earth. The plowed soil was very fertile, and weeds and saplings all thrived.

There were more residents in the surrounding area as well. Crude houses had appeared, including cabins and tents made of hide. At a glance, it seemed like a small town.

In the distance, the foundation of the Mage Tower had been established. Dozens of Magicians and workers bustled around it. Everything was prospering.

Milda and the High Elves also saw the Mage Tower. Milda mused and said, "You don't seem to have enough workers. Morrowson, Alar, you two stay here and help."

Since it was the princess's order, the two High Elves nodded.

Link needed this too, and he thanked her profusely. Looking up at the sky, he realized night was falling. He said, "Your Highness, it is getting late. Since we've arrived at my village, why don't you rest for the night and set off tomorrow?"

Milda naturally agreed.

The carriage rode into the Scorched Ridge and stopped before the Administrative Building. When they got off, Joshua, the clerk, welcomed them. He said to Link, "Lord, you're finally back. There's a magic letter for you."

Joshua handed a cowhide envelope to Link. Glancing at it, Link's brows knitted because there was a dark rune on it. A dark aura permeated it.

Who would send a letter like this to him? Vance? No, that old guy would never do something so unreliable because it would give Link trouble. Being involved with dark magic would be troublesome for him.

While he was still figuring it out, Milda had also descended from the carriage. Her gaze was attracted by the letter.

"There's a problem with this letter," Milda said discreetly, waiting for Link's explanation.

It was not just Milda. Morrowson and Alar also looked at Link with instinctive suspicion.

## 220. A Corruption Scheme

The greatest drive for someone to attain more knowledge is their curiosity.

There was no distinction of good and bad in curiosity. However, magic was a different story altogether.

Without constraints, a Magician would venture further into the path of magic and eventually succumb to the immense knowledge, becoming merely a lifeless puppet of magic. That would already be the optimal result. More often than not, many Magicians would end up dabbling in dark magic out of curiosity and eventually becoming a degenerate slave of darkness.

There had been many of such examples in history. Blood Demon Talon, Morestern, Andrew and just recently, Wavier were all exceptional talents with a bright future that ended up on the wrong path.

This applied even to the Dark Elves. There had been many cases where talented young Magicians fell to the dark side, and so, when Milda saw this magic letter engraved in dark runes, she started looking at Link suspiciously. After Wavier of the Southwould the magic genius of the Norton Kingdom be the next to succumb to the forbidden knowledge of dark magic?

This was Milda's first-day meeting Link, and she had no prior understanding of his personality. She instinctively doubted Link and found a serious problem with this magic letter.

She stared at Link coldly and said, "Link, I believe this needs some explanation."

Link frowned as well. He still had not rationalized the purpose of this letter, or even the identity of the person who had sent it. However, he had a clear conscience and he said, "Let's first enter the house and go to the second floor. I will open the letter on the spot to see what exactly is written."

The three High Elves exchanged glances as guarded expressions appeared on their faces. They started grabbing their wands tightly in their hands. Milda then said, "There is no need to. Here will do."

They looked ready to strike the moment they felt something was amiss.

One could not blame them for overreacting. After all, the incident regarding Wavier had already reached the ears of the High Elves.

Wavier had attacked his fellow Magicians and even his mentor in the heat of the moment and resulted in a tragedy. Link was at least ten times more dangerous than Wavier. If he went insane right on the spot, the situation would be even more disastrous than what happened in the South. They had to be prepared.

From Link's perspective, he would have agreed to open that letter on the spot if he were the only one present. However, many people were standing next to him. Joshua, the mercenaries and the residents of Scorched Ridge had all crowded around to join in the commotion.

A few Magicians clad in glamorous robes looking at each other under a tense atmosphere was bound to attract attention. Before long, there would be rumors spreading around.

It was extremely disadvantageous for Link for this incident to have happened on his territory.

Link was slightly enraged by Milda's actions. However, after seeing the determined expression on the High Elves' faces, he knew that getting angry would be for naught. The other part was a High Elf Princess, and she had two Level-7 Magicians as her bodyguards. She had personally attended to many crises and important events before. It would be difficult to change her mind once she had decided on something.

Going against such a strong-willed person would only make things worse.

I wonder who is plotting against me? To think that they would send me such a sinister thing!

Keeping his anger under control, Link took a step back and said, "As you wish."

He then prepared to open the letter.

At that moment, a voice sounded from his side, "Master Link, you have finally returned. We were expecting you."

Link looked behind him and saw Master Ferdinand and Master Grenci walking towards him.

As they came closer, Grenci glanced at the letter in Link's hand then looked at the guarded expressions on the High Elves' face before saying calmly, "It's just a magic letter. There is nothing too serious about it. Let's talk in the room."

As he spoke, he stretched his hand to take the letter from Link's hand and entered the house.

Ferdinand then followed as he patted Link gently on the shoulders. He then faced the three High Elves and said, "Young people, don't worry too much. It is merely a small affair. Let's go."

With the help of two experienced Master Magicians, Milda and the other two High Elves hesitated for a moment before they finally agreed to enter the wooden house.

They then reached the parliament hall on the second floor and got seated.

After they got settled, Grenci said, "This letter arrived two days ago. We felt something was amiss the moment it arrived. However, the letter was addressed to Master Link. We left it untouched until he returned."

After which, he stared at Link. Although his expression was calm, it could be seen that he was also waiting for Link's explanation.

Link then replied with a puzzled expression, "I am also curious as to who would send such things to me."

Following which, he pushed this letter to the middle of the table and said, "Your Highness Milda seems to suspect my integrity. For fairness sake, I will not open this letter myself. Your Highness, I would like you to open it personally."

"Alright." Milda nodded her head and activated the Magician's Hand, opening the letter from afar.

Upon opening this letter, the dark aura surrounding ititensified. One could clearly see a cloud of black smoke emerging from the envelope. This smoke then started congregating above the envelope, forming a human face which started speaking in a cheerful voice.

"Hey, Link, my good friend. I'm glad that you are interested in my domain of magic. I missed you so much after we parted last time. I feel extremely honored to receive your letter, and I am happy to answer some of your doubts regarding the domain of Soul Magic."

The voice then rambled on.

He spoke in great detail about the techniques to extract a person's soul from their physical body. This went on for about 15 minutes before he ended by saying, "This method is extremely useful. However, it is merely the foundation. If you are interested to know more, please continue writing to me. I will be more than happy to answer any queries."

The black smoke then dissipated and the magic letter returned to its original form. There was also a grey paper in the letter. Milda pulled out the paper which revealed the exact content of what was just said.

She then looked at the bottom of the paper and saw a detestable name, Wavier Warsling.

Milda was horrified and gasped, "Link, you had connections with Wavier?"

Link denied, "I did not."

Romilson then interrupted, "Master Link, the letter mentioned that you once made a trip to the Southfrom what I know, you indeed made that trip a while ago. You even brought back a Wind Tiger from that journey."

As the Magician the High Elves valued and feared, they had done comprehensive research on Link's actions and background. While Link's visit to the South could be concealed from the ordinary folks, it was no secret to a Magician, much less the High Elves.

Romilson did not complete his entire sentence. However, his underlying message was clear. This letter showed that Link and Wavier indeed knew each other by name and that he had made a trip to the South especially just to meet him. They seemed to be on good terms.

However, Wavier had already become a Dark Magician. The fact that he was still writing to Link and discussing dark magic issues with him was peculiar.

This was especially so as Wavier fell to the dark side not long after Link's trip to the South.

Link's face remained calm as he explained, "I went to the South to search for Celine. It has nothing to do with Wavier. As for the Wind Tiger, I simply met him on the road. He was on the run from Dark Magician Andrew, and I saved his life."

"Who is Celine?" Milda asked.

"Mygood friend." Link said, "If there is a need, I can call her down right now. She is right here at Scorched Ridge."

"There would be no need to; I know Celine personally. She is a wonderful girl." Ferdinand said.

He then looked around before he continued, "I believe that this is a clear set-up against Master Link. I know Master Link very well. If he truly had dabbled into dark magic, he would not allow himself to be exposed by such juvenile tactics. In fact, none of us would be this careless. This is too dumb!"

It was the truth. Sending an open letter and deliberately engraving dark runes on the front of the envelope was an obvious framing technique.

However, Milda shook her head as she said, "No, I don't think that the issue is this simple. This is Link's territory, and the ordinary people will not have recognized the dark runes. It is thus a fallacy to come to a conclusion based on the dark runes alone. While the letter itself is peculiar to begin with, Link had indeed made a recent visit to the South. Other than bringing back Celine and the Wind Tiger, no one knew what happened along the way."

On this note, Milda then turned towards Link as she continued, "I have actually noticed something when I saw your military report in the academy. In the report you made at Ice Peak Fortress, you mentioned a realm scroll that allowed you to travel in between realms. You seemed to have escaped the pursuit of the Divine Gear wielder many times using this scroll. Based on my knowledge, the realm scroll belongs to the domain of Secret Magic. Master Link, are you experimenting with Secret Magic?"

Link fell silent. Princess Milda was indeed extremely sensitive. She had easily discovered the detail Link wanted to cover up in the entire incident.

Milda then continued after getting no reply from Link. She said, "I noticed another problem. You mentioned that Kanorse had been corrupted by the Dark Serpent's venom and was about to be demonized. However, you managed to save him from the depths of despair. How did you do it? You are merely a mortal, and it is impossible for you to cure a status inflicted by a Divine Gear. It does not make any sense."

Grenci then stood up for Link as he sternly reminded, "Your Highness, every Magician has his own unique strength. This has nothing to do with dark magic. You have no right to pursue this matter!"

"Alright then." Milda then suppressed her aggressiveness as she continued, "Before this letter, I have totally aligned myself with Master Grenci's point of view. However, the appearance of the letter and Master Link's inability to give a convincing explanation makes him extremely suspicious. Before we get to the bottom of this issue, I'm afraid my race will not be able to render asstance to such a Magician. Link, Romilson and Latour might not be able to help with the construction of your Mage Tower."

Link then laid out his hands helplessly as he said, "I'm sorry to have caused this misunderstanding."

He did not blame Milda for her reaction. She had only known him for a while, and it was understandable that she would not trust him as much as his fellow compatits. The most important thing now was to figure out the person who was framing him.

Could it be Wavier?

But why would he do that? Although they sparred against each other when Link went South to rescue Celine, he should not have discovered his identity.

"I cannot stay here anymore. We will set off now. Romilson, return to the academy to convey this message. Request that King Leon form a special investigation team for this issue. Latour, accompany me to the port. We will return to the Isle of Dawn with the information regarding the Divine Gear."

"Yes, Your Highness." The two High Elves nodded.

"Then, farewell gentlemen." Milda left without any hesitation as the two High Elves followed behind.

Only three human Magicians were left in the room.

Ferdinand was still infuriated as he said, "The High Elves do not listen to reason! This is obviously a set-up!"

Grenci then stared at the letter on the table as he shook his head and said, "They don't understand Master Link as much as we do. It is understandable that they have such a reaction out of self-protection."

Following which, Grenci turned towards Link and said, "Master Link, there is another thing which we have kept hidden from the High Elves. Apart from this letter, someone sent a box of items. These items exuded an extremely sinister aura, and we had to open it without your permission. The box was filled with dark soul stones. We did not dare to mention this in front of the High Elves."

Link frowned upon hearing these words. After a long while, he muttered, "I thank the two masters for having such faith in me. However, the issue might not be as simple as it seems. Someone is plotting against me."

Grenci and Ferdinand exchanged glances and nodded before saying, "We have the same idea as well. You have been too outstanding recently. The dark forces excel in plotting against someone in the shadows. You are bound to be one of their targets. The problem is that their ploys are often difficult to detect and defend against. No one knows how they are going to execute their plan."

Link then fell into deep thought. Three minutes later, he said, "This letter and the dark soul stones are just child's play. If this is truly a set-up, this is only the beginning.

A letter and a few dark soul stones were obvious framing techniques that could be easily taken care of. However, if something more serious happened, these items would then become added evidence against Link. By then, it would be difficult for Link to explain himself.

Grenci and Ferdinand exchanged glances as they kept a troubled expression on their faces.

"What would happen next?"

"I don't knowthere has been an influx of new residents into the territory recently, there must be spies mixed into the lotHold upMilda might be in danger. Yes, not just her, all the Magicians in our territory, especially the High Elves would be in danger. No, they cannot leave right now, it is way too dangerous!"

There were over 30 Magicians in the territory. It was only a modest number, and they were all not strong individually as well. It was only the beginning of the territory's development phase, and the defensive strength of the territory was naturally weak. While they might not be able to kill Link, they should be able to exterminate these Magicians.

They could then frame thishi

Ordinary people would not be able to distinguish such facts and would definitely accuse Link as the perpetrator. The investigative team from East Cove Higher Magic Academy would then find many relevant pieces of evidence against him. Link would then be unable to explain himself and would fall victim to this scheme!

This was the worst result, and despite the slim chances of its occurrence, Link must still be prepared to defend against it.

Ferdinand and Grenci then exchanged glances as fear and horror flashed through their eyes. They then stood up and said, "We will get Romilson back."

Link then nodded and said, "I will take care of Milda and Latour."

The three of them walked briskly out of the wooden house. By the time they reached the entrance, they had realized that the sun had sunk below the horizon and the sky was getting darker by the minute.

Milda was extremely efficient as well. They had already left the territory without leaving any traces behind.

Link then headed towards the shack where Dorias stayed and was prepared to use him as a convenient mode of transport. However, Link did not manage to find him when he reached the shack.

"Where is Dorias?" Link asked a soldier nearby.

"Dorias? He mentioned that he heard something unusual and went out to patrol. He said that he would be back swiftly," the soldier answered.

Link was horrified. Are they luring the tiger out from its home ground?

## 221. Celines Nightmare

Link had run into trouble with the dark magic letter as soon as he returned to the territory. He was unfamiliar with the territory's current situation.

Hearing that Dorias had gone out to patrol, he was a little shocked. Rather than making a brash conclusion, he continued asking, "Does Dorias go out often?"

"He'd occasionally go for a stroll, especially when he's full. He just ate a cow." The soldier didn't find anything odd.

Okay, since Dorias wasn't here, Link could only rely on magic spells to catch up to Milda. Fortunately, she had only left five minutes ago. She shouldn't be far. Thinking of this, Link walked to the east gate of the Scorched Ridge camp. After walking a few dozen feet, he saw Lucy coming from the civilian area outside the camp. He called out to her.

"Lord, you've returned?" She looked joyful.

"Yes, I just got back. I need you to do something!" Link said seriously.

"Please tell me." Lucy grew serious as well.

"Go find Jacker and tell him to increase the patrols of the Magician area at night. Tell him that someone might attack the Magicians tonight. He mustn't let anything happen!"

The attack was Link's guess and might not happen but better to be safe than sorry.

Lucy had a stern expression. She nodded and said, "Don't worry. Nothing bad will happen!"

"Good."

Link continued toward the east gate. When he passed a cabin, he suddenly heard a familiar voice.

"Link, hey, over here. Look here."

He turned and saw Celine. She was leaning against the cabin's window with her head stuck out, waving at him. Bent over, hiding by the window, with only half her face revealed, she looked like a thief.

Link found the sight funny. His tension lifted a little. Walking to the window, he laughed and asked, "What are you doing?"

Celine was in no mood to joke. She ran to the door and cracked it open, peeking out. "Come in. I have something to tell you."

Link was troubled. He was on the way to get Milda back, so he said, "Why don't you wait a little? I'm busy."

Celine pouted unhappily. "This is important too."

Okay, fine. Link would put that proud princess to the side. He entered the cabin. "Okay, but I'm only giving you five minutes."

"Five minutes is enough." A smile bloomed on Celine's face. She pulled Link into a corner and took out a basic wand. She focused, and the wand instantly glowed with white light; with it came a very strange aura.

Link wavered. He had actually been affected.

A voice sounded in his mind. It was the spirit of the Storm Lord's sword.

"The girl's bloodline talent has started awakening. This is a mysterious power."

Pleased, Link patted Celine's shoulder and praised, "Very good."

"Ah, it's not that." Celine was still anxious. She said, "The main point isn't the power. It's the changes it brings. For some reason, I keep getting nightmares these days."

"Nightmares?" Link's heart jumped.

There were two situations if a person continuously had nightmares. The first was a health problem. While sleeping, the brain would receive the weak signals from the body and react with a nightmare. These were commonly seen in the average man.

The second was that a person's soul had a bad premonition, but because the future is always changing, it would create unclear and terrifying images during sleep. This usually happened to Magicians. Some with special talents were especially sensitive.

Before the Level-8 demon Tarviss escaped, Link and Herrera all had nightmares. Reality had proved them correct.

Celine obviously had no health problems. Her cheeks were ruddy, and her skin was clear. She was plump, and her eyes were bright. She was very healthy, so it must be the second situation.

She was still caught up in her nightmare. Worried, she said, "I don't know why I suddenly got this power either. Do you think the nightmares have something to do with it?"

In Celine's eyes, Link was the authority of magic. They were very close too, so she obviously went to him about something private like nightmares.

Link comforted her, "There should be some relation, but it's not a big problem. Tell me, what's in your nightmares?"

"They're scary." Celine's eyes were fearful. "I dreamed that the Scorched Ridge turned into a sea of blood. Corpses floated everywhere. A bunch of blurry black shadows ran around. They were so fast and killed anyone they saw. A shadow saw me so I ran, but I couldn't get away. I saw you too, covered in blood. You were screaming, and Lucy was on the ground. Her eyes were open, but she was deadAh, I can't talk about it!"

As she spoke, Celine was touched by the horrible scenes in her nightmare. Teassprang in her eyes and rolled down.

Link was chilled. Seeing Celine like this, he felt tender affection toward her. He involuntarily pulled her into his arms and murmured, "It's okay, it's just a dream. I'm here for you."

Celine nodded lightly.

Link looked calm, but he was the opposite inside. In his mind, the Storm Lord Sword's voice sounded again.

"Kid, the bloodline governed by the soul has very strong prediction abilities. This dream will probably come true."

"I know." As a Magician, he would definitely not overlook such an obvious premonition of danger. Thinking a bit, Link said, "Celine, let's go. I'll take you to someone."

At first, he wanted to go find Milda alone. After hearing this dream, he did not dare leave Celine in Scorched Ridge alone.

Without thinking too much about it, Celine nodded.

Link brought Celine out of the cabin and ran into Jacker. The big guy seemed to have already received Lucy's message and was busy arranging Scorched Ridge's defense. Seeing Link, he walked over and saluted seriously. "Lord."

Looking at him, Link realized that Jacker's war aura had risen to Level-5. The epic Battle Art was extraordinary. Within a short period, Jacker had had a breakthrough. It was great!

Link said, "I feel that something bad will happen. There might be trouble. Alert the camp that all Magicians must be on guard."

"I understand."

Link thought of something else. "Is Eliard still at Scorched Ridge?"

Jacker nodded. "He's always been here. Recently, he's helping with the Mage Tower."

"Good. Ifand I mean ifsomething happens, protect him."

"Yes." Jacker grew solemn. He could sense the danger in Link's tone.

"Very good. High Elf Princess Milda has left the camp, but it's too late. I'm worried she'll run into danger, so I'm going to get her back. The safety of the camp during this time depends on you."

Jacker slammed a fist against his chest, promising as a soldier. Link nodded and summoned a Wind Fenrir. He helped Celine up the beast and then climbed up behind her.

With a low roar, the Wind Fenrir pounced forward.

The Wind Fenrir's speed was around seventy-six yards per second. But even at this speed, Link traveled more than ten miles without seeing the High Elf Princess. He could only sense a faint Mana presence.

"It seems that the princess has also used magic for quick traveling," Link said to Celine in his arms.

Scorched Ridge was very small. Celine had also seen Milda's entourage, so she grew doubtful. "Are you talking about that group of snobby High Elves? I saw that they weren't polite with you."

Link nodded. "They truly weren't very polite, and I don't like them either. But compared to the alliance between our races, these are just small things. I can't let her run into trouble while on my land."

A mature lord would never let personal affairs affect politics. In politics, there were no relationships, only interests. Withoutiterests, even family could cut ties. Of course, Link would not go to that extent. He had his own bottom line. For Princess Milda, his bottom line was currently to make sure nothing would happen to her while she was here so he wouldn't getito trouble.

They had traveled another mile while talking. Link suddenly stopped. "Huh? How come the Mana disappeared?"

There were four more kilometers from the pier. It was a lowland with small hills everywhere and had an unclear view. Without the Mana for guidance, Link paused. He was ready to make the Wind Fenrir run up a hill to observe.

However, as soon as he thought of this, dozens of black shadows snuck out of the hills. Then Link heard a hoarse voice order, "Shoot!"

There were the clicks of triggers and then the whistles of arrows tearing through the air.

"Careful!" Celine cried reflexively before falling silent. She once was a powerful Warrior as well with rich battle experience. She knew that she shouldn't distract Link right now.

Link reacted extremely fast. The moment the black shadows appeared, his gaze hardened, and he activated Edelweiss, the Level-5 defensive spell. Then, he released a single directional Flame Blast at a shadow.

When the enemies shot the arrows, the Flame Blast exploded as well. With a boom, the cone-shaped flame tide flooded towards the shadows.

However, what happened next shocked Link.

The shadows reacted extremely fast as well. Link had only used 0.3 seconds to release the Flame Blast 32 yards away. The spell had a range of more than 20 yards, but the enemy actually dodged it.

In addition to dodging, he attacked as well.

Link was taken aback. He thought, How come they're so confident that they think arrows can break through my defense spell?

Just in case, Link entered a state of absolute focus. Time slowed instantly. He discovered that the arrows were abnormal. They were a bruised color with an eerie blue glow around it. Through the glow, he could see a large number of small runes.

Oh no! he thought. These are super anti-magic arrows! My Edelweiss can't stop them!

The super anti-magic arrows used magic gold made from alchemy. Magic Disturbance Formations as high as Level-5 were carved on them. They were different from regular anti-magic arrows. Rather than using force to break through defensive spells, they destroyed the spell by disturbing the spell's Mana structure.

Usually, these arrows could destroy defense spells up to Level-6. Because of the arrows' extreme speed, most Magicians had no time to activate spells up to that level. That was why super anti-magic arrows were known as a Magician's Kryptonite.

Link reacted quickly. Sensing danger, he used the last one-tenth of a second to use his consummate skillthe Spatial Lens.

With a light hum, the air began titing. Ripples appeared in the air around Link and Celine.

The next instance, the arrows shotito the distorted air.

Spatial power could affect everything. As long as its power was not past the magic's limit, Link could control the distortion to stop the arrows.

The limit was the peak of Level-7. This was not because spatial magic couldn't do it, but because spells at Level-7 would affect the structure of the spatial Mana, causing it to collapse.

Obviously, a few arrows were far from the top of Level-7.

In the distorted space, the arrows cut straight paths. They brushed past Link and Celine and shot out without causing any harm.

"Retreat!" The black shadow was straightforward. Seeing that no arrows hit the target, he immediately tried to retreat.

But how could Link let them go so easily?

## 222. There Is More Than One High Elf Princess

Ferde Wilderness, Dusk.

There were over 15 of these infiltrators. They moved at an extremely fast speed and scattered the moment they entered the territory. When Link was running up the small hill on the Wind Fenrir, the fastest one was already more than 150 feet away.

Furthermore, these infiltrators were making use of the Ferde Wilderness' terrain to hide themselves from Link's vision.

Link glanced around before decisively charging towards a figure in the front.

From the sneak attack previously, the leader of this mission said only a total of two words. He even snuck into the crowd before giving the signal to begin and wore the same black leather armor as his other underlings. However, Link had already detected the faint fluctuations in his Battle Aura and locked onto his target.

This black leather armored infiltrator was running for his life across the Ferde Wilderness. He would look behind him every so often while wearing an expression of panic.

The distance between Link and himself gradually closed up from 150 feet to 135 feet, and then, 120 feet. The area in front of them was an open field and no longer provided any form of shelter for the infiltrators. Link was prepared to land the first strike.

However, Celine, who was currently in his arms suddenly shouted, "Link, stop! It's dangerous!"

Link had a shred of doubt in his heart when he saw the flustered expression and movements of this infiltrator. He seemed completely different from the time when he calmly commanded the infiltration scheme. He should have been a lot more composed.

Link hence suspected that he was merely putting up an act.

Celine's warning then further proved his suspicions, and he immediately pulled the Wind Fenrir to a stop.

The moment he halted his movements, Link could feel a faint magic fluctuation emanating from the ground. He then cast an Eagle's Eye spell on himself and observed the peculiarities on the ground. What he saw came as a great shock to him.

Through the thin layer of gravel on the ground cleverly used as a disguise, Link saw a sinister, dark-colored glow which exuded an extremely faint dark energy. From the fluctuations, it was a dark magic circle Level-6 in strength!

If Celine had not warned him about the dangers, he would have not noticed this faint fluctuation and would have rushed rightito this magic circle. Following which, both of them would be gravely injured if he had failed to react in time to this trap.

Link felt a shiver down his spine.

He then looked around for the leader of the infiltrators, but he was already nowhere to be found. The leader had kept his full power hidden previously. However, the moment he realized that his trump card had not worked to his favor, he immediately made the decision to escape.

The traveling speed of these infiltrators was outrageous as well; they were no slower than the ghouls in the Dark Forest.

Who the hell are these guys? How strong are they? Link still had many questions he still had not figured out. Although Wavier's name was on the letter, Link felt that it was only a framing technique employed by the infiltrators.

"How sinister!" Link frowned. He then moved a total distance of 30 feet backwards before firing a Glass Orb towards the dark magic circle.

Boom! The magic circle was activated, and a 15-foot-tall pillar of ghastly blue flames erupted from the ground. It then rose to a height of 90 feet before disintegrating slowly. Despite being more than 30 feet away from the heart of the spell, Link could still feel the heatwaves on his skin.

"Level-6 spell, the Heart of the Abyss." Link heaved a sigh of relief and felt Celine trembling from behind. He then held her hand and comforted, "It's okay. Even if we stepped on it, I would transport you away using teleportation."

Celine merely nodded before saying, "Link, will my nightmare really come true?"

She was starting to understand her newfound strength better. She realized that in the face of imminent danger, an extremely clear premonition would appear in the mind, even to the point of generating a clear image in her head. Previously, she stopped Link simply because she saw the ghastly blue pillar of flames in her mind.

Link then assured, "It will not. From the moment you told me the nightmare, the future had already begun to change."

As Link spoke, he gazed in the direction of the port. From that direction, he could not feel the presence of the High Elf Princess Milda. He thus had no more clues on where to carry on the search.

Link then rode the Wind Fenrir back down the hill and ordered it to circle the area while he carefully observed its perimeter.

"There are 35 crossbow arrows on the ground. The opponent had only fired 22 crossbow arrows previously. The remaining 13 should be the ones that were fired when Milda passed through. However, there are no remnants of any magic fluctuations in this area. The two High Elves seemed to have disappeared into thin airWait, this is a blood stain!"

Link concentrated and willed a few gravel on the ground towards him. He then observed the blood stains on the rocks. They were dark red in color, similar to the blood stains of humans. He then placed them close to his nose and picked up a faint forest fragrance from the rocks.

"This is blood from the High Elves. They must be injured."

"But where did they go?" Celine asked while frowning.

"They must have used a transportation spell. However, the furthest distance of a transportation spell is no more than a mile. They must have continued escaping on foot after that. We have no idea where they went."

Although a mile was not a far distance, the other party was injured and in a state of panic. They would only be concentrating on their own survival and would do anything possible to conceal their presence. They would also run as far away from the battle site as possible, making it difficult for anyone to locate them.

Link was wondering if Milda would even accuse him of being the mastermind behind this asssination, causing her to avoid him all the more.

However, the problem lay with the Assassins. They must also be looking for the High Elves. Judging from their injuries, they would be doomed if they were ever discovered by the enemy.

They had gone missing on his territory, and Princess Milda was coincidentally the eldest daughter of the High Elf queen. She was also the top candidate for the next elf queen. If he could not bring her back safely to the Isle of Dawn, he would have no end of it from the High Elves.

After thinking for a moment, Link turned and bolted straight towards the coastline.

He possessed the fresh blood of a High Elf. While this might be useless in his hands, Vance might be able to track a person using this blood. As long as he could determine Milda's exact location, he could travel there and rescue her immediately.

As Link thought, he increased the speed of the Wind Fenrir and ran at full speed towards Vance.

However, Link stopped merely after a few steps. He then hesitated for a while before charging in the opposite direction straight towards Scorched Ridge.

"Weren't you prepared to find Vance? Why have you turned back?" Celine said. She truly was an intelligent woman. She had already guessed Link's intention despite his silence all this while.

Link then shook his head as he said, "My return trip to Scorched Ridge is an impromptu decision. The enemy's sneak attack will naturally be an impromptu one as well. However, you predicted in your nightmare that the territory would be in great danger. It is not worth it to save a High Elf Princess in exchange for over 8000 lives on the territory."

The refugees from the Delonga Kingdom had been traveling north in big batches towards the Ferde Wilderness. Merchant Warter had also been extremely efficient in bringing in slaves which caused the population of the territory to rocket upwards. Scorched Ridge was now a little town of nearly 10000 residents.

"But if the High Elf Princess were to die, you would be in trouble."

"That is indeed troubling, but the High Elves has more than one princess." Link had clearly thought this through.

This was an impromptu attack. The enemy had already managed to set-up an ambush party and even drew up a Level-6 magic circle. Both of them required delicate planning, craftsmanship, and more importantly, time. They should not be able to launch an attack on both sides in a short amount of time.

Since Milda had already suffered the brunt of the attack, Romilson should be safe. He should already be brought back safely to the territory by the two Master Magicians.

Romilson would then become Link's perfect alibi. This was because Link had stayed with them the entire time since East Cove Higher Magic Academy and had no time to arrange such a complicated set-up.

It was this exact thought that helped Link make the decision to give up on rescuing the princess and protect his own territory instead. Politics was all aboutiterests after all. As the lord of the territory, Link was responsible for the safety of his residents.

The return trip to the territory was smooth. Traveling at the top speed of the Wind Fenrir, they reached the east gate of the camp around five minutes later.

At this moment, the sky had already darkened, and the east gate was closed. There was a large number of soldiers patrolling the castle walls. Link then cast an illumination spell on himself to reveal his identity.

"It's me."

Link did not wait for the soldiers to open the door. He commanded the Wind Fenrir to leap forward. The moment the Wind Fenrir was airborne, he then cast a Weight Reducing spell on it, allowing it to leap to a height sixty feet tall. The Wind Fenrir then leaped comfortably over the castle wall without any obstructions.

The security within the camp was also heightened. The moment Link entered the camp, he immediately canceled the casting of Wind Fenrir and whispered to Celine, "Follow me closely, don't get lost."

He felt that the entire Scorched Ridge was unsafe.

"I know." Celine followed closely behind Link.

After a few steps, Gildern came forward to welcome them. Link then asked, "Has Master Grenci returned?"

Gildern then reported the good news, "Master Grenci, Master Ferdinand, and the High Elf named Romilson are all back safely."

Link immediately felt rejuvenated and said, "That's great. Where are they now?"

"Inside Master Grenci's abode."

Link then felt a weight lifted off his shoulders and asked, "What about Dorias, is he back?"

Gildern then had a worried expression on his face as he said, "We can't seem to find him anywhere. He would usually be back by this time. We have no idea where he went."

"Understood." Link could not do anything about this issue either. A tiger with such a monstrous size and outrageous speed would be impossible to find in the night. He could only pray for his safety.

Link then took Celine towards the Magician's residential area in the Scorched Ridge. The Scorched Ridge was only a few hundred feet in radius. They reached Master Grenci's quarters within three minutes.

After a few knocks, the door opened as Grenci's weathered face appeared behind the door. He then glanced around, seemingly searching for the High Elves. A frown then appeared on his face as he said, "Something happened?"

Link nodded as he took out the rocks stained with blood and said, "Celine and I gave chase and were ambushed by a team of Assassins. After defeating them, I found this on the ground. It should be clear that Princess Milda and Latour suffered injuries from the ambush and left using a transportation spell. As for their exact location, we were not able to locate them."

"Please come in." Grenci then invited them in.

Link saw Romilson the moment he entered the room. Romilson was completely pale and even had a blood stain on his elbow. He looked disheveled and seemed to have gone through some tough times. Upon seeing Link, he instinctively searched the room and asked with a hoarse voice, "Where is the princess? Why didn't she come back?"

"This was all I found when I arrived." Link then placed all the rocks stained with blood on the table.

Romilson face grew even paler as he grabbed these rocks and sniffed them as if in a trance. Half a minute later, with god knows what method, he muttered, "Latour is already dead, his blood is not showing any signs of life. The princess is still alive, though she has suffered heavy injuries. This will not do; I have to find her now."

"How will you do that? I believe you have met those Assassins as well; how will you deal with 15 Assassins at once?" Link asked.

"There are 15 of them?" Romilson was close to losing his consciousness from the shock. He had met four Assassins on his way to the academy and was already lucky to escape alive. If not for the timely arrival of Master Grenci and Master Ferdinand, he would definitely be dead. Going through with this mission with the knowledge that 15 Assassins were lying in wait would simply be suicide.

However, the princess must not die. If the princess died while he stayed alive, he would become the disgrace of his family!

"I have to rescue her! The princess' blood can guide me towards her; I will be able to find her!" Romilson stood up and was prepared to leave.

Link was just about to stop him when roaring sounds could be heard from outside the door, "Enemy!"

After only half a sentence, the voice seemed to be cut off by some sinister force.

"Arrgghh! Uhh!"

A large number of screams could be heard. The frequency and despair from those screams were enough to make anyone'shi

## 223. Human Ghouls?

When the concentrated cries traveled over, everyone in the cabin was shocked.

Link immediately walked out. He did not care about convincing Romilson anymore. When he passed the man, he suddenly shouted, "Romilson!"

"Huh?" Romilson was frightened. He didn't know why the usually calm Link would suddenly be like this.

Before he could react, Link hit the back of Romilson's neck. He acted decisively. No one could have guessed that a Magician would fight physically instead of with magic.

With this hit, Romilson's eyes rolled back, and he collapsed to the groundhe passed out.

"Uh" Grenci and Ferdinand were dumbfounded. They didn't know what Link was planning.

Link hurriedly explained, "He would definitely go back to save the princess, but with the current situation, he'll certainly die. We need him alive. Otherwise, if anything happens to the princess, we won't be able to explain it."

Romilson was a witness to prove the innocence of the Ferde Wilderness and the Norton Kingdom. Afterwards, Romilson and the High Elf Kingdom would hate the humans for this, but they were forced to do so.

The two Master Magiciasshuddered. They were old and wise; they instantly understood the meaning behind Link's actions and nodded.

"Sirs, I'll hand him over to you two while I go out to deal with the attackers." They were two Level-6 Master Magicians. Link believed that the attackers would be unable to break through their Advanced Defensive Barrier within a short period.

With that, Link shot a glance at Celine. The two walked towards the cabin's exit.

At the door, Link stopped. He pulled out the Burning Wrath of Heavens wand and murmured to Celine, "Follow closely."

Being with those two old guys should be safe, but after hearing Celine's dream, Link subconsciously wanted to keep Celine by his side. Only then would he be reassured.

After Celine nodded, Link activated the spell, Edelweiss and opened the door.

The moment he did so, a figure outside pounced on him. He was so fast. At the same time, he raised an arm, and a crossbow appeared.

Pop! Pop! Pop! The crossbow fired continuously at Link, each one glowing with an eerie blue. They were super anti-magic arrows!

Using the magic lantern inside the cabin, Link saw the attacker's features clearly. He had a black mask, only revealing his eyes and some bits of skin. The eyes were dark brown and contained signs of a familiar rune. His skin was grayish brown and looked scary.

Link flinched. He thought, A human with runes in his eyesis it a human ghoul?

The attacker's inhuman speed proved that. Since it was a ghoul, Link knew what to do. Faced with the flying anti-magic arrows, his eyes focused, and he pointed at the attacker with the Burning Wrath of Heavens wand.

"Spatial Distortion!"

The structure of Spatial Distortion was not complex and didn't need time to gather elements. It was created in an instant.

The three people in the cabin saw Link raise his wand and tit the air before him. There were three pops, and three arrows changed direction, burying into a wall on the side. Immediately after, there was a sharp shriekit was the spell, Whistle. Then, there was a soft thud. A Whistle had crashed into the charging figure, and he was stopped.

This was not all. Without ceasing, the air before Link blurred. This time, it was a Vector Throwing Force Field. Under this force field, the Whistle hit the figure and forced him back.

This retreat gave Link enough time to cast an advanced magic spell!

With a whoosh, fire elements gathered quickly in the air. After 0.3 seconds, Titan's Fist appeared, rushing down at the figure.

The figure was still retreating and had to maintain his balance. Hence, he had no time to dodge. Titan's Fist flung him in the air and then grasped him, clenching tightly. He was burnt to a crisp instantly!

The Assassin had overestimated himself by trying to fight Link alone. With his speed, Link might not be able to catch up if he focused on dodging. However, he chose to fight face-to-face. This was no different from looking for death.

After returning from the battlefield in the North, Link's battle techniques had improved. He could fight with ease and was practically invincible. The Assassin was no match for him.

Every move Link had just done only took one second. Those who reacted slowly couldn't even see what he did clearly. Coincidentally, the three in the cabin managed to keep up and had an idea of the order of Link's actions.

Ferdinand and Grenci exchanged glances, impressed. They knew that Link was a Battle Mage and had powerful abilities. However, they never had a concept of just how powerful he was.

Now, they saw Link kill someone with their own eyes. The two old men were speechless. Before this, they knew Link was powerful. Now, they realized he was ten times more powerful than rumored!

As for Celine, she had already seen Link's magic before. Rather than being surprised, she was a bit annoyed. This guy improved again. What a jerk. He must've gone through a lot of hardships going to the North alone!

After killing the Assassin, Link had an accurate estimate of his power. He turned back and called, "Sirs, the Assassins are similar to the northern ghouls. He was at the pinnacle of Level-6. Be careful!"

Then he walked out of the cabin with Celine following closely.

Inside, the two old men exchanged glances and started establishing the defensive force field.

Outside, Link scanned the area. The streets of the camp were filled with Assassins in black clothing. At a glance, there were about 50 men. They didn't have a target; they killed whoever they saw with frightening efficiency.

Some soldiers tried to stop them but were killed immediately. The difference was too big; they couldn't even put up a fight.

Link saw Lucy. She had a few soldiers beside her and was preparing to block an Assassin. However, another Assassin already noticed them and was charging towards them.

Lucy was a Level-4 Assassin but was nothing compared to a ghoul at the pinnacle of Level-6. If they really fought, the ending would unobtedly be Lucy's death.

Link focused on the Assassin and prepared to stop him. But then there was a whiz in the air. A Whistle had appeared out of thin air. It accurately dodged the Assassin's block and slammed into his face.

The Assassin stopped.

Link turned to see Eliard walk out of the cabin behind Lucy. With a stern expression, Eliard waved his wand. Whistles flew out one after another, endlessly attacking the aggressors.

He was very fast. He could release four Whistles per second, and they were all accurate. The Assassins could dodge or block as much as they wanted but on average, three out of every four Whistles would hit them square in the face.

The Assassins were masked so the Whistles couldn't injure them gravely. However, they successfully countered the Assassins' movements, greatly reducing their killing rate.

Link cheered inwardly, As expected of the number one magical genius of the continent. So awesome!

Link didn't waste any time either. He cast a Macro Sound Spell and roared, "My soldiers, your lord is here!"

The camp was in chaos, like a pack of dragons without a leader. They needed a core, and this was Link's responsibility as the lord.

He wore the robe of a Flame Controller, firelight flowing through him. He also held the wand of the Burning Wrath of Heaven that radiated with a blinding light. It was abnormally eye-catching in the dim camp.

Reassured, the soldiers immediately gathered towards him. Lucy, Gildern, Jacker, Eliard, and the others all came.

Link did not stop casting spells. He used all the old tricks against these attackers who were similar to the ghouls in the North. He used the force field to destroy the others' balance and then burned them with Titan's Fist.

He was unbelievably fast, and the Assassins had no chance. They went down at a rate of one per second.

Suddenly, one Assassin yelled, "There's only one of him. Charge and kill him!"

At this moment, there were only 40 Assassins. They immediately scattered, preparing to attack Link from all directions.

Link immediately ordered, "Retreat to the city walls. Don't get surrounded!"

If they were surrounded, Link knew he could protect the group around him by himself but only temporarily. His attacks would be greatly affected as well. If they had the sturdy stone walls behind them, they would only have the face the Assassins before them. It was much easier.

Hearing the command, everyone began retreating to the wall with Link at the center.

The Assassins attacked as if they'd gone crazy. They were constantly killed by Link, but they also killed many common soldiers. Link could not help it. Scorched Ridge lacked strong soldiers, and it was hard to fight off the Assassins' direct attacks. Even if Jacker charged forward, he would be using his life to win Link enough time to cast spells and attack.

If not for Eliard on the side, Jacker would have died many times already.

The battle intensified. The Assassins decreased by one per second, but the soldiers were decreasing by twenty per second! Without Link, the soldiers would have been defeated long ago.

At this rate, even if Link could kill all the Assassins, the camp would suffer greatly as well. The soldiers would probably all be dead. If they were not careful, Link might not survive either.

But then, a sudden roar came from outside the walls.

"You bastards dare to fool me! Dorias is angry!"

Dorias had returned at this critical moment!

He had spent his recent days in Scorched Ridge comfortably. He had good food every day, and there was someone just for brushing hishi

In his mind, Scorched Ridge was his territory. Now, people were wreaking havoc in his territory, and they'd lied to him too. Thisthis was unforgivable!

With an aggressive growl, a giant tiger covered in blue-green light pounced onto the wall and down to the ground. An Assassin charged at it.

With another roar, Dorias opened his claws. Dagger-like classhot out from the pads and slapped at the Assassin.

As a Wind Magical Beast, he was shockingly fasteven faster than the Assassins. As an old monster who had lived for centuries, he had rich experience, and these Assassins were no match.

Rip! There was a tearing sound. The Assassin had been torn to shreds by Dorias' claws!

Another Assassin rushed over, trying to make a sneak attack.

As if he had eyes on the back of his head, Dorias slapped his tail down on the man's neck. The neck snapped with a crack, and his head hung limply. He fell to the ground, convulsing, but didn't die.

Link's eyes were sharp. Seeing this, he was even more confident. This type of vitality had destroyed the equilibrium. It was definitely related to the Dark Divine Gear of the North.

Rather than retreating to the wall, he yelled, "Dorias, come here! Cover me!"

"Coming!" Dorias sprang up and landed behind Link. With this violent big cat, Link didn't have to worry anymore. He started to go all out.

Titan's Fist, Titan's Hand, Vector Force Field, Spatial Distortion were cast one after another. The Assassins in Scorched Ridge decreased rapidly.

"Retreat!" There were only ten Assassins left. They realized they had no chance and were ready to run.

"In your dreams!" Dorias rushed over like the wind. His huge body had a burst of speed faster than the enemies. Gnashing and blocking left and right, he blocked all their escape routes by himself.

With his cooperation and Titan's Fist, Link burned all the Assassins to dust in half a minute. There were only five living, left on purpose by Link.

After killing them all, the camp residences looked at Link with pure reverence. Even the Magicians from the East Cove Magic Academy had a look of awe on their faces.

They couldn't deal with a single one of these extremely powerful Assassins, but Link killed them all as if they were chickens. This gap in ability was unsurpassable.

Eliard sighed involuntarily. His friend was getting stronger and stronger. Eliard had worked hard, but he was still a Level-3 Magician. Link was getting further and further from him.

Dorias received a considerable amount of reverent gazes as well. He raised his head, puffed out his chest, and rubbed his claws. Over the clattering, he huffed, "These cowards want to cause trouble on my watch? Humph!"

Link didn't have time to be proud. He found Lucy and said, "Calculate the casualties and arrange for pension."

"Yes, Lord."

"Jacker, lock up the Assassins still living. Feed them this and then nail their hands and feet." Link pulled out Sacred Silver.

"I understand."

Then Link said to Dorias, "I'm going out now. The safety of the camp is on you."

Fifty ghouls was a big force. Even in the Skeletal Fort, Link had never seen a group of more than 100 ghouls. He believed that this amount was the maximum number of attackers, so the camp should be safe now. It was time to save Princess Milda.

Dorias was still busy being proud. Hearing Link, he immediately patted his chest.

"Link, don't worry. Give this to me. There won't be any problems!"

He had shown that he was truly powerful. Link could rest easy with Dorias there. He said a few more words to comfort the camp residents and returned to the cabin.

"Master, is he almost awake?" Link asked Grenci. He needed Romulsin's help to find Milda.

"Should be soon. Should I wake him?" Grenci asked.

Link nodded. "Sure."

## 224. Heartless and Cold-Blooded Lord

"Damn it, why did you stop me!"

Romilson was extremely agitated the moment he woke up. He rushed towards Link and grabbed him by the collar as he screamed.

Even if he were to ignore the fact that Link prevented him from going to Milda's rescue, Link actually knocked him out using brute force! How could a Magician ever resort to such tactics?

It's simply unbelievable! A savage, crazy man!

Link allowed this High Elf to roar and go berserk for half a minute. After making sure that he had calmed down, Link laid out his hands helplessly and said, "Have you calmed down? You must understand that every second you waste is also one second more dangerous for Princess Milda."

This sentence was akin to a bucket of ice water, dousing Romilson's fiery rage in one blow. He then picked up the blood-stained rocks on the table and strode towards the door. As he walked, he turned to Link and said coldly, "Magician, I'll remember you! When I return to the Isle of Dawn, I will request for an audience with the queen. I'll make sure you are blacklisted as one of the unwelcomed people of my race!"

He then opened the wooden door in rage. After taking just a step out of the house, Romilson stopped and stared at the scene in front of him in horror.

There were bodies lying helplessly on the ground as the mercenaries and residents cleaned up the mess silently. One could see some people weeping for their losses, some places on fire, some collapsed wooden houses. The stench of fresh blood filled the atmosphere. It was the complete opposite of the peaceful and calm Ferde Wilderness Romilson had seen just a while ago.

"How long have I been sleeping?" Romilson asked as he imagined the fierce battle that ensued.

"Not more than half an hour," Link said as he walked towards him.

"There were many assaulters I assume?"

"There weren't many, only 50 of them. However, each one of them was extremely powerful. If I wasn't present, my territory would have been in ruins by now." Link's voice was calm. He seemed unaffected by Romilson's previous threat.

Romilson could not help but turn to look at the human Magician beside him. There was not a shred of agitation or rage on Link's face. Usually, a lord would have been enraged and depressed after suffering such huge losses. How could he stay so calm?

Romilson was baffled by this Magician in front of him. He also did not want to understand his peculiar mindset. The tragedy in front of his eyes completely doused the rage he had as he whispered, "I will be going off to find the princess."

"I'll accompany you." Link stayed by his side.

Upon hearing those words, the rage that just subsided within Romilson's heart was once again ignited. He bellowed, "Oh, you are finally interested in saving the princess? To think that the princess gave you the Heart of the Puppet in the carriage just now. It would be fine if you refuse to save the princess yourself, but how could you stop me from going as well? What a cruel and heartless lord you are!"

"You will die if you go alone," Link reminded.

"Then I will die with no regrets!" Romilson growled.

Grenci had had enough of Romilson's tantrum and shouted furiously, "Young lad, Master Link did what he was supposed to. The person who made the decision to leave was Your Highness herself. Since she was the one who made the mistake, she naturally has to bear the consequences."

"Hmph, I know what you people are planning. You guys are afraid to be implicated by the princess' death and are only leaving me alive as a witness. Humans are such hypocrites!" Romilson shouted as he strode out of the territory.

When Romilson reached an open space, a warm glow enveloped his wand as he summoned a black horse. He then mounted the horse and headed straight towards the East gate of the camp.

"He is a young lad after all. How stubborn," Ferdinand sighed.

There was no right or wrong in the decisions made throughout this incident. The only thing that mattered was the difference in perspectives. Ferdinand was of the human race and would definitely support Link's approach to the matter from his perspective. He would have done the same if he was met with this dilemma.

Grenci then sighed, "He is still too young and arrogant. He is talented and powerful, but he is not seeing the big picture."

As Romilson was about to leave the territory, Link said, "Alright, I'll leave the territory in the hands of the two Masters. I'll be accompanying him to find Princess Milda. Celine, you will stay with the Masters."

Link knew what he had to do and would not be easily swayed by Romilson's insensitive words.

Link could care less about what Romilson said; the High Elf Magicians in this timeline were generally the same after all. They had enjoyed peace and luxury on the Isle of Dawn for over hundreds of years. The younger generation had never quite understood the cruelties of the world.

"Alright, you take care then," Celine said in a concerned tone. She was also not angry at Romilson. In her eyes, the High Elf was merely just a little more than a moody little brat.

Lin nodded and summoned the Wind Fenrir immediately, chasing after Romilson all the way out of the Scorched Ridge.

Grenci stared at the disappearing figures of the two young Magicians into the darkness and finally said, "Let's hope that Romilson will stop throwing his tantrums on the road."

Ferdinand nodded as he said, "Both of them are young genius Magicians. However, Romilson's character is a far cry from Link. He is too unreliable, indeed, a disappointment."

Why did the two Masters not harbor a single shred of suspicion towards Link when they received the letter and the dark soul stones? Apart from the fact that it was a clear framing technique, Link's usual conduct was a major reason as well.

From the beginning when he handled the Darris' ambush incident with maturity, to the revelation of Bale's experiments with dark magic and finally to his glorious victory against Demon Tarviss, Link had displayed a large number of commendable qualities.

He was thoughtful, sensitive, objective and rational. He would never judge anything or make a decision purely based on personal emotions.

When Dean Anthony did not believe Link's warning regarding Tarviss' appearance, Link did not even utter a sentence of defiance. He simply spent all his time studying magic and eventually saved the entire academy.

While it was fallacious to say that Link would never experiment with dark magic, it would be fair to say that Link would never allow himself to be exposed by such careless tactics. All in all, Link was a young lad that deserved their trust.

...

Around 600 feet outside the Scorched Ridge, two dark shadows were overlooking the situation in the camp from behind a small hill.

"It's over," one of them said.

His voice was raspy and low. He wore black leather armor and tied a dagger to each of his thighs. These daggers looked slightly special, having a rare crimson color and were enveloped in a layer of flaming brilliance. They looked gorgeous.

From his gears, one could tell that he was an Assassin.

"He has become even stronger. Our plan this time has failed," The other person spoke. This person was clad in a hooded robe and held a wand in his handhe was a Magician.

Although they had killed many people, they were all insignificant mercenaries. Their primary targets had all been well-protected and suffered practically no damage. The framing techniques that they had employed right from the beginning were all meaningless.

"He is already building his Mage Tower. Based on his current progress, it will be completed in about a month's time. With the monitoring ability of the Mage Tower, we will not have another chance at a sneak attack."

The ambush this time around took advantage of the absence of a Mage Tower in the Scorched Ridge. However, now that this disadvantage would be addressed, the only way to deal with Link after the completion of the Mage Tower would be to use brute force.

This was a devastating result.

However, the black-robed Magician suddenly emitted a quizzical sound and pointed to the Scorched Ridge in the distance before saying, "Look, two people are running out from the territory. It is the escaped High Elf and Link."

The Assassin squinted his eyes to take a look and eventually nodded. He then said, "It is indeed them. From the direction of their travelthey should be looking for the High Elf Princess. We have a chance!"

The Magician then shook his head and said, "We have around 13 Assassins left. Even after adding us both, it would only make us 15 men strong force. It would be more than enough to deal with the High Elf. However, Link would be a problem. That guy knows how to use a group transportation spell."

A transportation spell like Burst might not increase the combat powers of a Magician. However, it was an exceptionally useful spell to use for escape purposes. Not only could Link manage this spell, he could even bring people along with him, making him extremely difficult to deal with.

Even if they were to send 100 people to ambush him, he could also easily escape from the predicament.

This was the exact reason why they did notitend to kill Link from the beginning even with over 60 Assassins on their side. They chose to frame him with the crime they committed instead. Alas, the Assassins that they sent to the Scorched Ridge did not seem to get the memo and fought against Link in a direct battle. The end result was telling enough.

However, the Assassin thought otherwise. He stood up and chuckled, "The task of framing Link had not completely failed. As long as we kill the High Elf Princess, not only would the Ferde Wilderness be in trouble, so would the Norton Kingdom! The ties between the High Elves and the human race would then become estranged, giving less pressure to you guys in the North."

The Magician nodded but was still hesitant. He then said, "That might be true. But the High Elf Princess is extremely good at hiding. How will we find her?"

"That is easy!" The Assassin smiled as he said. He then pointed at Romilson from afar and said, "Look, the High Elf didn't take the main road the moment he left the camp. Instead, he ran straightito the wilderness, why do you think that is?"

The Magician was extremely smart as well. He immediately continued the sentence, "He can bring us to the High Elf Princess!"

"Yes. Notice the direction that he travels in. It is basically a straight line. This suggests that he is finding the princess through some sort of connection. Extrapolating this line of travel would probably lead us to the High Elf Princess. We can totally get ahead of him and kill the princess first. If we have the time, we can even plan another ambush. Perhaps we can kill the High Elf this time around."

The Assassin was extremely pleased with himself the more he thought about his plan. By making use of the High Elf's eagerness to save the princess, they would follow his tracks and first kill off the princess. It was a perfect plan!

The Magician also praised him from the bottom of his heart.

"This plan is indeed good. It is worth a try. I will then wish you success in the advance."

The Assassin was taken aback and said, "You are not taking part in this?"

"Me?" The Magician smiled as he said, "Of course not. The only reason for my trip to the South is to bring you the Divine Liquid. Furthermore, I have just reached Level-6 and do not specialize in combat spells. I would only drag you down if I join this mission."

The Assassin then shrugged his shoulders and said, "Alright then, watch my wonderful performance!"

## 225. Confrontation in the Wilderness

Ferde Wilderness.

Romilsin's summoned unicorn was even faster than Link's Wind Fenrir. After a few minutes, he was more than 300 feet ahead of Link.

However, he was not stupid. He knew that if he wanted to save the princess, he needed Link's power. So, after getting more than 300 feet ahead, he did not speed up and just maintained this distance.

The princess's blood aura in the stains was fading. This meant the princess's life was fading too.

Romilson must get to Milda as fast as possible. Not a second could be wasted!

The wilderness terrain had no pattern. Sometimes there would be boulders in the way, but that was okay. His Level-4 unicorn was very powerful and helped him quickly pass through these obstacles.

"Hey!"

Romilson controlled the unicorn to jump over a boulder and then land before continuing forward at breakneck speed. He then heard a call from behind him. It was Link, trying to say something to him.

He wanted to ignore the man. The humans were cold-blooded, selfish, and fake. If he didn't need Link's power to save the princess, he wouldn't even slow down to wait.

So what if you're the number one human Magician? So what if you can do spatial magic? F\*ck you! Anger rose inside Romilson. He stopped controlling the unicorn's speed and prepared to charge wildly.

But then, he suddenly heard a whoosh sound behind him. At the same time, there were violent Mana wavesit was a magic spell. Someone was attacking behind with a spell.

Looking back, he saw a metallic tip piercing towards him. The Mana on it showed that it was Link's spell.

"Link? Attacking me! What is he doing?" Romilson grew even more furious. Getting an idea, he instantly cast the defensive spell Shield of Thorns.

Shield of Thorns

Level-2 Elite Spell

Effect: Rattan thorns created by solidified natural elements form a flexible shield. It can effectively block all piercing attacks.

(Note: exclusive High Elf spell.)

A green light flashed in the air, and countless thorns formed instantly. They wove together and created a ten-foot wide shield.

Poof! The Whistle collided with the shield and exploded. However, the countless thorns absorbed all of the destructive force. It was basically ineffective.

Romulsive instinctively began to fight back.

He pointed his wand at the ground. A beam of dark green light shotito the soil.

"Poison Ivy Puncture!"

Poison Ivy Puncture

Level-3 Elite Spell

Use: Creates a bundle of ivy vines that snakes across the ground. These vines are very resilient, highly penetrative, and poisonous. They can pop out of anywhere within 210 feet and attack the enemy.

(Note: exclusive a High Elf spell.)

A flood of vines slithered across the ground, stretching toward Link who was catching up.

Using the delay caused by the Whistle, Link had decreased the distance between them to around 180 feet. Seeing the vines coming for him, he scrutinized the soil for any changes and guided the Wind Fenrir left and right.

Pop! Pop! Pop! Pop!

With each explosion, the soil beside Link burst. Bundles of black, thorny vines shot up rapidly. If Link was hit, he would either die or the poison would make him wish he were dead.

Unblinkingly, Link multitasked while dodging the poison ivy. With a slight change of thought, he hurled a Level-1 Vector Protective Force Field at Romilson who was 120 feet away.

While maintaining his summoned unicorn, Romilson focused on controlling the poison ivy to attack Link. Seeing how Link was dodging pathetically, he thought that Link would be unable to cast spells and didn't give himself any defensive spells.

He was wrong.

The Magicians who practiced with him in the Isle of Dawn couldn't do it, but that didn't mean Link couldn't.

Multitasking with two tasks or even three, and counter-attacking while defending was something every Magician needed to know in a battle. If you couldn't do it and didn't want to die, then you should just hide in the back and play nurse.

Boom! Romilson was instantly hit by the force field.

The force field wasn't very strong, but it was still painful for an average man. Romilson was stronger than most people, yet he still toppled down the unicorn in a jumbled mess.

He dropped his wand too. The unicorn and poison ivy all vanished.

Footsteps approached him. The Wind Fenrir had reached him. Link perched on the Fenrir and pointed the wand at Romilson. The Vector Protective Force Field was in preparation; the semi-transparent force field easily restited Romilson on the ground.

Romilson stared at Link in disbelief. "You want to kill me? Are you really studying dark magic?"

Link sighed, feeling sad for the High Elf's brain. He said coldly, "I'm stopping you from killing Princess Milda!"

Romilson was instantly furious. "Kill Princess Milda? Bullsh\*t! I'm saving her!"

Link's patience had a limit too. He pointed in the direction Romilson was heading to. "Is the princess in that direction?"

"Yes! Let go of me!" Romilson roared.

Link said coldly, "There are most likely still Assassins hidden in the wilderness, including at least one Level-6 Magician. If you go directly, the enemies will easily find where the princess is hiding. You're killing her!"

"You" Romilson uttered before he finally processed it. He shuddered and the blood drained from his face.

Seeing that he understood, Link let go of the force field. He waited for the High Elf to stand up dazedly and growled, "What are you waiting for? Where's your unicorn? Hurry up!"

"But this will reveal Her Highness's hiding spot." Romilson had broken down like asstem's collapse; his IQ was plummeting too. It was useless to hope he could do something.

"Summon your unicorn!" Link changed his tactic and ordered.

Romilson mumbled something and wanted to argue, but what he had just done was honestly too stupid. He had no confidence now. After hesitating a bit, he summoned the dark brown unicorn again.

Link said again, "Go. You point the way, and we'll take a detour!"

"Which way?" Romilson asked another stupid question.

Rather than berating him, Link pointed in a random direction. "That way and speed up!"

"Uhokay." Romilson obediently steered the unicorn and then sped up. He honestly had no self-esteem now; he went at Link's speed.

Link asked, "How far are we from the princess?"

"Around five miles away."

Link quietly estimated and then said, "Then, the princess will be absolutely safe within five minutes. After five minutes, she'll be in danger, so we have five minutes to act."

Romilson didn't understand. "Uhhow did you calculate that? Are you sure it's five minutes? Won't they be confused by the direction we're going in?"

To make him cooperate, Link explained, "It's a simple deduction. I hypothesized that you were discovered the moment you ran out of the territory. The enemy also guessed the princess's hiding spot at once and sent the command immediately. It's around five miles from the territory to that spot. If the Assassins go directly there at top speed, it'll take five minutes."

This was a really simple math problem. The shortest distance between two points was a line. Divide the shortest distance by the enemy's highest speed, and you would get the period of absolute safety.

"They might use magic communication to send the message," Romilson tried to argue.

"Impossible!" Link said decisively and explained, "Firstly, I didn't sense any strange Mana waves around here. Secondly, that command is complicated and temporary. It's hard to use magic communication to send messages like this."

Romilson was speechless and completely convinced. After a few seconds of silence, he asked, "What if they're fooled by what we're doing now? Will it help win us some time?"

"A little but not much. If I were them, I'd choose to split my men into two groups. One group would follow the original direction. The other would follow us." Link had thought it through.

Hearing this, Romilson grew anxious. "Then why don't we just go in a straight line?"

"Calm down." Link seemed to have already won. After a while, he suddenly said, "Okay, change your direction and go at top speed, then keep the distance between us to 160 feet."

"But this is the wrong direction! It's wrong by a lot!" Romilson honestly couldn't understand.

"I know, but stop hesitating and just go!" Link had become stit again.

Romilson's self-esteem had recovered a bit, but he still couldn't fight against Link's command. Gritting his teeth, he started galloping towards the direction Link had pointed out.

After a while, he turned around and saw that Link's Wind Fenrir had started galloping too, maintaining the 160-foot distance between them.

This was slightly reassuring.

...

At night in the wilderness.

"Chief, they changed direction."

"Changed direction? How?" The Assassin speaking held two dark red daggers.

"Link caught up to the High Elf, and they seemed to have a scuffle. Then, they changed direction."

"Heh, don't hesitate. Continue searching in the original direction. And send two more men after them. Don't lose them."

"Understood."

Half a minute later, another Assassin came to report. "Chief, they changed direction again."

"They seemed to have argued and the High Elf ran forward again. He's super fast."

"Oh?" The chief sank into thought. After a few seconds, he asked, "Is it the original direction?"

"It's at least 20 degrees off."

"Tell the men to change direction. Follow the High Elf's current direction. Hurry, they must hurry!"

"Understood."

Seeing the man leave, the chief sped up too. He was extremely fasteven faster than Link's Wind Fenrir. After sprinting for two minutes, the High Elf and Link appeared in his vision.

He cackled, "Link, so what if you saw through my plan? It's not my fault that High Elf is stupid, ha!"

Thinking a bit, he felt that it still wasn't safe. The two were too fast and might get to the High Elf Princess first. He must slow them down so his men would have more time to search.

## 226. Humiliated

Ferde Wilderness

As every second and minute passed by, Romilson felt increasingly anxious. It would only be around one mile before he would miss Princess Milda's hiding spot.

The presence of her blood was getting thinner, suggesting that her life was only hanging on by a thin thread. She must have suffered some fatal wound.

If I do not get there in time, I am afraid the princessRomilson did not dare to continue on that train of thoughts.

After ten more seconds, Romilson could not help but look behind him. He then saw Link leisurely following him 150 feet away. Romilson could clearly see the calm expression on Link's face as the distance separating them was short. Link appeared to be in control of the situation and even nonchalant, as though all these things did not matter to him.

Upon seeing his calm demeanor, Romilson could not help but shout, "Link, The Highness has suffered a fatal wound. She can only last for half an hour more!"

Romilson then turned back as the Mana within himself surged immediately, activating the defensive bracelet on his wrist. With a light buzzing sound, a light green crystal barrier surrounded him. This was a Level-5 defensive spell, Natural Rune Barrier.

Following which, he saw a dark figure standing on a huge rock around 150 feet away.

This person wore pure black leather armor and was surrounded by a crimson miasma.

He also held two daggers that surged with streams of bloody red brilliance.

He didn't make a move, only standing on top of the 12-foot-tall rock and said, "It is not very safe to be running across the wilderness at this time, my two dear Magicians."

"Who are you?" Romilson pulled his unicorn to a halt.

Without waiting for the Assassin to answer, Link had already caught up and ran past Romilson without slowing down his speed. He had also completely ignored the Assassin and said, "Why are you bantering with him? Saving lives takes precedence!"

"But he" Romilson wanted to say that there might be an ambush lying in wait for them.

However, Link had already run past him as he said, "He is merely stalling time, can't you tell?"

Romilson was immediately enlightened and felt his face turn hot. He then immediately willed the unicorn to charge at full speed and quickly caught up with Link.

He then stared at the Assassin on top of the rock and felt a wave of anger rush through him. He then raised his wand and fired a spell at the rock.

"Venom Ball!"

Venom Ball

Level-5 Spell

Effect: Concentrates natural elements to form an extremely corrosive light ball.

(Note: exclusive High Elf Spell)

A green light then began concentrating at the tip of Romilson's wand and quickly, an emerald-colored ball of more than one foot in length appeared. Romilson then flung this ball straight towards the rock without hesitation.

"Go to hell!" The venomous ball traveled at an insane speed.

The Assassin snickered and leaped backward right before the venom ball was about to hit his body. He then fell swiftly from the rock and escaped this spell in the nick of time.

The Assassin's speed was so fast that Romilson could not react in time. The venom ball had already flown past the rock and hit the ground around 180 feet away.

Bang! The venom ball exploded, and the ground within a 15-foot radius was immediately reduced to a pile of dark green mush. It also bubbled and emitted a turquoise colored smoke, showing its destructive, corrosive power.

The Assassin then looked behind him and felt a shiver down his spine. He was lucky to have escaped the attack swiftly. If not, even his bones might have been melted by the destructive attack.

He then stared at the distant figures of the two Magicians and frowned. This High Elf was merely a young, immature brat; he would be easy to deal with. However, Link was the problem.

The Assassin felt extremely bitter as he watched them going further away. He then shouted, "Link, aren't you afraid that I will attack Scorched Ridge right now?"

Link then replied, "If you truly have the strength, why would you still be chatting with me?"

Along with the reply, Link had also greeted the Assassin with two Whistle spells. The spell was extremely fast and was fired at a precise angle. The Assassin immediately used his dagger to shield himself from the direct blows of this attack.

However, before the dagger could hit the Whistles, they exploded in mid-air, causing the Sacred Silver fragments to splatter around him, encasing him in a rain of deathly metal fragments. He was unable to escape.

Left without a choice, the Assassin could only retreat while shielding his face using his hands.

Most of the Sacred Silver was blocked by his leather armor. However, a few managed to slip through the cracks in his armor and pierce into his body. A sharp pain then seared through his mind.

The Assassin felt terrified and immediately hid behind a rock.

Behind the rock, he observed his injuries and realized that there were a few holes the size of a fingertip in his hands. Silver liquid flowed within these injuries, and turquoise smoke could be seen oozing out from those wounds as well.

"So this is Sacred Silver; it truly is powerful!" The Assassin decisively brought out his dagger and severed the flesh affected by the Sacred Silver.

The moment the silver liquid was removed, the gory wounds started wriggling and healing itself at a speed visible to the naked eye.

These wounds then disappeared in five seconds.

The Assassin then heaved a sigh of relief and said in satisfaction, "The power of the Divine Liquid is truly amazing."

He then emerged from behind the rock and realized that Link and the High Elf had already moved forward another few hundred feet. He immediately picked up his speed and chased forward.

Although Link was a difficult person to deal with, he would stall as much time as he could. As long as he could kill the High Elf Princess, his mission would be accomplished.

On the other side.

Romilson no longer took the lead arrogantly. He ran beside Link as they charged together towards their target.

"Link, that guy is chasing us again," Romilson said.

"I know. Let him do it. We have two people. He is merely irritating us." Link had a clear view of the situation.

Romilson still could not help but look behind and gasp.

"How can he be so fast? He should have been injured from the previous attack. He looks completely unscathed."

Link then observed his surroundings, and after making sure it was safe, he explained to Romilson.

"That Assassin is pretty strong. He should be around Level-6 in strength even before he was strengthened. Now that he has received the blessings of the Dark Serpent, he should be at the peak of Level-7. This grants him extreme vitality. The small injuries that I dealt previously probably healed in around a few seconds' time. In order to deal with these creatures, you have to completely destroy their bodies. Even crushing their hearts would not kill them off immediately. They can still maintain a few seconds of combat following that fatal wound."

"Then what is his weapon? Do you recognize it?" Romilson asked again. His attitude towards Link had already changed for the better. He probably didn't realize it himself.

"I don't recognize it. However, for an Assassin to be using such a conspicuous weapon, he is either an idiot or that the weapon is extremely strong. If we really end up in a direct battle, we need to be careful."

In fact, Link recognized those two daggers. He had seen them in the game before.

A crimson body and a fiery red aurathis pair was an extremely famous epic-quality weapon called the Reaper's Gaze. He remembered that this pair of daggers had an extremely powerful special effect. If they were forcefully broughtito a battle against this Assassin, Link should be able to deal with it. However, if Romilson was careless, he might be killed easily by his opponent.

Upon this thought, Link added, "After we find the princess, I predict that this person will try to intercept us. Do not try to attack him then, just protect yourself."

This was Link's good intentions and him trying to be kind. However, it sounded pretty insulting. One should know that by the ranking of strength, Romilson was a Level-7 Magician while Link was only Level-6. To be warned by a Magician lower in rank was humiliating for Romilson. He thus sneered, "You don't have to care about me."

Link simply glanced at him and smiled faintly.

Romilson could not take it anymore and shouted, "What kind of glance is that? Contempt? Disdain? Let me tell you, while I might not be as strong as you yet, I am still able to take on one Assassin by myself."

"Let's hope so," Link shook his head as he spoke. He had exchanged a few strikes with this High Elf just now and already had a basic understanding of his skills. Link could only say that this young High Elf was truly overestimating his abilities and had clearly not gained enough battle experience.

"Heh, are the both of you really afraid of me?" The Assassin's voice sounded from behind again. He sounded really provocative.

Romilson then stared at Link and saw that he was unmoved. He hence also kept his rebuttals to himself.

The voice then sounded yet again, "I say, are the both of you cowards? Haha, the Flame Controller that has his name known throughout Firuman is actually keeping silent in front of me."

Link pretended not to hear those words while he calculated Milda's exact location in his head.

Romilson, on the other hand, could not stand it anymore and growled, "You cowardly mouse! Take one shot of my magic if you dare!"

"Oh, do you really think I am dumb? If you can hit me then come at me." As he spoke, this Assassin swiftly ducked behind a huge rock, only revealing his head.

Romilson gritted his teeth as he finally saw through the intentions of this guy. He hence started learning from Link to ignore and not reply to his provocations.

After two more minutes, Link suddenly spoke, "Prepare!"

"What? What do I do?" Romilson could not react in time.

Link did not explain and merely surged his Mana through his body and cast the Dimensional Jump spell.

In a blinding white brilliance, Link and Romilson disappeared from their current location, and in an instant, they were transported to a place a mile away.

The moment they landed, Link asked, "Is the princess nearbyNever mind, I already see her."

Just 60 feet away between two boulders, Princess Milda lay on the ground drenched in blood. Her face was turning blue, and her breathing was faint. A crossbow arrow had pierced deeply into her right abdomen.

Link then quickly walked over, and after some observations, he said, "The arrow did not hurt any key organs. However, there is fatal poison smeared on the arrow!"

As he said those words, he did not hesitate to pull the arrow out from the wound. Blood then gushed out from the wound, and the half-conscious Milda whimpered in pain.

Romilson was heartbroken by this scene and growled, "What are you doing? Are you trying to kill Her Highness?"

"Shut up! I am trying to save her!" Link pressed his hands on the wound and cast the Blizzard spell to concentrate water elements, encasing the wound in ice. It was completed within three seconds.

Although this would not cure Milda's injuries, it could greatly slow the spread of the toxins through her body.

Link spent less than five seconds accomplishing all these. He then cast a floatation spell on Milda and turned to Romilson and said, "You bring the princess along; we will head back to Scorched Ridge immediately!"

"Ah, oh okay!" Romilson summoned the unicorn and used the Magician's Hand to place Princess Milda on the back of the unicorn. He then charged straight in the direction of the Scorched Ridge.

Link similarly summoned his Wind Fenrir and stayed by Romilson's side the entire time, keeping his sensors on high alert.

On the other side of the forest, the Assassin stared at the empty plot of land where Link and Romilson once stood dumbfounded. It took him several seconds before he recollected himself and slapped his thighs in agony. Link you truly got me, I still fell for your trick!

Needless to say, the first direction which the High Elf proceeded with was the correct one. The change in direction was definitely something planned by Link. He deliberately chose a twenty-degree turn from the original to give the illusion that they were merely adjusting their direction of travel.

He had gotten information from the Dark Elves that Link's transportation spell had a maximum distance of a mile. It had been four miles since they made a change in direction. As they merely made a slight adjustment of running twenty degrees away from their original trajectory, their displacement would then be only a mile away from their original destination. After a few adjustments in the spell, it would become a perfect distance for Link to cast his Dimensional Jump spell.

Link had managed to use his group transportation spell to once again create a huge time advantage for himself.

"Damn it! I hate this guy!" The Assassin recalled Link's behavior all this while and realized that Link had completely seen through his tactics. This was truly humiliating.

At this moment, he saw his own underlings in front of him. He immediately bellowed, "Follow me; let's intercept them!"

Link had already used the group transportation spell once. He did not believe that Link could cast it again! Even if he could, they would merely be a mile ahead. They could still catch up if they went at top speed.

He was interested in seeing how much Mana Points Link still possessed after the huge battle at Scorched Ridge!

## 227. Thin Line Between Life and Death

Ferde Wilderness

Link looked up at the sky. The moon hung high, casting down silver light and covering the wilderness with a layer of frosty white fog. It was a clear night and was suitable for flying.

"Romilson, don't use the unicorn. Use a flight spell so we can get back quickly," Link said. He was pretty sure the Assassins would try to stop them. If they flew, they could pass over the trouble.

Unexpectedly, Romilson grew awkward. "I don't know how."

"Aren't you a Level-7 Magician? You don't know any flight spells?" Link knitted his brows. This was an awkward situation.

Romilson became more embarsed. "I don't like being in the airHow about you do it?"

Who would've thought that he was scared of heights?

Link shook his head. "I don't have much Mana left, and one of the enemies is a Level-6 Magician. I need to be ready for any sneak attacks."

He had encountered a Level-6 Hellfire Magic Seal earlier. This meant that the enemy had a very powerful Magician that he must be careful of.

The gears in Link's mind moved, and he suddenly had an idea. Giving up on the original plan of returning to the camp, he steered the Wind Fenrir and started running towards the coastline. "Follow me!"

"To where?" Romilson hurried to catch up.

"There'll be Assassins on the way back. It's not safe," Link said. If it was just the two of them, Link could battle it out. But now they also had to protect the gravely injured Elf Princess Milda, so he wasn't confident.

Romilson didn't have any other ideas and could only follow Link closely. After a while, he suddenly yelled in panic, "Link, Her Highness can't keep going anymore. What should we do?"

Link turned to glance at Milda. Her pallor was sickly, and her light golden hair had lost luster. Looking closer, he saw that Milda's breathing had become weak. Her Mana aura was extremely chaotic.

Chaotic Mana meant that one's consciousness was slipping and losing control of one's body. Warriors had a similar phenomenon. Many times after a powerful Warrior died, the Battle Aura inside would collapse. Sometimes, it would even cause a Battle Aura tornado.

If this was happening to Milda now, it meant she was on the brink of death. Even if they could return to Scorched Ridge, probably no one would be able to save her.

"Did you bring medicine?" Link asked.

"Yes, but they're useless. Her Highness always has Elf Nectar with her. It's a type of sacred medicine with great detoxification effects. She's already taken it, but it's useless. This poison is too powerful." Romilson's expression was grim; he looked like he was about to cry.

He used to live a peaceful life in the Isle of Dawn but ran into this mess as soon as he arrived in the Norton Kingdom. Now, even his princess was about to die. He was having a complete mental breakdown.

The problem was that even the Elf Nectar was ineffective against this poison. It was a rare feat.

Thinking of something, Link said, "Let me check her injuries."

With that, he activated the Magician's Hand and moved the princess from Romilson's unicorn. This time, Romilson didn't stop Link. He was already a mess and Link, ever so calm, was his last thread of hope.

When Milda reached the Wind Fenrir's back, Link controlled the beast to run smoothly. He cast a Flash spell for illumination and carefully lifted Milda's eyelids.

The crystal-like eyes had no luster, and the light purple irises had become dark green. Her pupils had dilated and, this was bad news.

Link turned Milda's hand over. He pinched the skin on the back of her hand and studied it closely. He'd seen her hands during the day. At that time, the skin was still smooth and flawless like cream. Now, Link discovered that the skin had darkened. When he pinched and pulled the skin taut, he could see little dark green dots underneath. At a glance, it was like countless little bugs under her skin.

Seeing this, Link had some idea what kind of poison had been on that arrow. He thought, System, I need specific info about the toxin, Gray Blood Poison.

After a while, information on the Gray Blood Poison was displayed in Link's vision.

Gray Blood Poison

Epic Toxin

History: it first appeared in the year 1229 of the Divine Calendar. The first generation blood poison was created by Deans, a disciple of Dark Elf Master Magician Aymons. After countless modifications, it has become a practically incurable poison.

Use: fusing into the victim's blood, the poison destroys the cells along the way. There will be dark blood spots under the victim's skin. Then their organs will begin to dissolve, followed by the muscles. Finally, the victim will be reduced to mostly undamaged skin and a skeleton.

Special circumstances: High Elves severely lack immunity to this poison. Even with a cure, the victim may not be able to survive if they are a High Elf.

Solution 1: Moonlight Potion

Solution 2: Blood purification

(Note: this toxin must be removed as soon as possible. If the organs begin to dissolve, it will become truly incurable.)

Link scanned the information quickly. Having a general idea, he quickly pulled open Mildasshirt. He pressed down lightly on her chest to test the status of her organs.

Milda's body was now covered in dark and pale patches. There was no beauty to speak of, so Link was not distracted. After a few seconds, he closed Mildasshirt and said, "I have an idea of what poison it is. It can dissolve her organs. I checked, and her organs have some small changes already. She can last for half an hour at most.

"Ah!" Romilson gasped. Staring at Link, he said, "Master Link, you have a solution. You must have a solution, right?"

"Yes, but we have to get rid of the enemies in the way first." Link could already sense the Assassins behind him. They didn't disguise themselves and used their advantageous speed to pursue Link and Romilson.

Now, they were more than 2000 feet away. At their rate, they would be here in five minutes.

Romilson could feel it too. Furious, he yelled, "Those d\*mn Assassins! I'm gonna kill them all!"

"No, we can't fight them. He princess won't be able to handle it."

Link calmly considered the situation. Milda was running out of time; her life was hanging by a thread. He must detoxify her immediately!

Romilson was about to cry. He kept looking behind him or to the princess on the Wind Fenrir. His thoughts were a mess, and it would probably affect his casting of spells!

"Relax, Romilson. The princess won't die. I have a way to save her, but you have to do what I say!"

Romilson also realized that he had lost it. Forcing himself to calm down, he nodded. "Okay!"

Sitting on the Fenrir, Link produced some magic materials. He didn't have any Moonlight Potions and didn't know how to make one either, so he couldn't consider the solution.

As for solution two, he needed a blood purifier.

The theory behind blood purifiers was simple. It was basically a precise water purifier with a simple transmutation magic seal on the filter. Then, the Magician must control the magic seal precisely and remove the toxin without damaging the blood cells.

All in all, the Magician must have a very strong enchantment foundation, which Link obviously had.

Link didn't have a blood purifier either, but it wasn't too complicated. He had the materiasso he could quickly make a simplified version now.

Without saying anything else, he focused and started making it.

Romilson caught up and asked anxiously, "Where are we going?"

"Don't disturb me! If anyone comes, stop them!" Link had to control the Wind Fenrir and create the blood purifier at the same time without making any mistakes. It was extremely hard.

All hope of saving the princess was on this human Magician. Romilson didn't dare to say anything. He followed Link quietly with a wand in hand. He was ready to attack any Assassin who appeared.

The seconds ticked by. Link could feel the Mana fading from Milda, and she was barely breathing. She was about to die.

Romilson kept an eye on Mildasstatus too. He was so nervous that it felt like his heart had jumped into his throat. He just wished Link would hurry up!

Around two minutes later, there was a blood purifier made of Mithril in Link's hands. It was shaped like a small heart with an entrance and exit for the blood. The center was an empty atrium the size of a fist. It was crudely made, but he didn't have time to worry about that.

After testing it a few times to confirm that the thing worked, Link lifted Mildasshirt again. He pressed down on her chest and back to discern where the heart was. Then he applied pressure and stabbed the two tubes into Milda's heart from under her armpits.

With the two tubes in her body, Link extended his perception along the blood purifier. Higg's Force Field also extended into it.

The force field changed the tube's shape with minor adjustments. It carefully connected the tubes to the aorta. Certain that there was no error, Link activated the spell on the blood purifier.

The Mithril heart glowed dimly. Then, Link saw viscous black blood get sucked out of Milda's body. It flowed into the blood purifier and flowed back into her body after being purified by the magic seal.

The cycle repeated.

Link carefully controlled the magic seal on the blood purifier. Bit by bit, the Gray Blood Poison was picked out.

This was highly technical work. He needed to ensure the stability of the Mana waves and distinguish the toxin. If he messed up, Milda's blood would be destroyed even if he got rid of the toxin. She would definitely die then.

Link focused entirely on this work to avoid any problems.

After around two minutes, the blood from Milda's body contained some slivers of red, while the purifier grew darker. Milda's breathing also grew heavier.

Success! Link thought in relief.

As an amateur, he had succeeded the first time he performed such a complex heart surgery. He was truly blessed by God.

To be honest, he had been relying entirely on his strong perception as a Magician to feel around. It had been like walking in the dark. He had no clue if he could succeed and just tried his best.

Since there was some effect, he needed to keep it up.

Link continued to operate the blood purifier. He estimated that at this rate, Milda's blood would be completely detoxified in ten minutes. All his focus was on the blood purifier, but he was also worried about the Assassins.

"How's the situation?" he asked Romilson.

Romilson had seen Mildasstate. Link was suspect of groping the princess's body, but she truly had recovered, so Romilson had nothing to say.

To answer Link's question, he quickly reported, "They've caught up. They're only around 400 feet away now."

"Four hundred feet?" Link glanced back. Using the moon for illumination, he saw a dozen black shadows racing towards them. The one at the front was the one who had the Reaper's Gaze dagger.

"I need ten more minutes for the blood purifier. I can't cast spells, so you have to stop them!" Link exclaimed.

"UhThere are 14 of them. I don't think I can handle it." Romilson didn't dare overestimate his power.

Link continued, "Just do what I say. If you can't follow directions, then just say so."

"What do I say if I can do follow directions?" Romilson asked stupidly.

Link sighed. He was losing patience from dealing with this imbecile. He growled, "If you can what I day, then just do it! What else do you need to say? Do I have to teach you this too?"

"Ah, oh, oh. I get it." Romilson realized immediately that he had asked something stupid.

"Now, cast the Magic Light Spell at the sky! Keep going, don't stop."

This was an illumination spell. It was simple, and Romilson obviously knew how to do it. He didn't know why Link wanted it, but he just followed the order.

Bright balls of light streamed from his wand and rushed into the sky. The formation of white light lit up the area as if it were daytime. No secret attacker could hide in this brightness.

Link looked up at the coastline in the near distance. He adjusted his direction and ran to the beach.

The Assassins behind them were now within 300 feet. Link glanced at the cave on the beach and saw the two familiar eerie green Flames of the Soul inside. Making a decision, he ran another 600 feet and said, "Now stop and cast a Level-7 offensive spell."

"I need at least three seconds. They're not stupid, and they'll definitely dodge it. Then, it'll be over for us!" Romilson cried.

"Do what I say!" Link ordered. The High Elf had wasted two seconds with his nonsense.

Romilson jumped in fright. He immediately started casting the spell Thorn Jungle.

Thorn Jungle

Level-7 Master Magician Spell

Cost: 3500 Mana Points

Effect: Rattan thorns created by solidified natural elements form a dense and deadly thorn array within 240 feet of the spell caster.

(Note: this is a semi-supplementary, semi-offensive spell, used mainly to trap the opponent.)

## 228. I Am Truly a Fool

Nightfall, the beach.

The Assassin leader chuckled when he saw Romilson channeling his spell. He then said, "My brothers, retreat further behind; this guy is panicking."

His underlings then erupted inobursts of laughter. They were around 300 feet away from their opponent. Judging from the magic fluctuation around Romilson, it should be a Level-7 spell. Emerald light glittered around him, and he was encased in an elemental brilliance at least six feet in diameter.

However, a spell would be for naught if it could not hit its enemy.

Just to be safe, the Assassins retreated a little further and were prepared to watch the show from the beach.

"To tell the truth, a Magician looks pretty darn scary while they are casting a spell."

"I did not believe people when they said that High Elves are good-looking. But geez, even I am feeling something for this Magician."

"If we manage to kill them, I'll have a shot at taking that good-looking elf for myself. Heh."

As they conversed, Romilson's spell had taken form. With a whooshing sound, a large number of thorn vines appeared from the ground with him as the center. The thorns on these vines were as sharp as daggers, with their tips shaped like hooks. Under the illumination of Romilson's magic aura, the vines looked like snakes slithering in all directions.

In an instant, the area within a 30-foot radius around Romilson was covered in such vines, completely sealing off the only way forward for the Assassins.

At the same time, violent magic fluctuations could be felt.

The Assassin leader frowned slightly as he said, "This spell is slightly troublesomeNot good, it's a sneak attack!"

As he spoke, he could feel imminent danger approaching. He immediately released his Battle Aura, causing a crimson glow to envelop his body. He then immediately moved away from his location, retreating almost 150 feet in an instant.

However, although he could escape this attack, his underlings were not so lucky.

As he spoke, red flaming runes more than 15 feet in diameter appeared on the spot his underlings were standing at.

These runes overlapped one another, forming a complex formation of countless runes. It was also situated at a perfect location, trapping five Assassins at once.

These Assassins who were distracted by the Level-7 spell of the High Elf naturally reacted slowly to this sudden attack. By the time they wanted to dodge, it was too late.

Almost an instant after the runes appeared, an explosion sound rumbled through the beach as a 15-foot thick incandescent pillar of flame rose from the ground. It reached an altitude of 150 feet, consuming the Assassins in the process.

Arrghh! The five Assassins were burned to ashes after only a few screams of despair.

This was the power of a Level-7 spell!

Fortunately, there were eight other Assassins who instinctively retreated in time.

Although they just had a close shave with death, they immediately let down their guard and thought, Lucky I am still alive. However, little did they know that the attack had not yet ended.

Almost immediately, another rune formation appeared at the most precise location once again, accurately predicting the eventual position of the Assassins following their retreat. It engulfed four Assassins this time around. To be exact, it seemed as though the four Assassins stepped into the rune formation of their own accord.

Boom! After another huge flaming pillar eruption, four Assassins uttered the final scream of their lives.

Four Assassins remained.

The four of them exchanged glances and were already terrified. They were prepared to flee and give up on this battle when the rune formation appeared once again.

Boom! With the sound of another explosion, two more Assassins were consumed by the attack. Within a tenth of a second, another spell erupted, taking the lives of the last two Assassins.

Apart from the Assassin leader, the rest of his underlings were completely annihilated.

Although the process might seem long, the entire duration of this spell was less than a second.

Within a second, four separate rune formations appeared in the area around the Assassins. Four consecutive flaming pillars then erupted from the ground and consumed all the Assassins in the process.

These four incandescent flaming pillars formed a complete Level-7 spell.

"Level-7 spell! Instantaneous spellcasting speed as well!" The Assassin leader was horrified. He knew that his opponents must have gotten some backup and immediately thought of retreating. He then released his Battle Aura as he turned in the opposite direction.

"Won't you stay?" A voice rang from the shadows of the forest followed by a beam of emerald light.

It was the Level-6 spell, Metal Decay.

Spells that were light based in nature traveled extremely fast. In the darkness, one could see a beam of light flashing through the air, charging straight towards the heart of the Assassin leader.

However, the Assassin leader was experienced as well. He released a huge amount of Battle Aura in the last moment and managed to escape to one side.

This was not to say that the Assassin leader was faster than the spell. He merely predicted his opponent's attack beforehand. When a Magician cast a spell, he would first have to determine the position where he wanted his attack to land. The spell would then take time to travel to that location. All these processes took time.

In the eyes of other professions, this time was called the "Golden Period."

Different types of spells had different Golden Periods as well. The length could be as long as half a second. For example, Link's whistle needed to travel through the air before reaching its target. In that time, an experienced Warrior could easily erect his defenses. Of course, the practicality of the defense then depended on the Warrior's judgment and skills.

Short Golden Periods could be only around ten microseconds long. Within these spells, the light-based spells were known for having extremely short Golden Periods. Most of these spells had a foundational Golden Period of not more than 100 microseconds long. If the Magician was an experienced one, he could even shorten it to under ten microseconds.

With a buzzing sound, the Metal Decay beam shot across the Assassin's arm and left a charred mark on his hand. It then hit the ground, causing a pile of rotten mud more than nine feet in diameter to appear immediately.

The Assassin leader had succeeded in avoiding the attack.

However, the Metal Decay attack was not completed. This spell was similar to the fire pillars previously and was made to fire in bursts.

After the first beam, three consecutive beams emerged from the shadows. Each of this beams had been carefully adjusted to aim at the Assassin leader's fatal spots.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Three beams of light flashed across the atmosphere. The Assassin leader also changed his stance three consecutive times in an instant, escaping these deadly beams one by one.

His speed was outrageous. From other's perspective, his body seemed to have splitito multiple images in that instant. Every beam seemed to pass through the image but was just so close to hitting his real self.

The attack ended after a second with all four beams landing onto the ground. All the images of the Assassin leader then converged into a tangible body. He then immediately headed in the opposite direction. He was running for his life!

"You stay!" Romilson was the one shouting this time around.

The unexpected support was a huge confidence booster for him. He had already canceled his Thorn Vine spell. When the Assassin leader was busy dealing with the spells coming from the shadows, Romilson skillfully manipulated his unicorn and charged straight at the Assassin.

As the Assassin leader was about to flee, he raised his wand and pointed it towards the Assassin leader before shouting, "Poison Thorn Vines!"

Whoosh! A series of noises sounded from the ground as countless magic vines sprung up towards the Assassin. Boom! Boom! the vines appeared one after another, charging towards the Assassin leader in all directions.

However, this Assassin leader had just escaped a light-based spell. These vines would be a piece of cake compared to the close shave with death he just encountered. He skillfully dodged left and right, escaping Romilson's attacks while showcasing a beautiful dance. Romilson could not seem to land a hit.

"Damn it! How can he be so fast!?" Romilson was terrified. He felt as though he was punching the air when the enemy was right in front of him.

However, his attack was not useless. It had successfully trapped the Assassin leader in his location and gave the figure in the shadows enough time to cast a spell.

"Flame Blast!" The figure in the darkness used a standard fire-elemental spell.

An incandescent fireball charged towards the Assassin leader. Although it was a Level-4 spell, the destructive force of this spell was terrifying. If the Assassin leader was engulfed by these flames, he would be heavily injured and most probably done in by the next few follow-up spells.

The attacking range of this spell was huge as well. After the explosion, the area within a 90-foot radius of the point of the explosion would be engulfed in flames; there would be no place for the Assassin leader to hide.

In an instant, Romilson felt a sense of relief as he thought that this battle was settled.

However, at the moment, Link's voice sounded, "Fool! Get back!"

"Back? Why?" Romilson had not reacted to the situation.

The next moment, he felt his heart palpitating at an insane rate, as though he had been targeted by an ancient ferocious beast. It was an intense feeling. More importantly, although he felt this dangerous premonition, he had no idea where the danger would strike.

In his state of panic, he could only follow Link's instructions and give up on his Poison Thorn Vine spell and ran back with his unicorn mount.

But he was too late.

The next instant, he heard a huge explosion behind him. It was the Flame Blast spell. Following which, Romilson realized that the Assassin leader had disappeared.

"Where is he? Where did he go?" Romilson instinctively cast a defensive spell on himself.

Before the defensive spell was completed, he suddenly heard the sound of howling winds. Following which, he saw a dark figure beside him. It was the Assassin leader who was just getting cornered a moment ago!

How can he be so fast? Romilson was horrified.

The Assassin leader smiled cruelly as he raised his dagger and plunged it straight towards his heart. The speed of this attack was outrageous.

It's over! I won't be in time!

Romilson knew that he would not have the time to complete his defensive spell. In fact, the emotional fluctuation that he was going through had already undone whatever progress he had made in casting the spell.

As the dagger was about to pierce through his skin, Romilson felt his body tremble at the very last moment. He then noticed that a faint crimson glow was enveloping his body. He then took a look at the Assassin leader and realized that the speed at which the dagger was reaching his heart had slowed down significantly. Furthermore, within this red glow, the black leather armor on the Assassin leader 's body began to burn.

Link cast a defensive spell on me! Romilson finally reacted to the situation. He felt as though he was just pulled back from the brink of death.

The Assassin leader decisively gave up on his assault after this delay and retreated a total of 30 feet in a single leap. After 30 feet, a dark crimson miasma could be seen enveloping his body.

Whoosh! An emerald light beam pierced this crimson miasma and almost dissipated it.

However, after the miasma dissipated, the Assassin leader was nowhere to be seen. He seemed to have disappeared into thin air.

"Where is he?" Romilson could not wrap his head around this situation.

"That was a Battle Aura illusion. His real self was concealed under some sort of stealth spell," Link explained. It was a shame that he had to concentrate on curing Milda. If not, the Assassin Leader would have been a corpse by now.

"I am here. You fool!" A voice emerged from afar.

Romilson stared in the direction of the voice and saw that several hundred feet away, the Assassin leader was waving to him. This guy was laughing hysterically and suddenly turned his body around. He then accelerated and disappeared into the darkness.

He was gone. Two Level-7 Magicians were unable to stop him. If not for Link's intervention at the end, Romilson would already be dead.

Romilson was devastated at this result. He then thought back on his immature ravings and felt his face turn hot. He almost wanted to find a hole in the ground and bury his head in it.

He remembered that his mentor had told him before he left the Isle of Dawn, "You are now an official Magician. However, you are still not fit for combat. You must be extra careful when you go to the Norton Kingdom."

He thought nothing about it then. This was because the strongest Magician in the entire Norton Kingdom was Dean Anthony, who was merely a Level-7 Magician like him. How dangerous could such an undeveloped place be?

But now he totally understood the teachings of his mentor. His path of magic had just begun. As Link and this Assassin leader had said, in a real battle, he was nothing but a fool!

This was truly a painful realization.

## 229. And Then, a Demon King Will Appear

High Elf Romilson stood dazedly on the beach.

From the corner of his vision, he saw the black-robed Magician leave quietly. He did not know who that Magician was or why he would help them. He'd even sensed a dark aura from the Magician's magic, but Romilson didn't want to stop him.

No matter who he was, he had saved them and that was a fact. Romilson knew he wasn't a match for the Magician either.

The sea breeze blew by, and the crashing of waves traveled to his ears constantly. He stood for a good ten minutes before he finally recovered and went back to Link's side.

Link was sitting on the beach now. Princess Milda was still leaning in his arms. Her clothing was a bit disorderly with two Mithril tubes reached inside her collar. There was a thin aura of blood coming from her.

"How is she?" Romilson asked. He could see that the princess was much better. Her breathing was more stable, and the darkness of her pallor had faded to nothing.

Link was still focused on detoxifying and nodded when he heard Romilson. "Not optimistic."

Romilson's heart clenched. Seeing Link's state, he didn't dare disturb him and just waited patiently.

After another ten minutes, Link's finger moved. He said, "The purification is mostly done, but Her Highness's body is greatly damaged. It's hard to sayCome, help me hold this."

Romilson hurried over. He knelt down in the sand and held the crude yet effective Mithril blood purifier with both hands.

With his hands free, Link started casting the Higgs Force Field. He connected the entrance and exit tubes with a click. Then, he tited the dirty filter off.

Romilson pointed at the Mithril tube still connected to the princess's body and asked, "What about this?"

"The Mithril tube is connected to Her Highness's artery. Without a priest, the wound won't be able to heal promptly, so I can't take it out for now. Hold it, and I'll anchor it on her ribs with a cloth."

With that, Link pulled out a clean shirt from his dimensional storage gear and tore out a few strips. He lifted Mildasshirt and tied the tube tightly.

After detoxifying, Mildasskin was different. It was dazzling white with pinkish breasts. Romilson quickly looked away. Link moved as fast as possible too. He anchored the tube tightly and made sure it wouldn't move and damage Milda's artery. Then, he quickly pulled her shirt down.

"Done. Do you have Elf Nectar?" Link asked.

"Yes, yes, yes, I have a bottle," Romilson answered quickly.

"Good. Feed it to Her Highness to replenish her fading vitality."

"Okay, okay," Romilson answered. He pulled out a beautiful crystal bottle filled with purplish emerald liquid.

Link lightly pinched Milda's chin and throat. Her mouth opened subconsciously, and Romilson carefully poured the Elf Nectar in.

Milda was still unconscious and couldn't swallow. During this process, Link used the Magician's Hand to close her windpipe.

After a full five minutes, the mere 50-milliliter bottle of Elf Nectar dripped into Mildasstomach. Romilson was covered in sweat when they finished.

The Elf Nectar was definitely powerful. Without the Gray Blood Poison's restitions, it was fully effective. Milda's pallor recovered visibly; her breathing became stronger as well.

Link opened Milda's eyes and saw that the pupils were pale purple again. He used the Flash Spell and the pupils restited immediately. This meant it responded to the light.

Fully relieved, Link said, "Good, she won't die. However, she'll be very weak for a long time."

Romilson wiped the sweat from his forehead and sighed. He mumbled, "As long as she's alive, as long as she's alive."

It was okay if she was weak. The High Elves had tons of ways to restore her health.

Link cast the Levitation spell on Milda again and helped her up with the Magician's Hand. He said, "Summon your unicorn. Let's go back to Scorched Ridge."

"Okay, no problem." Romilson obeyed Link's orders without any temper.

He summoned his unicorn and used the Magician's Hand to gently place Milda on the beast's back. Link also summoned his Wind Fenrir and they started back.

After 300 feet, Link turned back. He saw Vance in the shadow by the beach and smiled. Subtly, he made some complex hand gestures to the Lich, saying, Thanks, I'll come find you after I settle these matters.

Vance reached out his skeletal hand and gestured that he understood. Then, he retreated and disappeared into the shadows.

Nothing happened on the way back. The two men reached Scorched Ridge without any obstacles.

In the camp, the corpses all over the ground had been gathered. Occasionally, there were sniffles and cries but the fire was put out, and order was reinstated.

Seeing Link return, Jacker welcomed him. "Lord."

Link nodded. "Good job, but there's something else."

"Please tell me."

Link pulled out his wand and a sheepskin parchment. He pointed the wand at the parchment and activated a Level-1 Magic Image.

A few seconds later, a clear image of the lead Assassin appeared on the parchment. His two daggers were especially detailed, practically identical to the original. Link then used the Copy Spell to write down the leader's specific characteristics, going into more detail about his weapon. He even wrote down the special effects.

In the end, Link gave Jacker the parchment. "He is the culprit who attacked the territorya powerful Level-7 Assassin. Release an announcement that he's wanted. Those who can provide accurate information will be rewarded 100 gold. Anyone who can kill him will get 10,000 gold! One of his weapons is 20,000 gold!"

Jacker gasped. "Lord, isn't that too much?"

This would be the highest reward money in the history of Firuman.

"It's not too much. Anyone who can kill this Assassin is worth the money." Link saw that Jacker had more to say and waved his hand. "Don't. I've already decided."

He had an idea of what had happened. The Syndicate of the South and the Dark Elves of the North had schemed together against his territory.

It was a very good move. They'd publicly declared war on him. However, both the Syndicate and the Dark Elves seemed to have forgotten that the world was not so simple. The Syndicate did not own the South either.

There would always be a powerful solo Warrior; there would always be powerful mercenaries. If he provided an extremely high reward, someone would do everything for the money.

Seeing Link like that, Jacker remembered that they'd discovered a clay mine in the territory and had more money than they could spend. He had no need to argue anymore and nodded. "I'll do it this instant."

Link nodded. He turned to Romilson and said, "Let's go find a priest."

Scorched Ridge may be small, but it had everything. There was already a small church with a mid-level priest.

When they arrived at the church, the priest saw that it was the Lord and the patient was the High Elf Princess so he naturally worked as hard as he could. Half an hour later, Milda's outer wounds were mostly healed. The Mithril tube was removed as well.

Afterwards, Romilson took Milda to rest. This was the High Elves' business, so Link didn't bother them after arranging their lodging and guards.

Rather than going to rest himself, he started taking care of the other matters. He worked deep into the night until two in the morning. Finally, everything was settled, and peace started settling in Scorched Ridge again.

...

Huff, huff. A black shadow sprinted across Ferde Wilderness, not stopping until he had run ten miles. He panted heavily.

It was the lead Assassin who had escaped earlier.

The previous battles seemed easy, but actually, he had always been hanging by a thread. He had used all his might in every second.

After a short rest, he heard something beside him but didn't sense any danger. Looking up, he saw the Dark Elf Magician.

"Here for the show?" He was a bit angered. He wouldn't have lost if this Magician hadn't helped earlier.

"You must be blaming me, right?" the Magician chuckled.

The Assassin was furious. "Humph, you're still laughing now?"

The Magician sighed. "It's great news that you escaped alive. Of course I should laugh."

The Assassin huffed. "But if you helped, my men would still be alive. We could've killed the High Elf Princess too!"

The Dark Elf Magician shook his head. "No, you're wrong. If I joined, we might've been able to kill the High Elf Princess, but then Link would've been freed too. Then you would realize that you're faced with a Demon King. We would've died in that wilderness."

The leader wincedhe hadn't thought about this. He was only thinking of killing the princess and didn't consider Link's potential revenge afterward.

During the fight, Link seemed to have been treating the princess the entire time. Despite that, he was still able to easily stop the fatal attacks. The Assassin thought of Link's track record he'd heard rumors of. If Link had fought freelyThe Assassin shuddered. He truly had been careless.

When he snapped out of it, the Dark Magician continued, "I'm here to remind you that Link will definitely take revenge when he returns. If I were him, I'd announce a great reward to catch you. For example, 5000 gold for your head. How many people do you think would go crazy for that?"

The Assassin paled. Trying to stay strong, he said, "Let me see who dares to accept the challenge. I'll kill anyone who comes!"

"What if they come in tens or hundreds?"

The Assassin gulped. He sighed and said to the Dark Elf, "Thanks for the reminder. I'll go hide now."

With that, he started flying to the South without stop.

Seeing the Assassin disappear into the dark night, the Dark Elf Magician sighed. "The mission still failed. That Link is so difficult."

He had to return to the North promptly as well. The Dark Serpent did not have much more time left in Firuman. The victor of the northern war must be decided.

## 230. Its a Shame You Are Not a High Elf

Ferde Wilderness

These few days, news about the Ferde Wilderness spread around like wildfire. The most popular one was not the one regarding the ambush, but rather, the outrageous compensation the Lord of the Ferde Wilderness was offering!

The head of the Assassin was worth 10000 gold coins while his weapon was worth a whopping 20000 gold coins. This news was like a red-hot iron being thrown into a bucket of cold water. It exploded and splattered across the Norton Kingdom swiftly, reaching the ears of even the most elusive people.

A huge crowd gathered in front of the bulletin board outside Scorched Ridge every day, commenting on the rewards.

"It would be a wonder if the Assassin can stay alive after this declaration. I will feel safe staying in this place."

"I bet there will be someone sending his head over in a month's time."

"One month is way too long; half a month is more than sufficient!"

"If I had any battling skills, I would definitely hunt him down as well."

These discussions happened every moment throughout the day. Anyone who set foot on the territory would first and foremost be attracted by this notice. The residents of the Scorched Ridge prided themselves on this aspect of their land.

This also greatly reduced the negative implications the ambush had on the reputation of the territory. However, it was still the truth that the territory was ambushed by an enemy. Such a thing must not happen again.

The day after the ambush, Gildern rigorously sieved out the Syndicate spies from the mercenary band. The Magicians also doubled the construction speed of the Mage Tower. High Elf Romilson also joined the team to facilitate the process.

In return, Link also increased the commission for the Magicians.

Under the efforts of the Magicians, the Mage Tower seemed to have a new look every day. With this speed, the Mage Tower should be completed in half a month's time.

As for Link, he dedicated two hours a day to deal with the administrative things regarding his territory. He then spent the rest of his time experimenting with magic, especially the theories regarding the construction of a magic puppet.

The third day after the ambush, Link was studying theories regarding magic puppet construction in the top level of the administrative building as usual.

These few days, he delved deeper into the theories written in The Heart of the Puppet and Vance's Theory of Magic Puppet. After combining the wisdom from both books, a magic puppet theory unique to his own understanding was slowly forming in his mind.

But it still wasn't enough.

"I don't have enough relevant books regarding this field. If I am able to read more theories regarding magic puppets and extract the essence of their theories, that would be great."

The wisdom of the predecessors was necessary in order to attain greater heights. Link was now eager to attain this wisdom. Unfortunately, the magic foundation of the human race was way too weak. Link was already at the peak of knowledge and strength in the human race, only second to Magician Bryant.

Link then heard someone knocking at the door.

Link frowned as he checked the time. It was two o'clock in the afternoon. He had instructed his servants to let no one disturb him during this period. What happened?

"Is there something wrong?"

"Sir, Princess Milda is awake and wishes to see you." The voice of a young girl sounded outside the door. Link remembered this voice. It belonged to a female servant which he specially assigned to Milda.

It was his duty to pay Milda a visit when she woke up. Link then put away his magic book and opened the door before saying, "Let's go."

The princess had to be given special treatment everywhere she went. Princess Milda lived in the only house built from stone in the entire territory. This was a house which Link commissioned the Magicians to build just for the purpose of Milda's visit. It was a two-story villa and had a large balcony and a small garden.

Link passed through the small garden that was built in a rush and entered the villa before finally reaching the bedroom on the second floor. In the bedroom, Milda leaned her back against the bed frame as a servant carefully fed her meat soup.

As she saw Link walking into the room, she smiled and pointed to the chair not far away from the bed, whispering, "Sit."

Link sat down and observed Milda's face. As compared to the first day when he saw her, she still appeared pale, and her eyes were dim and lifeless. She wore plain white pajamas and let loose her golden brown hair. Without the overwhelming presence of a High Elf Princess, she looked more like a girl next door. Of course, the features of this girl next door were too delicate and gorgeous to be true.

"I have some things I wish to speak with Lord Link alone." Milda waved her hands at the two servants who bowed slightly before leaving the room and closing the door behind them.

Silence took over the room for a few seconds before Link said out of courtesy, "I'm glad to see the princess in good health."

To his surprise, the moment he said those words, Milda chuckled and said, "Are you truly glad? Link, I actually woke up way earlier this morning. Romilson had already told me the whole story. I'm afraid that in your eyes, I am merely a princess whom you can let go anytime you want."

Link lifted his head to look at Milda in shock. He realized that she was also staring right at him, her pair of amethyst eyes shining with sarcasm.

Link was also not surprised by those words. When he made that choice, he had also predicted that this would happen. He did not make any excuses for himself, but merely changed the topic of the conversation, "Your Highness, your reason for summoning me is?"

Princess Milda sighed helplessly upon seeing his reaction.

She had complicated feelings towards this Magician. She had great respect for his magic talent and was grateful to him for saving her life. However, she was also depressed at his previous choice, although she could totally understand his perspective as the princess of the High Elf race. Her political education from young had informed her that Link's decision was the correct one. If she were in charge of the situation, she would have done the same. Though, she would never have accomplished it nearly as perfect as Link did.

"I apologize for my actions that night. I should not have suspected you." In the end, Milda said an unexpected line.

Link then looked at Milda in shock. From her reaction that day, he thought Milda was just like Romilson, merely a fledgling young Magician who had no experience in dealing with issues. Her sarcasm just moments ago further confirmed his suspicions. However, her sudden apology had reversed Link's negative impression of her.

She seems to be slightly more mature than that brat Romilson. Link had a slightly better impression of Milda now.

"You don't have to apologize. If I had encountered such a situation, I would not have trusted the other party as well," Link said.

"Indeed, but you never would have left in a fit like I did." Milda had a self-loathing expression when she said this. "If you had encountered the same situation, you would not reveal any signs of dissatisfaction or distrust. You would even show support for the other party. If it was a misunderstanding, the other part would be grateful for your trust, and even if the other party had indeed dabbled in dark magic, your trust and support would have won you a good reputation. Others would then recognize your character, am I right?"

Link thought for a moment before nodding.

If he was really caught up in that situation, he would settle it as per what Milda had said.

It might seem silly to trust someone unconditionally. However, this was actually a smart investment. As long as one invested enough in self-protection and strategized carefully, they would become the ultimate winner in this exchange.

Using this strategy would gain you more loyal allies the further you down the road of power.

On the contrary, Milda's actions looked shrewd and applaudable at first glance. However, if she continued on this path, her allies would slowly reduce in size, and she would eventually be left alone.

The difference between these two choices laid in the magnanimity of the person.

After a long sigh, Mildassaid with a depressed expression, "You are not like me. Not only did I offend you, I even caused Latour to lose his life. Even I almost died in that incident. I feel horrible looking back at my actions."

It was impossible for Link to reply to this statement!

After some thought, he could only comfort, "Everyone makes mistakes. It will be fine as long as we change for the better."

Milda laughed as she said, "Look, you always make the best choice. When you first entered this room, I was enraged at your decision and could not help but ridicule you with my sarcastic tone despite the fact that I knew it was wrong. However, you did nothing as such. You still saved me in the end even though I suspected you. You comforted me even when I was rude to you just moments ago. I am extremely curious. Don't you have any emotions at all?"

Link frowned. He did not wish to be talking about such superfluous things with Milda. He then said, "Your Highness, did you call me in here just to say all this "

He nearly said the word "nonsense" before he stopped himself.

Mildassmile grew even brighter upon seeing his expression, "It seems like you still have emotions. You are just not going to hold it against a young an inexperienced girl like me. Alright then, I will stop spouting nonsense. This is what I want to say. I feel that you are a reliable ally worthy of the strong support of the High Elves."

Link raised his eyebrows. This was a result he did not expect.

"You are surprised, yes?"

"It was truly something I didn't expect." Link was surprised at the sudden maturity of this young girl.

Milda then said softly, "My mother once said to me that if the High Elves wished to stay strong forever, we would need a reliable ally. A true reliable ally is not one who stays loyal to you indefinitely, as those people simply do not exist. Reliable allies are those that can benefit from a mutual cooperation and have a common interest. This is the only way a cooperation can last long. You are the person I am looking for."

Cooperation between races had never been a one-sided connection or a highly-imbalanced exchange. Even if it existed, there was bound to be suspicion and fury after some time.

Link then nodded as he commended, "You mother is truly wise."

As Link brought up her mother, Milda's face lit up with pride. She continued, "You are a perfect Magician. I heard that you have been studying magic most of the time during the day?"

"Indeed."

Milda then laughed as she said, "I will put this bluntly. While the human race does have some interesting magic, the magic you have in general is still crass and vulgar. You guys don't even possess a complete Level-8 magic book. Even if you have exceptional magic talent, you can at most reach Level-7 in strength."

Link felt that something huge was happening and he straightened his body to look at Milda.

Milda stared at him as she straightened her body and curled her lips slightly before saying, "Hence, I invite you for a trip to the Isle of Dawn. We have a magic library on the island which contains the magic knowledge my race has accumulated throughout the years. When you are free, you can stay there for aroundthree months."

Link was truly touched by this offer. His eyes lit up as he bowed to Mildarsectfully before saying, "I am extremely honored."

Milda then took out another magic book named Freedom and Puppet. This is a book written by the Legendary Magician of our race, Rafael. It is a book regarding the workings of the magic puppet. You might need it."

Link was elated and immediately flipped open the book as he received it. After merely a few pages, he felt that the book was filled with undiscovered knowledge he had never imagined possible. However, he also had a question.

"Your Highness, why do you have so many magic books with you?"

Milda then smiled as she said, "I actually brought a mini library with me. I have many copies of famous magic books back on the Isle of Dawn."

Link was extremely envious of Milda's accessibility to knowledge. The High Elves were truly a race that built their foundation on magic. Not only did they possess a vast amount of magical knowledge, but they also possessed a lot more magic books than the human race.

Milda could not help but chuckle at Link's expression, as she said, "Link, it is such a waste that you are not a High Elf. If not, you would definitely become one of the greatest Magicians in the history of our race."

Link merely dismissed her last sentence as it was impossible for him to ever become a High Elf. He was already eager to delve into the mysteries of the magic book he just received. After asking Milda to take good care of her body, he was prepared to leave immediately and go back to his study room.

Milda then added, "I have at least ten more books regarding magic puppets over here. You can exchange it with me after you are done with that one. The information regarding the Divine Gear has already been passed on to Isle of Dawn by a messenger. I will be staying here to recuperate for some time."

Link once again thanked her for her generosity before hurrying away.

Milda then got down from her bed and walked to the window beside her bed, keeping her gaze on Link until he was no longer in sight.

She sighed once again, "What a waste that you are not a High Elf."

## 231. Potentially an Unbeatable Monster

After receiving a new magic book, Link was like fish in water. For the next few days, he spent almost all his time on the book Freedom and the Puppet. He practically forgot to sleep and eat.

Celine was unrestited and could disturb him while he was studying magic spells, but he closed his door to everyone else.

The morning three days later, Link had flipped to the last page. He had pretty much figured out the entire book.

"This is such fine and flawless wisdom, but there's not enough," Link sighed sadly. He picked up the book, ready to look for Milda and exchange for another one.

He was completely obsessed with the puppet theory. After finishing this one, he had his eyes on the other nine books Milda had. If he didn't read them, he would feel something missing from him.

Just as he went to open the door, someone knocked on it. Tuk tuk, tuk tuk. The rhythmic tapping meant that it was Celine.

Link walked quickly and opened the door. He was in a good mood; seeing Celine's lovely face, his mood became even better. Smiling, he said, "My dear, how can I help you?"

It was the first time Link used such an affectionate term. Surprised, Celine blushed and whined, "Go away. I'm not your dear." She looked inside the room. Seeing that the book wasn't on the table, she asked, "Are you busy now?"

"I'm free." Link moved to the side with a smile, letting Celine in.

Once inside, Celine took out her basic wand and said, "For some reason, my power is increasing faster and faster."

With that, there was a Mana influx in her wand. It merely rushed in without constructing any Mana structures, but Link was affected by it. He was shaken.

Wow, it's only been one week, and her power has doubled, Link thought, amazed. Soul Dominator bloodlines were truly powerful.

Seeing Link's surprise, Celine was a bit proud. She giggled and said, "That's not it. My premonitions are getting stronger too. Instead of long-term premonitions, they're short-term, like some really weird gut feeling. Like just now, I was outside and thought that you would be free, so I knocked on the door."

"Huh?" This ability was curious. Link couldn't figure it out, but after thinking for a bit, he pulled out a gold coin. He said, "I'll toss it and guess heads or tails."

"Heads." Celine's answer was definite.

Link tossed the coin, and it fell to the ground half a second later. It rolled and landed heads up. It may have been lucky so Link tried again and again. He tried ten times, and Celine was guessed correctly each time without any hesitation.

This was probably a short-term predictive ability, and she was completely accurate too. The ability was very powerful. However, since it was short-term, there should be a time limit.

Link tried something else, still using the coin. "This time, I'll toss it five seconds after you guess. Try it."

But Celine shook her head. "I can't. There's no feeling."

"Just guess."

"Then tails."

Link waited five seconds and tossed. The coin dropped onto the table with a clink, spun, and landed heads up. He tried this ten times again, but Celine was only right four times. Her rate was about 50-50, just like the average man.

Link reduced the time, going from four seconds to three, then two. Finally, Celine's feeling came back at 1.5 seconds. Her accuracy shot up to 100%.

This meant that she could guess anything that would happen within 1.5 seconds with almost 100% accuracy. Of course, guessing heads or tails was simple. If it was a more complex matter, the time might decrease further.

Link tried other tests. In the end, he concluded that Celine could choose correctly between two options if the time frame was 1.5 seconds. If there were more choices, such as three, four, or even ten, the time frame went from 1.5 seconds to around 0.5 seconds. More complicated guesses were still maintained at 0.5 seconds.

This meant that Celine could accurately predict anything that happened within 0.5 seconds.

Half a second was short, and she couldn't do much to change the big picture. However, if one had this ability in a fight, one's combat power would at least double. If trained well, Celine could become an unbeatable monster.

"Awesome! Awesome!" Link praised repeatedly. He spun Celine in the air and then studied her as if looking at a rare treasure.

A little shy, Celine said awkwardly, "Actually, there's something else."

"Tell me," Link said.

"I don't have any power now, and it feels weird."

"Would you like to learn magic with me?" Link's eyes brightened even more. A Magician with short-term predictive abilities would honestly be unbeatable in battle. If he could have this ability, he would be invincible.

Celine shook her head furiously. "No, no. I have Mana talent, and I can learn some basic spells, but when I look at advanced books, my head hurts. I think I'm better as a Warrior or something but definitely not a Magician."

Link was disappointed, but he understood Celine's interests. He knew she wasn't suitable for learning magic. Pondering, he asked, "Do you have any thoughts?"

Celine furrowed her brows. "II haven't thought much, but I don't want to be like now. When the Assassins attacked, I could only stand to the side. I couldn't help you and had to be protected. I don't like this feeling at all."

"Oh, then you think over it, and I'll help you think too." Link started wondering what Celine should do.

It should be a professional that was safe and didn't require killing people directly. It had to take advantage of Celine's talent as well. It would be best if she could develop combat power quickly without needing any difficult training.

This was a lot of requirements. Link racked his mind, and suddenly, an idea popped up. "The Yabba race has a type of Magic Pistol. It's really destructive, and I've seen it before. The structure isn't that difficult, so I can make one. How about I make you a Magic Pistol?"

Celine thought it over, and her eyes brightened. Her blushed cheeks were so cute. "That's a great idea. Please help me make a Magic Pistol. It has to be accurate and powerful."

"It's on me! You'll definitely be satisfied," Link promised.

Link wouldn't dare brag about other weapons, but for pistols, he could use memories from earth for reference. There were a bunch of enchantments he could use too. If he couldn't make something incredibly awesome with all that, he should just jump off a cliff.

Celine smiled brightly. Link's enchantments were renowned throughout Firuman. Since he promised, this Magic Pistol would definitely be powerful.

Actually, ever since the Storm Lord sealed the demonic power in Celine's body, her personality became brighter, and she loved to smile. Whenever she smiled, her eyes would turn into crescents. Her lips were pink and plump, bright and beautiful. Seeing it, Link became happy. He couldn't stop himself from pulling Celine into a hug.

Celine froze. At first, she was tense, but she quickly softened. She didn't protest, but her face was as red as a tomato. The two hugged quietly, enjoying the sweet serenity.

After a long while, Link unwillingly let go. Smiling, he said, "I'm going to find Princess Milda for another book. Your Magic PistolHow about three days? I'll find time these three days to make it."

Celine shook her head. "No need to hurry. Wait until you're free to do it. I need to start working out again too."

Hearing this, Link suddenly thought of the Epic Battle Art he had taught Jacker and the others. Hitting his forehead, he said, "Your body leans more toward the water element. I have an Epic Battle Art for the water element. Take it to practice but don't work too hard."

Celine giggled. "I was waiting for that. Give me the Battle Art!"

Link placed the book in her cream-colored hands. They shared another moment, and then Link kissed Celine's forehead before leaving. As for the Magic Pistol, he decided to start on it as soon as he exchanged the book!

When he reached the stone house, Link saw Milda working in the small garden. She had recovered well. She was still weak but could do some light physical work. Planting flowers and such helped her recover even faster.

She saw Link and took off her dirty gloves. Smiling, she asked, "What, you finished the book?"

"Indeed." Link returned Freedom and the Puppet to Milda. "I want to get another one."

Milda was straightforward. She took out a book with a purple cover. The title was One Hundred Twenty-Nine Ways to Connect Joints. Rather than a theory book, this was an explanation of specific techniques. Link accepted it, thanked her profusely, and turned to leave.

"Hey, not so fast," Milda called out.

"How can I help you?" Link's attention was already on the new book.

Seeing him like this, Milda sighed. She asked, "I heard you accepted a disciple called Rylai?"

Link smacked his forehead. He had been so busy these days that he practically forgot about Rylai. He was honestly an irresponsible teacher. "Indeed," Link admitted, a bit guilty.

Milda shook her head. "Oh, you're really wasting her high talent. She spends all her days frolicking with the Wind Tiger. I see that you're too busy while I have nothing to do so why don't you let her study with me?"

This was great news. Link quickly agreed.

"Okay, go do what you need. I'll tell her myself."

Link left quickly, unwilling to waste any time. Looking at his back, Milda shook her head again.

"No wonder he's accomplished. He's obsessed with learning."

On the other hand, Link had forgotten all about Milda. When he returned to the cabin, he flipped through the new book and scanned it roughly. Then he took out papers and pens to sketch the blueprint of the Magic Pistol.

This was for Celine. He had to do his best!

## 232. A Huge Fire Gun for The Beloved

In the World of Firuman, the small built Yabbas were known to be extremely adept in their handicrafts. They were the experts at engineering, and amongst their many ingenuity, the magic pistol was one of their greatest inventions.

Although they would stitly be categorized under the gun category as well, the construction of a magic pistol was ten times more complex than a normal gun on earth. Naturally, the firepower of the magic gun also put the gun on earth to shame.

Link had already reached a level of his own in the area of enchanting magic. He was unobtedly the best within the human race when it came to enchanting. Even Master Enchanter Weissmuller in East Cove Higher Magic Academy could not compare.

He would naturally have no problem crafting a magic pistol.

After thinking for a moment, he had a rough idea in his mind and began sketching the blueprint for the magic gun.

This magic pistol needed to have strong firepower and simple controls. It should also be reliable and should not fail under any environment or circumstances. Most importantly, it must be safe for use.

These were all basic requirements for the magic pistol. Link then tried to recall the appearance of those powerful sniper rifles on earth as he sketched the first blueprint.

The first step of the process was simple enough; Link completed it within ten minutes. Following which, he then started revising his blueprint according to the magic principles in the World of Firuman.

Although Celine has a dimensional pendant, it is not really safe to put a weapon inside it. It would be a tragedy if the dimension collass with the weapon still in it. Hence, this pistol will have to be portable. It must be small in size, meaning that the barrel has to be short. If I want to maintain the firepower while reducing the length of the barrel, I will have to improve the fire elemental pressure within the barrelThis way, the material requirements for the pistol will be pretty high.

Link had planned to create a magic pistol that could forcefully blast its way through a Level-6 defensive spell. This way, it would even be possible to blast through a Level-7 defensive spell if coupled with a special type of anti-magic bullets.

He would need an extremely strong barrel to withstand such tremendous firepower. Link then recalled the materials he had in his storage and finally wrote a note on the side of his blueprint: Mysteria Gold

Mysteria Gold

Epic Quality

Effect: Incredible strength and can withstand high temperatures. Has near perfect resistance to magic and performs well as a vessel for magic runes.

(Note: This metal is made using transformation magic and is extremely valuable.)

Vance had three blocks of Mysteria Gold in his storage. They totaled 15 pounds, and they were so rare that their price on the market could not even be estimated. It was more than enough to create just a single barrel.

The barrel is the first step. The rune formation on the pistol is the second step. It must be made using a reliable material. This material also cannot conflict with the properties of the Mysteria Gold. What should I use?

After a few minutes, Link then wrote down another main material on the blueprint: Shattered Star Thorium

Shattered Star Thorium

Epic Quality

Effect: An extremely powerful magic conductor. It is the perfect neutral material.

This was a metal that was of the same grade as Fire Star Thorium. On the Hot Springs City market, one gram of Shattered Star Thorium cost 987 gold coins. Link did not have a lot of these on hand; he merely had 50 grams.

Clearly, 50 grams of Shattered Star Thorium was not sufficient, so Link decided to use these materials only on the most crucial parts. He would then use Fire Star Thorium to fill in the rest.

As such, Link wrote down the third material on the blueprint: Fire Star Thorium.

After he settled on the three main materials he would be using, the remaining things would be simple. He simply had to choose materials that complemented the qualities of the three main materials. Half an hour later, Link wrote down a list of materials.

Although the rest of the materials were not as expensive as the first three main materials, they were also treasured items. The estimated total cost of the materials on the list was millions of gold coins. Alas, it was only an estimated price. No one would use gold coins to purchase these materials. For such ultra-high value materials, people usually trade for them by bartering.

After confirming the materials, Link then started sketching the second version of the blueprint.

This blueprint was more detailed than the first. Link took a total of three hours before he was done. It was dinner time by that time, and he took the blueprint to the dining area.

This was a private dining area especially made for Link and Celine. When Link arrived, Celine was already waiting for him. He then passed her the blueprint and said, "I intend to build a magic pistol based on this blueprint. See if you are satisfied with it."

"That's fast." Celine was elated and immediately started observing the blueprint.

In the blueprint, Link not only sketched the appearance of the product but also included the functions of each specific parts and structure. From Link's perspective, Celine should be able to understand it easily.

After five to six minutes, Celine returned the blueprint to Link. It was difficult to tell if she was satisfied with the design.

"How is it?" Link was actually quite nervous about Celine's opinion.

If this scene was seen by the people from the mainland who quoted high prices for Link's equipment, they would definitely be bitter and dumbfounded. This was a weapon which Master Link had specially tailored, to think that he would be worried about his customer's satisfaction level!

Celine then laid out her hands and said, "It looks beautiful, and I can roughly grasp the workings of the pistol. However, I do not have a good understanding of it and cannot determine the quality of a gun. I'll let you decide for me."

"Alright then." Link probably read too much into it.

After dinner, Link started revising the blueprint for the third time. He was extremely detailed this time around. Roughly four hours later, the third version of the blueprint was completed. It was already ten o'clock at night by then.

Link did notitend to give himself a break. He immediately pointed to the blueprint and asked the in-game system, "Can you begin the simulation?"

Yes, please confirm to begin the simulation.

"Confirm."

The next moment, he saw a hologram of the magic pistol in front of him. It was translucent, and one could easily see the internal structure of the magic pistol.

The magic pistol was around three feet in length and had a precision sight mounted on it. Link adopted the Yabba race's Sorvada Linkage structure to ensure the reliability of the sight. The exterior of the pistol had similarities to a sniper rifle on earth. However, the style of the two guns was starkly different. The magic pistol had a large number of magic runes carved on its exterior, giving it a rustic aesthetic.

"Shooting simulation," Link said.

The magic pistol had no trigger. It employed a touch sensor magic rune. When the rune carvings lit up, one could hear a light popping sound of a gun firing.

The in-game system even simulated the sound of the gunshot. This was because Link had carefully adjusted the volume of the gunshot to a minimum. This would ensure that Celine's position would not be exposed after firing just the first bullet.

After the sound reached his ears, Link slowed down the movement of the pistol in his field of vision. He could clearly see every single detail, the accumulation of fire-elementals, the potential energy of the magic bullets, and how it rotated at high speed out of the gun chamber.

The in-game system then reported the simulation results.

Chamber speed is at 6300 feet per second, and the bullet flame is hidden. The wind-elemental magic formation is activated and gravity balance spell is activatedPreliminary results estimate that the traveling distance of the bullet will be 5900 feet. Any distance further than that and the bullet will start to veer in directions too complex for the system to predict.

Link was pretty satisfied with this result. However, he still had no idea how reliable the pistol was.

"Simulate burst firing, 1000 times, one shot per 0.5 seconds."

Boom! Boom! The in-game system faithfully fulfilled Link's instructions as the bullets continuously fired from the chamber. At the shot number 532, a loud sound suddenly erupted from the chamber. It was a chamber explosion!

In an instant, the accumulated fire elemental energy and the bullet fragments flew in all directions. Although this was only a simulation, one could tell the devastating force of this explosion. It was no weaker than an explosion from the Flame Blast spell.

Link could not help but squint his eyes at this sight. This was too tragic. If Celine met such an accident while she was using the magic pistol, she would definitely be killed in the process. Getting killed by your own weapon was too much of a joke.

"Replay the chamber explosion process."

Link then started analyzing the reasons for the chamber explosion and started making adjustments to the pistol. Luckily, the structure of a magic pistol was not that complicated. It merely took him half an hour to make those changes.

"Begin simulation."

This time around, the pistol lasted a total of 900 shots before the chamber explosion happened.

Link then continued refining the pistol and simulating it.

He repeated this process again and again. Time flew and four hours passed in an instant. Link was just about to begin simulation after yet another round of adjustments.

This time around, Link reduced the firepower of the magic pistol slightly. From Link's perspective, he could see the bullets being fired one after another, 100 to 200 to 300 and so on. This continued until the shot number 6932, where the chamber explosion finally happened.

The situation after the chamber exploded was also vastly different.

When the chamber explosion happened, a defensive spell seemed to appear on the magic pistol almost instantaneously. This magic enveloped the user in an instant, offering protection from the flames and metal fragments. The user would be completely unharmed.

Link was finally satisfied with the results. He felt slightly tired but was too lazy to return to his bedroom. He laid down on a shabby wooden table and fell asleep.

In his semi-conscious state, he felt as though someone had entered the room. As he did not feel any sense of danger, he did not force himself up from the bed. Not long after, he felt a warm feeling spreading through his cold body. Someone had covered him with a blanket.

There was a familiar fragrance in the air as well. Link knew that it was Celine and slept with a peace of mind.

After a good night's rest, Link felt refreshed and started crafting the magic pistol right after he had his breakfast.

The blueprint was already completed. Link acted fast. Due to his Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, he had to make sure every part was perfect until he would decide to use them.

Fortunately, Link was skilled in his enchanting techniques and did not spend too much time in the entire process.

He started work in the morning, and by dusk, a brand new magic pistol had appeared in his hands.

The magic pistol weighed 26 pounds and was three feet in length. The exterior was dark green in color and seemed inconspicuous at first glance. However, closer inspection would reveal a large number of magic runes, giving the pistol a heavy and reliable tone.

It looked like a ferocious beast that could explode into a frenzy any moment.

This magic pistol was probably the most non-aesthetic equipment Link had ever crafted. However, it was also the equipment with the greatest firepower.

The in-game system then sent a message

Player Link has successfully crafted an Epic quality magic pistol. Omni Points +50 (payable in 112 days), please name the weapon.

"Let's call it the Huge Fire Gun." Link seriously had naming issues.

Naming completed.

Huge Fire Gun

Quality: Epic

Shooting Frequency: 0.3 seconds per shot

Penetration Level: Level-7

Note: Link's Huge Fire Gun, a gift for his beloved.

Link fell speechless looking at this information. Why would such decent equipment be paired with such a peculiar description by the system?

Since the equipment was completed, it would have to be given to its owner. Link then took the gun and proceeded to approach Celine.

However, the moment he opened the door, he saw Celine already lying in wait outside.

She then smiled as she said, "It seems like my premonitions were right. The gun is completed?"

"Of course; have a look." Link gave the Huge Fire Gun to Celine as though it were a treasure.

Celine then took over the gun and observed it from all angles. She then shook her head and said, "It looks ordinary enough. Is it really powerful?"

Link was dumbfounded. His ability and reputation were at stake! He would not tolerate this.

"We will test out the gun right now!"

## 233. Disorder in the South

Ferde Wilderness.

Woo, woo. There was the deep sound of the conch. In the Ferde Sea pier, a flat sail cargo ship slowly approached the dock. The sailor at the bow sounded the horn, asking for permission to dock.

A soldier ran on the pier while waving a bright command flag. Bit by bit, he guided the large ship to dock in the respective berth.

Ten minutes later, the large ship about 150 feet long safety stopped in the pier's berth. With a whoosh, the plank was put up. The physical laborers rushed over, fighting for a chance to work. They were all farmers from the Ferde Wilderness with land newly partitioned to them. However, it was off-season, so they all came to the pier to make some extra money.

A buff sailor walked down from the ship. He pointed at some stronger men casually. "You, you, and you guys, come and transport the goods. You get 100 coppers when it's done."

The chosen laborers were overjoyed. They strode up the ship and started moving the goods on the deck. The sailors helped while maintaining order. After a while, the bottom cabin was opened. Countless young men and women in rags and shackles walked out.

"Look, it's the slaves the lord bought."

"Look at that woman, the one with the torn shirt. Geez, her titties are so big and round."

"Wow, is that a Warrior? He's so muscular!"

The laborers discussed the slaves while transporting the goods. On the other hand, the slaves were terrified. Some of the women carried babies who were crying and waiting to be nursed. Because they were in an unfamiliar environment, they hugged their mothers and howled. Occasionally, there was the crack of a whip from sailors forcing the slaves to hurry up.

The pier instantly grew lively.

Another plank was propped against the other end of the ship. A few well-dressed merchants walked down. The leader was Warter, the owner of the Green Leaf Merchant Firm.

As the owner of the goods, he didn't have to oversee the unloading personally. After walking down the ship, he walked quickly to the Pier Office Building. He said to the guard, "I am Warter. I have an emergency and must see Sir Alloson."

Alloson was the man in charge of the pier. Warter had interacted with him many times before. The guard recognized Warter too, so he moved aside. "Sir Alloson is in the second floor. Please go on ahead."

Warter walked briskly. His steps were hurried, and his expression was somber. Finally, he reached the main hall of the second floor and saw Alloson behind the business table.

Alloson used to be a mercenary. Due to his extraordinary abilities, he became a core member of Ferde and was sent to manage the new pier. He was only 30 years old and was in his prime.

Right now, he was processing some documents speedily. When his subordinates asked questions, he could explain clearly within a few sentences. He was obviously a competent worker.

Warter waited patiently at the side. When Alloson finished with the task at hand, he walked over and said quietly, "Sir"

Recognizing him, Alloson smiled and said, "Oh, my friend, just call me Alloson."

Warter nodded and continued, "I just came back from the Kingdom of Delonga in the South. Something horrible happened in Delonga, and I'm afraid it might affect Ferde."

Alloson narrowed his eyes at Warter and asked, "What exactly happened?"

The Kingdom of Delonga was to the south of the Ferde Wilderness with only the Blackwater River between them. If something happened in Delonga, Ferde would definitely be affected.

Warter glanced around at the other people in the hall. He looked hesitant.

Alloson quickly waved. "Come, let's go to my room." He rose and led the way out the hall, up to the third floor, and into the room overlooking the sea.

Here, Warter pulled out a scroll to Alloson. He said, "The scroll contains a Magic Image. I bought it from an escaping Court Magician at a high price. The image recorded some secret things that happened among the Delonga royalty."

Alloson opened the scroll. There was a very clear image recorded on it. Under the light, he could see that the location was in a secret room. There were seven or eight men, mostly Magicians. One man had a gold crown. A Magician with red eyes and a dark aura was bowing to him.

"What's this?"

Warter explained, "The one with the crown is King Roy the Fifth of Delonga. According to the escaping Court Magician, the Magician beside him had shocking dark waves. He promised to help King Roy create a secret army and the king agreed."

Alloson couldn't believe it. "How can a Magic Image with such a secret be preserved? Is the Court Magician reliable?"

"Very reliable. He actually is Master Emmandel, the head Magician of Delonga. After he felt something was amiss, he quietly escaped. When I saw him, he was being pursued and then he gave me this."

Alloson was quiet for a few minutes. Then he asked, "This is very important. I'll take you to see the lord."

This was what Warter wanted. The Ferde Wilderness was developing rapidly, and Link's reputation was rising. It was getting harder and harder for him, a mere merchant, to see him, which was why he came to ask Alloson for help.

The two left the building. Getting horses and a dozen guards, they hurried to Scorched Ridge, dozens of miles away.

On the way, Alloson asked, "Warter, you've been going to the South a lot recently. How is the state of the Southern Trade Federation?"

Warter shook his head and sighed. "There's unprecedented chaos. Delonga is being forced back by Southmoon, and Roy the Fifth has started sparing no costs. The Doska Kingdom is almost entirely controlled by the Syndicate and can barely survive. The Golle Kingdom is corrupted. The officials will do anything for moneyI remember that when I went to the South 20 years ago, I didn't need guards on the road. Now, I'm terrified when I go to the wilderness, and I don't even dare to go out at night!"

He sighed continuously. He had truly experienced the downfall of the South.

Hearing this, Alloson's expression darkened. "Norton is also fighting with the Dark Elves. I heard that the North isn't doing well either. The military has already retreated to the Iron Wall Defense Line. It feels like the mainland fell into chasso suddenly. How can it be like this?"

"Maybe the world is ending." The merchant's brows were knitted.

In a time of unrest, a man's life was like grass. No one wanted this situation, but for some reason, the world just became more and more of a mess. As an unimportant figure, Warter could only watch everything happen without being unable to help.

Both fell silent for the rest of the journey.

More than one hour later, they could see Scorched Ridge in the distance. Gazing at it, Warter sighed. "The changes are so big. When I left last time, the Mage Tower only had its foundations. Now, you can see its general shape. And the camp looks like a small town now."

No matter how the South was, the Ferde Wilderness was still calm and peaceful. Everything was developing rapidly and prospering.

For some reason, Warter felt much better.

Alloson looked a bit proud. "This is only the surface. Let me tell you, even the High Elf Princess is staying here. A lot of powerful High Elf Magicians are helping with the Mage Tower too. They all respect the lord."

Warter smiled. "Our Lord is a smart and powerful man. When I was in Delonga, I saw many refugees from Ferde and guess what?"

"What?" Alloson asked with a smiled.

"They snuck back and then took their friends and family back to Ferde."

Alloson laughed out loud, and the guards laughed as well. The mood had lightened, and the group forged in light spirits. Three hundred feet ahead, there was a rock 13-foot-tall.

Rocks were everywhere in the Ferde Wilderness; there was nothing special about it.

But then, the reddish rock suddenly exploded with a loud boom. The rock, almost 30 feet wide and 13 feet high, cracked into two. Shards flew everywhere, and dust rose up to the sky.

"Careful, it's a Magician's sneak attack! Raise your shields!"

"Where? Where's the Magician?"

"Where are the archers? Archers!"

The procession panicked. Everyone was terrified as if they had run into a huge enemy. They looked side to side, trying to find the Magician who had attacked.

However, this was a prairie, and it was daytime; the vision was great. Everyone looked around but could not find the attacker.

Warter was extremely frightened. He wiped at his sweat and asked quietly, "What's going on? Who attacked?"

Alloson was tense as well. He looked at the boulder that had been split by some power. He said in a wavering voice, "I don't know, but it seems like he's really powerful!"

Warter rolled his eyes. He wasn't blind; it was obvious that the Magician was powerful. The problem was, where was he?! If they couldn't figure it out and there was another attack, they wouldn't even know how they died!

Everyone stood rooted to the spot with their guards up but the Magician didn't appear. The terrifying attack didn't come either.

Just as Alloson and Warter were at a loss, a soldier suddenly pointed at the road before them. "Look, I think it's the lord."

They all looked up. Indeed, there was a Magician clad in a dark red robe, covered in fire light, racing over on a horse. He had a person with hima woman, to be specific. She wore leather armor and grasped a plain-looking dwarf gun. She looked happy.

Alloson looked closely and let out a sigh of relief. "It truly is our Lord. The one beside him is Celine, the affairs officer of the territory. What just happened was a misunderstanding."

I knew there wouldn't be a Magician attack near Scorched Ridge, Alloson thought.

"Let's go to them."

The group started off again, and the two parties quickly met.

"Sorry about that. I was testing the power of the spell," Link explained voluntarily.

"It's alright." The group shook their heads.

Link went straight to the point. "Alloson, what are you doing away from the pier?"

Lucy had recommended Alloson. He was hardworking, so Link naturally knew him.

Alloson pulled Warter over quickly and said, "He has something to tell you. I was escorting him."

Warter walked up and bowed. "Lord, something terrible happened in Delonga. I must inform you about it."

Link recognized Warter as well. The merchant had helped him greatly before, but they hadn't met recently. Link said, "Tell me after we return to the camp."

## 234. Someone Has Completed the Reward

In the hall of the Administrative Building.

Link, Jacker, Lucy, Gildern, and Celine all had arrived at the hall. The magic projection Merchant Warter brought with him was placed on the table right in front of them.

Link tapped his fingers lightly on the table and suddenly said, "It is merely a magic projection that suggests Roy the Fifth might be in cahoots with Dark Magicians. However, this cannot prove that this incident indeed happened, unless we can find Aymons himself."

It was horrible news that Roy the Fifth was working with the Dark Magicians. This meant that his future behavior would become extremely unpredictable. He might even become a serial killer like the Dark Elves.

The Ferde Wilderness and the Delonga Kingdom were only separated by a body of water. If this magic projection was true, it meant that the Ferde Wilderness had made a dangerous enemy out of the blue.

The magic projection was extremely clear. The red-eyed Magician looked familiar. His stature was 70% similar to Wavier, though Link still could not confirm his suspicions.

It would be too hasty to jump to conclusions based on just a magic projection, especially when the issue was this serious.

Gildern immediately said, "My lord, we should set up a rescue team straight away and cross the Black River to rescue Magician Emmandel from the Delonga Kingdom."

He was already a Level-4 Archer and was in charge of the scout system in the Ferde Wilderness. This system was the equivalent of the MI3 of the Norton Kingdom. It was tasked with eliminating any spies and gathering of information. If needed, it would also be sent for rescue missions.

After some consideration, Link nodded and agreed. He said, "Just do your best for this issue. Don't make our soldiers lose their lives over this matter. Time will tell us whether Roy the Fifth is truly working with the Dark Magicians."

After which, Link then turned to Jacker and said, "We have to defend against the possible attack from the Delonga Kingdom. It is time to expand the scale of our troops. Didn't another batch of slaves just arrive? Grab the strong ones to become our Warriors."

"Yes, my lord."

Link then stared at Merchant Warter and said, "As you can see, my territory is still very empty when I have a large land area. Everything is under construction which requires a large number of resources and manpower. It is still too slow if you work alone. Perhaps you can find someone to cooperate with you. I can promise that all the goods transported to the Ferde Wilderness will be acquired at a price twenty percent higher than the average market price, as long as it is from a Merchant firm that you recommended. Of course, the quality of the goods cannot be compromised."

Link was not being generous by increasing the price of the goods he acquired by a good twenty percent of the original price. He was running out of time and by purchasing the goods at a premium, he would naturally be given the priority for these goods.

If not for the profit margins, who would go out of their way to come to the Ferde Wilderness?

Upon hearing those words, Warter was elated and immediately patted his chest with confidence, saying, "That is no problem. I will form a Merchant Alliance immediately after I leave and increase the speed of resource delivery. I promise that the delivery speed will increase ten-fold in one month's time! You would also be getting ten timesno twenty times more slaves!"

Merchants chased profits for a living, for Link to have increased the profit margins by a good twenty percent, he would definitely get all the businesses in the region.

Before he understood more about the situation, this was all the preparations Link could do. He then said, "You guys can discuss the specific things later. Lucy, remember to send me a report after you are done."

"I understand, my lord." Lucy was becoming more capable by the day. She was now the administrative chief of the Ferde Wilderness. She was a truly strong, independent woman holding the reigns.

Link then stood up and left.

In one swooping motion, everyone in the hall stood up to show their respect as Link left. They only sat down after he went out of sight and started discussing the specific details of the plan.

As he exited the administrative building, Link gave a long sigh. He could feel that the World of Firuman was slipping into the abyss at a terrifying speed. The powers of the darkness had already infiltrated into every single crack they could find.

Link could not help but stare into the sky as he whispered, "Oh God of Light. Herrera mentioned that I am your Chosen One. Lady Fortuna thinks that I can save the world. However, can I really hold up this wheel of glory and brilliance that is sinking into the depths of despair?"

As expected, he received no answer. The ever-present sun in the sky still shone mercilessly onto the Ferde Wilderness, bringing light and heat to the world. Link then sighed, feeling unconfident in his abilities.

He then heard light footsteps behind him. He knew that Celine had snuck up behind him. He did not turn his body but merely stretched his hand backward. After a while, a small and warm hand held his fingers gently.

"Link, everything is going to be alright. No one can do this better than you can."

She seemed to be able to guess Link's exact thoughts every single time. The soft whispers were like clear spring water surging into his heart, nourishing his tired and worried being. Link immediately felt better and grabbed Celine's hand with a bit more force. The smile once again appeared on his face as he asked, "How is my Huge Fire Gun?"

"It is indeed powerful, but it is way too expensive. How much did those Khorium bullets cost?"

"Not a lot, just 500 gold coins," Link said as he grinned.

Celine was startled by this answer and swore not to use the gun that often anymore. Link then smiled as he said, "While 500 gold coins may seem like a lot of money, every bullet can help me eliminate a powerful enemy. If you think about it this way, it will be extremely worth it, isn't it?"

Celine hugged the Huge Fire Gun tightly. Although she had only fired one shot, this weapon had already become her treasured possession. Upon listening to Link's words, she glanced at him before saying, "How can you be sure that I will land every shot?"

"You mean you can't?" Link said while maintaining his warm smile.

"Alright then, I will have to do some training."

"I will craft some training bullets for you. Each of them only requires 10 gold coins. I assume that will be acceptable?"

Celine nodded her head. Ten gold coins per bullet was the limit for the price of a practice bullet. She would still have to concentrate during her practice sessions, striving to get acquainted with the workings of this gun using the least amount of bullets.

Link did not idle for long as well. He soon went back to his own little magic hut and started using ordinary materials to craft a few training bullets.

The structure of these bullets was simple. As Link was still unfamiliar with the process, he merely spent five minutes on each bullet. By the time Link reached the tenth bullet, his speed had increased to one bullet per minute. Alas, this was menial labor, and he quickly grew tired of it. Link still persevered through the process and managed to craft 100 bullets in one sitting before he stopped.

Good marksmanship has to be trained using a large number of bullets. It's not possible for me to craft all the bullets Celine needs by myself. Luckily, the process of crafting these bullets is not complex. When the Mage Tower is completed, I will find a few helpers to do this task.

With this thought, Link then handed the bullets over to Celine.

Celine was naturally elated. After making sure that no one was looking, she gave Link a light peck on the forehead before heading over to train with her new batch of bullets.

Link felt as though all his fatigue instantly dissipated with that single kiss. He returned back to his room and crafted yet another 50 bullets before stopping to rest and read the magic puppet book he had borrowed from Milda.

Link was extremely focused when studying magic theories. Time seemed to pass extremely quickly when he was doing so.

On average, Link could finish a book regarding magic puppet theory within a day and a half. He even had the spare time to craft 50 of those training bullets for Celine every day.

Link had run out of books to read after ten days. However, by this time, his understanding of the magic puppet had already undergone a qualitative change. His view on the domain had also changed drastically.

Half a month earlier, Vance's creation, Nana, was nearly a perfect Warrior in Link's eyes. It seemed impossible to make her any better. However, now armed with a treasure trove of knowledge regarding magic puppets, Link had thought of nearly 30 ways to easily deal with Nana.

Link had not gotten stronger. He simply saw many flaws in Nana that he could not notice before after broadening his horizons.

"It is time to find that old guy Vance." Link decided to take a trip to the coastline.

Link was just about to return the final magic puppet book that Milda had lent him. However, when he reached his doorstep, he realized that the Scorched Ridge was exceptionally lively. There were also many people gathered around the East gate of the camp.

Link even found Jacker amongst the crowd.

"What is happening?" Link was curious and walked towards the commotion.

Jacker saw Link and brushed aside the crowd to get closer. When he reached in front of Link, he pointed to a red-haired man in the crows and said, "My lord, do you see that guy?"

Link nodded.

This person was around 27 years old and had shiny red hair. He was extremely handsome, especially the way his slender eyes squinted when he smiled. He had the presence and aura of a vagabond free-spirited individual. He had only been here for a while, but many young women were already attracted to him, casting him seductive glances every so often.

"His name is Skinorse. He has completed your mission."

Skinorse?

Link was slightly surprised. In the game, this person was extremely famous in the mid-late game period. He had many aliases such as the "Red-Haired Flirt," the "Lady Killer,""King of the Assassins,""Legendary Samurai" and so on.

He was born to a noble family from the Doska Kingdom. However, he chose to give up his right to the inheritance and live a life roaming the world. His strength was formidable, and he was one of those who managed to attain the Legendary status in the game. He still had room to grow even further when he died. His character was wild and free-spirited. He gained countless victories in battle and also gathered many negative rumors about his private life.

Eventually, when the Lord of the Deep, Nozama descended into the world, he joined the Army of Light and infiltrated the Demon Fortress to gather information. However, due to him having a complicated relationship with a succubus, he exposed himself and was surrounded by demons. During the chaos of battle, Nozama managed to take advantage of one mistake he made and reduced him to a pile of mushy meat in just one attack.

Well, it was not very noble to have died in that way if you were a well-known Assassin.

Link then carefully observed the Assassin's aura. It did not take him long to have a gage of his strength. Level-7 strength and extremely close to a breakthrough to Level-8. He does not possess a huge amount of Battle Aura, though that which he possesses is very pure in nature. He is indeed qualified enough to kill the Assassin leader.

Skinorse was extremely sensitive and immediately turned around. Upon seeing Link, he smiled heartily, revealing a neat row of glistening white teeth. He then bowed elegantly towards Link in the style of a noble and spoke in a charming tone, "Ah, are you the lord of this Land of Light? It is an honor to meet you."

## 235. Time to Resurrect Nana

Clink. Clink. There were two crisp sounds.

Skinorse tossed two fiery red daggers onto the ground before Link. They were the weapons that the lead Assassin had used that nightthe Reaper's Gaze.

"The Assassin's body was strange and was hard to kill. I could only burn it, but the daggers are special. It's enough to prove that I completed the mission, right?"

Skinorse smiled, lips curled upward. He started displaying to the people his slightly evil good looks, making some of the women call out softly.

Link activated the Magician's Hand. The daggers floated before him, and he nodded after studying them. "Yes, they're his weapons."

With that, he commanded Jacker before the hundreds of people, "Go find Lucy. I must keep my promise."

The reward for killing the lead Assassin was 10,000 gold. Each dagger provided was 20,000 gold. In total, he would receive 50,000 gold and Link prepared to give it without hesitation.

Jacker was unwilling, but he couldn't go against Link. Sighing and complaining, he went to go find the territory's Chief Executive Officer Lucy for the money.

The spectators were shocked. This offer had spread throughout the entire Mainland. Now, someone had surprisingly completed it, and the lord fulfilled it without delay. In the Ferde Wilderness, Lord Link had very high prestige. No one doubted he would fork out the money, especially after the discovery of the clay mine.

"Gods, it's happening! Are endless coins going to appear before my eyes?" someone cried.

"Oh, I'm witnessing history in the making!" Someone was prepared to take his hat off in respect.

"I have a question. How can he take all those coins away himself? I think I can help." Another man began thinking of how he could benefit a little. The people discussed amongst themselves, highly anticipating the huge sum of money.

"Hey, wait!" Skinorse suddenly called to Jacker. Then he smiled at Link and said, "Lord, I trust your credibility and know you'll definitely fulfill the payment. But even though 50,000 gold is a lot, it's not really useful to me. Can I use another way to exchange for the reward money?"

Jacker stopped. He turned to Link, waiting for the command.

Link actually wasn't surprised by the Assassin's request. Fifty thousand gold was just a gimmick. For truly powerful men, there was nothing more useful than a powerful weapon or some kind of magic medicine.

Not everyone liked gold coins. Too many of the powerful individuals, they only needed enough gold to survive. Skinorse happened to be one of them.

"What would you like? I'll try my best." Link was very friendly.

Skinorse looked left and right. Seeing all the spectators, he said, "Let's find a quiet place to discuss in detail. Just us two, alright?"

It was obviously alright. Link turned to the side and put a hand out to guide Skinorse. "Let's go to my home."

Skinorse strode into Link's cabin; Link followed him. After he shut the door, the civilians all sighed sadly. They'd thought they would see the piles of gold, but they were let down.

Inside the cabin, Skinorse took in the furnishing of the cabin for a while before sighing involuntarily. "You're a lord who can give away 50,000 gold as a reward, but you live in such a shoddy place. It seems like I made the right choice."

Hearing this, Link was interested. In the past game, Skinorse was a wandering vigilante-type character. He was a bit of a playboy, but he didn't have any bad traits. He'd always been part of the Light Camp. Later, when darkness shrouded the mainland, he even joined the alliance against the Dark Army.

If someone like that said these words, did it mean he was another talent who wanted to join him? But it didn't seem right. This guy never liked restraints. He liked going around for adventures and probably wouldn't become his subordinate. Then, why was he here? Link was curious.

"There's no one else here," Link said with a smile. "You can tell me your request now."

Skinorse nodded. He walked to Link's table and took out an old scroll, unfurling it on the table.

"This is a map of an ancient tomb that I came across by chance. I went to the ancient ruins alone to investigate and found that it's very dangerous there. It is filled with ghosts and strange creatures. I tried to enter but failed. The ghosts are very sensitive, so if you want to enter the ancient tomb, you must kill them all, killing your way in. So"

Here, he looked at Link. His meaning was clearhe needed Link's help.

Without responding to his plea, Link walked forward to study the map. It was drawn very clearly. The ancient tomb was in the Parmiso Plateau in the west of the Southmoon Kingdom. It was called the Tomb of the Late King Taris.

Seeing the surname Taris, related memories popped up in Link's mind. Turning toward Skinorse, he asked, "You said you saw many ghosts and creatures. Were they all very short and stocky?"

"Uh, yeah. They were all like thatshort and stocky. How did you know?" Skinorse was pleasantly surprised.

"They're all dwarfs," Link explained. "Taris is the surname of one of the royal dwarven families who disappeared in the Mana Disaster 2000 years ago. The Taris Royal Family had the tradition of immolation burials. They would use a very cruel way to turn their guards into mummies. These mummies would become very powerful ghosts that would protect the tomb forever."

In the game, this tomb was a dungeon quest that contained some ancient books. When Link got bored playing the dungeon, he would read through the books for fun. In this life, he had read many magic books, which contained history. He had a deep understanding of the Taris Dynasty.

Because of this, when he saw the word Taris, he was able to remember the background facts about the tomb. Though the information was shallow, it was enough to shock outsiders.

Skinorse chuckled in surprise. He reached out to pat Link's shoulder but felt it was unsuitable, so his hand shrank back. "Ha, I really found the right person. Lord, if you can help me, I can forget about the gold."

Instead of saying whether he agreed or not, Link asked, "Just the two of us? We're probably not enough."

The ghosts had matured for 2000 years. Now, they had terrifying power and had many unique attacks. In real life, they might even have unexpected tactics. Link didn't want to risk this.

Skinorse rubbed his hands excitedly. "Hehe, two isn't enough, but I also have two friends. One is a Level-6 Warrior, and the other is a genius priest. Oh, she's a beauty too. She's so good she can bring the dead to life. We just need a powerful Magician now, so how about it? Interested?"

Unexpectedly, he had two aces, including a priest. Things were more reliable now.

There would definitely be many good things in the tomb. Link remembered that the most valuable thing was an ore called crystallized sheet metal. Its element was very special, and it was a necessary material for creating legendary weapons. It was the only piece of metal like it in Firuman. Similarly, dwarves were an ancient race. They had a unique knowledge of magic. There were sole copies of some magic books in the tomb; each one was worth a fortune.

It was definitely worth it to explore a tomb like this.

Considering it, Link said, "I can participate but merely offsetting the reward money isn't enough. I'm really busy, you know."

"Psh." Skinorse felt slightly annoyed. He wanted to argue, but after thinking closely, he realized that the money truly wasn't enough to hire the renowned Magician. This man could hand out 50,000 gold easily; he clearly didn't care about money.

"Then what do I need to do for you to agree?" Skinorse asked, throwing his hands up.

"I recently received a magic image." Link had been waiting for Skinorse to ask this and he was well-prepared. Taking out the magic image given by Warter, he gave it to Skinorse. "As you can see, the one with the crown is King Roy the Fifth of Delonga. He's working with Dark Magicians to create a powerful army with dark magic. This poses a huge threat to the Ferde Wilderness."

Skinorse studied the image and asked, "You want me to kill this Dark Magician?"

"Can you do it?" Link asked in return. It would be best if the Dark Magician could be killed.

"No." Skinorse's expression grew somber. He stared at the Dark Magician in the image and said, "This guy isn't a humanNo, what I mean is he isn't from any of the intelligent creature on this world. His eyes tell me that he's already sold his soul to a demon god. Someone like that will definitely possess terrifying power. The dark aura around him proves this. I don't think I'm his opponent."

Link nodded darkly after hearing this. He could see all this too, but Skinorse could come up with so much with just a few glances. He was extraordinary.

"It's okay. As a lord, I must know the nearby threats clearly. I want to know the details of their alliance, what kind of power the army they create possesses, what weaknesses they haveall of that."

At this point, Gildern and the others hadn't developed yet. When they ran into truly strong opponents, they were helpless. This was a sign that they had weak foundations and needed time to accumulate experiences. However, he still needed to do things. Now, a powerful Assassin had offered himself to Link. He obviously had to take advantage of the situation.

Skinorse fell silent. After around three minutes, he nodded. "I'll do it. Give me ten days."

Link smiled, his eyes crinkling. "No problem."

Seeing him like that, Skinorse suddenly realized that he'd fallen into the cunning lord's trap. This was a loss for him. He huffed unhappily and put away the Reaper's Gaze daggers. "These daggers are pretty good. Since I'm helping you, I'm not going to give them to you anymore."

"Sure." They were just a set of Epic daggers. If Link wanted to, he could make some whenever he wanted. They were no big deal.

"I'm leaving." Skinorse was annoyed. He opened the door and left without another word.

Just then, he saw Celine who was back from gun practice. His eyes brightened instantly, and all annoyance disappeared. Turning around enthusiastically, he asked Link, "Hey Lord, that girl's pretty. Heh, that face, that body, that graceI've never seen someone like that before. Can I know her nameOh, she's walking towards me. Does she like me?"

Skinorse was instantly excited. He fixed up hishi

As he spoke, he wanted to take Celine's hand to kiss.

Celine was shocked. She moved to the side and walked past the Assassin with a weird expression. Reaching Link's side, she said, "Link, that guy looks weird. Is there something wrong with his brain?"

Link grasped Celine's hand to show that she was his and smiled. "He's not like the average man."

A man who could flirt while investigating demons was clearly in a different world than everyone else.

Skinorse was taken aback. He could see Link and Celine's relationship now and slapped his forehead. "Lord, I'm sorryI'll go work now," he apologized promptly.

With that, he ran out of the cabin. He looked calm but inside, he was wailing, I'm so embarsed!

While sprinting, he passed by a stone house. There was a small garden, and it was exquisite that Skinorse glanced at it subconsciously. Then he was stunned as if he was struck by lightning.

How can there be such a beautiful girlelf? Oh my god, is this Aphrodite? What's with Scorched Ridge? Ah, that girl looks good too.

Skinorse plastered on his mesmerizing smile again and instinctively wanted to go say hi, but he tripped over air and almost fell down.

Heh, thankfully I'm skilled. This is nothing!

In midair, Skinorse adjusted his balance, ready to land with an attractive spin. The next instant, there was a thud, and he crashed. He rolled on the ground a couple of times and then landed facedown.

It wasn't that he wasn't skilled enough, but that he had been attacked by a Magician, destroying his balance. Skinorse hadn't sensed any bad intent, so he didn't dodge, resulting in this pathetic state.

Then he heard a cold voice. "A human must not offend Her Highness!"

Skinorse turned around and saw a High Elf Magician glaring at him. He felt for the other's Mana and realizedhe was a Level-7 Master Magician. Skinorse turned back to the garden. The beautiful elf had taken the little girl into the house without even looking at him.

"Oh, it's the princess. Haha, sorry about that, sorry."

Skinorse climbed up quickly and patted the dust from his clothes. He apologized again and turned to leave. He seemed calm but inside, he was wailing, Ah, this place is so unfriendly. It's not suitable for a beautiful man like me!

The more he thought about it, the more embarsed he felt. After leaving Scorched Ridge, he started sprinting. He didn't stop until Scorched Ridge was totally gone from his vision.

On the other hand, Link didn't care about Skinorse's misfortunes. Smiling, he asked, "How's gun practice?"

Celine was in love with the pistol. Hearing the question, she grew proud. "Pretty good. I can hit nine out of ten arrowhead seagulls within one mile. If I practice a few more days, I can easily get ten out of ten. But mostly, this gun is so powerful."

Arrowhead seagulls were a type of bird with extreme speed. They were agile as well. She was definitely a sharpshooter if she could hit nine out of ten within one mile.

Seeing her animated features, Link was happy naturally. Nodding, he said, "Good, good. Come, I got you 100 more bullets. Take them to practice some more."

The two shared a moment and then Link took out the broken magic puppet Nana. He started organizing the pieces one-by-one.

## 236. It is Time to Resurrect Nana

Ferde Wilderness, East Coast

The weather was excellent. A cool breeze swept through the beach as golden sun rays graced the World of Firuman. There were many seagulls sunbathing on along the coastline, and in places where the tide did not reach, a lush layer of greenery took over. One could even see a few trees swaying in the relaxing breeze.

"Hey, old guy, it's time to wake up. The sun is up." Link walked towards the beach and lightly kicked a skeleton leg sticking out of the fine white sand.

A few seconds later, a muffled sound sounded from beneath the sand, "You came here alone? Are you not afraid that someone might be suspicious of what you are doing?"

Link was different from who he used to be. Now, every single one of his actions was carefully scrutinized. It would be impossible for him to hide his whereabouts even if he wanted to. This was the troubles an overachiever like Link faced.

Link then smiled as he said, "I came here together with Celine, in the name of practicing her marksmanship."

Whoosh, a skeleton appeared from the ground as the fine white sand around him was cast aside. Vance then said in a sleepy tone, "Marksmanship? What marksmanship?"

A sudden explosion on the surface of the water answered his question. This explosion traveled in a linear direction and only dissipated after skidding 150 feet across the water.

Looking along the direction of this linear explosion, Vance saw a figure on top of a rock some distance away. Celine, who was clad in grey armor, was waving at him with a cap in her hand.

"In this period, Celine will be practicing her marksmanship here and also doubling up as our surveillance. You don't have to worry about anyone discovering us."

"Alright then. That is good to know." Vance then stood up and put a black robe on himself. This way, even if someone had seen him together with Link from afar, Link would have room for explanation.

"Let's go. It is too open over here. It will be convenient to hold our conversation in the cave." Vance said as he headed towards the cave on the side of the coastline.

Link then followed behind him as he said, "Old guy, I have recently read many magic puppet books that belonged to the High Elves. One of them mentioned something called a Flesh Magic Puppet. This body is so genuine that ordinary people would never be able to tell the difference. Perhaps I can create one for you."

Vance then waved his hands as he said, "I simply like to lie on the beach and rest. I am notiterested in the rest."

Link then continued, "This type of magic puppet has an extremely delicate and intricate body, allowing the user to enjoy everything that a living person can. You will once again be able to taste delicious food and feel the bitter cold and unbearable heat. You can even find yourself a lover"

Before Link could complete his sentence, Vance stopped in his tracks and said, "It is impossible for such a magic puppet to exist in the world!"

The reason for his disdain for life was exactly due to his inability to experience the senses that accompanied flesh and blood. He was also unwilling to fall to the dark side and gain pleasure from those sinister acts. Hence, he could only rest on the beach to kill time when he was free.

However, with this intricate Flesh Magic Puppet, he could once again enjoy the pleasures that accompanied flesh and blood. He had almost forgotten that feeling. He only remembered that it was a peculiar and wonderful feeling, something that he would do anything in exchange for.

"The human race is unable to do so. However, the High Elves can. They have tens of thousands of years of experience with magic. Amongst these years, there have been countless prodigies which culminated into a vast treasure trove of wisdom. I already figured out the exact method to construct this magic puppet."

"That's enough. I want it. What should I do?" Vance answered immediately.

Link then said, "I am not done. There is a price to pay for this body."

"What is it? I can pay any price, as long as I am able to."

"Firstly, this Flesh Magic Puppet is extremely delicate. In order to reap the maximum benefits of this puppet, your soul would have to be completely fused with the puppet. This is the first step to attuning your senses with the puppet. This process is irreversible, that is, once you fuse your soul with the puppet, it would be impossible to draw your soul out again."

"Why would I want to come out of it after gaining back my senses? That is not a problem at all!" Vance shouted,

"Another point." Link continued, "Due to the complete fusing of your soul, if the puppet was damaged in any way, your soul will also suffer the same amount of damage. You will die like any ordinary human. Unless you become powerful enough to ignite the Sacred Fire within yourself and become a god before you die, you will never gain eternal life again."

There was a price to pay for all decisions, which was how the World of Firuman maintained balance in the world. At that moment, only a Divine Gear could partially upset this balance.

However, Vance showed no signs of hesitation. He merely chuckled and said, "Currently, I am no different from being dead. To be able to enjoy the world with my full senses and experience a lifetime of joy again is worth the sacrifice!"

Link was not surprised at this decision and said, "Then it's settled. When we are done with Nana, I will create that body for you."

After entering the cave, Link realized that Vance had expanded the place since the last time he entered. It had already been transformed into a place more than 30 feet in diameter and nine feet in height. It was even extremely cool inside.

In the middle of the cave, was a large and smooth table made of stone. There were a few naturally formed holes directly on top of the table, allowing light to enter the cave. There were then a few refraction lenses placed strategically on the ground, refracting the light towards the direction of the stone table. The principle which this setup worked around was similar to that of the astral lamp on earth.

"A decent enchanting table," Link commended.

"I did it in my free time. Alright then, I know that Nana is definitely damaged. Let me take a look at the pieces," Vance said.

Link then took the metal pieces out from the dimensional pendant. Quickly the entire stone table was filled, and he said, "She was damaged in the back by the Dark Serpent. Apart from her head remaining intact, the other parts were all smashed to smithereens. I have checked that the heart situated in her brain was only slightly damaged. We should be able to repair her."

Vance merely observed the fragments on the table and stayed silent. He paid close attention to the pieces that were directly hit by the Divine Gear. It took him a long while before he shook his head and said, "The power of a Divine Gear is truly amazing!"

Following which, he took Nana's head and cast the Higgs field spell on his hand. With just a little force, the exterior of Nana's head was removed, and a sapphire colored crystal dropped out from the inside.

This crystal was around the size of two fists and contained many runes within it. The runes were so dense that they looked like layers of seamless coating and cotton wool within the crystal from afar.

Vance then reminisced, "When I just created Nana, there were only over 1000 rune circles within her heart. However, after my hundreds of years of study, the number of rune circles within the heart has increased tenfold. Take a look at these knots over here. These are all Nana's battle experiences over the years. I had observed it previously when I was making adjustments. Nana has defeated nearly 200 infiltrators in this past hundreds of years trying to protect my underground palace. One of her strongest opponents was a Level-9 Assassin. Look, it even recorded the name of the Assassin. His name is Morpheus."

Link was shocked.

Morpheus? Wasn't that the leader of the Syndicate? The person who had attained the Legendary status and was extremely close to becoming a god, the Shadow Stalker?

To think that he was defeated by Nana as well. Furthermore, he had not come back for revenge even after so many years. Although this may be due to Morpheus preoccupation with other issues, this could also refer to Morpheus' fear of Nana.

Nanasstrength was truly amazing.

"Oh, look here, it's a crack. The heart was still damaged in some ways. But fortunately, it did not harm the core structure of the heart. I can repair this."

As he spoke, a glow enveloped Vance's hand as he was prepared to repair the heart. However, he was interrupted by Link.

"Wait, there is no rush." Link then opened a large scroll on an empty space at the stone table. He then charged it with mana to activate it.

With a humming sound, a clear hologram appeared on top of the scroll. It was a detailed structure of the heart of the puppet. Link pointed to the hologram and said, "I have many new ideas. I feel that we can improve Nana through these methods. However, I have never put them into practice and am thus unsure about their feasibility. Can you help me take a look?"

Vance did not speak. He was already completely absorbed in the hologram right in front of his eyes. He circled the hologram again and again and carefully observed every rune formation within the heart.

After a full half an hour, he pointed to an intricate structure and asked, "I don't really get this part. What does it do?"

"This is an intelligence structure that a High Elf thought of. Its role would be to humanize the pure logical thought process of magic puppets," Link answered.

"Humanize?" Vance was still slightly confused.

"Yes." Link nodded and continued, "For example, if I ask Nana what is one plus one, she will only reply two and would give no other answers. However, after this intricate structure, Nana can choose to not answer such simple questions. Its greatest use is to prevent Nana from going into a trap of endless logical loop. "

Vance then wentito deep thought as he whispered, "Endless loop? I did consider this and made some adjustments to Nana. However, it was not perfect. Your structure seems refined enough and should solve this issue completely. Amazing, truly amazing, the High Elves are indeed geniuses."

He then continued to observe the structure. Time flew quickly, and Vance was finally done with the structure after three hours. He then sighed as he said, "Compared to your magic puppet heart, mine is almost like a sieve. It is full of holes, and I must be lucky that Nana survived to this day."

Link then shook his head and said, "That is an overstatement. Nana's true strength lies in her battle experience over the past hundreds of years. That is the true priceless treasure. The rest are only parts that complement this aspect. The structure that I developed is also merely meant to help Nana fully utilize her strongest advantage. "

As Link spoke, he brought out another scroll and charged it with mana. Before long, another hologram appeared in the air. This time, it was a blueprint of the structure of Nana's body.

Vance then carefully observed it. His experience with magic puppet creation was rich, and he quickly discovered many flaws in the design.

Link stood beside him and started making revisions to the design the moment Vance pointed out the flaws. Every so often, both of them would discuss ways to improve on the design.

While Vance seemed like a depressed and unmotivated individual, he was also a prodigy of his times.

Their exchange of ideas and thoughts progressed extremely smoothly. New ideas surged into their brains constantly like the bubbles ever present in boiling water. The flaws were quickly taken care of by both of them.

Time flew, and the sky darkened. Link had to return to his territory. Vance then said in disappointment, "It has been a long time since I felt such joy. Alas, I was born 1000 years too early. If you were present at that time, I would not have to go through that much pain researching into Battle Auras!"

Link also felt elated and said, "We still have many issues that we have not settled. If I have nothing to do tomorrow, I will come at exactly 10 o'clock in the morning. If I cannot make it on time, I will ask Celine to inform you in my place."

"Alright, I already cannot wait for tomorrow to arrive," Vance said.

After a short farewell, Link then left the cave by the coastline. Upon reaching the exit, he saw Celine practicing her swordcraft on the beach.

Link then got inspired by that scene, "Celine's Battle Aura is still quite weak. Although the Huge Fire Gun is strong, she will still be in danger if her hiding spot is exposed. She will need something that can protect her even in a close ranged battle a shotgun should be good."

Link then decided to craft a pair of shotguns with high firepower for Celine when he was free.

Link then greeted Celine who was completely focused on her practice and said, "Let's go."

"Alright." Celine then kept her sword.

"You have used up all your bullets?" Link asked.

"It was just 150 bullets. I was done a long time ago." Celine laid her hands out helplessly. It felt extremely refreshing and exhilarating to shoot the gun. However, there was simply too few bullets.

"I will try to prepare more bullets for you tomorrow" Link said as he swore to find a simpler way to craft these bullets. It was too much of a chore to do the same things every day.

"Alright, then," Celine said expectantly with a smile on her face.

The coastline was not far from Scorched Ridge; the two of them quickly reached back to camp. By the time they reached the entrance, they saw Gildern walking towards them.

Seeing the serious expression on Gildern's face, Link felt a shiver down his spine as he asked, "What happened?"

Gildern then took out a letter and said, "My lord, MI3 has delivered an emergency letter from the battlefield. There is a bloody sword logo on the front of the letter."

Link was already a core member of the Norton Kingdom's upper echelon. He enjoyed the same clearance to information as Dean Anthony. He would receive a copy of any reports regarding the situation on the battlefield.

If there is a logo of the bloody sword on the letter, it meant that the information in the letter was extremely important, to the point where it might change the tides of the battle. Gildern was aware of this fact as well.

This meant that something that would adversely affect the results of the war in the North might have happened.

## 237. Secret Plans

The emergency letter from the MI3 had a special magic seal targeted at Link's Mana. Only Link could open it; if anyone else tried to damage it, the letter would self-destruct.

This letter from the battlefield, Link could only read it by himself. He brought it back to his room and cast a Silent Barrier. Then, he lightly pressed his thumb to the letter, supplying his Mana continuously.

After around three seconds, the shimmering surface on the letter receded like a tide. The entire outer shell faded as well. Finally, the entire letter transformed into a light blue ball of light. It turned into a face that hovered quietly in the air.

The face started mechanically reading the report.

"Recently, many Fear Demons were discovered in the Northern Black Forest. These demons and ghouls appear in groups and work well together. Their combat power is many times higher than the ghoul teams from before. The MI3 suffered heavy casualties, and the Black Forest is practically sealed by the Dark Elves. We only know about ten percent of what is happening there. There is heavy fog over the entire forest. To counter the possible attacks from the Divine Gear, the Pope and Twelve Archbishops of the Sacred City have already brought the Holy Grail north to the Orida Fortress."

There was not much to report. After that, it added the exact date, showing that it was a report from two days ago. Afterward, the light forming the man's face scattered into faint light spots and disappeared in the air.

It was only a few minutes, but it was like a dark cloud over Link. Had the Dark Elves started summoning Fear Demons?

Fear Demon

High-Level Demon

Introduction: #28 on the High-Level Demon Combat Power Rank. They are extremely powerful. In battle, they can instantly sense holes in the enemy's mindset and use strong psychological attacks to disrupt the enemy.

In the game, the Dark Elves had destroyed Greenstone, and then used sacrifices to summon the Dark Serpent Divine Gear. Later, they moved south, fighting smoothly. That was why, five years later, the Light Confederation was formed and they started summoning large amounts of demons to fight against the attacks. The first type of demons summoned was the Fear Demon.

But now, it was three years too soon!

If the ghouls modified by the venom of the Dark Serpent were like cockroaches that couldn't be killed, the Fear Demons were battle masters with the characteristics of a cockroach!

All the high-level demons from the Abyss had boundless vitality comparable to the ghouls. Because of the difficult environment of the Abyss, every demon who could survive had rich battle experiences.

These demons were extremely powerful, especially high-level ones like the Fear Demons. Compared to the ghouls with raised strength but low experience, they could fight one against ten.

Even more terrifying, the ghouls would definitely make these Fear Demons their commanders. This would make up for the ghouls' own lack of experience.

This was so in reality. The report had said that the combat abilities of the ghoul teams had multiplied. No wonder the MI3 would be forced out of the Black Forest.

In war, the most crucial thing was information. Now, the MI3 was unable to see anything in the Black Forest. They had no clue what the Dark Elves were doing. Even worse, there was no news on the actions of the Dark Serpent. If the Dark Elves wanted a surprise attackthe result was too horrible to imagine!

"However, the Light Church has put the Holy Grail into use. They should still have a chance to fight or at least delay the enemy."

Link remembered the characteristics of the Holy Grail clearly.

Holy Grail

Sacred Gear

Rank: 5

Effect 1: It activates a Light Territory up to six miles in diameter. Within this territory, all organisms of the Light World will receive the Light's Blessing. The strength of all dark organisms will decrease by 80%.

Effect 2: Begins the holy summoning to summon seraphim to fight in the mortal world!

The Light Territory was almost tyrannical. The seraphim it could summon had Legendary power, enough to make the Dark Elves fear for their lives and change their battle tactics.

However, this was only an expedient solution. Sacred Gears were not the same as Divine Gears. It could stop the Dark Elves for a while, but as time went on, the enemy would definitely think of a solution.

Pondering, Link realized that he was unable to help with the war in the North anymore. He could only reinforce them in the backgroundNo, he still had Nana.

"I can't keep procrastinating. I must complete Nana!"

Thinking of this, Link wanted to go to the seaside immediately and work with Vance to create Nana as soon as possible. However, he knew that as the lord, it would be troublesome if someone discovered he was with a Lich at a time like this.

"What should I do? What should I do?" Link murmured to himself. He paced in the room, trying to come up with a perfect excuse that wouldn't be suspected.

After thinking for a while, he really did come up with something. "Pretend to be sick? That might work!"

He could pretend to be sick and stay inside and then sneak out to the shore of the East Sea. If he had Celine for his alias, there shouldn't be any problems. This illness couldn't be any simple one either because there was a priest at Scorched Ridge. He could easily cure Link. For a Magician, the biggest problem would be Yes, spell backlash!

A priest couldn't cure this illness; the Magician must recover by himself.

Thinking of this, Link went to find Celine. After he told her everything, Celine's eyes widened, and she looked at him in surprise.

"What's wrong? Is it bad?" Link felt guilty being stared at like that.

"No, I just think it's weird you can think of something so interesting, ha." Not only did Celine not disagree, she even thought it was interesting.

"So, deal?"

"Sure."

"Let's discuss the details now. My cover can't be blown."

The two put their heads together and discussed for several hours until they came up with a seamless plan.

Late night.

There was a boom and huge sound waves spread through Scorched Ridge. Firelight rushed into the air, illuminating the night sky.

Everyone was shocked awake. Quickly, someone felt something wrong.

"Oh no, it's the lord's home! It's on fire!"

"What are you waiting for? Put out the fire! Put it out!"

Where's the lord? Is he okay? This was what the soldiers and common folk thought.

The Magicians of Scorched Ridge rushed to the scene as soon as possible. The two at the front were the two Masters from the East Cove Magic AcademyGrenci and Ferdinand.

They were nervous because they sensed huge Mana waves before the fire appeared. Rather than the typical waves, they had been uncontrolled and scattered. Waves like that meant a Magician's experiment had failed, and there was a high chance of spell backlash.

To a Magician, there was nothing more dangerous than this. When the two rushed to the scene, there was only blazing fire. There was no trace of Link.

"No way," Grenci murmured. How could a genius Magician die from spell backlash? This was unrealistic.

He would believe other people, but it was impossible for Link. He had such fast reflexes that he would definitely realize his Mana was losing control and save himself.

"Do you think he used Burst to escape?" Ferdinand guessed.

"No, I didn't feel the Mana for Burst," a voice said. It was light and lovely with a hint of worry. The voice came from Princess Milda.

"I didn't sense it either. Did something really happen?" Romilson was here too.

More and more people hurried over. They surrounded the blazing cabin, but Link still didn't appear.

"No, we must run in to save him!" Jacker had arrived. He was more straightforward and had a damp blanket over him. The Battle Aura around him was explosive; he was ready to run into the fire to find Link.

But then, something moved inside the fire.

"Jacker, wait. Look, someone's coming out," Eliard said.

The situation inside the fire was very clear now. Everyone could see a blurry figure walk from the blazing flames. When he came out, flames still covered his body. Five seconds later, the flames finally extinguished, revealing Link.

His face was as white as paper, and a patch of hishi

Countless people rushed over to steady him. The fastest one, the least hesitant, and the closest to Link was Celine. She held onto him and asked anxiously, "Lord, how are you?"

"My body is okay, but my Mana is a bit uncontrolled." Link smiled wryly.

Seeing that Link was okay, Grenci felt assured. He looked at Link's pathetic state and walked up to reprimand him. "After two days, the Mage Tower will be finished. If you want to experiment with new spells, you should go to the elemental pool of the Mage Tower. What are you hurrying for?"

"Stop," Ferdinand advised from the side. "Everything's alright as long as he's alright." Then he turned to Link and asked, "How are you now?"

"My Mana is very chaotic. I think I must recuperate quietly and organize my Mana." With that, Link coughed lightly. There was blood at the corner of his lips. It was clear that he was badly injured.

Milda walked over from the side. "The injuries look grave," she said caringly. "I have some Elf Nectar here. Drink it."

Link didn't reject her. He took the crystal bottle and drank all of the holy medicine.

At the side, Jacker and others saw that Link was alright and the fire had only burned Link's home. It hadn't spread further. Jacker waved a hand and said, "Let's disperse now. There's nothing wrong. The lord was experimenting with a new spell, and it's a small mishap. This won't happen after the Mage Tower is finished. Let's go now."

It had made a big commotion, but it actually wasn't that big of a deal. Under the soldiers' urging, the residents of Scorched Ridge all went back to their homes to rest.

On the side, Link smiled wryly at the Magicians. "It was a bit dangerous," he explained. "My mind is quite messy right now, and I must rest quietly for a while. I'm not sure if I can be better within half a month. Two Masters, all Magic-related matters of Scorched Ridge will need your help while I'm resting."

"No problem, these are all small things. Your health is most important," Grenci said. Ferdinand nodded.

Then Link said to Lucy, "There aren't any big matters on the territory these days. You can make decisions for me for everyday tasks. Jacker, Gildern, it's the same for you. If there's something important, tell Celine, and she'll notify me."

"Yes, Lord." The three weren't quite familiar with spell backlash, so they agreed without suspicion.

Link then smiled apologetically at Princess Milda. "I'm sorry for disturbing Your Highness's rest so late at night."

"It's nothing, but were you experimenting with a Level-7 Spell?"

"Yes, but I failed." Link's face was filled with regret.

At the side, Romilson comforted him. "Failing is normal. Back in the day, I failed at least seven times and had spell backlash four times. Once, it was even a serious injury, and I had to rest for half a year. But I'm seriously impressed that you dared to experiment without the Mage Tower!"

Link chuckled. He didn't dare; this was all a show.

"Then everyone, I'll go rest now."

"Go, go. Rest well and don't take risks like this again!" Grenci chided.

Link nodded. Celine helped him toward her own cabin. The people of the territory no longer saw this as strange. Link and Celine's close relationship was old news.

Once Link entered Celine's cabin, Milda turned to rest too. After a few steps, Romilson caught up. He asked softly, "Your Highness, this was weird. How can spell backlash happen to Link? It's so weird!"

Milda smiled. "Isn't spell backlash normal?"

"No, it's not the same. For other people, it's normal, but he's different. Back then, he helped detoxify Your Highness while controlling the Wind Fenrir to run smoothly and talking to me at the same time. He was doing three things at once. If this spell backlash didn't really happen, I would never believe it."

Milda still didn't feel any suspicion. She smiled and said, "Okay, stop feeling strange. Link is a human and humans can make mistakes. There's nothing weird about that. Go rest."

Seeing that Her Highness wasn't supporting his idea, Romilson couldn't do anything about it. Though he was suspicious, he didn't look too deep into it. He turned and went back to his cabin to rest.

On the other hand, Link waited patiently for two hours. When the territory fell quiet again, he whispered to Celine, "I'll be relying on you for the next few days."

"Don't worry. It's all on me," Celine promised seriously.

Link left the Flame Controller robe in Celine's room, using the aura from that robe as a disguise. He cast the Traceless spell and slipped out of Scorched Ridge.

## 238. Nana Is Alive!

The full moon hung precariously over the night sky.

The ever-present silver moonlight illuminated the entire Ferde Wilderness, casting a pale white glow on the barren land. Link could be seen running across the Ferde Wilderness under the watchful gaze of the moon.

In order to keep his actions a secret, he did not summon the conspicuous Wind Fenrir and merely cast a Level-1 Cat's Agility spell on himself.

Link took almost 15 minutes to reach the beach, which was around ten miles away from the Scorched Ridge. By the time he reached the beach, he was already exhausted and placed his hands on his knees while panting heavily.

After all, he was not a Warrior and did not have a strong physique.

He then heard footsteps beside him. Link did not even need to look to know that it was Vance. Sure enough, Vance's voice sounded a few seconds later, "Young lad, what are you trying to pull running here at this hour?"

Link finally caught his breath and wiped the perspiration off his head before saying, "I secretly escaped from the camp. Celine is watching my back for me. Currently, no one knows I am here."

Vance was startled and asked, "Is it that urgent?"

Link knew the intention of those words and briefly described the situation of the war in the North.

"In order to gain the upper hand in intelligence, the Dark Elves had once again summoned high-level demons to aid them in battle. It seems to be working well, and the kingdom is losing their footing. In order to defend against the possible sneak attack from the Divine Gear, the pope is bringing the Holy Grail back to Orida Fortress."

Link did not mention this information to anyone else, including Celine. However, he was comfortable sharing this information with Vance. After all, this old guy had a thousand years of wisdom running through his veins.

Upon hearing Link's words, Vance looked and him and sighed, "It is good to be young. You have the courage and drive to face the Divine Gear. If I were in your shoes, I would definitely get as far away as possible instead of running here to create some magic puppet."

Link then smiled bitterly and said, "I am left with no choice as well. If the Dark Elves head south, everything that I ever cared for will be destroyed. I can only face them head-on."

Vance then headed towards the cave as he said, "Then, let's begin. I have a feeling that the resurrected Nana will have the power to rewrite history!"

Link had also recollected himself from the tiring journey and entered the cave. He first cast an Illumination spell in the cave before saying, "Where did we stop the last time?"

"Methods to increase Nana's offensive power. You mentioned that you were going to try adding the power of space distortion," Vance smiled as he said.

Link patted his head upon hearing this reminder and recalled his previous thought process. He then took out a piece of paper and a pen and wrote down the magic equations on the side of the enchanting stone table. He spoke as he wrote, "The power of space is extremely unique. It has a basic property of being 'malleable.' When space is bent past a certain limit, a terrifying phenomenon called space fissure will happen."

Vance then took a look at the equations Link was writing and could vaguely understand the theories behind it. Upon hearing the final sentence, he gasped, "Space fissure? It has a similar concept to opening a gate to another dimension, right?"

Link then shook his head and said, "It is not the same. If I liken the space to a pool of water, then opening a gate to another dimension will be like linking two pools of water with a water pipe. There would be no rupture or tear in space. The two originally separate spaces would merely be connected. However, the space fissure creates a crater in the pool of water, causing water to flow out of the hole."

The fine difference between the two was a source of debate in the game by many guilds. The trigger for this debate was none other than the increasing mana intensity of the World of Firuman.

A faction believed that the reason for the increasing mana intensity was due to the Dark Elves constantly using cross-dimensional summoning magic to summon demons. However, there was another faction that believed it was due to the summoning of various Divine Gears by the different races of Firuman throughout history, and the reason for the increase in mana intensity was merely a side effect of the Divine Gears.

Previously, Link merely thought that these guilds had too much time on their hands. However, after delving deep into the principles of the World of Firuman himself, he realized that the latter faction was the correct one.

A Divine Gear could tear through space easily. When a tear in space happened, the energy within the Sea of Void would enter Firuman through this tear, resulting in the increase in mana intensity.

Naturally, the impact of a single Divine Gear entering the world was minor. The World of Firuman had not yet experienced any major changes. However, as the races continued to strategize against the Dark Serpent and come up with ways to summon their own Divine Gear to go against it, the collision between these forces would then cause the mana intensity to rise drastically.

However, Vance did not fully understand the characteristics of space. He then asked in a worried tone, "If that is the case, won't the water in the pool eventually run out?"

Link then shook his head and said, "No, it is the exact opposite. Not only will the water not run out, something else will be added to itWell, this has nothing to do with our magic puppet as of now. Let's get back to the main topic."

He then pointed at the equation and said, "The power of mortals definitely cannot cause a tear in space. However, we can distort them. If this distortion frequency is high enough, a space turbulence which possesses incredible destructive force can be created."

Vance then replied in shock, "You are referring to the space turbulence? If we can really accomplish that, then Nana will possess the power to destroy every being on the World of Firuman."

"Yes, that is exactly my thoughts!" Link's eyes gleamed as he exclaimed. His eyes seemed as though he had witnessed the wisdom as far reaching as the countless stars in the galaxy.

He then half sprawled on the enchanting table and tried to figure out the equation. He spoke with fervent passion, "In theory, all beings will be affected by some sort of spatial turbulence, including the Divine Gear! This is because for the Divine Gear to exist in Firuman, it will have to conform itself to the principles of this world. If we can vibrate it at a frequency high enough, it is possible to eject the Divine Gear out of Firuman before its expiry Look, if we do this, we might be able to increase the frequency just a little"

Link spoke at a fast speed and even mad some logical leaps along the way. Vance tried his best to keep up with Link and listened intently. When he was truly lost, he would stop Link and request for him to explain again until he understood the principles. After Vance understood Link's idea, he then gave his suggestions and comments on the feasibility based on his experience in magic puppet creation.

This process repeated itself over and over again. On a stone table in a rundown cave by the coastline, a human race magic prodigy and a one-thousand-year-old Magician pieced together a magic puppet that was bound to leave her name in the annals of history.

At that moment, the two creators of the magic puppet had no idea what she would be able to achieve in the future. They were only doing their best to make Nana more perfect in their eyes.

On the first day, Link only slept three hours on top of a cold rock. Luckily, it was summertime, and Link brought a blanket with him on this trip. Coupled with his young physique, he was able to hold on.

When he woke up, he cast an Elemental Healing spell on himself and immediately became energetic again. He then once again immersed himself in the heated discussion.

Link was fully focused on Nana's creation and had placed everything else at the back of his mind. He felt himself transforming into a burning flame, and Nana was the mineral on top of this fiery passion.

It was a process where the flames of wisdom were forging true gold!

Vance similarly gave up on his decadent lifestyle and did not sleep for the entire duration.

While Link slept, Vance tried to educate himself on the space equations that Link wrote so that he could better understand the power they were dealing with and also to keep up with Link's thought processes. While Link was awake, he would then give suggestions based on what he had understood.

He felt as though he was a full 900 years younger, back to the times when he first started learning magic, when his heart was still filled with curiosity and anticipation.

"This is how life should be!" Vance exclaimed as he delved even more fanatically into the creation of Nana.

All in all, these two prodigies had gone insane!

The World of Firuman had once again made a full rotation around the sun, all in the blink of an eye.

By the third day, the two of them had completed Nana's right hand.

This was Nana's master hand, the one she would use to wield her dagger. It thus had to be the most delicate structure in the entire body. In order to create this hand of the reaper, Link used the best materials he brought and made many adjustments together with Vance. After nearly a hundred adjustments, they finally created a beautiful hand with features similar to one of a young girl, but a power equivalent to that of a terrifying ancient dragon.

They completed the torso on the fourth day. This would be the source of Nana's majestic strength.

They then started building the main bodyNana would still be flat-chested. There was no other way. When the body was moving at high speed, a huge bosom would only become a burden to the body, greatly affecting the body's balance and was prone to damages. For example, when Nana had to come to a sudden stop, the bosom would continue to move forward due to inertia and risk breaking off from the body.

That would be awkward.

On the sixth day, the two of them attached a pair of beautiful slender legs to Nana's torso.

This pair of legs would be Nana's driving force. There was even a coordination field attached to the legs to ensure that Nana could make a turn if she wanted to while traveling at an extremely high speed. When needed, Nana could even make use of sonic explosions to walk in the air or maintain aerial battles for a short amount of time.

On the seventh day, the two of them completed the left arm.

From Nana's past battle experiences, the left arm was usually used to maintain the balance of the body. However, the left arm Link and Vance created was not much weaker than the right arm in terms of both strength and flexibility.

Both of them believed that after a few more battles, Nana would definitely familiarize herself with the use of the left arm and fully utilize its potential.

On the ninth day, both of them created Nana's weapon. It was a pair of daggers.

This time around, Link had pushed his enchanting skills to the limits and handpicked the best materials for this weapon.

When this dagger was completed, the Storm Lord's sword uttered a faint sound before falling silent again, choosing to not give his comments.

However, that sound alone was enough to show his astonishment.

Player has successfully created an Epic quality weapon, Omni points +200 (payable in 100 days), please name your weapon!

The in-game system had immediately rewarded Link with a hefty reward of 200 Omni points, a testament to the power of the two daggers.

Link then asked Vance, "What should we name these dagger?"

Vance then shook his head and said, "I shouldn't be the one naming them. You did most of the work. You should do it."

"We have two daggers, let's name one each," Link said.

"That's fine," Vance nodded and continued. "You take the main dagger wielded by the right hand."

Link then thought for a moment before he started writing down a line of beautiful runes on the dagger surrounded by multiple air ripples, spelling "The Last Nightmare."

Vance then thought for a few moments as well before carving onto the near transparent left-handed dagger, "Whispers of the Forest."

When Vance wrote down the last word, an in-game system message appeared in Link's field of vision.

Weapon naming Completed.

Main Weapon: The Last Nightmare

Sub Weapon: Whispers of the Forest

Quality: Epic

Main Weapon Effect: Able to trigger the space distortion effect while attacking. Has the ability to destroy any mortal beings.

Sub Weapon Effect: This sword has practically no quantitative weight. The user can use this sword to accomplish high-speed defensive movements from any angle.

Combined Effect: Space Fortress. This property ensures that the two daggers are protected by an almost impenetrable barrier.

(Note: Nana's little toy)

So far, the body and weapons were already completed. Link and Vance then exchanged glances and started working on the final step, which was to fix the heart of the puppet onto Nana's head.

They did not make any changes to the features and shape of the head, merely improving on some minor details. However, the interior of the head, also known as the heart, had received a tremendous upgrade. Apart from keeping the battle experience memories intact, everything else had been upgraded.

This took the two of them a total of ten days, more than the combined time of what they used to create Nana's exterior and weapons.

...

Three o'clock in the morning.

When the sun rose on the horizon, Vance gently placed Nana's head on her body. Link then used the magic field to repair the runes connecting her head to her body.

Two hours later, everything was completed, and the sun was already high up in the sky. A golden ray of sunlight illuminated the cave and landed right where Nana was lying.

"She should be waking up soon right?" Vance was slightly apprehensive.

"I have not activated it, hold onAlright, it is activated," Link whispered.

On the enchanting table, Nana still lay flat on the ground, seemingly lifeless. After around 15 seconds, she suddenly blinked and sat up on the stone table.

"Nana, Alive."

The voice was as cipand sweet as before. However, her tone was no longer monotonous and robotic. She sounded exactly like an ordinary person.

## 239. The North Has The Divine Gear The South Has The Undead Army

## 240. The Infiltration of the Undead Knights

## 241. The Real Undead Race?

## 242. Enemy Of Our Enemy

## 243. Pursuit in the Forest

## 244. It Sure is Crowded Today

## 245. You All Have the Intelligence of Mortals

## 246. A Gift from the Maiden of Truth

## 247. I Blocked It!

## 248. Nana, Keep Them Alive!

## 249. Two Madmen

## 250. Wavier Must Die!

## 251. Link is No Longer My Threat

## 252. Saving His Mentor

## 253. Fuse Divine Gear? Sure

## 254. Honestly, I Do Not Like These Wretched People

## 255. Necropolis

## 256. Blessings of the Red Dragon Queen? Thats Hardly Enough!

## 257. Smash You Until You Kneel

## 258. Three Magic Books of Fire

## 259. Problem in the Dragon Valley Too

## 260. A Familiar Presence

## 261. High Elf Tomb Quest

## 262. A Qualified Trap Clearer

## 263. Insect, Dont Run!

## 264. All for a Good Cause

## 265. Stopped by Nothing

## 266. Sinister Dragon Valley

## 267. Tipped Balance, Equilibrium Gone

## 268. The Small Rodents Strikes!

## 269. Traces

## 270. Shadow of the Night

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## 277. Getaway

## 278. A Shameful Life Over a Glorious Death

Link was still extremely calm. The moment his opponent noticed his apprehension, he would commence his attack immediately. That would be the end for the three of them.

His mind was spinning as he thought, What is my only advantage now? Yes, time, time is on my side. The longer I drag this out, the more favorable it will be for me. But how do I do it? Naturally, I need to let my opponent fear me. However, my Spatial spells are still too weak. This is not enough...Wait, I still have one more trump card!

He thought of a way to get him out of this predicament.

Link stared at the Red Dragon Duke who was closing in. He then chuckled, "How much strength do you have left after so many consecutive bursts of power?"

Duke Osiris narrowed his eyes and said, "It is enough to deal with you!"

Although that was what he said, he was still intimidated by Link as he had no understanding of Spatial Magic. He stopped in his tracks in fear of any trump cards in Link's hand.

"Perhaps, you can try," Link grabbed the Storm Lord's Sword in his hands and started charging the sword with mana. He then muttered, "Please lend me a hand. You don't have to do anything, just emit some presence."

If this sword was not willing to help, Link was prepared to use other tactics like generating a dimension singularity point to strike fear into Osiris' heart.

Luckily, the Storm Lord's sword did not disappoint Link. He said, "I am extremely weak now. That mana is hardly enough. Give me more!"

Link still had 3500 Mana Points left. Upon hearing those words, he transferred almost all his Mana Points into the sword without hesitation.

Following which, the Storm Lord's Sword gave a cipand shrill cry. After a slight jerk, it's dull appearance underwent a complete transformation. It had become a translucent opal-colored sword. Three air currents could be seen swirling within the groove of the sword. Countless runes appeared in the surrounding air as strong winds started howling through the forest.

Osiris was startled at this sudden change. He then asked hesitantly, "What sword is this?"

Link grabbed the hilt of the sword and spoke calmly, "The full name of my sword is The Arbiter of Storms. Master of Lightning. Silencer of Realms. I have prevented myself from using it all this time as I have not met an opponent powerful enough. However, now that you have arrived...I believe, a strong Red Dragon Duke should be able to satisfy you?"

The first part of the sentence was meant for Osiris, while the second part was meant for the Storm Lord's Sword spirit.

Clang! The sword shrilled once more as the air currents around Link swirled violently. The intensity of the wind in the forest grew stronger, causing clusto congregate in the skies above. A lightning bolt then struck right beside the feet of the Red Dragon Duke.

Osiris was horrified. He could not help but instinctively take a step back. There was a look of disbelief on his face.

"How could you possess the sword of the Storm Lord?" Osiris gasped. He recognized this sword!

The reason was simple. As a Legendary race, dragons possessed an insane amount of vitality and a good record of history. In this aspect, the only race that could hope to match their knowledge was the High Elves.

For example, Osiris had already lived for 2356 years. Coupled with the strong cultural foundation of his race, he would naturally be extremely knowledgeable. It was no surprise that he recognized the Storm Lord's sword.

That was also the exact reason why he was horrified.

Link was satisfied at his reaction. He then unsheathed the sword and glanced at Osiris with a death stare, as though he was already looking at a dead opponent.

"It does not matter how I came to possess it. More importantly, it will be taking your head today!"

When he said the last word, his voice was trembling with murderous intent. Another lightning bolt struck from the heavens followed by the roaring of thunder.

Such a presence could only be that of a Sacred Gear.

Osiris took another step back.

Elin was dumbfounded as well. She whispered to Link, "Hey, big guy, why didn't you use such a powerful weapon earlier."

Link smiled bitterly. Elin had no idea how arrogant this sword was. It probably only decided to help after deciding that Link was about to die. Furthermore, if not for his flashy use of Spatial Magic to shake Osiris' psychological foundation, this sword alone might not be enough to fool him.

Of course, these were just his thoughts. He could not say that in front of Elin.

He merely smiled and said, "A Holy Sword has a spirit. I cannot simply use him if I wanted to. The main reason this sword has decided to act is still due to our powerful opponent!"

He then sighed then chuckled, "Oh Holy Sword, you will feast on dragon blood today!"

At this moment, the time was about right. The dragons from the Holy Mountains had arrived. Link saw their figures flying towards his location. There were around 30 of them and the one taking the lead seemed to be of similar stature to Osiris.

Link then took a step forward, pointing the sword at the Osiris.

Osiris immediately cast a crimson red crystal barrier around him. He did not dare to go on the offensive against a Legendary Holy Sword like this. He chose the defensive stance straight away.

However, Link actually did not have any Mana Points. How could he then release any attacks?

He took this chance to drink yet another perfect Mana Recovery potion. After recovering 2000 Mana Points, he cast a Dimensional Jump spell without hesitation.

A white light enveloped Link, Elin, Nana and the heavily injured Felina, and they disappeared instantly.

They then appeared around one mile away.

The moment they landed, Link knelt down helplessly on the ground. The poison from the perfect Mana Recovery potion was affecting him seriously. Fortunately, he still had a bottle of the High Elves' Detoxification Elf Nectar with him.

He drank half a bottle of the nectar with trembling hands and immediately felt the churning in his stomach ease. He then handed the remaining nectar to Elin and requested her to give it to Felina.

At the same time, he saw a few dragons fly past, charging straight towards Osiris.

Link then heaved a sigh of relief before allowing himself to lie on the ground and laugh, "Oh Osiris, you will never forget me for as long as you live, right?"

He was not wrong. Osiris had already carved Link's features into the deepest part of his memory. He would never forget that he was taken for a ride by a human Magician. As long as he lived, he would do whatever he can to avenge this disgrace.

He swore on his life!

Osiris stared at the dragons approaching. He recognized the largest dragon as Davosus, a Duke and a husband of the Red Dragon Queen just like him.

If Osiris was at full power, he would have the confidence to defeat Davosus. However, Link had already depleted too much of his energy. He was not in the right state to fight against Davosus.

At that moment, the effects of Link's Spatial spells disappeared. Olisa was finally released from the clutches of the Spatial spell. This young Dragon Magician stared at him with tears in her eyes, clearly hoping that he would bring her along.

However, Osiris shook his head as he said, "Olisa, I'm sorry."

He could never escape Davosus' pursuit with another deadweight.

After which, he spread his wings and quickly left the scene.

He could no longer stay within the Dragon Valley. Should he seek refuge in Isendilan's territory?

Truthfully, he did not wish to stay together with the madman. Furthermore, he was still weaker than Isendilan and would definitely end up as his one of his underlings...Tsk, I should first focus on my escape.

Osiris then flew at full speed ahead.

However, he felt that something was amiss after a while. He looked behind him and realized that Davosus was trailing behind him. He was closing in!

"Davosus, why are you following me?" Osiris howled. Although he had committed many heinous crimes, the news should not have spread. Davosus probably still did not know. Why then, was he so persistent?

"I was just about to ask you. Osiris, why are you running away? Why did you attack a young dragon?" Davosus howled as he chased.

Faced with this question. Osiris fell silent and continued running with his head hung.

Unfortunately, he had lost too much energy. He was a lot slower than Davosus, who was at full power.

Twenty minutes later, Osiris reached the boundaries of the Dragon Valley. The mist maze was right in front of his eyes.

He was just about to leave the Dragon Valley when he heard the sound of howling wind behind him. He was not fast enough to dodge the attack, and half a second later, he felt a sharp pain pierce through his back. Following which, a violent force pinned him down from above, pressing him straight onto the ground.

Boom! Two giant dragons fell from the sky, the impact of the force akin to a meteorite.

After the dust settled, Davosus grabbed Osiris' head with his front claws, pressing his nails deep into Osiris' scales. He then leaned closer to his ears and whispered, "Do you know? Stepping on your head like this was something I have always wanted to do. However, now that Isendilan has gone mad and you have done such a stupid thing, I will become the Queen's only husband. Haha, this is fate!"

Davosus laughed haughtily. Following which, he raised his claws and swung it in Osiris' direction in an attempt to make him unconscious.

Davosus' idea was simple. If Osiris was so guilty, he had definitely done something wrong. He would definitely lose his status as a Duke if he was brought back to the Dragon Temple. Davosus would then be the only Duke available.

However, he could never imagine the atrocities that Osiris had committed. His only outcome was permanent captivity if he was brought back to the Dragon Temple. How then can Osiris accept such a result?

As the husband of the Red Dragon Queen and one of the most masculine male dragons of his era, he still retained this fervor even after living for 2000 years. He would destroy what he could not get. If he was unable to run, he would bring someone down with him!

Osiris suddenly turned over and plunged his claws into Davosus' heart. Following which, he released all of his power.

Davosus was taken by surprise and instinctively defended with all his might.

Crack! Splat!

A clean snap was heard. This was the sound of Osiris' neck being broken by Davosus claw. Following which, a dull splattering sound could be heard. This was the sound of Davosus' heart being squashed by Osiris' claw.

"You... why?" Davosus stared at Osiris in disbelief. Osiris not only destroyed his heart but also all the organs within his chest. Osiris' churning dragon force had turned his internal organs into mush. Even a powerful dragon-like him would not be able to withstand this injury.

However, he could not understand it. He thought this was merely a small matter. He did not expect this to happen.

Osiris had also suffered a fatal wound with his neck broken. The sparkle in his eyes quickly turned dim as blood poured from his mouth. He then snickered, "Do you really think I will let you have the Queen to yourself? We will perish together!"

The two Red Dragon Dukes then lay motionlessly on the ground.

Link still had no idea that such a huge incident happened. A few powerful red dragons landed near him, each of them at least Level-8 in strength. One of them had an extremely huge body more than 60 feet long. He stared at Link and said coldly, "I am the Chancellor of the Red Dragon Council, Pettalong. The Red Dragon Queen invites you into the Dragon Temple."

A cold demeanor was common across the dragon elders. They were not unhappy with Link, but merely uninterested, due to the fact that they have experienced way too much. The youngest elder was at least 2000 years old. They had witnessed more than any mortal could imagine.

Link had experienced such treatment before in the game. He thought nothing about it and nodded as he said, "It's my honor."

A few younger dragons approached Link and lowered their bodies for Link, Nana, and Elin to mount. Felina was also carefully placed on a dragon's back.

They then took flight and flew towards the Dragon Temple.

## 279. Will the Queen Fall to Darkness?

The Dragon Temple had a characteristic—it was big. Everything seemed huge, such as the passageway that the Red Dragon Elder Pettalong was leading Link down. It was 300 feet wide, and it felt like he was walking in an empty town square.

After walking with Elder Pettalong for a while, Link and Elin realized that they were walking toward the backyard of the Holy Temple. They exchanged glances, their spirits low.

They had last seen the queen in the huge square behind the Holy Temple. Now, she was meeting the guests there. This meant that the Red Dragon Queen was very weak and couldn't even move.

The situation was horrible.

After walking for five or six minutes, the passageway ended. A 150-foot-tall arch appeared. A 30-foot-tall Warrior stood on either side of the entrance.

They grasped huge battle swords and were covered fully in dark red body armor. Only their silvery eyes were revealed. Their auras were obscure and deep. When they looked down at someone, there was an indescribable pressure.

Link recognized this type of Warrior. Called Apocalypse Dragon Guards, they were currently at Level-8. Later, when the Mana density rose, they all passed the Legendary State and had terrifying combat ability.

Before, Apocalypse Dragon Guards had appeared on the battlefield and were like doomsday war chariots. Anyone who tried to block them would die. Only the Abyssal Horn, a high-level demon of similar physique, could stop them.

Even more frightening, there were at least 100 of them in this Dragon Temple. Clearly, the title of legendary race was veritable for the dragons.

Stared at by these Warriors, Elin shrunk into herself and looked like a little bird. Hunched over, she followed Link and was too scared to even breathe loudly.

At the entrance, Pettalong stopped. "The queen is not feeling well recently," he said quietly. "In order for her health not to be damaged further, pay attention to how you speak when reporting the truth to the queen, understood?"

Link and Elin exchanged glances. The Red Dragon Queen was a legendary force, but now she was in the state where her mood could affect her body. How horrible was the situation?

Pettalong's gaze was sharp, and Link could only nod. "We will do our best to take care of the queen's emotions."

"Okay, come with me." The dragon elder continued to guide them.

The group passed under the tall arch and saw the huge square of thousands of feet wide. The Red Dragon Queen was sprawled in the center quietly.

This scene was almost identical to that of the Soul Realm. The only difference was that the black light sphere that represented the Equal Scale was gone. The dragons had probably concealed it.

There were at least 30 dragons beside the queen. They were all over 60 feet tall, and the weakest one was above Level-8. They were all streaming crystal-red dragon power into the queen's body.

The queen's head drooped limply on the ground. The huge golden eyes were half-closed. When she saw Link's group, a gentle yet omnipresent voice sounded. "Apologies, my friends. There is a problem with my health, so I can only welcome you like this."

Her mouth didn't move as she spoke while her eyes stared at Link and Elin. She was speaking with a spell. Despite being so weak, the elegancy she emanated was still suffocating.

Elin didn't dare to breathe too loudly. She walked up, bowed seriously, and said softly, "Elin, Yabba Magician, greets Your Majesty."

Observing from the distance in the Soul Realm was one thing; actually facing the Red Dragon Queen was another. To Elin, the queen was like a mountain while she was just a small bunny.

She felt huge pressure, and her voice was tiny when she spoke. Elin had become a Yabba lady, nothing like the frustrated and furious girl at the Night of the Dragon Inn.

Link, on the other hand, had seen the Red Dragon Queen many times in the past life, so his expression was still normal. He bowed and greeted her to follow customs. "Your Majesty."

The Red Dragon Queen gazed at Link and continued, "I've heard of you. You've been investigating Duke Osiris recently. Do you have any results?"

"Of course," Link replied. Then he saw Pettalong's warning glance, telling him to pay attention to his speaking technique. This was quite annoying. He had to describe the truth, and the only technique was to be as objective as possible. What other techniques were there?

He decided to ignore Pettalong. Link stepped forward and took out the letters from Osiris' table. He used the Magician's Hand to open them in the air. Compared to the queen's body, the envelopes were very small, and the words were even smaller. However, Link knew the queen could read it.

The queen focused on the letters, reading them one by one. She was expressionless. During this time, Link was also reading the letters, as well as the dragon elders nearby. Dragons had very good vision. They could see clearly from a few hundred feet away.

These letters were mostly written to Osiris by Isendilan after the latter was banished from the Dragon Valley. The contents were simple. He urged Osiris to hurt the queen, and in return, he would give Osiris the Heart of Dramos.

"Dramos" was a word from the dragon language. It meant "legendary," or "holy." In the common language, it was the Heart of the Legendary. It could help Osiris enter the Legendary State.

The envelope also contained the unfinished reply from Osiris. It was clear from the letter that he'd already completed the task and wanted Isendilan to pay him.

The entire square was silent after the dragons finished reading the letter. Link didn't speak either. He placed the papers on the ground. Almost simultaneously, a message appeared in his vision. It was about the mission.

Mission reveal complete. Mission set completed.

Player receives Magic Surge Talisman (enchantment)

A light spot flashed in Link's vision, and a six-sided pale purple gem appeared. It flashed and stopped in the bottom right corner of his vision with the description awaiting materialization after it.

Link didn't have time to care about this reward. He was waiting for the Red Dragon Queen's reaction.

At this time, he suddenly realized that the queen's expression was strange. Nothing had changed except the two large golden eyes. A translucent teardrop formed and rolled down.

When the teardrop fell to the ground, it shattered into countless grains that converged and solidified into pearls. They rolled in all directions; one rolled to Link's foot.

He looked from side to side. Seeing that no one was paying attention, he collected this "pearl" the size of an infant's fist. He looked at it, and its statistics showed up in his vision.

Red Dragon's Tears

Quality: Epic

Effect: A dragon's tears can change a mortal's physique, allowing them forge a closer relationshi

(Note: one can only come across this object serendipitously.)

Isendilan and Osiris' betrayals truly hurt the queen's heart, but Link felt nothing towards these lovey-dovey things. He was secretly so happy at receiving this teardrop. Of course, he couldn't reveal this. Otherwise, he'd be despised by all the dragons.

After a long while, the queen spoke again. Her voice was not calm like before and sounded a bit waterlogged. "This is very unfortunate news. Mortal, thank you for letting me know the truth. I—"

Before she could finish, a young dragon burst through the arch. He'd rushed here and was panting for his breath.

Elder Pettalong immediately reprimanded him. "Oro, why are you like this? Where are your manners?"

The young dragon in question tried to catch his breath. He looked terrified. "Something horrible happened. Duke Osiris and Duke Davosus are all dead. They...they're all dead!"

"What?!" all the dragons present uttered in unison.

Link and Elin looked at each other. This was unbelievable, and neither of them had thought things would progress to this state. Weren't the dragons known for their hardy vitality? How could two dukes with such powerful Level-9 strength die?

The dragons at the square were all shocked.

Osiris and Davosus were pillars of the dragons. They were geniuses and had the potential of entering the Legendary State.

Osiris' betrayal was already a huge blow, but now Davosus was dead? He'd died with Osiris too. This was a disaster!

This meant that of the three grand dukes of the Red Dragons, one had betrayed, and two had died. The Red Dragons' power was reduced by at least 30%!

The Red Dragon Queen finally lost her calm. Shaking, her voice trembled as she asked, "Explain clearly. What exactly happened?"

Seeing that something was wrong, Pettalong gestured at the young dragon with his eyes to take care of the queen's emotions. However, the dragon was extremely panicked as well. He didn't even notice Pettalong's warning.

"When we found them, they were at the border of the Dragon Valley," he said hurriedly. "Duke Osiris' neck was broken by Duke Davosus, but he'd paid heavily for it too. His internal organs all exploded...it was a battle to the death."

Hearing this, the queen began moving. She pushed herself up with her front claws, her eyes filled with disbelief. "Why did they do this? Why did this happen? Why did they betray me?"

"Your Majesty, this is Isendilan's fault. Please take care of your health!" Pettalong advised anxiously.

The queen paid him no heed. "I treated Isendilan and Osiris genuinely," she muttered. "Osiris, I'd already prepared to choose you. Why did you do this? Why?"

"Your Highness. Your Highness?" Pettalong was still trying to comfort the queen.

Throwing her head back, the Red Dragon Queen let out a long roar. It was filled with sadness and anger. Under that was complete despair and hopelessness. The emotion was so strong that even the foreigners, Link, and Elin, could feel it clearly.

While roaring, the queen suddenly unfurled her wings. They flapped violently, and under the screaming wind, she flew up unsteadily.

But a few hundred feet up in the air, a black net of light suddenly appeared above the square. It tangled onto the queen like a spider web, dragging her down. She struggled but to no avail.

With a loud boom, she crashed to the ground pathetically. Then she laid there without moving. Her eyes were blank as if she'd died.

Even scarier, veins of dark aura snaked across her dark red body. It was corroding her body at a speed visible to the naked eye.

Pettalong panicked. "What are you waiting for?" he roared. "Help the queen scatter the dark aura! Dammit, hurry!"

He charged forward and transmitted power into the Red Dragon Queen with all his might. The other dragons did the same, but this could only slightly slow down the speed of corrosion.

The queen seemed to have completely given up. Her consciousness and legendary power were gone. She was just like a regular dragon.

The Red Dragon Queen's corrosion seemed to be irreversible.

## 280. I Did Not Expect This

Dragon Temple

The Red Dragon Queen was in an exceptionally unstable state. The dragons were all busy trying to suppress the dark forces corroding the consciousness of their queen. No one had any time to care about Link and Elin.

The situation was indeed dire. Streams of dark forces could be seen emerging from the void, spinning itself around Red Dragon Queen as though it was weaving a web, pulling her bit by bitito the abyss of darkness.

Under the corrosion of the dark forces, the efforts of the Red Dragon elders were simply futile. They were like insects trying to stop the advancement of a war chariot, whose fate was to be completely obliterated.

Elin whispered, "Shall we run?"

There were at least 30 Red Dragon elders. The weakest one was at least Level-8 in strength. If even such a powerful team could not resolve this issue, what could the both of them do?

The best course of action now was to leave this place quickly. As for the fallen Red Dragon Queen—they would find a way to deal with it next time.

Link felt that he did not have the ability to intervene in this issue just yet. Although it was disastrous that the Red Dragon Queen had fallen, his power was limited. Furthermore, the fight with Osiris had completely depleted his Mana Points.

He slowly retreated as he whispered, "We will find Felina and take her with us."

He could care less about the other dragons. However, Felina was a friend. They also needed her instincts to show them out of his terrifying Dragon Valley.

Elin had no opinions on that. She nodded and said, "Be quiet, we will leave quietly.

In order to not attract attention, the two of them retreated slowly while keeping their eyes on the elders. Link then waved at Nana, a signal for her to follow them.

Time was tight, and Link still had not fixed the damages on Nana's body. She did not possess the terrifying outburst of speed that she usually had, though she could still walk normally. If she put in her best effort, she could probably still travel at a speed of 300 feet per second.

Growl! The Red Dragon Queen howled loudly again. Her voice was filled with agony and insanity. It sent chills down the spine of everyone present.

More dragons appeared, arriving from all directions of the Dragon Temple. They turned into their dragon form and quickly transferred energy to the Red Dragon Queen in a bid to help her resist the dark forces of corrosion.

The Dragon Temple became increasingly chaotic. In front of these huge figures, Link, Elin, and Nana were like two small mice amongst a herd of elephants. They looked as if they were going to be trampled anytime.

Suddenly, Link saw a condensed drop of tears at the feet. He quickly glanced around, and after making sure that no one was keeping tabs on him, he picked up the tear stealthily. That was his second one! What a harvest!

As time passed, the situation became extremely grim.

The scales on the Red Dragon Queen's body was originally crimson red in color while shi

Almost all the dragons in the Dragon Temple had arrived. There were around thousands of them. This included the Apocalypse Dragon Guards. Their numbers and strength were simply unimaginable. However, even this amount of strength was insufficient in the face of a Sacred Gear. Their attempts were futile.

The Red Dragon Queen continued to howl in pain. Her motionless body started stirring and jerking uncontrollably. She was not trying to resist the corrosion of the Dark Sacred Gear but trying to unshackle herself from the control of the Red Dragon elders.

The strength of a Legendary individual was terrifying. Even with the entire group of Red Dragon elders who were Level-8 in strength and three of them who were Level-9 in strength, they could not even pin her down. They were blown away by the constant struggles of the Red Dragon Queen even when she had not unleashed her full power.

The situation was getting out of hand.

Link and Elin were horrified at the scene. They stopped caring about stealth and ran for their lives.

They had no choice. Elin was only Level-7 in strength and specialized in Secret Magic. This type of magic was completely useless against a dragon. On the other hand, Link had only 400 Mana Points left. It was not even enough for self-protection.

It would be dumb to not escape when the Red Dragon Queen was about to go insane!

However, the Dragon Temple was simply too huge. They not only had to run at full speed but also dodge the huge claws of the dragons which threatened to trample them every step of the way. They were out of breath by the time they reached the entrance.

They were just about to escape from the Dragon Temple when they were forced to stop. A huge magic barrier appeared at the entrance to the Dragon Temple. It stood in the way of their escape.

This magic barrier was black in color and almost opaque. Countless black runes encircled the barrier, and an intense principle-based aura surged through the spell.

Elin tried casting a Fireball spell onto the magic barrier. However, before the fireball reached the barrier, it fizzled out.

Link then walked forward and checked the runes on the barrier carefully. After a few minutes, he shook his head as he said bitterly, "This barrier contains the power of the principles. If I am not wrong, this should be the power of the Balanced Scale. We are trapped, together with all the dragons."

At that moment, the red dragons were still helping their queen. They seemed to not realize their predicament. However, the truth was that the moment their queen descends into insanity, everyone present would die!

Many screams could be heard, including the cries of the Red Dragon Queen and the bellows of the Red Dragon elders.

"Your Majesty, you cannot give up!"

"Your Majesty, please stay sane. You cannot be controlled by the Balanced Scale!"

"My Queen, our race needs you!"

However, these cries of desperation were to no avail. The Red Dragon Queen continued slipping into the abyss of darkness.

From Link's observations, the Red Dragon Queen must have already recognized the severity of the situation and wished to fight against the dark forces. However, the moment of carelessness had already allowed the forces of darkness to break through her psychological defenses.

She was powerless now.

"What do we do?" Elin shouted.

As she said those words, her small body disappeared for a moment. After a split second, she appeared again and said in a tone of despair, "The Soul Realm has been sealed as well. We have no way out!"

Link was calmer as he still had one last method he had not tried!

He walked towards Nana and unsheathed the dagger she kept tied at the side of her thighs. He then charged the dagger with mana, causing the space around the dagger to distort.

This distortion was not necessary. In fact, this was only a disguise, to conceal the true power of this dagger.

"Do you have a way to destroy this barrier? Does Spatial Magic work?" Elin thought that Link was going to try out some novel Spatial spells again. She did not even think about the special powers the dagger wielded.

From her perspective, this dagger might be sharp and of epic quality, but Link's Spatial Magic was still the fundamental force at work.

"I'll give it a try!" Link muttered. He then walked towards the dark barrier and slashed at it with full force.

A light clinking sound could be heard. An opening could be seen on the sturdy and impenetrable Legendary Barrier!

That was not all.

When the opening appeared, the dark forces within the Dragon Temple trembled slightly. There was complete silence for a moment. Even the howls of the Red Dragon Queen seemed to have stopped.

"It worked!" Link was elated. The Breakpoint dagger could really sever anything in the world, true to its name!

Link then made another attack on the dark barrier. Another opening then appeared, causing black smog to appear. Closer inspection would reveal that this smog was formed from countless tiny black runes.

As the smog dissipated into the air, the black barrier became dimmer and more transparent.

The Red Dragon Queen seemed to be coping better as well. The Red Dragon Elders who were suppressing the dark forces also felt the diminishi

"What is going on?" The elders were confused. There were too many huge dragons in the temple. They did not even see Link and company who were hiding behind one of them.

"Has the queen come around?"

"No matter what, this calls for a celebration. Increase the intensity of the power transfer, help the queen at all cost!" Chancellor Pettalong shouted. This instilled faith and hope in the dragons at the scene. They then increased the rate of power transfer to the Red Dragon Queen.

Link was extremely excited as well. The Breakpoint dagger was truly a weapon comparable to that of the Divine Gear. To think that it could destroy a structure made by a Sacred Gear so easily. The power of the singularity was truly terrifying.

He then made use of the Cheetah's Agility spell and leaped high into the air, before plunging the Breakpoint dagger into the barrier. Following which, he slashed downwards with full force.

Psh

A Legendary Barrier was indeed different from an ordinary one.

If an ordinary barrier were to suffer such damage, the structure would have disintegrated a long time ago. However, the Legendary Barrier was different. This barrier had already suffered many cracks, and opening's from Link's attacks and could still hold its integrity. It even attempted to repair the damage done to it.

Link would not give it the chance. He could only think about escaping at this point. He slashed with fervor and insanity, chipping away its strength bit by bit.

Elin stared at the scene in disbelief. Her eyes were wide opened as she asked, "Link, what kind of power is this? Is Spatial Magic really so powerful?"

Link then spouted some nonsense, "I am using a type of Spatial slash. This attack can destroy any being on the World of Firuman. However, my Mana is limited, which reduces the scale of the attack. That doesn't matter though! I will be able to destroy this barrier. When that time comes, we will be able to escape."

"Yes!" Elin was extremely inspired. She then praised heartily, "Link, you are so powerful!"

Her eyes blinked in admiration as she said those words. Elin thought, This human is unobtedly the Chosen One! His power is out of this world!

On the other side, the Red Dragon elders could clearly feel the weakening of the dark forces.

Pettalong shouted in excitement, "The dark forces are being suppressed. It is weakening fast. Quick! The Queen will be saved! Press on, my brothers!"

This Red Dragon elder lost all his indifference and became extremely passionate. He transferred his dragon force to the queen without hesitation. He seemed to believe that this was due to the combined efforts of the red dragons.

This situation lasted for three minutes.

Three minutes later, a cracking sound could be heard. Something had been destroyed. Following which, a ragged and torn Balanced Scale fell from the void. It landed on the ground before shattering into fragments. Its surface seemed to be ridden with dents and cuts, as though it were sliced mercilessly before its destruction.

"This is...?" The dragons stared at the Balanced Scale in shock.

"Could this be the proverbial Balanced Scale? It does not look like it," a voice rang.

"The scale is broken?"

At that moment, the Red Dragon Queen had awakened. The dark forces corroding her had been completely dispelled, and she had returned to her normal state.

"What happened to me?" The queen shook her head and was still in a trance.

This immediately caught the attention of the red dragons at the scene. Pettalong exclaimed, "My queen, are you alright?"

"I have a slight headache, but that should be all. Hey...Why did the Balanced Scale turn out like this?" She said as she fixed her gaze onto the debris on the ground. The exquisite and immaculate Sacred Gear was now heavily deformed and damaged. The light enveloping it had also disappeared. It was simply a pile of scrap metal now.

The red dragons exchanged glances apprehensively.

"Does this mean that we destroyed the Sacred Gear?" a voice rang. This was unimaginable.

"Do we even possess such power? This does not make sense."

"It should be due to the power of the queen."

Everyone on site, including the Red Dragon Queen, was confused by the destroyed Sacred Gear. They also felt an inexplicable sadness. After all, this was the only Sacred Gear the dragon race possessed. It was such a waste that it was destroyed.

At that moment, none of the dragons realized that two small figures had left the temple stealthily.

"Elin, when the queen asks about the Sacred Gear later, do not mention anything about me. I cannot afford to repay the dragon race another Sacred Gear," Link hid behind the door to the temple and whispered into Elin's ear.

"Alright, but this Sacred Gear doesn't seem all that impressive," Elin seemed to have forgotten her fears. She hid behind the door and peeked through the gap between a thick dragon leg. She simply saw a pile of scrap metal on the ground with no resemblance to a majestic Sacred Gear.

Link fell speechless. He was just trying to break out of the dark barrier. Little did he know that his dark barrier was the Balanced Scale itself. To think that he destroyed a Sacred Gear just like that while saving the Red Dragon Queen at the same time.

He did not expect it at all. He was just trying to escape.

Looking at the dagger in his hand, Link gulped nervously and quickly handed the dagger back to Nana. After witnessing the Breakpoint dagger's true power, Nana seemed to have taken a liking to it. She put it away carefully.

At that moment, Red Dragon Queen Gretel's voice could be heard, "Where did our guests go?"

She seemed to have remembered Link and Elin.

## 281. I Just Look at You and You Worship Me

It was a pity that the Balanced Scale was destroyed but the Red Dragon Queen was finally freed from its encroachment.

She still appeared weak and dispirited. Her giant body lumbered on the ground, her eyes half-closed. Seeing the two tiny ones before her, she sighed softly. "I'm sorry you have to see me like this."

"It's nothing, Your Majesty. Actually, I'm very impressed by your strong will!" Link said seriously. Probably only he knew the entire truth of what had just happened and he planned on keeping it that way.

Elin only knew a portion. She just thought that Link used magic to destroy the Sacred Gear. Link was powerful—that much was undeniable—but the destroyed Sacred Gear and the Red Dragon Queen who was tormented by it weren't very impressive.

With that thought, she wasn't as reverent of the queen as before. Her clever look came back. Pouting and opening her arms wide, she said dramatically, "Hmph, Your Majesty, you really scared me!"

Usually, the Red Dragon Queen would find this Yabba girl interesting but now, she was exhausted. She just sighed and said, "I'm sorry, my friend, but I want some peace and quiet."

Isendilan's betrayal, followed by Osiris' betrayal, and death of Davosus all impacted her greatly. Right now, she just wanted to be alone.

Red Dragon elder Pettalong was the queen's right-hand man. Hearing this, he immediately said, "I'm sure you all are tired as well. Let me take you to rest."

Link and Elin obviously had no complaints. They followed Pettalong away.

The queen looked to the other dragons. "I'm alright now. I just want to rest."

The dragons left quickly and soon, only Queen Gretel remained. She sprawled on the ground quietly without moving and suddenly sighed. "Isendilan, Osiris, and Davomos are all in the past now. Gretel, you're the Red Dragon Queen. You must compose yourself!"

The three dukes were her husbands in name but in reality, they were only candidates. This was related to extending the royal bloodline.

Red Dragon bloodlines were very powerful. Amongst them, the royal bloodline was even more flawless. Once mature, the dragon would reach Legendary strength.

However, the world was fair. A great amount of time was needed to possess a perfect bloodline and great strength.

Regular high-level dragons would start reproducing at year 1000. However, the royalty had to wait until year 2000 before they were mature and able to search for a mate to bear the next Red Dragon Queen.

Gretel was 1990 years old this year. There were still ten more years before her body reached the perfect state and the peak of her power.

According to dragon tradition, the three most talented male dragons would automatically become dukes before this. Ten years later, the on that the queen liked the most would become her lifelong companion.

This meant nothing now.

But she was a huge beast that had lived almost two millenniums and was the leader of a race. She wouldn't become heartbroken and depressed like a regular woman.

After sighing, Gretel accepted everything and moved on.

The Red Dragons needed a strong, persevering, and wise queen, not a weakling who would get hurt by these setbacks.

She shook her head and buried all the pain in her heart. She gazed at the remains of the Balanced Scale.

The Sacred Gear was shaped like a finely-made scale. One side was dark while the other end was light. Usually, the two sides would cancel each other out and be balanced. After Osiris messed with it, he sealed the light end, leaving only the dark end behind.

Gretel didn't realize it and she fell into the trap when she checked it.

The Sacred Gear's power was as immense as the sea. Even she couldn't fight against it and almost died.

Reaching out a claw, she pulled at the remains. Her confusion grew. How can such a powerful Legendary Sacred Gear become damaged? Who made these fine scratches? The elders can't do it and the younglings obviously can't either. How strange.

The regular dragons might think that they worked together to destroy the Balanced Scale but it wasn't so. If it was so easy to destroy, why would she be unable to escape from it?

Gretel thought long and hard to no avail but she had another solution. She raised a claw. A crystal red glow lit up at the tip and she pointed at the air lightly—Time Reverse.

Time Reverse

Level-15 Legendary Spell

Effect: Check all information from a period in the past. The stronger the user is, the wider the range and longer the duration.

(Note: an extraordinary time spell!)

The next moment, a projection appeared before the Red Dragon Queen's eyes like a thin veil being pulled aside slowly. Figures appeared from within. All their movements were reversed. Advancing became retreating, getting up became lying down, and releasing power became collecting power. Everything that had just happened was shown again.

The charging Red Dragon Warriors who helped her push back the Dark power at all costs warmed Gretel's heart. No matter what, she still had many loyal Warriors.

That wasn't the main focus though. She continued searching for the reason why the Sacred Gear was destroyed.

The elders? She looked at all of them. They were all pushi

I found it. I knew something's wrong!

Gretel's eyes focused on the human Magician. In the Time Reversal, his figure was a bit blurry but she could still see what he was doing.

At that time, Gretel had completed the spell and was viewing it for the second time. The figures' movements weren't reversed anymore.

At first, the human Magician retreated with the Yabba. While retreating, they dodged to avoid being trampled by the dragons. For a time, he suddenly did something strange. At closer inspection, it seemed that he picked something up.

Gretel couldn't see clearly but she could guess what he was doing. She didn't mind but looked down on him. What an opportunist.

She continued watching.

The human continued retreating until he was blocked by a black screen by the arch. Gretel obviously recognized the screen. It was the materialized power of the Balanced Scale.

The Balanced Scale existed in a strange way. It was combined with the space of the entire square and was omnipresent. Thus, one usually couldn't see its true body. In a way, the entire square was a huge scale.

Up to now, everything was normal.

Gretel saw that the Yabba was panicked while the human Magician appeared calm. He seemed to be thinking. This lasted for two seconds and then something changed.

In the Time Reversal recording, the human suddenly disappeared, replaced by an insubstantial black shadow.

This shadow approached the black screen and continued to touch it. Then Gretel saw cracks appear on the screen. After a few minutes, there was a crack. The Balanced Scale completely broke and fell away from the space.

After another three seconds, the black shadow disappeared. The Yabba, human, and magic puppet were outside the arch, peeking in at the square.

Gretel knitted her brows. Who exactly is this human Magician? How does he have the power to break time? What did he do to the Sacred Gear?

Checking the remains of the Balanced Scale again, the overlapping cracks made her heart tremble.

Breaking the flow of time and carving the Balanced Scale out of space was such a powerful move. How wise must he be?

Felina said this human was a Spatial Magician but I didn't believe her. I can't believe that not only does he have spatial power, he can also manipulate time. At his young age, he's already a Level-8 Magician. The Mana density of Firuman is rising, but his accomplishments are still quite scary.

Gretel felt that she needed to talk to him personally.

The Dark Elves had summoned the Dark Serpent. This greatly damaged the balance of Firuman. If the humans had such wisdom, she really had to visit him.

At this time, Gretel had completely forgotten about her pain. As a queen, she didn't have time to be depressed. She must think of the Red Dragons' future.

On the other hand, Link and Elin had each been given a large room.

This room was like a human's church. It was 65 feet tall and 150 feet wide. Thankfully, the beds were designed for dragons in human shape and were regular sizes.

It was just strange to live in a room like this.

Link sighed and gathered his thoughts to repair Nana's body.

A Red Dragon duke at the pinnacle of Level-9 was truly powerful. Not only was Nana's body warped, there were also many cracks. Thankfully, Link had designed many backup plans. Otherwise, Nana would be paralyzed now.

During the repair, Nana was still lying there without moving. Her bright eyes stared unblinkingly at Link, making him even more careful.

The repair took quite some time but Link had patience. When he found somewhere that could be improved on, he would do it. When he found a material that wasn't right, he would find a better one.

"Master, Nana is becoming useless. I keep getting hurt," Nana suddenly said. Her voice was as chirpy as before.

Link smiled. "No, you're really useful. Otherwise, I'd be dead already."

Nana truly helped him greatly. She was a magic puppet but Link saw her as his most reliable comrade.

Hearing this, Nana smiled. Her smile was very realistic and not at all like a magic puppet. She was getting smarter.

When Link got busy, he would forget the time. As he worked, a voice suddenly came from the door. "May I come in?"

The voice was melodious with a tinge of natural arrogance. It was hard to describe. There was just a confidence as if the speaker controlled everything from above.

Link turned around and saw a woman dressed in an elegant dress.

She was beautiful with red lips, long and thin eyebrows, and unique features. She had a great figure and there were no flaws. It was hard to tell her age. She could be 18 but also 30. Basically, she had all the positive characteristics of a woman. Innocence, loveliness, maturity, sexiness... everything could be found on her.

Just glancing at her would make one feel that the entire world had lost color. All light was focused on this woman. At this time, one only wanted to kneel down before her and submissively kiss her feet... But this was only an urge. You didn't have to do that.

But in the game, at least tens of thousands of players actually did it. This woman was known as the most elegant queen of Firuman that you would want to worshi

## 282. Simply Too Wicked!

"Your Majesty, may I know what brings you here?" Link asked awkwardly.

Link had not fully repaired Nana, and she was laying on the table completely naked. Although Nana's body was not gender-differentiated, her smooth skin and delicate features were clearly more feminine. Link was already used to this sight. However, this was still slightly awkward in front of a stranger.

Link had still underestimated the Red Dragon Queen. She had already lived for thousands of years. What else had she not seen?

Gretel walked beside the table and observed Nana carefully. After a few minutes, she smiled and said, "It is an impressive magic puppet. Although the durability of her body is too low."

In fact, it was already strong for a magic puppet. To be able to withstand a blow from a Level-8 Dragon Warrior was already the maximum one could expect from mortal materials. Although Nana was injured in the battle with the Dragon Warrior, she was still able to defeat him, clearly showing her capabilities.

Although in the eyes of a Legendary individual like Gretel, Nana was definitely still too weak.

Link would naturally nor argue against her words at that moment. That would bring him no benefit. He followed Gretel's train of thought and said, "This is indeed Nana's weakness. However, I have already done all I could."

Link realized that Nana was looking at him all this time. He then smiled back at her apologetically.

Following which, he saw Gretel took out a red glowing light ball around the size of a fist.

This ball of light was peculiar. After Gretel let go of it, it levitated in the air motionlessly. One would almost think that it was a stationary red ball in the air. However, closer inspection would reveal that this ball was a congregation of many small red spots, where each red spot was composed by a cluster of runes. Each rune had a role to play individually and resonated with the other runes in a specific and strange manner. This unimpressive small red ball was actually insanely complicated.

Upon seeing such an object, Link subconsciously exclaimed, "The Origin Substance?"

The Origin was where all life began. Conversely, it could also turn into anything and breathe life to objects. From another perspective, the Origin could also be described as the Principle.

The Origin Substance was basically the power of principles in a solid form, made from high-level alchemic techniques. It gave a form to the power of principles, making it tangible. This form subsequently became known as the Origin Substance.

This was slightly similar to the Breakpoint dagger which had fixed a point of singularity. The only difference was that the principles governing the dagger came from a broader and more complex Sea of Void, while the Origin Substance was merely a form of the principles governing the World of Firuman. There was a difference in the quality of these two objects.

This time, Link could identify this substance, not because of his in-game memory, but because he had read about it in a book named Law of Alchemy.

That magic book was part of the treasured collection of Master Grenci. It described the Origin Substance in great detail. Neither the humans nor the Yabbas and the High Elves had possession of this object. The only masters who knew how to create this substance came from the dragon race.

Link could not help but harbor the intention to research into this treasure.

On the other hand, Gretel stared at Link's glimmering eyes and laughed. "This is indeed termed as the Origin Substance in the human race. However, the dragon race calls it by a different name. We call it the Essence of Life."

"Oh, the dragon race sure is particular." Link no longer thought of this person as the Red Dragon Queen, but his mentor.

Gretel had also recognized Link's wisdom and replied to him seriously in kind. She pointed to Nana and explained, "Look at her. Is she really not strong enough?"

"Truth to be told, I think she is already pretty darn strong," Link said.

"Yes, for a mortal object, reaching around Level-8 in strength is probably the limit. But that is not true for living things. For us, even Level-9 is not the limit. We still have the revered Legendary status and after which, the Sacred Realm and finally, the ultimate Realm of Gods. Why is that so?"

This was something Link had never thought about. His eyes brightened up and continued along that line of thought, "This is because every part of their body is alive. Their bodies can be damaged, but at the same time, they can heal. They can heal even faster than they are damaged, which explains why they can exist indefinitely."

Gretel nodded her head in satisfaction. She had taken a liking to this human's mind. He was well-read and reacted fast to new knowledge. He also had a flair for understanding the most complicated of theories. From what she knew, he was merely 19 years old. It was unimaginable how a person could reach this level of wisdom in such a short time.

She applauded and said, "Yes, that is the case. Living things have almost absolute control over every part of their bodies. We will attempt to repair whatever is broken and even try to improve on it! I created the Essence of Life based on this very principle."

As she said those words, she waved to the floating ball of red light. This light ball immediately turned into a long thread of light, returning back to her hands.

Link's vision was brought along by this thread of light to Queen Gretel's hands. He stared at it for a few seconds before the impulse to bring this smooth and silky hand home to caress almost overwhelmed him.

What am I thinking about! Link forcibly retracted his gaze.

"This Essence of Life cannot increase the durability of your magic puppet immediately. However, it will bestow upon her the properties of life. Not only can her wounds heal, but she can also absorb energy. After absorbing enough energy, she might even be able to defend herself against the attack of a person who has reached the Sacred Realm.

Gretel played with the Essence of Life on her fingers flexibly. In her hands, that Origin Substance simply looked like a dark red ribbon, encircling her ever so gracefully.

Link naturally knew what to do after hearing her words. He asked, "What do I have to do to get it?"

There is no such thing as free lunch in this world. If he wanted to obtain this Essence of Life, he had to give something in return. This was a principle Link held dear.

The moment he said those words, Gretel squinted her eyes as she teased, "You exposed Osiris' plot. That alone is a huge favor I have to repay. I was planning to give this to you. However, seeing that you have taken extra rewards without my permission, I cannot give you this for free anymore."

She then put the Essence of Life away.

Link reacted fast to those words. He understood exactly what Gretel meant by "extra rewards." She was referring to the two drops of tears he had taken from the Dragon Temple!

Even Link who had cultivated a thick skin could not withstand the embarrassment. His face turned red as he said awkwardly, "I simply felt that it would be a waste if I just left it on the ground. Many of them were crushed by the feet of other dragons. If you want it, I can always return it to you. Is that okay?"

Gretel was just about to poke fun at Link when she was reminded of Osiris. Her mood immediately sunk and lost all interest in making jokes. She sighed, "Forget it. Those were simply painful memories. Take what you want. You may also have this Origin Substance. However, it is the treasure of the dragon race. You cannot research into it."

She then placed her hands on Nana's heart, causing the Essence of Life to flow into her body as though it was alive.

Following which, Nana's body started showing minor changes.

Originally, although her skin was flawless and white, it did not possess the texture of real skin. If one were to inspect closely, one would realize that Nana was not so human after all. However, clear skin texture could be felt and even seen after the integration of the Essence of Life. That was not all. Her eyes were originally of a uniform color. However, her pupils seemed to be slightly darker than the surrounding parts now, giving her gaze a sort of warmth previously not present.

Nana's body also underwent other changes that made her more life-like. Her mouth was originally just a sound box. However, it had now turned into a real mouth with teeth and a tongue. Something even appeared in between her pristine white legs...Link averted his gaze after taking a glance at it.

"This is beyond my imagination," Link smiled awkwardly. He would not have to help Nana with the healing of her wounds from now on, nor could he request for her to undress as conveniently as he did.

Gretel, on the other hand, did not feel that anything was inappropriate. She smiled as she said, "Life is the greatest miracle in the world. Each of the body parts is perfect. The Essence of Life my race had created is borne from our respect for these miracles. They are not merely aesthetic, but also useful. It can help the magic puppet obtain energy from the outside world, replenishi

Link imagined the scene in his head. If Nana were to see a rare mineral, she could simply gobble it down to replenish the loss of any body parts...This would be convenient. It would also present Nana with infinite evolutionary possibilities. The transformation process would take some time.

The Red Dragon Queen then made use of this time to get to the main topic, "I came to discuss the Dark Serpent."

Link's face immediately turned serious as he said, "Please continue."

Red Dragon Gretel started taking care of Nana's transformation by hand as she said, "Our race had defended against the Dark Serpent for a total of three times in history. Although the Dark Serpent would change form every time it enters the World of Firuman, there is a being in this world that could accurately determine the principles governing the Dark Serpent and offer countermeasures to it. Apart from my race, no one knows about his existence."

This was something new to Link. In the game, the Dark Serpent was rejected from the World of Firuman after running out of energy. No one could stand up to it while it was present. Naturally, he would not know about the presence of such a being.

However, if this being was as strong as the Red Dragon Queen made him out to be, he would definitely be the bane of the Dark Serpent. Link was slightly agitated as he asked, "This being is...?"

"You might have heard about his alias in the human world," Gretel stuck out her finger and wrote a name in the air, "Elodim Fen Sendac."

Link was reminded of something when he saw that name. He exclaimed, "Isn't this the name of a renowned Spatial Magician 800 years ago? I even read a book that he wrote. It was called...um...Son of A Gun and Son of a bitch..."

"Son of a Gun" was how he termed space, while "son of a bitch" was what he referred to as time...This Magician was truly a peculiar one, though his thoughts were brilliant and intricate. He had provided Link with much inspiration.

Gretel nodded helplessly and said, "That name sounds like something he would come up with. He is actually a God, though he lost all his powers after losing a bet to the God of Light. He was then exiled to the World of Firuman."

"Exiled after losing a bet?" Link felt that this was atrocious.

Gretel waved her hands and said, "Alright, that is not the main point. Most importantly, he had a good knowledge of the Divine Gear. If you can find him, and he is willing to help, the Dark Serpent will no longer be a threat."

Upon hearing these words, Link fell speechless and muttered, "He was exiled by the God of Light. He must be fuming mad! Why would he want to help us?"

Gretel then chuckled, "To each their own."

"How do I find him when Firuman is so huge?"

"Felina will accompany you. He had a contract with my race. Although 3000 years have passed, the contract is still valid. People of my race can still sense his existence and location."

Link could only nod as he said, "I understand. I will find him as fast as possible."

Following which, a message appeared in his field of vision.

Activate Mission: Exile

Content: Search for the God that was exiled to the World of Firuman

Reward: 200 Omni Points

What else could Link do? He accepted it begrudgingly.

Red Dragon Queen Gretel had finally completed the transformation as well. She retracted her hand from Nana's body.

Nana then sat up with her new body. Link was extremely satisfied with the transformation except for one part. There were two excess pieces of meat in front of her chest. This was an insult to Nanasspeed! It was blasphemy!

This was simply too wicked!

"Your Majesty, this will affect her agility," Link whispered.

"Oh no. I have considered this. In fact, this will greatly reduce the impact of any external forces on Nana's body and will not negatively affect her durability at all. It will only affect her speed slightly. However, you have to admit that even if she was slightly slower, it would not affect her battle capabilities. She is already fast enough as it is."

Link could not rebut against that point. He dressed Nana in her armor before he said, "We will set off after Felina recovers."

"Three days would be enough. Take this time to rest. Elodim will not be easy to find."

## 283. The Yabba Race Joins

"Ha, Nana grew bigger." The tiny Elin entered the Dragon Temple's huge room and immediately saw Nana who'd increased in size. Elin circled her and then giggled at Link.

"Uh, this wasn't my idea. It's the result of the queen's help." Link awkwardly put down the Talisman Magic book in his hands.

"No wonder. I was thinking that someone so obsessed with magic as you wouldn't do something so unnecessary." Elin nodded, showing that she understood. Then, she climbed onto a giant chair with some difficulty. Standing up, her head managed to peek out above the tabletop. "Link, I'm going back."

This time, she came to bid farewell.

Link smiled. "Tell Merlin I said hi. He helped us greatly last time."

"Uh, there's actually something I need your help with," Elin said with hesitation.

"Speak freely." Link really liked this little thing. All of her expressions were cute, and when she spoke, her big bright eyes would stare at him unblinkingly. She looked really serious, but it made Link want to pinch her adorable cheeks.

Elin was still hesitant. After half a minute, she finally made up her mind. "I heard from many of my people who returned from your territory that there are a lot of islands alongside Ferde? And some are really big?"

"Yes. One of the islands is called Sea Pearl. It's more than 12 miles in radius and only 30 miles from land. It technically belongs to me, but it's a barren island with nothing other than forests.

"Uh...oh..." Elin couldn't speak again. Her brows scrunched up, looking really embarsed.

"We're friends and even defeated the scary Red Dragon duke together. What's there that you can't say?" Link encouraged.

"Alright." Elin got onto her tiptoes so she would look taller above the table. "You know, I'm actually a lord too. It's an inherited title, and there are more than 10,000 citizens of my territory...I feel that the North isn't safe and want to establish a new gathering in the South. Do you think..."

Actually, she wanted her entire race to migrate south, but that was unrealistic. She'd thought for a long time about taking her citizens south but before, but she didn't know where to go. After her experiences in the Dragon Valley, she thought that Link was reliable—not only his personality but more so his exceptional abilities.

Elin believed he absolutely had the ability to protect them.

"Of course I welcome you!" Link answered without even thinking.

The Yabba were an ancient race. They were the best engineers in the world and had unmatchable attainments in Mana mechanics. They had great knowledge of magic as well. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that they were a more advanced species than humans.

If an advanced civilization was willing to live in his territory, on the surface, it seemed that Link had to give up the control of an island. At the same time, the entire human race, especially his territory, could absorb wisdom from the Yabba race. This was definitely a deal without losses.

Elin was so happy she jumped up. "Don't worry. My citizens are just temporarily residing on your island. During this time, we'll continue looking for a new island. If we can find a large one like the Isle of Dawn, we'll move there...For compensation, I'll open a college of engineering in your territory. My engineering team will also do everything to help you construct a new city."

Link nodded. He took out paper and started writing a letter. This was for the upper level of the territory, and the content was simple. After finishi

At this time, Elin grew serious too. This pertained to the future of more than 10,000 citizens. She accepted the letter and then continued, "This counts as an alliance. As for the use of the Sea Pearl Island, should we discuss the specific authorities and responsibilities? For example, if we build a port, what happens to the money made? Or if we discover some type of mine on the island, how would the profit be distributed? This should all be made clear."

This really had to be made clear. With the Yabba's magic abilities, it was easy for them to construct a flourishi

Thinking it through, Link felt that he wasn't that familiar with the matters of his territory. He was a loose controller. At this time, he wasn't able to come up with a profit distribution solution that really suited the realistic situation with Elin.

They were friends, but this was a private relationshi

Once there were disputes between different races, anything could happen. There could even be racial massacres. This type of thing happened on Earth all the time.

Thus, Link was cautious.

After thinking a bit, he wrote another authorization letter. "You know, I've always been studying magic, and I'm not that familiar with the specific matters. However, my territory already has a complete administration institution. I authorize them to deal with this in my place. You can discuss with them. When you have a plan, try to follow it, and we can revise it if there are any problems, alright?"

Elin shrugged and pouted. "You really have it easy as a lord. However, this actually reassures me. I'll go discuss with them, but you must ensure that they won't bully me."

Link smiled. "I'll return to the territory after I finish some things. I'll do my best to fix any problems that may exist."

"Alright, thanks. I'll go now."

With that, Elin took Link's two letters and skipped out of the room. Link watched her off. Though Elin looked cute, it was totally wrong to overlook her intelligence because of her appearance.

After I return, I'll have to spend some time on this, Link thought.

Of course, these were all trivial matters about territory. Link quickly refocused and went back to the Talisman Magic book.

Now, he had an epic Magic Surge Talisman from a mission reward. It was a good thing, and he decided to embed itito his Burning Wrath of Heavens wand. Before doing so, he naturally had to deeply research the technique of embedding talismans.

This time, he read quietly for three hours before someone else walked in. It was the Red Dragon Queen Gretel.

"Why are you always reading in your room? Is my palace not attractive enough for you?" she asked with a laugh.

She had light steps, and Link had been focused on the book, so he didn't realize her arrival. When she spoke, he was shocked out of his reverie. Looking up at the newcomer, he quickly got up to bow. "I didn't notice Your Majesty. My apologies."

"No need to be so formal." Gretel walked over. Glancing at Link's book and the light purple talisman in his hands, she chuckled. "The talisman enchantments of the High Elves are very interesting. Your talisman is very powerful as well. How do you plan on using it?"

"I'll fuse itito my wand," Link answered honestly. There was no point in hiding it.

Gretel looked from the wand to the talisman and smiled. "Felina's wounds are mostly healed, and you'll depart tomorrow. Will you have the time?"

"There's no hurry. I haven't studied this book deeply enough yet," Link replied truthfully. The book was quite simple, but it was very thick. They were all knowledge related to application, so Link estimated that he'd need to focus for at least one month to fully grasp the technology within.

"Let me try," Gretel volunteered to help.

As she spoke, she waved lightly. The wand and talisman flew to her. Link didn't know how she did it, but she picked up the Magic Surge Talisman and knocked it against the wand lightly. It fused perfectly into the wand, becoming a pale purple gemstone at the tip of the wand.

"Done." She returned the wand to Link. It had happened so quickly—not even three seconds—and Link gulped. The legendary dragon's techniques were truly unordinary.

Others couldn't learn these tricks. Dragons had a long lifespan and had great amounts of time to practice all sorts of spell-casting techniques. The other races didn't have this time, especially humans with their short lives.

Link studied the wand, and the information quickly appeared in his vision.

Burning Wrath of Heaven, Wand of the Flame Controller

Quality: Epic

Effect One: Increases power of spells by 200%

Effect Two: Spell caster instantly consumes 1500 Mana Points and activates the "Flood of Fire" effect. The next flame spell under Level-9 will be cast simultaneously with its power increased by 400%.

Effect Three: Magic Surge. This effect must be charged with 2000 Mana Points. After activation, the spell caster's casting speed increases by 100%, and all Mortal Realm spells' power increases by 200%. (Can be overlapped with the Flood of Fire effect.)

(Note: gifted by the Red Dragon Queen.)

The nature of this wand had increased greatly. The elemental gathering effect had been canceled, but it was replaced by the Magic Surge effect, which was much stronger. The scariest thing was that all the effects would raise the power of spells. If Link cast a flame spell and activated both effects simultaneously, his spell's power would rise by 800%.

This was terrifying power!

Of course, the Mana consumption was terrifying to match. Thankfully, Link's top limit for Mana was very high already. It was at 17100 points. This was comparable to the Level-9 dragon elders. If Link returned to the human world, his Mana would be impossible to calculate for the average human Magician.

"You have rich Mana. This wand suits you." Gretel was a bit shocked as well. Even she couldn't overlook Mana that could be compared to the dragon race.

One must know, the Red Dragon elders lived for a few millenniums while this young man was only around 20 years old. How powerful would he become in another 20 years?

Gretel found that she was in disbelief. This terrifying Mana talent is even stronger than Bryant from before. His personality is more open and brighter as well. He'll become very accomplished in the future. My race must form a good relationshi

This was the original motive for helping Link create the wand, but this wasn't enough. After Link finished studying the Talisman Magic book, he could do it himself. What she did was just icing on the cake.

I must make him feel gratitude towards me, Gretel thought.

## 284. Not the Queens Opponent

The best way to make someone grateful was to give them what they wanted. However, one must not be too generous else they would be taken as a fool.

Gretel had done an in-depth investigation into Link before she arrived. After thinking for a moment, an idea formed in her mind.

She said, "Link, I heard that you are doing research into Spatial Magic. If I am not mistaken, you are writing a thesis on the principle of space. Is that so?"

Link looked at Gretel with a perplexed expression. He did not understand her intentions, though this was not a thing he wanted to conceal. He then nodded and said, "Indeed."

"May I take a look at the draft?"

Link was elated upon hearing those words.

He remembered that Gretel was a Master Spatial Magician herself in game. In fact, the dragon race was known to be particularly talented at Spatial Magic. This was evident from the mist maze covering the Dragon Valley.

Her intention was to guide him along in his thesis!

"That would be my honor," Link said.

Following which, Link took out his thesis. This thesis was slightly thicker than the one he showed Milda. He had obviously made progress.

Link did not give up on the research of space. He would still delve into it in his free time. There were now 20 new pages to this thesis.

Gretel studied the thesis carefully. At the start, she read with ease, commenting on a few areas casually. Her analysis was specific and valuable, each of them providing Link with new inspiration.

Her reading speed started decreasing after she reached the middle portion. It took her around two minutes per page. However, her analysis also became more in-depth and exquisite. Link could only understand some of them. He then took note of the points that he was confused on for future research.

There were a total of 150 pages in this thesis. At the last 20 pages, Gretel's reading speed slowed significantly. It would take her half an hour to read a page. After the second page of the final portion, she exclaimed, "To think that you have already reached this level. This is an extremely delicate portion of the thesis. I need some time to think before I can offer any suggestions. How about this, you get busy while I read your thesis. I will come back tomorrow with more advice."

"That would be great."

Gretel then walked away with his thesis. On the other hand, Link continued reading the Talisman Magic book. When he was struck by an epiphany, he would then turn to his thesis and continue developing it.

Gretel arrived early the next morning. She was accompanied by Felina. Felina was already completely healed. She would leave the Dragon Valley together with Link and Nana to search for the exiled God after the Red Dragon Queen discussed the relevant issues with Link.

Felina was a beautiful and attractive lady. She was unobtedly eye-catching. However, when she stood beside the Red Dragon Queen, her brilliance immediately dulled in comparison.

Gretel was simply like a magnet, drawing all the attention to herself.

Naturally, this attraction was merely an instinct. Link's gaze only hovered around Gretel for a moment before he recollected himself. After greeting Gretel, he then looked at Felina with a concerned gaze and asked, "You still look pale. Do you want a few more days of rest?"

Felina then smiled gratefully and said, "There is no need to. The queen has offered to treat my wounds herself. I feel better than ever."

"That's great," Link muttered, though, in his mind, he had also decided to rest more frequently along the way to ease Felina's burden.

Gretel merely smiled as she waited for their conversation to end. Following which, she handed the thesis back to Link and commended, "I have to say that your thoughts are extremely intricate and ground-breaking. Many of the theories you have put forward are original and exquisite nonetheless. I have tried my best to complement them. Hope they are of some help."

At that moment, all her contempt for this human had dissipated. She had already viewed Link as a being that was able to communicate with her on an equal footing.

Link took over the thesis and flipped through it briefly. He realized that the thesis had five full pages added to it. He then glanced through the added content and was shocked to find that he could only understand a portion of what was written. This piqued his curiosity and propelled him to read it carefully on the spot. As he read, his eyes widened and glimmered with excitement. Eventually, he could not help but slam the table in euphoria.

Link the realized that he had lost his cool. He then said, "I'm sorry. your Majesty, these magic equations are simply too exquisite. They shi

Gretel then smiled and seemed to glow even more radiantly.

She felt nothing when people complimented her looks. She had long grown numb to these superficial compliments after living for 2000 years. If someone were to stare at her face permanently, she would be disgusted and annoyed. However, she felt accomplished and valued when Link commended her intellect and wisdom.

Furthermore, this human knew his boundaries as well. He merely stared at her for a moment before averting his gaze. He had also treated Felina with the utmost respect.

Gretel then replied, "I am honored that you appreciate them."

Felina was startled at this scene. She looked between Link and Gretel with a curious gaze. She wondered what Link did to make the queen so happy.

The death and betrayal of the three dukes and the destruction of the Balanced Scale should have made her extremely depressed. However, Gretel was acting as if none of that ever happened.

On the other hand, Link knew that they were about to leave and this was his last few chances at getting valuable advice from Gretel. He then took advantage of the opportunity to consult this Master Spatial Magician.

As Gretel was in an exceptionally good mood, she answered him patiently.

There were some areas that were more controversial, and Link would question Gretel's conclusion. He would do this based purely on logic and precise analysis. As usual, his thoughts are extremely sharp and impactful, resulting in acute questions. Gretel had to ponder for a long time before she could answer him.

Most of the time, Link was the one who was wrong. However, there were two areas where Gretel was indeed mistaken.

"How could I be wrong?" Gretel was shocked. She had studied magic for 2000 years and had developed a strong logical mind. To think that this treasured set of wisdom she had trained over the years had made a mistake! Furthermore, she was corrected by a mere mortal! She had really met her match.

The two of them quickly became immersed in their discussion and lost track of time. At times, they would fall silent thinking about the magic equations. When the discussion gets heated, they would then shout at the top of their lungs to prove their point. Felina stared at the peculiar scene in confusion.

One day passed quickly. This was the day Link was supposed to set off.

Gretel only recollected herself at midnight. However, she was still craving for more intellectual discourse. After some thought, she said, "Felina, why not you rest for a few more days?"

"My Queen... alright then," Felina was about to say they were running out of time when she saw Gretel's glimmering eyes. It was rare that Gretel could find something she was interested in to take her mind off the depressing thoughts. Felina could not bear to rob her of this happiness and nodded begrudgingly.

Following which, Gretel then cast her glance back onto Link and said, "Although your hypothesis on this Folded Spatial Extension theory is intricate, it is definitely flawed. I still cannot point out where exactly the problem lies, but it is definitely wrong. Let's rest for the night. I will definitely prove it to you tomorrow morning!"

Link was a madman when it came to magic. Having immersed himself too deep into the discussion, he had long forgotten that Gretel was the revered Queen of the Red Dragons and rebutted, "I don't think there is a problem! I will prove it to you as well!"

"Hmph, there is no point in being stubborn. We'll see!" Gretel shot him a glance before she left.

Link then took advantage of the time to rest. The Red Dragon Queen was a Legendary individual and required little to no rest. However, he was still a mortal and was already feeling the fatigue from a full day of mind-boggling discussion. He still pressed on as chances to discuss magic with such powerful figures would not come often.

The next morning, Gretel came knocking on his door extremely early. She shouted, "Link, wake up. My instincts were right! Your equation was wrong!"

Knock! The knocking sound echoed through the room, rudely waking Link up from his sleep.

"Nana, please open the door."

After giving a long yawn, Link sat up with his eyes still half-closed. He then looked at his watch and realized that it was only four o'clock in the morning. He had only slept for four hours.

He then placed his hands on his head as he sat motionless on his bed. He could feel a throbbing sensation in his head and also the fatigue from yesterday's discussion.

Gretel then arrived in front of him excitedly. She then said, "Link, Link... alright, a mortal's body is still too fragile."

Link's appearance had doused all her passion and excitement. She did not rest even after she left Link's room nor did she need any. She worked through the night and finally found a flaw in the equation. She could not hold in her excitement and rushed down to inform Link immediately. It had never crossed her mind that Link would be resting. This was a downer.

Even if she had won this intellectual discourse, she did not feel accomplished.

It would only be fulfilling if both of them were performing at their best, their minds whirling at high speed, sparking intelligent arguments and discussions. Only those engaging discourse would take her mind off the depressing things that happened recently.

However, there was no one in the dragon race who could offer her such fulfillment. Most dragons were talented Warriors with strong battle capabilities. Alas, they were not well-versed in the complicated theories of Spatial Magic. Dabbling in Spatial Magic theories would be suicidal to them.

It was such a waste that a rare prodigy like Link had such a weak physical body.

At that moment, Gretel had completely forgotten about her original intention of getting on Link's good side. She only wished to immerse herself in the research of Spatial Magic so as to distance herself from the pain in her heart.

"I can find someone else... probably not, a Spatial Magician is not easy to find! Furthermore, a prodigy like Link is not such easily obtainable. He is probably the only person in the World of Firuman with such intellect."

After a moment of thought, an idea sprung into Gretel's mind. She then blurted out, "Link, why don't you undergo the dragonification process?"

## 285. Pretty Much Deduced to the Max

Dragon Temple.

Inside the room, Link wasn't fully awake yet. Hearing the Red Dragon Queen's words, he couldn't quite process it yet. "What? Dragonification?"

He'd seen the word "dragonification" earlier. Oh, right. There was a book called The Pros and Cons of Dragonification Spells on Dragon Magician Olisa's dresser in Duke Osiris' castle.

This word had appeared in the previous game too.

In actuality, these dragonified creatures were another hidden race. The player must complete a series of difficult epic dragon missions, be revered by the dragons, and complete the dragonification spells to advance from being a newbie player.

After dragonification, the player's physique would strengthen in all aspects, especially vitality. They would practically become as hard to kill as a cockroach and were the best choice for Warriors. In the previous game, almost every main tank of a guild was a dragonified Warrior.

They were also excellent in terms of magic. Each one had a talent called Dragon Sense. It allowed them to quickly recover 30% of their Mana, and it could be used once per day. It was a fatal weapon in battle!

However, everything in the world had its pros and cons. It was the law.

The vitality of dragonified players was too strong. A side effect was becoming impulsive and greedy. In the game, they would have an extra desire bar. If the player couldn't complete a special mission in time to lower the desire count and it overfilled, the player's body would become uncontrollable. They would do all sorts of weird things. Dropping in experience or exploding equipment were everyday things.

In the previous game, the missions to lower the desire bar weren't hard, but they were frequent. They had to be completed daily. The bar would overflow if the player missed one day. It was very annoying.

Naturally, many dragonified players would experience that, and it lead to tragedy.

Some nosy people had calculated the 1000 ways to die as a dragonified Warrior. These included challenging the general of the allied army and being stabbed in the head; charging into a demon's fortress alone and getting blown up by countless demons; flirting with the Red Dragon Queen, resulting in getting burnt to dust; having sex with their horse in the wilderness, getting filmed, and having that video go viral...There were countless ways, and they were all abnormally unlucky.

If it was like this in a game, it would be even worse in real life.

Link didn't want to experience these cons. He was much more clear-headed now and shook his head furiously. "No, no, no. Magicians must have a calm and logical mind. Dragonification spells aren't suitable for me."

"Dragonification spells?" Gretel was taken aback and took a while to react. "I think you misunderstood. I was speaking of advanced dragonification technology, not regular dragonification spells."

"Is there a difference?" Link was interested.

"The explanation starts with the dragon bloodline. Our body contains the ancient and powerful dragon magic. This is very special and continuously grows with the dragon. It never stops modifying, and the dragon never stops strengthening. The completeness of the dragon bloodline magic determines the ultimate success of the dragon."

Here, the Red Dragon Queen took out a vial of a crystal red potion. There was a light spiral submerged inside. It actually looked similar to the double strands of DNA from Earth.

"True dragon bloodline magic is combined with the soul. It grows very slowly; that's one of the reasons why we have longevity. Regular dragonification spells just puts crude dragon magic into the person's blood. This affects the user greatly and torments them for life. The potion I have here is called the Red Dragon Password. Drink it, and a mortal can become a dragon—a true dragon."

"I can transform into dragon form?" Link was doubtful.

"It's possible, but it depends on the completeness of the fusion. It won't be effective immediately either. Like a true dragon, it requires a long period of time."

If it was true, it would be great, but Link still felt strange. "Your Majesty, why did you suddenly choose me?"

Gretel blanched at the question. Yes, the Red Dragon Password was so rare and precious. Why would she give it to a human she'd just met? She thought for a while and realized she hadn't seriously considered this idea. It was the result of an impulsive moment.

However, she couldn't take the potion back now. It was awkward.

Link could tell too. Chuckling, he said, "Your Majesty, it seems that you hadn't fully thought about this. We can talk about it in the future...Come, let me see the results of your deduction. I'd like to see where I went wrong."

The potion was a good thing—really, really good. In fact, it was like a Godly object. Link also knew that receiving it for no reason would be troublesome in the future. If he became a dragon, he would also be subordinate to the queen. If she commanded him to do something in the future, would he be forced to do it?

Gretel felt even more awkward. She even felt her cheeks burn. As a leader, she'd been too brash...This wasn't the level she should be at. Chuckling wryly, she took the potion back.

Looking at Link, he seemed totally unaffected. He was already immersed in her deduction and didn't notice her actions. She let out a sigh of relief.

This was still annoying though. I really embarsed myself today. Ah, how can I show my royal power before this human in the future? This is horrible!

On the other hand, Link was already focused. The queen's suggestion was only a small interruption in his mind. It didn't even cause a ripple. Now, all that remained in his eyes were the spatial laws.

After reading for half an hour, Link suddenly hit the table and laughed. "Your Majesty, I think I won this round!"

"Huh? What do you mean?" Gretel was stunned.

"Look at your Mana transformation here. It's very clean and peculiar, but you overlooked the sudden changes of spatial curvature in extreme situations...Look, this is correct."

Link took out a pen and started scribbling on the scroll. His writing was crude, but it was okay. The queen could understand and followed his train of thought. At first, she was still feeling awkward, but she quickly forgot about it, refocusing on Link's deduction process instead.

She read the whole thing while Link continued writing. After filling one scroll, he switched to a fresh one. This went on for more than one hour before Link finally stopped. He breathed deeply and smiled victoriously. "See, the final result shows that my idea is right while yours is flawed."

Gretel was in disbelief. She took the scroll and checked multiple times. Finally, she muttered, "Fine. You win this time."

Link was full of pride. He didn't win against some nameless person this time. He'd won against the ruler of the Red Dragons, and this boosted his ego to the max. He laughed loudly. "Don't feel down, Your Majesty. You still have the chance to beat me."

"Look how proud you are! If you were a dog, your tail would be wagging like crazy." Gretel wasn't willing to admit defeat, but she'd truly lost. She was ready to make a comeback. "Come, let's continue."

Link refocused. He pushed away all extra emotions and grew serious.

The two started discussing the spatial problems again and quickly forgot about time. They didn't even waste time eating and just used a spell for it. Link was now in the Elemental Rejection state and couldn't use Elemental Healing, so Gretel had to help him.

Her spell was very powerful. Link didn't know what specific spell she'd used, but whenever she used it, he would instantly become spirited and stronger physically as well.

A week passed in the blink of an eye. Link's spatial thesis was unrecognizable from before and had improved greatly. At this point, even the Red Dragon Queen felt unable to help anymore. Many of the theories had become crazily obscure.

Link felt the same. He knew that it had reached some kind of extreme.

"Your Majesty, I think it's pretty much done."

"Indeed." Gretel understood what Link meant without him saying it. They'd deduced this thesis together for one week and knew each other well now. Many times, they could guess what the other was thinking with just a look.

"It's time for you to leave."

All things had to end. Gretel found that she was a bit unwilling for this to end. Shaking her head slightly to get rid of the emotions, she eyed Link and sighed inwardly. He's just a mortal, in the end, with a limited life. I don't know if there'll be another chance to see him after this.

One hundred years was a lifetime to humans but just a snap of the finger for dragons.

Link didn't know what Gretel was thinking. He was still immersed in the new conclusion, thinking about how he could apply these results to his spells. He believed that before long, there would be a huge breakthrough in his spatial magic.

As for his life, he was only 20 years old now. He still had a long time.

Without him realizing, Gretel left. After a while, Felina walked over. She'd completely healed now, and her abilities seemed to have improved as well.

"Link, shall we go now?"

"Ah? Okay." Link finally snapped back into reality. He organized his luggage and followed Felina out of his room.

At the inner square of the temple, Felina transformed into her dragon shape. Link and Nana climbed onto her back. She flapped her wings, and with a low whistle, soared into the air.

Inside the temple, Gretel watched as Link left. She waited until he disappeared into the fog barrier of the Dragon Valley before looking away.

Sighing, she glanced back at the scroll of spatial laws. About half of the words were written by her while more than half were written by the human who'd just left. His thoughts were filled with spirit. Near the end, it was mostly him who guided the direction of the deduction.

She put the scroll away carefully, sealing it away with the weeklong memories. Her sadness had mostly faded through this week of willfulness.

With a long sigh, Gretel recovered the majesty of the Red Dragon Queen.

Ten thousand feet in the air.

"Felina, where are we going?" Link asked.

"My induction tells me that the exiled God Elodim is in the Golden Plains up ahead. He's not far from us, only around 300 miles," Felina said with a laugh.

It was much easier for her to take Link and Nana this time. Fighting with the Red Dragon duke had helped her break into Level-8. With her speed now, 300 miles was only around half an hour. Link waited patiently.

The Golden Plains was very open. The grassland reached as far as one could see while the sky was all blue. The color was pure, and the view was vast.

Link had worked for more than one week and was exhausted. Now, he looked around, enjoying the view. Suddenly, he made a curious sound and pointed into the distance. "Felina, that's the Beastmen city, right? I think it's on fire?"

## 286. The Red Dragon That Revives

Golden Plains.

Felina was originally focused on searching for Elodim and neglected her surroundings. Upon Link's words, she immediately turned her attention towards the town of the Beastman.

The dragon race had much better vision than humans. Felina's eyes widened in shock as she stared at the scene.

"What happened?" Link asked.

Felina then started circling the air as she said in an incredulous tone, "I saw Todelron! He saw me too!"

Todelron?

Link seemed to have remembered something from the distant past. Wasn't Todelron the Red Dragon Warrior that died in the High Elves Tomb? How could he have revived himself?

Everyone present clearly caught the fragrance of barbecued meat when he was getting electrified. If he could still live after those merciless attacks, his vitality would be insane.

"Are you sure he is alive and not an Undead Warrior?" Link had not seen such tactics before, even in the game. There had been many instances where souls would possess another body to revive themselves, but never one where a full and complete revival was done.

Felina said in an affirming tone, "He is not an undead. He is alive! As alive as how we saw him last time. If not for the fact that I recognized him, I would have thought that I had the wrong person!"

From afar, Link could only see that the town was going up in flames. However, he could not see the details of the incident. He then cast an Eagle Eye's spell on himself.

With the help of the spell, he could see that the town was already immersed in a sea of fire. The architecture within the town was built from the bones of beasts and covered in beast hide. It looked similar to a Mongolian yurt. They seemed to be splashed with oil to help with the combustion, causing the fire to burn fiercely.

Outside of the small town, over two thousand ordinary Beastman were surrounded by Todelron and his over 300 berserk Beastman underlings.

In fact, these Beastmen looked extremely similar to humans. They only had a slightly darker skin tone and had a larger physique, though they were still largely human-shaped. The only stark difference was the four sharp beast fangs that they possessed.

Link could see that amongst the Beastman surrounded, more than half of them were elderly and children. There were even a few unlucky humans.

The humasseemed to be protected by the Beastman. They were in the very center of the circle. There were five of them, four of which were mercenaries while the last one was probably a merchant. They huddled amongst the crowd with a pale expression on their faces.

At that moment, Todelron was commanding the berserk Beastman to pull the strong and healthy Beastman out from the crowd, separating them from the children and elderly.

None of them knew what awaited them. They kept silent and merely stared at the huge dragon in fear.

A young child was just about to wail loudly when her mother clasped her mouth swiftly. A young boy was huddling in his grandmother's embrace, only revealing his pair of small and innocent dark eyes. He was still too young to know fear. He was merely curious about what was happening.

"Todelron is choosing his Warriors. The children and women are of no use to him. He has also burned down the entire town...I'm afraid he will kill off all the people he deems useless."

If he was not going to exterminate them, there was no reason to burn off all that they had. He was obviously not planning to leave anyone alive.

These Beastmen showed no resistance at all. The reason was simple. They were too weak.

The Beastman were, on average, only around Level-2 in strength. The strongest one was Level-5 in strength, though the berserk Beastman surrounding them were mostly Level-5 in strength as well. The strongest berserk Beastman was Level-7. Todelron seemed to have achieved a breakthrough as well, reaching Level-8.

Link frowned as he observed this scene. He could feel the mana concentration of Firuman increasing, resulting in the birth of more powerful individuals.

Although Felina did not wish to believe that someone of her race would be so ruthless, the situation was dire. She whispered, "What do we do now? Should we try to save them?"

Link nodded as he said, "Since we have already met them, we have to interfere! Although we cannot simply barge in... let's leave them first."

"Leave?" Felina was unable to keep up with Link's thoughts, though she obeyed Link's command immediately and started flying in the opposite direction.

On the side of the small town. Todelron had also discovered Link and company; he even recognized that red dragon. He seemed to have spotted a tiny figure on top of it, though he could not make out the exact features.

He had been keeping tabs on them ever since they appeared. Now that they had gone in the opposite direction, he felt slightly relieved.

"Accelerate!" He bellowed. He walked on the outer perimeter of the encircled Beastman as the loud rumble of his footsteps echoed through the area.

The actions of the Beastman suddenly became extremely ruthless. One young Beastman was unwilling to leave his family, grabbing the hands of his pregnant wife and parents as he wept.

"Scram!" A ferocious berserk Beastman shouted as he kicked the wife with full force. This blow landed on the abdomen, which caused her to curl up in pain as she lay helplessly on the ground with her hands around her unborn child.

"No! I will not let you get away with that!" The young Beastmen growled in rage as he charged towards the berserk Beastman.

The berserk Beastman then unsheathed his sword and plunged itito the young Beastman's chest without hesitation. Three seconds later, he then pulled out the sword as he chuckled, "Those who rebel, will die!"

This sent shi

In the center of the Beastman, Masos looked around with a pale expression. He was a merchant who had traveled far and wide. This situation was not exactly the most optimistic one.

"They will probably start killing people afterward. You guys should run if you can, don't bother about me," he told the few mercenaries beside him. Along the way, they had done well fending against the ordinary bandits. However, they were definitely no match for a dragon. It seemed like the God of Light was summoning him back to the heavens.

The four mercenaries smiled bitterly at one another. If they could escape, they would have already done so.

"I am seriously unlucky. The Dark Elves are in the North, and I thought the Golden Plains would be a safe place. To think I would meet a Goddamn dragon!" A mercenary swore to relieve the fear in his heart.

The female mercenary then said, "We might not be dead. There are so many of them. We can simply fake our deaths later on. We are not important to those berserk Beastmen."

"Faking death? Alright then, let's see which of us has better luck."

On the other side.

After flying for around a mile, Link looked behind him and realized that Todelron was no longer concerned with them. He then cast a Traceless spell, causing the three of them to disappear in mid-air.

"Alright, we will descend and go back in. We must be quick," Link said. They could, of course, fly back in, but Link believed that Todelron would definitely use those Beastmen as hostages. They would then be harming them instead of saving their lives.

"I understand." Felina then flew towards the ground and landed after ten seconds.

"Nana, you will sneak up on them and delay their actions while attracting their attention," Link commanded.

They were still around six miles away from their opponents. If they were to travel at their current speed, it would be too late by the time they reached the scene.

"I know, relax," Nana's voice is cipand even warm. She sounded no different from a normal human. Following which, she bolted off and disappeared.

"Let's go. When we reach there, you will fight while I will protect the Beastman," Link said.

"I understand," Felina took a deep breath as she said.

Nanasspeed was not compromised by her bodily changes. Link estimated that her top speed should be at 2300 feet per second, only a bit slower than her previous 2400 feet per second.

At such speed, she would only take ten seconds to cover a distance of six miles.

Outside the small town.

Todelron and the berserk Beastmen seemed to have not felt the incoming threat. Just when they were getting bust, a berserk Beastman suddenly pointed to a plain some distance away and said, "Hey, why is the sandstorm so intense today?"

His compatits then looked in that direction. Sure enough, on the distant plain, a huge sandstorm was approaching them at an unimaginable speed. It was terrifying to watch.

The only person who knew what was going on was Todelron. He was the only one who saw the blurry figure charging in front of the sandstorm.

"Who could be this fast?" He was confused for a moment. He then gave up on his bulky dragon form and turned back into his agiler human form.

Three seconds later, he became a Red Dragon Warrior as he unsheathed his Dragonfang Sword.

"Caution; defend!"

He shouted. Although this person looked intimidating, they were alone. He believed that with the help of the berserk Beastman, it would be an easy victory.

The sandstorm quickly closed in and came to a distance of 300 feet away from them swiftly before coming to an abrupt stop. A beautiful young girl with a ponytail clad in brown leather armor appeared in front of their eyes.

Hm? A young girl? Todelron was even more confused. Although Nana appeared in the High Elves Tomb, he was on the verge of death at that time. He even suffered the damage of a Level-9 spell which caused him to lose consciousness. It was natural for him to not have any recollection of Nana.

Nana walked forward as she smiled, saying, "Todelron, I don't have any other motives today. I have heard about your perfect swordsmanshi

Although there were people on the streets who would indeed issue a challenge so flippantly, Todelron was clear that he did not have much of a reputation. His swordsmanshi

She was definitely up to something.

"Scram. I am not free," Todelron was still clinging on to the last ray of hope as he did not wish to be engaged in a battle. He merely wished to settle his mission swiftly and smoothly.

The duke was already unhappy with him for the failure of his previous mission. He had to make sure this one was executed perfectly.

"That will not do. I have to challenge you today. Are you afraid?" Nana's voice was just like a small little girl. If not for her flashy debut, one would have thought that she was simply a girl-next-door who was out for grocery shopping.

Todelron was immediately reminded of something as a terrible premonition struck him. He recognized that red dragon who was flying towards him just now. She was Felina! Judging from her character, she would never be able to ignore this violent and immoral scene.

Todelron was horrified at the thought and immediately bellowed, "Defend! It is a sneak attack!"

But he was too late!

## 287. Is He Crazy?

As soon as Todelron finished, a dark red figure appeared behind him. The figure rushed into the crowd of Wild Beastmen and started killing!

Wild Beastmen were powerful compared to regular Beastmen, but their opponent was a Level-8 Red Dragon Warrior covered entirely in sturdy, dark red armor and possessing an immense amount of dragon power. She was a war machine comparable to high-level demons!

The Wild Beastmen was numerous. Surrounded by them, some attacks landed on Felina. However, they were too weak and unable to break past her armor. The Wild Beastmen wanted to surround them, but she was alert and quick. It was difficult to keep up.

Even if they managed to catch up, she would release a powerful Battle Aura Cut just as they were about to be surrounded, foiling the Wild Beastmen's plan.

Indeed, the Wild Beastmen were very brave and never retreated. They roared, charging towards Felina. However, all who charged would die. They died in waves, and the sight was shocking.

Three hundred Wild Beastmen weren't enough to tire Felina out. Maybe thousands could.

Todelron recognized her at once. "Felina!" he roared. "You again!"

He couldn't recognize Nana last time at the High Elf Tomb, but he'd sensed Felina's presence. It was her who ruined everything last time. Now, she was here again, and Todelron was furious. Grasping the Dragonfang sword, he charged at Felina.

"Don't go. I'm your opponent!" Nana's voice rang out. Then there was an explosive sound in the air.

Todelron instantly felt the murderous intent behind him. The back of his heart thumped furiously. Not daring to be careless, he immediately blocked with his sword.

Clang. The explosive sound was almost tangible. A white shockwave spread in all directions. In a close call, Todelron's Dragonfang blocked Nana's blade.

When this shockwave appeared, merchant Masos in the crowd speedily covered his ears and shrank behind the mercenary beside him. "Be careful!" he said.

Both sides of the battle were rarely seen as powerful forces. Their strengths were impossible to calculate. Even the aftershocks of their battle were unbearable for the average man. They could go deaf if swept by it.

Just as the shockwave was about to flatten the regular Beastmen, a semi-circular Spatial Lens appeared in the sky. Almost 300 feet wide and 150 feet tall, the lens was huge. Like a giant shi

The next moment, the shockwave arrived, crashi

The mercenaries beside Masos had covered their ears on instinct. Seeing this, their hands dropped down. Masos was the same. He was very knowledgeable about things and immediately let out a breath of relief seeing this shi

"Is this a spell? I've never seen a large magic shi

"I think my prayers have been realized. The Light Lord is here to save us."

"Huh, look at that little girl. Same age as my daughter but she's this powerful. Hmph, incredible."

The mercenaries weren't stupid. If these Warriors didn't care about them at all, it meant that this was a dog-eat-dog matter. Even if this newcomer won against the evil Red Dragon, they still might not survive.

However, the Magician had helped them block the aftershock. This meant that they were here to save them.

The battle on the other side.

Not only did the Spatial Lens block the aftershock, but it also separated the Wild Beastmen from the regular Beastmen.

Outside the lens, Felina snaked in and out of the Wild Beastmen. Within moments, she killed hundreds of them. However, she also paid for it. Some parts of her armor were shattered, and she'd used up a lot of her dragon power. She would be injured by the end of the battle, but this wasn't much. She was used to it.

Todelron was caught up by Nana who was on him like a leech. He was definitely a good fighter, but this little girl's swordsmanshi

From the corner of his vision, he saw that his subordinates were reducing quickly. There was also a powerful Magician observing from the background while he was forced to defend himself against this eerie girl. Todelron prepared himself to go all out!

This mission was probably going to fail. He must die in battle or else he wouldn't be able to report to the duke!

With a roar, he hurled a Battle Aura Arc at Nana, forcing her back temporarily. With another growl, he decisively transformed into a dragon. His dragon shape was around 50 feet tall. After transforming, he spat out dragon breath at Nana.

The dragon's cry swept past everything and traveled into the distance.

Amidst this roar, dark red flames burst from his mouth. They shot towards Nana like a jet stream from a high-pressure water gun.

Nana hadn't experienced this type of attack before. She didn't dare use her body to test the strength of it. She applied force and made short bursts in a small proximity. Nana flashed within the dragon breath, dodging each attack at the most critical point while maintaining the distance to attack. Once Todelron exhausted his resources, she would rush up immediately for a counterattack.

"damn little bug!" Todelron didn't think this little thing would be so troublesome. His mouth was getting dried up from all the spitting, but he couldn't even force the enemy back.

He roared again, even more determined to die. He didn't fear dying because the duke could resurrect him, so his movements became very violent. Turning, he swept Nana away with his tail, slightly disrupting her pursuit, and charged towards Felina.

Today, he must drag at least one person into death with him. Otherwise, he wouldn't be able to report to the duke. The little thing was too fast for him to catch but he was confident in killing Felina quickly!

This fellow dragon was a genius of the younger generation, but she was no match for him. Felina wasn't as strong as him, and if he used all his might, he could definitely get her!

Boom, boom, boom! The earth shook from Todelron's speed.

Seeing this, Felina let out a long breath. A ring of the Dragon Aura Cut came slicing down, getting rid of all the Wild Beastmen around her. Then, she shrieked, and dragon power surged in her. Her body swelled up and instantly, a Red Dragon of similar size to Todelron appeared.

She went to meet him halfway without hesitation.

Three seconds later, there was an earth-shattering boom. The two beasts collided and the soil underfoot curled up. Some Wild Beastmen tried to attack Felina but were thrown into the air from the shockwave.

Felina fell to a disadvantage after this collision, and she lost balance. She wasn't Todelron's match in terms of strength.

Roaring, Todelron took the chance to breathe out dragon breath. In a hurry, Felina just lowered her head and released her own dragon breath. Two beams of dark red fire crashed in the air. Fiery streaks flew to the side, keeping the Wild Beastmen away in fear!

Ordinary Warriors could only watch the Level-8 battle. They would die if they got too close.

Todelron still had the upper hand. He continued to attack without caring about the wounds brought on by the dragon breath.

Is he crazy? Felina was utterly shocked. She didn't understand why her opponent would be so aggressive.

Within five seconds, Todelron and Felina made five attacks. With each one, Todelron received a sizeable gain. Felina had started to stumble. She'd also been clawed by Todelron and had a bloody wound. After another attack, he'd be able to go for the kill!

But just as this thought appeared, Nana suddenly started laughing behind Todelron. "Big guy, I know all your moves now!"

"What?" Surprised, Todelron looked back.

Nana had already jumped up. Thirty feet in the air, the force fields on her feet erupted, and there was a bang in the air. She disappeared from the line of sight and reappeared 100 feet away half a second later.

Todelron immediately slapped with his tail with all his might. It was so powerful that there were cracks and pops, but he missed.

With a boom, Nana disappeared again at the last moment. When she re-appeared, she was already on Todelron's back. Here, she paused for a second. Todelron's tail followed over immediately, but she giggled. With a bang, she dodged it easily.

Nana reappeared at Felinasside. Behind her, Todelron suddenly froze. Half a second later, there was a deep gash on his neck, practically breaking it.

"Such a fast sword!" Todelron said before he toppled to the ground with a rumble and died.

Nana breathed in deeply and then let out a long exhale. She could have done that burst of movement before, but it damaged her body greatly. If she didn't kill the opponent, she would have to defend passively, so she didn't dare use it too often.

Now, she was still damaged. Nana felt that her limbs were less agile, but the numbness was decreasing rapidly. After around two seconds, the unnatural feeling disappeared completely.

This was the recovery effect of the Essence of Life.

Now that even Todelron was dead, the remaining 150 or so Wild Beastmen exchanged glances awkwardly. Then someone yelled, "Retreat!"

They'd lost the will to fight, so they turned and started fleeing.

"Want to run?" Felinarsed over and let out many blows of dragon breath. Seeing that she was still attacking, Nana also followed over to kill more.

They had terrifying combat ability, and Nanasspeed was unbeatable. Her rate of killing was two times that of Felina's!

In the end, all the Wild Beastmen met their demise. When the last one died, the Spatial Lens around the regular Beastmen disappeared as well. They were all terrified. Too scared to make a sound, they looked reverently at the Red Dragon and the girl beside her.

Felina walked over slowly and tried to lower her voice as she said, "Alright, you're safe."

As she spoke, a red light flashed over her body, and she quickly turned back into a human. She was much less imposing now. The crowd rustled, and after a while, an aged Beastman with white hair walked out followed by some strong Beastmen. Some humans were in the distance.

The old Beastman walked shakily to Felina and Nana. Without speaking, he knelt down, prostrating himself. The Beastmen behind him did so as well, and the other Beastmen on the grassland all followed suit. The few humans bowed as well.

"Thank you two for saving Uda Town. Thank you for saving our lives. Mighty dragon, beautiful maiden, may I know your names?"

Felina had never seen something like this before and panicked. "Stand up, don't kneel," she said hurriedly. "The bad guy is someone from my own race. I should be apologizing."

As she spoke, she looked around for Link. This was too big of an occasion, and she couldn't handle it.

Link didn't appear, but his voice traveled over. "Their home is destroyed. Ask them where they'll go now."

Knowing that Link was nearby, Felina was relieved. "Uda Town is burnt to ashes," she said. "Elder, what will you do now?"

The old Beastman was dejected. "There's no other way. We can only go south. Around 250 miles south is White Cloud City. We plan to seek refuge there."

Felina was stunned at this. Link's voice immediately sounded in her ear. "The remaining one is at White Cloud City, right?"

Felina nodded and replied softly, "It's that area."

"Great. Then let's travel with these Beastmen for a while." Isendilan had his eyes on these Beastmen and probably wouldn't let them go so easily. Since they were going to the same place, they could continue being the good guys and protect them for a while. It wouldn't be too much to ensure their safety before speeding up.

Felina agreed. "Elder," she said. "I'm going to White Cloud City too. We're going to the same place."

## 288. Simply Unimaginable!

Although Uda Town was destroyed, there must still be some resources that were leftitact. These were necessities for the Beastman if they wished to migrate.

Just as the Beastman were salvaging the last of their resources, Link appeared in an exceptionally humble manner. He simply looked too ordinary when compared to Felina and Nana. He was even wearing a grey cape, making him even more inconspicuous.

Felina and him were circling Todelron's body, observing this guy who appeared to have been resurrected from the dead.

"He seemed to have died for real this time," Link circled Todelron as he said. He could not feel any vitality from the body.

Felina then checked Todelron's oral cavity. He was simply way too reckless when using the dragon breath attack, as though he was doing it at a complete disregard of his body.

Upon opening Todelron's mouth, one could tell that he was obviously seriously injured from his own attack. His oral cavity was completely charred, and blisters could be seen lining up along his throat.

Link was confused at this sight as well. He frowned as he said, "Judging from his insane actions, he must have been prepared to die."

Felina sighed. "Indeed. He could actually have escaped. I cannot understand why he is going to this extent for Isendilan."

Link said, "Perhaps it is some sort of contract. That is strange. I did not feel any peculiar presence on his body. He seemed like just an ordinary dragon. How did he revive himself the first time?"

It was not impossible to resurrect oneself in the World of Firuman, though it was bounded by a set of stit rules.

For example, Dean Anthony's Arbiter's Wand could revive the dead. However, he had once told Link that a resurrection spell was simply an extremely strong healing spell.

Only those who had just died and managed to keep most of their body intact could be revived. They also must not have suffered too devastating damage. Furthermore, it was only a possibility that they could be revived. Those who were revived would also be branded with a weakened status for half a year as compensation.

In the game, the archbishops were also bounded by a stit set of rules if they wished to revive someone within the church. The player would be in a weakened state for a day after he was revived.

However, Todelron's body was first heavily damaged by the traps before he was roasted by a Level-9 Lightning spell in the High Elf Tomb. He should not have fulfilled the conditions to be revived. It was peculiar that he achieved a breakthrough in strength even after he was resurrected.

This was not making any sense.

"Is he only being so reckless because he knows that he will be resurrected?" Link predicted.

"That is possible," Felina agreed with Link. While she was fighting Todelron, that was the exact feeling that she experienced. Todelron seemed to be fearless. Such brazenness was rarely seen in the dragon race who were known for their longevity.

There was still too little information for Link to come to a conclusion. He then said, "Perhaps we were too careless last time and gave him a chance to escape. Let's prevent it this time around."

Link then took out his wand and pointed it at Todelron's body. He then cast his newest spell, Spatial Rend.

Spatial Rend

Ungraded Spatial Spell

Effect: Cass spatial frequency to change at an extremely fast rate in an unpredictable manner. This would create countless forcefields in the affected space, disintegrating all matter in the area.

Link spent 2000 Mana Points without hesitation and boosted the power of this spell to a Level-6 equivalent. This should be more than enough to deal with a corpse.

A few extremely faint rumblings could be felt. This continued for three seconds before a terrifying thing happened.

The gigantic body of the dragon started to expand, and after two seconds, the dragon's skin tore, causing large amounts of fine white powder to flow out of the ruptured area.

The destruction had not ended. Following which, even the dragon's skin started disintegrating, becoming a fine, white powder.

The gigantic dragon had been reduced to a pile of white powder. A cool breeze then scattered that powder across the area.

"His ashes have been buried and integrated into this plot of land. He should not be coming back this time around."

Felina still felt a tinge of pain in her heart watching a member of her race subjected to such treatment, though she agreed with Link's method. This would also completely destroy his corpse, removing the physical evidence of a dragon committing such a heinous crime.

By that time, the Beastman had salvaged most of what was left. An old Beastman walked forward and stopped when he saw the pile of ashes on the ground. He then stared at Link defensively though he tried to contain his wariness. He greeted Felina as he said, "Oh mighty red dragon, we are prepared."

From their perspective, Felina was the leader of the group.

Felina then stared at Link for help. Link whispered, "It is best for a Magician to stay under the shadows. I feel that this is not the end of our problems. I have to stay low."

Felina understood Link's words. Todelron was the one who committed these heinous acts. As a red dragon herself, she naturally felt apologetic towards the Beastman. She then replied gently, "Let's go."

The old Beastman then retreated and hollered a few words at the rest of the group. They then started moving.

"He is slightly wary of us," Link said as he stared at the old Beastman.

"That is normal. There have been many instances of red dragons attacking Beastman towns and village recently," a voice rang. Link looked in that direction and realized that it came from a human merchant.

"I am Masos, a merchant. Greetings to the respectable Magician," He bowed to Link before he continued, "The red dragons destroyed their hometowns. They do not trust any red dragons. Oh, beautiful lady of the dragon race, they are merely respecting you out of fear and self-protection."

Felina looked at the Beastmen once more and realized that their gazes were indeed filled with suspicion and fear. Some of them immediately averted their gaze the moment she looked over.

She was not angry. Instead, she felt helpless and dejected. She muttered, "Isendilan is truly ruining the reputation of the dragon race!"

"So that's why. I was wondering why the dragons would resort to such insane acts. So a scum of the race has appeared," Masos said as he nodded.

Link could feel that this merchant was exceptional from this short conversation. Unlike ordinary humans, he seemed to not fear Magicians and red dragons. He seemed extremely casual when speaking to them. Although he was powerless, he could be considered a talent with his demeanor and insight.

Link then thought back on how the Beastmen seemed to be protecting him during the battle and laughed, "We will be depending on you to resolve any awkward situations along the way."

Masos smiled as he said, "I'll try my best."

The large group then headed south.

Four hours later, a black figure appeared in the sky above Uda Town. He hovered in the sky for a moment before descending.

Amongst the strong gale created from the flapping of his wings, a dragon with a physique larger than Todelron landed on the ground.

Bodies of the berserk Beastmen were strewn all over the ground. Green smoke was still appearing out of the Uda Town ruins. On the side of a road was a small pile of fine white powder.

The giant dragon sniffed his way forward and eventually stopped in front of the white powder.

He grabbed a bunch of it in his hands and allowed the powder to slide slowly through the cracks in his claws. His face sank and stood motionless for around ten seconds before flying up into the air once again.

He started flying south for about five minutes before he saw a group of Beastman resting along a running stream. He then looked from afar for any peculiarities.

"There are around 2300 people. That is a lot of people. However, it is hardly enough to defeat Todelron. Who did it?" He muttered.

He then observed the crowd closely but alas, he could not find the culprit.

"Has the troublemaker left? Haha, oh Beastmen, you are doomed, you are in for something," The huge dragon circled the area for a moment before he left for the Colorado Mountain Range.

After he disappeared, Link canceled the Traceless spell he had cast over himself.

He was eating barbecued beef beside a stream together with merchant Masos and four mercenaries.

This cow was something that Felina hunted along the way. In fact, this giant cow weighed over ten tons, alleviating the food scarcity problem all at once.

Merchant Masos was an incredibly easy-going person. He was eloquent and humorous. Under his guidance and prass for the mercenaries wonderful culinary skills, they quickly warmed up to Link and company.

Masos seemed to have seen the black spot hovering the air previously as well. He was slightly worried and whispered, "I'm afraid more threats are coming for us."

Link looked at Felina and asked, "Do you recognize that dragon?"

The barbecued beef was extremely tender and well-seasoned. Felina took a bite of the juicy meat as she nodded and said, "His name is Theron and is currently third in the battle rankings for the most powerful young red dragon. He is also Isendilan's most trusted aide. His strength should be around Level-8. In human form, he likes to use the spear and is extremely adept in it. If I were to fight against him, I can at most exchange ten moves with him before I will start losing my tempo. Nana will probably have problems dealing with him as well."

Theron was a troublesome figure. If Felina was alone, she would not be eating this barbecued beef so leisurely. She would have escaped the moment she saw Theron. However, she had Link and Nana with her. She would not be too afraid with the support of a powerful Magician by her side.

"That will be slightly troublesome. However, it would be impossible for us to hide. We have so many Beastmen with us. Furthermore, most of them are ordinary citizens with no powers. We can only increase our security and surveillance," Link then turned to Masos and said, "Sir, you seem to have a good relationshi

Masos immediately agreed, "Of course! Wait a moment, I will find the shaman right now...That old man is the shaman."

Following which, Masos cleaned the oil off his hands and got to work.

No one knew how Masos did it, but not long after, 50 young Beastmen were already on their way to their respective positions.

Felina had just finished eating an entire beef thigh. She went to the running stream nearby to wash her hands and stopped by to visit the mercenary cook, patting her shoulders as she said, "That was delicious. Here, take this."

She gave this mercenary around ten red dragon gold coins. The mercenary was elated at the sight of the gold coins and thanked Felina profusely.

Felina then turned to Link and said, "I will be patrolling the skies. I will not let them succeed in an ambush with me around."

"That would be perfect," Link said. He was all up for that idea.

Felina then turned into her dragon form and rushed into the sky. The dragon race had amazing gliding ability. When they were not weighed down by extra weights or injuries, they could make use of the air currents to stay airborne for a long time. Hence, Link would not have to worry about Felina getting tired.

After an hour of rest, the Beastmen continued on their journey.

Around five hours later, Felina dived down from the sky in a hurry and rushed towards Link. She then said with an incredulous expression, "Link, this is preposterous! I saw Todelron again!"

Link was extremely confused as he asked, "Are you sure?"

"I know this will not make sense, but it's definitely him. He is currently heading for us together with Theron. He had also brought many berserk Beastmen with him. His power also seems to have increased. This is strange!"

To revive after dying in such a horrible fashi

If he were to die for a hundred times, wouldn't his strength reach the level of a God?

Link had never encountered such a peculiar situation before, even in the game! This was simply unimaginable!

## 289. Another Force Destroying the Equilibrium?

According to Felina's report, there were two Level-8 dragons and more than 200 Wild Beastmen. This opponent was a bit too much; the two Level-8 fighters were especially hard to deal with. This matter was kind of troublesome.

During the earlier fight, Nana and Todelron had tied. Felina had basically tied with the 300 Wild Beastmen. She could have killed them all without any help, but she would pay a big price too. Injuries were unavoidable, and she would consume a big portion of her dragon power too.

Now, not only had Todelron been revived, but he was stronger too. Plus, there was also Theron who was just as strong. Nana and Felina couldn't fight them off alone. Link had to join.

By doing so, he wouldn't be able to protect the Beastmen anymore. Considering this, Link said to Felina, "We can't wait passively for the enemy. We must attack first."

If they attacked first and fought far from the Beastmen, they wouldn't have to worry about the damage of the aftershocks to the regular Beastmen.

Link then turned to Masos. "Tell the Beastmen to go faster. The strengths of these Red Dragons are too strange. They seem to be able to be resurrected endlessly. Blocking them this time doesn't mean we can block them next time.

There were 200 more miles to the White Cloud City. The Beastmen only walked around 30 miles per day. This speed couldn't do.

"I understand." Masos turned to find Old Shaman.

After a while, Old Shaman's voice rang out. He yelled in the Beastman language, and they immediately sped up. Before, they took the elderly and weak into consideration and walked slowly. Now, they jogged.

Link turned towards Felina. "Let's go meet them."

As he spoke, he tapped his wand and activated the Traceless spell, becoming invisible. "You two distract them, and I'll make surprise attacks while hidden," Link said. With the special effect of the Burning Wrath of Heavens wand and the Demon Slayer, he could definitely kill a dragon instantly if the surprise attack was successful.

"I know." Nana nodded.

"Understood."

This area was very grassy, and the grass was as tall as them. The three used the grass as cover and walked around three miles before there was a commotion up ahead. They saw countless fleeting figures in the grass hundreds of feet away.

Link checked the wind and saw that it was blowing toward the enemy, so he said, "Felina, set fire!"

The grass was too high. It obscured their vision, making it easy for people to attack them while restiting Nanasspeed.

Setting fire was simple. Felina activated her dragon power, transformed into a dragon, and roared. Dragon breath rushed out of her mouth. The scalding dark red breath swept towards the grass like a flamethrower.

It was early autumn now, and the grass was half-withered. Sprayed by dragon breath and helped by the wind, the flames sprang up easily. They advanced towards the Wild Beastmen like a rising tide.

Almost simultaneously, two Red Dragons appeared in the grassland across from them. They began spitting out dragon breath, and fire spread from them too.

Of course, they weren't spitting out fire for fun. This was to extinguish the fire and protect the Wild Beastmen. When Felina's fire spread to the Wild Beastmen, the other fire had already created a large isolation belt. There was nothing else to burn, so the fire slowly died out.

The Wild Beastmen and Red Dragons stood inside the isolation belt without any injuries. However, Link's goal had succeeded too. All the withered grass was gone, creating a vast, empty space.

Felina stood at the front. Looking at Todelron, she said, "I remember you died."

Todelron laughed loudly. "Indeed, I died, but the duke revived me. Let me tell you, I'll never die. Every death just makes me stronger!"

"That destroys the world's equilibrium!" Felina frowned.

"Equilibrium? What equilibrium? There's no equilibrium in this world, only power!" Todelron cackled.

Beside him, Theron wasn't in the mood for chitchat. He changed back into human shape and pulled out a ten-foot dark red Dragon Spine spear. "Come on," he muttered. "Todelron, hurry and kill them!"

"Alright." Todelron immediately shut his mouth and transformed back into a human, taking out his Dragonfang sword.

Seeing these two dragon traitors, Felina was filled with hatred, but she couldn't do anything. She knew that the dragon shape was too cumbersome in a battle like this. She would just become a target. Turning back into a human, she took out her dragon claw weapon.

Just as the battle was about to start, she muttered to Nana, "Take care of Theron. Any problems?"

"Yes," Nana answered honestly. "I haven't fought with an opponent with a spear before."

"Then I'll block Theron, but I can only block ten moves at most."

"Don't worry. I've already seen past Todelron's tricks. I can kill him within three moves!" Nana's voice was cipand bright. As she spoke, she pointed her sword at Todelron with a bright smile. She seemed to look down on Todelron.

Todelron was shocked. If anyone else said this, he would just treat it as nonsense, but this human girl was different. She was too fast. If she saw his techniques clearly, he actually could be killed immediately.

In order to not be defeated easily, he murmured to Theron, "That human girl is strange. I might not be her match. How about you block her?"

Theron nodded lightly. "No problem, but you said they also have a Magician. I don't see him though?"

His words reminded Todelron. He looked around, trying to find Link. However, Link was hiding in a blind spot. It would be strange if Todelron could find him.

"I don't know, but he must be nearby...However, he hasn't done anything yet. When I fought with Felina earlier, he didn't even do anything when I forced Felina into a desperate situation. I guess he doesn't know any offensive spells?"

Theron was a bit annoyed. "What do you mean 'you guess'? We can't go by guesses for this!"

"Then what do we do?"

Seeing that Todelron had no solutions, Theron glanced at the Wild Beastmen. On average, they were at Level-5. They were successful against regular Beastmen, but they were as useless as vegetables to someone in Level-8.

Suddenly, his eyes flashed. He got an idea. "The three are here to protect those regular Beastmen. Here, Mudda, bypass them and catch up to the regular Beastmen. Don't care about anything and just kill them."

Mudda was the leader of the Wild Beastmen. If he took the Wild Beastmen after the regular Beastmen, the Magician would most likely go protect them. The threat would be reduced greatly.

His calculations were great, but sadly, his opponent didn't give him time. The battle erupted without giving anyone the chance to escape!

"I'm going!" Felina charged, Nana close behind her.

"Good!" Todelron immediately went to welcome Felina. However, just as he moved, Nana suddenly burst forward at full speed and disappeared. When she re-appeared, she was before Todelron.

"Your target is me!" Theron charged over to stop Nana.

However, he forgot one thing. In a Warrior's fight, whoever had the speed would have the control over the fight. With Nanasspeed, she could fight whoever she wanted. No one could stop her!

Seeing Theron charge, Nana suddenly disappeared. She re-appeared with a bang and was already behind Todelron, a sword stabbing at the back of his heart.

Shocked, Todelron's Dragonfang sword shook and he blocked backwards.

Clang! Todelron had reacted hurriedly, and he stumbled forward from the strength. However, he rejoiced inside. This woman is fast, but if I block the first move, she'll need to readjust. Then I can block the second and third. If I can last a bit longer, Felina will be killed by Theron...Wait, what is that?!

He suddenly saw a thin streak of crystal red come towards him. It wasn't much, but it was unbelievably fast. After a dazed moment, he finally realized it was the Magician! It was a sneak attack!

"No!" With a spell before him and a sword behind, he hadn't adjusted completely and couldn't block anything!

Helpless, Todelron wildly released his dragon power. The dark red power burned on his body like fire. Ignoring the damage to himself, he forcefully cast a Battle Aura Cut.

It flew out, screaming in the air.

He was much stronger than before. This Battle Aura Cut was almost solid, and it was so fast it became a blur. The scale was larger as well. The arc was at least 15 feet long. It sliced forward like an iron plow. The air whistled, and the power was shocking.

Releasing an attack almost surpassing the limits, Todelron couldn't help but feel a bit proud. I'm only 160 years old, but I've already reached a state comparable to the elders. I have no regrets as a dragon now!

The next moment, the Battle Aura Cut crashed against a crystal red whip.

Clang! There was the sound of metal clashi

"This...this is impossible!" The flag of confidence was torn down one-tenth of a second after it was raised. Todelron just felt that his life was so sad.

He didn't have time to wallow in misery though. The whip arrived immediately at his chest. The tip curled, and there was a blinding light. It was as if a sun appeared on the battlefield.

Then the sun crashed into Todelron's head.

This attack from the Demon Slayer was paired with the two surge effects of the Burning Wrath of Heavens wand. The spell's power was raised by at least 800%. It was originally a Level-8 spell. Multiplied by eight, its power was comparable to that of Level-9. It was practically able to kill Gods, demons, and everything else!

No matter how strong Todelron was, he would definitely die from such a powerful hit. In the last moment, Link held back a little. This guy could be resurrected so Link couldn't let him die so easily.

Boom! Todelron was hit. His entire body shook, and he collapsed weakly onto the ground, losing all defensive abilities. The Demon Slayer Whip was still there. It curled and rushed over to Theron.

"No, I'm not a match!" Theron retreated without hesitation.

This spell attack was too terrifying, and there was still Felina and that black-haired girl. There was no reason to stay in a three against one battle. Only a fool wouldn't run!

He could be resurrected, but it was obvious the opponent wanted to play with him. If Theron fell into the enemy's hands, he'd be tortured until he wished he could die. That would be horrible.

Theron retreated decisively while stabbing his spear forward. He actually hit Link's whip and blocked the frightening attack. Nana charged and stabbed her sword to stop him.

Clang! His spear met it at an incredible angle, blocking Nana's attack while using the force to speed up his fleeing.

This way, he ran out of the range of Link's spell. Then, he activated his dragon power without hesitation, transformed into a dragon, flapped his wings, and soared into the sky to escape.

"Retreat!" he yelled. The Wild Beastmen followed him unhesitatingly. Nana and Felina wanted to stop them.

"Don't!" Link called them back.

The grass was still very tall up ahead. Chasing there could be problematic, and it wasn't a big deal for the Wild Beastmen to get away.

On the other side, Todelron was still on the ground. He felt his strength disappear without a trace while his entire body was burning. It was as painful as being in the Fire Realm.

Amidst his endless pain, he saw a few figures in front of him. Something tapped him, and the pain reduced a bit.

A voice sounded in his ear. It was that human. "I'm curious. How are you resurrected?"

## 290. Severing all Objects!

On the plains.

Todelron chuckled as he glanced at Link and said, "The Duke has unimaginable intellect. How could a mortal like you ever hope to understand the mystery of my resurrection?"

His contemptuous look was extremely irking.

Felina could not hold in her age anymore and charged forward, mercilessly giving Todelron a punch in the face. She then hollered, "Stop spouting nonsense! Reply Master Link properly!"

Todelron then shouted in rage, "Felina, how dare you side with another race. If you are indeed so capable, battle with me!"

Felina was already trying her best to hold in her rage. After hearing those words, she erupted, "Outsiders? Look at what you have done! Our race was tasked with the mission to maintain the balance in the world. Look at what you are doing! Taking the lives of the innocent!"

"Balance? Why must we care about balance when we are so strong? Let me tell you, balance is all but a lie. The only truth in this world is raw power!" Todelron smirked.

Link shook his head at this endless argument and said, "Alright Felina let him speak. After all, he is just a loser."

Felina then stopped talking, merely staring at Todelron with a cold glare.

Link walked forward with a calm expression. He did not feel insulted or infuriated by Todelron's words. He then said, "Your power seems to increase every time you resurrect. However, Isendilan does not seem to be killing you again and again to increase your strength. This means that there are still some limitations to this resurrection technique, am I right?"

"What do you know!" Todelron shouted as he rolled his eyes.

Link then continued, "Such power should not exist in the mortal world, nor is it possible for a mortal to master such techniques. Even Divine Skills have difficulty accomplishi

"Hmph!" Todelron smirked and did not answer Link directly.

Link did not press on. He observed Todelron's body carefully. From his aura, he seemed just like an ordinary red dragon. This explained that Isendilan's techniques had reached a level beyond that of dark magic.

In the game, Isendilan had cooperated with the Demon God. However, he had never obtained such peculiar strength. Link could not rely on his ingame knowledge this time around.

He then asked the Storm Lord's sword in his mind, Have you ever seen such a resurrection technique?

"I have never seen it...However, I have a feeling that this spell comes at a very, very, very steep price," the Storm Lord replied.

For example? Link asked.

"Destruction of this world's principles, a rift in time-space, and the disintegration of the world." The Storm Lord's sword mentioned three scenarios that sent shi

"How could that be? How could Isendilan obtain such power?" Link was startled at those words. It was too horrifying to even think about the result of using such spells.

The Storm Lord's sword then continued, "I am not sure as well, though I can definitely feel some things change in the world. It is a very subtle change that I cannot describe. I am also not able to determine how it will affect the world."

The sword then fell silent.

Link listened to those words with a heavy heart. After a moment of thought, he said, "I cannot figure out what this is about as well. Bring him along, we will study him when we get back."

He had an idea, which was to bring Todelron to White Cloud City and show him to the exiled God. Naturally, he would not mention this in front of Todelron.

"Alright." Felina walked forward and was just about to carry Todelron on her shoulders.

Todelron then suddenly shouted, "Don't get too cocky! Let me tell you, the Duke would rather have me dead than let me land into your hands. Pray that you can escape from the pursuit of the great Duke Isendilan!"

Link and Felina shuddered at that thought.

Isendilan was a Legendary strength red dragon. If he were to enter the battlefield, they would definitely be slaughtered on the spot.

Todelron was truly a threat to the entire group.

Felina then stared at Link as she asked, "What are we going to do?"

Link fell silent.

This was due to his negligence. In the game, Isendilan was merely an insane Magician. He would simply stay in his fortress and experiment with different kinds of magic. Nothing could draw him out from his fortress. However, the situation was extremely different in this timeline.

Link could no longer predict Isendilan's actions. He could not afford to take risks.

Three seconds later, Link told Nana, "Kill him."

Todelron instantly burst out laughing as he said, "I will be back very soon, Magician!"

Nana then pierced Todelron's heart in one swift action, ending his life.

Link then said, "We will bring this body to that exiled God. He should be able to give us an answer."

A dead body should be enough.

Dragging Todelron's body along, Link and company quickly caught up to the group of Beastmen. Masos then came to welcome them and asked, "How did it go?"

Link said, "We killed one of them and defeated the rest, though the situation is still grim. They have a high chance of appearing again."

Masos then informed them with a piece of good news, "The Beastman shaman has already contacted the shaman of White Cloud City just now. They have received news that Sky Shattering Warlord of the Beastman clan was coincidentally at White Cloud City. He is already on his way to render help."

Upon hearing this name, Link heaved a sigh of relief.

Beastmen were generally blessed with a stronger physique than humans, especially in the area of strength. They were exceptionally good Warriors, and the difference in strength between their levels was extremely huge.

By Level-7, they would be able to master the titan's Strength Battle Aura, a Battle Aura that was passed down the generations in the Beastman race, increasing their strength exponentially. When they reached Level-8, their strength would already be comparable to that of the dragon race.

If they ever reach Level-9, they would be able to utterly destroy dragons and high-level demons in terms of strength alone!

The Beastmen termed any Warriors who had achieved Level-8 and above "Warlords." Link understood that there were three great Warlords in the Beastman race: Sky Shattering Warlord, Glorious Warlord Avatar, and Storm Warlord Parmese.

The three of them each had their flairs. The Sky Shattering Warlord Holun was the strongest, while the Storm Warlord Parmese was the fastest. Parmese could probably hold his own against Nana in a battle of speed. However, if one were to talk about Battle Skills, Glorious Warlord Avatar would definitely come to mind.

In the late-game, Holun's strength was even comparable to that of the Lord of the Deeps, Nozama. They were evenly matched until Nozama finally decided to use a spell, resulting in Holun's defeat.

Link did not know how strong Holun was at this stage in the game, though he was definitely above Level-8 in strength. He would definitely be a strong aide.

"That is good news," Link's face lightened up as he said.

"Well, I suppose so," Masos laughed.

Felina continued to patrol the skies for the rest of the journey. Todelron's body was moved onto the back of one of Masos' horse to lighten their load.

On the other hand, Link was resting and conserving his energy. That Demon Slayer spell that he cast was strong but extremely manconsuming. It depleted 7000 Mana Points in one second.

Suddenly, Masos cry could be heard, "How strange. Look, this corpse is glowing."

Link looked over and sure enough, a golden brilliance could be seen enveloping Todelron's body. He immediately walked forward for a closer observation.

It became clear after a while. Todelron's body was not emitting a golden brilliance. More accurately, his entire body was turning into a beam of golden light.

This light turned into fine threads and emerged one after another from Todelron's body. As this light grows more intense, Todelron's body started reducing in size.

"Oh my God, his entire body is turning into light!" Masos gasped.

Link was perplexed as well. He could not feel any magic presence in this entire process. He then touched Todelron's body with his bare hands and felt a slight warmness enveloping his hands. This golden light seemed to ignore all obstacles, passing through his hands and the horse before disappearing into the air.

"Isendilan must be reviving it!"

Link thought for a moment before he decided to give Spatial magic a shot. He raised his wand and muttered, "Folded Dimensions!"

A light ball the size of a small dot landed on Todelron's body before exploding. The dimensions within then started folding in an unpredictable manner. Even light was not supposed to escape this dimension. They would be trapped inside forever.

However, this was to no avail. This golden brilliance ignored the change in dimensions and pierced right through it. The only difference the Spatial spell made was to dim the brilliance a little.

To think that Spatial Magic would be useless!

Link immediately waved towards Nana. He then removed the Breakpoint dagger from the side of her thigh and lightly slashed the area around Todelron.

It actually worked!

The atmosphere around Todelron seemed to tremble for a moment before the threassurrounding his body broke and became extremely scattered.

The Breakpoint dagger truly could sever everything in the world.

Link continued cutting those threads.

The golden threads then disintegrated at an insane rate. The threads would lose its brilliance after being severed from Todelron's body before disappearing into the air.

Around five seconds later, all the threads had been severed. He then stared at Todelron once again. His body had become dull and lifeless. At the same time, countless injuries started appearing on his skin, similar to that of a melted candlestick. He looked terrifying.

Link had a feeling that Todelron was completely dead.

Following which, a feeling of panic rose in his heart. This feeling was suffocating. Link felt as though the surrounding area was closing in on him. Even Masos felt this immense pressure, evident from the expression of fear on his face. The horse who was originally carrying Todelron fell onto the ground from the shock, lying motionless while trembling in fear.

The next moment, Link felt a voice rang in his head, "Who are you? Why are you getting in my way?"

damn it, I must have alarmed Isendilan!

Link knew that Isendilan must have used some method to locate him. However, he was not afraid. This was because he had the means to deal with this spying spell. His Breakpoint dagger could easily sever this spell.

He instinctively wanted to wave the Breakpoint dagger around to sever this connection, though he stopped the next moment.

I cannot sever it now. I'm amongst the Beastman. If I sever the connection now, Isendilan would rush over and all these people would die! I have to find another location.

Upon this thought, Link turned to Masos and said, "I might have angered a terrifying existence. I can no longer protect you guys. This will cause great misfortune to befall the entire group."

Following which, he cast a swiftness spell on himself and quickly left the main group. Nana followed behind and Felina, though unaware of what happened, also did the same.

Don't even think about running! You are dead! The voice in his mind grew clearer by the moment. Link then told Nana, "Carry me and go full speed ahead."

No matter how powerful Isendilan was, if they could not locate him, it would all be for naught. This applied even to a God.

## 291. The Hunter and the Hunted

"Link, what happened?" Felina landed.

"I killed Todelron," Link said the good news first.

"Huh? Wasn't he killed long ago?" Felina still hadn't processed everything.

"I really killed him this time. I stopped Isendilan from resurrecting him, and now he has his eyes on me." That was the bad news.

Felina gulped in shock and repeated, "You said the duke has his eyes on you now?"

"Yeah, let's go now. As fast as possible." Link climbed onto Nana and realized that Nana's backside was much softer now. Before, she'd been soft metal but still felt uncomfortable after a while. Now, she was soft, comfy, and even a bit warm, practically like a real human.

Not bad, not bad. The Red Dragon Queen's life essence is really an amazing thing, Link couldn't help but think.

Felina was speechless. She didn't understand how Link could be so calm. Being targeted by a legendary dragon was basically death.

However, she'd fought together with Link many times now. They'd faced enemies with Divine Gear in the Northern Black Forest, faced Level-9 undead High Elves, and fought with Osiris. She knew that if Link acted this calmly, it meant he already thought of a solution.

As expected, Link said, "Don't worry. I can escape from him, and he won't be able to find us."

As he spoke, Isendilan's voice continued to ring in his mind. Mortal, you can't escape. I'll burn your soul with fire.

Mortal, you don't know who exactly you've offended! Let me tell you, it is I, Isendilan, the king of the Red Dragons chosen by God!

Mortal, stop now. Stand there without moving and wait for my judgment!

Mortal...!

The voice kept going. As time passed, it became clearer and clearer. This meant that Isendilan had left his castle and was coming after them, closing in on them. However, this was okay. Nana was very fast and could run 650 feet per second while carrying Link without using all her strength.

If Link didn't cast a defense spell for himself, he'd probably get killed from the wind.

With this speed, Felina could barely keep up, using up a lot of her physical strength. She transformed into a dragon and followed close behind in the air. The three ran crazily like this and Nana brought Link past 30 miles within five minutes. This speed was wild.

"Alright, let's stop now," Link said. The voice in his mind had become clearer again, but overall, it was okay. Isendilan wasn't as fast as Link had expected.

Nana came to a stop. Link took out the Breakpoint dagger. Feeling around with his eyes closed, he suddenly sliced the air.

Mortal, I see you—

With the small slice, Isendilan's voice disappeared completely from Link's mind. Then, the indescribable terror was reduced until it was extremely weak. This meant Isendilan was still looking but had lost him.

"Felina, come down. We're safe," Link called to the air.

Felina flapped her wings and landed in the grass. She gazed curiously at Link. "Safe? Why?"

She didn't feel any change.

"I cut the spirit sensory between us," Link explained quickly. "He doesn't know where we are now and the Golden Plains is so vast. If we're careful, there won't be any problem."

Felina only received a shallow explanation. Cut the spirit sensory? How? She didn't know how reliable this was, but she trusted Link. Since he said it was okay, then they were definitely safe.

Link climbed down from Nana's back and said, "Isendilan still knows where we are now so we must leave quickly."

"Master, should I continue carrying you?" Nana asked.

"Not for now. We'll use a new way." As he spoke, Link activated the Dimensional Jump. White light blanketed all three of them, and they moved half a mile after a soft buzz. It wasn't far away enough though, so Link used the spell again, and they teleported again.

Link now had up to 17000 Mana Points. He used the spell five continuous times without worry and used up 9000 Mana Points. They moved three miles in three seconds.

This wasn't all.

Dimensional Jumping was a legendary spell, but they would still leave ripples in space while moving. Others could use these traces to find them.

Link wouldn't have to worry about being discovered by regular opponents, but Link was willing to use all his power against someone legendary like Isendilan. He couldn't be too careful.

After stopping, he used his understanding of space and began erasing the marks in the spatial structure bit by bit. It looked complicated, but it was just like a fox using its tail to sweep the snow, getting rid of all evidence and making it impossible to trace them.

Around two minutes later, Link said, "Felina, don't fly anymore. You're too obvious of a target."

"I understand." She didn't dare fly around when the situation was unclear. If she ran into Isendilan in the air, she would be dead meat.

Link then cast an invisibility spell on all three of them so Isendilan wouldn't be able to see from the sky.

After all this, the last bit of terror disappeared. This meant they'd completely escaped from Isendilan's eyes. Turning towards Nana, he said, "Continue carrying me. This time, charge at full speed. Yes, just like that."

Nana moved at full speed. Her speed had increased to a stable 1000 feet per second. Felina almost couldn't keep up. Rather than telling Nana to slow down, Link cast an acceleration spell on Felina. She instantly sped up and was right behind Nana.

"Link, we've already lost him so why do we still have to go so fast?" Felina still felt that she was using up too much energy.

Link obviously had thought deeply about this. "Isendilan had always been pursuing us, and he's familiar with our speed," he explained. "Even if he can't find us, he can still guess our approximate location. At that time, if he uses a wide-range search spell, we'll be revealed. Running like this can make him miscalculate. As long as he can't find us with a search spell, we'll be truly safe!"

All this made Felina's head hurt, but thankfully, she understood. Gritting her teeth, she followed right behind Nana.

"Master, where are we going?"

"White Cloud City...but don't go directly south. It'll reveal our target. Go east first, and don't worry about leaving behind traces. We want to leave some marks to fool Isendilan. When we cover enough distance, we'll turn back."

If they cared about their trail, they wouldn't be able to run quickly. If Link left some marks, Isendilan would definitely be tricked. This didn't mean he was stupid. It was because he could only find these marks so he would be forced to follow them. This was an overt trick.

"Got it," Nana answered and immediately changed her direction.

After traveling 65 miles, they'd gone around 70 miles with the distance covered before. "Okay," Link said. "We can slow down now."

Felina let out a breath of relief. Even with Link's spell, she was still exhausted from running at full speed for so long. She glanced at Nana and saw that she was still composed. Felina had to admit that the magic puppet's speed was just crazy.

On the other hand, Link activated the Dimensional Jump without hesitation to go south. He still had more than 8000 Mana Points now. After drinking the perfect Mana potion, he recovered 2000 points and jumped five times quickly.

After wiping the traces like before, he finally took a breather. "Okay, now we should be able to go south slowly. Just be careful, and it'll be okay."

Not even five minutes after Link left, a huge figure appeared in the sky. He came like a streak of dark red lightning, instantly hovering above where Link had used the Dimensional Jump.

He was almost 200 feet tall, comparable in size to the Red Dragon Queen. Dark red smoke wrapped around him. His eyes were blood red like burning fire. Here, he dove down and vaporized when he was 300 feet in the air.

The ball of vapor landed on the ground gently. When the fog dissipated, a man in a dark red Magician's robe appeared.

He had dark red hair, and his eyes gleamed red. His pale face was very handsome and ageless. He could be 20 years old, but his aura was like a timeworn elder.

He was the first traitor of the dragons—Red Dragon Duke Isendilan.

Standing in the grass, Isendilan looked around. This guy went from here so there should be footprints, a smell, or something, right?

A few seconds later, he indeed found footprints. There were three sets. One set was thin and looked like a girl's, but she was abnormally heavy—more than 200 pounds. Another set was wide and obviously a dragon. The last set was plain with average body weight. From the smell left in the air, it was probably a human.

Earlier, Isendilan could only faintly sense their location and send some threats, but he didn't know too much about the specifics.

Theron came back and said there's three of them. One is a Level-8 human Magician, one is an unbelievably fast human girl, and there's also Felina. It's a strange group.

Isendilan looked around. He tried to find the footprints of them leaving, but this time, he failed.

There aren't any departure marks. They just disappeared without a trace. Huh, this is annoying. Isendilan furrowed his brows. Pondering, he reached out. A golden glow shone from his fingertip, and he pointed in the air. It was the Spatial Eye.

Spatial Eye

Legendary Detection Spell

Description: The spell-caster marks the subtle energy in the surrounding space so the spatial structure will show more clearly. This spell effectively helps the spell-caster track targets who use spatial magic to escape.

(Note: there is no way to hide!)

The air surrounding Isendilan shi

Isendilan inspected carefully for a full two minutes. His brows started furrowing. These three really did use a spatial tunnel to escape, but the Magician's understanding of space is comparable to me. He even wiped all traces.

What kind of enemy was the most difficult in the mortal world?

The first one was spatial Magicians. To these guys, space was a sea. Whenever needed, they could go into the water and either escape to somewhere far away or stay hidden for a surprise attack. They were unstoppable.

Isendilan's traces were all cut off. He had no way of following them. The human Magician's tricks were too frightening, and he could even decode the resurrection technique. Isendilan must find him!

Thankfully, he had a more basic approach!

He used a teleportation spell, but it's an ad hoc teleportation, and they can't travel far. The limit is five miles. From their earlier speed, they could only go around 40 miles at most during this time. I'll look for them within a 60-mile radius!

With this thought in mind, Isendilan sat onto the ground and closed his eyes. A few seconds later, black-red light streaked across him for a few seconds. Then the light trembled violently and spread out at an unimaginable speed.

After around five seconds, an image appeared in Isendilan's mind.

No one in the east but there are signs of high-speed movement in the grass. They went east!

Isendilan opened his eyes with some fatigue. Searching within 60 miles was very consuming, and he was tired out. He still didn't find them, but he cackled.

Tricky Magician, you held back your speed earlier. Nice tricks and calculations but unluckily, I'm your opponent!

He stood up, transformed into a dragon, flapped his wings, and hurried east.

## 292. Keep Quiet!

Golden Plains.

There was a natural indentation under a huge piece of crimson rock. It was the perfect hideout, concealing them from the possible sky patrols.

There was a bonfire burning within the hideout. Link, Felina, and Nana sat around the fire. They wore armor made from sheepskin to disguise themselves as ordinary Beastmen.

The bonfire was also not created from magic but with bare hands using flint and stone.

Nana sat down in an elegant position as she poked the prairie porcupine roasting on the bonfire with a long iron stick. They had caught and skinned this porcupine earlier.

On the other hand, Link was sprinkling all kinds of seasonings on the porcupine. He had learned this technique from the mercenaries beside Masos. Link had no idea if the temperature he was roasting the porcupine at was the ideal one, though the aroma of the meat was a testament to its taste. Felina swallowed her saliva as she stared at the porcupine expectantly.

"It is already the second day. It seems like we have managed to escape from Isendilan," Link was relieved and even felt slightly proud of himself.

Felina actually sensed no danger through the entire process. She was merely following Link around all this time, concealing her presence and disguising herself. She was simply listening to his orders.

Isendilan had not appeared even once. It was as though he did not exist.

It sounded extremely fulfilling to escape from the pursuit of a Legendary individual, though Felina, being part of this glorious achievement, merely felt that it was extremely simple and ordinary.

"Do you think Isendilan will kill the Beastmen if he cannot find us?" This was Felina's only worry.

At that moment, the porcupine was already prepared. Link then used the Breakpoint dagger to slice off the perfectly roasted thighs and handed it to Felina. He then smiled and said, "He will not. I left many misleading clues along the way. Although Isendilan does not know our exact location, he cannot be completely off the charts as well. He has no time to even approach the Beastmen."

"That is nice to hear...Oh, this meat is delicious. It is more tender than the one I had with the Beastmen. Pretty decent," Felina then turned her attention to the meat as she spoke.

Link then sliced a piece of meat for himself and savored it slowly. It was indeed a decent first attempt at barbecued meat. It was a success.

"Master, can I taste it?" Nana said curiously.

"Please do," Link made an inviting pose before taking out a magic book of flame. He then lay casually on a rock at the side, enjoying his relaxing dinner time while reading a book.

Nana tore a slice of meat for herself and took a small bite of the meat. She then chewed the meat slowly before a frown appeared on her face. She still looked like a pure and innocent deer. No one could imagine what the experience was like for her.

After a while, she said, "The taste is weird. Is this what you mean by salty?"

Felina then said, "It is not just salty; there are at least six other flavors. They are mixed together to produce this unique taste. You can taste them one by one. Here, have this drought ginger."

Nana then stuffed the entire piece of spicy drought ginger into her mouth without hesitation. The drought ginger was at least half the size of a fist. It filled her mouth entirely, making her look like a stuffed hamster.

She then started chewing, her eyes glimmering with curiosity.

She was simply too fast. Felina was not fast enough to stop her and muttered, "You actually only need a small piece."

She felt uncomfortable even looking at someone stuff a whole piece of raw drought ginger into their mouth.

As Nana chewed, her eyes lit up and said, "This is delicious!"

She then stopped eating the meat and started stuffing the remaining drought ginger into her mouth, chewing delightfully. Felina then stared at the scene, dumbfounded.

"This... Link, do you think Nana has malfunctioned?"

On the other hand, Link was not particularly surprised by this. He laughed and explained, "The spicy taste in drought ginger came from a material called powdered silver. Nana probably likes the metallic taste of this substance."

Powdered silver was a rare metallic substance. Coincidentally, Link carried some with him for this journey. He then took out a small piece of powdered silver and gave it to Nana, saying, "Here, have a taste."

Nana bitito the powdered silver without hesitation, making a loud cracking sound as the metal was crushed under her jaws. However, she quickly spits out the pure powdered silver, and she frowned and said, "Master, this is too hard and bitter. Disgusting!"

Link immediately knew that he had made a mistake. This was similar to how humans needed iron in their body to survive, though we do not consume metallic substances directly.

Nana probably liked the taste of drought ginger as the powdered silver inside could be easily absorbed. The pure piece of powdered silver was too condensed, making it bitter and unappealing.

Link then awkwardly said, "So sorry, try the rest of the food as well. Take whatever you like."

"Alright." Nana seemed to have found a new toy as she started experimenting with the different food.

Link had a small appetite. Before long, he started cleaning off the oil on his hands and focused his attention on his magic book.

Felina and Nana also reduced the amount of noise they made with their actions. The cave became extremely peaceful and calm.

Two hours later, Link said, "It's about time. Let's set off."

"No problem."

The three of them then prepared to leave the cave. Link led the way, and he was still extremely careful. Before he left, he first cast a small-scaled Spatial Distortion spell on the entrance of the cave.

The Spatial Distortion spell acted like a mirror. It allowed Link to have a full view of the area outside of the cave.

"Is there anything in the sky?" Link asked Felina. After all, the dragon race had much better eyesight.

Nana carefully stared into the sky before she shook her head and said, "Apart from a few birds, nothing else."

"Then it should be fine," Link walked out of the cave.

They were around 130 miles east away from White Cloud City. In order to not leave any clues, they were traveling at a speed similar to that of an ordinary Beastman. They would need at least four days before they could reach their destination at this rate.

Although the progress was slow, it was safe.

After half a day, a small Beastman town appeared. This small town seemed unaffected by the wrath of the berserk Beastmen. The town seemed to be holding a small festival of some sort, which explains the crowd along the streets. There were even a few human merchants on the way.

"Look at this wolf-fang necklace. How pretty." Felina pointed to a stall on the roadside. She always had a penchant for these accessories. She had even bought a bracelet that Link designed simply for collection purposes some time ago.

She then ran over and bought this necklace for one red dragon gold coin.

This merchant did not recognize a red dragon gold coin, though he could recognize gold when he saw one. He was surprised that Felina was going to purchase this without a bargain and beamed delightfully. He was so elated that he even gave a complimentary wolf-fang bracelet to Felina.

This raised Felinasspirits indefinitely. She then started a shopping spree, spending her gold coins on almost every stall in sight.

Link did not stop her seeing that she was enjoying herself.

Felina had used over ten gold coins by the time she left the town. She bought a bunch of useless objects and wore them all on her body, inquiring Link about her looks every so often.

Link could not understand this weird hobby and merely nodded in agreement every time.

They then continued on their journey to White Cloud City.

Half a day after Link and company left the town, Isendilan arrived, clad in a long black robe. He realized that something was amiss upon entering the town. The arsemed to be filled with an extremely familiar scent.

He sniffed his way forward and quickly arrived at a stall selling wolf-fang accessories.

"Respected customer, what do you wish to purchase?" the Beastman asked. Not long along, he had sold a necklace worth only a few bronze coin for a full gold coin. He was in an extremely good mood.

Isendilan's mood was the complete opposite. He had pursued Link all the way to this dreadful place. God knows how many traps he had fallen into along the way. He was itching to kill to unleash the frustration inside him.

However, he had good self-control. He would never recklessly kill anyone. This was not because of his malevolence, but because he felt that this would only be a waste of his energy.

He did not even bother replying to the Beastman. He pushed the approaching Beastman on the floor before he walked over and pulled open the cash register of the stall.

Beastmen were not known for their friendliness to other races. It was normal for them to getito fights with humans and dragons alike. Furthermore, this guy seemed to be robbing him of his hard-earned money.

"Hey, are you going to rob me?" He picked up a stone from the ground and flung it with full force at Isendilan's head.

The stone then landed at the back of Isendilan's head. Isendilan seemed fine, though the stone had completely shattered.

At that moment, Isendilan was deep in thought staring at the red dragon gold coin. He had not noticed the attack from the Beastman until he suffered the full impact of the attack.

"Hmm?" Isendilan still kept himself from retaliating as he took out the red dragon gold coin. He then asked menacingly, "Where did this gold coin come from?"

The Beastman swallowed his saliva nervously. He knew that this was not someone he could mess with after seeing how the stone shattered.

At that moment, when he saw Isendilan closing in, he felt extremely hopeless. His mind seemed to have stopped functioning. He retreated for a few steps before he started running, shouting, "It's all yours! It's all yours!"

Isendilan frowned and was just about to give chase when a few well-armored Beastmen surrounded him. One of then placed his sword on Isendilan's neck and bellowed, "How dare you rob one of our kind. Either come with us or pay a fine. Choose!"

Isendilan's patience had finally run thin. He grabbed the sword and squeezed it slightly. Boom! The sword shattered and its metallic shards flew in all directions.

The shards flew at an insane speed, piercing anything along the way.

The Beastmen around could not react in time and were ruthlessly injured by the metallic shards. Blood splattered across the streets, and at least 20 people died with just a small action on Isendilan's part.

"Ah!" A woman screamed.

"A serial killer!"

"Run"

The town wentito a state of frenzy.

"Helpless mortals!" Isendilan was lazy to deliver another blow. He started sniffing the red dragon gold coin in his hands.

"What a fresh smell. It should be less than four hours since they left...But could this be another decoy?"

He had already fallen for many traps along the way. He was hesitant about this clue as well.

Just when he was deep in thought, a bellow could be heard, "Fire!"

The sound of crossbows firing echoed through the town. Isendilan then heard war cries declaring their prowess. He turned around and realized that 30 Beastmen archers were lined up in an orderly manner in front of him.

"Oh, you humble mortals. Are sneak attacks all you know?"

Isendilan was already in a bad mood. Now that he was repeatedly provoked, he had finally lost his cool. He lifted his hands and an incandescent fireball more than six-feet-wide appeared in his palms.

He then slammed the fireball onto the ground.

"How irritating, all of you shut up!"

"Boom!" An earth-shattering sound could be heard. A 300-feet-wide incandescent fireball appeared in the sky above the small town. The entire town was subsequently destroyed by the impact of this spell.

After the spell subsided, the world became exceptionally silent.

Staring at the bodies on the ground, Isendilan shook his head in disappointment and said, "What a waste of my strength."

He then sniffed the red dragon gold coin once again and chased the faint presence all the way out of town.

Although he could not pinpoint the exact location, he could feel that his enemy was not far away. All he needed was a stroke of good luck.

## 293. The Beastman City with Public Sex

Three days later, Link's group reached White Cloud City safely.

This Beastman city was the biggest city in the area. It was nestled in the valley of red rocks. Looking down from the valley, one could see an expanse of cramped buildings constructed of wood, hide, and bones.

At the entrance, there was a huge city gate made of wood and stone. Two strong Beastman Warriors guarded the gate. Beside them were big three-headed war wolves. These wolves were close to 12 feet long and six feet tall. They were either black or white and crouched on the ground, staring vigilantly at everyone going in and out the gates with their black eyes.

"Outsider, report your name and background!"

When Link arrived at the gate, he was stopped by the Beastman Warriors. They looked at Link's trio with guarded and fearful eyes.

"My name is Link," he introduced himself. "I come from the Norton Kingdom. We're all merchants."

They were now dressed in beast hide and looked very plain. The only special part was that Felina and Nana were a bit too pretty.

"Merchant, where are your goods?" The Warriors were extremely suspicious. They were naturally suspicious of outsiders.

Link reacted quickly. He shrugged with a bitter expression. "Unfortunately, all our goods were burned by those Red Dragons. I don't know if you're familiar with Masos. We're his friends."

"You all know Masos? Oh, I'm sorry. Many frightening things have happened these days. We have to be careful. You can go in now." The main Warrior's attitude did a complete 180-degree flip.

It appeared that Masos was quite well-known amongst the Beastmen. This was a good thing.

Link quickly thanked the two Warriors and secretly passed over some silver coins. "Treat yourself."

The Beastmen didn't have their own currency and just used human currency, so Link's coins were very effective. After slipping the coins to them, the two Beastmen treated Link even better.

The one on the left specially reminded, "Your two women are too pretty and might cause some trouble. Cover 'em up."

"Thanks," Link replied.

After entering the city, Link spent some money at a roadside stall to buy two loose beast hide cloaks. Felina and Nana put them on, covering their faces and curves.

To be honest, the inside of the Beastmen's city wasn't very well off. The road into the valley was jam-packed. Small stands one after another took up a good portion of the road. Feces was everywhere on the ground, and Beastmen with heavy body odor squeezed past each other. All the different smells mixed together into a nauseating scent.

The Beastmen acted crazily too. They pissed on the street, showed their private parts to flirt with the other sex, and even mated in the corner with people watching in interest. This would never be seen in the human world.

"Ugh, I hate Beastmen cities the most. I feel like I'm in a monkey kingdom every time," Felina whispered. Even though she was covered in the loose cloak, she'd felt dozens of harassing hands try to touch her as they squeezed down the path.

These Beastmen didn't really cross the line and just touched her, so she couldn't kill them just for that, right?

As for Nana...she was too fast and wouldn't get close to anyone. Even though the street was extremely crowded, no one could touch her. She was protecting herself instead of avoiding humiliation as a girl. Nana didn't have that type of conscience. She just wanted to avoid a sneak attack.

Link was having a hard time. In the previous game, there were uncivilized sights in the Beastman city too, but most had been censored. Entering the city, one would feel a primitive, barbaric, and straightforward atmosphere. This existed in the real city too, but he felt more shamelessness, dirtiness, messiness, wetness, and stickiness. It was disgusting.

If they didn't have to find the exiled God Elodim, he definitely wouldn't step foot here.

As they walked, Link asked, "Felina, can you feel his location?"

Felina caught a hand reaching toward her breast and squeezed, not letting go until the man yelled in pain. Hearing Link's question, she whispered, "The city is too messy. I can feel that he's here, but I can't pinpoint his location. We have to search carefully."

Link nodded and continued pushi

The valley was big with many paths and caves dug into the sides of the cliffs. Beastmen filled every cave. There were also some stone buildings in the valley. Each one surrounded by crude wooden cabins covered in ivy that looked like they would collapse at any time. Not only did the cabins lean against the stone buildings, but they also leaned against the stone wall of the valley. From afar, the layers upon layers of buildings were dizzying.

"This valley isn't that big, but I heard that there are at least 500,000 Beastmen living here. I didn't believe it before, but now I do." Link shook his head and sighed. He could only sigh at how efficiently the Beastmen used the space.

Felina wiped at her sweat and pointed at a tall stone building. "Look, it says Sleeping Giant Inn and looks okay. Shall we go rest inside?"

She wasn't tired—she just felt dirty and sweaty. She smelled indescribably of feces too. If she didn't wash up soon, she would go crazy.

"I was going to say that too." Link exhaled deeply.

Entering the inn, Link instantly felt like he'd returned to the human world. The spacious building was filled with the smell of cheese, and most of the people in the lobby were humans. He was relieved.

Coincidentally, Link actually saw Masos.

The guy was eating lunch with his mercenaries. He saw Link as well and chuckled. "Ah, what a coincidence! You look like you're in a bad mood. Come, come, I'll treat you to a good meal!" With that, he raised a hand and told the server, "Three more roasted lambs and three cups of grain wine."

Masos was very enthusiastic while Link needed someone familiar with the situation to help. He walked over and sat with them. "It's really hard to get accustomed to this city." Link sighed.

Grinning, Masos said, "Everyone's like that the first time, but you'll get used to it. Compared to us, the Beastmen are indeed a bit behind, but they're straightforward and rarely lie. It's much easier doing business with them."

That was true. Beastmen could be described with one word: straightforward. Other than the shamans, most were like inflexible rods.

Soon, a Beastwoman server brought the food over. The so-called roasted lamb looked like a roasted pig, so Link tried it. It was tender and tasty. He took a sip of the wine and instantly felt better.

Felina had a shocking appetite. She was a typical foodie and forgot all about the earlier unhappiness as she started eating. As for Nana, she tried the unfamiliar food and then sat there primly, listening to the others chat. She looked like a lady.

The people were all discussing the interesting things about the Golden Plains. Mostly, it was Masos talking while Link listened.

As they talked, Masos suddenly asked, "Master Link, did you hear about what happened three days ago?"

"Three days ago? What happened?" Link had been focused on avoiding Isendilan and didn't care about anything else.

Masos sighed. "A Magician cast some sort of terrifying flame spell in the northern village of Deral. The entire village was destroyed, and no more than 200 people survived. According to a lucky merchant, it was a young man dressed in a dark red robe. Hishi

Before Link could react after hearing this, Felina suddenly stopped.

"What's wrong?" Link noticed immediately.

"Masos just described Isendilan." Felina had paled.

"Isendilan?" Masos didn't know the name of this Red Dragon duke.

"He's the fallen duke and is very powerful, no less than Bryant from before. The Red Dragon at Holun was his underling," Link described the legendary dragon to Masos in layman terms.

Regular people wouldn't know how powerful the Red Dragon duke was, but everyone knew who Bryant was. If a dragon could be compared to Bryant and was so cruel and his underlings so terrifying—it was a disaster.

This time, Masos and his mercenaries turned ghastly pale. They were even more unnerved than Felina.

Masos sucked in a deep breath and said uncomfortably, "I heard about this yesterday. At that time, the Sky Shattering Warlord had just helped us to the White Cloud City, and we got the news that something happened to Deral. The Sky Shattering Warlord hurried over with three grand shamans and an elite Beastman army of 1000. Hearing what you said now, they're probably all dead now."

Link and Felina exchanged glances at this news.

After a long while, Link asked, "How powerful is the Sky Shattering Warlord?"

"He's a Level-9 Warrior. He apparently leveled up a month ago." Masos was a regular man, but he was very knowledgeable and described the Sky Shattering Warlord's strength precisely.

A Level-9 Warrior with three grand shamans and an elite Beastman army of 1000 soldiers could give Isendilan some trouble if they fought with the right techniques. They could even defeat Isendilan.

But if they were unlucky or Isendilan attacked first, all of them would be killed without a doubt.

Felina put her mouth to Link's ears and whispered, "I think this is our fault."

Yes, it was definitely their fault, and they even caused so many innocent civilians of Deral Village to lose their lives. Link felt very guilty.

Thinking for a bit, Link said to Masos, "The Sky Shattering Warlord isn't Isendilan's match and will most likely die. I want to help, but I'm afraid the Beastmen distrust me. Can you help be my witness?"

The three of them couldn't go against Isendilan, but with so many Beastman Warriors and a Level-9 Beastman Warlord, they could fight Isendilan and possibly even injure him gravely.

Masos drank all his wine and said boldly, "The warlord is my friend. I just don't have the abilities. Otherwise, I'd gone to help long ago. Now that you want to help, why would I refuse?"

They were all direct and bold people. Since they decided, they acted immediately. After filling their stomachs, they set off.

Just as they hurried out of the Sleeping Giant Inn, a blue-eyed black cat with shi

## 294. Alas, a Legendary Dragon is Not Invincible

After Link once again left White Cloud City and reached its entrance, an in-game message appeared in his field of vision. Upon closer inspection, he realized that it was a mission.

Activate Epic Quest Series: Dark Legends

First Step: Corruption?

Mission: Find the Beastman army that was destroyed by the Legendary red dragon.

Reward: 100 Omni Points

Link fell speechless upon seeing this mission. What did this mission mean? Were the Sky Shattering Warlord and his troops already defeated?

This had completely destroyed Link's plan of fighting against Isendilan together with the Sky Shattering Warlord.

Felina knew something was wrong after seeing the changes in Link's facial expression. She then asked, "Master, what happened?"

Link knew that the in-game system had never lied to him. Many times, it would even provide him with additional clues. Now that it mentioned of the destruction of a Beastman army, it must be true.

He took a deep breath before saying, "I have a bad feeling. I'm afraid the situation with the Sky Shattering Warlord is not optimistic."

Felina was startled. A Magician would never have a bad premonition without any basis. This was especially so for a strong Magician like Link. If he said that something was amiss, he could not be wrong.

Masos heard Link's words as well. He was terrified as he knew Link's reputation in the human world. His words were taken extremely seriously. Masos then said, "Their last message was just three hours ago. They mentioned that everything was fine. They had over 1000 capable Warriors and even Sky Shattering Warlord Holun. They should be able to hold their ground for a while even against a Legendary dragon. Am I right?"

Link could not mention the in-game system to Masos and gave up on explaining. He said, "Perhaps I was wrong. Let's go and search for them."

"That will do," Masos said and continued forward with a heart shrouded in worry.

Masos was highly respected amongst the Beastman community. When they heard that he was going to bring a few powerful Warriors to support the Sky Shattering Warlord, they even lent him a few battle wolves which allowed them to travel faster.

They could ride on the backs of these wolves when traveling on the rolling plains.

The wolves could cover a distance of 150 feet in a second and were extremely durable. They could run at that speed for an hour without stopping.

Although Link was more than used to such high-speed traveling, this was something new for Masos. He rode the wolf with enthusiasm, screaming at the top of his lungs as he sped. He seemed both excited and terrified.

After an hour, they had covered a distance of 60 miles and reached the battlefield.

Upon seeing the state in front of his eyes, Masos gasped, "Oh my lord, is this the strength of a Legendary dragon?"

On the plains in front of him, the area in a 900 feet radius was completely charred. There were many spots that were emitting a green smog. The bodies of the fallen Beastmen were strewn all over the charred ground.

They were completely burned from the inside out. Every so often when the wind blew past, cracking sounds could be heard. It was the sound of the dehydrated bodies splintering under the force of the wind.

"Felina, defend!" Link shouted seriously. He then jumped down from the wolf's back and carefully observed the battlefield.

"At least 700 Beastmen died in this battle. It was not a spell that resulted in this destruction. This was merely Isendilan's dragon breath. He used it for a total of three times. That was all it took for the Beastman troops to be annihilated."

Link then continued forward. He then picked up a broken spear on the ground and said, "This Warrior was at least Level-6 in strength. He threw this spear towards Isendilan using the last of his strength. However, the spear showed no signs of impact, though the body of the spear is broken. Isendilan must have blown it back using the force of his wings...He is truly devastating!"

Link went further into the battlefield and saw three bodies huddling close together. They were in a better shape than the other bodies, retaining most of their body parts and suffering less serious burn wounds.

Apart from their skin, the interior of their bodies was still largely intact, though their flesh had been thoroughly cooked by the high temperature.

Link then cast a Detection spell and carefully observed the magic fluctuations in the area. After ten seconds, he concluded, "The three of them should be shamans. They did not attempt to protect themselves after witnessing the terrifying dragon breath. Instead, they combined their forces to cast an extremely powerful Divine spell. This spell could very possibly have injured Isendilan."

Beastmen placed their faith in the God of Light as well, though they preferred to call their piss and bishops as shamans. Their application of Divine Skills was also slightly different than the humans. Their spells were often more offensive in nature.

True to its name, Divine Skills are simply powers of the Gods.

The three great shamans were akin to the archbishops in Hot Springs City. A Divine Skill cast from their combined efforts was sure to deal damage to any being in the World of Firuman, even a Legendary individual.

After a few steps, Link had found evidence of Isendilan's injury. There were a few crimson scales on the ground which were still warm to the touch. When knocked against one another, they emitted a low rumble that was clearly non-metallic. It definitely had a special quality to it.

"The dragon scales seemed to be broken. There was also dragon blood on the ground. Ah, there is a half-broken axe here. This axe... is Epic quality. There are clear liquid marks on the blade of the axe that has solidified. It is congealed dragon blood. This should be the weapon of the Sky Shattering Warlord. He had managed to injure Isendilan with this Epic quality weapon...It seems like Isendilan has suffered greatly in this battle."

A Legendary dragon was incredibly powerful. He could destroy an ordinary troop in three dragon breath attacks. However, when facing against a Level-9 Beastman and three great shamans, he still paid a great price.

Link circled the battlefield for a long while before coming to a stop. He did not find a corpse powerful enough to be Holun. He knew that Holun must have escaped after the battle.

Link had already gotten a grasp of the situation. He then took the half broken axe to Masos.

Masos gasped upon seeing this weapon. He said, "I recognize it. This is Holun's axe. Oh my lord, has Holun died?"

Link shook his head and said, "No, I could not find his corpse. There is a total of 803 bodies around here. I believe that Holun must have left with around 200 of his troops."

"Escape? Since he has escaped, why is he not returning to White Cloud City?" Masos uttered in confusion.

Felina walked forward and said, "He must be trying to divert Isendilan's attention to prevent the Uda Town tragedy from repeating itself."

With Isendilan's strength, he might be able to massacre the entire city if he wanted to.

Masos fell speechless instantly.

Felina stared at Link and asked, "Where did they go?"

Link pointed to the East and said, "That way. From what I know, there is a huge lake in that direction. They must have been trying to make use of the lake water to defend themselves from Isendilan's flames."

If that was the case, then these Beastmen were too naive.

This would be a good way to defend oneself against an ordinary dragon. However, it was futile against Isendilan. He had already obtained the power of the principles; his flames could even ignite and incinerate water.

However, this was not to say that there was no way around it.

Link then mounted the battle wolf and led the way. He said, "From the state of the battlefield, I suspect that Isendilan is also heavily injured. We are currently in the Golden Plains, the territory of the Beastmen. Isendilan probably would take caution and hide in a safe spot to recover. We should be safe in this period and have to rendezvous with them fast."

"Understood," Felina and Masos nodded as they said.

The traces of the Beastmens' retreat were obvious. After around six miles, they saw the body of a Beastman Warrior at the side of the road.

The Beastman Warrior seemed to be abandoned in haste. He had suffered burns on multiple areas, and his flesh almost melded together with his armor due to the intense heat. He appeared to be in pain.

Link said, "I believe that they have another reason for going to the lake. They must have been trying to ease the pain of burns on their body."

These surviving Warriors must have been burned as well. A red dragon's breath had a corrosive attribute to it. One would feel extremely uncomfortable after suffering a burn injury from a dragon's breath. Even if one were to survive the initial onslaught, most would die from the endless pain that tortured their body and minds.

Felina's face sunk as she said, "If those Beastmen were affected by Isendilan's flames, they might not live."

As a dragon herself, she knew how powerful Isendilan was.

On the other hand, Link was a lot more optimistic. He said, "There is actually a cure for the corrosion of a red dragon's breath. I have seen it once in a magic book. It is not very difficult to create."

"Oh, really?" Felina was slightly unsure. As a red dragon, she was immune to the corrosive properties of the dragon breath. She would naturally have no knowledge of ways to counter it.

Link nodded affirmingly and continued, "It's true. The main offensive property of a dragon breath is still its intense heat. The corrosive property is secondary and not that powerful. I remember the cure is called Pure Water Black Jade. It can easily neutralize the poison within."

When Link was playing the game, this antidote was a compulsory item if one wanted to defeat the Isendilan quest.

This was because one would be afflicted with the poisoned status the moment one came in contact with Isendilan's dragon breath attack. If this status was not dispelled, it would stack and accumulate, causing the player to lose a huge chunk of health per second. If one were to be afflicted with five stacks of such poison, they would suffer instant death.

However, alchemy potions were simply too expensive. In order to reduce cost, guilds would try to search for cheaper alternatives. Link's guild naturally did the same. The Pure Water Black Jade was something that they created. As is was frequently used and easy to create, Link could clearly remember the steps to brewing this antidote.

As Link spoke, they had covered another three miles. They saw at least ten other bodies along the way. This was not a good sign.

"Master, we have to hurry. They don't look like they are in a good state," Masos eagerly urged.

"I know...Wait, something is amiss."

Link cast his gaze into the sky and saw over ten black dots hovering in the air. Felina then did the same before she gasped, "It is Theron. The person beside him is Olisa. The rest are merely dragon beasts. They do not possess the dragon breath, though they are all at least Level-5 in strength."

"Olisa?" Link said in an incredulous tone. He clearly remembered that she was captured. Did the Dragon Valley overlook her threat to their race and merely exile her?

They were simply laying the path to their own deathbeds.

Link was horrified at the sight of these dragons, though it quickly turned into euphoria.

This meant that Isendilan's injury was probably more serious than he expected. If he was still able to battle, there was no need to summon so many helpers. They might even be able to defeat Isendilan without the Red Dragon Queen's assistance this time around!

Upon this thought, Link shouted, "We have to be quick!"

Although Isendilan was injured, they still needed the help of the Beastmen to defeat him, especially the help of Sky Shattering Warlord Holun. He was able to injure Isendilan in the previous battle, proving his capabilities.

In the sky.

Theron had noticed Link as well. His eyes widened in fear as he turned to Olisa and said, "Look, that is the Magician that prevented Todelron from resurrecting!"

Olisa's face sunk as well. She had once fought Link in the Dragon Valley and was nearly killed. She could still feel the chills running through her body upon seeing Link.

Olisa was extremely wary of Link. She quickly added, "We will not be able to defeat him. We have to find the duke quickly and kill this guy. No one can predict what he is going to do!"

## 295. Straightforward Warlord

Theron and Olisa flew in the sky, getting further and further away from Link's group. They didn't seem to be planning on coming down to fight with Link.

The dragons flew high up and escaped quickly. If they didn't want to fight, Link's group couldn't do anything about it. They could only speed up and hurry over to the lake in the east.

After a while, Link suddenly stopped. He ran to the roadside and dug up a clump of green herbal medicine. As he dug, he explained, "This is the Cattleya orchid. It's the ingredient for antidotes. There are many here so come over and help."

With that, Masos, Felina, and Nana all came down from their war wolves and started digging up the herbs.

Three minutes later, Link had around ten pounds in his hands. "Okay, that's enough," he said. "Let's keep going."

They ran for around 20 miles, and a boundless lake appeared before them. It was the Crystal Blue Lake, the biggest lake in the Golden Plains. It was more than 40 miles wide and never dried. The Beastmen called it the sacred lake.

Felina had sharp eyes and pointed at the shoal. "Look, they're over there!"

Everyone looked over and saw more than 100 Beastmen scattered in the shallow water. They had taken off their hide armor, revealing their burnt red bodies. Though they were lying in the water, it couldn't relieve them of their pain. They still tossed and turned, crying out pitifully.

Some of the Beastmen had already stopped breathing, turning into corpses. They floated in the water, tossed about by the waves.

No one cared about them; they were all tormented.

After seeing these people, a message appeared in Link's vision.

Mission accomplished: Defeat?

Player Link +100 Omni Points

Begin next mission: Suspicious Beastmen

Mission details: Gain the trust of the Beastmen and receive help from them.

Mission reward: 100 Omni Points

Link immediately accepted it.

On the other side, Masos sighed when he saw this. "This really is a horrible dragon catastrophe."

Felina opened her mouth to speak but then stopped. Her fellow dragons had done this, and she couldn't refute it. She just felt extremely shameful. She involuntarily clenched her fists.

Link had jumped down from the war wolf and was walking towards the Beastmen. Hearing Masos, he said, "Masos, watch your words. Isendilan did this, but he can only represent himself. He can't represent the entire dragon race, just like how there are horrible humans too."

Masos flinched. He glanced at the quiet Felina and realized that he'd said something wrong. Running to Link, he pointed at a Beastman sitting quietly on a rock beside the lake. "Master, that's the Sky Shattering Warlord Holun."

Link saw him as well. This guy was abnormally big, at around seven feet tall. His muscles bulged, filled with powerful tension. The hide armor on him was a bit damaged, and his dusty brown hair was kind of burnt yellow. There were some burn marks on his skin as well, but he wasn't in bad condition.

He sat on the rock without moving, gazing listlessly at his struggling brethren. It was as if he couldn't hear the pained cries from the lake. Or rather, he heard them, but he couldn't do anything. He'd already done everything he could do.

Footsteps sounded. Holun looked over with his red eyes and saw four people who looked like humans walking toward him...No, there were three humans and one Red Dragon... Ah, it was a Red Dragon!

Why was the damn four-legged lizard here?!

Holun felt something explode inside him. He jumped up from the rock and prepared to fight but realized he had no weapons. He instantly turned around and bent down to pick up the boulder.

He applied force, but the rock didn't bulge. It was much bigger than he'd expected and the part he could see was just the tip of the iceberg.

Holun roared in anger. Was a rock going against him too?

"Move!" he yelled. The titan Battle Aura was activated.

There were countless cracks. Holun had shattered the rock with his bare hands. Hoisting up the boulder, he used all his might and hurled it at Felina.

"Die, dragon!"

The two-ton rock whistled through the air. It was two feet wide and cut the air with shocking power.

Felina was shocked. She knew she couldn't catch it, so she quickly jumped aside.

Boom! The rock crashed into the riverbank mud and sank in. Mud splashed in all directions while there was a shockwave visible to the naked eye.

Felina had just dodged and hadn't even steadied herself before she was slammed by the tidal wave of mud. She was practically swept off her feet, and her legs were already sore and numb. She almost collapsed.

At this time, Holun had already broken off another giant piece of rock. He held it high up and hurled it at Felina.

Seeing that Felina would get stoned to death, Masos hurried over and yelled, "Holun, stop! She's our friend. She's here to help."

"Masos? Did you leave the White Cloud City to die here?" But Holun still listened to him and tossed the rock aside. He glared at Felina. "Help? Others can come help but not a dragon. I want to kill them all!"

Felina paled. Rather than becoming angry, she felt guilty. She wanted to apologize, but Link stopped her. "He's lost his temper," he murmured. "Your words might make things worse. Let me talk to him."

"Okay." Felina nodded lightly.

Masos had already explained to Holun why Link's group had come. At the end, he said, "I'm really telling you to the truth, Holun. They're here to help."

Holun huffed, his nostrils flaring. Fury still burned inside him. "The two humans can help but that dragon...I don't trust her. Make her leave. If I see her again, I won't hold back again!"

His threat was very heavy. Felina couldn't leave, but she couldn't stay either. In the past, she would definitely walk away without looking back. She wouldn't take the mistreatment.

However, the Beastman was stronger than her, and she wasn't confident in her own strength, so she lost her pride. Furthermore, a dragon had caused this. She felt that she had to make up for it.

Seeing her like this, Link sighed. She was such an innocent girl. If it were him, he would leave if the other party didn't accept his help. Then he would return after he became stronger and teach the guy a lesson!

Now, he had to stand up for Felina. He walked forward and said coldly, "Beastman, you should apologize to the lady for your crude words!"

"Apologize?!" Holun's repressed anger flared up again. "You want me to apologize to a dragon? Those damn lizards killed countless of my brethren. They killed the grand shaman and so many of my brothers. They're still in torment now, and I have to apologize to her? Human, do you want to die?!"

As he spoke, Holun looked left and right. He was looking for rocks to teach this human a lesson.

Masos hurriedly urged, "Ah, Holun, don't be angry. This girl really came to help. She saved the people of the Uda Village before. The Magician helped too."

"Masos, scram. I'm going to teach this Magician a lesson today. Since he saved the Uda Village, I won't kill him."

Holun picked up the rock he'd tossed down earlier. He felt its weight and looked at the Magician. He was even thinner than Beastwomen, and this rock would definitely kill him. Holun tossed it down again and chose a smaller one. Weighing it, he still felt it was too much. He decided to not use a rock. A fist would do for such a small thing.

Waving his fist, he strode over to teach Link a lesson.

Link didn't hide, retreat, or use a spell. He pointed at the Beastmen Warriors in the lake and said, "They're gravely injured, but I can heal them. Would you rather waste time fighting with me and watch your brothers die one by one or..."

He trailed off. His words were effective.

The last moment, Holun was still intimidating. The next moment, he sagged like a leaking balloon. "What did you say? You can heal them?" He looked eager.

"Of course. That's why I came."

Thud. Without caring about his dignity as the Sky Shattering Warlord, Holun knelt down in the mud. "Save them! Please! I apologize for what I said. Please save them now!"

The change was so dramatic that even Masos who was used to the Beastman's temper was dumbfounded.

Link wasn't surprised though. Beastmen were much more straightforward than humans. They didn't care about pride. As long as they didn't feel disgraced, they would do whatever they want. Kneeling down in apology was child's play.

Link nodded reservedly. "Good, I accept it. However, Felina is my friend. You should apologize to her too."

Gritting his teeth, Holun glanced at the suffering Beastmen. After a few seconds of hesitation, he unwillingly apologized. "Sorry, I was too brash."

"It's alright. Indeed, I-"

Link knew that Felina was saying the wrong thing. Beastmen were straightforward and only respected the strong. If someone softened their stance, the Beastmen would think they were easy to bully and do that. Holun would definitely take advantage of Felina if she acted like this.

"Okay, Felina," he cut her off. "I'm going to look for some antidote ingredients. Take me there."

Holun also said, "Yes, yes, the Magician is right. Woman, stop wasting time and go save them."

See, he already guessed that he could bully Felina and spoke casually. If Felina continued to soften, Holun would get all over her.

Link scoffed. "Is that your attitude?"

Holun flinched and immediately changed his attitude. He slapped himself too, producing a crisp crack. "I'm sorry, miss. I spoke improperly again. Please don't be offended."

That sounded better, and they couldn't waste any more time, so Link said to Felina, "Let's go. The other ingredients are all in the lake. Take me there."

"Oh, okay." Felina's voice was rarely this gentle, but she'd felt warm inside from Link's protection.

She transformed into a dragon. When Link climbed on, she flapped her wings and flew towards the heart of the Crystal Blue Lake.

Holun didn't let out a breath until he watched them leave. "What's with this Magician?" he asked Masos. "He's so powerful. I can't even talk properly in front of him."

He didn't know the other's background, but there was an invisible pressure from the man's tone and expression. Holun couldn't act imposingly at all.

Masos smiled inwardly. He knew the reason—Link was powerful, but he also found Holun's Achilles' heel at once. No matter how strong you were, you'd still surrender obediently if the other had you in their palm.

He couldn't say that though. Instead, he had to make Link sound even better.

With a face of reverence, he said, "Oh, him? He's probably the strongest Magician in my race. I think that he'll be comparable to Bryant in the future."

"Bryant? Alright, I'll give it to him." Holun ran back to the lake and yelled, "Brothers, hold on! That human is the new Bryant! He's here to save us!"

The legendary Magician Bryant wasn't just a name to the Beastmen. To them, it was a title for the humans—a glorious title like the warlord of the Beastmen.

Hearing that the new Bryant had arrived, most of the despair in the elite Warriors disappeared. They started hoping.

## 296. A Peculiar Way of Plastering Medication

Link and Felina did not go far. After a few minutes, Link pointed to a shallow area of a lake and said, "Stop here."

The lake was merely about three feet deep, and one could see the bottom of the lake clearly. Felina landed rightito the water.

Link raised his wand and waited patiently. Just when Felina was about to ask, she felt a magic fluctuation behind her back. Following which, a spatial sphere around nine feet wide rushed into the water.

"Alright, I caught it," Link smiled. A water sphere then appeared in the middle of the lake. Within the sphere, a fish around six feet long could be seen being restited.

This fish had no scales on its body. It was cyan in color and was flat in shape. Under the restition of the Spatial spell, it was still struggling slightly, attempting to escape.

Link then explained, "This is a cyan eel, a water beast. The oil on its body has cooling purposes and is effective in neutralizing the poison from the dragon breath."

He then cast another spatial sphere into the air, and two seconds later, another cyan feel was caught.

The two cyan eels added up to at least 200 pounds. This was more than enough.

Link then changed the form of the spatial spheres to a spatial blade. After a few swishi

Link put away the flesh and the oil before saying, "Let's go."

Felina nodded and flew back immediately. She then asked along the way, "You mentioned the uses of the oil, what about the flesh? Is it useful as well?"

"Slightly, but not as effective as the oil. The flesh is mainly used for culinary purposes. It is delicious when used to make a broth," Link explained.

Upon hearing the word culinary, Felina's eyes widened. Her trip with Link had exposed her to many different delicacies that she had never experienced. She was originally in a bad mood, though the thought of food immediately made her hungry and expectant.

There seemed to be no return in the road to gluttony.

A few minutes later they returned to the lake. Link jumped down from Felina's back and stared at the Beastmen in the lake. They were still struggling and whimpering in pain. However, there were no new casualties. This was a good sign.

Holun immediately came forward and asked, "Master, how is it going?"

"It went well. I got the materials."

He took out the herbs that he previously harvested before casting a Spatial Sphere spell to envelop these herbs. He then activated the Spatial Slicer spell.

Three seconds later, these herbs had become a complete mush. Link then added in the oil from the cyan eel. This time, he used the Spatial Rend spell to thoroughly mix the ingredients.

Naturally, in order to prevent the complete disintegration of the ingredients, Link kept the intensity to a minimum.

The emerald herbs and the fish oil were mixed thoroughly amidst the vibrations, creating a peculiar reaction. The color of the concoction started turning darker and greasier. Around three minutes later, it had become a ball of dark green paste.

"It is done," Link stretched his other hand and lightly tapped the stone on his side, casting a Spatial Slicer spell and clearing spell.

The rough edges of the stone were completely smoothed out, and the Clearing spell purified the surface of the stone completely. Link then placed the completed paste on the stone.

"Alright, bring your men here and apply this medication to their bodies...Do not eat it...It tastes slightly weird."

Holun spat the paste he had just putito his mouth on the ground. The paste emitted a faint fragrance, which propelled him to give it a taste. Little did he know that it was this horrible tasting.

Masos was a lot more reliable in this aspect. He took a bit of the medicated paste and applied them on Holun's body. He then asked, "Old friend, how do you feel?"

"Hm?" Holun said in a confused tone, "It is cooling and refreshi

This is truly useful.

Holun immediately got to work. He ran to the lake and carried the heavily injured Warriors by hand while shouting at the same time, "Brothers, the medicine is here. Apply it quickly! Let me tell you, this feels as good as having a good night's sex!"

Although these words were slightly vulgar, it was extremely effective. Even a few seriously injured Beastmen were able to crawl towards the medication using their last bit of strength.

God knew what they had gone through.

They started applying the medication in an extremely unsightly manner. Before long, they were applying insane amounts onto their body, depleting the medication extremely fast.

Link quickly added, "You do not need so much, just a thin layer will do. Hey, don't eat it, it will not help."

Holun noticed that the medication was running low and shouted, "Brothers, save some of it for others! You, and you, why have you applied such a thick layer? Rub the excess onto your other comrades. Don't waste this precious medication."

Following which, Link and company stared with their mouth agape at the actions of the Beastmen.

Simply imagine over one hundred naked Beastmen with burns all over their bodies rubbing the slimy medication onto each other. As the injuries on their bodies healed, some of them even found the passion and energy to engage in intercourse...It was an unbearable sight.

"Oh, that feels good. I am in heaven!"

"It's so cooling, I am reborn!"

"Hey, what are you doing to my butt! I will break your treasure stick! Ah, don't come any closer!"

The situation was simply too chaotic. Link retreated for a few steps quietly for fear of being drawn into the mess. Felina had long run to a faraway spot in fear. Masos, on the other hand, stared at the scene with a bitter smile.

Nana was the only one who stared with curiosity and asked, "Master, what are they doing?"

Weren't they applying medication? Why are they huddling together and doing peculiar actions?

Link thought for a moment before replying seriously, "Perhaps their butt was also injured. They couldn't have reached that spot by themselves, so they needed the help of their comrades."

"Oh, the dragon breath is truly powerful. To think that it can reach so deep inside," Nana gasped in admiration.

Masos perspired profusely while listening to the conversation.

As the commander, Holun had probably seen many such instances. In fact, he was elated to see that his troops had regained their energy. He then ran to Link and said, "Master, your medication is truly incredible. You are my friend from today onwards. I will serve at your command."

As he said those words, an in-game message appeared in his field of vision.

Completed Quest Series Legendary Dragon Step 2: Suspicious Beastmen

Player Omni Points +100

Activate Step 3: Persuasion

Mission: Persuade Sky Shattering Warlord Holun to cooperate in the fight against Isendilan

Reward: 50 Omni Points

Link chose to accept it and smiled and Holun before saying, "Do you mean that?"

"The Beastman race will never lie!" Holun seemed to have been insulted and patted his chest with full force.

Link then said, "I am prepared to face Isendilan...Oh, he is the dragon that you fought not long ago. I need your help."

Holun fell speechless immediately. A hesitant look appeared on his face as he took a step back subconsciously.

"Why...Are you afraid? Or are you telling me you only pick on the weak and fear the strong?" Link was not surprised at this situation. Anyone would cower in fear in the face of a Legendary dragon's power. Not to mention that Holun had experienced this power first-hand.

Therefore, Link used tried to provoke him into doing such acts. He knew that the Beastmen could not stand any form of provocation.

Sure enough, Holun immediately patted his chest as his eyes widened. He said, "Why would I be scared? I cannot wait to kill him with my own hands! However, I do not have a weapon now, I cannot possibly defeat him with stones."

"That is truly a problem," Link agreed. Holun's axe was destroyed, though this was not a huge problem. He could create a weapon for him easily.

"If you have high-quality materials, I can make a weapon for you."

Holun shook his head as he said, "No, that is not possible. My weapon is not an ordinary weapon. You are a Magician and not an ironsmith. How could you possibly do that? Furthermore, I would break any ordinary axe with simply an action."

Link would never expect to be rejected when he offered to help someone with the construction of his weapon. This would probably only happen with the Beastmen, who were not informed of the happenings in the World of Firuman. If he were to offer this in the human world, the doors to the Ferde Wilderness would probably be flooded with volunteers.

Masos then started laughing as he patted Holun's shoulders. He said, "Oh Holun, my old friend, you have no idea. In the human race, Master Link is the top enchanter. You are extremely lucky to have him create a weapon for you!"

Holun could not believe his ears. His eyes widened as he said, "Are you sure? Can it be better than my Obsidian Axe?"

Link then waved at Nana and said, "Show him the dagger."

Nana walked forward and unsheathed the Last Nightmare. She walked to a stone more than three feet wide and slashed it lightly. With a light sound, the stone was split cleanly into two. The fractured area was also extremely smooth. Nana then put away the sword and returned back to Link's side with a proud expression on her face.

Holun stared at the dagger in Nana's hand and the huge stone on the ground interchangeably before he swallowed his saliva and said, "A dagger with such sharpness exist in the world?"

He was not impressed that the dagger could split open the stone, as he could manage that himself with ease. He was amazed at how effortless it was for Nana to slice open that sturdy rock. Furthermore, the fractured area was extremely smooth and showed no signs of cracking. This could only mean that this stone was not split open by brute force, but merely the sharpness of the blade.

This was terrifying and was completely beyond Holun's understanding of weapons.

"I created it," Link smiled as he said.

Holun immediately knelt on the ground as he said, "Master, as long as you can create an axe that is half as sharp as that dagger for me, I will do whatever you wish. I can even drink urine and eat feces without as much as a frown."

Link fell speechless upon hearing those words. He could not believe the words that Holun just blurted out. He then said, "Let's go back. I can only create the axe with good materials."

"That is no problem at all. The lord of White Cloud City has a treasure trove. He will definitely be generous enough to provide me with what I need."

In a low-lying valley, Isendilan lay on the floor covered in blood. His injury was on the right side of his chest. It was dealt by a Beastman.

The wound was nine feet deep. Upon the impact. The axe shattered into pieces, and many of the smithereens were still stuck in his body.

That was not all. The three great shamans cast a Divine spell which broke through his barrier created from the power of the principles with brute force. The power of the Divine spell then seeped into his body which depleted a great deal of his strength.

He was so weak now he could hardly fly.

"My lord, what do we do now?" Theron asked in a soft voice.

Isendilan was just about to speak when his eyelids twitched. He then said, "Stand guard outside. I want some rest."

Theron and Olisa exchanged glances and retreated as ordered.

After they left, a shi

"Why have you arrived? Are you here to gloat at my misfortune?" Isendilan grumbled.

"I am just taking pity on you. Unfortunately, you don't seem to be able to live long," the black cat said. As he said those words, he leaped a few times before landing on top of Isendilan's body.

Strangely, Isendilan merely shook his head to express his discomfort. He did not chase the black cat away.

"Those bunch of mortals cannot kill me," Isendilan sounded a little weak as he said.

"A hundred ordinary people would not be able to. But what if a Spatial Magician, a Level-8 Warrior, a level-9 Beastman Warlord and a great shaman combined their efforts?"

Isendilan fell silent for a long time before asking, "What should I do?"

"Listen to me. You can do this..." The black cat jumped to Isendilan's ears and whispered.

## 297. Pillar Figure of the Humans

White Cloud City.

This time, Link didn't experience any crowding. Wherever the Sky Shattering Warlord was, the Beastmen would immediately move aside. It was like squeezing a stick into a can of sardines, forcing a path out.

Holun didn't kill the giant dragon and sacrificed so many lives, so he felt disgraced. The entire way, his expression was dark. He walked wordlessly with his head lowered, not slowing down until he reached the house of the White Cloud City's city lord.

The so-called city lord house wasn't bad. It was a stone longhouse with two levels and quite big as well. It was more than 100 feet long and wide. In the impoverished Beastman city, it was good, but in a human city, it couldn't even be compared to a rich merchant's mansion.

The city lord had come to wait for them by the gate early on. He was an old Beastman around 50 years old. Link could tell that he was very strong in his youth and probably was a powerful Warrior. Now though, he was frail and hunched. His muscles had shrunk, and his face was wrinkled.

When Holun saw him, he said brusquely, "Old man, my axe broke. The Master Magician said he can make a new one for me. Hand over whatever good stuff you have."

The old Beastman wasn't annoyed at all. He smiled warmly. "A broken axe isn't much. All that matters is that you're back. If you need material, you can take whatever I have that you need."

Holun looked less tense. "Time is tight. I need a new weapon as soon as possible. Take me there now."

The city lord nodded and said to the soldiers, "Take good care of the guests."

After the guards replied, he took Holun away.

"Follow me." The guard looked at Link with animosity and stared at Felina even harder. Only Masos was spared the looks.

It couldn't be helped. Beastmen were naturally suspicious of foreigners, and it couldn't be changed within a short period.

The inside of the stone house was alright. It was furnished with tables and chairs, and after everyone took a seat, a voluptuous Beastwoman came out to serve them wine. Her features were quite pretty, and she had naturally curled black hair. Her figure was hot too with a bit of wildness. She was an undisputable beauty even to a human.

"This is Charlotte," Masos explained to Link softly. "The city lord's youngest wife. She specifically treats the Warriors. If you like her, you can tell the city lord, and she'll spend the night with you."

Link was taken aback. He didn't expect the Beastmen to have this tradition. Obviously uninterested, he shook his head. "That's nice, but the Beastmen are too strong. I don't think I can take it."

Felina heard this and was unhappy. She glared at Masos. "Merchant, mind your business and shut up!"

Since no one entertained him, Masos shrugged and drank by himself.

After a few dozen minutes, Holun came with a big sack to Link's side. He tossed the sack down with a thud and said a bit proudly, "Master, all the good stuff is here. Do you think they're okay?"

Link opened the sack and checked each object.

There were indeed quite a few good things, but they were all unrefined ore. He saw orichalcum, silver compounds, thorium, obsidian, star copper, and more. There were around 20 different types.

Link thought for a moment and got an idea. He chose five fist-sized rocks and said, "This is enough. You can take the rest back."

"That's it? You can take more. No need to save anything." Holun only knew that these things were valuable but didn't know how to use them. He just thought that if he used all of it, the axe would be really, really powerful.

Link couldn't help but smile. Beastmen were truly ignorant and uncultured. Few in the race had any wisdom. All they knew were some basic common sense and experience. But because of this, they had simple thoughts and wouldn't think about nonsense. They could easily put their all into a battle and were perfect Warriors.

When they joined the allies in the previous game and received the weaponry supplied by the other races, they produced shocking combat ability. They were the most elite group in the army.

Later, the allies had been able to fend off the demon army's direct attack mostly thanks to the Beastmen.

Seeing that Holun was worried this was perfunctory for him, Link took out the biggest piece of obsidian from the sack. "Adding this will do. You know, an axe is only so big. More material will just be a waste."

This made sense, so Holun accepted it. He scratched his head and asked, "Master, when will I get my axe?"

"I'll do it as fast as possible. During this time, I hope you can go find more helpers. You know, a giant dragon is hard to deal with."

Holun could relate to this deeply. "You're right. That dragon is honestly troublesome. Here, I'll go find Avatar. That guy's more powerful than me!"

Avatar, the Glorious Warlord, had unbeatable combat skills. The strongest human Warrior was Kanorse, the Dawn Swordsman. He had almost perfect techniques, but in the game, these two had fought, and Kanorse couldn't even block 30 of Avatar's moves. It was obvious how powerful this Beastman warlord was.

"We also need a shaman," Link reminded. Divine power was indispensable against legendary power.

"Okay, I will go find the grand shaman."

"That should be enough. Go."

Holun was impatient about revenge and didn't want to waste another second. He turned and left. When he passed Charlotte, he reached out and squeezed her b.o.o.b and said seriously, "Charlotte, when I defeat that dragon, I'm gonna do you for three nights!"

The Beastwoman glanced at him and patted Holun's crotch. "Then you have to come back alive."

"Wait for me!" Holun left the house with the expression of a tragic hero.

Link drank some wine and started working on the axe after a short break.

He didn't plan on changing the axe's original appearance or weight because Holun was already used to it. Changing it could affect his performance. Link didn't plan on adding some special magic effect to the axe either. It was too complicated, and Holun's straightforward brain wouldn't be able to use it. Link just planned on creating the sharpest battle axe.

As for magic...there was only one spell that could work. The effect would strengthen Holun's power and endurance to the maxe. In other words, it could turn him into a war machine that wouldn't tire out on the battlefield.

If he could do this, Holun had to have endless vitality.

A regular spell couldn't do this. He had to use a "blood-sucking" spell. Here, the blood was another name for "vitality."

Blood-sucking spells can be both good and bad but it doesn't involve much power from the soul, so it doesn't count as black magic. There might be some problems with humans, but the Beastmen don't care about this so I'll use it.

With that thought, Link started to construct his first slightly-demonic weapon.

While Link was doing his best on the axe and Holun was hurrying around gathering manpower, a human dressed as a scout raced across the Golden Plains on a horse.

This man wasn't a stranger—it was wandering vigilante Skinorse. He'd wanted to join the Norton Army and go with Link, but Link was busy, and he couldn't wait, so he went to the North first.

Because of his power and extraordinary sneaking abilities, he made many victories and was already the major of the MI3.

Coming to the Golden Plains this time, he only had one goal: give Link a letter in the Dragon Valley.

The reason was simple. The Dark Elves of the North were becoming more threatening by day, and the shadow of the Divine Gear was thickening. There were more and more demons, and everyone could sense that the Dark Elves were about to unleash their final attack.

How could Link, such a renowned Battle Mage, be absent during the time of crisis?

The reinforcements from the dwarves and Yabba people had asked about Magician Link as soon as they arrived at the Orida Fortress. When they heard that Link wasn't there, their expressions all darkened and they seemed dejected. It was as if the humans were nothing without Link.

For every moment that Link was away, a message for help would come his way. Even if he was at the end of the world, the messengers would risk their lives to find him. He'd now become a pillar of the human race, just like Aymons was to the Dark Elves. Countless people were counting on him. He had to be there!

Racing down the vast grassland, Duke Abel's words echoed in Skinorse's mind. Find him as fast as possible. We need his wisdom! I heard that a powerful human Magician appeared in the White Cloud City. Perhaps I should go look there.

Skinorse had a feeling that that human Magician was the Master Link he was looking for.

## 298. The Black Cat Is a God?

White Cloud City

While Link was busy crafting an axe for Holun, Felina was not idling around, she took Merchant Masos with her and circled around White Cloud City in search of the exiled God Elodim.

However, after an entire day of searching, she had not gotten any results. She clearly felt that he was right here in White Cloud City. It was strange that she did not even see a phantom of his appearance.

She had a feeling that the exiled God was avoiding her on purpose.

By late night, Masos and her returned to the Sleeping Giant Inn feeling lethargic after a day of futile work.

Link was also busy the entire day. He was just about to rest when he saw Felina. Looking at her dejected expression, he said, "It seems like it didn't go well."

Felina nodded and said, "I didn't find him. I have this feeling that he is playing catch with me. At times, I even have this feeling that he was staring at me in some secluded corner."

Masos was present as well. He had followed Felina around the entire day and was extremely tired. He felt as if his legs were breaking.

The three of them then made their way to the hall of the inn before finding a table to rest their weary legs. Masos massaged his legs as he asked, "May I know who you are looking for? If you are to tell me, I may be of help."

Felina did not know if she should divulge the secret to Masos. She then stared at Link to which he gave a reassuring nod.

She thought for a moment before she said, "I have no idea how he looks like now as well. I can only roughly tell his location. He is an exiled God and possesses unimaginable wisdom. We hope to find this person and obtain countermeasures against the Divine Gear from him."

"You don't know his exact appearance?" Masos frowned as he stroked the beard he had just tidied. He then said, "Even if you were to give a vague description, I would be able to help you find him. However, I cannot be of any help like this."

It was truly a dead end.

Link then fell into deep thought. He drank the beverage that was served as he thought about the peculiar magic book by Elodim he had read some time ago. He could get a sense of Elodim's character from the book.

After half a minute, Link said, "Although I have no idea what he looks like. He is definitely a strange one. Yes, extremely strange. He seems to be angry at everything in the world and is extremely arrogant, belittling everything around him...He should have another habit. He likes to sit on the roof while staring at the starry night sky."

Felina shot a glance at Link quizzically and said, "Link, what even..."

"I once read a magic book written by him. It was a peculiar yet powerful book filled with vulgarities and anger. Through his writing, I could sense his character. It should be some sort of intuition."

Words were the embodiment of a writer's soul. If a reader were to immerse themselves fully in the writing of an author, they could feel the very sense of their soul and their being. This interaction was extremely mysterious. Usually, people who could achieve this were exceptionally focused and patient people who possessed a strong mind.

Link was one of them.

After Masos listened to Link's explanation, his eyebrows twitched slightly.

Link knew that Masos was on to something and asked, "What did you want to say?"

"In White Cloud City, there is a being that fits your description perfectly, though it is a cat and not a human. It is an extremely intelligent cat," Masos said in an incredulous tone, though he truly felt that the cat was the being Link and company was looking for.

"A cat?" Felina and Link stared at this merchant expectantly, waiting for him to divulge more information.

Masos then nodded seriously and said, "Yes, a cat!"

He then described this cat in greater detail, "This cat has extremely shi

That was strange.

Felina munched at the food that was served in a daze. Although it was delicious, her focus was completely elsewhere. She said, "The queen once told me that this exiled God had basically no powers. The only special thing about him is his immortal soul. If that is the case, do you think he might have revived using the body of the black cat?"

This might just be possible. Link was starting to getiterested with this peculiar black cat.

"Masos, do you know where this black cat is?"

Masos then shrugged his shoulders as he said, "I have no idea. It appears out of nowhere. After all, who would bother keeping track of where a cat is. This is strange though. I would alwassee him around every so often before, but after you guys arrived, I stopped seeing him entirely."

Thinking back on Felina's experience, Link quickly came to a conclusion, "This black cat is likely who we are looking for. Although he is trying to hide from us."

"Why is he doing that?" Felina frowned. They were merely trying to ask a few questions. Furthermore, he was a God; even if he was exiled and had lost all his powers, there was nothing they could do to him. What was he afraid of?

"Perhaps he just does not want to see us. Or even...He might have found a way to escape this cage confining him. He probably thinks that we would ruin it for him," Link predicted.

Link did not pull this out of nowhere. He had derived this from the actions of the exiled God. The God was unsatisfied with his current state. He wished to regain his freedom and be unshackled from the World of Firuman. Would he ever let go of this chance if he could? Clearly not.

What could help me escape the World of Firuman? Divine Gear Dark Serpent?

That was not possible. According to the Red Dragon Queen, the Dark Serpent had already appeared three times. Elodim was also the one who helped expel the Dark Serpent for its past two appearances. This meant that the Dark Serpent was not his chance.

Link suddenly remembered the words of the Storm Lord's sword.

The Storm Lord's sword had mentioned that the world was going through some peculiar changes. The thing that was instigating these changes was probably Isendilan's revival techniques.

He described the spell as the destruction of this world's principles, a rift in time-space, and the disintegration of the world

Disintegration of the world? If the world is truly destroyed, wouldn't he be able to escape? Furthermore, Isendilan is also a red dragon. He could similarly, feel the presence of this exiled God and could approach him for help. Could it be that Elodim and Isendilan had combined forces, allowing Isendilan to obtain the revival technique?

At that instant, thoughts flashed through Link's mind. They were extremely terrifying and sent chills down his spine.

These were merely his conjectures without any proof. He could not say these baseless accusations as no one would believe them.

Felina did not notice Link's discomfort. She was still worried about the black cat as she said, "If a cat was truly avoiding us, there was no way we could find it. What should we do?"

Masos shook his head and said, "There is a method."

"Speak," Link's eyes brightened. Following which he said, "Wait, Felina, is he near us?"

Felina then took around ten seconds before she shook her head and said, "No, I cannot feel his presence. He must have known that I was looking for him."

"Alright then, Masos, speak."

Masos whispered, "I have heard rumors that this black cat is extremely gluttonous. He would appear in places where delicacies await, especially when fish was involved. He likes it so much that he will not be able to control himself."

"Not able to control himself? Please elaborate," Link pressed.

Although this story is slightly absurd, it seemed acceptable for a Magician who had written a vulgar and peculiar book. After all, he was simply a strange person.

Masos drank his rice wine as he continued, "This is a legend of the dancing black cat. Everyone in White Cloud City knows that if you wish for the black cat to dance, you will have to capture a fresh fish from the Crystal Blue Lake before boiling a pot of tasty fish broth and putting it on the roof. After a while, the black cat would arrive and enjoy his meal. Say nothing for the first time and continue doing so for a few more times. When the time is ripe, you can negotiate for a dance in exchange for more fish broth. After which, when the black cat is finally full, it will present a dance for you...Naturally, this is just a legend, though all legends usually contain a fraction of truth in them. Am I right?"

Link nodded. This legend definitely proved that this was possible. Furthermore, they were already at a dead end. They would have to take anything that was given to them.

"We can give it a try." Link nodded and quickly filled in the plan with more details, "We cannot be the ones doing this, especially Felina. This would increase his wariness. An ordinary Beastman should be the one doing this. This black cat doesn't possess any powers. The moment it appears, it should be easy to capture him."

Masos confirmed once again and said, "That is a simple task. I can find someone to do this for me. Are you sure that this black cat possesses no powers?"

Felina nodded and said, "Yes, he will just be slightly faster than normal cats."

Masos was still worried and shot a glance at Link. From his perspective, Link was the most reliable.

Link smiled as he said, "If he has the strength to rebel, why would he harbor such hatred? If he is indeed powerful, how could you attract him with merely some delicious fish broth?"

Upon hearing those words, Masos heaved a sigh of relief. He then clapped his hands and said, "Then consider it done. If the legend is true, I can bring the cat to you tomorrow."

If the cat had no powers, it would be akin to capturing a cat with faster movement speed. This was simple.

## 299. Youre Demons, Not Mortals!

The next day, Link completed the battle axe.

He was this fast because the axe's structure was honestly too simple. He only included one spell into the entire thing.

It was 160 pounds, five feet long, and the blade was 1.3 feet. Under the coordination of Link's enchantment spell, the various rare materials melded together, resulting in a strange amber-colored crystal. It was semitransparent and crisscrossing red runic strands could be seen. At a glance, they looked like veins.

It had a cold metallic glow on the surface, and the amber darkened as it got closer to the blade. The blade was extremely dark, rather than transparent, and gave it a heavy feeling.

The battle axe was done, but Holun wasn't back yet. Link wasn't in a hurry either. He put the axe away and started reading his book.

Around dusk, Masos knocked on his door. Link opened the door and saw Masos holding a cage. It contained an abnormally smooth-looking black cat.

"You really caught it?" Link was speechless. Did it really fall for the trick?

Masos laughed heartily. "It was easier than I expected. I just used a bird net, closed it, and it was inside, heh."

Felina heard the commotion and came out. She was in disbelief too. Circling the black cat, she nodded at Link. "My bloodline sensing tells me that it's him."

"Put it on the table," Link said. He could also tell that this cat was different from others. Its emerald eyes were very bright, like pure opals. One couldn't help but keep staring at it, meaning that it had a strong spirit.

Masos placed the cage on the table. "It indeed is a bit strange, and it's really fast too. After getting caught, it just squatted there, soundless and unmoving."

Just as he said, the cat was quiet inside the cage. Its limbs were close to its body, and its eyes were half-closed. It purred as well as if it was resting with its eyes closed. Link circled it and studied it closely, but it still didn't move. It was as if it couldn't see Link.

"Felina, can it understand us?" Link asked.

"It should, but it probably can't talk." Felina was uncertain. This cat seemed quite unique from the appearance, but it shouldn't be that special. It's possible that something happened when the exiled God wentito it, causing the black cat to lose some functions."

Link continued observing it. After a while, he felt he wasn't going deep enough, so he took out his wand and petted the cat with his Magician's Hand. The black cat looked at him lazily. It let Link probe without fighting back.

"It's a female cat...but Elodim was a man 800 years ago, right? Possessing a female cat was probably an accident. Can he get used to it?" Link asked curiously. As he spoke, he kept his eyes on the cat. If it could understand him, it should have some reaction.

But he was disappointed. The thing continued to lie in the cage, half dead. Its stomach rumbled and other than its appearance, there was nothing special about it. It looked just like a gluttonous cat.

"Is it possible that when he possessed the cat, he sank into a deep sleep to protect himself?" Felina suggested. "Otherwise, why would he be so easy to capture?"

Masos pursed his lips. "Seems like it. I can't believe that something like this is a God. He's just a lazy cat."

Link was annoyed. He'd come for pointers, but if the other was always like this, what use was there?

Something felt amiss when he looked at the cat. After thinking for a bit, he finally realized what was wrong. "Masos, didn't you say that its personality is like how I described? If it can preserve its personality, how can it be so ordinary? Furthermore, this guy was avoiding us earlier, and now it's acting like this. I'm sure it's pretending!"

"Pretending?" Felina studied the cat. It was still sleeping inside the cage. She didn't think so.

"We'll see if we try," Link said.

It was already the evening and time for dinner, so Link said, "Doesn't it like fish? Felina, I have blue rock salmon. Take it to the inn's chef to cook it well. It'll be our dinner."

"Okay." Felina took the fish out.

After half an hour, a server brought a pot of fish soup into the room. As soon as it was brought to the door, the thick fragrance floated in, lifting everyone's appetites.

Gulp. Felina swallowed thickly.

Link studied the black cat. It was still lying on the bottom of the cage without moving as if it wasn'titerested. This wasn't logical.

Masos realized too. "That's not right. I caught him using regular fish. It can't be compared to the big chef's fish. It wanted to eat so badly back then. How come there's no reaction now?"

Link and Felina exchanged glances. They had the answer already.

"It can at least understand us. It's definitely pretending right now. Maybe it doesn't want to reply to us, or maybe it feels embarsed about being caught so easily."

Masos laughed loudly. "It is embarrassing to get tricked by a regular guy as a God and be stuffed inside a cage. Tsk, if it were me, I wouldn't want to talk either."

Since they got to this conclusion, Link felt reassured. He was worried that the God had lost consciousness, but now, he only had to worry about how to make it talk. For this, Link would follow the Red Dragon Queen's solution: cater to its interests.

Link smiled. "Then we'll just let him stay in the cage alone. I'm hungry. Come, let's eat. Let me tell you, the blue rock salmon is fresh and tender but with a little firmness. It's ten times more delicious than regular fish

With that, Link gulped down a mouthful of the soup and sighed. He was completely satisfied. The inn's chef was truly good at his job.

The soup had a milky color. With one gulp, the tender, smooth, soft, and tasty flavor hit the nerves on the tip of his tongue. It transformed inobeautiful electric currents, flowing into his brain bit by bit—unforgettable.

Masos got the clue. He took a sip, and his eyes brightened too. "I can almost see the beautiful scenery of the Crystal Blue Lake," he praised. "I can die happy after tasting this perfection."

Felina didn't talk. She used her actions to show the deliciousness of the soup. While Link and Masos were talking, she'd already eaten a bowl of fish. The way she shoveled food into her mouth was the best proof of the taste.

Nana was curious too and tried a small bite. She felt that the taste was extraordinary, so she sat beside Link and took one small bite after another like a kitty.

The black cat in the cage was still unmoved. Its stomach continued rumbling, and nothing seemed to have changed.

However, Link discovered that the rumbles would pause. He also saw its whiskers tremble at times and its nose would move slightly too. The actions were minuscule, but Link saw it all. Let me see how much longer you can pretend for, he thought.

With that in mind, he continued saying, "The most beautiful part of life is being able to taste all kinds of delicacies. Masos, I heard that there's another special fish in the Crystal Blue Lake called the Blue nightfin snapper. Soup made from it is enough to make one go wild. Is that true?"

Masos nodded. "Indeed, but it's very difficult to catch the Blue nightfin snapper. A Beastman fisherman can get one per month if he's lucky. They're very expensive as well. One fish costs ten gold coins. Regular people can't afford it."

With that, Masos glanced at the black cat. He smiled and said, "This kitty loves fish, but I'm sure it has only eaten regular fish made with regular techniques. Blue rock salmon, red damask fish, and silver swordfish are rarer. No one would feed a cat with them. As for the Blue nightfin snapper, I'm sure it will never get a taste."

Felina laughed at that. "It's only ten gold coins. That's too cheap. How about we buy some tomorrow?"

Link nodded. "Sure. The chef of this inn is really talented. I'm sure he can make good use of the amazing taste of something as rare as the blue nightfin snapper."

"Nana wants to eat too," Nana said.

"No problem," Link answered with a laugh. He glanced at the black cat again. It wasn't snoring anymore. It closed its eyes and curled up on itself, burying its nose in its stomach.

Link guessed that it couldn't hold up for much longer, so he continued.

"Hey," he said to Masos. "When I was at the East Cove Magic Academy, my advisor Herrera really liked delicacies. She found some of the best chefs, and I got to enjoy the food as well. Back then, I ate a type of fish called the black pike. The chef used excellent knife technique to slice the fish into translucent sashi

Masos laughed when he heard that. "I know about that method. It first came from the Leo Kingdom in the South. A palace chef invented this method. The black pipe is its common name. The official name for this dish is garra lamta. Apparently, the king had some disease and wouldn't eat anything. He became so thin he was practically a bag of bones. But after eating the fish, he was so content, and he recovered. At that time, he rewarded the chef with 300 gold coins!"

Felina was very into the story. She sighed and said, "Ah, you're making me want to try all of them."

Link agreed. "I know, right? I also ate—"

"Enough!"

A crisp roar came from the cage. The black cat jumped up, its emerald eyes wide open and itshi

"You're not mortals. You're all demons!"

## 300. There Is No Stopping the Disintegration of the World

Sleeping Giant Inn.

The black cat actually started talking. Masos was bewildered at this scene though he quickly recollected himself and said, "Tsk, did I really capture a God?"

Link nodded and said, "You can tell from the way he speaks. Only a God would call us mortals."

Masos then stroked his beard as he laughed, "I can brag about this for generations to come."

The black cat gave him a cold stare before he sneered, "A few generations? You will be lucky enough to live your life in peace."

Masos was suddenly reminded of the weight of the situation. The black cat seemed to ignore him after shooting him a glance.

Masos suddenly felt a cool breeze on his beck. Although this cat was in a wreck now, he was still a God. If he ever recovered his powers, Masos would definitely be in trouble.

"I don't feel good. I'll be going back to rest," Masos said as he quickly made his leave.

Only Link and Felina were left in the room.

Link was not afraid of the black cat. He sat beside the table and observed the cat quizzically before asking, "How do I address you? Do I still call you Elodim?"

"A name is merely an alias. Call me whatever you want." The black cat assumed its languid appearance once again. It no longer stared at the fish broth that was some distance away from him, though his nose would still switch ever so often.

"Why are you hiding from us?" Felina asked.

"I like to do so. What can you do?" the black cat said impatiently.

"I'm afraid that is not all." Link tapped his wand lightly on the table, emitting a clicking sound. He had a calm expression on his face as he stared at Elodim with an unmoving gaze. No one knew what Link was thinking about.

Elodim felt guilty upon seeing Link's face. He immediately stressed, "Like I said, it's none of your business!"

Link merely sighed and turned to Felina before saying, "Forget it, we are not in a rush anyway. We will eat our dinner in peace and discuss the rest tomorrow."

Felina naturally had no objections. She then started eating the cyan eel meat. There were still large amounts of fish broth left. The both of them ate with relish.

A few minutes later, Elodim could not withstand the temptations anymore. He leaned to the side of the cage as he eyed the fish broth expectantly, pleading, "Hey, mortal. Let's make a deal."

This was not fully due to his gluttony. After his power was sealed, there was only this much he could pursue in life as a cat.

What else could he do?

Usually, when he was hungry, he could only steal food from the nearby stores. However, he could only do so occasionally. If he was ever caught, he would be in a miserable position. He did not wish to die once again. Using a dead body to revive was not as easy as it seemed. When he died in an accident the previous time, he had to lie in his tomb for six months before a black cat somehow graced the area.

That miserable past was too much for him to recall.

After obtaining the body of the black cat, he could only catch birds and rodents for food. He could only eat them raw as no one would cook his prey for him. Although he would not die if he starved, the discomfort from a starving stomach could very well drive him crazy.

He had to endure the nauseating feeling every time he ate a mouse just to satisfy his hunger.

He knew that if he were to please a mortal using his cute and attractive figure, he would definitely be able to lead a good life as a house pet. However, he was a God! How could he do something like pleasing a mortal! That was preposterous!

Link was just sucking on a fish bone as he turned around and laughed, "Do you want to have some?"

"I...do not want it. I only want to discuss some things with you!" Elodim used the last of his willpower to suppress his urges and replied affirmingly, turning his head in the meantime.

Link then ignored him.

Felina was starting to pity the black cat. She whispered, "This is not very nice. Should we give him some?"

Link shook his head and said, "You do not have to take pity on him. He has never ever taken pity on us."

In his heart, Link added, You have no idea what he is planning. This guy is not someone to be trifled with.

However, Link did not say those words out. They were merely his predictions. Furthermore, Felina would not be able to help. There was no reason to make her unnecessarily worried.

After a filling meal, there was still a lot of food left, though Link had no plans on giving any of it to the black cat. He cleaned the oil off his mouth and told Felina, "Rest early, I will interrogate him in the night."

"Alright," Felina nodded before she left. After all, she had no idea how the Divine Gear worked. It would be futile to stay and do nothing.

At long last, there was only Link, Nana, and the black cat left in the room.

Nana sat on a chair at the side and ate the fish bit by bit. She seemed to be constantly intrigued by it, even playing with the bones. Link then allowed her to entertain herself while he walked towards the cage and whispered, "Isendilan approached you. Am I right?"

The black cat's eyes widened, and his pupils dilated. It took him a full second before he recollected himself and said, "He is a red dragon. It is normal for him to be able to find me."

"You taught him the revival spell right?" Link said.

The black cat fell silent again. After ten seconds, he nodded and said, "You have quite a good brain for a mortal. You are right again."

"He promised you freedom?" Link's questions seemed disjointed, though he knew very well the black cat could understand him perfectly.

"No." The black cat shook his head before continuing, "He is merely a larger worm in my eyes. He does not have the power to give me my freedom. Freedom is something that I fight for. He merely brought me a delicious meal while feeling self-righteous that he had stolen a revival spell from me."

"He does not know that terrible consequences of the spell?"

"He should know a bit of it, though, he is not very clear. I don't think he will use it that often...It is indeed a strong spell. He will not be able to help himself. As long as he continues to use it, haha, Magician, you should know what will happen."

The black cat did not conceal his plans at all. The reason was simple. The plan was already like a carriage that had set off, the coachman none other than the Legendary dragon Isendilan. The road ahead was extremely foggy and was a one way trip to the abyss, though Isendilan seemed to be oblivious to it, charging ahead aimlessly.

No one could stop this carriage. It would eventually descend into the abyss.

The expression on Link's face did not change. His spoke in a calm voice, "Isendilan's greatest flaw is his arrogance. He completely ignores the power of mortals. If I am not wrong, he has just suffered a loss. He should be heavily injured. Am I right?"

The black cat stared at Link and sighed, "If not for my reminders, Isendilan might really die in your hands. However, you do not stand a chance now."

Link was startled upon hearing those words. He gasped, "I'm afraid you have also taught him a new Divine spell."

"Haha, you got it, though I do not have a reward for you," The black cat said as he squinted his eyes to stare at the fish broth on the table. He said, "Why don't you bring me a bowl of fish soup while it is still warm. If I am happy with how it tastes, I might bring you along in my escape. As for the Beastmen, you should stay out of it."

Link laughed and sat motionlessly in his position. He then sighed, "Little guy, you know how to cause trouble."

The black cat then said, "Mortal, are you sure you want to talk to me like this?"

Link ignored him. Instead, he turned to Nana and said, "Nana, the dagger."

Nana immediately took out the Breakpoint dagger.

Gliding his fingers across the sharp blade of the Breakpoint Dagger, Link laughed, "I don't think I need to explain how special this dagger is."

The black cat retreated for a few steps before nodding his head, saying, "It can destroy the point of singularity.

"Then, tell me. Can this dagger destroy your immortal soul?" Link glanced menacingly at the blade of the dagger while using his enchanting spells to smoothen out the golden exterior.

The black cat then shook his head firmly and said "There is no use. My immortal soul is indestructible!"

However, Link realized that the black cat kept his gaze on the dagger the whole time, instinctively displaying an alert posture. This meant that he viewed the dagger as a dangerous weapon that could probably hurt him permanently.

Link then laughed as he snickered, "I do not like to put my fate in the hands of others, even if they are a God. Therefore, I have decided to test this dagger out on your immortal soul. I will even use this dagger against Isendilan, to see if he is truly as powerful as he says. Do you think my plan will work?"

As Link said those words, the candle flames in the room flickered, casting an ominous illumination on his face. His voice was also extremely soft, to the point where a person would think he was bewitched.

Every sentence he said struck fear into the heart of the black cat. By the time he was done, the black cat had retreated all the way to the edge of the cage.

Link squinted his eyes and continued, "I am a Magician, and naturally, I am not adept in wielding daggers. However, my magic puppet can do this exceptionally well. She is extremely fast as well. Even if I open the cage and allow you to run around the room, you would not be able to travel more than three feet without getting caught. Of course, I do not like to push people into a hopeless situation, so I am giving you a chance."

Upon saying those words, Link turned to Nana and said, "Nana, clean your hands. I need a favor from you."

"Alright then, I am already full." Nana cleaned her hands on the tablecloth and took the dagger over from Link's hand.

Link then turned to the black cat and said, "I will open the cage. When I do so, you will run with all your might. My magic puppet will try to pierce your skull with this dagger. If you can escape from this room, we will not bother you any longer."

Link then placed his hands on the metallic cage door and cast an enchanting spell, changing the structure of the metallic lock bit by bit.

"Nana, are you ready?" Link chuckled.

"A simple request," Nana played around with the dagger as she said. Under the illumination of the candlelight, the dagger reflected a cold brilliance into the eyes of the black cat. Nana's eyes stared unblinkingly at the metallic cage door. The moment the black cat emerged from the cage, she would follow her master's order and put an end to its life.

Link then turned to the black cat and said, "Elodim, what about you? Are you ready to face your fate?"

The black cat stayed silent, though it retreated far away from the cage door.

The cage door was opened. Nana eagerly stared at the door, though after a long time, the black cat still sat motionless inside the cage. He seemed to have no intention of escaping.

Link then smiled as he asked, "What is happening? Didn't you want freedom? Why are you afraid now that I have given you this opportunity?"

The black cat then lay helplessly on the ground as he said, "Mortal, you have won. Let me have a good meal, and I will teach you a Divine spell more powerful than the one I taught Isendilan."

"Tsk, it seems like you still choose death," Link stared at him in contempt.

These Divine spells would definitely be detrimental to the World of Firuman in one way or another. The balance of the world would be greatly disturbed each time. This would accelerate the world's descentito the abyss.

If he used these Divine spells to go against Isendilan, the World of Firuman would quickly descend into destruction. Even if Link did not understand the exact workings of a Divine spell, he could easily guess it.

An amicable relationshi

Therefore, he had to be ruthless.

Nana then walked forward with the dagger in her hand, ready to end the life of this black cat.

The black cat caved in, "Stop, make her stop! I will tell the truth."

Link then stretched his hands to block Nana's way before he calmly said, "You have one last chance."

Link was simply too calm. He did not reveal any emotions in this entire conversation. This made the black cat extremely uneasy. He had no idea if Link would truly destroy him. If his immortal soul were to suffer a blow from the Breakpoint Dagger, he would at the very least be seriously injured.

He could not afford to take the risk.

After a long sigh, the black cat whispered, "It cannot be stopped. From the start, there were no brakes in this plan."

## 301. Lets Die Together

Sleeping Giants Inn.

The black cat's words shocked Link. He couldn't help but ask, "Will it be useless even if we kill Isendilan?"

"Yes. It's too late." The black cat shook his head and uttered the answer that threw them into despair.

Link couldn't accept it. "Even if the divine spell has damaged the World of Firuman, the world is able to repair itself. How can it be useless?"

The black cat laughed. "Heh, Magician, you know quite a lot, huh? But you must know that some poisons will only weaken someone while others are fatal. This divine spell belongs to the latter."

Seeing that Link still hadn't given up, he continued, "Let me explain it like this. The World of Firuman is a piece of glass. My divine spell has made a tiny fissure in the glass. It looks fine, but as long as the world continues to operate, the fissure will continue growing and growing until it covers the entire world. Then, boom, Firuman will shatter like glass. The difference between Isendilan using the resurrection spell once or ten times is just how soon the world will fall apart."

"Is there no way to fix it?" Link asked.

The black cat shook his head. "Perhaps, but what does it matter to me? I wish this cage would have shattered earlier. Anyways, I can't do anything."

Link's brows knitted slightly. "How much longer do we have?" His voice was frigid.

The cat shrunk subconsciously and then relaxed. This was just a mortal, and he had nothing to be afraid of. "Based off of the current situation, there are at most 20 years. That means that even if I don't do anything, I'll regain my freedom in 20 years."

With that, the black cat grew happy. He meowed at Link a few times. "Mortal, even if you kill me, you'll only live 20 more years than me, and you'll only destroy my physical body at most, hehe."

Link lowered his head in deep thought.

He could search for a way to repair the crack within the 20 years. If he couldn't do so, the game would be over. That was his situation now.

During this time, Isendilan couldn't continue to cast the divine spell or else the rate of damage would increase.

Under these circumstances, Link had two choices: The first was run from the Golden Plains and have the Beastmen leave as well to reduce clashes with Isendilan. This was obviously unrealistic.

Isendilan had legendary power. If one became his enemy, they couldn't just escape if they wanted. Furthermore, the Beastmen wouldn't listen to his orders.

That left the second solution: kill him as soon as possible.

As for this black cat...Link sighed. He should commit his all at this critical moment.

"Hey, what are you spacing out for? Too scared?"

The black cat laughed. His voice was crisp like a little girl, and his face was round. When he spoke, his tail swished, making him look adorable. However, this was an ancient creature that had been alive for who knew how long. The cuter he looked, the stranger Link felt.

"Don't be scared, mortal. The world ending is a very fast process. It'll be over in a bit. You won't feel any pain, and it would already be over so don't worry about all that. Give me some fish, won't you?"

Link didn't refuse this time. He filled a bowl with fish and placed it before the cage. "One bowl of fish for one of Isendilan's lives."

The cat agreed quickly. "Sure!"

It wasn't his life, so he didn't care. It just meant that he would have to wait longer to escape the cage and he could wait. Tasting the fish, he couldn't help but let out a meow and start gorging.

Link's voice sounded again. It had no inflections and was neither slow nor fast. He just spoke very casually. "I'll have Nana bring you around. From now on, no matter what happens, if I die, Nana will stab a dagger into your brain. If I get hurt, she'll stab you in the same place as my injury. Nana, will you remember that?"

The black cat had very ordinary strength, and Nana was on a totally different level. Hurting him was as easy as squashi

"Nana will remember!" Nana said in her lovely voice, nodding seriously.

The black cat froze. He suddenly felt extremely frustrated, and even the delicious fish became tasteless. "Mortal, you're so evil!"

This meant that even if the world fell apart, he would still get killed. Then what was the point of doing all this?

Link played with his wand and smiled. "If I'm going to die, then let's die together."

"I'm done eating!" The black cat waved his paw and smacked the wooden bowl to the side. Then he ran to one side of the cage, curled into a ball, and growled angrily to himself.

Ignoring his temper, Link took the bowl from the cage. Then he used the Magician's hand to pick up all the spilled fish and soup and said, "The Spider Queen Lolth's Divine Gear, the Dark Serpent, has entered Firuman again. Its soul swallowing skill is too powerful. I need a way to stop it."

"Go away! Don't talk to me!" The black cat was pissed.

Link didn't lose his patience. He cleaned up the soup and said to Nana, "Watch him. If he runs out, stab him through the head. From now on, he can't be more than 100 feet away from me. If he does, kill him. That is your most important mission now."

"Understood." Nana nodded and stared unblinkingly at the cat with her big eyes. It looked like she was ready to stare at him until death.

Reassured, Link turned and walked to his room. Not long after he lay down, a "little girl" started screaming from the living room. "Ah! damn you magic puppet! damn you, Magician! damn Firuman!"

Link flipped over and ignored him. He continued sleeping.

Nothing was said the entire night.

The next morning, as soon as Link opened his bedroom door, Elodim walked over obediently. He rubbed his head against Link's heel and meowed sweetly. "Magician, you win," he said. "Give me a bowl of well-made blue nightfin snapper in exchange for the solution against the Dark Serpent."

Link smiled instantly. He bent over to pat the cat's head. "That's the way, little thing."

The cat would rather claw Link's face, but there was a scary magic puppet standing beside him with a dagger. He didn't dare do anything impulsive.

He could only cry in his mind, Ah, whatever. I can't believe that someone as wise as me would fail so completely. When can I make a comeback?

After washi

Whatever, at least she's pretty. If it was an ugly hag magic puppet holding me, it would be even more torturous, Elodim thought weakly.

In the main hall, Link saw Masos and Felina.

Seeing the obedient black cat, Masos opened his eyes so wide they almost fell out. "Master, how did you tame it? It wasn't like this yesterday."

Isn't this a God? he thought. Can Gods be tamed too?

Link didn't explain his exact tactics and just smiled. "Felina, he agreed to help."

"Really?" Felina was happy. "I knew you'd have a way."

Meow. The black cat sighed and squirmed. He rubbed softly against Nana's b.r.e.a.s.t.s. They weren't much, but they were still soft. He could manage in this place.

Link stayed in the inn for the next few days. He didn't do anything other than learn how to undo Isendilan's divine spell from the black cat Elodim.

The black cat was powerless, but he was sharp, intelligent, and had bottomless knowledge. If he wasn't evil, he would definitely be the best Magician advisor in the world.

Sadly, this guy liked being tricky even when threatened. Link had to be guarded when communicating with him. Even though he learned a lot, it was exhausting to be so cautious all the time.

Three days later, the black cat was finally satisfied. "You can finally use your brain. If you use this solution, you can fight against the divine spell I gave Isendilan."

"Perhaps." Link was still doubtful. He didn't know the theories behind divine spells at all. Knowing the effect without knowing the cause was the most annoying thing in the world. He couldn't trust the black cat at all.

Isendilan's matter was finally settled, but Link didn't allow the cat to rest. He made the cat start calculating the principle power of the Dark Serpent.

He had the data left behind by the Maiden of Truth integration gear. With this, the black cat could calculate the Dark Serpent's strength. Of course, this required time.

While he was busy, Holun returned.

The moment he got back to the territory where Link was resting, he yelled, "Master, where's my axe?"

Link was at his table reading. Nana stood beside the table with the bored cat. The scene was the definition of calm.

Hearing the door open, Link took out his wand and waved lightly. The axe that had been rested against the wall flew at Holun.

Holun caught it and started studying it.

The axe looked similar to his previous black light axe, but he felt like something was different. After checking carefully, he realized that it had become prettier, but he didn't know how. It just felt like the chest of the city lord's wife, Charlotte. Once he got his hands on it, he couldn't let go.

He made some mock slices, and it whistled through the air. The weight was suitable and basically had no difference from before. Anyway, it felt right in his hands.

After a few more swings, his hand itched to try it, so he hacked at the stone wall. There was a soft thud, and the axe met some resistance before slicing out of the wall.

Holun looked at the wall. There was a millimeter-wide cut in the wall. Touching the hole, it was smooth as glass. Holun gulped and swallowed heavily. He hugged the axe tightly as if it was his lover.

"Master—"

"Are you done testing it?" Link interrupted.

"Yes, yes, I'm so satisfied."

"Good. Then get out and close the door." Link waved his hand. This big Beastman was too noisy.

"Ah, ah, I'll go now. You do you," Holun said timidly. He snuck out of the room and gently closed the door. Then he tiptoed out of the hallway until he left the inn. Finally, he couldn't keep it in anymore, and he exploded like thunder.

"Hahaha, come, come, come. Come look at my axe! I'm telling you, it's like divine gear! Avatar, come, come, look at my divine gear! Hey, Shaman, come look at my sacred battle axe!"

Hearing this, Link couldn't help but bury his face in his hands. This was so awkward. If an enchantment Magician heard Holun, he would laugh until his jaw dislocated.

The black cat couldn't stand it. He reached out, combed his whiskers, and licked his paws. Then he uttered, "Huh, Beastmen are all idiots!"

## 302. A Black Cat with No Integrity

The Beastmen truly gave it their all in this fight against a terrifying dragon.

Two warlords were sent to the battlefield. They were the Sky Shattering Warlord, Holun and Glorious Warlord, Avatar respectively. Five great shamans also arrived. It was rumored that the Beastman race sent half of their great shamans for this mission.

Apart from these powerful individuals, over two thousand Elite Knights appeared as well. Their main purpose was to defend against the berserk Beastmen and not to fight against the Legendary dragon.

Quickly, Link saw Glorious Warlord, Avatar.

He was about the same age as Holun, around tity-five years of age. He braided hishi

Avatar was a man of few words. He would not be as active and dramatic as Holun. He merely bowed slightly when he saw Link and said, "Lord of the Ferde Wilderness."

He had clearly done his research and knew Link's identity. This was a lot better than Holun.

To show his courtesy, Link respectfully gave a Beastman greeting in return, saying, "It is an honor to meet you, Avatar."

Avatar was the strongest person in the Beastman race. He displayed a sense of maturity not found in other Beastmen. In the game, Avatar was the one who unified the fractured Beastman race and became the king of the new Beastman Empire.

Following which, he went against the will of his people and changed their perception of other races. He then led the Beastmen to join the allied forces to fight against the Demon Army.

He was also the first Beastman to attain the rank of Legendary and at the same time, the strongest Warrior in the Camp of Light.

When Holun died, Avatar was already the lead commander of the allied army. He led a 70000 strong army to fight against a 60000 strong Demon Army, resulting in huge losses on both sides.

He also lost his life in the fight against Nozama, though Nozama paid a heavy price in order to kill him. Nozama's left arm was broken, and his ribs suffered the full blow of the War Hammer's attack. This forced him to retreatito his Demonic Fortress.

It was only after this incident that some players managed to take on the Demon Fortress mission and fight against Nozama.

It could be said that Link did not kill the Lord of the Deep while he was at his full strength. The reason why his team could succeed was due to the sacrifices of many powerful individuals before them.

Therefore, Link had the utmost respect for this Beastman.

Following which, Link met with the great shamans. After they had gotten to know one another, they set off immediately.

The Beastmen did not know Isendilan's exact location; they could only return to the battlefield to search for clues.

However, although they had no idea, Link knew exactly where Isendilan's hiding spot was. Specifically, it was the black cat who gave him the information.

Elodim whispered in Link's ears as they moved forward, "Go towards the Crystal Blue Lake. Isendilan should be recovering somewhere around there. There are two dragons beside him and over 20 dragon beasts. There are also 1000 berserk Beastmen guarding him."

"How do you know all this?" Link asked softly.

"I have met him a few times. I am extremely clear about his strength. Furthermore, I had just met him a few days ago. He is in serious trouble. His chest was split open completely. I predict that he needs at least half a month to recover," Elodim seemed to have abandoned all his principles for delicious food. He had sold off Isendilan completely.

"Alright then," Link had a new impression of this black cat. He had to observe Elodim's every action more carefully from now onwards.

Link could not convey these messages directly. He then thought for a moment before he approached Avatar. This Glorious Warlord had a good reputation and naturally became the commander for this mission.

"Lord of the human race, for what reason have you come?" Avatar spoke in a Shakespearean manner. He was extremely cautious this entire journey as well. After every road, he would send a few Beastmen to scout the surrounding area, only proceeding after making sure it was safe.

There were neither Warrior schools in the Beastman community nor were there people with such knowledge to impart. It was merely his talent that allowed Avatar to reach this level of skillfulness with war tactics.

"My magic has told me that Isendilan is just at Crystal Blue Lake. We simply have to head there."

"Are you sure?" Avatar asked skeptically.

"I am sure."

Holun, who was standing by the side, nodded as he said, "Master is extremely powerful. If not for his appearance, all my brothers would have been dead."

After a short moment of silence, Avatar chose to believe in Link. He raised his volume and shouted, "We will go this way."

Upon hearing those words, an in-game message appeared in Link's field of vision.

Epic Series Quest Step 3: Persuasion Completed

Player Omni Points +50

Step 4: Slay the Dragon!

Mission 1: Destroy Isendilan's pawns and prevent him from reviving them.

Mission 2: Destroy Isendilan

Reward 1: Player will obtain 100 Omni Points for every pawn destroyed.

Reward 2: Upon killing Isendilan, player will obtain the fourth Bryant's Scroll of Enlightenment.

Link chose to accept the quest.

He had one Scroll of Enlightenment in his hands which he had already understood to the very core. It could double his Mana Recovery Speed. While it sounded powerful, it was actually the weakest of all the scrolls. The other scrolls were much stronger than this. If not for the fact that he had no time, he would have already set off on a mission to find them.

To think that the in-game system would offer him one as a reward.

After a while, Link said, "My magic is telling me that Isendilan has many pawns protecting him. There are red dragons, dragon beast and even a large number of berserk Beastmen. Be careful."

"Thank you for your warnings," Avatar said and nodded as he proceeded with great caution.

Two hours later, a scout suddenly pointed to the sky and said, "Look, there is a dragon in the sky!"

Everyone stared into the sky and saw a blurry figure hovering above. Felina was the only one who got a clear view of the figure. She said, "That is a dragon beast. It is level-6 in strength. From the looks of it, he should be a scout that Isendilan sent."

Avatar immediately frowned and said, "Is this to say that he has noticed us?"

Link nodded and said, "Dragons have better eyesight than eagles. There is no way he could have missed us."

Avatar immediately brandished the War Hammer he was carrying on his back and hollered, "Prepare for battle!"

The Elite Knights were originally traveling in a sparse formation. However, upon the command, they wentito neat rows and stood at alert. It was evident that they had been trained well. As they were all Avatar's underlings, it also clearly displayed his efficacy as a commander.

Although such a neat and clustered formation would be effective in dealing with ordinary enemies, it was not wise against a dragon who could use a wide-area dragon breath attack. Link then whispered, "The dragon breath attack is destructive and wide. If we continue in this formation..."

Before Link completed his sentence, Avatar had already understood what he meant.

He raised his War Hammer and hollered, "Spread out!"

The Elite Knights then spread out in an orderly manner. Each of them was exactly 45 feet apart. They had clearly trained for this as well.

It didn't take long for Isendilan to appear with his pawns. The one leading the way was Theron with over 20 dragon beasts behind him. Olisa was well-protected in the center of the dragon beasts. Isendilan then trailed behind the entire group.

A large group of berserk Beastmen then traveled on the ground. There were around 1000 of them.

Previously, Isendilan had suffered great damage when dealing with the Beastman army. This time, he chose a strategic position. One would have to get past all his underlings in order to even reach him.

Isendilan truly possessed a formidable army, at least on the surface. The strength of his army looked like it could dominate the Beastman army anytime, especially the group of flying dragons in the air. They had completely dominated the sky, giving them the aerial advantage.

Avatar's expression changed slightly upon seeing the huge army and hollered, "Defensive formation! Shamans, Windwalker spell!"

A skeletal, old shaman came forward with a human-faced totem in his hands. He then plunged the six-foot-long staff in his hands into the ground and started dancing fanatically around this staff while muttering some peculiar chants. Following which, he released a ferocious howl, causing a white light to envelop every comrade on the battlefield, even Link.

Link found himself surrounded by a defensive whirlwind spell. At the same time, he felt extremely light. He then took a step forward and realized that he could cover nine feet with an effortless step.

"What convenient strength." Link could tell that the Elite Knights had become extremely fast. As they ran, phantoms of their shadows could be seen lingering at their previous location.

Sky Shattering Warlord Holun then grabbed his new axe and hollered enthusiastically, "Haha, I will kill you oversized lizards with my weapon!"

Avatar then began to make arrangements systematically, "Holun, bring the Elite Knights to fight with the berserk Beastmen. I need you to eliminate them within ten minutes!"

They had an advantage with 2000 Knights and one Level-9 Warlord against 1000 berserk Beastmen.

"Leave it to me!"

"Haler, Mursa, Delta, you will help me deal with the dragons in the sky."

"Understood," the five shamans nodded as they replied.

Link was speechless at this arrangement. Although he was a Level-9 Warlord, it was simply too brazen to deal with all the dragons in the sky with just six people. There was even a legendary dragon in the mix. He must be really confident in his abilities.

However, Link also knew that Avatar had no choice but to delegate it as such. Before Avatar asked him for help, Link said, "I will help you deal with the dragon beasts. You only have to focus on the red dragons."

There were around 20 dragon beasts in the air, and they have spread out far apart from one another. They were Level-6 in strength and were extremely agile. It would reduce a great deal of pressure if Link were to help deal with these troublesome little creatures. Avatar then nodded at him with gratitude.

Taking advantage of the tie before the battle began, Link turned to Felina and said, "You will deal with the dragon beasts later on. Stay far away from Isendilan."

"I understand."

"Nana, bring the cat with you and help Holun with the berserk Beastmen. Try to defeat all of them in five minutes so that Holun can help deal with Isendilan!"

"Understood," Nana stared at the black cat in her hands. After thinking for a moment, she stuffed the black catito the cleavage before she tightened her leather armor.

"Hey, let me go! I will die from the speed you are traveling at!" The black cat struggled constantly, clearly trying to break free from Nana.

"Good little kitty, I will take note of it. Don't worry," Nana patted Elodim's head lightly to comfort him before stuffing him back into her armor.

The black cat then reluctantly yielded.

On the other hand, Isendilan did not have any plans to begin with. His gaze had been set only on one person this whole time. He stared at Link as he said, "Little guy, I have searched high and low for you!"

This human Magician not only destroyed his revival spell but also caused him to suffer serious injuries. He was now the number one target.

He only had eyes for Link.

As for the black cat? Elodim was simply too far away and too insignificant. Furthermore, Nana had stuffed Elodim into her armor, making him even more inconspicuous. Due to all these factors, Isendilan seemed to have left out this important detail.

"Charge!" Glorious Warlord Avatar yelled.

He pointed his battle axe at the Wild Beastmen. The Elite Wolf Knights immediately began waving their weapons and charging towards the Wild Beastmen while yelling.

The Sky Shattering Warlord Holun rode a white wolf. He was at the front, and his voice was the loudest. "Come fight! You cockroaches, take my Divine Gear!"

Argh! The dragons in the sky separated. They rushed down, targeting the Wolf Knights below.

These elite soldiers were at Level-4 on average with a few at Level-5. To regular people, this was extremely powerful. Even Wild Beastmen were only a bit stronger than them. However, they couldn't put up a fight against the powerful dragons who were at least Level-6.

Link also rode a wolf, following the Wolf Knights. Seeing that the dragons were about to charge into them, he pointed his wand at the sky. "Demon Slayer!"

Whoosh

Light flashed in the sky. Then there was a terrifying crack. The dragon was hit square in the chest. This was Level-8. How could a Level-6 dragon take it? It actually exploded in the air!

bloody rain began to fall. This was only the start.

The red whip was like the call of the God of death. It moved at will within the 300-foot range. There were four dragons in the proximity. They all exploded within three seconds.

Link didn't stay in place. He urged the wolf left and right, rushi

Boom, boom, boom! Three more dragons burst apart.

The dragons cried out. They hovered in the sky without daring to descend anymore. The Magician down there was too frightening! Only a few seconds had passed, but half of them had died while the Wolf Knights were unharmed. They couldn't keep doing this!

Avatar had his eyes on Isendilan and two other giant dragons. He spared a glance at the battlefield. Seeing this, he was relieved.

The flying dragons weren't a threat, and fewer of his soldiers would die. The human Magician lived up to his reputation. This was very good.

On the other hand, Isendilan grew impatient. "You two," he muttered, "distract that Magician. I am going to cast spells."

The situation was to his disadvantage. The enemy included two Level-9 fighters, five grand shamans, a Level-8 Dragon Warrior, and an impossibly fast magic puppet.

Faced with this, even Isendilan could be defeated from a slight mishap if he tried to fight directly. Thankfully, he had another solution. When Theron and Olisan charged towards Link, Isendilan flapped his wings and flew higher. A few seconds later, he was 3000 feet in the air. Legendary Dragon Power began to surge inside him.

Rings of crystal-red light wrapped around him, forming a 300-foot-long ring. Terrifying waves of power continuously streamed from the ring of light. Streaks of red mist appeared like lightning. They increased and spread in all directions.

The entire sky started changing color. The dark red halo spread, darkening dozens of miles. The white clusturned red as if they were set on fire.

The ball of fire and light was like the end of the world. A voice came from within. "Mortals, tremble in fear! Have a taste of world-ending Dragon Fire!"

That was his battle technique. It was very simple and violent!

No matter how many enemies or powerful fighters he faced, he only needed to take advantage of his flying abilities and cast this super divine spell. Then the world would turn silent.

On the ground, everyone stopped fighting and looked up in a daze.

Theron was about to pounce on Link. Seeing the spell, he froze and asked Olisan, "We'll die from the duke's spell too, right?"

Olisan nodded. "After this spell, other than him, no one else will survive... but he'll definitely resurrect us."

Hearing that, Theron wasn't afraid anymore. He continued charging at Link. But even though he wasn't afraid, the Wild Beastmen and flying dragons were panicking. They didn't get the resurrection treatment. If they died, then they died. The duke was clearly ready to kill them all so why should they keep fighting?

They turned and ran.

On Avatar's side, a grand shaman's voice trembled as he said, "The situation is bad. That dragon has gone crazy. His divine spell is really, really scary. It can destroy everything!"

As a Level-9 fighter, Avatar also felt the immense danger. It almost felt hopeless; even more hopeless was that the opponent was thousands of feet in the air. He couldn't even fight back.

He could only wait for death!

Holun also stopped killing. Furious, he pointed his axe at Isendilan in the air and roared, "You coward! You ugly cockroach! Come down and fight me!"

"Mortals, tremble! Despair!" Isendilan obviously wouldn't come down. He loved the feeling of peace right before the attack.

On the ground, Nana had stopped chasing the Wild Beastmen too. She returned to Link. Taking out a dagger, she pointed at the black cat's head and asked, "Master, should I kill it?"

The black cat struggled and finally poked its head out of Nana's collar. Looking at Link, it pleaded, "Stop waiting. If you keep waiting, the divine spell will come. Destroy it!"

Link had no other chance. Glancing at Nana, he said, "Do it if it goes wrong."

"Hurry! I'm not lying!" The black cat truly felt wronged now. It really didn't lie this time. Why didn't the human trust it?

Ignoring it, Link took out his wand. He raised it to the dragon in the sky and said, "Poirotson Axina Thacca Morata, unlock!"

The first half was a name. More specifically, it was the black cat's true name.

A God's true name was not merely a name. It contained a great amount of ancient contracts and laws. Saying the true name was summoning that power. The last word—unlock—was to summon the specific type of power.

Link's sentence was like a curse. It meant, In the name of the God's true name, summon the ancient contract to unlock all power of distortion in the world.

Isendilan's divine spell used the power of distortion.

As soon as Link finished, a fist-sized ball of white light appeared at the tip of his wand. It stayed for half a second before a thin white beam of light shot out. It was extremely fast. In a flash, it snaked into the thick red halo around Isendilan.

At this time, the red lightning-like fog inside the halo had stretched more than 1000 feet in all directions. The entire sky was dark red as if the end of the world was about to come.

But as soon as the white light dug into it, everything changed.

Boom, boom!

Thunder cracked amongst the red fog instantly. At the same time, countless bits of frost-white lightning spread along the red lightning-fog, quickly dissipating it. After three seconds, all red fog disappeared. Similarly, the redness in the sky disappeared too. The sky became clear again.

Finally, the protective red shi

This only lasted for a moment. Then his body started dropping.

Holun was dumbfounded. This was the first time he'd seen a dragon fall for no reason. What exactly happened?

Avatar saw it clearly though. He was shocked and happy. "The human Magician did it. He's falling, and this is the best chance to kill him! Follow me!"

Theron and Olisan were also dumbfounded.

"Why isn't the duke moving?"

"The Magician did it. I don't know what spell he used!" All Olisan felt was disbelief. The duke's power had been strong enough to destroy everything within dozens of miles. How could it be defeated by a white strand?

What spell was this?

Boom! Isendilan crashed straightito the ground from thousands of feet in the air.

He fell at around 500 feet per second. He crashed into the soft grassland, and this obviously wasn't enough to hurt the impossibly strong dragon. However, the lightning restiting his movements didn't disappear completely after the fall. He was still numb.

"I knew it! I knew that Magician would ruin things! Dammit!" Isendilan yelled. He flapped his wings, trying to fly again. However, his wings were sore and weak. Try as he might, he could only hover slightly.

Avatar reached him now. With the shaman's spell on him, Avatar dazzled. Five colorful elemental balls spun quickly around him. His battle axe slammed down on Isendilan's leg without hesitation. "You can't escape!"

The Sky Shattering Warlord Holun arrived at almost the same time. When he saw Isendilan fall, he knew this was a rare chance to kill the dragon. He immediately gave up on the Wild Beastmen and rushed over.

"Ah, cockroach, have a taste of my Divine Gear!"

Before he arrived, there was buzzing. His body started flashi

The God of Fire's Wrath!

The God of Wind's Power!

Wild Tide of Thunder!

The shi

The Barrier of Metal!

When Holun got closer to Isendilan, he was glowing just as brilliantly as Avatar. Under the grand shaman's reinforcement, his power had increased by 50 percent!

"Die!" He slammed his axe at Isendilan's other leg, almost simultaneous with Avatar's attack.

Faced with the full force of two Beastmen Warlords, Isendilan couldn't try to block it. Even worse, he was still numb. He tried to retreat with all his might. While retreating, he activated shi

The crystal-red power enveloped him, forming a two-foot-thick shi

The next moment, there was an explosive sound. Holun's axe first hit the shi

Holun's power was terrifying too; even Avatar wasn't his match. He'd also received Link's battle axe. It had absorbed a great amount of vitality from killing the Beastmen earlier. Now, Holun felt vigorous to the max. The axe had reached a level he could never reach before.

With the additional elemental aid, Isendilan's spell couldn't stop the axe. It shattered immediately.

On the other hand, Avatar saw this and realized that the axe could destroy the shi

Boom! With the muffled thud, Isendilan's twelve-foot-wide leg was crushed. Flesh and blood splattered. A shockwave visible to the naked eye went through the leg. It instantly distorted and became crippled.

Isendilan cried out in pain. The lightning around him finally disappeared. The numbness became faint under the immense pain as well.

"Go away!" He flapped his wings furiously. A violent gust of wind blew by.

Avatar immediately flipped over. He sprawled on the ground, clutching the dirt, so he didn't get blown away. Holun didn't dodge the hit though. Rather than reacting slower than Avatar, it was because he wasn't as skilled in predicting.

He was blown into the air from this hit. In mid-air, Isendilan opened his mouth wide. Dragon Breath came spewing out, going straight to Holun.

The moment between life and death, Holun instantly activated his Battle Aura at full force to stop the Dragon Breath. However, Legendary Dragon Breath was too powerful. His Battle Aura was being consumed at an impossible speed. If this kept going on, he would be baked alive in two seconds.

Am I going to die? The thought flashed past his mind.

Just then, white light lit up around him and disappeared. An instant later, Holun's surroundings changed drastically. The scalding Dragon Breath was gone, and he was under Isendilan. He was right in front of the dragon's belly. Under it, two six-foot lumps of flesh dangled. It was the dragon's balls.

A great opportunity!

Holun's mind was simple. He didn't wonder why he suddenly arrived here. He just thought that he had to do it!

## 303. A Legendary Conflict

When the white light appeared, Isendilan was already on guard.

When Holun appeared beneath him, Isendilan cursed, "damn it, it is that Magician again!"

He was in dragon form and was a lot clumsier. It was too late to dodge the attack. He had to defend himself against the attack.

A light humming sound could be heard, and Isendilan's abdomen area was covered in a thin layer of crimson mist. The mist seemed extremely thin, though Holun's speed greatly decreased when he entered the range of the mist. He was at least ten times slower, inching his way forward.

Holun did not realize this as well. He stared at the target above him with a death stare. He felt as though he could reach him in the next moment.

"Ha, giant lizard, I will destroy you!" Holun chuckled.

However, in an instant, he realized that the giant lizard got incredibly fast. He was just at his top speed a few moments ago. How could he have teleported away from his attacking range?

"How is this possible? How can he be so fast?" Holun gasped. He could not understand this at all.

This is the power of Spatial Magic. The victim would usually not feel any peculiarities. From the victim's perspective, the other party was the peculiar one. Link was familiar with these techniques as well.

Just when Isendilan was about to escape from the attack, Link pointed his wand at Holun and shouted, "Restore!"

Mana surged into his wand, and an incredible aura surrounded Holun. Ripples appeared around his body. Fine arcs of lightning could be seen on the boundaries of these ripples.

These flashes of lightning were the by-product of the clash of Spatial Magic between Isendilan and Link.

From Holun's perspective, the giant lizard was just about to escape his attacking range when he seemed to receive the blessings of the Gods, experiencing a sudden increase in speed. He then once again charged towards the giant lizard.

This was simply too strange. Even a dim-witted guy like Holun could feel the peculiarities, though he was too lazy to understand the theories behind it. He simply charged ahead!

"Hahaha, giant lizard, I am here again."

Isendilan knew that Link was the one behind this. However, he had simply no time to deal with him when so many powerful individuals were on his heels. He merely cursed in his heart.

This Spatial spell had earned him some spellcasting time as well. A crimson brilliance once again appeared, enveloping his body in a casing of dense crystal.

This crystal structure looked slightly strange. Upon closer inspection, one could see red thorns hidden within the structure.

This was no longer a Level-9 spell. This was a legendary Defensive Spell—Crimson Thorn Barrier.

Crimson Thorn

Level-10 Legendary Spell

Effect: Makes use of the power of the principles to construct a giant force field. This barrier can defend against all mortal spells and rebound 50% of the damage back to the attacker.

At that moment, Isendilan displayed his prowess as a Legendary individual. He constructed this barrier instantly. Link knew exactly what Isendilan was doing, though he did not have enough strength to prevent it from happening. He could only watch as Holun charged into the pit of fire.

The next moment, Holun's battle axe clashed rightito the crimson crystal barrier.

A blinding brilliance emanated from the barrier, though it was not destroyed.

When a spell reached a Legendary level, it would have attained a qualitative change. No amount of attacks under the Legendary level would be able to go against it.

Holun gave a scream of pain before he flew back onto the ground. He even dropped his battle axe as he fell. His hands were drenched in blood as he gave an expression of excruciating pain.

"What kind of barrier is this. damn it, it hurts!" Holun lay motionlessly on the ground, though his voice is still full of vigor. It seemed like he would live.

Isendilan would not let that happen. He lifted his leg and attempted to drive it down onto Holun.

He would definitely smash Holun simply by using the strength of the dragon form.

A white light enveloped Holun before his body disappeared. When Holun appeared once again, he had already returned to the shaman's side, together with his battle axe.

An old shaman then walked over immediately and plunged his human-faced totem staff into the ground, before dancing fanatically around it once again. Amidst his dance, green light ripples could be seen emerging and floating towards Holun.

Holun's wounds then recovered at a speed visible to the naked eye.

At the same time, the other four great shamans were not idling as well. They all plunged their staff into the ground and started dancing in unison.

Isendilan immediately bellowed with rage. Previously, his beloved Legendary Barrier was destroyed by the exact same peculiar dance. He would not fall for the same trick twice!

"Die!"

Isendilan completely let down his guard as he charged towards the great shamans. He then opened his mouth and released a dragon breath attack.

Each of the great shamans was already planning on sacrificing themselves. They continued to cast the Divine Spell and gave up on dodging or defending.

As the dragon breath attack was about to hit the great shamans, a blinding figure leaped from the ground. It was the Glorious Warlord, Avatar.

Avatar released his Battle Aura, causing his body to be enveloped in a dual gold and red colored brilliance. He then took the full blow of this dragon breath attack.

He could only withstand the pressure for a total of three seconds, though any delay would be good at that point.

"To think that an ant would block my way! How intriguing!"

With a loud bellow, another dragon breath attack was released. Avatar then leaped up once again as he prepared to block it once more.

He was prepared to die for this mission!

At that moment, translucent ripples appeared on the trajectory of the dragon breath attack. It was originally extremely concentrated and powerful, though each time it passed through a ripple, the intensity of the flames slowly dissipated. By the time it passed through the fifth ripple. The dragon breath attack merely had the offensive power of normal flames.

One second later, when the flames passed through Avatar's body, he merely felt a slight warm sensation. It did not deplete much of his Battle Aura.

Isendilan knew exactly who was behind this. He turned towards Link and said, "Magician, have you had enough?"

Link had not only hindered him but also toyed with him a few times, causing him to end up in such an embarrassing state. Isendilan hated Link to the point of no return.

However, Isendilan still had not lost his mind. He knew that the greatest threat on the battlefield were still the shamans who were dancing like a bunch of monkeys. He had to destroy them.

"Theron, Olisa...damn it!" Isendilan wanted his underlings to deal with Link. That was when he realized that both of them were getting toyed around by Nana. They could not afford to help him.

That was to say, no one could restrain Link.

Isendilan's rage had reached a boiling point. He gritted his teeth as he stared at Link and said, "I don't believe that you can block my Legendary spell! Principle: Disintegration

Principle: Disintegration

Level-11 Legendary Spell

Effect: Condense space into an unimaginable state before expanding them rapidly to cause an explosion. They will appear in high intensity and frequency throughout a 900 feet radius.

(Note: Mortals, run for your life)

Isendilan opened his mouth, and a spatial sphere appeared from his mouth. When the spatial sphere first appeared, it was the only one on the battlefield. However, as it hovered in the air, it began to splitito two, before becoming four, eight and filling the atmosphere with countless small spatial spheres.

Explosion sounds then appeared consecutively, as though an endless thunder was rolling across the sky.

Avatar was the first victim. He was hit by a spatial sphere only the size of a fist. However, after the explosion, this Level-9 Warlord was blown away. He then landed in a distant spot 600 feet away. Although he did not suffer many injuries, he was completely in a daze.

That was not all. The spatial spheres then gave chase. It seemed like they were not stopping until he was dead.

There was no way he could defend against that.

"Have we failed?" Avatar stared at the Legendary dragon from a distance as a sense of despair rose in his heart. This dragon is simply too intimidating. They were not his match.

The spatial spheres continued to expand and were about to reach Link.

Link was already preparing a countermeasure when Isendilan was casting this spell.

He was so focused that everything in his field of vision seemed to slow down. He then quickly thought, Purchase Legendary spell!

The Legendary spells available for purchase flashed through Link's mind. Link quickly chose a Level-11 Legendary spell, Miracle Aura.

Miracle Aura

Level-11 Legendary Defensive Spell.

Mana Cost: 17300 Mana Points

Effect: Creates an incredible aura that extends for a radius of 1200 feet. Allies who possessed this aura would be temporarily invincible and unaffected by almost all attacks.

(Note: This is simply a miracle!)

Link had set his sights on this spell a long time ago.

Link had 250 Omni Points and could purchase this Legendary spell with ease. This was also the only Legendary spell that he could afford to use with his current Maximum Mana. The other Level-11 Offensive-type spells had a Mana Cost of above 20000. It would be pointless even if he bought it. Link still had 13500 Mana Points left. He then used the remaining 140 Omni Points on his Maximum Mana and drank a perfect Mana Recovery Potion without hesitation, recovering 2000 of his Mana Points. Coupled with the Clear Thoughts effect of the Flame Controller's Robe, his Mana Points reached 18000, while his Maximum Mana was 18500.

This was just enough to cast the Miracle Aura spell.

When the Disintegration spell arrived, a light blue aura enveloped Link. The moment this aura appeared, it extended to cover the entire area within a 1200 feet radius.

In this area, the knights, Felina, Nana, the great shamans, Holun, and Avatar were enveloped in a thin layer of a Legendary barrier.

The next instant, the Disintegration spell reached the peak of its destructiveness.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

A rumbling sound similar to thunder rang across the area. The area within the effect of the spell was utterly destroyed. Dirt splattered everywhere as many fissures opened up on the ground. However, when this destructive force came into contact with the blue aura, it was surprisingly unable to penetrate through its defenses.

Isendilan's prided Legendary spell was completely shut down by a human and amounted to nothing.

This was terrifying!

"How can this be?" everyone gasped. At that moment, all enemies and foes stared at Link with a bewildered expression on their face.

"Legendary spell? Have you ascended to that level?" Isendilan stared at Link with widened eyes and retreated subconsciously.

Link still maintained a calm demeanor. He only had 700 Mana Points left, and his Miracle Aura spell was almost destroyed by the Principle: Disintegration spell.

However, it would turn out fine. The great shamans had completed their channeling of the Divine Skill.

"Wrath of The Wild!"

A shaman stared at Isendilan as he spread his arms wide open, shouting the four words with pride. A rainbow-colored light beam then appeared from the center of his chest, hitting Isendilan straight on the chest.

Crack!

The Crimson Thorn Barrier surrounding Isendilan was completely shattered. He was unable to maintain his balance in mid-air anymore. Furthermore, the Divine Skill seemed to be circling around him and restit his powers.

The Crimson Thorn Barrier had also reflected half of the strength of the Divine Skill back to the shaman. The shaman then looked as if he was pushed by an intangible force before he turned into a mist of blood.

"Die!" Holun hollered. He had already recovered from his injuries, and he rushed forward.

The Glorious Warlord also took a deep breath before he charged towards Isendilan. He knew that this would be their last chance to kill Isendilan.

Link then assisted the two of them once more.

A series of light flashed at the tip of his wand. A few spatial spheres then appeared on the trajectory of the two Warlords. Both Holun and Avatar seemed to be traveling faster than ever, the distance between Isendilan and the two of them shortening each time they passed through a spatial sphere.

They were originally 300 feet away from Isendilan. However, after the effect of these spatial spheres, they covered this distance in less than a tenth of a second.

This was simply too fast. Isendilan had no time to react. He had not even recovered from the impact of the Divine Skill.

He had nowhere to run.

Holun swung his axe with full force and released all his Battle Aura. He struck at Isendilan's neck, causing a deep wound that extended to the midpoint of his throat.

Boom! Avatar, on the other hand, went straight for the heart. He used his War Hammer to strike mercilessly at the heart.

Isendilan's body then jerked slightly and began to trip over his own steps. He looked as if he was drunk.

"Die! Die! Die!"

Holun continued attack Isendilan as though he felt no fatigue. However, these blows were nowhere as powerful as his first one. It merely worsened the injury by a bit.

Avatar was already lying on the ground. He had given it his all in that last blow. He could not even move his fingers now.

If Isendilan was still not dead, he would be out of options.

Isendilan's pupils began to lose their shi

He was planning on reviving himself!

"Nana!" Link shouted.

Nana was in the middle of a fight against Olisa. Upon hearing the command, she disappeared in an instant. The next moment, she was already beside Isendilan with the Breakpoint Dagger in her hand. She then started severing the golden threads mercilessly.

As the golden threads lost their shi

It did not take long for Nana to finish severing the threads. Isendilan then collapsed on the ground as he breathed his last.

He was dead.

The Legendary Red Dragon Duke who could fight on the same level as the Red Dragon Queen was dead.

Theron, Olisa, and Felina immediately stopped fighting as they stared at Isendilan's fallen body. It was as though a mountain had just collapsed.

The legend of a dragon was over.

But the legend of a human was just beginning.

## 304. Letter from the North

Whether for good or evil, Isendilan was monumental to the dragons.

Not only was he a duke, but he was also the first non-royal figure to reach the Legendary level within the past five thousand years. His death represented the end of an era.

Theron and Olisa froze for a while before leaving without looking back. Isendilan was dead. The future he'd promised was now a fantasy, and everything they did was meaningless.

The Wild Beastmen retreated like a tide as well. They'd lost all will to fight.

Felina stood dazedly, staring at the mountainous dragon corpse. As a dragon, she didn't regret killing Isendilan; she just felt sad.

No matter how strong one was, no one could escape the fate of death.

At this time, Isendilan wasn't completely dead yet. He still had one last breath, and he stared at Link, a few hundred feet away, with his listless eyes. He couldn't figure out why he died at the hands of a human. Even if Link had some special trick, Isendilan was ten times more powerful and had the Divine Spell. How could he lose?

While he was trying to figure it out, he suddenly saw the magic puppet in the near distance. A black cat snuggled in her bosom, a small head peeking out and sneaking a glance at him.

"Ha...ha...It's you...Magician, one day, you'll die to the hands of that cat too," Isendilan uttered his last words. He let out a long breath and slowly closed his eyes.

Elodim looked at the dragon, speechless. You're dead, and you still cause trouble for me.

He scrambled out of Nana's collar and leaped onto her shoulder. A grin blossomed on the cat's round face. "Don't listen to his nonsense," he said to Link. "Look how powerless I am. How can I hurt you?"

Link didn't comment. He walked over to Avatar, who was lying on the ground, and asked, "How are you?"

Avatar smiled weakly. "Alright. I'll be fine after some rest. Lord Ferde, I'm honored to fight alongside you."

This human Magician made the biggest contributions to the final victory. If not for him, all of them would die at least twice.

Link chuckled and pulled Avatar up. "All of us were indispensable."

Holun walked over too. He was excited at taking revenge and started yelling when he saw Link. "Master, the axe you gave me is honestly like Divine Gear! And I would randomly change places a few times. Did you do it too? That's so cool, but sadly I'm not strong enough. Otherwise, I'd kill that dragon with one blow."

As he spoke, he kicked the dragon corpse to vent his anger.

Link didn't know how to continue the conversation with a brute like Holun. He could only say, "As long as you're satisfied with the axe."

"Satisfied, I'm totally satisfied...I heard that bathing with dragon blood will make you bulletproof. I'm going to try." His train of thought moved quickly. His focus switched as he talked and ran over to rub dragon blood all over him.

Link shook his head helplessly.

Becoming bulletproof with dragon blood was a lie created by the lord of a territory tormented by an evil dragon. Its point was to tempt people to kill the dragon. Only Holun would believe something so stupid.

Avatar was embarsed too and sighed. "That's just how he is. I'm sorry."

"No, he's straightforward," Link said with a smile. Looking at the mountain-like corpse, he suggested, "This is still a duke. What do you think about letting the dragons take care of his body?"

Avatar thought for a moment and nodded. "You're right."

If he was a regular Beastman, he would definitely want to torture the body to take out his anger. However, Avatar considered the dragons' feelings. They were still a powerful race and becoming enemies wasn't a smart move.

Link turned to Felina. "This is done, and I found the black cat. Would you like to report back to the Red Dragon Queen?"

"Uh...oh...okay," Felina agreed, nodding. She looked down. Wanting to speak but stopping herself multiple times, she finally sighed. She glanced at Isendilan's body and back to Link before transforming into a dragon and flying towards the Dragon Valley.

Isendilan had died. She must bring this message back as soon as possible. As for Link...they were just friends.

There was nothing much after that. Link prepared to return to the White Cloud City to rest for a few days. After his Mana recovered, he would set out and return to the Norton Kingdom.

On the way back, the Beastmen were extremely respectful. The wolf knights and grand shaman would all bow before speaking to him. Halfway there, a Beastman scout suddenly ran over. There was a human on the horse behind him.

Link looked over and saw someone familiar. He then realized that the newcomer's armor was the dark leather armor of the MI3 with its emblem. He could guess why the man was here.

The wolf knight stopped in the distance and bowed to Link. "Master, this man is looking for you."

Link nodded and explained to Avatar, "This is a scout from the Norton Kingdom. He's my friend and is probably here about the Northern Dark Elves."

"Oh, then you two talk." Avatar nodded and distanced himself from Link.

Skinorse walked his horse over. He saw Avatar and Holun in the distance and shocked flashed past his eyes. When he was beside Link, he said, "Lord, I heard from them that you've just defeated a legendary dragon?"

"Indeed. We're on our way back to rest and ran into you." Link nodded. After thinking for a moment, he asked, "How's the North?"

At this, Skinorse grew serious. He pulled out a scroll and gave it to Link. "The specifics are here. Take a look."

The scroll contained the Norton army's magic seal and Duke Abel's personal stamp. This was confidential information.

Link undid the seal with practiced ease and started perusing the content.

The Dark Elves have started wildly summoning demons. Currently, the ratio of Dark Elf Warriors to demon Warriors is now six to four. There's also a succubus who calls herself Misamier. She's terrifying, and no one is her match. Aymons fused with the Divine Gear and practically sealed off the Black Forest. No one knows what's happening inside. The king, the church, Master Anthony, Dirk, king of the dwarves, Milda, High Elf Princess, and I all believe that the Dark Elves may perform their final attack at any time. We are on the cusp of danger. Master Link, we need your power and wisdom.

Link didn't expect things to be at this state. He collected the scroll and said to Skinorse, "It seems that we must depart immediately. Wait a moment for me to say goodbye."

"Yes, Master." Skinorse nodded respectfully. He was much calmer now, and his airhead feelings had decreased.

Link steered his wolf to Avatar.

"Is the situation bad?" Avatar guessed from Link's expression.

He nodded. "Yes. Unfortunately, I can't return to the White Cloud City now."

"In that much of a hurry?" Avatar was slightly shocked.

"I can't waste a second." Link was already regretting sending Felina back. If she was here, he could save a lot of time.

Avatar pondered for a long while before saying, "Go then but remember, you are the friend of the Beastmen forever."

Link nodded. He gestured at Skinorse and Nana and waved farewell at the Beastmen. He left their procession.

Holun had been with the Beastmen Warriors but seeing Link leave, he found it strange. He charged over on his wolf and asked, "Master, where are you going? Aren't we going back to the White Cloud City together?"

"Something similar to Isendilan's problem happened in the Norton Kingdom. I must hurry back."

"Ah, I see." Holun scratched his head. He wanted to say something, but Avatar's voice rang out.

"Holun, don't waste the Master's time. Come back."

Helpless, Holun could only say, "Then be careful on the road. I'll go back now."

Link continued forward.

Holun returned to Avatar and whispered, "Why did you stop me? Master Link helped us so much and is our friend. Why can't we help him?"

"I obviously know we should help." Avatar glared at him. "But our strength is too loose right now. How can we be of use? We need to create a strong army before we can help, understand?"

"Ah, I see. That makes sense." Holun nodded earnestly.

There was more than Avatar didn't say but Holun wouldn't understand the clash of interest between races.

On the other hand, Link raced forward on his horse. Behind him, Skinorse said quietly, "Lord, those Beastman are powerful and respect you. They can be reinforcement."

Link glanced at him and nodded lightly. "You have sharp eyes. They can be strong reinforcement indeed, but they're too loose now. We need to wait a while."

"What do you mean?"

"Did you see the Warrior with the battle axe just then?"

"That leader's? He's strong, very strong, and I see the ambitious in his eyes." Skinorse nodded.

Smiling, Link said, "He's a leader with foresight. If I'm not wrong, he'll become the king of the Beastmen very soon. At that time, he'll come with his army even without our invitation."

Skinorse was stunned but still worried. "Beastmen are powerful Warriors. If they're united and have such a powerful leader, I'm afraid—"

"That is a problem to consider." Link nodded. He looked far into the blue sky and mused, "This wouldn't be a good thing in times of peace. But now, a heroic Beastman leader is much better than someone untalented. As for fights between our races, that's in the future. Let's get past this first."

If they couldn't get past this, everyone would be dead. There would be no future.

Skinorse didn't reply anymore. They galloped side by side. Just then, the black cat lying on Nanasshoulder suddenly said, "Link, I have two pieces of news for you—one good and one bad. Which one do you want to hear first?"

## 305. The Grounded Yabba Airship

The black cat suddenly spoke, causing Skinorse to jump in fright. However, Skinorse had experienced things from all over the world and had seen many unbelievable things himself. Therefore he was quickly able to regain his composure.

He gazed at the black cat perched on Nanasshoulder unmoving and laughed. "This cat is cute."

The black cat rolled its eyes at Skinorse and said indifferently, "When I'm talking to Link, mortals like you shouldn't butt in."

Its voice was very clear and bright. Coupled with its round face and eyes that were half closed as though asleep, it gave off an impression that it couldn't care less. Seeing it would make one want to grab it and give it a hug.

Skinorse laughed once more and said, "Hehe, how interesting. You talk really big. Could you possibly be the cat God?"

The black cat's eyes were half opened, and it said lazily to Link," Are you going to listen to me, or let this mortal continue interrupting me?"

"Alright, go ahead," Link said. He smiled apologetically to Skinorse, thinking of the confrontation between him and the black cat. "Let's go with the bad news first."

"The bad news is, Isendilan used two other divine spells, causing the rift to expand greatly. Because of that, the energy from the Sea of Void is entering into Firuman and causing the density of Mana to increase rapidly. In one year, it will be double from now, and in two years, quadruple. The Mana would build up to a point where Firuman can no longer handle the Mana and Boom! This place will become a great big firework."

Skinorse was stunned. He swallowed his saliva, saying to Link, "Lord, this cat is talking nonsense right? Isn't Firuman doing fine?"

Link didn't answer Skinorse. He had been prepared for the black cat's news. "How long do we have?"

"About 15 years. Unless something unexpected happens, there's no way to undo it. Anyway, I've got no ideas."

"What about the good news?"

"Good news is, I've figured out the rule of the Dark Serpent, and I know the way to defend against the dark magic. If you want to learn it, it'll take about half a month...But this magic will require huge amounts of Mana. You won't be able to handle it alone and will need to construct a large magic seal."

"No problem, you can begin teaching me now," Link said. His current Maximum Mana was 18500 points. After slaying Isendilan, he had about 700 Omni Points. This enabled him to raise his maximum Mana to 25500 points.

It seemed like a lot, but if he were to consume all his Mana completely, it would only be enough to cast one Level-11 Legendary Attack magic spell. He definitely wouldn't be able to deal with the dark magic alone.

As for the collapse of Firuman, it sounded very serious, but it actually wasn't. They still had 15 years which was a pretty long time. The most important danger right now was the Dark Serpent, and they could decide what to do with the rift after getting past this obstacle.

Meanwhile, Skinorse could feel his heart thumping. He had no idea how true the black cat's words were, but judging from Link's serious expression, he was sure that it was 90 percent true.

"Sir, you're joking... Right?" Skinorse asked once more. He was holding on to the thin thread of hope.

The black cat turned to look disdainfully at him. "Pitiful mortal, do I look like the type to joke?"

Link nodded his head. "It's true. Regarding the rift, it's good enough that you know about it. Don't spread it."

Skinorse suddenly felt like there was no more hope in life. "Sir, is there any way to repair it?"

Looking at Skinorse, Link didn't continue giving him extra pressure and stress. "Yes, there is."

Skinorse let out a sigh of relief and pat his chest. "That's good, that's good. Gave me a shock."

The black cat disdainfully rolled its eyes again before it began to lick its paw.

They hit the road again, and along the way, the black cat began to teach Link how to resist the Dark Serpent's dark magic. It was very deep and obscure. Out of curiosity, Skinorse attempted to listen in on the conversation. Within three minutes, his head already felt like exploding.

Compared to this, he'd much rather play with the pretty magic puppet girl. The other party's reactions were very interesting, and it kept him entertained to no end.

Three days later, Link arrived on the border between the Golden Plains and Norton Kingdom.

This time, Link headed directly north, so they were traveling towards the northeast. After exiting the Golden Plains, they arrived at the perilous Hengduan Mountain Range.

This was the continent's biggest mountain range, spanning over 600 miles. Within it lived the Yabbas, Dwarves, and other Barbarian tribes.

The majority of the mountain range was covered in perilous terrain, with narrow paths that only mountain goats could traverse. Link and his party slowed down their pace by a lot.

At this point, Link no longer recognized the way. Fortunately, Skinorse was very familiar with the geography of the continent. He explained, "From here, we will pass through the Hengduan Mountain Range, about 800 miles long. After exiting the mountain range, we will need to walk for another 130 miles. There's a region there that would bring us straight through a corner of the Dark Forest. It could be dangerous."

Link asked, "Is that the fastest route?"

"Probably. Based on our current speed, we'll get there in about half a month," Skinorse replied.

"Half a month? That's quite a long time. Do you know where the Yabba city is?" Link's idea was to use the flying spell Storm Eagle to fly a short distance to reach the nearest Yabba city. Once there, they could use a flying shi

Skinorse waved his hand, saying helplessly, "The Yabba city is hidden deep within the mountains. There are also many hidden barriers surrounding their city. I'm not a Magician, and I don't really know their location."

Link only had a rough idea on where it was, and that was only from his experience in the game. Now, in reality, there would definitely be some differences. If he just went there without being able to find it, they would waste even more time.

Link also could not do anything. "Then let's pick up the pace."

He decided that he would use the Storm Eagle to help them travel the last part of the journey. That would help them save a lot of time.

Hengduan Mountain Range's trails were difficult to traverse. They were many steep cliffs around, and Skinorse's warhorse had fallen, breaking its leg. The wolf from the Beastman tribe was more adapted to this terrain and carried Link forward, bounding from rock to cliff agilely.

However, Skinorse was the one leading the way. Link had no choice but to let him use Nana's wolf while Nana herself had to walk.

In this manner, they rushed forward for two days when they suddenly saw black smoke coming from a forest in a valley up ahead. Every once in a while, there would even be sounds of explosions. They could vaguely make out flames in the distance. Clearly, there was a huge fire up ahead.

"What's going on?" Skinorse's curiosity was piqued.

Link immediately cast a Traceless spell on the group. "Come, let's go take a look."

The three of them increased their pace, climbing up onto the mountain cliff. Then, they descended down into the valley where they entered the thick forest. After walking for another three miles, they finally found the source of the flames.

"It's the wreckage of an airshi

"Wait, come back! There's a demon in the sky!" Link warned.

Through the dense canopy, he could see ten black figures with black wings circling in the sky. Each of these figures was about 13 feet long, with a wingspan of over 16 feet. They held weapons that emanated black gas.

Based on the aura, these demons were at least Level-6 or Level-7. There was even a level-8 Warrior among them. Looking closely, there were many corpses around the area. Some of them were Yabbas, while others were demons. There was also a dark elf and his mount, a black winged condor.

"Those are Winged Howlers, a high tier demon. They're very hard to deal with and will let out ear-piercing shrieks. They can also reach high speeds of 600 km/h," Link said, carefully observing the situation.

The airshi

Obviously, the airshi

Skinorse said skeptically, "This place is 300 miles from the Black Forest. Why would these elves and demons come here, and why are they attacking the Yabbas? Based on what I know, the Yabba cities have heavy fortifications and numerous magic cannons on their walls. They also have many high-level magic guns. It's not wise to attack them."

Link kept his silence. Based on his memories of the game, the Yabbas were exterminated by the combined force of the Dark Elves and the demons. It wasn't because the Yabbas were weak. No, they just had too few people, and even fewer Warriors, less than twenty thousand. These Warriors were all spread out among the various cities.

At the same time, they were also overconfident in their military superiority based on their magic abilities and magic cannons, airshi

Ultimately, there was a traitor within their clan.

Because of the collusion between the internal spy and aggressors, the Dark Army paid a huge price in order to successfully destroy the Lariel, the capital of the Yabbas. Following that, the surrounding cities were sequentially destroyed, and all their populations killed. It was very cruel.

Now, the situation was happening again, and furthermore, one year earlier than in the game.

Link had no way to know if the airshi

In the game, after the Dark Elves conquered the Yabba cities, they gained huge benefits, including the mighty magic cannons. They also gained the magic airshi

It was important for them to figure out the situation.

"Lord, are we attacking?" Skinorse asked softly.

Link shook his head. "No, these Winged Howlers fly very quickly and are now quite dispersed. If we let even one escape, it would bring us a lot of trouble. We'll wait for them to go before searching the surroundings for survivors. We can ask them what happened."

## 306. The Yabba Race Currently Being Massacred

At first, Link didn't have to care about the Yabba race since the Orida Fortress was in danger. However, he vaguely felt that something was wrong.

He felt that Aymons sealing off information from the Black Forest not just to prepare for the final attack. Aymons was probably taking advantage of the humans' fear of the Divine Gear to secretly attack the Yabba city.

If the Dark Elves had powerful magic muskets and airshi

This worry meant that Link had to find out about the Yabba race's current situation.

He waited patiently in the forest for half an hour. The screaming winged demons finally left. They didn't go toward the northeastern Black Forest as he'd expected and flew northwest instead.

This meant that they probably had another mission, which increased Link's worry.

"Let's go take a look," he whispered.

Skinorse led the way, and Link followed. The two of them used the forest's vegetation as protection and snuck past the still-burning airshi

Walking up to a Yabba corpse, Skinorse started studying carefully. "This Yabba man is wearing an engineer coverall. He's probably an engineer. There's an emblem here of blue wings and gears. Master, do you know what it is?"

Link thought back to the previous game and quickly found the corresponding information. "The wings and gears mark should be the emblem of the City in the Sky, Pollol. The Pollol City is one of the Yabba's important cities. They're especially skilled in creating magic airshi

Skinorse nodded. He circled the airshi

There were a dozen bodies of demons on the ground. Other than the hard-shelled armor that only demons had, they had nothing else so Skinorse and Link couldn't find out anything other than what kind of demon they were. There were seven or eight Dark Elves. All of them had an emblem on their armor of a moonflower wrapped around a bloody sword.

"These are members of the elite Dark Elf air force, the Wings of Moonlight. Why are they here?" Skinorse's voice was filled with shock, and the worry on his face deepened. It was clear that he'd thought of something.

After searching for a while longer, he suddenly called out, "Master, look, this Yabba man has a hidden letter."

The letter was very deeply hidden inside an inner layer of the corpse's clothes. The demons had searched this body before but just couldn't find this letter.

This showed how skilled Skinorse was. His acuity was almost like gut instincts, and he could easily find critical clues.

He handed the letter to Link. It had the same City in the Sky emblem, but there was no magic seal, so there was no obvious magic aura. Opening the envelope, he took out the letter, but it was white. There was nothing on it.

"A blank piece of paper? Why would he hide it so secretively?" Skinorse was watching, and he found it strange.

"It's not blank." Link shook his head. Every enchantment Magician was almost instinctively sensitive to the elements of the material. Link was so as well. The moment he received the letter, he felt that there was something about it hidden.

"Element Detection." Link cast a Level-1 enchantment spell.

Ding. A ball of powdery light appeared out of thin air and sprinkled onto the letter. Something miraculous happened.

There really was writing on the blank piece of paper. Because of the different material, it absorbed the element detection powder differently as well. Words appeared on the paper instantly.

The letter was written in the Yabba language. Skinorse was illiterate, but Link could read it, so he read it out loud in the human language.

"Respected human general, my race has suffered violent attacks from the Dark Army. We don't know how many there are, but from the current situation, there seems to be more than 30,000 soldiers. Half of them are demons. Our city is in extreme danger. Practically all the civilians in the nearby towns have been killed...Lariel is on the brink of danger as well...I ask for your reinforcement as chancellor of the High Mountain Council."

This was a letter for requesting reinforcements. It was written to Duke Abel of the Orida Fortress.

Link looked back at the airshi

It was obvious that it had burst out of the siege to ask for reinforcement but still couldn't escape from the Dark Army.

The more Skinorse thought, the more shocked he became. "No wonder there was no action from the Black Forest these days. I can't believe they were attacking Yabba cities without us knowing. They must want to receive their magic muskets and battle airshi

Link nodded and said, "There's still not enough written on the letter. Let's follow the trail and see if there are any Yabba survivors."

The Yabba airshi

The two followed the visible airshi

"Master," he whispered. "I feel something wrong. I think someone's on us."

Link felt it as well. The opponent had some odd trick that allowed him to see through Link's Traceless spell. However, Link didn't feel much danger despite having eyes on him.

After thinking for a moment, he said, "It should be a Yabba survivor. If I'm not wrong, his magic musket is pointed at our heads right now."

"Having their magic musket pointed at my head...doesn't feel good." Skinorse's handsome face had a wry and uncomfortable smile.

In Firuman, the dwarves were the first to invent the magic musket. The dwarves and Yabbas lived in a mountain range, and they often traded with each other. The magic musket was powerful but didn't require much physical strength so the thin Yabbas grew to love it. They developed the weapon and created many powerful muskets. With it, they became known for their musketeers in the mainland.

In Firuman, "having Yabba muskets pointed at one's head" had become an idiom that meant absolute death.

On the other hand, Link was searching for the Yabba. After around three seconds, he shook his wand, and assame-sized dot of light flew out soundlessly.

Buzz. With a light sound, the spatial sphere expanded, successfully restiting the target 150 feet away. Then firelight came from behind the grass. The musketeer had fired subconsciously at the shock.

Sadly, it was useless.

"Let's go. He's over there."

Skinorse had rushed over already. He saw two Yabba people hiding in the grass—one man and one woman. The man was covered in blood and unmoving on the ground. The woman was half-kneeling, a musket with a scope propped on her knee, aimed at where they had been.

Of course, these two people were no longer a threat. They were restited by the spatial sphere and were so slow they were basically frozen.

In that strange space, Skinorse saw something extraordinary.

He saw a beautiful flame bloom from the muzzle of the Yabba woman's musket. Inside the flame, a spinning bullet flew forward bit by bit. It looked so slow, but the bullet was able to produce rings of ripples in the air.

It was beautiful.

Master Link's spell is unbelievable, he thought, impressed.

Link walked over as well. Seeing the two people, he observed them and said, "The man is too heavily wounded and pretty much bled out. He can't be helped. If the woman doesn't treat her leg wound, she won't live for more than three days."

As he spoke, Link activated a Soundproof Barrier and canceled the spatial restraint.

The Yabba musketeer's movements sped up, but the musket's sound was muted within the Soundproof Barrier. Link then canceled the spell.

"Who are you?" The musketeer's face was bloody and full of vigilance. She wasn't dumb—when she spoke, she aimed the musket at the ground.

Link introduced himself. "I am Link Morani, the lord of Ferde. As you can see, I am a Magician."

Skinorse introduced himself as well. "I am the famous wandering vigilante, Skinorse...uh, hey, are you listening to me? Why are you crying? Am I that awesome?"

Before he could speak, the Yabba musketeer gaped at them and teasstarted streaming out of her bright eyes.

"Master Link, our city is destroyed." Ignoring Skinorse, the Yabba woman choked out, "The Dark Army invaded the City in the Sky and killed everyone in sight. My father, mother, and brother were all killed. They even ate my brother...They're all dead. The city is in a sea of fire. My home is gone."

Who was Skinorse? She didn't know, but the lord of Ferde, the most powerful human Magician, Link, was known throughout the continent. Link worked with the Yabba race often and Elin, the Lady Fortuna, spoke highly of him as well. All Yabba people were familiar with him.

In their eyes, Link was powerful, fair, benevolent, kind, wise, and basically everything good.

At this time, the Yabba musketeer had just experienced the biggest tragedy of her life. Seeing a strong figure she could rely on now, her tense feelings collapsed, and she broke down sobbing.

Skinorse had been disappointed at first but listening to her, he fell silent too. He'd only joined the army recently, but he had experienced too much tragedy already. He thought of the comrades who had died in the Northern battlefield, thought of their last cries, and thought of the rookies crying hopelessly before the demons.

He also remembered how in one mission, he had a smart girl as his subordinate. Her name was Lily. She had deep blue eyes and a pretty cherry-like mouth. She really liked Skinorse; she would run after him, asking questions, and called him "brother." She gave herself to him too. At that time, Skinorse even wanted to marry her.

But in the Black Forest, she was ripped apart by a Fear Demon. Her head was torn off, and the beautiful thing rolled to where Skinorse was hiding. The two deep blue eyes stared at him listlessly as if asking why he didn't save her.

Skinorse felt his eyes grow hot and his vision blurred.

"I'll go see if there's anything around here." He wasn't willing to cry before the others. With that utterance, he turned around and started investigating around.

Link couldn't escape. He had to take up the role of a kind elder now. Patting the musketeer's shoulder, he said, "It'll get better. Everything will get better. Now, I'm going to treat your wound. Tell me what happened in detail, alright?"

"Yeah." She wiped her eyes and nodded.

## 307. An Impenetrable Defense Zone

Hengduan Mountain Range

Based on the fragmented recounts of the Yabba musketeer while Link was treating her, Link could more or less figure out the details of the Yabba situation.

The Yabba population was about two million strong, and they had nine great cities. As of now, three had been defeated, including the sky city Pollol.

Currently, the Dark Army was besieging Lariel.

Their shi

By the time the high-speed assault shi

Among the musketeers, the male who lost the most amount of blood breathed his last breath. Seeing this, the female musketeer couldn't hold herself back anymore. Tears were streaming down her face.

"Go on, cry it all out." Link softly patted the musketeer's head. At the same time, he cast a soundproof barrier around them.

The musketeer hugged onto Link's leg and burstito tears. Much later, when her face was completely covered in grime and tears, she finally calmed herself down. Wiping her face, she said, "I'm sorry, your clothes are dirty. Thank you, my lord."

Seeing that she had recovered herself, Link took out a clean handkerchief to clean her face. She didn't move, allowing Link to do so. This made Link feel like he was taking care of a child.

After he was done, he asked, "What about Elin? Do you know of her situation?"

Elin had left a few days before him. Although she said that she was escorting the people to the islands, her return would have her cross the path of the Dark Army's advance. He was worried about her.

"Lady Fortuna? She's now in Lariel. She was the one who advised us to send out people for help. She also said to break out of the blockade and abandon the city because Lariel was doomed to fall... I'm not sure how true her words will be, but all her predictions so far have been true, so nobody would dare to take her words lightly."

Link let out a sigh of relief. At least Elin was safe.

At this point, Skinorse returned. He seemed calm, but his eyes were still red. "My lord, the situation is not good. The demons are doing a sweeping operation to hunt for survivors. I just saw a squad of them walk past."

It was indeed bad news.

Link thought for a moment, then said to Nana, "Please carry Melinda."

Melinda was the name of the female musketeer. Nana was just a little shorter than Melinda by less than three feet. Yet, although Nana was almost the height of a human child, she effortlessly carried Melinda onto her back.

"Let's go, we'll continue rushi

Since the Yabba city could manage to get people out of the blockade to send for help, it showed that they could hold on for some time. If Link could get their news to Orida Fortress, they could gather troops to head north in aid of the Yabbas. The Dark Army would then have to face a pincer attack from two sides, and this would lessen the pressure on the Yabbas.

Link actually respected Aymons.

Under the limited time condition of the Dark Serpent, he managed to seize the opportunity to pull so many tricks. Only Aymons could have done this.

damn it! It was a mistake not to have just killed him the last time!

The group continued to rush onwards. The wolves were too conspicuous, and so they decided not to use them but continue traveling on foot. When they encountered areas that were difficult to traverse, Link used the Level-0 spell Levitation, Lightweight, and some other basic sells to assist them. Sometimes, he would also have Nana carry him over. They were able to maintain a relatively fast pace.

After proceeding for another six miles, Skinorse, who was in the lead, raised his hand and signaled for them to stop. He ducked behind a tree and got Link and Nana to do the same. Then, he slowly pointed to foliage up ahead, mouthing with his lips, "Watch that foliage."

Link squinted his eyes, staring.

Up ahead was a hazelnut forest. Amidst the dense branches of the forest, in the crown of one of the trees, there was a monkey-like figure sitting there, not moving.

This "monkey" was about three feet tall and had two fleshy wings with sharp tips. Its skin was a dark red, and there were two horns growing from its head. At this moment, its wings were wrapped in itself as it nested in the tree crown. The only thing visible was a pair of black eyes that were unnoticeable unless you looked really carefully.

Skinorse continued mouthing as he explained, "In the Black Forest, this creature is everywhere. The Magiciassay it is a low-level demon, but I call them "Red Monkeys." Its battle prowess is average, about the same as a level-4 scout. However, there are many of them in the black forest. They're very astute and will usually notice us first. When they do, they let out a sharp call that can be heard from less than a mile away. After that, other red monkeys will continue transmitting that call. Very soon, the high-level demons will come. Even if we kill it before it calls, high-level demons will still come, because they have a signal that they call out every ten minutes.... Listen."

Skinorse motioned his hand to his ear to signal for them to listen. One second later, Link heard a sharp Jiiiiii sound, something like that of a bat. The sound traveled out, and moments later, the forest was filled with jiiiii jiiiii sounds responding to the first one.

"Based on the sound, it seems that the red monkeys have locked down the whole of this forest. How annoying! We've got to be really careful from now on."

Link finally understood how Aymons managed to achieve a complete information lockdown. With the eyesight of these red monkeys and the battle prowess of the high-level demons and ghouls patrolling around, there was no way for anyone to escape or hide. Human scouts would just meet an early end once they entered.

Skinorse was among the best among the humans already. If even he had no way to deal with this, then no one would.

To make matters worse, because the entire forest was now locked down, even if they managed to sneak through it would cost them a lot of time. Lariel was in an extremely tight situation now, and they needed to get to Orida fortress as soon as possible. What could they do?

Link looked at the red monkey and paused, thinking. "How big are the high-level demon patrols?"

Skinorse thought for a while then gave an estimate of the size of one patrol. "In the black forest, one patrol would be about ten men strong. There would normally be three high-level demons and seven ghouls. Once they hear the signal from the red monkeys, they'll arrive within three minutes.

Link asked again, "What species are the high-level demons?"

"Among them, there are Fodor Flaming Demons, Fear Demons, Dimensional Demons, Succubi, and about five others, a total of ten types. The Dark Elves have been aggressively summoning demons, turning the whole forestito a hellish abyss," Skinorse replied.

Link asked, "These demons have roughly Level-8 strength, am I right?"

"Yes."

This was about enough information. Link evaluated the information he had. "If they're able to reach within three minutes, that means that in a radius of a mile, there will be one squad of high-level demons. The red monkeys call out every ten minutes, so if we attack immediately after their next call, we will have 13 minutes to move ahead. If we mix in other fake signals, then we'll be able to delay them further... Okay! We'll go into action after the next call."

He decided to forcefully break through.

"Okay," Skinorse nodded.

Seven minutes later, the red monkey called out again. It was as though it had a clock in its body. The timing was extremely exact.

The moment it called out, Link threw out a dimensional ball. "Spatial Rend!"

He did not use any tricks but attacked directly.

Thud. The Level-4 red monkey had no way to resist the force of the dimensional attack and couldn't even last one second before turning into a lump of meat. It had no chance to even make a sound.

"Let's go, hurry up!"

Skinorse once again took the lead, with Link and Nana following close behind. Along the way, Link constantly erased the tracks that they made. He was very careful but also very efficient.

Along the way, they were discovered by other red monkeys. However, the moment those red monkeys opened their mouths to call out, Link immediately locked down on their location with a soundproof barrier. Simultaneously, he cast a Spatial Rend Spell on them, instantly killing the monkeys.

Link's reactions were becoming faster and faster, and the monkeys had no chance to even call out.

Ten minutes later, the red monkeys began to call out to confirm each other's locations. Not long later, they discovered that some of their companions had not responded.

Instantaneously, the forest exploded like a beehive. Jiiii! Jiiii! The red monkeys began to call out, and the sounds they were making were extremely shocking and fear-inducing. However, there was also a benefit.

With them calling out, Link was able to pinpoint their locations better.

"How long will they call out for?" Link asked.

"About half a minute. This is to help the patrol squads determine our location," Skinorse replied.

"Half a minute? That's fine."

Link waited for half a minute. As Skinorse had said, the red monkeys stopped calling out. Immediately, Link unleashed his attacks, using Spatial Rend to soundlessly kill the red monkeys, leaving no traces behind!

"Alright, let's go." Link waved his wand, and the group continued rushi

He was by now very proficient at this, and the misleading tracks were very effective. Along the way, the red monkeys had already called out three times, but the high-level demons had yet to find them.

They maintained their pace rushi

"After not being able to find us for so long, they'll go crazy soon. They'll probably break out of their patrol routine and activate more patrols. We've got to be more careful!"

Amidst the forest, two patrols had already been activated. Although they followed the tracks left by Link, they could not find the intruders.

After coming up empty-handed multiple times, the leader of the patrolling teassensed that something was wrong. He ordered a ghoul behind him, "You, report back to the base that something is off. Some slippery rats have entered the forest. We need reinforcements."

"Understood!" The ghoul rushed back to deliver its report.

## 308. The Demons are the First to Benefit

After a period of rushed travel, Link's group made their way over for more than 40 miles.

Here, there was a drastic change in the mountain's geography. There were rocks everywhere while the trees and vegetation lessened. The view was wide, and there were fewer places to hide.

This was both a pro and a con.

Here, Skinorse whispered, "The red monkeys disappeared. It appears that we've left their blockade."

Link let out a breath of relief. He'd been fully focused while traveling down the mountain path earlier. Every time a red monkey discovered their traces, he would kill it at once and make sure it would be executed flawlessly. This really did use up some energy.

He looked at Melinda on Nana's back and asked, "How's the wound on your leg?"

"It's alright. It doesn't really hurt anymore." Melinda looked at Link with wide eyes filled with reverence.

This reassured Link. He glanced at the black cat. It was pretty obedient—probably because it tasted some benefits at the Crystal Blue Lake. Now, it hid inside Nanasshi

Seeing that Link was looking at it, it narrowed its emerald eyes and meowed as if saying, Jealous? Well, that sucks because this is my personal seat.

Its appearance made the others really want to beat it up. At least, Skinorse had glanced at it many times already. It seemed that he was about to yank the cat out from Nana's collar and jump in himself.

Link didn't have time to bother with it. He turned to Skinorse and said, "How much farther away is Orida?"

Skinorse was very familiar with the North. Hearing the question, he composed himself and looked down at his watch. Then he looked at the sun, took out a triangular thing, measured the angle, and came up with a calculation. "I think there are around 700 more miles. If we continue forward, we'll pass through the southern corner of the Black Forest after 400 miles."

"We can't go into the Black Forest. How about this? We'll take a detour south, and after we get to a safer place, I'll summon a Storm Eagle. The spell can help us fly around 60 miles."

The Storm Eagle consumed a great amount of Mana. Link now had a maximum of 18,500 Mana Points, but this could only last for five minutes. The Storm Eagle's top speed was around 1500 feet per second, so they could fly 60 miles in five minutes. He still had to save some Mana so while this spell looked cool, it wasn't that useful.

Skinorse had no objections, of course. Crossing through the Hengduan Mountain Range was honestly too dangerous. One mishap could have them end up surrounded by high-level demons. It was like flirting with death.

Everyone turned and started going south.

After around half an hour, a gorge appeared up ahead. It was extremely narrow; the narrowest place wasn't even 15 feet wide. From the distance, it seemed to be entirely closed up. The walls on either side were very steep; on average, they were more than 2500 feet high. If one stood in the gorge and looked up, one could only see a sliver of the sky.

It was very windy in the gorge. Perhaps the wind passed through some unique rock formation because they kept hearing cries and it washi

Melinda curled up on Nana's back in fear and explained softly, "This is the Wailing Gorge. It's more than 30 miles long and contains many branches and caves. It's like a maze once you enter it, and it's really easy to get lost."

Skinorse had heard of the Wailing Gorge before. "This gorge has many legends," he said. "Legend says that there's a horrifying secret hidden here. Someone had buried countless treasures but put an evil curse on each one. Anyone who tried to get the treasure died. Apparently, one thousand years ago, the last emperor of the Goldweed Dynasty retreated into the Wailing Gorge with his last army and never came back out...Anyway, it's really dangerous."

Link knew a lot of information about the gorge as well, but they were from the past game. In the game, there were at least ten storyline quests, both big and small, hidden in each fork inside the gorge. Many parts were still off-limit to players even later in the game.

This was a mysterious gorge filled with unknown danger.

After thinking, Link asked Melinda, "Is there a way to bypass it?" Unless there was no other way, he didn't want to pass through the creepy place.

"I don't know." Melinda shook her head. "We've only ever flown past with our airshi

"What if we pass from the walls on the side?" Skinorse suggested.

"That might work...wait, probably not. Look there!" Link pointed to the sky behind them.

Skinorse and Melinda turned around to see many blurry black dots appear in the sky. Counting quickly, there was more than 100. Without a doubt, the demons must have caught up.

"I can feel that these demons are really powerful and there are too many of them. We're not their match so we can't go on top. We have to enter the gorge!" Link said.

The gorge was narrow, and the walls on either side effectively blocked the enemies' vision. It could greatly decrease the aerial threat.

Faced with more than a hundred high-level demons, this was their only choice.

"They sped up. They probably saw us." Skinorse's voice was a bit panicked.

Link decisively used Teleportation. They disappeared at the gorge entrance under the white light. When they reappeared, they were already inside. The transmission spell could make the enemy lose them temporarily, winning them more time.

"Traceless!" Link cast another invisibility spell on them all. Not only would this spell hide their bodies, but it would also block their voices, auras, and anything else that could be used to track them."

"We can't beat wings no matter how fast we run," Link said. "Speeding up won't help. We can only try to hide from their pursuit."

As he spoke, Link cast another spell: Pursuit.

Pursuit Spell

Level-5 Secret Spell

Effect: Borrows mysterious power from time to point out a safe path for the user.

(Note: It will tell you the right answer.)

There was a small puff, and faint white mist appeared in Link's eyes. The thread of mist extended forward, pointing out the way forward.

"Follow me." Link followed the white mist and strode forward.

Faced with more than 100 high-level demons, Skinorse was a bit panicked too. He had fought with many high-level demons in the Black Forest before, and he knew clearly how terrifying they were.

As for Melinda, she had no idea. At this time, she clung to Nana tightly, and even her musket was trembling with her. Only Link was as calm as before. He was the anchor of this temporary team so they would do whatever he said. No one would object.

Whoosh...rustle... The flapping of wings created the sounds of air moving. A group of demons flapped their wings and landed at the entrance of the gorge.

There were more than 120 of them. Most were Winged Howlers and above Level-7. One-third of the group was at Level-8. This was a very powerful force.

It would be unimaginable in the past, but recently, the demons summoned from the Abyss were less restited by the laws. The reduction of the power had lessened. The demons summoned to the World of Firuman were all strengthening at incredible speeds.

Now, their strength was already at a terrifying extent.

Link was probably the only one who truly knew why. Faced with this, he could only chuckle bitterly.

Who would be the first to benefit once the Mana density of the world rose? It was not the humans, not the High Elves, not any of the natives. The first to benefit were the ones who were already powerful in the foreign world—the demons!

This kind of delay existed in the previous game too. For more than five years, demons dominated the World of Firuman without any restraint. There wasn't a single person strong enough to fight them in the entire world.

After five years, the strong of the various races started strengthening as well, until they could restit the demons.

"I saw them disappear here." A Winged Howler sprawled on the ground, carefully investigating the footprints on the ground. His two hooked noses twitched without stop. A few seconds later, he had another conclusion. "General, their scent is in the gorge's wind. They're inside."

The general in question was shrouded in black mist and his features difficult to see. The only feature that could be seen clearly was the two eyes glowing with misty red light. His wings were different from the Winged Howlers.

They had a layer of membrane on their wings while he had black wings. And instead of one pair, he had a smaller pair under the large wings.

He landed slowly and shook his body. The wings transformed into a black mist that melted into his body and a hollow voice sounded. "The human Magician has a very special status. Try to capture him alive."

"General, capturing a Magician alive is playing with fire," a Winged Howler said, discontent. Capturing someone alive meant holding back and doing that in a life-or-death battle was flirting with death. No one would be willing to do so.

Crack. With the crisp sound, the demon suddenly spun and flew into the air. A ball of black mist slowly dissipated where he had been standing. No one had seen what the general had done. He was too fast.

"Remember, I'm not discussing with you. I am ordering you! I like giving people the chance to redeem themselves but one chance. Understood?"

The black shadow bent over slightly, staring at the fallen Winged Howler with blood-red eyes.

The Winged Howler was at Level-8 but was defenseless before this black shadow. He was unwilling but didn't dare show it. "Yes," he muttered.

"Good." The black shadow straightened and pointed down at the gorge. "The wind pointed out a direction, but it won't do so forever. We must hurry."

## 309. But Im Right Behind You

The Wailing Gorge

Wuuuu wuuuuu!

A gust of wind blew past, and instantly, it created a sound like that of children crying. It wasn't just a normal cry either, but more like a heart-rending cry that was forcefully pushed out. It made people who heard it feel like their heart was being squeezed, and it would make their hair stand on ends.

In the gorge, it was very dark. Although there were clear skies for a hundred miles all around, the amount of light inside was minuscule. Perhaps it was due to the walls blocking the light inside the gorge. In some corners, it was as dark as night.

After a moment, the wind blew in again from the front, carrying with it the smell of rotting corpses. Who knew who these corpses belonged to, or even what creatures they were?

Skinorse rubbed his shoulders, edging closer to Link. However, he still explained, "The wind in this ghastly place is very strong. I'm starting to feel cold too."

The Yabba musketeer, Melinda, didn't say anything, but she gripped on tighter to Nana's clothing. Every now and then, she would look backwards, as though afraid that there would be a black claw that would grab onto her and drag her away.

Link was still in a better situation. He was occupied with casting spells, and this kept his mind from wandering off. Therefore, he looked somewhat calm.

As for Nana, she opened her eyes wide, looking left and right in curiosity. After all, it was her first time coming to a place like this.

The black cat was naturally not the least bit scared, but it had its own troubles. "MEEOOW! Let go, you scaredy cat! Stop grabbing my ear!"

Melinda had grabbed onto the cat's ear, squeezing onto it tightly no matter what the cat did. This caused the cat a lot of frustration on the journey through the gorge.

The group of them thus proceeded like this through the strange place. After walking for about half an hour, they heard a sound of rustling carried by the wind.

They looked up and could make out the figures of two 12-foot-long Winged Howlers flying overhead.

The group immediately backed up. Although they knew that the Howler had not discovered them, they still reduced the sound of their breathing nonetheless, trying to remain as hidden as possible.

Only after the demons had flown off, Skinorse softly said, "These two demons look very strong, much stronger than me. Could they both be Level-8 demons?"

He had the strength of Level-7, but while facing these demons he could feel immense pressure from them. This showed that the demons were clearly a full stage higher than he was.

Link nodded his head. "Indeed, they're both Level-8 monsters. They're probably about ten times stronger than you."

Skinorse was speechless. Ten times! How could he even fight them?

A full ten minutes passed before he spoke again. "Why do I feel that the demons have gotten much stronger than before? They weren't this strong a month ago."

Link naturally knew the reason but chose not to say it. He simply said, "Perhaps the demons that Aymons is summoning are stronger than before?"

Skinorse did not doubt what Link had said. He cursed, "Aymons is mad! All the Dark Elves are mad! They're going to do themselves in some day."

Not long after the two demons flew off, the group heard footsteps coming from behind them. At the same time, they also heard voices speaking in the demon's language. Skinorse and Melinda had no way to understand it, but Link had done some research into the language spoken in the abyss, and he could vaguely make out the gist of what he heard.

"This damn gorge! How many passages are there?"

"Where do you think those little rats are hiding?"

"Who knows. They might be huddled up in some hole. I'm just annoyed at the commander's orders. Capturing a Magician alive? That's just suicide!"

"Hush

"Let him hear me then! What, can't we speak the truth?"

There were eight demons in this group. They took advantage of their superiority in numbers to walk brazenly through the gorge, not bothering to hide their position.

The demons were huge, and their speed was also fast. Looking at the situation, it would only be minutes before they caught up. This was different from the situation with the demons flying overhead. The gorge was only ten feet wide. If the two groups engaged in combat, the demons would definitely notice.

Link glanced around and suddenly spotted a human-sized hole. The hole was pitch dark. Nothing could be seen within. However, Link could make out the sound of wind from the other end of the hole. That meant that there was an exit at the other end of the tunnel.

These demons were huge, above nine feet in height. The hole was rather small, so they would definitely not be able to enter. It would be much safer than walking normally.

Link pointed at the tunnel. "Let's go in."

"Lord.... can we not? I think it'd be better if we just ran faster," Skinorse said. Looking at the hole gave him the chills. The tunnel was pitch dark, and there were even weird noises coming out of it. Furthermore, what made them even more afraid is that, in order to escape the demons' pursuit, they would have to grope their way forward in the darkness with no light. Who knew what they would find inside?

Melinda was about to burstito tears at this point. She didn't say anything but pouted her small mouth at Link. Her face was pleading. Clearly, she did not want to go in either.

Hearing the footsteps behind getting closer, Link said determinedly, "Stop dilly-dallying; quick go in! Skinorse, you're first. Nana, follow him, save him if anything happens. I'll bring up the rear."

Although they could run quickly, could they hope to outrun the flying demons? Furthermore, if they ran, they would make even more noise and expose their own position. Perhaps that would lead to even greater trouble.

Entering the tunnel was definitely the best solution.

As for what they might encounter inside the tunnel...well, they would deal with it when the time came. It would definitely be easier to deal with than the pursuing demons.

Link's command was absolute, and Skinorse could not think of any other way out either. He could only grab his dagger in his right hand and feel his way forward with his left hand, creeping forward one step at a time in the darkness.

Nana quickly followed. Link went in last.

Just as the group was about 90 feetito the tunnel, behind them in the passageway they came from came the sound of footsteps running past. The demons had arrived and walked past the hole.

Link carefully listened to the sounds of the footsteps go by. Just as he let out a sigh of relief, the demons suddenly turned back and Link heard a sound. "Hey, there's a hole here."

"I feel that there's something suspicious about it."

"Let me smell it."

There was the sound of something sniffing, and in a few moments, a demon voice said, "Indeed! There's a scent on the walls. They've definitely gone through here!"

"This hole is so small; we can't go in! How do we get them?"

"It seems that only someone of the commander's size can fit inside. Should we inform the commander?"

"Of course! Hee hee! Let the commander go in alone and attempt to catch the Magician."

Upon hearing this, Link again let out the breath he was holding back.

The scent on the walls was probably because of Skinorse's sweat. Just this little bit of trace had given them away. The demons were definitely astute. Fortunately for them, only the commander demon could chase them inside here, and Link was confident of dealing with one commander.

Thinking about this, Link said, "Hold up."

Skinorse and Nana stopped and watched as Link took out his wand to draw out magical symbols in the air. With each stroke of his wand, one line of glowing light appeared in the air.

His speed was very fast, and in about ten seconds, the air was filled with the light of radiant magic runes. Link pointed the staff towards the stone wall and said softly, "Seal!"

The runes flew up onto the stone walls. Clang! The cavern walls shook slightly, as though a hammer had knocked into it. Immediately, a magic formation emerged on the walls.

Following that, the tunnel started to change.

As the magic formation glowed with light, a magic door appeared behind Link. The magic door's surface was rough and looked like a mountain wall. It gave the impression that it was a dead end in the tunnel.

That was not enough. If it were just the magic door, the magical aura emanated from the door would easily be detected by the opponent. Then, they could easily break through the barrier.

Link continued drawing more magical symbols. Ten seconds later, another set of runes appeared.

"Seal!"

Clang! The sound appeared again, and this time, the runes appeared on the magic door. When this magic formation was completed, the magical aura of the door immediately disappeared. Now, it looked no different from an ordinary door.

Skinorse could not spot any defects in the door. If he hadn't just come from the tunnel, but discovered the door on his own, he would have assumed it was part of the stone wall and be tricked by it.

The black cat also praised, "Hey, isn't this one of the tricks I taught you? Not bad, you're already putting it to good use. You're definitely smart, much better than that blockhead Isendilan."

Link shook his head, saying, "According to the demons, the commander is really incredible. This may not be able to trick him. I'm merely using it as a warning system."

If the magic door was broken through, Link would detect it and know that the demon commander was catching up. He would then be able to make preparations.

He said to Skinorse, "Okay, let's continue. Go forward another 300 feet, then I'll be able to safely give us some light."

Skinorse felt a lot more relieved and continued feeling his way forward in the darkness.

The tunnel gradually grew wider. After about 300 feet, what was originally tall and wide enough for just a single person suddenly expanded out. From the echoes of their footsteps, they could tell that the tunnel had gotten bigger.

"Lord Link, are you still behind me?" Melinda asked, suddenly feeling frightened.

"I am," Link replied. Hearing his calm voice made Melinda feel a lot more reassured.

However, it was at this moment when there was a wuuuuu sound coming from the tunnel. As a strong gust of wind blew past them, it made them lose their balance for a moment.

The strange wind blew for about three seconds, and then, just as suddenly as it had begun, it stopped.

The one in the lead, Skinorse, let out a sigh of relief and forced out of laugh. "That gave me a fright. I was afraid something would happen."

The group of them continued walking forward.

However, after ten seconds, Skinorse suddenly called out, "Hey, Nana, what are you doing beside me? I brushed your hand just now.

The next moment, Nana's clear voice sounded out. "But I'm right behind you."

At this moment, Skinorse felt like his heart was going to stop.

## 310. The Night Kings Sadness

The Wailing Gorge, cave.

Nana was behind him, so whose arm did he just touch?

Skinorse felt goosebumps all over him, and cold sweat sprouted all over his back. He had the sudden urge to get up and just run.

Poof. Link cast an illumination spell and weak light lit up the cave. Under the dim yellow light, Link saw two pairs of wide eyes and two faces filled with terror. One was Skinorse, and the other was Melinda, the Yabba woman.

As for Nana, she was how she always was. The black cat was curled inside Nanasshi

As for the surroundings, the cave tunnel was already very spacious. It was 50 feet wide and more than 15 feet high. There were pebbles scattered all over the ground, and to the left, there was a huge ten-foot tall semicircular boulder that blocked everyone's line of sight. Many stalactites hung down from the ceiling of the cave. There were two dark tunnels up ahead, one of which had wind traveling through, creating eerie keening sounds.

"N-nothing? But I clearly felt something. It was soft and kind of warm." Skinorse was about to cry. He flattened himself against the wall and gripped daggers with both hands in a defensive position. Only like this could he be slightly at ease.

Whoosh. Link cast another light spell. He lit up three in total, and three fist-sized balls of milky white light flew out. One was stuck above Skinorse's head, one stuck onto the ceiling, and another turned and flew behind the boulder in the upper left.

The space was instantly illuminated, and everything became clear. No blind spots were left. Skinorse was a lot more reassured. Gripping his daggers, he inched towards the boulder. He thought that it was the only possible hiding place. If that thing he touched really existed, it had to be here.

He was already prepared to fight.

Three feet, six feet, nine feet... After six more feet, he would be behind the boulder. Here, Skinorse pounced using his experience and rolled forward after landing. He ended in a half squat behind the boulder, his dagger before him and ready to go in either direction.

If there was someone hiding behind the boulder, Skinorse would charge like this to ensure he wouldn't be attacked.

"Where is he? Where? Still no one?" Skinorse felt that he was going to have a mental breakdown.

The cave was only so big, and this boulder was the only hiding place. If there was nothing here, then what the f\*ck did he touch?!

"Skinorse, m-maybe you imagined it?" Melinda asked timidly. She was curled up on Nana's back as if she wanted to disappear.

Skinorse lost his confidence. He lowered his head and looked around. If that guy really existed, there should be footprints on the ground. Skinorse started suspecting that he'd imagined it because there were no footprints at all.

"Lord, do you sense anything wrong?" Skinorse felt that he was so nervous that he made a mistake—and a rookie mistake at that.

Link didn't speak after casting the light spell and carefully investigated the surrounding marks. At this time, he'd already found some abnormal marks.

"You were right. You probably did touch something. Look here," Link said, pointing at the center of the boulder.

Skinorse looked over. There was a small scrape at the six-foot point. It was a fresh mark as well. It seemed that the thing had gone deeper into the cave.

"It probably flies, and after you accidentally touched it, it was scared too and immediately flew away. It's silent when flying or it's very quiet and was covered by the wind in the cave on the right."

While speaking, Link ended the light spell, only keeping the one on top of Skinorse's head. "If I guessed correctly," he continued, "there should be some abnormal things in this cave. The thing we just ran into should be like a detective sentinel."

In the game, these sentinels were called "Night Whistles." They were a type of trained bird unique to the Wailing Gorge. If a Night Whistle was discovered inside a cave, it was a sign that there was definitely a storyline quest inside.

If Link was correct, the one right ahead was called "The Night King's Sadness."

Sealed locations like caves had fewer geographical details, so this place was practically identical to the game. When the familiar semicircular boulder appeared, Link immediately confirmed his guess.

After knowing this was a storyline quest, Link felt relieved but also annoyed.

The reason was simple. The final boss in this quest, the Night King, wasn't too powerful but the way to win was really messed up. If the player had bad luck, they would feel like smashi

The quest was called the Night King's Sadness, but it could easily end up being the player's sadness.

Link had done this storyline quest at least 100 times in the game. He passed after completely wracking his brain every time just to win a double mount that the Night King dropped.

When he got it, Link swore that he would never come to this messed up place. But now, in real life, he was back.

On the other hand, Skinorse heard that there were sentinels and scratched his head. "Lord, there are two roads up ahead. Which way should we go?"

"The left side, the one without wind," Link said.

"Ah, but the right side has wind. That means there's an exit." Skinorse didn't understand. He liked adventures, so he knew this type of basic knowledge.

Link had already gone toward the left. "The wind isn't natural. It's a wind element spell. I can feel that it will end up as a dead end."

Actually, Link couldn't tell at all. In his opinion, this wind was exactly like natural wind. Link only knew because he'd fallen for the trick before.

This was the first trick of the Night King's Sadness. The pioneer gamers would see that the left was still while the right continuously had wind. They would instinctively feel that there was something in the right and go that way.

However, the result was the wind would lead them into the maze-like tunnel and run into a bunch of wind element creatures. There were usually two endings after choosing the right side. One, the player would accidentally attract too many creatures and get killed; two, the player would get completely stumped by the maze and return to the cemetery to be resurrected. (The game didn't have the Hearthstone.)

The ones who could exit the maze were either geniuses or were lucky enough to win the lottery.

The tricks here could be used on rookies but also experienced players. Link was now completely focused. He was ready to deal with the Night King's traps.

Link's words were very reliable. Since he said the right side was a dead end, Skinorse walked towards the left without any hesitation.

"Wait, let's leave a mark behind."

With that, Link walked to the right entrance. He pointed his wand forward, and a light spell appeared, flying deep into the cave. The spell had a unique characteristic—it had a very, very long range.

Its Mana structure was introverted and very stable. After completion, it would steadily release light until all the Mana inside was used up. The Magician didn't need to consume energy during the process to maintain its existence. This resulted in its super long range. Basically, the light spell could be shot as far as one could see.

Link controlled the spell along the tunnel. Unsteadily, it flew 650 feet before sticking onto the wall.

"This spell can last three minutes," he explained. "The entire time, it'll release large amounts of Mana aura—"

Before he could finish, the black cat stuck out its head and said, "And then the demon general will charge into there and end up in the maze. Meow, Link, you're evil. I like it."

Link shrugged in admission.

Deep inside, he was impressed. As expected of a God, the black cat immediately understood the inner structure of the cave. Of course, even though it looked extremely cute, it was actually cold inside. It would sacrifice anything for freedom, which was evident from his actions.

Link was still cautious of it.

Hearing their words, Skinorse was rest assured. Under the guidance of the light above his head, he took the lead and entered the left cave. He walked forward while Link stayed behind to erase their marks. He wiped away all the footprints, spell auras, odors, and everything else.

The path was mostly smooth, and nothing abnormal happened.

The further they went, the more spacious the cave became. After five minutes, Link suddenly felt something. Then he heard a boom come from behind them.

"What's that?" Skinorse's footsteps faltered.

Link was a bit surprised by this. "My Magic Door was broken in. It seems that the demon general truly is powerful and we can only fool him for so long. Don't worry. Let's continue."

After around 300 feet, there was suddenly a glowing Magic Door before them. A sentence was written in magic runes. Mortal, what is the biggest lie in life?

There were three choices under it: love, power, and wealth. There was a blank space after it, as well as an explanation below it. If you want to enter, answer the question.

Seeing this, Link sighed. This was first trick for experienced players. In the game, countless good men were wrecked by this Magic Door.

## 311. Mind-boggled to the Point of Desperation

In the tunnel

Skinorse walked in front of the magic door, inspecting the words carved on the door. "Hmm, this door... Power, Wealth, Love... These are all life's great lies. However, they aren't really the greatest."

Using his dagger, Skinorse drew some lines on the door. As the sharp edge of the dagger brushed the surface of the door, it created a sharp scratching sound. However, it did not even leave a mark on the door. Skinorse turned to Link, saying, "Lord, this door is really sturdy. How are we supposed to break through? Don't tell me we really have to answer the question?"

As an adventurer, Skinorse felt that it could not be so simple.

The black cat in Nana's bosom looked at the door. "Meow, this door is really interesting."

Saying so, he ducked back into Nana's chest, not bothering to speak further or explain the method to get past the door. Looking at it made Skinorse's gums itch.

Link looked at the door and sighed to himself. In his previous life, he was played to death by this very door.

At that time, he was still inexperienced and had come with some friends to explore this dungeon. Upon reaching this door, the group of them had sat down discussing the topic of what life's greatest lie was. Their discussion lasted three days and three nights. Finally, because of some accident, they realized they were tricked.

Link walked forward and, using his wand, wrote down a line in the blank space on the door. "You are the greatest lie!"

Life's greatest lie?

How could there be anyone answer to this question?

The most hateful thing about this door was that it used the players' self-doubt to lead them on. The more the player thought about the answer, the more they would wrack their brains to come up with more and more answers. However, all of that was just wasting the player's time.

The answer was simple. The key to opening this door had nothing to do with the complicated looking question. The only purpose for the question was to con you.

The moment Link wrote this on the door, an illusory voice sounded out from the door. "Wrong answer."

This response from the door was also a con.

In most situations, when someone tells you that your answer is wrong, you would naturally reconsider what the correct answer could be. However, that would just mislead you deeper and deeper into the con.

Ultimately, this trap made use of the player's self-doubt to keep them from proceeding. During the game, many teams were toyed with in this manner by the Night King.

"Lord, the answer is wrong," Skinorse said.

Look, this fellow fell into the trap.

Link replied, "If I were the creator of this magic door, I would not bother putting a real answer. If I'm not wrong, these are the only four words that this door knows."

As he said this, Link selected "power."

As expected, the door immediately replied, "Wrong answer."

"Then how do we enter?" Melinda asked.

"Don't rush," Link replied.

Link walked around the magic door until he reached a part of the door not under the light. There was a normal looking stone sticking out from the stone wall.

Link took a clean cloth and lay it on the stone. This was to ensure that he did not leave his scent behind. Then, he pressed down hard onto the stone. Suddenly, the stone was pushed into the wall! Immediately, the magic door started ringing, and after three seconds, it vanished.

"What...!" Skinorse suddenly felt that the world was truly treacherous. A simple trap like this could have led him around in circles forever. How would people dare to adventure like this?

"Alright, don't worry, let's go in!" Link instructed urgently. The magic door made a lot of noise before it vanished and would surely have alerted the pursuing demons. They definitely could not afford to dally any longer.

After they entered the passage, Link pressed down hard on another similarly normal looking rock. Ringgg. After ringing again, the passage they were in lit up, and two seconds later, the magic door was back in place.

This magic door was a very high-level door with the strength of Level-8. Link hoped that it could delay the demon commander. It would be the best if the commander fell into the trap and wasted time solving the riddle. Even if he didn't but used brute force to break through the door, Link could use it to gauge the demon commander's true strength.

Once the magic door was reformed, Link warned the rest, "Later on, we've got to be more careful. There could be assassins appearing at every trap we encounter. Also, watch your step, don't step into any holes. Any of them could be dangerous.

The trickster door was only the beginning. After passing the door, there were all sorts of other traps that made adventurers nervous or irritated. Without knowing it, they could find themselves in trouble.

Skinorse swallowed his saliva. Earlier, he had been tricked by the magic door and was feeling less confident about himself. However, he was the only assassin with the highest agility in the group. Therefore, he still went ahead to scout for traps.

The path behind the magic door was very wide, about ten feet wide and five feet high. Magic lamps hung on both sides of the passageway. Under the dim light of these lamps, the passageway could be seen clearly enough. Link stopped his light magic.

"Watch out, these lamps aren't meant to guide us, it's for assassins to conceal themselves. As we walk in this lit place, we would naturally feel more at ease and let down our guard. Also, because of the flickering light, it would distract us from focusing on the shadows and help to conceal any assassins hiding inside. In this situation, we have no way of knowing when the assassins may rush out."

"What should we do then?" Melinda asked. She was currently standing under the glow of the lamps. As she looked around, she could see dark areas but couldn't see anything in them.

"Well, it's easy. I've got a way," Skinorse replied. He took out an eyepatch and used it to cover his eyes. With one eye covered, he looked like a pirate.

Link immediately understood what he was doing. "Great idea!"

With one eye covered, they could walk around in the light with no worries. When they entered the darkness, they could take off the eye patch to see normally as the eye covered by the eye patch would already be acclimatized to the darkness.

Hearing the praise, Skinorse was delighted. "Heh heh, I learned this from a pirate. Whenever they pilfered others, they would often rush from the brightly lit deck into the darkness below deck and back again. Without this trick, they would have more difficulties adjusting to the change in vision.

The group continued walking. After about 3 minutes, Skinorse suddenly raised his dagger and cast out his battle aura, looking very fearsome.

Clang. The moment he cast his battle aura, Skinorse was knocked backwards by a figure cloaked in the darkness. He staggered a few steps back, trying to stabilize his footing. His both hands gripping the daggers were also hard at work fending off the attacks emerging from the darkness.

"Look out below! Levitation!" Link shouted, then immediately cast a spell onto Skinorse. The moment his spell was completed, Skinorse had stepped onto a piece of stone slab.

Because of the effect of the Levitation Spell, he did not step down onto the stone slab but only brushed the surface.

The trap did not trigger.

Immediately, Link followed up by throwing a dimensional ball the size of assame seed. The dimensional ball exploded directly in front of the assassin, constiting the dark figure's movements.

The group was finally able to see the figure's features.

Its body was shrouded in a dark green fog, making it look like it was covered in a dark green cloak. Looking carefully, it didn't seem to have legs and was levitating in the air. It also didn't have a face, and here its head was supposed to be was completely covered in the dark green fog. It looked very much like a specter.

Amidst the fog, there were two crystal claws that glowing with red light.

At the moment, the claws were clashi

Those with some fighting experience could tell that these pair of crystal claws would soon unleash a terrifying attack.

However, it didn't have the chance.

Link spent 1000 Mana on this Spatial Shackles Spell. The spell was over Level-8 while this Specter assassin was only Level-7. It had no way to resist.

Its movements slowed down until they came to a stop.

Skinorse took advantage of the opportunity to regain his bearings. He looked at the stone slab he had nearly activated, noticing an array of creamy white runes flashi

Normally, he would have easily noticed this trap, but in the midst of being sneak attacked, his concentration was fully directed at fending off his opponent's attacks and had no time to look at where he was stepping.

If he had been alone, he would certainly have stepped onto the slab, activating the lightning trap. Even if he did not die in the trap, he would be paralyzed. In a place like this, that was essentially the same as dying.

He rejoiced in his heart and rushed over with his daggers aimed towards the Specter assassin.

Puff puff puff. His daggers pierced continuously into the fog-covered body. However, it was as though he was stabbing into the air, and Skinorse could not feel any resistance from the stabs. His opponent also showed no signs of injury.

"Don't tell me it can't be killed?" Skinorse exclaimed.

"This is a specter, its body is completely spiritual and normal attacks have little effect. Nana!"

Nanarsed forward, drawing out the dagger that would make even exiled Gods nervous. The dagger slashed across the specter's body. Whoosh. The specter was ripped into two halves. The dagger had also slashed across one of its crystal claws which immediately split like a jelly bean, spilling out red light.

After being cut in half, the Specter assassin dissipated into smoke. Its crystal claw fell to the floor with a clang.

Link picked the claw up and kept it. It was excellent material.

"Wow, Nana, that was great. What kind of dagger is that?" Skinorse could immediately tell that the dagger was special. Just watching it cut the crystal claws alone made him very moved. One had to know that the crystal claws were extremely hard and he could not even put a scratch on it.

"I made it," Link replied instead.

Skinorse was instantly filled with a sense of jealousy. Link was a Magician famous throughout the continent. Any dagger he made would definitely not be ordinary.

However, this dagger was really powerful.

Link instructed, "Let's slow down. Make sure to look carefully where you're walking. There will be many traps where you least expect them, and, although you would not normally step on them, you might be led towards it when fighting with the assassins."

This was the most dangerous part.

"Understood," Skinorse replied, becoming extremely alert.

The group continued on meeting three more Specter assassins along the way. This time, Skinorse was prepared for them, and together with Link and Nana, easily dealt with them.

They followed the curving passageway for another 450 feet before encountering a spiral staircase leading downwards.

Seeing the many magical doors that flanked the spiral staircase made the group nervous. There was one door every ten stairs. Looking down, there were 500 stairs, meaning there would be 50 doors.

At the end of the stairs was a dead end. There was simply no exit.

Meaning to say, if there were an exit, it would be found among one of these doors. However, who could say which door led to the exit and which led to a dead end? Worse still, which door would lead them into danger, and how were they to open these doors? They would need to try every door.

Even Link felt a headache coming after seeing this.

"Life Stealing Ten Thousand Door Array." This was the most painful part of the mission "The Night King's Sadness."

It was naive to think that the 50 doors was all there was to the Life Stealing Ten Thousand Door Array!

Here, players would experience what it meant to be mind-boggled to the point of desperation.

## 312. Unbelievably Strange

Cave.

"Lord, it's a dead end?" Skinorse gaped at the spiraling steps.

The first Magic Door was in the near distance. He walked up and tried with his dagger. There was a sharp scraping sound, and a faint scratch appeared on the smooth Magic Door. It faded slowly and disappeared completely after three seconds.

"This door isn't very sturdy. I can destroy them easily, but there are too many." He estimated that he could force through five doors, ten doors, and even 20 doors but 50 would exhaust him.

Link had a headache too.

The reason was simple. The space in the spiral steps was very unusual and was finely folded multiple times. Only one of these doors was the true exit, but its position wasn't set. It could randomly appear as one of the 50.

In the previous game, Link had tried more than 100 times. Every door had once been the exit, but as a player, they could only gamble their luck.

They had to break through door after door and go in to check until they found the correct exit. If one was lucky, the first would be the exit. If one was unlucky, it could end up being door 50. That would be honestly depressing. Some players were even stuck in this place for an entire week.

Link was quite lucky in the other world. Paired with some tricks, he could usually find the right exit within five tries. However, that was a game, and this was reality. Link didn't know if his tricks would work.

Of course, the most important task now was to open the doors.

Forcefully breaking them was possible, but these Magic Doors were all around the pinnacle of Level-6. It was too consuming and wouldn't work in the long run. Fortunately, Link was prepared.

He took out the dark red crystal claw blade taken from the Undead assassin earlier. After modifying it, it had become a 20-centimeter-long, two-centimeter-wide crystal stick. Holding this stick, Link walked towards the first Magic Door. He studied the wall carefully. After around one minute, he found a centimeter-long crack in the wall.

Found it. It's just like in the game! Link was overjoyed. He took out his wand and pointed at the crack lightly. "Cleansing spell!"

Faint light loomed over and lightly cleaned the crack of dust and pebbles like a duster. Finally, it revealed a small hole around two centimeters wide. It was the exact size of Link's crystal stick.

Link stuck the stick into the hole and started pouring Mana into it. At the same time, he explained, "This should be the keyhole of the Magic Door. A key made from the Undead assassin's claw blade won't be rejected by the Magic Door's power...Wait, the position is wrong."

He pulled the crystal stick out and continued to add Mana in to investigate. After around three seconds, Link slowly pushed the stick in again. He went millimeter by millimeter, and after around three millimeters, a slight crack sounded in the hole.

"Got it." Skinorse was overjoyed when he heard the sound.

Link activated an enchantment again and modified the crystal stick bit by bit to the shape of the lock's structure. After around ten seconds, Link gently turned the stick. Buzz...buzz...buzz... The Magic Door beside the hole hummed lightly. After around ten seconds, the door transformed into light and disappeared.

"The door is open!" Melinda laughed and clapped her hands. She looked at Link with reverence.

"Hmph, you haven't seen anything." The black cat looked at the cheering Yabba woman with disdain. Then it changed its position and curled up again as if things had nothing to do with it.

"Skinorse, investigate the path!"

"Okay." The guy brandished his dagger and rushed to the front again. He walked in and, after a bit, he said, "Come in, it's safe...but it's a bit strange. I think we've been here before."

The group entered. Link glanced around and sighed. "Let's go. This door is the entrance to a looped space. It's not the exit. Let's continue forward."

The place they were at was completely identical to the entrance of the Door of Lies. This door was like a transmitter among the steps. They stepped through and returned to the entrance.

"Lord, why don't we go back?" Skinorse asked curiously.

Link pointed behind them. "Are you sure you want to go back?"

Skinorse walked to the door behind them and instantly had a fright. When they came in, there were still steps. Now, it had become a bottomless hole. He couldn't see anything in the hole while violent wind kept blowing through. It was really strong too and caught Skinorse by surprise. He lost his balance and actually floated. It seemed that the wind would suck him in.

Nana hurriedly grabbed his arm and pulled him back.

Regaining his balance, Skinorse felt that even his breaths were shaky. His legs felt like jelly, and he could barely stand.

Link tossed a rock into the hole. One second, two seconds...After more than one minute, there was a sudden boom, and a lick of fire shot out from the hole. The flame was light blue and was abnormally hot. Skinorse was a bit closer to it and his face hurt from the heat, forcing him to activate his Battle Aura to defend himself.

"That scary?" Skinorse gulped. The rock took one minute to land, there was wild wind, and there was Level-8 explosive fire in the bottom. If they retreated, they would definitely die.

"This is a one-way looped space. There is no way back."

"What's a one-way looped space?" Skinorse asked as if he wasn't in dire danger.

Before Link could reply, the black cat cut in. "Mortal, take it easy with your poor brain and let it live a few more years. You won't understand even if I tell you."

Link shrugged and said, "You saw the general situation. We can only go in one direction and go past the places we've already been through. As for the specific theory, are you sure you want to know?"

He understood the theory and could even make something similar. Decoding this type of space wasn't that hard either, but there was a big problem.

This one-way looped space had dead ends. This meant that once it was decoded and the space collapsed, there was a high possibility that everyone inside would be brought to the dead end—the bottomless fire pit they'd just witnessed.

From what they'd seen, this dead end was abnormally horrifying, and there was little chance they would survive.

Thus, Link decided he would just follow the spatial laws obediently. He could get out anyhow.

Skinorse didn't believe him. "Tell me. I'll listen."

So Link started saying, "It's like this. The single loop doesn't actually exist. It's one-way because dead ends exist. It's a Mana transformational equation—"

After that sentence, Skinorse knew that listening to it would be torture. "Lord, I realized my mistake. I don't want to listen."

"Then let's keep walking."

Skinorse looked at the gradually disappearing Mana equation in the air and sighed, his heart stillusttled. He continued leading the way.

The group traveled around 900 feet down this familiar path when another downward spiral staircase appeared. There were fifty doors around the steps; it was identical to the scene earlier.

"We're back," Link said.

"But didn't we already open the first door? This one is closed." Skinorse felt mentally and physically exhausted. This place was too strange and was almost beyond his ability to comprehend.

Melinda found a detail this time. She pointed at the footprints on the ground and said, "We really did come back. Look, those are our footprints."

Skinorse looked down and let out a long sigh. He'd already given up on wondering why. Since he couldn't figure it out, he would hand the brain work to the Magician.

"Lord, what do we do now? Do we continue with the second door?" Skinorse asked.

As he spoke, he felt like an idiot that didn't know anything. The black cat especially looked at him as if he was an ant. It was okay once or twice, but after being looked at like that for so long, even Skinorse was starting to doubt himself.

Link shook his head. "No, we'll still try the first door."

"But didn't you say the first door is that one-way looped space thing? If we go in, wouldn't we come back?" Skinorse didn't understand while Melinda was staring at Link too.

"The situation has changed." Link shook his head. "This door is completely new. Let me put it this way. The first door in front of us now is different from the first door we just opened. You know, doors are connection points in the space. These points can be ordered randomly...Whatever, just follow me."

Nana was completely uninterested in this. She only looked inside the cave curiously. Melinda and Skinorse didn't understand even if Link explained. The black cat didn't need him to explain, so his explanation was meaningless.

As for why they would still open the first door, this was a trick he'd learned from the experience in the game. It may be a preference of the one-way single loop's designer. There was a strange pattern to the position of the true exit.

If the first door opened was a one-way single loop door, there was a very high possibility that the true door after coming back would follow Fibonacci's numbering.

If the door was number one, the second time, it could be one, but it could also be two, three, five, eight, titeen, and so on. If he tried according to this method, he would definitely find the exit within six tries.

Link had played the Night King's Sadness more than 100 times in the game, and this pattern was never wrong.

He found the keyhole in the first door again and stuck the already-created key in. He tited, and with a crack, the Magic Door disappeared again. Skinorse was the first to enter again.

After entering, he sighed sadly. "Lord, we're back again."

"Then continue!" Link didn't feel dejected at all. As long as the second try was another one-way single loop instead of some strange space, it meant they were right.

They walked to the entrance of the spiral steps again. This time, Link went to open the second Magic Door.

They were all familiar now. Link quickly adjusted the key's shape, tited the key, and the Magic Door disappeared with a buzz. The group walked in again.

Once they did so, Skinorse sighed again. "Back again."

Link looked carefully and shook his head. "No, it's not the same. Look behind us."

Everyone turned around and discovered that it wasn't the steps they'd entered from or the fireless pit behind them. Instead, it was a bright tunnel.

The walls on either side had become extremely smooth, clearly polished with care. Every 30 feet, there would be a magic light on the wall. It could be seen that there was a bright hall at the end of the tunnel. The scene in the hall could be described as resplendent.

"The exit?!" Skinorse was overjoyed and almost ran over instantly.

"Wait, be careful!" Link called out. When Skinorse stood still in confusion, Link picked up a rock and tossed it towards the exit. The moment the rock passed through the Magic Door, there was a soft noise, and the rock was sliced into dozens of pieces. Each piece was less than one millimeter thick.

Skinorse paled immediately. He couldn't see anything in the tunnel, but such a fatal trap was hidden in it. It was terrifying!

"It's a Spatial Slicer. Look carefully. Do you see anything?" Link asked in warning.

Skinorse calmed down and investigated for a few minutes before finally nodding. "It's a bit different, but it's too well-hidden."

When they'd found the exit just then, he was ecstatic and wouldn't notice such a small mark. If Link hadn't called out to him and ran over happily, he wouldn't be Skinorse now. He would be pieces of Skinorse.

"How do we decode this—"

Before Skinorse could finish, a giant explosion sounded in the tunnel. Then the exit that they'd found with so much difficulty collapsed and disappeared. It revealed a broken tunnel—the position of the Door of Lies.

A black shadow shrouded in black mist, and bloody eyes stood in the tunnel, roaring angrily, "Lies! They're all lies! damn Magic Door! It's lying to me!"

When he saw Link's group, the anger vanished. He burstito laughter. "Hahaha, seems like I've come at the right time!"

Everyone blanched and gaped at each other. Skinorse wanted to kill this bastard. They'd finally found the exit, but it disappeared just like that.

However, reality was cruel, and this demon was very powerful. Even Link couldn't defeat him, let alone Skinorse!

"A Level-9 demon," Link muttered. "He's a fallen angel and is very powerful. We're not his match. Retreat."

## 313. My Love, Did You Return?

"Run?"

When the dark figure laid its eyes upon Link, it let out a hollow laugh. "Run! Run if you can! I love hunting my prey! Kukukuhahaha!"

Skinorse immediately moved in front of Link to block him, facing off against this fellow shrouded in black mists. His heart was thumping, and he whispered to Link, "Lord, I feel like the moment we move, we'll be killed."

Link was a Level-7 expert and was definitely one of the strongest among the human race. Facing off against an otherworldly demon, that however meant nothing. He could be killed in an instant.

The difference in power was so great that it could not be made up with Battle Art or tricks.

The demon's hearing was excellent, and it was also in no hurry to attack. Laughing, it mocked, "At least you're clear on your situation, smart man. However, that's still not going to save you. DIE!"

Suddenly, the demon commander attacked.

Skinorse watched as the demon commander raised a finger and a streak of black light appeared in the air, flying towards his forehead.

If it hit, Skinorse's head would definitely explode, and he would die.

Fortunately, Link was as fast as the demon commander. The moment the demon commander stopped talking, Link noticed the Mana fluctuations coming from him. In that instant, Link had prepared his defenses.

A dimensional ball was flung over by Link, meeting the streak of black light in mid-air. Bang! As the two collided, they exploded just hairs away from Skinorse's body.

Link did not dare to hold anything back. In that instant, he expended 5000 Mana to cast the Spatial Shackles spell, causing it to reach the peak of Level-8 and approach the strength of Level-9.

However, a skill flashed by in that exact instant.

This skill looked completely pitch black, as black as ink. On the surface, it looked somewhat translucent. The moment it collided with the Spatial Shackles, Link felt the shackles shake violently. Moments later, the Mana within it was disrupted and burstito chaos, collapsing the spell.

The Spatial Shackles spell which cost 5000 Mana could not even block the demon's casual attack for one second.

This was the strength of a true Level-9 demon!

Furthermore, this demon was a fallen angel and was one of the strongest. Its total strength placed it among the top three demons, the Three Great Gold Demons.

Lord of the Deep, Nozama, was a mixed blood demon. Half of his blood came from a fallen angel. It was because of this that Celine's demon form possessed black wings.

Link already knew that he could not hold anything back nor did he have time tangle with the demon. The only thing he could do was try his best to escape.

Thus, as he released the spatial skill, he was also multitasking on other things.

The moment the spatial skill was broken by the demon, Link's mind was racing through multiple courses of action.

His black eyes lit up with threads of cold white light. This would only happen when a calm person pushed their soul to the limit, causing it to emit soul light.

Rustle. The Demon Slayer Whip appeared, and red colored light flashed. The whip lashed out and curved back to hit towards the back of the fallen angel's head.

This was not all!

Multitasking two things was not Link's limit. While simultaneously controlling these two spells, Link prepared one more skill: Dimensional Jump.

As the Spatial Shackles and the Demon Slayer Whip appeared, a white column of light enveloped him and his team members.

One second later, the Spatial Shackles was destroyed. Nonetheless, that was enough to give Skinorse some time to react.

His Battle Aura exploded out, drawing his dagger and holding it in front of himself.

Clang! A sharp sound rang out. The Demon Slayer Whip was destroyed by the fallen angel. Against a Level-8 attack, this expert merely needed to raise his hand and flick a finger to destroy Link's attacks.

However, that gap was enough.

The next instant—whoosh, a sound rang out. Link, Skinorse, Nana and the rest of them disappeared. The fallen angel's attack arrived the moment they disappeared, but it was nevertheless too late and only hit air.

"That's fast! HA, they're going to be worthy prey!" The fallen angel was excited. He could already detect Link and the rest, in another passage a few hundred feet ahead. He rushed forward.

Meanwhile...

Link had already planned out where to teleport them to. He could not teleport them out of the cave. The outside was definitely surrounded by demons already. They could only proceed further into the cave.

As the teleportation ended and the group of them appeared, Skinorse coughed up a mouthful of blood. Both of his arms were trembling like mad, and he struggled to maintain a firm grip on his daggers.

Just before the teleportation activated, he had clashed once with the fallen angel's attack. Just that one attack which had already been diffused by Link's spell caused his arms to hurt as though seriously injured. The shock of the impact went all the way to his chest, and his internal organs were rattling.

"Level-9 demons are so powerful! What a bitch!" Skinorse laughed bitterly.

"Stop whining, mortal. It's fortunate enough that you're still alive." The black cat had at this point stuck out its head. It had a never-before-seen serious expression on its round face. It turned to look at Link and asked, "Hey, do you have any idea how to escape?"

It knew that it could no longer sit around without caring. Link had once said that if he died, it would die too.

Link took a deep breath. His head throbbed, but he could still go on.

"I'm fine. I've got a plan to escape. Just follow my lead."

He inserted the key into the keyhole of the first magic door and turned. The door disappeared. It was opened! Once again, it led into an empty space.

Link could feel the aura of the fallen angel nearby. After pausing for a second, he instructed, "Go in, go in!"

They ran in through the magic door and once again found themselves at the Door of Lies.

At this point, the fallen angel arrived at the spiral staircase. He looked down and saw the spiral staircase surrounded by numerous magic doors as well as the footprints on the floor. He immediately appeared outside of the first magic door and drew out a curved black knife, slashi

Dense energy rushed into the knife, causing the knife to glow with black energy. Wham! The magic door was blasted open.

Behind the door was a wide space filled with earth puppets. Link and the rest were nowhere in sight.

"damn it! It's a dimensional spell!" The commander immediately knew what he had gotten himself into.

However, he once again felt for his prey's auras and realized that they were back at the Door of Lies.

He immediately turned back to give chase.

After passing through a passage, he caught sight of Link's party. More accurately, he caught sight of a group of figures surrounded by a column of white light. "Don't run!"

The fallen angel dashed over in an attempt to stop them from disappearing.

However, Link had already estimated the time he would take. They vanished just as the fallen commander reached them and once again appeared at the spiral staircase.

The first door that had been destroyed appeared again.

Inserting the crystal key, Link turned it again, and the door opened. This time, they were lucky. There was no empty space or earth puppets. It was just a one-way looped space.

This was another special feature of this magical array. Different ways of opening the door would lead to different portals. Using the key to open the door would have a much higher likelihood of reaching the true exit as compared to smashi

Link waited patiently. After about three seconds, when he could feel the fallen commander approaching, he instructed, "Enter!"

Whoosh. Once again, they reappeared at the Door of Lies.

The fallen angel learned from his previous mistake. Instead of smashi

He feltitense anger rising up from the depths of his heart. He felt like he was being led around by the nose by Link.

"Stop right there! I dare you to run again!" The fallen angel's voice boomed like thunder, reverberating throughout the mountain.

Link ignored him.

This time, he arrived at the second magic door, and as usual, inserted the key into the keyhole and turned. The door opened, and once again, it was an empty space. However, Link had the feeling that on the third try, the true exit would once again reveal itself.

After waiting for the fallen angel to rush over to them, he instructed the rest to enter the door.

The fallen angel immediately turned around and, without any hesitation, dashed towards the Door of Lies. He knew that any magical spell would consume Mana, and that was especially so for a big spell like group teleportation. He didn't believe that Link could use it often.

When Link arrived at the Door of Lies, he looked backwards. As expected, the tunnel appeared.

He had 4600 Mana points remaining as well as 700 Omni points. That was more than enough to use Dimensional Jump again. The walls of this tunnel out were also covered in lines, clear evidence of a Spatial Slicer Trap. Link didn't disrupt the trap but simply used teleportation instead.

Whoosh. They disappeared, and the next time they reappeared, they were in the inner region of the tunnel.

"Come on, let's go," Link urged. He looked back and saw the fallen angel rushi

"Brat, you're not running this time? Have you run out of Mana?" He stared at Link, walking forward with big strides.

Link watched as the fallen angel approached Spatial Slicer Trap. Then, in order to distract him from noticing, Link suddenly turned around and taunted the fallen angel, "Look at your wings. Are you a bird? Or a person? Or maybe a bird person?"

The fallen angel's eyes became more bloodshot. "Hmph, your self-confidence is puzzling."

He strode forward, entering the tunnel.

Slice. All of a sudden, the fallen angel's body was sliced by the Spatial Slicer trap.

Link watched as the black mist around the fallen angel's body suddenly contract, before dissipating. The red color in the fallen angel's bloodshot eyes also lightened.

No matter how strong an expert was, as long as he was caught off-guard, even a normal knife would be able to cut him. There was no need to talk about the Spatial Slicer Skill, which was famous for cutting through anything.

The fallen angel was distracted by Link's taunts and got himself injured by the Spatial Slicer Trap. If not for his quick reactions, jumping back the moment he noticed the trap, as well as his strong demonic life force, he would have been cutito slices of meat by now.

Even if he didn't die, his injuries would not be light.

He retreated to the entrance of the tunnel with black blood dripping off his body. His hollow voice sounded out. "Magician, well done, you tricked me. But don't think you've won! You're still going to die today!"

The fallen angel suddenly knelt onto the ground. Instantly, blue flames emerged on his body, surrounding him and burning every inch of flesh on his body.

The black cat immediately called out, "He's using Soul Recovery! Let's go!"

Soul Recovery

Angel Bloodline Ability

Effect: Burns a portion of soul energy to heal any injury.

(Note: Cause a permanent decrease in angel's power.)

Link knew the side-effects of this spell used by angels. However, a Level-9 demon, even after it had its power reduced, was still extremely dangerous.

He immediately turned and ran. As the group of them rushed through the tunnel, emerging into a big hall, the door to the tunnel closed. The fallen angel inside the tunnel disappeared from view.

Skinorse laughed in delight. "Ha! He's gone. Now he won't be able to find us."

In order to escape through this space, they had expended a lot of energy. Skinorse did not think that the fallen angel, being the coward he was, would dare to open each of the 50 doors to find the tunnel again.

Melinda also exclaimed, "God of Light, we managed to escape from that demon!"

The black cat's voice shook them out of their excitement. It coolly said, "This may not necessarily be a good thing. Look ahead. This place belongs to somebody."

They were in a big, resplendent looking hall. The hall was very wide and was about 300 feet long, covered in rich decorations which were almost all made of gold.

In the center of the hall, there were many lifelike gold sculptures with strange expressions on their faces. Most of these expressions were tited in fear, giving people the impression that they were fleeing for their lives before falling to a magic spell that turned them into gold.

At the very most center of the hall, there was a golden throne. The throne was made of pure gold, and on it were carved lines and words of epic stories. On the throne sat a man.

He wore a gold-colored mantle, as well as an eye-catching crown. However, his body was very thin, and he looked like a bag of bones. Even his skin was a dull gray.

"That is an undead!" Skinorse said under his breath.

The undead had its had lowered. One hand supported its forehead, while the other was busy holding a piece of gold in the shape of a rose.

Upon hearing the disturbance, the man's body didn't move, but a deep, magnetic voice called out, "My love, did you return?"

## 314. Always a Reason to Hate the Pitiful

The undead on the throne slowly raised his head. It was a very gaunt face with the cheeks, and eye sockets were deeply sunken in. It was practically bones wrapped in skin.

His eyes glowed faintly. From within, one could see clear anticipation as if just as he said, he was waiting for his so-called "love" to return.

But Link's group obviously wasn't his true love.

"This doesn't seem good," Skinorse muttered. "This guy will probably turn us into statues."

The black cat gave him a look of scorn. Not bothering to pay attention to him, it turned to Link and said, "This guy is like you. He's a spatial Magician so be careful."

Link smiled thinly. The earlier experiences told him that the situation was basically identical to the previous game. This Night King was probably similar to the game as well.

He'd played against this Night King more than 100 times and was extremely familiar with it.

To be honest, the Night King was very strong. He had reached Level-8, but he was a Magician. A Magician must, first and foremost, be calm as water and be unaffected by the outside world. However, the Night King lacked this. Therefore, in Link's eyes, he was easily defeated.

"Actually, we might not need to fight him."

As he spoke, Link took a dozen steps forward. He walked to the Night King and bowed politely. Then he pointed at the huge painting of a woman on the right wall and said, "Your Majesty, we are here to bring you news of your love."

The woman in the painting was around 30 feet tall. The painting was of a beautiful woman dressed in a palace court dress. She was around 30 years old and had creamy skin. Her eyes were like the purest of deep sapphires. Her brows were curved as if she was smiling, but there was no warmth in her eyes.

She also held a wand, and there was a deep red Thorium pendant around her neck. The markings on the pendant indicated that it was magic gear. This also meant that the woman was a Magician. It could be seen from the shape of the wand that she was very skilled. She was at least at Level-6, despite seeming to only be around 30 years old.

A woman like this couldn't be nameless in history. In reality, Link had played the Night King's Sadness more than 100 times and knew everything about each figure that appeared.

The Night King was the king of a wealthy northern kingdom 800 years ago. He was also a Magician and was extremely skilled in spatial magic. He married an equally skilled Magician—the woman in the painting. Her name was Vivian. She'd become a Master Magician at a young age and was loved greatly by the Night King.

It could be said that the Night King had everything a mortal desired. He had wealth, power, and love. His life was practically perfect.

The first year of their marriage, they loved each other dearly. The second year, the Night King sank into a spatial magic mystery. He started studying it day and night and neglected his wife.

While he studied magic, Vivian and a knight named Lancelot took care of the kingdom. They often discussed political affairs together.

At first, they were very polite, of course, and usually discussed in the library. But before long, they felt that the library was too small, and the chairs weren't comfortable. They started discussing in bed.

One day a year later, the Night King discovered by chance that his wife was having an affair with his most trusted knight. He caught them red-handed.

Utterly betrayed, the Night King furiously pulverized Lancelot, still lying on his wife, with spatial magic. As for Vivian, he locked her in a Mage Tower, and she began living in imprisonment.

However, Vivian was also a Master Magician. Half a year later, she escaped from the prison and disappeared.

The Night King suddenly regretted his actions. He thought he'd been too harsh and sent many people to search for his wife but to no avail.

To find his wife and beg for her forgiveness became the Night King's undying wish. However, the second half of his life became an utter tragedy.

Hearing Link's words, the Night King's silver eyes flashed faintly. The calm voice suddenly became urgent. "Ah, you brought me news of Vivian? Tell me, where is she?"

Before this, Link had his hands behind his back. Now, he reached out with his palm up. There was a pendant in his hand that was identical to the one on Vivian's neck in the painting.

Link had created this 30 seconds ago. The magical pendant was only Level-4 and was as easy as breathing for a Level-8 Master Magician and enchanter like Link.

Seeing this pendant, the Night King became even more excited. He immediately stood up from the throne and walked down, step by step. His eyes were trained on the pendant in Link's hand. "This is definitely Vivian's magical pendant. How did you get it? Did she tell you to send me a message?"

Link's other hand was behind his back, holding the Burning Wrath of Heavens wand. "Yes," he said. "She told me to tell you that she's forgiven you but she doesn't have any feelings for you anymore. She implores you to let her go and give her freedom!"

These words were a blow to the Night King. He stumbled and could barely remain standing. "Oh, that is definitely something she would say. My love, are you really so determined? Has nothing I've done been enough to make you change your mind?"

The Night King's tone was dejected, helpless, and filled with immense pain. His emotions were genuine.

Behind him, Skinorse muttered, "I was wondering why he would make something like the Door of Lies. I can't believe he's a pitiful guy who was betrayed by his woman."

Melinda started dabbing at her tears. "He's so pitiful."

Nana was still curious. "Why? Why does he have to be with that Vivian? He seems to be living well by himself."

The black cat pursed his lips. He jumped out from Nana's collar and expertly took out the dried fish from Nana's bag that Link had prepared. Eating, he said, "Mortals' love is just overdramatic."

The Night King obviously didn't hear Skinorse and the others talking. After recovering a bit, his features grew menacing. Gritting his teeth, he said, "Vivian, you are so cruel! You betrayed me first, but nothing I've done can win your forgiveness? I should have killed you. If I killed you, you wouldn't have had the chance to break my heart!"

As he muttered to himself, he suddenly looked up at Link. "And you, messenger, I've waited for so long just for this heartbreaking message. You've sinned! I—"

Before he could finish, Link whipped out his wand and pointed at the Night King. "Restraint!"

Link had predicted that the Night King would flip out. He was naturally selfish. Vivian's affair with the knight was partly because of being neglected but also due to the Night King's selfishness. He only cared about his own feelings and rarely paid attention to Vivian. It could be seen in every detail, and as time went by, it became unbearable.

Now, Link acted first and gained the important advantage.

Poof. The spatial sphere burst open and restrained the Night King.

"I'm sorry. Spatial Rend!" Link poured in Mana without hesitation.

Boom, boom, boom. Rings of ripples appeared. Within the spatial sphere, the frequency changed at an unimaginable speed. The chaotic force field was like a flood, continuously washi

Link's speed of casting spells was honestly too fast. In addition, he was at the same level as the Night King and had acted first. His actions were close to a sneak attack and the Night King basically had no chance.

After half a second, the light in the Night King's eyes dimmed. After another half second, his body collapsed under the Spatial Rend and became fine white powder.

He was dead.

This was a battle between Magicians. Whoever snatched the chance could act at once and quickly end the battle. Link, especially, was a Master Battle Mage. He could easily defeat a king like the Night King who fooled around with love when he was bored.

The battle ended within the half second. It was so fast that the others couldn't even react.

"Wow, killing people without any warning." Skinorse felt like he'd learned a lesson. There would always be a reason to hate the pitiful. Hearing the Night King's words, he deserved this ending.

Melinda had shed tears for the Night King, but after hearing his words, the sympathy was gone instantly. Her eyes glowed with worshi

As for the black cat, he was too busy eating dried fish to talk.

After the Night King's death, the entire space started to change. There were rings and rings of ripples in the air. Many places even cracked like glass.

Link immediately retreated to the group and said quietly, "This is all a folded space supported by the Night King. Now that he's dead, it will collapse and reform. We need to hurry out!"

"But where can we go?" Skinorse saw that the surrounding scenery was all tited strangely. Cracks would streak by like black lightning. Everything in the path of the cracks was destroyed. It was terrifying.

"Ah!" Melinda screamed because a black crack happened to appear right beside her. It was only ten millimeters away, and the Yabba almost hadamntal breakdown from the destructive aura.

"Follow me!" Link called. Mana surged around him, and a soft buzz sounded. Rings of half-transparent ripples spread from him. The chaotic space under the ripples calmed greatly. At least, no black cracks appeared.

The group started sprinting through the room with Link.

Link ran to the top of the throne. He saw the magic book on the left side. Glancing at it, he saw the title Wonders of space and immediately picked it up. There was also a statue of a knight on the right side of the throne made of neither gold nor metal. Cheering inwardly, he quickly collected it.

Then he ran to the back of the throne. There was a small six-foot-wide space there with a magic seal on the ground. There was chaos everywhere except here. Light flowed through the magic seal, showing that it was operating normally.

"This is the magic seal the Night King left for himself to escape. Go in and stand straight."

After everyone got in, Link also ran in and activated the magic seal.

Buzz. The white light for teleportation lit up. The group was enveloped by the glow and started fading. They were about to leave.

But just then, a black shadow charged through the door and roared, "Where are you? Don't think about escaping!"

It was the fallen angel.

As the folded space collapsed, the doors in the spiral steps naturally became ineffective as well. He took the chance the rush in but...he shouldn't have come at this time. Really.

Whoosh

"Ah!" he cried out in pain, falling to the ground.

Buzz. Link didn't see his end. The transportation spell was completed, and the group disappeared from the underground palace. Half a second later, they re-appeared at the top of the Wailing Gorge.

Ten Winged Howlers were patrolling in the sky beside them. When they saw the group, they froze before immediately flying over.

"Go!" Link yelled.

"How? There are so many demons!" Skinorse cried in shock.

Link took out the knight statue he'd taken from the Night King's throne. This was the ride he'd gotten more than 100 times in the game—the Nightingale Statue!

For their current situation, this statue was a lifesaving Divine Gear!

## 315. The Magician Who Stole Away the Princess

After escaping from the underground palace, Link had 2300 Mana points remaining. It wasn't a lot, but he drank a Perfect Mana Potion and activated the robe's Clear Thoughts effect. His Mana immediately became 4300 points and continued to increase.

At this time, the closest Winged Howlers were about 3000 feet away. Based on their speed, it would only take them seconds to arrive.

Link immediately channeled Mana into the Nightingale's statue, expending 1500 Mana points in one go.

The statue lit up, revealing numerous runes carved on its surface like an intricate spider web. Then, the spider web started shi

Suddenly, it really exploded into pieces!

Link threw the statue towards the ground in front of him. Kcha! The statue immediately started expanding. As it expanded, it turned into many small cubes, which rapidly floated about and joined together to form a black stallion that was about nine feet tall.

This was a practical usage of the Spatial Folding skill. It was very mystical.

This horse was completely black, and it caused flames to emerge as it stamped its feet, distorting the air around its body. Its skin was tough like a sculpture, but its muscles were flexible, containing explosive strength.

On its broad back were two saddles. The Night King had constructed this horse with the intent to ride around the world with his wife, Vivian. Unfortunately, that could only remain a dream now. The horse now belonged to Link.

"Hurry, get on it!"

Although there were only two saddles, this horse was created for traveling and was thus very broad. It had no problems carrying four people.

As the party climbed onto the horse, Link gotito the front saddle. In order to protect Link, Nana sat directly behind him. Melinda sat in the second saddle with Skinorse behind her to prevent her from falling.

By now, the Winged Howlers were only 600 feet away. The front-most Howler had drawn out its sword, blazing with thick black Battle Aura. It was definitely going to attack.

"Lord!" Skinorse shouted. His muscles were already tensed, and he was ready to duck aside if necessary.

"Stay calm!" Link pressed down on a rune in front of the saddle, channeling Mana into it. Whoosh. The Nightingale Horse trotted forward, digging its hills into the mountain rock.

Simultaneously, a one-directional magic barrier appeared around them, protecting them from falling off the horse.

"Here we go!" Link increased the Mana input to about ten Mana points per second. It was not considered a lot, but the effect was very visible.

Whoosh. Suddenly, the Nightingale bolted forward, flying across the mountain rock.

Almost at the same time, the Winged Howler's Battle Aura came slashi

"Constit!" Link pointed his magic wand, and a dimensional ball flew out, exploding and blocking the Howler's attack.

The next instant, the Nightingale ran off into the distance.

Its speed was ridiculously fast. On top of the horse, the party could only see a white mist surrounding their barrier. Outside the mist, the scenery passed by in a blur, while behind them, only a dust cloud could be seen. From afar, they looked like an earth dragon rushi

"How fast are we going?"

Skinorse felt his heart thumping. He realized that the flying demons were getting further and further from them. What's more, the speed that they were pulling away was incredible—over 300 feet in one second!

If anyone were to tell him that someone on the ground could travel faster than someone flying, Skinorse would never have believed them. However, he was now experiencing that first-hand.

"We're now going at 1300 feet per second," Nana reported. It was a relatively accurate number.

Melinda was shocked. "This thing is actually faster than our assault airshi

Link's expression was serious compared to the rest. He was left with only 1800 Mana points. Adding the Flame Controller Robe's Mana recovery ability, he estimated that he would only last three more minutes.

Three minutes later, his Mana would run out, and he would need to use Omni Points to raise his maximum Mana limit in order to sustain Nightingale's running.

He currently had 700 Omni Points. If he spent them all on increasing his maximum Mana, he would gain enough Mana to power Nightingale for another ten minutes. That would be enough to shake off all the demons. However, that was in an ideal scenario. There was one other major problem.

That was the durability of Nightingale.

Nightingale's size was large. Running at high speeds across the earth's surface, the damage to its components was many times higher than flying up in the air.

In the game, the durability of Nightingale, the artificial stallion, was always a point of headaches for players. After every use, it would require repairs. At most, it could only travel for 100 miles before stopping for repairs. Otherwise, it would directly explode while running.

That would be an absolute disaster resulting in many deaths.

To make matters worse, the Night King was a king. Naturally, he was rich and would not consider the cost of materials when constructing the Nightingale. However, for players, that would mean 2000 gold per repair due to the expensive materials used. That was simply burning money.

Therefore, most gamers would never opt to use Nightingale to travel in this manner. The Nightingale was often used for traveling slowly instead. It was very good for showing off, especially for dates. After bringing a girl out on a ride on Nightingale, it was almost guaranteed that you would succeed in chasing her.

Right now, after running for about a minute, Link could feel many small cracks starting to form on Nightingale's four legs. This was even more inefficient than within the game. Link predicted that it would only last five minutes before becoming useless.

Looking back, Link noticed that the Winged Howlers were now little black dots in the distance. Even though there was already over half a mile between them, they showed no signs of giving up.

There was no way for Link to engage in a battle of attrition against the demons.

All this time, they had been traveling along the upper region of the Wailing Gorge. At this point, the road had reached a dead end. Ahead of them lay a 3000-foot-tall cliff.

"Lord, there's no more road up ahead. Can this thing fly?" Skinorse and the women asked.

Link did not reply. He was busy thinking about their next step. Suddenly, he had a flash of inspiration. Seconds later, he controlled Nightingale to rush to the side of the cliff and jump right off!

Nightingale's speed was truly fast. Jumping like this, it was just like a canoball, piercing downwards through the wind.

The cliff was 3000 feet high. It would take them just over ten seconds to reach the ground. At the base of the cliff were many rocks jutting out, which would turn them all into meat paste if they could not find some way to fly.

"Lord, this thing's protective barrier is sturdy enough, right?" Skinorse was shi

He had traveled all over the world, but this was his first time experiencing something so exciting. After rushi

"Don't think too much. Let me tell you, this protective barrier is only meant to block the wind. Going down like this, we would definitely all die, with the exception of Nana," the black catiterrupted. Of course, the black cat was not the least bit worried. He knew that Link had some plan.

Link naturally had a plan. After Nightingale had descended 1200 feet downwards, the cliff behind them blocked them from the line of sight of the Winged Howlers.

Right at that moment.

"200 Omni Points, raise maximum Mana limit."

Instantly, there was a flowing sensation from within his body. Link's maximum Mana was raised to 20500 points, and the current Mana he had was 2600 points. He didn't hesitate to use Dimensional Jump in midair.

Whoosh. Nightingale, along with the party on its back disappeared into thin air. One breath later, they appeared on a spot half a mile away.

This region was probably out of the Wailing Gorge's area. The trees looked more lush. The position Link selected to teleport to was right underneath a big tree.

Link brushed his hand over the magical lines on Nightingale, keeping it. Then, he began to cast Traceless Spells.

"Alright, we're safe now. Let's continue onwards."

Back at the cliff, the Winged Howlers had rushed to the cliff's edge.

"They're gone."

"Did they fall to death?"

"No way. There's not a single mark on the ground. It's definitely the Magician. They've teleported away!"

"Then how are we supposed to find them?"

There was a forest up ahead without red monkeys guarding them. If Link and his party ran into the forest and used spells to hide their tracks, then they would essentially be like a fish that found the ocean. They would be able to hide anywhere they wanted.

As the demons stood around helplessly, a black figure flew over. It was the demon commander.

The demon commander was now in a mess. Its black aura was now much thinner than before, and it was missing one arm. It also flew much slower now, not much faster than ordinary birds.

He slowly landed on the ground, staggering forward and nearly falling down. Looking at the forest up ahead, he helplessly sighed. "Go back and report that there's been a change in the situation. The Magician, Link, has taken a Yabba person and broke through the barricade. They are approaching Orida Fortress."

However, after he had spoken finish, the Winged Howlers stood there without moving.

"Commander, are you alright?" At this moment, one of the Howlers asked. It was the one that had been beaten up by him previously.

The fallen angel naturally understood his intention. He laughed coldly, and a knife appeared in his hand, surrounded by black lightning. "Gori, are you perhaps thinking that you can defeat me now?"

"Oh, no no, I had no such intentions. I just wanted to know how you were doing... I'm going to report," Gori replied. Flapping his wings, the Howler flew off into the skies, heading towards the northwest.

The fallen angel looked at the forest and commanded, "The rest of you, continue searching. The enemy's teleportation distance is small. He is definitely still around the area.

"Yes, Commander!" The rest of the Winged Howlers spread out to search.

Finally, there was only him left on the mountain cliff. He could no longer hold it back, and suddenly, he puked out a mouthful of blood, crumbling onto the floor.

He had escaped from the trap earlier, but amidst the collapse of the dimensional space earlier, he had been heavily injured.

"This is all because of the Magician that stole away the princess? Haha, he certainly possesses the threat of a realm lord. He's already a Level-8 Magician. I need to report this news to my lord."

The Dark Elves had summoned them, but they were only in a collaborative relationshi

## 316. Mortal, You Lack Patience

South Hengduan Mountain Range, 120 miles outside the Orida Fortress

The group was resting inside an abandoned sentinel's cabin. There was a bonfire in the middle and Skinorse, and the Yabba were grilling the rabbit they'd hunted. Nana was responsible for keeping guard while Link was in the corner of the room, learning magic from the black cat.

"Alright, your brain is a bit better than I'd expected," the black cat said. "Now, you've successfully grasped this magic seal. Unfortunately, you still can't save Firuman."

Link thought the black cat was only talking about the world's crack and said, "Don't worry. I'll mend it somehow."

The cat shrugged. "Perhaps."

Link ignored the cat after that. He started flipping through the notes he'd taken page by page, checking over them. When he confirmed that there was no problem, he closed the notes and wrote on the title, "Soul Slalom."

These notes described in detail the process of casting this powerful spell. If a Magician had enough magic knowledge, anyone who received this book should be able to cast the spell after studying it for a while.

Link didn't only learn. He was still cautious of the black cat and verified the spell during the learning process. He was sure that this spell was effective.

The Dark Serpent's Godly power was a large scale sucking of souls, while Link's Soul Slalom spell agglomerated a large amount of Mana. It then created a powerful soul-natured storm to forcefully scatter this attractive force.

According to Link's calculations, he needed to use up 50000 Mana Points in one second to achieve this effect. He estimated that 100 Magicians were needed to create a magic circle for this.

It was easy to introduce, but the theory was actually very deep, and there were many details in the casting process. It was beyond all the magic Link had ever learned before.

There were two reasons why Link could grasp it in such a short time. First of all, the black cat explained it in a way that was easy to understand. Second of all, Link's great accumulation of knowledge was also helpful. For some reason, Link felt that his brain worked a bit better now, especially after deducing the spatial thesis with the Red Dragon Queen.

For example, he could multitask with three tasks earlier. He could do this before too, but it had never gone this smoothly.

Maybe I made some breakthrough without realizing? That was the only explanation he could think of.

"Lord, here." Skinorse offered him one of the rabbit's hind legs that had finished grilling.

Link accepted it. As he ate, he said, "We've already gone six days, and my Mana is completely recovered. When we're done eating, I'll use the Storm Eagle, and we'll fly back."

There were around 120 miles. With his current Mana count, they could pretty much fly past.

"Okay." After this trip, Skinorse had become completely submissive to Link.

After that, the small room fell quiet. Everyone ate without speaking while the bonfire in the middle of the room occasionally crackled and popped. Outside, there was the occasional call of birds.

Even the black cat Elodim was quiet. It curled up beside Nana and battled with a blue nightfin fish. It didn't even let the bones go, and crunches sounded as it chewed.

Everyone had become used to this black cat. It had been obedient while on the road and didn't do anything abnormal. Link had relaxed his guard around the cat too.

They were all tense after passing through the Hengduan Mountain Range and facing all the dangers. Here, they were tired and enjoyed the piece of peace.

At this moment, no one knew what would happen later. Skinorse and Melinda had completely relaxed. Even Link felt comfortable and relaxed.

Years later, Melinda, already past her middle ages, would alwasshake her head and sigh when recalling this part of her life, involuntarily feeling tremors. When others would ask her, she would refuse to say what happened, only saying, "It was too scary. I never want to think about it."

After a while, Link finished the rabbit leg. He took out a clean rag to wipe his hands. Seeing that the others were still eating, he decided to take out the book Talisman Enchanting to kill time.

But halfway through the motion, he stopped. Something felt wrong.

He looked around, and his gaze fell on the black cat. It wasn't beside Nana anymore. Instead, it was at the small window ten feet away. It was still chewing on fish, but it subtly crept towards the window as it chewed.

"Elodim, what are you doing?" Nana also looked over from beside the door. She didn't think anything was off and walked towards the cat, saying, "Little guy, come back."

Unexpectedly, Elodim ignored her. It pounced and leapt onto the windowsill. Nana moved to chase it.

"Nana, don't move!" Link called immediately. For some reason, he smelled an evil aura. While he called, he trained his eyes on Elodim's eyes. "Are you preparing to escape?" he asked quietly.

"Meow, isn't it obvious?" A thin smile appeared on the black cat's round face.

"You know that you can't escape with your power...unless you received strength. The world is cracked, and the demons aren't the only ones strengthened. You're stronger too!"

"Am I? Am I not? Hehe, Link, you're the smartest mortal I've met, but sadly, you're still a mortal. The biggest difference between mortals and Gods is patience. I endured for so long just for one mishap from you." With that, the black cat prepared to escape from the window. Nana felt something was wrong and sped up to catch it.

Nanasspeed was supernatural. If she sped up, pretty much no one could escape from her, but this time, she failed. The black cat flashed and successfully escaped from Nana's clutches. Its speed was unimaginable.

It disappeared after the flash, but a bright voice traveled back. "Link, I'm sorry. The world's crack is getting wider and wider, and the laws restraining me have become flawed too. Indeed, I've recovered a bit of my strength—just a bit, but it's enough for me to escape. As for you all...I can only say that Link, you've caused so much trouble. I don't even have to do anything other than to leave some tiny marks, hahaha."

The cat's departure seemed to take away some sort of shi

He quickly understood why he had felt so calm earlier. It wasn't that there truly was no danger. Instead, the black cat had used some secret spell to block his perceptions. And now, it went without saying that he was definitely surrounded by demons.

Link immediately wanted to use the Dimensional Jump, but as soon as he moved the Mana and tried to construct a Mana structure, it collapsed by itself. This space was locked.

They had hid here and there while on the road and weren't very fast. If the black cat revealed their tracks, they must be surrounded by layers of demons now.

At this moment, Isendilan's last words sounded in Link's ears. He'd said, "Magician, one day, you'll die in the hands of that cat too."

Link didn't think that this day would come so soon.

I'm only a mortal after all. I can't be the match of a God, even an exiled God. This lesson hurt.

Skinorse was an experienced scout too, and he immediately called, "Lord, let's go!"

"No!" Link took out his notes, Soul Slalom, and handed it to Skinorse. "Take it back and give it to the Magicians in the Orida Fortress. You must bring it back!"

Link made a decision in that moment. The enemy had surrounded them with such fine preparations, and someone had to stay here. That was okay, but the information had to be brought back to the Orida Fortress.

"Lord..." Skinorse knew the meaning behind Link's words.

"Take it!" Link ordered.

Skinorse had no choice but to accept the notes and hide them on him.

Beside them, Melinda felt something, and her face paled drastically. She was just a regular Yabba woman. It was understandable for her to panic at this time.

As expected, Link then said, "Melinda, your injury isn't completely healed. Do you see that cellar? Hide into it immediately and don't come out no matter what!"

"I can fight! I'm a soldier!" Melinda pursed her little lips. She was about to cry, but she gripped her musket tightly.

Link shook his head. "This isn't a fair fight, and there's nothing glorious about it! Don't waste your life!"

On the side, Nana had already opened the cellar. It was a small thing used for storing food. A grown human couldn't fit, but it was no problem for the Yabba.

Melinda couldn't do anything but grab her musket and climb into the cellar, tears rolling down.

After covering the cellar's entrance, Link immediately erased all signs of her existence. When that was done, Link finally told Skinorse, "Nana and I will distract the demons. Their main target should be me. Hide here and wait for the chance to run."

Skinorse wasn't that good at fighting, but he was the best at espionage. If someone distracted the enemy, he should be able to escape successfully.

The wandering vigilante nodded his head seriously. Gray battle aura appeared around him. He moved a bit and hid into the shadows of the room. He quickly disappeared after that.

After that, Link walked to the door of the sentinel's cabin. He took out the Nightingale Statue. He'd modified this ride already. It made a big commotion while galloping and was extremely fast. It could definitely attract the demons. Link believed the demons already knew their situation. As long as he made a big enough scene, Skinorse would have the chance to escape.

When the Nightmare Ride appeared outside the room, Link saw the first demon. It wasn't a stranger; it was Misamier, the deputy officer of Nozama, Lord of the Deep.

She licked her red lips and smiled seductively. Her long whip danced in the air, producing crisp cracks. The strong waves coming from her were at the pinnacle of Level-9.

"Magician, we meet again," she said with a smile.

## 317. Link, Is This Really It?

In the forest behind the sentinel's cabin

The succubus demon Misamier was the first to emerge, but she was not the last.

From up in the sky came the sound of wings flapping. It was the Winged Howlers. Judging from the sound, they were about 150 feet high and 300 feet away. Link also caught sight of the fallen angel.

That fellow had apparently not died, but at least he looked a lot weaker than he did before. Even if he was missing one arm and looked extremely pitiful, he still possessed the strength of over Level-8.

Currently, he was holding a rune stone which had silvery lines streaking across its surface. These lines extended out from the stone like a spider web, reaching out for about 90 feet before vanishi

He looked at Link, saying, "The Gredo Rune Stone. Do you recognize this, Magician?"

Three hundred years ago, a Spatial Magician known as Gredo created this rune stone. This rune stone was not particularly useful for low-level Magicians, its only function was to lock down space. Within this space, all spatial magic skills became useless. It was a very effective counter against Link.

Of course, using the rune stone came at a great cost. It required a Level-8 expert to continuously input Mana to operate it. Furthermore, it could only be used continuously for 20 minutes.

After 20 minutes, the rune stone would begin to crumble.

Being a Spatial Magician himself, Link naturally was familiar with these types of rune stones, as well as the method to break through them.

"Hah, you overestimate me," Link laughed.

The demons were indeed numerous, but Link still had some moves he hadn't used. Right now, his Mana was full, reaching an amount of 19000 points. The Flame Controller Robe's Clear Thoughts activity was activated. Furthermore, he had 500 more Omni Points.

This was a huge amount of Omni Points, enough for Link to purchase a Level-10 Legendary spell. More importantly, Link still had the Mana to cast it.

Actually, the spell cards had appeared in Link's vision. Various glowing Legendary cards revolved around him, waiting for him to make a selection.

At this point, an archaic voice sounded out from the forest behind him. "Link, I think you're mistaken. We don't just look highly upon you; we also want to kill you."

As this voice sounded out, a massive, pitch-black snake slithered out. On the snake's head sat a white-haired old man in a black robe.

It was obvious in one glance that this old man's limbs were missing. This made his body look very small.

Looking at this man, Link sighed. "Aymons, I didn't expect to see you here."

"Because it's you, I had to come," Aymons sighed. This time, he had to make sure to thoroughly kill Link.

They had activated numerous demons as well as the magic tool, the Dark Serpent. There was no Magician in the world with the ability to escape this ambush. It was not even a possibility.

This formation was truly frightening!

Link sighed again, slowly. He had a helpless expression on his face. "Being a logical Mage, I know I don't stand a chance to fight. I also don't wish to pointlessly struggle. Aymons, what say I choose to surrender? I'll join the Dark Elves. Is that acceptable?"

Aymons's eyebrows twitched. It was a great suggestion. Although the Dark Elves seemed to be prospering, in truth, they were facing many internal problems. One of their greatest problems was the demons.

They had summoned too many demons. However, they had no choice if they wanted to deal with the invading Yabbas from the west and the combined army of humans and High Elves. Without the support of the demons, the Dark Elves will unobtedly perish.

Originally, they had no need to offend the Yabbas. However, the Dark Elves had another consideration. The Dark Serpent could only stay on earth for a limited time.

This pressured the Dark Elves to rapidly grow their military strength such that when they attacked in the future, they would be able to swiftly achieve victory instead of engaging in a long, drawn-out battle against the humans.

They, therefore, required the technology from the Yabbas - the airshi

As of now, the Dark Elves were like a blazing flame. However, after the flames died out, it was likely that they would be exterminated.

If Link joined the Dark Elves, it would definitely be a great help to the elves' development. Although Aymons didn't truly believe that Link would surrender, he was truly moved by the idea.

Even though the possibility was not large, he intended to test Link out. However, before he could, Misamier spoke, "I'm afraid that's not possible. Our Lord of the Deep, Nozama, is determined to have your head!"

Misamier had stolen the lead on Aymons. Aymons wasn't pleased, but in front of a huge enemy, he couldn't show his displeasure with Misamier and could only swallow it back in.

Clang! Link unexpectedly threw the Burning Wrath of Heavens wand towards Misamier, where it landed on the floor.

Link spread his arms wide and said, "Well then, Misamier, give me a clean death. You're the commanding officer of this attacking force, aren't you? Go on, decide how I die."

Then, Link closed his eyes.

"What...?" All the demons were stunned.

Their mission was suddenly a lot simpler than they expected. Before moving out this time, everyone including Aymons, Misamier, as well as the fallen angel had assumed that Link would fight to the death. In fact, they were prepared for hidden cards that Link might have yet to play.

Therefore, they had mobilized their troops as though they were facing a huge army, paying attention to every little detail and contingency to ensure their plan was a success. However, in the end, their opponent actually surrendered without a fight!

This feeling was similar to that of a vagabond who would see a beautiful queen and try his best to meet her, only to discover that on their fateful first meeting, she immediately spreads her legs to invite him in.

However, they had no doubt about Link's surrender. After all, he had already thrown his wand to his opponent. That was essentially giving up all his defenses.

A Magician throwing down his wand was like a Warrior throwing down his sword. It was unbelievable.

Misamier grasped the wand Link had thrown over and was surprised.

She had suspected that the wand was fake and picked it up to inspect it. The wand was a fiery red color, slightly translucent, and the workmanshi

All of these showed that the wand Link had thrown out was indeed a Legendary wand of the highest grade.

However, Misamier was ultimately not a Magician and could not be certain about the wand. She handed the wand to Aymons, saying, "Magician, check if this is real."

Aymons was a Master Magician and naturally knew without having to check carefully whether the wand was real. He nodded his head, saying, "The wand is real. It seems like he's really not planning to resist anymore. Since that is the case, you should just give him a quick death."

Aymons felt that it was a real pity.

In his opinion, since the opponent had already cast aside all his defenses, then his surrender earlier must have been true. To lose such a potential Magician for the Dark Elves was a real pity!

However, Misamier had already declared that Nozama wanted Link's life. It was not worth it for Aymons to oppose Nozama over just one Magician. If he did, the demons who were now allied with the elves would immediately turn against them.

When one was riding a tiger, it was hard to get off. That was the situation Aymons now found himself in.

Misamier agreed, shrugging her shoulders. She walked over to Link. Then, 90 feet away from Link, she stopped. "Your magic puppet is too powerful. Order it to self-destruct!"

In the Necropolis in the South, she had witnessed the power of magic puppets and knew how difficult they were to deal with.

"Nana, self-destruct," Link instructed, staring at Nana without blinking.

"Understood." Nana's voice was as clear as before. She drew The Last Nightmare with her master hand and slashed herself through the neck, cutting through half of the white flesh. Crash. Nana's body crumpled to the ground, unmoving. Her eyes closed and her sword fell to the ground.

She looked like she truly died.

"Ha, kid, it seems you're really prepared to die. Let me give you a quick death!"

Misamier kept her whip and drew a dagger from a sheath on her leg. The dagger was emanating a thick black aura. Misamier walked cautiously towards Link, one step at a time.

Link stood on the spot, not moving, eyes closed. The dense Mana on his body showed no signs of any fluctuations. It seemed as though he was truly prepared for death.

Inside the sentinel's cabin, Skinorse could not understand what Link was thinking.

He had thought that Link was pretending to surrender in order to sow discord between the elves and the demons in order to create an opportunity for a counter attack. Then, he had thrown his wand and had Nana self-destruct. Skinorse truly could not understand what was going on.

"Is the lord truly surrendering? Although the situation is such that I would have no idea what to do to escape, the lord doesn't seem the type to easily surrender."

Skinorse could not understand. In his heart, Link was the type of person who would fight to the last man even if there wasn't a chance. Could he have been mistaken?

Furthermore, if Link really was going to surrender, why would he instruct Skinorse to make sure to bring the news back?

In the cellar, Melinda could also hear the commotion outside. When she heard that Link was going to surrender, she started trembling in fear. Later, when she heard Nana self-destruct, she felt like she was going to faint. This was truly too terrifying.

The cellar was cold and damp, and the wound on her leg had not healed. She panicked and truly fainted.

In a bunch of trees, a short distance away, the black cat Elodim was also watching the situation in secret. He was also confused.

"Link, are you really going to go down like this? And here I thought I would get to watch a good show..."

He had thought that he would get to watch an earth-shaking battle. In the end, it turned out like this.

How boring. Truly boring.

## 318. Abstruse MeaningThe Thunder Gods Descent

Misamier was good at the whip and also good with the dagger.

As she walked towards Link, her thin waist swayed, and her chest stuck out. The dagger in her hand glittered brightly just like her smile. "Link, it won't hurt at all, and I'll only do it once."

Link still closed his eyes and didn't move. His ears focused on the actions around him while in his vision, he'd already chosen a magic card wrapped in frost-white lightning.

Abstruse Meaning—The Thunder God's Descent!

Level-10 Lightning Law Spell

Cost: 19500 Mana Points

Description: gathers an immense amount of Mana to activate the abstruse meaning of lightning. The spell caster will transform into the physical incarnate of lightning and thunder, using their destructive power as a weapon for ten seconds.

(Note: all spells under the lightning and thunder will be destroyed.)

Link chose this spell for two reasons.

Firstly, this spell was a guidance type of Legendary Spell. Rather than being straightforward, it was a flexible spell. Secondly, it didn't cost the least amount of Mana amongst the Level-10 offensive spells, but it was still close to top three. Taking its force into consideration, it was the most cost-effective.

When Misamier was around 90 feet away from him, Link chose the card. Purchase the spell.

One hundred Omni Points were used up instantly. The card glowed and then broke into countless tiny lightning snakes. These snakes wriggled in all directions and finally disappeared in the air.

At the same time, Link felt strength surge deep in his soul. It was subtle but with a feeling that it could destroy everything. For a moment, Link felt that he was a God standing amongst the clouds with a sword of lightning in his hand. He looked down on all organisms. If he saw someone who dared to not submit to him, he would bring the lightning bolt down like God's punishment.

This was the power of a Legendary Spell. It was the start of something that transcended the ordinary!

Mortal Spells required a Mana structure and the aid of a wand. Elemental Spells required time to gather the elements. Legendary Spells didn't need any of this.

It only needed the spell caster's comprehension of the laws and the grasp and understanding of the world's truth. It was possible to wield horrifying power with a thought and destroy the skies and earth.

This did not mean that Legendary Spells were easier. In reality, they were unimaginably obscure. The spell casting process seemed simpler but only because it had surpassed the restraints of the world's laws.

This breakthrough process was already impossibly difficult. Only a handful of the billions of organisms in the world throughout history had done so successfully.

Link had another special point. In the game, he was a Legendary Magician with rich experience in the casting of Legendary Spells. Thus, he could perfectly control the Thunder God's Descent at this moment.

After receiving this spell, Link had 400 Omni Points left. Without hesitation, he put all of them into pushi

For a human, this was horrifying power.

Now, Misamier was 60 feet away.

For some reason, Aymons started feeling unsettled. "Stop wasting time," he urged. "End him quickly."

The fallen angel also said, "Hurry. I'm running out of Mana."

Misamier pouted and put on a mock hurt expression. "Fine. Ending a genius Magician isn't a small thing. I just wanted to make it more formal."

As soon as she finished speaking, Link's eyes fly open. His eyes were no longer black. Instead, they were white as frost. Around his pupils, threads of gray-white lightning flashed and cracked constantly.

A moment later, the lightning spread from Link's eyes to his entire body before going into the surrounding air.

Strangely, the lightning didn't spread very quickly. Everyone could clearly see the entire process. But even though they saw it clearly, they just couldn't react. It was as if, at that moment, time itself was tited by some mysterious force.

"No, it's a Law Spell!" Aymons was the first to call out. He recognized it at once. In addition to having a rich knowledge of magic, he also grasped the Dark Serpent. With the help of the Divine Gear, his outlook widened greatly.

"Misamier, retreat!" the fallen angel also yelled.

Misamier wasn't a layman either. In the Abyss, she had Legendary power and was only at the pinnacle of Level-9 now because of the restraints from Firuman's laws.

Seeing this situation, her first thought was to rush an attack. However, this idea was extinguished instantly. Link was honestly too fast, and Misamier immediately realized that she didn't have a chance. Thus, she went on the defensive.

She poured out all her power so crazily that in an instant, she felt her body starting to weaken and wither. She couldn't worry about this now though. With the help of her bloodline talent, all the power surged into her wings. She wrapped the wings around her, forming a dark red circular shi

Carmine Fortress

Level-9 Bloodline Spell (Master Level)

Description: this spell is an inheritance talent of the succubae. Of all high-level demon inheritance talents, the Carmine Fortress' defensive ability is within the top ten. It is what the succubae rely on for survival in the Abyss.

(Note: this spell involves the strength of the laws.)

The moment the shi

Frosty white lightning wrapped around Link's entirety. His body, eyes, nose, lips, and skin all had a similar glow. At this moment, he was practically the incarnate of lightning.

"Ah!" He couldn't help but open his mouth and roar. Reaching out, power rushed from his arms. Lightning streaked across the sky and cracked with an explosive sound that filled the air.

The world lit up with a flash

Boom! Lightning struck Misamier's Carmine Fortress directly. Bang! With a crisp bang, Misamier fell backwards. In the air, her body lost balance from the lightning and the blood-colored shi

"Go, Dark Serpent!"

Aymons didn't care about Misamier. He reacted by immediately turning the Dark Serpent Divine Gear from a snake into a long whip. The whip cracked toward Link's head according to his thoughts.

Link had an eye out for him too. He clenched his left hand, and a thick bolt of lightning rushed towards the Dark Serpent.

Power crashed unbridled inside Link's body, pouring out without any restraint. This freedom felt so good Link couldn't help but roar again!

As he roared, lightning spewed from his mouth. He was the incarnate of lightning and thunder.

Crackle, crackle. A thick bolt of lightning more than three feet wide collided against the Dark Serpent. The Legendary Spell and Divine Gear clashed directly once again.

Whoosh

The Winged Howlers in the air were hit by this force and dropped like dead birds. The surrounding trees were hit by this force and instantly fell in a radiative shape. The ones on the ground—Nana, Misamier, Skinorse hiding in the sentinel's cabin, and the room itself—were all tossed into the air.

In that moment, the mountains within a 300-foot-radius were all reduced to ruins.

In the endless chaos, a black cat hidden amongst the trees was caught by surprise. It was hit by a fallen tree, and while it was dazed, another tree fell down, trapping it to the ground.

"Meow!"

A pained cry tore from its lungs. Squashed by the tree, the black cat pushed up with its limbs, and its tail stood up straight. It managed for two seconds before collapsing. Then it stopped moving. Blood pooled around its body.

Was it dead? No one cared at the moment.

Aymons laughed maniacally. "Link, even your talent isn't a match for the Dark Serpent!"

The thick electric snake was still in the air. Across from it was the snake-headed whip shrouded in darkness. The Divine Gear was forcing the lightning back bit by bit. This was because they were in Firuman. In the World of Firuman, Divine Gears were restited. But even so, it was still much more powerful than Link's Legendary power.

The seconds ticked by. The snake whip was about to defeat Link's Abstruse Meaning of Thunder.

He didn't seem to care though. He reached out with another hand and roared again. Another bolt of lightning flew out, hitting the fallen angel sealing the space with runes 300 feet away.

The fallen angel was only at the pinnacle of Level-8. How could it fight against Legendary power?

Lightning snaked around him, and he fell to his knees. Then he crashed into the ground, his entire body turning to crisp. He was burnt by the lightning, and the spatial lock was removed as well.

"Trying to escape?" Aymons immediately realized what Link was planning and increased the strength of the Divine Gear.

He didn't believe the other dared to use a Burst Spell to escape during such an intense fight. Even if he didn't mess up while casting the spell, the chaotic laws at the moment could confuse him in space.

Crackle, boom!

The Divine Gear and lightning were still battling. The Divine Gear had already pushed the lightning to three feet away from Link. From the look of things, Link couldn't hold on for much longer.

With his physical strength as a Magician, he would be dead as soon as his lightning spell was defeated and the Dark Serpent hit him. There was no possibility of survival.

"You're dead, Link, you're dead. You have no hope at all!" Aymons voice was practically crazed. The fighting had erupted suddenly, and they surrounded Link, but the tides had almost turned.

Now, he really needed to defeat this frightening Magician. He couldn't give the man a chance to breathe. He was scared the Magician could come up with a spell to turn the tides; he was scared of this Magician.

He was scared, so he must destroy Link!

"Die! Die!"

At this moment, Link was the only thing in Aymons' eyes. He didn't realize that a pale hand reached out from the ruins in the near distance. The hand grappled and pushed aside the pebbles and weeds. Then a girl with a ponytail and big clear eyes climbed out of the ruins.

It was Nana.

The wound on her neck was completely gone, and her skin was flawless as if she'd never been hurt. This was the effect of the Red Dragon's Essence of Life.

She stood up. Seeing Aymons, she quietly took out the Breakpoint Dagger.

## 319. The Cost of Recklessness

In the forest

Boom! Boom! Explosions sounded out one after another as the lightning flashed and blasted out in all directions. Link's legendary magic spell continuously clashed with the Divine Gear.

The Dark Serpent was already just a few feet away from Link.

At this moment, 15 seconds had already passed. There were only five seconds left before Link's legendary spell ended. After that, Link would have no method to deal with the Dark Serpent.

However, what made Aymons anxious was that he had noticed that Link's expression hadn't changed from before. After slaying the fallen angel, Link constantly attacked more enemies with the one hand while blocking the attacks from the Dark Serpent with another.

Boom! The Winged Howlers that were shot down from the sky simply had no chance to fly back up. Any demon who was within 450 feet of Link would be bombarded by the lightning.

The power of the lightning was simply too incredible. Even Level-8 demons stood no chance against it, and every single one of the Winged Howlers that was hit was eventually burnt to a pile of ashes.

Very quickly, only ten Winged Howlers were left of the initial 50 that came, and none of them dared to get close. They maintained their distance far away from Link, afraid that they too would be struck by the lightning.

Unfortunately for Link, when Misamier escaped, she landed behind a large rock where she was then carried out of Link's kill zone by another Winged Howler.

"Link, you will pay for this recklessness!" Aymons bellowed.

Facing the Divine Gear and daring to split his attention, Link was truly being very reckless.

Aymons increased the output of the Divine Gear. Roaaar! In an instant, the Dark Serpent Whip closed in about one foot and was only about two more feet from Link. It looked like it was about to break through his defenses and strike his body.

If it hit, even if it just barely scraped Link's body, he would immediately be killed, his body disintegrated, and his soul dispersed.

Aymons just needed one more push to succeed.

However, it was at this moment that he noticed a silhouette in the corner of his eye. The moment this figure appeared, his heart constited, and a sense of immense danger welled up within him. He didn't dare to waste time consider and immediately retracted the Dark Serpent, dodging to the side.

Whoosh. The sudden strike hit nothing but air.

Aymons's reaction was truly fast. Seeing his chance, he immediately activated the Divine Gear's protection. Whoosh

Almost in the same instant that the barrier materialized, Aymons saw the figure clearly. It was Link's magic puppet, Nana!

Nana held a dagger in her hand and was stabbing into the barrier. What made Aymons afraid was that the barrier created by the Divine Gear was actually unable to block the dagger. Inch by inch, the dagger edged towards his forehead.

Aymons could not understand what was happening. Wasn't the Dark Serpent a Divine Gear? Earlier, when he was blocked by Link's legendary magic spell, he could believe that it was a restition on the Divine Gear by the laws of the world of Firuman. However, right now, what was going on?!

If a normal looking dagger could penetrate the Divine Gear's defenses, wouldn't that mean that the magic puppet was abnormally strong?

Watching the dagger approach his head, Aymons didn't dare to dally any longer. He immediately controlled the Dark Serpent to attack Nana.

Boom, boom! The Dark Serpent was blocked! It was Link's lightning!

The lightning branched out, flashi

At this rate, the dagger would hit his forehead first.

Even with the Divine Gear, I'm being pushed back by this Magician? Aymons couldn't believe it. However, in the face of the imminent danger, he had no choice to believe it. Without daring to hold anything back, he activated a teleportation spell powered by the Divine Gear. His body was surrounded by a white light.

Previously, when Auselia controlled the Divine Gear, she could only use its extreme speed and barrier abilities. In Aymons's hands, the Divine Gear could exhibit even greater power in attack and defense. Furthermore, this teleportation spell could achieve a range of up to 25 miles and could be activated instantaneously. It was essentially unstoppable.

The next instant, Aymons disappeared.

As he disappeared, a voice remained that said, "Link, don't be happy too quickly. You will soon experience the true power of the Divine Gear!"

After the voice vanished, Link's legendary magic spell also came to an end. The lightning flashi

Link instinctively knew that this was a weakness that came from overexertion.

In his previous life, while playing the game, Link had meticulously trained his character into a Legendary Magician. Every time he leveled up, not only did he raise his magic, but he also raised his body's tenacity. This was just like the characters in the game increasing their hp.

However, right now in reality, his body was just slightly stronger than an average human. It was about the same standard as a Level-1 Warrior. With this kind of body, there was no way for him to withstand the might of lightning. If not for the Mana protecting his body, he would have long been burnt to a pile of ashes.

Something flashed in his vision. Link squinted his eyes to look. It was asstem notification.

Player has forcefully activated a Legendary Magic Spell and is now in a state of "Soul Weakness."

This status will be in effect for 720 hours. Under this status, the player's ability to cast spells is drastically reduced.

Link was speechless. Earlier, when he had purchased the Legendary spell, this wasn't stated. This unexpected side effect was truly perilous.

He couldn't help but curse in his heart. Thank goodness Aymons is gone. If he had stayed for just a few more seconds, it would be really troublesome.

Looking around, there were still over ten Winged Howlers around. Because of Link's earlier display of power, even though he looked extremely weak right now, none of them dared to approach him, instead choosing to observe from afar.

These demons would definitely pose a problem once they realized that Link was in a weakened state. Just Nana alone would be insufficient to defend against them.

Among these demons, six were Level-7, and five were Level-8. This was an enormous force that Nana would clearly be unable to handle alone.

Link turned to look at the ruined sentinel's cabin. He could feel Melinda's aura which, although faint, was still there. Skinorse, though, was gone. Nearby, he could see the tracks where Skinorse had snuck away during the mess.

Skinorse had made use of the chaos to escape with Link's message.

This made Link feel relieved. Right now, what he had to do was to attract the Winged Howler's attention to distract them from Skinorse, giving Skinorse enough time to safely escape.

Link took a deep breath, trying to suppress the discomfort he felt. Step by step, he walked towards the Nightingale.

The stallion had been blown away by the shockwaves from the clash earlier. Fortunately, it wasn't damaged but only collapsed onto the ground. Link staggered over, ignoring his splitting headache, sending Mana into the Nightingale.

However, Link's condition was much worse than he had anticipated. Just the simple act of sending out Mana caused his head to split and his vision to turn black. He very nearly fainted.

After Link inputted Mana, the Nightingale started moving. It climbed up to a standing position. Link took the chance to settle himself onto the saddle.

Controlling Nightingale, Link turned to face Misamier. He needed to kill this powerful demon. Nana stuck close by his side, Breakpoint Dagger grasped tightly in her hand.

Watching him approach, the Winged Howlers surrounding Misamier immediately dispersed, flying into the air. They were terrified of Link.

Misamier lay unmoving on the floor. However, she was clearly not dead. Link could detect her breathing and noticed that she was still grasping tightly onto the Burning Wrath of Heaven's staff.

Thirty feet away from Misamier, Link stopped Nightingale. Then, biting his lip, he determinedly used the Magician's Hand spell to snatch the Burning Wrath of Heavens wand from Misamier's hand.

After obtaining the wand, Link instructed Nana, "Kill her!"

Nana walked forward, preparing to attack. Suddenly, the Winged Howlers started moving, seemingly prepared to come up to defend Misamier.

Link's heart tightened, however, his face remained calm. Straightening his back, maintaining a serious expression, he looked coldly at the Wing Howlers, smirking. "Haven't had enough of my lightning yet?"

Immediately, the Winged Howlers started backing up. Nana took the opportunity to close in to Misamier, planning to cut off her head.

Ting. Nana's attack was suddenly blocked by Misamier.

Misamier clutched a small dagger in her hand and managed to block Nana's attack. Somehow, she managed to avoid hitting the sharp edge of the Breakpoint Dagger. In order to block this attack, she exerted all her remaining strength. Currently, her body, clad completely in black, was trembling.

However, a Level-9 expert was no weakling. Even as Nana attacked a second time, her attack was once again blocked by Misamier.

"He's extremely weak now! Don't waste time, attack and kill him!" Misamier screeched. She had seen through Link's facade.

Link clenched his teeth and said, "Let's go!"

With that said, he poured even more Mana into the Nightingale. Whoosh. Nightingale burst off, dashi

"When you catch him, immediately kill him. Don't let him run again," Misamier said weakly.

However, hearing her instructions, the Winged Howlers did not move. They glanced at each other, hesitating.

This Magician is far too crafty. Earlier, he even managed to trick Misamier. If he has any more tricks left to play, then what seemed like an escape might instead be an attempt to split them up.

Based on the opponent's speed, wouldn't they be toyed with to death?

Besides, Nana was accompanying Link. Earlier, she had very nearly slain Aymons. With someone as terrifying as her around, wouldn't they simply be courting death if they chased Link?

Misamier was not surprised by this. She once again shouted, "This is the Lord of the Deep's orders. Whoever kills him will be greatly rewarded by the Lord of the Deep. Anyone who dares to retreat will be known by the Lord, and they can just wait for their punishment."

After looking at each other for a bit, the Winged Howlers decided to pursue Link.

Misamier lay on the ground for another half a minute, recovering her strength. Then, she slowly crawled up, heading in Link's direction.

At first, she struggled to walk. A minute later, she managed to jog slowly. Two minutes later, she started running faster, exhibiting the strength of a Level-6 expert. Her recovery speed was truly impressive!

Of course, this was just on the surface.

Misamier herself knew that with her injuries, running would not be much of a problem but to recover her battle strength would require at least five days.

Nonetheless, while she was weak, her opponent was definitely weaker than her.

Link, this time, your life will be mine!

## 320. I Will Go Save Him!

All the Winged Howlers and Misamier chased after Link. The ruins of the sentinel's cabin were suddenly silent. It was silent as death until one hour later when a hesitant bird started calling.

Crack. The crack of wood sounded abruptly. A wooden board in the ruins suddenly cracked, and a dirty little hand reached out.

The commotion scared the bird that thought everything was over. It snuck back in fright.

The little hand reached around on the board and clung onto something. With a big push, a small hole appeared in the board. What followed immediately after was the muzzle of the musket.

After a while, a little girl climbed out from the hole. Her hair and face were all streaked with dirt. Her leg seemed hurt too, and she had to walk.

It was Melinda, the Yabba woman who had hid in the cellar.

The surroundings were all ruined, and all the trees had fallen. Smoke rose from the dirt, and the demon bodies were like burnt cinder. The air was filled with a faint acrid odor.

Melinda was completely shocked. What happened here? Where's Master Link? Where's Skinorse? Where's Nana?

Before she'd passed out, she heard Master Link choose death and order Nana to commit suicide but other than the dead demons; everyone else was gone.

Melinda walked around the ruins, trying to find some clues but to no avail. While in a daze, she suddenly heard weak meows.

"Meow." The breath was rapid yet weak and came from under a fallen tree more than 60 feet away. Frightened, Melinda crouched down and propped up her musket. She looked side to side cautiously.

"Meow." Here it was again. This time, Melinda heard it clearly. She timidly walked towards the source.

One minute later, she saw the pitiful black cat trapped by the tree. There was a sturdy slab of stone under the tree and the tiny crack it created helped the cat escape from being turned into a meat pie. Even so, it still looked tragic.

The shi

The cat had closed its eyes earlier but cracked them open at the commotion. After seeing Melinda, joy flashed past its eyes. It meowed quietly, appearing extremely pitiful.

Crack! Melinda forced the muzzle of the musket to the black cat's head. She wasn't stupid. They could have escaped safely but were forced into this situation because of this horrible black cat.

She was going to kill this cute but demonic little thing.

"Melinda, don't shoot yet. I have something to tell you." The black cat's voice was very weak.

"What do you have to say? Traitor! Demon! bastard! Master Link treated you so well!" Melinda yelled though she still didn't pull the trigger.

"As long as you save me, I can give you the power to overlook the entire world," the cat said softly.

But as soon as it finished, Melinda started laughing. "You're all talk but you can't even save yourself, and you want to give me power? Go die, liar!"

She really did pull the trigger decisively. With a muffled bang, the bullet shot out. However, it hit the dirt. The black cat moved its head aside at the last moment and escaped from the fatal hit.

It wouldn't die if its physical body was ruined but it would still be tragic to become a wandering soul. Its soul would still be imprisoned, and it wouldn't even be able to leave this body. It could only watch as the body decayed and rotted.

It had already experienced this disgusting thing 300 years ago, and it didn't want to do it again.

After dodging the bullet, it was entirely freaked out. It immediately realized that it wasn't easy to fool this Yabba woman. "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" it yelled. "Master Link is in danger now. He's being pursued by demons, and only I can save him!"

Melinda fell silent. The surrounding ruins and dead demons made her believe the black cat. After she'd fallen unconscious, Master Link definitely attacked and escaped after killing a portion of the demons.

This explained why the bodies of Skinorse and the others weren't here. They were probably fine. Master Link had saved them again!

But even though Master Link was powerful, he was still a mortal, and his strength was limited. With so many demons here, he must be in danger now.

At this moment, Melinda thought of Link's care for them along the way, how he'd comforted her when she cried, and his gentleness when he tended to her wound. Despite the fact that she was a burden, Link had never abandoned her, even at the most dangerous times. He didn't even show any thought of that. Now, he was in danger.

Melinda suddenly felt that she wasn't scared anymore!

A resolute decision grew in her. She must go help him—save him—even if it meant giving up her life.

Half a year ago, she was just a regular Yabba girl. Now, she was a soldier, a musketeer!

Her expression grew determined. Pointing the musket at the black cat's head, she glared unblinkingly at it and "threateningly" said, "Little thing, I'll save you!"

The black cat was relieved. "Move away this tree first. It's a bit heavy. Can you lift it?"

"Of course! Us Yabbas are the best at using our brains!" Melinda found a wooden stick and brought a large rock over. She rested the stick on the rock and forced the stick under the tree. She pressed down on the stick, and the tree budged a little.

The black cat cried out immediately. "Ah! Lighter, lighter! My leg hurts!"

"I hope you die from the pain!" Melinda continued to pry without caring about the cat at all.

She was a soldier after all and met the basic physical requirements. Her strength was equal to a Level-0 human Warrior. Using a wooden stick as a lever to move a 30-centimeter-wide tree was no problem.

Ten minutes later, Melinda moved the half-dead cat out from the tree.

"Thank you for saving me...huh? Ah! My leg...you—you're so cruel!" The cat's first sentence was in gratitude while the second had become pained howls.

The reason was none other than the fact that Melinda had cut off its broken legs. Not only that, she even cut off the paws of its two front legs.

"You like running, huh? Let me see you run now!" Melinda spat out. Then she found a rag and wrapped the cat up.

Cutting off its paws wasn't enough. Its teeth were weapons too and must be removed. Melinda opened the cat's mouth and pried the sharp teeth out with her dagger.

"No, don't do that. I need...tho...eath...thoo," the black cat said with a lisp as it continued to struggle. It was much weaker now and, wrapped in the rag, it was no match for Melinda.

Melinda ignored its cries and pried out all four fangs before feeling settled.

"I don't trust you, kitty. From now on, I'll pull out another tooth every time you dare lie to me, and I find out. When all your teeth are gone, I'll dig out your eyes. When your eyes are gone, I'll cut off your nose and ears!" Melinda threatened loudly. She stared at the cat with her big eyes and waved her dagger.

The black cat's mouth was filled with blood. It nodded weakly. "Mortal, I surrender!"

Now it was really regretful. Link was troublesome, but at least he was logical and would never use force. This Yabba girl, on the other hand, looked cute but didn't even hesitate when she did things. She was terrifying.

Now, great. It didn't have its legs, its teeth had been pulled out, and it was gravely injured. Even if it regained some strength from the world cracking, what use was it if its body was this broken?

Melinda obviously didn't care about its opinion. She put away her dagger, hoisted up her magic musket, and stood up. "Alright, where should I go now?"

The black cat closed its eyes to gather its bearings and weakly pointed in a direction. "That way. They went that way."

Melinda ran in that direction without hesitation.

Link was running low on Mana. With a whoosh, he collected the Nightingale Statue. The statue started shrinking and folding. He also fell off from the Nightingale. Nanarsed up and caught him. She also caught the statue afterwards and handed it to Link.

Link put it away in his spatial bag.

"Master, I'll carry you!" Nana said.

Nodding, Link closed his eyes. Bearing the immense pain in his head, he said softly, "The pursuers are all Winged Howlers. There is one flaw in the combat of these high-level demons. They like dive attacks. If they don't hit the target each time, their bodies will stiffen temporarily due to stopping abruptly at high speed. This is the best opening for an attack."

"I understand." Nana nodded. She ran very fast at more than 650 feet per second. That speed was equal to the Winged Howlers at their tails.

On her back, Link could only feel that his entire body was extremely sore and that his head was about to crack open. It practically felt like he was about to die. Nana ran smoothly, and without realizing, Link grew drowsy and became half-unconscious.

In this dazed state, he vaguely felt a strange warm current appear in his body. It started in his abdomen and flowed through his entire body before finally returning to his lower abdomen.

After that cycle, Link felt that he was much more comfortable. The intense migraine had lessened as well.

Another cycle, another cycle, Link thought in anticipation.

The warm current didn't disappoint. It came a second time, and a third, and a fourth... It seemed ready to go on forever.

Link could clearly feel his body recovering.

What kind of strength is this? Is it the game system helping? But there hadn't been any messages in my vision. That's strange.

## 321. A Vague Calling

"Master, there's a strange looking mountain up ahead with smoke coming from the top," Nana said while running, sounding a little out of breath.

Link was still groggy, but under the influence of the warm feeling coursing through his body, he was starting to feel much better. Hearing what Nana said, he forced his eyes open to look at the mountain.

They were currently surrounded by a plain, with grass about half a human'shi

Going further up, there were no more trees, only grass, moss, and stones. Even further up, the grass disappeared. Only the black rocks remained. Beyond that was the peak of the mountain, and as Nana said, there was a column of smoke coming from the peak.

It was a truly unique shape, and Link immediately recognized the place. "This is a live volcano. We have reached the central regions of the Norton Kingdom. This volcano is called the Azzaro Volcano, and it erupts once every ten years. At its peak is a lava hole with hot magma inside. That's why it is constantly emitting smoke."

"Oh." Nana looked very interested. However, they were currently being pursued by flying demons and climbing the hill would cause them to lose a lot of speed. She prepared to circle around the mountain.

"Don't circle around it. Just go right up. There are magma holes on the way up; we'll use it to shake them off!" Link said. He was very familiar with the complex network of tunnels within the volcano.

In the game, there was an entry level duplicate of the Azzaro mountain. In his previous life, Link had explored it over 200 times and was so familiar with the paths that he could close his eyes and walk through it without getting lost. This was definitely the best place to get rid of their pursuers.

Getting rid of the pursuers was one reason. There was actually something else that Link desired from this place.

When he first laid eyes on the mountain, he thought of the high temperatures of the lava inside it. For some reason, he felt that he had to go and take a look at it, as though there was something summoning him there.

It was a very strange feeling, and as a Magician, Link's emotions were usually calm and controlled. With the exception of the excitement that comes with studying new spells, his heart was always as cool and calm as still water.

This feeling that suddenly arose in his heart was very unusual, and despite there being no explanation for it, Link decided to trust the feeling.

Anyway, there was no harm in taking a look at the lava.

Nana originally wanted to head there anyway, so once Link instructed her to go up the mountain, she continued on a straight path heading up the mountain.

The Winged Howlers were already less than 1500 feet away. Although the two parties were traveling at roughly the same speed, Nana was restited by the geography of the land and also had to consider Link's safety. Gradually, the demons were catching up.

At this point, the demons noticed Nana heading towards the mountain peak. They laughed uproariously. "Come on brothers! We'll go ahead to surround them!"

Climbing up the hill would definitely take more time and cause Nana to slow down. Furthermore, they had to go upawnding path. Compared to her, the demons could fly, so the mountain terrain was definitely no problem for them.

They would easily catch up at this rate.

When Nana brought Link to the side of the mountain, the demons had already caught up to within 600 feet and were quickly gaining on them.

"To the left, about 600 feet away, do you see that grey rock?" Link pointed.

Nana nodded.

"Dash right there."

In two seconds, Nana circled around numerous mountain rocks to reach the place where Link had pointed out. By this time, the Winged Howlers were already 300 feet closer.

"Go around to the back of this stone. There is a flat piece of wall... See it? Kick it down as hard as you can!" Link instructed.

Nana kicked it with her foot. Crash. The wall crumbled to reveal a gaping wide tunnel mouth. She dashed into the cave.

Link cast a Level-0 Light Spell to light the way, conserving his Mana as much as possible.

Just this beginner level magic spell made Link's head hurt. If not for the game system giving him the weakened soul status notification, he would have thought that his mana was forever ruined.

The moment they entered the cave, the Winged Howlers arrived at the tunnel entrance.

There were 11 demons in total gathered outside the 6-foot-tall cave. They looked at each other.

"Is this Magician a mouse? Why is he always running into caves?" The previous time in the Wailing Gorge as well as this time, Link had escaped through cave tunnels that they, being 12 feet tall, had no way to enter.

"The tunnel is actually not that small. We could destroy the entrance and enter. More importantly, how did they know there was a cave here?" One of the demons gestured, pondering.

"They must have been here before and are very familiar with the place. In that case, if we enter, we're definitely in trouble."

"Then what do we do?"

"Let's wait for the commander."

Therefore, the group of demons waited outside the tunnel for charm demon Misamier.

Misamier's wings were broken by Link. She had to travel here on foot, and her speed was much slower. The demons waited for over an hour before Misamier finally arrived.

"What are you doing? Where's the Magician?"

One demon pointed at the tunnel entrance. "They're inside. They clearly know this place very well. We had no other choice but to wait for your orders."

At this moment, Misamier had recovered her battle strength. She walked towards the cave entrance to check it out. Looking at the dark tunnel mouth, she bit her lip. "The Magician is struggling to even cast a spell. He's extremely weak now, and the only thing we need to beware of is his puppet. No matter how strong the puppet is, there's only one of it. We'll just follow him in!"

This chance to kill Link was definitely hard to come by. If they missed it, once Link recovered, they might have to face a Legendary-level Magician!

Upon hearing her orders, the Winged Howlers glanced at each other. Then, one of them walked up and slashed through the stone wall. Crash. In an instant, the tunnel entrance expanded to 24 feet tall and 15 feet wide.

"Since it's so broad, I'm relieved!" One Winged Howler said. He was worried that the space would be too narrow and that his opponents would make use of their small size to hide and launch sneak attacks. He wouldn't even know how he died. Seeing that the space was broad, he would be able to make use of his body size and strength and was less afraid.

"Go, go in," Misamier ordered.

The Winged Howlers lined up in a row and entered the tunnel. After 150 feet, the demon at the front said, "Commander, there is a fork up ahead."

"Can you smell which way they've gone?" Misamier asked from the middle of the party.

The sound of people sniffing came from the front. After a while, the demon replied, "There's the smell of humans on both sides. Furthermore, this tunnel is open, and there's wind coming through. There's no way to know which way they've gone."

"Well, we've got 12 people here including myself. That's six a side. We'll split up and search," Misamier said after some consideration.

Then, she immediately started splitting the demons up.

Among the demons, six were Level-7, and five were Level-8. After splitting them up, there were four Level-8 and two Level-7 demons on one side, and one Level-8 and four Level-7 demons on the other as well as herself. The battle strength of both teams was equal.

"Alright, let's go. If you find anything, call out immediately. We'll rush over."

"Understood, commander!"

The two teams of demons walked into the left and right lava tunnels respectively.

After about another 300 feet, the demon in the lead position called out again, irritated, "Commander, there's another fork in the road. This time, there are three paths."

Misamier walked forward to take a look. Up ahead was a wide chamber with 4 paths leading into it. One of those paths was the one they were currently on, while the other three paths led deeper into the mountain. There was a smell of sulfur coming out of every tunnel, as well as the scent of humans.

Right now, they had only 6 people. If they were to split themselves up into three teams like before, they would not be able to deal with a sneak attack from the magic puppet.

"This damn hole!"

Misamier cursed silently. After thinking for a moment, she said to the other Level-8 demon, "We'll take two demons each and search two routes. You take that one, I'll take this. Remember to leave down markings along the way and don't get lost. Call if you find anything."

Misamier had fought against Nana before. She knew that Nana possessed the strength of a Level-8 Warrior, therefore, with a Level-8 demon in the team, even if they could not defeat Nana, they could drag for time for her to arrive.

"Okay." The demon had some reservations, but he had no choice.

The two teams proceeded into their respective tunnels.

Outside the tunnel, a small figure appeared. It was the female Yabba Melinda. She carried a cannon about the size of a human. There was also a bag attached to her waist with a black cat inside. At the moment, she was struggling to climb up a large rock.

"Where did they go?" Melinda wiped the sweat off her forehead. After rushi

However, she did not care. She was only concerned with one thing, saving Link! If she could, she wouldn't mind sacrificing her soul to do it.

"It's jusshhtt up ahead. Look, there'sh a tunnel entranshe up ahead. Jushhtt go in there. But you musshhtt be careful, the demonsh also entered the tunnel," said the black cat. Due to its teeth being broken, the black cat's speech was airy and unclear. Its mouth was covered in blood, and the fur on its head was also crumpled and messy. It looked somewhat pitiful.

Right now, it had only one thought, and that was to find Link. Once it found Link, it would quickly get far away from this crazy Yabba woman and return to his side.

Although Link's methods were harsh, he was willing to negotiate with the cat, unlike the Yabba woman. For no apparent reason, she had started abusing it. How pitiful!

## 322. Lets Die Together!

Gloomy cave.

With a soft poof, a Level-7 Winged Howler suddenly shook and collapsed, eyes rolling to the back of its skull. He convulsed a few times and then died.

There was a fist-sized hole in the back of his head. Silver liquid flowed from it—Sacred Silver. Behind it, a small figure hid in the darkness like a wraith.

It was Nana.

"Dammit, I said to be careful when you turn corners. Be careful! These idiots just don't care," the Level-8 Winged Howler cursed at the front.

When the enemy had performed the sneak attack, he'd clearly felt the signs. Unfortunately, he was at the very front of the line and couldn't turn around in time. By the time he did so, Nana had already succeeded and retreated.

"Head, what should we do now?" There was another Level-7 Winged Howler of the trio. He was shaking in fright.

Only two were left in the group now. If the enemy attacked again, he would be the one on the ground.

The Level-8 Winged Howler mused for a while. He was scared too. This messed up place connected in all directions, and the enemy seemed to be really familiar with the tunnels. They'll get toyed to death before long. "Let's get out of the cave."

F\*ck the mission and f\*ck the Magician. He wanted to stay alive.

The two Winged Howlers retreated along the original path.

Thankfully, they'd left marks along the way. Otherwise, they would probably get lost while retreating. After going down the confusing paths for around 1000 feet, another turn appeared. This was different from before—it was more spacious, without many places to hide.

"I'll go forward, and you follow. Be careful this time!" the Level-8 Winged Howler said.

"Got it."

The Level-8 Winged Howler brandished his huge sword and walked forward guardedly. After making the turn, he looked back and forth before turning to the Level-7 Winged Howler. "Coast is clear."

The path after the turn was very wide with unobstructed sight. It was very safe.

But just then, there was a tiny sound. The pop was completely unnoticeable. The next moment, the Level-8 Winged Howler seemed to be hit by something in the head and was thrown to one side.

His temple suddenly exploded and his pupils, flesh, broken bones, and brains splattered in all directions. The Level-8 Winged Howler instinctively pushed off, and he flew sideways. He crashed against the stone wall and then rolled back down. Then he started convulsing on the ground.

Half of his head was gone, and even a demon couldn't withstand this injury. He was just struggling for his life now.

At this sight, the Level-7 Winged Howler began shaking. He didn't know who the attacker was and definitely didn't know how they attacked. All he could do was be scared.

There was a magic puppet behind them, and now, there was a mysterious killer before them. He didn't even know where to run. This practically 14-foot-tall giant curled up against the tunnel's side. He hugged his knees, curled his wings around him, and just shook in fear.

On the other side of the turn, Melinda hid behind a rock barely three feet tall. Seeing the demon on the ground, she shook her fist excitedly.

The black cat was reliable for once. After its modifications, the musket was at least five times more powerful and barely made any sound! Back in the day, her musket could only scratch these big demons, and they'd recover soon after. This time, she'd blown out half of the demon's skull with one bullet!

"Master Link, I can help you now!"

"Okay, leave now," the black cat urged. "Go towards the left tunnel!"

Melinda immediately stood up from the rock. Hugging the musket, she limped down the tunnel. Because of her good mood, she was pretty fast and scurried past like a little mouse.

The other side.

After finding the chance to kill some Winged Howlers, Nana returned to Link's side. She picked him up and started forward again.

"That way," Link said, pointing at a tunnel. This was the path to the heart of the flames in the center of the mountain. It was very dangerous, with all sorts of fire element beasts and extremely high temperature. But for some reason, Link's thirst was getting clearer. He wanted to go somewhere hot right now.

Rather than making him uncomfortable, hot air made him indescribably happy.

Nana obviously didn't care because she couldn't feel the heat. Even if she jumped into lava, it would be like a bath for her.

The further they went, the wider the tunnel and higher the temperature. It was already above 120 degrees, and a faint red glow even appeared at the end of the tunnel.

Link actually felt more comfortable. He could clearly feel waves of heat dig into his skin, seeping into his body and merging with the mysterious warm current.

After that, the warm current grew even larger. Its speed quickened as well. Link felt his body temperature rise continuously like he was on fire, but he didn't feel any discomfort at all. Instead, it felt insufficient. It would never be enough.

It's only a spark. It's too weak. I need a blazing fire!

"Nana, hurry forward. Walk against the right of the wall and be careful. There's a fire-bellied salamander on the left. Do you see it?"

The tunnel was very spacious now. It was more than 100 feet wide and 65 feet high. The six-foot-long salamander curled in a small lava shaft without moving. It looked just like a withered tree.

Nana's movements grew lighter.

Fire-bellied salamanders were easy to deal with but would cause a large commotion. It could alert the demons chasing them.

After traveling more than 150 feet like that, Nana brought Link halfway up the Azzaro Volcano. It was very wide and spacious here. Everywhere was filled with a dark red glow. There were patches of lava here and there, while a lava pond made up the center.

The lava bubbled and gurgled, spitting out plumes of fire and smoke. Occasionally, a burst of heat would rush out before white-hot lava would spew out like the prominence on the surface of the sun. The heat here was unbelievable, distorting the air. Waves of fire were everywhere. Link's Flame Controller robe and Nana's leather armor couldn't withstand this temperature. They started to curl and singe. Then a ball of lava spouted, and a drop fell on the clothing, burning it up.

Nana was alright, obviously. Strangely enough, Link didn't feel any pain in the fire either. His skin didn't even burn. Lava dropped onto him and rolled down like water.

"Master, are you okay?" Nana asked.

"I'm okay. Do you see the tall podium?"

Nana nodded. The podium was 150 feet away. There was a rock protruding from the lava lake, and it glowed red from being baked by the extreme temperature. The heat was truly unimaginable.

"There aren't any fire element beasts along the way. Put me there, and I'll rest for a bit." Link was feeling much better than when they'd entered the cave.

"Okay." Nana walked over.

But before she walked 60 feet, a voice rang out behind them. "Link, where are you going?"

Link turned around. It was Misamier. She was hundreds of feet away with two Level-8 demons beside her. Seeing Link, she took out her long whip and strode over.

It was extremely hot here, but it was nothing to demons.

Here, Misamier's strength had recovered a lot. Though she was far from the pinnacle of Level-9, she was still around the pinnacle of Level-8. With her two Level-8 helpers, they were enough to deal with Link.

"Ignore her and continue forward. Put me on the podium first."

As he spoke, Link picked up his wand. Bracing the searing pain in his head, he cast a Level-0 scream spell on the fire sharks swimming in the lava.

After that, he immediately cast a Level-0 lesser invisibility spell on him and Nana.

"Ah!" The scream scared the large 15-foot-long shark. It instinctively rose out of the water and instantly saw the sprinting Misamier.

"Grr!" The fire shark immediately charged at the intruders.

"F\*ck, stop him!" Misamier said to her helpers.

As soon as she spoke, a Level-8 Winged Howler standing at the entrance fell forward and stopped moving. There was a gaping hole on the back of his head.

Misamier's pupils constited. This is bad. Link actually has reinforcements—strong reinforcements!

She gritted her teeth. At this point, she had no way back. She had to kill Link!

The other Level-8 Winged Howler was frightened. He'd heard the noise. It had come from the tunnel behind them. He immediately left the entrance and ran over to Misamier.

The fire shark pounced at this time. The Winged Howler waved his sword, meeting the shark.

The shark was only a Level-6 Magical Beast. Misamier knew that her subordinate could easily kill it, so she just warned, "Watch out for sneak attacks. I'm going to kill that Magician!"

With that, she strode over to Link.

At this time, Nana had already put Link on the high podium. Link lay on the ground, and to him, the rock wasn't scalding. Instead, it was warm—very comfortably warm.

It's comfortable but still not quite enough. I'm still a little cold. Link instinctively looked at the hottest lava lake. He had the urge to jump in, but this was psychologically challenging. He was still a bit hesitant.

Nana turned around to stop Misamier.

The succubus sneered. "Little girl, you're not my match anymore!"

Though injured, her power was much stronger than last time at the Necropolis.

Nana didn't speak. Her leather armor was already damaged by the lava. She tore it off and threw her swords down too. She only had the Breakpoint dagger in her hands.

"Come at me!" Nana blocked the path. Instead of attacking first, she started provoking.

Crack! Misamier cast the whip at Nana, whose reaction was simple. She cut lightly with the Breakpoint dagger.

The attack was simple but also greatly threatening. Misamier was forced to pull her whip back. She knew how sharp the dagger was and her whip was no match. However, she had other solutions.

"Heh, you have a dagger, but sadly, you're only a Warrior!"

As she spoke, Misamier suddenly reached out. A dark red ball of light appeared in her palm. She hurled it at Nana, and it exploded with a boom.

This was her talent spell!

Caught by surprise, Nana was forced back by the ball of light. She lost balance and fell into the lava.

In that moment, she knew she'd made a mistake. With extremely fast reaction speed, Nana threw the dagger toward Misamier.

Misamier had just cast her talent spell and reacted a bit slowly. Her left leg was hit by the dagger. With a crack, the entire calf fell off from her body.

Plop! Nana was thrown 150 feet away by the explosion and fell into the lava.

Plop! Without her left calf, Miamier lost her balance and also fell to the ground.

It was okay though. A calf didn't matter much. She was now less than 100 feet away from Link. Before Nana swam back, she could end Link even if she had to crawl!

Misamier began crawling.

After around 60 feet, her heart suddenly tremored. She rolled forward without time to look behind. If her body was undamaged, she could definitely dodge it. However, her calf was gone, so she moved slower.

Poof. Her back shuddered, and she spat out a mouthful of blood. Looking down, she discovered a clear hole in her chest. Then she looked back. At the entrance, a small figure was looking at her with a magic musket.

It was too hot here, and Melinda couldn't come in. But it was okay because her musket had long range. She could stand far away and fire it.

It's that Yabba woman. Dammit! Misamier didn't expect the little thing she'd overlooked would ruin everything.

She looked back at Link. He was still lying on the podium without moving.

Gritting her teeth, Misamier gathered her remaining strength and leaped forward. She grabbed Link and then jumped into the lava.

"Let's die together!"

## 323. Great Fortune

Splash

Watching this, everyone was stunned.

The Level-8 Winged Howler cut off the fire shark's head in one strike. Hearing the noise, he turned to look only to find that Misamier's body had fallen into the lava. Not wanting to fight, he immediately ran.

This time, the Magician will definitely die, right? Commander, I'll report this to the Lord of the Deep. I'm sure he'll remember your service! The Winged Howler thought to himself.

The space above this cavern was wide, and there was a hole leading into the sky. This was the hole that lava would emerge from when the volcano erupts. The demon spread his wings and prepared to fly.

Bang. He heard a soft sound and saw a bullet flying, headed straight towards him. It was from Melinda.

Rip! The bullet shredded one of his wings just as he flew above the lava. As his wing broke, he spiraled down from the air and fell into the lava. Splash

"Aaah! Aaaah!" He screamed. He struggled fiercely as he tried to escape from the lava, but it was all in vain.

The temperature of the lava was simply too high.

After Nana fell in, she immediately swam as quickly as she could to the edge of the lava. Even if it was her, she could not last for very long. How could a flesh and blood demon compare?

In but a moment, the demon's body was on fire. The screaming gradually faded until it disappeared.

The mountain finally quieted down, and Melinda put down her musket. She stared stupidly at the spot in which Link had fallen into the lava, mind blanked.

Splash, splash. Nana had swum to the edge of the lava and got out. Her body was now bright red, and many parts were deformed. If she took any longer, she would also have melted.

After reaching the shore, she too stared at the lava. She was waiting for her body to cool down so that she could jump in to look for her master.

At this moment, the one who was calmest was the black cat. Seated inside the bag around Melinda's waist, it poked out its head and stared at the lava pool. "Interesting. How interesting."

"Interesting your head!" Melinda immediately shouted when she heard the cat. She was incensed. If not for this damn cat, Master Link would never have died. It was all the fault of this cat!

Therefore, the cat which had experienced a few lucky moments of calm was once again subjected to indescribable torture. Painful sounds of mewing resounded through the mountain.

At this moment, deep within the lava pool was a very different scenery.

After being pulled into the lava by Misamier, Link found himself slowly drifting down.

The temperature of the boiling lava was extremely high. This could be seen from how even Nana could not handle being inside for too long. Strangely, Link only found it slightly warm, and not the least bit scalding.

Streams of warm currents flowed into his body and joined into the warm current inside it, making it flow faster and stronger.

Mysteriously, under the influence of the warm current, Link found that even as he descended deeper into the lava, he was not suffocating even though there was no air around.

He simply did not need to breathe.

Misamier was also still alive. Demonic power spread out from her body, protecting her from the insane heat. She hugged Link tightly, planning to drag him deep into the lava.

Not just that, she opened her mouth wide and bit savagely at Link. Link instinctively tited to the side, causing Misamier to bite onto his shoulder.

Misamier was now just like an octopus. Not only did she latch onto Link with her teeth, but her arms were also wrapped tightly around Link, as were her legs. She wanted to thoroughly trap him and kill him!

If Misamier was at her full strength, Link's body would definitely be tited to death by her. However, right now, she was severely weakened and her strength diminished. Also, there was a strange force circulating within Link's body helping him resist Misamier's grip.

The two of them had sunk down over 90 feetito the lava. The temperature was getting increasingly hot. Link no longer felt cold. Now, he felt hot, extremely hot!

The current within his body was now raging fiercely, and Link could feel an enormous force that he could not describe. It was as though the power was trapped inside his body and was trying to force its way out. Link's body had become the battleground in this struggle, turning into something like a pressure cooker and causing Link to be in burning pain.

If this thing gets any stronger, I'm going to die! I'll definitely explode to death! I need to suppress it.

Under constant attack by the intense struggle within his body, Link's mind was spinning, and he could not think properly. At some point, he detected a cool presence beside his body, an icy cooling sensation.

It must be Misamier. She's actually still alive!

By now, Link could no longer feel Misamier's titing grip. However, he could still feel the cooling presence beside his body. It was precisely because of this presence that he was still alive and not destroyed by the power within himself.

There's a wound on my shoulder. It can let the power escape!

Link attempted to circulate and direct the path of the current. He actually did not have much control and could only hope that some of it leaked out from his shoulder wound.

Somehow, he succeeded. Although the current was circulating rapidly in his body, he could somehow direct it. A portion of it separated and flowed towards the wound on his shoulder.

The cool feeling from his shoulder came from where Misamier's sharp teeth were still clamped onto him. The coldness came from the demonic power of Misamier and was slowly seeping into Link's body.

Under normal circumstances, this demonic power was more than enough to kill Link. However, right now, things were different. The power in Link's body was much stronger, and in fact, it was still growing.

This power was like an incinerator. In front of it, whatever demonic power that entered Link's body could only be dissolved.

Unexpectedly, not only did this exchange not have any negative effects, but it also gave Link some benefits. It was like a regulator, as the heat within Link's body dissolved the cold demonic power, the pressure from the heat also reduced.

However, this demonic power was not enough. It was far too little! He needed a lot more of it to achieve a balance.

As Link struggled, he found that his strength had increased. He easily shook off Misamier's grip on him. Not only that, he even hugged her tightly and bit down onto her neck.

Filled with thick demonic power, blood started flowing out of Misamier's neck and into Link's belly. It was icy cold, and as it entered Link's body, it dissolved the immense pressure within him.

Link instantly felt much better.

Misamier started struggling. However, it was no use. This time, it was Link who held onto her tightly, and Link's strength was much greater than hers. He gulped down her cool blood greedily.

The blistering hot energy was still entering into Link's body, and the warm current was getting larger. However, under the influence of the demonic energy, the current was a lot warmer and manageable.

If the power earlier was likened to blistering lava, the power now could be described as a gentle water flow. As it gently coursed through Link's body, it helped him recover his internal injuries.

These injuries were the result of forcefully using the Legendary level magic spell. Link's head had cleared up by now, and he could "see" these injuries. He saw numerous torn arteries and tendons, as well as fractured bones.

Looking at his wounds, Link suddenly came to a realization. No wonder the Legendary Magicians were so much rarer than the Warriors. Besides the requirement of magic, the strength of one's body was definitely another restition.

Warriors' bodies were naturally strong. After reaching the peak of Level-9, it was easy for them to attain Legendary power. However, Magicians could not. Their bodies were too weak such that even if they were enlightened on the mysteries of the Legendary power, their bodies were unable to bear the load of such a force unless they had a way to raise their bodies' strength.

This point, therefore, demonstrated the superiority of the dragon race.

The gentle current washed over each wound, and with every second that passed, the wounds gradually recovered. The torn blood vessels slowly reformed like leaves growing on a plant, sprouting little by little.

Link had no idea how much time had passed, but he detected that within his embrace, the body he was hugging had crumbled. He had completely sucked Misamier's demonic power dry.

The hot energy from the lava was still entering his body. Without the demonic power to balance out the heat, Link's body started to heat up again.

However, there was no longer anything constiting his movements. He moved his arms and legs and rapidly swam towards the surface of the lava. As he got higher, the temperature of the lava decreased. Consequently, the heat of the energy entering his body decreased as well. After swimming up for about a minute, Link reached a depth where he felt comfortable.

The temperature at this depth was neither too high nor too low. Surrounded by the lava, he felt warm and comfortable.

At this point, Link was happy to stay in his current position and float there, letting his body absorb the heat from the lava.

As time passed, the power in his body got thicker and thicker, and Link's mind felt clearer and clearer. The effect of the injury to his soul was also fading.

He carefully assessed the power within his body.

Based on Link's intuition, the power had a crystal red color and was extremely hot. It was bursting with energy and furthermore, was unimaginably clear.

How could he describe this?

The power was exactly like the most brilliant ruby that would make everyone desire it... Hold on... Link recalled seeing power this pure only once before. That's right, he had seen it once in the Red Dragon Queen Gretel. That was the impression her dragon power gave Link.

At this point, Link's heart was pounding. Could it be that the power within me is dragon energy? But how did I come to have it?

He suddenly remembered what happened in the Dragon Temple. At that time, she had demonstrated a few mysterious magic spells for him. After every demonstration, his fatigue always disappeared, and he was always full of vigor.

Don't tell me that she was doing Dragonification on me? But if it were Dragonification, wouldn't I have detected it before? Why would it be hidden until now?

Link could not understand.

There was one other thing he could not comprehend. Earlier, to reduce the pressure, he had to absorb demonic power from Misamier to balance the power inside him. Based on that logic, his power should be mixed with demonic power. However, not only did the power within him not have the slightest bit of evil, it was pure beyond comparison. In fact, it was comparable even to the Red Dragon Queen Gretel.

This is truly mysterious! Could it be the game system? Link guessed wildly before rejecting the hypothesis. If this was the work of the game system, he would have received a notification window. However, the notification window did not appear.

Since he could not figure it out, he would rather not bother with it. He focused on absorbing the energy.

As the energy continued flowing into his body, Link noticed that his body was no longer feeling as "thirsty" as it was before.

Before, it was as though he hadn't eaten for half a year. He had greedily absorbed all the flame energy around him and secreted all the waste from his body.

Something flashed in his vision, and the notification window popped up. This fellow finally appeared.

Link looked and saw a row of words.

Player Link has obtained "Flawless Dragon Power."

Flawless Dragon Power (Growth)

Level: 7

Effect: Boosts the life force, strength, speed, etc. of the user, and power increases as skill level increases.

(Note: Ability gained from multiple coincidences.)

Coincidences?

Link asked, What coincidences?

The system displayed another message. Link looked at it and was pleasantly surprised. This is fortunate. Truly fortune!

## 324. Not a Personal Problem Between Us

The game system display recorded the entire process.

When Link fell into the lava lake, there were three types of power within him: Mana, Light power, and Dragon Power.

Mana went without saying. Every Magician had it.

The Light power...it was the soul blessing from the angel Herrera. After dealing with fallen Magician Bale, Link possessed the power to absorb sunlight. This ability was very weak and only made Link's body slightly stronger than the average Magician. But after all this time, he'd accumulated much Light power.

The Dragon Power came from the Red Dragon Queen.

According to the game system, the Red Dragon Queen actually didn't cast any spell on Link. She'd put pure Dragon Power into Link. Under its influence, Link naturally grew much more spirited.

After a few times, Link retained some of her power.

Of the three powers, he had the most Mana, followed by Light power, and finally, Dragon Power. The Dragon Power had been sealed by the Red Dragon Queen so it could only help him regain energy.

But this time, Link had cast a Legendary Spell and damaged his body. The Dragon Power naturally started acting and helped heal his wounds. As the saying went, failure was the mother of success.

During this process, the Dragon Power started fusing with Link's body. Part of the power that the Red Dragon Queen had sealed offhandedly was awakened too. Not only did it heal Link's body, but it also started absorbing from the surroundings to strengthen itself.

According to rumors, after a dragon was hurt, they could recover speedily no matter how serious the injury was, as long as they were given enough energy and weren't killed on the spot.

Reality proved that the rumors were credible.

However, there was another problem after the Dragon Power was awakened. It wasn't very cohesive with Link's body and instinctively started absorbing strength without caring if Link's body could withstand it.

Similarly, the Dragon Power clashed with the other powers within Link. It was practically a three-way war.

At this time, Link introduced the demon power.

Demon power was very dark. After it appeared, it immediately clashed against the Light power within Link. One light and one dark, they tried to destroy each other into the purest form of energy.

This energy didn't go anywhere. It was all absorbed by the Dragon Power. After it strengthened, it swallowed the neutral Mana. After another series of serendipities, Link came to possess flawless Level-7 Dragon Power with a pretty good future of growth.

This really is fortune born from misfortune, Link couldn't help but think.

Thinking back on his experiences in the World of Firuman, he'd had some good luck, but only this achievement was completely out of his expectations. It was also the most satisfactory.

However, there was another problem. He only had Dragon Power left, so how could he cast spells in the future?

Getting an idea, Link chose see character information.

His vision flashed faintly, and Link's profile appeared.

Link Morani (noble)

Level-7 Dragon Mage

Flawless Dragon Power: 6500

Dragon Power Recovery Speed: 5-100 points per seconds (changes according to energy in the environment)

Current Dragon Power Recovery Speed: 66 points per second

Weapon: Burning Wrath of Heaven

How can I cast spells without Mana? Link discovered that all his power had changed.

The game system replied with a message.

The Flawless Dragon Power can be used as Mana.

Two Mana points = one Dragon Power point.

One Omni Point can raise the upper limit of Dragon Power by one point.

Omni Points will not be able to change the Dragon Power recovery speed.

Reading it all, Link gained a basic understanding of his new power. He looked back at the Mana cards that he could buy and realized that the Mana cost had turned into Dragon Power cost.

Seeing this, Link mostly got it. It was like opening a hidden career in the game. He'd changed his job and even changed his power bar.

The biggest advantage of becoming a Dragon Mage was that he didn't have to worry about using up Mana anymore. The Dragon Power recovery speed was honestly too fast. Even at the lowest speed of five points per second, it was 300 points in a minute, and he would be at the max within 20 minutes. Currently inside the volcano, the recovery speed was at 66 points per second.

Feeling the unprecedented strength, Link was happy but also felt a bit regretful.

Even if one Dragon Power point equaled two Mana points, his Mana upper limit was only 13,000. He couldn't use either of the two Legendary Spells—Miracle Aura and Thunder God Descent.

The Dragon Power was the flawless strength of dragons, but the functions still weren't complete. Link couldn't use it to shapeshi

The exchange rate of Omni Points had lowered as well. Before, one Omni Point could exchange for 10 Mana. Now, it was a one to one ratio. He'd lost a lot on this but thinking of all the benefits of Dragon Power, Link felt better.

Whatever, it's still pretty good. The upper limit is low, so I'll just have to do more missions, Link comforted himself.

His body was fine now, and the Dragon Power's absorption speed had slowed down considerably. Link moved his limbs and started swimming upward.

With a splash, Link broke out of the lavassurface and started swimming towards land. Before he reached it, Nana came over. After seeing him, her big eyes turned into crescents, and she smiled. "Master, are you alright now?"

"No big problems." Link nodded.

He climbed onto land and heard the black cat's pained cries. Turning his head, he saw Melinda standing by the entrance. She cried while also hitting an extremely pathetic-looking black cat.

"All your fault! All your fault! All your fault!" she kept saying. If it wasn't for the cat's betrayal, Master Link wouldn't have died.

She hadn't discovered Link yet.

Uh, isn't that Elodim? Why is he with Melinda and looks so pitiful? Link found it very strange. He got up and walked over.

When the black cat saw Link, its yowling grew twice as loud. "Stop...hitting! Stop...hitting! Link...still...alive. Look, there he is!"

It was really scared of that Yabba girl. She didn't listen to it at all and just blamed everything on it. No matter what it said, she would keep hitting. Its head was hit dozens of times while it said those words. Her hits weren't strong, but it made it feel pathetic.

She was so barbaric!

When it finished speaking, Melinda finally stopped and raised her teary eyes. She really saw Link walk over with Nana behind him.

Because of the lava, neither of them had clothes on. Melinda yelped in pleasant surprise, and then her face turned beet red. She hid back behind the corner.

Link walked out of the hot place and into the tunnel. He covered himself and Nana with a simple cape. After dressing, he called, "Melinda, it's fine now. Come out."

So Melinda finally came out with a red face. Seeing Link, her happiness quickly overcame her shyness. "Master Link," she called quietly.

Link nodded. He saw that the girl's leg was bloody and realized that her wound had opened again. He walked over to clean the wound. After wrapping it again, he tried to put in some Dragon Power.

Melinda immediately yelped.

"Does it hurt?" Link asked.

"No, it's warm. The wound feels kind of numb and itchy like it's about to heal soon. It's comfortable," Melinda said, feeling curious.

Hearing that the Dragon Power was effective, Link was relieved. After pouring Dragon Power into Melinda's wound, he said to Nana, "Carry her."

After Nana picked Melinda up, Link finally asked, "How did you catch the black cat?"

"It was hit by a big tree, and its back legs were flattened. I saved it and then cut off its front paws and pulled out its teeth. It can't hurt people anymore."

Link put Elodim in his hands. The cat really looked pathetic. It was covered in blood and talked with a lisp. Its fur was matted, and its limbs were all missing. It was even more pathetic than a stray cat.

With its ears flattened, it said weakly, "Link, let's make a deal. I won't have any bad ideas from now on. Will you forgive me?"

Looking at it, Link thought for five seconds before shaking his head. "No."

"Why not? I saved you this time. If not for me, you'd be dead meat. I helped you gain dragon power too!" The black cat was stunned.

It knew Link well. His words meant that he would end things once and for all. He was ten times crueler than the Yabba girl when he wanted to be!

Link smiled thinly. "It's not a personal problem between the two of us... Without further ado, goodbye Elodim. Nana, dagger!"

As soon as he spoke, the Breakpoint dagger in Nana's hand glowed faintly. She pierced itito Elodim's head.

Colorful lights flashed. This was a God's soul, and it tried to block the Breakpoint dagger. However, the dagger was an agglomeration of destructive singularity. Merely a God's soul was useless. After three seconds, the dagger pierced into the light.

"Ah!" A horribly painful cry rang out in everyone's mind. Then the colorful glow scattered into countless light spots. There were so many spots that the entire spacious tunnel was colored.

The light didn't fade for five whole seconds. By then, the dagger had sunk into the black cat's skull.

Elodim, a God that wanted nothing more than escape from Firuman, died under the destructive singularity just like that. Perhaps there were remnants of his soul, but this was unimportant.

The betrayal was only a small part of why Link killed it.

This black cat posed too big of a danger. The World of Firuman had already cracked, and it would only get stronger. With a God's wisdom, it would have endless tricks. A damaged physical body couldn't restit it for long.

No one could know what a God would do at that time to the cage that had imprisoned it for thousands of years.

Link didn't dare take the risk, so he decided to get rid of the problem once and for all.

After that, Link tossed the black cat's corpse into the lava. With a soft pop, the corpse turned into smoke and disappeared.

Seeing that Melinda was a bit dazed, Link realized that his cruelty had shocked her, so he explained, "His existence has already caused the losses of countless lives. More lives will die because of him in the future. His strength is quickly growing and will soon surpass us. I can only take the chance to kill him now."

Melinda nodded lightly. She saw another side of Link—cruel and decisive. She was a bit scared but also felt safer. Her feelings were contradictory.

After leaving the cave, Link checked the direction and summoned the Nightingale. They climbed on and started flying towards the Orida Fortress.

This time, there was still a twinge of pain in his head, but he could bear it. After flying at a regular high speed for around 100 miles, not only was he not tired, his headache even disappeared.

A dragon's physique is so weird.

They were within the Norton Kingdom now and were around 250 miles from the Orida Fortress. It wasn't too far. With the Nightingale's speed, the fortress's outer walls appeared in Link's vision after three hours.

For 2000 years, the Northern human race had gone through eight dynasties. Each one had spent countless money and manpower on building and expanding the walls. At this time, it was unobtedly the top strategic pass for the Northern humans.

When Link was three miles away, he was stopped by a scout.

"Magician, report your name!"

"Ferde Lord, Baron Link Morani." Link reported his noble title to the common soldier because it was easier to make a commoner respect a noble while a Magician would receive reverence and fear. The former was much better.

Once he said his name, the scout instantly became ecstatic, and he saluted to Link. "Lord, welcome to the Orida Fortress!"

## 325. Eve of the Final Battle

After Link's message arrived, Duke Abel stood up, losing his cool a bit. This wasn't that bad. Someone stood up from their seats and ran out of the room.

Everyone stared at each other, speechless. The one who ran out was none other than the High Elf Princess Milda. She ran so quickly that her body even glowed faintly and disappeared out the door in a blink.

She'd used an acceleration spell.

Everyone had seen Milda's tears earlier, but that was when everyone thought Link had died. They'd all felt heavy, so no one had thought much. Now, Link was alright, and they were all relieved, but Milda's reaction was so dramatic. They thought more into this.

Apparently, Milda had run into trouble at Ferde before, and Master Link saved her. After that, Milda stayed in Ferde instead of returning to the Isle of Dawn. She even had her own house in Ferde.

These weren't secrets. Anyone would know if they asked.

As a Magician, she didn't even control her emotions and cried when they'd heard the news of Link's death. Now, she was this emotional... Was there something between them?

Everyone was relaxed at this time.

Riel, the king of the Dwarf Mountain, was very straightforward. He slammed a fist on the table and laughed, saying, "The princess is in love with the Magician? Haha, that's great!"

The Yabba airshi

Duke Abel and the other deputy officers exchanged glances awkwardly. They all knew that Link had a woman in the Ferde Territory named Celine or something. Those two were apparently very in love. The High Elf Princess' reaction made things awkward.

The duke chuckled. "Aha, that's Master Link's private matters. Let's stop discussing it and go welcome him."

Everyone rose and walked out of the hall.

Along the way, the more Duke Abel thought about it, the more he found it odd. When he walked past the first checkpoint, he finally understood. "Princess Milda's matter is Link's own private thing," he whispered to the officers beside him. "It's forbidden to discuss. We'll pretend we didn't see anything and don't know anything. If any of the soldiers gossip, punish them! Understood?"

By the end, Duke Abel's eyes grew harsh, and his lips were pressed thinly. His expression was very stit.

"Yes, General!" The officers didn't know why their general was like this, but they obeyed anyway.

Abel actually had very deep thoughts behind this action.

The dwarves and Yabba were foreign races. Outsiders didn't care and had no qualms about causing some drama. However, Abel knew that Princess Milda's tears were genuine but rushi

She was the princess of the High Elves and her each move was critical. After living in the fortress together these days, Abel knew that Milda was clear about her duties. She might not be a mature politician yet, but she was already on the way to maturity. She was stronger than most people.

How could she lose her cool like this?

Bryant had a messy relationshi

He was known as the iron duke and had a strong personality. The wellbeing of humanity was always first for him. In his opinion, the High Elves and Dark Elves were both foreigners. They could work together but must be cautious!

Of course, even though he was unhappy about Milda's actions, he was a political figure, and they were allies. Abel quickly adjusted his emotions and put a smile on.

On the other side, Link had just crossed the first wall of the fortress and soldiers already filled the square. They were all there just to see the infamous Magician up close.

There were so many people. Thankfully, the soldiers mostly kept order and there were officers present. No chaos erupted.

While walking, the crowd at the front grew loud. There were gasps and cries.

"The High Elf Princess is here!"

"Oh my God, how can there be such a beautiful woman in this world?"

"She must be the incarnate of the moon!"

The High Elf Princess had been at the Orida Fortress for more than a month, but when she'd first appeared, she wore a veil. Later, she mostly stayed at the Mage Tower, so most regular soldiers had no chance to see her true appearance. There were rumors that she was beautiful but as to just how beautiful, no one knew.

Now, she appeared right in the crowd and didn't hide her face at all.

Her features were the stunning type and were quite offensive. Just a glance could make someone go blind from the beauty and stop breathing.

Barely any beauties of this extent appeared before the males. In a war fortress where even a female pig was stared at, it was no surprise a commotion was stirred.

Seeing this scene, Link obviously knew what was up. His brows furrowed slightly, feeling that Milda's actions were improper.

At this time, Milda had arrived before him.

She wore a long ivory dress of the High Elf style decorated with many silver magic runes. She had a snow bear cape on her back and a snow fox throw on her shoulder. Her golden hair fell down her shoulders like sunlight. There was a flame-like silver mark painted on her forehead as well. When she walked over, the elegant and glamorous aura was overpowering.

Such a fine beauty appeared among all the sweaty and ragged soldiers. In comparison, Milda was like a Goddess.

Link's eyes brightened too, but he quickly looked down and bowed. "Princess—"

Before he could finish, Milda walked up and hugged him tightly. "Link!" she cried happily. "You're still alive. That's great!"

"Woah!" All the surrounding soldiers started to jeer and cheer. This was legendary.

Without thinking much, someone yelled, "Master, kiss her!"

"Marry the High Elf Princess!"

"Master, the princess likes you!"

Link was even more shocked. He felt Milda's body tremor as if she was really excited, but it still felt odd. In his memory, Milda's every move was like a true princess. She would never do something that could be misunderstood before so many soldiers.

They weren't that close either.

It felt wrong.

Hugged so tightly, Link couldn't push her away either. He could only mutter, "Your Highness, it was dangerous indeed, but I'm already back...Can you let go now?"

It was nice to hug a beauty, but Link was passed that. The High Elf Princess' beauty was unparalleled, even prettier than the Red Dragon Queen. However, Link had marked her with the "political alliance, no other relationshi

There was no other reason save that she was the High Elf Princess. No matter how innocent and naive she was, after a few years, she would still mature. They could become allies but as for love...that wasn't an option.

Link's tone was calm and devoid of extra emotions. Milda stiffened and instantly let go. With red eyes, she whispered, "I thought you died, but you came back alive. Sorry, I lost my composure."

"It's alright, no need to apologize." Link immediately changed the subject. "Does that mean Skinorse is back?"

"He's back and also brought back your magic notes. But now it seems that the notebook can be returned to its owner." Milda had already recomposed herself. She took out the notebook and handed it to Link.

Link accepted it. Just as he was about to speak, Duke Abel and the others arrived.

Duke Abel's smile was a bit forced. He suddenly sped up as he got to Link and forced Milda to the side. Opening his arms wide, he laughed heartily and gave Link a warm embrace. Then he patted Link's back and lamented, "Master, it's so great that you're back."

Link could only reply out of courtesy. He'd already felt the subtle vortex as soon as he'd arrived. He couldn't help but sigh. This is politics. It's far less interesting than magic.

He pretended he couldn't tell the subtle jabs. After a bunch of polite small talk, Link arrived at the iron stronghold at the mountain peak.

Milda had mostly returned to normal now. She explained the situation of the Magicians at the Orida Fortress.

In the fortress, there were more than 300 Magicians. Two hundred and tity-four were humans. The highest level was Level-6, and there were three Magicians. Seventy-six Magicians were High Elves with the lowest at Level-6. There were two at Level-7—Milda and Romilson.

After hearing this, Link thought carefully and said, "There are enough Level-6 Magicians. Start training now...How about ten days? After ten days, the magic seal will be able to be used officially."

These words roused everyone present. "Master, how is your health right now?" Duke Abel asked.

"No problem at all. We can start now!"

"Great!" Duke Abel had already forgotten the earlier problems. The frustrations built up in his heart due to the Dark Divine Gear were all wiped clean.

Four hours ago

Whoosh. Aymons appeared in the forest.

Riding the Dark Serpent, he flew northwestward while thinking about the war situation.

When I left, Misamier was gravely injured. She's probably dead now. The surviving demons probably aren't Link's match. He'll definitely reach the Orida Fortress alive. That man is too frightening. He actually used a Legendary Spell. He might be able to think of a way against the Godly techniques. No, I can't drag it on any longer!

Conquering the Yabba capital would take at least one more month. This was too long, and he couldn't wait.

## 326. Too Much Energy, Need a Way to Let It Out

Orida Fortress

To reinforce the Yabba race getting attacked up north, the entire defensive line wentito action. Soldiers were brought over, and supplies were transported. As the core of the defensive line, the Orida Fortress was obviously the busiest. Everyone was up to their necks in work.

Of course, those matters had nothing to do with Link. He only had one task—to train Magicians and complete the Soul Slalom Magic Seal to combat the Dark Serpent.

The Orida Fortress contained three Mage Towers. The two subordinate towers were similar to the Mage Tower of the East Cove Higher Magic Academy. The main tower was practically equal to the Heaven's Thorn Mage Tower.

There was a 300-square-foot garden between the three Mage Towers surrounded by a low wall. This was the Magicians' independent area.

Link practiced the magic seal with the Magicians here.

One had to be at least Level-6 to join the magic seal, so most of them were High Elves. There were only five humans, including Link. The High Elves were honestly much more advanced in magic than humans.

The magic seal was very tedious. Every Magician had to multitask while operating it. While casting the spell, they must keep an eye on the Mana of the other Magicians at the same time and adjust their own Mana output accordingly.

The intensity of the training was like having a Magician continuously cast spells at the pinnacle of Level-6.

These tasks were practically beyond the limits of the Magicians and were tedious. However, this directly influenced the result of the battle, and there was no way to back out. Every Magician gritted their teeth and put in all their effort.

But even the strongest determination had a limit. On average, Magicians were physically weak as well. During training, Link paid attention to the physical state of each Magician. Once someone approached their limit, he would immediately end training for the day and take a break.

Every Magician in the Soul Slalom was precious and indispensable.

The result was that Link could only train them for three hours per day.

After each session, the Magicians were all exhausted. They would hurriedly cast a healing spell for themselves and sleep like the dead as soon as they returned to their rooms.

High Elf Princess Milda and Level-7 Magician Romilson were slightly better but not by much. They went to bed early to save energy. In actuality, they had to sleep 16 hours every day.

Only Link would be left.

Before this, he would be like Milda and the others, but it was different now. After receiving the Dragon Power, Link's vitality was extremely high. This training was just like a warmup for him.

After training for three hours, there was still much of the day left. What should he do?

Naturally, he started studying magic books.

Link had many books and scrolls at hand. The most valuable were the Wonders of space from the Night King and Bryant's Revelations Scroll IV rewarded by the system.

With Link's current strength, it was difficult to improve in regards to spatial magic. On the other hand, Bryant's Revelations Scroll gave him many benefits.

After weighing the choices, Link focused his attention on Bryant's Revelations Scroll. He became obsessed as soon as he started. After training ended each day, he would return to the Mage Tower and start reading the scroll. He would read for 15 hours per day, sleep six hours, and be filled with energy the next day.

There wasn't much content in one scroll. Because of his endless energy, Link could maintain his thought operation at the highest level.

He finished the scroll two days later.

The technique explained in this scroll is so interesting. If I cast spells using this, the power of the spell increases by at least 50 percent and the speed rises by five percent too. It's like having a high-quality wand.

Link was very satisfied. There were still some things that he hadn't completely understood. He didn't have anything else to do and had so much energy, so he just read through casually, absorbing the wisdom of the Legendary Magician.

This would definitely be torture for the average man, but to Link, it was relaxing.

While reading, someone knocked on the door. Link could tell who it was by the aura. He activated the Magician's Hand and opened the door.

Dressed in an officer's leather armor, Princess Annie stood prettily by the door. She saluted to Link casually and asked with a smile, "Master Magician, are you busy?"

Link put away his scroll and replied, "No, no, come in and have a seat."

With that, he used the Magician's Hand to bring fire wine over and poured a cup for Annie. "It's cold out. Have a cup to warm yourself."

A year passed in a blink. It was now early winter, and the first snow was the day before yesterday. The wind cutito one's bones while walking outside. Annie's cheeks were red from the wind.

She walked in, sat down, and took a sip of wine. Letting out a long sigh, she said, "I heard you're all practicing the magic seal. It's really hard, and many Magicians are ill from the fatigue. I thought you would have a hard time, but I guess I was worrying for nothing."

Link chuckled. He pointed at his head and said, "The mysteries of magic are endless. I received some secret spells from the dragons, and my body is much better now. You might not even be my match in terms of strength."

Nourished by the Dragon Power, Link's outer appearance didn't change much, but his strength had risen greatly. His physical strength was probably equal to a regular Level-5 Warrior now, and he didn't even train.

If he underwent the rigorous Warrior training, he could definitely reach a Warrior's Level-7.

"Really?" Annie didn't believe him. After returning from the Black Forest, she'd broken into Level-5, and her strength started improving rapidly. She was now at the pinnacle and would soon enter Level-6.

She specialized in assassination and power wasn't her strongest suit. But if she couldn't beat a Magician, that would be embarrassing.

"Want to try?" Link was interested. He pulled a chair before Annie and rolled up his sleeves. He reached his hand out for a simple match of arm wrestling.

Annie was amused too. "Fine but I might crush your bones," she joked. "But I won't use my Battle Aura so you can't use spells either!"

If Link cast something like a titan spell for himself, Annie would definitely lose.

"Sure."

Link grasped Annie's hand. Her hand was small, but her palm was rough. There were thick calluses from using a dagger yearlong. Link's hand was a typical Magician's Hand—soft and fine without any calluses or scars.

After holding hands, Link said, "I'm going to apply force. Be careful."

Annie felt the warmth of Link's palm and couldn't control her heart. She blushed involuntarily and calmed herself down with difficulty. "Come at me," she said seriously.

They used their power at the same time, and something cracked. No one won, but the wooden table under their elbows met its demise. It cracked under the immense power and almost collapsed.

With the table damaged, the match couldn't go on. Annie gaped at Link's hand. She didn't expect this. "Link, the dragon spell is so powerful. With your power, you can go practice martial arts."

Link shrugged instinctively. "I'm a Magician. Why should I learn martial arts? I don't have time and my energy...Hey, actually that's not a bad idea."

In Firuman, no Magician practiced martial arts. Other than the bias against physical combat, they also didn't have the energy.

For a Magician, the endless and boundless spells were enough to take up all their time and effort. They were usually physically weak too. Even if they trained, it wouldn't be of much use. They'd also be laughed at by other Magiciasso who would do it?

But actually, there was no rule against Magicians training in martial arts.

Back in the day, Link faced the same problems as other Magicians. Now, he had the physique of a dragon. Practicing martial arts while he had no inspiration for studying spells could help relax his mind. He might even become accomplished after training every day.

To Link, martial arts was just for relaxing his mind. Before, he would walk everywhere but now, his body was too strong. Strolling around was a waste. Why not practice martial arts?

Thinking of this, Link smiled. "Annie, you reminded me. After receiving the dragon spell, I'm full of energy, and I shouldn't waste it. Let me think...How about I learn swordsmanshi

Annie laughed. "That's easy. Kanorse, the Dawn Swordsman, is in the fortress too. I'll call him over."

What human could surpass the Dawn Swordsman in terms of swordsmanshi

Link's interest deepened. He chuckled and said, "Oh, don't. Since I'm asking him to be my teacher, I should be the one to find him. I owe him a magic sword too. How about tomorrow? After training tomorrow, can you take me to him?"

If not for her duties, Annie would rather be with Link at all times. Now that she had a legit reason, she would obviously agree. Smiling, she replied, "Of course. I'll come find you tomorrow."

The two made the plan and chatted for a while. Annie was now a high-level commander of the MI3 and was quite busy. She left soon. Link glanced at the sky and realized it was only two in the afternoon. It was still early, so he started forging the magic sword.

This would be his gift to his teacher.

## 327. Too Simple

Link had plenty of materials on hand. Previously, when the Beastman Warlord commissioned Link to craft his axe, there were many leftover materials. There was plenty left to craft a magic sword.

Link once crafted a Khorium sword for Kanorse. Kanorse had provided Link with the design for the sword, so it was very simple. Therefore, right now, based on a similar design, all Link needed to consider was the magical component of the sword.

After thinking about it for a while, Link decided to use talismans to inscribe the sword with magic. He had plenty of experience with using talismans, and based on his experience with it, he could create profound effects.

He had a few high-grade talismans with him, ones that he had gotten from High Elf Lord Derrac's Lightning Wand.

He took out one lightning talisman from his dimensional pendant.

When no energy was being inputted into the talisman, it looked like a transparent crystal, beautiful to look at. It would definitely make a good necklace for a gift to one's wife, and would absolutely fetch a high price on the market.

This lightning talisman was originally designed for the wand, and not for a sword. Therefore, some adjustments would have to be made.

At this stage, Link already had an idea of the things he'd need to change. After casting an Eagle's Eye spell on himself, Link began to modify the talisman.

Hmm, my eyesight has also improved. Previously, these minute markings weren't so clear before. Now, I can see everything clearly, Link mused to himself in surprise.

In the past, he truly envied Felina's eyesight. Right now, his body had improved to the point that it was comparable to the best.

With plenty of spirit, outstanding eyesight, Link's modifications to the talisman were completed quickly.

Three hours later, a brand new talisman lay in his hand. Information about this new talisman appeared in his vision.

Lightning Tempest Talisman.

Level: Epic

Effect: After channeling Mana into the talisman, the talisman will convert the Mana into lightning energy.

(Note: Priceless gemstone)

The talisman thus formed the core of the sword. The next step was to construct the carrier, the sword that would support it.

Whether or not the talisman could fully utilize its power would depend on the grade of the sword. The sword was fundamentally many times easier than the talisman and was simply no challenge to Link.

Modifying the talisman took Link three hours, whereas constructing the carrier took only half an hour. Very soon, a shape similar to the Khorium sword was produced.

Link inlaid the talisman into the base of the sword blade, aligning the talisman with the lines on the sword. The lightning talisman sword was created!

The process was extremely fast, taking only about 3.5 hours.

If I had used traditional methods to create this sword, it would take me at least a week. Using talismans to do it is a much better way!

Picking up the blade, Link made some adjustments to the body of the sword. Now, the sword was considered complete.

Since this sword was a gift, it would not be appropriate to simply hand it over like this. Link created an elegant ebony box for the sword which he then placed the sword into. Suddenly, Link had a flash of inspiration. He quickly put away the sword and began studying the Flame and Purification spell.

Very quickly, a day passed by.

The next day, after conducting the regular training for the Magicians, Link chose not to leave from the training grounds. Annie walked over, accompanied by Kanorse.

Annie waved her hand helplessly, saying, "Link, I told Kanorse about your request, and he immediately came over."

Kanorse laughed and said, "I heard that you were preparing a magic sword as a gift. I was curious and couldn't resist coming to take a look."

Well, fine. He's already here, Link thought. He retrieved the box from within his dimensional pendant and handed it over to Kanorse.

The box was simple but incredibly elegant. Looking at it, Kanorse's eyes lit up. He carefully opened the box and laid his eyes upon the sword within.

The exterior of the sword was a silvery white. Along the body of the sword was carved exquisite flowing runic lines which sparked with electricity. At the base of the sword was inlaid a brilliant gemstone which emanated a thick aura of lightning energy. It made the entire sword feel very electrifying.

Kanorse held his breath as he kept the sword aside. Immediately, the electricity disappeared, causing the sword glow to fade away. Kanorse was puzzled by this effect. Link explained, "When you're not channeling your energy into the sword, the sword will automatically stop releasing energy so that it doesn't appear too eye-catching. Now, try channeling your Battle Aura into the sword."

Kanorse followed Link's instructions. Immediately, the sword lit up with electricity as small explosions of lightning went off around them. Kanorse did not control his strength earlier and used too much force, causing the sword to explode with energy, transforming a nine-foot area around them into a lightning field.

Link and Annie were surrounded by a defensive barrier that Link had prepared earlier. He said, "Your power is too strong, but it is also too dispersed. You need to control the direction of your power on the sword. I can't advise you much with this; you'll need to figure it out yourself."

However, Kanorse's attention was completely focused on the magic sword in his hands. Who knew if he had heard Link's advice.

Kanorse was completely engrossed with the sword. At first, the electricity on the sword still striking randomly around the area. Ten minutes later, he managed to contain the electricity onto the body of the sword. Yet another ten minutes later, he was starting to be able to release the electricity as he willed it.

This rate of improvement was stunning, to say the least. It was no wonder that Kanorse was the human race's strongest champion.

Nonetheless, time was passing by quickly. Annie reminded, "Hey, Link is still waiting to learn swordsmanshi

"Oh? Oh right, I completely forgot! This sword is just too amazing; it's the best and most beautiful magic sword I've ever used. I was just too engrossed in trying it out. It handles well too!" Kanorse praised as he admired the magic sword in his hand. No matter how he looked at it, there were no aesthetic flaws in this sword, and the more he looked at it, the more he liked it.

Of course, since he already received the tuition, Kanorse had to teach Link properly too. He took out a pair of wooden swords that he had prepared beforehand and tossed one over to Link. Holding the other sword in his hand, his expression became serious. "Sir Link, I know that you only want to learn some basic swordsmanshi

Link understood the seriousness of this. He had never looked lightly upon the skills of Warriors. For their skills to last so long in this world, it certainly had to have its own mysteries and strengths.

Kanorse used the wooden sword to demonstrate some basic sword forms. He knew that Link's eyesight was good, so he moved rapidly. After running through the forms, he asked, "Sir Link, did you understand?"

Link closed his eyes for a few minutes before opening them. "Let me try," he said.

Link slowly repeated the motions that Kanorse demonstrated—chopping, slashi

Actually, the moves were very simple. Link memorized them all after looking at them once. However, when he actually did it himself, he found that his body could not keep up with his thoughts and would constantly make mistakes.

After he was done, Kanorse nodded his head in satisfaction. "Well done, the overall form is there. However, there are many areas that need to be worked on. Continue training; I'll correct you as you go along."

Link nodded his head and repeated the sequence.

Kanorse was a stit teacher. He would shout at Link to stop the moment he noticed a slight mistake to correct the mistake. The basic sword forms comprised of 20 strokes. He took half a minute to demonstrate them, but now, he spent almost an entire hour correcting Link's form.

An hour later, Link ran through the sequence of forms once more, going very slowly this time.

He didn't dare to go through the forms quickly. When he did, he found that he could not control his movements properly and would make many mistakes.

Kanorse nodded his head, pleased. "This is it. From here, you need to work on the speed of the movements. Sir Link, even though you are only doing this as a form of exercise, I hope that you would still take it seriously. Based on your current physical capabilities, as long as you train constantly and become familiar with these basic sword moves, they can still become very useful. It is also better for tempering your body."

Initially, Link had only planned to learn this as a pastime. However, after going through that session with Kanorse, he was beginning to find swordsmanshi

Kanorse continued, "Over the next week, I will constantly come to check on you until the point where you are able to run through the sequence of forms without making a single mistake. If you have any doubts, feel free to send someone to look for me. I will immediately come over to help you clarify your doubts."

For such a valuable magic sword, Kanorse was only teaching Link the basics of swordsmanshi

Of course, Link was not likely to make many mistakes. With his photogenic memory, it would not even be a problem for him. Nonetheless, he still said sincerely to Kanorse, "My utmost gratitude."

Following that, Link continued practicing.

Annie and Kanorse stood by the side watching him. After watching for a while, Kanorse waved his hand and said to Annie, "I have a feeling that if Sir Link continues to train like this, he could become a very formidable assassin."

Annie was skeptical. "That can't be. Where would Link find the time? He still needs to study magic."

"I can't be wrong. Based on Sir Link's intellect and focus, as long as he continues to train for just an hour every day, he would definitely make incredible progress with the sword within a year.

"This..." Annie was speechless. She had no doubts about Kanorse's appraisal. It was just that it was simply too unbelievable. Would a Magician that mastered swordsmanshi

The two of them stood in silence for a while. After observing Link for a while more, they left.

Link continued to train.

In the next few days, Kanorse continued to come daily to observe. However, after three days, he decided to stop coming. It was simply pointless. Link did not need Kanorse around, every motion he made was simply flawless.

Link had reached the point where he could feel his own progress.

Every day, after practicing with the magic formation, he would study his magic books, burying himself deep into the books. Then, when he found himself stumped by a problem, he would practice his swordsmanshi

In fact, due to Link training his body, not only was his body getting stronger, the maximum limit of his Dragon Power was rising as well, increasing 20 points every day.

His Dragon Power which started off at Level- 7 quickly rose to Level-8 within half a month.

How interesting. I should've done this earlier instead of just strolling. Link found it a real pity and decided to step up the intensity of his training.

A week later, Link's Soul Slalom magic formation was starting to show signs of being effective. The coordination between the individual Magicians was improving, and right now, they could actually unleash some magic spells. Unfortunately, there was a high possibility that they would make a mistake and needed more time to become familiar with it.

Based on this rate of progress, it seemed likely that Link's deadline of mastering the magic formation within ten days would be met.

On the other hand, Link's swordsmanshi

The sword spirit in the Storm Lord's sword ignored him, letting Link swing it around without making noise. After practicing for a day, Link found it pointless. Swordsmanshi

Link looked at Nana.

## 328. Master, You Cheat Every Time!

After another day's magic seal training, Link practiced his sword by himself. He quickly felt bored.

"Nana, come practice with me."

"No...Nana only knows fatal techniques." Nana blinked her big eyes and pouted, shaking her head resolutely.

"It's alright. Fatal techniques are fun. Come, you won't hurt me." Link activated a thin layer of the spatial shi

"Uh...okay!"

As soon as she spoke, Link felt wind before him. He squinted and saw Nana pounce at him. Link instinctively wanted to use magic to counter her.

My magic instincts are deep-rooted, but this is swordsmanshi

Link used a basic move to block the attack.

Clang! He surprisingly blocked it, but then Nana changed her tactic. She easily dodged Link's sword and stabbed towards Link's ribs. His heart was there; if stabbed, he would die unobtedly.

Faced with these extremely sharp moves, Link couldn't think fast enough. His sword couldn't keep up. This was totally different from practicing alone.

Cling! Link's rib was prodded. Nana stepped back and said in her chirpy voice, "Master, you lost."

Link couldn't admit defeat. He waved his Storm Lord sword. "Again!"

Clang! Link blocked the first move again but Nanassecond move nicked his neck. She immediately retreated. "Master, you lost again."

Link finally admitted that he was still far from the top fighters. He couldn't help but think, What would I do if a martial arts expert was next to me?

If an assassin was this close to him and their speed was similar to Nana's, Link wouldn't have the time to cast a spell. He would be killed!

There aren't any assassins that powerful in Firuman, and even if they exist, it's hard for them to sneak up to me. But if—if—I make a mistake and something so extreme happens, I can't do anything except get killed.

In the game, Magicians were powerful but not undefeatable. Their biggest enemy was the assassin because they were fast and could silently approach a Magician.

In the real world, Link's life was pretty smooth. Most of the time, he was the one who caused trouble. He was rarely the target of strong assassins, but that didn't mean it wouldn't happen in the future.

There were career restitions in the game, so Magicians had to suffer under assassins. This was real life though. As long as you had enough time and energy, you could learn everything.

With an assassin nearby, there was no time to cast spells. He'd make time for himself with swordsmanshi

With that in mind, Link grew serious and competitive. He waved his sword and said, "Again."

Cling, clang. After two moves, Link was defeated again.

"Again!"

Two moves.

"Again!"

After being defeated 49 successive times, Link finally kind of got the hang of Nana's rhythm. He got the right feeling.

Nana pounced like lightning. Clang! Link blocked the strike. Nana stabbed at Link's abdomen. Sliding his sword down, Link blocked it again. Clang!

The two moves used up one-tenth of a second. It was enough for Link to cast a spell. Basic sword moves were very easy, and Link's mind was relaxed while fighting with a sword. During this time, he could use a spatial sphere to force the opponent aside, putting distance between them.

But because this was training, Link pushed down the urge to use spells. He continued using his sword.

He failed at the third move.

"Again!" Link was in the groove now. He was using basic techniques, but they were effective. On the other hand, Nana used many advanced techniques but vaguely seemed like a beginner swordsman.

As a Magician, Link was skilled in finding the pattern. After practicing together for so long, he could see through to the essence of Nana's techniques. They were only variations of basic techniques. Compared to spells, the pattern was extremely simple. As long as he knew the pattern, he could respond with basic techniques.

After thinking hard, they started fighting again.

Cling, clang! Link returned to losing after two moves.

Nana giggled. "Master, you got worse."

"I haven't matured yet. Just you wait."

Martial arts couldn't be perfected by thinking. His body had to train as well. Otherwise, he couldn't perform his thoughts and would forever be one beat slower than the other. This would kill him in a real fight.

Nana wouldn't get bored. If Link said "again," she would immediately attack. After around 80 times, Link could consistently block five of Nana's moves.

After that, Link would fail because of his endurance rather than his skills.

"Master, do you want to try again?"

"No, it's enough. Let's stop for today. I need to exercise my body."

Other Warriors would be over with one mistake, but Link had a smart and powerful magic puppet. He also had spells for protection. He could continuously learn from his mistakes.

Thus, the experience he gained in this short period had already surpassed most Warriors in the fortress.

When he practiced again, Link didn't feel as mindless as before. Nana's methods appeared in his mind, and he started strengthening himself by targeting those.

He alternated between thinking and practicing; he was completely immersed.

A day passed in a blink. This time, Link trained until he was utterly exhausted. His entire body was sore. This never happened since he received the Dragon Power.

Before sleeping, he didn't want to move at all. He fell asleep as soon as his head touched the bed. After waking up, Link felt full of energy. Touching his muscles, he discovered they bulged and were hard.

Dragon Power is so miraculous!

He checked his stats again.

Link Morani (noble)

Level-8 Dragon Mage

Flawless Dragon Power: 6800

Recovery Speed: 12-105 Points per second

Current Recovery Speed: 20 Points per second

Main Weapon: Burning Wrath of Heaven

Subordinate Weapon: Abstruse Storm—Lord of Thunder—Silent World

He'd actually reached Level-8, and the upper limit of Dragon Power had increased by 300. This rate was so fast.

It seems that working out my body is a good way to increase my Dragon Power. Link had an idea of the Dragon Power's nature. In three words—use and disuse.

He arose and washed up. After dragging a group of sleepy and dazed Magicians and training them until they went back to sleep, Link started practicing his sword again.

"Nana, come train with me." Link activated a shi

This time, Nana didn't hesitate. Her sword arrived as soon as Link finished speaking.

Clang, clang, clang, clang... Dense clangs of weaponry sounded continuously. This time, Link performed exceptionally well. His body was stronger than yesterday, and surprisingly, he could keep up with Nana.

After blocking 26 moves, Link failed because he couldn't keep up anymore.

This defeat was no longer due to Link's skills. Instead, it was because of his strength. After each block, his sword would be forced aside by Nana and unavoidable mistakes would appear. Link tried to fix them, but he still failed in the end.

"Master, you're not as strong as me. You're around Level-7, so it's normal to not be able to block me," Nana said.

In martial arts, strength was the biggest advantage. No matter how many tricks you knew, it was no use if you couldn't block the strike.

"I understand." Link seemed to be enlightened.

He was still using basic techniques while fighting with Nana now, but these moves were entirely different from the ones he used while exercising.

After his careful research, Link's moves were filled with a type of spirit. They seemed basic, and each move was clear. But for some reason, he could block Nana's dizzyingly fast moves.

At this point, Link could move as he wished.

My technique is fine, but my strength is lacking. I need to get stronger. Yes, train diligently! Raise the Dragon Power!

After that, Link stopped reading. He started sword training obsessively and using up all his Dragon Power. After that, he would wash up and sleep. The next day, after tiring out the Magicians, he would train again.

This went on for five days. The Magicians could operate the Soul Slalom Magic Seal with ease. To avoid mistakes, Link continued training them and increased the duration to five hours per day.

Every Magician improved greatly under the arduous training. Some at the pinnacle of Level-6 had already entered Level-7.

Of course, Link continued his swordsmanshi

After another three days, Link's strength finally caught up to his Dragon Power and was at Level-8.

When he fought with Nana now, they could go back and forth. They could exchange more than 300 blows without anyone losing.

Link grew more and more comfortable. His body would make the best move without him even thinking.

As time passed, Link was no longer satisfied with responding to Nana's attacks. He started attacking actively.

Nanassingle moves were all perfect. Link couldn't defeat him with only a sword, so he started arranging things.

His every move would lead the opponent to make a small mistake until they failed under the accumulation.

If Kanorse came and saw Link do this, he would definitely be astounded. This was a master-level technique, but Link found it natural.

Swordsmanshi

One move, two moves, three moves... After move ten, Link felt a flaw in Nana's move as expected. Yes, she really did make a mistake caused by Link. Each move guided the flaw until move ten where it was big enough for Link to grasp it.

Link focused a bit and stabbed toward the opening.

Cling! He hit Nana's rib. It was just a tap, but Nana was forced back. She didn't regain her balance until dozens of steps back.

"Master, Nana lost." She blinked her big eyes, and her eyebrows moved downward. She looked sad.

Link chuckled. Happy, he said, "Come, let's do it again. I'll help you fix your mistake."

"Okay."

The two fought slowly. Before the flaw appeared, Link pointed out, "Look, if I do this move and you block like this, some small problems will appear afterwards. If I do this next, I'll expand your mistake. After ten moves, your flaw will be big enough to be fatal so you should do this from the start..."

Nana's brain was limited to her experience and wasn't too agile. She liked to rely on speed. This was no problem against regular advanced fighters, but she would definitely lose to a super-powerful opponent skilled in planning.

Link was too smart. Compared to spatial magic, martial arts was practically like kindergarten math. It was as easy as pie.

After focusing on training for half a month, excluding the powerful battle techniques, Link was at an unbelievable level for regular swordsmanshi

As for a Warrior's battle techniques, Link didn't have to learn them. What kind of battle technique was stronger and more flexible than a spell?

In a way, spells were the most powerful battle techniques in the world!

After Link explained patiently, Nana nodded. She understood.

Thus, Link said, "Again."

This time, Link used 50 moves to defeat Nana. His plan had changed, but Nana didn't catch it. She was tricked again. When she realized something was wrong, it was already too late.

"Oh, this is interesting. Continue." Link's interest was growing.

After teaching Nana this new trick, they started fighting again. This time, he defeated Nana with 30 moves. His tactic had changed again, becoming more and more creative. The signs had disappeared too.

"Master, you cheat every time!" Nana had lost badly.

"Come, I'll teach you." Link chuckled.

Nana started learning seriously but Link changed again in the next fight, and she lost again. However, she'd lasted for 80 moves this time. She had improved.

Without speaking, Nana learned the new trick and started fighting again.

This time, it was harder for Link. Nana's mind wasn't flexible, but she learned really quickly. She immediately learned the trick Link had just thought of.

But it was fun this way.

Just as Link was having the time of his life, an officer ran over breathlessly. "Master, the Dark Army has appeared at the border of the Black Forest. The duke wishes to talk with you."

Link grew serious. "I'll go immediately."

## 329. We SHALL be Victorious

Link changed out of his training shi

Five minutes later, Link was ready and followed the officer to the stronghold center.

When he reached the hall, he found that everyone had gathered, including the religious leader.

The religious leader was named Yinnos, and he was a 50-year-old man with gentle looking eyes and brows. He was slightly bigger around the waist, a sign of prosperity.

In Firuman, the church did notiterfere with affairs of politics and war. If not for the appearance of the Dark Serpent, he would not have come to this war meeting.

When he saw Link, he gave Link a slight smile before closing his eyes, sitting peacefully in his chair.

Duke Abel and his officers were dressed in full military attire. Duke Abel himself was only a Level-5 Warrior, but with his commander's uniform, he looked very imposing.

He asked Link, "Sir Link, what is the progress with the magic formation?"

"They've had enough practice. As long as no one interferes, there shouldn't be any problem with the formation," Link assured him.

"Excellent!" Duke Abel said, punching his fist in excitement. Then, he said, "The Dawn Swordsman will lead 3,000 Silver-white shi

Kanorse was in the hall. However, despite his individual fighting prowess, he was born as a commoner and did not hold a major position in the army. He did not have much say in this command structure. He stood to the side of the hall.

Listening to the Duke's commands, he bowed to Link, looking extremely self-confident. The Silver-white shi

Yinnos spoke, "The leaders of the church will operate the Sacred Light Wall to protect the magic formation as well."

"That will be fine," Link expressed his gratitude.

Following this, the rest of the commanders began discussing their plan of attack.

All of this was about war strategy which Link was not well-versed in. Link stood silently by the side, observing and paying close attention to the details. He had to make sure he knew what was going on throughout the battlefield.

There was a magic sandbox in the middle of the hall that displayed a battle simulation. An area of about 50 miles around Orida Fortress could be seen.

The group of officers huddled around this sandbox to discuss the strategy.

After listening for a while, Link got an idea of the overall deployment of troops. On the iron-wall defense line, there were the First, Second, and Third Armies of the Norton Kingdom.

The First Army was the strongest, with 70,000 Warriors gathered in Orida Fortress.

Within the fortress was also 3,000 Dwarf Warriors, 2,000 Musketeers. The Yabbas had brought along one team of airshi

The last force were the High Elves. Although they were the smallest in number, every single one of them was Level-6 Magicians or higher. They were also the main force forming up the Soul Slalom formation, so the army could not do without them.

As for their opponents, the dark elves, it was reported that they were over 10,000 strong. Furthermore, they were all very strong, and at least ten percent of them were high-level demons.

What's worse was that they still had yet to discover the location of the demon army. No one dared to take the demon army lightly.

They had no other information on the Dark Elves, as they had the Black Forest completely locked down.

At the end of the discussion, Duke Abel sighed and said, "We've no other choice, we have to build our defenses around this fortress. Although we humans have the numerical advantage, we do not have enough strong Warriors. If we bring the fight to the demons and encounter them in the wild, we won't stand a chance."

Everyone was silent.

Link had brought back news that there were many high-leveled demons amongst the demon army. Many of them were at least Level-7 and Level-8 demons. An army of that strength would make anyone think twice before fighting against them.

With regards to this, Link also felt helpless. He knew that even with the advantage of high ground from Orida Fortress, this battle would still be a bloody one.

In the Black Forest

There was a new patch of clearing in the forest, within which was a Dark Army Camp. Similarly, they were discussing their attack strategy.

For this battle, the Dark Elves were also deploying all their strongest experts. All the members of the Silver Moon council were here, including council leader Romand.

Romand was the only Level-8 Magician amongst the Dark Elves. However, his strength was so close to Level-9 that he was almost on the verge of breaking through. Among the Dark Elves, his fame and power were extremely high.

However, he was only interested in magic and did not care about politics. The one who was really running things was Aymons.

Naturally, the commander of the Dark Army was Aymons, wielder of the Divine Gear.

There was also a special person in the clearing. She looked like a human girl, standing at about 4.5 foot tall. She wore a simple black cotton war gown.

She had long black hair that extended to her waist and looked as silky as water. Her skin was fair as snow, and her features were very pronounced. Her lips were red, her teeth were brilliantly white, and her eyes were particularly beautiful.

This gentle looking girl stood in the forest clearing surrounded by Dark Elves that looked like vampires and vicious looking demons. She looked like a young lamb that found itself surrounded by wolves.

Strangely, everyone treated her with respect, and this was especially so for the demons. There were even a few that kneeled before her, licking her feet.

This was because she was the daughter of the Lord of the Abyss, Nozama, sent by him to command the demon army.

At this time, Aymons was sharing the attack strategy to attack Orida Fortress in the south. As he was in the middle of his talk, the girl interrupted him, "Sir Aymons, Link has been at Orida Fortress for at least half a month by now. You might not think that he has found a way to oppose the Divine Gear, but I disagree."

"What do you mean, Your Highness?"

"I believe that your worst-case scenario should consider the possibility that Link has a way to oppose the power of the Divine Gear. We need to come up with a contingency for the event in which the Divine Gear is no longer effective," the young girl said. Her voice was sharp, just like the yellowbirds in the south Girvent Forest.

Lawndale agreed with her. He said in a low voice, "Teacher, perhaps we ought to prepare for that possibility too."

Aymons pondered over it for a moment before nodding. "Your Highness, do you have any suggestions?"

"Me? Nope, I'll just be watching from the back later on. Romand, aren't you the chair of the Silver Moon council? I don't see you saying anything. Aren't you going to come up with some spell to counter Link?"

Romand coughed lightly and said, "Well, I do have some spells prepared. We have re-discovered a lost spell known as the Moon of Annihilation. This spell requires 50 Level-5 Magicians to work together, and it can unleash power equivalent to a Level-11 Legendary spell. I believe that even if the opponent wants to render the Divine Gear ineffective, they would have to rely on a magic spell formation. This spell can destroy the spell formation that the enemy creates."

"That's not bad. At least you haven't been a waste of space," The black-haired girl smiled as she clapped her hands. Then, she said, "Well, I don't have any more ideas. Please do continue, I'll just watch on from the side."

Aymons continued the discussion.

After listening for a while, the black-haired girl got bored. She yawned and said to a black shadow beside her, "Noya, how's your coordination with the Dark Elf assassins?"

This black shadow was naturally very respectful towards the girl. He saluted before saying, "Your Highness, it's pathetic. The Dark Elves are too weak, none of them are higher than Level-7. If we were supposed to infiltrate the fortress to take Link out, they would not even serve as cannon fodder. They would only alert the enemy and make my job difficult."

"Wouldn't you have to go on your own then?" The black-haired girl opened her mouth in shock, seemingly worried.

"Your Highness, don't worry. An assassin is strongest when he is alone. I'm fine on my own. Once the battle starts, Link won't last more than half an hour," Noya said.

"Ha, you're that confident." The black girl nodded her head. "But don't underestimate him. He just killed Misamier. Here, take this, my father wanted me to give it to you."

The girl handed a skull-shaped ring to Noya.

Noya looked at it and then immediately fell to the grounds. His voice trembled as he said, "Your Highness, this is too precious, I... I..."

"What?! Quickly take it. My father wanted me to give this to you. You're only allowed to succeed, not allowed to fail. If you do, you know what will happen."

Noya received the ring with two hands and said, "If I had this Oath Ring and still failed, I wouldn't have the face to meet the lord anymore."

If Link saw this ring, he would immediately be shocked. In the game, this was the description of the ring.

Oath Ring

Level: Legendary

Effect 1: After equipping this ring, the user will exist in a different dimension. Except for the moment when attacking, the user will not be affected by any other attacks.

Effect 2: User can create two illusory clones which can switch positions with the user at any time.

(Note: Any assassin that possesses this will become the greatest nightmare of the living.)

This ring was almost a Legendary item for assassins. How could Noya not be moved?

He slowly put on the ring and felt a thin membrane form around his body. His body turned half illusory and half real, as though he were a floating cloud of gas.

Meanwhile, Aymons and the rest had completed their discussion. They determined that the time of attack would be late at night on the next day.

Aymons declared loudly, "Everyone, please remember that we are not fighting alone. On the southern edge of the Norton Kingdom are our allied forces. I just received news that the Kingdom of Delonga have started their attack on the Girvent Forest. The news will reach the humans in the Orida Fortress soon. I'm sure the news will throw them into chaos. So for the upcoming battle, we SHALL be victorious."

## 330. Then Dont Use Me in the Future!

Returning to the Mage Tower from the commanding hall, Link's spirits were low. On the way back, he suddenly saw a scout run hurriedly.

The man's expression was anxious, and his footsteps were messy. His clothing was covered in dust and mud. He ran past Link, snaked through the generals leaving, and sprinted straight towards the hall.

Only the top officials could enter the hall. Seeing the strange scout run in, everyone felt that something was wrong. They all stopped and looked over.

Link had a bad feeling too. He halted and waited for Duke Abel to call them to reconvene. But strangely, that didn't happen.

After the scout entered the citadel, he didn't reappear. The hall was as calm as before as if nothing had happened.

Seeing this, the generals found it weird, but they soon departed. They were all busy; at the critical point before the final battle, there was much to do.

Link didn't leave. Not only that, he even walked over.

His vision was shockingly good now. The scout's clothing was horribly dirty, but he could still vaguely see the emblem on it. It was a roaring golden lion.

Only soldiers of the Hot Springs City could wear the golden lion. This meant that the messenger came from the capital city. From the looks of him, the capital was most likely in trouble.

Link returned to the hall. It was still organized with the officers taking care of matters orderly. Nothing seemed to have happened.

However, Link didn't see Duke Abel. The duke had still been sitting when Link left earlier.

He pulled an officer over and asked, "Where's the duke?"

Seeing that it was Link, the officer pointed at the stairs. "He went to the library."

"Oh, write it down that I'm going to visit him now."

It was the army's rule that solo meetings with the general must be recorded. In the proper process, a message would be sent after the recording, and one could visit the general after being given permission. Link obviously didn't need that.

He strode upstairs and to the duke's library. He knocked lightly.

"I'm busy!" the duke's voice traveled from the room. He sounded normal, but Link could hear the anxiety.

I'm afraid something has really happened.

Using the Magician's Hand, Link opened the lock and pushed the door open.

There were two people inside the room. One was the messenger from earlier. He was now shoveling food into his mouth from the small table in the corner; he was clearly famished. The duke sat before a long table, gaping at a letter covered in sweat and blood.

Click. Link closed the door.

"Did something happen to the capital?" he asked. "Let me guess, did Delonga attack suddenly? Did their army pass through the Girvent Forest, going straight to the Hot Springs City?"

At least 10,000 soldiers were always positioned at the Hot Springs City. It wasn't easy to conquer, so Link wasn't too worried.

The duke let out a long sigh and sagged in his seat.

At that time, the scout reached at the wine on the table and was about to drink. Link used the Magician's Hand to steal the cup and add in a drowsiness spell. The man was already exhausted. With the spell, he fell asleep without a sound.

Magic flashed on his hand and the wine bottle dissolved into sand. "There's no use in killing a loyal messenger to hide news," Link said. "Let him sleep. When he wakes up, he'll forget everything."

The duke looked at the sky with lifeless eyes. "Master Link," he muttered, "the situation is worse than you think. When the messenger departed, Hot Springs City's outer walls were already breached. Everyone is holding down the inner city. Otherwise, His Majesty wouldn't send a letter asking for reinforcements."

He passed the letter to Link, who accepted it with the Magician's Hand. Scanning it, his pupils constited. "Dark Magician Andrew and the Syndicate. This is indeed a crisis."

Duke Abel glanced at Link and sighed. "What should I do? Abandon Orida and go south to help? No, I can't do that!"

If the Orida Fortress was breached by the Dark Army, it would be a catastrophe for the entire human world. The Dark Army would rush southward like a flood. Everyone in their path would die.

Furthermore, sending reinforcements now would be too late. He could only cover up the news by trying to kill the messenger.

This thin piece of paper held such heavyweight.

Link slowly placed the letter on the table. "The final battle is inescapable, and no problems should occur. Sorry for butting in."

With that, white light glowed around Link. He disappeared from the library and returned to the Mage Tower.

In the library, Duke Abel lit a flame and burned the letter. Then he wiped his face, wiping away all anxiety and frustrations. When he lowered his hand, the mighty general had returned.

Back in the Mage Tower, Link felt inexplicably anxious.

The world was riddled with pores and darkness was seeping in from every crack. He'd already done his best, but danger was still looming, even getting worse.

If the Hot Springs City was attacked, what about the East Cove Magic Academy? What about Ferde? Will Celine be okay? The thoughts poured into Link's mind, almost driving him crazy.

"Master, what's wrong?" Nana's crisp voice rang out, shocking Link.

Oh no, my mind is a mess. I still have to lead the magic seal! I can't be a mess!

His library was at the top level of the Mage Tower and included a one-way glass. He could see the Black Forest from here.

Pulling a chair over, Link forced him to sit down and stare quietly at the Black Forest without moving. Time passed slowly. His chaotic thoughts lessened, and finally, he let out a long breath.

I was being impatient. There are many Mage Towers in the Ferde Wilderness. There are many strong fighters, and Celine's gun is powerful too. I left her a lot of bullets. Andrew is only Level-7. If he dares go, a few bullets will end him...

Thinking like that, Link gradually calmed down.

Just then, a message appeared in his vision. It was a mission.

Activate Mission: Orida Fortress

Mission Description: Guard the Orida Fortress against the Dark Army

Mission Reward One: 300 Omni Points

Mission Reward Two: One Full Replenishment Crystal (Level-10)

Full Replenishment Crystal

Legendary Composite Part

Effect: This item can replenish any drained Legendary weapon

Seeing this, Link got an idea. He glanced at the Storm Lord sword at his waist, and the sword's stats appeared.

Abstruse Storm—Lord of Thunder—Silent World

Upper Order Legendary

Current State: 1/100 (drained)

The Replenishment Crystal could definitely recharge this sword. However, the level was too low. It probably couldn't fully charge it but could still help a little.

A pity, such a pity. It would be great if I could use the sword during this battle... No, the sword spirit probably won't let me use it. Ah, how annoying.

Just as he was feeling sad, the sword spirit's voice rang out in Link's mind. "Who said I wouldn't let you use me? Haven't you been using me all this time?"

Link shrugged. That counts? Every sword can do that. I was just using you for the convenience.

Then don't use me in the future!

Link felt a change and quickly said, I'm sorry. I really have been using you. With that, Link thought back to his words and still felt something was wrong.

"Okay, fine. I forgive you. I just don't have enough energy right now... Your Dragon Power should be able to recharge me, but it's not very efficient. If you start charging now, I should recover some strength by tomorrow. By then, I'll at least be stronger than your Burning Wrath of Heavens wand."

Really? Link was overjoyed.

"Hurry up." The sword spirit scoffed.

Link's happiness only lasted for a bit. He quickly thought of another problem. I don't know any lightning spells. It won't be effective even if I recharge you.

The sword used wind and lightning strength. Link didn't know either of them.

The sword spirit was quiet as if thinking of something. After ten seconds, it said, "Look at my hilt. Do you see the dark red rune?"

Yes, Link said.

"Drip your blood onto it."

What does that mean?

"If you want to use me, put your blood in!" The sword spirit wouldn't explain.

Link did as told and sliced his finger on the blade. Blood flowed out, and he put a drop on the rune. Strangely, the blood was originally bright red, but the moment it touched the rune, it turned into a translucent drop of water. All redness was absorbed by the sword.

The next moment, Link felt the sword start to vibrate with crisp clinks. Then a spider web of cracks appeared on the body of the sword.

"Hurry, your strength! I need your strength!" The sword spirit's voice was urgent.

Link added in Dragon Power without hesitation. His upper limit was 6900 and was in mid-Level-8. He was now the strongest of the Orida Fortress.

However, nothing happened when he poured the power into the Storm Lord sword. Like mud falling into the sea, it just disappeared. Link's Dragon Power was drained almost instantly.

More and more cracks appeared on the sword. Finally, there was a crack sound, and the sword turned into countless shards. But strangely enough, the pieces didn't fly away. A crystal-red connected each piece. After a moment of stillness, the pieces grouped back together.

Clink, clank. Crisp sounds came continuously as the sword quickly changed.

"Power, power!" the spirit cried.

Link's Dragon Power recovery rate was now 18 points per second. He poured the power in as soon as it regenerated.

"Too slow, too slow. I need more, more!" the spirit yelled.

Link's recovery rate was related to the energy in the environment. If he wanted to recover faster, he needed somewhere with higher energy. What place had the most energy?

The Azzaro Volcano? It was 400 miles from the fortress, and Link quickly crossed out that option.

The Elemental Pool? No, his body rejected the elements. Those in the Elemental Pool stayed far away from him.

As he thought, Link suddenly looked up. The weather was great today, and the sun was out... Link immediately ran to the rooftop of the Mage Tower. He cast a spell and released a huge Spatial Sphere.

The sphere was more than 300 feet wide. Inside it, the frequency was only slightly warped but it acted like a huge lens, focusing all the sunlight directly on Link.

He felt heat on him, and his clothing quickly burned to crisp. It was alright; his body was fine.

Checking his recovery rate, he discovered it was now 64 points per second while he used up five per second to maintain the Spatial Sphere. Overall, the recovery rate was still three times higher than before.

Is it enough? Link asked.

"I guess."

The sword regrouped bit by bit. After two whole hours, Link put in a total of 450,000 Dragon Power points to complete the sword.

The shape was different. The groove in the center was gone, and dark red scales appeared on the surface, looking like dragon scales. The blade was now a transparent crystal red. The body was wide, and the blade was arced. The cross-guard was a Red Dragon with wings unfurled. The hilt was made up of two entwined dragon tails. It was also covered in fine scales and was smooth to the touch.

Link checked the sword's stats. It was completely different from the Storm Lord sword; even the name had changed. At closer inspection, his eyes flew wide open. It was made just for him!

## 331. The Battle Begins

## 332. The Wolf Enters the Tigers Den

Zip. A second later, Noya soundlessly teleported to the base of the city wall.

The battle had only gone on for less than a minute, but the center of the battlefield was filled with gore, blood, broken bones and dead bodies.

As the blood accumulated on the ground, it formed streams of blood. The stench of blood and gore filled the air thickly, like a fog that would not disperse.

The battlefield was filled with the sounds of killing, screaming, shouting, as all sorts of lethal attacks were unleashed. Within half a second of Noya's appearance, two musket shots and five arrows flew towards where he stood. These weren't aimed at him but just happened to fly past him.

It was a brutal scene.

Noya didn't tarry long. Zip. He quickly jumped to a one-eyed mountain demon's back and then jumped off again, crossing over 600 feet to arrive at the second city wall.

Once again, he immediately moved from where he landed, not giving the surrounding soldiers the chance to notice him. When he reappeared again, he was only 300 feet from the Magic Tower.

It was in this manner that he penetrated Orida Fortress. In the midst of the chaos, no one would notice a vaguely visible shadow.

Being separated by a mere 300 feet, Noya could see the low wall that surrounded the Magic Tower. The wall was only 9 feet tall, and within it could be seen a splendorous divine light. The divine light was blinding, making it impossible for him to jump in as quickly as he did before.

He had no idea what he would find within the walls and had no choice but to proceed cautiously.

Thirty feet out from the wall, the Silver-white shi

Of course, if it were one-on-one, he would not even spare this character a glance. He could kill him in an instant. However, here on the battlefield, these types of Warriors could be very troublesome. They were on the alert and could discover his traces. Once he was spotted, he would be tangled up fighting with the Warriors and waste a lot of time.

He was on a stit time limit and had no time to waste.

Noya adjusted his angle of approach, steering clear from the Level-8 Warrior. He sped towards the low wall of the Magic Tower.

Suddenly, one of the Level-7 shi

Boom! A resounding clang sounded out. All the shi

At this point, Noya had yet to activate the power of the Oath ring. Although the ring's powers could be constantly active, it had a weakness. In the corporeal state, Noya's vision would be limited. Things would appear blurry and dark, and right now, he needed to be able to see what was going on within the walls.

However, he had underestimated these shi

Time was tight. He had no other choice but to quickly break through.

Adjusting his angle, he increased his speed. An instant later, he stepped onto a shi

shi

Watching as Noya was about to jump over the walls, the Level-7 Warrior that discovered him immediately shouted, "Hold it!"

He dashed towards Noya, flinging his shi

"Pitiful strength," Noya laughed coldly. His body vanished, and he reappeared beside the dashi

Crash. The rest of the Warriors were mostly around Level-4. As the heavy corpse was thrown into their way, it caused them to trip over, crushi

Noya made use of this opposing force to flip himself over the yard wall, stepping into the sacred area inside the walls.

Hisss. The demonic energy on his body clashed with the divine light, causing green smoke to rise up, further blocking Noya's vision.

"damn it, this divine light!" Noya squinted his eyes, peering at the area in front of him. There were two groups of people. One group was made of piss who were knelt on the ground, praying. The other group was made of High Elves, and this group was the one responsible for the deep vortex in the sky.

Noya quickly identified his target. He was standing right in the middle of all the High Elves, and his body shone with blinding light. His body emanated strong energy vibrations.

It's him! Noya thought. He immediately activated the Oath ring.

At this instant, he felt three forces from different directions targeting him. One came from directly behind. This was the Level-8 Warrior. One was beside him, rapidly approaching. Out of the corner of his eye, he recognized that it was a magic puppet, precisely Link's puppet Nana. This proved that the human in the middle of the formation was Link.

The last threat came from the human priest. In the air, the divine light formed a corporeal blade that flew straight towards him.

Hehe, the reaction is pretty fast, but it's too late. Noya laughed coldly. The Oath ring's effect was about to be activated. He knew that the opponent's attacks could no longer hit him. He was safe.

However, just when this thought flashed through his head, a dreadful sound came from behind him. Then, the whole courtyard lit up in a flash. It was lightning!

The speed of the lightning was instantaneous, hitting him just before he turned fully corporeal.

This attack was completely out of Noya's expectations. He felt his body grow numb as the energy entered his body. If he didn't immediately deal with it, it could potentially result in permanent injuries.

Noya's heart clenched up. He immediately stopped the Oath ring's activation, using his power to defend against the invasion of the lightning.

Noya was a Level-9 assassin. The lightning was a Level-8 spell. It took him little effort to disperse the energy of it. However, with this short delay, the sword formed from divine light had arrived. This spell had him completely locked down. This was a divine spell that would definitely injure him if he was hit.

Getting injured in a place like this, surrounded by many strong enemies was almost synonymous with dying.

Without even hesitating, Noya drew out his dagger and stabbed towards the divine light sword.

Boom. The divine light sword was destroyed by his attack and had no chance to injure him. However, the trade-off was that his movements were once again halted.

Now, Nana had reached him. In one hand, she held a sword, in the other, she held a dagger.

The sword arrived first, stabbing towards his heart. Noya laughed coldly. The speed is nothing to scoff at, but the technique is pathetic. A puppet can only do so much.

The Dark Elves had talked so much about this magic puppet, elevating its status to a war God. They even said that the previous user of the Divine Gear was killed by this magic puppet, and as a result, Noya was extremely wary of this puppet. However, after exchanging blows with the puppet once, he immediately felt that the Dark Elves were trash

Noya turned his body slightly, avoiding the sword edge by a hair. At the same time, his right hand struck out with the dagger, stabbing towards the magic puppet's breast.

Clang. Unexpectedly, his dagger clashed with the opponent's dagger and was blocked. Even more shocking, this powerful dagger which had accompanied him for hundreds of years was actually splitito half by the opponent's dagger.

damn it! Is this the powerful dagger that Aymons was talking about? Noya had heard about this dagger from Aymons. However, Aymons had not been clear about what actually happened. He said that the magic puppet used the dagger to break through the Divine Gear's defenses. Noya assumed that the puppet had used a special skill, and only now that he had clashed with the puppet, it wasn't the puppet's skill that was exceptional. No, it was the dagger in her hand that was special!

My dagger was constructed from Enchanted Gold and is extremely durable. If the dagger was just shattered, so be it. But how could the dagger be so cleanly splitito half?!

Noya could not gauge how strong this dagger was. Furthermore, the Level-8 Warrior was approaching from behind. He had wasted eight seconds here and really could not afford to waste any more time.

He speedily retreated backwards, but suddenly turned his body, narrowly avoiding the Level-8 Warrior's lightning-quick attacks. Then, he activated the Oath ring, turning his body into the translucent corporeal form.

Although his main dagger had been destroyed, he still had a secondary dagger in his left hand. It was more than enough to kill a Magician!

He approached rapidly towards Link who stood at the center of the magic formation.

"Stop right there!" Nana shouted. She chased after Noya, dashi

Immediately, the priest condensed the divine lightito a divine shi

Hehe, I'm now invincible, your attacks won't even hurt me... Wait! This dagger is unnatural!

He was rejoicing earlier, but suddenly felt a cold, sharp pain in his back. How could this be?! Had he already entered a corporeal state?

What in the devil is this thing?!

In that instant, with so many things running through his mind, the anxious Noya could barely react in time. He desperately activated the Oath ring's cloning ability. His body immediately multiplied into three bodies. One was still in the original spot; another was rushi

It was at this moment that Noya felt fear blossoming in his heart.

In the corporeal state granted by the Oath ring, Noya's vision was limited, and he did not notice that at some point, Link had changed from using the wand which was sustaining the deep blue vortex in the sky and was now holding a magic sword in his hand.

In all honesty, even if Noya had seen Link change his weapon, he would not pay much attention anyway. So what if a Magician was holding a sword? Could the sword hurt him in his corporeal state? Furthermore, even if the opponent's magic was strong, it still could not injure him in time!

## 333. The Sacrifice of My Soul was Meaningless

Under the effect of the Oath Ring, Noyo's body separated into three. One body easily passed through the Sacred Light Wall and charged at Link.

Link immediately felt a shred of unrest appearing in the Mana surging into him. The Magicians in the magic seal were disturbed, affecting their spells.

"Steady! Keep steady! Don't worry about me!" Link muttered. He used Dragon Power to heighten his voice. It wasn't loud but still traveled clearly to each Magician's ear.

On the other side, seeing the Sacred Light Wall lose effectiveness, an archbishop's expression suddenly grew solemn. He and the other 11 had been kneeling in a circle, praying around the pope's body. Now, he stood up and walked towards the magic seal alone.

The other cardinals didn't move, but they all sighed simultaneously as if knowing his choice.

The cardinal prayed as he walked.

"Brilliant Lord, I am willing to burn my soul and sacrifice my all in exchange for your light to protect these mortals. Halo of Sacrifice!"

Halo of Sacrifice

Divine Spell

Effect: The halo's range reaches 150 feet. Within the protection of the halo, all injuries of the targets are transferred to the spell-caster until the spell-caster dies. If the soul is used as the cost, the spellcaster's soul will be destroyed after the spell.

(Note: There must be something in this world that deserves you to sacrifice everything for!)

When the last word was uttered, the benevolent white-haired archbishop stopped. He clasped his hands before his chest, head lowered and body hunched over. Then, golden flames burst from his body. These flames formed a pair of golden wings on his back. They grew quickly until they enveloped the entire magic seal like a mother bird protecting its nest.

Rings of golden runes circled the Magicians inside the magic seal.

Noyo had just arrived beside a Magician. He stabbed at the man with his dagger. The golden runes flowed over, blocking the hit. Not convinced, Noyo stabbed harder. The dagger sunk in slowly but more and more runes appeared before the tip. The resistance grew as well.

I can break through it, but I don't have time! Noyo immediately gave up on this hit and pulled his dagger back. Ignoring these regular Magicians, he ran towards Link.

At the same time, a wound slowly opened on the archbishop's body.

He still stood there, unmoving. His brows didn't even knit. Sacred power surged towards him, healing the fatal wound for him.

Noyo quickly arrived beside Link. His hand moved, and the dagger shot towards Link's back like lightning. He was still in a half-dimensional state.

He planned to turn solid the moment the dagger touched Link. At that time, he would be unstoppable.

That was what he planned, so that was what he did.

But then, there was a cling. His dagger was blocked by the sword in Link's hand. It happened the moment he turned solid!

Link didn't even move, but the body of his sword blocked the dagger perfectly. The dagger's tip was less than three millimeters from the back of his head!

That moment, Link activated the Dragon King's Fury magic sword. His strength multiplied tenfold, and he was five times faster. In two seconds, his physique was comparable to this demon assassin and might even be stronger.

Noyo ignored his shock. Demon power seeped from the dagger instinctively, and he continued attacking.

Golden runes flowed over—the Halo of Sacrifice. This flow of light once again blocked Noyo's demon power and saved Link's life. The next moment, Link's sword moved and forced Noyo's dagger aside.

I don't believe a Magician knows swordsmanshi

Link maintained the Soul Slalom while blocking Noyo's attacks.

Cling, clang, bang. There were various sounds and waves of power rippled. Shockwaves spread in all directions before being blocked by the Halo of Sacrifice again.

The Magicians in the magic seal were unharmed but more and more wounds appeared on the archbishop. There were too many for the sacred power to heal.

He still stood there, praying without moving. His body was covered in thousands of wounds, but he still didn't move.

In one second, Noyo stabbed Link 18 times. Other than the first move that was like a sneak attack, the other attacks were no threat to Link. His sword was like a seamless shi

"This is impossible!" Noyo didn't know how to describe his feeling. He wanted to go crazy. As an assassin, he was beaten by a Magician in martial arts. He'd never experienced anything like this in his 300 years alive!

"How is this possible?!" Kanorse ran over to help. Seeing this, he was shocked too.

He could tell that Link was using basic moves—each move was a basic technique. But these were somehow able to block all the assassin's attacks. He remembered that Link had just started learning swordsmanshi

By then, Nana had already defeated one of Noyo's avatars. She rushed towards Link, ready to attack the demon from the back.

After half a second, Noyo realized that he couldn't defeat this damned Magician's sword with a simple dagger attack. The magic puppet was coming behind him too. He must use all his power!

Battle Skill: Thousand Apparition Attack!

Noyo's body suddenly turned into a cloud of black smoke. Hundreds of overlapping figures appeared in the smoke. They surrounded Link and each one stabbed at him. Noyo was too fast, and there were too many apparitions. It was impossible to distinguish real from fake!

But almost at the same time, there was a soft pop. A Spatial Sphere exploded beside Link.

Restraint!

There were no flaws in the defense of Noyo's battle skill. However, there was a momentary opening while attacking. This gave Link the time to multitask and cast a spell.

Link's Spatial Sphere was at Level-8 by itself. With the magic sword's strengthening, its power was multiplied by seven. It reached the pinnacle of Level-8, almost at Level-9. Under this powerful spell's restraint, Noyo slowed down.

His battle skill was an instantaneous burst of indistinguishable attacks. Now, Link stretched this "instantaneous burst" to half a second, making it ineffective!

Link must maintain the Soul Slalom. He couldn't investigate which was Noyo and which were apparitions, but he had half a second to try each one.

The magic sword sliced past the apparitions. Sizzles sounded in the air, and the apparitions popped like bubbles one by one.

At the 36th one, Link hit a solid object.

Clang! Link found Noyo's true body. There was only half a second left for the Dragon King's Fury magic sword. He used all his strength and stabbed.

Huh? Noyo broke free from the spatial restraint at the same time and saw Link's sword. Panicked, he raised his dagger to block it.

Clang! Link's sword had time to build up and power burst from it completely. Noyo had reacted hurriedly and couldn't block it. He was thrown backwards. The apparitions surrounding him disappeared.

Whoosh. Nana hurried over, wrapped in wind. She was right behind Noyo and reached forward with her dagger. With a squelch, Noyo was stabbed through.

"Oh, ah!" Noyo's cry of pain was short. Then he transformed into smoke and disappeared.

"Where'd he go?" Nana asked in confusion.

"Over there. He's hurt!" Link pointed towards the wall. After seeing Noyo splitito three, he realized what gear the demon used. Now that the stabbed body disappeared like smoke, it confirmed Link's guess.

The Oath Ring was a sacred ring of assassins. Now, two of the three bodies were killed. If the last one was defeated, the assassin would be truly dead.

Without needing Link to speak further, Nana turned around and chased after the third body. Kanorse did the same.

At that moment, the archbishop couldn't hold on anymore. He paid his soul to block two attacks from Noyo, saving Link and another Magician. After that, he bore all the shockwaves from the battle for the Magicians in the magic seal. His body was battered now.

The light around him disappeared. With a soft whoosh, he dissolved into a pile of white sand and scattered on the ground.

Seeing this, Link sighed, his heart feeling heavy. "Thank you," he whispered.

Noyo was heavily injured too. His speed of escape was twice as slow. Nana quickly caught up with her extreme speed. Noyo was quite skilled in swordsmanshi

Kanorse caught up soon after. Two against one, Kanorse beheaded the demon after a few rounds!

At this time, the Godly technique had already lasted for more than a minute. The deep blue whirlpool remained in the sky. Aymons' dark Godly technique was ineffective.

During his final moments, he stared at the deep blue Soul Slalom and sighed. "Ah, the sacrifice of my soul was meaningless!"

As soon as he finished, the light on his body disappeared as well. His body caved in. The Divine Gear that had transformed into a giant snake now returned to a snake-headed whip.

The whip flickered between real and apparition then vanished with a pop!

The Dark Serpent had existed long enough in Firuman and was already about to be forced out. The dark Godly technique was the straw that broke the camel's back.

After it disappeared, the dark vortex in the sky scattered. A beam of sacred light shone through again.

On the square, all Magicians were exhausted. They'd practically squeezed their bodies dry for Mana. After the Godly technique disappeared, all the Magicians collapsed. Other than Link and Milda, the others fell unconscious.

Milda looked withered as well. Her forehead was covered in sweat, and her starry eyes were dull. She sat on the ground listlessly and looked blankly at Link. "Did we succeed?"

Link was in the best state, but he looked exhausted too. He still had 3000 Dragon Power points and was regenerating at 20 points per second. He nodded. "Yes, we succeeded."

"Good, good." Milda's eyes closed and she fell asleep on the ground.

In the Black Forest, the black-haired girl watched everything and sighed with knitted brows. "Ah, so boring. Not fun at all!"

However, even though all tactics to reduce loss had failed, the Dark Army still had a great advantage in the battle. The girl gathered her patience to continue watching.

The Light Army had won in the fight of the Godly technique, but on the battlefield, they were in danger. The fight was burning white-hot. Hundreds of lives were lost every second.

Not even five seconds after the Soul Slalom disappeared, there was a giant boom. The outer wall of the Orida Fortress was 300 feet tall, 150 feet thick, and had been reinforced countless times. Now, a hole was created by the last One-eyed Mountain Demon.

It was killed immediately after but the wall was breached!

The Dark Army poured through the opening.

## 334. Millions of People

"Report! Report! The airshi

A piercing shriek blasted through the air as the final airshi

Boom! Immediately after, the magic crystal that was powering the airshi

The ten or so Winged Howlers that were flying away from the wreckage were instantaneously engulfed by the smoke, perishi

Looking around, the dead bodies of the Dark Army numbered at least over a thousand. However, that was but a slight dent in the Dark Army's forces. At the fortress entrance, the Dark Army was like a flood of black, surging towards the fort.

There were 30,000 people posted on the first wall. At this moment, there were only 8,000 left. The rest had fallen in battle.

"Arrows!"

"Fire!"

"Block them! Shoot down those winged demons!"

From the second wall, the officers were constantly shouting instructions, making the battlefield sound very chaotic. Everyone who could fight was fighting, and the battlefield was just one big mess.

As the overall commander of the Light Army, Duke Abel no longer had any control over the direction of battle.

Boom! Whoosh

Spells were constantly exploding around. The second wall was also armed with magic cannons as well as a few low-level Battle Magicians. The magic spells rained down on the battlefield.

Some of them were effective, others merely grazed the demons and ghouls, unable to inflict any serious injuries. Although the Divine Gear had disappeared, the ghouls were still very powerful. Their life-force was tremendous, and until now, there were still 20,000 of them left.

As for the high-level demons, there were also many of them left. Three hundred demons still lived, from an initial count of 500. Every single one of them was at least Level-7 in strength. They swept through the battlefields, and no one was able to stop them.

Boom, boom, boom!

These were the Fordor Flaming Demons assaulting the fortress gates. Gradually, the anti-magic gates over a meter thick were slowly changing shape.

Screech! A Winged Howler swooped down from the sky onto the fortress walls, screeching and swinging around a broadsword that blazed with dark demonic fire. Wherever it went, no one could block him.

Fortunately, because of the fighting with the Yabba airshi

"Shoot! Shoot them down!"

Facing the threat of the Winged Howlers, the only means to deal with them were to use the Dragon Ballistae and the Yabba musketeers to attack from afar.

This was only somewhat effective, but unfortunately, the demons were too strong. Especially for those demons that were over 9 feet long, their wings were extremely tough and could act like two giant shi

The Winged Howlers rapidly cleared out a space on the fortress walls, enabling the ghouls and demons below to climb up and find their footing to battle.

The Light Army was rapidly losing the advantage in the battle. Even worse, the casualty rate among the Light and Dark armies were roughly equal. However, in this defensive battle, adding up all the Yabbas and dwarves, the total army was only 80,000 strong.

Meanwhile, the Dark Army had 80,000 elves, over 500 high-level demons as well as numerous low-level demons which numbered over 90,000. This was almost twice the size of the Light Army, and furthermore, they were stronger too.

If the casualty rate kept up this pace, eventually, the Light Army would be completely wiped out, handing the victory to the Dark Army. Orida Fortress would soon be overrun!

In a small tower behind the wall, Duke Abel and the Dwarven King of the Mountains, Riel, were gathered. As for the the Yabba airshi

Dwarf King Riel surveyed the top of the city wall, his eyes bloodshot. In his opinion, it was only a matter of time before the second wall was breached too.

"Ahhh! Kill them!"

"Save us!"

As all sorts of sounds of fighting reached the tower, Dwarf King Riel exhaled slowly. He said, "Duke, I can't sit by any longer. I'm going to fight!"

He was a Level-7 Warrior and was ranked amongst the ten strongest of the dwarven race. His weapon of choice was two war hammers. Without waiting for Duke Abel's reply, he dashed out of the tower, shouting in rage, "My Warriors! Great Hammer Riel is coming!"

As he shouted, he dashed towards a Winged Howler. His war hammer shown with yellow light as he smashed it towards the demon.

Although the dwarves were a short race, their bodies were thick and strong, and their life force was immense. Not only that, they had immense strength. Dwarf King Riel ducked to avoid a Winged Howler's swipe of the wing and immediately arrived in front of the demon. He swung his hammer towards the demon's kneecap.

Smash

Dwarf King Riel dashed onto the demon's body, swinging his war hammers. The hammers fell onto the demon's head like rain, and under three seconds of attack, the demon's head was smashed into a paste.

He immediately dashed towards another Winged Howler. This time, he ran into a Level-8 demon.

His opponent was fast and had long since noticed him approaching. It swiped its wings, blowing the ten human Warriors surrounding it away. It then drew out a sword knocking aside a ballista arrow aside. Now, it turned to face Dwarf King Riel, dashi

"Die, dwarf!"

Even though he had not reached the Dwarf King, the force of the wind from his attack buffeted Dwarf King Riel, making Riel unable to open his eyes. The thick demonic energy was suffocating. Against this speed and strength, Dwarf King Riel had no way to defend or dodge.

Is this it? Dwarf King Riel rubbed his red nose. He didn't even attempt to dodge, but rushed forward, roaring, "Let's go down together!"

However, he still underestimated the strength of a Level-8 demon. With a mere wave of his sword, the demon cut off Dwarf King Riel's path. Then, with a second wave, the sword continued slashi

"Die together? Dream on!" The demon laughed.

The demon's sword was six feet long, ten inches wide, and it blazed with dark demonic fire. Getting cut by it would unobtedly result in one turning into a meat paste.

Looks like this is the end. Dwarf King Riel sighed. In the end, all he could do was to raise his hammer and block in front of him.

Bam! Suddenly Dwarf King Riel's saw a flash in the corner of his eye. Immediately after that, a streak of lightning struck into the Winged Howler.

The electricity was terrifying, and it immediately paralyzed the demon.

Reinforcements? Dwarf King Riel's heart suddenly lit up with hope. He turned to look and saw a human Warrior wearing a Silver-White battle outfit. He held a one-handed sword in his hand which sparked with electricity and was dashi

"Dawn Swordsman Kanorse!" Dwarf King Riel instantly recognized the figure.

Kanorse also recognized him. He laughed. "Commander, leave this demon to me!"

In the midst of his laughter, Kanorse dashed forward, appearing beside the Level-8 demon.

Crackle. The electricity flashed, and the demon who had just regained feeling in his limbs was paralyzed once again. Kanorse slashed out with his sword, cutting off the demon's legs.

The demon lost its balance and knelt down on the floor, exposing his neck. Kanorse swung his long sword, decapitating the demon.

He did not stop after slaying the demon but immediately went to seek out another demon on the fortress wall.

The Dwarf King looked at him, mouth gaping. "The Dawn Swordsman eh. Truly powerful!"

Kanorse was the first to arrive at the battlefield. After him was Nana, followed by 2,000 Silver-White shi

These were all elites of the kingdom, and their addition to the battlefield caused the tides of battle to swing.

Nana did not act on her own. It was as though she received some order, and she followed closely behind Kanorse, killing the demons that escaped him.

Both of them were top experts. Although they were cooperating for the first time, after killing about ten demons, their cooperation started to improve. As they fought their way towards the walls, demons fell to their swords. None could stand in their way. From afar, they looked like they were splitting the waves.

Once the Dawn Swordsman arrived at the scene, the human soldiers received a boost in morale. The previously depressing atmosphere started to improve rapidly.

However, this was just the last burst of strength before death.

Those who understood the flow of battle knew that the addition of Kanorse and the Silver-White shi

In the tower behind the fort, Duke Abel was also excited. However, just then, a calm voice reached his ears. "Duke, at this rate, we are sure to lose."

The duke turned his head and saw Link walking in.

Link took five minutes to walk here from the top of the fort. In this five minutes, Link recovered 3000 Dragon Power points. The Dragon Power within him was almost full again, and under the influence of the pure Dragon Power, the fatigue he felt from operating the magic formation had also disappeared.

Duke Abel did not doubt Link's words for a second. In truth, he had also realized subconsciously that the fortress would eventually fall.

"Sir, what should we do?"

Link had a plan in mind. "We only have about 15,000 men left. These are all precious seeds among our Warriors. We must keep our losses to the minimum. Importantly, Kanorse, Dwarf King Riel, and the outstanding talents must survive... Right now, let's have everyone begin to retreatito the fortress to the Magic Tower."

Link decided to use the area of effect of the Dragon King's Wrath magic sword and his newly found swordsmanshi

Of course, the reason he dared to do this was because the Dark Army had no more experts that could single-handedly rock the battlefield. All the high-level Magicians had retreated, and no one could hinder him. With his boundless Dragon Power, he essentially had unlimited energy.

He was probably the strongest on the battlefield right now!

"Sir..." Duke Abel could not quite believe his ears.

"Trust me. Right now, the Dark Army is all gathered on the fields, and I have a magic spell, a very powerful spell that can deal with them. If our soldiers are mixed in, they will unobtedly get caught up in the attack."

At this point, Duke Abel did not raise any further disagreements. He said, "I understand. We will start the retreat now."

Then, he turned to his deputy, "Go, sound the horn, order the retreat."

Half a minute late, Hoorrrnnnn, a sharp horn blasted through the air. This was the signal for retreating. The soldiers on the wall did not know what was going on, but this was a military order. They immediately started pulling back from the city wall.

"Quick! Quick! Retreatito the fortress!" An officer shouted, directing the troops.

In the Black Forest, Lawndale smelled that something was off. "What's going on? They could clearly defend the fort; why would they retreat now?"

The black-haired girl said doubtfully, "Could they be preparing to release another powerful spell? But their Magicians must be spent from dealing with the Dark Serpent, aren't they?"

When the Dark Elves' Silver Moon Council high-level Magicians used the Legendary magic spell, the 100 of them who participated in the spell were all drained.

Even if the opponents had talented High Elf Magicians, they were dealing with a Divine Gear. The drain on them would definitely be larger. How could they possibly have the strength to release another powerful spell now?

She could not understand. Neither could Lawndale.

Lawndale said, "If they want to retreat now, then this is our chance to break through the fort in one shot!"

"No, something's wrong. We can't attack, we must retreat. They must have some secret killing move!" The black-haired girl shook her head. She instructed a Winged Howler beside her, "Go, send my orders, have the soldiers retreat!"

## 335. The Stubborn Demon Princess

"Duke, what's wrong? Why did you retreat?" The dwarf King Riel was covered in blood. He looked back at the citadel in confusion.

"This is my idea," Link said.

"Master, you...you're here? You still have energy?" Riel didn't count on Link joining the direct battle. He'd already blocked the dark Godly technique for the army. As a Magician, Link had done enough.

Link nodded. "My power has mostly recovered, but we don't have enough soldiers. I checked, and there are less than 13,000 now. If this continues, we will be defeated—"

Before he could finish, a loud screech came from the Black Forest.

The sound was grating. It was the typical cry of a Winged Howler and reverberated across the entire battlefield. After this, the demons that had been violently attacking the city walls were momentarily dazed. Then they retreated.

The demons climbing the walls started jumping down. The Fodor Flaming Demons ramming against the gate were stunned before sprinting back. The low-level demons on the square retreated like a tidal wave, leaving the confused Dark Elves behind.

What was happening?

So many Warriors had died, and one wall had finally been breached. All the walls were about to be broken through. Why did they give up now? Were the demons stupid?

Other than the Dark Elves, the Light Army was stunned too. No one expected this change.

Riel tugged at his whiskers in disbelief. "Was the demon commander kicked in the back of his head by a mountain goat?"

"No, no, he probably guessed we'll use magic," Duke Abel said quietly. He looked at Link. "Master, what do we do now?"

"We'll continue retreating. The Dark Elves haven't left yet." Link was shocked at the demon commander's boldness too. No matter what, retreating when things were going well was too bizarre.

The Light Army was retreating because they couldn't hold the city walls for much longer. Though they retreated a bit early, it was still understandable. But what was with the demons?

Black Forest.

Lawndale gaped at the black-haired girl. "Your Highness, why did you do that? We were about to win!"

To him, the humans were retreating, but they needed time. If they immediately attacked and caught up before the humans retreated, even the strongest magic would be useless. Would the Magician kill his own soldiers?

Furthermore, the Orida Fortress' sturdiness was obvious. After so many deaths, it was about to be breached, but now they gave up... Did all those soldiers die in vain?

After they retreated, the humans would recompose themselves, reconquer the city wall, and repair the hole. On the other hand, they lost so many high-level demon Warriors. It was doubtful whether they could attack again.

Ah, this woman is crazy!

"Are you calling me crazy in your mind?" the girl asked with a smile.

Lawndale froze. He shook his head violently. "No, not at all. I just can't understand your actions. You must know, the Orida Fortress is a very sturdy iron fortress. The humans clearly couldn't hold on any longer. Retreating into the fortress is normal, and it's not highly possible for a powerful spell to appear. The human commander isn't stupid. If they really have a spell like that, why didn't they use it at the start? Why would they save it until so many people died?"

The black-haired girl nodded. "You're right, but I'm the commander of the demon army. I like retreating at this time. You can't do anything about it." Near the end, the girl pursed her red lips and jutted her chin out. She huffed through her nose arrogantly.

Lawndale was speechless.

His Tutor, Aymons, was already dead. As Aymons' right-hand man, Lawndale automatically upgraded to the commander of the Dark Elves. Things had been going well, but then the demons suddenly retreated. Now, he was conflicted as to if he should have the Dark Elves retreat too.

At this time, a hoarse voice traveled over. It was Romand, the chancellor of the Silver Moon Mage Council. He walked up and said confidently, "Don't retreat. Continue attacking. There's no way they'll use a powerful spell. Blocking the Godly technique is enough to use up any mortal Magician's strength!"

There were more than 40,000 Dark Elf Warriors at this time and almost 2,000 ghouls. It was many times the size of the Light Army, who had given up and was retreating. This was the best chance to snatch victory.

Only an idiot would retreat!

Lawndale had been conflicted but, hearing Romand's words, he immediately made his decision. "Pass down the order, continue attacking!"

Woo, woo woo. The Dark Elves used bone horns. The sound was eerie and chilling. It carried the Dark Elf commander's thought to the frontline.

The Dark Elf army was still dazed. Hearing the command, they ignored their stupid demon allies and turned around to attack.

Countless hooks with cables were shot onto the city wall from crossbows. Ghouls and Dark Elves continued climbing up. On the wall, they met sparse resistance. The human and dwarf Warriors had all retreated, leaving behind a few soldiers with shi

"Stop chasing and open the gate! Fortify the camp!" a Dark Elf general said.

It was none other than Lund, the one who once attacked Gladstone City at night and was known as the Blood-hand Demon. He was now a Level-7 Warrior and was the strongest Dark Elf general with the highest military rank.

Hearing his voice, the Dark Elves instantly stopped pursuing. A portion went to open the city gates while most collected the bodies. They pushed the bodies into the passageway, creating the simplest and bloodiest barrier.

While the Dark Elves were busy, the Light Army had all retreated. The demons all returned to the Black Forest.

The Orida Fortress, filled with murderous cries earlier, had become almost deathly silent.

"See?" Romand sneered. "The humans have no tricks. They just wanted to hide into the citadel like rats."

Lawndale had still been worried but seeing that there was still no action or abnormal magic waves, he felt assured. Nodding, he said, "Seems like it's safe now."

The black-haired girl clapped and laughed. "That'll be the best. Lawndale, we're allies. I'll be sad if something happens to you all."

A smile bloomed on her delicate face. She didn't look like she'd just retreated alone without caring about her allies earlier.

What could Lawndale say? He remained silent.

At this time, no one in the Black Forest could see that in the Orida Fortress a figure stepped through the blood and bodies in the passageway filled with corpses. He advanced step by step. At the point with the highest pile, the person stopped, gazing at the Dark Elves hundreds of feet away.

At first, only one or two Dark Elves saw him. After a few seconds, a wand appeared in the man's left hand. With a soft pop, a ball of light burst out.

Now, all the Dark Elves on the wall saw him.

Some stopped involuntarily and looked quietly at this young black-haired human. Many were confused, unsure what was happening.

Link wasn't in a hurry. His fatigue wasn't quite gone, and his body hadn't recovered to his peak. Since that was the case, he could spare the time for a few sentences.

He scanned all the Dark Elves. Finally, his eyes focused on General Lund. Smiling, he said, "Hey, you, yeah, you. Do you still recognize me?"

Lund's brows knitted. He found the human familiar—very familiar, especially the eyes. He'd definitely seen those eyes before. He studied Link and gradually, a memory formed.

One and a half years ago, he'd led an army to attack Gladstone. There was also a black-haired young man, though much thinner, who forced him off the city walls with a flame spell. At that time, the man had worn an average Magician's Apprentice's robe. He'd been so thin it looked like he would fall over in the wind.

The man in front of him now was muscular with a rounder face. He wore a fine short robe that only Master Magicians could wear. But those eyes—cold, deep...they were the exact same.

Before Lund could fully remember him, a Dark Elf recognized Link and screamed, "It's him! It's the human Demon Slayer!"

The voice reminded Lund like lightning. Fury rushed out from the bottom of his heart like lava, and his eyes turned blood-red!

"I knew it!" He gripped his bloody Sword of Glory and settled in a combat position. "One year ago, you stopped me from attacking Gladstone. At that time, you had countless reinforcements, and a demon princess helped you. Now, you're alone. How can you stop my 40,000 brave Warriors?"

Link chuckled. "Yes, what a coincidence. We've met twice, and both times, you're attacking the city I'm protecting. But last year, I was an amateur that had just started learning magic. Now...well, have a taste of it yourself!"

As soon as he finished, the light spell at the end of Link's wand turned into a crystal red ball of light. With a whoosh, the ball stretched into a long whip. It was the Demon Slayer Whip!

It flew out hundreds of feet as soon as it appeared. It reached Lund instantly. Piercing light shot out from the tip, curling at Lund's head.

The attack was too sudden. The hair on the back of Lund's neck shot up. His head shrunk back and he swung his sword.

Clang! There was a huge vibration. Lund's bloody Sword of Glory met the hit but couldn't block it. The sword flew out of his hand.

Link was a Level-8 Dragon Mage. With the reinforcement of the Burning Wrath of Heavens wand, the Demon Slayer Whip reached Level-9. Lund was still at Level-7, and the difference was too large. He wasn't Link's match.

The whip forced the bloody Sword of Glory away but didn't stop. It cracked against Lund's face. With a pop, Lund's head exploded. His body flew backwards and plummeted down the wall!

This was the tragedy of not having a powerful fighter there. Misamier, Aymons, or even the fallen angel that had forced Link to pathetically escape could easily make Link escape. But now, these powerful fighters were all dead.

Link wasn't as strong as them, but he was still alive, so he'd become the undisputable top fighter on the battlefield.

Lund was the commander and strongest of the Dark Elves. Even the ghouls weren't his match, but he'd been killed instantly. All the remaining Dark Elves exchanged glances awkwardly.

In the faraway Black Forest, Romand's eyes flew open. "Pinnacle of Level-8 strength...is that him? How does he still have strength?"

Lawndale was shaken too. "How can one man face the entire army?"

The black-haired girl laughed. "Ah, seems like my worry has come true. I'd like to see what spell he'll use. Would it be a Legendary spell?"

When she said that, both Romand and Lawndale's faces turned so white they were almost transparent. Link had used Legendary spells before. Aymons had proved this and had said before that many wounds had appeared on Link's body because of it.

Secret spells like this couldn't be used often. Link hadn't done anything in the earlier battle, so they didn't worry. But now, Link appeared by himself. The situation was odd.

Romand and Lawndale met each other's eyes. Could the demon princess be right?

## 336. Hehe, Ive Seen Through His Strength

Lund was killed in a single whip!

The Dark Elves on the city wall were stunned into silence.

A few seconds later, someone shouted, "He's only a single person! There's nothing to be afraid of, kill him!"

"Let's go!"

"We've got 40,000 men!"

The ones shouting were ghouls, and immediately after that, they rushed towards Link. Initially, there were only three people in the charge, but soon, there were over 40 ghouls trailing behind.

In reality, the ghouls on the city wall numbered over 2,000. However, it was because of the threat of Link and his Demon Slayer Whip loomed over them. After all, this was someone who could go toe to toe with the wielder of the Divine Gear! Who would dare to easily approach?

The ghouls that rushed forward were hot-blooded and reckless. Typically, a ghoul's strength was about Level-6. They also dashed forward very quickly. Before the tracker was invented, the ghouls used to guard the perimeter of the Black Forest, preventing all scouts from getting into the black forest. They were quite fearsome.

When 40 ghouls charged at the same time, even a Level-8 Warrior could not face them head on and win easily. It would be necessary to use the terrain advantage and engage in hit-and-run tactics to deal with them.

However, Link did not retreat. He just stood calmly there.

Three seconds later, the ghouls had surrounded Link. They came from all directions. Some climbed the walls to get behind him, others flanked him while some charged him straight from the front.

This was the way to deal with Magicians. To prevent the Magician from annihilating all of them at once, it was necessary for them to split up and attack from multiple sides.

However, they still underestimated Link.

As the ghouls arrived before him, Link pointed his Burning Wrath of Heavens wand at the floor. A Spatial Sphere the size of assame seed landed on the floor. When the ghouls reached within two feet from him, the Spatial Sphere suddenly exploded.

"Shackles!"

With Link as the center, a white misty semi-circle formed around him, 60 feet in diameter. This enveloped all the ghouls that had rushed forward.

The ghouls were originally rushi

This Spatial Shackles cost Link 300 Dragon Power points and was equal to a Level-7 skill. The ghouls were only at Level-6 and had no way of breaking free.

Then, Link drew the Dragon King's Wrath magic sword, strolling forward. As he walked round, he casually stabbing into the heads of the ghouls he passed.

The Dragon King's Wrath magic sword was incomparably sharp. The ghouls' skulls could put up no defense against Link. Link did not even need to put in much strength but merely poked his sword to slice into their skulls.

Fifteen seconds later, every single ghoul had been stabbed by Link. Link walked to the edge of the Spatial Shackles field. All the ghouls were still suspended in the air, in a charging position. In fact, they were still moving forward ever so slightly. However, the one thing that had changed was that their eyes were now listless, as they were now all dead.

Snap! Link snapped his fingers, canceling the Spatial Shackles spell. Crash, Crash. The 40 ghouls fell from the air like kites, smashi

The whole process of casting the Spatial Shackles spell and killing the ghouls cost Link 300 Dragon Power points. In the 15 seconds that he took to kill the ghouls, his Dragon Power had already recovered.

Therefore, killing these 40 ghouls was as simple as breathing for him.

This was a terrifying existence.

The Dark Elves glanced at each other, at a loss. As Link took one step forward, they subconsciously took one step back.

Then, one Dark Elf Commander stood up and shouted, "Warriors, he is a Magician. His Mana is definitely limited. Let's all charge together! Archers keep shooting at him, waste his Mana!"

Twang twang twang. Sounds of bowstrings releasing reverberated out as the arrows filled the air like rain, heading for Link.

Link waved his wand lightly to his side again. "Shackles!"

Whoosh. In the next instant, a space of about two feet around him rippled, and the arrows struck into the space. All of them immediately stopped in mid-air. The scene resembled arrows being stuck in a training puppet.

Link walked towards the Dark Elves while waving his sword around. Every single one of the arrows he sliced through fell to the ground like trash.

It was truly a joke to use normal arrows on a Level-8 Magician like Link.

"Quick, use the anti-magic arrows!"

The Archers immediately changed to using anti-magic arrows. However, these arrows met a similar fate to the normal arrows. To a Spatial Magician, arrows that were designed to penetrate normal magic barriers were completely useless against them.

Huff, huff. The Dark Elf commander panted, trying to calm the fear in his heart. Three seconds later, he raised his sword and charged Link. "Warriors, charge!"

This commander was a Level-6 Warrior. The Battle Art exploded out from his body, enveloping the sword and causing it to glow brilliantly as he charged Link.

He knew that he was going to die, but he also knew that when facing a Magician, the army cannot break down in fear. That would be the worst thing that could happen.

As long as the Warriors continued charging forward, that might provide them a chance to reverse the situation!

As the commander of the army, he had to be the first to make the sacrifice!

The ghouls followed behind him, and the Dark Elves also started charging at Link from all directions.

They couldn't believe that a 40,000 strong army would be unable to kill a single Magician.

Link had rested enough. He took a deep breath, focusing his thoughts and pointed the magic sword in front of him. "Demon Slayer!"

Whoosh. A 300-foot-long crystal red whip appeared, wrapping around Link over ten times. The body of the whip was covered with zigzag thorns. Each thorn shone like a bright red crystal. Viewed in the darkness of the night, it would look like flickering fireflies.

However, this spell which was a beautiful as fireflies also had destructive power incomparable to fireflies.

Each point of light was an attack point. Although it looked small, its power was terrifying.

As the ordinary Dark Elf soldiers were hit by the whip, it was as though their bodies were hit by a siege hammer. They were flung back far away. As they flew back, they coughed up thick mouths of steaming hot blood. By the time they landed on the ground, the Dark Elf soldiers were completely dead.

That was not all!

Each time the fireflies hit somebody, there would be a fiery red aura that exploded out in all directions, covering an area of 600 feet, looking like a fog.

This fiery red fog was also terrifying. Those who were enveloped by it felt that it was burning hot. At first, it was scalding, causing their skin to blister. It was still tolerable, but soon after, even their armor and weapons started to heat up and turn red. It became unbearable.

The fireflies exploded continuously, and every Warrior that tried to approach Link was knocked back. Meanwhile, the red-hot fog in the air got thicker, causing the temperature to rise.

Finally, some of the Dark Elf soldiers cried out. "No, I can't breathe!"

"My eyes, I can't see!"

"My clothes are on fire!"

Various voices shouted out in agony, as the fireflies continued exploding. The red-hot fog in the air continued to become even denser, causing the fortress walls to seem less like a battlefield and more of a slaughterhouse.

Two minutes later, Link had used up 5000 Mana points. Every 10 Mana points could form one thorn on the Demon Slayer Whip, possessing the strength of a Level-2 spell. These fireflies could block the majority of these attacks. Through the two minutes, he had unleashed over 400 attacks with these fireflies.

As for the stronger ghouls, Link used Spatial Shackles to deal with them. He was surrounded by a Spatial Shackle from the start. Anyone who broke through the whip would find themselves shackled. Link would simply stab through their heads with a sword, killing them.

Therefore, no one was able to get close to Link.

There were 400 firefly explosions, all of which were wide area attacks. The resulting damage from the area attacks was ten percent of the main firefly attack. Four hundred of those added together was equal to being attacked by 40 fireflies.

Orida Fortress was huge, however, within 600 feet of Link, there were over 30,000 soldiers caught in his attack. Some of them had detected the danger and escaped earlier with their lives. Yet, there were many others who were determined to kill Link at all costs, throwing their lives in the process.

Whatever the case, two minutes later, the city wall was completely silent.

Link cast a Light spell, causing a weak light to shi

Looking at the carnage on the city walls, Link estimated that he had killed over 35,000 Dark Elves. A large portion was killed from the area attacks by the Dragon King's Wrath magic sword.

After walking one round around the walls, Link sat down on a pile of arrows. Beside his feet lay many corpses. There were some corpses that belonged to humans, but the majority were Dark Elves. Streams of dried blood ran along the floor, and the air was filled with a stench of gore and barbequed meat. It was strange and grotesque.

Link felt like he was truly a slaughterer.

Having killed so many, it burdens the heart. Link said to the sword spirit.

This is war. However, my previous owner, the Storm Lord rarely attacked weaker opponents. He said that it felt meaningless. Of course, not many dared to provoke him. I believe that after this, weaker opponents would not dare to provoke you anymore, the sword spirit replied.

Link nodded his head. Indeed, he found it completely meaningless. This was a simple slaughter, and he killed so many that he had become numb.

He felt like all he needed right now was a hot cup of wine and a good rest. He decided he wouldn't eat barbequed meat for a long time.

In the Black Forest.

Lawndale stared dazedly at the Dark Elves that had returned alive.

Every single one of their clothes was in tatters. Their skin had many burn scars. Their expressions were completely dejected, their eyes were wide open, and teasstreamed down their face. What's more, they panicked at the slightest sound. They were evidently frightened to death.

"He's not a human! He's a God, a fire God!"

"We couldn't even approach him! Arrows couldn't hit him!"

"Even the Lady of Darkness isn't his opponent. We were just like chickens to him!"

"He has some kind of body freezing spell."

"Commander Lund was killed in one hit by his whip."

Countless recounts of their terrifying experience made Lawndale speechless.

Romand's expression was completely sullen. Out of 40,000 Dark Elves, only 5,000 had made it back alive. That was completely brutal.

It was his suggestion that the Dark Elves continued the attack. Now, it dawned on him that his suggestion had sent all those Warriors to their grave. Simultaneously, he had destroyed the future path of progress for the entire Dark Elf race.

After this defeat, they no longer had any strong Warriors. If they wanted to survive within Firuman, they needed to retreat to the Dark Realms and lay low for a hundred years. Otherwise, they would not be able to recover from this.

His mouth twitched. "It was just in an instant. Furthermore, there was no high-level spell used. How could he kill so quickly?"

The black-haired girl was still laughing. Out of the slits of her eyes, she looked at the two dejected Dark Elf commanders. "Oh dear, that was a mistake. Now that all the Dark Elf soldiers are dead, what should we do?"

Lawndale was dazed and forlorn. He had just buried the future of his Dark Elf race. It was a huge blow. As he heard the princess, he said listlessly, "Your Highness, you don't have to say these useless things."

He didn't even have the energy to get angry.

"Oh wells, you guys are too pitiful. I won't make fun of you trash any longer. In my opinion, Link must have used some powerful magic weapon. You fell into his trap! I won't say any more, lest I make you cry. I'll teach him a lesson for you. Hehe, I've already seen through his strength!" The black-haired girl said.

While she spoke, dark purple scales appeared on her skin, covering her whole body. Her skirt also became stiff, turning into armor made of numerous purple pieces. Because the girl was small, the armor looked petite as well. However, it still gave off an imposing and savage aura.

On every corner of the armor, there were also spikes. This was especially so for the shoulder area, which had plenty of spikes. On top of the spikes were stuck many skulls. Two sharp horns stuck out from the helmet forehead.

Petite but savage, together, they created a feeling that was hard to describe.

In her hands appeared two curved sabers. The blade edge sparkled, flickering with deep blue flames. The air around the blade occasionally sparked with electricity.

All of these transformations happened in an instant.

Finally, in the small but savage helmet's eye area, two purple flame-like eyes lit up.

A metallic voice sounded from inside the helmet. "You, you, and you, the three of you, come with me. We're going to kill."

She was still prudent, and selected three Level-8 high-level demons to assist her.

"Yes, Your Highness!"

## 337. Really Cant Beat Her

Orida Fortress

Within 600 feet of the second ring of walls, all buildings were slightly hot to the touch. All wood had burned down, and the ground was charred.

The charred blackness stretched to 100 feet before the top citadel before stopping. If the humans hadn't retreated, they would be in the same state as the Dark Elves now.

Surrounded by the army, the pressure was great. Link couldn't keep the Dragon King's Anger effect from accidentally hurting his own soldiers. He sat blankly on the oven-like wall for a while. Gathering his senses, Link walked towards the citadel. The Dark Elves weren't a concern anymore, but the demons had retreated. They were unhurt now, so he had to quickly reorganize the fortress' defense.

After a few steps, Link felt something. He turned around.

It was around one in the morning and the night sky was like ink. The prairie before the fortress was even darker. He couldn't see anything.

Night vision.

Link wiped his eyes lightly. His vision immediately turned gray-white and the night scenery became clear.

Five black shadows charged towards the fortress. They were quiet and extremely fast. The smallest shadow seemed to slow herself down so the others could keep up.

Her armor was extraordinary and familiar, especially the two blue scimitars in her hands. Two purple demon eyes (a type of gemstone) were embedded in the hilt.

Seeing this, Link gulped. Without thinking, he turned around, poured Dragon Power into his sword, activated the Dragon King's Fury magic sword, and started sprinting towards the citadel!

He knew this demon; he'd never forget her in his entire life!

In the game, she appeared in the later part. Instead of being in a storyline quest, she appeared in the wilderness around the time of Celine Flandre's appearance.

At that time, Celine was plotting against her father. She created missions to test the players' abilities. They were also the prerequisite missions for the Nozama storyline quest. One of the missions was called "The Lord's Other Daughter." The player had to kill a demon named Saroviny.

The game recommended players to form a team for the mission. But at that time, Link was already well-accomplished in magic. He had a bunch of Epic Legends and was confident to the max. Regular bosses were nothing to him. He called on a Warrior and Priest from the guild and set out.

The three found her in a remote riverside mansion. The first time they met, the black-haired girl was planting flowers in her garden.

Link remembered that when she saw them, she clapped lightly and had a human slave bring over clean water. After washi

At that time, they were all young men. They were high-spirited and the top players of the game. Without saying anything, they started fighting immediately.

One second later, their souls returned to the cemetery together.

The Warrior was the one who took the hits in the guild. He was killed instantly, and the Priest didn't even have time to heal him. Just as Link was about to cast a spell, the girl streaked like lightning. There was a flash of a sword, and his world turned black and white. Half a second later, the Priest was there too.

The three thought the game system had purposely raised the enemy's difficulty. After checking the records though, they were impressed. It wasn't that her difficulty was high. They'd fallen into the demon's trap!

While approaching the mansion, they were secretly marked with a death mark. It was a tiny spell, hidden but easily removed. If they didn't remove it, the enemy could use the mark to semi-teleport. The damages would increase by 300% and could break through armor.

They obviously died within seconds after falling for this.

After being resurrected, they went to take revenge on full alert. This time, they lasted for three seconds before all dying. Not giving up, they went back and died again after three seconds. The enemy had tons of tricks and never repeated the same one.

Finally, they admitted defeat and went offline.

This was Link's most frustrating and humiliating experience in the game. Even worse, a passerby player saved one of the recordings and posted it on the Internet. After that, they became national laughingstocks.

Thinking back, Saroviny's tricks were actually quite simple, but she had an indescribable ability. No matter how careful you were, she could make you fall for the trap.

Later in the game, many players went to find Saroviny, but they were all defeated. Even a team of 1000 couldn't ensure victory. Nine out of ten times, they would lose. The remaining time, it would be a win with great costs and Saroviny still wouldn't die. At most, she would be forced to escape into a storyline quest and turn into another terrifying boss.

Finally, a player accidentally found a bug. They could bring Celine to Saroviny's side and use Celine's strength to defeat Saroviny.

In reality, Link could tell from Saroviny's appearance and aura that she was only a step away from the Legendary level. She also had four pinnacle Level-8 demons by her. Only an idiot would stay there. He obviously ran away.

He ran all the way to the citadel when a voice said, "Master, you're back. How are things?"

It was Kanorse with Nana beside him. They'd come to welcome Link.

"I defeated the Dark Elves, but the demons are unhurt... Hurry into the citadel and close the door. Big demons are coming, hurry!"

Link rushed towards the citadel, Kanorse and Nana following behind him.

The citadel was a giant metal thing. The portion on the ground was a semicircle 150 feet in diameter and three floors tall. However, this was only the tip of the iceberg. The biggest part was underground. There were five floors below ground, each floor being extremely spacious. The tunnels reached in all directions, practically emptying the entire mountain.

Storing 20,000 soldiers inside was no problem. There were only 13,000 soldiers left now. They easily fit inside the citadel with the exhausted Magicians.

The strength of the citadel was unparalleled. The door that Link had just passed through was two feet thick, 30 feet tall, and 15 feet wide. It was entirely built from sheet metal and fine gold alloy. It weighed more than 200 tons. The inside was also carved with many magical runes.

These runes were not ordinary either. The Orida Fortress survived more than 2000 years and was fortified every generation. Three hundred years ago, Bryant personally fortified the citadel, adding a shockingly durable Level-10 defensive magic seal.

"Hurry, close the door! Close it!" Link cried.

Crack, crack, crack. A few herculean Warriors used hinges to close the door bit by bit.

Link estimated it would take half a minute to completely close. It was too slow, so he activated the Dragon King's Fury magic sword again. He walked to the door and shoved it.

Boom! The heavy door shook. Under the shocked scrutiny of everyone present, the door closed at twice the speed.

Ten seconds later, it closed with a boom. With another boom, the gate dropped down. Link quickly found the magic seal's activation rune and poured in Dragon Power.

With a soft buzz, the energy accumulated over the centuries was activated. Mana flowed through the entire citadel. A beam of golden light extended over the gate, quickly covering the citadel's inner and outer walls.

This light was special. At a glance, it was like a flawless film, but at closer inspection, one would realize it was formed by countless beehive-like cells. They were independent but connected intricately.

Apparently, Bryant was inspired by the Yabba magic shi

Link finally took a breather.

No matter how powerful Saroviny was, she couldn't break into the citadel. Currently, the only way to do so was to wait until the citadel's saved energy was used up. There was a great amount of energy though. Link calculated that it could last at least three months.

Outside the citadel

When Link entered the citadel and prepared to close the door, Saroviny just arrived at the first wall of the fortress. She didn't know Link had retreated. She continued walking in carefully.

"Be careful. That guy might make a sneak attack." She hid behind the four high-level demons, not going forward until safety was confirmed.

They were demons and had seen countless bloody scenes. But inside the fortress, they still gasped involuntarily when seeing the mass of dead Dark Elves.

Saroviny sniffed lightly and whispered, "It's the smell of a flame spell. It's only around Level-3, but the Dark Elves didn't escape. They were packed on the wall and died in such an organized manner... What a bunch of failures!"

"Your Highness, he's gone. From the footprints, I think he went towards the citadel," a demon reported.

Saroviny flinched. She listened closely and seemed to think of something. Running towards the citadel, she cried, "Hurry, hurry, that guy is going to hide!"

The demons sprinted, but when they reached the citadel, they saw the golden glow envelope it all.

"Your Highness, the citadel is sealed. The enchantment is very strong!"

"Shut up! You think I'm blind? This is a Legendary enchantment left behind by Bryant. We can't go in," Saroviny said, annoyed. She was in a bad a mood—a really bad mood!

"What should we do?"

"Surround them!" Saroviny sneered. There were more than 10,000 people inside the citadel. Eating and drinking was a great cost. Even if the Magicians inside could create some magic food, those couldn't be eaten too often. Problems would arise soon. "I'll see how long they can last!"

## 338. Searching for Reinforcements

On the tower balcony

The core members of the alliance were already here. They looked through the legendary yellow enchantment, observing the demons surrounding the fortress. Their faces were all pale.

Link pointed at one figure and said, "Look, see that black haired girl? She's the daughter of Lord Nozama. Don't be tricked by her petite looks, she's just a hair away from reaching the Legendary realm. If we were out there, give her enough time, and she would be able to easily kill everyone here."

Saroviny was an assassin, at the same time, she knew some very useful high-level spells. Link suspected that she was had the same gifts of foresight as Celine. Engaging in guerilla battles with these types of enemies was the worst possible nightmare.

Everyone's faces were pale.

Among them, the strongest was Link, at mid-Level-8, followed by Kanorse and Nana who had also reached Level-8. They were already strong beyond compare in Duke Abel's opinion, but they still could not compare to the demon army whose commanders were a step away from the Legendary realm.

Legendary Warriors!

Just the thought of it made one tremble in fear. Who would dare confront these people?

"That's not all," Link continued. He pointed at the demons surrounding Saroviny. "This, this, and this guy, they all have Level-8 strength. I believe that out of the 230 high-level demons, tity percent of them are over Level-8. That's about 70 demons. Besides that, they have 60,000 low-level demons! It's quite impossible to fight!"

Although a Level-8 demon was not able to obliterate an entire army like Link had done, against the human armies, they definitely would not face any obstructions. If they weren't locked down in fights but free to roam the battlefield, they could easily kill thousands of people.

Demons like that, they had over 70!

Just these 70 were enough to obliterate all the soldiers in the fortress. There was no need to talk about the 160 Level-7 demons and the 60,000 demons who were all around Level-5.

It was only in the late phase of the game that players were able to deal with such a force of demons. Only when the true Light Army alliance was formed with the Legendary experts from the various races did they have a chance to fight back against these demons. Everyone's faces were white as a sheet.

Kanorse said, "They're trying to siege us!"

"Evidently," High Elf Princess Milda sighed. She had long since woken up but had only gotten an hour of rest. Her spirits were far from recovered, and she looked fatigued.

Duke Abel was similarly forlorn. He didn't bother looking at the demons outside the fort but reported some figures, "Within our fortress, there are 12,900 people. We have 50 tons of stockpiled rations. If we want to maintain our current fighting strength against the demons, we will consume one ton of food every day. At most, we will last two months."

Princess Milda offered, "I have some seedlings... Forget it. It's not going to work. The fortress enchantment has prevented any form of energy from entering. There wouldn't be enough sunlight and water."

Dwarf King Riel stroked his beard in habit. "In other words, we're still going to die. Either we die starving, or we die in battle."

Link glanced outside the enchantment. Saroviny could feel his gaze and turned to stare back at his direction. She smirked and waved her fist at him. It was extremely adorable, but it made one's heart clench while looking at it.

With no mood to continue looking at the enemy, everyone turned back to return inside the tower. They had no mood to even discuss a strategy.

Link was in the best condition among them. He focused his mind and went to one of the great halls.

Although the fortress was said to be able to accommodate over 10,000 people, it was still rather crowded. The great hall was filled with people, especially injured soldiers who were lying down in the corner. The air was thick with the scent of blood, urine, and sweat, and it was extremely pungent.

As he walked in, Link saw a small figure in the corner. Her face was covered in wounds, and her hair clumped together with dried blood. She was leaning against a wall and clutched in her hand was a musket covered in blood and dir. Her head rested on a gunny sack filled with some items, and she was obviously fatigued.

It was the Yabba woman, Melinda. Initially, when the attack on Orida Fortress first began, she was grouped with the Yabba people and Link couldn't find her. He was pleasantly surprised to find her still alive.

There were many cuts on her little face. Because there were few piss, and most were busy tending to soldiers with heavier wounds, she had not been able to receive any treatment.

Link's feelings were complicated as he looked at her. She fidgeted, changing her resting position. As she moved her body, her eyes were shut tightly. A tear dripped down her face. This tear dropped instantly moved Link's soul, causing him to shudder involuntarily.

This was just an ordinary Yabba young woman. Her country was invaded, her parents killed, and after arriving at Orida fortress, her clansmen were essentially all killed. At the moment, there were only about ten other Yabba people resting beside her.

After pausing for a while, Link softly said to a soldier beside him, "Help me fetch some blankets and lay them on the floor in my room. Let these Yabba people rest in my room."

"Yes, sir," the soldier obeyed.

Link turned to look at the human soldiers around. Essentially, all of them were injured. Some were lying on beds, their eyes blank. Some were softly crying or calling out. The piss were running around tending to injuries, and although they had completely used up all their divine power, it was evidently still not enough.

Link also saw Annie. She was injured but still in good shape, able to run about to help with work.

When the soldiers saw him arrive, they looked at him with hope. There was one soldier who was still very young. The signs of youth still marked his face. He was probably only 18 years old. His injuries were very severe, and he was on the brink of death. Trembling, he stretched out his hand, struggling as he said, "Sir, help me... save me!"

Link was helpless. His Dragon Power could assist people in recovery, but it could not bring the dead back to life. It also could not cure fatal injuries.

Link walked over and knelt on the ground. He grasped the soldier's hand and said comfortingly, "Don't be afraid. You will enter the kingdom of heaven. There, there will be no pain or darkness, no fighting..."

Halfway through his words, Link felt the hand he was holding lose all energy. The soldier had passed on. Even then, his eyes were wide open, hoping to be saved, hoping to live on.

Link solemnly closed the soldier's eyes, and wordlessly stood up.

No! We cannot simply wait to die! Link knew he had to do something.

These soldiers had gone through a baptism of fire and blood. Given enough time, they would be able to grow into powerful Warriors of humanity. As long as they had enough time!

He needed to go and get reinforcements.

Link turned and went up to the hall on the second level. He was going to see Duke Abel.

"What?"

"I heard that there is a secret passage under the fortress?" Link asked.

The duke responded blankly, "You mean to have us retreat through the passage? I don't think that's possible. Ten thousand people will create too much noise and will immediately be discovered. On the plains..."

"No, I plan to go out alone and bring a few experts with me. Kanorse has to stay, but King Riel, Princess Milda, as well as Nana can accompany me. The four of us will go out to search for reinforcements."

Kanorse would have been a great help, but his importance to the army was too great. If he left, Duke Abel, being the only Level- 5 himself, would not be able to defend the fortress on his own.

It seemed to him that looking for reinforcements elsewhere was the only way. Duke Abel pondered for a while. Then, he turned to face the bookshelf. "The secret passages under the fortress are very complicated, like a maze. I have no idea where the magic door truly is. Hold on, let me look through the maps."

He went to the bookshelves and flipped around. Finally, he pulled out an ancient scroll. "Got it!"

He opened the scroll on the table and pointed at the passage. "Originally, the passage was not complicated. However, since ancient times, this fortress has been renovated over ten times, and each time, there were some projects that were never finished, making the place very complicated. Let me see... let me see..."

Ten minutes later, the duke slapped his head and handed the scroll to Link. "It's very messy, here, take a look."

Link took a look at the scroll. Immediately, he frowned. This wasn't even a map. It was just scribbles and scrawls on the parchment. Some places were faded, and other portions of the map had holes bitten out of it by worms.

After looking at it for half a day, Link roughly understood the structure. "According to the map, Orida Fortress was originally a dwarven mountain fortress. Later on, they abandoned this fortress, and it was taken over by humans. On top of the original structure, they built Orida Fortress. Later on, additions were added until we have today's final fortress. There is a magic door in there in the basement level five, and it should not be hard to locate. It's not actually hard to find, but the problem lies in after finding it. This magic door leads into the dwarven tunnels that crisscross and go everywhere. My God... I can't even see that part clearly."

The duke's heart rate increased. "So, how is it? Is there a way out?"

Their entire fate now rested on whether Link could find a way out and bring back reinforcements. If he couldn't, then they were finished. Eventually, the fortress would run out of supplies, and that would surely result in a miserable and chaotic end!

Link replied with a firmness that could cut through iron. "I will definitely find a way out. Even if I can't, I'll just blast my way out."

After that, Link went to find High Elf Princess Milda and Dwarf King Riel. After explaining his plan, they agreed. This was their only way now.

"Okay, time is precious. Let us go now. We'll leave secretly, Duke, while I'm not around, say I am researching a new powerful spell."

"I understand," Duke Abel nodded.

Link released a Traceless Spell, and the four of them vanished from sight. They followed the stairway done into the underground, walking for over ten minutes through numerous intersecting passageways. Finally, they found where the magic door was located.

It was a simple spell formation made of a single rune. Link understood how to use it in one glance. "Stand on it, please," he instructed everyone.

The three others stood on the rune stone, and Link got on as well. After locating the activation rune, Link channeled his Dragon Power into the stone. A few seconds later, the four of them felt the world spinning, a feeling which lasted for five seconds. Then, the feeling vanished, and they were back on solid ground.

Thump. Dwarf King Riel sat heavily on his bottom. He cursed continuously as he got up. "damn magic door, it nearly destroyed this old ass of mine."

Nana landed stably, while Link and Princess Milda cast a levitation spell on themselves to land lightly.

Dwarf King Riel felt that it was really unfair. He rubbed his buttocks as he complained.

"I hate magic," he grumbled.

Link started to look around the surroundings. He found that he was in a large underground passage surrounded by stone walls. On the stone walls were embedded crystals. Drip. Drip. Water dripped from the ceiling. Wuuuuuu. The wind howled as it blew through the cavern.

Dwarf King Riel looked around as well. Then, he patted his chest and said, "These passageways are built in the style of my race. We are probably in the heart of the mountain. Without a map, outsiders will very likely lose their way, but for me, it's no problem. Follow my lead."

Naturally, the dwarf would be most familiar with the dwarven passages. Link and Princess Milda exchanged a glance and followed closely behind King Riel.

They walked for over half an hour. Half an hour later, the group of them were still circling around the passages.

"King Riel, why are we still stuck in here?" Princess Milda could not help but ask suspiciously.

Dwarf King Riel's reply was full of pride. "Don't you worry, there's no hurry. My people's tunnels are very complicated. I'll need to walk through a few more tunnels to familiarize myself first."

Link did not say a thing, but he had a feeling that this dwarf was not very reliable.

After another half an hour had passed, Riel stopped in front of a stone wall. He pulled his beard roughly, grunting and sighing, "Why is it like this? This is wrong! This was definitely the way out. What's going on?"

Princess Milda immediately frowned. "You're lost?"

"Lost? Nonsense! How could I be lost in my own home? I'm just a bit confused, but I'm sure I will find the way out!"

Princess Milda shrugged helplessly.

Link couldn't say anything either. He had to protect King Riel's face. He said, "How about this, let us select a tunnel that looks to be going upwards and follow along that path. What do you think, King Riel?"

Dwarf King Riel's face was downcast as he said, "Hmmm, these passages are too old, and the style has changed a lot. Sir Link, let's do as you suggest."

In the demon camp

Not half an hour after Link left, Saroviny suddenly stood up with a start. She said to the demon beside her, "Hey, I feel that something is not right. Do you think Link would have gone out to look for reinforcements?"

The demons looked at their princess blankly. Reinforcements? That would still require them to sneak out of the fortress and the demon barricade. Considering that they've guarded it so tightly that not even a drop of water could leak through, how could the other party get out?

"Hey you dumbasses, you're useless! The fortress is sure to have some underground passage. All of you go out, search and check if any rats are sneaking out from around here."

Saroviny's orders were very clear. The demons nodded at once, replying, "Yes, Your Highness."

As the demons dispersed, Saroviny sat down and rubbed her chin. Her two black eyes stared at the distant tower, unblinking. "Hey little rat, oh little rat, where will you crawl out from?"

## 339. The Derpy Dwarf

"Look, there's light ahead," dwarf Riel called. He sped forward.

He was so excited after being in this mine hole for two hours. If news of him getting lost in a dwarf mine hole traveled back to Moria, the dwarven capital city, he would be so humiliated.

Yes, he must tell Master Link and Milda to keep this a secret.

Link immediately cast a traceless spell and said, "Don't run out when we get to the exit. We need to see where we are."

"No problem," Riel replied. He gained momentum as he ran and quickly passed the corner.

Milda couldn't help but shake her head and chuckle. "This guy is so funny. He's so old but still acts like a kid."

Riel had been serious, but after they became more familiar with each other, he began relaxing and showing his derpy side.

Link didn't find his personality strange. In the game, he'd met too many funny dwarves. If you stayed in a dwarf's inn, you'd see many interesting things. For example, a dwarf once lit his beard with his pipe and poured hard liquor on it. His entire body had lit on fire.

A dwarf had run under a dragon's stomach to research the dragon's gender. Another dwarf used a magic gun to hit at a fly on food and ended up smashi

Anyway, one had to be prepared for all types of situations when with a dwarf...

Dammit, I jinxed myself!

Just as Link was about to speak, there was a cry from outside the tunnel. It was a tragic cry and made one's guts clench, involuntarily close one's legs, and cover one's crotch.

Just as Link and Milda exchanged a glance, not sure what happened, Riel scampered back. As he ran, he called, "Oh no, ack—there's a demon outside, and he saw me."

When the guy ran over, Link saw that his head was covered in black mud. There was also a disgusting smell that made him nauseous.

"What exactly happened?" Milda covered her nose and cast a cleaning spell to get rid of the "mud" on Riel's head.

As Rield walked deeper inside the tunnel, he said, "The tunnel opens up skyward. When I went there, a Fodor Flaming Demon was taking a dump. I think he ate some bad food. That guy was like a spray gun. I wasn't paying attention, and it got all over me. I even swallowed some...I was so pissed! I slammed my hammer on his ass. I'm sure he's injured now, but more demons will run after us later. Let's run...ugh....ack...it's so disgusting!"

"Ugh!" Milda ran with Riel. She just wanted to throw up.

Link's throat felt uncomfortable hearing this too. Pushi

"Ah, poisonous? No wonder my stomach hurts now...Ah!" Riel missed a step and tripped. He fell down and couldn't climb back up. His face was black as if he was heavily poisoned.

Link hurried over to help him. Milda continued holding her nose. She pulled out a bottle of Elf Nectar and gave it to Link from afar. "Here, feed it to him."

Pulling out the stop, Link poured the green liquid into Riel's mouth. As expected of the sacred antidote, Riel started vomiting violently after drinking it. Mouthfuls of stinking black liquid spewed from his mouth. After throwing up three mouthfuls, he was finally clean.

Riel was a Level-7 Warrior and was very strong. He wasn't poisoned deeply and had the antidote promptly, so he recovered after resting for half a minute.

He shook his head and took out a bottle of liquor. Rinsing his mouth, he put the liquor away and breathed deeply. "Thank you, Your Highness," he said to Milda. "Those demons are so f\*cking disgusting."

"Enough, let's go now!" Milda had had enough. She'd thought this dwarf was like a kid, but now, she thought he was an insufferable bastard.

Seeing that Milda was upset, Riel shrugged. "I'm the one who drank it, and I'm not complaining. What are you angry about...alright, I'll stop talking. Let's go. I saw many demons patrolling outside. They seem to know our plan."

He led them deeper into the mine hole. Link, Milda, and Nana followed.

As they ran, Nana asked curiously, "Riel, what does demon poop taste like?"

"Nana!" Milda yelped. She was going to have a breakdown.

"Nana, stop talking," Link commanded.

"Oh." Nana didn't say anything else.

Riel didn't know what it tasted like. He ran powerfully without speaking. Dwarves had a weird and funny personality, but they were naturally sensitive to cave tunnels. He memorized it all after one trip.

The group quickly returned to the cave along the original path. Finally, Riel stopped before a black tunnel. "We didn't go down this road. I have a feeling that it's very, very deep and might lead to danger. Are you sure we should go in?"

Milda looked at Link, who nodded without hesitation. "Of course. The demon general is very strong. If we run into her, we'll die."

"Alright, follow me." Riel didn't dare face someone about to enter the Legendary level. He widened his eyes, picked up his battle axe, and wentito a defensive posture. He walked towards the deep, dark cave.

On the other hand, the Fodor Flaming Demon's cry traveled far. After a while, a team of demons hurried over. When they arrived, the Fodor Flaming Demon was already dead. His stomach had been torn open by a hit form below. His guts were everywhere, and it was tragic.

It was clearly a sneak attack.

There was a two-foot-wide crack beside him. A demon crouched down and sniffed strongly. "Uh...it smells like poop...and...sniff...it should be a dwarf's scent. Those rats are hiding under these rocks!"

"You found the rats?" asked a lovely voice. It was Saroviny.

"Your Highness, a dwarf appeared here and killed Lomen."

Saroviny walked over. Seeing the feces on the rock, she wrinkled her brows. She took out a handkerchief to cover her nose and started investigating carefully.

"A dwarf had indeed tried to come out of here... The footprints on the rock are very deep. He'd used power and stomped hard... He's quite strong, should be a Level-7 Warrior. This should be the dwarf's King of Mountains... I can feel that Link is with him."

Saroviny laughed. She stepped back and said to the Fodor Flaming Demons beside her, "Make the hole bigger and get rid of all the waste. I don't want to smell a thing. Then you and you shorter ones go in with me. We're going to catch the rats!"

"Yes, Your Highness."

The Fodor Flaming Demons immediately started working. They used their claws, Battle Aura, and feet to attack the rocks. For them, the hard rocks were as soft as dirt.

After a few minutes, the small crack was many times wider. Finally, it revealed a tunnel around ten feet tall and six feet wide. The two Saroviny had chosen were Dimensional Demons. They were only about seven feet tall. The hole was big enough for them.

"Alright, let's go in."

Booms came from behind them. Link and the others exchanged glances and saw shock in their eyes.

"They're coming. We gotta hurry!" Riel quickened his steps. Link easily caught up while Milda was a bit slower. She activated the Cheetah's Agility spell for herself. However, she still hadn't recovered and looked exhausted.

Link saw it unintentionally and felt a twinge. "Nana," he said, "carry Princess Milda."

"No need...alright." Milda had refused instinctively, but she was honestly too tired. Her vision was blurry. She knew that holding on stubbornly would only slow down the team, so she nodded and accepted.

Nana picked her up and continued walking.

Link was at the back of the group, wiping their footprints clean.

They advanced. The further they walked, the more spacious the tunnel became. It became darker as well, and they couldn't see the path clearly. But strangely, the wind grew stronger.

It wasn't blowing from within the tunnel. Instead, it was being sucked in from behind them. The further they walked, the stronger the wind became.

Woo, woo. The wind whistled, almost making them lose their balance. It felt like a hand pushi

Suddenly, Riel yelped. He missed a step and lost his balance. Woo. A gust of strong wind came just then and blew him a few feet ahead. That wasn't all. He continued falling down. It was so dark, and they couldn't see anything.

"Light spell!"

Whoosh

Seeing that Riel was about to disappear from his line of sight, Link hurriedly cast a spell for him. "Levitation!"

But it didn't work!

Riel kept dropping at an incredible speed. He struggled and yelled, "There's wind! The wind keeps blowing down! Oh, Glorious Lord, I'm gonna die!"

## 340. Mysterious Realm

The wind from the cliff was extremely strong. Under the light from the light spell that Link had cast, they could see small wind ripples. These all pointed to the base of the cliff, as though there was a vortex sucking them in from there.

Watching as the dwarf Riel was slowly getting further and further away from them and that the demons behind them were catching up, Link bit his lip and said, "Milda, go on, we'll jump too."

He had never come to this place before when he played the game, but he had seen something similar on the game forums.

On the discussion boards, it was said that beneath Orida Fortress was a dwarf cavern. If you followed along one specific path inside the cavern and followed it till the end, you would reach a place called the Wind Vortex.

This vortex was a naturally occurring vortex. By going through it, one could reach a place known as the Hidden Realm.

As for what was in the Hidden Realm, the writer did not give many details. From his description, after entering the Hidden Realm, players would appear in mid-air. As for him, he had died in mid-air, killed by the birds in the Hidden Realm. The adventurer had been Level-5 at the time. The only thing he knew was that the birds' levels were all indicated as a question mark. This meant that they were at least three levels above him.

He attempted to respawn in the Hidden Realm after dying. However, he could no longer find the Wind Vortex. Therefore, he could only respawn in the graveyard.

After him, many other adventurers also attempted to find the Wind Vortex, but none had succeeded. It, therefore, became a legend.

On the discussion boards, the player had included a map. However, the vortex shown on the map was nowhere as big as this one.

In the game, it was just a small vortex. According to the player, after jumping down, a levitation spell was activated on his body, and he gradually floated into the vortex. Over here, not only was the wind insanely strong, the jump was much bigger too. What's more, there didn't seem to be any levitation spell appearing.

The light spell illuminated the surroundings, allowing Link to see the not-too-distant stone wall. It was almost pitch black inside this pit, and every now and then, violent wind blasted out from the darkness as if it were reminding them that below it was empty space.

This truly was another underground space.

Link leaped forward, angling himself towards King Riel. Nana followed closely behind. In mid-air, Link waved his wand at King Riel and cast, "Spatial Shackles!"

Riel momentarily stopped in mid-air. Link grabbed Nana's hand and instructed Princess Milda, "Hold on tightly!"

Then, he released a Vector Throw behind him. Whoosh. Energy blasted out from behind him, causing him to increase speed, reaching Riel's side.

Under the restraints of the Spatial Shackles spell, Riel was stuck in a very funny position. He had assumed he was going to die, and in the last moments before his death, he had retrieved his alcohol flask, intending to finish the rest of the alcohol before dying. The alcohol was still flowing into his mouth when Link reached him.

Link grabbed the dwarf's thick hand, flinging the alcohol flask aside. Then, he canceled the Spatial Shackles spell.

Riel looked at Link and was so moved that he started crying. "Waaaah, Link, Milda, waaaaahh. You guys are truly my best buddies, when I fell off the cliff, you guys actually jumped off to accompany me in death. Waaaah, to have such friends like you, it's all worth it. My life has been worth it!"

Link was speechless.

Princess Milda couldn't take it anymore. "Dwarf, there has never been a Magician that has fallen to his own death before!"

"Hmmm, eh what? You mean, I won't die?" Riel suddenly realized what was happening. He immediately started clapping. "Hahahaha, I'm not going to die! That was such a fright! Where's my booze, I'm gonna drink to celebrate!"

His hand was feeling around his belt for his alcohol flask, but it was nowhere to be found. Link had long since thrown it away.

Link couldn't be bothered to deal with him. After falling for another short distance, he shouted, "Careful! We're reaching the bottom!"

It was still completely black ahead of them, just like a black hole. The light from the light spell was useless in lighting up the way. The ripples in the air dude to the force of the wind were becoming even stronger, and the wind that blew past their faces was like a sharp knife, cutting deeply into their skin. Link immediately cast a Level-2 protective barrier on everyone.

Two seconds later, the four of them disappeared into the black hole. Just before they disappeared, Link heard a clear voice from behind him.

"Don't run!"

He turned back to look and saw a vague black figure sticking her head over the top.

shi

Meanwhile, the four of them entered into the black hole, and it seemed like time had stopped for them.

Link embraced Nana and Princess Milda in one hand, while in the other, he grabbed on tightly to the dwarf Riel's arm. In that instant, he felt like his mind blanked out. Besides the feeling of constantly falling downwards, he could not see or feel anything. Neither could he move his body. At some point, the light spell also winked out.

This feeling was like a ghost crushi

That player's description was nowhere near as frightening as this. Who knows if this vortex will lead to the same Hidden Realm as in the game.

After falling for an unknown period of time, Link could vaguely make out some light in front of him. It got brighter and brighter until finally, the four of them appeared high up in the sky. Beneath them was an endless sea of clouds, while above them hung the brilliant sun. Birds flew through the clouds like fish swimming through the sea.

This was exactly as was described in the game.

Link let out a sigh of relief. It seems like he had entered the Hidden Realm.

He immediately cast a levitation spell onto everyone, letting them descend slowly from the sky.

"What is this place?" Riel asked in surprise.

Princess Milda pondered for a moment, before saying, "I believe we have reached the world of Aragu!"

"Aragu? As in the disappearing continent?" Link asked. He was shocked. This was a name that was not unfamiliar to him. He did not know of this place in the game. Rather, it was during his time in the East Cove Higher Magic Academy, when he was flipping through the library archives out of boredom that he came across this name. It was in a book called The Continental Adventure Guide.

In the book, it was said that in the ancient past, Firuman was a lot bigger than it was now. At that time, there was a strong and knowledgeable race, known as the Aragu. They occupied Firuman's most beautiful landmass, creating an incomparably strong magic empire, producing many illustrious, famous magical works.

However, amongst these magical works, there was one incident that happened. In the midst of that incident, the magic went out of control, and the resulting explosion caused the Firuman continent to break apartito many smaller pieces.

After the incident, Firuman was splitito many pieces. The current Firuman continent consisted of the largest piece. The Isle of Dawn was another small piece of land that broke off. According to legend, there was another large piece that drifted off towards the east. Because of the treacherous sea waves and wind, all adventurers that had gone out in search of this continent had lost their lives. In the end, none had brought back concrete evidence of another land.

No matter what, after that incident, the Aragu people and their empire disappeared. The only traces they left behind were stories in the history of some of the tribes in the current Firuman continent.

Link had always treated this as a myth and did not pay it much heed. Princess Milda, however, was a High Elf. The High Elves were an ancient race, and Princess Milda would not talk nonsense without having any basis for her words. Therefore, Link still trusted her words.

Princess Milda surveyed their surroundings, picking up some clues. She pointed to some of the birds flying through the crowds, saying, "Look there, at those birds. Their wingspan is over 30 feet long, their beaks are bright red, long, and sharp like a spear. No such bird exists on Firuman now. However, I've seen fossils of this kind of birds in the museum on the Isle of Dawn. Based on the research by historians among my tribe, these red spear birds lived over 100,000 years ago and were extremely ferocious birds of prey..."

"Hold it, you said, birds of prey?" Link immediately interrupted. He remembered that in the game, the other player had died from being pecked to death.

Princess Milda also realized Link's concern. They were about half a mile from the nearest cloud. The red spear birds had yet to notice them, but at the rate they were descending, they would soon encounter the birds.

The dwarf rubbed his forehead. "I hope these birds don't give us too rough a welcome. My old bones can't take it anymore."

As Riel was starting to feel a headache coming, they heard a sharp voice coming from above them.

"Don't run! I'm gonna get you!"

Link looked up and saw Saroviny just above their heads, rapidly catching up to them. What made matters worse was that Saroviny had a pair of dark purple wings extending out of her back. Needless to say, these wings were inherited from her father's fallen angel bloodline.

Fortunately, amidst all this misfortune, Saroviny had come alone.

Yet, even this was enough to give Link a hard time. He did not dare to get tangled up with her. Making use of the distance between them, he did not hesitate to use a Dimensional Jump to get further away.

Whoosh. A column of white light appeared, and Link and the others vanished from their original spot. A moment later, they re-appeared below the cloud. From there, they could see dense forests covering the land. At the same time, the red spear birds had noticed them.

Caw, caw! Immediately, the red spear birds chased after them.

Link had no time to play with these birds. He immediately activated another Dimensional Jump to teleport to the ground.

The forest here was very different from that on Firuman. The trees here were extremely tall and thick. Every tree was at least 30 feet wide, reaching a height of 600 feet. Even the grass and vegetation were ridiculously huge.

Beside where they landed was broadleaf grass. The grass was, in fact, bigger than a banana leaf by about three times. The way it drooped down made it look like a natural shelter.

"What kind of shi

"Look up, the demon is being attacked by the red spear birds!" Princess Milda pointed out.

Link saw it too. As Saroviny chased them through the clouds, the red spear birds also noticed her and started to pursue her.

Link's eyesight was excellent, and he watched how Saroviny drew out her knife to slash at the red spear bird. As her blade collided with the bird's beak, it let out a harsh clang sound, causing sparks to fly out. However, the beak was not damaged at all. After being dazed for a moment, the red spear bird immediately resumed its pursuit of Saroviny.

Link had no time to admire the strength of this predator. "This is a good chance, she won't be able to escape for a while, let's use this chance to get away!"

The four of them ran through the mysterious forest. After a few minutes, Saroviny was no more than a black speck in the sky. It wasn't because Link's party was traveling quickly. Rather, Saroviny was chased far away by over ten red spear birds.

This was truly a frightening place.

Link kept his senses on full alert as he slowed down his pace. As they passed another giant tree, all of a sudden, ten people appeared out of the vegetation.

Their clothes were all tattered, as though they were simply wearing rags. They were thin and gaunt and had sharp noses, looking almost like humans, but possessing sharp ears like those of elves. It was perhaps more accurate to describe them as elves rather than humans.

After jumping out, one of them pointed a long spear at Link, speaking in a strange language that consisted of lots of howls.

Link could not understand, but the system helped him translate what the other party was saying.

Basically, this was what was being said. Dear friends from afar, you came from a distant place and met with me. This is the grace that the lord has showered upon me. I must reciprocate this grace. Therefore, I will use all my strength to destroy you and take all your possessions, enjoy your women and beat up your children!

"Isn't this simply robbery?" This was Link's first time hearing such eloquence prior to a robbery.

Link could understand what he said about women, but as for children...?

What children? Don't tell me, it's Riel?

## 341. Aragu Empire

Mysterious forest

Dwarf Riel held two battle axes and muttered to Link, "These are the poorest elves I've ever seen. Master Link, do you know what they're talking about?"

They were indeed poor. Not only were they thin as bags of bones, but their clothes also couldn't cover their bodies. Some only had a piece of hide while others just wrapped leaves around their waist. The one who jumped out was in the best state. Other than the fur hide, he also had a metal spear and a damaged metal ring around his neck.

Link activated the Dragon King's Fury magic sword in preparation. "I can't really understand. I think it's a dialect, but it seems they're here to rob us. Milda, can you understand?"

Unexpectedly, Milda nodded. "They're speaking the ancient elven language, a really ancient one. I'll cast a Consonance Spell."

Consonance Spell

Level-2 Secret Spell

Effect: The receiver of the spell will instantly learn the elven language.

(Note: Spell unique to the elves.)

She lightly tapped Link and Riel with her want. Two thumb-sized balls of light melted into their bodies. A few seconds later, they could understand the screaming of the elven robbers.

"Brother, I think they're Magicians!" an elf whispered to the leader.

"The leader seems to be from Aragu. From his clothes, he looks to be a noble," another robber said.

The leader lost confidence. He waved his spear and said to Link, "My friend from a faraway place, I've decided to let you go this time. Leave your wealth behind and go."

Link was curious about this world; they seemed to all be really powerful. For example, these robbers were extremely thin, but from their auras, the weakest was at Level-4. The leader was even at Level-6.

That wasn't too strong, but they were robbers in the lowest class. If there was an elven kingdom here, the strongest would be impossibly powerful.

The leader was losing patience but didn't dare act brashly. Brandishi

Link thought for a moment and quietly took out a few dozen coins. He squeezed them and cast an enchantment, melting all the coins into a fist-sized block of gold. Then he flicked his finger while activating the Magician's Hand. The gold slowly floated towards the leader.

"We are just travelers from a faraway place. Coming here was purely coincidental. We want to know the specific situation inside. Who is the king? Who does this land belong to? Are there any cities nearby? If you answer, this gold is yours."

Gold was clearly also the currency in this world. When it appeared, the elves all stared unblinkingly at it. It seemed that gold was quite valuable.

When the gold flew beside the leader, he reached out to take it. But there was a soft sound and the gold stopped moving. Link had used Spatial Restraint and added 1000 Dragon Power points, making the spatial frequency very high.

The leader grasped the gold to tug it back. But no matter how he tried, the gold wouldn't move. It was like it was stuck there. He activated Battle Aura, and his body shi

The trick was marvelous and incomprehensible.

The other elves looked at Link with terror. The leader seemed to sense something. He shuddered a bit and let go from the cold. "Friend, is that for real?" he pushed on. "If I answer the questions, this gold will be ours?"

He didn't mention the robbery anymore. Only an idiot would try to rob someone so powerful.

"Of course. After my questions, this is yours."

"Okay, okay, I'll tell you now. We're in the Great Beast Forest as you can see, everything is huge. But we're at the edge, so it's not that dangerous. Go east from here for 30 miles, and there's a small town called Spring Leaf Village. The lord is the bloody Butcher Balha. The Spring Leaf Village is a small place of the Aragu Empire... Oh, right, let me tell you, we're in the Aragu Empire right now. There's no king, just an emperor. The emperor is Calagu XVI. He lives in the City of Gold."

The robber rambled on. Link's group learned a lot about this world.

"You said that this gentleman looks like an Araguan noble," Milda said. "What do Araguans look like?"

The leader looked at Milda and was mesmerized. However, he was scared of Link, so he quickly looked away. Then he said fiercely, "The Araguans are similar to us from Lagu, but their ears are different. They have round ears like this gentleman. They enslave us Laguans!"

With that, he turned to Link and said, "Sir, I must remind you that your slave is too beautiful, like the moon in the sky. You should cover her up, or else people will come to take the moon. It'll be really, really troublesome then."

Link didn't expect that the elves would become slaves. It was so interesting.

Milda didn't find it odd though. She covered her face with a veil and then put on a hat. At the same time, she whispered an explanation to Link. "In our historical records, the ancient Araguans were extremely powerful. They ruled over most races in the continent. In addition to my face, the dwarves and Yabba were all slaves. I think that not only did we teleport, we also time traveled. We've returned to ancient times."

Link had this feeling too, but it was all a guess now. He needed more information to prove it.

"What year is it?" he continued asking.

"Year?" The leader was confused.

"Epoch. What epoch is it?" Link tried again.

The leader was still confused. He thought for a while, scratching his head, and said, "You're probably asking about the Aragu calendar, right? It's the year 3162."

The Aragu calendar was nothing like the later Holy calendar. As for year 3162, there was no reference number, and this number had no meaning.

"It seems that we're in a new world," Riel said softly.

"That's possible, or we just came to a new land or realm. Or we traveled through time. We can't get much information from the robbers, and we're short on time. Let's go to the Spring Leaf Village."

It would be best if they time traveled. Otherwise, they only had two months. Within the two months, they must find reinforcements and return to the Orida Fortress. That was their mission.

The three nodded seriously.

Link canceled the Spatial Restraint on the block of gold. "It's yours."

The gold dropped down, and the leader caught it with two hands. A smile bloomed on his face. The gold was the size of a fist. It was enough for them to live off of for half a year.

Link's group turned and left, walking eastward.

Seeing them leave, an elf asked quietly, "Brother, should we tell them there's a group of Blood-eyed Robbers on that road?"

The leader smacked his head. "Shut up! He didn't ask, so we won't say it. Why should we look for trouble? Come, let's go to Spring Leaf Village to buy a goat. We'll feat."

"Yeah!" The elven robbers were immediately in a good mood. All of them started drooling.

The other side

Plop! Saroviny rushed into the hole of a large tree. As soon as she entered it, there was a series of tut-tuts. The flock of strange birds arrived and started pecking at the tree. Thankfully, the tree was strong. Even though wood splinters flew crazily, it protected Saroviny inside.

The birds went crazy around the tree for a long while, cawing for a whole half hour before leaving unhappily.

Inside the tree, Saroviny clutched her chest, stillusttled. What place is this? It's too scary!

The birds actually had Level-8 strength, and there were many of them. At first, only a dozen attacked her, and she didn't mind. She even killed some, but it was like hitting a beehive. Hundreds came all of a sudden.

She was frightened and could only escape frantically. After a while, she finally discovered the tree. She ran with all her mightito it and escaped.

Relieved now, she suddenly heard a hiss. Turning around, she saw a black spotted snake thicker than her waist inside the tree. Its eyes were green and about the size of her fist. They were like two will-o-wisps.

Seeing Saroviny turn around, the snake hissed again. Then there was a poof, and green mist sprayed towards Saroviny's face.

She reacted quickly and immediately held her breath. Simultaneously, she activated her demon power and blocked the mist.

But the snake reacted quickly too. During this, it curled and wrapped around Saroviny. Then it started squeezing, instantly stealing Saroviny's breath. The snake was abnormally powerful, and she couldn't struggle free. Both her hands were entangled and couldn't move.

No, I'm going to die like this! Gritting her teeth, Saroviny screamed. Demon power spun wildly and exploded!

Boom! With a muffled boom, the snake swelled up and fell down from Saroviny's body.

Ack, this mist is so poisonous! Saroviny was in bad shape too. To use her power, she had to take a breath of the poison. Now, she felt dizzy. Everything doubled in her vision. After struggling, she actually lost consciousness.

When Saroviny woke up again after some time, she found herself in a small cage. It hung on some long-haired demon. There were many other cages on the demon, all filled with people. Most were elves, but there were also dwarves. The snake had now been skinned and was being grilled over a fire. Humans dressed in leather hide sat around the fire, eating the snake while laughing.

They put me in a cage. How horrible! Saroviny's fury was about to explode, but then she discovered that her power was sealed by something. She couldn't control it at all. There was something cold on her neck. Touching it, she realized it was a metal ring.

The ring had a mysterious power that locked all her demon power.

I'm...a slave now? Saroviny never imagined that she would be in this state. Even scarier, she'd lost all power.

After a while, the humans had their fill. One walked towards the demon. He tossed a bundle of hay to the demon, and it started eating quietly.

"Let me go! Let me go!" Saroviny yelled.

The human heard. He walked over and looked at the cat-like black-haired girl. He reached into the cage and patted the girl's cheeks with a smile. "Pretty girl, don't be scared. When we get to Spring Leaf Village, I'll sell you to a good home. You'll have a good life."

Saroviny tried to bite the hand, but there was a crack. She missed. The human retracted his hand, fast as lightning.

"Kitty, you have to change your attitude. Otherwise, you'll have a hard time in the future." The human was still smiling but stopped paying attention to Saroviny. He walked to his bedroll by the fire and fell asleep.

Saroviny stared at him in shock. The reasoning was simple: a slave trader in such crude leather had Level-9 power!

This world was terrifying!

## 342. This Place Was Really Shitty

Hiss hiss. From deep in the grass came a soft hiss and suddenly, a figure flew by.

"That seemed like a person," Riel said, tiptoeing. He shaded his eyes with his hands as he looked at the direction he saw the figure disappear in.

He was roughly only about four feet tall, and the grass was a bit taller than him at four and a half feet. Despite all his efforts to make himself taller, he still could not see past the grass.

"Nana, catch him!" Link ordered.

He had seen it too. After getting his Dragon Power, his eyesight had improved greatly. He had seen the figure in a grey leather armor and a mask. The figure looked highly skilled.

That figure appeared in the forest, leaving no traces. After it saw them, it turned and disappeared. That was very suspicious, and Link had to find out why.

Nana immediately put down Princess Milda before shooting towards the figure. Half a second later, Nana had crossed a distance of 900 feet and had caught up to the figure. She stretched out her hand to grab onto him.

That person's reaction was instantaneous. He ducked, rolled on the floor and jumped up, turning back with dagger in hand. His body flashed and all of a sudden, he had his dagger stabbing towards Nana's neck.

Clang. Nana withdrew her Breakpoint dagger and countered, slicing through her opponent's dagger. Then, she punched towards the figure's head.

That person was shocked. Nonetheless, he reacted and blocked Nana's arm, retaliating with a punch towards her chest.

Nana retreated backwards, dodging his punch, then shot forward once more, stabbing with her dagger.

Unexpectedly, he dodged again. Although he had lost his dagger and was at a disadvantage in a fight with weapons, he was still able to fight back. He crouched low, punching, clawing, and kicking at Nana's lower body. Every strike was extremely vicious.

Nana had never faced an attack like this before. In the face of this attack, she could only dodge and retreat. Even though she held her dagger in her hand, she was unexpectedly on the receiving end of the attacks.

Bamm. Suddenly, a dimensional ball exploded, stopping the enemy in his tracks. Link had arrived. However, immediately after that, the person's body shone with white light. Link felt his Spatial Shackles becoming unstable as the person struggled to escape.

Link was shocked. This person has to be Level-8 at least. This is ridiculous.

Nana had charged back in, landing a punch in the person's belly, knocking him to the ground. Then, she stepped heavily onto his head, preventing him from moving.

Link, Princess Milda and Riel walked towards the person, expressions of surprise and shock on their face.

"This fellow wearing tattered leather armor is actually a Level-8 expert?" Riel asked, eyes wide. He almost couldn't believe what he was seeing.

What kind of shi

Princess Milda carefully assessed this person. He was about 30 years of age and wore a mask that hid all his features. However, his ears were sharp and pointy, although not quite as sharp as an elf, but just a bit more rounded. She turned back to look at Link, saying, "This is a Halfling."

Link used his Magician's Hand to remove the person's mask.

His looks were ordinary. He didn't have the same features as other Halflings. On his forehead, in between his eyes was a tattoo, a blood red eye. From afar, it looked like a third eye.

Although his head was being stepped on, his expression was tited with hatred. He squinted at Link and laughed coldly. "Magician, don't even dream of leaving the Great Beast Forest!"

He spoke in the same elven language as the thief from earlier. Link and the rest could naturally understand.

Link frowned as he asked, "Are you together with those bandits?"

"Nonsense! I am from the Blood Eye Mercenaries. I'm a mercenary. You guys better release me quickly, otherwise, you'll regret ever coming to this world."

Riel laughed coldly. "Hmph, bandits are bandits. Once you open your mouth, you give away your identity. Sir Link, let me smash his arm with my hammer, he won't talk so much nonsense after that."

Who would have thought that the bandit actually laughed at this. "Hahaha, Sir? With such weak magic, you actually call him sir? Hilarious. Little dwarf, if you are lucky enough not to die, you can visit the Yellow Golden City. This Magician won't amount to anything there."

Even after he was captured, he was still as arrogant as ever and did not tone down his taunting. It was as though he knew Link and the others wouldn't dare to do anything to him.

Evidently, Link and the rest weren't worth anything in his eyes.

Riel was infuriated at his words and was about to attack him.

Link stopped him. From what had happened, he could feel that this world was not simple. At this moment, he laughed. "Sir is just a title we use as a joke between ourselves. We're just passing through and we're sorry to have disturbed you. This is just a misunderstanding. What say you forget about all this?"

"Hmph, it's too late for that now!" He laughed coldly, then stared at Princess Milda. "Legu woman, there's no use hiding. I could smell out a beauty like you no matter how you hide. Heehee, my leader will surely savor you."

This caused the three of them to frown.

For a scout to possess Level-8 strength would mean that his leader must be incredibly strong as well. He would definitely be at least Level-9, right?

Riel grumbled, "We just escaped a wolf, but find ourselves in a tiger's den. How unlucky!"

Princess Milda looked at Link. "What do we do now?"

Link was silent. He was considering his options.

The scout had seen that Link was the leader. He smirked as he said, "Are you thinking of killing me to keep me silent? My Blood Eye Mercenaries take vengeance very seriously. If you kill me, they will definitely seek you out and then use the most horrible methods to torture you for a hundred days!"

In the past, he had always used his mercenary troop name to scare people. Anyone who heard that would immediately release him and escape for their lives.

However, he had ran into the wrong people this time.

After hearing his words, Link immediately gestured towards Nana. Nana used force to stamp down on his head, and the scout's head exploded like a watermelon. The blood splattered all over the ground.

Since they had already provoked the enemy and there was no way to avoid the trouble, then they might as well do a clean job of killing them. As for this fellow's threats, this was something to worry about later. They would deal with whatever came later.

Link threw out a dimensional ball, and softly said, "Rend!"

Zaaap. The scout's body soon turned into a crystal like white powder.

After having done all of this, Link said, "Legends say that in ancient times, Legendary figures were common. It seems like we've returned such a time. In here, we cannot rely on such a strength anymore. This means that things are only going to become more dangerous."

He then said to Princess Milda, "Disguise yourself well, make yourself look as ugly as possible. Riel, your hammers and armor look too valuable, hide them and wear plain armor. I've got to hide my wand too. This sword..."

Before he finished what he was saying, the Dragon King's Wrath sword suddenly turned dull. The dragon-like scales on the sword became ordinary looking lines. It looked like a regular factory-made sword.

"Seems like I can still use this," Link said.

The reality was right in front of them. Riel and Princess Milda didn't argue further and immediately got to work.

Riel's armor clanked as he took it off and changed into his most ordinary armor. As for his weapons, he took out a large iron hammer from his dimensional bracelet.

"This was the hammer I used when I was training, never thought I'd use it again," Riel reminisced, moved.

Princess Milda was a woman and still had to care about her modesty. She walked behind a large leaf to change, speedily taking off her outfit.

As this was happening, Link asked the Dragon King's Wrath sword spirit.

Is this the ancient century?

The sword spirit replied, although a bit hesitant. "It is somewhat similar, but not quite. Do you feel that? The Mana here is thick and bountiful, at least ten times more than on Firuman. It is higher than it was even in my time."

Link was now a bit confused. Have you heard of the Aragu Empire?

"I've heard about it before but I can't remember clearly."

There was no point in asking anymore. Link only became more and more confused.

About five minutes later, Princess Milda emerged from behind the grass.

She wore a simple pale green leather armor which looked simple and not very eye-catching. However, upon closer inspection, you would discover that the armor was more than it seemed.

Princess Milda also let down her braided hair, changing to a simple ponytail. Still, it could not hide her beauty, from her light purple eyes and flawless skin, sharp features and her diva like figure.

She simply could not hide her beauty and brilliance. Even if a female Goddess dressed in simple clothes, she would still be a female Goddess. In fact, it gave her a simple charm.

King Riel shook his head. "No, no, no, Princess Milda, you'll give us away like this."

Princess Milda replied in frustration, "This is already the outfit I like the least. There's nothing worse."

She was a princess, well-respected by everyone. Every single one of her outfits was worth 100 gold. This was her cheapest set of leather armor, but it was still worth over 50 gold. She simply didn't own any simple common clothing.

Link also didn't have any. He was no longer the poor simple Magician from the past. He was the Lord of Ferde, a great Magician. His clothes were similarly top grade.

Riel was the King of the mountains. With that kind of status, how could he wear torn and tattered clothing?

As much as the three of them tried to change into something common, it could not hide the truth from people with keen eyes.

Link also could not do anything about it. "Let's just go on like this. We'll try to stay as hidden as possible. We'll decide what to do when we get to Spring Leaf Village.

In order to avoid danger, the four of them moved inconspicuously, carefully proceeding eastwards.

Fortunately, they didn't meet any unexpected situations on this journey. After walking for about half a day, they reached a stone wall that was 60 feet high. This entire wall was made out of anti-magic rock. Both sides of the wall were guarded by soldiers. The guards wore seemingly normal battle armor, but they themselves exuded an aura that was exceedingly shocking.

King Riel eyed them, swallowing his saliva. "This is Spring Leaf Village? It has a 60-foot-tall stone wall and such strong guards guarding the city wall!"

He instinctively felt that the soldier could kill him with one slash.

Link could accurately gauge the opponent's strength. He reported, "Level-8 strength, two of them."

Riel was beginning to miss the demons in Firuman. At least those demons were a low level and easy to deal with, even though they were numerous beyond compare. He, the King of the Mountains, could barely deal with mountain bandits.

Princess Milda sighed. "We're just nameless pawns now."

Even as she sighed, the four of them caught sight of a huge beast. On the beast's back hung cages filled with people as it swaggered towards Spring Leaf Village.

Link casually glanced over, then blink and focused his gaze once again on one of the cages. "Look, over there. That demon has been captured."

As they looked over, they found that, indeed, in one particular cage, there was a black-haired young woman hugging her legs as she knelt on the wooden cage floor. Her face was extremely depressed and down-spirited.

Hey, wasn't that the one that had chased them to death? The demon commander famed for being half a step into the Legendary realm.

"Hmmm..." Riel looked at Link with a serious concerned expression on his face. "There is too many people on the road up ahead. Let's steal some normal looking clothes. These clothes make me fearful.

This place was really shi

Princess Milda's heart was jumping right out of her chest. "I need to touch up my disguise. This is too dangerous!"

Even a Level-9 demon was captured.

Link nodded his head. "Yes, let's go steal some clothing."

In the mountain forest

Two halflings appeared, standing around a pile of white powder. One of the Halflings carefully studied the pile of white powder. After a while, he stood up. "This was done by a Magician. They have four people, two male and two female.

"Rohan cannot die in vain. Ollie, report this to the chief. I'm gonna circle around and see if I can get any leads."

"Okay," said the other, as he turned and ran into the distance.

## 343. The First Legendary Magician

Scrape, scrape.

Riel dragged the fourth unconscious passerby into the tall grass beside the road to the Spring Leaf Village from the Great Beast Forest.

This passerby was a rare fat man. He wasn't too tall either—barely past 5'3'' and wore a short dirty flaxen robe. Riel removed the clothing and put it on himself. While doing so, he muttered, "I, the King of the Mountains, have become a robber. What did I do in my past life to deserve this?"

He finally put the clothes on. The sleeves and pants were still too long. He looked like a circus clown and had to roll the cuffs.

Link walked over. He tossed some coins beside the unconscious fatty and said, "Alright, we should be able to go to the town now."

Right now, Link wore an old cowhide armor. He had a plain red craft sword at his waist. Hishi

Milda looked the most different. She lowered her hair and mussed it up. Forcefully bearing the disgust, she rubbed dirt in her hair, face, neck, and every other patch of bare skin. She wore a short dress and baggy pants that regular women wore. There were even two ugly patches by her butt.

The dirt covered the luster of her hair and skin. The baggy clothing completely covered her beautiful figure. Now, she was a slightly attractive village girl.

"Okay, this should be enough. Let's go."

The four walked towards Spring Leaf Village. Though it was a village, it was similar in size to one of Firuman's average cities. The roads outside the village were wide and smooth. People passed to and fro. Most were adventurers and looked like humans. There were occasionally elves and dwarves, but they either had bronze rings around their necks or were dressed in rags. They looked utterly abject.

Link's group's disguises were successful. No one looked at them strangely along the road as if they were regular passersby.

At the entrance of the village, the guard looked at Link and then at Milda and Riel. "Are they your slaves?" he asked.

"Ah...yes, my slaves." Link quickly reacted and nodded, following the guard's flow.

"Why aren't they wearing collar rings?"

Along the way, Link had some idea of the customs here. Now, he nodded and said, "I just bought them. I was preparing to put the rings on inside the village."

Surprisingly, the guard shook his head. "Slaves can't enter the village without rings!"

"Ah, then what should I do?" Link asked. He'd already seen that the guard had rings hanging from his waist.

As expected, the guard took these rings off. "Three coins for one. If you don't put them on, it'll be seen as your slave breaking the law! The Spring Leaf Village has the right to punish all slaves breaking the law!"

It was only two copper rings; it wasn't that big of a deal. Link had the currency used here, taken from the passersby they'd knocked out. However, he only had two coins. He couldn't take out coins from the Norton Kingdom either and he'd only taken a few dozens of those too. He secretly made a few golden nuggets and gave it to the guard with the coins. "This is all I have. Is it enough?"

The guard wasn't too picky. Golden coins and nuggets were the same and Link had obviously given more than needed. He weighed the gold and smiled, handing two rings to Link. "Take them. Recently bought slaves are wild, and you have to be stiter. Don't be a pushover!"

Stared at by the guard, Link had to put the rings onto Milda and Riel. Strangely, the rings seemed just like regular copper rings, but once on the neck, they immediately closed seamlessly. Milda and Riel's expressions turned odd, and Link knew that something was wrong. But this was the city gate, and the guard was there. He couldn't say anything and just walked in.

Inside the city, Milda said, "This ring is strange. My power is completely sealed."

"Me too, I can't use any Battle Aura!"

Link had checked the rings earlier. He hadn't noticed anything strange and was surprised to find out it had this effect. Thinking a bit, he said, "After we find an inn, I'll study this closely."

The streets of the Spring Leaf Village were similarly busy. People walked to and fro, just like outside the village. Humans were the majority; there were elves and dwarves, but they were all slaves. Each one wore copper rings; there was no exception.

There was a variety of roadside stores—daily products, weaponry, armor, magic equipment, and more. Link looked at a few magic equipment stores and discovered the craftsmanshi

Especially for material, the rare materials in Firuman were also rare here.

"At least we won't go hungry." Link had many rare materials in his dimensional storage, as well as many coins. From the prices he'd seen, his stuff was worth at least 10000 coins. They could live by selling material.

As they walked, a bookstore appeared. Link's eyes brightened. "Let's take a look."

Books were the best aid in quickly understanding this world.

The group walked in, but at the door, a human worker stopped them. "Sir, slaves can't enter the bookstore. Have them wait outside."

Link knitted his brows. What was wrong with this world? Did they discriminate against the slaves of other races so badly?

He was forced to say to Milda and Riel, "Wait here for me. I'll be out soon. Nana, you wait for me too."

In the bookstore, Link walked around and quickly found The Encyclopedia of Aragu. After paying, he walked out and said, "Let's go find an inn now."

Milda and Riel were pissed now but couldn't show their anger. This world was too horrible to them; there was discrimination everywhere. Just then, they saw an elf get beaten to death by his master. The surrounding people didn't bat an eyelash as if it were a normal thing.

It was terrifying. They could only stick close to Link.

After walking for a bit longer, Link suddenly heard a strange conversation.

"Hey, did you hear? Magician Rockham is going to accept apprentices again."

"Psh, apprentice my ass. They just work for him and barely learn anything after three years. It's a complete waste of time."

"That's true. I've never seen anyone stingier than Magician Rockham. He's a complete slave to money!"

Link was interested. From these words, he received two important pieces of information. First, Magician Rockham was an important figure and very famous. Second, he didn't have a great reputation. He was stingy and lacked Apprentices.

In this strange place, any random mercenary was at Level-7 or Level-8. There were a few at Level-9 too. As a foreigner, he didn't know anything and could easily getito trouble. It would be much safer with support.

Thinking of this, Link walked towards the speakers. "hello sirs," he said. "I am a Magician from out of town. I'm not quite familiar with here... Did you say that Magician Rockham is looking for apprentices?"

The two exchanged glances, and one laughed. "Foreigner, I'll advise you against this. Rockham isn't easy to deal with."

"If you can learn anything from him, then you're this!" The other man gave him thumbs up.

Link smiled and continued asking, "Can you tell me his address?"

One man pointed towards the village center. Chuckling, he said, "You don't have to look around. See, the tall tower in the village center is Rockham's factory of blood, sweat, and tears."

Link looked over. There indeed was a tall tower in a completely different style from the Norton Kingdom. It was a round white tower, like a lamppost from Earth. The tube was very simple.

When he looked back, the two were already walking away, chuckling. They looked at Link as if he was an idiot.

Milda walked up and whispered, "Are you planning on relying on him?"

She was a princess and was most familiar with these tactics. She obviously knew Link's motive after hearing his question.

Link nodded. "It's too dangerous here. They're so cruel to the slaves and are too violent. They probably won't be too nice to humans either. We have no authority or power here. If we get the wrong attention, it'll be bad news."

If this was Firuman, like in Creekwood Village, Link wouldn't have these worries. In the Norton Kingdom, laws were still effective, but here, Link was completely unfamiliar. He didn't feel safe at all.

Milda nodded. "That's the only solution."

It looked to be only two in the afternoon. It was still early, so they walked towards the round tower in the village center. Spring Leaf Village wasn't too big. After around twenty minutes, the group stood outside the tower.

Looking in from the fence, they could see that the tower was only a small portion of the magic field. There were many other beautiful buildings and a huge garden square. Many young Magicians walked on the square, all looking stressed and frazzled.

"It looks like a magic academy," Milda said.

Riel was too short to see what was inside. His strength had been locked too so he could only jump up and down. "Tell me what's inside."

Just then, Link suddenly felt someone looking at him. He turned around and saw an old man with a pointed hat and white beard. Seeing Link look at him, the old man asked with a smile, "Young man, do you want to learn magic from me?"

Link was completely shaken. He could feel an overpowering Mana aura from the elder. It was almost endless. Standing beside him, it felt like a black hole. The Mana's attractive force made one dizzy. It told Link clearly that this elder was a true Legendary Magician!

This was the first mortal Legendary Magician Link had met after coming to Firuman!

## 344. Hourglass Plane

Spring Leaf Village

"Are you Great Magician Rockman?" Link asked.

The old man's smile widened. A glint appeared in his eyes.

Magician Rockman shook his head. "Young man, please don't call me a great Magician. I'm still far from being a great Magician. However, I can see that you have great potential! How about this, would you like to study magic from me?"

Link didn't rush to answer him. He waved his hands helplessly and said, "But I have no money."

Rockman pulled Link's hand warmly. "Haha, why talk about money? I, Rockman, have never asked for money from students learning magic. Come come, follow me. Are these your slaves? Follow me... Oh hey! This is a magic puppet! Not bad."

He dragged Link by the arm as he walked into the yard. When he reached the yard, Link saw a person standing there.

It was a black-haired young girl. Her skin was fair, and her features were delicate. On her neck was a slave collar, but Link immediately recognized her as the demon princess Savoriny.

"This is??" Link jumped backwards in shock. Princess Milda and Riel also retreated behind Link as though they were facing a strong enemy.

Rockman laughed as he introduced, "Her? She's a new slave a bought. Pretty isn't she? Don't mind her, I'll gift her to someone soon."

As he said this, the white-bearded old Magician shouted, "Fu, Fu!"

Soon, a fat-faced middle-aged man walked out. This middle-aged man was also wearing a slave collar. When he saw Rockman, he bowed and asked, "Master, you called?"

"See this pretty lady? Send her as a gift to Great Lord Bal. Bring her away and train her."

Newly bought slaves were unusable. They were disobedient and rough and didn't know how to serve people. They needed to be trained. This was especially so for a slave that was being given as a gift to a great lord. Such a slave needed even more training so as not to lose face for the giver.

Once Fu heard that this was to be a gift for the Great Lord, he respectfully acknowledged the order. "Master, rest assured. Give this slave three months, I guarantee that she will be as tame and gentle as a sheep."

"Okay, go on," Rockman said, pleased.

Fu beckoned towards Savoriny. Although her face was bitter, she didn't dare to resist. She obediently followed along.

Link and the others were shocked speechless. They simply couldn't believe that this was the ferocious demon commander that they knew.

Princess Milda and Riel were even more afraid. They had slave collars on them too. Could it be that there was no way to break the collar? Otherwise, why would the demon princess still be so obedient?

Meanwhile, Rockman turned back to look at Link. "Young man, your two slaves don't look like they have been trained. Would you like Fu to train them for you? He's a great slave trainer."

Link hurriedly refused. "No thank you, I'm already used to them."

"Okay then. Come with me, let me find you your accommodations."

Link said, "Sir, could you arrange for my slaves to stay with me? I grew up with them around and would like them nearby."

Rockman's face was neutral. "Haha, that's no problem. You decide what to do with your slaves. I'll find you a comfortable place to your liking!"

He dragged Link along with him into the yard.

There was no reason for Rockman to be so welcoming. It seemed like he really was looking for a student to teach magic to. Furthermore, he was surely extremely stingy. However, for Link, that didn't matter. Link needed someone to depend on to find a place to settle down and understand this world better. Therefore, Link let Magician Rockman pull him into the yard.

Princess Milda, Riel, and Nana naturally followed behind Link.

Along the way, Link realized that although this fellow was old, he was still strong. He seemed to be equivalent to a Level-7 Warrior. He also didn't use a wand but a magic sword instead, just like Link.

The sword gave off a mysterious aura, something that could not be underestimated. Surely, it was a Legendary weapon. However, its appearance was crude, even pathetic. It looked like the work of a three-legged cat.

On his way in, Link also met many students of magic. However, none of them were as welcoming as Rockman. Many of them look disinterested. In fact, there were even those that looked over at Link with a sneer. There was a cold laugh on their face, as though saying, "Look at that, another fool has been tricked by Rockman."

Rockman pulled Link to a solitary stone building in the side of the yard. "Here, this is yours. Doesn't it look comfortable?"

The stone building was about 860 square feet wide, with two floors. On the upper floor, there was a balcony. Outside, there was also a small garden that looked rather beautiful.

"It is beautiful. But I haven't even done anything!" Link responded. He turned back to look at all the other Magicians. Once in a while, they would enter their wooden huts. Compared to his stone building, the difference was just too great.

He wasn't a kid who would believe that a random old stranger would treat him so nicely for no good reason. That person must have some kind of motive.

Rockman laughed. He pointed at the Magic Ring that Link wore. "Did you make that ring?"

Link nodded.

"The handiwork is not bad. I'll give you materials and talisman blueprints. If you help me create talismans, I'll teach you magic. What do you think?" So, Rockman was attracted to Link because of the magic items he wore.

Whether it was the magic sword on his waist or the ring on his hands or even the magic puppet by his side, they all looked flawless.

Perhaps the magic on these items wasn't particularly strong, but because of their appearance, their value would increase by at least 50%.

To Rockman, as long as that person could help him earn money, that person was a talent that deserved privileged treatment!

Link now knew his intentions. Link immediately agreed. "No problem! I just wanted to learn magic from you."

"Great, great!" Rockman laughed uproariously. The wrinkles on his face bloomed like a flower. "Truly a young man with determination! Here, this is a Tier-1 talisman. See if you can do it."

Link received the talisman blueprint from Rockman. Princess Milda curiously looked over, wanting to see the blueprint. Immediately, Rockman frowned and shouted, "How unruly! Get back to your position!"

This was Princess Milda's first time being scolded like this. Her face was flushed, but she could not talk back either. She bowed her head and retreated.

Link did not say anything to interfere. He simply continued looking at the blueprints.

He realized that what Rockman called a Tier-1 talisman was actually not that complex. The magic knowledge inside was similar to that of Level-4 magic on Firuman. However, the way it was used and arranged was almost like that of a Level-8 magic spell. It required huge amounts of patience and meticulousness. The smallest mistake could ruin the whole talisman.

"This shouldn't be too difficult..." Link said.

"Not difficult? Hahaha, you're truly someone with talent. Young man, what is your name?" This old man was one of a kind. It was only now that he asked Link for his name.

"I'm Link, this is Mil..."

Before he could finish, Rockman interrupted him. "Don't tell me the names of your slaves. Even if you did, I wouldn't remember them. How long would it take you to finish the talisman? Is two weeks enough?"

Link was at a loss. They take two weeks for a talisman like this?

Before, Link would take about an hour for one talisman. After obtaining his pure Dragon Power, he could maintain a state of high concentration for longer periods of time. Three days was enough for him to craft one talisman. In response to Rockman's offer of two weeks, Link thought for a moment before saying, "Ten days is enough for me."

Unexpectedly, Rockman frowned and said, "Ten days? Young man, it's good to be ambitious but do not be overly ambitious. How do you expect me to believe your big words?"

It seems like two weeks was already a high expectation. This talisman would take over two weeks on average. Link wracked his brains to find a suitable reply. "Sir, ten days is the time I take if I expend all my energy. I cannot do it for too long. I need to rest for a week after each talisman. So on average, it takes me about 18 days."

"Oh, so that's how it is. There's no need to rush so, two weeks is fine. After two weeks, if you give me the talisman equipment, I'll give you a Tier-1 magic book and answer three questions on Tier-1 magic for you."

"No problem," Link agreed, nodding.

"That's good. Then I won't bother you. This is the key to your lodgings. Everything has been prepared inside for you. There's also a special room for doing talismans. You can begin anytime."

After handing the keys to Link, Rockman turned and left. On his way out, he saw another student walking slowly. Rockman kicked him, causing the student to stumble. "What are you wasting time for? You've got no talent and only know how to skive. Hurry and help me wash the Winter Night Grass!" Rockman scolded.

His attitude towards this student and Link were two worlds apart.

Riel whispered quietly, "Link, how confident are you? I feel that if you can't complete what you promised, we'd be chased out after two weeks."

"Of course I'm sure. Let's go inside. I'll try to figure out what's the deal with the collar," Link said.

After entering the room, Link began inspecting the collar.

He found that the collar had no seam lines to show where it was connected. After knocking on it, it produced a thick sound that didn't seem like either metal or wood. Furthermore, there were no talisman markings whatsoever on it. It was as though it was completely natural.

"This workmanshi

He gestured to Nana. "Try using the dagger to cut it."

The Breakpoint Dagger could cut through all items. It probably shouldn't have trouble cutting through this three-ringed collar.

Nana was just about to use the Breakpoint Dagger to test out Riel's collar when Riel immediately panicked. "Wait wait wait, stop! It hurts, my head hurts. Don't poke at it anymore, please."

His face was pale.

Nana helplessly pulled back her dagger.

Riel let out a sigh of relief. "That was really scary. It felt like my soul was tearing apart."

"It seems like this collar cannot be broken with force. No wonder the demon commander was like a cat after being captured. I need to study this more."

Link was full of regret. If he knew this would happen, he wouldn't have made them wear this collar.

Princess Milda consoled him. "This isn't your fault. This is a new world, if we don't wear this, we might not have even lived."

Riel also said, "Sir Link, there will be a way. Don't be anxious."

Link nodded. He opened the book he just bought, the Encyclopedia of Aragu, flipping through the pages to understand more about the place.

At this point, a notification window popped up in his vision.

All this time, the system had been silent. Now that it appeared, it showed a message:

Anchor point in time has been discovered. Determining the current timeline. Player is in an hourglass plane.

## 345. Hourglass Realm

"The Hourglass Realm?"

Link was taken aback. He'd never heard of this term—it didn't appear in the game or in the books.

His vision flashed and an hourglass appeared. The top was labeled as the World of Firuman while the bottom was the Aragu Realm. The narrow neck area was marked with the Wind Vortex that they'd traveled through.

The two worlds are opposite one another yet are still connected. The current known passageway is the Wind Vortex. From the results of the time anchor calculation, time flows very quickly in the Aragu Realm. It's more than 100 times that of Firuman.

This cheered Link a bit. If time flowed that fast, he could stay here for one year and it would only be three and a half days on Firuman. He didn't have to worry about not having enough time. This way, he could focus on finding a way out of the world.

"But how can it be so fast?" Link asked.

The Mana density of Aragu is 20.5 times higher than in Firuman. Life controls great power and operates at high intensity, making time flow extremely fast.

Link thought about it but he still didn't understand it. Time was too confusing. His abilities weren't at that level yet. However, the flow of time was only meaningful to higher-level observers. The living organisms would feel nothing. For example, Link didn't feel any difference from the World of Firuman. Everyone was going at the regular speed.

"Then how come Aragu appeared in the ancient legends of Firuman? Why do the elves, dwarves, and humasspeak in the ancient elven language?"

There is not enough information to answer.

"Alright..." Link was helpless but knowing the speed of time now, he didn't have to hurry. He had a lot of time to understand this world.

He opened the Encyclopedia of Aragu and started reading closely.

The book was also written in ancient elven and mostly described the customs and conditions of the land. Milda and Riel had nothing else to do so they read as well. As for Nana, she was playing with a small accessory on the table.

After reading for a bit, the three exchanged glances in shock.

There were many things in the book but it revealed clearly the Araguans' superiority complex. They called themselves the "descendants of God" while the others were "scum of the earth."

In Aragu, the elves, dwarves, and Northern Beastmen were even lower than horses. They could be sold, killed, and humiliated at will, treated like tools. Once a slave became sick, they would be killed immediately. Instead of burying the body, it would be sold to a butcher. There, it would be cooked and fed to hunting hounds, griffins, wolves, and other trained carnivorous beasts.

The encyclopedia also listed the prices of the different slave meats. Elves were the most expensive because they were the most tender. Amongst them, meat of elven girls was the most valuable. They were usually fed to the pets of nobles. Dwarves were the cheapest. Their meat was described to be rough as sandpaper. Even dogs weren't willing to eat it.

"That's too scary. These Araguans are so barbaric!" Riel exclaimed in fury.

"sh

Riel wanted to argue but Link said, "Her Highness is right. Riel, remember this isn't Firuman. We have an important mission and nothing can happen to us!"

"Alright. This f\*cking place!" Riel muttered. It wasn't that he didn't understand what the others were saying. This place was just too horrible.

At this time, Link flipped to a passage about the slave collar ring. The three started reading closely.

The book explained that the ring's scientific name was "Soul Shackle." It was known as the most successful and powerful gear of the Aragu Empire. It was created by one of the emperor's magic workshop, the God-given Wisdom. One million are made analy. The cost isn't high but the effect is shocking.

The encyclopedia proudly declares that, this shackle is a gift from God. Perfect and flawless, it is the scepter for descendants of God to rule the scum!

That was it. Other than a bunch of bragging, there was nothing useful.

"damn Araguans!" Riel muttered again.

Thankfully, this book wasn't only bragging; there were also useful things, such as descriptions of the world's power.

In this world, all power under the Legendary Level was known as Tier-1. Legendary Level-10 was Tier-2. Legendary Level-17 of Firuman was Tier-9 here and Magicians of that level were known as Masters. Level-18 was Saint. As for Level-19, that was almost God-like. It was the pinnacle of humanity and was known as the Archmage!

In Aragu, there was currently one Archmage, three Saints, and 18 Masters. They could easily destroy everything in the world. As for official Magicians, there were countless. An ordinary little town could produce someone like Rockham. Just imagine how many there were in the world!

After reading this, Link sighed. "No wonder the robbers laughed at us. The Masters of Aragu are Legendary Level-17."

"I feel so weak after reading this." Riel plopped onto the ground. He'd wanted to redeem himself and wait a few days before breaking free from his slave identity. But the Aragu Empire was like a mountain with no seeable peak.

Milda was much more optimistic. "It's not all bad. Link, have you felt your power increase much more quickly? Not even a day after being here, I've already entered Level-8."

Her Mana had been at the pinnacle of Level-7. In Firuman, leveling up required a good opportunity but she passed through it naturally here. Link could feel it too so he checked his information.

Link Morani (Firuman noble)

Level-8 Pinnacle Dragon Mage

Flawless Dragon Power Maximum: 7100

Dragon Power Recovery Speed: 18-110 points per seconds

Current Dragon Power Recovery Speed: 40 points per second

It hadn't even been a day but his Dragon Power had already risen more than 100 points. The speed was shocking.

"It's the same for me. I feel that I can break into Level-9 soon...I'm afraid the demon commander will break into the Legendary state soon."

"So what? She's just a slave now," Riel leered. This was probably the only good news.

The encyclopedia was quite thick but the descriptions weren't too deep so they finished it within half a day. They all had a general idea about Aragu. At least, they won't do anything taboo when they go out now.

"I'm going to start with the enchantment now." Link took the paper towards the enchantment room. "I prepare to make the bracelet on this paper. Milda, Riel, don't go outside during this to avoid trouble."

"I'm too scared to go outside. It's too dangerous out there," Riel sighed.

"I'll clean up the room," Milda said.

"Okay. If you feel bored, you can come help me."

"Of course." Milda would love to do that. She wanted to learn Aragu's magic too.

Inside the enchantment room, Link found that there were many mid-level materials here. There were also many tools that were similar to those in Firuman and weren't too complicated. Link could use them after studying for a bit.

He placed the paper on the table and started working.

Link barely left the room in the next few days; he had people bring him his meals. His magic bracelet came into shape bit by bit.

In order to complete within two weeks, Link purposely slowed down his speed. This way, he had time to perfect the details and work more intricately on the bracelet.

The first two days, Rockham would come check. After that, he was reassured and left satisfied after saying some encouragements.

Two weeks later, Link completed the magic bracelet as expected. Putting it in a wooden box, Link went to find Rockham.

He first went to the concierge to find guard Afu.

"Master is in the round tower. He said that you can go to him directly."

"Oh, okay."

Link walked straight towards the round tower. It was in the back of the courtyard. Along the way, he would pass by the apprentices' dormitories, magic workshops, the library, and other buildings. When he passed by a small yard, he saw Demon Princess Saroviny by chance.

The yard was closed with a locked door. There were many beautiful girls inside that Rockham bought to give to important figures as "gifts." Saroviny dressed scantily. She had a bra and a semi-transparent muslin dress. One could see through the muslin that she didn't wear anything under it. The details of her body could be seen fleetingly. She even had a Mithril accessory hanging from her belly button.

When Link saw her, she was learning a sexy dance with the other slave girls in the yard. Clearly, she was not doing well; she kept making mistakes.

Crack! The whip fell onto her, making her stumble. A halfling with a slave ring around her neck yelled, "Idiot! Is your body made of wood? Move your waist! Shake your ass! I've never seen a slave as stupid as you. You should be chopped up to feed the dogs!"

Without making a sound, Saroviny stood up and continued. Link was sure she saw him but her eyes looked straight ahead.

Link was slightly relieved. At least this demon was completely submissive in this world. He should be safe... No, this wasn't enough. He was mistaken as an Araguan now and had a great advantage. He had to get rid of this girl.

With that in mind, Link walked towards the tower. Rockham was about to go out and saw Link at the entrance. He smiled immediately. "What, did you finish the bracelet?"

"Yes. Here you go." Link offered up the wooden box.

Rockham opened it. He glanced at it and his eyes brightened greatly. "Good! Amazing! Perfect! This artistry is incredible! Tsk, this artistry deserves a spell book as a reward. Come, come. Go to my library and choose any Tier-1 book. And three Tier-1 questions are still free."

He was so excited. Looking at Link was like looking at a mountain of gold.

"Tutor," Link said politely. "Can I change my reward?"

"Oh, what do you want?" Rockham asked.

"I saw a slave girl in the yard, a black-haired one. Can I have her as a reward?"

## 346. Average Foundation but Incredible Vision

"You want the slave girl?" Rockman was shocked.

"That's right. I've taken a liking to her," Link pleaded.

Rockman found himself facing a dilemma. Before seeing the magic bracelet, he would have instantaneously rejected Link. The slave had cost him 1000 gold, and she was meant as a gift for Great Lord Bal. Most importantly, he had informed Lord Bal about the news and Bal was very excited. He couldn't simply swap her out like this!

However, the magic bracelet was worth at least 300 gold. He would make a profit of 200 gold, and could easily cover the cost of 1000 gold. He needed to take good care of this golden goose that could help him earn big money.

Pondering the matter, Rockman decided on a compromise. "I can't give her to you, she's been promised to Great Lord Bal. How about this, I'll let you have any two others to your liking."

Link was stunned. He now knew who Great Lord Bal was. He was the lord of this region of about 77 square miles. In Firuman, that would be the equivalent of a Duke. His son, bloody-Butcher Balha was the lord of Spring Leaf City.

Not only did Great Lord Bal have a high status, but his personal strength was also terrifying. He was the strongest in the region and was a Level-15 Legendary Expert.

It was said that Bal was hot-tempered. He would kill over slight disagreements. The slaves killed by his hand numbered over 5000. His nasty personality was inherited by his son, bloody-Butcher Balha.

No one would dare to provoke a person like this in the whole realm. Link's face was immediately full of "disappointment," and he shook his head in regret. "It's alright then, I'll go with the magic book."

Rockman let out a sigh of relief. "Haha, young man, if you want to go far in life, you must properly study magic. Don't get caught up by lust. Come with me, I'll give you two Tier-1 magic books. As for that girl, don't think about her anymore. I'll get you another pretty one soon."

He opened the door to the circular paGoda and led Link inside.

The first floor of the paGoda was a spacious hall. Along its walls were bookshelves, forming half a circle around the room. The shelves were stacked with books.

"Here, the Tier-1 books are on this side. You already have some knowledge of magic, so you can choose any two books that are suitable for you," Rockman said generously.

Link nodded and walked towards the bookshelf. Rockman did not bother Link while Link browsed through the books. He was engrossed with the magic bracelet that Link had made.

It was a truly splendid piece of work!

He had only given the blueprints for the talismans to be builtito the bracelet but did not specify any shape or design. That was left entirely up to Link.

The final product was a simple, flawless circular band. However, the various colors blended to create a magnificent scene of two Red Spear Birds locked in battle. The birds looked lively and full of vigor, emanating the ferociousness of a live bird.

He used magic to magnify the details and couldn't find a single flaw in all the details. Even the wrinkles and curls along the birds' eyes could be seen, making them appear extremely realistic.

He channeled Mana into the magic bracelet and felt keenly for the changes. He could detect that the magic flowed smoothly into the bracelet, encountering no hindrances or obstruction. The entire bracelet emanated a warm and rhythmic magic aura.

This rhythm indicated that the magic formation in this bracelet was almost perfect!

Aesthetically pleasing and flawless, it was the most perfect thing ever. Rockman found that even he himself was reluctant to part with it now.

This thing is truly unique, one of a kind. Rather than selling it, I could give it as a gift to the Great Lord's daughter. She loves collecting these kinds of things to play with. I'm sure she'll like it. Who knows, I may even be able to get a Tier-3 magic book as a reward.

By now, Link had decided on two magic books. They were The Basics of Magic analysis and Top Skills of Tier-1 Magic.

"Teacher, I've selected the books," Link said.

Rockman brought his attention back to Link. He looked at the magic books that Link had selected and instructed, "You can bring these two books back with you. Return them after two weeks. Also, here is the blueprint for the new talisman, this time, I want a magic sword. Do you have confidence?"

Link received the blueprints from Rockman.

The basic formations in the blueprint were simple, although they were slightly harder than the magic bracelet. They were equivalent to Level-6 magic. However, the way they were arranged was also more complicated, roughly possessing the complexity of Level-9 spells.

Link looked at it for a moment. He thought about it for a while. He knew that it would only take him a week if he tried. He nodded and said, "Teacher, this is a little more difficult. I think I will need three weeks."

Unexpectedly, Rockman was delighted. "Only three weeks? Great! Truly someone with potential. Okay, you don't have to tire yourself out, I'll give you a month."

"Thank you, teacher."

Just then, Fu appeared at the entrance to the paGoda. "Master, Lord Balha's men are here."

"What do they want? Haven't I already given this month's medicinal tribute to the army quartermaster?" Rockman frowned.

"It seems like the Great Beast Forest's Blood Eyes goons are up to something again."

Rockman's expression turned dark. He turned and said to Link, "Alright, you may return. Good luck with your studies, and don't forget the sword!"

"I got it, teacher," Link nodded his head. He now knew what kind of people he had provoked in the Great Beast Forest. The Blood Eye Mercenaries were formed from a group of oppressed and outcast halflings. They were the scourge of the Spring Leaf Village.

Their members numbered over 500, with 50 core members possessing over Level-10 strength. Their chief was known by his name Blood Pupil and possessed Level-13 strength. His strength was similar to Spring Leaf Village's Balha and Magician Rockman.

It was said that Balha and Blood Pupil had fought before, resulting in Balha's loss. If Balha hadn't escaped fast enough, he would now be dead.

"Go on," Rockman frowned. His mood was solemn.

Link left the paGoda. Before leaving, he saw Rockman walk away with a fully armored soldier. The soldier seemed extremely sturdy. Standing there, Link felt like he was an unmovable mountain.

Hmmm, another Legendary Warrior. Probably Level-10. Link thought. He was starting to get numb.

In this world, the Mana density was high. It was easy for all living things to grow. Without much effort, one could easily reach Legendary level. However, there was a drawback. Perhaps because they gained strength too quickly, they didn't have a good foundation and understanding of skills.

For example, among Rockman's students, there were many who possessed enough strength to reach Level-6, however, because of a poor understanding of magic, they were stuck at Level-2 and could only use a few simple spells.

Therefore, Link's control of magic was far greater than his peers of the same age. In fact, in some ways, he was even superior to Rockman.

Of course, power was still power. With enough power, it doesn't matter even if you had no skills. A simple punch could unleash incredible destruction. Link would probably be killed by any random punch from Rockman. This was just winning by force.

Thinking about this, Link was anxious to quickly raise his strength.

He followed the path back to his residence, passing by the slave training yard along the way. He could see Saroviny still learning to dance. Then, he stared, stunned. He realized that in just a short period of time, Saroviny had gotten much better at the dance. Earlier, she was like a wooden block with stiff movements. Now though, her body flowed like water, her limb movements were supple and smooth. There was something about her that now captured people's attention.

Did she have a change of heart?

At this moment, the halfling instructor praised. "Good, good. At least you're not wasting your good looks. Continue working hard, considering your good looks, I'm sure Great Lord Bal will treat you well.

Link's heart clenched. Bal ruled the lands around here. If Saroviny got his favor and influenced him, wouldn't that become a great threat for him?

Link felt Saroviny's gaze and detected a trace of cold killing intent. The moment he looked over though, the killing intent vanished and was replaced by a warm smile.

Link knew that he wasn't mistaken though. He didn't tarry a second longer and quickly headed back to his own residence.

In this world, he couldn't remain a small and unimportant person. He needed to quickly become strong and create a name for himself so that Bal couldn't simply kill him when he liked.

Over the next few days, Link entered his previous state of fervor when creating the magic bracelet and began constructing the magic sword.

When he was free, he would study the two books of magic. Princess Milda would look at the books with him. As for Riel, he would use wooden swords to train against Nana.

After a few days, Princess Milda said, "The content in these books is somewhat normal. However, the discussion about magic is very in-depth. This book on magic analysis is still alright, it's about Level-8. This book on top skills, however, is more difficult and requires at least Level-9 magic knowledge to be able to make use of it."

"It is something like that. I've looked at it and gained a lot from it. Furthermore, this is only a Tier-1 magic book in this world. After that, there's still the Saint and Archmage level. There's no end to their field of vision," Link sighed.

After possessing enough strength, your field of vision would naturally increase. Perhaps they might be lacking in some ways in their magic foundation, but the world in their eyes was surely something that Link could never imagine.

Without standing on the mountain peak, you would never understand how wide the view from the peak is!

Link tried his utmost to absorb the magic knowledge from this world.

Two weeks passed by in a flash. Link's magic sword was completed three days ago. His dragon power now reached 7500 points, successfully pushi

Here, there were no barriers to increasing their strength. Naturally, they would grow quickly.

Perhaps it was because there were no barriers to their growth which was why the Aragu people considered everything under the Legendary Level as Level-1.

This day, Link was practicing the new magic knowledge he had learned when he heard a clamor from outside the building. Something had happened.

As Link was still thinking about it, Riel's voice came from the second-floor balcony. "Link, Link! Something's up. Rockman was carried back by some people. His body is covered in blood."

## 347. Take All Opportunities!

With Rockham in trouble, Link couldn't stay indoors anymore. He could feel that this was an opportunity!

After thinking, Link took out his finished magic sword. Placing it in the sheath, he ordered, "Stay here and don't open the door for strangers."

"I know. We're not kids," Riel answered.

Taking the sword, Link left the house and jogged to Rockham.

When he got close, he saw Rockham lying on a stretcher. He was covered in blood. There was a bloody hole below his liver. The bleeding had mostly been stopped blood was still seeping out slowly.

Rockham was being taken to the round tower by two slaves. When he saw Link, a weak smile appeared on his pale face. "Heh," he laughed at himself. "I'm old now and got stabbed by that bastard without realizing."

As far as Link knew, there were no piss or healing spells in this world. If Rockham's wound wasn't treated properly, it could be fatal.

The apprentices stood in the courtyard, watching from afar and muttering amongst themselves.

"It's karma for this money-slave. I think he's going to get it this time!"

"I'm afraid the Bloody Butcher will find another stingier Magician after he dies."

"How can he teach us magic if he's so injured? He promised to answer my two questions last week."

They just watched without doing anything. Rockham was too stingy and mean to them usually. Of course, Rockham didn't need them; he had many slaves. Seeing Link beside him, he said, "You don't have to come. I won't die."

Link took down his wooden case with the sword. "Tutor, actually I already finished the sword and was about to give it to you."

"Ah, you finished so quickly." Rockham was surprised, but he quickly smiled. "Follow me then, but you'll have to wait. My wound still needs to be treated carefully Ah, that damn bastard was so cruel!"

Link followed Rockham's stretcher all the way to the round tower. When he passed by the slave yard, he looked inside subconsciously. It was empty. The slave girls didn't come out to practice today.

They quickly arrived at the tower. After entering, the stretcher was taken to the second floor and inside a spacious bedchamber. Rockham was placed on the bed.

The doctor that had followed them went forward. He cut open the bloody clothing with practice and started treating the wound. The doctor's methods were similar to surgeons from earth. He cut open Rockham's wound and used very thin thread to sew the injury to Rockham's internal organs. Then he sewed up the cut quickly.

After around twenty minutes, he was done with sewing. He also poured some blue medicine on it. It sizzled softly, and many bubbles appeared.

Rockham grunted and his body tensed. Five seconds later, he felt much better and let out a long breath.

"Lord," the doctor said. "You injured your intestines and bled a lot. You must rest for three months. During this time, you mustn't work too hard. Otherwise"

Rockham lost his patience. Waving his hand, he said, "I know. It's not my first time getting hurt. You may go and tell Balha about my injury. Say that I need to rest but nothing will be delayed. Tell him to not bother me if it's not important."

In the Spring Leaf Village, Rockham was a Magic Official. He was responsible for the magic affairs and had high status. This could be seen from how he spoke to the owner of the village, Balha.

The doctor nodded. He collected his tools, left some bottles of medicine behind, and left.

A few pretty elven servants came up. They carefully cleaned up Rockham's bloody clothes and dirtied sheets. The room was soon tidied up.

During this, Link waited quietly in a corner, but he didn't waste time. He had a book borrowed from Rockham and was reading seriously without making a sound. When everything was taken care of, he put his book away. He stood up and waited for Rockham with his arms lowered.

Fortunately, Rockham didn't forget about him. He patted his bed and said, "Come, kid. Show me your sword."

Link took the sword out of the wooden case and offered it to Rockham with both hands.

The sword had a sheath made from the skin of a python unique to Aragu. It was brown-gray and wasn't attractive. Of course, the sheath was made as intricately as alwaysthere were no flaws.

Seeing this, Rockham nodded. "Good. A sheath that hides the sword should be more low-key. This is interesting."

He looked to the hilt. There were many grooves for better grip. Holding it, it felt a bit rough but also a bit soft. "It won't be slippery and can also absorb sweat. You used soft magic steel, didn't you? You adjusted the property very well."

Rockham was already very satisfied by the sheath and hilt. He used a bit of force, and the sword was unsheathed with a clang. The air in the room turned cold as soon as the sword appeared. A couple of the elven servants around Rockham let out soft cries and retreated involuntarily.

"Get out of herea bunch of idiots ruining my moodhmph." Rockham was upset and spoke loudly, affecting his wound. He grunted again.

The elven servants scurried frantically out of the room. A young girl even fell hard, hitting her head against the corner of a table. Blood flowed out of her pale forehead. Without making a sound, she used all her limbs to get up and walked out of the room dazedly.

The room quickly quieted down.

Rockham rested for a bit and pulled the sword again.

Clang! With only some power, the sword sang again. It was clear and high like a dragon's cry. Rockham was a Magician, but he'd worked with all sorts of magic gear and weapons. Hearing this, he couldn't help but praise, "I know it's a good sword just from the sound!"

He slowly pulled the sword out. Pale white fog appeared on the blade. Under the fog, the silvery-white sword seemed to turn into crystal. The room's temperature dropped even more until the cold seemed to dig into one's bones.

Rockham praised again, "You were able to use the ice enchantment to this extent. So amazing!"

The runes on the body of the sword were flowing and intricate. Not only did it use the enchantment's effect to the extreme, but it also tited around the sword, creating an ancient and thick groove.

If not for the low level of the enchantment, Rockham would think that this was a Master-level Legendary weapon!

He finally pulled the sword out entirely. As soon as it appeared, the room glowed faintly, and the temperature dropped again. The sword's arc was smooth and natural. It was light without a bit of murderous intent. The surface was covered in a faint layer of even white light. Around the glow, snowflake-light spots of light floated around.

Rockham studied the body, looking at the runes one by one. He grew more and more focused, even forgetting about his injury.

After a long while, he sighed. "I can't believe that I'm able to see such a magic sword before I die. Ah, what a pity. If only the enchantment was higher, at least at Tier-3, I believe it can be sold for up to 6000 gold coins. Right now, it can only be 2000 coins at most. Ah"

No, he couldn't sell the sword. He should use it to forge more connections. With his injury, he would definitely have to overlook some matters in the village. Balha never liked him. Rockham had to use this sword to stabilize his status.

Lord Balha liked swords. Yes, this sword must be given to him. This sword came at just the right time and solved one of his worries.

Rockham put the sword away and looked at Link. His eyes had become so gentle as if looking at the love of his life. Link got goosebumps.

"Kid, your artistry is very good. Are you interested in becoming my student?"

"Student? Tutor, aren't I your student already?" Link looked confused, but his heart was pounding. He knew his chance had come.

"Ah, that doesn't count. How is this being a student? It's just working physical labor for me. But you're different. If you're my student, I will pass down my magic print and tell the entire village. As my student, you can read all my books at will, and I'll answer all questions for free. While I'm recovering, you can be responsible for the magic workshop. What do you think?"

Rockham wasn't saying this casually. He hadn't disturbed Link, but after receiving the magic bracelet, he'd kept an eye on Link.

The result was that this young man was a bit soft and was overly nice to his slaves. People like that are easier to control. Plus, he had such great enchantment skills. There would be many benefits to having a student like him.

As for being responsible for the magic workshop, Rockham had considered this thoroughly. He'd seen two of Link's enchantmentsthe bracelet and sword. He could see from the items that the man was careful and smart. There would be no mishaps if he was in charge. Rockham could also lasso Link in like this. It was two birds with one stone.

Link was surprised. He didn't expect all these benefits. Raising his head and seeing Rockham's enthusiasm, he thought a bit and nodded. "Tutor, I am so honored!"

There were both pros and cons. The most obvious negative was that, after becoming his student, their relationship would be very close. Rockham's bad reputation would affect him heavily. There were many more pros than cons though.

More importantly, Link didn't have other choices. This was the best chance to get a hold in this world. There was no reason not to accept.

Rockham clapped his hands and laughed. "Great. I didn't think that at my age, I could find a true disciple. Heh, come, I'll add the magic mark for you!"

## 348. A Simple Matter

Clang! In the fortress in the center of Spring Leaf Village, a fully armored Warrior pushed open the door and walked into the main hall.

This Warrior was wearing blood red armor, a bright red cloak, and a helmet with fire red feathers. Looking from afar, he was completely dressed in red. When he walked quickly, he naturally gave off an extremely oppressive air.

He was Spring Leaf Village's lord, Balha.

"Master..." a young, elven slave rushed forward, wanting to help this Warrior remove his armor as usual.

"Scram!"

Balha's hand swung forcefully, his hand landing on the elf slave's face. Crack. The body of this elf slave who was less than 17 years old stopped, his neck was completely tited around.

Without caring about this pathetic elf, Balha continued to walk forward until he reached the seat at the very end of the main hall, then he finally stopped. He shouted angrily, "Where are my slaves? Quickly come and help me remove my armor!"

Another two elf slaves approached cautiously, carefully helping Balha remove his blood red armor.

This time, Balha waited patiently for his armor to be removed. Then, after his armor was removed, he sat down. After a few seconds, he suddenly raged, violently throwing the wood carving beside his chair onto the ground.

Crack! The wood carving broke into pieces, forming a large hole in the ground. Balha roared, "damned Laguans! damned Blood Eyes! Don't let me catch you!"

This time, he personally led 1000 Warriors to clear the bandits. In the end, they were ambushed halfway. Never mind that over a hundred Warriors died, even Master Magician Rockham was stabbed by a sword and almost died.

Although he did not see eye to eye with Rockham, it was only an internal problem within Spring Leaf Village. Now, Rockham was almost killed, and it was because the Warriors did not protect him properly. This was a blow to his face!

Huff, huff. He sat on his chair, breathing heavily. His facial expression was livid. The surrounding people did not dare to make any noise, especially the two elven slaves who were afraid that they would end up like the previous slave if they were not careful.

The atmosphere in the main hall was so heavy that it was difficult to breathe.

Clack, clack. At this moment, light footsteps sounded. After a short while, a black-haired woman walked out from the main hall's back door. The woman had skin as white as chalk and a round face with beautiful features. Wearing an exquisite dress, she carried herself gracefully. When she reached the main hall, she saw the slave who had been beaten to death. She frowned, looking at Balha and said, "Lord, you vented your anger on others again?"

Weirdly, although Balha was originally in a rage, a smile actually appeared on his face once he saw this woman. "My wife, I lost control for a moment; it was not on purpose."

This woman was Balha's wife, Anlis.

Balha had a brutal personality, and people called him the bloody Butcher. This wife was the very reason why his brutal personality was always displayed outside but hardly ever in his home.

Balha would fight and kill people as he wished, but for unknown reasons, once he saw his wife, his temper would disappear, and he would not scold a single person.

The whole of Spring Leaf Village knew of this.

Since the person had already died, and it was only a slave, Anlis did not nag Balha anymore after that.

"Carry him out and bury him," she said to an elven slave.

Once she appeared, everyone in the main hall let out sighs of relief. When the elves heard her instruction to bring the elf out to be buried, they said gratefully, "Thank you, Mistress."

If it were left to Balha, the elf would surely be taken to be chopped into meat slices and fed to the dogs.

After the young corpse was brought out, Anlis sighed and sat down beside Balha. Her discerning eyes stared at Balha. "Lord..."

Balha couldn't stand his ground under her gaze. He hugged his wife and said in a gentle voice, "Call me Jon. Don't call me Lord. I've told you many times."

"Alright, Jon, I don't wish for the house to constantly be filled with blood. It scares our child," Anlis said.

"Nonsense! My child would never be so cowardly... Alright fine, I won't do it again, I swear!" Balha said. He had one arm wrapped around Anlis's waist, while he raised his other arm to affirm his promise.

"Alright, I believe you," Anlis nodded. "Were those bandits that hard to deal with?"

Once she raised this up, Balha's anger was stoked again. He was about to rant and vent, but under Anlis's stare, he immediately quieted down. "That rabble has no true ability, they're just like little rasscurrying about. My Warriors were wearing heavy armor and couldn't catch them. Hmph! Tomorrow, I'll request for 100 black-robed soldiers from my father!"

The black-robed soldiers were Great Lord Bal's strongest soldiers. Every one of them had minimally Tier-2 strength. In total, they numbered 3,000 strong. They went through harsh training and had plenty of battle experience. They were the sharpest sword in Bal's realm.

Anlis stroked Balha's face, and said softly, "Alright, calm your anger. It's not worth flaring up over the bandits. In my heart, you, Jon, are the strongest Warrior. You're the one my child, and I will rely on."

Balha felt happy. He felt like his heart was melting and he hugged his wife tightly. However, in his heart, he swore. Laguan trash, just wait. I'll wipe the lot of you off this planet.

The Great Beast Forest

The floor was covered in blood and gore. There were over 300 corpses. Two hundred or more belonged to the halflings and elves, while about a 100 of them were Warriors from Spring Leaf Village.

At the edge of this battlefield, there was a group of people scavenging through the corpses. A large portion of them were halflings, while a few of them were elves.

They retrieved all the armor and weapons they could find, especially when they came across Spring Leaf Village Warriors. Even their underwear was not spared.

Among these halflings, there was one garbed in pitch-black leather armor. On his back were two transparent blue short swords that looked like crystal. Other halflings had a blood eye scar carved onto their foreheads. His, however, looked more like a bloody red eye constructed from magic talismans. It seemed almost real.

This was the Blood Eye Mercenaries' leader, Blood Pupil Maude. He stood quietly at one side, surveying the remains of the battlefield.

In this ambush, they traded the lives of 200 Laguans for 100 Araguans. This was a battle record with nothing worth being proud of.

After some time, a middle-aged halfling walked to his side. He was using a human Warrior's underwear as a handkerchief to wipe the blood off his face. After walking to Maude, he said, "After this, Balha will definitely come for revenge. We'll have to go back into the Great Beast Forest to hide for a while."

"I know. I also know that tomorrow, he will go to his father, Bal, to get reinforcements. If I'm not wrong, he must be preparing to go to Black Eagle City right now. Within three days, he will head out," Maude said, confident in his prediction.

The middle-aged halfling was stunned for a moment, but he quickly understood Maude's intention. "You mean to assassinate him along the way?"

Maude nodded. "Hehe, but of course. Anyway, we've got to escape. If we kill Balha, our fame will skyrocket. Then, even more, Laguans will come to join us."

The middle-aged halfling thought for a moment and nodded his head. "This is risky, but if we're going to kill him, then we need to plan this well."

Maude laughed and looked at his most trusted deputy. "Derek, you've got any good ideas?"

Derek laughed. shi

Maude pondered over this plan and laughed. "This plan is truly vicious. Haha! I love it! Let these Araguan's learn the taste of losing a loved one!"

"Hahaha... That year, my daughter was only nine. Nine!" Derek clenched his teeth in hatred.

Maude also exhaled slowly. He didn't say anything but patted Derek's shoulder. Within his mind, there appeared the figure of an elven woman. She was called Lili and was his older step-sister.

From young, the Laguans had mocked him for being a halfling. Only Lili had stayed close to him. Every time he was bullied, it was her who would seek justice for him.

Therefore, his stepsister became a hero figure in his heart, until one day, Warriors from Spring Leaf Village invaded and kidnapped the elven girls. Among them was his sister. They said she was just going to drink with them for a bit.

That night, he could hear his sister's voice, screaming helplessly for help.

The second night, all he saw was his sister's bloody mangled corpse. From then on, Maude swore that he would make all the Araguans from Spring Leaf Village pay the price of blood!

Clenching his fist, Maude stared at the sky. Up in the sky, it was as though a gentle girl was smiling at him.

"Sister, I will help you get revenge!"

At this moment, a scout ran out from the trees. After looking around cautiously, he ran up to Maude.

"Leader, I've found traces of the murderer!"

"Hmm, who is he? Where is he now?" Maude questioned.

"His name is Link, he's a Tier-1 Magician. He's currently hiding in Spring Leaf Village and is a student of Magician Rockman."

"Oh, is that so? Derek, find some brothers and sneak into the city. Find the chance to get rid of them and get revenge for our brothers!"

"Haha, it's a simple matter," Derek laughed.

## 349. A Way Back to Firuman

Link's small cottage

There was a library on the second floor of the cottage. The table was originally very small, but Link had now become Magician Rockham's official disciple. He was also in charge of the magic workshop now. There were many things to do. Link exchanged the table for a long one quickly. Four to five people could sit and work at the same time with no problem.

By the table, Milda was carefully looking at the production documents of the workshop. She was a princess and had now become a Level-8 Magician. This was a small matter for her.

Link, on the other hand, was studying a book while studiously taking notes. The best thing about becoming Rockham's disciple was that he could read whatever he wanted. He definitely wouldn't let such a good opportunity pass. He'd been reading like crazy for the past three days.

He was spirited and read very quickly. With the additional aid of the system, he wouldn't forget anything. Even if he didn't understand, he would write it down first and then deal with it.

Rockham was at Legendary Level-13. There were around 35 books pertaining to power. Link stood before the bookshelf and scanned them voraciously. Rockham knew about this, and he didn't mind. What could one learn by just flipping through it? He thought Link was just scanning it out of curiosity.

Riel practiced martial arts with Nana as before. Though his power was locked, he found that after practicing a lot, his inner strength could rise faster.

In Firuman, he was stuck in Level-7 and hadn't improved in a long while. Now, there was obvious improvement every day. This made him happy every day.

Everyone was focused on their own work. Time passed quickly and half a day passed in a blink.

While organizing the workshop documents, Milda said to Link, "I'm mostly done. The situation is quite good. On average, the workshop can make a profit of 100 gold coins every day. What is your plan? Maintain the current situation or raise earnings?"

Link put down his book and thought. "Just maintain it. We need to figure out how to get back to Firuman. Magic is the necessity. There's no point in wasting effort on other things."

Even though time passed slowly and they had enough time to think, it didn't mean they should just stay here without moving.

"Then there isn't much to do with the workshop—just ordering raw material and supervising the apprentices to complete the orders on time. There are people in charge of that now. We just have to make sure nothing goes wrong."

Link nodded. He pushed his notes to Milda. "This is analysis of Time-space Structure that I borrowed. It's Level-10 and explains the hypothesis of realm transportation. It should be able to take us back to Firuman."

"Oh, what does it say?" Milda was immediately interested. She took Link's notes and started reading earnestly.

In the notes, Link described two ideas of realm transportation.

The first was direct. He drew two bubbles, representing Firuman and Aragu. The center was connected by a thin neck. It was empty outside the realms. Link marked it as the Sea of Void.

The other was Link's specific calculations. There was a string of obscure spatial structure changes beside the picture. Milda glanced at it and gave up on understanding the specificities. She only checked if the equation was complete or not.

It was, meaning Link had come to a specific conclusion.

"You really found a way back?" Milda was slightly excited. This world was too scary. For her especially, it was like hell. Once people found out about her beauty, she couldn't even imagine what kind of future awaited her. She'd already had many nightmares about this.

Link nodded. "Speculated from everything we've seen, I realized that Aragu and Firuman are actually one entity."

Of course, it was mainly due to the game system's reminder, but Link couldn't say that. As he spoke, he snapped his finger. A head-sized Spatial Sphere appeared in the air. Link manipulated it, and the center grew thinner until it turned into an hourglass.

"Now, for some reason, the connection has become thinner and thinner to the point of almost breaking. I've pretty much found the reason too."

Link waved his hand. The Spatial Sphere disappeared. He took out another book titled Genesis. It recorded an Araguan legend.

Flipping to page ten, Link pointed at a line and read aloud, "Moses had a vision of a disaster. He brought his people south to the Promised Land. Halfway there, the world-ending disaster occurred. The saint (Moses) waved his staff and used his power to split the sea of the world. Everyone was safe, and they made a home in the new world."

After reading that, Link took out another book. This was the Aragu Annals. He had also taken this from Rockham's library. Official disciples had no restitions in borrowing books. He also took unimportant books, so Rockham didn't care at all.

"This annal was written officially by the Aragu Empire. I read it. Even though it glorifies the Aragu Empire at times, it's still reliable." Link flipped it open and pointed at a passage. "It records here that Moses was a real person. It's unknown when he was alive, and there are practically no records of his life. However, one part is clear. Look at this description. 'Moses may be the most powerful Archmage in the history of Aragu. It is said that he has the power to break through realms.'"

Here, Milda finally understood. Excited, she said, "I know what you're saying. This matches my race's records of the Aragu Empire. Taking both into account, this means that a catastrophe happened to the World of Firuman in the ancient times. During this, a powerful Magician named Moses retreated with a portion of Araguans. Finally, he split Firuman into two halves... Oh, if this is true, that power must be unimaginably incredible!"

Link nodded. "There are many details that must be confirmed, but the general idea is right. I did some spatial experiments these days. The data matches the spatial thesis I worked on with the Red Dragon Queen. I received the spatial variant—"

Milda shrugged and stopped him. "I don't understand that. Just tell me the conclusion. How do we return?"

"There are two requirements. First, we must find a spatial coordinate—Firuman's spatial coordinate. Second, we must have Legendary Level-10 power. All of us must. My portal will pass the Sea of Void. Without Legendary power, we'll die from the void's corrosion."

Milda thought and said, "With our rate now, it won't be hard to reach Level-10. But how can we find Firuman's spatial coordinate? Link, do you have an idea?"

To be honest, when she asked that question, she didn't think Link could reply immediately. But as soon as she asked, Link took out another book.

This book was called Continental Natural History.

Smiling, Link said, "This is the best part about being Rockham's disciple. He's only a regular Magician, but he's lived more than 70 years. He has many interesting books and quite a few rare ones. For example, this book is the only copy, written by an explorer named Eurosan. He made a record here. Look."

He flipped to a page that included a short story. He read aloud, "This person is very interesting. She's not even three feet, even shorter than dwarves. But strangely, her secondary sexual characteristics are mature. Her possessor tried to impregnate her to produce more small creatures, but sadly, he failed. His anatomy was too big, and she was too small. She was tormented to death."

Milda overlooked the crude content and asked, "The Yabba race?"

Link nodded. "Yes, the Yabba race. There are Yabba in Aragu, and this one appeared suddenly. I believe the Yabba came from Firuman. Look here."

Milda's interest grew because of Link. She became excited and forgot about the customs. She got close to Link and continued reading.

Without a doubt, this is a new race. I am very interested. When the little thing was alive, I asked where she came from. She said that she didn't know how she got here. She crossed through a cave. When she came out, she couldn't go back again and came to this terrifying world...

Yes, she described our world as "terrifying." I think that in her eyes, it is just like hell while her owner is a demon of this hell... I used five gold coins to find the specific position of the cave. I hoped to find something special but was disappointed. The cave is nothing different from a regular cave. I searched for a long time but gave up in the end—Eurosan, 3142 Spring.

"It's Year 3162 now. This was from 20 years ago?" Milda's eyes brightened, and her heart started pounding. She could feel hope now.

Link nodded. "Eurosan is quite famous. I believe the cave is just like the wind vortex we traveled through. It's a connection between Firuman and Aragu. It's temporary, but as long as it had existed, it'll leave a mark in space. I can find Firuman's spatial coordinates."

Milda thought for a bit and asked in confusion, "Why don't we try to find the entrance we came from?"

Link shook his head. "I can't do it. I also did a test. Look here, I invented this spatial cross chord."

Link took four runic spheres from the dimensional storage gear. He added Mana and tossed the balls in the air. They hovered immediately. Two faced each other with a beam of light between them. The two beams intersected, creating a stable cross.

"This spatial chord can sense spatial disruptions within 60 miles. The place we came from is approximately 30 miles away, two miles in the air. If a spatial disturbance of that scale appears, the spatial chord will definitely vibrate, but it didn't. That means that the tunnel we came from has probably closed now."

Link put it away. He sighed and shook his head. Milda slightly knew about spatial magic but could still understand Link's words. "Okay, so when will we go look for the cave?" she asked.

"How long do you think you need to level up to Legendary?" Link asked.

"Probably one month is enough."

"Riel is probably the same. During this month, we'll make some preparations and set out," Link said.

Now, they were very familiar with Aragu. Even if they didn't have enough power, nothing bad should happen if they're careful.

A bell suddenly rang outside the window.

Ring, ring! Ring, ring! Ring, ring! It was very loud and spread throughout the entire village.

"It's midday now. Does the bell mean something happened?" Milda asked curiously.

Link frowned. "No, it's a mourning bell!"

He had specifically checked Aragu's customs, which included the meaning of bells. Rapid bells meant incoming enemy. A long bell was welcoming. If it was two rapid rings and a pause, it was a mourning bell. Someone important had died.

## 350. Advent of the Bloody Butcher

"Arghhh!!!!"

Immediately after the bell stopped tolling, a roar reverberated throughout the village. This roar contained hatred, anguish, and insanity. It made all those who heard it tremble in fear.

In the fortress in the center of Spring Leaf Village, in the cafeteria, Balha sat on the ground, hugging his wife in his embrace and crying loudly out to the sky.

"Ahhhhhh, ahhhhh!" His voice had broken, his eyes were wide open and bloodshot. The sides of his eyes were marked with tears and blood, turning into a light red liquid that trickled down his face.

His wife's face was green and her lips black. She already had no strength left in her. At Balhasside was strewn the corpses of elves. No, that's not right. It was more appropriate to say that elven body parts lay around Balha, because there was not a single elf corpse that was still intact.

Every single elf in the hall was killed. None was left alive.

After hugging her for a long time, Balha suddenly said softly, "Anlis, my dear, sleep peacefully. In the other world, you will not be alone. I will send many Laguan slaves to accompany you and serve you and our child."

Carefully, he placed Anlis's body on the ground and stood up. One step at a time, he walked towards the main door. Upon reaching the door, he declared loudly, "Men, hear my orders! Kill every single Laguan in the city. Do not leave even a single one alive."

The captain of the guard hesitated. "Lord, that..."

Balha hatefully stared at him, killing intent brimming in his eyes. "Anlis is dead, don't tell me I'm not supposed to get revenge? My unborn child was killed, should I not get revenge?! This was done by the pathetic Laguan Dregs. They will pay the price!"

The captain of the guard decided to hold his tongue. He could vaguely feel that if he said anything more, he would be the next one to die.

"Understood, Lord. Kill all the Laguans!"

The order quickly transmitted throughout Spring Leaf Village to all the army camps. The soldiers in every army camp rushed out like fierce wolves and tigers, spreading out in all directions and killing every single Laguan they saw. The dwarves were not spared either.

Most of the Laguans in the Spring Leaf Village were slaves and wore slave collars. They simply had no strength to resist.

The whole village was suddenly engulfed in a stench of blood.

In the magic school, Link was still unaware of what was going on. However, as he stood on the balcony, he noticed soldiers killing elves en masse in the streets.

They didn't stop with slaves on the streets but rushed into the shops and residences. "Lord's orders, all Laguans are to be killed!"

Link watched as the soldiers dragged elves outito the streets, where they were beheaded and diced into small parts. Some residents attempted to stop what was going on, but they too were simply chopped to death by the soldiers.

There was no compassion, no pity, no hesitation, only bloody, cold-hearted slaughter.

These soldiers were blood-crazed!

Link found his heart pounding. He didn't know what was going on, but he knew that the situation was not good. He might be safe, but as for Princess Milda and Riel, they would definitely be killed.

The magic school was now in chaos as the enslaved elves were trying to escape in any way they could. Link saw Fu standing guard at the gate, trying to maintain order. However, he was simply ignored.

Very soon, the soldiers approached the school. Fu walked up to them and raised his hand to obstruct them, declaring, "This is Magician Rockman's property. You cannot—"

The blood-crazed soldiers obviously paid him no heed. They raised their weapons and slashed off his head. Link was stunned.

He knew that he could not hesitate any more. The recent changes spoiled his plans to slowly raise his strength in a safe environment.

He turned back into the house and looked at the frightened Princess Milda and Riel. "We can't stay here anymore; we've got to go. Milda, let down your hair, try to use it to cover your ears. Also, wear a hat."

Milda had been staying inside the building without going out. She thought that she would be safe, so she was wearing a simple dress.

The dress was simple and plain, and it would look normal on a regular person. On her, however, the plain dress made her look as beautiful as an angel from the moon. It was enough to make people go crazy with desire.

She had to change her clothing.

Princess Milda ran into the room and hurriedly changed her clothes. Just as she had removed her dress, the stone door was kicked aside and a soldier covered in blood rushed in. "Hand over all your Laguan slaves or die!"

This soldier was an expert, and his speed was naturally fast. He wouldn't give people any time to react. When he saw Riel, he immediately rushed over with his sword striking out.

Clang. Nana intercepted his blow with her dagger.

"What? You dare? Looking for death!" The soldier was a Level-8 expert. His short sword flickered and changed direction towards Nana's neck. Nana immediately retreated, and Link rushed forward in her place.

Link held the Dragon King's Wrath in his right hand and the Burning Wrath of Heaven's wand in his left. He pointed the wand forward, casting a Spatial Shackles spell.

Whoosh. The Spatial Shackles appeared, and the soldier's movements immediately stopped. Link took the chance to attack him, slapping hard onto his neck.

Smack. The hit knocked the soldier out. His eyes turned white, and he collapsed to the ground.

Seeing another soldier rushi

He turned and rushed towards Milda's changing room. "Milda, we have no time, we're leaving now!"

As he said this, he pushed open the door to the room.

"Ahh!" Milda was halfway through changing, and her top half was still exposed. As Link charged in, Milda yelped and turned around. Link saw a snow-white body, with skin as fair as jade. There were two shapely round mounds on her chest, with a cherry red tip at each end. Link was momentarily stunned.

Riel was behind Link and couldn't see what was going on. He immediately asked, "What! What's going on? Did they charge into this room too?"

Link did not have time to explain. He took out a mantle and draped it over the blushi

Just then, a shout of rage came from the door as a soldier charged in. "Who! Who dares to defy the Lord's order?!"

Whoosh. Link cast a dimensional jump without the slightest hesitation, and the group vanished, reappearing in a small street half a mile away.

The instant he left, Rockman appeared from the paGoda. He was fuming. "Who's kicking up a ruckus in my yard!"

He saw a soldier rushi

Slam. The soldier smashed into a stone wall and crumpled to the ground, unconscious.

Magician Rockman's status was high, and he was also very powerful. No one could simply kill him that easily. One leader ran up to him and explained, his face solemn. "Sir, the Laguan's poisoned Lady Anlis. The Lord has ordered for all the Laguan's to be killed. We are carrying out his orders."

"What! Anlis was killed? F\*ck, this is a disaster!"

Rockman was very clear about the implications of this. Balha was a crazy dog. Anlis was the only one who could control him. Now, Anlis was dead, and she was also carrying another life inside of her. That was two people killed! Anyone would be enraged at something like this. One can only imagine how Balha would react.

At this moment, Balha must have lost all sense of reasoning. Even Rockman didn't dare to go forth to stop him.

Rockman sighed. "You may kill all the Laguans you see. However, there is a black haired girl that isn't a Laguan. She's a gift for Great Lord Bal. Leave her alive."

Rockman had already compromised. The leader didn't dare to ask for anything more. He waved the rest of the soldiers forward. "Do as Sir Rockman ordered," he instructed.

Outside the city

Link and the others reappeared in a street outside the city. Before they even had the chance to regain their footing, they heard the sound of horses coming from behind. Not far, a troop of soldiers was riding down a large street from the city gates. Judging from their direction, they were probably going to attack the Laguan village.

There were 30 soldiers, all of whom were over Level-8. The one at the front who was most likely the captain was Level-10. At this moment, they laid eyes upon Link's party, specifically Princess Milda.

There were many small differences between humans and elves. This wasn't limited to their ears, but also their figures, skin tone, hair color. To Araguans, this difference was very obvious.

Two seconds after seeing them, the captain shouted. "Stop right there! Hand over the Laguan slave."

Only an idiot would stand still at this moment.

Link immediately cast a dimensional jump.

"Dare to leave?" The captain bellowed. He immediately drew out his bow and fired an arrow at Link.

The captain was a Level-10 Warrior. Even if he casually fired an arrow, the arrow's power would still be immense. The arrow flew forward, leaving a streak of light behind it. Around the arrow's body, the air rippled. In fact, there were even sound vibrations, like that of thunder.

It wasn't just him. The other 30 soldiers also released their arrows, covering the sky in a rain of arrows. The arrows were fast and numerous. Against an attack like this, Link didn't dare to multi-task. That was too dangerous.

He immediately canceled the dimensional jump and instructed Nana. "Bring them away, I'll stop these guys!"

While he said this, Link focused his power and consumed 1000 Dragon Power points to cast a Spatial Distortion spell. The space distorted and knocked the rain of arrows aside. Amidst the distortion field, all the arrows experienced a strong attraction force. After leaving the field, the arrows changed direction, landing around Link but never getting within three meters of him.

"Hmph! You still dare to oppose us? Kill him!"

The captain released his Battle Aura. He jumped from the horse's back, releasing more and more Battle Aura as he sailed through the air. He took three mid-arseps, instantaneously crossing a span of 150 feet, appearing 30 feet in front of Link. From that distance, he slashed down with his sword.

## 351. This Guy is Ruthless

This was Link's first time facing a Legendary Warrior of a mortal race in real life.

Compared to the game, real-life Warriors had a more obvious intriguing aura. His actions were more agile and incredibly fast!

In the game, because of the average man's reaction speed and for equilibrium between the careers, lightning-fast speeds like this would never appear.

Even if Link had Legendary power, if he met a Warrior like this when he first arrived at Firuman, he would be defeated immediately. But now, he wasn't a rookie anymore. He was a master at fighting!

In the blink of an eye, the leader had charged to 30 feet before him. He raised his sword and cut through the air. A crystal-like strand of Battle Aura shot towards Link.

I can't block Level-10 strength!

Link's mind went crazy. In the corner of his vision, he saw Nana retreating 60 feet while carrying Milda and holding Riel. She had rich battle experience. When she ran, she didn't maintain a straight line with Link. Instead, she ran towards the side, making it impossible for the Legendary Warrior to kill them all.

This made Link a bit relieved. He started reacting with full force. He couldn't block the hit, but he could hide.

The opponent used the Battle Aura to fly through the air. Link already predicted his next move. He pointed somewhere on the ground with the Burning Wrath of Heavens wand in his left hand. Spatial Spheres appeared continuously. Bit by bit, they flew all around Link.

His control on the Abstruse Meaning of space had increased again. In the past, his Spatial Spheres were only the size of assame seed. One could see it by looking closely.

Now, the frequencies of the Spatial Spheres were 100 times higher. When tightened to the extreme, they couldn't be seen by the naked eye. Even Link couldn't see them. He only knew they existed by the subtle Mana they emitted.

While making this trap, he flashed in the opposite direction of Nana.

Now, his Dragon Power was halfway into Level-9. His physical strength was at this level too. Because of his prediction, he dodged the general's attack by a millimeter. Then he pushed off the ground and stabbed towards the general.

"Oh, a Magician knows swordsmanshi

Whoosh. The crystal-like Battle Aura erupted again. The general's body seemed to teleport. In a blink, he landed on the ground from three feet in the air.

He was so fast that when he hit the ground, there was a faint afterimage behind him. Before the afterimage disappeared, his body transformed into a streak of light again as he charged at Link.

During this, he continuously brought his sword down. Strands of Battle Aura hurled towards Link. There were three. One attacked Link directly while two sealed off his exits. He couldn't hide or dodge.

"Die!" In the general's eyes, this low-level Magician was definitely dead meat.

But then something happened!

The moment before the attack arrived, Link did two things. First, he activated the Dragon King's Fury wand. Instantly, his strength multiplied by ten and his speed multiplied by five. Next, he activated a Spatial Sphere he'd planted in the path of the general knight.

Buzz. The Spatial Sphere erupted. It instantly turned into a foggy ripple ten feet wide and blocked the knight.

"Spatial Rend!"

This time, Link didn't use Restraint. The difference between Level-9 and Level-10 was too big. Spatial Restraint wouldn't be effective and would just waste a chance to attack. On the other hand, the strange phenomenon created by the Spatial Rend could stun the opponent and delay their reaction.

Inside the Spatial Sphere, the force field became chaotic with Link's thoughts. Inside it, leaves, grass, rocks, and dirt all turned into fine white powder. Regardless of how powerful his attack was, the visual was already impressive!

The knight had been charging at Link. Seeing this, he was stunned, and his steps faltered. This had nothing to do with battle experience; it was his protective instincts!

When something incomprehensible happened, an animal's natural instinct would be to avoid it. They couldn't just charge forward stupidly.

The general's pause gave Link a chance.

When the Battle Aura came, Link's rising power burst out. The basic swordsmanshi

With the great power he had, Link flashed even faster than the general. The three Battle Aura arcs came one after another. Link stepped to the side, dodging the first arc by a hair's breadth. Then he moved his foot and flashed back to his original spot, dodging the arcs that followed to seal off his exits.

His speed was extreme. At a glance, it was like he didn't even move. The Battle Aura arcs passed by him as if he was just a shadow.

"Okay, you have nice tricks!" The knight was shocked too. Link's speed was honestly too fast!

And that wasn't all!

While performing those actions, a fiery-red light appeared on Link's Burning Wrath of Heavens wand. With a whoosh, a crystal red whip lashed out. It cut a graceful arc in the air and whipped towards the knight's head like lightning.

Stunned, he hacked at the whip. This move was also an instinct. Whether one could control one's instinct during battle was the difference between a Master and a regular Warrior.

Before a Battle Mage like Link, using instincts was the biggest taboo. Especially after Link learned basic swordsmanshi

Thus, the knight missed. The Demon Slayer Whip tited slightly, brushi

Crack! Crystal-red light splattered in all directions. The knight's head swayed a little. At the last moment, he activated his Battle Aura and protected his head. However, even though the pure Battle Aura was at the Legendary level, it was too rushed. The structure was too loose and wasn't as condensed as a Battle Aura Cut.

The result was that a shred of Link's power successfully seeped into the back of the knight's head. The back of one's head was a fatal shot. A regular person could kill someone while playing with a bit of pressure there. In a life-or-death battle like this, getting hit in the back of the head was a sign of getting killed.

The knight felt a little dizzy as if the world was spinning. He started seeing double and knew that he was in trouble!

"Argh!" he roared. He waved his sword and started attacking wildly in front of him.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh

But this was useless. Link had predicted this early on.

If the general was alone, he would definitely get killed. But he had around 30 knights behind him. Seeing that their general was in trouble, they immediately started shooting arrows at Link.

Link wasn't obsessed with fighting; he'd already started retreating. During this, he didn't look towards the arrows. Distinguishi

Whoosh. A ball-shaped force field appeared at the tip of the wand. It increased to ten feet in diameter. The next moment, dozens of arrows arrived. They dug into the force field. Like candles going into a cake, they froze in the air.

These knights were at most at Level-9 and couldn't break free from Link's magic. Before the general could recover, the white light of a Dimensional Jump appeared from Link's Dragon King's Fury wand. The light enveloped Link like water.

Nana saw this and immediately stopped retreating. She turned and rushed towards Link. Soon, she entered the range of the spell. The white light covered them all.

With a hum, the group disappeared.

The next instant, the restitive force field disappeared. After dozens of twangs, the arrows in the air suddenly sped up and stuck into the ground.

The general had finally recovered too. Clutching his heavy head, he looked up in utter shock. He had truly felt the threat of death just then even though the Magician wasn't even at Tier-1.

"Who was that Magician? Does anyone know him?" he asked, his voice low.

"I think he's called Link," a knight answered, unsure. "He's Rockham's new apprentice... an official apprentice with the magic mark."

The general was a bit shocked. "Oh, it's him... Whatever. Since he escaped, we won't chase after him. Let's continue to the Lagu tribe."

He didn't have anything against Link and was only carrying out a command. Since Link was Rockham's apprentice and had escaped from him, he had no reason to continue this. He would just see it as doing Rockham a favor... But that guy truly was ruthless!

Humm. Thousands of feet away, white light flickered in the forest. Link's group appeared again. They were in a high area. If they climbed a tree, they could see the nearby situation and the knights on the road of the city gate.

After appearing, Link scampered up a tree. He looked towards the Spring Leaf Village. As he predicted, the knights didn't come after them. The general stood in place for a while and then went in their original direction.

Link let out a breath. That battle had been shocking. When he faced the Legendary Warrior, the pressure of the thin line between life and death suffocated him.

Climbing down, Riel looked at him reverently. "Master Link, you just defeated a Legendary Warrior!"

Milda also looked at him with shock. Her eyes shone with unshed tears.

Link didn't feel any pride. "It was just luck. This is Aragu. These Warriors have Legendary power but aren't battle Masters."

Other than the dragons, Legendary fighters of Firuman were all grandmasters of battles—undefeatable fighters who had survived hellish experiences. It would be impossible for someone on a lower level to beat them. It would already be a feat to escape alive.

"Let's go. We can't stay in Spring Leaf Village. Balha has probably gone crazy already. Faced with a madman like that, Rockham can only give in."

"Are we going to go find that cave?" Milda asked.

"Of course. According to the annals, it's in the Darrow Peak outside Black Eagle City 100 miles to the north. It's not too far."

"Then what are we waiting for? Let's go!" Riel couldn't wait to get out of this f\*cked up world.

Spring Leaf Village

Three halflings hid in the shadows outside the magic workshop.

"He escaped using a portal."

"Bullsh\*t. How can it be a portal? He's not a saint. Where can he get the power for that? He probably used short-distance Burst. He can't be too far. Let's go find him."

The three halflings retreated into the shadows and disappeared.

## 352. Supreme Magic Skill: Instant Flash

Spring Leaf Village was no longer an option. Link and the rest could only proceed inconspicuously to the northern forest outside the city.

The forest was not the safest place. There were constantly soldiers charging out from the city towards the forest. This was because the elves in the city were mostly all dead and the soldiers could only go outside to look for more elves. Link's party proceeded carefully and were fortunate not to meet any nasty surprises along the way.

In this manner, they proceeded 15 miles north. As the sky turned dark, the soldiers from Spring Leaf Village returned. Link and his party sighed in relief.

"There are roughly 1,500 soldiers in Spring Leaf Village. With this much distance between us, we should be safe," Milda said. All this time, Milda was being carried by Nana and hadn't had the chance to change her clothing. She was still wearing the mantle and beneath it, she had one simple skirt. However, her top was bare.

Unfortunately, she could only use the mantle to cover her body until they had a chance for her to stop and put on her clothes.

After walking for a few more miles, the sky turned dark. Riel suddenly said, "Look, there's a hole at the base of the tree. It looks pretty big; we could rest there for tonight."

Link looked over and could only see dense leaves. He bent down. It was only then that he discovered what Riel saw. There was indeed a little hole at the base of the tree. The tree was big, about 60 feet across. The hole in the tree trunk was five feet wide. If it opened up even more inside, this would make a good place to pass the night.

"Careful, holes in trees usually have wild beasts living within them," Princess Milda said.

Link nodded. After thinking for a while, he used a Light Spell to probe into the tree. The spell emanated soft white light, gently filling up the tree.

About three seconds later, a big bear with six-feet-wide shoulders rushed out of the tree. It roared as it ran along, and one could hear the fear in its voice as it roared. It probably never encountered something like this light spell before.

In its panic, it didn't look where it was going and stumbled. But quickly, it picked itself back up and continued running. Soon, its big round butt disappeared from view.

"Alright, the tree should be safe. That timid looking bear probably won't be back any time soon," Link said.

The four of them entered the hole in the tree. Riel was the first to go in. As he entered, he couldn't help but pinch his nose in disgust. "Ugh, this smells worse than dwarven women's panties."

Link immediately casted a Cleansing spell. He waited until the Cleansing spell had cleaned the hole entirely before he walked in.

The hole still had a faint smell but at least, it was now bearable.

After entering the hole, Link did not rest and began inscribing talismans around the side. About ten minutes later, the tree hole entrance was covered up by a magic door. This magic door's texture was almost the same as the tree trunk. Furthermore, no trace of magic was able to leak out. It looked extremely realistic.

Only when he was done with all of these did he return inside to rest.

The hole did not look big from the outside, but inside, it was actually rather spacious, covering an area of 210 square feet. More importantly, there was a small passage near the top of the hole that allowed a single person to crawl through.

It could be seen that this passage opened up where the tree branches started to fork out. That was about 90 feet above the ground. It was a great escape route.

Link used magic to attach a light to the top of the tree hole. With the light, he brought out rations and water. These were items that Link usually kept on standby. In this perilous world, he knew he often had to be on the move.

After walking for a whole day, everyone was hungry. They ate their food in silence.

After eating, Princess Milda found a corner and, using the cloak as a curtain, she quickly changed her clothing.

Riel was not aware of the situation that Princess Milda was in. Watching her, he asked curiously. "Milda, what are you doing? You can't be pleasuring yourself in this situation, can you? Save your strength, we're on the run right now."

Milda's face flushed red. She hatefully glared at this dwarf who did not know how to control his mouth and shrieked, "Shut the hell up!"

Riel looked helplessly at Link. "I had good intentions..."

"Alright, don't be nosy. Go rest." Link knew that the dwarf was in the mood for poking fun at people. He quickly handed Riel a bear skin mantle and urged him to go to sleep.

Riel was also pretty tired. His energy was spent. He had traveled all this way on his own and was not carried on Nana's back. After receiving the bear skin mantle, he laid down. Soon, the tree hole was filled with the soft sound of snoring.

Link rested for a while after finishi

He sat himself down on another mantle and took out a magic note, making inscriptions on it.

The battle against the soldier captain earlier was extremely dangerous. However, under the immense pressure, Link suddenly felt like he made a breakthrough. He gave into the inspiration he felt, going along with the feeling and making various calculations.

Very soon, he was immersed in the feeling. As he scribbled on the magic note, a new dimensional spell was gradually taking shape.

Link was concentrating so hard that he did not notice his environment. Suddenly, he felt that someone had closed up to his side. He smelt a familiar fragrance and realized that Princess Milda had come to watch what he was doing. This happened more and more frequently to the point that Link was already used to it. He brought his attention back to the note that he was writing, continuing to make various calculations.

After a period of time, Link suddenly felt a weight on his right shoulder. Turning to look, he saw that Princess Milda was now leaning against him and resting her head on his shoulder. She had already fallen asleep. Maybe it was because of the night cold, but her body was huddled up and pressed tightly against Link.

Link kept his body absolutely still as he carefully used the Magician's hand to reach over, picking up the mantle that had fallen off to the ground and used it to cover her body.

Then, he turned to look at Nana. Nana had never been able to feel fatigue. At this moment, she was watching the bugs crawling up and down the tree hole with greatiterest.

Link laughed before turning back to his work. Suddenly, he realized that there were some changes to Nana's body. Link realized that Nanasstrength had increased and there was even some traces of Mana in her body.

This must be due to the Essence of Life. When it is safe, I need to properly investigate it. Link's focus was now completely on the spatial spell that he was creating, and he had no time to check Nana out. He continued the calculations for the spatial spell.

Time passed slowly.

After another hour passed, Link finally wrote down the final inscription on his magic note. Now, a fully formed Mana construction formed on the paper.

This was a completely new piece of magic that could replace Link's primary escape magic, Dimensional Jump.

Although the Dimensional Jump was a Legendary Level-10 spell, Link had used it very frequently. Furthermore, he was a spatial Magician. This meant that he knew the spell like the back of his hand. Nonetheless, it was still a Legendary spell, and its design was extremely well done. There was little that Link could have done to improve it. That was until now.

Link had finally made a breakthrough with the magic.

A message popped up in his field of vision.

Player Link has created a Legendary Supreme Magic Skill. Attained 500 Omni Points.

Please name the spell.

Unexpectedly, he was rewarded with such a huge amount of Omni Points. This made Link very pleased. Thinking for a moment, he said, "Let's call it Instant Flash."

The system displayed a new message.

Instant Flash

Level-10 Legendary Spatial Spell

Consumption: 2500 or more Dragon Power points (Increases as the teleportation distance increases).

Casting time: 0.01 seconds

Effect: User can appear anywhere within 700 feet immediately after casting the spell.

(Note: Go ahead and burn your Dragon Power)

This description gave Link a heartache. This spatial spell was excellent and could be used offensively in combination with his sword skills and magic. It was a great killing spell. The only problem was that its consumption rate was a little high.

One Instant Flash cost 2500 Dragon Power points. Even with Link's immense recovery rate, it was something that he could not keep up with. Essentially, he could only use it twice in an entire battle.

The less time it takes to cross the distance, the more Mana will be consumed. This was a simple law of nature, Link thought to himself and sighed.

The design of the spell was fairly simple, even easier than the dimensional jump. Furthermore, Link was the creator of the spell and was definitely the most familiar with it. Even without practice, he was already extremely familiar with the spell.

As for the 500 Omni Points, Link looked at his maximum Dragon Power limit—it was currently at 7700 points. Link had a strange feeling that he was about to reach the threshold into the Legendary realm. He just needed a small push before he could.

Right now, his strength was rapidly increasing. He decided to conserve the 500 Omni Points. In the future, if he encountered any issues, he could use these points to breakthrough.

Finally, Link was starting to feel fatigued and prepared to rest.

Carefully, he leaned against Princess Milda and laid them both down on the mantle.

Closing his eyes, he quickly started to dream. It was a very nice dream. He dreamt of Celine.

He dreamt that he was enjoying life back in Ferde. He dreamt of himself, gently stroking Celine's flawless skin, slowly tracing his finger up to caress Celine's soft chest. Celine laughed and told him off for teasing her. Then, she reached out and grasped his hard member, taking it out. The two of them then began talking dirty.

The things that were said between them were muffled, and Link couldn't remember exactly what he had said. Anyway, it was a warm and calm feeling. After that, the two of them hugged and laid down on the bed, tossing and turning. At some point, they were connected with each other.

Link found himself engrossed in the sweet dream of Celine.

As he was preparing to continue, Link heard a soft cry of pain from beside him.

This cry shook Link awake. What is it?? Could it be an enemy?

After waking up, Link was stunned.

He was having a sweet sappy dream, but right now, in reality, he was actually hugging a girl. It wasn't just anyone but Princess Milda.

He was covered by the wide mantle, and beneath him lay Princess Milda. Their two bodies were pressed tightly together. Link could feel Princess Milda's feverish warmth on his skin.

"Ooops..." Link was speechless.

What made it worse was that Nana was squatting in the corner. She was no longer looking at the tree bugs. Rather, she was looking at them.

## 353. Unavoidable Blood-Eyed Robbers

This was very awkward!

It was okay if Nana saw it. She was a magic puppet who didn't understand this stuff. Link turned carefully to look at Riel. Thankfully, he was still snoring and deep asleep.

Looking back at Milda, Link didn't know what to say.

Link was very open-minded about sex. He didn't care that much and had only acted intimately with Celine, but he wouldn't stay monogamous purposely. He didn't feel bad about what happened—just awkward.

He never thought that an erotic dream would become real. Milda must have cooperated. Otherwise, he would at most just hug her and rub a little.

But now that they were at this point, should he stop or not? If he stopped, he would feel a bit sad. If he didn't...what even was this?

While he was still debating, Milda hugged Link tightly and murmured in his ear, "Finish your dream."

Okay. Link decided to continue.

There was a flurry and a storm. Afterwards, Link and Milda both used a cleaning spell and quickly fixed their clothing. He didn't know how to face Milda anymore. Clearing his throat, he pulled out a book. "Rest well. I'll read for a bit."

Milda giggled. She sat up and latched onto Link's lower back. "Now you're a true man. Before this, I thought you only knew magic spells..."

Link started sweating. Just as he was trying to answer, his ears twitched. He heard something unnatural. Seeing Milda was about to speak, he reached out to stop her. Then he cast the Silence Spell on Riel. The snoring disappeared instantly.

Weak cries of insects traveled in from the trees outside. There were soft scrapes within the noise.

Link's hearing was very sensitive. He listened hard to distinguish it. After a few seconds, he wrote some words with streaks of light in the air. People are coming. There are three.

They were in the wilderness. No matter who it was or if they were discovered, they must be prepared to defend themselves.

Link gestured at Nana and pointed at Riel. Nana quietly walked to the dwarf and shook him awake.

"Ah, what's wrong?" Riel asked blearily, not fully awake yet. His voice was quite loud. Thankfully, the Silence Spell surrounded them and the people outside the tree couldn't hear.

Link increased the range of the spell, covering the outside of the tree. "Shush. There are people outside."

Riel shuddered. He was immediately awake. Climbing up, he asked, "What do we do now?"

The footsteps continued outside, growing more obvious. The other party seemed not to be hiding themselves. This meant they weren't discovered yet.

Link pointed to the tunnel at the top of the hole. "We're going up."

Riel was the closest to the hole, but it was a bit high; he couldn't reach it. Nana walked over and grabbed his neck. Using some power, she tossed him into the tunnel. Next was Milda. She was already wearing comfortable clothes. Link cast the Levitation Spell and pushed her arm, pushi

"Nana, you too," Link said while he chose to leave the tunnel. He walked towards the magic door of the tree.

His magic hole didn't seal the hole completely. There was still a tiny peephole for him to see the situation outside.

Beside the door, Link tapped beside the peephole. A Spatial Lens appeared in the air. A thin thread extended from the end and through the hole. Then it enlarged slightly, turning into a Spatial Sphere.

It was already light outside. After outer light waves passed into the sphere, they were turned into strands and taken to the Spatial Lens. Thus, Link could see a 360-degree image.

As expected, there are three people. They should be halflings with bloody eyes carved on their foreheads. They're from the Blood-eyed Robbers...They really won't leave us alone. It's already been so long, but they still pursued us to kill us.

Link could understand this. For a group of robbers that used their horrible reputation to instill fear, they must do this to maintain that reputation. It would put fear in everyone and lower their cost for robberies.

Otherwise, rumors would spread that someone killed a Blood-eyed Robber and survived. The horrible reputation would decrease greatly. In the future, people might fight against them during robberies. Then people would die, and the cost would rise.

What Link didn't expect was that they were so tough!

Judging from their postures and movements, two of them were at Level-9, and one was Level-10. They looked left and right, full of vigilance. They must have felt something odd but didn't discover anything wrong.

The situation was tricky, but it wasn't hopeless.

Link grabbed the Dragon King's Fury sword and carefully watched the opponents' positions, planning out how to do the sneak attack.

The three stood in a triangle. The Level-10 robber stood at the front while the two Level-9 robbers were fifteen feet to either side of him. This meant Link couldn't attack the Level-10 robber. It was too risky; if he messed up and didn't kill the robber, he would be surrounded by the three.

The seconds ticked past. Riel and the others were almost to the top of the tree. Suddenly, Riel stepped on a withered branch and popped up. There was a soft crack that traveled outside the hole. Link saw the three all look toward the branch. They heard it and were distracted!

Now was the time!

Link continuously used Instant Flash. His Dragon Power surged, and 2500 points evaporated instantly. Then Link's figure slowly faded like an apparition. At the same time, Link appeared abruptly behind the outermost Level-9 robber outside the tree.

His position and timing were perfect. As soon as he appeared, the tip of his sword was right against the robber's back. All Link had to do was push lightly.

Squelch. Unsurprisingly, the sword pierced the robber's back and killed him.

"Who is it?!" The Level-10 robber immediately turned around.

"Loch!" The other Level-9 robber shouted his slain companion's eyes, shock in his eyes. This attack was too sudden.

One down, two to go but Link didn't have another chance.

Before the Level-10 robber turned fully, he already hurled his axe towards Link. It cut a three-foot bloody arc in the air.

This must be some type of battle technique. It crashed towards Link like a meteor. Under it, the ground split open deeply. Fallen branches and leaves spun quickly under some mysterious power. The trees nearby were bent by the blood-colored light as if sucked by a magnetic force.

It was the torque. The ball of light forced everything else to start spinning. Link was affected as well. He lost his balance and was almost sucked towards the battle technique. His movements were affected too. The light came crashi

This Legendary battle technique was terrifying. If hit, Link would die without a doubt. He couldn't attack again and used the Instant Flash to escape.

Whoosh

Link didn't see this, but he was chilled by the sound. After the Instant Flash, he didn't continue attacking. Instead, he went to the others and used the Dimensional Jump without hesitation.

Whoosh. The group disappeared inside the tree.

The two Instant Flashes used up 5000 Dragon Power points. The Dimensional Jump was 900 points, and so Link now had 1800 points left. Even though it regenerated quickly, it wasn't enough to face two strong fighters.

After reappearing, Link immediately cast the Traceless Spell on everyone. Then he said softly, "You two stay here and wait. Nana, come with me."

Only running was meaningless when Legendary fighters were after them. It would only use up their strength. He had to attack.

As he spoke, Link sneaked towards their original position. After staying low for 600 feet, he stopped and hid under a large leaf. He gestured at Nana and pointed towards a pile of grass in the other direction. Nana crawled over and hid in the grass with a giant leaf on her head. After adding an invisibility spell, it was impossible to detect her existence.

After all that, Link began waiting patiently.

If the Level-10 robber could find them, his pursuit abilities must be shocking. They could definitely feel their existence, so they followed over. The most probable path was a straight line from where Link used the Instant Flash. This was the best chance for a sneak attack!

The other side

"Oyes, that guy escaped again!" The speaking halfling hugged his companion's body tightly. He was furious and sad.

The one called Oyes had a dark expression. He sensed carefully and pointed in a direction. "He's there. I can feel them. I'll go after them and leave marks. Bring Loch back and report to the head. Tell him to bring more people. This guy isn't that powerful, but his spells are strange. He runs like a rat too. We need more men."

"Okay, be careful."

"Don't worry. He's not my match at all. His little tricks are like jokes to me."

Oyes carried his battle axe and charged deep into the forest.

## 354. The Possibility of Removing the Slave Collar

In the forest

Link waited patiently. He wasn't disappointed. After three minutes, there came the patter of footsteps.

From the time they concealed themselves to now, it had only been three minutes and tity-five seconds. Link's Dragon Power recovery rate was 27 points per second. In this time, he had already recovered over 5800 Dragon Power points, fully recovering the amount he consumed earlier on.

This was the benefit of pure dragon power.

As their opponents got closer, Link gestured towards Nana. It was to say, I'll take the lead, you take the chance to sneak in an attack.

Nanasstrength had increased, but even still, she was still only at Level-8. It would be foolish to let her initiate the attack on a Level-10 expert, tantamount to suicide.

In fact, Nana was only a backup plan. If things went smoothly, she would not even have to reveal herself.

Nana nodded. She could feel her opponent's strength. She gripped her Breakpoint dagger tightly.

Tap. Tap. The footsteps slowed down. It seemed that the opponent detected something.

Link crouched low under the huge grass, squinting his eyes to look at the opponent. He saw that the bandit was only 90 feet away. The bandit gripped his axe tightly and poised his body in a defensive posture.

The bandit was wearing simple leather armor with little defense. Whether it was Link's Dragon King's Wrath sword or Nana's Breakpoint dagger, either one would easily pierce their defenses.

The axe he was holding also seemed to be made of simple steel. This would be a great weapon for a normal Warrior, but for a Legendary Warrior, it was far too inferior.

Although the Warriors in this world are strong, their equipment is pathetic. This fellow doesn't even have any magic equipment; he's just a sitting duck. Link sighed. In terms of equipment, Link had an extreme advantage.

At this point, the bandit came within 30 feet. His movements became even more cautious and alert. When he walked into the foliage, he alarmed a dog-sized rat. As it jumped and escaped, the bandit was in turn alarmed and turned to face the rat.

Whoosh. Link naturally would not waste this chance. His body immediately disappeared from his original position, instantly appearing to the bandit's seven o'clock, behind the bandit's left shoulder.

This was an ideal position for sneak attacking, as it was a dead angle for the opponent. Link could focus on attacking while the bandit could only dodge and not counter.

Swoosh. Link's sword stabbed at the bandit's back. At the same time, he pointed his Burning Wrath of Heaven's wand to the space in front of the bandit. He released a dimensional ball that stopped in front of the bandit, cutting off his escape path.

The bandit Oyes detected the killing intent from behind him and immediately reacted, lunging forward as Link had predicted.

As he was in mid-air, he forcefully spun his body around, raising his axe to strike back at Link.

Wham. The dimensional ball exploded, trapping the bandit within.

Revolve!

This time, Link didn't use Spatial Shackles or Spatial Rend. Instead, he simply used the distortional force produced by the spatial energy to create a rotating force. The huge force acted on Oyes's body, causing him to spin around mid-air.

Oyes was shocked. He immediately re-adjusted his body and forcefully activated his skill. Swoosh. A blood-red light appeared and headed straight for Link.

This skill was extremely forced. After releasing it, he found himself in an awkward position, and he couldn't maintain his balance.

Link had long since expected this development and had activated Instant Flash before this happened. When the blood-red light reached, all it hit was Link's after-image. The real Link had already reappeared behind Oyes's body and once again stabbed towards his back.

This stab was in a perfect position and had perfect timing. It was immediately after the opponent had used his skill and was in a refractory period. The bandit simply did not have time to make any follow-up moves.

The sword stabbed into the opponent's back, sliding smoothly into his body. Just as the sword tip entered, Link noticed a few scars on the bandit's neck. Link felt a sudden impulse and tited his blade, avoiding the bandit's heart.

Nonetheless, the blade still pierced right through the bandit's lungs. The pain was incredible, and the bandit involuntarily released a cry of pain. Still suspended in the air, his body lost all its strength and went limp.

Link pulled back his sword and slashed once more, cutting off the bandit's arm that held the axe.

Crash. The bandit's body crumpled to the ground. He no longer had any strength left to resist.

After creating the spell Instant Flash, it was a simple matter for Link to deal with regular Level-10 experts.

Link walked forward and stepped down hard onto the bandit's body, which was still jerking about in pain.

Link pressed his sword tip against the opponent's throat and asked, "What happened in Spring Leaf Village?"

"I dare you to kill me!" The bandit shouted. He wanted to spit his blood covered spit at Link. However, the moment he exerted his strength, he started coughing in pain. The wound in his lung caused him to cough up huge amounts of blood and nearly stop breathing.

Link moved his sword to poke into the bandit's finger on his left hand, like a sharp nail.

"Arghhh!" The bandit screamed in pain. He could see that Link was going to slowly and repeatedly pierce his finger with his sword. Panicking, he explained. "We poisoned Balha's wife. He's gone mad!"

"No wonder," Link said in realization. In Spring Leaf Village, everyone knew that Balhassoft spot was his beloved wife. Even though Link had only stayed in the village for a short time, he had also known about it.

There was little that strong people like Balha would fear. That was with the exception of the people that he cared about. Watching as the bandits kill his beloved, it was no surprise that Balha would go insane.

Link couldn't understand it. He asked, "But you guys are just a bandit gang..."

"Mercenary troop!"

"Fine, mercenary troop. For a mercenary troop to go up against the lord of Spring Leaf Village, aren't you afraid of retaliation? I'm sure you know that Balha's father is Great Lord Bal. That's a Level-17 expert."

"Heh," the bandit laughed. His smirking mouth was covered in blood. "We are just slaves, trash with nothing to our names. All we have are our lives. What wouldn't we be afraid of doing? Anyway, Bal is busy with his own troubles. Where would he find time to bother us? Hahahaha."

Important figures had their own work to do; this was something Link understood very well. Back when he was cleaning up Ferde's bandit problem, he had let the mercenary troops manage the problem. He had not gone out to clean them up himself, as he was far too busy with other things.

Link asked another question. "How do you remove the slave collar?"

This question caused the bandit to pause. "Remove the slave collar? What are you planning...? Oh, I get it. You Araguans are up to something. I'm never telling you!"

Although the bandit refused to answer, it gave Link a clue, letting him know that there was a way to remove the slave collar. Furthermore, it wouldn't be too difficult. Otherwise, a simple bandit troop would never be able to release it on their own.

This made Link happy.

Link sized up the bandit again. The bandit was tough and unmoving, stubborn to his bones. It would probably be difficult to make him open his mouth.

Link had no time to waste with him. Raising his sword, he ended the bandit's life.

There were three bandits from just now. Now that two were dead, there was one more Level-9 bandit. Link thought for a moment and said to Nana, "Go, protect Milda and Riel. I'm going to kill the pursuers."

"Understood," Nana said. She turned and left.

Link, on the other hand, turned back towards the tree hole they were hiding in before. He was going to deal with a Level-9 bandit. This would be a piece of cake for him, and he hurried onwards.

Half a minute later, he exited the dense foliage and found himself back where the tree hole was.

The surroundings were covered in flesh and blood, the remains of the first Blood-eye bandit he killed.

Link carefully studied the tracks on the floor and quickly determined the direction the last bandit had left in.

His speed isn't fast; the footsteps are much deeper than before. There is also a lot of blood trailing along. The bandit probably brought his comrade's corpse along, Link deduced.

Link followed the trail. After about three minutes, he noticed something new.

His speed suddenly increased. Based on the speed and the distance, this must have been when I killed the third guy. He must have realized that the situation was bad and decided to speed up. Unfortunately, he's still not fast enough.

Link increased his speed, determined to chase the bandit down.

After another five minutes, Link stopped. At the side of the road, he saw a corpse. This belonged to the first bandit he killed. At the same time, the footsteps on the trail disappeared. At least, with the naked eye, there were no obvious tracks on the ground.

Link thought for a moment. He must have decided that he couldn't escape fast enough, so he threw aside the body and hid his own tracks, choosing to hide instead.

If Link was a Warrior in this world, he might not be able to continue tracking down the bandit. Fortunately, he was a Magician.

Link pointed the magic sword in his hand forward and said softly, "Clear Sign!"

Clear Sign

Level-3 Hidden Spell

Effect: Greatly increase the user's senses and filter out irrelevant information.

(Note: Use it to uncover the truth.)

After using the spell, Link felt like he woke up. The world in front of him changed, and all the unhelpful phenomena in front of him, like the wind and the sound of bugs and bird calls, disappeared.

Link's mental realm became silent. The surrounding imagery became somewhat vague. Meanwhile, Link sniffed hard, picking up the scent of blood. There were two different scents: One came from the corpse in front of him and was very dense. The other scent was a lot fainter and pointed towards a particular direction.

The other bandit has got this guy's blood on him. I can use it to find him too.

Link maintained the state of Clear Sign, tracing the scent of blood and chasing it.

After walking for about 300 feet, Link stopped. He pointed the sword in his hand towards a patch of green nine feet away.

"Come out!"

The foliage was quiet at first. Then, three seconds later, a figure lunged out towards Link. It was the bandit!

Whoosh. Spatial Shackles!

The bandit was Level-9, and Link used 2000 Dragon Power points in this spell. The bandit immediately slowed down, moving as slow as one centimeter every second. It was like he was in a thick, viscous paste.

Link waved his magic sword, negating a portion of the Spatial Shackles. In the end, the bandit's body was still trapped within the Spatial Shackles space, while his head existed in normal space.

On this bandit's neck were also some scars. These scars were probably left by a slave collar.

Pointing the Dragon King's Wrath at the bandit's forehead, Link began to speak.

"I've got no patience. I just want to know one thing. If you answer me, I'll spare you, otherwise, ..."

"Just kill me!" The bandit stared hatefully at Link.

Link laughed. If the bandit had stayed calm, Link wouldn't have any confidence in prying the information out of him. However, it was obvious that this was just a brave front in the face of death.

People in this state seemed fearless, but it was only temporary. After a while, their survival instinct would naturally kick in.

Link paused, dragging out the time. After a while, he continued, "I will count down from ten. You can make your decision by then...ten... nine... eight... three..."

Link took his time counting down. Finally, when he had reached three, the bandit spoke up. "Will you really let me go?"

## 355. Someone Wants to be a God

Forest in the mountain

Using Link's thoughts, there was a ding. The Blood-eyed Robber's short sword was flicked 1000 feet by the force field. Finally, it buried into a tree. At the same time, Link undid the robber's restraint. With a plop, the robber fell onto the ground.

Link retreated ten feet and put his sword away. His action had a strong hinting effect. The robber saw this and let out a breath. He climbed up slowly and asked, "What do you want to know?"

Link didn't ask about the slave ring immediately. Instead, he explained his situation, "I have two friends, one Laguan and one a dwarf. Because of an accident, slave rings were put on them. I want to take it off for them."

The halfling's expression relaxed slightly and the animosity reduced by a bit. Sneering, he said, "Since when were Araguans nice enough to see Laguans and dwarves as friends?"

Link smiled faintly. "Not everyone is like the bloody Butcher Balha. Actually, I don't support slavery."

The halfling fell silent. If someone else said this, he wouldn't believe it. However, to assassinate Link, he'd watched the man for many days. He truly treated his slaves well. It was understandable if he wanted to get rid of the ring.

More importantly, if he didn't answer, he would die.

Thinking of this, he said, "The one who helped us get rid of the ring is the Laguan prophet Greer Seymor...ah...ah...ah!"

Halfway through, an accident happened! Link saw smoke suddenly come out of the halfling's throat. A few seconds later, his neck turned black from the inside out. The smoke coming out of him turned into scalding sparks of fire.

Link smelled the thick smell of something burning. Then, right before his eyes, the halfling caught on fire. He burned for more than ten minutes. When the fire went out, all that was left was a human-shaped pile of ashes.

Shocked, Link squatted down. He sifted through the ashes and sniffed it. A spicy, garlicky scent rushed into his nose.

He closed his eyes and felt for the aura. There was a very subtle and mysterious power within the ashes.

It's a silencer curse for a specified target. This type of curse is extremely difficult and is at least Level-17. It is probably done by the prophet Greer Seymor that he mentioned. This was the experience Link received in the game. The game had replicated the signs of the spell very well.

This was strange.

According to the halfling, the prophet was Laguan. If he didn't want to be revealed, he could just say so. Why did he use such a powerful curse?

From the halfling's reaction, he didn't know about the curse at all. This meant that the prophet wasn't a secret amongst the halflings. They didn't know about the taboo either. The curse would only be activated if the information was revealed to an Araguan.

The process was very interesting as well.

The man didn't completely make the secret forbidden. The curse only started after uttering the name. That means the name has a special power.

With that thought, Link took out his Burning Wrath of Heavens wand to write down the name. He wanted to see if the name contained any special magic or contract. But just as he was about to start, he stopped.

If the name contains power, the other must be extremely strong. I have to be prepared.

Thinking of that, Link returned to Nana. He and Nana had a special magic bond, so he quickly found the group.

"How is it?" Milda asked. She'd returned to normal without a sign of the past. The redness on her face had faded and returned to the alabaster color. She looked at Link normally as well. There was no difference—at least, none that Link could see.

He let out a breath of relief. Composing himself, he moved on from that ridiculous thing. "I might have found a way to remove the ring, but it's extremely dangerous."

"Oh, tell me." Riel was interested as well. His power was rising quickly; he was about to break into Level-9.

Link began recounting what happened to the two halflings. During this, he replaced Greer Seymor's name with "elven prophet." Then he said, "I don't know what kind of power the prophet has. Milda, do you have suggestions?"

The scope of elven magic was very wide. Link believed Milda could help him.

Unexpectedly though, Milda had spaced out. Hearing his voice, she jolted and asked with embarrassment, "Sorry, what did you say?"

Beside her, Riel instantly lost his temper. "Your Highness," he huffed, "how can you be distracted about something so important? What are you thinking about?!"

Milda looked ashamed, and she reddened again. "I'm sorry," she muttered.

"Okay, I'll say it again." Link knew the reason. It seemed that last night had indeed affected Milda. He really regretted sleeping so close to Milda now, resulting in that stupid thing. Now, it was getting between their friendshi

Composing himself, Link repeated himself.

This time, Milda was finally back to normal. After listening attentively, she pondered and said, "According to our secret records, names carry power. This usually appears after Legendary Level-15. The power a name contains is different and divided between three categories—Mana, soul, and law. Legendary Level-15 can only contain Mana power. Above Level-17, it will involve the soul. At Level-19, it will involve the laws. The next step would be a demi-God."

This was the elven heritage. Hearing those details, Link suddenly thought of someone—Morpheus, the Shadow Stalker of Firuman. In the game, this guy actually reached Level-19 as a human assassin. He even understood a portion of the God territory and started searching everywhere to be turned into a God.

Even though he'd always lived in obscurity and never did anything big, once he reached Level-19 in the game, he'd sense whenever someone in Firuman said his name. If he was mentioned multiple times within a period, he could even cast down bad luck. His name probably carried the power of the laws.

Thinking of this, Link said, "Then we'll test what kind of power the name carries. Nana, get ready."

Nana nodded. She pulled out the Breakpoint dagger.

Milda didn't understand. "How will you test it? He'll definitely find out and might even find us with it."

Link pointed his wand at the air and cast a Spatial Sphere. Then, the sphere started warping. Finally, it formed a special structure. It was entirely caved in with a thin link connecting to the outside world.

"Break this link if anything happens," Link said to Nana. Then he said to Milda, "Nana's dagger is a bit special. It can break many illusory things. I can't explain it, but we're safe."

The Breakpoint dagger could even destroy a God's soul. No matter how strong the prophet was, he couldn't be stronger than a God. Link wasn't worried.

After the distorted space appeared, Link wrote Greer Seymor in the air with Mana.

Once he finished, his heart started pounding. It felt like someone had his eyes on him. At the same time, the constructed space was disturbed by some strange power. It started undoing itself uncontrollably.

"Nana!" Link exclaimed.

Nana brought the dagger down. The link was cut with a snick. The heart tremors instantly disappeared. Looking at Milda and Riel, they looked relieved too.

"It felt like I was at the edge of a cliff and could fall down at any time. It's terrifying!" Riel patted his chest, still not recovered.

Milda clutched her forehead. "That power is very strong. Not only did it instill fear, it even destroyed the spatial structure..."

The answer was close to being revealed.

Link was the constructor of the Spatial Sphere and felt it deeply. He uttered what Milda didn't say, "It's the power of the laws. Judging from this, the prophet should be the strongest in Level-19. He... might be looking to be made a God!"

"Is that possible?" Riel started tugging at his beard again. This world felt more and more dangerous. It was one thing to find Legendary people everywhere. Now, there was someone at the pinnacle. What could a mortal like him do?

Milda agreed with Link. "Your thinking is right. In Aragu, the hatred between the Laguans, dwarves, and Araguans have accumulated for centuries. Now, it's like an active volcano. Once the power is released, it's enough to change the world and push a Level-19 into the Godly level."

She said what Link was thinking. He continued, "The Blood-eyed Robbers are just a start. They're the first weapon of this Legendary man!"

"Who is he?" Riel asked. "Araguan? Elven? A dwarf?"

"He must be an Araguan," Link and Milda said at the same time. Then they met eyes and smiled knowingly.

In this world, Araguans held absolute knowledge and power. Only they could reach the pinnacle of Level-19.

Riel was shocked. "Are you sure? An Araguan is purposely making elves and halflings to go against his own race? Doesn't he know this will destroy his race? Oh my God!"

Milda shook his head. "Before eternity, races are just a shackle that can be abandoned."

"Races are cradles. You can't stay in a cradle forever," Link explained.

Aragu was on the brink of a revolution; they were right when the sparks were about to be ignited.

Riel looked miserable. "So there's no hope of getting rid of this damn ring?"

The one who could undo it was at Level-19 and they'd become rivals with the Blood-eyed Robbers. They were looking for death if they tried to ask the prophet to remove the ring.

Link smiled. "Actually, there's a lot of hope."

"How? He's not a good guy." Riel shook his head furiously, not believing Link at all.

Link put his wand away and explained, "The church should appear soon. With that, there would be altars and the first batch of piss. These piss might not know curing spells, but they'll know how to undo the ring and free the slaves."

Each freed slave would be the church's fervent believer. They would become the church's Warriors and begin massacring the Araguans under the motivation from centuries of hatred.

Not only would the church give them freedom, but it would also give them power and knowledge. With time, the slaves would become a force that could not be ignored.

At that time, Aragu would become chaotic. They could take advantage of it and find a priest to undo the rings.

"What should we do?"

"Hide somewhere and focus on strengthening. Between half a year and a year, we should be able to leave this world."

## 356. I Will Conquer This World

Balha was infuriated, and the whole Spring Leaf Village was in chaos. The only one who could stop him, Magician Rockman, was still recovering from his wounds.

Therefore, the whole of Spring Leaf village descended into an abyss of despair.

In fact, at this moment, Rockman was no longer in Spring Leaf Village. He had left two days ago and was now in a cart headed for Black Eagle City. Besides him, was a black-haired girl.

"Saroviny, you aren't a Laguan or a dwarf. When we reach Black Eagle City and meet Lord Bal, if you are able to gain his favor, you may be able to get rid of your slave identity."

"Understood."

Saroviny made a noise to acknowledge Rockman's words. Saroviny was dressed in a long black chiffon dress. The dress, however, was very thin. Besides the most important areas, the rest of Saroviny's skin was pretty much visible. Her entire back was essentially exposed, showing off her radiant snow-white skin. Her gorgeous black hair tumbled down across her bare back. That combination of black against white was stunning and possessed incredible attractiveness.

Rockman did not dare to look at her long. He was afraid that he too would lose control of himself and make advances on this beautiful young girl. That would ruin all his plans.

However, he also could not bear for such a beautiful girl to be ravaged to death by Lord Bal. After hesitating for a while, he decided to give some advice. "Remember, Lord Bal sometimes prefers delicate and tender personalities."

Saroviny revealed a cold smile on her face and retracted her gaze from outside the window, glancing at Rockman. Hypocrite!

Although she did this, there was still a trace of bitterness in her heart. Bal is it? damn, how did I even end up in this situation where I need to rely on selling my body to survive? Link, don't ever give me the chance, or I will let you experience the Anluval Twist torture.

The Anluval Twist was a torture method created by a demon from the abyss. It was very effective and would make the person being tortured go crazy within a short time. From ancient times till now, not a single person has lasted for more than five minutes.

Meanwhile, back in the cart, Rockman couldn't read Saroviny's thoughts. Noticing that she was ignoring him, he shook his head helplessly. "Do what you want. Whether you live or not has nothing to do with me."

After saying that, he no longer bothered Saroviny. He brought forth a sword case that was resting in one corner and began to appraise the sword. As he looked at it, he sighed.

"Ah, what a great sword. What a pity that Balha messed things up, causing me to lose such a great student. Sigh."

"Heh." As he said this, Saroviny smirked and laughed. She looked at the old man with an extremely condescending look.

"What is it? Is the sword not good?" Rockman didn't like her gaze.

"The sword is good, but the person wielding it isn't worthy," Saroviny couldn't even be bothered to argue with Rockman. She had many things that she left unsaid. It was a joke that this businessman that reeked of money believed that he could take Link in as a disciple. He was led along by the nose by Link and didn't even know it.

Rockman laughed it off. He didn't argue with her. Anyway, it's not like he lost anything because of her harsh words.

At this point, the chariot suddenly lurched to a stop.

"What's going on?" Rockman shouted. Because of the sudden stop, he had dropped the sword case onto the floor. The sword fell out onto the carriage floor, clanging about. This made Rockman's heart hurt.

"What in the world? Driver, hey driver, what's going on?" Rockman asked angrily.

Swish. The front curtain of the carriage was pulled open, and the driver looked into the carriage. "Sir, the road up ahead is blocked by a ditch..."

Before he could finish his sentence, an arrow shotito the carriage from the forest and buried itself into his neck. Crack. The driver's neck snapped, and his head was slammed into the car window by the immense force of the arrow. All the blood spurted out and made a mess of the car.

"Sh\*t! An enemy attack!" Rockman's heart clenched. He immediately reached over and pressed the carriage's defensive talisman. A crystal light surrounded the four-sided carriage.

"Wait inside and don't come out. I'll go see who dares to cause trouble."

Rockman opened the carriage door and walked out. Upon stepping out of the carriage, he was immediately stunned.

This was because the carriage was guarded by eight heavy armored Warriors. However, outside of this entrapment were 200 Laguans fiercely eyeing the horse carriage, bows in hand.

Rockman immediately recognized the leader. "Maude, you bastard. You dare to ambush me?!"

Immediately after he said this, Maude threw a bloody head in front of Rockman. This head had its eyes opened wide, and it wore an expression of incomparable misery.

"Ah!" Rockman took a step back. He recognized this head. It was none other than Spring Leaf Village's Lord Balha.

It had only been two dassince he left the village, how could they have killed Balha so quickly?!

Maude laughed coldly. "He was wasted. I baited him with a few people, and he immediately chased after us with a cavalry of 50 men. We prepared an ambush in the forest, and he jumped right in without the slightest hesitation. Hahaha. What bloody Butcher? He's more like a dumb pig going to the slaughter."

Rockman knew that he was finished. However, he still couldn't understand why the bandits dared to act this recklessly. "Aren't you afraid of Great Lord Bal's revenge?"

Balha was Bal's son. Even if he was the third son that Bal did not look highly upon, now that the Laguans had killed Balha, Bal could not sit there and do nothing. That would be like giving up his power in the realm.

Meaning to say, the Blood-eyed mercenaries would soon face Bal's frenzied revenge.

Maude, however, didn't seem to care. "Bal wants revenge? Well, let me tell you, not long from now, all you Araguans will face the revenge of my fellow Laguans."

As he said this, Maude gestured at the archers. "Shoot!"

Whoosh. Immediately, the arrows rained down like rain. The eight armored Warriors were turned into porcupines. Rockman waved his hand and shrouded himself in a light screen, creating a barrier around himself.

Patter patter. The arrows rained onto the light screen. However, it was like rain raining onto the leaves of a banana tree. No matter how hard it rained, it had no way to break through the cover of the tree leaves.

After the rain of arrows, Maude took the chance to rush forward. The sword in his hand flashed, and immediately, Rockman's light barrier broke apart. Behind him were three experts. The moment the barrier broke, the three stabbed at Rockman simultaneously.

Wham. Rockman released yet another spell, causing the four halfling attackers to become crushed together and flung aside. They rolled for a few rounds before finally coming to a stop.

However, all this was useless. The three blades were already stuck inside his body.

Rockman retreated a few steps and rested against the walls of the carriage. He looked down to check his wounds and raised his head to see the approaching halflings. He had a bad feeling.

This time, the kingdom is probably finished.

After the thought entered his mind, he blanked out. Leaning against the carriage wall, he slowly slid down to the ground, leaving a long trace of blood on the carriage. Finally, Rockman crashed and collapsed onto the floor.

Meanwhile, Maude was picking himself up from the ground. His face was covered in dust. However, he was ultimately still the same level as Rockman. Rockman's final blow was not unleashed properly, and it only managed to shock Maude, causing his insides to hurt. However, he was not actually injured.

Maude climbed to his feet and instructed, "Open up the carriage! Let's see what treasures this old man has brought."

Crash. The carved carriage door was broken off and flung to the ground by a halfling.

Another halfling charged into the carriage. After staring for a long while, he said, "Chief, there's a sword inside the carriage. As well as an Araguan woman!"

The sword was exquisite, and the woman's beauty was even more so. It nearly caused the halfling's eyes to go blind.

"Bring the sword over, kill the girl!" Maude instructed without pausing to consider.

However, the halfling did not attack. He slowly turned and said, "Chief, I think you should come and take a look at her."

"What's there to see about an Araguan?"

Somewhat impatiently, Maude made his way to the carriage entrance and stuck his head in. He immediately froze.

On the floorboard of the carriage was a sword. A portion of the blade's body stuck out of its sheath. The blade seemed as cold as ice and very mysterious.

On the carriage, seat was seated a girl. Her black hair flowed down her back, and her skin was fair as snow. She had beautiful eyes and delicate features, as well as a lovely figure. She smiled at him.

This... He really couldn't bear to kill her. However, this was an Araguan. If he spared her, how could he still be the leader of the Laguans?!

He was their chief, and everyone knew that the hatred between the two races ran as deep as an abyss. The force of the hatred was as vast as the sky and deep as the oceans. Anyone who dared to stand in its way would bear the full brunt of the hatred.

"What do we do then?" Maude quickly ran through many plans in his head, trying to think of a way out of this situation. Then, he laid his eyes on the girl's neck and noticed her slave collar.

Maude's eyes suddenly lit up. He had found a way. "Lady, you are an Araguan woman. How did you become a slave?"

Savoriny obviously knew the danger involved here. Only an idiot would still claim to be an Araguan.

She shook her head vehemently. "My name is Saroviny, and I'm from Firuman. The Araguans are my mortal enemies!"

Maude was taken aback for a moment. Then, he grinned broadly and gave Saroviny an awkward bow.

"Although I've never seen or heard of Firuman before, we have a common enemy. Now, you've regained your freedom!" Maude said, smiling.

Saroviny also noticed the scars on one of the other halfling's neck. The smile on her face became even more apparent. "Thank you for saving me. The Araguans killed my parents and brothers. I vow to kill them all and get revenge for my family!"

"Alright, let us fight together!"

Maude reached out a hand to Saroviny, which she took hold of. Then, Maude helped Saroviny out of the carriage. After she got out of the carriage, he picked up the sword that was left behind in the carriage and declared loudly, "This is Saroviny, from the distant lands of Firuman. From here on, she will be our comrade-in-arms!"

Under the sunlight, Saroviny's beauty was beyond compare. All the halflings were enraptured by her beauty, and they started chanting fervently, "Comrade! Comrade!"

Hearing the chants, Saroviny squinted her eyes. Deep inside the pair of deep black pupils, a flame burned.

"Aragu, I, Saroviny, have come! I will conquer this new world!

## 357. Prepare to Go Home

In the blink of an eye, three months had passed.

The situation progressed faster than Link had predicted. In the borderlands of Aragu, a Fire Sect arose. Deep in the Great Beast Forest, the first altar appeared in the Laguan village Greenleaf Stop.

This news secretly spread amongst countless Laguans. Every day, many Laguan slaves escaped to the village to search for freedom.

The piss at the altar didn't disappoint them. The slave collar ring that symbolized restraint and submissiveness were easily taken off. The slaves were given freedom, and the Laguans grew stronger.

The news obviously reached Link's group, so they secretly hurried over. In the forest outside Greenleaf Stop, the invisible Link said to Milda and Riel, "Go quickly and come back. I'll wait for you here."

"Okay." The two nodded.

During the three months, Link, Milda, and Riel all entered Level-10. Link was the most advanced; he was at the pinnacle of Level-10, and his Dragon Power limit had reached 9200 points. Next was Milda at mid-Level-10. Riel entered Level-10 three days ago. Nana had accumulated much strange power and had reached Level-10 too. Link couldn't figure it out. He'd have to look into it back in Firuman.

In Aragu, this was equivalent to Stage-2. It was very average.

These three were top geniuses in Firuman. It was natural to rise to Stage-2 within four months. However, they leveled up way too quickly. They had no time to really grasp the Legendary power.

Currently, other than Link who could release the Legendary spell Miracle Aura, Milda and Riel were just two super-soldiers with the raw strength of a Legendary Warrior. They could squash anyone under the Legendary level but faced with someone of the same level, they'd most likely be destroyed.

At this time, Milda wore ragged clothing and had rubbed dirt in her hair and face. She looked like an average Laguan slave. Riel was even more extreme; he only covered himself with a rag.

There were many slaves searching for freedom on the road. The two split up and didn't attract any attention.

Link and Nana waited in the forest. Everything went smoothly. Around half an hour later, Milda and Riel came back one after another. Their rings were gone, but strangely, they both looked stunned.

"What's wrong?" Link was curious.

"You'd never guess who I saw at the altar." As Riel spoke, he tugged off his rag, revealing his stocky and tanned body. He didn't care about being naked and quickly pulled on leather armor of good quality.

After almost half a year, he finally recovered his strength—Legendary strength, at that. He finally didn't have to worry anymore.

Milda, on the other hand, hid behind a tree to change. She cast a cleaning spell to rid herself of the dust. Then she put on a plain brown leather dress. She also said, "We saw that demon commander. According to the believers, she's now the holy maiden of the Fire Sect. Her name is Saroviny."

Clack. Riel clasped the buckles on his armor and continued, "I don't know what's going on, but that demon's power didn't rise as fast as us. When we faced her, we didn't feel much pressure. I think she's around the pinnacle of Level-10 now, about the same as you, Link."

Hearing this, Link knitted his brows. "Did she discover you two?"

In the Abyss, Saroviny had true Legendary power. She was only one at the pinnacle of Level-9 in Firuman because of the laws. Now, she recovered her Legendary power. Even though it was only Level-10, her combat ability was incomparable to a regular Level-10 Warrior in Aragu!

If a Laguan reached Level-10, they were still soldiers with no experience. Saroviny though was a true Legendary fighter. They were two different concepts.

Reality proved this point. Otherwise, Saroviny wouldn't become the holy maiden of this Fire Sect.

"I don't think so." Milda had finished changing and walked out of the grass. Even though it was a simple dress, it was like muslin around the moon on her. She was shockingly beautiful.

It couldn't be helped. A Goddess-like beauty could blind anyone with her looks by just dressing up a little.

Fortunately, Link and Riel had been with her for so long and were used to it. They just found her pretty but didn't lose their minds.

Milda started combing her brilliant golden locks while saying, "There were many slaves around the altar, at least 1000 people. Saroviny just passed by the altar. She glanced in our direction and then walked away. I didn't sense anything amiss."

"I see." Link was more relieved. Seeing that the two had changed, he said, "Saroviny is very scary. In case anything happens, we'll leave now!"

They now all had Level-10 Legendary power. During the three months, Link had gone to the cave outside Black Eagle City and successfully found the spatial coordinate. It was time to leave the horrifying Aragu. Milda and Riel were both excited.

With Link's current power, he couldn't break through the realm for the portal in a regular place. He could only do so where the realm's laws were weaker. The Black Eagle City cave was that place.

The four hurried towards the city without waiting another second.

After around ten minutes, Link suddenly stopped. Not only him, but Milda also flinched. Riel even took out his battle axe. "F\*ck!" he cursed. "That b\*tch pretended not to see us. I waited for half a year. I want a good fight now!"

Footsteps came from the forest behind them. They were hurried with obvious malevolence. There were at least ten people, and they didn't hide their presence at all. Each one was above Level-10 with the highest at Level-11. The aura at the front was the most familiar—dark, chaotic, and evil, it was unobtedly Saroviny.

She brought Laguan Warriors after them.

"Are we fighting?" Milda looked at Link. She'd already taken out her wand.

Times were different. Before they were squashed by Saroviny, but now, they were all at Level-10. Even though the enemy had more people, this was a forest. It was a game of guerrilla fighting. They weren't afraid!

Link's thoughts flashed like lightning as he weighed the pros and cons. "We can't fight here. Only ten came, but there are countless reinforcements. Let's go!"

With that, Link activated the Dimensional Jump without hesitation. He was very familiar with teleporting groups now. His speed was faster than before, and the usage of Dragon Power had lowered. Now, it only required 750 Dragon Power points. With his current level, he could continuously cast the spell dozens of times.

And that's what he did.

Buzz. The four disappeared and reappeared thousands of feet to the north. As soon as they arrived, a light flashed again. Buzz. They moved forward thousands of feet. This went on ten times; they'd moved more than five miles in an instant.

After that, Link cast a Traceless Spell for everyone to hide.

"Let's go. Even if they don't give up, they won't be able to find us quickly," he said.

His Dragon Power was recovering at 35 points per second. He'd used up 7500 points just then and could be recovered in three minutes. It didn't delay anything at all.

Riel wasn't satisfied. Waving his axe, he said, "I wanted to fight."

Milda thought more deeply. She said while walking, "The Fire Sect is strengthening extremely quickly. Saroviny is the holy maiden. With her power and tactics, she will most likely control the sect. After we go back, will she use the power here to find us in Firuman?"

This was a very real problem. Link had been thinking about it and had some ideas. "It's possible but not likely."

Link didn't purely wait the last three months. During this time, they traveled about, observing the Aragu Empire. They now had a comprehensive understanding of Aragu.

The Aragu Empire wasn't weak. In contrast, they were terrifying powerful. The Fire Sect could grow so quickly because it was sudden. The large empire couldn't react yet. But once they did, it would be harder for the Fire Sect to grow more. The two parties will clash violently.

Both sides had pillars of support. The Fire Sect had a Level-19 Archmage while Aragu had countless years of accumulation. No one would win in a short time.

"The Fire Sect's rise will cause war throughout Aragu," Link muttered. "Countless people will die, but both Laguans and Araguans will be sapped of resources. With all the deaths, a great amount of space for living will be opened up. The hatred will be released too. The two parties will probably come to a stalemate."

Here, he looked at Milda. "This is the most likely result. It doesn't suit the Laguans' or Araguans' interests, but it's what the Archmage wants. He'll try his hardest for it to happen."

Milda's thoughts cleared as well. She continued, "So then Saroviny won't have time to come to Firuman. She'll always be faced with the threat of the Aragu Empire."

Link nodded then shook his head. "These are all hypotheses. No one knows what will really happen. Even a Level-19 Archmage can't sway the trend of the world. It can become uncontrollable too."

But this was all in the future. They couldn't do much with their current power. It was most important to hurry back to Firuman at the moment.

Milda sank into silence.

The other side

When Link used the Dimensional Jump, Saroviny felt it. She immediately stopped chasing because it was meaningless. She couldn't keep up.

You're fast, but it's useless even if you run back to Firuman. Just wait. I'll bring my army to you.

Not only was she the holy maiden of the Fire Sect, but she was also the Lord of the Deep's daughter. Her father was Nozama and not a bit weaker than the ruler behind the Fire Sect.

She'd also secretly contacted her father.

"Father, this new world is my gift to you."

## 358. Someone Needs to Restrain Her

Three days later

Link's party arrived at the cave on Darrow Peak, near Black Eagle City.

They were all ready to leave Aragu, even though the three months' deadline wasn't up yet. The demon army outside of Orida Fortress had lost their commander, and future developments were unpredictable.

Anyway, after the three of them had reached Legendary level, their growth rate decreased significantly. It would do them no good to spend any more time here, and they might as well return as soon as they could.

At the cave entrance, Link looked at Milda. "Are you sure?"

Milda nodded. "It's too dangerous to leave Saroviny here alone. At least, we must have someone here to restrain her."

It was true, but Link would be hard-pressed to take up this responsibility. He had many other responsibilities to handle. Riel was even less suitable to do this. Milda was naturally the best choice. As an elven princess, Milda had beauty comparable to Saroviny.

At their level of strength, it was obvious that they would not speak without due consideration. Once Milda made her decision, it would be hard to change her mind.

"Milda, your strength is not comparable to Saroviny's, you won't be able to fight her," Riel advised. He also hadn't expected Milda to really offer to stay behind. Riel actually did not have a good impression of her before. He thought that she was short-tempered and petty. Now, though, he had a newfound respect for her.

"I won't be alone. There's still the Level-19 Archmage. As the strongest in this world, he definitely would not let Saroviny take control of the Fire Sect by herself. He will definitely do something to prevent her from growing too quickly. As for me... I brought some Legendary spell books with me. Given some time, I'm sure I'll be able to master Legendary spells too."

She had been keeping it a secret until now, but at this point, there was no longer a point in hiding it.

Although what Milda said was true, it did not diminish the danger. This was especially so in the beginning while she was still weak. Furthermore, Milda was exceedingly beautiful. Even if she entered the Fire Sect, she would attract unwanted attention and may ultimately meet a bad end.

Fate was completely unpredictable. Even if one put in their best effort, things still may not turn out as desired.

After thinking for a while, Link said, "Alright, Nana will stay here with you."

Nana was a Warrior. Unlike Magicians, their strength would immediately increase upon reaching the Legendary level. Although they would not have the versatility and special abilities that Magicians possessed, for Nana, her speed was already her hidden trump card. Furthermore, she had the Breakpoint dagger. Link decided that this was for the best.

Link turned and said to Nana, "Nana, come here."

Nana walked to Link's side, and Link reached out his hand, which now glowed with the light of transformation magic. He reshaped Nana's ears to become pointy and also changed some of her facial features. Now, Nana looked much more like an elf. This would prevent her from being attacked by the Laguans.

After he was done, he instructed, "Protect Milda as you would protect me."

"Nana understands," Nana replied. She walked over behind Milda.

Link pondered for a little more, then he took out a talisman-inscribed rock and handed it over to Milda. "This is a Loco Stone that I created; it can provide me with your coordinates. If you meet any danger, you can use it to contact me, and I will come over to help. However, dimensional teleportation takes up a lot of energy. After using it once, I will need time to recover, so it would be best if you could give me half a day's warning if you know you're going to go into a dangerous situation."

"Understood." Milda nodded her head. She solemnly received the Loco Stone from Link. Not only was this a hidden trump card, but it was also an escape route for her. It was very valuable.

"Then, we're leaving."

Link indicated to Riel to get ready and turned to enter the cave. Before he could walk off, he heard a sound behind him and was immediately hugged from behind in a warm embrace. It was Milda. At the same time, he felt her push a necklace into his hand.

"This is a Thorn necklace. Only qualified members of my race are allowed to wear it. Bring this to my mother and tell her this is my decision and that she doesn't have to worry."

"I will," Link promised.

Milda continued softly, "Also, if I perish, help me erect a tombstone in Ferde. On it, write "Milda Morani," okay?"

Link shuddered. He turned around and embraced Milda. "I will!" Link promised.

Link lowered his head and kissed Milda softly on the forehead.

Then, he let go of Milda and said to Riel, who had not spoken a word since earlier, "Let's go."

Riel didn't move. It seemed like he had just made a hard decision. After a few seconds of silence, he reached into his dimensional bracelet and took out a large crystal. The crystal shone brilliantly, reflecting five beautiful colors that flowed like water. He walked over and handed it to Milda.

"This is for you. It's called the Heart of the Mountains, a treasure dug out from deep inside the mountains. I was planning to use it to make a weapon for myself, but I now give it to you. I hope you'll use it well. Quick... Quick! Take it, don't let me see it anymore!" Riel said. His face tited in pain.

Milda was really amused by his behavior. She received the Heart of the Mountains from him and bent down to kiss his forehead. "Goodbye, friend."

This caused Riel's dark face to flush. He felt faint and giddily followed after Link. Even after reaching the cave entrance, he was still faint and did not recover.

Finally, Link activated the teleportation spell. White light flashed, and a few seconds later, Link and Riel vanished from within the cave.

Milda watched until the two men completely disappeared. She sighed. Turning to Nana, she said, "It's just the two of us now."

"Master will return," Nana replied, smiling.

Milda laughed too. "Yeah, he will."

She walked down Darrow Peak. When she reached the foot of the mountains, she found a quiet area and took a deep breath, kneeling onto the ground.

"Honorable one, Greer Seymor, Lord of the Flames, savior of the Laguans, I implore you, receive my loyalty," Milda said softly.

There was no reply.

Milda did not find this surprising. If a God replied every time someone invoked his name, the God would become a slave of the people.

Milda was determined, and she repeated it once more, twice, thrice. When she repeated it for the fifth time, she felt something stir and had the feeling she was being watched by some existence.

Under that gaze, Milda felt as though her secrets were being seen through and her soul was facing a burning fire.

A voice sounded in Milda's heart. "Mortal from Firuman, I've heard your calls, but I know that you cannot truly be loyal to me. Tell me, what do you want from me and what do you hope to gain from me?"

A Level-19 existence was unfathomable and could see through Milda in a glance.

Milda was shocked. Nonetheless, she had prepared for all these possibilities. She said humbly, "The flames helped me remove the slave collar and returned me my freedom. Your cause will need the help of many mortals. I am willing to become one of these mortals."

The voice did not reply, but the gaze was still there.

This lasted for about five minutes before the voice spoke again. "I see somebody inside your heart. She is called Saroviny, and she is the Holy Maiden that I have selected. She can help me expand my influence, but as for you, she is your enemy. Tell me, why should I accept you?"

Milda continued, "Saroviny is a sharp and dangerous blade. She is the incarnation of destruction and slaughter. Your cause cannot be achieved with just this. You require creation and order. The sharpest blade will require a good sheath to protect its edge, just like after burning through the fields, you need to till the ground and plant good seeds to get a harvest."

The voice was silent again. This time, the silence did not last long. After five seconds, the voice said again to Milda, "You are a wise Laguan and possess a beauty that exceeds most mortals. You will indeed be useful to my cause. However, you are the disciple of the God of Light. Okay... we will make a loyalty contract."

"I obey your orders, Lord of the Flames." Milda breathed a sigh of relief.

The next moment, a force pressed down onto Milda from out of nowhere, and Milda felt her forehead getting hot. This lasted for a few seconds before receding. Finally, the voice said again, "Go to the Great Beast Forest. My little lambs are ready to receive their new Holy Flame Envoy."

Finally, the gaze was retracted.

Milda summoned a mirror and used it to look at herself. She could see a bunch of silver flames dancing on her forehead and knew that this was the binding agreement between her and the existence from before.

After activating the teleportation, Link and Riel found themselves in an unknown realm. In this place, they could see strange lights and grotesque scenery. Everything was distorted, filled with colorful lights and even traces of lightning. Link could hear Riel's rough breathing beside him.

He could feel that they were moving forward rapidly, as though in a high-speed car. He could also feel infinitely many disorganized Mana strands rushi

He knew that if he allowed the Mana to rush into his body, he would likely explode into pieces.

Link activated his Dragon Power to defend against this torrent of Mana. It worked! He was not wrong; Legendary power could indeed defend against the pressure from space.

The Dragon Power diminished at a very fast rate. Just when he thought he could not maintain the consumption anymore, whoosh

He found that he was in a wide cavern that was at least 60 feet high. A short distance ahead was the exit.

That first Yabba who found herself transported between dimensions mentioned disappearing from a certain cave. This was probably that very cave.

"Ahhhh! Waahhhhh!" Dramatic screams came from beside him and lasted for two whole seconds. Crash. Link felt the floor shake. Turning to see what happened, Link found Riel lying on a crushed stone in the cave. The floor was imprinted with the shape of his body.

"Argh! That hurts!" Riel was rolling around the floor screaming. However, considering that he was still so full of vigor, he probably did not have any serious injuries.

Link focused on checking the condition of his body.

He had 300 Dragon Power points remaining, but they were recovering quickly. Even then, they recovered at 18 points per second, much slower than in Aragu. At the same time, Link noticed that he had received a "Void's Aura" status.

Void Aura: After traveling through the void, the chaotic aura from the void will stick to the player, preventing the payer from using spells. This effect will begin to disappear after 300 hours and will fully disappear after 30 days.

Link was stunned. He attempted to cast a spatial spell. However, he quickly realized that once the Dragon Power appeared outside his body, a mysterious force would interfere and disperse the Dragon Power, preventing it from forming into a spell structure.

Link slapped his forehead and sighed. "Alright, 300 hours is about 13 days. At least that isn't too long."

"System, was the data from the teleportation recorded?"

Dimensional teleportation involved traveling through the spatial void. This was extremely valuable data, and using it, Link would be able to make great developments in his understanding of space.

It has been saved as "Dimensional Teleportation: Void" and can be accessed at any time.

"Good."

Link was pleased. He reached out a hand to Riel.

"Ouch, ouch, my bones are going to shatter," Riel whined. He was still lying on the ground, however, the moment he saw Link's hand, he grabbed it and pulled himself up. After dusting off the dust from his body, he sighed. "I'm finally back. This teleportation was truly vicious; all my strength is gone."

Riel was somewhat weaker than Link and also had a much lower recover speed. His situation was clearly much worse than Link, and without a few days of time, he probably wouldn't be able to recover his fighting strength.

"It'll recover shortly," Link said, as he walked towards the cave exit.

Upon exiting the cave, Link found that they were halfway up a huge mountain. In the distance, there was an enormous yellow light shi

Boom, boom! One after another, purple balls of light flew towards the city, exploding on the barrier. It could be seen that underneath the barrier was a majestic city.

"That's the Yabba capital, Lirico! Over there are... Dark Elves and demons. It's the Dark Army!" Riel said, following behind Link.

Link immediately understood what was going on. "The Dark Army's main force is attacking Orida Fortress, but they left a smaller force here to pretend to continue attacking. This is to prevent the Yabbas from joining the battle."

Based on the time difference, they had spent half a year in Aragu, but that was only about two days here. The news from Orida probably had yet to reach the secondary army here.

With a glance, Link could see that this secondary army was not weak. Using his powerful eyesight, he counted over 4,000 demons, including 30 Winged Howlers flying in the air. The Dark Elves were also numerous, numbering over 8,000.

Something flashed in his vision. Link turned to look. It was a mission.

Rescue Mission: Deliver the message.

Description: Infiltrate the Dark Army's encirclement and inform Lirico about the situation outside the city.

Mission Reward: 200 Omni Points.

Link thought for a moment and decided to accept it. Orida needed reinforcements anyway, and the Yabba's flying shi

## 359. Weird Equipment Reward

Hoo, whoosh

At the cave entrance outside Lirico City, Link waved the Dragon King's Fury magic sword. After a few strikes, he nodded in satisfaction.

"My strength has mostly recovered. Even though I can't use magic and don't have any battle techniques, my basic swordsmanshi

Strangely, Link and Riel weren't rejected by the laws of the Firuman Realm. After returning, their power didn't change. This meant that Link was still at the pinnacle of Level-10 and Riel was at the lower stages. They were both Legendary fighters.

Riel already knew Link's plans, but he still needed a few days to recover. He couldn't help. However, the dwarves and Yabba were both residents of the Hengduan Mountain Range. He was much more familiar with the Yabba race than Link.

At this time, he stood outside the cave, looking at the mighty magic shi

Link squinted and quickly saw the profundity. He discovered that when the cannons outside the city were about to reach the magic shi

The benefits of this were obvious. Causing the fireball to explode beforehand reduced the damage to the shi

"Did you see?" Riel asked. "Those purple lightning streaks are small and can only reach around 150 feet, but they're shockingly powerful. They're at Level-9. They are controlled by an intelligent core and actively attack anything that tries to approach the shi

"I see." Link's brows knitted.

If that was the case, Link couldn't approach without warning even with his power at Level-10. If a bunch of purple lightning bolts attacked him, he'd be fried to crisp.

If Link could cast spells, it would be easy to make a signal. He could even teleport straightito Lirico City. But now, he was disturbed by the Void's aura, and he couldn't get rid of it. He'd have to think of something else.

Link stood outside the cave and observed the geography.

Lirico City didn't have city walls, and it was actually quite large. It spanned the entire valley. There were even Yabba houses not too far from the cave Link was at now.

Even though the shi

Most Yabba homes were made of wood. Some were made of stone, but they were few. These wooden cabins were scattered about. Each one was finely made with their own garden and grassy yard. Some were set on fire, billowing with black smoke. Others were taken by demons.

Many demons flew in the air. There were only 30 Winged Howlers, but there were thousands of Level-5 or Level-6 demons. They sealed off all paths approaching Lirico. Flying demons had exceptional vision. High-level ones, especially, were comparable to dragons. Under the scrutiny of so many demons and the inability to use an invisibility spell, it was a hassle for Link to approach the shi

"What should I do?" Link hit his forehead.

"What about a bomb?" Riel suggested. "I have some that we use to bomb mountains. It's not that powerful, but it's loud. It's enough to attract attention. What do you think?"

Riel took out a few fist-sized metal nuggets. They looked like grenades from earth, but these were magic bombs. Each one was carved with many runes. Link could feel that there were fire elements sealed inside.

Link took one and looked. They were made intricately with a turntable on the surface and tick marks. They were time-delayed explosive equipment.

"Great!" Link was overjoyed. Getting an idea, he asked, "Can sound pass through the shi

If it could, he might not have to risk getting through the demons. He could detonate the bomb outside and use the frequency of the sound to pass the message. With the Yabbas' intelligence, they should be able to understand.

But unexpectedly, Riel shook his head. "No. The shi

"That's illogical. Isn't it hard to observe the outside, then? What if something changes outside?" Link was shocked.

Riel waved his hand quickly. "No, it's very logical. This is all from precious experience. Like the soundwave barrier, for example, is because the Yabbas have learned their lesson. You know, they're pretty weak. One thousand three hundred years ago, they had a conflict with the Dark Elves. In one battle, the Dark Elves used a Level-8 Thunder Roar. The strong sound waves passed through the shi

Alright, Link's nice plan was ruined by the Yabbas' experience.

Riel pointed at a few lighthouses. "Those are for observing the outside. The Yabbas have actually left some leeway. Look at the statues outside the city."

Link looked over and saw statues of varying sizes. There were many inside the city, but they were all broken. "Aren't those decorations?"

Riel nodded. "Yes, but they're also magic detectors. Through them, the Yabbas can look outside the shi

"There must be a spy within them," Link said.

"There must be. Very few people know that secret. The dwarves and Yabba are close, and I'm the brother of our king, so I know a bit." Riel sighed.

Link decided to let this go for now. He must approach the shi

There were 15 bombs, but it wasn't enough. Riel turned his hands over. "There are no more. I only brought them with for fun."

"Alright." Link hit his own forehead. "Then I'll set out. Be careful and hide."

"No problem. This is a cave, and I've recovered some power. I can still kill some demons."

Link nodded. He walked to the cave exit and checked the direction. He took out a bomb, adjusted the tick mark and hurled it to the left. His power was a bit too much now. The tiny bomb was less than two pounds. With the throw, it whooshed out and flew more than 2000 feet. Just as it was about to land, it detonated.

The bomb was only at Level-5, but as Riel had said, it was really, really loud.

Link saw a blue-white fireball three times bigger than a Level-4 Flame Blast shootito the air. Around it, there was an obvious white shockwave.

Three seconds later, the shockwave reached the cave Link was at. Boom, boom! The huge explosion came like mountains crashi

The demons flying in the air instantly noticed the commotion.

Now was the time. Link shot out of the cave. Using the foliage as a disguise, he sprinted and traveled 500 feet in three seconds. He jumped into a cabin that he'd aimed at.

He'd controlled his speed too. If the geography was flat and he ran at full speed, he could easily travel 650 feet in a second. This was the powerful strength he possessed after entering the Legendary level. He couldn't be compared to Nana, but for a living creature, it was frightening.

After jumping in from the window, a shadow flashed before Link. It was a low-level demon, around Level-4. It was probably taking a break here. Seeing Link appear, it probably felt Link was danger and tried to run.

It was about to get to the door. Link arched his back and lunged while slicing down with his sword. With a squelch, the demon was halved.

The room was silent.

The Yabbas were short, so their houses were built low as well. However, it was still more than seven feet tall. As long as Link didn't make big movements, he wouldn't hit his head.

There were three corpses on the ground—two big and one small. It was probably a Yabba family. The father's body was already gnawed at by the demon, and less than half of it remained.

Seeing it, Link sighed. He walked to the window on the other side and looked out.

Now, he was 6500 feet away from the shi

Link didn't advance hurriedly. He looked at the shi

After a long while, Link still had no clue.

What do I do? What do I do?

While thinking, Link's gaze fell on the Yabba corpses on the ground and got an idea.

If there are bodies, it means that the Yabbas outside Lirico didn't all leave. With so many houses here, it's very possible that someone's still alive. If I can find a living Yabba, he can give me a way into the city safely.

With that thought, a message appeared in Link's vision.

Mission Activated: Survivor

Mission: Search for surviving Yabbas in the ruins outside Lirico City

Mission Reward: assassin Robe (Epic)

The game system had started rewarding equipment, and it was called the assassin Robe? The name sounded contradictory.

Whatever. Just accept it now and worry later!

## 360. The Yabbas are Bi-gender!

Link could not use his spells because the Void Aura around his body interfered with the formation of his Dragon Power into spells.

In his body, however, his Dragon Power still circulated freely.

This gave Link an idea.

He held the Dragon King's Fury in his right hand and clenched a fist with his left, channeling the Dragon Power into it. Soon after, Link's left hand was clad in a crystal red light.

Originally, once the Dragon Power exited Link's body, it would naturally expand into a Dragon Power ball two feet wide. However, under the influence of the Void Aura, the Dragon Power could not even form a ball an inch wide before dispersing. This disruption completely prevented Link from casting any spells.

However, within that small space just around his fist, he could still use a minor support spell. Link used Clear Sign.

Whoosh. Suddenly, all the chaotic noises disappeared. The cannon fire and the beating of wings by the flying demons; even the sound of the wind disappeared.

Other less obvious, yet extremely important sounds suddenly became a lot more apparent.

A hundred and fifty feet away from a wooden cottage, in a small alley, three lesser demons were chattering away. On a beam in the cottage 210 feet away, a cat was trembling in the eaves of the house. Further away, a slight and unnoticeable scent drifted over.

Not only did the Dragon Power enhance his eyesight, but it also enhanced his hearing, sense of smell and taste.

This smell was extremely faint, such that even the demons were unable to discover it. However, under the effects of Clear Sign, Link detected it.

Sniff, sniff. Link's nose twitched lightly.

Only a living person would give off this scent... There is even the fragrance of food... It's meat stew. He's cooking meat stew, and there's also the smell of wine. He's actually hiding in a wine cellar... He's alone... but which direction is he in... Found him. Here! He is about 1500 feet away.

Whoosh. Link canceled Clear Sign, and the background noises instantly returned.

In just this short time, Link already used up 2000 Dragon Points. It could be seen how powerful the Void Aura's interference was.

From outside the house, came the clear sound of flapping wings. Based on the sound, there were three demons. They were attracted here by the smell of Link's Dragon Power.

Link hid in the corner of the house. Not moving at all, he focused his ears and listened to the movements outside.

There are the demons. Based on the sounds of their footsteps, they are Gargoyles. This type of demon has a tough body. In order to kill them, their heads must be cut off... They're coming, they're probably 15 feet away... One is outside the door, nine feet away; one is in the corridor, and the last is on the street, reaching the entrance... Now!

Link was able to tell their positions based on the sound, but never like this. Now, he was essentially using his ears to "see"!

One Gargoyle stood at the doorway. He was five-feet-tall, and his skin was pale grey. He had bat-like wings, a membrane that extended from his back to his underarms. His claws were extremely sharp, protruding from his hands and feet. They could easily smash through steel.

Once the Gargoyle appeared, Link charged forth like the wind. His figure instantly vanished.

A blade flashed, and one Gargoyle's head flew off. Before the head could fly far, Link stamped hard on the ground and changed directions. The blade flashed again and the second Gargoyle's head flew off.

He paused. Earlier, the two Gargoyles were indoors. When their heads flew, it wouldn't fly far and attract the attention of the flying demons. The third Gargoyle was out on the street though, but Link had already made preparations.

After killing the second Gargoyle, he threw out the last grenade which he had set beforehand. It landed somewhere in the city and exploded. Bang! From 1,800 feet away, came an earth-shaking explosion.

All the demons, both in the sky and on the ground, looked over to where the explosion occurred. Many even flew over. Meanwhile, the Gargoyle on the street had just noticed Link and was about to react. Hearing the explosion, he was startled.

In this brief instant, he lost his last chance to call out. Link dashed over and rolled; then he stood up before slashi

Immediately, Link continued towards a wooden house that he had identified earlier. He kept his sword raised in a defensive position and didn't slow down for even a moment.

Outside the wooden house, the three lesser demons were still talking when the explosion happened. They were just about to go over to investigate when Link appeared in front of them. Before they could react, Link's blade flashed past, and three lesser demon heads flew into the air.

Link continued onwards until he entered the wooden house.

It was only now that the first Gargoyle's head hit the floor.

Link exhaled slowly in relief after he entered the wooden house. Earlier, he had expended all his strength. Had there been a single mistake, he would have attracted the attention of all the demons. Under the circumstance in which he could not use any spells, he would be hard-pressed to deal with so many demons. Even if he did not die, he definitely would not return in one piece.

Link took a moment to catch his breath. After he had recovered, Link walked towards the window and looked to where he had first detected traces of life.

From the house 1200 feet away at the base of a hill, there was a stone cottage. The left half of the cottage was already wrecked by cannon fire; even the roof was gone. There were no demons in that area.

From where Link was to the stone cottage, there were no other trees except a huge Silver Tung tree. It was so thick that not even three people could wrap their arms around it. Besides the tree, there was also a huge broken statue. These two were spaced about 400 feet apart, and in fact, provided sufficient cover.

Flap, flap. Link heard the sound of beating wings approaching—demons were coming. They probably discovered the slain Gargoyle and lesser demons; that was inevitable.

While the demons had yet to arrive, Link retrieved another grenade and adjusted the timing. Gathering his strength, he flung it out in another direction.

BOOM! Another explosion shook the air.

Link did not waste even a second and dashed out of the cottage. He used all his strength, running as fast as he could. Not only was he fast, but he was also silent.

A second later, he arrived at the broken statue, and beneath the statue was a Yabba Warrior's corpse. Link noticed a musket lying next to the corpse.

"Good find!"

Link picked up the musket and inspected it. The casing was a little dirty, and the scope was slanted, but these weren't serious problems. Link quickly did some necessary maintenance.

The musket had three bullets loaded, and Link searched the corpse to find another 15.

Keeping the musket in his dimensional pendant, Link looked up to check on the demons. Five demons, including a Screaming Demon, were flying to where the demons were killed.

Link thought for a moment before retrieving another grenade. Adjusting the timing of the explosion to 30 seconds and checking the angle, Link lightly threw the grenade. The grenade followed an ideal path, landing softly near the dead Gargoyle 900 feet away.

The grenade was just the size of a fist, and the demons did not notice it. Link waited.

About ten seconds later, the five demons landed and approached the corpse. They still did not notice the grenade.

Link mentally counted down in his head. 10, 9, 8, 7... 3, 2, 1, explode!

BOOM! The grenade exploded. From where he was, Link saw three Gargoyles flung 150 feetito the air by the force of the explosion. Their bodies were contorted at a weird angle, and they were charred black. Clearly, they were dead.

Screeeeee! The screaming demon was still alive. Of course, it was a Level-8 demon, and a Level-5 grenade could not kill it. It started alerting the rest of the demons by screeching.

The screeching was very loud and immediately attracted the attention of numerous demons who started moving towards it.

Taking this chance, Link darted out from the statue and dashed forward to the large tree. When he reached the tree, he paused and looked back. None of the demons had noticed him. Meanwhile, the screaming demon was still screeching, and all the demons in the sky were flying towards it.

Link dashed out again from under the tree. A second later, he had entered into a portion of the broken down stone cottage.

He had entered into the hall. The hall was filled with rubble, and the ceiling was already split. One column had collapsed and was leaning against a wall, forming a triangular structure. Hidden beneath this triangular structure was a small passageway.

Link crawled into it and discovered that this was the kitchen.

Sniff, sniff. Link's nose twitched. Very quickly, he found the entrance to the wine cellar. The entrance to the cellar was blocked by a giant stone totaling at least one ton in weight. It was essentially sealed. The traces of life he had detected came from inside this cellar.

"We detected danger and hid in this cellar. Do you think we managed to escape the disaster?"

After checking to make sure there were no demons within 300 feet, Link began to clear away the stones.

To the Yabba people, the stones were definitely impossible to move. For Link, however, this wasn't a problem. The biggest stone was 660 pounds. Link only needed a bit of strength to clear it aside.

After doing this, Link listened again and checked for danger. Detecting nothing, Link attempted to open the cover to the cellar.

Creak, creak. the cover shook but didn't open. It was locked from the inside.

That wasn't a problem. Link used a little strength and pulled, feeling where the resistance came from. Then, using the Dragon King's Wrath sword, he stabbed at the spot and cut sideways. The lock immediately broke.

Pulling aside the cover, Link jumped in.

Before he had even reached the ground, he heard a bang. Something flashed in the darkness and a thought passed through Link's mind. Musket fire!

The Yabba inside must have heard the commotion outside and thought the demons were coming. Therefore, they had opened fire.

To be able to shoot at him while he was falling in mid-air, and furthermore accurately target his chest—this gunner's skills were not bad.

If it were before this, Link would use Spatial Shackle to defend himself. Unfortunately, he had to rely on his swordsmanshi

Judging from the sound of the bullet, Link could determine the trajectory of the shot. Link waved the Dragon King's Wrath sword, and crystal red light flashed in the air as the sword intercepted the path of the bullet. Twang!

The cellar was dimly lit by a small fire that was built on top of a broken barrel in the cellar. On top of the fire was a pot, inside of which something was boiling. A piece of rat skin could be seen floating inside.

A young Yabba eyed Link in fear.

This Yabba's face was very youthful. He did not have a beard, and his skin was still white and tender. He even had a bit of baby fat. His eyes were like little crystals, which, because of fear, were now opened as wide as they could be.

Honestly, if not for the flat chest, Link would have no way of telling his gender... Wait! That did not eliminate either possibility. Was this Yabba a male or a female?

Link was confused.

Once he laid eyes upon this Yabba, asstem message appeared in Link's vision.

Mission "Finding Survivors" has been completed. Continue with the rescue.

Player has obtained assassin's robe. It can be worn anytime.

An image appeared in his vision and Link took a look. It was a dark blue robe with dark silver inscriptions on it. It looked pretty fine, possessing an assassin's cool demeanor as well as a Magician's mysteriousness.

Link didn't have time to investigate further. He looked at the Yabba child and gestured with his hands, whispering, "Relax, I'm not a demon. I'm a human... messenger. I've come with a message."

Unexpectedly, after hearing Link's words, the Yabba youth was even more frightened. He huddled up and shouted, "You're lying! You hesitated just now; you're definitely lying!"

His voice was also very shrill and did not help in differentiating his gender.

"Wow, that's some keen observation skills you have there," Link said. Link was stunned, that really was only a short pause.

## 361. The Suspicious Little Thing

Wine cellar

The Yabba obviously didn't believe Link. This was quite awkward.

Thinking a bit, Link said, "Look at me. I can't be a demon right?"

The little Yabba held a short-handle musket. It was like a handgun from earth. At the moment, the muzzle was shaking but still pointed at Link. "Demons are the best at disguises. Those demons outside aren't scary. It's the evil demons pretending to be humans that are. Like Akensser, he's arsected artisan, but he betrayed us all!"

Thus Link learned that there was a traitor from Lirico. It was the artisan Akensser, just like in the game.

Link looked helpless. "There's no point for me to hurt you, right?"

"Yes you do!" the little thing yelled. "Kill me, hurry! I won't say anything."

This intrigued Link. The Yabba definitely knew something.

Just as he was about to speak, he heard a soft noise outside. Shocked, he listened closely and gestured at the Yabba in the corner of the wine cellar to be quiet. Then, looking left and right, he saw a few wine jars.

He immediately started moving. He stacked the jars one by one beside the entrance. When they almost reached the entrance, Link glanced at it. He estimated the measurements, and then stabbed his sword into the wall. He sliced it lightly as if it was tofu, cutting out a slab bigger than the entrance.

The Yabba's wine cellar was very low-hanging, only eight feet high. Link picked up the stone slab and gently put it on the jars of wine. It sealed off the entrance perfectly. During this entire process, Link was extremely fast. More importantly, he didn't make a sound. Even when slicing the wall, it only made tiny snicks. One couldn't hear it without listening closely.

When he finished, he realized that the Yabba had put down his musket.

Link was slightly relieved. He brought his finger to his lips to gesture the Yabba to be quiet. The little thing also heard the noise outside. He didn't dare breathe loudly, and his body was shaking. At this moment, even though he still suspected Link, he'd pushed it to the back of his mind. The demon outside the cellar was more terrifying.

The two didn't make a sound. They just waited inside the cellar. Link stood beside the entrance with his sword, ready for anything.

After around two minutes, the ceiling vibrated. Thud, thud, thud. Those were the demons' footsteps. Judging from the sound, there were at least three demons. They weight more than half a ton. Link could also tell that one was a Fodor Flaming Demon.

They got closer and closer to the entrance and Link could hear the Abyss language.

"Do you smell it? It smells weird, like wine."

"A little. Sniff, sniff. Smells nice."

"Hey, leader, there's a sealed entrance. It looks like it's been moved."

"Oh? Let me see."

Hearing this, Link tightened his grip and pressed the sword's tip against the stone slab. As soon as the demons realized something was wrong, he would stab.

Crash

At this moment, not only was Link completely focused, but the Yabba in the corner also picked up his musket nervously again. Rather than aiming at Link though, it was pointed at the stone slab.

The breathing sounds lasted for three seconds before leaving.

"It's just a stone slab. There's nothing there." The demon's voice resonated deeply. This meant he had big lung capacity. Judging from his footsteps, this was the Fodor Flaming Demon. He was at Level-8 too.

The footsteps faded into the distance. The demon seemed to have really left. Link let out a breath and turned around. "Hey, we can't keep wasting time. We need to leave now. The demon might come back any time."

Actions spoke louder than words. Link's earlier actions had greatly reduced the little thing's doubts. He stared at Link with huge eyes. "You really are the human messenger? What's your name?"

"I'm Link Morani. This is my noble seal, and this is my wand... Hurry, we don't have time!" Link urged.

The Yabba was shocked. "You're the Ferde Lord. Why don't you use magic?"

"Something happened. No time to explain. Follow me!" Link's heart jumped. This meant there was danger, and he had to leave as soon as possible.

This time, the Yabba seemed to believe him. He kicked the jar above the fire, putting the fire out. Then he ran over to Link. "Do you have food? I haven't eaten in three days."

Approaching the Yabba, Link realized that his lips were cracked and he looked frail. Link took a baked potato from Aragu and a pot of water out of the dimensional storage bag for him.

The Yabba took a bite and smacked his lips. "It tastes weird. I've never had it before, but it's nice. I like it."

Link then took out a shi

"Ah, oh... okay." The Yabba was frightened, but he had to follow through. He clasped his thin legs tightly around Link's waist. He also hugged tightly with his arms but didn't forget to eat his potato. He was honestly starving.

Link finally realized from the body hugging him that the Yabba was a girl but was completely flat-chested.

Link wrapped the rag around until it got to the Yabba's neck. He turned around. Seeing that she was still eating, he took the potato away. "Enough. Don't eat too much at first."

"But I'm hungry." She stared imploringly at Link.

He was unmoved. Link continued wrapping the rag until her head was firmly fixed to his back.

"I'm going to die if you tie me like this."

"I'll run very fast later. If I don't fix your head, your neck will turn into tited rope."

She didn't believe him. "You're lying again! Let me see how fast you run!"

After tying her, Link listened to the outside. It was quiet, but he couldn't lower his guard. He clenched his fists again. Dragon Power surged and activated the Clear Sign effect. Instantly, Link could perceive all sorts of signals.

The ground trembled lightly. There were four demons nearby, including the Fodor Flaming Demon from earlier. He was talking 150 feet away.

The Clear Sign effect collected his voice.

"Look, this seems to be footprints. They're fresh too," he said.

"Something passed by. He must have tossed the bomb earlier too," another demon said. Judging from the voice, it was a Winged Howler.

"He walked the entire way to the wine cellar from earlier, but it was sealed... Is it a secret room?" the Fodor Flaming Demon muttered. After a pause, he said, "Let's go back!"

Then footsteps got closer. It sounded hurried; the demons were running quickly. In order for them to not sense the Dragon Power, Link canceled the effect. Then he whispered to the Yabba, "I need to send a message to Elin, the Lady Fortuna. How can I do that?"

Link didn't say that he needed to enter the city's defensive shi

"Tell me what Elin looks like." The Yabba was quite careful.

"Emerald eyes, under three feet, likes wearing colorful robes with red, blue, and green. She has pigtails, but her hair isn't long. They look like horns—"

"Alright, I believe you. Elin is inside the crystal wall, but we can't go in. We can't send messages either. The demons destroyed all the investigation statues," the Yabba replied softly.

"The crystal wall? Is it that yellow light shi

"Yes, it's that magic shi

Link shrugged. He didn't continue asking because that would make his intentions clear. The Yabbassuspicions would skyrocket. He put his attention on the demons outside the sealed entrance.

Thud, thud. The Fodor Flaming Demon returned. This time, his steps were hurried. From the screams in the air, Link predicted that he would shatter the stone slab.

In the span of a thought, Link made his calculations. He didn't attack or retreat. He just wentito the corner, hiding behind a jar of wine.

Crash

The jars of wine were shattered. Wooden splinters flew and wine splattered. The cellar was filled with the thick scent of wine. It was the Yabbas' favorite red berry wine.

The commotion was too big like the world shattering. The Yabba screamed instinctively, but before she could make a sound, Link covered her mouth. All other auras in the cellar were covered by the smell of wine.

"Go in and look," the Flaming Fodor Demon said. As a high-level demon, he was over ten feet tall. The cellar was too small for him.

Thud, plop. Two smaller low-level demons jumped down. Link could feel that the Yabba's heart quickened instantly. Even her breathing became faster. She was clearly frightened.

Seeing the low-level demons, Link's mind whirred. He thought of various solutions, and a lightbulb went off. He took the Yabba's musket and reached into the wine jar. Distinguishi

When he fired, Link also gently pinched the Yabba's legs. Even though he did it gently, she couldn't take it. She instantly screamed in pain, and her big black eyes fogged up. A teardrop hung in her eyes. It hurt.

Bang, bang, bang. Every bullet hit a low-level demon, and their heads exploded. They died without putting up a fight.

The commotion obviously alerted the Flaming Fodor Demon outside the cellar. Not only did he hear the musket, but he also heard a Yabba's cry. He cackled. "I was wondering what's hiding down there. It's a little trigger-happy thing. They taste good. Seems like I'll get a good meal today too."

Not only did Firuman know about the Yabba's muskets, but the Dark Army had also experienced them from all the battles. So when the demon heard the musket, his first thought was that a Yabba was hiding in there. To him, Yabbas were just slabs of fresh meat. They weren't a threat at all.

A Winged Howler spoke from the distance. "I want one too. I want one too."

"If you want to eat, help me dig up the cellar. These little things are just like rats. You have to dig them out."

Thud, thud, thud. The Winged Howler walked over and really did start helping. The two demons were both at Level-8, and the stone slabs couldn't stop them.

Boom, boom. The cellar was stomped on continuously, and the entrance widened. Link retreated to the border without a sound. After a few more seconds, a ten-foot-tall figure jumped in. He squatted to look for the "rat."

As for the rat's musket, it was only a threat to low-level demons. His skin was rough and thick. Even if he was hit, it would only be a scratch. While he was getting used to the darkness, Link acted.

He rushed to the demon's side instantly and kicked his knee. With a crack, his knee broke, and the demon stumbled. He opened his mouth to scream, but Link had already used the momentum to shoot upward. There was a small scraping sound. He chopped off the Fodor Flaming Demon's head cleanly, cutting off the scream.

Rushi

The Winged Howler's voice attack was very strong. Link could resist it easily, but the Yabba on his back would die from the soundwaves.

In this critical moment, Link lunged as fast as lightning. His foot hooked onto a stone and grabbed the demon's ankle as he shot up. Link yanked the 14-foot-tall demon from the air.

Boom! Link threw the Winged Howler onto the ground, disorienting it.

Without hesitating, Link charged. He stepped onto the demon's head and activated his Legendary power. With a burst, the demon's head exploded like a watermelon under pressure.

As soon as he finished, Link heard screams from the air. It was the Winged Howlers. Link was finally discovered by the demons in the air.

Taking a deep breath, Link composed himself. Then he turned around and started running towards the dense cluster of buildings. Since he was discovered, he'd take advantage of the geography.

"Go left. There's an entrance to an alley," the Yabba suddenly said.

At the same time, a message flashed in his vision.

Activate New Mission: Breakthrough

Mission: Break through the demon's blockade and enter the underground world of Lirico City.

Mission Reward: assassin Pants (Epic)

It was another piece of gear. The name was similar to the assassin Robe too. If he finished all the missions, would he get an entire set?

Link had never heard of this set in the game, but he didn't care. He accepted the new mission.

## 362. Unbelievable Strength

Screee, Screeee!

Screeching filled the air as the vibrations from the sound waves became visible.

In the distance, hordes of demons were approaching, some flying, many others running. Link could see ghouls, demons and other creatures heading towards him.

If he could use his spells freely, these creatures certainly wouldn't pose a threat. Coupled with the special ability of the Dragon King's Wrath sword, he could single-handedly finish them off. However, right now, his hands were tied. If he fought desperately, he could take out 2,000 demons, but ultimately, he would still be dead meat.

More importantly, his task now was to deliver a message, not to kill the demons.

"My ear hurts!!! Ahhh my ear!!" The little thing on his back started screaming. She was completely tied down onto Link's back and had no hands to cover her ears. The screeching from the demons made her ears hurt badly.

As Link dashed away, he tore off a corner from his shi

Link stamped hard onto the ground as he pivoted, slashi

Countless demons were still rushi

Link's mind spun quickly, and he came up with a plan.

He untied the little thing on his back and held her in front of him instead. At the same time, he supported her neck and head with his other hand. Finally, he took out a grenade. Listening to the sound of the wind behind him, he waited.

Three seconds later, he threw the grenade out behind him.

"Three, two, one, hold on tight!"

The little thing obviously recognized this grenade and figured out what Link was trying to do. She immediately retracted her limbs and buried her head into Link's chest.

Instantly, Link leaped off from the ground.

As his leap took him to a height of 15 feet, a loud boom shook the ground behind him. Light blue flames exploded out and surged towards Link.

The explosion also engulfed the many flying demons behind Link.

Link could feel the heat on his skin. Of course, it wouldn't pose a problem to him, but as for the little thing, she would be burnt to crisp. Link released some Dragon Power, creating a crystal red barrier that would protect her.

Amidst the burning inferno, Link felt a strong force pushi

In his embrace, the little thing was screaming non-stop. The incessant shrill screaming made Link's ears numb.

Five seconds later, Link had shot out 450 feet. As he landed, Link huddled his body into a ball and rolled along the ground to dissipate the momentum. He protected the Yabba within his embrace the entire time.

Actually, with the tenacity of his body, Link could have landed standing up and still be fine. However, the impact would be too much for the Yabba. In the worst case, her body would be held still within his embrace, but the impact would severely rattle her brain and internal organs, causing internal hemorrhage and resulting in her death.

Nonetheless, although Link had done his best to disperse the force of the impact, the little thing was still knocked giddy. She said breathlessly while in Link's arms, "My head is spinning, the ground is up, and the sky is down, ughhh!"

"You'll be fine soon," Link reassured her. He took out the cloth strip from earlier. This time, instead of tying her to his back, he tied her to his chest.

Once she was tied stably, he instructed, "As I walk forward later, help me keep a lookout behind and quietly warn me of any danger. If I'm going to increase my speed, I'll warn you first. You've got to close your eyes tightly immediately, understand?!"

If she didn't close her eyes, the moment Link picked up speed, that adorable pair of crystal-like eyes would immediately pop out of their sockets. Now that would be ugly.

"Okay," the little thing whimpered. Link could feel her heart beating rapidly. He knew that she was terrified.

The grenade earlier had wrought a fair amount of chaos. At least 20 Gargoyles were killed, and many surrounding houses were destroyed. Because of that, there was a lot of noise and confusion. Making use of the chaos, Link instructed, "Close your eyes!"

The little thing immediately shut her eyes. As she did, the sound of wind rushed past her ears, and a great feeling of inertia pushed against her body, pressing her into Link's chest. Her face especially was buried into his body, and her nose was being flattened against his chest.

Half a second later, the pressure disappeared, and she carefully opened her eyes a slit.

She saw the scenery flash by in a blur as they shot past at high speed.

She had once seen such a sight before; that was when she was on a small airshi

However, that was an airshi

She was stunned. It was said that the Ferde Lord had spells that were undefeatable. Could this be one of those unknown spells?

All doubt about Link had long since vanished.

Along the entire way, she knew that Link had done all he could to look out for her safety. How could someone like this be a dog of the demons?

Meanwhile, Link had used the opportunity to run 1500 feet. Not far in front was Lariel City's outer distit. It was now in ruins, and many places were emitting black smoke.

At the entrance of the distit, a squad of demons was obstructing the way.

There were ten demons among them. One was a Level-8 Fodor Flaming Demon. Three were Level-6 sword demons, while the remaining six were Level-4 demons.

The demons adopted a defensive formation as they noticed Link.

From afar, Link also noticed them. He did not decrease his speed in the slightest but merely asked, "Where is the tunnel? I need to adjust my angle of approach!"

"Just go straight along this road, and at the third junction, go right 300 feet. There will be a small alley on your right-hand side, inside that alley is the entrance.

Even in this situation, the little thing's directions were very precise. It wasn't something anyone could do.

Not long ago, Link had met another Yabba called Melinda. After meeting him, she did not hold any sense of suspicion but immediately broke down and lost control of herself.

It wasn't that Melinda was wrong, but in terms of emotional control, the little thing tied to his chest was much stronger than Melinda. This was the difference between a normal human and an elite.

Link guessed that this little Yabba must have some kind of background.

At this moment, Link had already rushed in front of the Fodor Flaming Demon. He drew the Dragon King's Wrath sword, and with one hand protecting the little thing's head, he stabbed towards the Fodor Flaming Demon.

Link's speed was simply too fast. Besides the Level-8 demon, the rest of the demons could not even track him with their eyes. Hence, right now, he only needed to deal with the attacks from the flame demon.

The Fodor Flaming Demon's weapon of choice was a huge war hammer that was emitting flames. The handle was 6-feet-long, and the hammerhead itself was a large metal block that appeared to weigh 440 pounds.

This Fodor Flaming Demon itself was ten feet tall. As Link approached, he swung the hammer and smashed it towards Link. The demon didn't care about precision with this attack. After all, the hammer was so heavy that as long as it connected with its target, the target would immediately be smashed to bits anyway.

This attack was too brutal, and so Link didn't dare to take it head-on. The pure Dragon Power improved his vitality, but it did not give him extra defenses. Although his body was stronger than the average human, it was still far from being able to take a Level-8 expert's attack head-on.

In an instant, Link ducked. Whoosh. The huge hammer swiped across Link's head, missing it by just a few inches.

After Link had dodged this attack, he entered the flame demon's defensive range. The demon's speed was far from being able to keep up with Link, and it was impossible for him to defend against Link.

At this moment, the Fodor Flaming Demon was just like a sitting duck.

Link stood up straight and leveled the Dragon King's Wrath sword, striding forward. His sword slashed across the flame demon's thigh. Swoosh. The demon's leg was sliced off.

"Ahhh!" The demon cried in pain. As his leg was sliced off, he lost his balance and fell towards Link. Link drew his sword upwards in an arc and conveniently slashed off the Fodor Flaming Demon's head. Flaming hot demon blood spurted out, turning inobloody rain.

Within the bloody rain, Link continued moving forward. As he walked through, the bloody rain fell. It looked as though he walked out through the rain, but not even a single drop of the demon's blood landed on him.

Behind the Fodor Flaming Demon were three Blackshell Sword Demons.

These three Blackshell Sword Demons were six feet tall, and their bodies had natural armor. The swords in their hands looked threatening, and they appeared to be very vicious. However, ultimately, they were low-level demons whose strengths were only at Level-6.

Against Link, it was like three street bullies meeting a real martial artist. They looked like monkeys trying out new tricks.

Link used the footwork he learned from Kanorse. Stepping forward to the left, he stabbed once, then took another step and delivered a level strike. Finally, he stepped back to the left and struck once more. In this manner, he easily broke through the three sword demons' defenses.

After he had rushed 30 feet past the demons, blood finally spurted out from the demons. It was like they only realized they were killed when their heads finally hit the floor.

Link was already extremely well-versed with this technique. Even if Kanorse were here, he would not likely be able to give Link many pointers.

This technique did not escape the notice of the little Yabba girl. Link gave her a feeling that he, the lord of Ferde, was immeasurably strong.

Every demon here would be a threat to the Yabbas, even the smallest and weakest ones. The Yabbas required their weapons and could only attack in groups of three. Otherwise, they ran the risk of being completely obliterated.

As for the Blackshell Sword Demons and the Fodor Flame Demons, they would require the heavy-duty magic cannons to deal with them.

However, Link was killing them like he was killing chickens. The entire time, he had been holding onto her and protecting her head with one hand.

What kind of strength was this?

At this point, there were only six low-level demons blocking the way. How could they even dream of standing up to Link? They yelped and scampered to the side.

"Eyes close!" Link instructed. Half a second later, he dashed forward again.

He had now successfully reached the third junction and could see, once again, that many demons were charging towards them.

Among them were ghouls, Dark Elves, and even a few Dark Elf Magicians.

Having the support of Magicians greatly increased the threat of the incoming attack.

Link didn't dare to take any risks and immediately escaped forward. Based on the directions by the little thing, he dashed to the left and continued for another 300 feet. Then, as she had said, there was an alley to his right.

Link entered the alley and ran for 150 feet until he reached a dead end. Here, he noticed a pile of rocks on the ground. Hidden beneath the pile of rocks was a passage to a tunnel.

The little thing noticed the pile of rocks and exclaimed, "Oh no! The entrance has been discovered by demons!"

"Are there Yabbas in the passage?" Link asked, frowning. He could hear the thunder of footsteps. It meant that pursuing troops were approaching.

"Of course! And not just a few," the little thing said.

Lariel City had a complex network of sewage pipes. When the demons attacked, she saw many people evacuate under the city. If not for the fact that she lived in the outer distits of the city and didn't make it in time, she would have taken the chance to hide there as well.

"Understood," Link said. He looked back to see the demons entering the alley. Without any more hesitation, he jumped into the passage.

Because the entrance to the passage was wrecked, the fall down into the passage was very deep, about 30 feet. As he landed, Link rolled a few times to disperse the impact of the fall.

Almost at the same time, something flashed in his vision.

Mission complete: Break through.

New Mission: assistance.

Description: assist the Yabba people in resisting the enemy in the underground passages of Lariel City.

Mission Reward: assassin's Helmet (Epic)

## 363. Big Terrifying Demon

The underground world of Lirico City reached in all directions. A stranger would definitely get lost within ten minutes. Link was no exception.

Thankfully, he had a guide.

"Go left. The ride side is going out the city," the Yabba directed.

"Where are we going?" Link asked. At the same time, he listened closely for any noise behind him. There were many footsteps. Many soldiers had followed him into the underground tunnels.

However, the tunnels were very complex. No demons had caught up yet.

The little thing explained in a low voice, "We're going to the sewage treatment area. It's the lowest part and most complicated. There are also many sturdy valves there. If there are any survivors, they'll most likely be there."

"I see." Link crept forward.

After around 300 feet, Link realized that the noises behind him had become extremely weak. Thanks to the complex layout, Link had easily lost the pursuers.

He let out a breath of relief and continued.

"Left side... Careful!" the Yabba suddenly called.

Her alert was unneeded. Link had realized earlier, and a low-level demon charged out of a corner. Link swung his sword and chopped off the demon's head.

He turned the corner and saw a 150-square-foot room. The Yabba yelped at the sight and buried her face in Link's shoulder, not willing to look anymore. Link narrowed his eyes as well.

The room was filled with bodies. There were around 20 Yabbas and four low-level demons. There was even a Blackshell Sword Demon. The ground was covered in spilled intestines, broken limbs, and a shattered magic musket. The Blackshell Sword Demon was dead too. He was killed by a Yabbassuicidal bomb attack.

That Yabba's body was completely broken. Only half of his face remained. He'd stuffed the bomb into the demon's mouth, exploding the demon's head.

"Wah, wahh." The little thing began crying. She'd turned around at some point and saw that face. "I know him. He's Ferrion, a major. He's really brave, smart, and had so much potential. He was going to be the commander of an airshi

Link patted her back and continued walking.

There was a very sturdy gate at the back of this underground room. Fifteen dim runes flashed around the door. Link looked at it and realized this was a password. If he activated the runes in the wrong order, the door wouldn't open.

"Little thing, do you know the password?" Link asked while checking the runes.

"Don't call me that. My name is Lannie. I don't know the password either, but we can go another way," she said.

But Link didn't move. He was still checking the runes.

"It's useless. You can't decipher it. It's a magic lock. If you don't know the password, there are tens of thousands of ways to input it. This door uses the sturdiest metal of our race. It's really sturdy and... hey, how do you know the password?"

While Lannie was speaking, Link had already started touching the runes. By the time she finished, a soft click had come from the metal door and then it swung open soundlessly.

"It's an innovative rune lock, but it's not that hard. Don't forget that I'm a Magician."

Link entered the tunnel and then looked at the runes behind it. After ten seconds, he pressed lightly. With a click, the door closed again.

Lannie was speechless. After a long while, she said, "Then how come you know swordsmanshi

"I learned it in my free time... Shh... don't talk. This space doesn't feel right," Link whispered.

There was a long passage behind the door, with many pipes in the passage. They should be from the sewage system. They looked undamaged, but Link noticed that the spatial frequency was a bit off.

He walked to the side and touched the wall. His hand came back with a layer of gray-white powder.

Lannie found it strange. "This wall is reinforced by transformational magic. It should be strong and smooth. How come there's powder?"

"It's caused by fine spatial ripples," Link said.

He started looking carefully. After around ten seconds, he stepped back and whispered, "A Dimensional Demon appeared here... And look here."

There were many footprints on the ground. Most were small and scuffed, left behind by retreating Yabbas. Behind them were footprints three times larger.

"The footprints are trapezoidal and very wide. There are claws too. These are the characteristics of a Dimensional Demon. Judging from the remaining aura, these are from one day ago. Hurry!"

Link sped up.

After around 200 feet, the first Yabba corpse appeared on the ground. Only the upper half of his body remained. His eyes were open wide while his small body was halved with some sharp blade. There was a musket beside him, broken in half. In the distance, the wall was charred black. It was cracked, and there were stone shards on the ground.

After a few seconds, Link came to a conclusion. "The retreating Yabbas discovered that someone was after them. This Warrior was left behind to stop the demon. He was broken by the Dimensional Demon, but he took the chance to detonate a bomb. There is a drop of black blood here. The demon was wounded."

Link picked up the broken magic musket. Seeing the smooth cut, his brows knitted. "This demon is very strong. I fear he's reached Level-9. It'll be a bit difficult."

If they fought face to face, Link would have nothing to fear. However, Dimensional Demons loved hiding in spatial folds for sneak attacks. If anything went wrong, they'd hide back into the spatial fold. Dimensional Demons were assassin demons and extremely fast. This was troublesome.

More importantly, Link couldn't use magic now. If he could use spatial magic, he could use Spatial Rend to destroy the demon if he tried to hide in space.

What a pity.

"Are we going to keep chasing?" Lannie asked fearfully. She wished Link could keep going to save her people, but he said there was a Level-9 demon up ahead. This was scary.

"Of course, but I need to prepare."

With that, Link looked into the corner and thought, Accept reward.

Whoosh. A shi

Link undid Lannie's ties and set her on the ground. Then Link took off his leather armor. Putting on his new clothes, he explained, "I recently made these two pieces of gear and couldn't bear to put them on before. I have to use them now."

He spoke calmly this time. The gear had dropped out of thin air as if he'd taken it out of the dimensional storage. Lannie, observant as she was, didn't suspect anything.

When Link was done, she studied him and couldn't help but ask, "Is it a robe? It's pretty."

It was indeed. The clothing was of dark blue material. One could faintly see many elegant dark silver patterns. There was a faint blue glow around the robe. Looking closely, one could see countless specks of light flying around.

Link didn't notice the appearance. He checked the robe's profile first.

assassin Robe (Set)

Epic

Current Set Status: 2/6

Effect One: Magic resistance increases by 80% as long as it doesn't affect the spell-caster's magic conductivity.

Effect Two: Shadow effect. When the spellcaster stands without moving, a ball of fog three feet wide will appear from their body. This effect can protect the spell-caster from being attacked at critical body parts.

Effect Three: Activate the "ready" status. Under this status, the spell-caster can cast any spells instantaneously. This effect can be used once every ten days.

Link looked at the pants.

It also had three effects. The magic resistance and shadow effect were the same as the robe. The third, called "Godspeed," was different.

The player could activate this status and increase their speed by three times. The effect could last one hour but had to cool down for one month.

This effect was pretty good. Link could use it to both attack or defend. If his current speed was tripled, he'd be close to Nana. After his magic recovered, he could pair this with Dimensional Jumps and no one would be able to catch him.

The set also had its own attributes. The two pieces of gear already activated it. Link looked over and saw a halo.

It was the Focus Halo. This halo was permanent and had a 30-foot range. Within it, anyone the spell-caster focused on would receive the effect. Their speed would increase by ten percent and their spell-casting speed by five percent.

Not bad. With this set, he was much more confident in dealing with the Level-9 Dimensional Demon.

"Let's go. Is it okay if you follow behind me?" Link asked.

"Of course. I'm great with the musket." Lannie took out the musket she'd put in the holster by her leg and twirled it.

The two continued forward.

After around 300 feet, there was another door. It also had runes, but they didn't glow.

Lannie looked at it strangely. "The door was damaged but how? And how do you use this?"

Link didn't speak. He was looking for a way through the door. He tried the Dragon King's Fury magic sword. It sizzled and didn't give in easily, but he still forced the sword through. This seemed to be the easiest way.

He spent ten minutes and finally cut an opening into the door. The two climbed in.

Once in, Lannie and Link were stunned by what was behind the door.

The walls here had all collapsed. Broken stones were everywhere, practically blocking the tunnel. There were many black bloodstains on the ground. The most eye-catching was a black thing that looked like a lizard's tail.

Seeing this, Link recreated the scene in his mind and couldn't help but praise, "So powerful!"

The Yabbas were very smart. They'd figured out the Dimensional Demon's characteristics and sealed the door. They forced the demon to teleport using its dimensional abilities. The moment he appeared from the spatial waves, the bomb detonated.

Caught by surprise, the Dimensional Demon was hurt badly. His tail even fell off.

Link walked to the tail and studied it. After one second, two seconds, three seconds, his brows knitted. "No, the tail isn't right."

"What happened?" Lannie was frightened.

Link looked up to her. "I underestimated the demon. Look at his tail. The scales are very fine and have rings of blue-gold light. A regular Dimensional Demon wouldn't have these things. If I'm not wrong, this must be part of the royal family!"

Lannie was quite knowledgeable too. Her eyes widened. "You mean, this is a Dimensional Phantom?"

Dimensional Phantom

Dimensional Demon Royalty

Royal Talent: Soul-absorbing Stab. With every kill, the Dimensional Phantom can turn a portion of the target's soul into their own power. To protect the purity of their power, the rate is not very high, but it builds up, especially on the battlefield. A Dimensional Demon can kill a great amount of creatures in a short period.

"No wonder this Dimensional Demon has Level-9 strength. If he was Level-8 at the time of summoning, then he must have killed more than 3000 Yabbas... We must catch up to him!"

This demon chased so relentlessly and so impatiently probably wasn't just to kill them all. It was highly possible that he was about to advance to the next level.

## 364. Completely Convinced

Whoooo, Whooo. The sound of the wind howling came from nearby.

Lannie said softly, "Up ahead is the center of the shallow portion. From the sound of it, the air formation has been activated. It will purge the stale air from the tunnels out from above."

Link nodded his head and rubbed his nose. He said, "The situation probably isn't too good. I smell a thick scent of blood."

Even though the system was circulating the air, Link could still smell the blood in the air.

The smell of everyone's blood was different. It differed based on body mass, Mana quantity, and other minute differences. Normally, people would not be able to tell the difference, but Link could.

Link could smell that in the center area, there were at least 30 corpses. Perhaps they were too late.

However, Link did not say a thing and walked ahead with Lannie.

After about 300 feet, they reached a circular pool about 150 feet across. In the center of the pool was a round platform. Connected to the platform were four walkwassupported with semicircular bridges. At the top of the sewage, chamber was a light spell formation which emanated warm light, lighting up the entire underground chamber.

Lannie took a single glance and immediately shut her mouth and sobbed silently.

Up ahead, corpses were piled over each other. There was not a single corpse that was complete. Some brains were split in two, while others had their bodies separated into two or more pieces. On both, the left and right side were pools of dried blood. Some places of the floor were crumbled, perhaps from cannon explosions.

Corpses, rubble, and cannon shells were strewn across the area. The only thing that didn't seem to be around was the Dimensional Demon. Not even a trace of black demon blood could be found.

Lannie sobbed. "No, no, all these are Warriors, I'm sure there are civiliasstill alive. There must be."

Lannie was about to jump into the sewage to look for people, but Link held her back. She struggled fiercely. "Let me go! I'm going to take a look!"

Of course, her struggles were futile. Link restrained her with little effort and pulled her back beside him. He glanced around the space and warned her softly, "Lannie, you're right. There are survivors, but it is because there are survivors that is why it hasn't left."

Lannie trembled and quieted down. Swoosh, she drew out a musket.

However, this musket's firepower was unfortunately far too low. It was useless. In all likelihood, it would not even be able to penetrate the demon's armor.

Link took out the musket he had picked up and handed it to Lannie. "Here, I picked this up along the way."

This gun's firepower was much higher. Although it could not pose a serious threat to a Level-9 demon, at least it would be able to inflict an injury. Lannie obviously couldn't do anything by herself, but she could support Link and create a distraction when he was battling the demon.

Lannie nodded, "I can use this."

"Good, okay follow me." Link said as he stepped forward carefully. He was in a state of high alert.

However, the Dimensional Demon did not appear. As Link walked through the sewage chamber to the platform on the other end, all they could hear was the howling of the wind in the chamber.

"Strange," Link said, frowning. He couldn't seem to see through the demon's intentions.

In front of him was a wide passage. At the end of the passage, there was a large door. Along the passage were many footprints and lots of blood.

Link knelt down to inspect the trails. "The footprints are heading towards the door. There were at least a hundred people, it's probably the survivors I think."

As he said this, he turned to Lannie. "Stay close by my side, we'll continue going forward."

Lannie nodded, hugging the larger musket to her chest. She kept close behind Link, looking around attentively the whole time.

After walking about 60 feetito the passage, Link suddenly shouted, "Stop, there's a spell formation here. Seems like there is a Magician among the survivors. Based on their skill... They're probably Level-7."

The space up ahead seemed completely clear, and nothing seemed odd about it. There wasn't even any trace of Mana left behind. This level of spell formation couldn't be done by a Magician without sufficient skill.

Lannie was short and could see things on the ground and at low angles more clearly. She suddenly pointed to the base of a sewage pipe and said, "Look! There are many bullets stacked over there. Those are incendiary bullets possessing about Level-6 strength. There are about ten of them."

Link followed the trail of Mana that existed in the air and quickly understood what was going on. "This is a trap. This trap is very well done, even if you pass through without touching the floor or the walls, the trap would still be activated and explode. The explosion would even affect the Dimensional Demon's other dimension and tear it apart. I believe it is because of this that the demon does not dare to enter. The survivors must be inside."

"Do you have a way to break through this?" Lannie asked.

"Of course," Link nodded. He carefully observed the flow of Mana in the spell formation. After ten seconds, he stretched out his finger and used his Dragon Power to poke at a few random spots in the air.

One second later, the magic web of the spell formation shattered. Finally, it disappeared in a trail of white smoke.

The moment the web shattered, there was a commotion from behind the door. Some were crying, others were breathing heavily. There were even sounds of shock and teeth grinding.

Obviously, the people inside were aware that the spell formation had been broken.

Link listened carefully and estimated, "There are about 200 people inside. Lannie, call out to them and tell them we're here."

At this moment, they didn't dare to make any rash actions. Everyone inside was tense. If they were alarmed, one of them might set off a grenade and kill everyone inside.

Lannie nodded. "Everyone, I am Lannie Alliway. Don't worry, I'm here to save you. I'm not alone, I'm with the Lord of Ferde from the south, Magician Link. He was the one who broke the formation just now, don't be afraid."

After Lannie shouted, there were about ten seconds of silence. Then, the door opened. Behind the door was a huge room packed with Yabbas.

The person who opened the door was an old Yabba man. Hishi

Lannie was delighted too. "Master Green, it's great to see you!"

When the Yabbas in the room saw this, many stood in joy. They thought that they would be saved. However, the Magician didn't think so. He asked, "When you guys came in, did you see the Dimensional Demon?"

"No, but we were chasing it on the way here," Lannie said, shaking her head.

The Yabba called Master Green's face paled. He looked at Link and was a little confused. "You must be Master Link. Why does it seem like you are using a sword?"

Link had been standing there unmoving for a while now. The assassin's Robe special ability activated on its own. Link was wrapped in a blackish-blue fog, and his features weren't clear.

Link moved slightly and walked out of the fog. He explained, "I did a dimensional teleportation a while ago and got affected by the Void Aura. I'm temporarily unable to use any spells, so I'm using the sword to make up for it instead."

"Dimension... Dimensional teleportation? Make up?" Master Green couldn't wrap his mind around it. Link's appearance still matched the description in the stories, but the things he was saying were completely foreign.

Dimensional teleportation was a skill belonging to the Legendary realm, wasn't it? And furthermore, what was a Magician doing with a sword? Is it something one could randomly pick up to make up for being unable to use spells?

However, the Ferde Lord was said to be very intelligent, and the ridiculous things that he was saying were not things an intelligent person would say.

Lannie knew that Master Green had misunderstood. She quickly said, "Master Link really knows swordsmanshi

Master Green was still skeptical, but nonetheless, he still believed that Link was strong. Anyway, Link didn't bother replying to his doubts. He informed Link, "Master Link, the Dimensional Demon is still hiding somewhere. Do you have a way to deal with him?"

This entire time, Link had been observing the Yabbas. Most of them looked like they were prepared to die. Everyone had bombs strapped to their bodies. This was probably to prevent a sneak attack from the Dimensional Demon.

Link was also thinking of a way to deal with the Dimensional Demon. Link said after a moment, "I'm afraid it's observing us right now and is prepared to take action. Master Green, do you know how strong it is?"

As he said this, Link was keeping an eye on the movements in the space. The moment he detected anything, he would immediately take action and retaliate.

"Okay," Master Green replied. "He..."

The moment Master Green started speaking, Link felt a disturbance in the space. This was something only a Spatial Magician could detect.

In a Spatial Magician's eyes, the space was like a sea. Those that could pass through the space were like fish. When a fish emerged out of the water, even if normal people couldn't detect it, but a Spatial Magician could see it based on the fluctuations in the space.

The fish has come out, where is it? Hmmm, there!

Link stabbed out at the spot he identified, a short distance from Magician Green's forehead.

Clang. Link hit something as a slit opened in the air. It appeared like a black dot fleeting through the air. Many Yabbas with sharp eyes could see it, and Magician Green could see it too.

He stared at Link in shock. The entire way here, they had been plagued by the Dimensional Demons attacks which left no trace. Link, however, could accurately determine where the demon's attacks were coming from and could even defend against them.

This made Magician Green completely convinced of Link's strength. He shrouded himself in a defensive barrier and asked, "Master Link, what do we do now?"

## 365. Let Me Borrow Your Mana

Underground sewage treatment cesspool

Link didn't make a sound. He sensed the surrounding situation quietly like an experienced fisherman observing the fish swimming from the changes in water current.

The Yabbas were afraid of disrupting Link's thoughts. They didn't even dare breathe loudly. A mother muffled the mouth of the child in her arms as soon as she cried out.

After around five seconds, Link said, "He's around 150 feet from us right now. He should be around the cesspool. Master Green, I need your help to fight him."

Master Green replied without hesitation, "No problem. Tell me whatever you need. I'm willing to even give up my life to kill it!"

Link shook his head. "It's not that grave. I just need to borrow your Mana." With that, he looked at the little one. "Lannie, you stay here. Master Green and I will deal with him."

He couldn't use spells now, but with a Level-7 Magician aiding him, that Dimensional Phantom would definitely die as long as it didn't escape.

"I can help... oh, fine," Lannie surrendered after withstanding two seconds of Link's stare.

Link turned to Green and said, "Let's lock the room first."

"Set up a magic net?" Master Green asked.

"Something like that." Link took out his notes and flipped to a certain page. Pointing at the spatial Mana structure, he said, "Construct your Mana according to that."

Master Green looked at the notes. Half a minute later, he said, "It doesn't look too hard. What spell is it?"

"Spatial barrier. Just follow it," Link explained simply.

Master Green followed his instructions. He raised his small wand and inserted Mana according to Link's structure. Around ten seconds later, a tiny ball of Mana light appeared at the wand's tip.

The Mana ball was like a mist. It was around ten millimeters wide. One could faintly see the fine structure within it, but that was all.

This was only Mana without producing any specific spell. There was no sign of the Spatial barrier.

Master Green maintained the structure while looking at Link strangely. It was easy to understand what he was thinking. Why isn't it working? Is it a broken structure?

Link was now multitasking between sensing the Dimensional Phantom and paying attention to the Mana ball. "No, you didn't finish it," he said in a low voice. "The rune's position and frequency of vibrations must be adjusted precisely. Listen closely."

Master Green nodded. It was his first time using spatial magic and felt reverent. He listened closely.

"Move the alpha rune south 0.01, move the beta rune along the spatial vector 0.2, 0.03, 0.85... Increase the Mana output of the wheeler rune... Yes, just like that. The main rune has started vibrating. That's the frequency, yes, that's it..."

Master Green had a strong foundation in magic. He could follow Link's instructions immediately.

Half a minute later, after 30 precise adjustments, the space around the ball of light at the wand's tip started changing. It rippled like water. Master Green's heart actually started pounding. So this is spatial magic. Tsk, it's too hard, too precise, but I feel so accomplished to see my own Mana disturb this mysterious space.

He was already 80 years old, but he was still stunned. However, he must be calm when casting spatial magic. His emotions had caused abnormal waves in the spell. The spatial ripples started slowing down.

Link sensed this and growled, "You're not done yet. Compose yourself!"

"Yes!" Master Green hurriedly composed himself.

Link didn't speak. He felt abnormal waves in space again. The Dimensional Phantom had returned to stop Green from casting the spell. Link narrowed his eyes. Without moving, he continued instructing, "The auxiliary runes have started vibrating as well. The frequency trend follows the vegetta formula."

As soon as he finished, Link's sword suddenly moved. It stabbed into the air behind Master Green. With a soft cling, Link hit another black blade.

Because of the spatial ripples, the Dimensional Phantom needed some time to build up his power, but Link wouldn't give him the time. As before, this attack came quietly and was forced back quietly.

The commotion was tiny, but the murderous intent stunned all the Yabbas. At this time, all of them looked at Link. He was the only one who could save them.

Master Green trembled inwardly as well. He now knew that he'd become the Dimensional Phantom's target to be killed without a doubt. However, he was still a Master Magician. His heart was steady and calm and had rich experience. His heart trembled, and a small ripple appeared, but he smoothed it out within two seconds.

He handed his safety to Link and focused entirely on the spatial magic. The structure wasn't that complex, but during the process, there were many runes to control. The controlling method was extremely complex as well. It was difficult to truly cast the spell so he must put all his effortito it.

Cling. Link forced the Dimensional Phantom back again and said, "Alright, now complete the vibrations of the last flank rune. The trend follows the Arak formula... Yes, now maintain it for more than five seconds!"

Sweat beaded on Master Green's forehead. A faint light glowed in his eyes, signifying that his soul was operating at the max.

The spatial ripples at the wand's tip began spreading and spreading. After five seconds, there was a buzz, and the tunnel was sealed with a thin film of light. The spell calmed down.

Whoosh. Master Green exhaled loudly. He looked tired but mostly excited. "This is spatial magic? What's it called?"

Link shook his head. "There's no official name. It's just a spatial barrier that I created in my free time. It can block all spatial transmissions. If someone tries to cross through forcefully, it'll break down immediately. The breakdown process will cause a violent spatial rend. I think that the Dimensional Phantom won't like that feeling."

With that, Link walked towards the cesspool while saying, "Let's go. Now that they're safe, we can deal with him."

He could feel that the Dimensional Phantom hadn't left. The demon seemed to not give up. Link scoffed inwardly. If you're not leaving, then prepare to die.

"Okay!" Master Green nodded. He shook his head and moved his small legs, jogging behind Link.

Soon, they reached the circular podium in the center of the cesspool. Link flipped through his notes to a certain page. "This time, use this Mana structure."

Green glanced at it and seemed uncomfortable. "This looks a bit troublesome, but I'll try my best."

Link nodded. "You've never cast this type of spell before so don't think. Just follow my instructions step by step."

This spell truly was a bit difficult; its level was second only to the Spatial Sphere that Link often used. Even a Level-7 Magician with detailed instructions would need at least three months of practice to cast it alone if they didn't have the foundation. But now, Link, the spell's creator, divided the casting process into countless tiny steps. He would instruct bit by bit while Green only had to follow him. The difficulty was lowered almost ten times.

At this moment, Green was like a soldier while Link was the general.

"Let's start!" Link said.

"I'm ready."

On the platform, one spoke while the other acted. After a minute, the spatial ripples appeared again. The ripples spread ring after ring, moving through the space of the sewage treatment center like waves of water. They were like the radar detection waves.

Three seconds later, Link suddenly said, "Coordinates 25, 52, 3, vibrate auxiliary Aravin formula!"

Green obeyed.

The spatial ripples instantly trembled. Immediately after, they grouped in the direction that Link pointed out like a net.

Hiss! There was a scream, and a black shadow tumbled out of the air. It was the Dimensional Phantom!

"Start attacking!" Link immediately said.

Master Green reacted speedily. He gave several Yabba firebombs to Link while throwing another bomb at the shadow.

Link through a bomb too.

Boom, boom, boom! Blue fireballs around ten feet wide continuously exploded on the black shadow.

Hiss, hiss! The screams kept coming. The Dimensional Phantom's voice was tinged with pain. It had just been forcefully dragged out by the spatial ripples and had delayed reactions. During this time, he couldn't protect himself well. The Yabba took advantage of this and bombed his tail.

Now, he faced the incoming bombs and was hurt again.

"He's going to run!" Master Green panicked. He discovered that the demon's body had blurred.

"Protect yourself!" Link had already discovered this. While roaring, his body was covered with the crystal red Dragon Power. He lunged and instantly arrived near the demon. His sword sliced down.

Link was very, very fast. The Dimensional Phantom didn't even have time to sneak into the spatial ripple and waved his arm to block. His weapons were blue arm blades on both arms.

Clang! The sound reverberated.

Instead of a light attack, they truly clashed this time. Power burst after the attack and rings of white airwaves spread in all directions. The convergence of power was many times more powerful than the bombs.

In the path of the shockwaves, corpses flew, and sewage water splashed. Master Green had already cast a defensive shi

He sat on the ground in shock. If not for the shi

The other side

Link's Dragon King's Fury sword activated an extremely dense attack. Each move was a basic technique but forced the demon to endlessly go into defense. He had no time to fight back, let alone escape into space.

Link was shocked too. The Dimensional Phantom's physical strength was no weaker than his. The demon power showed signs of reaching the Legendary level. While Link's Legendary Dragon Power could restit him, it couldn't defeat him easily.

Of course, another reason was the Void's aura around him. His Dragon Power scattered as soon as it left his body, reducing his direct combat ability.

After more than ten moves, Link finally got the chance. With a squelch, he hacked the demon's left arm.

Hiss! The Dimensional Phantom screamed in pain and his power suddenly exploded. He used his demon power without caring for the consequences, and his speed multiplied suddenly.

Link knew immediately that the guy was getting ready to escape.

If other demons went crazy like this, Link would choose to go onto the defensive and wait for it to end. Dimensional Demons were different. They had spatial abilities, so they would try to escape as soon as things went wrong.

Link couldn't give him the chance. He covered himself with Dragon Power for protection and started attacking faster!

Hiss, hiss! The demon cried out multiple times. He still wasn't as powerful as Link. Even if he used all his might, he still couldn't force Link back.

Five seconds later, he used up all his strength. Link shot forward and waved his sword. With a disturbing sound, the demon's head flew off.

The Dimensional Phantom was killed.

The message Mission accomplished flashed past his vision.

Link let out a sigh of relief. During this entire time, the guy would escape if he made a single mistake. After that, there would be endless trouble. It was very good to successfully kill him now.

Link looked back at Master Green. The man had been thrown to the corner, but he had a shi

He looked relieved to have survived. Seeing Link look over, he chuckled, both tired and relaxed. "I'm old now. My bones were almost shattered by you, youngling."

## 366. The Strange Fluctuations In The Magic Net

## 367. Just Curious

## 368. Mysterious Travel Magician

## 369. A Piece Of Cake

## 370. Mid Air Battle

## 371. Disaster For The Yabbas

## 372. The Yabbas Attachment

## 373. Nagas Ready To Do Something Big

## 374. Cruel To Themselves Too?

## 375. Gods Treasure

## 376. Stop Them

## 377. Thats Strange

## 378. Im Doing This Alone

## 379. To Be Honest Youre All Corpses

## 380. The Death Scythe Of The South

## 381. Big Change In The Territory

## 382. Links Era

## 383. Youve Angered Me

## 384. Incredible Strength A Legendary Expert

## 385. The Dukes Nightmare

## 386. New Spell: Despair

## 387. A New Spell: Despair

## 388. All Experts In Love

## 389. Someone Behind The Scenes?

## 390. A Book Thief As Expected

## 391. The High Elves Get Involved

## 392. Former Traitor

## 393. Extremely Terrifying Way Of Dying

## 394. Bryant Youre Pathetic

## 395. You Flatter Me

## 396. Greed Of The High Elves

## 397. Eye Of The Realm

## 398. The Girl Calling For Help In The Woods

## 399. A Mysterious Black Shadow

## 400. How Do We Get Rid Of It?

## 401. A Confusing Case

## 402. A Fourth Person Appeared

## 403. This Is A Dragon King

## 404. As Tenacious As A Cockroach

## 405. Void Tyrant And Astral Magician

## 406. The Red Dragon Queens Punishment

## 407. Breakthrough In Five Steps

## 408. Balance Is But An Illusion

## 409. The Source Of The Dragon Race: The Ferry

## 410. Despair Of The Astral Magician

## 411. This Is The Void Ferry I Want

## 412. Impossible

## 413. The Tyrant Reappears

## 414. The Winds Of Change

## 415. In The End One Can Only Rely On Oneself

## 416. Was It An Illusion?

## 417. Following The Guidance Of The Soul

## 418. Its Trapped

## 419. Void Hunter

## 420. The Secret Duke

## 421. Use It Now But Dont Wear It

## 422. Theres Something Wrong With The Iron Duke

## 423. Cannot Give Up This Island

## 424. The Shepherd Of The Storm

## 425. No Chance At All

## 426. Unacceptable

## 427. Make A Fortune Without A Sound

## 428. The Incurable Illness

## 429. The Dean Is Angry

## 430. The Demon Abel

## 431. Give You A Gold Coin For Compensation

## 432. An Underwater Ambush

## 433. Why Did You Save Me?

## 434. The Shadow Of Destruction

## 435. Time To Repay An Old Friend

## 436. The Northern Duke

## 437. Are We At A Dead End Already?

## 438. Trouble Ahead

## 439. Destiny Cannot Be Defied

## 440. Whos Ambushing Whom?

## 441. Katyusha In The Ruins

## 442. The Nagas Spear And Celines Guns

## 443. Power Of Time

## 444. The First Clue: The Cemetery South Of The City

## 445. The Gravekeeper And Blood Runes

## 446. Power Beyond Comprehension

## 447. Youre Surrounded

## 448. A Lapse In Judgement

## 449. Let The Hero Fall In The North

## 450. The Melting Of The Snow

## 451. Legendary Battle

## 452. Three Pillars Of The Realm: Time

## 453. We Need More Power

## 454. Thin Pieces Of Time

## 455. The Boatmans Bamboo Raft

## 456. From An Ant To A Dragon

## 457. The Construction Of The Golden Rune

## 458. Obstacle Of Dragon Biases

## 459. Youre All Dismissed

## 460. Cook A Pot Of Mixed Stew

## 461. The Centipede In The Sea Of Void

## 462. Queens Crisis A Close Call

## 463. The Mysterious Island

## 464. Worshipped As A Saint

## 465. The Legend Of The One Eyed King

## 466. Legend Of The One Eyed Giant

## 467. The Legend Of The One Eyed Giants

## 468. Mighty Man Or Liar?

## 469. The Arrival Of The Actual Gods Messenger

## 470. Time Sword Technique

## 471. Thoreau The Soul Devourer

## 472. Not Even 10000 Tricks Can Stop The Pass Of Time

## 473. A Piece Of Water Meteorite

## 474. Links Enduring Wisdom

## 475. Let Time Decide

## 476. No Longer A Weakling

## 477. Magic Points And The Divine Punishment Protocol

## 478. Amazingly Effective

## 479. We Are Magicians

What Ferde had plenty of was money, while the black market in the North had plenty of slaves to spare.

In the black markets of the northern kingdoms, if your price was right, the Syndicate would provide you with anything you wished.

The Golle Kingdom, one of the Leo Kingdom's neighboring states, saw the most active slave trade among the four northern kingdoms.

The Golle Kingdom had a huge geographical advantage, as it shared its borders with the other three kingdoms. With the ocean stretching to its east, the Golle Kingdom had one of Firuman's first largest ports within its borders as well, called Port Antique.

Incidentally, a slave market thrived in Port Antique.

On that day, an elderly man with thick flaxen hair and gristly sideburns arrived at the market.

With a generous wave of his hand, he tossed out tens of thousands of gold pieces to the slave merchants, buying every slave of any race he could find—from Elves to mixed-blood demons, and Beastmen to half-dragons.

The Syndicate thieves were all taken aback by the arrival of such a benevolent buyer. Despite their immoral ways, they showed good business ethics and professionalism by responsibly transporting the buyer's merchandise to a designated area in the wilderness outside Port Antique.

Once they were finished, the thieves suddenly fainted on the spot. When they regained their senses, the slaves that they had brought with them had all disappeared.

The group of thieves blankly stared at each other as if they had just seen a ghost. Given the bewildering circumstances of the incident, the thieves silently decided among themselves not to speak further on the subject.

One hundred miles to the east of Port Antique, there was a dense forest. As the North saw frequent rains and the weather was warm and humid, the trees there grew unnaturally tall almost like their tropical counterparts on earth.

The forest was filled with all manner of ravenous beasts and venomous insects. As a result, there was little to no signs of human presence.

Deep in the forest, a castle stood tall. From the outside, the castle seemed dilapidated. Vines entwined themselves around its walls, some of which had collapsed. None of the rooms inside seemed intact.

However, in the depths of this castle was a wine cellar, and in it was an extremely spacious Folded Dimension.

The dimension was a few hundred square feet wide and around ten feet tall. It was divided into two levels. The recently purchased slaves were kept on the lower level, while the upper level served as an experimentation area.

Vance was the one carrying out the experiments.

He had been in the castle's wine cellar for almost a month. Every day, screams of agony escaped the wine cellar's cracks like the inhuman cries of a phantom.

Link, Eliard, Alloa, and Eleanor took turns visiting the place. Link had left the place after staying for only a day, no longer able to withstand the cellar's conditions. Eliard threw up for a whole day after only glancing at the experimentation area. On the other hand, Alloa and Eleanor's reactions were a little better than the other two, but they did not last long in the cellar either.

The scene in the wine cellar was simply too inhumane to be spoken outside the castle walls.

A month later, the wine cellar's great door opened with a thunderous thump. Vance in all his balding glory entered the place and shouted into the darkness of the room, "Alright, people, you're all free."

There was no response from the wine cellar. Ten minutes later, a mixed-blood Blade Demon timidly poked his head out of the wine cellar's door. His body was covered with horrible scars, especially around his chest, all of which wound compactly with one another like cobwebs. Though his scars had largely healed, one could only imagine what sort of torment he had been through in the past.

The mixed-blood Blade Demon's eyes were somewhat unfocused. This was due to the Memory Wipe spell he was under. As a result of the spell, the slave subjects in the wine cellar had all forgotten their time in the ancient castle.

Eleanor the Magician had cast the spell on all of them.

After the mixed-blood Blade Demon, the Beastmen came out next, followed by the half-dragons, and finally the elves. Like the mixed-blood Blade Demon, all their bodies were heavily scarred as well.

Of course, as their body structures were unique in their own ways, their scars were only temporary and would heal soon.

Before long, the slave subjects were all gone. After losing ten of them during the experiments, there were around 80 of them remaining.

When the slaves had all gone their respective ways, Link appeared beside Vance. He then willed the Folded Dimension to collapse on itself, bringing the whole wine cellar down with it.

He sighed and said, "I finally understand why you were called a butcher in the past. To think that I had allowed such cruelty to happen..."

Vance spread out his hands, indicating that it could not be helped. "Sacrifice of some kind is always inevitable in one's search for ultimate knowledge. This is the last time I'll sully my hands with such foulness. Oh, I definitely won't be able to sleep well with the shrieks of agony still ringing in my ears."

Link patted Vance's shoulder, unable to come up with any words of consolation for him.

Though the process was barbaric, their experiments had achieved results. Vance had more or less grasped from where each race drew their power. Such information was priceless to them.

When they returned to Ferde, Vance produced five copies of his results to everyone involved.

When Eliard received his copy, his hand trembled a bit. He was able to vividly smell the stench of blood from the experiments they had conducted. Eliard then raised his head to look at the others.

Link's face was dark and solemn, while Vance looked exhausted from the experiments. Both Alloa, the Maiden of Truth, and Eleanor's faces were expressionless as if they were already accustomed to such horrors.

Eliard then sensed that there was a stark difference between his worldview and the others. Before, he had seen the world in either black or white. The two color's purities remained intact even with the insinuation of a few grey areas.

Now, he finally understood that the world consisted simply of shades of grey. There was no such thing as a purely black-and-white world.

For instance, in the hearts of the people of Ferde, their lord, Link, was honorable and intelligent beyond compare. He was a messiah-like existence almost akin to the reincarnation of light itself.

But this time, he was the first to suggest using the strengths and powers of the other races for their benefit. Before, Link had wanted to end the lives of 70,000 people in Orida Fortress of the north, regardless of whether those people were good or evil. Link's hands were certainly stained with more blood than anyone else in the world.

On the other hand, who would have known that Vance, who usually disputed with him over magical problems as a fellow, mild-mannered scholar, would be willing to dissect countless corpses and even live bodies in his zeal to develop Battle Art?

Judging from their unfazed expressions, Eliard was sure that both Alloa and Eleanor had done their fair share of unspeakable things in the past.

Link looked at Eliard, who remained silent. He then said, "Is there something wrong? You seem shocked."

Eliard shook his head. "No, I just realized that there's no line between light and darkness."

Though he was still a bit shocked, as a Level-7 Magician, he managed to calm himself down and prevent himself from losing composure.

"That's not usually the case. To some people, absolute light exists. I've seen it with my own eyes in Orida Fortress. But..." Link remembered the pope and cardinal who had been willing to incinerate their souls back in Orida Fortress. Such individuals would sacrifice anything for the light.

Eliard raised his brows upon hearing this and waited for Link to continue.

Link fell silent for a while. He then continued, "But... we're Magicians. To us, the eternal conflict between light and darkness holds little to no meaning. Religion and morality are better left to saints who have long removed themselves from worldly concerns. What we do has concrete value. Our ultimate goal is to change the very nature of the world."

Before, Link had not given this much thought. As he grew in power and accrued even more experience in the world, his convictions had fortified. To quote a saying from earth, "Be unscrupulous in your methods, and never lose yourself."

Beside Eliard, Vance spoke out, "We need to be diligent in our efforts to reshape this world. There will be times when we'll be forced to shake off the shackles of morality in order to achieve our goals."

Eleanor added, "Link took the words right out of my mouth."

Alloa the Maiden of Truth then said solemnly, "This is the reason why I left the Dark Elves and sided with Link. He sees through everything more than anyone else."

To all of them, piety, morality and the values of mortal men were nothing more than impediments. A Magician should not concern himself or herself with the struggle between light and darkness, but rather with an object's practicality and whether it can be used to fulfill their objectives.

Though Link usually presented a noble exterior to the outside world, it was usually for the purpose of gathering support for his actions.

Hearing their words, Eliard looked at his compatits around him in awe.

He suddenly had a clearer understanding of things.

Slaughter, cruelty, generosity, greed—all these things were simply a means to an end. These tools would only be used when needed and discarded when they had served their purposes. Most people usually made the mistake of confusing means and ends and ended up losing themselves in the process.

Heaving a long sigh, Eliard sensed that the path ahead of him had become even clearer. There were others like him walking the same path, and they were all doing a great service to the human race.

"I understand." Eliard nodded.

Link then shuffled the papers in his hands and said to the others, "Alright then, let's get started."

## 480. Seed of Sunlight

With the unique powers of different races for reference, the progress of Link's team skyrocketed. They were practically in a different world.

With Link as the leader, the five members of the team all had their own strengths.

Vance had the most experience. He created the Battle Aura field single-handedly. Battle Aura itself was a unique power. It just didn't seem as powerful or versatile as Dragon Power or the power of demons. However, it gave Vance rich experience, especially in his understanding of the human body. Thus, the work of creating seeds was built on Vance's foundation. Eliard had a great imagination, and his thoughts were creative. Many times, they broke through bottlenecks with his creativity. Alloa, the Maiden of Truth, had remarkable magical insight. This was an instinctive sensitivity to the truth. She could glance at an idea and know if it had potential. Reality proved that she was always right. This saved a lot of time. Secret Magician Eleanor had great attainments in the Secret spells. Power seeds naturally touched on the target's soul. She was experienced in this.

Finally, there was Link.

He was the most powerful; this gave him the widest vision. He also had the richest knowledge of magic. He'd studied secret, elemental, spatial, and time magic. In addition, he possessed grandmaster-level enchantment and alchemy skills. He was pretty much a master at magic.

If this team was a ship steering through uncharted seas, then Link was the captain deciding their direction.

The five worked day and night. Eliard and Eleanor had to rest occasionally, but Link, Vance, and Alloa all had crazy bodies. They could work without stop.

This craze lasted for 20 days. Finally, they created the first successful power seed.

The seed was packaged in a high-level crystal Mana bottle. It looked like 30 milliliters of liquid. It was light blue and viscous. At closer inspection, one could see semi-transparent vortexes constantly flashing in and out of existence. It also radiated with a strange aura.

"For some reason, this aura reminds me of sunlight, like sunbathing on a summer afternoon at the beach." Vance provided a very poetic description.

Hearing this, Eliard's eyes brightened. He laughed. "Yes, I have a similar feeling. It has to be the beach by Ferde's pier. You lie on the fine sand and watch the merchant ships in the distance come and go. Seagulls fly in the air, the wind isn't heavy, but it's still there—"

"Alright, it's just an aura," Eleanor cut him off, not able to bear it anymore. "There isn't that much to talk about. But it really does feel like sunlight. In that case, let's call it the Seed of Sunlight?"

"Seed of Sunlight? That name is nice, and it's similar to its effect." Alloa nodded in agreement. "As long as the person has human blood, it can fuse with the seed and become effective. Just like sunlight, anyone who can feel it will benefit."

It was just a name; Link obviously didn't have complaints. "Then let's call it that. Now, let's begin the next step. Find some volunteers and test its effects."

This seed of power was already very refined and had no theoretical problems; no one could ensure that it didn't have potential flaws. They must experiment on a human to create a true seed.

"It's best to find a volunteer from the army. We need Jacker," Vance said.

Link thought this too, so he summoned Jacker. The man arrived within five minutes.

After receiving Epic Battle Art, he didn't stop training and improved quickly. He was only a step away from breaking into Level-8 and was a very powerful Warrior now.

Link met with him alone in the library. After arriving, Jacker saluted. "Lord, what are your orders?"

Link pointed at the crystal bottle on the table. "We created a new power seed. It's similar to the Dragon Power of dragons and the power of nature of the High Elves. It's new though. We need to verify its effects."

Jacker's eyes brightened. "Understood," he said immediately. "I'll find a Warrior right away. Are there any special requirements?"

"No physical requirements; a regular person would be fine. This must be kept a secret, so the Warrior must be loyal. It's best if he doesn't have any special background. As for the number, 100 would be good."

"No problem. Lord, give me one day's time," Jacker said.

"You can go now."

Jacker turned to leave while Link returned to the alchemy room with the seed. Clapping, he said to his four companions, "Alright, let's prepare at least 100 seeds now. Let's go."

...

Allen was 18 this year and was very young. Thanks to the rich food of the Ferde army and hard training every day, he was muscular and strong. He was more than six feet tall and weighed more than 180 pounds. If not for his youthful features, he would look like a 30-year-old man.

Despite his age, he was a veteran already. When he was 16, the king of Delonga had gone crazy. He'd been separated from his family during the chaos and fled all the way from the South. He didn't have anything other than his life when he arrived at Ferde. Coincidentally, Ferde had been recruiting soldiers. He'd been a bag of bones at the time but had a large frame, so he'd been recruited. Almost two years had passed.

He'd fought in the border war last year and killed more than 20 Undead Warriors. Now, he was a captain in charge of more than 50 soldiers. His strength had reached Level-4 too. He didn't have to care about food or necessities in the army; he could even receive two gold coins for his monthly salary.

To him, Ferde was now his homeland, and the army was his family.

This place contained his brothers, comrades, and the glory he yearned for. Even if his family were alive and wanted him to go back to the South, he would refuse. The South was too messy compared to Ferde.

Today, he returned from the training field and was wiping his sweat in his own room when the door suddenly opened. A middle-aged man stood in the doorway. He had a gold star pinned on his chest—he was an associate general. Allen knew this man. It was General Rotokan, commander of his corps. He was a Level-6 Warrior.

"General!" Allen immediately straightened and saluted.

General Rotokan nodded. He studied this spirited youth, appreciation flashing past his eyes. "Allen, there is a mission," he said. "It's very dangerous, but if you succeed, you'll become a major and have authority over 500 soldiers."

As soon as he finished, Allen replied without hesitation, "General, I'll definitely complete the mission!"

"Very good. Remember, this is a mission announced personally by the lord. Don't disappoint me," Rotokan reminded.

Allen's heart started pounding; his body was even trembling. This was the lord's mission. Did this mean that he would have the chance to see the lord in person?

He was so excited. To the soldiers, even though Marshal Jacker was just a human, he was extremely powerful and had a high status. One would feel honored to meet him. The lord of Ferde, though, was from legends. He was an undefeatable war god—able to do anything, was impossibly wise, and extremely brilliant.

Practically every soldier's dream was to be appreciated by the lord. They would feel unparalleled honor even if they could only exchange a phrase. Now, he received the lord's mission! What did he do to deserve this?

"General, I know!" Allen almost yelled.

"Good. Come with me but keep low. This is a secret mission."

Hearing this, Allen forced down his excitement. He put on his armor and tried to act normal.

He followed the general outside the training grounds and climbed onto a black carriage. There were three other soldiers there.

The four stared at each other. They wanted to speak but remembering that this was a secret mission, they kept silent.

After a while, the carriage rode out of the camp and all the way to a big house in the inner city of Scorched Ridge. After getting out of the carriage, Allen saw that there were almost 100 other youths like him. They all had repressed excitement on their faces. He knew many of them too—they were all elites of the army.

Seems that many people are here for the secret mission. I have to work hard! Allen thought.

The other youths had similar thoughts. They looked at each other, feeling slightly competitive.

More carriages arrived after that. When there were close to 100 people, the carriages stopped coming. After a while, Marshal Jacker actually came.

He announced some rules. Basically, they would rest at this house tonight and head to the Mage Tower tomorrow morning.

Since the marshal was announcing this personally and they'd go to the lord's Mage Tower, the youths went "crazy." Thankfully, they were soldiers. Ferde's military discipline was very stit. Even though they were totally excited now, they didn't dare make a sound with the marshal present.

When Jacker finally left, they immediately started discussing amongst themselves.

"What kind of secret mission is this? We're even going to the Mage Tower."

"Is it to use a portal? The type of magic that sends you hundreds of miles instantly?"

"It's time to accomplish something!"

"We might see the lord tomorrow. What if I can't fall asleep tonight?"

All sorts of voices sounded in a cacophony. Allen listened quietly without speaking. He clenched his fists and thought, No matter what, I must accomplish this mission perfectly!

## 481. Birth Of The Sunlight Warriors

## 482. Ferdes Sunlight Army

## 483. I Leave This Matter To You Eliard

## 484. Ill Discipline Him For You

## 485. Legs Turned To Jelly

## 486. Whos Lying?

## 487. Danger Everywhere

## 488. Time To Do Something Big

## 489. An Ethereals Use

## 490. Ethereal Time Crystal

## 491. The Prodigy That Rivaled Eliard

## 492. You Two Have Fun

## 493. The Woods

## 494. Demi Elves Are Lost Souls

## 495. Shes An Incredible Woman

## 496. A True Strong Figure

## 497. Is He Trying To Kill Himself?

## 498. Too Embarrassing

## 499. Profit Beyond Ones Imagination

## 500. Bluff

## 501. Maintain Balance Of Power

## 502. Capturing The Ethereal Prince

## 503. The Fire Of War Has Been Lit

## 504. Ariel Newmoon

## 505. A Big Sewing Needle

## 506. It Was Just Impossible

## 507. Battle Invitation At The Cliff

## 508. Only One Rule In This World

## 509. More Importantly Its Growing

## 510. The Moonstone And The Realms Elite

## 511. Moon Stone And Realm Essence

## 512. A Swords Symphony Under A Moonlit Sky

## 513. Strange Beastmen On The Plains

## 514. An Incurable Poison

## 515. Pearls Should Be Treasured

## 516. Things Were Becoming Complicated

## 517. Plague of Mara City

Golden Plains, night

"Someone figured out the poison."

There was a small thatched cottage in the thick grass. Inside, Ariel, Elovan, and Milose sat facing each other. They had been meditating as Magicians usually did, and the cottage had been quiet. Ariel suddenly broke the silence.

Elovan and Milose didn't open their eyes, but their expressions changed. "Can you sense who it is?"

"I'm not sure. It's a strange power, very clean and seemingly a bit gentle... No, it's reserved. This is a subtle power. I feel that if it is used at full force, it can be terrifying."

"Do you know where it is?" Elovan asked.

"Near Mara City."

"Your Highness, should we go check?" Milose asked.

Ariel was silent for a bit. Then she said, "Let's go see. Bileauquin is not a simple poison. I have to see who solved it... But try not to getito conflict with him. We can't reveal our identity."

Whoever could figure out Bileauquin must be at the Legendary level. A fight at that level could destroy the entire area. By then, it would be impossible to stay hidden.

"Understood, Your Highness." Elovan and Milose nodded at the same time.

As soon as they spoke, faint green light shone around the three sitting on the ground. An instant later, they'd turned into a green haze and shot out of the cottage like lightning.

...

On the other side of the plains, a large line of Beastmen knights with Kero Beasts, unique to the plains, were making their way to Mara City.

The Kero Beast at the head was huge and had a unique color. Rather than the regular grayish-white, it was pure black. A Beastman in fine leather armor sat on its back.

Using the Beastmen's craftsmanship standards, this leather armor was extremely luxurious. The Beastman was strong, and the black obsidian broadsword on his back was half a man'shi

If a regular person saw this, their eyes would be in pain. They wouldn't even be able to stare at it directly.

But compared to the Beastman's own aura, the sword was nothing.

His pure black hair, long and dense, was tied carelessly and hung down his back. When there was wind, hishi

Different from the other crude and barbaric Warriors, he sat upright on the Kero Beast. His eyes were closed as if he were resting, and no matter how bumpy the road was, he didn't move. His presence was like a looming mountain that one couldn't see the tip of.

This was the new king of the Beastmen: Glorious Warlord Avatar.

Technically, it appeared that he ruled over all tribes of the plains. The fighters of each tribe had submitted to him, recognizing him as the only king. However, the thousands-of-years-old Beastmen tradition was too resilient. Each Beastman was only loyal to their own tribe, and there was no king in their hearts. This would take years to change.

To strengthen his rule, King Avatar established a touring convoy, in addition to the Gronhon Capital. He traveled the cities to show his authority and power.

His next destination was Mara City.

Three in the afternoon, a scout reported, "Your Majesty, there are 30 more miles to Mara City, but it doesn't seem very stable."

Avatar wasn't surprised. He'd run into such things often along the way. Even now, he wasn't firmly seated on the throne. Many people weren't willing to surrender to him.

He didn't fear challenges.

"Explain." He didn't even open his eyes.

"Your Majesty, many people are fleeing the city. They say there's an epidemic..."

"Epidemic?" Shocked, Avatar's eyes flew open. His eyes were slightly bloody—a change after he entered the Legendary level.

If a strong opponent had appeared in the city, he wouldn't be scared. He was confident he could fell the opponent with his sword. But this time, the opponent was an invisible disease. He had to be scared.

"Isn't Grand Shaman Alador there?" Avatar asked. "Is he helpless too?"

"Grand Shaman Alador was asssinated five days ago."

Avatar was shocked again. This smelled fishy, but the Beastmen lived in the Golden Plains and rarely had conflicts with other races. Who would try to harm them?

Could it be Parmese? Avatar shook his head as soon as he thought of that. He was familiar with Parmese. The man only disagreed with Avatar, but he wouldn't sacrifice regular Beastmen or kill a Grand Shaman.

Humans? Avatar shook his head again. Humans liked dark magic. The Norton Kingdom in the North was fighting with the Destructive Army while the Syndicate was busy with making an alliance. They also had to be careful of the Isle of Dawn. They had no time to make more enemies.

The Destructive Army? Avatar still shook his head at this. As far as he knew, the Destructive Army and humans were mostly equal. They were far in the North and were busy with the humans. Why would they fight the Beastmen now?

He thought for a while but couldn't figure out who his enemy was. He could only move past this now. "What kind of plague is it?" he asked.

The scout looked fearful. "I saw some victims. Their skin turned green and became weak. The disease doesn't spread quickly, but there's no cure. Even the Shaman's divine spells don't work. They can only wait for death."

"Even the divine spells don't work?" Avatar furrowed his brows. Suddenly, he flinched. He thought of something terrible. "Are there many people fleeing?"

"Yes. They spread throughout the plains after leaving Mara City."

Hearing this, Avatar shook. "So cruel!" he uttered.

There was no cure for the plague. They could only wait for death after falling sick. Even worse, these people would only weaken and still have the ability to move for a long time. Many of those who were fleeing were probably sick already. They would bring the plague throughout the entire plains. By then, the entire Golden Plains would be infected.

Avatar didn't dare imagine the consequences.

After a few seconds, Avatar was about to speak to the scout when he realized there was something wrong. He studied the scout and then looked to the Warriors behind him. He quickly realized that there really was something wrong. His face was slightly green... He was infected!

"You are infected. Leave now!" he ordered.

Stunned, the scout checked himself. Face paling, he stumbled back, eyes filled with despair. He prostrated himself on the ground and looked up at Avatar. "Your Majesty, please help me," he begged. "Don't let me die without honor."

Avatar was only a Warrior. He was helpless against a plague. Faced with the scout's pleads, he felt uncomfortable. After a long while, he said, "Stay here alone. Don't give up until the end!"

With that, he jumped off from his Kero Beast. Turning, he said to his Warriors, "Set up camp here. I'm going to Mara City."

An army couldn't deal with a plague. If these soldiers went with him, they would just get infected.

The soldiers were all shocked when they heard this. "Your Majesty," someone said, walking forward. "Mara has already become a city of plagues."

"That is why I must go alone. The plague can't hurt me. I will go find those shamans. They're the first to come into contact with the plague. Even if they don't have a solution, they can show me the way."

With that, he turned to the infected scout. "Soldier, don't give up. I'll think of something."

Tears filling his eyes, the scout fell to his knees and choked out, "Your Majesty!"

Avatar took a deep breath; his power started operating. He crossed hundreds of feet with one step as he raced towards Mara City.

As he ran, he thought angrily, The spreader of the plague is evil. They want to destroy my race. If I find them, I'll make them suffer all the torture in the world.

The furious Avatar didn't know that three figures were following behind him. It was the Storm Warlord Parmese who had come south.

"That's Avatar?" a small Naga asked. It was Katyusha with the Spear of Victory.

"It's him." The Storm Warlord grasped his lancet as if facing a great enemy.

"He doesn't seem that powerful." That came from the Fallen Angel. His weapons were two finely made shurikens. He twirled them as he spoke. The graceful movements went well with his handsome and angelic face.

The Storm Warlord didn't like him. Cursing him inwardly, he warned out loud, "Don't underestimate him. He's the strongest Warrior of our race. You'll never know how powerful he is until you fight him."

"Even the strongest Warrior can't escape from the Spear of Victory." Katyusha smiled.

Parmese stopped talking. He'd experienced how terrifying the Spear of Victory was. To him, it was undefeatable.

"Anyway, be careful... Where are we going to attack?"

"Mara City."

"Mara City? There are too many people there." Parmese was a bit hesitant. Whether they were Magicians or Warriors, Legendary figures alwasshook the world when they fought. Every ordinary person around them would die.

Katyusha heard his hesitation. "What, you can't bear it? They're all Avatar's people."

"But..." She was right, and Parmese had left the Golden Plains. However, he never thought to return and massacre the innocent.

The Fallen Angel chuckled coldly. "See, mortals will always be mortals, even if they have extraordinary power."

"Fine, I'll do it!" Parmese waved his hand. He would go all out. He looked like a human now, so everything he did would be the humans' fault.

## 518. Glorious Warlord Avatar

The caravasslowly made their way across the plains. There was a slight upward slope, so they could see the Mara City from where they were.

The merchants jolted in their carriages along their journey. Their faces wore weary but elated smiles.

They had finally reached the outskirts of Mara City. They should be safe for now. Since last night, the merchants had been on their guards, worried that the poisoned Beastmen might ambush them again. They were finally able to loosen up a bit at the sight of Mara City in the distance.

"Brother Link, why haven't you said a word?" Shallie squeezed over to Link's side. She seemed to have put behind her what happened last night.

Link ignored the girl. He stared straight ahead at Mara City and said, "Look, aren't those Beastmen?" Why are there so many of them leaving the city?"

The others had also noticed this peculiar spectacle. "Yes, how strange."

Once outside Mara City, most of the Beastmen stampeded towards the Golden Plains. They all seemed to be in a rush to put the city behind as soon as possible as if something terrifying had scared them out of their wits.

Suddenly, someone shouted, "Look at that Beastman's face!"

The merchants were able to see from their caravans that the Beastman's skin was whiter than the rest, and there was a hint of green on his face. This was one of the symptoms that mercenary leader Milo had exhibited when he was poisoned.

The only difference was that the green on Milo's face was steadily receding. After basking under the glow of the mysterious moonlight and resting for a night, Milo had recovered considerably. He was now able to walk about like before. On the other hand, the Beastmen were stumbling in their steps. It was obvious the poison was spreading deep inside their bodies.

Everyone took another look at the other Beastmen and saw that most of their faces were now becoming greener. There were even some who were sprouting white patches of fur on their bodies.

"Why are they all poisoned?"

"This is horrifying. Are we still going to Mara City?"

"Do you guys think that it's an epidemic?" one of them stammered. They could see that it was utter chaos in the city from where they were. There was no semblance of order in it. What kind of poison was capable of turning an entire city upside down?

This did not seem like a simple case of poisoning, but rather an epidemic.

An epidemic could spread and infect an entire population if one was not careful enough. There had been three instances in recorded human history where a plague had reduced the population of a city to zero. Each time, the death count had numbered in the millions. To generations of humans, an epidemic was this faceless, relentless enemy capable of slaughtering millions with no sympathy for its victims.

"Milo, what should we do?" The chief of the Red Earth Firm looked at Milo. After what had happened last night, everyone in the caravans now held the mercenary leader in high esteem, believing him to be blessed by the gods themselves.

This was the first time Milo had encountered such a phenomenon. However, regardless of whether it was an epidemic or something else, he could tell that this was out of their depth. Their best course of action was to keep themselves far away from the city for now.

"I don't think we should go to Mara City right now. We probably should go round the city... No, there doesn't seem to be any way to go round it. Look at the Beastmen running off in all directions. No one's even trying to quarantine them in the city. This plague, or whatever it is, will spread across the Golden Plains. Chief, I fear you won't be able to do any business here."

"Are you serious?" The chief swallowed. He thought for a moment before making his decision. Given the choice between profit or life, the chief decided to choose life.

"Let's go back. We'll go back to Norton Kingdom," he shouted.

"Chief, we've not even sold a single thing. If we go back now..." someone beside him spoke out. If they were to turn back now, the Red Earth Firm would go bankrupt. Every one of them would be sent home with debt that they would probably not be able to pay off for the rest of their lives.

"Chief, maybe if we go around Mara City..."

"Enough, it's just a little debt. Debt will not kill you as fast as what awaits you in Mara City! Now let's go!" The chief did not budge from his decision.

Milo said, "Let's go back. These spices won't go bad that soon. You'll still be able to make some money by selling them back in Norton Kingdom."

Some of the merchants still seemed to have reservations about this, but the chief's word was law. In the end, the people of Red Earth Firm began turning back towards Norton Kingdom.

However, only half of the caravans belonged to Red Earth Firm. The rest were independent merchants. After thinking it through, some of them followed Red Earth Firm back on the road, while the rest decided to leave the party and head towards Mara City.

The merchant Olan hesitated for a few minutes. Finally, he chose to turn back. He was still in good shape to take his chances with the epidemic, but that would mean risking her daughter's safety. He decided that it was best to bring her back safely to Norton Kingdom.

Suddenly, someone shouted. "Do you see that? Someone's flying!"

Everyone turned around and saw that a black figure was racing through the sky towards Mara City. The figure was actually running rather than flying through the air. Each step propelled the figure across a few hundred feet, which made it seem as if he was really flying.

"How is he able to run so fast?" The figure had already traveled across a few thousand feet. One would have thought that it had teleported across that distance in the blink of an eye. The merchants would not have been able to catch up with its speed if they had not been observing the figure from a far enough distance.

Milo saw it, and the expression on his face changed instantly. "Not good, that's definitely a master. We'd better hurry. Something big's about to go down!"

At that moment, no one hesitated. Everyone began turning their horse carriages around and hurriedly headed back towards Norton Kingdom.

In the chaos, a girl's voice rang out. "Where's brother Link?"

No one answered her. Everyone was busy running for their lives. Her voice was immediately drowned out in the din.

The carriages' wheels began clattering across the ground as the merchants desperately tried to put some distance between them and Mara City. In another corner, Link, who had cast an Invisibility spell on himself, walked in the opposite direction towards Mara City, unnoticed by anyone else.

Link was now able to exhibit perfect control of his Realm Essence. He had completely retracted his aura. With the aid of an Invisibility spell, he had blended perfectly into his surroundings.

He recognized the figure which had raced across the sky. It was the newly promoted Beastman King, Avatar. Link did not expect that he would come all the way here, but Link had also sensed other auras beside Avatar's.

After receiving his Realm Essence, not only was Link able to refine the control of his own power, but he had also become even more sensitive to the auras of others in comparison to other Legendary masters.

One might liken Link's current senses to a puddle of clear water. A drop of ink would make more of a difference in it than a puddle of muddy water.

He could feel a total of six different Legendary auras up ahead. He even recognized four of them, with whom Link had come into contact before.

"Katyusha, Ariel, Elovan, Milose, a demon, a Beastman, and the Beastman King Avatar. That's seven Legendary masters. There's gonna be quite a party in Mara City."

Link did not feel confident about facing all of them head-on. One slight misstep would mean certain death and the decimation of his very soul.

I'll need to keep myself well hidden. Watching the seven of them fight it out from the sidelines seemed like an excellent idea.

He wanted to know why these many Legendary master had come together in the Beastmen's city.

Avatar had reached the outer wall of the city. He stood on the wall and saw that different areas of the city had descended into different degrees of chaos.

There were sounds of crying and roaring all over the city. Avatar saw these strange things running amok in certain parts of the city. Their bodies were green, and covered in white blemishes. Green pus flowed out from them as well. They were rampaging throughout the city, biting and clawing wildly at anyone they saw.

Avatar frowned at this spectacle of madness. Without further delay, he leaped off from the wall and headed towards Mara City's ancestral altar.

The altar was where the shamans lived. He needed to find a way to stop the epidemic. Otherwise, Mara City and the entire Golden Plains would soon turn into an uninhabitable wasteland.

On his way, Avatar saw countless atrocities being committed by the people in the city. He had seen a father, who was on the brink of death, suddenly sitting upright and biting into his daughter's neck beside him. There was a mother who had swallowed her infant child whole. Even the soldiers were not immune to the madness. They had slaughtered everyone in their paths as green pus flowed profusely from their pores.

Order had completely collapsed in Mara City. The city itself had become a literal hell on earth.

Avatar began to grow anxious. Anger burned even more fiercely in him as he saw more atrocities being committed along the way. The bloodlust in his eyes intensified.

Whoever the culprit was, he would find them and then tear them to shreds. Avatar would then cook their remains and gobble them all up. This way, they would be digested slowly in his stomach and excreted from his body like the filth they were.

Ten seconds later, he reached the ancestral altar, but what he saw there caused him to lose all hope.

In the altar, an old shaman covered in white spots was feasting on the meat of a younger shaman. The latter was also infected, but he still retained his senses. The young shaman was trying to break free from his aggressor, but it was useless. The other shamans had collapsed on the ground, their faces a sickly green like the rest of the infected.

The ancestral altar was done for.

"How can this be? How can this be?" muttered Avatar despairingly outside the altar.

Just then, a female voice came from behind him. "Oh, how unfortunate, Avatar, that such a tragedy has happened to your city!"

It was Katyusha.

Avatar turned around without warning and pulled out his obsidian sword from his back in a fluid motion.

"Is this your doing?" Avatar glared at Katyusha, his eyes now flashing dangerously. A target that he could channel all his anger and bloodlustito had finally appeared before him.

Battle aura flowed off him in waves. Parts of the ancestral altar began to crumble under the weight of such power.

Katyusha did not expect such a decisive reaction from Avatar. She could not help but take a step back from the sudden rush of power from Avatar's body.

"Die!"

Without giving Katyusha time to react, Avatar leaped mightily forward. He then swung his sword, directing all his power and bloodlust with the ferocity of a thunderstorm at the Naga.

Katyusha was shocked. Her opponent had moved too swiftly. She could not use her Spear of Victory's Thorn of Fate in time.

Though the Spear of Victory was a formidable weapon, its wielder was no match for the Beastman King's lightning speed.

In the face of such an attack, she felt as if she was out in the middle of a stormy sea and a huge wave would break her pitiful raftito pieces at any time.

She had no idea just how terrifying the Beastman King really was.

## 519. Cicada, Praying Mantis, Oriole

Clang!

Avatar's murderous intent burst out. In a hurry, Katyusha could only raise her spear to block the attack. She was forced backwards, each step burying into the stone tiles. Countless cracks appeared under her feet, spreading out like a spider web.

A shockwave visible to the naked eye rushed out in all directions. The ground shook, the air trembled, and all houses within 1000 feet toppled as if they were made out of jigsaw pieces.

After the attack, a small nick opened up on Avatar's obsidian broadsword. The material of his Beastman Epic blade couldn't be compared to Katyusha's Spear of Victory.

But so what?

Katyusha retreated, and Avatar followed like a shadow. He huffed out a breath. A fast air current rushed out of his throat in a guttural roar.

"Blade of Glory, go!"

Wild power surged into the obsidian broadsword, making it shine with blinding fiery light. Under the red light, the blade doubled in size. It was close to ten feet long and two feet wide. Outside the actual blade, there was a shadow made up of condensed Wild Power.

He brought it down on Katyusha; the power grew more aggressive. His attack was right when Katyusha still hadn't regained her balance.

The air cracked like thunder as the sword came down. Bolts of bloody lightning appeared around the sword. It was so powerful it could almost cleave the heavens!

Facing this type of attack directly, Katyusha just felt tumbling waves charging at her. There wasn't even time to breathe. She could only passively block this fatal attack.

This can't continue. She was very clear.

She had to use this attack to distance herself from the opponent. As long as she was further away and had time to adjust, she could cast the Thorn of Fate and kill this Beastman warlord.

Clang! Katyusha blocked the attack again.

But this didn't feel right. The opponent had used an instantaneous rend. When she caught it, she felt electric numbness go from her palm to her arm and then to the rest of her body. She almost went slack.

It was fortunate she could stand her ground, let alone use the momentum to retreat.

"Human Warrior, I don't know why you're doing this or how many people you have, but you will all die here today!"

Avatar gritted his teeth. His actions didn't slow down at all, and he didn't give Katyusha any chance to recover. Taking advantage of when she was powerless, he roared again.

"Die!"

His sword cut upward. The blade was as fast as lightning. If Katyusha was hit by this, she would be hacked into two. Even if she had nine lives, she would be dead.

Avatar had only used three attacks in all his battles. He would kill with three moves!

Even though Katyusha had the Spear of Victory, something close to being a divine spell, once she made a mistake, she wouldn't find another chance to attack—even though she only needed one-tenth of a second.

Avatar defeated all the brave Beastmen by himself and canceled the tribal system. This all depended on his amazing combat techniques.

In Firuman, he could definitely rank in the top three for combat. No human could compare to him. Kanorse couldn't do it; the High Elves definitely couldn't. He could only find an equal opponent in the dragons or demons.

However, Avatar's might didn't just come from combat. He also had a spirit that helped him break free from all restraining tradition and change the world.

Perfect combat techniques, a majestic spirit, and surging murderous intent—the three combined to make Katyusha unable to fight back.

Just as Katyusha was about to be halved, a slender figure streaked out from the corner. This person had a lancet in both hands. One went for Avatar's neck; the other, to his heart.

At the same time, a young man with darker skin, handsome features, and six dark wings charged from another direction. This person had a spinning shuriken in each hand. He put his hands together and the shurikens combined into a blade going for Avatar's obsidian sword.

This six-winged fallen angel was extremely fast, almost teleporting. He had charged a second later but was even faster than the Storm Warlord Parmese who was known for his speed. He blocked Avatar's broadsword at the last instant.

Clang! There was the explosion of metal going through stone. Avatar's sword didn't stop or continue. It spun midway and blocked Parmese's attack.

During the block, Avatar's thoughts whirred. An almost subconscious thought flashed past his mind. No, there are three of them, and they're all at the Legendary level. My only advantage is that they aren't working together now. If I don't end this now, I'll die.

With this thought, Avatar started moving. There was no hesitation or pause during this entire process.

These were battle instincts—the terrifying talent of the Beastmen!

During battle, Beastmen always had an almost beastly gut instinct. They could always make the correct decision at the critical moment.

In the history of Firuman, Beastmen always ranked high in the records of single challenges. There was the record of a Level-8 Beastman warlord killing and dying with five Dragon Warriors of the same level.

Beastmen were natural Warriors.

The next instant, Avatar activated his fatal trick. He used the reverberations from when his obsidian broadsword clashed against the opponent's weapon and retracted a bit. During this, his sword suddenly blurred.

The obsidian sword seemed to become illusory as if formed by thousands of shadows. At the same time, the glow around it consolidated. The wild bloody-red power seemed to solidify. It was blinding.

Parmese was the most familiar with Avatar's power. Seeing all the sword shadows, he was terrified. "Retreat, he's putting his all in!"

The fallen angel didn't mind. "What's there to be scared of... oh, so powerful!"

At the same time, Avatar activated his fatal trick. Wild Power rushed into the sword, and he hacked forward with all his might.

Instantly, sword shadows filled the air within a 15 feet range. Every shadow was bloody red, and the blades dazzled. They seemed to be illusory but contained extreme power.

This was Avatar's strongest battle skill: Wild Battle

Wild Battle

Level-11 Master Battle Skill

Effect: The user consolidates all power and murderous intent to explode abruptly. Everything within 15 feet will be pulverized!

(Note: The anger of a warlord!)

Shtick, shtick, shtick. Dazzling sword shadows shrouded everything. Within them, Katyusha, the fallen angel, and the Storm Warlord Parmese all suffered the horrible attack.

It had come too quickly and too densely. With nowhere to hide, they could only block with all their might.

Katyusha had just been saved by her companions and wanted to activate the Thorn of Fate. But then she sank into such a desperate situation. She couldn't do anything other than using everything to retreat.

The fallen angel suffered the densest attacks. He spun his shurikens like crazy so that it created a seamless blockade before him. Even so, countless sword shadows still got past them and hit him.

Parmese was terrified. All will to fight was gone. He'd already retreated beforehand, but this was useless. He was still within range of the attack. Though he put in all his might to block, he was still cut by a sword on his left leg.

Poof, poof, poof. It was the sound of flesh cutting open, accompanied by the metallic smell of blood. The sounds lasted for half a second. Then three bloody figures flew out in different directions.

The three Legendary figures were all hit at least once by Avatar's attack of full force. They flew out, covered in injuries.

The most badly hurt was the fallen angel. One of his arms had been hacked off, and blood gushed out of his chest. He stumbled back unsteadily and fell. He convulsed on the ground, blood pooling around him.

No matter how powerful the fallen angel's vitality was, the Legendary power rushing into him was destructive. The fact that he was alive right now was proof of his strong vitality.

As for Katyusha, she was covered in blood. Though she stayed standing, her body shook uncontrollably, barely unable to hold onto the Spear of Victory.

The least injured was Parmese, but he wasn't well off either. Everywhere was fine except for his left leg. More than half of his leg was missing. The remaining parts were hanging by shreds. The speed that he was proud of was gone now.

However, Avatar wasn't well off either. Though he wasn't hurt, this battle technique had used up all his power. Leaning on his sword, he half-knelt on the ground, panting heavily.

He didn't look at Katyusha or the fallen angel. Instead, he stared at Parmese.

"I didn't think this would happen. It was okay for you to take the humans north. It was okay to side with the Dark Elves in the Black Forest. But I didn't think that you would come back to massacre our helpless brethren and with such a lowly method of a plague! Parmese, you are the biggest disgrace to our race!"

Legendary fighters didn't look at their appearances. Parmese looked like a human now, and regular people wouldn't be able to tell. However, Avatar instantly knew who he was after attacking.

Parmese instantly refuted Avatar. "I didn't do the plague! I just came to kill you!"

"Ha, so what? You'll kill me and let the plague spread through the Golden Plains to kill our entire race. Your soul will be abandoned by our ancestors. It's such a pity that I can't kill you with my own hands."

He'd lost all his power while Parmese only lost one leg. His power wasn't damaged at all and could easily kill Avatar.

Parmese didn't want to be responsible for this. He didn't care what regular Beastmen thought; he didn't even care what Avatar thought. However, he couldn't ignore the countless ancestors.

In Beastmen tradition, ancestors were very important. Respect for the ancestors was ingrained in their souls.

"No, I didn't do the plague. I couldn't do something like that!" he exclaimed, either to Avatar or the countless ancestors.

"Kill the demon and Naga to prove to the ancestors!" Avatar roared.

Parmese froze. His eyes moved to Katyusha. The fallen angel was disabled and would need at least three months to recover. The only one present who could fight back was Katyusha.

He instinctively gripped his lancet.

"Parmese," Katyusha said hurriedly. "Your people are still in the Black Forest. Your wife and children are there too. Don't forget!"

With that, Parmese's grip loosened again. He didn't dare meet Avatar's eyes, but he didn't speak either. Lowering his head, he ripped his shirt off and tied up the remnants of his leg. Then he hobbled towards the fallen angel.

He picked the badly hurt demon up and went to Katyusha.

"Let's go."

"Why won't you kill him?" Katyusha asked angrily. The Beastman king was too terrifying. If they didn't kill him now, she wouldn't be able to kill him again, even if she had the Spear of Victory.

Parmese shook his head. "Now is not the time. Only he can stop the plague in the Golden Plains. He can't die!"

"What does this have to do with you?" Katyusha was so pissed she could slap this guy right now.

"Shut up!" Parmese didn't want to speak further. He took out a tonic and poured it down the fallen angel's throat. Then he carried him away.

Katyusha stared at the Beastman king kneeling on the ground. She wanted to stab him to death, but she was badly hurt and wasn't confident. She could only follow Parmese away.

Avatar let out a sigh. Pushing against his broadsword, he rose slowly.

He was still alive; he could still find the cure to the plague. Yes, he had to find the cure. Since he couldn't find it here, he would go to the Dragon Valley and ask the Red Dragon Queen for help.

Yes, the dragons would have the solution. As long as they were willing to help, he would pay them anything.

With that in mind, he prepared to set off. He'd recovered some of his power now. It might not be enough to fight, but he could travel.

But two steps later, his heart leaped. Without thinking, he jumped to the side.

Whoosh. A black vine as thick as his arm snuck out of the ground, piercing towards his heart like a poisonous needle. Avatar dodged it, but the thorn changed direction too, not leaving his chest.

Helpless, Avatar blocked it with his obsidian broadsword.

Clang! The broadsword was easily forced away by the black vine. Avatar was too weak now. He wasn't the vine's match.

After that attack, the vine returned. Avatar groaned inwardly. He dodged at the last moment but still couldn't avoid it entirely. With a poof, it passed through his arm. Extreme pain besieged his mind. He couldn't help but grunt.

Immediately after, he felt poison spread from the wound. He was familiar with the poison, and he knew this vine. It was from the High Elves!

In that moment, something flashed past his mind. No wonder Parmese refused to admit that he's responsible for the plague. The actual masterminds are the High Elves!

As soon as he thought this, his vision dimmed, and he felt dizzy.

In the last moment, he saw a white light flash around him. He knew this was from a portal spell, but he found it strange. Is someone saving me? Are the High Elves capturing me?

With that, he fainted.

## 520. The Beastmen's Combat Form

No, no, no!

Dazed, Avatar found himself in the middle of Mara City. He was surrounded by crazed Beastmen whose bodies were dripping with green pus and covered with scars that had sprouted white hair.

They tore towards him, green mist issuing out of their mouths as they roared. They looked even more savage than the wild beasts of the plains.

Avatar was forced to cut down his own people with his obsidian sword, but their number was overwhelming. They were threatening to tear him apart and eat him alive.

Why are there so many of them? Is Mara City doomed? And what about the grass plains?

In a panic, Avatar began cleaving his way through the ravening mass of Beastmen towards the city gates.

To his horror, he realized that his strength was rapidly depleting as he cut down many of his fellow Beastmen. He had used up all of his strength when he finally got to the city wall.

His arms were now sore, and his legs felt like lead. It was like wading through a mire. But there did not seem to be any end to the swarm of infected Beastmen. The streets teemed with them like ants swarming out from their nest. The Beastmen surged towards him, ready to sink their fangs into his flesh.

With what was left of his strength, Avatar leaped up onto the city wall. He was ready to leap down and flee for his life. However, as he got onto the wall, what he saw plunged him into despair.

The same infected Beastmen had spread far across the grass plains. There was no end to them.

Is this real? Are the Golden Plains done for? Is there no hope for my people?

Hahaha!

Avatar heard shrill laughter from behind him. He turned around and saw that in a shadowy corner of a street stood a couple of slender figures with long, pointed ears.

It was the High Elves.

Sensing his gaze, one of the High Elves spoke with a sharp voice, Hahaha, youre all going to be extinct quite soon, Beastmen!

Avatar, youll die as well. Your people will feast on your corpse until not a single bone is left.

The crazed Beastmen dashed towards Avatar, who was now too fatigued to put up a fight. In an instant, he was submerged in the torrent of infected bodies. Amid the chaos, he could only flail his arms about, but it was useless. He roared in pain as one of the Beastmen bitito his neck.

Argh!!!

He sat up. He immediately realized that something was wrong. There were no Beastmen or High Elves anywhere around him. Only a warm fire crackled happily near where he sat. A metal pot was hung from a metal stand above the fire, and there was a figure sitting near the fire. The figure seemed human. He was holding a skewer of a dead rabbit that was cooking above the fire. At that moment, the delicious aroma of cooked meat filled the air.

The place was dark. A full moon shone down from the night sky. There were thick clumps of reeds around them. A night breeze was blowing, but thanks to the fire, Avatar did not feel the least bit cold. There was something soft beneath him. Avatar looked down and saw that a thick bearskin had been laid out beneath him on a pile of reeds. A thick woolen blanket covered his body; it appeared to be woven by human hands.

Avatar tried to get up, but as he moved, there was a piercing pain in his arm. His entire body was also extremely weak. Everything seemed like a dream to him.

He felt his neck and was relieved to find that there was no wound on it.

While he was still trying to process his surroundings, he noticed that the human figure was approaching him. In his emaciated state, Avatar could not see what he looked like, especially when the figure had his back to the fire. Avatar could only see the cooked rabbit in his hand. The aroma of food now wafted close to him. Suddenly, the Beastmasstomach growled. He was starving.

Here. The person handed the cooked rabbit over to him.

Without thinking twice, Avatar took it and began stuffing himself with the rabbit. It was delicious. The rabbits skin was crisp, its flesh tender. There was also a hint of spice added to it. Avatar had never tasted anything like it.

Within ten minutes, he managed to devour the entire 20-pound rabbit. All that was left were the rabbits thigh bones. He had swallowed down its smaller bones together with its flesh. Still, Avatar was not completely full.

Once food had entered his stomach, Avatar felt a surge of energy and strength return. He turned to the figure and asked, Who are you? Why did you save me?

The mans aura was powerful, perhaps even more powerful than Avatars. But it was gentler, almost inoffensive. Avatar had never felt such power before.

The man chuckled. He took a few steps and let the glow of the fire illuminate his face.

Master Link, is that you? Why are you here? How long have I been sleeping? Avatar was so surprised by Links presence that he could not help but fire multiple questions in quick succession at him.

Link did not attempt to hide the truth from the Beastman. Youve been asleep for half a day. As for me, Ive come to the Golden Plains to discuss the matter of the Army of Destruction. As you probably know, the Storm Warlord has joined the Army of Destruction, so I thought maybe I could solicit your aid in the matter. Who would have thought that such a thing would happen to Mara City before I could even meet you?

Avatar was not averse to helping Link. He was on good terms with him after all. In the last few years, the Beastmen and Ferde had done a lot of business with each other. Avatars people had imported all kinds of magical weapons from Ferde. Said weapons had played no small role in Avatars unification of the Beastman tribes.

Hearing Link mention Mara City, Avatar quickly asked, Master, how much do you know about whats happening in Mara City?

A lot. Ive been doing some investigations. When I saw the High Elves attacking you, I finally understood what was happening. Link knew that Avatar was going to ask him about Mara City. He was also prepared to leverage this to form an alliance with Avatar.

Avatars face was grave. I want to know.

Link nodded, ready to share what he had learned. Before saying anything, I should remind you that Id only just arrived near Mara City a few days ago. Everything Im about to tell you is merely what Ive deduced from my observations, and there may be some discrepancies between my deductions and the actual truth. In other words, you dont need to believe everything I say.

Avatar nodded, somehow even more confident that what Link had to say would be true.

Link began telling him what he had learned. Only one insignificant human Dark Magician had a hand in this, which would not be enough to incur Avatars wrath towards the whole human race. Link then told Avatar about the High Elves and the Army of Destruction, the real culprits behind everything. He did so in detail to stoke the fires of Avatars hatred towards both sides.

Of course, Link chose his words objectively. He did not let his emotions sway the way he spoke.

Though Avatar was never in the habit of showing his feelings, when Link was finished, he could not help but punch at the ground in frustration. He said through gritted teeth, How cruel can those High Elves be!

Katyusha, the fallen angel, and Stormlord Parmese of the Army of Destruction had targeted Avatar. After all, he was a Warrior, and he had never backed out from a fight. Even if he lost that fight, Avatar could only blame himself for not making adequate preparations and letting the enemy take advantage of his weak points.

But the High Elves had targeted the ordinary folk of the city with such an insidious method that threatened the Beastmens very existence. At that moment, Avatar wanted nothing more than to tear those three High Elves to shreds.

Just then, a sweet aroma drifted from the broth in the pot that was still cooking above the fire. Link activated the Magicians Hand and poured the broth into two silver bowls. One floated towards Avatar, the other towards himself.

Link took a gulp from it. The taste was rich and thick. Once inside his stomach, a feeling of warmth and fullness spread over his body. He let out a sigh and said to Avatar, Dont think too much about it. Your bodys still weak. Let your hatred and thirst for vengeance simmer in you. Your recuperation is top priority right now. Try some of the snake soup that I made with cobra meat. I learned how to cook it from another master. Its perfect for restoring you to your full strength, especially when youve only just had your body cleansed of all that poison.

Avatar nodded and drank some of it from his bowl. His eyes lit up. Despite how hot the soup still was, he drank all of it in huge gulps, including the snake bones that had been left to stew in it. In the blink of an eye, he had even gobbled up all the snake meat in the soup.

Link shook his head as he watched the Beastman swallow everything down. All the trouble he had gone through to make the snake soup had gone down the drain just like that.

When he was done eating, Avatar placed the silver bowl beside him. He then struggled to stand up and began practicing his combat forms.

Link knew that Avatar was trying to regain his full strength, so he did notiterrupt what he was doing. Link rolled up the sheets and put everything else away in order to clear out a wider space for Avatar to practice his forms.

Link then watched as Avatar moved.

At first, Avatar went at a slow pace, as his arms injury had greatly affected the fluidity of his movements. Gradually, a dim red light began radiating from his body, especially from the wound on his arm. As the red light grew brighter, his movements began picking up speed.

Gradually, Avatar began losing himself in his movements. Though his eyes were open, they were not focused on anything. His movements were guided entirely by instinct, fluid like flowing water.

Link observed the Beastmans movements intently. He was a master himself in the art of combat, and his senses were also as acute as any other combat master. Even though Avatar was only practicing one form, Link could sense his breathing rate, the movement of every muscle and the flow of Savage Power in Avatars body.

Link recognized the form that Avatar was doing—it was called Soul Furnace, and it was a highly valued combat form of the Beastmen. The idea was to turn ones body into a furnace and ones soul into tinder. In the duration of the Soul Furnace, a Beastmans body would be able to recover from any injury twice as fast and even strengthen their bodies at the same time. Besides that, the synergy between soul and body would be greatly improved. Constant practice would also help boost ones battle instincts.

In other words, this was the Beastmens trump card, just like the High Elves World Tree and Ferdes Sunlight Power.

One could develop both physical and spiritual strength through the practice of this technique. However, even though Link understood the forms movements, he could not grasp how he should bring out his spiritual strength through those movements. Link simply watched Avatar practice for his own pleasure.

Two hours later, Avatar ceased all his movements. He put his arms down and let out a long breath.

His forehead was beaded with green drops of sweat. It contained the rest of the poison that Link did not manage to remove from his body. Avatar waved his arms. He could now move normally.

He turned to Link and said, My injuries have almost healed completely, and Ive regained most of my strength. I take it that youre able to grasp the form that I was practicing, Master Link?

Link nodded. Looks simple enough.

Avatar laughed. He took out a book whose cover was made from pelt and said, This form can only be performed by those with Savage Power. Its not really a big secret. Everything you need to know about letting your spiritual energy flow in your body as you practice it is all in this book. You can take a look at it if you like.

Seeing how curiously Link had observed him, Avatar did not mind sharing such knowledge with him. It was not as if Link would be able to execute the form anyways.

Link took the book. As soon as he opened it, a message popped up before him.

Soul Furnace

The Beastmens Battle Technique

Quality: Level-19

Description: Body, mind, soul, all coalescing together to form a warlords path to ascension.

(Note: The road to becoming a god of war!)

Link jolted in surprise. Before, he probably could not pick this up, but now, the Realm Essence in his body had allowed him to ignore all racial limitations imposed on techniques like this one. He could now master even the Beastmens prized battle technique!

## 521. Perfect Dawn of Magic

Accepting Avatar's battle technique book, Link flipped through without changing his expression. Half a minute later, all the content was ingrained in his mind.

After finishing, he returned the book to Avatar, commenting, "Very good battle techniques. However, it's too restitive. Even a Beastman would need absolute talent to accomplish it, right?"

In the game, every Beastman player tried for the Soul Furnace battle technique book. However, the book was not enough by itself. They had to fulfill many stit requirements. This was expressed by a set of practically impossible missions that had to be completed alone under three tries.

If the player failed at the third try, the book would disappear.

According to calculations, of all the lucky Beastman Warriors who could receive the Soul Furnace book, only 20% could successfully pass the test and learn the technique.

If the game was this difficult, real life would be worse.

As expected, Avatar looked proud after Link said that. Link had read too quickly, so Avatar thought his comment was a bit too rash. However, anyone liked hearing prass. Chuckling, he said, "You're right. Only three people in our entire race have learned this battle techniqueHolun, Parmese, and I. Right now, I'm the best."

Link had to admit this point.

In the later stages of the game, Beastman King Avatar was the undisputable top Warrior. He was a legend amongst legends and had even injured Nozama, Lord of the Deep, forcing him to retreat back to the demon fortress.

It was completely true to say he was the best.

As for the Soul Furnace battle technique, Link had taken a look and determined he could learn it. But if he wanted to learn it fully, it would be difficult. To reach Avatar's level would be practically impossible.

Not only did the practitioner need Savage Power, but they also had to have unshakeable and courageous will. They had to do things according to their heart, unaffected by anything else.

This was the path to a true and pure Warrior.

And Link was a Magician.

A Magician had to be flexible and agile. A powerful Magician couldn't forget their original intention but should use any method possible. In order to reach their goal, some white lies were alright, but this would betray their heart. This was the opposite of a Warrior. If Link forced himself to learn it, he would probably distort it.

But even though he couldn't learn this battle technique, it didn't mean that he couldn't use the wisdom in the book. To a Magician, everything had a pattern and could be learned and used. This included battle techniques.

The Soul Furnace seems to fit with the Soul Stamp of the game system. The two are different but have the same function. They both stamp power onto one's soul. If I can truly grasp the Soul Stamp, my spell-casting ability will truly follow my heart's wishes. My speed will really rival battle techniques, and I'll be powerful enough to destroy everything I need to grasp this power as soon as possible.

Thinking of this, Link grew excited.

One must know that all current spells, regardless of whether they were mortal or Legendary, required a Magician to use their own power to build the structure and activate the outer force by shaking the structure to attack.

This was extremely powerful but lacked in speed. This shortcoming was especially obvious after entering the Legendary level.

There were two reasons: Firstly, Legendary spell structures were very complex. Even if a Magician was experienced, the spell-casting speed would still be restited.

Secondly, the power after a Legendary spell structure reverberated was different from a regular spell. Regular spells used the power of the Firuman realm, while Legendary spells took from the Sea of Void. This was hundreds of times more powerful than the former.

Firuman was actually submerged in a little "bubble" in the Sea of Void; they actually overlapped. Technically, this shouldn't cause a delay. However, the laws of Firuman rejected the Sea of Void, thus causing the delay.

Due to these two reasons, a Legendary Magician's speed was much slower than a Legendary Warrior. If the Warrior got close, especially if they were an Assassin, the result would be tragic. The Magician would barely be able to fight back.

This was why Link practiced martial arts to protect himself.

This was the only solution though. If Link could solve the problem using a spell, he would rather do that. Now, Link saw some hope in solving this shortcoming through the Soul Furnace.

These thoughts all flashed through Link's mind in an instant. Then he heard Avatar sigh. "A pity that I lost the broadsword."

Avatar was depressed. His obsidian broadsword wasn't the best, but it had been with him for more than a decade. He was used to it, but it was forced out of his hands when he blocked the vine. It was probably left in Mara City.

Unexpectedly, Link waved at a long bag by the campfire as soon as he finished speaking. The bag flew to Link's hand, and he pushed it towards Avatar. "Open it."

When Avatar took the bag, he already got the feeling. "Is it my broadsword?"

Link smiled in reply.

Excited, Avatar unwound the cloth, ring by ring. Slowly, a reddish black blade appeared. It was the same color as his obsidian blade, but it was much smoother. The spine of the sword was sturdy and ancient-looking, while the blade was sharp and bright. It shimmered when Avatar moved it. The nicks on the blade were gone too.

At closer inspection, Avatar saw many faint gold runes on the sword. He didn't know what they were for, of course, but they were very detailed. They fit with the overall style of the sword too. When the cloth was entirely unraveled, and the sword was completely out, Avatar subconsciously held his breath.

It was also a black obsidian sword, but his old one was like an ugly rod in comparison.

When he grasped it, he was even more pleasantly surprised. It felt like the sword was connected to his blood, like the sword was an extension of his arm. He swung it a few times and discovered the weight was just right. It whistled as it cut through the air; it was impressive as a dragon's low roar.

"How did it change so much?" Avatar didn't want to let go.

Link smiled. "It's your old sword, but I made some small adjustments. When you were unconscious, your arm was still bleeding. I used some of your blood for a blood refining method. I'm sure you felt that it could understand you, right?"

"Indeed." Avatar's eyes were glued to the sword without leaving for even a second. He caressed the sword gently as if it were his lover.

With a sword like this, he was confident in using many of the tricks that he couldn't before. His power could triple at the very least.

After appreciating it for a long while, Avatar suddenly said, "I can feel that it has another special power."

"You're very sensitive. That's right. It can cut through the causal ring Uh, it's for fighting the Spear of Victory. That's the Naga's weapon. I think that you must have felt how dangerous it is, right?"

Avatar nodded. He had the feeling that if the Naga used her spear, he would definitely be dead. That was why he used all his might to make sure the Naga couldn't fight back.

Link chuckled. "You don't have to worry anymore."

"Oh Thank you. I owe you a life and a weapon But I need to ask something of you." Avatar lowered his head. It was hard to say because he really owed too much.

Without needing him to say anything, a crystal vial appeared in Link's hand. There was dark red liquid inside it.

"What is this?"

"The antidote. I stole a potion from that Dark Magician and spent a whole night studying it to create this. A drop can cure a regular man."

Avatar's mouth fell open. He didn't know what to say. After a long while, he said, "I will personally lead my elites to the Orida Fortress after this!"

Link had already done so much for his race. In return, there was no reason for the Beastmen to reject the alliance. Repaying in gratitude was the honor of the Beastmen!

Link was happy that his goal was accomplished, but he couldn't show it. Calmly, he said, "There's no hurry for the alliance. Right now, we have another challenge to face. You must recover to your peak as soon as possible."

"What challenge?" Avatar was shocked.

Link smirked. "It's those High Elves. They revealed their identities and have become your top enemy. After I saved you, they used a magic seal to lock this area."

With that, Link pointed at the moon. "Look at the moon. Doesn't it waver every now and then?"

Avatar looked and saw that it was true. Not only was the moon wavering, the air around them would ripple like water too.

"That's the magic seal. It's 30 miles in radius, and we're inside. If we break through it, they'll use a portal to appear by us within three seconds.

Avatar was shaken. "They're going to make us die with the secret?"

Link nodded. "Not only that, they even temporarily allied with the Army of Destruction to increase efficiency."

Before, Vance and Elin had said that the High Elves might very possibly break past their bottom line, but he didn't expect them to go to this extent.

Right now, they had six enemies. Though Avatar had greatly wounded the three from the Army of Destruction, the High Elves had impressive healing techniques. They were probably mostly recovered by now.

Link wasn't there match at all. Even if he could kill some, it would be over for him too. However, if he added Avatar and his new sword, Link was 80% sure they could wipe out the enemy.

The fury Avatar had just repressed flared again. Gripping his sword, he gritted his teeth. "Good, very good. I was looking to cause them some trouble!"

## 522. The Nine O'Clock God of Moonlight

The grass plains, nighttime

The caravans hastily made their way back to Norton Kingdom, but something unexpected happened. Around three in the morning, a mercenary ran back to his leader from the road up ahead. He seemed terrified, as if he had just witnessed something inexplicable.

Leader, theres a problem up front.

The mercenary leader, Milo, looked a lot better than before. The symptoms of his poisoning had all but disappeared. He had also regained most of his strength.

Hearing this, Milos brows furrowed. He looked around and said in a low voice, Dont say it out loud, we dont want this to get out.

He feared that this would instigate panic among the merchants.

In a low, hurried tone, the mercenary said, Leader, theres something blocking our path in front. Its wide and invisible, but it seems like a wall. A really big wall.

Milo widened his eyes. Being more experienced than the ordinary mercenary, he had an idea of what they were up against. Probably a magical barrier one of those masters had erected. Something big is happening right now.

Milo felt powerless in the face of all this. In comparison with the masters of the continent, his power was simply inconsequential like a pebble in front of a huge rock. If the rock decided to roll over him, he would simply be ground to dust under it.

Knowing that there was nothing anyone could do about this, he went to the Red Earth Firms chief and explained the mercenarys discovery to him.

The chief was a merchant and an ordinary person who had heard and seen much in his travels as well. When he heard Milos account, his face went pale. He was silent for a while, before he finally said, What do you think we should do, Milo?

Milo had already figured out what their next step should be. He said, We are definitely no match for these masters. The only thing we can do now is not get caught in the crossfire. Ive heard that when two Legendary masters clash against one another, the shockwave they send out can spread across more than ten miles. Anyone caught in that area will be disintegrated in an instant. I think our best option would be to find a low-lying place to hide for now. It would be even better if we could find a cave. Well hide inside it and then cover its entrance with a pile of reeds. This way, well have a higher chance of weathering the coming storm.

The chief did not have anything to add to this. He found Milos suggestion reasonable. Alright then, well do as you say, he said.

Milo began making arrangements. Before long, the mercenaries scattered out to find suitable hiding spots. The merchants were all anxious about this, but it did not seem like they were in any immediate danger at the moment. Their caravans continued moving forward on their path.

After trudging on for more than 3000 miles, everyone saw the transparent wall that the mercenary had just described. It was soft to the touch. However, the wall hardened as soon as pressure was applied to it. No matter how anyone tried to push against it, the wall did not budge an inch.

Everyone was able to see the other side of the wall, but there was just no way to walk through it. The entire thing was surreal.

There were shouts and cries of terror amid the merchants. However, most of them did not speak a word. Their faces were all pale as they braced themselves for what was about to happen.

Milo remained in the caravans. This at least gave some sense of security to the merchants. The mercenary leader did not appear as uneasy as the rest. He seemed confident in the solution that he had come up with to survive the coming storm. Milos presence was the only thing keeping the caravans from descending into total panic.

As everyone waited silently for the mercenaries to return with a report on their surroundings, suddenly, three flashes of green light appeared in the sky.

They hurtled towards the caravans at an unimaginable speed.

At first, the flashes of light streaked past the caravans overhead without any intention of stopping. However, they suddenly turned back and landed before the merchants in the form of three hooded figures.

One of them walked through the crowd towards Milo. The figure observed him from tip to toe and then asked, Youve encountered the poisoned Beastmen. You were poisoned, were you not?

The voice was clear as a bell. It was female.

Milo wanted to ask who they were, but for some reason, when the figure before him posed her question, he could not seem to control his own body. He nodded and said, Yes, I was poisoned, but then I was cured.

How?

I dont know. There was a sudden beam of moonlight from the sky, and then I just got better, said Milo.

Moonlight? repeated the hooded figure strangely. Suddenly, she stabbed Milos arm with a thorn before he even had time to react.

Fresh blood stained the thorns tip. The figure gave it a lick and then went silent. Ten minutes later, she said, I need to borrow something from you.

What... what do you want? Milo felt that something was wrong.

Ill need to borrow your lives for a bit. Of course, none of you are in any position to refuse. The figure waved a hand. All of a sudden, a faint green mist appeared above the caravans in the air.

Without warning, the mist descended on everyone. The merchants began coughing uncontrollably in it. Ten seconds later, the green mist faded. There was now a hint of green on the faces of all 300 people in the caravans.

Youre now all poisoned. Two hours from now, youll lose all reason and meet the same fate as the poisoned Beastmen youve encountered before. What you should do now is pray that the same beam of moonlight will appear once more and cleanse you all of the poison in your bodies. Whats done is done. Theres no use getting angry at me. Attacking me will only quicken the spread of the poison in your bodies. Now pray.

When she was finished, the figure stepped out of the crowd and returned to her companions. The three of them then turned into flashes of green light and zipped back into the sky.

Back on the grass plains, everyone sat on the ground despondently. Their faces were all ashen as they contemplated on their fates. Even Shallie, who always had a smile on her face, was stunned. She sat absently beside her father, unable to comprehend what had just happened to them.

Father, why did she have to do such a thing? We didnt even do anything to her, said the girl to her father, Olan.

Olan chuckled bitterly. He looked at his daughter with a pained expression. He never thought that they would meet their end so soon. He should have never brought her along with him.

Father, why? asked Shallie.

Olan shook his head miserably. Maybe its because... its our fate to die here.

Shallie fell silent. After a while, hope welled up in her. Father, do you think God will come and save us?

God? Olan was taken aback by her question.

Yeah, he saved Milo and Eyre before. If he could do it before, hell definitely do it again for all of us! Definitely! Shallie was unwavering in her belief. She waved her arms about excitedly as if trying to keep her spirits up.

Suddenly, she thought of something. Shallie climbed up on a horses back and shouted, Everyone, theres no need to panic. If God knows whats happened to us, hell definitely come and save all of us. But right now, what we should do is pray to him so that hell be aware of our plight!

Hearing this, the caravans began to show some signs of life.

In times of hopelessness such as this, any shred of hope, no matter how faint it might seem, was worth holding on to.

However, someone asked Shallie, But we dont even know the name of this god. How do we even know who to pray?

Hes definitely the God of Light.

You cant say for sure. The God of Light has never performed a miracle outside the walls of a church. Also, the power we saw before didnt look like his divine power of light.

Shallie did not expect such a contradiction to be pointed out. However, she managed to think up a response. His power resembles moonlight, and the miracle we witnessed took place at nine last night. So maybe we should call him the Nine Oclock God of Moonlight?

Everyone was speechless at this.

But Shallie did not care. She knelt on her wagon and began praying. Oh benevolent and merciful Nine Oclock God of Moonlight, you are the light that drives out the darkness from this world. Here I pray that you may guide us through these troubling times. Before you I kneel, a humble servant promising to spread your deeds far and wide, and offer you my entire being.

It did not matter if her prayers went unanswered, nor did she care if she was doing it right. Shallie simply knelt there, praying for salvation again and again.

At first, she was the only one praying. Soon enough, some of the people followed her, including the mercenary leader Milo. He hesitated at first, then knelt on the ground and began praying in a low voice.

He did not copy Shallies prayer word for word. He simply prayed inwardly, Lord, youve saved me before. I hereby swear that for as long as I live, Ill not be swayed by temptations of the darkness in my path and remain an honorable Warrior. Now, Ive once again fallen into the same pit. If you still think Im worthy of being saved, I beseech you, help me out one more time.

The mercenary Eyre was even more straightforward. He prostrated himself on the ground, crying, Lord, save me!

Gradually, the people in the caravans began kneeling and praying.

All their prayers were born out of a sincere desire to be saved from their current predicament.

Behind a clump of grass, the three High Elves, Katyusha, the fallen angel, and Stormlord Parmese quietly observed what was going on in the caravans, somewhat troubled by this.

Katyusha whispered, Whats this about the Nine Oclock God of Moonlight? He cant really be a god, can he?

The fallen angel whispered weakly, Pointy-ears, this better not be a part of some elaborate scheme. If theres a god involved in this, you three will also be in trouble!

No matter how strong a Legendary master was, they were nothing more than ants before a god. Normally, gods rarely interfered with the affairs of Legendary masters due to how much power they needed to spend to descend to the mortal plane. However, they had been known to make exceptions, especially when any one of their chosen disciples were harassed by an outside party.

There was another word for this. It was called suicide.

For instance, the God of Light was widely acknowledged to be a kind deity. However, he had meted out divine punishment twice in recorded history. Each time, at least one master was on the receiving end of the God of Lights divine stick. Of course, what these masters did was unforgivable. In their folly, they had attacked a holy city and paid the consequences for their actions.

There were two types of divine punishment, and they both needed some sort of medium.

If there was an altar, a god would simply need to appear on it. If there was none, said god would infuse his divine power into one of his disciples. In that moment, he or she would be in possession of unimaginable power so that they could carry out their gods will.

The possibility that one of the God of Lights favored disciples was in the midst of the praying merchants troubled the High Elves and the others. The girl who had first started praying seemed like a potential candidate.

Under normal circumstances, Legendary masters and gods were bound by an unspoken rule to mind their own businesses.

Ariel was beginning to grow suspicious. All the hints she had gathered pointed to a Legendary master who might have been responsible for curing the poisoned humans back then, but there was no evidence suggesting the involvement of a god.

She had also felt Legendary power that was extremely pure and concentrated. It was beyond the limits of a typical Legendary master.

A chill ran down her spine at the thought of this.

As they watched on from their hiding spot, unsure of what to do next, Link and Avatar had reached the caravans.

Seeing the fervently praying merchants, Avatar asked curiously, What are they doing? And whos the God of Moonlight?

Link did not know whether to laugh or cry as he saw what was going on. He explained, I secretly saved two poisoned mercenaries back then. They must have mistaken what I did for a miracle.

Well then, can you sense where they are now? Avatar decided not to pay any heed to the praying merchants and mercenaries. With Links help, he was now at full strength. Right now, he was raringly waiting to exact his revenge on the High Elves.

Link nodded. I can feel them.

Where? Avatar was now gripping his obsidian sword.

Wait, I need to set up a magic seal to protect these people first.

We may reveal our location to them, said Avatar. They were vastly outnumbered, and giving themselves away would mean losing the element of surprise.

Link nodded. I know, but theyre still my people. I cant leave them unprotected.

Avatar decided not to say anything else. He remembered the tragic scene he had seen in Mara City. He understood what Link was trying to do.

At first, I thought he was like all the other Magicians, conniving and obsessed only with his ambitions. I never knew he would be just like me. Avatar seemed to finally understand Link as a person.

## 523. Is it Really Gods Punishment?

Golden Plains, night

Ariel studied the merchant caravan in the distance. Getting an idea, she gestured at the others. Look at the caravan. The arsems off.

Elovan and the others looked over. They really did see that, under the silver moonlight, there were some strange ripples in the air around the caravan. These ripples were very fine. Because the caravan was close to the magic seal, one would think that that was the reason if they didn't look carefully. However, they realized something was wrong after Ariel's reminder.

Of these six Legendary figures, the three High Elves led by Ariel were Magicians while Katyusha's group were Warriors.

The three Warriors saw that something was wrong but couldn't figure out where the opponent was from this. Thus, they turned to the High Elf Magicians, waiting for their conclusion.

Ariel said to Elovan and Milose, "You two protect me. The opponent has very strange power. It's hidden. I must put all my effortito tracking him."

She didn't trust the three from the Army of Destruction. She only trusted her own race.

Elovan and Milose stood to either side of Ariel. Their Natural Power surged into their wands made from the World Tree into the preparatory state.

Seeing that they were ready, Ariel gestured at Katyusha. If I successfully track the opponent's position, I'll point him out. Be ready to attack!

Katyusha didn't like these three young High Elves, but they were cooperating, after all. They'd also treated her group's wounds and hadn't done anything tricky. She would manage to trust them this time. She nodded, showing her agreement.

After preparing, Ariel composed herself. She took out the World Impaler and added Natural Power into the magic sword. After half a second, the sword tip glowed and buried into the air.

An instant later, the World Impaler peaked out of the ground near the caravan. After that, a strand of faint Natural Power poured out of the sword. Disappearing into the ground, it entered the grassurrounding the caravan.

The biggest advantage of Natural Power was that it could fuse perfectly with the plants in Firuman. It had a perfect cover in places with dense vegetation. This was something that no other race's power could rival.

After the strand of Natural Power entered the grass, it started sliding. There were very slight ripples during this, but they were absorbed by the grass. No one noticed.

A short while later, the Natural Power reached where Link and Avatar were hiding.

While Link was focused on setting defensive runes for the caravan, Avatar gripped his obsidian sword. He kept his eyes wide, staring at the place Link had pointed out in high alert.

The enemy hadn't reacted yet, so he didn't do anything. However, he couldn't feel the Natural Power sneaking up at him at all.

Just as the Natural Power was three feet away from him and about to touch his body, Link reached out and pushed Avatar slightly to the side.

A snake-like tentacle of Natural Power slid past centimeters away from Avatar without touching anything.

Avatar was shocked. Natural Power was very subtle, but he was surprised that it was to this extent. He could obviously feel the change in power around him. As soon as Link touched him, he reacted immediately. Without any hesitation, he stepped aside, following Link's push.

His martial arts skills were practically flawless, and he had perfect control of his body. Even though he was huge, his movements were as light as a feather. He didn't disrupt anything when he dodged.

He was like a large buffalo that had the agility of a cat. One couldn't help but be amazed at the sight.

Less than half a second after the first tentacle of Natural Power came, another came. Link was still setting up the runes, but he tapped lightly, and Avatar sensed it. He moved lightly, following Link's direction. He moved at a speed and distance that was just right to avoid the tentacle.

After that, a dozen tentacles passed by him. Link moved Avatar around as if he were a puppet on strings.

To avoid the intrusive tentacles, Avatar had to make a lot of weird movements too. For example, he had to leap in the air and then spin three times. After landing, he had to go on his tiptoes, arch his back, move his hips with a hand on his pelvis, and much more.

Avatar was annoyed, but he had to follow Link's orders. It was like performing a weird dance under the moonlight.

He had to make sure Link would keep this a secret. If people found out that the Beastman king did all these weird things, they would dislocate their jaws laughing.

On the other hand, Ariel was deep in thought as she focused on searching. She could feel that the opponent was somewhere nearby, so she repeatedly checked that place. But strangely enough, she just couldn't find any trace of him time and time again.

After a full ten minutes, she was still fruitless.

At this time, she was forced to retract her Natural Power. Otherwise, she would use up too much power and affect her fighting later.

Retracting the World Impaler, Elovan asked with a gesture, How is it?

Ariel shook her head. I can't find him, but I can feel he's less than 2000 feet away!

Beside her, Katyusha pursed her lips with some disdain. She wouldn't say anything though. Gesturing, she asked, What do we do now?

The opponent was putting runes in the air around the merchant caravan. Clearly, they were getting ready to fight. Since Ariel couldn't find where the opponent was, there was no reason for them to stay here now.

Ariel was silent for two seconds. As soon as she was about to speak, the situation changed.

There was a soft sound in the air around the merchant caravan. Then the strangeness in the air disappeared. Other than the whistling wind and the merchants' prayers, the plains grew abnormally quiet.

He finished the magic seal.

He's going to attack!

But does he know where we are?

The six gestured speedily, trying to find a solution.

The seconds ticked by, but they couldn't reach an agreement. Ariel finally couldn't take it anymore and said out loud, "Stop arguing. This Magician is powerful. He knows where we are! Get ready!"

Everyone flinched and then gotito defense mode, waiting for the hidden enemy to attack.

But what happened after that was unexpected.

Near the caravan, a pillar of silver light, like moonlight, appeared. It was more than 15 feet in width, and so tall one couldn't see the tip. More terrifying was that it didn't rush up from the groundit descended from the sky.

It was as if a hole opened up in the boundless void and watery light flowed out to somewhere on the plains.

Seeing this, the merchants were shocked. A moment later, they fell into ecstasy.

Shallie excitedly cried, "There really is a god of moonlight. He responded!"

"We'll be saved!"

Mercenary leader Miro sighed deeply. He'd been on one knee earlier, but now, he knelt fully. Placing his hands on the ground, he murmured inwardly, God, you saved me once again. From now on, I will be your most loyal slave. I am your sword, and your will is my glory!

On the other hand, Ariel's group all gulped, shivering.

This power was too pure and subtle. Other than the silver glow, no aura seeped from the pillar of light. Right now, the six felt that this beam was so obvious, but it seemed to exist in another realm. They could only see it without sensing it.

"F\*ck. Is this really god's punishment?" The fallen angel gaped at the brilliant silver moonlight. He could feel his hands shaking. His newly-recovered wound was hurting again.

Ariel didn't know either. She just swallowed subconsciously. It was as if she'd angered some horrible existence today. Before she could speak, she heard Katyusha say, "What if we retreat?"

She could tell from the sight that they weren't a match.

As a servant of the God of Destruction, Katyusha had some knowledge about divine punishment. The God of Destruction had used the same method to pour power into a sacrifice or a messenger's body.

In that case, there was probably a god's messenger nearby. This nameless god had poured his power into him.

From the look of things, there would probably be a terrifying god's messenger coming after them in a while. If they didn't escape now, they would have no chance later.

"But we're six people. There's probably just one god's messenger. Maybe we have a chance?" Storm Warlord Parmese wasn't satisfied.

But just then, Ariel felt something was wrong. The scene looked scary, but it just didn't feel right.

Likea god's punishment shouldn't be like this.

She didn't feel the danger of being in a hopeless situation. As a Magician, gut instinct was important, but she didn't feel the relative danger What did this mean?

A thought popped up in her mind. What if this is a farce to divert our attention?

## 524. A Complete Defeat

Back in the game, Ariel was the most promising magical prodigy among the new generation of High Elves. In the later stages of the game, she was even on par with the most gifted character in the game, Eliard.

Feeling that something was off, Ariel quickly produced a tree seed in her hand. This was the seed of the High Elves' strongest combat puppet, Golden Tree Spirit.

The Golden Tree Spirit, commonly known as the vine devil, and the Black Gold Tree Spirit were two sides of the same coin. Though they were both formed from barbed vines, their colors were different.

The Black Gold Tree Spirit was, as its name implied, black and usually used offensively. Its barbs were highly poisonous. On the other hand, the Golden Tree Spirit was golden and used defensively most of the time. Its barbs were extremely solid and could interlace with one another to form a defensive mesh.

At that moment, Ariel did not know where her enemy would strike from. Instinctively, she decided to go the defensive route and took out the Golden Tree Spirit's seed.

Legendary-level Nature Power flowed into the seed. When jade green light shone out from the seed, she quickly threw it down to the ground. When the seed hit the ground, it began taking root immediately. Shortly after, countless barbed vines broke through the seed's husk.

The vines intertwined with one another, forming a tight net around the three High Elves. Due to the urgency of their situation, Ariel had left the other members of the Army of Destruction out in the open to deal with whatever was out there.

At that moment, a black shadow sprang out from a clump of grass nearby.

A fiery red light swirled around the figure's body as it appeared. It let out a roar as it swung its dark red sword down at them.

"Die, High Elves!'

It was the Beastman King Avatar!

Avatar was able to get up close enough to them to execute an ambush while they were distracted by the moonlight that Link had produced.

With all his strength, he came at them with his unique skill: Wild Battle.

In an instant, the blood red dazzle from Avatar's blade bloomed like a lotus flower in all directions, with his body as its center. All three High Elves and the others were immediately enveloped inside the burst of light!

The light was akin to the plow of a Grim Reaper, violently loosening the soil it touched. Destructive damage would be inflicted upon those standing on the soil it touched.

The attack had caught them all by surprise.

With their lives on the line, the only thing Katyusha, the fallen angel and Stormlord Parmese were able to do was to block the attack with all their might. They were unable to dodge it; they had already missed their chance to do so.

Sounds of metal clashing against one another rang out in quick succession. Energy rippled out from the points of impact, which blew up a powerful storm and uprooted the grass around them.

The clash of weapons and the resulting storm were so intense that they would blow away an ordinary adult standing a few hundred feet away from the vortex.

Dust flew about in the air, blocking out the starry night sky and moon. Everything went dark in that moment.

However, when the storm was about to hit the caravans nearby, it mysteriously died down.

In front of them, the wind howled like restless phantoms. However, the wind was no more than a quiet breeze as it reached the caravans a few feet away from the action. The only thing that everyone could see from there was the occasional rumble of thunder and flashes of lightning produced by the clash of weapons.

Shallie was first to notice this. She shouted, "The God of Moonlight must be protecting us!"

"Lord, thank you for your protection!" shouted someone in response.

This time, no one doubted a single word Shallie said. Way too many things had happened tonight. This deity had evidently performed miracles to protect them from all manner of misfortune. This much was irrefutable.

On the other side of the plains, the battle raged on.

Even at their full strength, Katyusha, the fallen angel, and Parmese could not entirely block the Beastman king's onslaught. At that moment, their wounds had only begun to heal, and they had not even regained their strength completely. In their currently weakened state, their chances of coming out of this alive grew ever slimmer.

Katyusha was now covered in cold sweat and screaming inwardly at the hopelessness of her situation. She did not even have the time to activate her Thorn of Fate skill. She sensed that she would be done for at any moment.

As the storm raged on, she saw the fallen angel from the corner of her eye desperately trying to block Avatar's attack. His chest had already been slashed open. Blood poured out profusely from his wound.

Katyusha suddenly leaned to one side and retreated behind the fallen angel.

The fallen angel was too busy deflecting the rapid glimmers from Avatar's sword that he did not notice Katyusha retreating behind him. He began to retreat as well while blocking the incoming attacks, but before he could even take half a step back, he sensed that something was wrong. There was someone blocking his way behind him.

Katyusha did not deliberately block off his retreat. But under such circumstances, a moment's hesitation could mean life or death.

He reacted immediately. "Get out of my way, Naga!"

At that moment, the fallen angel was caught between the storm of sword glimmers in front of him and Katyusha, who had blocked off his retreat behind him. The only thing he could do was continue keeping the sword glimmers of death away from him as long as he could.

As long as he continued blocking the attacks, there was still a chance he would be able to make it out of this alive. Otherwise, he would be cut to ribbons.

He tried to block off the attacks with all his might, but reality was a cruel thing. In the span of a second, the fallen angel had blocked at least 30 attacks from Avatar. However, the sword glimmers did not let up, and he had already exhausted most of his strength.

An instant later, the sword attacks sliced through the fallen angel's body, turning itito mincemeat.

Stormlord Parmese met the same fate as the fallen angel. With his nimbleness greatly affected by his injured leg, Parmese's body was instantly chopped to pieces by Avatar's onslaught.

The whirlwind of sword glimmers lasted for three minutes. Two Legendary masters of the Army of Destruction had been torn to pieces in it. On the other hand, Katyusha had hidden behind the fallen angel and was able to escape with her life.

The three High Elves fared better than the rest of their party.

With the power of the Golden Tree Spirit's seed, Ariel was able to erect a sturdy vine barrier, but the barrier only lasted for one second.

In that one second, the sturdy Golden Tree Spirit was instantly ground to fine dust by Avatar's sword glimmers. However, before the attacks reached them, Ariel and the others were able to set up a powerful magical barrier.

Under the magical barrier's protection, the three of them scattered, safely evading Avatar's attack.

Avatar had used up all of his strength in his attack. He had faced six Legendary masters on his own and was able to slay two of them. This was a feat worthy of recognition throughout the continent.

But his enemy had no intention of leaving him alive even after accomplishing such a feat.

After managing to survive Avatar's ambush, the three High Elves and Katyusha proceeded to carry out a counterattack against him.

In an instant, Katyusha's Thorn of Fate, Ariel's World Impaler, Elovan and Sonya's Black Gold Tree Spirit all came at Avatar at the same time.

All four them surrounded the Beastman King, blocking all his escape paths.

The Beastman was simply terrifying. His sword attacks had made everyone fear for their very lives. After escaping his onslaught by the skin of their teeth, their first reaction was to kill the Beastman immediately before he could do any more damage.

However, Avatar was laughing.

He made no attempts to defend himself. The Beastman King simply remained in place, laughing at the attacks that inched closer and closer towards his body by the second. As he laughed, a white light suddenly engulfed his body. He then faded away like a mere mirage.

A moment later, all four attacks converged on the same spot at the same time, but their target had vanished into thin air.

Ariel shouted urgently, "Careful, it's an extremely powerful teleportation spell. The one who's not yet revealed himself is a Spatial Magician!"

She then began to readjust her body, ready to intercept the Spatial Magician's attack.

At that moment, she did not know that the Spatial Magician was Link himself. Due to the fact that the power she had sensed was different from Link's, Ariel only assumed that it had come from some unknown master.

Just as she shouted her warning, the Magician's attack came towards them at a frightening speed that they could barely even react to it.

All four of them had come at Avatar in unison a moment ago, ready to kill him where he stood. Though they had sensed the Magician's attack, they were unable to pull back their attacks and readjust their bodies in time.

To a Legendary master, the length of time to readjust one's body in anticipation of an enemy's attack was usually no more than a tenth of a second. It was a skill ordinary people could not hope to master. Even among Legendary Magicians, it was extremely difficult to grasp as Legendary spells required time to prepare.

Logically speaking, their enemy could not possibly follow up a teleportation spell with such a powerful offensive spell so soon.

But the person they were up against was Link. Though his spells never hit hard, they were fast.

"Not good!"

Warning bells were now ringing in her head. Without hesitation, Ariel cast Moonlight on herself. She would not be able to survive her enemy's attack. Her only option now was to flee.

But her movements were still too slow. Avatar was indeed frightening; his flurry of slashes back then had given them no room to execute a counterattack. But the person they were now facing was a hundred times more frightening than Avatar.

Just as her Moonlight spell's protective layer began to take shape, a seemingly normal steel sword appeared behind Ariel out of thin air. With a swift stroke, it pierced directly through her heart.

Ariel's body trembled. Her eyes widened. Her heart had been stabbed. At that moment, her internal energies were in a state of chaos, unable to put up any resistance against foreign energies.

Shortly after, a rush of spatial power spread from her wound across her entire body. She was instantly turned into a spatial statue, frozen completely on the spot.

At that moment, she was neither dead nor alive.

The sword then disappeared. It reappeared in another corner and struck Katyusha. She trembled at the moment of impact. Her heart was also stabbed, and her internal energies were sentito disarray.

Spatial energy flowed out from the sword and easily locked her in place.

Seeing that Ariel and Katyusha were immobilized by the sword, Elovan and Milose quickly tried to escape by dissipating into flashes of light.

But the two of them were no match for Link.

With two short hums, two sword tips appeared out of thin air and stabbed the High Elves' light forms at the same time. Elovan and Milose were forced to return to their physical forms. They fell out of the sky and landed on the ground, throwing up blood.

As they were in their light forms, there were no visible wounds on both High Elves. Still, the integrity of their bodies was damaged. For a short period of time, they would not be able to fight back.

Link had landed the finishing blow on all four of them as they came at Avatar. Though his method was a bit underhanded, it was still a means to an end. The High Elves had a long history of fighting dirty anyway, so Link had no reason to feel shameful for his actions.

Once Link had subdued all four, he strolled out of his hiding spot towards them.

Elovan and Milose were still conscious. When they saw Link, their eyes went wide like saucers. They had no idea the one who had ambushed them was Link himself since the power they had felt from him before was so different from the Magician who had attacked them.

Despite knowing that there was a Magician hidden somewhere in the vicinity, they had decided to attack Avatar in full force.

A normal Magician's attack was usually preceded by some obvious sign. It would also not come as quickly as a Warrior's. At that moment, all four members of the Army of Destruction were confident that they would be able to react to it in time.

They did not expect to be ambushed by a Master Magician who was also well-versed in the martial arts.

Elovan asked, "Link, do you really want to start a war between Ferde and the Isle of Dawn?"

Milose added, "If you kill us here, are you not afraid that the Isle of Dawn and the Army of Destruction will join forces against Ferde?"

Link smiled faintly. "Of course I'm scared. That's why you three are still alive."

The two High Elves looked at each other. Link had admitted that he was afraid of the Isle of Dawn's retaliation, but still the smile did not leave his face. He did not look at all afraid. Anyone looking at him then would be chilled to the bone.

Remaining silent for a few seconds, Elovan finally asked, "What do you want?"

## 525. Direct Breakdown from Torment

Golden Plains

Before Link could answer Elovan's question, another voice rang out. "Of course we'll kill you all to avenge for my race!"

It was Avatar, the Beastman king.

He'd used up almost all his power in the last attack. Now, panting heavily, he dragged the obsidian broadsword as he slowly walked out of the grass.

"You pointy-eared elves from the Isle of Dawn will do anything for your goal. We are thousands of miles away from the Isle of Dawn but still angered you somehow. Now, you've lost. I'll make you taste the most horrible punishment in this world!"

When he finished, he was already beside Elovan and placed the sword on the elf's neck.

The skin on Elovan's neck twitched, but he still kept staring at Link. "Ferde Lord, don't forget that your territory is less than 500 miles from the Isle of Dawn. You won't be able to keep this a secret. You will be declaring war on the Isle of Dawn!"

Avatar scoffed. "This has nothing to do with Ferde. I'm the one killing you." With that, he looked at Link. "Master, will you stop me?" he asked coldly.

Link shrugged. "I want to because that High Elf is right. This may very possibly spark a war between Ferde and the Isle of Dawn. But seeing our relationship, I can't force you to listen to me."

Knowing that Link agreed, Avatar chuckled. He applied pressure, and his blade turned, glinting. With two sounds, Elovan's hands dropped from his body.

Avatar's cutting style was very unique. Rather than using the blade's sharpness to cut off the hands, he used the reverberations of the sword's body to forcefully rip the hands off the wrists.

It was impossible to imagine how painful such a method could be!

"Ow! Ahh!"

Elovan had wanted to show his courage, but his eyes almost popped out of their sockets immediately. A gurgled cry left his throat.

Beside him, Milose heard it and shivered. He yelled to Link in panic, "Ferde Lord, stop this Beastman!"

Link shook his head and gazed at Milose. "When Ariel chose to use the lives of the human merchants to force me out, there was no more room for negotiations."

With that, Link turned around, not wanting to see the tragic scene anymore. He focused on casting the antidote spell for the merchants from thousands of feet away.

From here, one could see beams of silver moonlight falling from the sky and entering all of them, driving away the poison.

They were all regular folks with the most powerful only at Level-4. Link didn't use more than ten points of Realm Essence for each person. There were around 300 people, so it only cost around 3000 points. With his current power recovery rate, he recovered fully within half a minute.

The entire process only took a minute.

During this minute, he kept hearing Elovan's distorted cries. He just pretended not to hear them. When he finished and turned around, he saw that Elovan's body was practically shattered. Avatar had ripped off his limbs by each joint. Now, his one arm lay scattered on the ground in 20-some pieces.

He wasn't dead though. Seeing Link turn around, he immediately cried, "Lord! Lord! I'm begging you to forgive me. Please forgive me. This is all Ariel's idea. I'm just a follower, really. Please, save me"

At the end, he actually started crying.

Beside him, Milose's eyes widened at this. He couldn't say anything. During this, Elovan suffered physically, while Milose suffered psychologically with every second. He knew that once Elovan was tortured to death, he would be next. He almost went crazy when he thought of how this cruel fate would befall him.

Often times, being tortured wasn't the scariest. The worst part was the waiting.

This was worse for High Elves. Since birth, they'd lived on the peaceful Isle of Dawn. They mostly came to the mainland after having powerful abilities. Though they'd experienced some things, they were very rarely at a disadvantage. They'd never had emotional trauma. Even if they'd gone through hardships, they'd just grow a thicker skin.

Faced with this bloody scene, that skin had cracked. Elovan had broken down, and Milose was close.

By now, Avatar was tired from it all. He'd been exhausted originally and now broke Elovan's arms and legs into dozens of pieces. Panting heavily, he paused.

Seeing Elovan's teary and snotty face, a large portion of his anger was gone. He stabbed his sword into the ground and rested against it. At the same time, he scoffed coldly.

"I thought you were powerful, but I guess you're just some kids."

He glanced at Link. "Alright, I've vented my anger. Master, how do you prepare to punish them?"

Link had already thought of it. Seeing how Elovan had broken down, he got another idea. Of course, he couldn't say it aloud now.

He pointed in Mara City's direction. "They released the poison and have infected almost the entire city. Thankfully, the poisoned Beastmen haven't spread out due to the surrounding magic seal. We must cure them promptly, but it's too slow with the two of us. We need their help."

Curing the poison was the most important task at hand.

Avatar was instantly enlightened. He hit his head in annoyance.

"I cut off this guy's hands and feet. Now we have one less person. It'll slow us down!"

"It's alright. Broken bones can be reconnected."

Avatar didn't believe this. "They can be reconnected?"

So Link started using the Magician's Hand. First, he collected all the pieces of limbs and arranged them in the right order. Next, he used the Magician's Hand to connect them in the right shape.

Then, Link took out the Song of Tomorrow magic sword. He drew runes in the air around the arm. He was so fast that the sword tip just quivered and countless runes lit up in the air before sinking into the body parts.

Something miraculous happened. When the runes entered the arm, the bloody marks at the cut faded, faded, and finally disappeared. The skin just melded together like that.

But that wasn't all.

Link didn't stop and kept drawing runes. When he stopped after more than ten minutes, Elovan's hands and feet had recovered their original appearance. The only difference was that one could see many faint magic veins on the skin.

After that, Link said, "Stand up and try walking."

Elovan cautiously stood up. He stretched his arms, shook his feet, and walked around. Then he said to Link, "Lord, there are no more problems."

As a fellow Magician, he was familiar with this spell. Technically, it came from the flesh magic puppet spell of the High Elves. However, Link's spell for making magic puppets had been developed to another level. He'd added many of his own innovations too. For example, his feet and hands felt just like the original. This was something the High Elf spell couldn't do.

Of course, there were still side effects. The biggest one was that he couldn't add Natural Power to his extremities anymore. After influence from great power, his power might even stop working.

Avatar made noises of appreciation. He'd fully witnessed the power of Magicians today.

As a king, today's experiences made him realize how important magic was. A race that didn't know magic might be eliminated, but his race barely had any Magicians.

My race must have our own Magicians, he thought. Shamans aren't enough. Otherwise, if something like this happens again, would I have to ask for help outside again?

On the other hand, Link obviously didn't know what Avatar was thinking. Looking to Milose, he asked, "What about you? Do you need King Avatar to pick apart your limbs and then come help or help now?"

Milose scrambled up from the ground. "I'll help now. I'll help now."

"Oh, you're very smart." Chuckling, Link said, "Then let's start."

## 526. Do You Think Its Safe?

Plains

The four hurried over to Mara City.

Elovan and Milose were at the front. Link and Avatar followed behind them. Link was empty-handed while Avatar had Ariel and Katyushasstatues in each hand as he walked beside Link.

The four were extremely fast. Three minutes later, they stood before the sturdy dirt wall of Mara City. Here, Link told the two High Elves, "Let's start."

The High Elves were scared of Link now, so they were very obedient. Since Link wanted them to detoxify the poison, they started casting spells immediately. They were responsible for the poison, so they were much more efficient than Link.

The two Legendary High Elves released a fog spell together that covered the entire city. The light of this spell swept over Mara City like a broom and cured all Beastmen within. Even those who had been badly poisoned and had gone insane recovered as well. The only side effects were that they were weak and needed to rest for a while.

The recently-cured Beastmen touched their heads, standing in place dazedly. They didn't know what had happened. After a while, shocked cries came from all over. Clearly, people were scared by the corpses scattered on the ground.

Of course, these were all unimportant details.

Seeing that there were no major problems, Avatar urged, "Many people escaped outside the city. We need to cure them too."

Elovan and Milose both nodded. Natural Power surged within them; they were about to turn into light and fly out to cure the poisoned.

Seeing that they were about to leave, Avatar reminded, "Don't think about escaping. Your Princess Ariel is still in our hands."

Hearing this, Link smiled. He pointed at the two and two tiny dots of light sank into them. "Remember," he said, "this is a curse."

The two High Elves shuddered involuntarily. Then, without a sound, they transformed into emerald light and split apart to find and help the individual victims.

Avatar watched them leave from the city wall. "What do you plan to do with them?" he asked Link.

"What do you mean?" Link asked in return.

"Of course I'll kill them one by one. They're disgusting, especially the three High Elves. I wish I could chop them up to feed to the dogs!" Avatar huffed. But after he said that, his tone changed and he looked to Link. "However, you did more to catch them, so you can decide how to punish the captives. I'll agree with whatever you decide. But to be fair, you should also give me the equivalent reimbursement."

This was indeed fair, and Link agreed completely. Smiling, he said, "In that case, I want all four. They will be important bargaining chips in my battle with the Isle of Dawn."

Killing them directly was satisfying, but other than venting his anger, there weren't any practical benefits. As a lord, he couldn't choose this option.

If these four were still alive, Ferde would gain greatly either by holding them hostage or using them to exchange with the Isle of Dawn.

With that, Link looked to Avatar and asked, "So, Your Majesty, what would you like to receive from me?"

Avatar sank into deep thought.

Before, he knew that magic was powerful, but he'd always thought that the Beastman Shamans were enough. He'd thought that they could fight against Magicians. But after today, he discovered that when a spell reached a certain point, a Shaman would be helpless.

Divine spells were powerful, but they were actually still the weakest ones. They weren't a match for the truly strong at all. Thus, Avatar discovered that the Beastmen needed true magic.

Thinking of this, Avatar said, "My race needs MagiciansBeastman Magicians who truly belong to us. But you know that we have no magic foundation, so I need Ferde to provide tutors for us."

"Oh?" Link looked at Avatar a bit strangely. "Magic is a very difficult study. If you want it to be effective, it will take at least five years. During this, a Magician's tuition is at least 5000 gold coins"

Avatar shrugged. "I need to train at least 200 Beastman Magicians. Just follow what you said and let them study for five years. As for tuition We don't have money. Just count it as the benefits I got from this time."

Link chuckled wryly. "That's one million gold coins suddenly. Your Majesty, you're really asking for a lot I can only train 100, no more."

"Master, you received four Legendary fighters this time," Avatar insisted. "You can't buy this with money. Two hundred, no more, no less, no discussion."

Link thought and gave in a little. "Here, let's not talk about the specific number of apprentices and only discuss the specific cost. In five years, I'll prove one million gold coins for Beastman apprentices to study magic until you use it up. As for how many students you wish to send, you can choose."

This suggestion was not bad. Avatar calculated in his mind and thought it was cost-efficient. This way, he could send many Beastmen with magic talent to Ferde. He could spend more money on those who were better talented and less on the others. His race's coffers weren't completely empty. If the one million was used up, he could still pay some ten thousand coins. By then, he would use his own money to support the extraordinarily talented.

After a few years, his race would have their own Magicians. It wouldn't be much in the beginning, but with the seed planted, it will grow naturally.

Thinking of this, Avatar had already agreed to Link's suggestion. But since they were discussing conditions, he still had to ask for more. "One million isn't enough. At least 1.5 million."

"One point one million, nothing more." That was 10,000 more gold coins and could feed so many mouths. Link obviously wanted to give less if possible.

"One point four. I won't do it if it's less!" Avatar gave in a bit, but he wasn't stupid."

"1.15."

"1.3."

"1.15."

"1.25 ah, you're scamming me."

"Okay, then 1.25 million."

"1.3!" Avatar huffed.

"Alright, alright," Link acquiesced. "Let's take the average. How about 1.27?"

Avatar was still annoyed, but if they really kept arguing, it was just the difference of a few ten thousand. Beastmen were naturally coarse, and he was too lazy to argue anymore. "Master, then let's do 1.27 million. But I think you're better as an evil merchant."

Link laughed loudly. "Okay, after I return to Ferde, I'll send Magicians to choose some talented youths and take them to Ferde. All travel costs will be on Ferde. What do you think?"

"That's better. But can't adults go learn?" Avatar didn't want to send children. These guys didn't have set personalities yet. If they lived in somewhere like Ferde for too long, they might not want to come back.

Link chuckled and shrugged. "Adults are fine, of course, but their bodies are set already. The various magic training won't be very effective. Their minds are set too and lack creativity. Even if they can learn spells, they won't become very accomplished. Your Majesty, if you fear that the children will forget the plains, you can send Warriors to teach them the traditions."

He made sense. Avatar thought hard and couldn't find any problems. He finally nodded. "Good. Let's do that."

Coming to an agreement, the four Legendary captives now belonged to Link.

After that, the two started talking about the alliance and went through another round of bargaining. Finally, Avatar agreed to take 100,000 elite Warriors northward. The requirement was that the humans must provide all food needed and 10,000 sets of equipment equal to what Norton's official soldiers had.

Unobtedly, this was a huge cost for the humans, but they desperately needed Beastman power. Link gritted his teeth and agreed.

Done with that, the two stayed at the city wall for another hour. Then Elovan and Milose hurried back.

"How are things?" Link asked.

Elovan quickly replied, "Everyone is cured, and the rivers are cleaned. No one should get poisoned again."

Avatar glared. "What if someone does?"

Elovan hurriedly took out a big bottle of dark red potion. There was around a liter. "Your Majesty, this is the antidote. You just need to put a drop in a bowl of clean water and have the poisoned drink it. They will recover fully."

Avatar accepted it, satisfied. He pointed at Link. "Okay, you don't have anything to do with me anymore. You two are the Ferde lord's captives. He'll punish you."

Hearing this, Elovan and Milose were relieved. This was great. That Beastman was too barbaric and illogical. It was much easier to deal with Link. From what they knew, Link didn't torture captives. If they went with him to Ferde, they could definitely live well. Then, when the Isle of Dawn heard of what happened, they would rescue them.

They would be able to escape this place.

The two immediately went to Link's side, staying away from Avatar.

Avatar looked at them with scorn and sneered. "Little lambs who aren't even fully grown, you're lucky you're alive!"

With that, he said to Link, "Master, I'll go arrange the soldiers now."

"Go. I must return to Ferde too. Say hi to Holun for me." Link smiled. Holun was a warlord, but he had a candid personality and was easier to communicate with than Avatar.

Avatar could feel that Link was happier when he mentioned Holun. "I will. He always talks about you."

Link nodded. White light flashed around him. Under this light, Link, the two High Elves, and two statues disappeared together. An instant later, the five appeared tens of thousands of miles away.

Here, Link's face darkened, and his lips curled up. Sneering, he looked at Elovan and Milose. "Gentlemen, you think you can return to the Isle of Dawn now, right?"

## 527. Conquer Some, Destroy Some

Woo, woo. The wind on the plains at night was like a ghost's wail. The moonlight was ghastly pale in the sky, illuminating the world with cold light and turning itito a ghost region. All the animals were quiet because of the seemingly repressive atmosphere. There was no noise.

After Link uttered that phrase, Elovan's heart skipped a beat. His eyes flew to Link, and then he lowered his head, gripping his World Tree magic wand. "Lord," he mumbled, "how do you prepare to punish us?"

Milose hadn't been tortured, so he was in a better state of mind than Elovan. It had been many hours since the horrible torture; he'd recovered greatly. Hearing Link's words, he inhaled sharply. "Link, you're the lord of Ferde. You can punish us if you think we've committed something bad, but you should still consider the interests of Ferde, right?"

Link nodded. "You're right. I indeed must consider the interests of Ferde. That is why I can't let you return to the Isle of Dawn."

"You want to kill us?" Milose paled.

"That's not the best plan." Link shook his head. With that, he smiled at Elovan. "If I remember correctly, you're from a commoner family in the Isle of Dawn. Your father is a minor official while your mother died while giving birth to you. That is why your father has hated you since your birth. He thinks you're the physical incarnate of bad luck, is that right?"

Elovan nodded silently.

His background wasn't difficult to investigate. Once he entered the Legendary level, it was like entering the spotlight. Anyone who wanted to know his past only had to spend some money. Link was the lord of a wealthy territory. It was extremely easy if he wanted to know these things.

Reminded by Link, Elovan couldn't help but think of his past. When he was little, he would be beaten and punished by his father for no reason. At eight years old, he was forced out of his home. No matter how he cried and screamed, it was to no avail.

If the old Magician in the village didn't adopt him, if he didn't display high magic talent, he would definitely be part of the Isle of Dawn's lowest class.

Seeing Elovan sink into deep thought, Link turned to Milose. "As for you, your bloodline isn't that pure. You have a tinge of human of blood given by your great-grandmother. Because of that, you've always been marginalized. It doesn't matter how excellent you areIn reality, this is the same for your father and grandfather, right?"

This hit Milose's weak spot. He also lowered his head in silence.

Mutt!

Scum!

Get out of the Isle of Dawn!

These were the phrases he'd heard the most. Whenever he had a conflict with someone else, High Elves would insult him, either to his face or behind his back. Whenever he heard these words, it would feel like someone stabbing his chest with a knife. It felt horrible.

Then Link gazed at Princess Ariel's spatial seal statue and smiled. "Look at this one, the noble elven princess. She isn't as powerful as you two, she isn't as skilled as you two, but just because of her status, she received the powerful World Impaler. Look at the magic bracelet on her wrist and the beautiful magic robe on her body. Tsk, so enviable."

With that, Link suddenly turned to the wand in Milose's hand. "Hmm, you actually treasure a wand made from a twig. The Mana inside that wand is as messy as a pile of trash."

That really hit Milose hard. Even though they were all from the World Tree, the branches had different qualities too. His wand indeed had the lowest quality of the four Legendary Magicians. His hand retracted subconsciously, hiding the wand that Link had insulted.

Link chuckled. "You can hide the wand, but you can't hide your robe. Your robetsk, it's only for an elite Magician, right? I thought Legendary Magiciasshould wear the Wild Robe that Sonya and Elovan have. Why are you wearing a Natural Robe? Did no one tell you or did they not make it for you yet?

Milose's face reddened. Link was right. Of the five new Legendary Magicians, only he was still wearing a Natural Robe. It was difficult to make a Wild Robe, so only one was made per month. He was last in line.

This wasn't that bad, but after Link pointed it out, he felt humiliated.

"No, it's just not my turn yet. It's not"

"Oh, it's not your turn yet. So why are you last?"

"I" Milose couldn't reply. He knew the reasonit was because of his bloodline.

After that, Link turned to Elovan. Even though he had a pure bloodline, he didn't have a powerful family. His treatment wasn't any better.

"You're wearing a Wild Robe, but it just feels weird for some reason. Oh, they really slacked off when making it. Look, you also have the Natural Guidance spell, but your guidance rate is only 70%. Ariel's is 98%. Compared to hers, yours is just a rag."

"Ariel is a princess," Elovan refuted weakly.

"Oh, she's a princess. A princess is so high-class!"

Here, Link suddenly undid the spatial seal on Princess Ariel. Time started acting on her body again. Link had stabbed her heart. A strong figure wouldn't die from it, but it was still a heavy injury.

Once the seal was undone, Ariel collapsed onto the ground. Her body was limp and powerless.

Link cast a dragon recovery spell for her, managing to heal her wound and keep her alive. However, she still couldn't move. Any movement would cause extreme pain.

She scanned Link, Elovan, and Milose. Link had a cold sneer, Elovan looked downtrodden and weak, and Milose's face had a fury that even he didn't realize he had.

Ariel was smart. She knew immediately that things would go bad now. These two High Elves would probably turn towards Ferde.

She opened her mouth to speak, but she felt her tongue go numb. Something restrained her. Other than "ah," she couldn't say anything else.

Link activated the Magician's Hand, and Ariel's World Impaler flew to him. Then he gave it to Milose. "Take it and stab Ariel's chest in one move!"

Milose gaped. He reached out but didn't dare accept the World Impaler. "No, I can't. I can't do that. I'll die!"

If he did it, he would never be able to turn back and return to the Isle of Dawn.

Link scoffed. "Oh, so you can live if you don't do it?"

Milose winced. He looked up at Link to see that his hand was already on his sword. He knew Link. He knew Link had top-tier swordsmanship and magic. With their close distance, Link could kill him and Elovan in an instant.

They wouldn't even be able to fight back.

Should he die now?

Or kill Ariel, join Ferde, and fight for a chance to live?

It wasn't even a choice.

Trembling, Milose took the World Impaler. Grasping it with both hands, he moved towards the struggling Ariel.

"Ah, ah, ah!"

Ariel screamed with her eyes wide open. Her movements were too big and opened her wound many times. Link was forced to heal her a bit so she wouldn't die halfway through.

Finally, Milose got to Ariel and pressed the sword tip to her chest Then he relaxed his hold. Due to gravity, the sharp sword pierced Ariel's chest, nailing her to the ground.

Link recorded this entire process with a Memory Crystal.

After Milose was done, he said to Elovan, "You too. Stab her."

Elovan had already given up. He was willing to do anything to live and was more resolute than Milose. He walked over, yanked out the World Impaler, aimed at Ariel's heart, and stabbed down.

"Uh." Ariel twitched violently. Grasping the sword hilt, she gaped at Elovan.

Now, she realized that her tongue wasn't restrained anymore. She could speak. Voice rough, she said, "Why?"

It could be said that Milose had been forced, but Elovan had done it without hesitation. He'd decided on joining Ferde.

Elovan didn't reply. He pulled out the World Impaler and turned to Milose. "Milose, I belong to Ferde now. What about you?"

The sword in Elovan's hand dripped with blood as he spoke. It was as if he could kill Milose if needed too.

Milose had no way back. He stepped forward, grabbed the World Impaler, and raised it. He stabbed through Ariel's forehead, nailing this talented High Elf princess to the ground.

Then he said, "Me too."

He'd thought it through.

Technically, Milose was a half-elf. He knew that Ferde had a half-elf with a high position too. That guy was called Eliard.

Since Eliard could accomplish that, why couldn't he? In Ferde, he had opportunities that he would never have in the Isle of Dawn!

Link chuckled. He waved, and the World Impaler jumped out of Ariel's forehead. Her corpse ignited too. It burned to ashes in the fire and blew away with the wind.

Link could control Milose and Elovan, so he chose to take them in. Princess Ariel was a top talent. She hadn't matured fully, but she would definitely become a terrifying Magician in the future.

Link wasn't confident he could control someone like that, so he chose to destroy her.

He still had one more captivethe Naga, Katyusha.

He'd thought of a way to deal with her too. However, he didn't have the needed method of control. For this, he had to return to Ferde and brainstorm with the core Magicians.

"Alright, my companions, let us return to Ferde. Once there, you must change your appearance and identity for safety."

"Yes, Lord."

Elovan and Milose saluted to Link.

## 528. Ferde Lord, Prepare to Pay

One day later, Link brought Elovan, Milose, and Katyushasstatue to Ferde's border. By now, Elovan and Milose's appearances had changed greatly.

First of all, their pointy ears were gone. Link had used a flesh magic puppet spell to round them and change their faces.

High Elves were all very attractive. Even Milose, who was plain amongst High Elves, was above average amongst humans. Now, they looked completely like common men.

If not for their Natural Magic auras, no one would be able to tell they were High Elves from their appearances.

When they got to the border, Link cast a transmission spell to avoid alerting the soldiers. Under white flashes, the group appeared within the main Mage Tower.

Just as the two High Elves steadied themselves, their hearts jumped. They sensed the magic aura coming out of the Mage Tower. It was majestic, deep, and heavy. They felt like they were facing an unshakeable mountain.

Before, they didn't think much of human Mage Towers by instinct. With their magic knowledge, they thought that they would definitely be at the top level. They obviously couldn't beat Link, but they could still be second or third.

Now, they weren't as confident.

Even more shocking, it wasn't just the Mage Tower that looked majestic. The entire Scorched City was shocking. It was filled with a warm aura like sunlight. It was strange.

This "sunlight" was omnipresent in the Mage Tower and outside in Scorched City. Especially to the north of the city where the sunlight aura was abnormally densethey could even feel the heat.

Sunlight was warm, but when an immense amount of warmth was gathered together, it would become a sun with unlimited power. There was a sun like that burning in the northern part of the city!

Shock was written in Elovan's features. He asked without thinking, "Lord, what's with the north?"

The Isle of Dawn had always paid attention to Ferde, and they thought that they were knowledgeable in Ferde's basic situation. However, they couldn't sense this aura. From the outside, nothing special seemed to have happened other than the new buildings they'd built.

But now, he saw an entirely different Ferde in the Mage Tower.

"The military camp is in the North," Link said, chuckling. All of Ferde's power was covered by the Mage Tower. The only place they could see the entire city was in the Mage Tower.

"Military camp?" Elovan flinched. He seemed to understand something and was instantly shaken. Not only did they need a lot of people to create such a convergence of power, but they also needed many strong figures. They needed at least 5000 soldiers over Level-6 to create a scene like this.

If they had 5000 Level-6 soldiers, it meant that Ferde now had an entirely new type of power.

He'd interacted with Eliard before and felt the pure and warm aura inside the other. At that time, he'd only thought that Eliard was the exception. He didn't think that Ferde's power had reached this level.

At first, he thought he'd only won a chance to survive by joining Ferde. Now, things seemed much better than he'd expected.

Judging from Ferde's current display of power, they still weren't a match for the Isle of Dawn. It didn't mean they had no chance though. Plus, humans had a great population. This was a huge potential. After a few years, Ferde's power would reach an unthinkable level.

Originally, Elovan had been forced to join Ferde. Now, he saw huge hope. With this hope, he was practically willing to be loyal.

Then he turned to his companion Milose. The other was clearly thinking the same thing. When he turned, Milose had also turned towards him. He saw shock and respect in Milose's eyes.

During this time, Link had still been walking forward. The two followed in his footsteps until Link stopped before a magic portal door.

"It's Evelina's Mage Tower up ahead."

Evelina was the first High Elf to join Ferde. Elovan and Milose had been scared, but after hearing Evelina's name, they became calmer. At the same time, they also had complicated feelings.

Link never admitted that Evelina was in Ferde, but everyone knew, so Elovan and Milose didn't find this surprising.

After opening the portal door, the three stepped in. The scenery changed and they reappeared in a hallway of a totally different style.

The two walls were made of wood with flowing veins. There was the fragrance of wood and grass in the air. A long-tailed green robin perched on one of the lights on the wall. After seeing them, the robin said with a feminine voice, "Welcome, welcome."

The decorations were completely elven.

Another part of Elovan and Milose were reassured. Link continued leading them all the way to Evelina's room. Then he knocked on the door. "Master Evelina, are you here?"

The reply came quickly. "I'm here, Lord. What's wrong?"

At the same time, the door creaked open. Evelina was sitting before a large table, her hands were playing with an Ethereal Crystal. She was making Ethereal equipment.

"I'm sorry. You worked hard these days, but I found two helpers for you." Link moved to the side, revealing Elovan and Milose behind him.

Seeing them, Evelina felt for their auras and was horribly shocked. "Elovan, Milose, why are you here?"

The two High Elves felt awkward. They didn't know what to say.

Link felt like he was extra here and left Evelina to take care of everything. "I think," he said, "it's better for you three to talk amongst yourselves. I'll go rest now."

As soon as he finished, white light flashed around him, and he disappeared from the room.

Evelina pushed down her shock and waved, closing the wooden door. Then she used the Magician's Hand to place two chairs across the table.

"Sit and tell me what exactly happened."

Milose and Elovan walked up. Milose was still reserved as before while Elovan was always the leader, so he was the one to speak this time as well.

"I" He opened his mouth but then realized that he didn't know what to say. He had some worries. He was afraid that if he said too much and Link heard, he would bring trouble.

This often happened on the Isle of Dawn. There wasn't any torture or punishment, but if you said the wrong thing, you would be banished to the fringe of society. You wouldn't be respected your entire life because the Isle of Dawn didn't lack talents.

It was useless even if they reached the Legendary level because there were handfuls of youths that had the same potential. Within three months, there would be at least five Magicians who would reach the Legendary level.

Evelina had lived in the Isle of Dawn for many years. She obviously knew Elovan's worries. Waving her hand, she said, "Don't worry. No one will eavesdrop. You can speak freely with me."

Milose was shocked. He couldn't help but say, "The Ferde lord trusts you that much? What if we plot betrayal?"

Elovan had the same suspicions. In his opinion, Link had said he would leave, but he must be hiding in the shadows. He would eavesdrop on them to see if they were honest. This was common on the Isle of Dawn.

Evelina covered her mouth and chuckled. "Betray? Do you dare?" she asked in return.

"I was just saying. Don't take it seriously," Milose explained hurriedly. He was afraid too.

Evelina shook her head. "Don't worry. This isn't the Isle of Dawn. Here, no one has the time to eavesdrop. As for grouping together to plot betrayal, it's even more impossible. The system within the Mage Tower makes it impossible."

"Oh, what do you mean?" Elovan was interested.

Smiling, Evelina raised her voice slightly and said, "Lily, explain to these country bumpkins."

Lily was the Mage Tower's tower spirit. As soon as Evelina finished, a gentle female voice said, "A stit surveillance system operates within the Mage Tower. All magic items must be on record. All Magicians, including manager Master Link, who use magic items, will be recorded. By checking the flow of items, one can deduct the user's intentions. If someone uses too many dangerous items, the Magician will be marked as a 'dangerous figure' and be placed under more scrutiny. If"

Lily's explanation was very detailed. The system was stit and had no loopholes at all. It was clearly complicated, but because most steps were run by the tower spirit, it was actually quite simple in reality.

When Lily finished, the two Magicians were mostly clear.

Smiling, Evelina said, "See? The system ensures that you can't do anything big. Even if you discuss for your entire life, you won't have the weapons."

Without the help of magic equipment, a Legendary Magician might not even be the match of a fully-equipped Level-9 Magician. They wouldn't be able to do anything.

"But I can still stab the lord in the back when we work together. He can't prevent a sudden accident, right?" Milose asked.

Evelina nodded. "Indeed, he can't prevent it. But let me ask again, do you dare?"

Elovan and Milose met eyes and shook their heads.

Elovan's reaction was even more obvious. When Evelina asked, he shuddered slightly. He'd thought of the torture on the plains again. He never wanted to be reminded of that painful experience ever again.

They really didn't dare.

The more one interacted with Link, the more terrifying he became. It seemed that his magic would improve a lot whenever they met. They had no clue what power or tricks he had.

Just the thought of fighting him appearing in Elovan's mind scared him, let alone actually doing it.

Evelina casually pushed the Ethereal Crystal to the side of the table and brought over a cup of elven honey tea for her old companions. "You two were most likely forced to join Ferde," she said. "I'd love to know what Master Link did to make you so obedient."

Elovan and Milose fell silent. After a long while, they started to speak at the same time and then stopped again. Finally, Elovan murmured, "He made us kill Princess Ariel."

"What? Ariel died?!" Evelina was shocked.

The two nodded and then remained silent.

After a long while, Evelina sighed. "Now, Firuman will have trouble again."

Almost at the same time, in the palace on the Isle of Dawn, a High Elf messenger brought a confidential letter to the queen. She opened it and paled drastically, unable to even grip the paper. She tottered unsteadily and leaned against the wall.

"My daughter!" she murmured, tears rolling down her shining cheeks.

She had three childrentwo daughters and one son. Milda was the eldest daughter, and Ariel was the second. Now, Milda was somewhere in Aragu while Ariel was dead. All of this had to do with Link.

Ferde Lord, prepare to pay! She turned and sped to the High Elf Elder Council.

## 529. Theres Somewhere This Magical in the World

Ferde Mage Tower

Evelina started planning the treatment of her two brethren after communicating with Elovan and Milose.

She was now a core Magician in the Ferde Mage Tower. Her authority was second only to Link, and also she had the powerful tower spirit Lily's help. She could do all this by herself.

After a flurry of activity, she gave two identical plain metal rings to the two elves.

"Put it on."

"What is it?" Elovan took the ring and studied it carefully. No matter how he looked, the ring seemed ordinary. There weren't many runes on it either. It was just like a normal metal ring.

But Ferde's magic equipment was quite famous. They were known for their fine appearance and stable power. Why did they give such a plain magic ring?

Milose couldn't believe it. He flipped it around, trying to find something from the ring.

Evelina smiled. "No need to look. This is just a regular ring. It's known as the Ferde Black Ring, used to show your status in the Mage Tower. The only good thing about it is that it has Level-10 ordinary authority. It lets you use a portion of Level-10 magic power within the tower."

"Ordinary authority? Level-10 magic power? What's that?" Milose asked. While speaking, his eyes went to Evelina's hand.

Evelina also had a ring, but it was made of precious Thorium and had a crystal red gem. Fiery light flowed through the entire ring. It was beautiful.

Compared to hers, their black rings were like trash.

Touching her ring, Evelina said proudly, "Mine represents my status too. However, mine is called, 'Master Magician's Burn Mark.' It has the complete Level-10 authority. It can activate some Level-11 defensive spells, a portal spell of at least five miles, and a Level-11 Destructive Beam. In Ferde, only the lord's ring is more powerful than mine."

Milose was jealous. "What's the use of a complete Level-10 authority?"

"Use? Of course it's useful. For example, before you accumulate enough magic points to upgrade your ring to the Master Magician level, I'll be in charge of your power"

Elovan heard one word. "Wait, wait, you said you could upgrade the ring? How?"

Unexpectedly, Evelina stretched and drawled, "I'm tired now and don't want to talk anymore. If you want to know, ask the tower spirit, Lily."

As soon as she finished, the door creaked open. She picked up the Ethereal Crystal on the table and started making magic equipment again.

She was obviously telling them to leave.

Milose was annoyed. "Evelina, what are you doing? We're"

Evelina's expression changed. "Watch your language, Magician," she said coldly. "This room is my private territory. Even the lord has to knock and receive my permission to enter. Now, turn around, leave, and go back to your room!"

Milose was furious at her attitude. But before he could speak, he heard footsteps. Turning, he saw Elovan. The other elf was hurrying towards the door as if he had something urgent to do.

But what could he do? Milose was curious and hurried after him. He thought of Evelina's words about upgrading the ring and magic points Wait, Evelina was so arrogant now because she had the Master Magician's Burn Mark. Could he also achieve that level by following her method?

Could he become a core figure of Ferdesomeone truly in the top class?

Thinking of this, Milose's heart started pounding. Elovan had left the room and was about to disappear from his vision. Feeling urgent, Milose didn't feel like arguing with Evelina anymore. He followed Elovan out of the room.

Watching the two disappear at the end of the hall, Evelina shook her head. Two more Magicians will become obsessed now.

She closed the door and focused on making Ethereal equipment again.

Since Ariel was dead, the Isle of Dawn would definitely get the news. They wouldn't let it go. Ferde must accumulate more power!

As for whether they would win or not, Evelina was absolutely confident. The process would be difficult, but Ferde would definitely win in the end. Even Ariel, who she'd thought would never fail since childhood, had died in Link's hands. Who else in the Isle of Dawn was his match?

On the other hand, Elovan had returned to his room.

This room was on the fourth floor of the Mage Tower. It wasn't big or small. It was around 120 square feet and was equipped with all the necessary furniture.

According to what Evelina had said, as long as he didn't disturb Ferde's safety, everything in the room belonged to him. Even the lord had no right to forcefully search him.

Evelina shouldn't lie to him. The Ferde Lord's actions when entering Evelina's room earlier had proved her words.

Thinking of this, Elovan was slightly reassured. As a High Elf suddenly becoming a member of the enemy and entering their Mage Tower, he was understandably anxious. Now, he had a private place that belonged to himself. It wasn't big, but it helped relax him greatly.

After closing the door, Elovan composed himself. Following what Evelina had said, he found the portal to the signet in the room. It was on the wall, on the pendant of a pretty woman's painting.

He pressed his ring against the gem and asked, "Lily, are you here?"

The profile floated out of the wall and expanded into a realistic three-dimensional image. She had a gentle motherly smile. "I'm here, aster."

Elovan was intrigued and circled the image. He found that, if he didn't witness it being made, he wouldn't be able to tell that this wasn't a real person.

Such a detailed illusion, he praised inwardly. The gentle woman made him comfortable. "I want to know everything about magic points and upgrading the ring," he said.

"Understood. Please listen carefully"

Lily started reciting the specific rules for upgrading in the Mage Tower. She was very detailed. Of course, because they were simple rules, it was also boring.

However, Elovan listened seriously, not letting a single word pass by.

He was a commoner and had no background in the Isle of Dawn. He went through the levels purely by virtue of his talent. This entire way, he'd experienced all the good and bad of humanity. He couldn't explain the feeling to others.

At first, he thought all of Firuman was like this. At first, he thought the Isle of Dawn was a peaceful heaven. Even though there were bad parts, it was 100 times better than the messy mainland. But now, he suddenly realized that there was a place as miraculous as Ferde.

The lord was actually willing to give his authority to a tower spirit. He was actually willing to create rules to restrain himself. This was incomprehensible, but it made Elovan feel a burning desire inside.

As Lily explained steadily, that desire burned hotter and hotter. After a full hour, Lily finished, and Elovan worked to compose himself.

"So you mean I can upgrade my metal ring into the Master Magician mark, enter the top level of Ferde, and become a core Magician?" he asked softly.

Lily nodded. "Of course. You only need sufficient magic points."

"Then please give me missions!" Elovan said immediately. He couldn't wait any longer.

He knew Ferde was wealthy and had a great amount of precious magic material. He knew that Ferde's enchantments were very advanced. The Golden Rune Workshop's fame had surpassed the Isle of Dawn. He also heard that Ferde's alchemy was unique in its attainments. Recently, they also created a useful potion. They seemed to be catching up to the Isle of Dawn.

All in all, Ferde wasn't much weaker than the Isle of Dawn. If he could become a core Magician in such a magic paradise, he could receive much more than struggling in the Isle of Dawn!

In that case, why should he still think about the Isle of Dawn?

In that case, why shouldn't he work on moving forward?

"Thank you, Lily," Elovan said. "Show me the missions available for my level."

Now, he didn't have any unwillingness left. He was completely willing to stay in Ferde.

In the other room, Milose was feeling similarly. Because of his bloodline, he'd been discriminated against much more than Elovan. Now, that didn't exist anymore. He immediately found the motivation to advance.

At this time, Link and Eliard were in the main tower. They faced the Katyushasspatial seal statue.

"No, this is too hard. Her soul is very powerfulmore so than most of us. We can't wipe her memory without damage, let alone add command orders using hypnotization." Eleanor shook her head. She couldn't do it.

Link had wanted to wipe Katyusha's memory and add the command order used for magic puppets. This way, she would become Ferde's battle puppet.

Katyusha was a Warrior genius and had the Spear of Victory. She was a fatal weapon. If Ferde could use her, the territory would have another ace card.

"Then we'll think of a way," Link said. No matter how hard something was, they'd just have to think of a solution.

## 530. We Need Power

The Isle of Dawn, royal courtyard of the High Elves, Andwar

There was a clear brook behind the palace under the World Tree. It was called the Brook of Tranquility. The water was always clear, its flow gentle. At night, the whole brook would shine with an ethereal glow under the moonlight.

Palm-sized flowers floated on the water's surface. A soft purple glow radiated from every flower. Soft tinkling sounds rang out from them like wind chimes. The sound was clear and pleasing to the ear, and anyone who heard it would have all their worries and emotional turmoil melt away.

On that day, ten High Elf Elders were by the brook with the High Elf Queen. She was holding a flower that shone with a golden glow. She slowly walked to the brook, knelt down and placed the flower on the water.

The water flowed on, carrying the flower with it. Its golden glow began to form the image of a young High Elf woman in the middle of the flower. It was Ariel. She was holding a long, narrow sword in her hand. She danced and brandished her sword in the middle of the flower, repeating the same form without any hint of exhaustion.

The flower floated off into the distance along the brook.

The queen saw the flower off till it finally disappeared into the hazy moonlight.

A breeze was blowing, and she shrank back against the cold wind.

A middle-aged High Elf man with white sideburns came to her side and put a green cape over her shoulders. He muttered, "My love, Ariel is now finally at rest. Let's go back."

The man was the queen's husband, King Mordena. He was also one of the masters in High Elf society who had chosen to live as a total recluse.

Most people believed that Bryant was the most powerful master among the High Elves. This was not entirely wrong. In terms of sheer power, Bryant, who possessed Level-12 power, unobtedly was the most powerful High Elf in the Isle of Dawn. However, in terms of magical knowledge and actual competence on the battlefield, Bryant's number one status might not be as secure as one would be led to think.

During his youth, Mordena had been the most prominent High Elf prodigy. Back then, Bryant had looked up to him and had sworn that he would someday be a pillar of High Elf society just like Mordena.

It was because of this that, despite his modest upbringing, Mordena had caught the High Elf Queen's fancy, who at that time was still just a princess in the royal palace. The two fell in love and soon were married to each other.

Ever since then, Mordena had stood in the queen's shadow, maintaining a low profile till he faded away from the consciousness of the outside world. 30 years had passed since. Even the High Elves nowadays would be hard-pressed to remember Mordena's glory days.

Despite living as a recluse, Mordena never abandoned his magical training. No one knew just how powerful he had gotten. This was because no one had seen the fruits of his training with their own eyes for the last 30 years.

The only thing people could sense from Mordena was the power within his body. Though he had already reached Level-11, Mordena usually kept his power hidden deep within him. Upon meeting him in person, normal Magicians would have the impression that they were facing a vast ocean stretching outito the horizon.

The queen did not try to put up a brave face in front of her husband. After putting on the cape, she turned around and leaned her forehead against his chest. She began to weep silently.

Mordena did not speak a word as he patted the queen's back. He said consolingly, "Everything will be alright, Your Highness."

He looked on at the golden flower that drifted further and further away from them as he said this.

His vision was better than the High Elf Queen, who was still a Level-9 Magician. He could still see the image of her daughter brandishing her sword about on the flower.

Looking on at such a familiar sight in the distance, Mordena drew in a long breath. The composure that he had maintained all these years was finally broken by a growing bloodlust in him.

He had kept a low profile for the queen for at least ten years, staying out of the Isle of Dawn's affairs and simply focusing on his magical studies. But now, the Isle of Dawn was under threat. Even their own daughter had been killed. He could not stand on the sidelines any longer.

The queen never knew who her own husband really was, as a person. The love they had shared in their youth had long since eroded under the slow grind of time. Before Ariel's death, the queen had not seen him for almost half a year and did not even know what he was up to during that time.

Suddenly, the queen sensed something in him as she was leaning against him. She shivered and raised her head to look at Mordena. "You"

She sensed her bloodlust.

"Your Highness, I am Ariel's father. I need to do what must be done," whispered Mordena.

"But you're not his match."

"That remains to be seen." Mordena smiled faintly. He extended a hand. With the force of his will, a noticeable curve appeared in the air above his palm. "I can perform spatial magic as well. As for the martial arts, I wandered the island as a wandering knight when I was young. When it comes to swordsmanship, no one was my equal. Or have you already forgotten this?"

"You" The queen felt as if she no longer knew the man standing before her.

Mordena said once more, "Your Highness, the Isle of Dawn is in need of my power more than ever. When it no longer requires my help, I will once again return to my place behind you."

According to the traditions of the Isle of Dawn, its king should never dabble in politics. It had always been this way for more than 10,000 years.

The elders behind the queen had heard what Mordena had said. If it had been under any other circumstances, they would have been the first to voice their objections. Right now, the High Elves were facing a problem unlike any other in the past. The elders were silent. A few tried to say something, but in the end, they simply let out a collective sigh.

Mordena had come from humble beginnings. Right now, he possessed power that the Isle of Dawn sorely needed. Once he had done what needed to be done, everything would still be able to return to normal. Besides, there was no immediate harm in breaking the old ways once or twice.

The queen was also of the same opinion. She sighed and touched Mordena's face. "It's been so long, and you haven't changed one bit. I'll allow this, but be careful. I can't bear to lose you again, my love."

With that said, everything was settled.

Mordena nodded. "I won't overestimate the enemy, nor will I underestimate him. I won't even try to confront him head-on. I'll do whatever it takes to facilitate the reunification of the elves."

The reunification of the elves was something the High Elf Elders had come up with after Ariel's death.

The High Elves and Dark Elves had existed on the Firuman continent for a long time. However, 3000 years ago, before the occurrence of the Mana Disaster, the two races had belonged to one race. The fact that they both shared a common ancestral line was grounds enough to work with each other now.

The way things were going, the Isle of Dawn would not be able to keep Ferde under its thumb any longer on its own without risking retaliation. They needed outside help.

That outside help came in the form of the Army of Destruction in the north.

This was the Isle of Dawn's approach to restoring the balance that they had worked so hard to maintain for the last 3000 years. A few years back, the High Elves had formed an alliance with the humans to resist the forces of darkness. Now, they were forced to ally themselves with the Army of Darkness to keep the humans down.

The High Elves would only switch sides if this alliance threatened to wipe out the humans and disturb that balance once more.

However, this time, things were different. The enemy that the Isle of Dawn now faced possessed immense power. As a result, the High Elves were forced to come up with a response to deal with this threat.

The High Elf Queen said in a low voice, "No, it's too dangerous to proceed with the reunification of the elves now. I'll leave this matter to Bryant. Also, this will only be a temporary solution to our problems. The Isle of Dawn is still in need of power to carry out its ends I want you to execute the reunification of the realms."

Realm reunification was another response the elders had come up with.

Once the two realms of Firuman and Aragu were reunited, with Milda as the center point, the Isle of Dawn would be able to strengthen their forces with the large number of elves living in the Aragu realm.

If they were able to reunite both realms, the humans would effectively lose the advantage they had over the High Elves with their numbers. The High Elves would be able to fight the humans to the bitter end on equal ground.

Hearing what the queen said, Mordena frowned.

"Link was the one who had provided the coordinates for the Aragu realm. Knowing him, he must have set up a countermeasure against anyone trying to use them. Building a realm portal is just too risky."

"I know. That's why I'm letting you do it. My love, our daughter Milda is still in the Aragu realm."

Mordena jolted at the name. He nodded. "I'll do whatever it takes to build that realm portal."

Due to him having stayed out of High Elf politics for quite some time, Mordena did not fully grasp the whole idea of realm reunification. He had assumed it meant building a realm portal.

But that was not the case.

"No, not a realm portal, you're going to reunite the two realms!"

Mordena was stunned. "That's just impossible. Combining both realms would require an unlimited power source!"

"Don't forget, we have the World Tree on our side," said the High Elf Queen.

"I I understand. I'll do as you asked!" Mordena nodded, letting out a long sigh.

## 531. The Foundation Of Cooperation

North, Black Forest

In the dark forest, a beam of green light shot between the black pine trees. He was impossibly fast, crossing thousands of feet within a second. Half an hour later, he'd broken out of the Dark Forest and was in the icy wintry world of the North.

Here, he continued northward. Five minutes later, a giant fortress made purely from bones appeared before him. This was the darkest and most terrifying structure in the NorthSkeletal Fort.

Once, this was the residency of the Dark Serpent's first owner. Now, it had become the camp of the Army of Destruction.

When the green light was around six miles away from the Skeletal Fort, two Level-9 four-winged fallen angels flew up to meet it on either side. Their spears formed a cross in the sky. One cackled coldly. "High Elf, flying is forbidden here. Descend if you want to live!"

The green light immediately turned in the air and landed obediently, transforming back into human form. It was an elder with white hairthe Prophet, Bryant.

Standing in the snow, he said, "I asked to see Holy Priest Molina. I believe she knows that I am here."

The two four-winged fallen angels also landed. The one that had spoken before continued, "Priest Molina has told us. Follow me."

With that, the two fallen angels turned to lead Bryant. They didn't go to Skeletal Fort though. Instead, they turned left and walked towards a small wooden building on a hill.

Bryant didn't say anything. He pulled his bearskin cloak tighter around him and followed.

When they reached the building, the two fallen angels stood on either side of the door. At the same time, the door creaked open by itself.

Bryant walked in. There was a large room with a fireplace warming up the place. Naga priest Molina stood quietly inside the room. Her brows were slightly furrowed as if there was a troubling matter.

Hearing the noise, she turned around. Seeing Bryant, the worry disappeared, and she smiled. "My apologies for the simple conditions. Please bear with it."

"No problem." Bryant found a warm corner near the fireplace to stand. He looked down at the dancing flames and said, "You seem to have something on your mind."

Molina smiled bitterly. "You must know what happened. Katyusha is in Ferde's hands now. I can sense that she isn't dead yet, but she is in danger. Ferde seems to want to control her soul."

Bryant wasn't surprised. Since Link dared to kill Ariel, controlling Katyushassoul wasn't too much for him. Those Magicians of Ferde dared to do anything behind the scenes.

He nodded. "The Isle of Dawn suffered great losses too. Princess Ariel was murdered. Our queen views the Ferde lord as the biggest enemy now. We prepare to support your army."

"I am sorry for your misfortune. However, I must say that our cooperation isn't enough. You supplied various types of magic equipment, alchemy, and potions, which is good, but we need Magicians the most. The more, the better. You have so many Magicians but won't even send one over to help. This is insincere."

"Indeed." Bryant actually nodded in agreement, but then he changed his tone. "This is in the past. Soon, we will send at least 1000 Magicians, all above Level-6."

"One thousand? Ha, it seems that the Isle of Dawn is really sacrificing a lot." Molina tited her boneless body and walked to the fireplace. She stoked it with a rod, saying lightly, "To be honest, 1000 isn't enough. It's like placating some beggars. Everyone in Firuman knows what the Isle of Dawn thinks. If you want me to help you fight Ferde, 1000 Magicians isn't enough. I need to add another condition."

"Yes?"

"Help us rescue Katyusha and get the Spear of Victory back. If you succeed, we can continue cooperating. If you can't, it's over. If any High Elf dares to enter the Black Forest after that, not only will we attack, we'll spread the news all over the mainland. I'd like to see if the humans would still buy your magic equipment!"

After that, Molina stoked the fire casually, patiently waiting for Bryant's response.

Crackle, pop. The fire crackled lightly. Under Molina's movements, sparks flew. Gradually, a human face appeared from the red flames.

Not only that, the face's mouth opened and a low raspy voice said, "Molina, this is the one you said you would cooperate with?"

The voice was very strange. Just hearing it shook one's mind, making one feel uncontrollable. The voice seemed to represent boundless and endless darkness.

Standing in the corner, Bryant inhaled sharply when he heard the voice and subconsciously uttered, "Nozama, Lord of the Deep."

Nozama, Lord of the Deep, was at the pinnacle of Level-19. One step away from entering the godly level, he was the most powerful of all mortals.

He was always watching Firuman. Throughout history, he'd activated tides of darkness into Firuman many times. It could be said that he was the one responsible for the wild tide two years ago.

Three hundred years ago, Bryant had personally faced Tarviss, the Legendary demon that Nozama had sent. During the battle, Bryant had met Nozama's projection into Firuman. That meeting had shattered Bryant's hopes and was the major reason that pushed him to join the Isle of Dawn.

The face in the fireplaces moved and cackled. "You still remember me. You have a good memory, but you just won't improve your skills. After so many years, you're still only at Level-12. Not fun, so not fun."

Bryant was angry too and couldn't help but say, "You're the same. Three hundred years ago, you reached the Legendary Pinnacle, but you're still there. Why didn't you improve? I guess you'll never see the mysteries of the divine territory. Just die from an old death in the Abyss."

"YouHaha, you have a smart mouth, but you're right. We shouldn't laugh at each other. We're both failures." Nozama laughed easily. Despite the flying sparks that crackled and popped, he wasn't angry at all.

Seeing that the two were about to fight, Molina interrupted, "Gentlemen, don't forget what we must discuss. We must rescue Katyusha and take back the Spear of Victory!"

"Oh, alright." The fiery face moved and two eyes made of black coal turned to Bryant. "I'm not familiar with the current Firuman. What ideas do you have?"

Bryant shook his head. "I don't have ideas. I can't do it, and you can't do it. Ferde's power is beyond our imagination. The lord is terrifying I don't know what level he is now, but I'm definitely not his match."

"Oh" A sigh came from the fireplace. Then there was a huge explosion. Flames flew in all directions, splattering across the room.

"That bastard took my daughter and my other daughter is missing too. If I get my hands on him, I'll turn his soul into a candle and light it for a thousand years!"

Bryant scoffed. He patted off the dust on him and mocked, "It's useless to lose your temper in the Abyss. Think of a way to deal with him."

The fireplace calmed instantly. After a while, the remaining fire formed another face. It could be seen that Nozama had composed himself. His coal eyes turned to Naga Priest Molina.

"I don't have any solutions unless you can think of a way for me to enter Firuman without any damage to my power. Otherwise, we can only watch that proud little bastard."

Molina actually did have an idea. A runestone appeared in her hand. Chaotic dark red aura wrapped around the runestone. As soon as it appeared, all light in the room turned dark red. Under it, the yellow fire turned the room a bloody red color.

This time, even Nozama was shocked. "This isthe Sacred Rune of Destruction?"

Molina nodded. "Indeed. There is only one use for this sacred runerestition of time. After activation, everything within two miles will be frozen in time. The stronger the power that is frozen, the shorter the duration. Judging from the conditions in Ferde, it can freeze time for one second.

"One second? That's too short!" Bryant frowned. The sacred rune was indeed powerful. One second gave them the chance to rescue Katyusha, but after that second, they could even lose their own lives if they messed up afterward.

But Nozama nodded. "One second? Not bad, not bad. A god is truly powerful. Here, make a portal door, and I'll send my last daughter over. She will be powerful enough to help you rescue the person. If there's a chance, kill that Link boy too and give me his soul. I need a candle!"

"Thank you." Molina nodded.

As soon as she finished, the fiery face disappeared. Nozama's conscience left too. Molina turned to Bryant. "The Isle of Dawn and Ferde haven't declared war yet. You should be able to get close to Ferde's core, right?"

"What a f\*cked up mission!" Bryant swore, but he still agreed. "Wrap up the sacred rune. Don't make it so obvious. It's best if you use some sacred spell. I don't want any accidents!"

## 532. Time Veil

"Argh!!! No!!!"

In the quiet bedroom, Celine, who was fast asleep, suddenly let out a cry. This startled Link, who had been studying a time magic book at his desk.

He placed a paperweight on the page he was reading and turned down the brightness of the magic lamps in the room. He then walked over to the bed where Celine slept. However, her sleep seemed troubled. From time to time, her brows would furrow, beads of sweat glistened on her forehead, and her hands were gripping tightly on her sheets.

Must be having another nightmare. Link sighed inwardly. He sat beside the bed and held Celine's hand gently.

This was one of the major side-effects that came with Celine's clairvoyance. She was just about to transcend Level-9, and her ability to foresee the future was becoming even stronger. Nevertheless, she still could not master this ability. As the situation on the continent was becoming even more complicated, her prophetic nightmares became even more frequent.

These nightmares suggested that danger was imminent, but the core Magicians of Ferde did not need a clairvoyant to tell them what they already knew. The ship that was Ferde was now already sailing across stormy waters.

There was an air of tension among Ferde's high-ranking Magicians as they braced themselves for war.

Usually, Link only needed to hold Celine's hand in order to calm her down. This time was no different. After holding her hand quietly for ten minutes, Celine's brows relaxed. Her breathing was steadier, and she slept soundly once more.

Link did not move away from the bed. He took off his robe, leaned back against the headboard and beckoned at the desk. The magic book on it floated obediently towards him.

He then turned on a magic lamp beside him and continued reading the impossibly difficult time magic book.

The three main pillars of the realm were space, time and energy. Link already had a profound understanding of space and energy. Only the mysteries of time remained uncracked by him. He was still a beginner at this stage.

As he was absorbed in deciphering a magical formula, Celine, who had been sleeping beside him, suddenly turned around. Her hand touched Link's waist, and she spoke, "Still awake?"

Link closed the book and asked, "Did I wake you up?"

"No, I just had a dream. I was woken up by it," said Celine lazily. She took the book from Link's hands and looked at its cover. "Is this book that hard?" You've been studying it for more than two months, and you've only finished the first chapter."

Link's head was already on the verge of bursting. When Celine snatched the book away from him, he decided not to read it any longer. He massaged his throbbing forehead and laughed bitterly.

"It's not just hard; it's very, very hard. It's way past my power level. I may need to reach Level-14 first if I hope to make any progress in my research."

Back in the game world, the first time spell available to a Magician was Time Acceleration.

All the spells a player had acquired before Level-14 were incompatible with time spells. Spatial spells were incredibly difficult to master, but time spells were a hundred times even more difficult. Time spells involved complicated calculations of causality, logic arrays and time ripples, which were enough to cause Link's brain to overheat.

Despite noticing the tired look on Link's face, Celine did not tell him to get some rest. Instead, she steered the conversation towards another topic that required less brainwork. "How's the Naga?'

"The Naga?" Link smiled. "Progress is going smoothly. Vance and the others have found a reliable way to put her under our control. The only problem we've encountered was her Spear of Victory, which was built to automatically defend its mistress. But the weapon's power is limited. I estimate that it would use up all its power in a week."

"That sounds great. But I just had a dream that was related to the Naga. Do you want to hear it?"

"Tell me."

Celine placed the time magic book on the bedside table. She then sat up and leaned against Link's shoulder, before saying, "The dream was a blur, and it was mired in metaphors and symbolism, but it was also strange and frightening."

Link never dared to take Celine's dreams lightly. He listened attentively.

Celine closed her eyes as if trying to recall the dream she had. A moment later, she said in a low voice, "In the dream, I saw my father. Ever since I had my Demon Power suppressed within me, this was the first time I had seen him in one of my dreams. In it, I saw a figure heading towards Ferde from the ocean. The figure was strange. There was blood gleaming off of it. From afar, it looked like a High Elf. But up close, it looked like a girl with a pair of goat horns on her head. The girl's face was indistinct. As she reached Ferde's port, I think she saw me. I then heard her saying something to me. It was clear and distinct, like it was real. She said, 'Big sister, Father misses you.' When she was done, she suddenly transformed into a man shrouded in shadows. Even though I couldn't see his face clearly, I knew deep down that it was Nozama. He spread out his wings and grabbed me with a huge claw"

Celine's dream sounded outlandish, as if it was simply the stuff of her overworked imagination. But what she had described was enough to send a shiver down his spine.

"Nozama, a High Elf, the glint of blood, you being called sister, this is just a bit too eerie to be a simple dream. Why don't we pay Elin a visit? She's not called Lady Fortuna for nothing. She specializes in dream interpretation, so she'll probably be able to tell us something we don't know about your dream."

At the mention of Celine's younger sister, Link immediately thought of Saroviny. But she was supposed to still be in the Aragu realm.

Saroviny had probably spent a few hundred years in Aragu by now. Could it be that she had attained enough power to break free from the realm? Or could it be that Nozama had found her there and proposed an alliance with her?

All these scenarios in his head made Link a bit jumpy.

"Alright, I'll go with you. But it's already getting late. Get some sleep, try not to worry too much about it." Celine tugged against Link's arm, trying to get him to lie down.

Link allowed himself to be pulled down by her. He lay back on the bed, relaxed himself and before long, fell into a deep sleep.

The night passed by without a word from either one of them.

The next day, Link went to check up on Katyusha's condition. Making sure that everything was progressing smoothly, he brought Celine along with him to the Yabba people's Blue Stone Isle.

The island was originally an uninhabited island, but after a year of development by the Yabba people, the island was beginning to look more like a city.

When Link saw the island in the distance, he began to slow down and lower his altitude. He then used Void Walk to complete the rest of the journey and finally came to rest on an airship platform by the docks.

When the airship supervisor saw Link landing on the platform, he immediately went out to greet him. A small airship was prepared for him immediately after Link told the supervisor where they were going.

Link and Celine got on the airship. The vessel took off and flew low in the sky. Five minutes later, they reached an elevated region on the cliffs near the sea, where a small Mage Tower stood. This was where Elin residedthe Tower of Fate.

Link and Celine walked towards the tower. Before they could even knock on the door, it opened. A 12-year-old Yabba girl stood at the threshold. She looked at Link with a pair of emerald green eyes and said with a high-pitched voice, "My lord, the prophet has said that she's prepared afternoon tea for the two of you on the balcony. She's been expecting you."

Link and Celine looked at each other before entering the Mage Tower. The tiny Yabba girl led the way, skipping and hopping all the way to a great hall on the third floor. Outside the hall was a balcony. Elin was standing beside a round table outside, smiling at them.

When Link and Celine stepped out onto the balcony, Elin said to them, "Welcome, my lord and lady."

Though both of them still had no plans for marriage, everyone knew what sort of relationship they were in. Link intended to officially marry Celine once they had defeated the Army of Destruction. Everyone knew about this as well. As such, Link and Celine were both fine with Elin calling Celine "lady."

All three were seated around the table, and before Link even had the chance to speak, Elin said with a smile, "Not a word. First, let's draw two cards out, shall we?"

Elin then took out a deck of tarot cards and lay them out across the table.

"My clairvoyant ability is now one with this deck of cards. My lord, just like before, think of the question that you want answered, and the deck will give you its answer."

Link nodded and focused on the dream that Celine had described to him the other night. He then drew out two cards.

Seeing that there was no one else on the balcony other than the three of them, Link flipped them open.

What they saw shocked the three of them.

There was nothing but a grey blur on the two cards that Link had drawn out, absolutely nothing for Elin to make a prediction with. Upon a closer look, they noticed that there was, in fact, an image on each of the two cards. There was an indescribable power obscuring the images, making it impossible to decipher their meanings.

Sensing the strange power around the two cards, Link jolted up and recalled something he had read in the time magic book: a Time Veil!

A Time Veil was what would happen when a future chain of events sent out time ripples so violent one's premonitions would be severely distorted by them.

Link's face grew solemn as he saw the fogged-up cards. He sensed that the imminent danger they were about to face this time was unlike any other they had faced in the past.

"What happened?" asked Celine.

Link looked at Elin as well, expecting an answer from her.

Elin was shocked as well. She took the cards and gently felt the patterns on the backs of both cards. She had familiarized herself with every card in the deck. By feeling for the patterns' subtle differences, she was able to tell the cards apart.

A strange look came over her face when she felt the backs of the two cards. Her mind suddenly went blank as she tried to figure out what the images on the two cards were.

Finally, she gave up. She then said, "Forgive me, my lord, but it seems to me that whatever you want a prediction is completely beyond my clairvoyant powers. I think you should tell me everything yourself."

## 533. The Prophecys Reminder

Tower of Fate

Celine recounted her dream again. This time, she added more details. After she finished, Elin sank into deep thought.

She didn't speak or even move; she just sat there like a statue for over three minutes. Finally, she started organizing the tarot cards in her hands speedily. When she finished, she started taking out cards.

Glancing at the cards she took out, she shook her head and put them back. Then she shuffled, took cards, and repeated.

Repeating 18 times, Elin suddenly coughed. Blood appeared at the corners of her lips. Celine was shocked at this; her mouth dropped open. "You"

Link immediately covered her mouth. "Shush, don't disturb her!"

Elin was forcefully predicting the future right now. Any disturbances could make all efforts go to waste.

Ignoring everything around her, Elin kept going without stopping. She pulled cards three more times. At the third time, her pupils constited as she shoved two cards back into the deck.

Now, her face was ghastly pale and flushed; her body wavered. Her big emerald eyes were dull and half-closed. She looked like an eggplant covered in frost.

Link immediately cast an Essence Vitality spell for her. After more than ten minutes, Elin had recovered a bit.

She let out a long sigh and murmured, "The future is very lost. Many forces interfere with my sight, but just then, the fog lifted slightly. I saw a god of death approaching a poisonous snake."

"Oh?" Link was shocked. The god of death represented misfortune and the poisonous snake Was it Katyusha?

"Huh?" Celine had some thoughts too.

The two exchanged glances, and Link stood up. "Elin, thank you for your help. Please take a break."

"It's alright. I'm happy to help." Elin smiled weakly.

The two stopped disturbing Elin. Link used a transmission spell, and under the flashing light, he appeared on the sea thousands of feet away. Then he used the Void Walk to fly towards Ferde.

"So it seems that the Army of Destruction is planning to rescue Katyusha?" Celine asked.

Link nodded. "Indeed. I couldn't think of how they would save her, but a High Elf appeared in your dream. I'm afraid they'll have a hand in this rescue mission."

"Don't forget, there's also a demon," Celine reminded. "She called me sister. Perhaps because of our shared blood, she was especially clear in my dream. I could even see her horns. They were curled and short like a goat's. Her eyes were faint green."

Link slowed down and thought. After a while, he said, "It isn't very possible for this demon girl to enter Ferde directly. She will probably get help from the outside. The High Elf is the one who will truly enter Ferde."

Judging from Celine's description, this demon girl probably wasn't Saroviny. It was probably Nozama's other daughter. After all, that guy had so many descendants. It was normal that there were daughters that didn't appear in the game.

However, Link wouldn't be afraid even if Saroviny came. Ferde's magic defense wasn't weak. For example, the Divine Punishment protocol that attacked proactively was only Level-15 at the beginning. After many upgrades, it was now Level-19. Any mortal who came would die.

Thinking of this, Link asked, "Which High Elf do you think it'll be?"

Celine already had an answer. Looking to Link, she discovered he was looking back at her. "I believe it will be Bryant. Didn't the Orida Fortress send a message that there were traces similar to Bryant in the Black Forest?"

"I think that too." Link smiled.

The two continued analyzing Celine's prophetic nightmare.

"The High Elf was covered in a bloody light," Celine said. "But thinking more closely, it doesn't seem like a bloody light. It might be the power of the God of Destruction. Do you think Bryant would have some sacred gear?"

Link shook his head. "Sacred gear? If there's sacred gear, the Army of Destruction can just come southward. Who can stop them? Why would they care about the Spear of Victory?"

"Then maybe it's just a sacred rune?"

Sacred runes were one-time tools and could be made with the addition of sacred power. It was far from sacred gear.

Link nodded. "That should be it, but I don't know what function it can have."

Here, the big picture was clear. If the Army of Destruction wanted to come rescue Katyusha, regardless of whether they used Celine's prophecy or objective observations, Link and Celine's proposed rescue plan was still possible. If Ferde didn't prepare, the enemy could very possibly succeed.

But now, Link was prepared.

After returning to the Mage Tower in Scorched Ridge, Link didn't alert anyone else. The rescue would definitely be a sneak attack without many people. If he and Celine prepared well and had Lily's help, it would be enough.

Celine went to practice with her fire gun. Link went to the top level and started adjusting tower spirit, Lily. He wanted to improve Lily's ability to discern the power of the God of Destruction and demons. Then at critical moments, she could see through the enemy's disguise and attack.

Link was very familiar with these two types of power. There were samples in the Mage Tower too. He could use them to experiment now.

This adjustment took Link more than ten hours. After that, he went straight to the enchantment room. He needed to make something else. It was called the Order Compass!

Link thought that since the enemy dared to rescue Katyusha, they must possess something that Ferde didn't have. Now, Ferde had most powers from the mortal world. The only one missing was the power of time.

The power of time was highly mysterious. It could make someone's brain explode to research its principles. But to a god, it was nothing. The sacred rune from the God of Destruction should be related to time.

Link still only had a shallow knowledge of time power, but this didn't stop him from using it. After all, he had the game system and close to 600 Omni Points.

The game system used the power of the God of Light. Link didn't have enough knowledge about time, but the God of Light definitely did. The Omni Points were equivalent to usage rights that the God of Light gave. Link had 600 points now. It was enough to buy any Legendary spell.

Of all the magic cards, there was a very powerful time spell called the Order Compass.

Order Compass

Level-16 Legendary Spell

Cost: more than 20,000 Realm Essence points

Effect: Incomparable power consolidates into a unique material. This creates the compass of time. Within a range of 3000 feet, the controller can speed up or slow down the flow of time after paying sufficient power.

(Note: Chase the arrow of time.)

Link's current max was 8300 Realm Essence points. If he relied solely on his own power, he wouldn't be able to use the Order Compass. This was okay though. He was in the Mage Tower and had more than enough magic material.

He could save up his power and solidify this Level-16 spell into a rune. This was a one-time-use rune, but with it, Link wouldn't have to worry about the enemy defeating him with the power of time.

Going to work immediately, the motivation surged in Link, and he started creating the Order Compass rune.

While Link was working hard on preparing against the rescue attempt, a High Elf ship slowly entered the pier three days after Link returned to Ferde.

In the cabin, Bryant gazed at the lively Ferde port through the window. His eyes were complex.

Ferde lord, will today be your last day?

While thinking of this, he gazed at his wrist. A small white snake with yellow stripes wrapped around his wrist. After sensing his gaze, it suddenly said, "Old man, stop looking at me. You'll expose me!"

This was Nozama's daughter. She was only Level-10not as strong as the others. However, she had no demonic aura about her. She could also shapeshift, which was an ability that others couldn't prepare against.

This wasn't a spell. Her body could truly transform. For example, she was a tiny snake less than one-foot long.

## 534. Rescuing The Naga

The wheels of the carriage that the port administrator had arranged for Bryant rattled on as it drove straight towards Scorched City.

The stretch of road that Bryant was on was at least 20 feet wide and had been leveled flat through the use of a Petrification spell. The road ahead of the carriage was practically a straight line. There were tall buildings neatly lining both sides of the road, from the port all the way to the Scorched Ridge.

Looking out from the window in front of the carriage, he could see groups of buildings crisscrossing with each other. A few miles down the road, skyscraping Mage Towers rose up from the horizon.

From afar, one could clearly see networks of Mana intersecting with each other around the Mage Towers. Under the faint golden light emanated by the Mana, the whole city seemed even brighter and warmer as if the place was illuminated by a sun that never set.

Bryant could not help but feel calmer and cheerful at the sight of this magnificent city being bathed in everlasting sunlight.

He had just left Skeletal Fort in the North and was somewhat depressed by its sight. The city's golden glow dispelled all the negative emotions in him in an instant.

"What a beautiful city," he exclaimed.

From his sleeve came a hissing voice. "Like hell it is! I hate it here! It's too bright and hot, and it stinks of humans everywhere. This is a disgusting place! If my father rules this place one day, I'll make sure to have him tear down that tower in the distance!"

Sensing the clammy wriggling in his sleeve, Bryant warned, "I think you'd best keep it down. We're approaching the Mage Tower. Wouldn't want to risk getting exposed now, would we?"

"I don't need you to tell me twice!" grumbled the voice in his sleeve, and then it went silent for the rest of the journey.

The carriage pressed on until it finally arrived at the entrance of the Scorched Ridge. Bryant was stunned by what he saw there. Looking out of his carriage, he saw a black-haired young man standing at the entrance, smiling at him.

The young man was wearing a standard magic robe. He was holding an ordinary-looking magic wand. He looked like an ordinary Magician's Apprentice. But Bryant knew all too well that this was simply a magical illusion. The aura that he sensed from the young man had already revealed to him who he really was.

It was Link himself.

The "Magician's Apprentice" walked towards the carriage, opened the door for Bryant and then gave him a Magician's salute.

"Master, please follow me."

Bryant felt his heart beating even more quickly. Link's appearance had caught him off guard. This was unexpected.

Though Nozama had asked him to kill Link, Bryant never intended to do so in the first place. The Time Stop spell would only last for one second, which was just too short. If he wanted to end Link, he would need to be sure of where Link was and be close enough to him in order to activate the divine time seal.

However, Link could easily turn on him if he tried to activate the divine seal. Bryant might even be killed by him before he could even activate it. No matter how powerful the seal was, it would all be for naught.

Seeing Link coming out to welcome him personally, Bryant could not help but feel suspicious about this. He suddenly had an impulse to turn around and leave.

However, he managed to get a hold of himself. Bryant coughed and then said, "I did not expect you to come out personally, Link."

Saying this, Bryant's arm tensed up, warning the little snake hidden inside his sleeve to be careful. She wriggled back in response. Bryant could feel that the little snake was also nervous. She had not moved a muscle when she saw Link standing before them. It was as if she had already entered hibernation in his sleeve.

What Bryant did not know was that Link had seen this little exchange between him and the serpent. He had already suspected Bryant was up to something. Seeing the High Elf personally at the entrance, Link was able to confirm his suspicions about this meeting.

He let out an inward sigh. Seems like Celine's dream was true. I never knew that the High Elves would be working with the Army of Destruction.

Still, the smile on Link's face did not fade.

"I've been quite free lately. When I heard that you were coming for a visit, I thought I might greet you personally. You said that you were coming to discuss the matter of reconnecting with the Aragu realm. Well, I'm all ears."

Reconnecting with the Aragu realm was what Bryant wanted to discuss with Link, at least on the surface.

Bryant did not think that Link would be interested in the subject. Somewhat startled, he smiled and said, "I see. After you."

The two began walking along the street of the Scorched Ridge.

Compared to the bustling outer city of Scorched City, the Scorched Ridge was a different matter altogether.

Ordinary folk lived in the outer city. Though their houses were laid out neatly, due to how fast construction had taken place, some of them looked shoddily built. There were still places in the midst of construction.

Those living in the inner city belonged to the upper circles of society, including high-ranking military officials and Magicians. The buildings here were all splendidly built. However, it was extremely quiet in the midst of this splendor. There were few people on the street, each one of them dressed in high-quality attire. There were even a couple of young Magicians hurrying about.

One of the pedestrians had his head lowered as he walked, apparently deep in thought. A few others were huddled together in a heated discussion about something as they passed by. Everyone walked at a brisk pace, as if they had all come out for a jog out on the street.

Bryant also saw a few Magician's Apprentices buried in their magic books as they ate something.

One would not find such bustle in the Isle of Dawn.

The High Elves' lifespan was thrice that of humans. They were also more gifted in the mystic arts than the human race. The High Elves had always preferred peace and tranquility. It would be diligence of the highest order if a young High Elf Magician was willing to spend eight hours a day in his or her magical studies.

Bryant walked on, amazed by the sight before him.

He remembered his days as a young Magician. At that time, he had been so obsessed with unlocking the secrets of magic. However, when there was not much else he could learn from human magic, Bryant decided to set outito the world.

He had basically left his mark across all of Firuman. He had climbed mountains and crossed oceans to learn magic from the dwarves, the Yabba people, the High Elves and the dragons. However, his time studying magic in Andwar had left a deep impression in him.

In order to study magic in the Isle of Dawn, he had paid 200,000 gold pieces up front. During his time there, he had even helped the High Elves carry out many questionable deeds on the Firuman continent. In the end, the magic books he had gotten for his effort were no more than Level-8.

When he walked along the streets of Andwar, the High Elves would avoid him like the plague and then whisper behind his back. They would look at him as if he were a monkey in a zoo.

His magic might have seen a drastic improvement during those years, but it was also one of the most humiliating times of his life.

Looking again at the scenery around him, Bryant said to Link, "My lord, you've already built a Mage Tower. All these young Magicians are now thriving in your city. You don't need to travel the world just for a bit of magical knowledge here and there."

Link shook his head, still smiling. "Whether this place will thrive tomorrow, or the day after, still remains to be seen. I may have built myself a Mage Tower, but I've also angered many people. This city may seem prosperous now, but it may also be reduced to ashes tomorrow. Take me for example. I may be the object of adoration and envy today, but one of my enemies may get the chance to destroy my body tomorrow and subject my soul to whatever horrendous torture they could think of. Who's to say for sure what fate has planned for all of us?

Link's words seemed to be hinting at something. Hearing this, Bryant jolted and laughed weakly. "Surely you're joking, my lord?"

Link gave a vague smile. The two of them reached a courtyard garden. Link extended out a hand, inviting Bryant to enter the place first. "After you. Whatever it is you wish to speak, we'll be discussing it here."

Bryant raised his brows in surprise. Glancing at the not so distant Mage Tower, he asked, "Hasn't it always been tradition to discuss matters in the Mage Tower?"

The Sacred Rune of Destruction he had with him was telling him that Katyusha was currently being imprisoned in the Mage Tower. But now, there was no way to enter the place, determine where she was being held prisoner or spring her out of captivity.

Link smiled, "The Mage Tower is now no longer open to guests. It's one of the new rules I've enacted."

"I see. Then we'll talk here." Bryant was somewhat disappointed. This was unexpected, but also understandable, seeing that there had been many clashes in the shadows between Ferde and the Isle of Dawn.

He had a backup plan.

Once they were inside the courtyard, a beautiful magic puppet maid came over to lay out treats on a table. Casually seating himself beside the table, Link said, "I've read the documents you've sent me. I take it that the Isle of Dawn is prepared to reconnect with the Aragu realm?"

Bryant nodded. "In truth, we've already begun building a small-scale portal. Princess Ariel has vanished without a trace, but the royal line must continue. So, we've been working to reconnect with the Aragu Realm and bring back Princess Milda. During the process, slight vibrations will be felt in the realm. But rest assured, this is all normal. We hope that Ferde will not overreact to this."

"I understand," said Link, nodding. It sounded as if Bryant had feared that Link would begin jumping to conclusions when this happened, and so decided to let Link know what was going on beforehand.

After pausing for a while, Link asked, "Is there anything else?"

"There's one other thing. Opening a realm portal is a complicated and dangerous business. We aren't really confident about all the details of this operation, and of course, nothing must happen to the princess during the process. And so, I've brought the magic circle we've designed for the portal. Our highness wants you to take a look at it and see if there is anything that could still be improved on. You will be sufficiently compensated for your work, of course."

"I see. Do you need it soon?" asked Link.

"The sooner, the better. I'll be waiting here for the next few days. When you're done, I'll bring the plans back with me." Bryant even handed Link the blueprint for the realm portal.

Link gave it a look. The design was incredibly complicated, but it did resemble a realm portal's magic circle. He nodded and said, "I'll have it ready as soon as possible. I'll need at most three days."

"Thank you. I'll wait for you in the outer city then," said Bryant.

"No need. You can stay here in this courtyard. It's much quieter here."

Bryant nodded, accepting Link's offer.

Without another word, Link turned around and left the place. After seeing Link off at the courtyard's entrance, Bryant went back into the courtyard.

"Alright then, I guess it's all up to you now, Merna. Be careful, though. Link's acting strangely. I think he may be on to us."

"Understood." Merna was the name of the snake. She slithered out of Bryant's sleeve, made her way to the middle of the garden and finally squeezed into the opening of a drain out in the street.

"Link, do you think he's really coming to discuss important matters?"

Celine walked up to Link as soon as he returned to the Mage Tower. She stayed at the top level during Link's meeting with Bryant, aiming her big fire gun at the Magician. No matter what Bryant did, she would fire as soon as she felt danger.

She wouldn't be able to kill Bryant, but she could at least affect his power.

However, she didn't observe or sense anything abnormal. Bryant seemed to have really come to discuss the portal.

Link found it strange too. Prophecies were always a bit iffy. They made nice reminders, but there would be problems if one completely relied on prophecies.

From the interaction, he believed that Bryant was up to something. However, he wasn't sure how he would rescue Katyusha or if he was here for another reason.

After thinking, Link said, "There's no hurry. He gave me the drafts now and will stay in Scorched Ridge for three days. If we wait patiently, he'll expose himself."

Celine shrugged, a bit confused. "That's too troublesome. He's not your match. Why don't we just capture him and interrogate him?"

Link shook his head immediately. "Celine, you're too confident in me. Bryant is still quite powerful. If we fight, I'll have to kill him. I can't capture him."

For someone like him, capturing him alive was 100 times harder than killing him.

It was easy to kill Bryant. Link could activate Lily and attack, ending Bryant in a few moves. However, if Bryant fought back before he died, the entire Scorched City could be destroyed.

Scorched City was Link's camp. He couldn't do something so risky.

"Alright. I'll continue watching him." Grasping the big fire gun, Celine returned to the Mage Tower's balcony. She could see the entire city and also had the magic seal for protection. It was the best place for spying.

Link took out Bryant's draft for the portal matrix and started revising it. Of course, he was only getting rid of some flaws.

Sewage system under Scorched Ridge

Merna swam through the sewage tunnel. In order to avoid having her aura sensed, she used her physical power. All her movements looked like a regular snake.

The sewage system was as complex as a maze, but Merna had shocking memory. She also had a great sense of smell. She could smell her own scent even in the dirty water.

These strong points paired with her acute sense of direction helped her reach the outside of the Mage Tower's foundation after around two hours.

There, she ran into a new problem.

The Mage Tower's defense was abnormally dense. Even the foundations underground were practically seamless. Merna circled it many times but couldn't find any flaws.

Even the drainage hole had a very detailed detection matrix. If she swam over, it would be activated immediately. She stared at it for half an hour without finding any defects. It was so sophisticated that she felt helpless.

The material elsewhere was extremely sturdy too, at Level-9. The critical parts reached Level-11. If she wanted to force her way in, it would cause a big commotion.

Who built this tower? Is he crazy? Would it kill him to leave a crack? Merna was frustrated.

Not willing to give up, she swam aimlessly, circling around the tower three times to no avail. Sneaking in from underground wasn't going to work.

Merna could only backtrack. After returning to the yard, she used the foliage for cover and slithered back to Bryant's room.

Bryant was lying on a chaise and reading. Two magic puppets stood behind him. One massaged him gently while the other held his drink.

"Stronger, lower, ah yes. Feels good."

"Let me drink again."

The servant walked over and gently spooned him the drink. All Bryant had to do was slightly move his head. He was in paradise.

Seeing this, Merna almost exploded in anger. She'd swum in the disgusting water of human feces for hours and had even accidentally swallowed some of it. But this guy was here enjoying everything. Feeling the difference, anger rose up in Merna. She rushed over and bit Bryant's calf, injecting poison.

Crash! Bryant almost fell from his chair in fright. Stinging pain came from his calf. Looking down, he saw that it was bruising at a speed visible to the naked eye. There were also two fang marks.

This was extreme poison.

Bryant hurriedly drank some Elf Nectar to push the poison down. Then he looked to the two magic puppets. They stared at him, confused, but didn't do anything abnormal.

He let out a sigh. Feeling Merna go inside his robe and wrap around his arm again, he said to the magic puppets, "Okay, I want to rest. Go out."

They turned and left the room.

Finally, Bryant muttered, "What? What did I do?!"

Merna huffed. "I risked my life to investigate the Mage Tower, and I was annoyed to see you like this, so I bit you!"

"Alright, alright How's the situation?" Bryant did feel that he'd crossed the line, but Ferde's magic puppets were really nice. They were beautiful, had soft voices, gentle movements, and served extremely well. If he wasn't scared of being laughed at, he would take two back to the Isle of Dawn.

"The defense is very dense. I can't break through by myself. I need your help." Merna sighed. She'd underestimated Ferde.

"That bad?" Bryant was shocked too. He'd personally experienced Merna's espionage skills. If even she was helpless, Ferde's defense was really something.

Thinking, Bryant said, "How about I go out? I can definitely find an apprentice that will take you into the Mage Tower Of course, you have to change your appearance, like a parrot that can talk or a white rat. Or another animal that people won't be scared of."

Merna sighed. "Fine. I'll do as you say."

The two immediately started acting.

Merna started changing her appearance in a hidden corner while Bryant walked out and wandered down the street. He walked until six at night. When he returned, there was a mouse the size of two fists in the room. The mouse was extremely fluffy and white. It was adorable.

Bryant petted Merna, praising, "Perfect."

Then he sat down and sighed. "Merna, my plan won't work."

"What now?" Merna felt depressed. The two large eyes on the cute mouse face glinted red. She'd spent the entire afternoon transforming, and now Bryant said this. It made her want to go crazy.

Stomping, she yelled, "You're a Legendary Magician! You've lived for almost 400 years, and you can't fool some 20-year-old apprentice?"

"Of course I can, and he would take you in, but from what I've observed, Link has a powerful Tower Spirit in the Mage Tower. She will detect all organisms brought in. If it isn't verified, the spirit will activate the alarms. So"

"So none of our plans will work?" Merna was about to explode.

"Yes."

So Merna exploded. She jumped around on the table, yelling, "Link is crazy. Is he going to think a cockroach is an invader?! He should just die!"

"Actually, yes. I manipulated a cockroach into climbing in through the door. One second later, it was killed by a Level-0 spell."

Merna was speechless.

After a long while, she said, "Katyusha can survive two more days at most. After that, we will have failed our mission. You must think of something."

Bryant had a headache too. "Don't worry. We still have two days. Tomorrow, I'll go out again. I'll find something. I must!"

Main Mage Tower, a magic laboratory in the fourth basement

Purple magic runes crackled in the air like electricity. The runes were arranged in circles. Like soldiers in the vanguard, they charged towards a dark red glow in the center.

Three crystals as big as a human's brain were placed in a triangle around the dark red glow. They were the source of the purple magic runes.

Beyond the crystasstood two MagiciansEleanor and Vance. The two of them were intently observing the crystals' power input. Should any anomaly arise, they would immediately step in to rectify it.

"How's it going?" Link asked. He had come to check on Katyusha's conditioning.

"Everything looks to be in order. But something strange happened a while ago," said Vance, a confused look on his face.

"Do tell."

Vance pointed at the white energy flow pouring out of the Mage Tower. "It happened just last night. The energy flow here had always been stable. We never had an issue with it. However, since one in the morning, there have been three small consecutive Mana outbursts, as if something's disturbing the energy flow. What's strange is that Eleanor and I have inspected the surrounding Mana channels. But there seems to be no sign of anyone tampering with them."

Link was stunned. The first thing he thought of upon hearing this was that this must be Bryant's handiwork!

The energy flow that was used to break through Katyusha's defenses came from the Mage Tower's Mana core. Link had personally overseen its construction and regulation. Every Monday, he would come by for an inspection to make sure that the Mana core was functioning properly. His last inspection had been two days ago. It was still working normally back then.

Also, Link would be able to sense the presence of any foreign power interfering with the Mage Tower's energy flow from a hundred miles away. However, nothing seemed to stand out in the vicinity at the moment.

"I'll go check on the main tower's Mana network."

He was now feeling a bit anxious. Bryant had been staying in the Scorched Ridge for the past few days. Celine had reported that the man's behavior seemed suspicious. He might have found a way to gain entry into the laboratory.

Link began checking the main tower's Manasstem, starting from the laboratory, then along the conduit pipe, all the way to the Mana core. Still, he found nothing.

Everything seemed normal. There was no sign suggesting that an outside force had invaded the place, which meant that the disturbance was not man-made.

Link was now puzzled. Strange indeed. Could it be that Bryant's using a technique even I don't know about? If that's the case, what's he sticking around here for?

Still trying to figure out how Bryant did it, Link decided that he needed more data. He began observing the Mage Tower's energy flow. He had also set up a Memory Crystal in order to record the next energy outburst when it happened.

He had only just started looking at the numbers when an hour later, another Mana outburst occurred.

This time, Link saw with his own eyes the disturbance in the Mana current. An abnormal tremor appeared in it, affecting the whole thing. The sensation Link had at that moment was that of a giant rocking the entire Mage Tower about, trying to tip it over.

When the tremor occurred, due to the continuous flow of Mana, tiny chaotic eddies began to form in it. They might not have much effect on low-level magic, but they presented a serious threat to the Legendary-level Hidden spell that was keeping Katyusha subdued. These tiny disturbances were able to cause the spell to lose its effect!

Link immediately tried to suppress the sudden disturbance in the Mana channel. He noticed that Vance and Eleanor were also trying to do the same thing.

Four seconds later, the eddies disappeared. Everything was back to normal.

Link took a look at the high-quality Memory Crystal he had placed beside him. It had recorded the whole thing down as it happened.

Link then watched the disturbance unfold again and again on the Memory Crystal. Each time, he would look at the numbers he had jotted down and then make all sorts of calculations with them.

He had completed the entire evaluation process after watching the Memory Crystal at least 12 times. However, his anxiety only intensified as he scanned the formulas and intensity curve of the tremor he had scribbled down in his notebook.

All signs indicated that in order to set off such a tremor in the Mage Tower's Manasstem, the disturbance needed to be global in scale.

In other words, this disturbance needed to encompass the entire realm.

Just what kind of power are we up against, to have such an effect? Could it be the appearance of another divine gear? Link frowned.

When the Dark Serpent first descended on the mortal plane, Link's power was only at Level-6. He was still so weak at the time that he did not sense any disturbances in the realm and so never experienced anything like this in the past.

This did not mean that others were oblivious to the ripples sent out by the Dark Serpent's appearance.

After thinking for a while, Link sent a telepathic message to Lily the tower spirit. In an instant, Lily conveyed the message to Evelina, Elovan, and Milose.

When the Dark Serpent first appeared, the Isle of Dawn must have kept a record of the changes brought about by it across the realm.

Five minutes later, the three Legendary High Elves arrived at the main hall of the Mage Tower. As one of Ferde's chief Magicians, Evelina walked in front, followed from behind by Elovan and Milose.

"My lord, is there something wrong?" asked Evelina. The two High Elves behind her were also looking curiously at Link.

Link was about to explain what was going on when suddenly he stopped. He then raised a finger and whispered, "Try to feel the Mana flow in the Mage Tower."

A new tremor had appeared, this time even more intense than before. There was even a sudden fluctuation in the brightness of the overhead magic lights.

Of course, ordinary people might not be able to perceive these changes. But to a Legendary master, these changes were as clear as day.

As soon as he sensed the Mana current growing even more turbulent, Link immediately tried to bring it back under control until it returned to normal. He then looked at everyone and asked, "Did you all feel that?"

The three High Elves nodded.

Evelina said, "This disturbance is most unusual. Even my Elemental Pool was affected by it. I was just about to report this to you. It felt like someone was barraging the city with Level-10 offensive Legendary spells from the ocean a hundred miles away."

Link nodded. He looked at Elovan and Milose. "What do you two think?"

Elovan said, "I am of the same opinion as Evelina, but judging from the direction of the disturbance, it seems to be coming from the Isle of Dawn."

Milose was about to say something but then closed his mouth.

"If you have something to say, say it now. This is a mission of sorts. If you're able to provide valuable information, you will be rewarded with Magic Points," said Link.

Milose jerked up and then said, "When the Dark Serpent appeared, I was stationed at one of the Isle of Dawn's watchtower. From the watchtower, we would watch for any energy disturbances in the Firuman realm through a magic net powered by Nature power. The commotion we felt just then was a lot more intense than the one caused by the Dark Serpent itself."

"Oh?" Link was surprised to hear this. He then asked, "I also sensed that the energy disturbance this time was coming from the north-east, which is where the Isle of Dawn is. What do you think?"

"Yes, that's what I was thinking as well."

"What about you two? Anything you'd like to add?" Link looked at Elovan and Evelina.

Elovan thought for a moment, then said, "If what Milose said is true, then it is possible that the Isle of Dawn may be working to activate the World Tree's power as we speak. Such a thing has only happened twice in the past. The first time was 2300 years ago when the Calamity Dragon King Ira invaded the Isle of Dawn. The High Elves had activated the World Tree to trap the Dragon King within an impenetrable Eternal Time Ward. The second time was 800 years ago, when the God of Slaughter, Dalas was attempting to descend on the realm of Firuman. Though he had been thwarted, he had left a huge crack in the realm. The High Elves had used the World Tree's roots to seal up the crack. The two times the High Elves used the World Tree's power had left permanent changes on the entire realm. Even now, the Tree's effects can still be felt. If the Isle of Dawn is activating the World Tree right now, there is a high chance the High Elves' target this time is Ferde. My lord, we need to prepare ourselves immediately!"

Link was stunned. He had known for a long time that the World Tree possessed incredible power. But now he learned that it was even capable of fending off foes like the Dragon King, Ira and the God of Slaughter, Dalas, both of whom were terrible presences closer to divinity than anything else in the realm.

Link now had a clearer picture of its power.

The World Tree was a force that stood on the pinnacle of the Firuman realm. Outside the Isle of Dawn, Link might be untouchable, but if he dared come within shooting distance of the island, his body and soul would probably be disintegrated on the spot.

Link then asked, "Is there no way at all to deal with the World Tree?'

"There may be a way," replied Milose.

Raising a brow, Link asked, "Let's hear it."

"The World Tree's power may be the pinnacle of the realm, but it is also way too powerful for any mortal being to handle. Not even the High Elf queen could wield its power alone. For 1000 years, the World Tree has operated according to an innate set of rules. One of those rules was that it should never be used to attack those who possess Nature Power. Even if those with Nature Power were to attack the World Tree, it would only seek to defend itself and drive its aggressors out of the Isle of Dawn."

Elovan added, "The rules governing the World Tree are not that complicated. Besides not attacking its own people, the World Tree's rules also include protecting those with royal High Elf blood. Under its shade, royal High Elf members will not be injured by attacks from the outside and are also prevented from hurting each other."

Hearing this, Link looked at Evelina. She was a High Elf princess. Though her blood was impure, royal blood still ran through her veins.

Evelina shrugged. "Basically what they said, but I would just like to correct what Elovan said. In truth, the royal family members can attack each other. To do so, the High Elf elders must first deliberate with each other before activating a judgment magic seal. After being granted permission by the World Tree, the elders would then remove all Nature Power from an offending member of the Royal High Elf family in order to pass judgment on him or her."

Link fell silent, ruminating on something. Half a minute later, he said, "Evelina, I would like to study your bloodline power."

High Elf customs had always been an enigma to him. He decided to go to the Isle of Dawn one of these days to probe even further into this.

"It would be an honor" Evelina gave Link a bow, but before she could finish her sentence, she was interrupted by a sudden explosion.

The explosion had come from the North. The impact was so great that they could feel a violent tremor running through the Mage Tower.

Startled, all four of them quickly rushed to the window. They saw a white ball of light with a diameter of more than 20 feet rising up from behind a hill.

Evelina shouted in surprise, "My god, it's a Level-9 Blazing Sun spell!"

The Blazing Sun spell was one of the most potent fire spells in the mortal realm. If the ball of light exploded in the middle of the city, everything in it would be wiped off the map.

This should not have happened. Lily the tower spirit had been keeping watch for any energy anomalies in the city all this time.

If the spell were to go off in the outskirts of the city, the explosion would engulf everything in a sea of eternal fire, and there would be more than 1000 casualties as a result!

The might of Level-9 destructive fire spell Blazing Sun was practically at the peak of mortal power. After it exploded, the huge blast spread in all directions, sweeping through the entire Ferde within seconds.

Under the light of the giant surging fireball, the entire Scorched City sank into terror and chaos. Looking down from the Mage Tower, one could see people scurrying around on the street for somewhere to hide. Link had great hearing; he could hear shocked cries from all over.

Even the Mage Tower fell into an uproar.

Many apprentices wandered like aimless flies. Faced with such a change, most people were dazed; they had no clue what to do.

In Link's room, Evelina, Elovan, and Milose were all floored. They gaped at the burning white ball in the distance. The three High Elves couldn't imagine that someone dared to use such a spell in Ferde. Did that person not fear for their life? Or did they not fear Ferde's power?

Their minds were in a mess. However, some were still calm.

Link recovered immediately and ordered, "Lily, upgrade battle mode!"

In the battle mode, Lily would be given the biggest authority. She would be in charge of a range of ten miles around the Mage Tower. Within this, she would kill anything that didn't follow the safety rules!

"Mode changed. Currently in battle mode!" Lily's voice used to be gentle, but as the mode changed, it became cold and murderous.

Whizz, whizz, whizz. The defense matrixes in the Mage Tower cluster were all activated. Under the various dazzling flashes, a 20-centimeter-thick golden crystal shield appeared on the walls. This was a Level-11 defense spellCrystal Enchantment. It was very sturdy.

Not only that, a thick magic door appeared before each critical entrance in the Mage Towers. The critical zones were locked and impassable.

While following these commands, Lily also sent commands to the Magicians of different levels in the Mage Tower.

"All apprentices must stay in place and keep quiet." This was what the apprentices received.

"All official Magicians, converge on the second-floor hall All official Magicians, converge in the second-floor hall and await further instruction."

This was the alert for all Magicians under Level-6. The passageways were locked, but they could go through with their badges.

The message for Magicians above Level-6 was different. They were the elites of Ferde and only numbered to around 30. They were told to converge on the third floor. When they all reached the location, they saw that Magician Eliard was already waiting for them.

Eliard quickly assigned tasks. He sent a Magician to watch over each node in the Mage Tower to ensure that the tower would operate normally.

When each Magician who received their task hurried to their location, two magic puppets would follow closely for protection. These magic puppets weren't only servants. When needed, they could be powerful Warriors equal to Nana, the first magic puppet.

On the other hand, Link gave orders to Evelina and the others. First, he looked at Evelina and said quickly and powerfully, "Eve, protect the Mage Tower's core!"

"Uhyes!" Evelina finally recovered.

Link turned. "Elovan, Milose, your authorities have upgraded. Go immediately to the secret room underground. Ensure that the 'weapon' transformation won't be disturbed!"

The weapon was Katyusha. Link had a feeling that this crisis was for her.

"Understood!" The two High Elves turned and ran towards the underground room.

After these orders, white light flashed around him. He disappeared, and an instant later, he reached the balcony. Celine was watching Bryant there.

Even with this great and sudden change, Celine still wasn't disturbed. After all the wars, her mind was much stronger than those High Elves. No matter what happened, she wouldn't even blink if Link was still alright.

Right now, she still had her eyes on Bryant.

"How are things?" Link asked.

Celine's eyes didn't leave from the lens. Knowing that Link was here, she said, "Bryant is still in the yard. He looks normal."

"Oh?" Link activated a Spatial Lens and saw Bryant through the distorted light. The elf was reading in his room, unaffected by the chaos outside. His movements didn't even change. He was just reading page after page.

"I've been watching for a few days, and he's always like this," Celine says. "It looks like he's patiently waiting for you to finish designing."

Link watched closely but didn't find anything strange. He couldn't keep watching. As the lord, he had to hurry to the suburbs and take care of the explosion.

Thinking, he said, "Keep watching him and call Lily if anything is wrong, then fire. Don't give him time to react! I'll teleport back immediately."

"Understood." Celine nodded. She rubbed her reddening eyes and continued watching Bryant.

Seeing her like this, Link cast an Essence Vitality on her. Celine felt the power surging through her and smiled at Link. Link smiled as well. Then he activated the transmission spell again, hurrying to the suburbs.

When he got there, it was empty. Link could sense Jacker bringing many soldiers here. They were fast, but they couldn't compare to Link's spell.

The explosion site was around five miles from the Mage Tower. It was at the border of Scorched City, and the buildings were sparse. The Level-9 spell only destroyed around 30 houses. Link circled in the air and got an estimate of the casualties. Around 100 had died while close to 1000 were hurt. This was much better than he'd expected.

At this time, Jacker arrived with 1000 Sunlight Warriors above Level-6. Link descended.

"Lord!" Jacker ran over and saluted. The others followed suit.

Link nodded and ordered, "The attacker has escaped, and this place is safe. Go help the affected citizens Oh, leave a dozen to help me. I will investigate the explosion site."

"Yes, Lord." Jacker immediately turned. "You, you, you, you guys go help the lord!"

The chosen Warriors were all excited. Puffing up their chests, they walked forward in unison, yelling, "Understood, general!"

Link waved. "Come with me."

"Yes, Lord!" they replied together. They were so excited that they were as tense as robots.

The group hurried to the heart of the explosion.

While everyone in the upper level of Ferde was in a flurry, Bryant was still reading in his room. He looked calm. Fifteen minutes had passed since the explosion. During this, he seemed to have flipped through 20 pages. He actually hadn't comprehended any words.

Taking advantage of the chaos, Merna had successfully infiltrated the Mage Tower. However, she seemed to have disappeared, having not said anything after all this time.

She didn't even send their signal, let alone show up.

Bryant looked out the window. The Mage Tower loomed before him. At this time, it glowed with dazzling magic light. Less than three seconds after the explosion, the entire Mage Tower completely closed off. The magic seal was very powerfulat least Level-11.

His reaction is too fast. Merna can't break through the magic seal with her power. I hope she'll be okay.

Bryant was very anxious. Honestly, if Merna wasn't Nozama's daughter, he would have left immediately after seeing the Mage Tower's transformation. This place was too dangerous. Trying to rescue someone from the tower was no different from suicide.

I'll wait for four more hours. If there still isn't any news, I'll find an excuse to leave Ferde! Bryant decided inside.

As for the rescue plan, Bryant didn't think about it. The Isle of Dawn and Army of Destruction were only temporary allies. There was no need to die for each other.

At that time, Merna was going crazy inside the tower.

With the detection earring from the God of Destruction, she had a vague sense of where Katyusha was. Thus, she went straight to the underground room after entering the Mage Tower.

She was very fast. Within two seconds, she was on the first underground level. She ran into trouble when she tried entering the second level.

Just as she was about to get through the entrance, a magic door appeared in the previously open passageway. Surprised, she retreated immediately but found that it was blocked behind her.

Even more shocking was that the magic door was very powerful. It was impossibly sturdy, and the runes on it were past her understanding. She couldn't even break through forcefully, let alone undo it.

Thus, she was stuck in the first underground level. She couldn't walk as wished either because there were detection runes all around. Many were hidden in unnoticeable corners too. She would be exposed easily if she wasn't careful.

This damn Mage Tower is scarier than the Abyss!

The only thing she could do was hide in a corner and wait patiently until the other lowered their alert. Then she would find a chance.

However, Merna didn't notice that there was a painting of King Charlie on the wall behind her. The king's eyes were so detailed that they seemed to be real.

And now, they were staring at Merna's back.

Mage Tower, Mana core

"Where's Link?" Eliard had been looking for Link, but found Evelina instead.

"He went to check on the explosion and left me in charge of the Mana core. Is something wrong?" Evelina did not turn around to face him. She had to maintain control of the Mana core.

"Nothing really, just that I found something quite interesting on the first basement," said Eliard. He then raised his voice and gave the tower spirit Lily a command. "Lily, open up mirrors 13 and 17."

"Command received," replied Lily. There was a whir. Then, a two-sided magic mirror materialized near the Mana core out of thin air.

The first basement was where the Mage Tower's storage rooms were. All kinds of magic materials, food and wine were kept inside them. There was enough for a thousand people to survive for at least ten years.

The magic mirror displayed a corner of one of the food storages. The left side showed a pile of potatoes, while the mirror's right side showed a row of oaken wine barrels.

Evelina looked at the two displays. Finally, she gave up, shaking her head. "I don't see anything."

Eliard chuckled. "You can't see it here. It's hiding in a blind spot between the two detection runes."

Evelina asked curiously, "Then how did you find it? The tower's Mana network didn't pick up any unusual activity."

"If I'm going to tell you how I found it, I'll need to start from the time the Mage Tower was still in construction. Back then, I had overseen its entire construction process. I was even there when they began laying out its foundation. In the first basement, there, in mirror 17, do you see a mural on the wall?"

Evelina looked at where Eliard was pointing and nodded. "Yes, though it looked a bit crude. The scribbles of a High Elf child in the Isle of Dawn would have looked much better there."

Eliard looked offended. "It was me. I painted it in my free time. When I was still practicing the Stoneshaping spell, Master Grenci told me that painting murals was the best way to master the spell. That's not the point. The point is, I spent a lot of time on the eyes. Do you notice that the eyes of King Charles on the mural here seem to be gleaming?"

"It certainly does. Does this have anything to do with what you're saying? There doesn't seem to be any magic at work in those eyes," said Evelina, still confused.

Eliard shrugged, then said disparagingly, "Evelina, I've been telling you that your thinking has always been rigid. I've already given you a hint, and still, you can't see the secret behind the mural. If Link was here, he would have immediately known what it is."

Evelina kept her calm. She had heard such talk from Eliard far too many times during their discussions. If she had let his words get to her, she would have been driven mad by him a long time ago.

However, no matter how closely she looked at the magic mirror, she still could not see what she was supposed to be seeing. "Where is this secret you're talking about?"

Eliard said to Lily, "Magnify mirror 17, focus on the mural's eyes."

"Magnifying"

The image was slowly expanding. Throughout the magnification process, the mirror's image maintained its definition. When the image was magnified tenfold, Eliard shouted, "That's enough. Evie, look at the reflection in the figure's eyes. There, do you see it? It's a white-furred mouse."

Evelina had already seen it when the image was only magnified fivefold. Deep down, she admired Eliard's observational powers, but she would never be caught dead admitting that to him out in the open. She glanced at him and said with a huff, "Alright, I admit you have quite a keen pair of eyes."

"I won't argue with you over that," said Eliard as he pointed at the reflection. "The mouse is a Magical Beast. It's extremely intelligent, and it's not as weak as it looks. This little fellow managed to sneak into the Mage Tower when the place was in chaos for at least two seconds. It had slipped into the first basement without even tripping the detection seals in its path. Despite its size, its speed and observational powers are extraordinary. I estimate that its power may be above Level-8."

Evelina had listened to Eliard's evaluation of the creature with a solemn face. When he gave his estimation of the creature's power, she said incredulously, "Isn't it a bit of a stretch to assume that such a tiny creature has Level-8 power?"

"Not at all. Have you read Magician Opello's magic book called Big and Small? asked Eliard.

"No, what's it about?" Evelina felt a bit awkward. Half the time, she did not understand a word of what Eliard said, and this was not the first time. Was she getting old?

"You should give it a read. Opello's a Level-5 Magician in the Mage Tower. He's quite imaginative. The book's filled with all of his wondrous ideas and imaginings. In the book, Opello presented his theory that an object's size does not have any substantial value. For instance, through spatial manipulation, a person can be shrunk into the size of a peanut, without affecting his strength in the slightest."

"Alright, I believe you. I'll read it when I'm free. Right now, what should we do?"

Evelina was aware that new books were being added into the Mage Tower's library collection every day. Before, she did not really think too much about it. She had always assumed that these low-level Magicians had nothing to offer her since she had surpassed them all in terms of knowledge and power. But now, she saw them in a new light.

Eliard had already thought of a plan. "This little fellow hasn't realized that it's been found out. It hasn't moved from its hiding spot all this time, probably waiting for us to lower our defenses. It must be heading towards the laboratory where the Naga Katyusha is being held prisoner. If that's the case, we could lay a trap ahead of it through a portal. When the Mage Tower's defenses are sufficiently lowered, and the magic door is opened, it will walk rightito our trap"

Before he could finish, a white light filled the great hall. Link's figure appeared when it subsided.

Eliard clapped his hands and said, "Link, you're back just in time. I've discovered an intruder in the Mage Tower."

Link had just finished inspecting the site of the explosion. The culprit was cautious. He did not gain much information from the scene. At the moment, he only knew that the culprit had used a delayed-action magical spell. It had been triggered using a Level-9 runestone. He had spent half a day searching for other clues, but even with the aid of a Focus spell, he did not find anything else.

All evidence clearly pointed to the fact that the culprit's method was extremely advanced and was not at all an inferior to Link.

When he heard what Eliard said, his eyes lit up. "Intruder? Whatitruder?"

Eliard began explaining his discovery to Link in great detail. When he got to the part about the eyes on the mural, Link immediately said, "You were able to spot it from its reflection in the mural's eyes? Not bad, not bad at all."

Eliard seemed pleased with himself, then gestured at Evelina. "See, I told you Link would understand immediately. You still have a long way to go."

Evelina's mouth contorted with irritation.

When Link listened to Eliard's plan, he pondered it for a while before saying, "I see nothing wrong with your plan. It's just a bit too risky. You may even alert the Magical Beast's owner. There's still a lot of room for improvement."

"Hmm, let me think it through again." Eliard frowned, deep in thought.

Link smiled. He already had a plan ready. "How about this? Let's not try to catch the Magical Beast. Instead, we'll pull a trick on it."

"A trick?" Eliard was silent for a few seconds. He then immediately said, "Are you suggesting that we let it find its target and then contact its owner in order to bring him or her out of hiding?"

Link nodded. "It's still too risky to let the beast reach its intended target. We may be in trouble if its owner has some powerful technique up their sleeve. As a safety precaution, we'll set up an illusion and fool the Magical Beastito thinking that it's found its mark. At that point, it will make contact with its owner. We'll be able to trace the connection back to the real culprit hiding in the shadows!"

Eliard's eyes were glowing as he listened. He nodded furiously. "It's definitely a better plan than mine. What are we waiting for? Let's get started! This guy sure has some nerve, causing so much trouble in Ferde! He's gonna pay for his actions, big time!"

Merna stayed in the basement of the Mage Tower for around two hours. Then she heard a soft click. The magic door's aura disappeared.

They lowered the security! Merna was overjoyed. However, she didn't hurriedly act. Instead, she remained in the corner. It was most likely a trap.

This didn't mean that they'd found her. Instead, they didn't find her yet but wanted to use this to lower her guard and make her come out of her hiding place. Thus, she kept waiting quietly. After another hour or so, she finally snuck out of the spot.

There were detection runes hidden all over the storeroom, but Merna's body shape was her advantage. She also had great vision. Even the most hidden runes were visible to her.

Carefully, she walked in the blind spots of all the runes. Three minutes later, she successfully got to the second basement floor.

Here, her detection earring vibrated faintly. This meant she was getting closer to her target. It was less than 60 feet away!

Merna was overjoyed. Only a bit more. If I find the right location, I can save her!

Now, another thought appeared in her mind. It's been more than three hours. We agreed that I'd contact that old guy once I got in. Should I send a signal?

This idea circled in her mind before she scrapped it. The Mage Tower is too scary. There might be other detective methods. I shouldn't risk it at the most critical part. Let's figure out the situation first.

Composing herself, Merna continued feeling her way forward. A while later, she was at the entrance to the third floor. Her detection earring was vibrating more strongly now. Katyusha was right before her!

Merna repressed her excitement and continued. After a while, she saw a magic door.

This magic door was different from the ones that had appeared because of the security alert. This one was semi-transparent with many magic runes overlapping on the surface. Looking through the tiny cracks between the runes, Merna saw Katyusha.

The Naga was curled up inside a circular pool, bathed in red light. This red light came from the Spear of Victory in her hand instead of from herself. There were many faint purple runes outside the light. They constantly corroded at the red light, trying to get inside Katyusha's body.

Even further away stood three Magicians. They guided the Secret runes forward. Under their effort, the Spear of Victory's red glow was already very dim and at the brink of defeat.

Merna was shocked. It's Secret magic. Ferde wants to control Katyusha!

She wasn't a Magician, but she was still familiar with each type of magic so she wouldn't get fooled by others. For example, she didn't make arsed decision after this initial conclusion of the current situation. She started distinguishing the runes carefully. After five or six minutes, she finally concluded that it was true.

Katyusha can't hold on for longer. I must alert that old guy!

Merna left the magic door and retreated to her safe corner in the second floor. She took out a small silver ring and started adding power in.

Her father had given this to her. It wasn't that powerful, but it had a unique technology for sending messages. It was very secretive.

Merna sent out everything she'd seen in detail. Because it had to be secretive, she sent the messages slowly. What he didn't know was that five pairs of eyes in the Mage Tower were watching her every moveLink, Eliard, and the three Legendary High Elf Magicians.

"It's contacting its owner, but the method is very secretive. I can't trace it. Who could it be?" Eliard whispered.

Link already had a candidateBryant. However, he couldn't be completely sure, so he didn't speak.

"The method is quite powerful," Evelina said. "I can't detect the signal at all."

"Judging by its make, I think it's from the Abyss." Elovan stared at the ring in the fuzzy mouse's front paw.

At that time, Celine's voice sounded in Link's mind. "Bryant moved. He's coming towards the Mage Tower!"

Alerted, Link replied, "Don't hesitate. Shoot!"

By now, the entire Scorched Ridge was still in high alert, and Bryant was walking towards the Mage Tower which was out of ordinary. Even if he wasn't responsible, his actions now were going to get him killed!

Simultaneously, Link started directly controlling the Mage Tower's Divine Punishment protocol. He set the target, adjusted the Mana, and gathered power in one smooth action, activating the Level-19 Divine Punishment laser.

Boom! A soft sound came from the balcony. Celine had fired at Bryant. Link saw fire streak past the corner of his eye.

Almost at the same time, the Divine Punishment laser appeared too. Whoosh! An almost invisible beam of light shot out from the tower towards Bryant.

If Bryant wasn't prepared, he would definitely be dead. Even if he'd escaped from this, he would die under Celine and the Mage Tower's later attacks. But in that moment, Link suddenly felt something strange, along with an indescribable feeling of danger.

His focus sharpened to an unprecedented level; his thoughts whirred. In his eyes, time slowed down and almost stopped.

At the same time, Link felt the world change oddly. The light outside the window and room dimmed and dimmed.

What's going on? Dark magic is swallowing light No, it's not dark magic. It's time magic. Even the speed of light is slowing, freezing. Less light is reaching my eyes, so the world is darkening!

Spatial magic could restrain practically all existences in the world, but other than singularities, it couldn't affect light. So even though Link used spatial magic to seal Katyusha, she didn't turn into a shadow. One could still see her clearly because light could still travel freely within the frozen space.

But not even light could escape from the effects of time on this realm. When someone froze time, everything there would look dark.

Light was dimming quickly, but Link's thoughts were still burning brightly. So that divine rune freezes time. What a great method!

As that thought flashed past, he focused on his neck. There, a pocket watch-like thing hung from a Mithril chain. A runestone was hidden inside the watch. It was the Order Compass that he had made to defend against time attacks.

Realm Essence followed his thoughts and entered the Order Compass. That instant, Link's entire body, and soul shook. Then a gold thread appeared from his chest.

The thread organized itself, instantly forming the apparition of a gold pocket watch. There was a clock with one hand. The needle measured milliseconds. Each circle was one millisecond.

Before, the hand had spun extremely quickly. Now, Link saw it tick by bit by bit. It was so slow but was still getting slower.

Time is freezing! Link's heart shook. The world in his eyes was already very dark. In this darkness, he saw Eliard, Evelina, Elovan, and Milose.

These four were all Legendary or close to it. Faced with this kind of change, all of them had reacted. Shock was written in their faces, and their eyes were all trained on Link.

Under their gazes, Link's thoughts focused on the millisecond hand on the Order Compass. It was still slowing down. Link had to speed it up.

He forced Realm Essence onto it. Move!

Click. The hand quickened only a tiny bit, but Link had used all his might. One-fifth of his Realm Essence had been burned.

It wasn't enough. The divine rune's power was too strong. His power wasn't enough alone.

He gazed at the four Magicians. They were looking at him too. For people at their level, they could completely figure out each other's thoughts by applying their gazes to the current situation.

The four Magicians couldn't move, but power extended from their bodies. They snaked to the needle on the Order Compass and applied force to move it.

Link did the same.

At this moment, the five strongest Magicians in Ferde put their powers together.

Click, click, click. The needle moved much faster. The ticks were like cracking ice in everyone's ears.

The five continued to use their power. Click, click, click. Time had stopped slowing and was regaining speed, recovering back to normal. The room brightened again.

This didn't mean that the Order Compass was more powerful than the divine rune. Instead, it was that the five Legendary Magicians working together surpassed the level of the small divine rune.

If one's power wasn't enough, they would fail. This was the basic law.

No matter how many tricks one had, if they didn't have enough power, it would be useless. They still wouldn't be able to change the world.

The divine power inside the rune still wasn't enough. Paired with the repulsion that Firuman had against divine objects, Link's group won this battle.

What had been frozen went back to normal. What followed was the chilling alarm ringing throughout the Mage Tower.

"Alert! Alert! Invader discovered! Invader discovered!"

Bryant was inside the Mage Tower!

## 535. A Wretched End To A Glorious Life

When the flow of time returned to normal, Bryant had reached the first basement.

There was a tearing sound. It came from the divine time seal in his hand. In an instant, it crumbled into a pile of ash which scattered into the air.

He was taken aback. "How is this possible? Only a tenth of a second has passed!"

His targets had resisted the seal's effect. This was to be expected. But he had hoped that the seal's effect would last for at least eight-tenths of a second. Though its duration was not as long as he would have liked, Merna had already planned out his route for him. Eight-tenths of a second was enough time for Bryant to enter the place, rescue Katyusha and immediately teleport out of there.

Only one-tenth of a second had passed. As soon as the thought flashed across his mind, he felt an intense magic reverberation surrounding him. A magical barrier was taking shape around him.

He turned around and saw that magical runes had appeared on the walls around him. Level-11 magical barriers surfaced one after another, completely trapping him within and preventing him from destroying the Mage Tower.

A chill ran down Bryant's spine as he saw the barriers forming one after another.

He had thought about destroying the Mage Tower as his last resort. But there was no chance of that happening with this thing around him. The magical barriers were all Level-11. Though he could still bring the whole place down, he would need time, which was not what he had plenty of at the moment. As soon as Link reached him, he would be done for.

He knew that right now, his only option was to flee. He could not afford to waste another second, or else he would definitely be killed in this Mage Tower. He was the one who had cast the Blazing Sun spell in the outskirts of Scorched City. There was no way he would be able to hide his tracks from his enemy. Knowing Link, if given the chance, he would certainly execute Bryant on the spot.

He needed to escape from this place immediately!

Turning around, he saw a tiny shape running out of the entrance to the Mage Tower's second basement. A shrill voice cried out, "Wait for me, take me with you!"

It was Merna. She had realized something had gone wrong. If they did not flee now, they would both be dead. She did not really know the Naga anyway, and she had no intention of throwing away her life for a complete stranger. Now that their plan had failed, Merna's first reaction was to flee as well.

She also knew that she would not be able to get out of there alive on her own. She was up against four Legendary masters of Ferde and the Mage Tower itself. She needed Bryant's help in this.

Bryant glanced at her, then at the enclosing magical barriers around him. Without any hesitation, he turned around and began to run.

It was every High Elf for himself. It would be a miracle if he managed to escape from the Mage Tower with his body still intact. He could not care any less about a puny little demon like Merna.

His body dissolved into a faint green light. Like lightning, he was able to pass through a crack under the magic door that was materializing in its door frame and reach the great hall on the first floor.

Layers of magical barriers were taking shape in the great hall. They were all Level-11. The scale of magic being used here was huge. At that moment, two layers of barriers had already materialized in the hall.

There were even more magical barriers forming near the Mage Tower's great door. His opponent apparently had no intention of letting him leave the place. But thanks to his lightning reaction time, Bryant had chosen to retreat as soon as things went awry. At that moment, there were only two layers of magical barriers around the Mage Tower's great door. He could still break through them.

In his desperation, Nature Power boiled in his body as he raced through the air with lightning speed. He had also channeled his magical energy within his wand. A silver leaf shot out, clearing a path in front of him.

The silver leaf then broke through the barriers. It immediately lost all its momentum and returned to Bryant's wand. Taking the opportunity, Bryant burst through the great door.

Once outside the tower, Bryant's magical energy again rushed into his wand. There were three leaves on it . At that moment, a blinding light shone out from them in unison. One of the leaves expanded into an emerald shield. The other two danced around him, ready to intercept any incoming attack from any direction.

When he finished casting his spell, there was a sudden palpitation Bryant's heart. The Mage Tower has locked onto me. It's even able to affect time. Damn it, its attack is above Level-15. There's no way I can block it!

He turned around swiftly and began doing an erratic dance in the air, trying to dodge the incoming attack.

However, just as he began moving, a streak of dazzling light shot down from the sky. It hit squarely against the emerald shield that was spinning around him.

The emerald shield's magic was Level-12. Bryant was unharmed, but he could feel the impact of the attack.

While he was still shaken by the impact, the Mage Tower launched a second attack. It was the same unblockable laser as before. He was still slightly dazed. There was no way he could dodge the attack in time.

Is this the end? No, I still have a chance! Substitution spell!

In an instant, one of the leaves flew forward with blinding speed. In mid-air, the air dissolved into a faint green mist, out of which appeared Bryant. The green mist he had left behind solidified into another leaf with the same shape as the one before.

The newly formed leaf was shot down by the laser. The World Tree's leaf was Level-17, but it was disintegrated immediately by the Mage Tower's attack.

Bryant did not have time to look at what happened behind him. He had just cast a Substitution spell to propel himself 1000 feet forward. He was now outside Scorched ridge, flying in the air above the outer city.

Just as he was about to let out a sigh, there was the same palpitation in his heart again. The Mage Tower was still targeting him. It seemed as if there was no end to its attacks.

Thank god I've put some distance behind me. I can still dodge its attack. Bryant was about to dodge to the side. But before he could even move, another laser shot down from the sky. This time, the attack blocked off his trajectory.

Bryant was stunned for a moment. Under such circumstances, his reaction speed was slowed down. Before he could even react, there was a tearing sound in the air. A transparent laser had pierced through his green light form.

Before the laser's energy exploded within Bryant's body, a searing pain bore through his head. Bryant immediately reacted to this by activating his wand's special effect.

Death Substitute!

Death Substitute

The World Tree's divine spell

Description: After activation, the World Tree wand will absorb all the damage its user has sustained and die in his or her place.

(Note: Try not to get yourself killed, as you can only use this once.)

When Bryant activated the spell, the World Tree wand in his hand began to splinter. Before long, it was completely shattered into pieces.

The wand had been by Bryant's side for 300 hundred years, and now, it was shattered beyond repair. Still, there was no time for him to mourn as the danger had not yet passed.

Without the World Tree wand's protection, he had lost his ability to disturb the flow of time. On the other hand, Link's Mage Tower seemed capable of freezing time itself, and Celine never missed her mark with that magic rifle of hers. At that moment, Bryant had no chance of dodging either one of their attacks. He would be dead for sure when the next wave of attacks reached him.

Bryant felt a growing dread in him as he realized that he was doomed. He returned to his physical form and amplified his voice magically as he shouted at the Mage Tower behind him, "I surrender! I surrender! Don't kill me!"

He was floating motionlessly in the air.

Surrendering himself was his only way out of this alive.

Celine was about to take her next shot at him but soon stopped as she saw Bryant giving himself up. At the magic core area, Link was also stunned. The Mage Tower's offensive magic formation was already charged up and poised to fire another shot at Bryant.

Around Link, Eliard and the three High Elves looked at Bryant. None of them said a word as they waited for Link to make a decision.

Fearing that Link had no intention of sparing his life, Bryant shouted again, "I know all of the High Elves' secrets, including the World Tree. I knew the High Elf Queen herself, as well as all of the core members of the Royal High Elf family. If you promise to spare me, I'll tell you everything you need to know. I'll even defect to Ferde and devote all my talents to you."

Bryant had said all this in earnest. His voice amplification spell was one-directional. Only Link and the rest of the core Magicians heard what he said, while everyone else in the city could not hear him. This way, he would not spark outrage among the people of Ferde, and Link would not have Bryant answer for the resulting chaos in the city.

One's crime usually tended to fade away from people's memory if hidden away from scrutiny for a long enough time.

Hearing this, Evelina said, "My lord, we should subdue him immediately. He's more useful to us alive."

Eliard knew that the Blazing Sun spell that exploded in the south of the city was Bryant's doing. Seeing him surrendering himself in order to live a little bit longer, Eliard's contempt for Bryantitensified even more. But from a logical point of view, it was indeed better to keep Bryant alive. Eliard did not say a word, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with Evelina.

Though the other two High Elves were Legendary masters, they were not exactly core Magicians of the Mage Tower. As such, they were not in any position to voice their opinions. Milose's mouth twitched as if he wanted to say something, but Elovan pulled his arm back, stopping Milose immediately.

Link thought about this for half a minute. Then, he said to Celine, "Shoot him down from the sky. Nullify his powers, but don't kill him."

Though Bryant's life was spared, his actions could not be pardoned so easily. The High Elf's extensive knowledge of the Isle of Dawn was the only thing Link needed from him. His powers, on the other hand, was of no use to Ferde. It might even bring more harm than good, and so there was no need for him to keep them. He might even decide to turn on Ferde again in the future.

Celine knew what Link had in mind. Without any hesitation, she fired her rifle.

Bang! A streak of light raced out across the sky and tore through Bryant's legs.

There was another bang. Another streak of light took out one of Bryant's arms. Bryant could not keep himself afloat in the air any longer after taking those two hits. Like a bird whose wings had been injured, he began to fall from the sky

A third streak of light arched across the sky and hit Bryant's other arm, slowing his descent through the air.

A moment later, there was a dull thud. Bryant had landed on the road, breaking god knew how many bones in his body. Due to the last bullet that slowed his fall, he managed to survive the impact.

Bryant lay on the ground, pain paralyzing his arms and legs. Due to his indomitable spirit, he was still conscious enough to feel the indescribable pain gripping his body after his fall.

He sighed. Who would have thought this glorious life I have led until now would all come crashing down?

## 536. The High Elves Are Crazy

Oh, ah! My arm! My leg!

Bryant shuddered and was shocked awake from his nightmare. After regaining consciousness, he felt that he was under the covers of a bed. It felt warm and soft. His broken limbs weren't in pain either. They didn't seem to be hurt; he could even move them.

He found this strange. What's going on? Were they all nightmares? And now I'm awake, so none of that had happened?

Opening his eyes, Bryant looked around. He was lying in an open and bright room. The furniture inside looked familiar. At closer inspection, he seemed to be in the courtyard from before.

Sitting up, he looked at his hands. He realized that there were many subtle runes on his skin. Immediately, he recognized that his hands and feet weren't actually his. This was a flesh magic puppet spell.

Oh, seems that everything that had happened was real. Bryant sighed.

"You're awake?" a voice asked.

Bryant looked over. There was a table by the illuminated window. Link, clad in casual clothing, sat there. He closed his book and looked over.

Ferde now was bright and sunny. Golden sunlight shone in from the window like a gold beam inside the room that was dim in comparison. Link was half bathed in sunlight and half covered in shadows. Because of the light, Bryant couldn't see his expression clearly. He just felt like the other was very calm.

"How long did I sleep?" Bryant clutched his head. It felt heavy like there was cotton stuffed inside. His thoughts couldn't flow smoothly.

"Not long, 75 hours." Link's voice was light and emotionless.

Bryant suddenly discovered something. All his power had disappeared, not a shred left behind. His body was empty; he was no different from a regular person.

"You sealed my power?" he asked. He wasn't surprised.

"No, I didn't," Link said. But just as Bryant sighed in relief, Link continued, "I just separated it completely from your body What I truly sealed was your soul."

Bryant was shocked. He subconsciously clutched his head, trying to think of a spell to cast. But when he tried it, he discovered something even more shocking. "Where are my spells? Why can't I remember them? What did you do?!"

Only spells under Level-2 were in his memory, and they weren't much either. Thinking carefully, he only knew five or six harmless spells. Everything else was gone. Like a book soaked in water. His memory was like the words in the book. There were some imprints, but he couldn't think of anything if he tried.

"No, you can't do this to me! Magic is my everything. You must return it to me!" Bryant used all his might to sit up in bed, but he discovered that some power had restrained his limbs. All struggle was in vain.

Link didn't speak or even look at Bryant. He just sat in the chair and read his book, completely focused.

After struggling, Bryant finally realized that right now, he was just an insect to Link. All his struggling, growls, and roars were useless. Link could isolate him from the outside world with a small spell. The world wouldn't even be able to notice his situation.

Understanding this, Bryant gave up. He leaned against the bed, panting heavily. When he caught his breath, he said, "Alright, what do you plan on doing to me?"

Link closed his book again. "While you were sleeping, we read all your memories, including your cooperation with the Army of Destruction, the Isle of Dawn's plan, as well as the exact actors, their personalities and characteristics, and even the names of some young talents. Basically, we know everything that you know. Right now, you're useless to Ferde."

Bryant's heart went cold. "So you'll kill me?"

"No, you're wrong." Link shook his head. He waved at the door, and two beautiful magic puppets walked in. One was slender and delicate; the other was curvy and full. Both were attractive.

"Your explosion destroyed hundreds of homes. As the lord, I should give you the death penalty. However, we also received a great amount of information from you. As an exchange, you kept your life. Now, you can only live in this courtyard, unable to step outside forever. You can'titeract with anyone. If you have any needs, these two magic puppets will do their best to satisfy you Don't try escaping with the magic puppets either. They're different from typical war puppets. They're only slightly stronger than a regular human"

"You're holding me captive!" Bryant was furious. No matter what, he was at the Legendary level. Now, he was being imprisoned by a junior for life. He had to be angry.

Link ignored his reaction and continued, "There is no room for you to fight back. As a disabled man, no one will risk things to save you. Enjoy the rest of your life, Bryant."

He didn't care about Bryant's reaction. After speaking, white light flashed around him. When the light faded, he'd already left the courtyard.

Bryant felt the magic restraints on him disappear as well. He lay on the bed without moving like a soulless puppet.

After a long while, his stomach grumbled. The feeling of hunger traveled to his mind. He was hungry.

The curvy puppet immediately said, "Master, I will go prepare your meal." Her voice was smooth and lovely.

After she left, the slender puppet walked over with some clothing from the bedside. "Master, I will help you change," she said softly. Her voice was gentle and unique, very lovely as well.

When the puppet got closer, Bryant smelled a clean fragrance. This reminded him of his first woman. She was a human girl of 19 years old called Lilian. The smell was similar to Lilian's. It was filled with youthfulness but was still so different.

For a moment, Bryant felt like he'd gone back hundreds of years. At that time, he was still a human. He was still a hero worshipped by thousands of humans Ah, that was all in the past.

He'd always heard that Ferde's puppets were top-tier. Earlier, he was busy with saving the Naga and didn't focus on the magic puppets. Now, he realized that they were also made with flesh magic puppet techniques. This one looked exactly like a real human. Her movements were gentle too. When she helped him change, her pressure was just right. He didn't feel any discomfort.

After changing clothes, he waited a few minutes before the plump servant walked over with food. The delicious smell floated over, tempting him.

"Master, I will help you," the puppet said. After that, Bryant didn't have to move at all. He just had to sit on the chair.

He drank some of the soup made by the puppet. It was very fresh and brought his appetite to life. After finishing all the food, he burped happily and stretched. The plump puppet started clearing the dishes. The slender one began massaging him. Her pressure was just right, and her technique was great. Bryant was close to moaning in pleasure.

His anger slowly extinguished under this enjoyment. Fine, whatever. Without my power, I won't be able to live much longer. I'll just retire here.

Sighing, Bryant gave up.

Mage Tower

Link's group was watching Bryant. When he started enjoying himself, Eliard said, "He's no longer a threat to us."

"Who would have thought of this ending?" Evelina scoffed.

Celine only had one word. "Karma!"

Bryant's matter was over now. Next, they had to deal with the High Elves' crazy plan.

"Judging from Bryant's memories," Link said, "the confluence between the two realms is unavoidable. What we must do now is accumulate power for the new challenge."

The High Elves used the World Tree to fuse the realms. They were crazy and should be stopped if it was possible. Unfortunately, the World Tree was too big. Not only was it at Level-19, its scope was unimaginable. Even a Legendary Magician was as insignificant as an ant before it.

Once this plan was activated, it would be like a mortal facing an avalanche. They could only watch as it moved forward and then follow the current. If they tried to stop it, they would be pulverized.

Anyway, judging from Bryant's memory of the World Tree, Link couldn't think of any ways to stop the confluence. Even if there was, it would be extremely risky. In that case, he could only prepare for self-defense.

As for how exactly to respond, they had to discuss it.

While Ferde was having a critical meeting, the other forces in Ferde also felt the giant shake.

Dragon Valley, the Golden Plains, the northern Black Forest, the southern Syndicate, and some hermits were all alerted. While they were shocked, they also tried finding the source.

The second day after Ferde started acting, two unexpected guests came to Link. They were familiarLight Magician Halino and Dark Magician Eugene.

They'd fought and seemed to have gotten back together. Their relationship was really confusing. When they saw Link, Magician Halino's first words were, "The High Elves have gone crazy. We must stop them!"

## 537. The World Tree's Administrator

Link was adjusting his body's Realm Essence power when Halino and Eugene came to him.

With Evelina's own blood as a model and Bryant's aid and knowledge, Link now had a better understanding of Royal High Elf blood.

Of course, he still did not possess the actual thing, but his Realm Essence power was able to mimic certain properties of Royal High Elf blood.

At this stage, Link's Realm Essence power was now able to pass for the real thing. Even Evelina could not tell the difference, though it was in part due to the fact that her blood was impure. However, as a Magician, Link was obsessed with detail. He had personally experienced the power of pure Royal High Elf blood through his clashes with Milda, Ariel, and the High Elf Queen. Whenever he found a flaw in his replication of Royal High Elf blood, it was as if something would gnaw on him until he smoothed it out completely. Link even felt that he would not be able to sleep well for nights if the matter remained unresolved.

Three seconds after Halino saw Link, his expression changed. He then said, "What's wrong with you? When did you become a member of the Royal High Elf family? Have you gone mad?"

Eugene was even more observant. "Lord of Ferde, your power's grown purer. Why, you could even pass yourself off as an actual Royal High Elf! This is amazing!"

Hearing this, Link frowned. "What tipped you off? Did you sense a flaw in it?"

Eugene shook his head. "No, there's no flaw. That's the thing. It's too perfect. There's always a flaw or two in everything, even a Royal High Elf's power. You simply tried too hard."

"I see. It would seem that my powers of imitation aren't quite up to your level yet," said Link with a faint smile. Putting aside the matter of the Royal High Elf blood, he then said, "I need to know how you intend to disrupt the High Elves' machinations. Do you plan on destroying the World Tree?"

According to Bryant's memories, the World Tree was not a High Elf creation. It had existed since time immemorial. The High Elves had simply settled under its shade.

In order to occupy the area around the World Tree, the High Elves were forced to pay a huge price. They had to adjust their own power and lifestyle in order to adapt to the World Tree's power. For 3000 years, the High Elves had coexisted with the World Tree, gradually forming the symbiotic relationship between the two that existed today.

This relationship was akin to that of a lion and the fleas sucking blood off its body. The World Tree was the lion, and the High Elves were the blood-sucking fleas. But these fleas had been sucking blood off this gigantic lion for a long time. They knew how to steer it in a more favorable direction.

On the other hand, it was simply impossible for other fleas outside the Isle of Dawn to turn this lion around.

At least, Link did not know how to do such a thing.

Halino shook his head. "The World Tree is indestructible. Its power is limitless. Its roots are planted directly into the core of Firuman. Destroying it would mean destroying all of Firuman."

"Then what should we do?" Link was now even more curious.

Before, he had assumed that Halino had no idea just how terrible the World Tree's power was. Judging from his explanation, the Light Magician seemed to know a lot more about it than Link himself. Since he knew something that Link did not, he must have some sort of inkling to stop the High Elves. This was all the more reason for Link to listen to what Halino had to say next.

Link pricked his ears up, listening attentively to Halino now.

Eugene, the Dark Magician, added, "The World Tree is a magical relic passed down from ancient times. In a way, it's like a huge tree-shaped magical puppet, which isn't all that different from the tower spirit Lily that you had developed recently. The World Tree implements a user authority system similar to your Mage Tower's, which also offers supreme administrative authority over the tree itself. As far as we knew, none of the High Elves were given such an honor. According to legend, this authority was carved on a stone tablet."

"Supreme administrative authority? On a stone tablet?" Link grew even more curious. There was no mention of this in the game. He had always assumed that the World Tree was simply an ancient tree whose existence was similar to a guardian deity. He never knew that the tree was a magical creation.

If such a stone tablet existed, wouldn't it automatically grant anyone wielding it the power to destroy the whole world? thought Link.

This piece of information had come as a surprise to him. The fate of the world could literally be in anyone's hands. Link would not have minded if the stone tablet was in the hands of someone he could trust to keep the world in one piece. However, it would be a different story if it fell in a demon's hands.

The Light Magician Halino was thinking the same thing. He shot a sideways look at Eugene and said, "Also, according to legend, this tablet was called the Book of Creation. It was torn to shreds by the Storm Lord during a great war in the past. As a result, no one in this world has had complete administrative authority over the World Tree for a long time."

"The Book of Creation was destroyed?" Link jolted. Halino had mentioned the Storm Lord. Incidentally, Link's Ode of a Full Moon sword had once belonged to the Storm Lord in its previous life. It should know something about this.

Ignorant of the origin of Link's sword, Halino continued, "The original Book of Creation was lost forever, never to resurface in this world. However, its fragments were found. At the moment, there are three known fragments of the Book that still exist in this world. One is in the hands of the High Elves, another one is in the dragon's possession, and the third one is somewhere in the far north. Any one of these fragments would be enough to give you some power over the World Tree. Maybe this will put an end to the High Elves' madness."

"Sounds hard." Link was now extremely fascinated by this. Still, he managed to keep his face expressionless. His voice also remained impassive as he spoke.

Seeing Link's expressionless face, Halino assumed that Link was still not aware of the gravity of their situation. He continued, "Lord of Ferde, you must understand, the High Elves' plan to reunite the two realms will set off a magical disruption across the entire continent. At that moment, ordinary folk may not feel a thing, but without the World Tree's protection, more powerful Magicians will be severely affected by the disruption. If nothing is done to stop this from happening, our powers will go out of control, and we'll all perish!"

Realization came over Link's face. That was the reason why both Eugene and Halino had come to him for his help together. It seemed that Link would not be spared by the effects of this magical disruption as well.

However, he was no longer that young Magician who would be easily swayed by the words of others. He had power and influence of his own. He could decide what to do based on his own judgment.

Though the matter was indeed serious, Link and his companions had already considered the possibility of a magical disruption and devised a proper countermeasure against it.

Noticing that Link's face was still inert, Eugene said, "If you think you can weather this storm safely, then I think you should know about the second effect of the two realms' reunification."

"Tell me," said Link.

"The second most terrifying thing about it is that there is a world crack in the Korora Mountain range. Once the two realms are reunited, the stabilizing runestones around the crack will lose its effect, and the crack will then open up. Not saying that the world will end immediately at that point, but the God of Destruction will definitely take advantage of this opening to slip back into our world and bring about its end!

"This is certainly worrying." Link nodded, but he and the others had also already thought of this problem. According to Bryant's memories, the reunification process would not be immediate. Its early stages would take at least two years. Also, Link had already collected 224 Jogu pieces at the moment. He was close to reaching 300 Jogu pieces, which was the amount he had agreed to compensate Aisenis the Traveling Magician with for his services.

Two years was more than enough time to repair the crack. It was not as serious as Eugene made it out to be.

Though he acknowledged the seriousness of what the two Legendary Magicians had told him, Link decided still to remain impassive to all this. Halino and Eugene looked at each other, visibly even more troubled than before.

How could the lord not be concerned over the dangers a magical disruption and the world crack posed? Could it be that he already had some sort of countermeasure to deal with both threats? Could it be that Link planned to take refuge in the Isle of Dawn by replicating Royal High Elf blood in his veins?

Finally, the Light Magician said, "My lord, are these two things not enough for you to step in and stop the High Elves' madness?"

Link shook his head, "No, you misunderstand me. I don't really think that the situation is as bad as you claimed. Maybe I'm just being optimistic, but I think the two of you may be exaggerating things a bit. I'll need to look into this personally if I'm going to decide on anything."

"Alright then." Halino did not know what else to say. Link spoke the truth. Both of them might have gotten carried away when they came to him with their problems. This young man was different from them. He held power over a huge territory. He had a terrifyingly powerful Mage Tower and countless fearsome subordinates under him. Basically, Link was more powerful and wiser than the two of them. It would not be an easy task to persuade him to see their way.

Deep down, Halino was disappointed. The lord of Ferde was someone he had wanted as an ally. It was a shame that things did not go his way. He sighed and said, "But I'm sure that you'll arrive at the same conclusion as us after seeing things for yourself."

"You're wasting your breath, Halino," said Eugene the Dark Magician cynically.

Link was not offended by Eugene's words. He smiled and said, "The two of you have come a long way just to see me. There's no need to get allust, just because we don't see things the same way. Come, it's already lunchtime. Why don't we have lunch together?"

Halino shook his head. "No thanks, we need to find other potential allies. We'll be paying Dragon Valley a visit, and then maybe the Mountain Sage later."

"Alright, enough talk, Halino. Let's go, we don't have much time!" said Eugene. His body was already starting to dissipate. He then leaped out of a window and soared a few thousand feetito the sky. Before long, he vanished into the distance.

Halino shrugged his shoulders. "Lord of Ferde, don't pay him any mind. Eugene's always had a nasty temper, though he's been in a fouler mood than usual these days."

"Of course. Have a safe journey," said Link, smiling.

Halino nodded, then turned around and left the place.

When the two of them were gone, Link placed his hand on the handle of his sword. He then asked it telepathically, "Did he Storm Lord really shatter the Book of Creation?"

The Ode of a Full Moon sword replied, "I think he did break some stone tablet before. Or maybe it was me. It's been too long. My memory's a bit fuzzy, let me think about it for a moment."

## 538. Book Of Creations Pieces

This chapter is updated by BOXNOVEL.COM

When the Storm Lord was still alive, the World Tree already existed. It hadamnager at that time, and we all called him Heim. That means 'highest sovereign. At first, the lords and Heim lived in harmony. Then one day, a lord made a mistake while testing a new spell, leading to a horrible spatial change. Heim spent three years trying to revert this change. During these three years, countless people died Finally, Heim realized the danger of magic, and he decided to ban everyone from using it Then, the War of Domination erupted.

Link sat quietly in his Mage Tower's library, listening to the sword spirit recount the War of Domination from millenniums ago.

It was too long ago, and the sword spirit often had to stop, but his memory was still quite clear.

"What happened next?" Link asked.

What happened next? Let me think, let me think.

The sword spirit's voice was close to a murmur. He didn't continue until a long while later.

Heim was too powerful. The lords weren't his match at all. Using the World Tree's power, he easily defeated them all Until one day, someone discovered his secret.

Here, the sword spirit stopped again. Link couldn't help but urge in his mind, "And then?"

Don't worry, don't worry. It's been too long Oh, right. There was some unknown thief who somehow climbed onto Heim's World Tree. He discovered the secret of the Book of Creation. Heim destroyed the thief, but the secret still spread. The Storm Lord, Fire King, Iron Dragon and more all went forth. Finally, my old master, the Storm Lord, found the chance. He used turbid lightning to shatter the Book of Creation into pieces Ah, I was so powerful back then. I shattered the tablet with one hit, scattering the pieces on the ground After that, I became famous

"Alright, alright," Link quickly cut the sword spirit off so it wouldn't drown in its past glory. "What about the pieces? Was it really broken into three big pieces with one in the Dragon Valley, one in the Isle of Dawn, and one in the North?"

Let me think.

The sword spirit sank into deep thought again. Link had to wait patiently. This time, it took a long while to think. Just as Link was about to give up, it spoke again.

It was too chaotic at that time. I don't remember how many pieces it broke into, but one was really big. It was the main portion. When it broke, the Storm Lord grabbed it He'd checked it carefully and then said it was useless. He was about to throw it away, but someone stopped him

"And then?" Listening to the sword spirit's memories made Link feel constipated. He had to push it out bit by bit. It even made his stomach hurt.

This time, the sword spirit didn't reply. More than ten minutes later, it said in confusion, I can't remember, for some reason.

Link sighed deeply and composed himself. "Then tell me what you can remember," he said.

Okay. I'm sorry. It's been too long, and I can't remember. Its voice was apologetic.

Link couldn't do anything except comfort it. "It's okay. Anything you say now will become my unique advantage. I don't need to know everything. I just have to know more than other people."

The sword spirit seemed to feel better, and it continued.

I have some impression of where the large piece went. I think the Storm Lord still threw it to the north. He threw it really, really far away. He even used a wind spell. Perhaps that's the one in the North.

"Oh So you're saying that the one furthest up north may be the biggest one and the main portion at that?" Link suddenly wanted to go north immediately and search for the piece.

However, he quickly calmed down. It had been millenniums since the war. Throughout these years, there must have been countless ambitious people who went to find it. The High Elves must have had some information too. They wouldn't let go of a chance to control the World Tree.

After all these years, either someone found it secretly, or it was very difficult to find. Anyway, it couldn't be rushed. It depended on pure luck to find it.

Probably. I remember that the main portion had many more times the content than the other pieces.

Link was intrigued. He continued asking, "Is there more information?"

Let me think.

The sword spirit fell silent. After that, it managed to say some more, but they were mostly unreliable rumors. Link could only remember them and use them for reference.

While he was communicating with the sword spirit, Celine came over. "Link, that mouse surrendered."

Ever since that day, the mouse had been stuck in the basement. In order to not damage the Mage Tower, the Magicians just used the most powerful seal to keep the thing in a corner instead of capturing it.

It had been more than a week now. The thing hadn't had any food or water and had less than 30 feet to move in. It probably couldn't keep going anymore.

Since the sword spirit couldn't think of other valuable things, Link stood up. "Let's go take a look."

The two got to the basement. Eliard and Evelina were there too, observing the cage.

Eliard looked as if he'd seen something new and special. "Link, you came at the right time. Come look at this thing. We thought it was a magic pet, but it's actually a demon. It has such great transformation skills!"

Transformation? Link was quite curious. The game had transformations. For example, dragonification was the most typical one. However, a dragon couldn't hide their power after transforming. They were still a dragon.

But this demon didn't have any demonic aura after transforming. It looked just like a mouse. This was quite interesting.

He walked inside the seal but didn't see a mouse anywhere. There was just a demon girl around 13 or 14 years old.

She couldn't be over four feet tall. She wore a pure white fur dress and was barefoot. Her face looked just like a human's with pink cheeks. There were only two inhuman characteristics. First, her black eyes had faint purple veins. There were also two curled horns near her ears. The horns were also black with the same purple veins. They were beautiful and looked harmless.

Perhaps due to being watched by everyone, the "little girl" looked shy. She hugged her knees in the corner, peering outside cautiously. Her expression, paired with her lovely features, made her look pitiful. There was none of the chaotic murderous intent a demon should have.

Seeing Link come, she curled up even tighter, hiding her face behind her knees. Only her eyes were revealed.

"Will you kill me?" She finally spoke. Her voice was bright and young like a little girl's.

However, this was just the surface. To Link, he saw a Level-10 demon. She looked pitiful now because the Magicians present were all more powerful than her. If she faced regular people, she would be a horrific demon The souls lost due to the explosion outside the city hadn't been laid to rest yet.

Link didn't answer the demon's question. Instead, he asked, "So you must be Nozama's daughter. Tell me your name."

"I'm Merna." The "little girl" still looked pitiful.

"Merna?" Link thought back. This name was foreign No, he might have seen this girl before. Oh, right. She might have been in the game's demon fortress.

With this clue, Link's memory sharpened. Yes, after Avatar used his life to injure Nozama, he'd returned to the demon fortress. In the game, it was actually a storyline game. Naturally, countless players swarmed over to watch. Link went too, of course.

While they killed one boss after another, there would be a non-player character who wouldn't attack voluntarily. Her name was Merna, and she wasn't eye-catching. She wasn't brave either and would run away after a player came. They wouldn't be able to find her afterward.

Thinking now, she'd faced many players in the mid-Legendary Level and must have been terrified. She had escaped without caring about her poor dad at all. Of course, that didn't mean that Merna wasn't dangerous. It just meant that she didn't feel anything towards Nozama. They were merely using each other.

Thinking of this, Link said, "I want to know everything about Nozama. If you tell me, I'll let you go."

Merna shook her head. "No, it doesn't matter if you forgive me. If I betray my father, he can easily use a dark curse to kill me. I can't."

"Oh, then I'll just have to take you to the city's church to be baptized," Link said with a smile. He studied Merna's reaction while talking.

When he mentioned baptism, he saw Merna shudder clearly. To a demon, a baptism was like getting sliced by thousands of knives. It was the most horrible torture. Their souls would disappear completely after it.

Merna gulped. Instead of begging him, she turned to Celine and wiped at her tears. "Sister, you're my sister. Father told me about you many times. Save me, Sister, I don't want to die."

Her tears rolled down like pearls, and her voice was so sad. She looked very pitiful. Celine opened her mouth to say something, but nothing came out. She looked to Link. It was clear from her eyes that she had softened a bit.

It wasn't because of Merna's overly-dramatic performance. Instead, it was because of their similar pasts. If not for Link, Celine would probably have a fate like Merna and become a puppet too. Merna looked to only be a teenager. She was curled up in the enemy's Mage Tower and tried so hard to save herself.

Celine couldn't do it.

Link understood Celine and knew her thoughts with that one look. He sighed inwardly and said to her, "Merna is still useful. In the future, she can help us defeat Nozama. You will be in charge of her, but know that if she does anything, you're responsible."

Gentleness appeared in Celine's eyes. She knew that Link always respected his own rules and was stit on himself. Today, he broke the rules for her. Clearly, she was very important to him.

"I will watch her carefully, Lord," she said seriously.

"Yes." Link nodded and turned to Eliard and Evelina. "The single annual forgiveness right of the Lord has been used up."

The lord's forgiveness was the only special right Link gave to himself.

Eliard and Evelina nodded to show that they'd recorded it. This was the supervision system between the core Magicians. Even the lord wasn't exempted from it. Of course, Link could break it if he really wanted. However, his image that he'd built up would be destroyed instantly. He had to choose between these two options.

Merna had Legendary power while Celine was only at the pinnacle of Level-8. Thus, Link tapped the magic seal. Countless runes appeared in the air and easily passed through the seal, burying into Merna's body.

At the same time, other runes flew into Celine's body.

Three seconds later, Link tapped the seal again to cancel it. Merna pouted, but she stood up obediently and walked to Celine.

She had no choice. Not only did Link seal up most of her power, but she also had a curse planted in her for Celine. Celine could torture her with one thought. She had no way to fight back.

Celine patted her head and murmured, "Alright, Merna. It's much better than baptism."

Merna's matter would temporarily stop here. "I wish to go north. I need some helpers," Link said to Eliard.

The north had the main piece of the Book of Creation. He had to at least try his luck. If he really got the piece, the High Elf threat would vanish.

## 539. Winds Of War From All Sides

Updated by NovelFull.Com

Dragon Valley, outside the mist maze

"No, Halino, the Dragon Valley will no longer be a party to any wars in the continent," said the Red Dragon Queen's illusion. In the illusion, her dragon body lay coiled up on the ground. She was gazing at the Light Magician, her golden gleaming eyes half-closed.

Still, Halino did not give up. "Your Highness, you don't look too good. Did something happen in the Dragon Valley?"

"There's been no other incident since the opening of the crack. We already have our hands full with it. It was our mistake to begin with, so naturally, it falls to us dragons to keep the crack closed. I'm sorry, but it is beyond our power to intervene in anything else right now."

The Red Dragon Queen's voice was deadpan as if she could not be bothered with anything else in the world. When she finished, her eyes swiveled towards Eugene and then said, "Halino, do you really intend to find the Book of Creation's fragments with Eugene? Are you not worried that he has other plans for them?"

"Of course I'm worried, but it's a risk I'm willing to take. It would be better if you could join us in our search. It's a shame, really" Halino shrugged, visibly disappointed by the queen's refusal.

"I'm truly sorry," said the Red Dragon Queen again, sighing.

Seeing her in such a state, The Dark Magician Eugene cackled. "Just give up, Halino. Your words won't move her. She was the one who got dumped after all, and now look at her. You're better off seeking a dog's help instead of hers."

"Eugene!" Halino was aware of Eugene's sharp tongue, but he did not think that he would go this far!

As soon as Eugene said those words, the Red Dragon Queen's illusion trembled violently. It was probably due to a sudden surge of emotion on her side. After a few seconds, the illusion vanished.

Eugene shrugged his shoulders and chuckled. "See, I told you. I don't really know the specifics, but the fact that the lord of Ferde abandoned Dragon Power completely, and the dragon race in Ferde has withdrawn from the place meant that things did not end well between the two. But you should know, Link was a Dragon Duke before. So isn't it reasonable to assume that he was the one who dumped the Red Dragon Queen?"

Despite their differences, Halino could not help but admit that Eugene's words sounded reasonable. He let out a sigh. "Alright, I guess the only Emerald Council member we could go to now is the Mountain Sage himself."

He turned around, ready to leave. But just then, there was a stir in the Mist Maze. After a while, a gigantic form burst out of the maze. It was the Red Dragon Queen Gretel.

With a loud thud, she landed on the ground, and the earth trembled. Eugene immediately took on a defensive posture. If there was one thing he had learned from his long life, it was that hell indeed hath no fury like a woman scorned.

But he thought wrong.

Gretel lowered her head and widened her eyes at Eugene. Her voice was still flat when she said, "Though you could have worded it nicely, you are right, Dark Magician. I've been dwelling in the past for far too long. Everyone experiences failures and setbacks. Link has also been no more than the child of a noble family once. If he can move forward, so can I!"

Hearing this, Eugene raised a brow. "Your Highness, you still haven't let go of your little duke, have you? But no matter, we all have our little fixations. As long as you don't hamper our plans, I'm fine with you tagging along."

Gretel let out a humph. "You're mistaken. I never said I would work with you. I'm only proposing my alliance with Halino. I couldn't care any less about what happens to you."

Eugene shrugged, but he muttered under his breath, "Such a vindictive dragon!"

Halino did not expect such a turn of events. He was happy. The Red Dragon Queen's power level was not as high as theirs, but the extent of her power was vast, and she was also able to travel through dangerous places like the Sea of Void. She would make a valuable ally.

Feeling more optimistic, Halino said, "Great, then let's go find Mountain Sage Heroto. I'm sure he'll agree to join us."

"Let's hope so." Eugene did not share his companion's optimism.

North of the Black Forest, Skeletal Fortress

In the deepest depths of Skeletal Fortress, there was a secret room. In the middle of this room was an obsidian altar, and a blinding, red light was radiating from it. Beneath it, Molina the priest was kneeling on the ground, motionless.

This went on for an hour. Suddenly, a voice rang out from the red light.

"Katyushassoul is lost to us. We can no longer bring it back. However, our greatest concern now is not Katyusha, but those pointy-eared elves. The actions of those elves will bring destruction upon the Firuman realm. Go help them, and make sure their plans do not fail. Hehehe"

"But Master, Katyusha" Molina still could not come to terms with what happened to her sister.

"Katyusha was weak. She has failed me twice. There won't be a third time! Molina, she's gone forever. Do you understand?" said the cold voice from the red light.

Molina felt a sudden chill. "I understand, Master."

"Good. Now go. Let the pathetic creatures of this realm see for themselves how these elves came to destroy their own world. Hahaha, idiots, the lot of them."

The voice gradually faded away. Finally, the room once again fell into silence.

Molina was still kneeling on the ground. Five minutes later, she wiped the tears from her eyes and whispered, "Goodbye, Katyusha."

She stood up and walked out of the room. There were three Legendary Nagas already waiting outside the room.

Molina had regained her authoritative demeanor as a Naga Priest. She said with a low voice, "Alright, Master has given us his orders"

The High Elves were not wasting any time on the Isle of Dawn as well. They were already in the midst of the realm reunification's preparations.

The High Elf royal palace, Andwar

The High Elf Queen was listening to her subordinates' reports on their progress.

"Your Highness, we've already begun the reunification runestone's construction. With our current rate of progress, we'll have it ready in approximately 14 months."

"Very good. Has contact been made with Princess Milda on the other side?" asked the queen.

The one who answered her was King Mordena. He stepped forward, frowning. "We've made contact, but Milda did not agree with what we're doing. No matter how I tried explaining it to her, she still strongly objected to it."

"Uhm?" The queen was confused. "Did you not explain to her the current state of the Firuman continent?"

"I did, but she said that the risks of reuniting the two realms are huge and that there is a better solution to our problem. She has even proposed an alternative."

"What alternative?" The queen was troubled. She would not have been as upset if it had been the elders who objected to her wishes. But this was her own daughter they were talking about. In the past, Milda had always been the respectful and compliant daughter. Now, she seemed to think that she now stood on equal footing with her own mother. Was this still the same obedient Milda she had raised?

"She said that her power had reached Level-16. She's also now a priest of the Blazing Fire sect. With your consent, she could send two Level-14 Inferno Warriors to help us out."

In truth, King Mordena thought that her daughter's plan was excellent. Deep down, he felt that the reunification of the two realms was just too risky. One mistake was enough to set off a catastrophe of a magnitude that surpassed even the Mana Disaster.

But as soon as he finished speaking, the queen immediately waved a dismissive hand. "The realm reunification will proceed as planned. There's no turning back now. What we should be discussing now is how best to reduce the risks we're running instead of switching plans halfway through!"

Seeing that her husband still had second thoughts, she said even more assertively, "King Mordena, two Level-14 Inferno Warriors are certainly powerful, but can they take on Ferde's Mage Tower themselves? The power of that Mage Tower is not to be taken lightly. Not even a hundred Inferno Warriors would be enough to resist its attacks, let alone two. And so what if we manage to kill Link? The humans remain numerous. Who's to say another Link won't rise up against us in the future? After reuniting the two realms, our forces will be in the millions. At that point, we'll have both the all-powerful World Tree capable of fending off even gods and ten thousand years of magical knowledge on our side. Even if the humans are able to find allies of their own from the Aragu realm, they won't stand a chance against us!"

Finally, she said, "Have you forgotten Ariel? She's your daughter, and she's also the first royal family member to be killed by a human. This affront will be paid in human blood!"

At this point, King Mordena could not say anything else to change the queen's mind.

Though Milda had objected to this, the fact remained that she was still in another realm and did not fully understand Firuman's current state. Her plan would only serve as a temporary solution to the High Elves' troubles. On the other hand, the queen's plan would completely turn the situation to their advantage. They would also finally be able to avenge Ariel's death. King Mordena nodded and said, "I'll contact Milda and have her full support on this matter."

"Go then. Tell her that her sister was slain by the humans!"

King Mordena nodded, "As you wish."

He turned to leave. Just then, a High Elf elder stepped forth and said, "Your Highness, we received word from one of our sentries that the Emerald Council will not support our plan and that they intend to stop us. They also seem to have known about the existence of the Book of Creation."

He handed a letter over to the queen.

The queen gave it a glance, then fell silent for a few seconds. Finally, she said, "Take this to King Mordena. Tell him to ask Princess Milda to send over her two Inferno Warriors."

At the moment, the High Elves were running short on powerful Warriors. There was no way they could oppose the Emerald Council's Magicians on their own. They needed outside help right now.

"As you wish, Your Highness." The elder immediately left the palace to carry out his order.

The rest of the High Elves then continued reporting their progress on different aspects of the realm reunification plan to the queen. As an ancient race, they had never done anything like this before, but there had been many scholars in the past who had explored the possibility of reuniting two realms and had even conducted large-scale experiments on the subject. Right now, aided by the wisdom of these scholars, the High Elves carried out every step of their plan steadily and without any trace of disorder.

As the winds of war began to blow across the continent, the Magicians of Ferde had also begun making their own preparations.

## 540. A Strange Person

Trot, trot, trot.

The sounds of organized hooves came from the training field in the north of Ferde. The Sunlight Warriors were gathering.

There were many soldiers heremore than 150,000. Looking down from the tall stand on the side of field, one would see a sea of people. It was practically boundless. With all the people and horses, it was extremely noisy as well. Looking closely, one would see that the soldiers all shone as if they were covered in a layer of sunlight.

An indescribable vitality radiated from each of them. It spread in all directions and, from the distance, it seemed that this land was loved by the sun. It was very warm and abnormally bright.

To the outside world, these soldiers were gathering to help reinforce the Orida Fortress in the north.

In the near distance, Link and his Magicians were watching this. General Jacker was also in the stands. He was now a Sunlight Warrior at the pinnacle of Level-9, one step away from the Legendary Level. He was still the most powerful Warrior in the territory.

However, there were many new stars behind him. For example, Warrior Thoreau had risen two levels in a row. He was now Level-8 already. There were more than 700 soldiers in Level-8. There were also many in Level-9more than 90. They were all chasing close to Jacker.

Though these newbies wouldn't replace him as general even if their power surpassed him, Jacker still felt pressured. He practiced like crazy whenever he had time, not daring to relax for even a bit.

"Lord, with our speed, we should finish preparing tomorrow and can depart the next day," Jacker reported the specific developments.

Link nodded. "This trip north is to deal with the Army of Destruction if they come southward and also to build a sturdy foundation there. We will also establish defensive sentries along the way to reinforce our actions whenever needed. Go back and keep observing. Choose enough elites for this mission."

"Understood, Lord." Jacker nodded.

After that, Link gave some more detailed instructions that Jacker recorded. Then he left to get to work.

After Jacker left, Eliard said, "Link, let me go with you this time. I feel that it only takes a bit more for a breakthrough, but I still lack something. I think I need the opportunity."

Link glanced at Evelina who said, "Lord, don't look at me. I don't careas long as this guy doesn't die in the north."

Eliard huffed. "How would I die there? You're cursing me!"

"Alright, alright, just come with me," Link agreed quickly.

Beside him, Celine had some thoughts, but Link sensed them and spoke before she could.

"Celine, you're at Level-9, but you're still far from a breakthrough. All the enemies we'll meet in the North will most likely be in the Legendary level. Stay in Ferde and train patiently."

"Fine," Celine had to answer.

Beside her, Merna giggled at this. "Sister, the north isn't fun at all. It's filled with Father's underlings, and it's too dangerous. Ferde is more fun."

This girl was a demon, but she wasn't very demonic. Her personality was only a bit more mature than a regular little girl's. After staying in Ferde with Celine for these days, she was mesmerized by the colorful world. It would be hard to kick her away now.

Celine chuckled wryly. She knew that Merna couldn't understand her worries now, so she didn't say anything. She just smiled and patted her sister's head.

On the other hand, Link was discussing with Evelina, Vance, Alloa, and Eleanor about the arrangements after he left.

The Mage Tower was getting bigger and bigger with more sub-towers nearby. There was also the Gold Rune Workshop, and alchemy shops were getting built. There were many tasks, even with Lily's help. Link discussed with them for more than an hour before settling everything.

Finally, it was decided that the three who would go to the Orida Fortress were Link, Eliard, and Milose. Elovan had wanted to go, but he was, unfortunately, a flesh magic puppet now. He couldn't travel quickly and would hold them back, so he decided not to go.

Of the three, Eliard was almost at the Legendary Level, Link had successfully reached Level-12, and Milose was in the middle of Level-10. Because they had the support of a rich territory, the three were covered in the best magic equipment, all types of potions, and runes.

This way, even if they ran into forces much stronger than them, they could still put up a fight. The trio was now the top force in Firuman.

The Sunlight Army would depart the day after tomorrow. Link' group obviously couldn't wait for that. After settling everything, Link took Eliard and Milose and used a transmission spell.

After the flash of light, the three appeared in the sky miles away. The increase in distance was a benefit to Link's leveling up. After that, Link used the Void Walk and sped northward.

After a while, Eliard felt a change. He watched as clusters of runes flashed by like flowers and exclaimed, "Link, I feel that you're using a new magic technique. It's different from before, and it's 50% faster!"

Milose didn't say anything, but his eyes were filled with shock. Link's speed was honestly too fast. He was at least twice as fast as before. With this extreme speed, Milose couldn't even feel any wind. His surroundings were calm as if they were in a nonexistent illusion and were flying through the air.

Even more shocking was that Link wasn't alone. He was flying with two others. This spell was too incredible.

Link chuckled. He didn't keep it a secret. "Indeed, I changed it, but the general theory didn't change. I'm still using the force from spatial distortions to move forward. I just greatly increased the curvature of the spatial distortions and added some auxiliary forces. For example, all the currents are behind us now. Look behind. The air is distorted, right?"

Eliard and Milose turned to look and found it was so. The air before and beside them was calm, but the air behind them was shaken. Everything they could see was tited.

Technically, such intense spatial ripples would create horrible noises. However, they were going so fast that the speed of sound couldn't catch up. Thus, they couldn't hear anything at all.

Eliard studied carefully for five or six minutes. Then he shook his head. "Oh, your methods are getting better and betterThis requires very strong magic control. I'm too far from this."

Hearing this, Milose smiled wryly. It wasn't just farit was impossible.

Eliard wasn't at the Legendary level yet, so he couldn't feel how terrifying Link's tactics were. However, Milose could clearly feel the precision in Link's control. It was inhuman.

Link's power seemed to be his soul. He could use his power according to his whim without any delay. It was magic, but he made it seem like a martial arts attack. This kind of Magician was too terrifying. Even if Milose stood behind him, he didn't have the courage to attack.

Link didn't know what Milose was thinking, of course. After that, he helped the two fly while discussing the Void Walk spell with Eliard. He was fast at comprehending and could understand everything before Milose could. He could even draw his own inferences later on.

Both Link and Eliard displayed inhuman thought operations during this trip. In Milose's opinion, Link was a strange beast. Eliard was too.

It was understandable. In the game, Eliard was a total genius. He was the star of the stars and all players called him the prince of the realm. The fact that Link could be one step ahead of him this entire time was mostly due to his strong soul.

Now, as Eliard grew stronger, his soul was awakening and strengthening too. He could gradually catch up to Link. Many times, Link could feel the pressure coming from Eliard, so he didn't allow himself to relax.

As for Milose, he was just a regular genius. He could reach the Legendary Level thanks to his talent, but also because of the complete training he'd received in the Isle of Dawn since childhood. If he lived in the human world where there weren't many magic academies, he would at most be at Level-6 now.

This was an astronomic difference. No wonder he was so dazed.

Link was honestly too fast. Half an hour later, the Orida Fortress appeared before them. Here, Link had planned on crossing over it and continuing northward.

However, after glancing at the fortress, he changed his mind. Inside the Orida Fortress No, more specifically, it was in the forest outside the fortress that he felt a strange aura. It was familiar, but he couldn't pinpoint who it was.

## 541. It Really Was Her

Slowing down, Link cast an invisibility spell on all three of them. He then began to slowly let his altitude drop as he flew straight for the aura that he just felt.

"What is it?" asked Eliard when he saw the grave expression on Link's face.

"There's someone in the woods. His aura is extraordinarily powerful. It may even be at Level-13. What's strange is that I seem to have felt it somewhere before."

"A Level-13 master?" said Milose, aghast.

Milose was a High Elf. Before the Mana Disaster, numerous masters had existed when there was still a high Mana concentration in all of Firuman. The High Elves had a complete record of their own history and lineages; as such, they knew more about Legendary masters than the humans did.

For most professions across the continent, Level-10 was a huge bottleneck. This meant that subsequent promotions after Level-10 would become progressively harder.

For instance, a hundred years ago, the former High Elf prophet Bryant had reached Level-12. A hundred years later, though his power was still increasing, he still had yet to reach Level-13.

Despite the difficulties of a promotion, its payoff was huge. After reaching a new level, the extent of one's power would increase drastically. His or her body would also be one step closer to perfection.

Of course, this was what normally would happen for most races. Legendary races like the dragons who were blessed by their ancestors' wisdom were a different story.

Though power did not necessarily equate to combat power, if someone had actually attained such power, they would most certainly not be a pushover.

As far as Milose knew, among the natives of Firuman, only two Level-13 masters existed. One was the Light Magician; the other was the Dark Magician. Next was the Level-12 High Elf prophet Bryant. After him was the Lord of Ferde himself, the Red Dragon Queen and the Dwarf Mountain Sage, who were all Level-11 masters.

Last but not least were the High Elf Legendary prodigies who had only recently reached Level-10 at the bottom of this hierarchy.

Right now, Milose's heart was thumping in apprehension at this sudden appearance of another Level-13 master.

"My lord, should we prepare for battle?" asked Milose. A master of such caliber would not be hanging around near Orida Fortress without any reason. He must have come all the way here to fulfill a mission. If all three of them blindly rushed in, there might be trouble.

Link thought for a while, then nodded. "Alright, prepare yourselves then."

Saying this, he slightly made some adjustments to their formation, placing Eliard in a position where he could do the most damage.

Half a minute later, the three of them landed on a clearing in the middle of the woods. Link narrowed his eyes and felt for the enemy's aura. It was extremely weak. He probably would not be able to sense it if he only had Dragon Power at his disposal like before.

"He's approximately 300 feet in front of us. I think he's resting." Link was troubled by this. He sensed that the person was weak as if wounded.

What on earth would be able to injure a master like him? Was he injured by someone? If so, who was his assailant?

Things had become complicated.

Link raised a hand for the other two to stop. He then mouthed out silently to them what he had sensed from the other person. When he was done, he then said, "This does not look too good. If this Level-13 master was really injured by someone, that means that there's an even more dangerous being lurking in the vicinity. What's worse is that I can't even feel this other being's presence."

The fact that he could not sense the presence of this assailant could only mean that either such a person did not exist, or that the person had used a technique to camouflage his or her own presence that surpassed even Link's current level. If it was the latter, this unseen enemy would be able to easily to flatten all three of them like ants.

Eliard did not know much about the masters in the continent. He looked at Milose.

Milose looked even more apprehensive. "There was no way such a powerful being existed on the Firuman continent. It's just impossible. The World Tree would be able to pick up his or her presence right away. Unless"

"Unless what?" asked Eliard.

Link already had the answer. "Unless this person was from another realm. The Aragu Realm, perhaps?"

Milose nodded. "When Princess Ariel brought us to the plains, the High Elf Queen had revealed her intention to seek help from Aragu. She had also contacted Princess Milda in Aragu numerous times, asking her to send over masters there to asst the Isle of Dawn, but the princess refused her mother's requests each time. However, with Princess Ariel gone, I fear that"

This seemed possible.

Link knew Aragu's state all too well.

There were countless masters in the Aragu realm. Masters above Level-13 were no more than a lord there. For instance, the Bloody Butcher Balha back then was a Tier-3 master, whose power was only Level-12 in Firuman terms.

Time worked differently in Aragu. A hundred years had probably passed there ever since Link came back to Firuman. No one knew what had changed during that time. If Milda was still alive and also knew that Link had killed her sister Ariel, then her sending over a master to asst the High Elves was just a matter of time.

Teleporting a Legendary master across the two realms would only cause a tiny splash, which would not be enough to trigger Link's Eye of the Realm.

Link still could not grasp the situation they were in at the moment.

Finally, Link said, "Things have gotten out of control. Let's retreat for now. We'll go back to Orida Fortress and convince Marshal Kanorse to dispatch a squadron to investigate the woods Wait, something's changed. The injured master's spotted me. He's heading towards us!"

Milose was stunned. "He'll draw the attention of his attacker to us! My lord, let us retreat, quick!"

Eliard had also sensed how serious things had become. Though he was already panicking on the inside, he did not dare interrupt Link's thoughts. Eliard immediately waved a hand at Milose, stopping him from saying another word.

Eliard might not understand the state of the world as much as Milose, but he was a hundred times more familiar with Link's ways than the latter. He had known Link for almost four years and had personally witnessed his strength and powers of judgment. He deeply believed that Link would be able to lead the two of them out of there safely.

However, Link did not move a muscle.

He silently stood there, feeling the other master's aura closely. The other master seemed to be hesitating, his movements tentative. He was making his way towards them inch by inch. As he got closer and closer, Link had an even clearer sense of his aura.

Everything about this master was extremely familiar to Link. The person's aura, the frequency of his footsteps, the heft of each step he took, and even the soft sound the wind made as it grazed past the person's body were all coming together to form a familiar image in Link's memory.

Though these characteristics gave Link an indescribable sense of familiarity, there was still a stark difference between the approaching master and the person he remembered. In the end, he could not come to a final conclusion as to who the mysterious master was.

He decided not to make any further judgments and waited patiently for the other party to arrive.

As Link waited, he placed a hand on the Ode of a Full Moon sword hanging from his waist. This way, he would be able to lash out first at the first sign of trouble.

Milose and Eliard too readied themselves for a confrontation. Their eyes were fixed on Link the whole time.

In front of them was a dense forest. The cold air in the North was unable to fly down south due to the iron wall blocking off the region. The climate here resembled the South's. As a result, the woods were thicker, and all kinds of plant life grew uninhibited in every corner of the forest.

Five minutes later, footsteps sounded from the woods up front. All three had heard them. Link was now able to gather more information on their mystery guest.

A woman. She doesn't seem tall, perhaps 4 feet. She has a slim physique, but she feels heavier than her body's supposed weight. Is it due to the armor that she's wearing?

Her footsteps seem to be in disorder. Even if her body had been considerably weakened, judging by her current power level, she should still be able to retain some control over her movements No, she's lost control of her own emotions.

Who is it? Link now had a clearer image of who he was dealing with. He slowly let his hand slide off the pommel of his sword.

Updated by BOXNOVEL

When the other party exited the woods and revealed her face and pair of huge eyes to everyone, Link let out a sigh.

It really was her!

## 542. Time Pass Magic Puppet Heart

Forest

The figure behind the trees was just as how Link had estimated. She was around five feet tall and was slim. There were a clean ponytail and a pair of pure eyes with complicated emotions in them. There was confusion but also the fatigue of having seen too much.

She wore simple leather armor. Its style and color were very strange. It didn't look like the Firuman style or the Araguan style that Link had once experienced. There was a sword at her waist. The hilt was old, and the handguard had many small nicks.

Link had great vision. He could see instantly that the sword had gone through countless battles. The nicks had resulted from collisions with enemy weapons. He could see from the runes that this was the main weapon he'd once made for Nanathe Last Nightmare.

"Master," the girl said while walking forward and lowering onto one knee before Link.

"Master?" Milose was very shocked. The change was a bit drastic, and he couldn't process it.

Eliard recognized Nana and explained softly, "She's Nana, the first Legendary Magician and had once killed a dark divine gear."

"Ah." Milose was even more shocked after hearing this name. Wasn't Nana in the Aragu Realm? Why did she appear in Firuman?

Link ignored his surprise. Through his contract with Nana, he was sure that this was still his Nana. He walked up and hunched to help Nana up. "Why did you return?" he asked.

Nana rose and pouted in a human-like way. "Princess Milda knew about Ariel. In the end, she agreed to fuse the two realms. At the same time, she had sent two Tier-5or Level-14 Inferno Warriors to the Isle of Dawn. She's now the priestess of the Fire Sect and has many Inferno Warriors around her. She doesn't need Nana's protection anymore, so Nana came back."

Her voice was still a bit mechanic, but it was very faint, and most people wouldn't be able to tell. She didn't look like a magic puppet at all.

Link looked at Nana's arm and then the sword at her waist. His eyebrow quirked. "You're hurt. Who injured your waist?"

Nana's armor wasn't damaged, but Link was extremely sensitive. He was also a martial artist himself. Especially after practicing the battle technique from Avatar, he became even more sensitive.

Link saw a flaw in the power circulation in Nana's waist when she had knelt and later when he helped her up.

Nana lowered her head and didn't speak.

Link didn't need her to speak. Using his thoughts, pure Realm Essence surged and formed a dot of light in the air. It circled Nana. Three seconds later, it brought the information it gathered back to Link.

Now, he knew Nanassituation. She was at the pinnacle of Level-13. This wasn't very powerful in Aragu, but her power was very pure. It was only a bit weaker than Link's Realm Essence.

The pureness meant high control. Nana's battle techniques must be intimidating. However, there was a bit of foreign power at her waist.

"It's a sword injury with a bit of Fire elemental power. It's very powerful, at Level-19, but it's faint. Did an Inferno Warrior of the Fire Sect hurt you?"

"Yes." Nana nodded.

Link's thoughts whirred; he'd guessed most of it.

"You and Milda had an argument No, you wouldn't do that. She didn't want you to return, but she couldn't convince you, so she sent people to kill you. Is that right?"

Nana's expression turned a bit sad. She sighed and nodded lightly. "I can't fool Master. Sheshe's not like before. After 113 years, she's completely into the Fire Sect now, becoming the ambassador of the god in the mortal world. Sheis drunk on the ultimate power. She's completely forgotten Master."

"Oh." Link nodded. This change was expected. If he left Celine for more than 100 years, he would probably forget her too, let alone Milda. This was how people were.

Since Milda was now the ambassador of the Fire Sect and had ruled it for more than a century, she must be a mature politician now. It would be laughable to talk about romance with someone like that.

It wasn't hard to understand her actions towards Nana.

Thinking of this, Link asked, "You went between the realms. Did people pursue you here?"

Nana shook her head. "No. Nana killed all pursuers Nana's weakness now is from passing through the realms. Fighting against the chaotic currents in the Sea of Void used up much of Nana's power After entering Firuman, Nana appeared in the Hengduan Mountain Range and traveled quickly. Nana didn't expect to meet Master here."

Link now completely understood Nanassituation.

After spending a century in Aragu, Milda had changed, and Nana had changed. Both had changed a lot, but the one thing that remained unchanged was that Nana belonged to Link. To her, Link was always her master. Thus, when Milda sent Inferno Warriors against Link, she was willing to end the relationship with Milda and hurry back to Firuman.

Judging from her actions, Milda was also important to her. Unfortunately, Milda had betrayed the thing most important to Nana. Thinking of this, Link sighed inwardly. Everything changed with time, and people's hearts couldn't be trusted. The only thing he could trust was the magic puppet he'd created.

Patting Nanasshoulder, Link smiled. "It's great that you're back. Your protection mission is over. Come with me now."

"Nana understands." Nana went behind Link. Her position was exactly the same as 100 years ago.

Nana was a great helper, but her power hadn't recovered completely. Link prepared to rest for a bit. Since the Orida Fortress happened to be nearby, he said, "Let's go to the Orida Fortress now."

Eliard and Milose had no objections. Nana obviously didn't either. The group turned and hurried toward the Orida Fortress.

Because Nana was weak, Link traveled slowly. Along the way, he learned about the Aragu Empire from her. Nana obviously told him everything she knew, telling him about what had happened over the century.

The Aragu Realm hadn't been quiet for the hundred years. It had changed drastically too. The once-powerful Aragu Empire collapsed 15 years after Link had left and splitito two. In one, the Araguans, Laguans, dwarves, and other races that believed in the Fire Sect formed a new empireYan. The other group of Araguans inherited the empire and continued the Aragu Empire.

The two empires were in the state of civil war and constantly had battles. The longest period of peace was less than two years. Both sides put their all into the war, even going past their bottom line at times. Not only were the people tormented by war, even the realm was hurt.

The injuries were caused by the curses of Magicians. The countless curses might have angered the realm's conscience or changed the laws. For whatever reason, the Mana density decreased greatly. It was less than one-fifth of what it had been!

The direct change was that the strong figures lessened. Their rate of strengthening decreased as well. Add to that the fact that many older ones had died in war, the strongest person in Aragu now was the Fire Archmage who was trying to become a god. After that was the Snow Mountain Archmage. These two were protectors at Level-19. Below that, there was a break, jumping from Level-19 to Level-16.

A hidden change was that time was flowing slower now. Of course, very few knew about this. Now, Aragu was only around 1.5 times faster than Firuman.

Milda was now at Level-16. Other than the two Level-19 Archmages, she was the strongest in the mortal world. The other was Saroviny. She was now completely following the Fire Sect. She was the Black Flame Envoy and the commander of the Inferno Army.

For this century, more than 50,000,000 lives had died because of her and her army. In Aragu, she was also known as the Black Blood Rose.

Here, Eliard suddenly asked, "Nana, you didn't talk about yourself. What was your status in the Yan Empire?"

"Nanasstatus?" Nana chuckled wryly. "My power rose too slowly. At first, Nana was head of Milda's guard. As Milda had more trusted people, Nana was pushed to the side. Before returning, Nana was only one of Milda's 12 Holy Yan Warriors."

"Really?" Milose felt something wrong. "If you were pushed to the side, why would she send people to kill you when you wanted to leave? That means that you're still important to her."

"Maybe she didn't want Nana to notify Link?" Nana said.

This made sense; Milose and Eliard believed her. However, Link felt that Nana was hiding something. No, she wasn't hiding it. Rather, she thought it wasn't important, so she didn't mention it.

Link felt that Nana's position in the Fire Sect wasn't as low as she said. Of course, this was just his gut feeling. He had no proof.

Thinking of this, Link didn't continue asking. Since Nana was back, she had nothing to do with the Fire Sect anymore. She was his own Nana.

"The Orida Fortress is before us," he said. "We can go see General Kanorse Nana, your power is recovery a bit slow."

Nana nodded. "That is Nana's biggest flaw. I am not living flesh, and my body isn't perfect. I need a long time to recover after using up my energy."

Link thought a bit and said, "That's okay. I'll check your body. Maybe I can find a way to improve you."

( Updated by BOXNOVEL )

Eliard laughed at this. "Be careful of Celine if she finds out" Link glared at him before he could finish and he quickly changed the topic. Chuckling, he said, "Nana, you're lucky. Link's magic improved tremendously these years. He can probably even use magic to create a person. He can definitely fix your problem."

Nana smiled. "Nana's owner has always been the most powerful Magician!"

## 543. Creation Of Life

Half an hour later, Link finally saw Kanorse.

It had been half a year since Link saw him. Kanorse was no longer the naive young knight he once was. He now exuded an air of authority that befitted his place as the army's marshal.

When Eliard and Milose saw Kanorse, they could feel a sudden pressure weighing on them. The two of them stood behind Link nervously. Despite being a master of the same level as Kanorse, Milorse still did not dare speak out of turn for fear of offending him.

Of course, this did not affect Link and Nana.

This was due to the training both of them had undergone and also the fact that Ferde was a main supporter of Orida Fortress. Ferde provided 70% of the fortress' resources and hadamnopoly on the provision of all kinds of magical equipment for the soldiers there.

Given the fact that Link had also saved his life once, it seemed that this was a debt Kanorse would not be able to fully repay in his lifetime.

In a study on the second floor of the fortress, Kanorse personally poured a cup of hot tea for every one of them. He then sat down and smiled. "My lord, why haven't you come with your army?"

Kanorse was already made aware of the news that the Sunlight Army of Ferde was going to back up Orida Fortress.

Link smiled back. "I'm heading towards the North on a secret mission, so I thought I would drop by here first. My army should reach Orida Fortress in half a month's time. You know Nana here. She's injured, and I'll need to borrow the fortress' enchantment workshop for a bit."

"Oh, I see." Kanose did not even bother asking what Link intended to do up north. Since it was a secret mission, even if he asked, Link probably would not be willing to give him the details. "I'll order the military Magicians to vacate the workshop immediately."

"Thank you."

"It's no problem at all. Actually, my lord, there is something I was hoping you could help me with. There's something off about my sword. I was wondering if you could fix it a bit for me." Kanorse handed the Lion's Fury sword over to Link.

Link smiled and asked, "What would you like me to change, then?"

It was Link who had given this sword its current form. Back then, Link's combat skills were excellent, but his combat sensitivity was nowhere near his current level. Despite his attempts to forge the perfect sword for Kanorse, it might not have suited him. Hearing what Kanorse said, Link thought that he did not forge the sword right in the first place.

Kanorse scratched his head, confused.

I don't really know. At first, it felt right in my hand. But recently, it's become a bit unwieldy."

Link understood what was going on. Kanorse's skills had improved tremendously, but the weapon just could not keep up with them.

After thinking for a moment, he said, "Why don't you perform a basic sword form here in the study? I may be able to see what is wrong with your sword."

"Alright." Kanorse knew that Link was now a combat master and should be able to see what the problem was with it. He then began to brandish his sword about in the tiny room.

The study was extremely tiny. There were bookshelves and paperwork around him. He started slow, holding his movements back. After giving his sword two swings, Link said, "Now you're just dancing. I can't see what your problem is from a dance number. The sword that I've forged for you is meant for murder, so use actual killing techniques with it!"

Kanorse immediately understood what Link meant. There was now a drastic change in his form as he swung his sword a third time. Killing intent flowed out from every stroke of his sword, rocking the whole room like a tidal wave.

With a gentle wave of his hand, Link set up a barrier around the room in order to shield everything in it from Kanorse's sword. At the same time, an illusion of himself surfaced from his body with a sword ready in its hand.

Link's illusion held nothing back as its sword stabbed straight at Kanorse's back. The attack came slow, giving Kanorse ample time to react.

The illusion accelerated its attack as soon as Kanorse sensed it behind him. He immediately turned around and managed to block the attack in time.

In the span of a few moments, Link's illusion and Kanorse exchanged flurries of stabs and slices with each other in the cramped, 100-square-foot space of the study. Each stroke of their swords was calculated to slay the other on the spot.

Though Eliard and Milose were Magicians, the two of them could feel just how terrifying Kanorse's swordsmanship was. Eliard still had a grip on himself. On the other hand, cold sweat dripped from Milose's forehead profusely. His eyes were wide with awe and terror as he watched the two masters cross swords.

The only other person who was not affected by this was Nana.

Her eyes were locked tightly on the two duelists' movements. When the duel reached a high point, her hands began swinging about in an attempt to imitate their movements. She was completely captivated by the spectacle before her.

Such a reaction was understandable. Both Link and Kanorse were masters of the combat arts. A duel between two masters of their caliber was guaranteed to be worth watching. One would be hard-pressed to find such high-level displays of swordsmanship from masters of the Aragu realm.

The duel went on for ten minutes. Then, Link's illusion took a step back and faded into specks of light. Kanorse chased after it, still intent on continuing the fight. He then turned to Link, somewhat disappointed. "That was fun. My lord, we could still continue our duel for a few more minutes if you like."

It had been a while since Kanorse had fought someone to a standstill even with his full strength. It was an exhilarating experience.

Link shook his head. "Another time, perhaps. I now know what your sword needs. Give it to me."

"Alright." Still not completely satisfied, Kanorse handed Link the Lion's Fury and then wrote a mandate for him.

As soon as Link received the document, a white light enveloped his body, and he vanished from the study. An instant later, he reappeared in front of the fortress' Mage Tower.

MIlose reappeared behind him. He let out a sigh, looking at Link with renewed admiration.

"My lord, I never knew you were this good with the sword."

He had only known about Link's swordsmanship through hearsay. Even back on the Golden Plains, Link had only ambushed them with a few strikes from his sword. Milose finally witnessed the true extent of Link's swordsmanship with his own eyes today.

"I dabbled with it from time to time," said Link, smiling. "Come, I'll need all your help on the next item of our agenda."

Eliard and Milose nodded. Both of them followed Link into the Mage Tower.

Inside the tower, without even looking at Kanorse's mandate, the Magicians instantly knew who Link was and nearly went down on all fours before him. They were more than willing to provide him with everything he needed. Link probably would have the whole tower for himself if he asked for it.

A few minutes later, Link and the others were now in a fully furnished enchantment workshop.

"Nana, lie down on that platform, please," said Link.

"Oh, alright." After lying down, Nana asked, "Should I take off my clothing?"

"No need. Wait there for a bit," said Link. He then placed Kanorse's Lion's Fury sword on an enchantment workbench in a corner and proceeded to mend itito a new shape for no more than five minutes. When he was done, he stroked the blade with a finger, and it flashed with white light.

Seeing this, Eliard asked, "That's it?"

"Of course. Just wait and see, Kanorse will personally come and thank me"

Before he could finish, a figure appeared in the in the workshop's doorway. It was Kanorse. When he received the newly mended Lion's Fury sword from Link, his face flushed with excitement.

"That's it, my lord. It's perfect. There's no reason for such a perfect sword to exist in this world. Oh, it's basically a divine weapon made only for my hands!"

Eliard and Milose were speechless as well. Both of them had always felt that there was something divine about Link's enchantments.

"Alright, alright, I still have work to do. I'm sure you have lots of work to do as well." Link dismissed an excited Kanorse out of the room with a wave of his hand.

Link was in no rush to repair Nana. He walked over to where Nana lay and laid out all sorts of alchemical materials on a nearby workbench. As he began preparing a medicinal concoction, he explained, "Nana's body was once infused with Dragon essence. It's undergone all kinds of changes ever since. She's also probably encountered much in the Aragu realm. I already gave her a look. She's now evolved into something resembling actual life, but it still lacks a certain spark."

"How so?" Eliard walked over to Link's side, watching him picking and choosing his ingredients carefully. Link's words had piqued his curiosity.

Though Milose did not say a word, he was stunned by what Link had just said. Link basically meant that he was able to turn a magic puppet like Nana into an actual living being.

( Updated by NovelFull.Com )

How was this possible?

No matter how powerful a Legendary master might be, Link was still a normal human being. There was no way a normal human being could create sentient life!

## 544. Water Of Miracles

In the World of Firuman, the High Elves were the best at creating life. Using the World Tree, they could create seeds of magical plants. They'd also created various types of tree spirits, flower spirits, and tree people.

But despite their efforts throughout the generations, they could only create lifelike flesh bodies for animals. They had many attainments in creating lives and even intelligent lives, but there was still a long way to go before truly succeeding.

Thus, Milose also walked over after hearing what Link had said. He wanted to see what Link could do.

Nana also turned around curiously to watch Link make the potion.

Link was extremely busy. Occasionally, there would be mysterious flashes of light. At the same time, he explained, "You're all wrong. I can't create a true life. I'm not even close to that. Nana's level is mostly due to her experiences which can't be copied. All I can do is perfect her a bit more, but I still can't give her a true life. I recently figured out the improvement method too. I added alchemy and enchantments. I call this Automatic Enchantment Magic Potion."

"That name is so simple. It doesn't match the miraculous potion." Eliard wanted to stand up for the potion. After thinking for a bit, he said, "I think we should call it Water of Miracles."

Link chuckled. "It's not a miracle, but that's a nice name. We can call it that."

As he spoke, his hands stopped. There was a new bottle in his hands. The potion looked like white fog. At closer inspection, one would discover that it was a type of sol. Countless glowing dots floated in the sticky substance.

Looking even more closely, one would discover that each glowing dot was actually the glow of a detailed rune. There was a subtle force between each rune's glow, keeping them equidistant.

"Is it ready?" Eliard asked.

"No, this is only the foundation potion. If the entire Water of Miracles is a ship filled with cargo, this bottle is that ship. Next, we have to make the cargo to fill it with."

With that, Link took out various enchantment materials and laid them out. There were around 100 types. "Come help me process these," he said. "It's tiresome work. It'll take a long while if I do it alone."

"Understood."

The two Magicians walked up while Link instructed them.

"That is replenishment gold. Grind itito powder with the Gritz grinding method. Eliard, you're familiar with this, so you do it."

Eliard nodded. He took the precious metal covered in light purple haze. Walking to the enchantment table nearby, he started working carefully.

"This is suppression silver wood. I need it turned into liquid. When the particles are in their natural positions, it should have the effect of a Tier-3 mirror surface. It's wood, so Milose, you do it with the Marshal Fractal method."

"Yes, Lord."

Milose took the dark silver material that looked like the withered root of a tree. Faint green light surged from his hand, and the wood gradually started transforming.

Link himself took a piece of metal with a faint red light and started refining it. He also ground itito powder with high requirements for the size of each particle.

The enchantment room instantly fell silent, the three Magicians all busy with their own work. Whenever Eliard and Milose finished their task, Link would take out new material for them. He didn't let them rest at all. Of course, it was the same for him. He wouldn't waste a single second.

A day and night passed in the business. To a Legendary Magician, this kind of work only made them a bit tired. They could recover with some rest. Link and Eliard especially had types of power with great endurance. They weren't affected at all.

During this time, Link took out 125 types of material in total and used various enchantment methods to turn them into 210 types of materials of different physical properties.

It was far from the end though. This was only the preparatory stage.

After all this, Link finally started to use his actual enchantment technique. He took each material and used enchantment spells or the tools to refine them. Magical light never stopped flashing from his hands. The various materials quickly changed in his hands, either mixing, dissolving, or transforming.

Occasionally, he would give Eliard and Milose some missions. Most of the time, he did everything alone while the other two just watched on the side.

After a long while, Milose whispered to Eliard, "Lord's Mana output hasn't decreased at all. It's been five hours and the Mana he uses every three seconds is equivalent to a Level-7 spell. How can he have so much energy?"

"You wouldn't know, but Ferde's Sunlight Power's strongest characteristic is its recovery rate," Eliard replied quietly. "It practically surpass dragon power. Link is the main creator, so his recovery rate means that he basically will never run out of energy."

"Oh," Milose said. After a while, he asked again, "Do you understand the lord's techniques? It seems to be like Isle of Dawn enchantments, but after looking closer, it seems different. There are occasionally dragon techniques, and I even saw the melting techniques of dwarves. It's so strange."

"I can understand some but not most." Eliard's eyes never left Link's hands; his eyes were practically shining. "Link created many more intricate enchantment techniques. After a while, he'll probably write a book with them. If you have the authority and enough Magic Points, you can read it."

"Really? He'll share it?" Milose couldn't believe it. In his opinion, these were probably Link's most secret tricks. He should treasure them. For example, in the Isle of Dawn, many families treated their Magician's ultimate techniques as treasures. Like the royalty wouldn't pass many powerful spells to non-royalty, or even to those not directly in line to the throne."

Eliard guessed Milose's thoughts and smiled faintly. "Every new idea is like a brick. After some time, the bricks will form a small magic house. The small house will turn into a big house, and then a tower and a palace. After centuries, perhaps Ferde will become the most brilliant magic temple in Firuman. The Isle of Dawnmight be stronger now, but who knows in the future?"

"But if people learn the lord's abilities" Milose mumbled. He understood the logic, but he was still conflicted about sharing. If someone learned his tricks and surpassed him, he would have nothing.

Eliard sighed and glanced at Milose with pity. "That depends on what kind of person you want to become. If you want to stop improving, keep all your good stuff. If you want to improve, you should share your accomplishments. If you do that, you'll naturally receive the fruits of others. You can only improve by mixing different thoughts You should know that in Ferde, the Magic Point reward for sharing any unique spell is 1000 times more than creating a potion of the same level. Buying someone else's wisdom also costs 1000 times more than magical items of the same level. This is the reward for wisdom."

Milose was affected by Eliard's eyes. He wanted to refute him but couldn't find anything and gave up in the end. He still wasn't entirely convinced, but the idea of sharing wisdom was carved into his soul.

At that time, Link stopped.

He'd used up all the refined magic equipment at that time too. A fist-sized ball was now in his hands. It was brown and completely dull. No magic aura seeped out of it. If he tossed it on the ground, it would be like any small rock.

"That's it?" Eliard glanced at the "rock." He knew that it was filled with boundless wisdom, so his eyes were reverent.

"Getting close."

There was some fatigue in his eyes, and his hand twitched. The white foggy sol flew out of the bottle and spread equally in the air. At the same time, the brown "rock" in Link's hand broke into a mist with a soft sound. The mist and sol mixed together under the invisible force of magic.

After around half an hour, the brown mist was gone. The originally white sol was now dark red. It looked a bit like blood.

The liquid formed a circle. Though it contained the brown mist, its size hadn't changed. It was only around two centimeters in diameter. Hovering in the air, it floated towards Nana.

"Open your mouth and swallow it. It will fix your body's last flaw, Link said.

Nana did so without hesitation. The round liquid entered her mouth and automatically "rolled" down her throat. Around three seconds later, Nana's body shook. She gripped the enchantment table, and the sturdy table cracked, turning to powder.

But the next moment, Nana stood up with a confused expression. She clenched her fist and then touched her face. Her expression grew more confused. "Master, Nana doesn't feel any change."

Link smiled. "That's right. Life is the most complicated structure in the world, so all changes happen gradually. Wait patiently, and you'll feel the power of the Water of Miracles."

"Oh." Nana was still confused, but she accepted Link's explanation.

Eliard found it strange too. He'd thought that a potion of this level should cause some things like a giant flash or Nana's power multiplying. But the ending was so anticlimactic. He just felt like something was missing.

"It seems too simple," Eliard said.

Link chuckled. "Don't just look at Nana now. You have to see what's growing inside her now. Just wait and see."

"Alright, so what do we do now?" Eliard asked.

Link asked Nana, "Your injuries should be all good now, right?"

Nana moved her hands and feet and then felt her body. Immediately, she said confusedly, "It's weird. Why don't I feel anything?"

Earlier, her injury seemed okay on the surface but would subtly affect her movements. Now, it was as if she wasn't injured at all. She even forgot how it had been.

Eliard laughed and clapped. "Amazing. This must be the first effect of the miraculous potion. It reminds me of a seed sprouting in the spring. It's soundless but keeps changing. One day, it will grow into a big tree."

Link also smiled. "Since it's okay now, we can continue northward Oh, I almost forgot. Let me see your sword. Perhaps I can strengthen it."

So Nana gave Link the sword and sheath.

Link slowly pulled the sword out. As soon as he did so, he felt a blazing aura radiate from it. At the same time, his heart turned cold as if someone stabbed him.

"Ah!" A cry came from Milose. He was staring at the sword in Link's hand. When it was pulled out, he stumbled back and activated a defensive barrier subconsciously.

Eliard flinched as well. Big droplets of sweat beaded on his forehead. Wiping his sweat, he exclaimed, "Is that the Last Nightmare? What a great sword!"

Clang! Link sheathed the sword again and returned it to Nana. "This sword changed a lot. What happened to it?"

"Nothing? Nana has always been using it. Unfortunately, Whispers of the Forest broke in a battle." Nana found it strange. She took the sword and pulled it out casually. Weirdly enough, the sword was very different when she did that. There was no glow at all, and its surface was covered in marks. There were even many nicks on the blade. It was extremely old and ragged.

At this time, the sword spirit of Ode of a Full Moon spoke in Link's mind.

This sword has killed at least 1000 Legendary figures. A bit of every victim's soul wraps around the sword. Those souls are filled with hatred and anger. The only one who can control them is Nana. Thus, only Nana can use this sword.

One thousand? No wonder, this is a weapon of mass destruction! Link sighed inwardly.

He walked over with magic materials in his hands. "Nana, hold it, and I'll fix it up."

"Yes, Master."

It was just a quick fix up, and Link finished within an hour. He also added some very resilient hardening seal to upgrade the sword. It was now at Level-11 and counted as a Legendary weapon too.

"Okay, that's done. We can go north now."

## 545. Visitors From Another Realm

"Four people passed by here recently. One of them was a human, and the other two were half-elves. What's even stranger is that they all seem to be heading north," said a human male with a full mat of fiery red hair. He was standing in front of a pile of ashes that had once been a campfire in the Black Forest. His red glowing eyes were narrowed as he observed his surroundings.

Beside him stood someone else. The person was also human. The only difference was that it was a woman.

Her eyes also shone with the same red light. Like the man beside her, the woman was wearing an elegant set of magical armor. A pair of scimitars hung from her waist. Her hair was also a brilliant red and even more luxuriant than the man'shi

She squatted down and wiped a hand that was wearing a dark red leather glove across a tree stump. She then raised a finger to her eyes, closely observing whatever she had wiped off from the stump. She even took a whiff from it. Five seconds later, she whispered, "Hamilton, I sense a familiar hint of coldness in the aura of one of them. There's also a slight warmth in it Do you think it's her?"

"It is possible. The saint told us that she was the Lord of Ferde's magic puppet. She has crossed realms to return to Firuman. The first thing she'd probably do would be to go back to the Lord of Ferde. Noa, we'll need to tread carefully from now on."

Noa grinned. "She's the only one who poses a threat to us. Everyone else isn't even worth our time. The saint was right. This realm's power level is just too weak."

"Don't underestimate them," said Hamilton. He then began walking northward as he continued, "Forget what the saint said about keeping them alive. Kill them on sight with all your might. We'll just have to see if they're lucky enough to survive our attacks."

Noa caught up to him, giggling. "Of course I won't show them mercy. But I would rather we not come across them too soon. It's probably better to let them find the Book of Creation first. Saves us a lot of time finding it ourselves."

Hamilton shrugged. "That certainly would be convenient."

After taking a few steps, Noa suddenly said, "But really, those High Elves are a bunch of idiots, especially their queen. She thinks she can boss us around and even belittle our bloodline just because she's the saint's mother. I just really want to chop her head off with my sword!"

"Alright now, you've been saying that ever since we got here. Let her have her way for now. She'll get what she deserves later."

"I just can't stand her!"

"But you can't deny that her World Tree holds considerable power."

The two of them were now heading north. They strolled through the Black Forest without an air of concern as if they were simply taking a walk in their own backyard.

After walking for two hours, another group of four arrived at the remnants of the campfire. This time, it was the Red Dragon Queen's party. When they got there, the Light Magician Halino pointed at the pile of ashes with his wand and cast a high-level detection spell: Time Reverse. A gold shower of light fell from his wand, forming a couple of vague silhouettes around the pile of ashes. The silhouettes then began to move.

There were four silhouettes sitting around the campfire. A huge tent had been set up in a corner. A freshly skinned wild boar was roasting above the campfire. Through the silhouettes, they could see drops of oil dripping from the wild boar.

Halino's spell had vividly conjured three of the silhouettes. Two of them looked like half-elves. Their features were handsome. They were sitting around the fire, discussing something. From their get-up and mannerisms, they were probably Magicians.

The third silhouette belonged to a girl who was wearing a full set of armor. She seemed to be around sixteen to seventeen years old. She was sitting near the fire as well, enthusiastically turning the skewer that was holding the wild boar above the fire.

However, the fourth silhouette stood out from the rest. Its entire form was a blur. The figure was basically a condensed ball of light sitting quietly near the fire. It was easy to miss if one was not looking properly at it.

No one could see what the figure looked like or even what it was doing at the time.

Just then, the four of them saw that the human blur waved a hand. An instant later, the figures conjured by Halino's Time Reverse spell shook violently. Tried as he might, Halino could not maintain the integrity of the silhouettes any longer. In the end, they all faded back into a shower of light.

Seeing this, the Dark Magician Eugene let out a humph. "That's definitely the lord of Ferde. No one else could pull off such a trick."

The other party must have disrupted the flow of Time power. In Firuman, aside from a couple of the High Elves who had spent a long time studying Time Magic, only the lord of Ferde could do such a thing.

The Mountain Sage Heroto sighed, stroking his white beard. "I had seen the lord of Ferde back in Dragon Valley. He was still such an innocent little thing back then, like a sprout that had just poked its head out from the soil. Who would have thought that he would become so powerful in less than a year? It's incredible."

Gretel did not say a word. She was still gazing absently at where Link's silhouette had been.

Noticing Gretel's current state, Eugene said, "Your Highness, Link's most likely heading north to search for the Book of Creation's fragment there. Try not to let your heartstrings be pulled by a few words from Link when we catch up to him. If you can't even do this, I suggest that you go back to Dragon Valley right now."

Gretel let out a long sigh and looked sideways at Eugene, smiling bitterly. "I'm fine, thanks. Just worry about yourself. I'm not the one making life difficult for everyone in Firuman, anyway."

"Alright, alright, point made." Eugene raised his hands in defeat. He then turned to Halino. "Link's a handful by himself. Now that he's involved in this, what should we do now?"

Halino thought for a moment, then said, "I don't think we need to worry about him too much. The lord of Ferde is a reasonable man. We'll try to come to an agreement with him if we see him. He'll probably accept our terms as long as Ferde stands to profit from them."

Just then, Heroto burst out angrily, "Well sure, he's a bloody businessman who only thinks about profiting off everyone he meets. Heck, he's probably hoarded all the gold in Firuman for himself in Ferde by now."

"That's enough! Let's continue our journey, shall we?" said Gretel.

The four of them fell silent. They then activated their spells and continued their journey towards the far North.

Ten minutes later, Halino suddenly said, "Stop, something's not right. There are two people up ahead. I can sense that they're extremely powerful!"

Eugene had sensed them too. He emerged from a black ball of mist. "Strange, I've never felt such powerful Warriors in Firuman before. They also seem to be no more than 30 years old. Has something changed in the world?"

He was shaken by this. All this time, Halino was the only person who had stood on equal footing with him in terms of power. Now came along these two youngsters whose power surpassed even his. This was just not possible.

Gretel stopped. She pricked her ears and then closely felt the two youngsters' power levels. Ten seconds later, she spoke, "These two are not from Firuman. I heard them mentioning something about a saint, the Aragu Kingdom, and a Black Blood Rose. They probably came from the Aragu realm. Link once told me about that place. The Mana there is extremely saturated. It's probably five times that of Firuman."

Eugene was stunned upon hearing this. He was now even more curious. "So that's why those two possess such power. They've been living in a Mana haven. From the looks of things, those two don't seem to be up to anything good. Why don't we take them on now?"

"Why would you want to pick a fight with them right now?" The Mountain Sage Heroto did not agree with Eugene's suggestion.

Eugene immediately replied, "I highly doubt those two come all the way here from their native realm with good intentions. Heroto, would you have minded if I barged into the dwarves' underground capital one day without even saying hi to you?"

Heroto glared at him. "I would have you escorted out of the city in a coffin if you so much as came near the place!"

"Hahaha, that's my point. Those two fellows didn't even bother introducing themselves to us, the rightful inhabitants of this realm. Halino, you up to it or what?"

After thinking for a bit, Halino said, "You do have a point. We'll need to at least ask what they had come here for. It's just two Warriors anyway. Though they may be more powerful than us individually, we could set up a trap for them. Subduing them shouldn't be a problem."

"Hehe, it's not every day you would agree with one of my ideas. Then let's do it."

## 546. First Challenge In The Tundra

Link stood on the snowy peak and asked the sword spirit, "Is this direction right?"

An icy wind blew around him while the boundless icy plain was before him. The air was abnormally clean. Looking down from the peak with his excellent vision, Link could see hundreds of miles.

All of this land was the same tundra. What was different was that in the distance, it became darker; it was nighttime at the end. There was a clear difference between night and day in different parts of the north and south. This was a sight unique to the extreme north.

The general direction is right, but too much time has passed. I don't know if the land has changed.

The sword spirit's voice was full of uncertity. The Storm Lord was from the ancient times and millenniums had passed. This was enough time for seas to turn into land.

Link had no choice but to continue searching in the general direction. Whether or not he could find the piece of the so-called Book of Creation depended on his luck.

I'll search for three months at most. If there aren't any clues after three months, I'll give up. Link set a deadline for himself. He still had many things to do and couldn't waste too much time on this.

Pulling his clothes tighter, Link said to the other three, "Alright, let's continue."

The three nodded. Nana took the lead and jumped down from the mountitop. Then she ran down the slope. She looked as light as a floating leaf with perfect control of her strength.

She couldn't do this before. In the past, Nana had perfect battle experience, but her fighting style depended on extreme speed and strength. If anyone could deal with those two, she would be in trouble.

Now, she was in a whole new state. Her techniques mixed with her perfect experience, and she had indescribable agility. This was the subtle effect of the Water of Miracles.

Eliard and Milose both cast flight spells to descend from the mountitop. Though they were flying, they had to use all their might to catch up with Nana.

Link followed slowly behind them to erase their marks. They could be a bit careless in the Black Forest, but this was the extreme north. They were very close to the piece. If they didn't hide themselves, it would be annoying if people came to cause trouble.

The four traveled more than 150 miles like this. The sky darkened gradually. After around 50 more miles, night fell completely.

Thankfully, the sky was still covered in stars. There was also ice and snow everywhere, so their vision wasn't affected.

This place was not inhabitable and very few people stepped into this world of ice during the millenniums. Even the courageous adventurers wouldn't come here. In many legends, this was even known as the end of the world.

No one knew what they would run into. For safety reasons, Link and the others slowed down. To avoid surprising some unknown existences, they didn't even use spells and just walked on foot.

Though they were Magicians, all three had strong bodies. Nana went without saying. It was a bit cold, but they could handle it.

After a while, the cold wind stopped.

Crunch, crunch. Other than the sound of stepping in snow, the world was silent.

"It's as quiet as a cemetery here." Eliard hugged himself, feeling a bit anxious.

Milose looked side to side, hands gripping his wand tightly in preparation. "I just feel strange, like something's watching us."

Nana continued forward as before. She didn't feel anything abnormal.

Link felt something strange too. This place was too quiet. His Magician instincts told him that if he continued walking, something would happen. However, this feeling was fuzzy. Like a spider web in the breeze, it was hard to grasp. All Link could do was compose himself and walk on in full alert.

As he walked, Link's heart suddenly jumped. The surroundings had suddenly fallen silent. He couldn't even hear footsteps anymore. Turning around hurriedly, he saw that Eliard, Milose, and Nana had all disappeared from the boundless tundra. Other than the white snow, there was nothing else around him.

Strange. How did they disappear? Link furrowed his brows. He hadn't felt the surroundings change during this process. There were no Mana ripples, spatial ripples, or anything else. The three just vanished.

Link wouldn't believe it. He walked to where their footprints had disappeared to check. He cast many detection spells but to no avail.

This was a bit strange.

Link stood in place to think. A few seconds later, he decided to retreat. What had happened was outside his range. Going forward wasn't wise.

He turned to walk back, but then it felt even more wrong.

Deep in the extreme north, white snow was everything. Paired with the fact that it was night and even the wind had stopped, it was difficult to find one's direction. Link could still tell north from south though. The southern sky was slightly brighter than the north. He also had a compass. Relying on the magnetic field, he could precisely distinguish north and south.

But now, Link discovered that the sky before and behind him was still the same sky. He looked down at the compass. It stayed frozen; it couldn't distinguish the direction.

Link spun around and discovered something even more shocking.

The four sides are the same. They're all going northward. No matter how I move, I'll get closer to the northernmost pointThe space must have been distorted, but I've never seen this technique before.

At this time, the sword spirit said, Link, for some reason, I suddenly thought of something.

Link really wanted to drag the sword spirit out of the sword and beat it up. Why did it have to wait until something had happened to tell him? Was it playing with Link?

He sighed and asked, "What is it? Tell me."

I think it's about that person. The one who'd stopped the Storm Lord from carelessly throwing the piece away. I suddenly remembered what he'd said. No, I didn't remember it. It just jumped out by itself.

Hearing this, Link's heart twitched. He felt that things weren't as simple as he'd thought. There seemed to be something existing in the sword spirit's memory that planned this.

"What did he say?"

He said that this is the first step. It's a solo challenge.

"Oh?" Link fell into deep thought and came up with two points. First, everyone who came here probably had to face this test alone. Thus, Eliard, Milose, and Nana were separated from him. Second, he wasn't the only who could pass this test, so there must be a second and third step until there was a final winner.

Here, Link stopped thinking. He continued walking deep into the icy plain.

Soon after he entered the test, two fiery-red figures arrived. They were Hamilton and Noa, Inferno Warriors from Aragu.

They didn't have the calmness as when they'd first arrived in Firuman. They were in a panic as if a beast was chasing after them. Their glamorous leather armor had become tattered, and they were wounded too. Hamilton especially had a still-bleeding injury under his ribs. His pallor was white, and his steps were unsteady.

Noa beside him wasn't any better. She'd had two curved fire swords but only had one now. There was a menacing wound on her right arm. The blood had frozen already, but more blood kept seeping from the ice. Her arm trembled.

"F\*ck, they're still chasing!" Hamilton gritted out. Speaking had pulled at his injury. He immediately clutched his chest and grunted.

"I didn't expect Magicians in this world to be so powerful." Noa's eyes were filled with terror. These people were too frightening. They weren't as strong, but no matter how the two fought, they couldn't hit the enemy. And the enemy seemed able to predict their every move, always beating them to it.

If not for their power and the fear of the enemy, they wouldn't be able to escape here.

Hamilton still wouldn't admit defeat. "Hmph. They had four people and attacked secretly. Of course, we weren't their match. If it was one on one, I'd halve them with one strike!"

Noa didn't speak. She knew that this was just Hamilton's ego speaking. In reality, they might not be a match even in a one on one battle. The Dark and Light Magicians were especially terrifying!

The two continued running forward without caring about anything else. Without realizing, the wind stopped, and then Hamilton felt his surroundings empty. He turned around, but Noa was gone.

"Noa? Noa?" he called. There was no reply.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. The Red Dragon Queen's group also arrived. Eugene sniffed the air and cackled. "Those two aren't far from us. Go, we'll catch them soon."

The other three could feel this two and naturally started chasing. After a while, the four were all in the strange territory, separated by the strange force.

Suddenly, the icy tundra had nine Legendary figures and the legendary Eliard trapped. These ten were facing the test of a certain ancient figure.

## 547. A Fragment Has Been Found

"Am I back again?" Link looked at the footprints on the ground again and realized that it was the same place that he had passed by moments ago. It was also the place where Eliard, Milose, and Nana had vanished.

This was the third time Link had walked by the same place. He realized that he had been walking in an endless loop. Stitly speaking, it might even be a four-dimensional closed loop he was dealing with.

In this icy wasteland in the Far North, no matter which way he went, he would always return to the loop's point of origin. Time in the outside world would also rewind back to the moment when Eliard and the others had disappeared without a trace.

It was easy to spot a spatial loop. On the other hand, no ordinary human being would be able to notice a loop in time, especially when he or she was trapped in an icy region where there was nothing but ice as far as the eye could see. The wind was silent, and nothing stood out as a point of reference for Link.

Link would not have been able to sense a time loop as well, had it not been for the fact that he had spent most of his time studying his time magic book recently. Though he still had a long way to go, his research had bore some fruit, such as the fact that he was able to sense a stagnation in time.

Link decided not to walk in circles any longer. He sat down on the snowy ground. With one hand on his forehead, he tried to remember what had happened before, hoping to find some clue for him to break out of this loop.

Though he sat there, motionless, his mind was working at a feverish pace trying to piece together an explanation for his situation. Not only was he going through his own thoughts, but he was also flipping through the time magic book in his mind in an attempt to corroborate his own theories.

After silently sitting there for a long time, Link suddenly jerked up from his thoughts. He finally discovered the secret behind the loop he was trapped in.

It may seem like an endless loop, but it still has a point of origin. Otherwise, I would not have ended up here in the first place. The loop's origin is its endpoint. It is also my way out of here!

He stood up and drew out his Ode of a Full Moon sword. Under the starry sky, he stabbed at six different points around him with his sword.

A runic wheel appeared from the sword's tip with each stab. There were countless smaller rings of runes within each runic wheel. At a glance, it looked like the interior of a clock, its gears rotating rapidly with each other inside it.

When Link was done, six exquisite hexagonal runic wheels now surrounded him.

As the wheels spun on for three seconds, Link heard the sound of ice breaking. Soon, his surroundings began changing drastically around him.

The silent, dark, icy wasteland was now fading away quickly before Link. Snow then whirled around him alongside the wind, which roared into Link's ears like a wild beast. The surrounding temperature had dropped to a few hundred degrees below zero in an instant.

The cold was now beyond bearable. Even Link's magic robe could not resist the freezing cold. His eyes felt like they were about to freeze up and fall out of their sockets. There was no way a human body would be able to withstand such temperatures. He needed to warm himself up as quickly as possible.

One of the most convenient methods for any Magician to keep warm would be magic itself. Before, Link would have cast a spell to do so without hesitation. However, at the moment, he decided not to use magic.

In order to magically keep oneself warm, a Magician would need to focus on maintaining the spell's effect on himself. This would not have been a problem to Link under any other circumstances. But given the erratic nature of his surroundings at the moment, he would not be able to react in time to any sudden changes if he had to focus on two things at the same time. This was not a risk he was willing to take.

Instead of magic, Link decided to use a new technique that he had acquired after practicing the Beastman King Avatar's Soul Furnace technique.

The energy in Link's body began to circulate at an accelerated pace as he willed it to. As a result, he began to feel his body warming up more and more. The heat in him flowed through his every vein to every extremity of his body.

In a matter of seconds, the numbness in his body was gone. Link had regained the feeling in his limbs.

In truth, the technique that Link had just used was similar to the way a Warrior used his battle aura. This was an easy task for a Warrior, but to a Magician, it would have been extremely difficult.

A Magician was usually accustomed to drawing out Mana from within, forming magical constructs outside his body and then summoning the elements of his surroundings to fight his battles. In truth, Magicians had little to no mastery over their physical bodies. There had also never been a Magician bold enough to cast a spell on himself. Even casting a supplementary spell on oneself was a taboo in itself. This was due to the damage a Magician could cause to his own body by doing such a thing.

But now, Link had transcended the difference in power between Magicians and Warriors by using the Beastmen's Legendary battle technique, the Soul Furnace. This was only made possible by his mastery over his own power.

His body was now warming up. Link glared at the freezing wind as he pressed on towards the north.

The voice of his sword spirit echoed in his head, There's that voice again. It said that this is the second test.

"Understood," said Link, as he continued walking forward.

Soon, Link realized that the air was getting colder by the minute. As a result, he was losing body heat quickly. He needed to speed up the circulation of his energy in his body before he froze to death.

After walking a few hundred feet forward, a message popped up in Link's line of sight. Straining his eyes, he saw that it was a warning message from the game system.

Attention! Attention!

Player's current Realm Essence recovery rate is at 134 points per second, while current rate of power usage is at 135 points per second. Player's power reserve is beginning to drop!

Link's current maximum power was 10365 Realm Essence points, which was more than what the Red Dragon Queen had by 30 percent if converted into Dragon Power. Also, his current recovery rate was 134 points per second, which meant that his power was virtually unlimited. However, in order to withstand the cold, his power recovery rate had taken a huge hit.

The first test was to test how much I understand about space and time. What's the second test about this time? Is it testing the level of mastery I have over my power?

As soon as the thought flashed across Link's mind, he heard the sound of ice breaking again amid the howling of the freezing wind.

He narrowed his eyes, trying to see what was up ahead, but the flying snow around him was so dense he could not see a thing. Just then, he felt a slight protrusion beneath his feet. He lowered his eyes and saw that a huge number of cracks had appeared on the ground that he was standing. The cracks were dark inside. Link could not see how deep they went. A piece of ice fell off the edge of a crack. Sounds of its collisions against the ice walls echoed from within the abyss as it fell. Link had no idea just how deep the crack was.

A moment later, the ice beneath Link's feet began to give way.

In a flash, Link tiptoed his way across the gradually collapsing ice layer. His body floated gracefully through the air and finally landed on a patch of ice in a corner.

Link could have used one of his spells throughout the whole thing. He chose not to, as he could sense that there was an unseen danger lurking beneath the ice layer. If he had cast a spell to help himself across the collapsing ice, he would be distracted by said danger and consequently fall to his doom.

This was why he chose to use a battle technique instead.

Before he could let out a sigh of relief, the layer of ice he had landed on suddenly began to collapse as well. Link sprang up, sailed lightly through the air and landed on a patch of ice that was still intact.

Without warning, the ice there began to break, and Link leaped into the air once more. This whole process went on without any danger of Link stumbling in midair.

An outside observer would probably notice that Link was stepping on falling pieces of ice throughout the whole ordeal. The layer of ice he landed on would collapse, and Link would leaped off fragments of it in the air as he moved forward. It seemed as if he was literally walking on air.

This went on for around ten minutes. In that time, Link had taken 1329 steps forward across ten miles of ice without missing a step or slowing down. It was as if he had rehearsed for such an occasion.

When he took his 1330th step, his foot finally hit solid ice which did not give way immediately.

This circular patch of ice was around a hundred square feet. In the middle of it stoodamn completely covered in frost. Before Link even had time to plant both feet on the ground, the man came at him, appearing before Link in the blink of an eye. An ice sword materialized in his hand and was already less than a feet away from piercing through Link's chest.

No Magician or Warrior would have been able to react to such an attack in time, especially after experiencing what Link had gone through. They would be stabbed by the man's ice sword before they even knew what hit them!

Anyone on the wrong end of this sword would be killed in an instant!

However, Link was not just an ordinary Magician. As he was leaping off of falling ice, he had already spotted the ice man in the distance. His power had already flowed into his sword. When the ice man teleported before him, Link immediately stabbed at him with his Ode of a Full Moon sword.

He then activated the time sword technique, which had the effect of 1000 yeassqueezed into the span of a mere second.

As the Ode of a Full Moon sword lightly touched the tip of the ice sword, cracks began appearing across its blade. An instant later, the entire ice sword burstito a fine powder.

In this realm, nothing could withstand the destructive power of accelerated time.

After shattering the ice sword, Link swung his sword up and stabbed the ice man's forehead with it in one fluid motion. Power then flowed into the tip of his sword, activating an incredibly destructive fire spell that belonged to the dragon race: Ball of Destruction.

Purple light flashed out from the ice man's head. Then, his body fell down limply and melted into a puddle of water. The puddle of water froze up immediately in the cold.

As the puddle of water turned into a new sheet of ice, Link's surroundings began to change again.

The blizzard was gone, and so was the biting cold. A full moon had appeared in the sky. Up ahead rose a towering mountain of ice. On the peak of the mountain was a platform, from which shone a faint light. Looking closely, Link realized that a broken stone fragment was the light's source.

The fragment of the Book of Creation! Excited by his discovery, Link began to climb up the mountain to retrieve his prize.

Just then, the sword spirit said, The third test has begun.

Five flashes of light appeared in quick succession not far away from Link. There were silhouettes standing in the light. One of them was no more than 300 feet away from him.

Link narrowed his eyes. "Eugene."

Eugene looked disheveled. His black robe was torn in certain places. Hishi

## 548. Moment Of Testing Ones Heart

The icy peaks loomed under the moonlight.

Under the mountain, six people appearedLink, Dark Magician Eugene, Light Magician Halino, Eliard, Nana, and a Warrior with tattered red armor and a curved sword.

Wait, another beam of light appeared around 1500 feet to the left of Link. The light subsided, revealing Red Dragon Queen Gretel.

So there were seven people.

Gretel didn't seem to be in good shape. She was covered in wounds, and her fiery-red dress was torn at places. After she appeared, crystal red power surged, and her injuries started healing at a speed visible to the naked eye. Even her dress was mended.

Seeing Link, she flinched and then looked away. She didn't speak.

No one else appeared after that. Milose never came. Link guessed that he couldn't pass the test.

Now, the piece of the Book of Creation was not far from the seven. Gretel was 1500 feet to the left of Link. The Dark Magician Eugene was to his right. After that was the Light Magician and the Warrior before finally getting to Eliard and Nana.

Link's position was disadvantageous. He was right between three outsiders.

The treasure was before them, and the situation was unclear. Thus, everyone was on alert. No one wanted to be the first to go.

They couldn't keep at this stalemate though. Light Magician Halino spoke up first. "Ferde Lord, the piece isn't that useful. If you take it"

Before he could finish, the voice rang out from the mountain again. "Younglings, I am very happy that you all passed the test. The fact that you are here means that you all have a talent that the others do not have. It may be power, wisdom, lineage, or even pure luck. You are the top-tier geniuses of the era. Now, you have come for the piece of the Book of Creation. Unfortunately, there is only one piece. That means only one person can receive it."

"Who are you?" Eugene called.

"Me? I'm just the remnant of a soul left from the ancient times. I am the protector of the ancient sovereign wisdom."

"What benefits does that piece have?" Eugene asked again.

"Benefits? Didn't you come because you knew? It is the key that can open the authority of the World Tree. Because it is the biggest piece, it contains more than 50% of the Creation Runes in the book. With it, you can control the World Tree and become the most powerful of this realm. You can rule over the countless lives in Firuman."

Control the World Tree? The most powerful who could rule over lives?

Other than Nana, everyone present stopped breathing for a moment. Even Link's heart skipped a beat at this.

Link wasn't greedy for the ultimate power of ruling all lives. His heart sped up because of what the piece represented. It could help someone become the ultimate ruler and control countless fates. The fact that it existed was terrifying.

Imagine if someone got it. If they really became the most powerful as this protector said, then Link, his loved ones, and his friends would all be ruled by them. If they didn't like the new magic institution he'd established in Ferde, they could destroy it easily.

These thoughts flowed through his mind. Instantly, Link discovered that he only had one choicefight for the piece.

Link didn't lower his guard while thinking. He kept watching the people beside him from the corner of his vision, especially Eugene.

In his mind, he also asked the sword spirit, Is the piece truly that powerful?

It might not have been in the ancient times. When all Level-19 lords united, they could still defeat the sovereign. But now, there are barely any strong figures. Perhaps it's true?

The sword spirit made sense.

At this time, Link suddenly saw a message pop up in his vision. He checked and saw it was actually from the game system.

Activate Mission: The Piece That Shouldn't Exist

Mission Content: The piece of the Book of Creation is too powerful. Its existence will only push the Firuman Realm deeper into danger. Destroy it so no sovereign can appear in this world.

Mission Reward 1: Brilliant Starry Crown (Level-19)

Mission Reward 2: 1000 Omni Points

Punishment for Failure: Light Curse

Light Curse

Divine Technique

Effect: The punishment of the God of Light. The cursed will have their power forever sealed by the God of Light and die within three years.

(Note: God can instantly destroy a mortal's power and cause them to fall from the clouds, making them experience despair!)

This mission was very cruel. Link glanced at it and then ignored it. He wasn't that naive kid anymore. He knew what he wanted to do and didn't want anyone to interfere. Even if it was a god tempting him with Level-19 magic equipment, he would still be unmoved.

The Red Dragon Queen spoke now to everyone present, "This piece will cause a great imbalance in the world's power. I don't wish anyone to receive it, so I will do my best to destroy it! If I succeed, the world will be in luck. If not, I hope Firuman can be eternal!"

As she spoke, thick red light appeared on her body. They formed the illusion of a dragon. Half a second later, she transformed into dragon form.

Hearing this, Dark Magician Eugene yelled, "Gretel, what's wrong with you? Didn't you say that we'd use this to stop the High Elves? How come you've turned now?"

Light Magician Halino also said, "Your Majesty, I agree, but let's use it to stop the High Elves first and then destroy it."

The Red Dragon Queen shook her head resolutely. "No, once this piece arrives at the World Tree, no one will be able to resist its temptation, not even me. Thus, I must destroy it now!"

"You crazy woman!" Eugene yelled. Dark flames faded in and out around him as he berated, "Without it, we'll all die when the realms fuse and Mana explodes."

"So what? Life will pass. My race's mission to maintain the balance in the world is truly eternal!" Gretel's voice was calm. Her eyes were also calm; she'd seen everything in the world.

In the distance, Inferno Warrior Hamilton watched all this and burstito laughter. "It's laughable. It's truly laughable. You haven't even gotten the piece, and you have internal fights already. There'll be a great show next Alright, don't look at me. I'm not your match. You guys take it while I get out of here. Seeing this was enough for me."

With that, he turned around and walked back. Soon, he was gone. Even his aura had disappeared. He really wasn't going to continue this fight.

Six people were left.

Eliard looked to Link. "What do you plan on doing?"

He wasn'titerested in ruling. To him, the best thing in life was to quietly study magic and spend his time with his loved one. This had mostly come true in Ferde.

Now, this piece was threatening his happy life. His intent was the same as the Red Dragon Queen. He would do his best to destroy the piece. However, if Link wanted it, he would also try his best to get it for Link. He knew that the world wasn't as beautiful as he thought. He may not want it, but that didn't mean others didn't want it. Link getting the piece was better than others getting it.

As for Nana, she would do whatever Link said.

Halino looked at Link and hurriedly said, "Lord Morani, don't forget the crazy plan of the High Elves. I believe the wisest choice is to take the piece, stop the High Elves, and then destroy it. If you agree to help us get it, I can take three astral meteorites from my personal archive as compensation."

As soon as he finished, Eugene said, "Lord Morani, you have common sense. Halino's plan doesn't' have any problems. If you agree, I'll add three more astral meteorites."

On the other side, the Red Dragon Queen didn't say anything. She also looked at Link. She was clear that whether or not she could destroy this terrible piece depended on Link.

He already had a plan. Glancing at the piece on the mountain, he smiled. "Actually, I"

Before he could finish, there was another flash. When the light subsided, a dwarf appeared. It was the Mountain Sage, Heroto.

This was another variable.

## 549. I Don't Know What You're Thinking

Heroto was in a state of disorder when he appeared. His white beard had been sheared unevenly by some sharp object and stained by blood. His clothes were in tatters. He looked around. Feeling that something was not right, he asked, "Halino, what happened here? Did I miss anything?"

Halino chuckled. "No, you've arrived just in time, Heroto."

Eugene said, "Heroto, I'm telling you, the Red Dragon Queen's lost it. She's turned on us! She wants to destroy the Book of Creation's fragment!"

If Heroto had not appeared and Link had chosen to side with the Red Dragon Queen, both Eugene and Halino would have lost all hope of retrieving the Book of Creation's fragment.

But now, their overall strength had received a huge boost with the appearance of Heroto. They now had an advantage over the Red Dragon Queen. Even if Link allied himself with her, it would not have made a difference.

Also, Link was a reasonable person. He would definitely be able to see that he had no chance of winning against them. Not wanting to risk annihilation alongside the queen, Link would naturally choose to pull out from their dispute.

The Red Dragon Queen might even be thinking about taking all three of them on her own. If she was still intent on stopping them, it would only mean her death.

Gretel had also noticed the sudden change in her situation. She turned to Heroto.

"No, Great Sage, the Book of Creation's fragment is just too powerful. Whoever has it will Eugene, you bastard! Are you looking to die so soon?"

Before she even finished, she realized that Eugene had already raced up the mountain ahead of them.

As he streaked up the mountain, he shouted back, "There's nothing to be said between us, Gretel. Our opinions differ greatly. Trying to persuade the other to see one's point of view would simply be an exercise in futility. Halino, Heroto, stop her!"

Gretel opened her mouth wide, and a huge fire pillar surged out from it towards the Dark Magician Eugene like a sharp sword.

It did not matter whether Link decided to side with her. It did not matter if she had to see this fight through on her own. Even if it meant risking death, she would do whatever it took to destroy the Book of Creation's fragment.

And so, she did not hesitate to make the first move against Eugene.

Heroto was still unclear about the situation. The atmosphere was already tense when he appeared in their midst. Seeing that Gretel had struck out at Eugene, Heroto decided to join forces with Halino and Eugene.

He pointed his wand at the ground. "Mountain Surge!"

A rumbling sound came from the ground. In an instant, the ground rose up, forming a 500-foot tall, 1000-foot wide, 100-foot thick stone wall. It was as if a huge mountain had appeared out of thin air.

The five-foot thick dragon breath hit the stone wall. Streaks of fire and light flew off in all directions upon impact, and molten rock flowed from the wall, but the attack did not penetrate the thick stone wall.

"Gretel, what are you doing? !" Heroto could not grasp the Red Dragon Queen's actions.

Halino said hurriedly, "Save your questions for later, Heroto. Our top priority now is to retrieve the Book of Creation's fragment before anything happens to it!"

This sounded reasonable. Still unclear about the whole situation, Heroto decided not to think too much about it for now and pointed his wand at the Red Dragon Queen's feet. "Earthquake!"

With another rumbling, the ground beneath the Red Dragon Queen began to roil like an ocean's surface during a storm.

Gretel spread out her wings and rushed into the sky in a whoosh. She then spewed dragon breath at Heroto as she flew up.

Another huge pillar of fire surged out from her mouth.

This was not all. A dark purple fireball was now taking shape in front of the Red Dragon Queen's massive body. It gradually expanded into a three-foot wide purple-black fireball.

"Ball of Destruction!"

Dragon breath surged towards Halino and Mountain Sage Heroto like an avalanche. On the other hand, the Ball of Destruction hurtled towards the Mountain Sage's huge stone barrier and collided into the huge hole that Gretel had managed to carve into it with her first burst of dragon fire.

In the next second, an explosion shook the earth. The Ball of Destruction had exploded, shattering the stone barrier into pieces. The stone that formed the barrier melted into hot molten lava, which burst out in all directions at incredible speed. In an instant, lava sprayed out as far as a few thousand feet around the point of impact.

From afar, it looked as if someone had set off a lava-filled firework!

This was an indiscriminate attack, covering everyone and everything within its area in an instant. It also had tremendous power. Each blob of lava that was sent flying into the air could reach Level-11 or above in terms of power. Only the Red Dragon Queen was able to unleash an attack of this magnitude with ease.

In the midst of this catastrophic display of fire and smoke, a flash of white light appeared. It was Link's spatial portal. Just as everyone else was busy taking cover, Link appeared beside Eliard and Nana and conjured a spatial barrier around them.

As soon as the barrier appeared, hot molten lava began falling from the sky and onto the spatial barrier. The barrage of lava was then suspended in midair by this transparent barrier before it hit the ground.

Through the spatial barrier, all three of them saw that Halino, Heroto and even Eugene stopped in their tracks in order to set up their magical defenses against this attack.

Seeing the raging Red Dragon Queen floating in the air, Eliard could not help but exclaim, "The dragons' queen really is powerful to be able to hold her own against three Legendary masters!"

Nana thought otherwise. She was staring at Halino. She then whispered, "Two seconds."

"Two seconds until what?" asked Eliard.

Link replied, "Two seconds from now, the Light Magician Halino will retaliate. Judging from the flow of energy within him, the attack he's preparing will be lethal. She'll die from it!"

( Updated by NovelFull.Com )

Halino was a Level-13 master who had seen much in the world for the last hundred or so years. He was a peerless master whose power was second to none. The Red Dragon Queen was simply not a match for him.

Link's hand was already holding up the Ode of a Full Moon sword as he said this. Though his choice differed slightly from the others, Link was still of the opinion that the Red Dragon Queen's continued existence would benefit Link and Ferde more than her demise.

And so, if Gretel was really in trouble, he would have to step up and come to her aid.

As the terrifying shower of lava came to an end, Halino's voice rang out. "Your Highness, this is getting ridiculous. I've always held you in the highest esteem. But now, you've gone too far. You seem to forget that I too have a temper!"

Halino was now holding a white crystal magic wand. He pointed at the sky, and a faint golden light flashed out from the tip of the wand into the air.

"Light's Fury: Lightning Retribution!"

There was a rumble in the sky. Almost at the same time, a streak of lightning descended from the clouds like a golden electric serpent, striking the Red Dragon Queen squarely.

The golden lightning's power was incredible. When it flashed out, the whole sky was lit up as bright as day. The ice plain was bathed in a golden light, holy and pure like an angel's halo.

Though the Red Dragon Queen's body was massive, her size was trivial in comparison to the sheer force of Halino's lightning attack.

Eliard's eyes widened, unable to believe what he had just seen. He was at a loss for words, unable to comprehend the terrifying attack Halino had just unleashed.

If one had compared the Red Dragon Queen's Ball of Destruction attack to the earth's terrible fury, then the Light Magician Halino's Lightning Retribution attack was like a divine punishment meted out directly by a god. It had come straight from the heavens with enough power to bring all mortals down to their knees in reverential awe.

The earth might be powerful, but it was still inferior to the heavens. Anyone could see that the Red Dragon Queen would not be able to survive the attack.

Link was still gripping on the Ode of a Full Moon sword. However, a moment later, he loosened his grip. He knew that the Red Dragon Queen must have something up her sleeve. She would not be killed so easily by this.

The bolt of lightning pierced through the Red Dragon Queen's body as it descended from the heavens. It seemed to have hit her, but in the next second, her body began to fade until it finally vanished.

"Was she hit by the lightning?" Eliard asked, stunned.

"No, she's entered the Sea of Void," whispered Nana.

The golden lightning bolt was indeed powerful, but the Red Dragon Queen did not bother defending herself against it. Her dragon body was a vessel meant for crossing the Void. She must have realized that she was completely outmatched by Halino, and so chose to slip into the Void to avoid the attack.

"Uhm?" Halino was stunned by this as well. He had assumed that the queen had lost her mind completely. The fact that she still retained her combat sense had caught him by surprise.

"Eugene, stay alert! She could ambush you from anywhere!" Halino shouted at the Dark Magician, who was already halfway up the mountain.

"I know, just mind your own business Ah, going after the fragment yourself, eh?" No longer caring where the queen might strike next, Eugene continued making his way up towards the mountain's peak.

Halino had also turned into a ball of golden light, which sped off towards the peak of the mountain. Though he and Eugene had formed a temporary alliance, Halino was not about to let Eugene lay his hands on the fragment.

Once Eugene had gotten hold of such a treasure, there was no way he would ever let it go again. Things would become even more troublesome at that point.

Both Light and Dark Magicians raced up the mountain towards its peak.

Mountain Sage Heroto remained confused, unsure of what was happening right now. Had they not all agreed to retrieve the fragment together? The lord of Ferde had been standing on the sidelines of this fight that had broken out among them. Was it not him they had all come to stop from wreaking havoc? Why did they all start fighting one another?

Seeing that the two Magicians were getting closer towards the peak, Eliard asked, "Should we move in, Link?"

The fate of Ferde should not be up to these two outsiders to decide. Eliard realized just then that wanting to live a peaceful life was an extremely tricky business. The world was filled with ambitious schemers vying for a huge piece of it. Their every action could easily upset the balance of the world if they were not careful enough.

The only surefire way of taking control of one's own fate was to become even stronger than these masters.

There were only two options available to Eliard and the others right now : either let the Book of Creation's fragment be destroyed, or let Ferde have it!

Link did not move. Still looking at both Light and Dark Magicians, he said in a low voice, "Things aren't as simple as they look. The Red Dragon Queen may reappear at any moment, and the Book of Creation's fragment is still protected by a defensive barrier and the will of a guardian. We'll see how things go."

A second after Link finished speaking, Halino and Eugene were basically near the mountitop. Just then, ripples began to form near where they were.

A moment later, a faint purple light burst out from the Sea of Void. It was the Red Dragon Queen's Dragon Void Breath!

"I've been expecting, you red lizard!" said Eugene. He had completely dispensed with formalities at this point. He pointed his wand at where the dragon breath was coming from.

"Dark Canvas!" A glittering sheet of darkness before Eugene, blocking the Dragon Void Breath attack from Gretel.

"Your Highness, you're outmatched!"

Halino had also joined in the counterattack against the Red Dragon Queen. Pointing his wand, he shouted, "Judgement of Light!"

It was another Level-13 light spell. A golden light surged into the depths of the Void, drilling into it like a cyclone.

The force of the attack was incredible. Eliard and Nana could not see what was going on, but Link was now ready to leap into the fray and put an end to the fight.

The Red Dragon Queen was up against two Legendary masters. As a Level-11 dragon queen, even with the advantage she had by hiding herself in the Sea of Void, she could not possibly defeat two Level-13 veteran masters by herself.

Link figured that the Red Dragon Queen would sustain heavy injuries from this fight at best.

Just when Link decided to step into the fight, something happened.

There was a hum. Light shot out from the mountain peak, hitting everyone present. At that point, all six of them were completely immobilized. Even the clashing spells were frozen in midair.

Then, the voice of the guardian sounded. "Alright, people, that's enough. I've seen what you have chosen."

A white silhouette appeared on the platform at the mountitop. His gaze swept across everyone before finally coming to rest on Link. "Except you. I don't really know what you're thinking."

## 550. The True Ruthlessness Begins

When the white light enveloped everyone, no one could move. They could only stand dazedly in place.

It wasn't that they didn't struggle. In reality, everyone tried to escape from the restraints. However, the power was formless and insubstantial. It looked like faint white light, but no matter how the people tried, they couldn't budge—not even Link.

This horrible power was way above their abilities!

When the protector looked at Link, the Red Dragon Queen, Light and Dark Magicians, the Mountain Sage, and even Eliard also looked at Link. He had the strongest combat ability but hadn't done anything yet. Faced with a treasure that could help someone quickly take control of Firuman, his opinion was the most important.

Link had already confirmed he couldn't escape from the white light. It should be at Level-19. In the game, he'd reached this step too. A Level-19 Magician indeed could restrain a few Magicians who were at most Level-13. This wasn't difficult.

Faced with this absolute power, all struggles were in vain. Link stopped moving. Faced with the protector's question, he replied calmly, "I think that your idea is meaningless. An idea is just a strategy in my mind. It doesn't mean it'll really happen."

"Oh, you aren't willing to say it?" The protector was a bit surprised. "Your viewpoint is very realistic. However, to those who are blessed like you all, ideas are basically reality. Thus, your first idea is still very important."

He turned to Gretel and smiled. "Like you, Red Dragon Queen. You've always followed the tradition that the dragons had followed for thousands of years. It may pain you, but still, you will not change. This piece will indeed destroy the traditional balance for the dragons. You aren't wrong. As long as it exists, there will be someone who will try anything to possess it. The countless lives in Firuman will also be affected greatly. If someone who doesn't care for others takes control of it, countless of lives will be lost."

The Red Dragon Queen had already floated out from the Sea of Void. Her eyes focused on the Book of Creation piece at the mountitop. "You're right," she said coldly. "That is what I think. I can die for it."

"Very honorable, but it has nothing to do with me." The protector was unmoved. He turned to Eugene. "And you, Dark Magician, are the one who wishes the most to get it. A voice deep inside tells you to get it and control the undefeatable force in Ferde. Turn Ferde into what you like. And what you like is a dark world where only dark magic exists... Am I right?"

Eugene laughed sinisterly. "You're right, but you don't have to guess my plan. Those who are familiar with me know that I'd definitely do that. If I get the piece and take control of the World Tree, the just and moral will have no excuse to banish me. I'd love to see the expressions of those hypocrites at that time."

"Hmph!" Halino looked down at him with extreme disdain.

But the protector's expression was still calm. There was no disgust at all. "No matter what, you are honest. That is one of your few good points."

"Thank you for the compliment. I'm flattered." Eugene leered.

The protector ignored him and turned towards Halino. "As for you, Light Magician, you say that you wish to take the piece and destroy it after stopping the High Elves and ensuring the safety of Firuman. But I see your hesitation. You aren't sure what you'll choose after getting it. Deep down, you know that you may take it for yourself...Your actions are different from what you say. Judging from this, it fits for the Dark Magician to call you a hypocrite."

"Haha, that's great! Well said!" Eugene clapped and laughed heartily.

Halino was annoyed. "Protector of the Book of Creation," he said coldly, "you must be bored. Why exactly are you imprisoning us and rating us all?"

The protector froze and then patted his forehead. Smiling, he said, "Oh, young man, you reminded me. I haven't talked to anyone in such a long time, and suddenly, so many people came today. I almost forgot."

He turned towards Link again. "Young man, the reason why you confuse me is simple. Your thoughts are always changing. Sometimes, you want to destroy the piece. Sometimes, you want to take it. Do you not have a clear standpoint after getting to your current status?"

Link didn't know how to reply. However, he felt like this annoying protector wouldn't let them go if he didn't explain himself. After thinking, he said, "When I first saw it and especially after I listened to you introduce its powers. My first thought was to destroy that piece because of my fear... But then I discovered that you'd exaggerated its uses. It may let someone control the World Tree, but that person will definitely pay the price... Basically, I don't understand the power of this piece. I think it's best not to hurry and make a decision about something I don't understand."

Hearing this, the protector was silent for a few seconds before saying, "I think I've already introduced all the functions very clearly."

Link shrugged. "Indeed, but it was just your introduction, and it's our first meeting."

The protector was a stranger. Why should Link trust him? So what if he had a powerful background and was strong? This couldn't ensure that he wasn't lying.

The protector laughed. "You're brave, but in the end, you want the piece, right?"

Link nodded. "Judging from the current situation, yes."

"Very good." The protector looked to Heroto. "What about you, Mountain Sage? Do you want it?"

"I'm notiterested but—"

The protector cut Heroto off before he could finish. "Okay, I understand."

Then he looked to Eliard and Nana. "You two have very simple thoughts. You either don't want it, or you aren't confident. People like you aren't qualified to possess it. In that case, you, you, and you are eliminated."

As soon as he finished, there were three buzzes. Nana, Eliard, and Heroto disappeared from the strange space.

"Now, there are only four people left. You four either want to get the Book of Creation or destroy it. Whether it can continue to exist or not depends on who wins in the end."

While he spoke, the light enveloping the four moved slightly. They teleported to somewhere ten miles away from the mountitop. Looking down from here, the mountitops that were thousands of feet tall were now little sticks of ice. The Book of Creation piece at the top was a tiny dot of light, almost invisible.

Link turned around. There was no one beside him; he couldn't even sense any auras. The other three seemed to have disappeared.

The protector's voice came from an unknown place and sounded in his ear, "All of you are ten miles away from the Book of Creation piece. You cannot use spatial transmissions or flight here. The restraint on your bodies will disappear at the same time. The mirages on this land will melt away too. If you want to get the piece, then use all your power. Remember, I will notiterfere this time."

As the voice spoke, Link felt a thin layer of light fade from the boundless plain. It was like someone lifting a huge curtain from the land. Without it, the land's original appearance was revealed.   ( Updated by BOX NOVEL.COM)

Link discovered that the ground before him had changed greatly. Various steep mountains rose from the ground. Each one was miles high. Compared to them, the one with the Book of Creation was like a little round podium. They'd completely blocked the way to the Book of Creation.

After the mountains consolidated, the protector's voice sounded again, "Now, begin!"

As soon as he finished, Link felt the white light around him vanish. He was standing before a ten-mile high wall.

He sighed inwardly. So the true ruthlessness is just starting.

The protector wouldn'titerfere, and the four would chase in this maze-like mountain cluster. No one knew who would succeed, who would die, and who would receive the Book of Creation in the end.

## 551. An Unjust Treatment

It was a 15,000-foot tall precipice. Its surface was as smooth as a mirror. There were little to no footholds on it. As neither Teleportation nor Levitation spells could be used at the moment, Link's only option now was to scale the ice wall.

The Guardian was clearly more powerful than any of them. Link had no choice but to play by his rules.

After trying to cast a spatial teleportation spell and making sure that what the Guardian said was true, Link began climbing up the ice wall.

The frozen wall was slippery. Each foothold was carved into it atitervals of 20 feet. With the aid of his magic and battle techniques, climbing the precipice would have been a breeze.

Link cast a spell on himself which gave himself an agility boost, Cheetah's Agility. The spell cost no more than one power point.

Normally, his body would have recovered this bit of power in an instant. However, after a few seconds, Link realized that his power reserve showed no sign of replenishing itself.

"Hmm? Has this so-called Guardian blocked off all the energy channels in my body?" He felt fine, which meant that no foreign power had infiltrated his body. The only other possible explanation to his current predicament was that the other party had erected a barrier around his body.

"Are the other three in the same situation as I am? Forget it; I don't have any proof to confirm my theory anyway. I'll need to expect the worst while dealing with this just to be on the safe side."

The worst case scenario would be his power being sealed off while the other three still retained their powers. This meant that Link would need to use his power sparingly. If a confrontation were to happen, he would need to be in a position where he could strike first and fast in order to be efficient with his power reserve.

Link would also need to maintanalevel of secrecy. In the case of climbing the ice wall, it would be better for him not to use any spells right now so as to avoid wasting his Mana and giving away his position.

After thinking for a while, Link placed a firm foot on one of the footholds on the precipice. He then extracted a piece of magic steel from his spatial ring and spent two points of power to activate a Higgs Force Field, which reshaped the magic steel into a pair of ice-axes. Link then deactivated the Cheetah's Agility spell that he had cast on himself just now.  ( Updated by NovelFull.Com)

When he dispelled the supplementary spell, the Realm Essence power keeping it active would be released into the air. Link was prepared for this. With a nudge of his will, he redirected it back into his own body.

He was also up against two Level-13 Legendary masters. They were one level above him and possessed a great deal of combat experience. He could not afford to waste even one point of power at this point if he were to stand a chance against any one of them.

Gripping the ice axes tightly in his hands, Link stopped looking for footholds and swung himself up across the ice wall by brute strength.

He had climbed no more than 15 feet when suddenly there was a sudden rumbling sound within the ice wall. A few seconds later, a dark aura issued violently out of it. This is Eugene's doing. Must be at least Level-9. The fact that he is able to use such a high-level spell meant that his power was not sealed off like mine was... Well, that's not fair!

Though he had no idea why the Guardian had targeted only him, there was no use crying foul and getting angry about it. If he wanted to get his hands on the fragment, he would need to process his current situation calmly and devise a countermeasure against any attack.

Things aren't looking too good. I'd better get past this wall of ice, quick!

He then continued climbing up the ice wall, even faster than before. As he climbed, he activated a battle technique: Soul Furnace. This technique not only allowed its practitioner to have perfect mastery over one's own power, but it could also speed up the body's healing rate.

Link was putting enormous strain on both his arms as he climbed. He would have been able to withstand such a strain for a moment or two. But climbing 15,000 feet without rest would definitely present its problems soon. At that moment, he sensed that the strain would severely affect his swordsmanship.

However, if he sped up his body's healing rate as he climbed, with the aid of his Realm Essence power's naturally high recovery rate, he would probably be able to minimize the damage to his arms.

Composing himself, Link continued to climb up the wall. After climbing for a while, he began to feel his body heating up. His body temperature had increased to more than 50 degrees. At the same time, he could also feel that his power level had decreased by 50 points.

The 50-point loss was the result of his body mending the wear and tear in his arm muscles as soon as they appeared. At that point, Link's arms looked undamaged. Due to the continuous cycle of repair and damage that was taking place in his internal systems, they looked even sturdier than before.

Link decided to rest for a while on the precipice. He then continued climbing when his temperature returned to normal.

Throughout the whole process, Link could feel five distinct magical auras. One of them belonged to the Light Magician, the other two were the Dark Magician's, and the last two auras were the Red Dragon Queen's.

The three of them were using high-level spells as they pleased, not at all concerned about how much Magical Power they were spending. This proved Link's initial conjecture. All three of them were not hindered by the same power limitation that Link was shackled with. This unjust treatment was enough to make a man's blood boil.

If that's the case, I'll only have one chance for one single burst. If I fail, that would mean death. Eugene would also take the chance to shatter my soul into pieces, thought Link.

The risk was high, but there was no way Link would let the fragment fall in anyone else's hands, especially those belonging to the Dark Magician Eugene.

After calming himself and dousing the flames of righteous anger over the injustice of his treatment in his head, Link then continued his climb.

Half an hour later, Link finally reached the top of the ice wall.

At the top of the ice wall, there was a small platform no wider than 20 feet. There was a steep hill behind it. Sharp icicles lined the hill's path. It looked like a sea of swords from afar. Pristine white clouds floated at the end of the path, blocking off Link's view. From where he stood, besides the white clouds in the distance, Link could not see anything else.

Link made a mental note of the circular platform's coordinates. After looking around, he began walking forward. The slope of the hill was at most 60 degrees. There were places which were as slippery as a mirror. One could easily slip and tumble towards one of the icicles in front.

Here, Link walked with extreme caution.

After walking 50 feet down the hill path, he finally entered the sea of clouds. He could only see no more than 100 feet in front of him. Link had no idea what awaited him up ahead. For now, he could only walk on through the thick mist with his head bowed low and find out for himself.

After traveling 1000 feet, he suddenly heard a distant rumble up ahead. He could also feel the clash of dragon and light auras. After a while, he heard the Red Dragon Queen's shriek.

There was a hint of desperation in the high-pitched shriek as if it had been made by someone on the verge of dying. This did not bode well for the Red Dragon Queen.

Aghast, Link picked up his pace. However, after taking ten steps, he slowed down. "Halino must have found Gretel. It's clear she's not his match. She may already be beyond saving at this point."

Link let out a sigh. "Goodbye, Queen of the Dragons."

The queen's death would be a lamentable outcome. After all, they were still friends. If there was still a chance to save her, Link would take it by any means necessary. However, they were now pitted against each other in an unusually brutal testing ground. He could not afford to be lax in the face of such powerful opponents.

There was nothing he could do.

After a few steps, Link felt that his emotions were still in turmoil. He decided to find someplace to rest for a bit. He then began practicing the Soul Furnace technique on the spot.

His movements were slow as he carried out every step of the form. Five minutes later, he let out a long breath. He finally managed to regain composure.

Then, he continued walking forward.

Another five minutes later, Link reached the bottom of the hill. Here, the mist had thinned considerably. Visibility had increased to at least 500 feet. From there, he could see mountains and towering precipices in the distance. There was a wide, flat path between the mountains.

The path was at least 80 feet wide and spread out in all directions. From where Link was standing, he could see at least three forks branching off the main path.

Link did not know which was the right path to take. The place was like a maze.

An ordinary person would resort to trial and error, blindly taking each path until he found the right one. However, Link was Magician. Naturally, he had his own way of finding the right path.

He stood at the intersection, his hand holding an exquisitely crafted compass.

This was the Compass of Ultimate Truth. A magical gear imbued with Secret magic, it was also an imitation made by Link. The real thing was in Eleanor's hands. Link instantly took a liking to it and made an imitation for himself. He had also added precognitive powers to it, making it even better than the original.

There were three adjustable wheels in the face of the compass. 64 symbols had been etched on each wheel. Calmly, Link set the outer wheel to the symbol of a tree, the middle wheel to "hand" and the inner wheel to "book." He then cleared his mind of all thoughts and slowly channeled his Magical Power into the compass.

This was to ensure that his own thoughts would notiterfere with the compass' function. Unobstructed by his thoughts, his unconscious mind was able to ask the compass the question that Link wanted answers.

There was a needle in the middle of the compass. A few seconds later, it began to tremble violently until it pointed at the leftmost road.

The needle had been guided by the mysterious hand of fate. Link kept his compass and headed for the left fork without hesitation.

After walking 1000 feet, another intersection appeared in front of him. Sharp icicles had sprouted on both sides of the road. It was as if Link had entered a crystalline forest.

Suddenly, Link sensed that he was being watched by someone.

"I've been spotted."

He stopped in his tracks. His hand now holding the Ode of a Full Moon sword, Link felt for the presence of his unseen enemy with his five senses spread out in all directions.

## 552. Instant Battle Of Life Or Death

Pad, pad, pad. Link walked down the tunnel within the icy peaks. The constant soft footsteps hit the walls on either side and bounced back, creating overlapping echoes in his ears.

This was the only sound in the ice tunnel.

After around 50 steps, there was a cross-section. The place was quite wide. It was an open area of a few hundred feet wide. There were many sword-like stalagmites piercing into the sky. All of them overlapped and crisscrossed like a huge ice flower.

Suddenly, Link felt in his heart a strange aura coming from a huge ice flower on his left.

That moment, Link's senses sped up dramatically. He felt time slow down. Instantly, the basic information of this abnormal aura flashed past Link's mind.

Two hundred forty feet to the left, Level-13, dark, power is consolidating, about to erupt, danger!

Each fact was short, but they were indispensable in battle. As for other things, such as the attacker's identity, method, and more would need deduction to figure out. Link didn't have that in his mind. He didn't think either because that would cost additional reaction time.

In a battle like this, the faster he reacted, the more advantages he had!

After another instant, around one-thousandth of a second, a solution flashed past Link's mind. Give up defending and attack immediately!

The other was at Level-13, but Link had much magic equipment. Defending against this attack would be hard but not impossible. However, if he used a defense tactic, he would fall into an awkward disadvantage.

He would use up much Realm Essence to block a Level-13 spell, and he wouldn't be able to recover. Even if he won, he would have lost a lot. This was disadvantageous towards later battles.

And once he started defending, he would enter a stalemate even if he succeeded. Then that would cost even more power. So if he wanted to win and get the Book of Creation piece, in the end, he only had one option: fight to attack first!

During the instant decision, the Ode of a Full Moon was unsheathed at the same time. As the sword flashed, the consolidated Realm Essence flowed like a river. It seemed smooth, but there were undercurrents that rushed into the sword.

The entire sword glowed. The light didn't just come from its surface. It shone from deep inside, turning the sword translucent like crystal.

The glow was like moonlight. It poured into all directions, instantly washing the entire tunnel in frosty white.

At the same time, a rune halo appeared around the sword's tip. There were smaller halos inside this halo. The countless rings vibrated and turned at the same time. It was detailed and precise to the point of not being able to see it clearly.

The next moment, a black vortex appeared before the Ode of a Full Moon's halo. The sword tip buried into it and reappeared 240 feet to Link's left. That moment, countless runes flew at the tip. The silver moonlight was cold as frost. This was Link's strongest attack spell: Time.

As time flew by, seas could turn to land.

The sword soared for around one-thousandth of a second and moved 30 centimeters before hitting something soft.

There was a stalemate for around three-hundredth of a second.

In the first one-hundredth of a second, Link could clearly feel the powerful repulsion force from the soft object. It kept resisting the Ode of a Full Moon, wanting to push the sword out. This strength was impossibly powerful and completely surpassed Link's limit. He almost lost control of the sword.

But this only lasted for one-hundredth of a second. After that, the power of time came into effect. Under the extreme passage of time, the soft object's power decreased rapidly. It entered the stalemate period. This lasted another one-hundredth of a second.

The opponent continued to weaken. The Ode of a Full Moon began to get the upper hand. During the last one-hundredth of a second, the other's power collapsed completely. The sword stabbed in.

Squelch. That familiar sound and feeling was of a sword piercing flesh.

In the Orida Fortress, Link had personally used his sword to kill more than 5000 people. He was very familiar with the feeling of a weapon entering flesh, so he felt it at once. Realm Essence flowed through the sword and rushed into the opponent's body.

It didn't simply rush in. When it flowed past the sword, it started forming Mana structures. Because of Realm Essence's perfect controllability, the speed was at the maximum speed.

Instantly, it formed a destruction spell: Ball of Destruction.

It entered the opponent's body next. Then, Link retracted his sword. During this process, he'd already started retreating at full force. His body flashed and then hid behind a thick stalagmite.

It wasn't enough to block the opponent's attack, but it could hide him, making the opponent lose their target momentarily. This was to prevent their last attack before death.

While Link did all this, less than one-tenth of a second had passed. Link couldn't do this before. He would have needed at least two-tenth of a second to perform it completely.

This was all thanks to the Beastman Legendary battle technique, Soul Furnace.

Just as Link hid behind the ice pillar, a tragic cry came from his near distance. Following it was an explosive boom. Then, a power aura with fire and darkness traveled over.

Link turned to take a glance. He saw a dark purple flame billow from behind a stalagmite. Around the fire were pieces of blood and flesh. Amongst it, Link saw a bloody skull. Judging from the hair color, it was Dark Magician Eugene.

Now, Link realized belatedly that his sneak attacker was this Dark Magician. He'd taken care of it with one strike. Eugene was weaker than he'd imagined.

A semi-transparent shadow flew up from the ruins at an incredible speed, rushing into the sky. It should be Eugene's soul. If he'd flown a bit slower, Link wouldn't mind adding another strike to shatter the soul. He couldn't do that now though.

Eugene must be skilled in soul spells. After leaving this time, he will definitely use some method to be reincarnated. At that time, I'll have a new nemesis. I must be careful about this.

Of course, Link didn't have any regrets. In the previous situation, it was life or death. Since Link could kill Eugene once, he could do it a second time! He wouldn't underestimate Eugene's destructiveness because of this though. Eugene was a true Legendary Magician. Fighting face to face wasn't his strong point, but if Eugene chose to stay in the shadows and plotted, that would be truly horrible.

After composing himself behind the stalagmite, Link walked to Eugene's corpse. After looking around, he found an extraordinary dark wand and some magic items. This included a spatial ring. Opening the ring, Link couldn't help but shake his head.

So many good things. As expected of an old Legendary Magician.

Collecting all of them, Link checked his own state. That attack had seemed fast, but it had cost a lot too. In that instant, he'd used up more than 5000 Realm Essence points. This was close to 30% of his total power.

I still have more than 70%, and I should only have the Light Magician left. I can deal with him!

Link continued on with that in mind.

He walked for more than ten minutes along the tunnel. Then he suddenly saw someone leaning against a huge stalagmite up ahead. Looking, his heart jumped. It was none other than the Red Dragon Queen Gretel!

She'd transformed back into human form and was covered in blood. A crystal spear that kept flashing with golden lightning was in her waist. Her head rested weakly against the stalagmite. Her fiery hair fell messily around her. Behind her, the pool of blood had flowed for more than three feet. The view was tragic.

Perhaps due to a dragon's strong vitality, Gretel hadn't died. Her chest was still rising slightly. Hearing the footsteps, she opened her eyes and saw Link. That moment, she smiled bitterly. She opened her mouth to say something but didn't in the end. She'd just sighed and closed her eyes again.

She knew that this human wasn't the human she'd imagined. He was a lord. Perhaps he looked warm on the outside, but inside, he was fierce, cold, and cruel. They may have been friends, but they had different paths. He wouldn't help her.

Though her logical mind told her this, Gretel still had some hope in her heart.

Tap, tap, tap. The footsteps got closer; they were about to reach her. Gretel couldn't help but open her eyes. But what she saw dashed all hope.

Link didn't seem to see her. He acted as if she was a cold corpse and walked past without even turning his head.

I was right, but that's alright. I have nothing to miss in life. Gretel's heart had given up. The lightning spear had destroyed her body. All she could do now was wait for death.

Tap, tap, tap. Link's footsteps faded into the distance... A teardrop rolled down from Gretel's closed eyes. This was the second time she'd shed tears for Link. It would be the last time too./ NovelFull.Com

But then something happened.

Link's voice suddenly sounded. "Halino, I see you. Come out."

## 553. Only One Will Walk Out Of Here Alive

There was a slight breeze blowing through the path between the ice walls. The breeze dispersed the white mist floating across the path as it blew towards Link.

A lone figure appeared from the mist. The man was wearing a flowing grey-white robe. Hishi

He had managed to retrieve it before anyone else.

"I didn't think you would be able to make quick work of Eugene," said Halino in a low voice.

"So you two formed an alliance?" Link lightly placed a hand on the handle of the Ode of the Full Moon sword, ready to strike out at the first opportunity.

Halino had the same idea as well. His power pulsated at the crystal tip of his magic wand, ready to conjure magical constructs around him at the first sign of trouble.

At that moment, both Halino and Link remained wary of each other. Neither one of them dared make the first move while the opportunity had yet to present itself to them.

"It wasn't an alliance exactly, just an agreement that had benefited both sides under the current circumstances. I handle Gretel, Eugene handles you. Once I have the fragment, I'll fight it out with him. I've figured out what the Guardian has in mind for all of us. Only one of us will walk out of this valley alive. There's no point in reaching the fragment first while someone else is still alive."

Saying this, Halino threw the glowing fragment to the ground. "I'll just put this here. Now let us battle. Whoever wins will have it."

Link chuckled coldly. "That sounds nice and all, but why would you pick this place as our battleground? Why didn't you just kill Gretel immediately? Is leaving her barely alive your way of trying to distract me?"

Halino smiled faintly. "Eugene was clearly outmatched by you. There's little to no difference in power level between me and him. Our methods are also the same. Our duels have always ended in a stalemate for years, so there's no way to tell who's stronger. I knew I needed to resort to less conventional means to defeat you. For the sake of all of Firuman, I will not let the High Elves destroy this world. I need the tablet, and this is the only way to make sure that I have it in the end."

His words sounded righteous and filled with a sense of justice. Link could not find the words to rebuke him. He would have done the same thing if he was in Halino's shoes.

To a true Magician, the ends always justified the means. For example, in order to further his own nefarious goals, a notorious Dark Magician like Eugene did not shy away from staining his hands with the blood of hundreds of thousands of lives. Link too had the blood of thousands on his hands. In order to aid Orida Fortress' resistance against the Dark Army, he had conceived the Sunlight Seed through experiments using live subjects. Ordinary Magicians might not be able to stomach his actions, but Legendary Magicians like Halino would have understood why he had to do the things he did.

Link took a long breath. "Well, it worked. I was indeed worried about Gretel's well-being. You were able to throw me off balance by torturing her."

Link's feelings for Gretel were complicated. They used to be close friends with something of a history behind them. Though their paths had split, Link's heart was still haunted by Gretel's shadow. He would never want her to die, not in front of him anyway.

More importantly, as the queen of the dragon race, she was more useful to Link and Ferde alive.

The Red Dragon Queen might have been stubborn and old-fashioned, but she was also a reliable person. Her personality was a constant. You never needed to guess when she would turn on you. Having her by your side was a boon in itself.

The dragon race was also incredibly powerful. Whenever something or someone threatened to throw the world out of balance, the dragon race would rise up as self-proclaimed peacekeepers to tip the world back inobalance.

Right now, the High Elves planned on merging the two realms. This would have far-reaching effects on the world. Though Halino and the others had been working desperately to stop the High Elves, things might not work in their favor.

As a lord, Link needed to devise a series of countermeasures for all possible contingencies. If they were unable to stop the realm reunification, the world would descend into chaos. The High Elves would be a common enemy shared by all other races in Firuman, and the dragons would naturally become allies of Ferde as a result.

Evidently, a dragon race with the stabilizing presence of the dragon queen was a hundred times better than one without her.

Whatever the case might be, Link needed Gretel alive.

Halino was surprised to hear Link's words. "You actually told me what your weakness is. You should know that I could send my Spear of Light flying through Gretel with a mere thought!"

"So it would seem," said Link, nodding in acknowledgment. He then continued, "However, this will leave you completely unguarded. You'll be risking your own life just to end hers."

If Halino were to be distracted for even a hundredth of a second, Link would not hesitate to kill him as he had killed Eugene.

Halino glared at Link.

This human stood quietly before him, his black battle robe billowing around him. He looked more like a hardened Warrior than a Magician with that magic sword he was holding in his hand. The human before Halino gave him the impression of a volcano that was about to erupt at any moment.

Though Link looked serene on the outside, Halino could feel that he would not be able to survive this volcano's eruption.

After standing in front of each other for half a minute, Halino began to sense his sense of inferiority growing in him. Realizing this, he sighed. "I'll admit, you may be the strongest Battle Mage in all of Firuman I've ever seen. In one-on-one combat, your magic is the equivalent of an unstoppable tank. But it does not mean that I have no chance of beating you, Lord of Ferde. Unencumbered, no one is your equal. However, that is not the case right now. If I leave you now, you'll be able to take the fragment from and save Gretel as well. However, you will be at your weakest when you're burdened by both an injured person and an invaluable stone tablet."

Saying this, Halino began to step back slowly until his body slipped into the white mist behind him. A faint voice echoed out from it. "So choose wisely, Lord of Ferde."

There was a sudden bang beside Link. The Spear of Light embedded in Gretel's body exploded into specks of light.

The explosion managed to widen Gretel's wound even more, causing her extreme pain. However, it was not powerful enough to kill her immediately.

"Arghhh!!!" Gretel shrieked out in pain. Her entire body then collapsed on the ground. Blood flowed out of the gaping wound between her chest and abdomen in rivulets.

If Link did not cast a healing spell to stop the bleeding soon, the Red Dragon Queen would most certainly die before him.

Link turned around and was about to do something about the Red Dragon Queen's wound when suddenly he stopped. In an instant, he drew his sword out and stabbed it out to his side. A Despair Ball appeared before the sword tip, swallowing half of the sword as it extended outward.

In one fluid motion, Link had lashed out just as quickly as when he had delivered the final blow to Eugene.

A soft groan echoed from the white mist. It was the Light Magician Halino. Link's Ode of the Full Moon sword had pierced his heart.

From the sword, Realm Essence power flowed into Halino's body like a moonlit stream. Gradually, a Ball of Destruction began to form in his heart.

The Ball of Destruction did not explode immediately in him, which was the reason why Halino was still alive.

Halino grasped at his chest in pain. From a few hundred feet away, he asked, "How did you know I was about to attack?"

Link pointed a finger at Gretel and cast a spatial sealing spell on her, sealing her body in a spatial bubble. He then slowly said, "On the Golden Plains, if a Beastman wished to become a Warlord, he would be required to overcome a series of challenges. Once a Beastman declared his candidacy for the title of Warlord, one of the trials he would be required to take on was to survive a series of asssination attempts. Powerful Assassins would try to kill him at every opportunity for a whole month, day and night. He would only be deemed fit to bear the title of Warlord after having survived this trial."

The candidate could employ whatever means necessary to overcome this trial. If the new Warlord was not able to stay alert even in his sleep, this meant that he sorely lacked training and would probably have to stay up all night for a whole month on a lookout for Assassins. He would probably die from the exhaustion if no Assassin had managed to kill him at that point.

The only way any potential Warlord candidate could get through this trial was the Legendary battle technique, the Soul Furnace.

The perfect unification of soul, strength, and body would naturally sharpen one's sensitivity to all forms of danger, allowing it to surpass even a wild beast's instincts. A Beastman Warlord who had mastered the Soul Furnace technique would be able to sense an enemy's presence even in his sleep. He would be ambush-proof.

This was the true strength of the Beastmen's Soul Furnace technique.

Halino might not have lost to Link so easily if he had put up a fair fight. It was a shame that he had chosen to fight so dishonorably. When Link turned around, Halino thought that this was his chance to move in. However, it was then that he took a hit from Link's sword.

In a fight between two equally powerful masters, whoever slipped up first would be instantly killed by the other. This was the cruel reality of any life-and-death battle.

Link then cast a soul barrier around Halino's body, preventing his soul from escaping. Eugene's soul was more than enough for Link. He wondered if he needed to keep another enemy's soul.

Halino instantly knew what Link was up to. Panicking, he shouted, "I'm not like Eugene. He's a banished Dark Magician. His soul will wander around the mortal plane if it's let loose. My soul, however, will ascend to the God of Light's kingdom!"

"You're right, but I won't make the same mistake twice. Even if you'll be ascending to heaven, that's not your call to make. It's mine!"

At that moment, the Ball of Destruction exploded inside Halino's body, blowing it up into pieces. The soul barrier that Link had set up immediately shrank around the explosion until a single Soul Crystal was all that was left of Halino.

Link beckoned at the Soul Crystal, and it flew into Link's hand.

"Don't worry, your soul isn't of much use to me anyway. I'll be sure to personally take it to a Church of Light and let an archbishop send you to heaven."

Keeping the crystal away, Link walked towards where the Book of Creation's fragment lay. He had defeated everyone. The fragment was his to keep.

However, as he reached for the fragment, there was a glimmer of light from it. The guardian's image appeared on the tablet. He looked at Link and pointed at the Red Dragon Queen. "Young man, you still haven't dealt with everyone. She's still alive," he said.

## 554. Young Man Wish You A Beautiful Life

The protector's words made Link stop. He glanced at Gretel. She was "frozen" in the spatial seal. A bloody gaping hole practically went straight through her. Her entire body was covered in blood. Flesh lay on the ground around her. Her frozen eyes were opened listlessly. Her pupils had started expanding, but her head was raised slightly. Her gaze was directed at Link's current position.

Her expression was complicated. There was some happiness but also bitterness. No one could pinpoint her thoughts.

Something was clear though. If Link removed the spatial seal and didn't receive any help, she would die within a few minutes.

"She doesn't have any power to fight back." Link didn't want to do it.

"She doesn't now, but you won't let her die. You have enough power to save her. As long as she's alive, she will try to destroy the Book of Creation piece. She will be your opponent... So, if you let her live, you won't be able to get the piece."

The protector's words were heartless. He'd given Link a very cruel choice. He could either choose the Book of Creation or choose to save Gretel. He could only choose one.

Judging from the performance earlier, the protector was abnormally strong, reaching Level-19. Link had no confidence to break through the obstacles set by something like that.

"People can change. She might not be that insistent," Link tried to persuade the protector.

The protector shook his head. "It seems that you don't know her well enough. Can you easily persuade a dragon queen who has lived for more than 2000 years and seen all the horrors of life? No, you can't. No one can change what she's already decided. You can't either...young man!"

He emphasized the last two words, pointing out Link's age.

He wasn't wrong. Link may possess great power now and experienced more than most humans, but he was still in his twenties. Even if he added his days from both worlds, he wouldn't be older than 50. His experiences and knowledge couldn't help him understand someone that had existed for 2000 years.

It was like how an innocent child couldn't understand an adult. They could live under the same roof but weren't living at the same level at all.

This was a fact. Link couldn't refute it.

Seeing that Link admitted it, the protector continued, "The Book of Creation contains unlimited power. Once you have it, you'll stand at the peak of Firuman and become the ultimate sovereign. At the peak, there is freezing wind. Countless people will have their eyes on your power, trying to steal your glory. Your closest friends will stab a dagger into your heart. Your most trusted will give you poisoned wine. Your lover will become the one who ends you. If a sovereign wishes to remain for eternity, you must be lonely... So, end her life!"

The protector's words were magical. When he spoke, different images appeared in Link's mind uncontrollably.

In the images, Eliard stared at him from a dark corner with hatred. When he was sleeping, Celine's hands gripped around a poisoned dagger. The reports Lucy gave him were all faked...They were images of all his friends betraying him.

Other images appeared too. They weren't about him anymore. Instead, they were historical events from Firuman and Earth that he'd read before. In these images, the kings and emperors were all alone. To get the throne, fathers killed sons, brothers killed each other, and mothers killed sons. There were endless tragedies and unspeakable darkness.

Whoosh, whoosh. Cold wind sounded in Link's ears. He thought back to the protector's words.

If a sovereign wishes to remain for eternity, you must be lonely. At the peak, there is freezing wind!

Yes, the wind was too bone-chilling. They were only hallucinations, but even with his strong mind, Link still shuddered subconsciously.

The protector's shadow had a pair of glowing eyes. Those eyes seemed to see through everything. Looking at Link, he could see his soul. "Young man, what is your choice? Lonely glory or a mortal's happiness?"

Link looked at the bloodied and dying Gretel again. After a pause, he said, "I choose..."

To be honest, he didn't know what to choose. This was the first time he felt lost after coming to this world.

Before he could finish, his vision flashed quickly. He glanced and saw the mission from earlier—the Piece that Shouldn't Exist. The mission flashed with blinding red light. It wasn't just to show its existence but also to remind Link that the God of Light wanted him to destroy it.

At the same time, the sword spirit's voice rang in his mind again. Another voice appeared in my mind. It said one sentence: all existences in the world have hearts. If one's heart is blinded, the world will have no light.

The sentence was mysterious. After hearing it, Link's heart twitched. Something flashed past his mind. It was fleeting, like a rabbit sprinting in the grass, but he could see the blurry figure.

Experience told Link that if he couldn't decide, then he shouldn't get affected by the outside world and decide brashly. He should think carefully to prevent making an irrevocable mistake.

Thus, he shut his mouth and fell silent again.

"What is your choice, young man?" the protector urged.

Link shook his head. "I haven't decided. You've already waited for so long. You can wait a bit longer, right?"

"Indeed...I will wait for your decision."

Link thought back to the sword spirit's words. He composed himself and carefully sensed his surroundings. More than ten minutes later, a light flashed in Link's mind. He had a hypothesis.

Nothing is restiting my power recovery, and the space isn't sealed. I can still use spatial magic. Does that mean that the restitions on transmissions and flight aren't real?

Thinking of that, Link ignored the protector and took out the Ode of the Full Moon. He started practicing the Soul Furnace battle technique.

He went through each move slowly. His thoughts were sinking too. After a long while, Link's heart suddenly jumped. There was something abnormal. It was in his soul rather than the environment.

With the help of the Soul Furnace, Link was able to focus completely. His soul entered an indescribably calm state. It was as smooth and flat as the surface of a mirror.

Right now, Link's heart had no disturbances. He didn't have any emotions. He was completely calm.

There were many reasons why he could reach this state. Firstly, there was the Soul Furnace, a Legendary battle technique. Secondly, Link had the pure Realm Essence. It was abnormally perfect and basically gave Link zero disturbances. More importantly, Link had high control over his soul.

In this calm, Link could sense the tiniest shred of abnormalities. Now, he could feel several strange thoughts in his soul. After sensing carefully, he found three. Two were clear. The first was that he couldn't use transmission spells while getting to the piece. The second was that he couldn't fly in the valley.

These were the requirements given by the protector.

Another thought was blurry. Link sensed it carefully and discovered it was very fuzzy evil intent. It came from the protector. It was hard to explain, but it activated Link's stress mechanism.

After this was activated, the changes in his soul influenced his entire body which affected his power. After this avalanche-like chain effect, Link's body thought that everything in the environment was harmful and subconsciously rejected absorbing the power.

All existences in the world have hearts. If one's heart is blinded, the world will have no light.

The sword spirit's voice rang in Link's mind again. This time, it dawned on him. A ray of sunlight appeared in his clouded soul.

Once the light appeared, it sliced apart the clouds like a sharp sword. The world in Link's eyes brightened too. At the same time, he discovered that the looming ice walls had changed too. They looked cloudy, like a white mist.

It suddenly dawned on Link.

The protector's illusion wasn't actually that powerful. Most of his tricks were on the aspect of one's soul. Most of his surroundings weren't real. Other than the outermost walls of this icy valley, everything was fake.

Exhaling, Link looked back at the protector's figure. He realized it was an illusion too. Looking closely, he saw that the air around it was wavering. Its power was actually quite weak. It was practically just air.

"You're just the remnant of an ancient lord's consciousness. Now, you can no longer stop me."

With that, Link walked towards the Book of Creation piece and picked it up. During this, the protector retreated automatically. He smiled faintly. When Link picked up the piece, he bowed slightly. "Young man, you passed the final test."

Link no longer had any doubts. Looking at the piece in his hands, he said, "It won't turn me into the ruler or even give me any power, right?"

"Of course. It's just a broken piece. If it really could turn someone into the sovereign, it wouldn't be abandoned here."

"Then why was it passed down through the millenniums?" Link asked.

"It is a key." Light appeared in the protector's hands. When it dissipated, all illusions in the ice valley disappeared.

The freezing wind, icy snow, and extreme frigidity appeared one by one, showing the true appearance of the extreme north.

Whoosh, whoosh. Freezing wind blew endlessly, scraping Link's face like knives. He was forced to cast a Level-5 spell to fight against the cold.

The protector's illusion wavered in the wind and snow. He pointed at the tall mountain behind him. "Do you see the mountain path covered by thick snow?"

Link looked. Through the heavy snow, he saw a mountain behind the protector. A path snaked across it, but it was covered with snow. If not for the fact that the snow piles were very smooth, he wouldn't be able to see the path at all.

"Follow the path up. At the peak, there is a cave with a Level-19 eternal seal. The key is in your hands... Young man, I wish you a beautiful life."

After that sentence, wind blew and the protector transformed into snow, melting into the tundra.

Link glanced at the corner again. The game system's mission was still there, but it didn't flash anymore. The blood-red color had turned gray too. Behind it, it said "discarded."

This surprised Link slightly. The God of Light...can be wrong too?

He'd always thought that the God of Light was very powerful and knew practically everything about Firuman. Apparently, he was wrong.

Thinking back, this wasn't the God of Light's first mistake. Back at the Yabba city, he'd been fooled by the God of Destruction.

It seems that the God of Light isn't as powerful as I thought. He can't control Level-19 strength in the mortal world.

This detail helped Link see the God of Light's bottom line. He was powerful but not impossibly so. He had many flaws in his control of Firuman.

Of course, Link was still too weak. It was too soon to think of this. Shaking his head, he tossed the thoughts to the back of his head. Activating a levitation spell and Void Walk, he followed the mountain path to the peak.

Seconds later, Link was before a ten-foot-tall ice crystal. At a glance, it was just a normal block of ice. At closer inspection, Link saw that it was covered in runes. They were innumerable and complicated. He felt like his head would crack apart at just a glance, so he gave up.

When he walked up to it, the piece in his hand brightened and buzzed. It started shaking, almost leaving his hands.

Link let go, and it immediately floated to the crystal door. Then, like water fusing into a river, it disappeared. A few seconds later, the crystal door shone too. Five seconds later, there was a soft poof, and the door disappeared. A tiny hidden chamber appeared.

Pale blue light came from it, as well as a lovely and ethereal sound. Link walked in, and his eyes widened.

He saw two people inside the room. No, more correctly, it was two dried corpses.

## 555.

The interior of the ice cave looked like an ordinary living room.

It was approximately 100 square feet wide. There were two semicircular bookshelves hanging on the walls. In a corner of the room, there was a smaller room with an embroidered screen blocking its entrance. Through the screen, one could see a large bed in it. This must be the bedroom.

In the main room, there was a large circular table. Beside the table sat the bodies of a man and a woman. Their corpses were still intact, despite the fact that they had been desiccated thoroughly and now looked like a pair of withered branches.

The expressions on their faces remained the same as when they were still alive. The man was reading a magic book, while the woman was busy carving a golden bird figurine. Their faces were serene. The man even seemed to be talking.

There was a magic book which emitted a faint blue glow in the middle of the circular table.The empty sound that Link had heard just then was coming from it.   U.p..dated by NoVelfull.Com

Lots of questions now popped up in Link's mind. Who are these people? Why did they come to live here in the far north? And why did they leave this magic book behind?

Prompted by a desire to resolve these questions, Link began walking into the room of ice. No sooner had he taken his third step than a subtle current of magical power suddenly filled the air.

Stunned, Link stopped. His hand instinctively flew to the Ode of a Full Moon sword's handle.

Two seconds later, a silhouette appeared in front of him. The silhouette swirled about in the room before coming to rest on the two corpses.

Strangely enough, when the silhouette wrapped itself around them, the two withered bodies began to swell up. Link could see that their skins was gradually regaining moisture, while their glassy eyes cleared considerably, as if the two bodies had been brought back from the dead.

A drastic change swept across the entire room as well. Everything in the room, which was initially covered by a layer of dust, now shone with almost surreal cleanliness.

However, Link knew that this was all just an illusion. In truth, the bodies still remained lifeless. The magical power that Link felt just then had simply refracted the light in such a way that the bodies only seemed to have come back alive.

A moment later, the man started speaking.

"Lucia, my life's coming to an end soon." The man's eyes did not leave the magic book he was holding as he said this. His face remained expressionless, as if his death was about as unusual as a neighbor coming by to borrow a cup of sugar.

The woman beside him laughed, not at all perturbed by what the man said. She did not stop carving the golden bird figurine. "I see. I guess we'll need to start making arrangements for that now, won't we?"

The man nodded. He stood up, walked to one of the bookcases and then took out a magic book. Link peeked at it and saw that the book the man was holding was similar to the one on the table, at least on the outside. The only difference was that it was not glowing, nor was it making any peculiar sound.

The man returned to his seat with the book and then placed it in the middle of the table.

Link noticed that there was a simple-looking magical rune etched in the middle of the table. When the magic book was placed on it, the runes on the rest of the table began to glow. Light then began flowing from the rune formation into the magic book.

Link also realized that the light did not actually come from the rune formation itself. It was flowing out from the man's hand. The magic book grew brighter and brighter as it absorbed more and more of the light. It then began to emit an empty, trembling sound.

The man was shriveling up visibly. He now looked to be 100 years old when he finally stopped pouring the lightito the book.

"Dear, we can live for close to a thousand years with this power if we want to. Will you be angry at me for doing this?" said the man ruefully to the woman sitting beside him.

"No, Rosso, there's always a beginning and an end to all life. We've completed our respective journeys in life. Another thousand years would only be torment for our souls," said the woman, shaking her head.

Link noticed that for some reason, the woman's face had withered like the man as well.

This couple must have used some kind of spell to bind their life forces together, thought Link.

Just then, the man, who was still barely alive, took out a pencil and began writing slowly on the magic book before him. The woman, not at all concerned about death's approach, continued carving the golden bird figurine.

The man began reading what he was writing. "I am Rosso Schneider. I started studying magic when I was 28 years old. However, the first three years of my studies had been uneventful. When I was 31 years old, I stumbled across a Soul Stone. For whatever reason, it chose me, granting me an incredible potential for the mystic arts. Ten years later, I was given the honorable title of Soul Dominator. Another ten years later, I began studying Prophecy Magic for five years, but without any noticeable progress. One night, when I was looking at the stars, I had a sudden epiphany. At that moment, I realized that one needs to receive the realm's blessing in order to master Prophecy Magic. No amount of rigorous training was going to help me accomplish that..."

The man was writing his life's story in the book. Link patiently listened in a corner, curious as to how the man's story ended. Ten minutes later, the man stopped writing. He gave a sideways look at the magic book that was emitting a faint blue glow for three seconds. His eyes then returned to the book in front of him. After looking at it for ten seconds, he resumed his writing.

"The gift of clairvoyance had allowed me to see what the future holds. It was both a blessing and the most terrifying curse one could hope to receive in this realm. I had lost all hope in life. In order to recover the hope I had lost, I had struggled upstream against the river of time, peering into the future until at last, I saw a turning point, 120,000 years into the future.

"120,000 years later, the realm's timeline had diverged into multiple branches. It was like a tree that had begun to branch out, creating multitudes of possible futures. Some of these futures I had seen were bleak, some even completely annihilated. However, there were also some filled with light and hope. The possibilities were endless. 120,000 years was too long a time. Even if I ascended to godhood, I would not be able to live that long to see which future unfolded... I have seen my end. I have received the realm's blessing, and then I will fade from this world as quietly as I had entered it. And so, I have decided to leave the Book of Spirits behind for posterity."

The man finally put down his pencil. He lifted his head up and looked at Link. He then spoke, his eyes seemingly focused on nothing in particular, "To the future possessors of this book, your identities are legion. Demons, Beastmen, servants of the God of Destruction, elves, or even humans. Whoever you may be, the fact that you have come this far means that you have passed the Guardian's test. You now have the right to possess this book. Take it. Finally, the wisdom I have accumulated for a lifetime has an heir."

When the man finished speaking, the silhouette vanished. Everything was back to normal. Only the magic book remained humming on the table as if waiting for Link to pick it up.

Link was not in a rush to pick up the prophet's book. He stood in the entrance and bowed low before the bodies of the two ancient sages. Only then did he walk forward and picked the Book of Spirits up from the table.

As soon as the Book of Spirits left the table, the room began to sway gently. Cracks appeared on the table, the withered corpses, the bookshelves, and even the small bedroom. They began to crumble, bit by bit.

In the blink of an eye, the whole room of ice collapsed into a pile of ash. Only the magic book that Link was holding in his hand remained unscathed.

The surrounding walls in the ice cave also began to crack, threatening to collapse all around him. At that moment, Link cast a spell to keep the walls intact as long as he could.

The sword spirit's voice sounded in Link's head.

He's the Soul Dominator. He was the most powerful entity to ever exist in ancient times. He was the ancestor of Celine Flandre as well as a good friend of the Storm Lord. He had even tried telling the Storm Lord to keep his temper in check, or there would be consequences. However, his words fell on deaf ears. Soon, the Soul Dominator stopped telling his friend off, which ultimately led to Storm Lord's downfall.

Link was moved by the sword spirit's tale. He recalled Rosso's life story and vividly felt the hopelessness that the prophet had felt due to being submerged in visions of possible futures. Link could only imagine what it must have felt like to bear such a curse throughout one's life.

He bowed again at the Soul Dominator's body before leaving the room. As he stepped out, the room lost the support of Link's spell and instantly came crashing down.

Outside the cave, the Book of Spirits in Link's hand stopped glowing. Link tried to put the magic book inside his spatial ring but failed. The book seemed to be resistant to spatial magic.

The book's cover was made of a leather specially forged through alchemy. Link decided to simply bind the book securely to his waist.

Suddenly, there was a flash of light in his vision. The game system had brought up some information regarding the magic book Link had just gotten.

Player has received the magic book titled Rosso's Book of Spirits.

Book of Revelation: Rosso's Book of Spirits

Level-19 Flawless Divine Gear.

Special effect 1: Contains all the magical wisdom Rosso has accumulated in his lifetime.   U.p. dated by Novelfull.Com

Special effect 2: The caster will be able to activate the Level-19 prophecy spell, Divination of the Fates, by channeling enough power into the book. This spell allows the caster to divine the fates of everything that exists in the Firuman realm. Higher-level targets will require more magical power. (This spell can be cast on any target, regardless of its level.

Cooldown time: one year.

(Note: This world holds no secret from me.)

Reading the message, Link let out a sigh, before saying, "Such a terrifying spell. I guess that's to be expected from a Level-19 master."

Composing himself, Link headed towards the bottom of the ice mountain. Gretel was still frozen in stasis by his spatial spell. Her injuries were grave. Patching her up under these circumstances would be a difficult task, even for Link.

"What should I do?" said Link as he began thinking of ways to treat Gretel's injuries.

## 556. Can I Still Call You Duke?

"Ah!"

The Red Dragon Queen felt warmth flow into her icy chest, forcing away the coldness and numbness. She instantly recovered her feeling. This wasn't a good thing because what followed was an intense pain that made her go crazy.

It was terrifying, like someone plunging a blunt knife into her body and then cutting her into pieces, bit by bit, before rolling her into a ball of ground meat. She felt like her bones were getting shattered!

Under this extreme pain, all she could do was scream.

But the small movement brought new pain. The pain came in waves, each stronger than the last. It felt like her intestines were breaking and her soul was scattering.

What's wrong? Who's torturing me?

Gretel couldn't think properly under the pain. Her vision was black, and she couldn't see anything. Her mouth was numb and swollen too. There seemed to be a block of wood inside so she could clench her teeth.

Those two questions remained in her mind for a long while. Suddenly, another warm current surged. More numbness was driven away. Coming back to life, her body grew more sensitive. Even more unbearable pain came, shattering her mind.

She started floating in the sea of pain. Surrounded by darkness, she didn't know when she would see land or why it was like this. She just waited for time to pass in the torture, confused and lost.

After who knew how long, a shred of light appeared in the dark sea of pain. It came from the sky.

The only thought in her mind was: what is that?

The light approached quickly. When it was close, Gretel vaguely saw that it was a hand. This hand of light came from the sky and grasped her body, pulling her from the endless torture.

It was like a hallucination but also a bit real. She couldn't distinguish real from unreal.

But she felt that the pain had reduced to something bearable. Gretel also felt a bit of her vision recover. A blurry figure appeared—he was familiar. A familiar voice sounded in her ears too.

Gretel couldn't hear the voice clearly, but it seemed to be warm like winter sunlight. She calmed instantly.

The warm current from before kept surging into her. This time, the pain reduced when it appeared again. What resulted was indescribable warmth and comfort.

Slowly, Gretel's vision sharpened more, and she saw the figure clearly. She saw the young yet plain face and the black battle robe. The sleeves were rolled up, and the hands were covered in blood. They reflected the moonlight. There was something like a thread and needle in the hand. It was doing something in her chest and abdomen. The warmth she felt came from these hands.

The memories of before returned to Gretel's mind. She'd run into the Light Magician Halino. She hadn't been his match. A few moves later, she had been nailed to the wall by the Spear of Light. Then Link had appeared, and Halino had detonated the spear. She didn't know what happened afterwards.

But Link was healing her now. At the very least, this meant Halino hadn't defeated him...This young man was incredibly powerful. He'd killed the Black Magician Eugene who had been undefeatable for centuries. He'd also survived a battle with the Light Magician. Unfortunately, he had his own path and didn't belong to the dragons.   U.p..dated by novelfull.Com

Looking at Link's focused expression and the sweat on his forehead, and feeling her body recovering quickly, Gretel stopped caring. She threw away all worries. Without speaking, she gazed at Link, looking at every curve and detail on his face.

She wanted to remember all of this.

On the other hand, Link was focused completely on healing Gretel's injury. Instead of the flesh magic puppet spell, he used Vance's anatomy method. He also used Realm Essence to urge Gretel's body to heal itself. The effect wouldn't be as fast as the flesh magic puppet spell, but it would help Gretel recover to its original state. There wouldn't be many side effects.

Gretel's injury was grave. That explosion had practically shattered her body. Link had used two hours just to keep her from dying. Then he used three hours to help her regain consciousness and get rid of the pain.

But she was still far from recovered. Link couldn't help much during this process. It depended on Gretel's own recovery ability.

After another half an hour, Link finally treated all the surface wounds. From the outside, Gretel's body had recovered. There were just stitches everywhere that looked menacing and scary. To prevent scarring her mentally, Link washed the blood off his hands and wrapped her with the magic gauze he'd prepared.

"Your Majesty, your wounds are treated but are still grave. You need at least ten more hours before he can move."

As he spoke, Link placed a fur cape on Gretel's body and a clean shirt under her head for a pillow. Now, Gretel had collected the weak emotions that had come out. She was once again the Red Dragon Queen.

"How's Halino?" she asked softly.

"He's dead." Link wasn't surprised by the Red Dragon Queen's actions. They'd chosen different paths and were both rulers. If the prior disagreement still existed, they would have no room for negotiations.

Gretel was shocked. She didn't think that things were more dramatic than she'd imagined. Link had killed both Light and Dark Magicians. After a moment, she asked the most important question. "Did you get the piece?"

When asking the question, she wished that Link would tell her he didn't. Even if it was a lie, she would accept it and move on.

So what if Link became the ruler? He had the ability. As the ruler of Ferde, the territory had prospered instead of sinking into darkness. Anyway, she didn't want to care anymore. She couldn't care. As long as Link lied, she wouldn't be conflicted.

But Link nodded. "I did."

The Red Dragon Queen's heart turned bitter. She said with difficulty, "You shouldn't have saved me. You should've killed me!"

Link smiled. He rolled down his sleeves and pulled a book from his waist. "Actually, we were all fooled by the protector. The piece can't do anything. It's just a key. What I received, in the end, was a book of Secret spells."

Link opened the leather buckle on the book and flipped through for Gretel. "Do you see? It's all Secret spells and some Soul spells. This was left behind by some powerful ancient Magician. It has nothing to do with the World Tree."

"Really?" Gretel's eyes sparkled with happiness. The pained expression in her brows dissipated.

"When have I ever lied to you? In reality, you're the one who's always lying. Do you still remember the Dragon Valley?" Link asked in return, smiling.

Gretel sighed in relief. Link was right. She'd indeed lied to Link many times, tricking him into the Dragon Valley. Of course, these were nothing now. Even if the Soul spells in Link's book were mostly forbidden, that didn't matter either.

The most terrifying disagreement between them had disappeared. They didn't have to kill each other anymore. It was enough.

Gretel's brows curved and her voice became gentle. Her entire temperament grew gentle. "Thank you for saving me, Duke."

"Duke?" Link arched an eyebrow in confusion.

"I think that your idea before was right. The dragon race can't remain in the same spot. When I recover, I will return and persuade the elders to share the secret of the Dragon Power."

Then, fearing Link wouldn't agree, she asked, "Will you come back?"

"Your Majesty, I'm very happy you can understand me." Link smiled and nodded. He agreed.

"Duke" was only a title to represent that he saw himself as part of the dragon race. But now, he and the Red Dragon Queen didn't have any difference in status.

In reality, this was like an alliance. Link lowered his title in consideration of the ego of the ancient dragon race. (Take the Qing Dynasty tribute trade for example. It was trade but was called "tribute" for the Qing Dynasty's ego.)

Gretel obviously knew they couldn't return to the past. But after experiencing this event, she understood something. Decisions shouldn't be made in a hurry. She should look forward—it may be a good thing.

"Where are we now?" Gretel looked around and only saw icy walls. There was a magic light above her head.

"We're still in the extreme north. This is a hole I dug randomly to keep warm." Link chuckled. As he spoke, he felt that Gretel's wound had used up all her power again, so he started feeding her power.

"Your injury is very grave. The power cycle may even be damaged, so every now and then, I must feed your power to boost recovery. A few hours later when you're better, I'll take you to Ferde."

Right now, the Red Dragon Queen didn't have any power at all. It was all supplied by Link. She couldn't recover it anymore, and Link didn't know why. But seeing as her body kept using up power to heal itself, it was highly possible she would recover.

Gretel nodded in agreement.

After a pause, she suddenly thought of something. "What about those who'd come with you?"

"They're okay. The test we experienced was actually an illusion. My people have returned to Ferde. The Mountain Sage also returned to Dwarf Mountain. The Warrior from the Isomerism Realm has also disappeared. I checked the tracks in the snow. They seemed to have gone towards the Black Forest."

"Oh, that's good." Gretel sighed softly. "This way, we won't be able to stop the fusion of the realms. Firuman will have trouble."

Link nodded. "Indeed, but we're still alive. There's hope that we can solve it."

Gretel looked at the young man. He was calm when he spoke. Even something as shocking as the realms fusing couldn't shake him.

She smiled and thought, You're wrong. As long as you're here, then there is hope.

## 557. The Dark Magician's Rebirth

The Black Forest, stretching out as far as the eye could see

A faint dark light zipped through the thick forest. It was moving so fast that it appeared to be dragging a viscous band of light in its wake.

This band of light was filled with huge volumes of dark energy. In its wake, trees withered, and insects and birds dropped dead on the spot. All manner of wildlife in the vicinity fled the scene in an attempt to avoid this terrifying presence.

For half an hour, the ball of dark light had traveled 500 miles through the forest. A stone forest rose up in front of it as it approached the westernmost region of the Black Forest. Without hesitation, it burrowed itself into a crack on a stone in a secluded corner.

Beyond the crack lay a narrow passageway, which was no wider than ten inches and no higher than a foot. It was the kind of tunnel that small creatures like snakes and rodents could enter.

The tunnel was deep and winding. After taking a couple of sharp curves, a faint purple light finally came up before the dark light. As it approached, one could see that it was actually a purple, light membrane.

The dark light came to a halt In front of this layer of light. It then began to gather itself into a ball of light. The vague impression of a human face gradually surfaced on it until it resembled the Dark Magician Eugene's face.

This was Eugene's soul.

He had fled the far north all the way to the south. His soul was incredibly powerful. It was able to maintain its integrity for a long time without a body.

He floated in front of the light membrane for a few seconds. He then extended a tentacle-like band of light and touched a couple of flickering magical runes on the light membrane with it. There was a flash of purple light, and the light membrane was gone.

There was a five-square-foot wide secret room beyond the light membrane. The room's walls were filled with magical runes. They made up a permanent magical formation, which ensured that the place stayed dry.

In the middle of the room stood a crystal container which was as tall as a human being. The container was filled with a green fluid. Inside it floated a sickly-looking female Dark Elf.

The female Dark Elf looked to be at least 25 years old, an age where one should be at the peak of their life. Her hair was golden. Her eyes stared out vacantly, showing a pair of black pupils. Her entire face was as dark as any other Dark Elf, but her limbs were exquisitely built, giving the impression of a painting that had come to life.

The female Dark Elf's body was close to perfection, from her chest down to her long, slender legs. She would have been the most beautiful specimen of the female gender if she was dressed in some form-fitting clothes.

The ball of dark light swam around the woman's body floating in the container. Finally, it came to rest on a dark rune on the lid of the crystal container.

The ball of dark light burstito specks of light, which slowly diffused into the rune and then came out of its other end. Once inside the container, the specks of light began integrating themselves into the Dark Elf's body.

With each speck of light entering her body, the Dark Elf's skin and vacant eyes grew even more radiant. It took ten hours for the specks of light to diffuse completely into the Dark Elf woman's body.

Her chest began to rise and fall slightly. She was now breathing in the green fluid. This went on for another minute. Then, her limbs began to move. Finally, her eyes widened. She then stretched out her hand and lightly touched the wall of the container.

Cracks began spreading across the container's surface like a spider's web from where the Dark Elf's hand was touching until they covered the whole thing. Without warning, the crystal container shattered into pieces, spilling the green fluid out. The ground immediately sucked up the fluid without leaving a single trace of it behind.

She then cast a Levitation spell on herself and floated out of the broken remains of the container towards one of the walls of the secret room.

There was a rune on the wall as well. She touched it with a hand and then channeled a weak current of Magical Power into it. The wall vanished, revealing a storage space behind it. Its contents included a magic wand, a Magician's robe and a vial of magical potion.

The Dark Elf woman activated the Magician's Hand spell, and the vial containing a light red potion drifted into her hand. She gulped the whole thing down and waited patiently for it to take effect. She then stretched her arms out, allowing the Magician's robe to put itself on her.

Finally, the magic wand flew out from the storage space and into her hand.

At first glance, there did not seem to be anything special about the wand and the robe. Nobody would even bother picking them up if they were left on the street. However, when the Dark Elf gently touched a few runes on the robe and the wand, a dark golden light radiated from both items. Countless magical runes swirled in the air as well, like stars in a night sky.

"Robe of Eternal Night, Wand of Darkness, my old friends, we meet again," said the Dark Elf. Her voice was soft and hoarse with disuse, but her tone was the same as the Dark Magician Eugene's.

She was Eugene.

As a conniving Dark Magician, Eugene was always paranoid about people conspiring against him. As a result, he had prepared a couple of contingency plans for himself should the worst come to pass. One of those plans involved amassing a large number of bodies that were compatible with his soul.

The body he was now using had once belonged to a princess from the Dark Elf royal court two hundred years ago. She possessed an extraordinary talent for magic and had a bright future ahead of her. She could have even grown up to be a pillar of Dark Elf society.

She was only 24 years old when Eugene met her. She was already a Level-6 Magician, which was a rare thing at the time. What caught Eugene's attention was the fact that his soul had a certain resonance with hers. He even felt as if he was able to read her mind as he got close to her.

Eugene was an expert in Soul Magic. He immediately realized that the Dark Elf princess was a perfect vessel for his soul. The only problem was that it was a female body. However, it was nothing he could not handle. He simply needed to adapt to a new life as a female Dark Elf.

That year, he was already a Level-11 Legendary master. There was no way he would let such a perfect specimen escape him. It did not matter that the body belonged to a princess.

And so, this talented Dark Elf princess had vanished from the face of the earth.

The princess' disappearance remained unsolved to this day among the Dark Elves.

Though the vessel was flawless, the power it possessed was only Level-6. Eugene was only able to raise it to Level-8 even after drinking his specially-brewed magical potion. To a former Level-13 Legendary Magician, this was no more different than being a cripple.

He had Link to thank for his present state.

Taking a deep breath, Eugene said to himself, "I'll admit that you are a better Magician than me. I was never a match for you, nor shall I be for a long time to come. However, your enemies are everywhere, and they also happen to be my allies. I would like to see just how long you'll be able to survive our plots and schemes!"

When he was finished, he turned back and walked towards the crack in the stone. He then pointed his wand at it and activated the Stonesplitter spell. The stone began to crumble on both sides of the crack until it formed a long tunnel.

Eugene began walking down the tunnel until he reached the exit. He chuckled as he saw the dark forest in front of him and felt a cold breeze blowing from the North.

"Dark Elves, the prodigal princess has returned."

Eugene's Body Possession spell was flawless. No one would be any wiser as to who was inhabiting the Dark Elf princess' body. She had returned to the Black Forest with Level-8 power. With her innate potential for growth, she would be able to easily rise up the ranks in Dark Elf society, especially considering the emaciated state of the Dark Elves at the moment.

...

Just as Eugene emerged from his lair in a new body, ready to enter Dark Elf society, a Silver Storm Sparrow battleship had entered the Dark Water port on the western side of the Black Forest.

An elegantly dressed High Elf with white sideburns stood silently on the deck. It was the High Elf King, Mordena.

Two Warriors dressed in crimson leather armor, the leader of the Dark Elf Magicians Lawndale, the priest Molina and a powerful Legendary Fallen Angel had come out on the dock to receive the High Elf King.

When the Silver Storm Sparrow entered the port, Molina was first to greet Mordena as he disembarked from the ship. She said in a low voice, "The lord of Ferde has the Book of Creation fragment."

Mordena's body quivered. He had braced himself for such an outcome, but still, he shuddered as he heard the news with his own two ears.

Composing himself, he said, "That's one of the reasons why I have come here today. I think it's time we start discussing about an alliance between us!"

## 558. Dark Elves Starlight Rose

Black Forest, Dark Water Port

"Hamilton, tell us in detail what happened at the tundra. Tell us all so we can be prepared."

There was a castle beside the port. A group was in a meeting inside the castle's main hall. That sentence was from High Elf Prince Mordena to the Inferno Warrior.

Hamilton wasn't happy about Mordena's commanding tone. However, he'd experienced the power of Firuman's top figures and didn't dare act too proudly now. He shrugged and started with meeting the Red Dragon Queen's group. He continued with the extreme north, meeting the protector, and everything else.

At the end, he said, "I quit at the mountain. There were too many opponents, and they were all Magicians. I wasn't their match alone. Afterwards, I stayed outside to observe. In the end, I only saw one person walk out unharmed. It was the Ferde lord."

Hearing this, everyone fell silent.

Of the Magicians that Hamilton had mentioned, only the Ferde lord and the Red Dragon Queen were well-known. The others, like the dwarf and Light and Dark Magicians, were unheard of to most of the people present.

The only one who knew everyone was High Elf Prince Mordena. He was also the most shaken. Every time Hamilton described one of them, he would subconsciously tap the table, his brows furrowing.

"Your Highness, do you know them?" asked Lawndale, head of the Dark Elf Magicians.

After that battle at the Orida Fortress two years ago, the Dark Elves had lost their elites and suffered great losses. They'd become a second-class race now, almost becoming servants to the Agatha Nagas. Lawndale was a Level-9 Magician, but he didn't have much confidence when he spoke. He was very quiet and even bowed slightly to Mordena to show respect.

Molina and the others also looked to Mordena, waiting for him to explain.

Mordena nodded. "I've indeed heard of them. Perhaps you think that the Red Dragon Queen and Ferde lord are figures from legends. But I think that the other three Magicians all have comparable strength, especially the Light and Dark Magicians. They are the most mysterious. They're behind many of the large events throughout the centuries."

Hearing this, everyone exchanged glances. Then they thought of something else. They were all absolute powerhouses, but only the Ferde lord was unharmed in the end. Where did they all go?

Here, Mordena got an idea and asked, "Hamilton, you said you saw the Ferde lord walk out alone in the end but don't know what happened exactly. This doesn't mean he really got the key to the Book of Creation."

"Yes, but that's most likely what happened."

This also meant that it wasn't certain. Mordena relaxed slightly. To be honest, if the Ferde lord really got the so-called Book of Creation fragment, he wouldn't know what to do.

Since it wasn't certain, he had to figure out what had really happened and then decide what the Isle of Dawn should do. Of course, he couldn't say what he was thinking. He decided to delay them first.

"No matter what, the Ferde lord's threat is obvious," he said. "I think it's time for us to ally against him. How about we discuss the specific conditions of our alliance?"

Molina and the others obviously agreed. After that, they started discussing the specifics of their cooperation. Both sides fought for their own interests and haggled over every detail. Prince Mordena was the most difficult.

After arguing from morning to night, the agreement only had a few conditions. Something so important obviously couldn't be completed in a day. They weren't in a hurry either. After agreeing to continue tomorrow, they all went to rest.

Mordena and the two Inferno Warriors happened to go the same way.

On the road, Mordena cast a Soundproof Barrier and asked caringly, "I heard that you two were hurt. How are your injuries now?"

The two Warriors weren't stupid. Exchanging glances, Hamilton asked, "Your Highness, please speak straightforwardly. The saint had told us to do everything to help you."

"I see." Mordena chuckled awkwardly. "I want you to go to Ferde and get some information. I must know if he got the fragment or not. This pertains to my race's strategy. I must know clearly."

Noa was unhappy at this. "We heard what had happened with rescuing Katyusha. Ferde is very dangerous. Your Highness, are you sending us to die?"

Mordena shook his head quickly. "No, no, of course not. The mission is a bit dangerous, but we've prepared well for you."

As he spoke, he took out a scroll. Unfurling it, he revealed a map.

"Look, this is our map of Ferde's defenses. It cost our spies a lot to draw it, but it's highly accurate. If you follow the map, you won't set off Ferde's alarms... That's not all. These are two transmission runestones. If you must escape, you can use this. The Isle of Dawn will open a long-distance transmission spell to take you back and save you. What do you think?"

These preparations weren't insincere. He was also the saint's father and was quite noble. After considering for half a minute, Hamilton accepted the scroll. "I can go, but I can't ensure success. I can only try my best."

"No problem. Just do your best." Mordena smiled, but he was worried inside. The Inferno Warriors were so difficult. Could the Isle of Dawn truly control them after the realms fused? He wasn't sure at all.

But the Elder Council had passed this, and it was already started. There was no room for regret. Mordena had some worries, but he could only keep going and try to make it succeed.

Canceling the Soundproof Barrier, Hamilton and Noa took the scroll and runestones. Without wasting any time, they hurried southward.

Mordena returned to the place arranged by the Dark Elves to plan the next step.

On the other hand, Dark Elf Magician leader Lawndale also walked towards his room. Dark Water Port was created by the Dark Elves, but it didn't belong to them anymore. The Army of Destruction and demons were the new guards. The Dark Elves were the lower class, mistreated wherever they went.

Lawndale had high status, but he still had to be careful. He also had to try to help the Dark Elves so they wouldn't become the cannon fodder. Trying to find the balance had used up much of his spirits. He wasn't 30 yet, but hishi

He walked cautiously, being careful that his movements wouldn't catch the attention of the guards. A full half hour later, he returned to his home.

As soon as he opened the door, he felt that the living room was off. The furniture hadn't changed, but there was an unfamiliar aura. He immediately grasped his wand and cast a defense spell. Then he followed the aura timidly into the room.

There was nothing there, but the aura remained. It smelled faintly like flowers. It led him to the balcony on the second floor. There, he saw the uninvited guest in his home. Her back was to him as she gazed at a Starlight Rose.

It was a Dark Elf woman. Her side profile was already very, very, very beautiful. She also had an indescribably strong aura. Even though Lawndale had seen countless beauties before, his breathing still hitched and his heart sped up. He didn't know such a beauty existed in his race.

What he didn't understand was why such an extraordinary woman was unknown. She could be known throughout the entire Black Forest with just her looks.

Because they were of the same race, she was beautiful and didn't show any animosity, Lawndale got through the initial shock and relaxed a bit. "Excuse me, who are you?" he asked.

The woman wasn't stronger than him, but her aura was too oppressive. He reflexively spoke with respect.

The Dark Elf turned around. Her dark gold hair shimmered like pieces of starlight. Her pure black eyes blinked, and Lawndale shuddered at the light. Her side profile was already perfect. Seeing her face now, she was as mesmerizing as a goddess. Lawndale was intoxicated.

"Ellie Danas." Eugene had already thought of a name.

Lawndale froze. He repeated the name and then exclaimed, "The lost princess? How? You've been missing for 300 years!"

"Has it been 300 years already?" Confusion flashed past the Dark Elf's eyes. Her brows furrowed slightly; Lawndale wished he could smooth them for her.

"Your Majesty, what happened?" Lawndale subconsciously accepted her identity. The reason was none other than the fact that her features and aura were clearly from Dark Elf royalty. It was enough to prove her identity.

"I mistakenly entered a spatial whirlpool and recently broke free from it. I didn't know so much time had passed. I thought it had only been 100 years," Eugene said.

"Oh, I see. It is fortunate that you are back. Oh, the girl blessed by the gods is back. Oh, this is amazing!" Lawndale could feel that the other was at the pinnacle of Level-8 and was only around 24 years old. What did this mean? It meant that she had great potential and could become a Legendary figure.

To have such a talented royal return to a weakening race was so exciting!

On the other hand, Eugene knew everything about Lawndale's thoughts. Waiting for him to calm down, she smiled. "Lawndale, I saw the Silver Storm Sparrow. Have we recovered our relationship with the High Elves?"

"Oh, Your Highness, the world has changed greatly. Please sit down. I will tell you what happened during these 300 years. You will need to know."

Eugene smiled again. His body was too amazing. Not only was it talented, but it was also beautiful. No wonder this Dark Elf would freak out and call it the "girl blessed by the gods." He'd easily shaken up the usually calm Lawndale.

Back when Lawndale went south, he could act cruelly to human beauties. This was different though. The other was a princess of his race. She was a flawless rose sparkling faintly under the starlight. He was drunk.

Thus, he tried his best and racked his brain to say everything that he knew about the mainland. Eugene listened attentively.

When Lawndale finished, Eugene fell silent as if in deep thought. A few minutes later, he chuckled lightly. "It's not hard to deal with the Ferde lord."

## 559. Dark Elves' Starlight Rose

Hearing what Ellie said, Lawndale shook his head furiously. "Princess, you don't understand. The Lord of Ferde is more terrifying than you can imagine. You have no idea just how many people want him dead, and how many of those people have ended up dead."

He then let out a sigh, a little less optimistic about the princess' chances in the world. She's still so young and has so much to learn about the ways of the world. It would seem that she still requires training.

Eugene swept a glance at him silently. He had stood on the pinnacle of Firuman for 400 years. Compared to him, Lawndale was a lot less wise about the world itself. His mind was an open book to Eugene.

"You think I'm underestimating the Lord of Ferde?" asked Eugene softly, fighting off the urge to let out a bitter laugh.

"No, Your Highness, I just thought that you would do well to maintain a certain degree of reverence when talking about someone as accomplished as the Lord of Ferde." Lawndale chose his words carefully in order not to hurt the princess' pride. Of course, the Dark Elf's attempt at euphemism had little effect on Eugene.

Eugene grew even more contemptuous of the young Dark Elf, whose sideburns had already grown white. However, he knew that if he were to climb up the ranks of Dark Elf society, he would need Lawndale's support.

Also, Lawndale's reaction allowed Eugene to recognize that Link had earned the respect of every race on the continent. Despite being so much younger than the veteran masters of the world and the fact that he had only made a name for himself not too long ago, Link had cast a long shadow over the world. Even his enemies could feel the heft of his influence all over Firuman.

Can Link really be the Avatar of the Realm? How else could he have grown so much? But he still seems to be lacking something that makes him a true Avatar of the Realm. Curious, curious indeed.

"You're right, Lawndale, but first, don't you want to hear what I have to say first?" said Eugene, humbly admitting that he was in the wrong, despite thinking otherwise.

"Of course, Your Highness, please say your piece." Lawndale nodded immediately. There was no harm in hearing out the princess, anyway.

Eugene said, "You mentioned something about the crack in Dragon Valley. Even though the crack's already been sealed up, it's still not completely fixed, is it?"

Lawndale nodded.

Eugene continued, "Right now, things are going quite well between Ferde and Dragon Valley. This crack threatens the safety of the Firuman realm. If we break the seal holding the crack together, the Lord of Ferde will definitely rush over there to fix it, will he not?

Lawndale nodded again, finding nothing to contradict.

"When the Lord of Ferde leaves Ferde, we'll have plenty of options to choose from. We could ambush him as he makes his way there, attack Ferde itself, or even incite chaos throughout the human cities beyond Orida Fortress. Ferde's forces will be scattered all over the region in an attempt to maintain order, and we'll be able to chip away at its defenses bit by bit."

"But he'll retaliate..." said Lawndale. It sounded like a solid plan, but his mind had grown duller recently. He would instinctively try to refute anything without forming an actual counterargument.

Eugene explained, "Of course he'll retaliate. But don't forget, we're in the Black Forest. We can always retreat back into the darkness if he does. While the High Elves may have the World Tree to protect them, we are already protected by the geography of our natural habitat. We'll simply have to be on the defensive, as we send in crack troops to harass the human cities. The humans live mainly on flat terrain. Once they're scattered, they'll be more vulnerable to our attacks. Trade among the humans will weaken considerably in the resulting chaos, and Ferde's sources of income will be cut off as well. Follow my plan to the letter, and the humans will become so weak that all we need to do is give them a little push, and their entire civilization will fall."

"Your plan sounds reasonable," said Lawndale, mulling over Eugene's plan. He was obviously moved by it.

Of course, it's reasonable! Eugene was now becoming increasingly disdainful towards the Dark Elf, who seemed to have sunk so deep into the pit of abject failure there was no hope of pulling him out of it. Of course, she managed to hide her contempt as she continued, "This is only step one. There's a step two to my plan."

"Oh, do continue, Your Highness," said Lawndale.

Eugene continued, "There's the Syndicate to the south of the humans' domain. Wasn't Morpheus planning on ascending to godhood? Also, wasn't he an ally of ours? Why have we stopped working together? Let the Syndicate harass Ferde from the South. Even if this proves difficult for them, they could still block off merchant ships bound for Ferde and disrupt business there. What do you think?"

"Yes, you're absolutely right." Lawndale's eyes lit up for a moment but then shook his head, chuckling bitterly. "It's a good plan, but I fear that it may be impossible to carry out."

Eugene frowned.

An oppressive aura began to bubble up from the depths of Eugene's soul. The radiance that the Dark Elf princess' flawless features had afforded him on the outside had faded all of a sudden and was replaced by a chilling sternness.

At that moment, Lawndale sensed that the air was becoming hard to breathe. A shiver went down his spine as he looked at the princess. He quickly lowered his head, not daring to look at her in the eye. All the meanderings in his head had melted away like snow under a fiery sun.

As is to be expected by someone blessed by the gods themselves. I shouldn't have opened my mouth so carelessly. She truly is the princess of the Dark Elves! All of Lawndale's distrust towards Eugene was converted into admiration in an instant.

"Why would it be impossible to carry out?" asked Eugene.

Lawndale smiled bitterly. "Your Highness, I had come up with a plan similar to yours back then, but it had fallen on deaf ears. The Black Forest now belongs to the Nagas. Don't let their feminine features fool you; in truth, they are as hard as steel and have always preferred head-on confrontations with Ferde. They have never been one for sophisticated plans like yours, Princess. What they do like, though, are one-off solutions along the lines of taking the fight straight to the humans at Orida Fortress. According to them, doing so will please the God of Destruction. Once he's satisfied, they'll receive more of his blessings."

"But won't they lose in a head-on fight?" Eugene held his forehead in his hand. He did not expect to hit such a problem here.

"Which is why they've decided to make their next move after the High Elves succeed in merging the two realms..."

"Damn it!" cursed Eugene before Lawndale could even finish speaking. He then took a deep breath, calming himself down. "The realm unification will destroy Firuman. The High Elves have gone mad, this is exactly what the God of Destruction wanted! Idiots... Lawndale, the Dark Elves will be taking the helm of this alliance. There's no way I'm entrusting the fate of my race to a bunch of madmen and servants of the God of Destruction!"

Eugene's words resonated with Lawndale. Deep down, he could not agree any more with them, but there was nothing he, or anyone else, could do at this point. He sighed. "Your Highness, our race has never been the same since the war between light and darkness two years ago. We can only leave these things to the realms of fancy."

Eugene fell silent for a long time. Then he spoke, "I once came across a certain presence residing in a space-time distortion. It taught me a sacrificial technique that would allow me to increase my power considerably. I've tried it once. It was effective, but I'll need your help to do it."

Lawndale was stunned. "How much power will you be able to acquire?"

Eugene narrowed his eyes. "I'll be able to reach Level-14 in three days if we can sacrifice more than 30,000 people."

Before, he had only reached Level-13 with the technique in question. After his ordeal with Link, he was now able to easily solve some of the problems that had tormented him in the past. He was now confident that he could reach Level-14 this time.

"30,000? You can reach Level-14 by sacrificing 30,000 lives? Lawndale's eyes widened. He could feel his heart thumping wildly against his chest. If the princess could acquire such power, the Dark Elves would be free from a fate of exploitation in the hands of others.

Regaining his composure, he said in a low voice, "Your Highness, how sure are you about this?"

"I'm 90 percent sure that I could pull it off, but I'll need your help, Lawndale." Eugene reached out and touched Lawndale's face, looking fondly into his eyes. He could see that Lawndale was immediately entranced by his gesture.

"Don't you worry, Your Highness, I'll have 30,000 people ready for you in a day. They'll be dying for a righteous cause!" said Lawndale, gritting his teeth in resolution.

## 560. Dark Elves Starlight Rose

Black Forest, Dark Water Port

"No, no, no, we can't agree to those conditions. Iridium is a precious material from the Isle of Dawn. It's a strategic resource. Supplying 200 pounds per month is too much. We can't give that much."

At the table, Prince Mordena shook his head. There seemed to be no room for negotiations.

Molina was frustrated. She'd experienced the High Elf's toughness many times these past days. He would repeatedly calculate each condition of cooperation; nothing was smooth. She wouldn't waste time with these discussions that just went back and forth if he hadn't shown some sincerity.

After discussing with her subordinates, Molina said, "Your Highness, it's useless to keep trying each other. Just say what your bottom line is."

"This, uh..." Mordena suddenly started coughing. At first, they were quiet, but after a while, they intensified. It sounded like his lungs were ripping. Suddenly, he spat onto the ground. It was red, and a metallic smell floated in the air. It was blood.  U.p.dated by Box n o v e l. com

"Your Highness, what's wrong?" The surrounding High Elves surged forward, protecting Mordena. They stared at the Nagas and demons with caution as if they'd done something.

Molina was shocked too. After all, they were serious about working with the High Elves after receiving the order from the God of Destruction. They wanted to help them fuse the realms successfully. They'd never thought of pulling tricks, let alone hurt the prince.

"Your Highness, what's wrong?" she also asked with concern. She forgot about the negotiations immediately.

Mordena was still coughing but much softer. After half a minute, he finally took a breath and said weakly, "These past days were too tiring. My old injuries came back. I must rest for a while. I'm afraid I cannot continue coming."

His face was pale as paper while speaking. There was also a shocking pool of blood on the ground. He was listless too.

Molina furrowed her brows. She wanted to say something, but Mordena continued, "The alliance can't be delayed either. My subordinates will negotiate for me."

"Okay, that's fine." Molina nodded and then asked in concern, "Your Highness, I am skilled in divine healing spells. Would you like me to help you?"

Mordena smiled wryly and waved his hand. "No need. My injury isn't easy. Even the World Tree is useless. It isn't too bad though. Just let me rest for a few days."

With that, he nodded apologetically to Molina and then said to his servant, "Take me back."

His servants helped Mordena away from the room. When he returned to his residence, he straightened and said to his adjutant that had followed, "Vader, it's up to you all now. Argue with them if the conditions are too much. If the conditions are okay, then pick them apart. If there's nothing to pick, then agree. Whatever you do, just drag it out, understand?"

The two Inferno Warriors hadn't sent news back, but this information was too important. It directly affected their strategy.

If they couldn't confirm it, the High Elves couldn't fully cooperate with the Army of Destruction.

"I understand, Your Highness." Vader nodded. He knew what his prince meant.

Lawndale was at the meeting room. "Saint," he whispered to Molina. "The High Elves may be trying to delay things."

Molina's heart jumped. But before she could reply, she saw that High Elf across the table had good hearing. His eyes narrowed, and he said angrily, "Saint, is this your attitude towards cooperation? We've decided on quite a few conditions these days. Is it all nothing to you? We have no need to delay things!"

This was true. Things were going slowly, but the High Elves were still sincere. Once they decided on something, they would follow through immediately without any delay. This was one of the reasons why the negotiations hadn't failed after this half month. The High Elves would occasionally toss out something sweet to keep tempting them.

The High Elf's protest was effective. Molina's worry was erased instantly. She knew she must soothe the other's feelings. Turning to Lawndale, she said angrily, "Dark Elf, watch your words. Go apologize to the Isle of Dawn!"

Usually, Lawndale would stand up without hesitation to apologize. He would even give compensation. But today, for some reason, he grew tough.

Sitting in his chair without moving, Lawndale said coldly, "Saint, am I wrong? Do you not see anything wrong with their performance these days? The promises they'd gone with are all unimportant details. These benefits are like ants. It's just to sate us. They always avoid the core problems."

As he spoke, he huffed at the High Elf across from him. "Gore, I think that you're waiting for news from the two Inferno Warriors, right? You want to confirm if the Ferde lord truly got the Book of Creation fragment because it pertains to the safety of the World Tree and the Isle of Dawn. Is that right?"

"You...nonsense!" Sweat beaded on Gore's forehead.

"Then tell me where the Inferno Warriors went," Lawndale pressed.

"That's our private matters. I don't need to tell you." Gore composed himself a bit and turned to Molina. "Saint—"

Before he could finish, Lawndale started again. He stood up powerfully and slammed a hand on the table. "Look at me, Gore," he roared. "Answer my question!"

That utterance was powerful and loud. Everyone was frightened, especially Molina. She froze and stared at Lawndale incredulously. The demon nearby blanked too. Then he pointed at Lawndale, laughing.

"Poor thing, are you still drunk? Do you still think you're laying down next to a girl right now?"

Lawndale looked over and sneered. "Idiot! Your brain is filled with sh\*t. What do you know? Shut up before you embarrass the Army of Destruction."

"Huh, did you eat sh\*t today and embarrass yourself so now you want to die?" The demon wasn't easy to deal with either. He waved his fists.

Lawndale wasn't afraid. He glared at the demon, pissing him off even more. "Looks like you don't want to live anymore."

Lawndale grasped his wand and inserted Mana. Thick black fog surrounded the dark gem at the wand's tip.

Seeing that a fight was about to break out, Molina finally said, "Enough!"

Demons feared Agatha Nagas, especially Molina who could communicate directly with the God of Destruction. Hearing her yell, the demon stopped immediately. Lawndale also retracted his Mana.

Seeing that things were calming down, Molina looked to Lawndale. "Dark Elf, you're different today," she said, feeling strange. "What gave you the courage?"

The current Dark Elf race had no Legendary figures. The most powerful was only Level-9. The entire race only had around one million people. There were less than 5000 Warriors who could fight. With that power, they could only be subordinates.

But today, they suddenly straightened their backs. It was very strange.

Lawndale smiled. Standing up, he walked to the door and lowered onto one knee. "Welcome the princess," he said respectfully.

"Princess?" Molina was confused. The Dark Elves had a royal family, but they only existed in name. All authority lay with the Silver Moon Council. The so-called princess was only a puppet of this fallen race. She only had symbolic significance.

The demons found it strange too. They stared at each other.

"When did the Dark Elves get a new princess?"

"A little girl can give Lawndale so much strength? Did he hit his head?"

"I think he's gone mad."

The High Elves didn't say anything. They just watched the show. When Lawndale welcomed the princess, they looked to the door. They wanted to see what the princess was like.

Under all their anticipation, a veiled figure appeared at the entrance.

Seeing this person, Molina was shocked. She felt a very obscure dark aura. Only a Legendary figure would have this power. It had to be at least Level-12 too.

Really? Molina thought back to Lawndale's actions, and fear appeared.

At this time, the figure raised her hand and slowly took off her hood. Light golden hair flowed down like a waterfall. The delicate features revealed now stole everyone's breaths. The pure black eyes shone with indescribable authority.

When she appeared, the surroundings lost color. Everything became the background to show her off. It was as if all light in the world had gone to her. She was flawlessly beautiful; she was high and mighty, like a goddess in the clouds.

The room was silent. No one could speak.

After a long while, the High Elf behind Gore fell to one knee like Lawndale. Mesmerized, he murmured, "The rose illuminated by starlight, the moon's daughter, unmatched. My only wish is to accompany you for eternity."

Her charm was truly shocking.

## 561. Time To Take On Ferde

Dark Water Port

Everyone in the great hall was stunned by the young High Elf's action. However, a hush fell over the room as all of them realized that they could not pull their gaze away from the Dark Elf princess.

Even Molina was not immune to the princess' beauty.

She immediately came to her senses and muttered to herself, "Forgive me, my lord, for I have sinned!"

On the other end of the room, Eugene laughed inwardly at the full attention she was receiving from everyone thanks to her new body. What a bunch of fools!

However, on the outside, she smiled at them. She then gestured at Lawndale and said sweetly, "Rise, my loyal servant."

Lawndale stood up and followed close behind her.

Eugene then entered the great hall and said even more sweetly, "Everyone, I think you've forgotten something."

"And what would that be?" asked a demon.

Eugene somehow managed to smile in an even more tantalizing manner. "The fact that the Black Forest and the Dark Water port are all part of the Dark Elves' territory. They belong to neither long-horned beasts nor boneless servants of the God of Destruction. But now, the guests have become masters of the place, while the true masters have been reduced to mere servants. Everything's gone upside down. Don't you find that strange?"

Molina frowned, sensing that something big was about to happen. She did not like the way the Dark Elf princess was speaking. The fact that she could not accurately measure the princess' power level gave Moli more cause for concern. After mulling over it for a while, she turned to a Level-10 Fallen Angel sitting beside her and whispered, "Go test her power."

The demon seemed reluctant to do so. But Molina was the commander of the Army of Destruction. In the end, he yielded to her authority and walked up to Eugene.

"Little one, quite a big mouth you have there, eh?" said the demon gruffly.

Eugene observed the demon from tip to toe. He was around six feet tall with a pair of delicate wings composed of strands of light standing out from his back. Level-10 Dark Power billowed out from him. The corners of Eugene's mouth curved upwards as if she was about to say something to the demon.

She suddenly pointed the Wand of Darkness at the Fallen Angel and channeled all her power into it. A beam of green light shot out from the wand's tip in the next second.

The beam of light struck the Fallen Angel. For a moment, he stood there motionless. Half a second later, the point of impact on the demon's body began to turn greyish-white. The discoloration quickly spread across his entire body until the Fallen Angel was transformed completely into a stone statue.

With a gentle flick of her wand, Eugene sent the statue flying off in the opposite direction until it hit the ground and shattered into pieces.

Everyone in the great hall was speechless. Only shallow breathing echoed off the walls.

The Dark Elf princess had killed off a Legendary demon with a single spell. Her charm and grace belied a tendency for cruelty and her incredible power.

Eugene looked around at everyone in the great hall, her smile showing no sign of fading from her face. These were all higher-ranking individuals in the Army of Destruction. Most of them were at least Level-8 in terms of power level, and they were all completely taken aback by her actions.

Finally, Eugene's gaze fell on Molina. She asked smilingly, "Naga, you and your kind have outstayed your welcome. Tell me, should I kick all of you out of the Black Forest right now?"

The Dark Elf princess' voice was calm and gentle as if she was simply having an ordinary conversation with Molina. However, Molina could feel an indescribable pressure weighing on her. Her legs had gone wobbly, and her back was sticky with sweat.

"Oh, Master..." She began to pray to the God of Destruction for solace.

Eugene waved her wand, and the black crystal on its tip began glowing with a black light. Before Molina could finish her prayer, Eugene said, "Your master won't be able to enter the Firuman realm, and your so-called Divine Destruction spells won't have much effect on me because I won't be giving you any chance to use them on me. If you even think about casting any of your spells on me right now, I won't hesitate to kill you where you stand."

As an expert in Soul magic, Eugene would be able to easily read Molina's mind.

Molina's legs were now trembling. Forcing herself to regain composure, she asked, "What do you mean?"

Eugene chuckled and appeared beside Molina. She then walked around to face the Naga Priest. The Nagas and demons nearby took a few steps back, fearful for their lives. On the other hand, the Dark Elves were now watching their princess' every move with admiration.

Eugene stopped smiling as she gazed around at everyone else from where she now stood. She then spoke with a raised voice, "The Black Forest belongs to the Dark Elves. Not the Nagas and certainly not the demons. From now on, no alliances with the Dark Elves will be forged without my consent. This isn't a request. It's an order."

Eugene looked at the High Elf Lieutenant Gore and gave him a cold smile. She then shot a beam of black light at him. Gore's body shook violently the instant he was struck by Eugene's attack. His body began melting like candle wax until all that remained of him was a puddle of pungent black sludge.

The scene was horrifying.

The High Elves in the great hall were all surprised and angered by this, but for some reason, no one dared say a word. They were completely spooked by the Dark Elf princess' true power.

However, Eugene remained calm throughout all this. "You High Elves must have all gone blind that you don't even know who's running the show here. This is the price you'll pay for your disrespect!"

Saying this, she saw a High Elf sneaking out of the great hall from the corner of her eye, probably to inform his superiors on the events that had transpired here. She did not bother to stop him and simply waited until he was out of the hall.

An instant later, a white light appeared in the middle of the hall. It was a Teleportation spell. Someone was coming.

The figure of a certain someone appeared immediately in Eugene's mind when she saw the white light. Anger began to rise up in her, and she pointed her wand at the ball of light. "This is my Black Forest. Get out!"

Hum... A translucent beam of light shot out from the tip of the wand and gathered itself into a translucent ball of light in the air. The ball of light then hurtled into the white light.

The clash of the two lights persisted for a few seconds. Then, the teleportation spell's white light vanished as suddenly as it had appeared. No one was there in the hall when the white light faded.

The Teleportation spell had failed.

Eugene was not an expert in spatial magic, but she was a Level-14 master and had a few tricks up her sleeve capable of countering spatial spells. Even without them, her power had reached a point where she was now able to disrupt any spatial spell with her very presence.

A few thousand feet away, in a cottage, the High Elf King Mordena returned to his physical form just as Eugene disrupted his teleportation spell. He wobbled for a moment as soon as he reappeared. Once he regained his balance, he suddenly felt nauseous. Without warning, blood spewed out from his mouth.

Mordena's face was filled with horror. "Who was that? How did they come by such power?"

He could feel that his opponent's power level was above his by a huge margin. If he had not retreated sooner, there was no telling what might have happened to him.

Back in the hall, after killing Gore, Eugene turned towards Molina. whirling her wand casually in her hand. "Naga Priest, tell me, am I not the commander of this army?"

Molina went pale. She then nodded. "Your magic is powerful, far more powerful than any one of us. You are the army's true commander."

"Such a wise priest you are. Since that's the case, you get to live." Eugene sighed and then looked at the demons.

Before she even said anything, the demons all kneeled down before and said in unison, "Commander, we abide by your every command! Give us your order!"

Eugene clapped her hands gleefully at this. She then turned towards the High Elf and said, "Go tell that king of yours that the Isle of Dawn only has one option from here on out, regardless of whether the lord of Ferde has the fragment of the Book of Creation, and that is to form an alliance with us. If he delays his decision any longer, the Isle of Dawn will have to deal with Ferde by itself!"

The High Elves looked at each other.

"Now get lost!" barked Eugene.

The High Elves immediately ran out of the hall.

Eugene then sat on Molinasseat and said to the demons, "Go spy on the High Elves. If they're having second thoughts about an alliance with us or even thinking about running away, kill them all!"

Hearing this, Molina said hurriedly, "Your Highness..."

Eugene waved her wand, sealing Molina's mouth in an instant. Eugene smiled coldly. "Bear this in mind, Naga. I know what the God of Destruction's planning. He's thinking about destroying Firuman, and I don't like that. So, just giving you a heads-up: I won't hesitate to cast a Level-13 Area-of-Effect spell on an Agatha Naga base camp if you don't cooperate fully with me.

The muffling from Molina's mouth stopped.

Eugene laughed. "Such an obedient little Naga. I like you. As long as I'm alive, you can stop thinking about that mad god of yours. Once I'm dead, you have my permission to do whatever you want. Right now, I want you to focus on the lord of Ferde. What do you say?"

If it was not for the fact that she still needed the Nagas' power, Eugene would have slain them all without hesitation. She would probably dispose of all of them once she was done with Ferde. These servants of the God of Destruction had certainly outstayed their welcome here in Firuman.

Molina remained silent. She seemed vexed by what Eugene said. Knowing what the God of Destruction meant to the Naga, Eugene did not rush Molina. She waited patiently for her answer.

Five minutes later, Molina nodded. "Your Highness, you will have our full cooperation in defeating the lord of Ferde."

The Dark Elf princess possessed extraordinary power, which the Army of Destruction lacked at the moment. Also, she probably would not try to abuse the Nagas in the God of Destruction's presence. Molina saw no problem in letting the princess taking command of the army for now, especially when she was the one who had so eagerly volunteered to lead the charge against Ferde.

Gods all had one thing in common: Patience.

"Good," said Eugene.

Just then, there was a commotion beyond the doors of the great hall. A fight had broken out between the High Elves and demons. A demon had entered with a report. "Your Highness, the High Elves refused to form an alliance with us. We've made our move on them."

"Excellent. Molina, time to demonstrate your loyalty," said Eugene, looking at the priest.

Molina beckoned at her sisters beside her, and the Nagas all slithered out of the great hall.

The fight out on the port lasted for ten minutes. Then, a heavily-scarred demon came before Eugene to deliver his report. "Your Highness, out of the 109 High Elves, we've killed 108 of them. The elves' Silver Storm Sparrow ship was also destroyed. Only the High Elf king managed to flee."

"Well done. Those High Elves are out of their minds apparently. Next time, kill them all on sight. Don't even let their corpses go to waste. Gobble them up. Grind their bones to dust. Do you understand?

If the High Elves had not decided to proceed with their plan to merge the two realms, Eugene would not have gone all the way to the far north to retrieve the Book of Creation's fragment, only to have his body be destroyed by Link and finally end up in the body of a Dark Elf princess. The High Elves were mostly at fault for his current condition.

Since the High Elves had no intention of forming an alliance, Eugene would not show them any mercy. Besides, the High Elves would not surrender to Ferde no matter what Eugene chose to do at that point.

"Yes, Commander!" Everyone said in unison.

This made Eugene extremely happy. She let out a laugh as light and sharp as a silver bell. Her face then grew solemn. "It's time to take on Ferde!"

## 562. Dragon Allies

Roar! A dragon's cry came from the clouds. After that, the people of Ferde saw dozens of fiery-red dragons of varying sizes. They circled in the air and then slowly landed on the roof of Scorched Ridge's main Mage Tower.

The dragons were very slow and didn't do anything aggressive. The residents had all experienced many things, so they didn't fall into unrest now. The dragons descending only let the people on the streets have more to talk about.

Let us return to the Mage Tower roof.

There were around 20 dragons. The leaders were Elder Pettalong and young Felina—both familiar with Link. The others included three elders and a dozen rising stars above Level-8.

After landing on the roof, they transformed back into human form.

Many people were there to welcome them, including Link, Celine, Eliard, Evelina, Nana, and more. The core Magicians were all present. There were six Legendary figures, and the newest one was Eliard.

He hadn't faced a Legendary Magician directly at the extreme north this time, but he'd passed the protector's test. This helped him break through the bottleneck and enter a new world.

Elder Pettalong arrived first. After transforming, he looked to Red Dragon Queen Gretel. Seeing her pale face and unsteady steps, he immediately said, "Your Majesty, I heard that you were gravely wounded. How are you now?"

Pettalong didn't avoid the Ferde Magicians while speaking. He took out a fist-sized red crystal. "Your Majesty, I brought a Flawless Dragon Power crystal. It is filled with Dragon Power and should be of help."

Gretel seriously needed this; it could greatly speed up her recovery. She took the crystal and smiled gently at Pettalong.

"Just in time. My injury is quite serious, but I've already recovered much. It is okay now."

The dragons were all relieved by this. The Red Dragon Queen had a unique lineage and had a true hereditary Legendary bloodline. If something happened to her, the lineage would lose a protector. If something big happened, the dragon race would weaken quickly. They couldn't endure that loss.

Seeing that everyone was relieved, Link smiled. "Everyone traveled great distances and must be tired. Come, come. We've prepared a banquet so you all can shake away the fatigue."

"Thank you, Duke." Pettalong bowed to Link. They knew that the queen had re-accepted Link as a Red Dragon duke. Some dragons protested, but this was still an exciting thing.

Pettalong especially had witnessed Ferde's fast development and Link's power. He supported this wholeheartedly.

The other dragons all thanked him and found their seats.

At Felina's turn, Link gave her a second glance. Surprised, he asked softly, "Are you at the pinnacle of Level-9?"

She was about to enter the Legendary level.

Felina smiled proudly but also with some regret. "Sadly, I just can't get past it."

"Don't worry. You'll succeed," Link encouraged her. He could tell that Felina would get there sooner or later.

Felina nodded with force. She was motivated. Encouragements from others were just encouragements. But Link had amazing achievements. His words were practically like prophecies. If he said she could do it, then she definitely could.

After that, everyone took their seats. Then beautiful magic puppets walked up to take away the silver covers over the dishes. Instantly, a delicious smell spread about. Not only did the dishes smell so tempting, but they also looked great. Many of the dishes were so beautiful that they didn't want to destroy it.

Link sat at the head of the table. "These delicacies were all procured by Ferde's chefs from all over," he explained. "Every dish has a unique story. If you're interested, you can ask your magic puppet."

The dragons were all intrigued by that. They started pointing at the dishes and asking questions. They couldn't help it; the dishes looked too interesting.

There was a pot of broth before Felina. The broth was thick and semi-transparent. It kept bubbling and gurgling too. But what was interesting was that there were many thumb-sized, silver fish swimming inside. They seemed to be alive, but the milky broth radiated with such a delicious fragrance. There weren't any Mana waves either. This meant that it wasn't made with magic, which was even more confusing.

After asking, the magic puppet explained quietly, "This is called 'Fishing for Silver.' The fish are from a volcanic spring. They can survive extreme heat. After being caught, they're fed with a special method, and their meat becomes cipand sweet. They only need to be placed in the prepared broth before being brought to the table to create this delicacy."

"Oh, why is it called fishing?" Felina was interested.

"Miss, look at this second dish. It is thin strips of a vegetable called green cassava. It is tasty in itself and also the favorite of the silver volcanic fish. Try putting the cassava into the broth."

Felina picked up a strip of green cassava and lowered itito the broth. As expected, a fish nearby swam over and bit the cassava. It refused to let go.

After fishing it out, Felina saw that the fish was biting the cassava, but it wasn't moving. It seemed to be asleep. "What happened?" she continued asking.

"The cassava is filled with a special ingredient. It makes the silver fish more delicious and also acts as a sedative. This prevents the fish from struggling in your mouth, which affects the taste."

"Oh, great idea." Felina took a bite. An interesting taste entered her mouth. It was crisp, light, fresh, and soft. It was like a pair of small hands gently massaging her tongue. The taste was incredible.

This put her in a great mood. "Interesting, interesting," she praised repeatedly.

After eating that fish, she immediately took another piece of green cassava and continued fishing at the table. She ate one after another happily.

The other dragons were all like this, mesmerized by the dishes before them. Each happily ate their fill at the meal. The atmosphere was harmonious too.

Some elders who didn't know the truth disliked Link because of had happened before. But after this great treatment, the hard feelings all softened.

Afterwards, the magic puppets speedily cleaned everything up and served the dessert. The Magicians and Red Dragon Elders started chatting about the specifics of cooperation.

Pettalong's group came to see Gretel's state and also negotiate the alliance. The core was the popularization of Dragon Power.

To Link, getting the secret of Dragon Power wasn't as important after having the Seed of Sunlight. Of course, it would be better if he got it. It could improve Ferde's Sunlight Power, but it was okay if he couldn't get it.

Since it was just icing on the cake, he didn't care as much. He gave Eliard, Vance, and the others full control over the specifics.

While they were discussing, Link waited at the side for the final result. Since he was free, he asked the Red Dragon Queen, "Your Majesty, I feel that your power is starting to grow again. Is it true?"

Gretel was on Link's left. She glanced at Celine who was looking over and nodded.

"Indeed. Now that I have the crystal, I will recover completely within a month. You don't need to give me power anymore."

"That's great news." Link was relieved, and he sighed inwardly.

The past ten days, he would give Gretel power every hour and was tired too. It was okay for a small amount, but after the visits increased, Celine started suspecting him too. She got jealous many times. If this continued, they might getito a cold war. Link didn't want that.

Gretel knew about Link's situation too. She felt sad inside, but she forced a smile. Taking out a dark red bracelet, she gave it to Celine sitting on Link's right.

"Madam, I've really disturbed you by resting here all these days. This is called the Heart of Flames. It is my gift to you."

Surprised, Celine glanced at Link. He nodded slightly, so she accepted the bracelet.

"Thank you."

Her opinion of Gretel improved but was still unfriendly. This woman was too beautiful and too powerful. In all of Ferde, only Link could act normally before her. When she stood beside Link, Celine felt that the two were a perfect pair. This upset her greatly.

On the other hand, the Magicians and Red Dragons acted quickly. They'd come to a mutual agreement during this short period and had drafted the terms of cooperation.

Eliard passed it to Link. He was satisfied after scanning it and stamped it. Then he passed it to the Red Dragon Queen. She also nodded and added the dragon royalty's stamp.

Thus, Ferde and the Dragon Valley were allies once again.

Afterwards, Link arranged places to stay for the dragons. The Magicians returned to the Mage Tower to continue working. When everything was done, Link returned to his own tower to study the Book of Revelation that the Soul Dominator had left behind. He wasn't alone though. Celine was also there.

Perhaps due to the connection of blood, Celine was shaken when reading it. The knowledge inside was very obscure, and she had difficulty reading it. But she could always figure it out in the end. There wasn't anything incomprehensible. It was as if someone was guiding her.

Eleanor, Vance, and the others couldn't understand it at all. In that case, Link naturally studied with Celine.

While reading in the library, the magic bell there started reading. Celine looked up at Link. "It's an urgent message."

Link pressed down on the bell. Scout leader Gildern's voice sounded. "Lord, the Orida Fortress sent two very important messages. I think you should look over them personally."

His voice was serious, and his words were rapid. Something must have happened!

## 563. Is There A New Person In Charge?

Gildern seemed to have something important to report. However, Link was already used to dealing with matters of great import. He said calmly, "Come to the conference hall. I'll listen to your report there."

"Yes, my lord," replied Gildern, who then hurried straight towards the Mage Tower.

Link then said to Celine, "My love, I have something to attend to. Please continue without me."

Celine's eyes were still glued to the magic book in front of her, puzzling over an extremely difficult problem concerning Soul Magic. She waved a hand at him.

"Go do whatever you need to do, as long as it doesn't involve flirting with that beautiful Dragon Queen."

Laughing at this, Link touched Celine's hand. He then let his hand run through her long, silky hair before lowering his head to give her a kiss on her forehead. Finally, he walked out of the study silently and headed towards the conference hall.

On his way, he saw Gildern hurrying towards him from the other side of the corridor. The two of them then walked side by side towards their destination.

Gildern said, "My lord, the problem we're now dealing with"

He stopped when he saw a Magician walking towards them.

Seeing how cautious Gildern was, once they were inside the conference hall, Link closed the doors and cast a Soundproof Barrier over the whole room. He then said, "Alright, now you can speak."

Gildern handed two scrolls to Link. Both were black, which meant that their contents were extremely important.

Link opened the first scroll. It came from MI3 in Norton Kingdom. In it contained information on the Army of Destruction's movements in the North. There was also a message scribbled in it by the writer.

The message was this: A veteran scout leader of Orida Fortress recently sighted a set of intriguing tracks in the Black Forest. He determined that it had been left by a 300-man shock troop of demon soldiers. Each member of this unit had a power level of at least Level-8.

A shock troop of this scale would be able to cause a lot of chaos anywhere in Firuman.

As soon as he made the discovery, the scout leader decided to take a couple of his subordinates to follow these tracks through the forest all the way to the depths of Hengduan Mountain Range. The enemy's tracks stopped there abruptly.

As the enemy's schemes had always been a great cause for concern, any information regarding them would be brought to Ferde in a black scroll to indicate its urgency.

When he was done reading the scroll, Link contemplated on it for a moment. He then asked Gildern, "Any word on the Beastmen of the Golden Plains?"

Ferde had set up scout outposts throughout all of the Firuman continent. These outposts formed a far-reaching information network, which was complemented with that belonging to Norton Kingdom's MI3. This allowed Ferde to keep tabs on almost everything on the continent.

Gildern took out another scroll and gave it to Link. "My lord, the Golden Plains had sent us information regarding the demons' appearances. They were sighted in five different spots. I've already marked them out on a map. Please have a look at it."

Link took the scroll and unfurled it. A detailed map of the Golden Plains was depicted on the scroll, with five red markers on it which pointed out the locations where demons had last been sighted. These markers began from the northeastern corner of the Golden Plains, where the plains were connected to the Hengduan Mountain Range, all the way to the Korora Mountain Range in the southwest. It was clear where the demons were heading.

Link was stunned for a moment when he realized what the demons' destination was. Are they heading towards the realm crack? But how did the Army of Destruction know where it was?

If the Army of Destruction had long known the precise location of the crack, they would have made a huge fuss over it a long time ago. They certainly would not have waited until now to do something about it. The God of Destruction would also be making a lot of noise trying to come through the crack from the other side.

Only now did they decide to move in to open the crack after it had been sealed up and the space around it had been stabilized. This could only mean one thing: They had just recently discovered the coordinates of the crack.

Regardless of how they came upon this piece of information, the demons needed to be stopped before they could break open the crack.

"When were the demons spotted?" asked Link.

"Any news from Orida Fortress would need at least three days to reach us. As all our scouts are given communication runestones, news from the Golden Plains would at most be delayed by two hours before reaching Ferde. Also, according to one of the scouts, an hour had passed since he received word on the demons' latest movement and brought it to the nearest outpost in the Golden Plains, so there is a three-hour delay in total to the news that we've received," answered Gildern.

This meant that information on the demons' latest movements that Link now had was three hours old. He looked at the map again. The last marker was no more than a thousand miles away from the crack. The demons might already have started working to break its seal if they moved fast enough.

"I fear this unit of demons means to destroy the seal that had been placed over the realm crack." Link tapped on the scroll, somewhat concerned. However, he showed no sign of panic.

The shock troop consisted of 300 Level-8 masters. There might even be a couple of Legendary demons in their midst. Together, they were a force to be reckoned with, but the dragon guards posted near the realm crack were no pushovers either. They had been guarding the crack for almost two years to prevent any Void creature from trespassing the Firuman realm. The Level-18 magical barrier erected around it had also been designed mostly by Link himself. It was an extremely intelligent piece of work and would not be easily overcome by anyone.

In other words, the barrier would be able to hold up against any enemy attacks for a long period of time.

Gildern's face remained grave. He said, "My lord, this all seemed a bit too easy. In truth, if the enemy had intended to make their way across the plains undetected, they would have chosen a less frequented path and not leave such an obvious trail behind them. I fear that this is also part of some elaborate scheme the demons have cooked up for us."

This had crossed Link's mind as well. It was obvious that the enemy wanted Link to notice them. The demons would continue with their mission, regardless of whether or not Link decided to provide backup for Dragon Valley. If he decided not to interfere, the crack would be opened, and whatever horrors lurking behind it would be released into Firuman. If Link decided to help, there was a high chance he would be ambushed by the enemy as he made his way there.

He nodded. "You may be right. Such a scheme suggests an intelligent mind behind it. I think that there may be someone new calling the shots for the Army of Destruction now."

Link then opened up the second black scroll.

The black scroll was from one of Ferde's own scouts. In it, the scout had reported an attack launched by the Army of Destruction in Dark Water Port, to the west of the Black Forest.

The ones who had been attacked were the High Elves. Their attackers were the Nagas, demons and the Dark Elves. They had wiped out almost all of the High Elves who were there that day. The High Elves' Silver Storm Sparrow warship had also been destroyed by the Army of Destruction. As an insult to injury, members of the army had cooked and feasted on all the High Elf corpses they could find. It was most likely a terrible scene to behold.

Looking at the report, Link said with a frown, "Weren't the High Elves reported to be in talks with the Army of Destruction about forming an alliance? Why have negotiations broken down between them?"

As far as he knew, the current leader of the Army of Destruction was a Naga Priest, who had always preferred to deal with things through diplomacy. Someone like her would never have attempted something so brazen.

Gildern shrugged, evidently troubled by this as well. "My lord, during their negotiations, the Army of Destruction had sealed off a 5000-feet area around the Dark Water Port. This was all the information we could find about the incident."

Link tapped a finger on the table. "Strange indeed Tell me, do you think that there's been a change in management in the Army of Destruction?"

Gildern could not give Link an answer. As an intelligence officer, he would never make baseless assumptions without solid information, as he knew from experience that the truth was always far stranger than one could imagine. Also, as he did not possess the near-clairvoyant instincts of a Magician like Link, Gildern's predictions would probably not be as accurate as those made by the lord of Ferde.

On the other hand, Link's instincts were extraordinarily accurate. This had been proven on multiple occasions in the past.

Before Gildern gave him a reply, Link muttered to himself, "I think that there's a new commander at the helm of the Army of Destruction. He or she is extremely intelligent but does not seem to have any experience in leading an army. Their extreme actions and the fact that they were able to immediately inspire loyalty from the army meant that they possess incredible power. Also, the usurper had thrown Molina's plans for an alliance out of the window. This meant that they might not be a Naga"

Link rambled on, making one deduction after another in an attempt to determine the new commander's identity. Finally, two potential candidates surfaced in Link's mind.

"Assuming the Army of Destruction had changed leadership, there are only two people capable of doing such a thing. The first is Eugene. Knowing him, he must have prepared a contingency plan for the destruction of his physical body and regained his full strength by now. The other potential candidate is Saroviny No, it couldn't be her. She's still in another realm and has already reached Level-16. The Eye of the Realm would have picked up any attempts made by such a powerful presence to breach the walls between realms. She also would have left some shred of dignity for the Nagas. This means that Eugene might be the one behind everything."

Once he reached his conclusion, Link looked at the two black scrolls in his hands and began closely reading the description of the attack in Dark Water Port. Gradually, based on his memories of the Dark Magician, Link realized that the new leader of the Army of Destruction and Eugene had behaved exactly the same way.

However, Link had no way of proving his fears at the moment. What held precedence right now was the enemy's plan to open up the crack. Under no circumstances should anything be allowed to happen to the crack.

The crack was not just Ferde's problem. The dragons would also be greatly impacted by it as well. As they were now allies, this meant that it was a problem both sides had to confront together.

Link then said to Gildern, "Listen closely."

Gildern stood up immediately.

"Assign a couple of scouts to the Black Forest. I need to know as soon as possible what is going on inside the Army of Destruction. Make this your top priority."

"I understand, my lord."

"Now go."

Gildern turned around and exited the room to carry out his orders.

Link sat in the great hall, meditating on something for a few minutes. Then, he took the two scrolls on the table and set off to find the Red Dragon Elder Pettalong.

## 564. Dragon Race Divides

"What? They want to break the seals for the crack?!"

Elder Pettalong couldn't keep sitting after hearing this news. He shot up, brows furrowed and gray whiskers trembling. Shock was written all over his face.

"Relax, relax." Link pressed his hands. "It isn't irrevocable yet. It isn't easy to break the seals around the crack. Of course, we must respond to this quickly. Do you have any ideas?"

Pettalong leaned against the table. Half a minute later, he was still shocked. Worries and concerns flooded into him without stop. He forced himself to stay composed, but those thoughts were still affecting his mind.

If it was five years ago, he wouldn't be so easily affected. But recently, so many things have happened in the Dragon Valley. Each event had been shocking. He had felt powerless each time.

The entire world was getting stronger while the Dragon Valley kept weakening. This was the worst period for the dragons.

Now, he was on edge. There were problems with the crack again. He feared that things would get to the point of no return.

A few minutes later, he sighed. "Duke," he said to Link. "My mind is a mess. I'm afraid I won't be able to make suggestions, but I only have one request. Do not let Her Majesty know. She's heavily wounded and must rest well Ah"

Right now, the elder was depressed and feeling down. Link could clearly sense the hopeless aura coming from him. People who had racked their brains and still couldn't change the current situation or see any hope were usually like this.

Link frowned, confused about Pettalong's state. He was still a spirited man before. Why had he changed so much?

However, things were urgent, and he didn't have time to wonder. He couldn't expect help from a dragon elder like this either. Thinking a bit, he said, "In that case, please recommend someone to help."

Pettalong paused and then said, "Then Felina. She's young and vigorous, filled with bravery and courage. She's the star of the younger generation, and you two are familiar. Duke, she can help you."

Link was even more confused. "As I recall, there are ten elders here. Why don't you recommend an elder?"

Pettalong shook his head. "No, Duke. We're all old and don't have energy. Things like war should be handled by the young."

"Oh, that works." Link knew Felina. Since Pettalong insisted, he didn't have any complaints. "Then I'll go now."

"Wait," Pettalong called out.

"What?"

"Duke, many things have happened, and many high-level dragons have died. There aren't many left. Now, there are less than 1000 true great dragons We cannot have more losses."

Here, Pettalong lowered his head and avoided Link's eyes. He wished Link could take care of the dragons to reduce losses, but since the demons wanted to target the crack, there would be an intense fight. If they wanted to lower dragon casualties, they would be replaced by humans.

Before, this would be no problem. But now, Ferde was huge and surpassed the Dragon Valley in every aspect. With Ferde, the humans were now a powerful race. Pettalong didn't have confidence in saying this.

Link knew what he meant. Chuckling, he said, "I'll try my best, Elder."

With that, white light flashed. When he reappeared, he was at Felina's door. He knocked. A while later, Felina opened the door.

"Duke, what's wrong?" Felina was dressed in armor. Dark red dragon scales flashed all over her. Her hands had become dragon claws. She was panting heavily, her cheeks were red, and her forehead was covered in sweat. It looked like she'd been practicing in her room.

Her state was the polar opposite of the elder.

Link repeated what had happened in the Dragon Valley. After listening, Felina also asked strangely, "Duke, why are you asking for my opinion? You should ask the elders."

"Elder Pettalong had suggested I find you." Link found it strange too. He couldn't understand Pettalong.

Felina couldn't figure it out and shrugged. "You don't need to ask me. You're the duke. Whatever you want to do, just send the order."

To Felina, Link was the dragon duke. Since the queen was hurt, Link was technically the leader now. His word was the law.

Link smiled wryly. He was only the duke in name, but now it seemed to make sense too. He couldn't explain to Felina clearly right now.

Unexpectedly, Felina continued, "Duke, I actually know what's happening. Some elders think you're an outsider or that you're only our ally and not a dragon. But I think they're wrong. You passed the Mist Maze alone and was recognized by the ancestors. You received the dragon body too. You became a dragon long ago. There are no doubts! Those elders don't admit it because of their bias and selfishness!"

Her eyes were determined as she spoke. There wasn't any doubt. She'd already thought through this long ago.

Link flinched. Thinking closely, Felina wasn't wrong. But he still hadn't become the dragon duke legitimately. Some dragons could understand, but the others couldn't. If he really acted like a duke with his current status, it would cause a storm within the dragon race.

Thinking of this, Link said seriously, "Felina, you must know that if I acknowledge what you said, it will cause a divide within Dragon Valley!"

"So what?" Felina moved aside so Link could enter. At the same time, she said, "Both Her Majesty and the elders care too much about the tradition. That isn't wrong, but it isn't right either. The dragon race is failing. If we never change, we may become extinct!"

In the past, the dragons had had horrible strength, but times had changed. The dragons hadn't gotten weaker and had even improved. However, the other races had improved more. For example, the Beastmen Warlords could kill a dragon with one strike. Ferde, the demons, and the High Elves were all more powerful than the dragons. There was also Aragu. If the realms fused, the dragons would lower even more in status.

Basically, the predicted future for the dragons was dark. They must change!

Felina's eyes had always glimmered, but now, they shone. They looked like two orbs of fire. Staring with a burning gaze, she said excitedly, "Duke, many young dragons actually worship you. As long as Ferde is willing to accept us, we can immediately leave"

"Okay, stop! Stop talking. I understand," Link interrupted. He didn't think the Dragon Valley would secretly have such divisions. It was unexpected.

After a pause, Link asked, "Do the elders know?"

Now, he thought of Pettalong's attitude, and his heart jumped. The elder must know, but he didn't object or support it. He just chose to stay silent.

Felina shook his head. "They don't know, but it doesn't matter. The young dragons are stronger than the elders. They can't stop us."

"Have you thought about the queen?" Link asked.

"Of course." Felina calmed down slightly and sighed. "In reality, it's because of Her Majesty that we haven't done anything, especially when you two had argued But now, there aren't any problems. We've thought it through. You are our duke, and we're all free. We can choose to be loyal to any strong dragons. We can follow you and become your followers. No one can stop us, not even Her Majesty."

Become his followers? That wasn't too bad. Even though it was still getting close to the bottom line, they wouldn't completely break apart. There was still room to amend things.

Now, there was one problem left. Should he accept the loyalty of the young dragons? Thinking, he asked, "Felina, how many people think like you?"

"Many. Most young dragons think this way. There are at least 300, all above Level-8. The strongest is Aonis. He's already close to Level-10. Unless something happens, he should become a new Legendary dragon half a year later."

There were more than 300 Level-8 Dragon Warriors. Unlike humans, these dragon Warriors had great potential to improve. They were likely to enter the Legendary level and could continue to strengthen to at least Level-16.

The dragons were a Legendary race, after all. After the Mana density rose, every race's average power was rising. It was the same for the dragons.

But the problem was that dragons had long lives. Their improvements were relatively slower than the other races. Thus, they would be relatively weaker in the beginning. For tens of thousands of years, the dragons had been at the peak of the mainland. Now that they had fallen, it was logical that the young dragons couldn't stand it.

But this was only temporary. After a decade, these young dragons would probably all become Legendary. The Red Dragon Queen would reach Level-19 too. This Legendary race would once again stand at the top of the food chain.

The game had proved this.

In other words, the dragons' current state created the opportunity for Link to have a huge group of future strong figures. This opportunity would disappear quickly too Three hundred Legendary figures were enough to tempt Link.

But despite being tempted, his expression didn't change. After a pause, he put on a pained expression. "Felina, you've seen how Ferde has many strong people too. There are at least 1000 above Level-8 and six at the Legendary level. There will be more in the future. If I accept you all, the queen will be furious. The new alliance will probably fail too."

Link was speaking the truth too. Felina had flown around earlier and had a general idea about Ferde's strength. She was sad. Had the dragons gotten to the point where they would be looked down upon even while wanting to follow someone?

But Ferde's power from these short few years was all due to Link's leadership as the lord. Link was also recognized as one of the most powerful battle mages in the mainland. Countless people have been defeated in his hands. Ferde was also known as the cemetery for the strong. Even the renowned Bryant had been defeated here.

This was a place one yearned to be in.

To follow such an undefeatable man had long been the greatest glory for the young dragons. Felina was one of them. She was stubborn and wouldn't give up so easily.

After thinking, she said, "Duke, we won't make it hard for you. Just wait and see."

Link worried over the alliance and the queen's feelings. Felina didn't think it was a problem. If anything, she could talk to the queen.

Link didn't say anything. At this point, it was already decided. Now, he didn't have to state his stance. He only had to wait for things to develop. If the Red Dragon Queen gave tacit consent, he would naturally accept these young dragons into Ferde. If she objected strongly, he would use even gentler tactics.

Of course, this would be in the future. Now, the Korora Mountain Range crack was the most important.

He passed the report to Felina. "Your matter isn't urgent now. Look at the details and gather the Warriors to the Korora Mountain Range."

Felina accepted the scroll and scanned quickly. A few minutes later, she said, "No problem. There are eight young Warriors here. The weakest is at the pinnacle of Level-8. I will call them over now."

Link nodded. "Remember not to alert Her Majesty. Her health won't allow it."

"I understand." Felina turned and walked away briskly. Different from the downtrodden Pettalong, she was energetic and did things quickly. She would do what she said without any delay.

Watching her leave, Link started preparing as well.

First, he found Evelina and informed her. Then, he sent her to chat with the Red Dragon Queen and distract her. Next, he found the Yabba airship commander in Scorched Ridge and called up the airship usage authority. Finally, he gathered the people above Level-8 in the territory. There were 300 in total. Two hundred and tity-six were Sunlight Warriors. Sixty-four were newly leveled-up Magicians in the Mage Tower.

He could've found more, but many of the elites had been sent to the Orida Fortress earlier. Only less than half had remained in the territory.

These people didn't make a scene. After receiving Link's orders, they quietly hurried to the western suburbs of Scorched Ridge.

Around 20 minutes later, Nana, the Magicians, Sunlight Warriors, and eight Dragon Warriors had all arrived. This time, Celine had requested to join the temporary army and Link had agreed.

A short while later, there were buzzes in the air. Everyone turned to look and saw the Yabba airship fly over slowly.

This airship was called "City in the Sky." It was a new super-ship created this year. Hundreds of feet long, it had a capacity of more than 500. It could travel more than 3000 miles per hour and was even faster than the dragons. With this speed, they could reach the Korora Mountain Range in around two hours.

The pilot was Merlin, someone Link was familiar with. After seeing Link, he immediately saluted. "Lord, everything is ready. We can depart at any time!"

Link nodded. "Depart immediately after everyone boards. First, fly south slowly. Sixty miles later, adjust the direction to the realm crack in the Korora Mountain Range."

As he spoke, he suddenly felt something. Turning towards Scorched Ridge, his crazy vision allowed him to see Pettalong stand next to a window, gazing at them. Perhaps feeling Link's eyes, Pettalong turned and pulled the curtains.

Link had an idea. Perhaps following Ferde is a common voice within the dragons. The objections to accepting these young dragons might not be as big as I thought.

This was good news, but Link had to stay calm. He continued to watch and wait quietly.

All participants were strong this time and were fast. Within five minutes, everyone was in place.

Ding dong, ding dong. Under crisp bells, the City in the Sky rose up slowly. Then it sped up and, following Link's orders, it went southward first. Five minutes later, it had flown 60 miles. Then, Link added in his power and the airship sped up. It cut a smooth arc in the air and turned towards the Korora Mountain Range.

When it departed, a man and woman dressed as wandering vigilantes watched it in the suburbs. They were Hamilton and Noa. They'd traveled southward and had arrived five days ago. Mordena had told them to investigate the Book of Creation, but they wouldn't really risk their lives for the High Elves. They'd just wandered outside the city these past five days.

Unexpectedly, something had changed.

"Did you see him?" Hamilton asked.

Noa nodded. "Yes. He's the Ferde lord, and they'd gone south with so many people. They'll need a few days, right?"

Hamilton laughed. "This is a great chance for us to investigate Ferde. Yes, I think the Saint must be interested in the inner power structure. If we're lucky, we might even get the fragment. That'll be even better, heh."

They hadn't come to Firuman to help the High Elves. Instead, they were missionaries. Since they couldn't stop the fusion of the realms, the Saint wanted Firuman to become a new region of the Fire Sect. If they were to do that, they'd have to become familiar with Ferde, the power hub of Firuman.

"Don't underestimate them," Noa reminded. "There are still many strong people guarding the city."

"I know. Don't worry, the lesson learned in the Black Forest is enough." Hamilton shook his head in annoyance. He wasn't stupid.

As they spoke, they walked towards Scorched Ridge.

At the same time, in a grassy valley, thousands of miles away from the Korora Mountain Range

"When do you think they'll arrive?" The speaker was a Magician. Heavy black light wrapped around him. His wand kept flashing with dark purple lightning. His eyes burned with dark red fire.

He was Glyn, a Black Blood Demon. He was the demon commander in this mission. In the Abyss, he was an important subordinate of Nozama. As a rare demon Magician, he was very strong. Even with the restitions in Ferde, he was still at Level-13.

His hands didn't stop as he spoke. They were speedily creating a magic seal. A Naga stood beside himPriest Molina.

Molina was silent for a bit. Then she said, "It won't be too long. Master has already seen them." She raised her voice. "Hurry up. We don't have much time!"

Her voice boosted the morale of the Magicians beside her. They sped up quite a lot. On the ground, a huge magic seal that crossed the mountains was quickly being built.

## 565. The Army Of Destruction's Scheme

"My lord, a Beastman village is in flames up ahead! The fire's really strong!" shouted the captain of the airship Merlin. A couple of his crew members began working the magic seals in the airship in order to pull up a visual of the Beastman village.

"The village is approximately 80 miles away from us. Look, 30 degrees to our left, demons!" said Merlin, pointing at the image.

The airship was new, and so were all the magic seals installed on board. All of them were the result of innovative work done by the Magicians of Ferde's Mage Tower. Although they were 80 miles away from the village, its visual was displayed on board in exquisite detail.

Everything on the ground could be seen clearly, from the raging fire to one of the Demon Warriors chasing after a screaming Beastman villager.

"My lord, there are 37 demons in total on the ground, including one Fodor Flaming Demon, three Succubi, and two Demon Illusory Assassin. The rest are horned Demon Warriors. The Fodor Flaming Demon is at least Level-10. It must be the leader here," reported one of the co-pilots beside Merlin in a feverish voice.

Celine intently observed the image and frowned. "These demons are acting strange. They don't seem to be killing anyone. I think they're just reveling in the Beastmen's misery. Look at that demon over there."

It was a Level-7 Demon Warrior. Before it stood an ordinary Beastman Warrior. The Demon Warrior had one foot on the body of a Beastwoman and one claw clutching the leg of a six-year-old Beastgirl.

The demon let out a terrible laugh as he brandished the little girl as a weapon at the Beastman Warrior. The Beastman's movements were becoming sluggish due to the injuries he had sustained. He also had to take a step back every time the little girl screamed out, in case the demon managed to land a hit on him with her body.

"The girl must be the Warrior's daughter, and the woman being stepped on must be his wife! These demons should be sent back into whatever hole they crawled out of!" said a Yabba man through gritted teeth.

In the visual, the Beastman Warrior looked on helplessly as the demon continued toying with his wife and daughter. Teasstreamed down his face until his eyes were all red and puffed up. He roared at the demon until his voice went hoarse. The Beastman seemed to be on the verge of collapsing in exhaustion and despair.

Link noticed that the other demons exhibited similar behaviors in other parts of the village.

In the middle of the village, a couple of the demons had set up a bonfire and hung a huge cauldron above it. The cauldron was filled with water, inside which a couple of children who had not even learned how to walk were left to soak.

The water slowly began to boil until the children inside the cauldron started to feel uncomfortable. They then cried out, their little hands flailing about in the water in an attempt to climb out of the cauldron.

But the cauldron's rim was too high for them to reach. It had also turned scalding hot. The children pulled their hands back immediately when they touched the cauldron's walls. Hot steam was now rising from the cauldron. It would not be long before they were all cooked alive in it.

The demons had even tied their parents to wooden stakes that had been planted no more than three feet away from the cauldron. Just like that, they were forced to watch their own children being boiled alive.

The parents cried out as they frantically struggled to free themselves from their bonds and rescue their own flesh and blood, but the demons had done a wonderful job of tying all of them to the wooden stakes. The parents' efforts were all in vain.

Such atrocities could be seen everywhere throughout the village. There was a demon who was munching on the flesh of a Beastwoman in front of her husband. A demon had forced a Beastman to cut off one of his legs and then cook it for the demon himself. There was even one who had tited a Beastman's arms into a ribbon. It was a terrible sight to see.

"This is literally hell on earth!" Celine could not stand this any longer. She took out her rifle and looked at Link. Her intent was obvious. She wanted to kill every demon on the ground.

"Duke, are we moving in?" asked Felina.

Nana remained silent, but she was already gripping the handle of her sword.

Any normal person would be filled with a sense of righteousness and hatred towards these demons after seeing such a horrific scene unfold before them. These demons were truly foul beyond belief.

Link nodded and then turned to Merlin. "Let's move in, but pay attention to the village's surroundings. This could be a trap."

"Yes, my lord!" said Merlin, and he gave a military salute to Link. He turned around and gave his crew members a series of complicated orders.

Link then retracted the boost of power he had given the airship as he readied himself for battle. He gazed at the magical visual in the middle of the airship and then sank into a deep meditation.

What these demons had done was unspeakably evil, but Link had been hardened by his experience in the war between light and darkness back in Orida Fortress. The scene in the Beastmen's village barely affected his judgment.

There was something strange about this. What are the demons trying to achieve by tormenting a village full of Beastmen? he thought.

This would not have struck Link as odd if it had happened near the Black Forest, which happened to be part of the Army of Destruction's domain. However, they were now in the Golden Plains, and the Beastmen were no pushovers.

The demons were no fools. Why would they risk incurring the wrath of more powerful Beastmen by engaging in such meaningless acts of violence?

These demons may not be part of the crack troop that the scouts had spotted, which means that there may be more than 300 demons who had come out of the Black Forest. The Army of Destruction may have even sent two or three squads out to spread chaos throughout the Beastmen's domain. There must be an even bigger scheme behind all this.

It was obvious to Link that the demons were up to something. The only problem was, what were they planning to do?

Link could not figure out what their plan was. He feared that they might already be playing into the demons' hands.

At that moment, Link noticed that something had changed in the magic visual.

"Uhm, are the demons retreating?"

In the visual, the Fodor Flaming Demon seemed to have received some sort of message, as he took out a horn and blew into it. All the demons who had been tormenting the villagers suddenly stopped what they were doing. They then turned around and retreated towards the west.

When they were all grouped up, the Fodor Flaming Demon took out a scroll and triggered whatever spell it contained. Once activated, the group of demons ran off at an incredible speed of up to 700 feet per second.

Did they notice us? thought Link, surprised by this. This suggested that the demons had set up a powerful detection spell.

I did not sense anyone spying on us. Whoever was able to do such a thing without revealing themselves must possess a power superior even to mine. We may be dealing with some form of divine spell that was cast by a powerful servant of the God of Destruction. This was the only conclusion Link could come up with.

"My lord, the fire's still raging in the village. If we don't do anything about it, the villagers will be burned alive. But if we go down and save everyone now, those demons will" Merlin did not finish his sentence, but everyone in the airship understood all too well that they would lose the demons if they decided to go down and help the villagers.

They could make any one of the demons spill the beans on their big plan by punishing them for their crimes at the same time. There was no way they were letting the demons flee!

However, Link had already made up his mind. He said firmly, "We'll help the villagers. Once we're done, we'll go straight towards the realm crack!"

Whatever the Army of Destruction's game was, Link would not take the bait. As long as they kept the crack safe, there would not be a problem.

"But my lord, those demons" said Merlin with a low voice.

"The crack is our top priority. The safety of the entire realm hinges on it!" said Link coldly.

Merlin jolted. He then said apologetically, "Understood, my lord!"

The airship accelerated towards the village until they were floating a hundred feet above it. Three Water Magicians climbed to the deck and began to cast a Rainmaking spell in unison.

This was a non-offensive Level-3 spell. The only thing unique about it was that its area-of-effect could be expanded. The spell could even summon a torrential rain stretching across hundreds of miles with the use of magic seals and the involvement of other Magicians.

The three Water Magicians were at least Level-8. They began channeling their power into the spell together. Three seconds later, thick clouds began to churn in the sky above the village. Before long, heavy rain poured down, extinguishing the village's fire in one fell swoop.

At that moment, a Magician appeared a few hundred feet in the air and used the Magician's Hand to undo the rope tied around the limbs of every villager.

Once everything was done, the airship sped off towards the realm crack.

However, after flying for a hundred miles, Merlin caught sight of something in front of the airship.

"My lord, look. There's a lake up ahead. Dark Elf Magiciasseem to be trying to activate a dark magic seal in it."

Link had already sensed the swirl of Dark Power. He was particularly sensitive to it. Not only was he able to sense the dark magic seal's presence, but he could also tell what technique the Dark Elf Magicians were using.

He narrowed his eyes and began meditating. Five seconds later, he said, "It's a realm teleportation seal. They're going to summon backup through it. Increase altitude and bring us closer. Strengthen our detection seals and look out for any sign of ambush!"

The enemy would be able to musterl an even greater force if the Dark Elf Magicians were not stopped. They might even summon powerful Legendary demons through the magic seal. Keeping the realm crack safe would be impossible by then.

Merlin began giving out his orders.

Link then said to Celine, "Celine, getito position. Take your shot as soon as the Dark Elves enter your range of fire. Use your crystallized silver bullets just in case!"

Crystallized silver bullets were Link's latest creation. Each one was tailored to deliver a Level-13 impact!

They were now in the midst of an operation. Link's orders were curt. His face remained impassive even as he gave his orders to Celine.

"Understood, my lord!" Celine was a veteran soldier. She did not mind Link's curtness. She carried her rifle and assumed her firing position on the airship.

At that moment, a message popped up before Link. He had triggered a new mission in the game's system.

## 566. Will We Succeed?

Player has activated mission series: Protect the Realm Crack!

Activate Step One: Army of Destruction in the Shadows

Mission Content: Investigate the Army of Destruction near the crack. Determine their motive.

Mission Reward: 40 Jogu

Seeing this reward, Link's heart jumped. He'd made a promise with the Travel Magician to exchange 300 Jogu for the way to fully fix the realm crack. Skinorse had sent someone to bring him some Jogu recently. Now, he had 273. If he had these additional 40, he would be able to solve the problem completely.

In this case, Link accepted without hesitation.

During this time, the airship had risen to two miles in the air. The range of Celine's large fire gun was 2.5 miles. Thishi

She took out five Thorium bullets and pressed them one by one into the gun. Aiming at the Dark Elf Magicians in the distance, Celine said, "Shooter in position!"

"Fighters prepare," Link ordered again.

All passengers on the airship had been trained. They weren't very familiar, but all were above Level-8. Their brains worked quickly, and voices sounded within half a minute.

"Magicians are in place! Airship vector defense force field activated! Magic cannon charging, complete in 20 seconds."

"Warriors in place!"

"Cannons in place. Ready to fire!"

Link felt the Mana within the entire airship. It seemed to be bubbling, but it was stable overall. This was the result of using many new spells. After ensuring that the ship was in perfect state, he said to Merlin, "Approach target. Prepare to attack!"

"Yes."

Merlin turned to give his crew a series of orders. The airship had entered combat state.

Link didn't stay in his position during this. He didn't check the magic projection in the command cabin. Instead, he walked to the window and used his naked eye to observe the ground.

The lake below was very wide, more than six miles in diameter. There were many small islands in the center. Those Dark Elf Magicians were there. From his position, Link could see six Magicians in a circle. Thick Mana waves rippled from them. He could sense that each was above Level-7.

There was a stone tablet before each Dark Elf Magician. The tablets were covered in dark purple light that connected the tablets like a belt. Looking from the sky, he could see a dark purple six-point star.

Obvious Mana waves came from the star. He could see a 600-feet-wide pure black matter hovering in the center of the star.

What was pure black matter? It was something that light could enter but never come out of. The most direct characteristic was that it was darker than anything around it. It was an abnormally pure blackness.

Inside it, Link sensed a horribly distorted space. He looked down at the Eye of the Realm bracelet on his wrist. The crystal had a weak red glow. This meant that there was a passage to another realm here. The pure black matter mustwas probably the exit to that passage.

Since it could activate the Eye of the Realm, this meant that the Dark Elves were probably summoning some powerful existence. It would be bad news if they succeeded.

So he had to stop them.

But for some reason, Link felt that something was wrong. It was like he'd missed something when calculating earlier.

What's the problem? Link stared at the magic seal on the island, brows slightly furrowed.

At this time, Merlin reported loudly, "Lord, we've arrived at the attack position!"

His voice shook Link awake. He thought for half a second and then ordered, "Shooters attack at will. Magic cannons, prepare!"

The magic cannon was the most powerful and most large-scale weapon on the airship. Its core was a meteorite Gildern had found from the Free Trade Confederation black market in the South. The original idea came from one of the Mage Tower's apprentices called Akeers. After Link, Eliard, and the others perfected it through deep research, it resulted in this magic cannon.

Its range reached three miles, and its attacks reached Level-16. One attack could cover 1000 feet in diameter. After recharging, it could fire three times consecutively. On this moving platform, it was Ferde's most powerful weapon.

Celine started shooting as soon as Link gave the order.

Bang! With the gunshot, a white-gold beam shot down from the airship. It crossed almost two miles instantly and shotito a Dark Elf Magician's head.

The crystalized Thorium bullet was at Level-13 and had impressive anti-magic elements. It should be able to break through any defense barrier in Firuman.

But then something happened.

When the white-gold arc was 150 feet from the magic seal, a huge lattice shield made of many runes suddenly appeared. It shone faintly with a blue glow. After appearing, it easily blocked Celine's attack. This shockingly penetrative bullet hit it and disappeared without a ripple like a leaf falling into water.

Seeing this, everyone on the ship widened their eyes. Someone even gasped, muttering reflexively, "How is this possible?"

Everyone in Ferde knew how powerful Celine's fire gun and especially the Thorium bullets were. Link had created the Thorium bullet, but many Magicians had participated in the design process. To Magicians, these bullets were the kryptonite for magic barriers.

But now, it was easily blocked by a shield. This was incomprehensible.

Link squinted at the shield. His vision was shocking. The collision had happened quickly, but he'd seen every detail. With his bottomless magic knowledge now, he figured out the shield's general operation mode after thinking for a little bit.

"This shield is interesting. It isn't strong in itself, but there are many latent magic seals 150 feet around the shield. They can quickly absorb the energy of attacks and use it to strengthen the shield. The stronger the attack, the stronger the shield."

"Lord, will our cannons be unable to get through too?" a Magician asked.

"Not sure, but the situation is very strange. Use the cannons for unexpected events. Don't use them too casually." Link trained his eyes on the magic seal. A few seconds of silence later, he smiled. "This shield is powerful, but there is a fatal flaw. Watch me."

He continued, "Felina, you all follow me to the deck."

"Yes, Lord."

The weakest of the eight Red Dragon Warriors was at the pinnacle of Level-8. Felina herself was at the pinnacle of Level-9. In addition, dragons had extreme recovery rates. This was a powerful force.

Arriving at the deck, Link said, "Transform into dragon form. I need your dragon breath flames!"

The eight Warriors jumped up. When they were 300 feet above the deck, a red light flashed past. Eight young dragons over 150 feet long appeared. They formed a circle and looked down at Link, waiting for his order.

Link stood on the deck and raised the Ode of a Full Moon sword. Mana surged into it. Half a second later, a six-foot-wide Spatial Distortion sphere appeared at the tip. It started rising.

"Blow fire at this with all your might for at least 20 seconds!" he ordered.

Roar! The eight dragons started at the same time. Eight thick beams of fire spewed from their mouths, burying into the sphere. They all wanted to show off their power before Link, so they used all their strength. Everyone lasted for 25 seconds. Felina even maintained it for 35 seconds.

When Felina finished, Link's Spatial Distortion sphere had turned into a blue "lava" sphere. It kept vibrating and spinning. It seemed unstable as if it could explode any time.

The eight dragons were all shocked. They could clearly see the power contained within the thing. If it exploded within the airship, it could blow it to smithereens. If they were hit, they would be cremated directly.

They all subconsciously moved away from the dark blue lava sphere.

Link took a deep break, focusing his thoughts. "Singularity transformation!" he whispered.

Around 500 points of his Realm Essence followed the Ode of a Full Moon to the sphere. Under the restraint of this force, the huge "lava" sphere instantly shrunk to the size of assame seed. It didn't glow either. If one didn't pay attention, one wouldn't notice its existence.

Then Link reached out and grasped the tiny thing with horrible power.

"Okay, you can come down." Link walked to the edge of the deck with the thing and ordered Celine, "Listen to my orders. Be prepared to shoot at any time!"

"Understood."

Link threw the tiny sphere down towards the island. When it was around 300 feet from the shield, Link suddenly said, "Shoot!"

Bang! A white-gold arc flew down. An instant later, the blue shield appeared again with a soft buzz. Here, Link used his thoughts to activate the Spatial Distortion sphere.

That moment, everyone on the airship saw a blinding flash on the lake. They were all forced to squint.

After the blue light faded, the Dark Elves, magic stone tablets, and even the island had disappeared. All that could prove that the island had once existed was a bubbling patch of lava on the lake's surface.

The entire island had melted!

That moment, Dark Magician Glyn felt something from hundreds of miles away. Furrowing his brows, he said to Molina, "The trap in the lake has failed. He already undid my shield."

"That fast? Is his power damaged?" Molina frowned slightly. She didn't think to use the shield to defeat Link. She'd only wanted to weaken him and raise the chance of success. Now, it seemed that it hadn't been effective. The opponent's feelings hadn't been affected by the demons at all. They were still terrifyingly calm.

How can there be such a frightening Magician in the world? Dammit! A shred of doubt appeared in Molina's heart. Would their carefully prepared plan No, she couldn't think that. Her master's wisdom was boundless. If he attacked personally, that mortal would definitely die!

Glyn shook his head. "It only took three seconds. He didn't use brute force to undo it. Instead, he used a tiny flaw in the shield's Mana cycle. This trap probably didn't weaken him."

Molina let out a long sigh, pushing down her worries. "The Ferde lord is definitely troublesome, but our magic seal is the true tactic. Glyn, go get ready."

"As you wish, Saint." Glyn bowed to Molina. His body blurred and then disappeared.

## 567. Legendary Magic And Divine Retribution

The Flying City airship continued flying forward.

"My lord, the realm crack is 200 miles up ahead. We'll reach our destination in five minutes," reported Merlin.

Link nodded. His eyes were glued to the windshield, intently watching the ground getting closer in front of the airship.

Half a minute later, he heard footsteps coming up behind him. It was Celine.

"There's something strange about all this," she whispered.

Link's eyes did not budge one bit. In truth, he had already sensed that something seemed wrong as well. The demons setting a village on fire and the summoning ritual that the Dark Elf Magicians were conducting earlier all seemed to point to the fact that the enemy had a good idea where Link and his lot would be.

The Army of Destruction had made preparations to deal with them. The first two incidents had been harmless distractions, but it was possible that they heralded something grander and more likely to kill them all.

The main problem was, what did the enemy have in store for them?

As the airship flew forward, Link began to feel even more anxious. They were now flying over the Korora Mountain Range where the sun was shining and the trees grew abundant. From above, the forest on the mountain range was a magnificent sight to behold.

However, to Link, the sunlight was of a cold pallor. The leaves were a sickly, rotting green. The whole mountain range was a bleak grey, and the whole world seemed deprived of all life. In Link's eyes, it was a scene not unlike hell.

Something big will happen a few minutes from now, thought Link. Whatever it is, it will pose a huge threat to my life. It's even managed to mess with all my senses!

Link's time magic book stated that time was multidirectional and that in reality, the concepts of past, present, and future were mere constructs conceived by intelligent life on Firuman to make sense of time itself.

As no natural law dictated that time should move only in one direction, it was possible that both the past and future would be able to affect the present. The time magic book also dealt with the subject of cause-and-effect cycles. Discussions on the subject were carried out on the assumption that the past and future assumed causal roles, while their effects were expressed in the present.

These concepts of time introduced by the book were extremely esoteric. The effects brought upon the present by the past and future differed from each other in some respects, and the magical concepts underlying these effects were especially complicated. Link had been studying the time magic book for a long time, and he barely scratched the surface of the subject. At the moment, he only had a general idea about time magic.

My life's in danger, and I have no idea what form this threat will take. There's not much else I can do about it, other than heighten my vigilance for now.

Link had a general understanding of how time worked. He knew that time itself was replete with variables, and that however right his actions might seem at the moment, there was a real chance they might set off a chain of events in the future that would ultimately end in his death.

Right now, he would be better off thinking up a couple of countermeasures to deal with the imminent danger rather than trying to change the current course of his actions.

The more countermeasures he had in hand, the more likely he would be able to survive the impending threat.

Link checked the number of Omni Points he had in hand. He still had 750 Omni Points and 23,000 Realm Essence Power points remaining at the moment. This was enough for Link to cast a Level-13 Legendary offensive spell or a Level-15 supplementary spell.

Link continued observing the scenery in front of the airship in order to divine where the danger might come from. In the span of half a minute, the anxiety intensified in him as the sky had darkened considerably from his perspective.

The world darkened even more with each passing second around Link as if all hope had fled off in the face of this danger.

Link took the encroaching darkness to mean that the danger was drawing closer than ever towards him and that the time he had to react to it grew even shorter. It seemed to Link that the approaching danger was something he would not be able to handle alone.

This was the first time Link had encountered such an ominous sign.

"Link, I've got a really bad feeling about this. It's as if my whole world's completely engulfed in darkness!" said Celine. Her voice sounded distant.

Link turned around and saw her standing stock-still behind him. Her pupils quivered uncontrollably. She was endowed with the gift of clairvoyance. Though it had its benefits, the effect it had on an actual clairvoyant was ten times worse than that received by a non-clairvoyant as an imminent danger approached!

Most clairvoyants had been driven mad by their own visions of the future. This was the price that came with such a double-edged gift!

Link looked at the other Magicians. They were all above Level-8. Still, they appeared ill at ease as well.

The only person who was still able to remain calm was Nana.

Though she might look like a living being on the outside, she did not have an actual soul inside her physical body. As such, she was not as capable of any form of precognition as a Magician would be.

All of a sudden, a thought flashed across Link's mind.

Is waiting the only thing I can do in the face of this danger? No, there should be something I can do about it!

The game system was his only hope of salvation at this point.

Link then gave his order. "Power, I need power. Magicians, prepare your nodal magic seals this instant!"

"Yes, my lord," said the Magicians of Ferde in unison, and they all began carrying out his order.

Nodal magic seals were a technique developed by Ferde to concentrate power into a single point. Through these seals, weaker Magicians would be able to pool all their power in one place and then purify it to produce a steady flow of Realm Essence Power for the use of high-level Magicians.

The seal was structurally simple, and all Magicians in Ferde were required to be equipped with it at all times so that it could be used anywhere in the world. At Link's order, the Magicians onboard the airship began channeling their power into the signets they were wearing around their fingers.

The power inside their signets was then purified and redirected into Link's own signet.

A moment later, Link's signet turned transparent. The space around it was visibly distorted by the high concentration of power in it. Golden ripples of light began radiating from his ring as well.

As power flowed into his ring, Link quickly read through all the available Legendary spell cards in his mind, some of which were as high as Level-15.

With his power alone, he would be able to cast a Level-15 Legendary supplementary spell. However, with the added power of six other Magicians, Level-17 Legendary supplementary spells would definitely not be beyond his power.

In his vision, these high-level cards shimmered with an assortment of colors. There were purple Secret spells, iridescent Elemental spells and Spatial spells which were enveloped in rippling light. Finally, Link's gaze settled on the darkest spell card in the collection.

The card was so dark that its edges had merged completely with the darkened background in front of Link. An eye was traced out with silver lines on the card.

Looking at the eye, Link took a deep breath. It was the highest-level time spell in the game: the Eye of Agramma.

The Eye of Agramma (Oblivion-type spell)

Level-18 Legendary Supplementary Spell

Initial casting cost: 30,000 points

Subsequent cost: 500 points per second

Description: Invented by the Time Magician Agramma. With this spell, the caster will be able to peer into the most profound secrets of time magic.

Side-effect: Due to the immense power this spell holds, when it is cast, the disturbed flow of time will return to normal. The caster will completely forget the existence of this spell and will be punished by the realm itself.

(Note: The world may not hold any secret from me, but curiosity still kills the cat.)

In the game, Link had always thought that this spell served no purpose whatsoever and that its cost was also way too high. Its effect, which supposedly would allow the caster to look into the future, was simply impossible to activate in the game world. In reality, almost all time spells in the game could not be activated due to the fact that influencing the flow of time was just impossible back on earth.

However, in Firuman, time magic was powerful enough to turn the whole world on its head, which was why the realm would only allow such a spell to be activated once. Once a time spell was cast, the laws of the realm would undergo a drastic change. If one wished to continue using it, he or she would need to rewrite the laws governing the realm in order to allow the spell's continued use.

The Soul Dominator had once said that mastery of Prophecy Magic could only be obtained through the realm's blessings rather than one's efforts. The same could be said for time magic.

It certainly held incredible power, but the use of time magic always came at a high price.

Once he selected the spell, Link whispered, "Acquire."

There was a bang, and suddenly, the Eye of Agramma card dissolved into countless points of light. A second later, a new spell settled in Link's mind.

At that moment, the nodal magic seals were almost done channeling the Magicians' power into Link's signet. The total amount of Realm Essence Power points he could use right now had reached more than 40,000 points, which would be enough for him to cast the high-cost time spell he had just acquired.

Link's sense of foreboding was now screaming at him. He felt as if he was at the bottom of a mountain, and an avalanche was thundering down the slope in his direction, moments away from swallowing him whole.

"There's no time to lose." Link activated the Eye of Agramma spell immediately.

In an instant, the whole world went black. Countless shapes of light floated in front of him. Some of them seemed immaterial, while others showed clear images which played out before Link in the blink of an eye.

"These are strands of timelines!" said Link, understanding what was going on. He then composed himself and closely observed the shapes of light playing out in front of him.

At that moment, the airship was now 30 miles away from the seal surrounding the realm crack. They were about to reach their destination soon.

On the ground, Molina had seen the airship which was hurtling through the air at top speed. She breathed in deeply and then stabbed her Staff of Destruction into the ground.

"Divine Retribution: Dawn of Darkness!"

## 568. Judgement From A True God

"Lord, look over there!" Merlin started yelling. "Oh, oh my god, what is that?!"

Right now, Link's eyes were listless. He seemed to see it, or he did not. His two black eyes reflected the strange sight before the airship. There, a beam of dark red light fell from the sky, landing somewhere on the ground.

The place it landed in was very tall. One couldn't see the top. The beam was also thickmore than 1000 feet wide. Around the solid beam of red light, there were countless dark red storm clouds spinning counterclockwise. They swept up the rocks and clouds of the forest and the water vapor and clouds in the air.

From afar, a world-ending red storm was being born.

Less than two seconds after Merlin yelled, the destructive force of the dark red storm already affected the airship.

"Merlin, the wind speed is rising and affecting the ship's balance. What do we do?"

Clack, clack, clack. The ship shook clearly as it was blown towards one side.

"Add more Mana to the turbine power. Keep it steady, steady!" Merlin cried.

The wind strengthened. After the airship added more power, the two forces turned the airship into a tug of war. The ship shook even more.

Clang, clack, creak The ship shook violently as if it would fall apart.

After three seconds, Merlin knew this couldn't continue. He immediately changed his order. "Retreat, retreat. Follow the wind back"

"No! Go against it!" Link suddenly said. His eyes were still blank, but his voice was abnormally determined. There was no room for negotiation.

"Lord, the ship can't survive itAh, go against the wind. Hurry, left turn!" Merlin followed Link's orders in the end. He knew the ship would definitely fall apart, but this was the army. They were fighting an unknown force. He must follow the lord's orders.

The crew immediately turned and started going against the wind.

During this short period, the windstorm's range had expanded again. The wind had doubled in intensity too. The airship had adjusted its direction and was going against the wind, but its speed was pitifully slow. They could only go 300 feet per second. Usually, it could go at almost 2000 feet per second!

The wind continued strengthening. The airship continued slowing. After three seconds, its speed had been halved. It could only go 150 feet per second and was shaking violently.

Crash! Clang! Creak All types of sounds formed a cacophony. It was about to scatter into pieces.

"Lord, we can't keep going!" Merlin saw many magic seals had already lost control. If they continued, the airship's core would explode.

"Keep goingkeep goingturn 90 degrees to the right. Right now, hurry!" Link made another crazy order!

They'd been going against the wind. If they made a right angle turn, they'd be going straightito the storm. Any logical person could see that this was the same as suicide.

But this time, Link's voice contained a spiritual spell. As soon as his voice sounded, his intent carved directly into Merlin's brain. He couldn't refute at all.

"Right turn, right turn, extreme output of power. Charge!" Merlin yelled. The bright voice unique to the Yabbas rang throughout the command cabin.

Every crew member was terrified, but they instinctively followed the orders. The cabin charged towards the storm at full force.

Creak, creak, creak. The noises made one's insides curl. Runes on the floor and walls kept breaking apart. Many places already had cracks. The only fortunate thing was that the critical parts had all been specially fortified. They were still as strong as before, undamaged by the windstorm.

Just as the ship charged towards the storm, a ten-foot-wide black beam of light flashed past the end of the ship. It was so close that it practically brushed past the airship. There were less than 100 feet between them.

It had already reached the outer edge of the airship's defense barrier. The magic seal inside immediately displayed its stats.

"Level-13, power scale of 13000, a powerful Dark Magician is secretly attacking us!" an operating yelled in terror. Everyone in the airship paled. They couldn't imagine the consequences if they were hit.

It was Level-13 and at 13000. If the airship was hit, it would be decimated immediately. Less than ten people would survive. Now, the airship had used a series of strange and illogical actions to avoid this fatal attack.

The instant the beam brushed past the airship, Link ordered, "Retreat with the wind. Now!"

He didn't have to worry about disagreements. Merlin immediately yelled, "Right turbine! Open lower right wing"

The airship shook and made a turn. The huge ship nearly flipped over as it retreated to the outside of the windstorm.

Almost simultaneously, Link used the Spiritual Transmission spell to order the Magicians from Ferde, "Magic cannon, shoot at coordinates 78, 751, 281, 232!"

These were spatial coordinates that corresponded to numbers on the Magic Locking Wheel. Though the airship had been damaged in the windstorm, the cannon was the core. It had been fortified and was still unaffected.

Half a second after Link sent the order, the cannon fired.

Whoosh! The entire airship shook. Below, a white-gold arc around 300 feet wide appeared. Like a sword of divine punishment, it cut to the source of the black beam.

The cannon attack reached Level-16 and was unbeatable. When the white-gold arc streaked past, the space in its path distorted. Rings of spatial ripples spread in all directions.

In the blink of an eye, the attack reached the ground.

Kaboom! There was a ground-shaking explosion. A huge white-gold fireball burst from the earth. It glowed blindingly, turning the entire battleground snowy white.

This was the cannon's first true attack. Its power captivated everyone on the airship.

"Slow down and stop!" Link suddenly made another strange order.

This time, Merlin didn't hesitate at all. The airship was already outside the storm. The wind wasn't strengthening anymore. He easily stopped the airship in the sky.

At the same time, Link ordered the Magicians again. "Second attack, coordinates 89, 232, 231, 2323. Fire!"

Boom! The airship shook again. Another "white-gold sword" pierced down.

Almost at the same time, the white flash of a transmission came from the target destination. One could make out a Magician with a black robe and curled horns under the light.

It was Black Blood Demon Glyn.

He hadn't completely materialized from the transmission when the airship's attack arrived. The Level-16 attack was unstoppable.

The demon Magician was powerful too. Faced with this situation, he screamed, and the transmission light flashed again. He'd forcefully started another transmission.

One must know that before the first transmission ended, the surrounding space wouldn't fully consolidate. If one started another transmission, the Magician would use up immense energy. Accidents were also highly possible. It was quite common for one to lose limbs from the second time. In more extreme cases, one could lose a head too.

But the Magician should be praised for his decisiveness. If he'd hesitated at all, he would have been destroyed by the cannon.

Boom, kaboom!

Almost the exact moment that he left, the attack arrived. An instant later, Glyn reappeared miles away. This time, the Magicians on the airship saw him. As soon as he appeared, he collapsed onto the ground, spitting out blood. He was clearly hurt.

Seeing him, a Magician asked, "The cannon only has one attack left. Should we continue?"

If they continued, the demon Magician would definitely die. But strangely enough, Link didn't order a third attack. He kept silent.

It stretched for two seconds. On the battlefield where changes happened instantly, two seconds was like a year. Then Link said, "Cannon prepare. Coordinates 2342, 2325, 52, 987, standby!"

As soon as he finished, everyone realized that the dark red pillar of light was fading. The windstorm around it reduced too. Around three seconds later, the storm that was about to destroy the world disappeared completely.

"What happened?"

"What?"

"Look, there's someone under the light. They're so tall!"

"Looks like a Naga Warrior!"

On the ground in the center of the pillar, a female Warrior with dark red skin and bloody wings appeared. She was more than 30 feet tall and grasped a blood-red spear with dark gold flashes of lightning.

Perhaps because of her power, the air around her distorted clearly. From afar, it looked like a translucent dome.

As soon as she appeared, a voice rang out through space. "Mortal, accept a true god's judgment!"

Here, a Magician who reacted quickly understood what was happening. "Oh, God of Light, please!" he yelled. "This is the God of Destruction's divine punishment!"

## 569.

Divine retribution was what would happen when a god decided to directly punish an offender in the mortal realm.

There were two ways a god could go about this. Firstly, he could descend to the mortal plane via an altar. He would usually be summoned to an altar in order to punish an offending follower of his religion. Secondly, a god could mete out his punishment via a messenger. He would simply need to channel his divine power into the body of a willing representative, allowing him or her to carry out their god's vengeance against any of their enemies in the mortal realm.

It was evident that the airship from Ferde had found itself on the receiving end of the second form of divine retribution.

Throughout Ferde's history, there had been more than 15 instances of divine retribution, eight of which had been carried out by a god's messenger.

Each time a god's vengeance was delivered, the result had always been the same: the complete disintegration of an entire people.

There had never been records of mortassurviving a confrontation with a god.

The Magicians, Red Dragon Warriors and Sunlight Warriors on board the Flying City airship knew all too well about their chances against a god's power. The appearance of the 33-foot-tall winged messenger before them had literally put the fear of God in everyone.

"Save us, God of Light!" One of the Magicians had fallen to his knees and began praying in despair.

"No, I don't want to die!"

"Oh god, what should I do? Is there any way out of this!"

The airship was now in chaos. Through the uproar, the airship captain Merlin shouted, "My lord, what should we do now?"

Link did not immediately reply him. He waited for a few seconds before giving his command. "Ready the cannons and fire!"

As soon as he gave the order, there was a low hum. Then, a streak of white light shot out towards the god's messenger on the ground.

Just when the light was about to hit it, the messenger suddenly let out a roar and thrust the crimson lightning spear in its hand forward.

As the spear began picking up speed, the red electricity around its tip gradually thickened until it formed a net-like electrical barrier which shielded the messenger's entire body.

In the next second, the cannon fire struck the electrical barrier.

Crackle! Boom!

Spatial ripples spread out from the point of impact. The sky thundered, and the earth rumbled as the Level-16 magical cannon attack collided against the messenger's shield.

At that moment, Link gave his second command. "Abandon ship, everyone out of the airship now!"

"My lord?!"

Merlin was stunned by what he had just heard. The Flying City airship contained all the magical innovations made by Ferde and the Yabba race. It was one of the most advanced airship in history. To Merlin, the airship held an even more important place in his heart than his own family. He only had it for less than a month and had barely gotten to know every corner of it. Even in the face of death, Merlin could not bring himself to abandon the ship.

"Out, now!" said Link, accentuating his every word.

Saying this, he activated the Dimensional Jump spell. A white light engulfed the whole cabin. An instant later, only Link remained inside the cabin. Everyone else had been teleported out of it by him.

The other passengers outside the cabin were all scared witless by the god's messenger as well. Upon hearing Link's order, none of them hesitated for a moment before fleeing the airship.

Confident in their own physical prowess, the Sunlight Warriors on deck had jumped straight out of the airship. The Magicians exited the airship by casting the Levitating spell on themselves, while the Yabba crew members released their parachutes as soon as they jumped out of the airship.

Three seconds after everyone disembarked the airship, the shockwave from the cannon fire's impact against the shield hit the vessel. In the wake of the shockwave, everyone who had jumped out of the airship was simply blown about in the air and was able to come out relatively unscathed.

The same could not be said about the Flying City airship.

The vessel hung huge and heavy in the air. The shockwave hit it like a giant hammer traveling at the speed of sound.

Bang!

With a screeching sound, cracks spread out across the walls of the cabin. The entire airship trembled violently in the air as it was pushed back upon impact.

The airship's structure had already been weakened by the storm earlier. It now seemed to be on the verge of splitting in two after having received the brunt of the shockwave.

It was as if an invisible hand had struck the airship, crippling it instantly.

At that moment, there was a flash of white light on the ground a few thousand feet below the airship. The light faded away to reveal Celine, Felina, Merlin and the others who had previously been inside the airship's cabin.

They were able to catch a glimpse of what had happened to the airship in the air just in time.

Celine looked around and suddenly shouted, "Where's the lord? Where's Link? Why isn't he here?"

Felina looked around as well. Suddenly, she remembered the last thing she saw before they were all teleported out of the cabin. The white light had enveloped everyone in it, all except Link.

She shouted in reply, "The lord did not teleport himself out of the airship. He's still inside!"

Hearing what she said, Celine suddenly sensed from the airship an aura which she knew belonged only to Link. Startled, she raised her head and stared at the airship which had spun out of control in the air. She shouted, "What's he still doing in the airship?!"

A realization suddenly dawned on her. Is he trying to buy us some time for all of us to escape by distracting the god's messenger? But that would be suicide! Has he lost his mind? If he dies, who will be left to defend Ferde from the Isle of Dawn? What will happen to me if he dies? thought Celine, dread now creeping into her heart. Before she could even react, a red glowing figure launched itself into the air. At the same time, a thunderous voice boomed out.

"Mortal, you dare to defy a god?"

It was the god's messenger!

The sky and earth were painted in a shade of blood red in an instant. The only object that remained untouched was Link's airship.

A white light was pulsating around the airship. Even though the light was barely holding its own against the sanguine light, anyone could see the difference in power between the two sides. It would not be long before the blood-red light swallowed the airship.

"No! No!" shouted Celine desperately. She took out her rifle, rapidly stuffed her silver bullets into it and fired a few times at the blood-red figure.

None of her shots hit her target.

The messenger headed straight towards the airship without even making an attempt to dodge Celine's bullets.

Even her precognitive prowess was of not much use against a god's power.

Felina and the others had taken on their dragon forms and rushed into the sky to Link's aid. Still, no matter how fast they flew, they could not catch up to the blood-red figure.

The god's messenger had outclassed all of them in terms of power and speed.

The airship's cabin

Even though the airship had been split in two and the cabin's walls had cracked, the cabin remained an integral part of the airship and was at the moment the only thing keeping the entire vessel from breaking apart completely.

Link still had his feet anchored firmly to the floor. He was holding the Ode of a Full Moon in his right hand and the Soul Dominator's Book of Revelation in his other hand.

As the god's messenger drew closer towards him, Link began flipping through the book with the Magician's Hand spell and channeling all his power into it at the same time.

Link had spent more than 33,000 Realm Essence Power points in order to cast the Eye of Agramma spell and keep it activated all this time. His power had depleted so much that he now had no more than 10,000 points of power to channel into the Book of Revelation.

The Book of Revelation's Divination of the Fates spell may not be able to kill the messenger, but it should be able to buy me some time, thought Link.

Just then, there was a flash of light in the corner of his eye. It was a message notifying him that he had completed his mission, and that he had been rewarded with 40 Jogu pieces. He now had more than 300 Jogu pieces in total.

At the same time, a new mission popped up.

Player has activated the second phase of the mission series: Avoiding Divine Retribution!

Description: Flee from the God of Destruction's messenger and cross over the realm crack's seal.

Mission Reward: Astral Whetstone

Due to the urgency of his current situation, Link only managed to glance through the message before accepting his new mission immediately without giving much thought to the mission's reward.

He then channeled his power into the Book of Revelation, which began to glow.

The light around the book rippled like water in the air. Looking closely, one would be able to see that it was in fact composed of countless transparent magical seals.

Just then, Link felt an indescribable power flowing into his body. No, it was not power that he felt, but rather an authority over the fates of all existence in the realm.

Link's body began to float in the air, not because he had cast a Levitating spell on himself. Rather, it was the world which had prostrated before Link in recognition of his authority.

In other words, it was the entire world which had lifted him up in the air in exaltation.

Mastery of Prophecy Magic could only be granted via the realm's blessing. Link now fully understood what this meant.

He then walked out of the collapsing airship, calmly taking each step in the air as if he was walking on a level surface.

The God of Destruction's messenger was still making a beeline towards him with all the fury of a storm.

With the Eye of Agramma spell, Link was able to predict the most probable development in the near future. Two-point-three seconds from now, the messenger would unleash its attack at him, and there would be nothing he could do to stop it. The only possible outcome of the messenger's attack would be his complete annihilation.

If he hoped to survive the attack, he would have to strike the messenger down first.

And so, Link did just that.

With one hand holding the Book of Revelation and the other pointing the Ode of a Full Moon sword at the messenger, he announced, "In the name of the realm, I sentence you to death!"

His voice was soft at first, but it gradually grew louder until it rocked both heaven and earth like thunder. It continued to echo for what seemed like an age with no sign of losing momentum.

"I sentence you sentence you to death!"

Just then, something inexplicable happened.

The shade of blood-red that had filled the sky moments ago suddenly vanished. A moment later, the God of Destruction's messenger let out a blood-curdling scream as she began falling from the sky like an angel whose wings had been clipped.

## 570. Dont Worry I Still Have Strength

What happened in the sky was incomprehensible.

"What happened?"

Felina was the closest to the Saint and saw most clearly. She saw the Saint get tied up by some force. The Saint struggled, but the force stuck to her like a spider web. Her hand couldn't break free.

"Is this the lord's true power?" Another Red Dragon Warrior gulped. His wide eyes were filled with incredulousness.

After all, it had been a divine punishment!

A true god's power had descended into the mortal world, but the lord had said to take care of her on the spot. Judging from the current situation, the lord hadn't been bluffing. If this true god's Saint was really taken care of, then Ferde's lord would undeniably be the strongest Magician in the history of Firuman!

On the ground, Celine's group was shocked too. Faced with the Saint, everyone had felt some despair. But what happened afterwards was incomprehensible to the Yabbas, Magicians, and Sunlight Warriors.

Is the lord's power really to this level? everyone thought.

Magic puppet Nana was the calmest. She couldn't fly or help Link, so she just stood beside Celine to protect her.

Further away, demon Magician Glyn looked up despite the intense pain from all over his body. A few seconds ago, he'd been about to watch the Ferde airship get destroyed by the Saint. Now, he saw the Saint get tied up by the Ferde lord!

As a Legendary Magician and a subordinate of Nozama, the Lord of the Deep, he was more knowledgeable and had seen more.

When the Saint was trapped, Glyn immediately noticed the magic book in Link's hands. Oh, even if that book isn't divine gear, it'll definitely be magic equipment of the Legendary Pinnacle. Amazing!

Ferde's lord had such powerful magic equipment. Glyn felt that he wasn't safe here anymore. I'm injured, and the Saint doesn't seem to be the Ferde lord's match. If I stay here, I'll die!

The demons were only temporary allies with the God of Destruction's servants. He was already being nice by not turning on the servants in their trouble. They'd be dreaming if they wanted him to help!

He was decisive and immediately prepared to leave. But a few steps later, he saw a somewhat familiar figure out of the corner of his eye. Looking closer, he saw that it was a young girl with dark purple hair. She had a finely made fire gun.

Oh? I think it's the princess! As Nozamassubordinate, he was familiar with each daughter. Their features were carved in his soul. He could recognize them even if they were turned to ashes.

Celine's power had been purified and barely had any demonic aura, but Glyn was sensitive. He recognized her after a few glances.

Right now, he was less than two miles from Celine. The other was completely focused on the Ferde lord in the sky. If Glyn ambushed her, he could probably capture her successfully.

Lord Nozama misses Princess Celine. If I can take her back to the Abyss, I will definitely be rewarded heavily!

Looking back up at where the Ferde lord was, Glyn clenched his teeth and snuck towards Celine. Capturing the princess could distract Link, help the God of Destruction's Saint, and also help himself get on Nozama's good side. It was three birds with one stone and wasn't that risky. Only an idiot wouldn't do it!

On the other hand, Link had used up almost all his power to restrain the God of Destruction's Saint. He had less than 1000 points and couldn't maintain the Eye of Agramma anymore.

After stopping the spell, he felt his head spin like something had disappeared from his body. Thinking back, he had no information about the Agramma spell. He'd forgotten it all.

He knew this was one of the side effects. According to the instructions, he would get punished by the Firuman Realm too. But time was tight now. The Saint could break free at any time. Even one-tenth of a second's delay would make a difference between life and death.

He had no time to figure out what punishment he got. Using his remaining strength, he cast a Dimensional Jump spell towards the realm crack.

He was the Saint's target. The further he ran, the safer the others would be. Thus, he began running without hesitation.

Buzz! With the soft sound, the white transmission light flashed. The next moment, Link was miles away. He only had around 800 points left. With his recovery rate, he could generate 120 Realm Essence points per second. If he waited two minutes, he would be back to normal, so he didn't care.

After this jump, Link jumped again, moving forward around ten miles. If he jumped again, he would be close to the realm crack.

But then he discovered a change in his body. No, my recovery rate slowed down!

How slow exactly? As soon as he thought that, the game system answered.

Current Recovery Rate: 13 points per second

Player currently in a negative state: Time Abomination

Time Abomination: Usage of time magic disrupted the flow of time. The user will suffer from time's backlash. Under the disruption, the user's body will be greatly affected, their power lowering to 10% of the original rate. Unless time returns to normal, this effect will last forever.

This was a horrible negative state, but Link didn't regret using the Eye of Agramma at all. If he didn't use the spell to see the future at that time, they would've died without a doubt.

The entire airship might be reduced to ashes.

Mortals always had to pay when faced with divine punishment. Only his recovery rate had slowed down. He could accept this.

Thinking of this, Link felt calmer. He was less than six miles from the barrier now. He prepared for a third transmission.

As long as he escaped into the realm barrier, he could use the powerful magic seal created by the thin piece of time. That seal was at Level-23. It was definitely enough to kill a Saint.

White light flashed around him again. The transmission was about to start. Just then, Link's heart jumped. An avalanche of anxiety surged in him.

The Saint escaped! he thought.

The next instant, the sky turned blood-red again. At the same time, he heard a resounding voice behind him. "Mortal, you've angered me!"

She'd underestimated Link earlier and had been fooled by the little trick. It was truly insulting. Now, she wouldn't give him another chance!

Link looked back. He saw semi-transparent spatial ripples appear around the Saint dozens of miles away. The ripples spread with incredible speed.

Link was shocked. No, I can't use the transmission anymore!

The spatial ripples traveled at an inhuman speed. In Firuman, it could travel tens of thousands of miles in a second. Even if he didn't die, he would be gravely injured.

Link immediately canceled the transmission and used the Void Walk, rushing towards the barrier. He was less than six miles away. The Void Walk gave him a speed of around one mile per second. He would need seven seconds!

Seven secondsisn't enough! Link saw that the Saint had already started charging. Her speed was even faster. With a flap of her wings, her entire body turned into a beam of red light.

Even if Link was the fastest in the mortal world, she was still closing in on him around five miles per second.

Six miles in a second. That's so much faster than me. So is this divine power? Link was shocked. He forced himself to focus and planned while sprinting.

No, a true divine-level figure wouldn't exist in this realm. Otherwise, the God of Destruction would have come long ago. This Saint is at most at the pinnacle of Level-19. She's powerful and Legendary, but she isn't different in nature from me. She's just more focused and of a larger scale.

Thinking of this, he asked the sword spirit in the Ode of a Full Moon, "How powerful do you think she is?"

The sword spirit's past owner was the Storm Lord, who was at the pinnacle of Level-19. It must have seen many people at that level. Even though Link had seen those in the game too, that was only the game. It was still quite different from real life. Thus, he had nothing to refer to.

The sword spirit knew this was urgent too. As soon as Link asked, it replied, Judging from her performance, she isn't higher than Level-17.

"Level-17?" This was lower than what Link had expected, but it was still terrifying.

The higher one was in the Legendary realm, the harder it was to cross that chasm. The gap would be wider too. In lower levels, Link could perhaps use his superb battle techniques to overlook the difference in levels. For example, when fighting against Bryant, Halino, and Eugene, he'd defeated them despite them being stronger. But this wouldn't happen when the other's level was much higher.

Even in the game, it was impossible for a lower level to win after reaching Level-14. The difference was hopeless!

Yes, she should be Level-17. If she is truly at Level-19, we wouldn't have the chance to fight back. The Book of Revelation wouldn't be able to stop herbut I still can't fight against this.

Indeed. Link's eyes brightened and then darkened again.

He now had 820 Omni Points and around 600 Realm Essence points. This was too little. He hadn't been a match at his full status. Now, it was basically hopeless. How could he fight against the Saint's attack?

There wasn't much time. Link's mind whirred as he worked to find an idea. During this time, the Saint traveled close to six miles again. She would catch up the next moment.

What do I do? What do I do?

Don't worry. I still have strength, the sword spirit suddenly said.

## 571. Mortal You Will Be Judged Soon

The Ode of a Full Moon sword indeed still had some power left in it!

During his downtime, Link would channel his power into it in order to raise the sword's quality.

Link was already able to recover more than 100 Realm Essence Power points every second. With such a high recovery rate, he could afford to store most of his power inside his sword whenever he could. Upon careful calculation, he realized that the power he had stored within the Ode of a Full Moon sword had reached an astronomical figure.

As soon as he heard the sword spirit's voice inside his head, he began to feel a huge surge of power inside him. He could see in his field of vision his own power level beginning to rise. 1000... 2000... 3000... His power was restored completely before a hundredth of a second had even passed.

Do you still need power? There's more where that came from! said the sword spirit.

"How much do you still have left?" asked Link. He had opened up the game system's spell card shopping interface.

He still had 820 Omni Points, which was enough to buy a Level-19 spell and enable him to defeat the God of Destruction's messenger.

I've used most of the power you've given me to improve on the quality of my blade. I can probably replenish your power twice over if I have to.

"Twice, you say?" Link quickly did the math. This meant that the sword could provide an additional 45,000 Power points to him. Adding to the 22,000 Power points already restored in him, he would have approximately 68,000 Realm Essence Power points in total.

Sixty-eight thousand Realm Essence points would be the equivalent of 300,000 Mana points, which would be enough for Link to cast a Level-17 Pinnacle offensive spell.

Link quickly flipped through the pages of spell cards on display and was able to find four Level-17 offensive spells that he had used before in the game world.

Time Hex: Calamity. Costs 5000 Power points to activate. An extremely powerful spell, with an extremely long casting time... Not what I'm looking for. Infernal Secret Art: Twilight of the Gods. Costs 58,000 Power points. Explosive and impactful, but it's an area-of-effect spell, which means that its power is not particularly concentrated in one point. Don't think it would be of any use against a god's messenger. Wait, this is...

His eyes fell on the third spell card, on which was written, "Glorious God: Judgement."

A Level-17 single-target offensive spell. It can be cast instantly with a 60,000 Power point cost. Once the spell is cast, its target will be immobilized and rendered incapable of retaliating!

Recalling how the spell had worked in the game world, Link could not help but sigh. In order to attract more players, the game had added a lot of gaudy effects to the spell. As a result, its power was reduced considerably. Still, this is the only offensive spell I can use right now.

In the game world, Link had acquired the spell in order to show it off to others. Back then, he had thought that the spell was extremely powerful. Now, after actually acquiring the spell, he felt that it was a spell simply meant for showboating.

Nonetheless, he had no other choice. Without any delay, he purchased the spell card.

One-hundred and seventh Omni Points were instantly deducted from him. In his field of sight, the spell card dissolved into countless points of light, which was then absorbed by his body.

The God of Destruction's messenger was already 1000 feet away from Link when Link concluded the transaction. Electricity crackled around the blood-red spear she was holding in her hand. Its tip was pointed straight at Link. "Mortal, time to receive your final judgment!"

Just as her voice boomed in the air, the electricity around the spear began expanding until it formed a huge net which covered a 500 square-foot-wide area. The net then descended rapidly toward Link.

Link noticed that there were ripples spreading from the blood-red electricity. Upon closer inspection, he also saw that there were countless spatial cracks left by the ripples in the air.

It was clear that the electrical net had completely sealed off the space around Link. There was no place he could run. His only option now was to confront the attack head-on!

The Red Dragon Warriors who were hovering ten miles away in the air saw what was going on.

Unable to do anything else, the Red Dragon Warriors could only look on at the scene as they kept themselves afloat by flapping their wings against the wind.

Felina's face contorted in horror. She began muttering to herself, "No, how can this be? There's no way it would end like this for the duke."

Floating alongside the Red Dragon Warriors in the air, the Sunlight Magicians were also watching what was happening in helpless horror.

The power they had witnessed had simply surpassed the imagination of all the Magicians on the scene!

The Magicians were so shaken by this that most of them were unable to maintain their concentration and fell straight out of the sky. Had it not been for the fact that they were able to strengthen their bodies in time with Sunlight Power, most of them would have died on impact.

Perched atop the trees in the forest, the Sunlight Warriors of Ferde were also able to see what was going on in the sky.

Most of them began trembling so violently that they could not keep a firm footing on the treetops. Unable to react as quickly as their fellow Magicians, some of them even tumbled to the ground.

Celine was standing on top of a tree as well. She gaped at the horrific scene before her, a tear rolling down her cheek from the corner of her eye.

"Is this it?" she murmured.

At that moment, the times she had spent with Link flashed before her eyes.

She remembered the moment she first met Link in Flemming Magic Academy. Back then, Link was just a clumsy initiate in the mystic arts, whose furtive glances he would shoot at her from time to time did not escape her notice. She remembered the time he had come to save her in Opal City on his own. She also remembered the tender moments she had shared with him, as well as the look of concentration on his face every time he forged magical equipment for her.

All these scenes raced through her mind until finally, all she could see now was the horrifying display of blood-red electricity that had filled the sky in front of her.

It was over.

Grief overcame Celine like a raging river. Her mind was now filled with thoughts about Link and nothing else.

At that moment, there was only one person who was still able to calmly observe the scene before them.

It was Nana, who had not spoken a word all this time.

She had seen the blood-red web of electricity, and still, she did not feel a hint of despair. The reason was simple. Through her contract with her master, she did not feel a single hint of despair from her master as well. This meant that he still had something up his sleeve to deal with such an attack.

The web of electricity that had filled the sky did not faze her in the least. During the last hundred years, she had spent in the Aragu realm, she had experienced countless Legendary battles. She even had the chance to witness the duel of two Archmages once with her own eyes!

A duel between two such individuals could reshape even the geography of an entire continent.

The battle between her master and the god's messenger was certainly one of grand proportions, but it was not enough to disconcert Nana.

Nana stood beside Celine, surveying her surroundings. Just then, she sensed that something was watching them.

She needed to be careful now.

In the sky, Link took a deep breath as the electrical web began descending toward him. He then raised the Ode of a Full Moon sword and infused his Realm Essence Power into it. In an instant, the sword began shining with a blinding light.

From afar, it looked as if a sun had emerged from the ground!

"Glorious God: Judgement!" muttered Link as he activated the Level-17 Legendary spell.

Hum. The Ode of a Full Moon sword began vibrating violently until Link could barely hold it in his hand.

Suddenly, the concentrated light from the sword shot upward into the sky. When it reached a few hundred feet in the sky, the light began spreading outward, slowly forming a golden throne.

One could see a vague silhouette sitting on the golden throne in the sky. When the silhouette appeared, the entire light construct shone fiercely like an actual sun, pushing back the electrical web that was pressing down from the sky toward Link.

The radiant throne continued expanding until it reached more than 5000 feet tall. From afar, it looked as if a golden mountain had risen abruptly from the ground.

Overlooking the god's messenger, the figure sitting on the throne boomed, "Messenger of the God of Destruction, I now find you guilty!"

Both heaven and earth quaked when the voice sounded, and it echoed on for a long while.

"I find you guilty!"

"Guilty!"

"Guilty!"

Any mortal, be they an ordinary being or a Legendary master, would have been scared witless as soon as they heard those words.

The condemnation of the whole world now weighed heavily on the God of Destruction's messenger. Everyone throughout the world was now judging her, reviling her. One could only imagine the stress she was feeling right now.

"Who are you?" roared the messenger. She tried to bring down the electrical web on it but soon realized that the figure was a lot stronger than her and was able to resist her attack.

The figure on the golden throne ignored her. It gazed on at the world below it indifferently, as if the god's messenger was nothing more than a grain of dust.

Then the voice rumbled once more, "I now banish you from this realm!'

Something happened as soon as its words fell.

The messenger sensed that her power was depleting rapidly. Strands of blood-aura aura were now seeping out of her pores and into the Sea of Void.

Her 33-foot-tall body was also rapidly shrinking and losing the luster that had enveloped it moments ago.

"What are you doing to me?" roared the messenger. She tried to rush toward Link, intent on killing him. However, she sensed that an incredible power had bound her up. Even the simple act of walking proved difficult.

The inexplicable conditions that the messenger now found herself in had driven her mad. "Argh!!! Get away from me!"

She struggled on desperately, swinging her blood-red spear around in a frenzy.

There was a cracking sound from the golden throne. Link was now having a hard time keeping her restrained after having spent much of his power siphoning the messenger's power into the Sea of Void.

Sensing that her restraints had weakened slightly, the messenger struggled even more desperately against her unseen fetters, convinced that freedom was now within her grasp.

Her power was still receding rapidly from her body, which was shrinking as a result, but the golden throne was also breaking apart in the air. Fragments of it glowed for a moment as they fell from the sky, before evaporating completely in the air.

Both parties had sustained heavy injuries at this point.

The ground trembled furiously during the course of the battle, as if the entire world itself was gripped by terror in the face of these two extraordinary beings.

Everyone on the scene had stopped what they were doing and simply gaped at the spectacle.

This included everyone from Ferde, the elite soldiers of the Army of Destruction who had been watching the fight unfold from afar, and the dragon guards inside the barrier protecting the realm crack. Even the Demon Magician Glyn, who was intent on taking Celine prisoner, had stopped in his tracks as he saw what was happening in the air.

Glyn had wanted to make his move, but he noticed that there was a female Warrior standing beside Celine. She appeared ordinary, but every time he tried to move closer toward Celine, the female Warrior would turn her gaze in his direction unconsciously.

Glyn had never seen Nana before. He also did not have a handle on her power and so remained unsure whether he should move in on Celine now. Then, he saw the fight between Link and the God of Destruction's messenger.

Glyn was stunned by what he saw. "That's a Level-17 Pinnacle spell. Is the lord of Ferde really that strong?"

Even back in the Abyss, his power was only Level-16. Upon entering Firuman, the restitions imposed by the realm had reduced him to Level-13. The fact that the other party was evidently stronger than Glyn even when he was in his full power certainly came as a shock to him.

He now had doubts about capturing Celine.

The clash between the golden throne and the god's messenger lasted for 15 seconds. The messenger was now seven feet tall, while the golden throne had used up all of its power in an attempt to keep her down.

Then everything was silent.

Link still had 8000 Power points left in him. He stood on the ground, looking on at the messenger who was a few thousand feet away from him.

The messenger's power had been depleted completely as well. Link could clearly sense that she was now only as strong as a Level-12 Legendary master. Although she still had plenty of power in her, there was nothing overwhelming about it.

This was now a fight to the death between Link and the messenger.

Ding! Link was now filled with killing intent. The Ode of a Full Moon sword quivered in his hand, and a sound as clear as a bell rang out in the air. It was incredibly resonant and could be heard a few thousand feet away.

The god's messenger floated a few hundred feet in the air, looking at Link with an inscrutable expression on her face. She remained silent for around three seconds and then said, "Mortal, you will be judged again soon!"

Saying this, she spread out her wings and flew off into the distance.

Seeing this, Glyn bit his lip. He looked at Celine who was still perched on the treetop, then at the unknown female Warrior standing beside her, and sighed. Forget it, I did not come fully prepared for this. It's just too risky. I had better report this to my master.

Finally making his decision, Glyn immediately turned around and left the place.

## 572. Each With Their Own Plans

"Master, are you okay?" That was Nana. Her voice was the calmest as if everything that had happened was normal.

"Lord!" That was the Magicians and Warriors of Ferde. They stared at Link with reverence. Worship was written all over their faces.

"Duke, how are you?" That was the Red Dragon Warriors. The dragons were known as the Legendary Race, but they'd been shocked by Link's performance.

This was the first time in Firuman's recorded history that someone could remain unharmed after facing a divine punishment!

Link also let out a sigh of relief. The earlier clash had been thrilling to the max. Even though he used the Level-17 Legendary spell, he'd had to use extreme effort to stabilize the spell and restrain the Saint.

During this process, any flaw would allow the Saint to break free and ruin everything. He would still be killed.

Thankfully, he'd succeeded.

At this time, the crowd suddenly fell silent and parted to the side. Celine walked over. Her eyes were slightly red, and there were faint trails of tears on her face. She'd been crying.

Link could obviously guess why. Without speaking, he walked up and hugged her. They embraced silently. The surrounding people kept silent too.

After a long while, Celine whispered, "After going back, I'm going to study Soul magic! I want to get stronger! Even if we fail in the end, it'll be a failure after we worked together. I don't want to watch from the side anymore."

Celine's voice was calm, but Link could hear a determination that hadn't been present before.

Link was too familiar with Celine's personality. She would either not do something or use her whole heart and keep going even at a dead end. She wouldn't stop even if she was defeated.

In the game, she didn't want to become her father's slave, so she went from hiding to doing everything to attack. During this process, she'd experienced unimaginable pain and torture. Her personality had even become tited, but she still kept going.

Since she'd decided, Link wouldn't disagree. He would do his best to help Celine get stronger so she could take less wrong turns in this process.

Patting her back, Link murmured, "Okay, that's my girl."

There were many people watching. After the initial outburst, Celine calmed down. Seeing all the people, her cheeks turned hot. She tried not to act abnormally and pretended to be composed as she broke free from Link.

Link looked up at everyone and smiled. "Alright, the danger is over. Our airship is destroyed, but the magic material inside is still good. Let's recycle them and then go to the crack."

"Yes, Lord!" No one objected.

Everyone turned to the ruined airship. Link walked in the crowd, but his mind was on the Jogu in his spatial ring.

He now had 309 while he needed 300 to completely fix the crack. He could summon Travel Magician Aisenis now.

I'll summon him after we get inside the crack barrier, Link decided.

Just as they were cleaning up the battlefield, Glyn and Molina regrouped at the border between the Golden Plains and Hengduan Mountain Range.

Molina was in bad shape. Her face was horribly pale, and her breaths had a bloody smell. At closer inspection, one would see that her bare skin had cracked, covered with web-like fissures. They were extremely deep and revealed red flesh.

This was the side effect of divine power forcefully entering her body. Earlier, the Saint had used her body.

Glyn was in bad shape too. He'd forcefully used transmissions under the interference of the outside world. Even though he'd succeeded in the end, his internal organs had moved. He wasn't hurt on the surface, but his internal injuries weren't any better than Molina. He was a demon, but he was also a Magician. His body was weaker than demon Warriors.

When the two regrouped, they stared at each other speechlessly. Even something as extreme as the divine punishment couldn't kill the Ferde lord. What more was there to say?

After half a minute, a sudden eagle's caw broke the silence. Glyn coughed softly and asked, "Priestess, how are your injuries?"

"I'm alright. I can recover after some rest. How about you?" Molina was embarsed. She'd embarsed her master today. In order to hide the awkwardness, she had to say this nonsense.

"I'm alright too."

After that, they were silent again.

The wind blew past. After another pregnant pause, Glyn spoke again. "What happened today was actually an accident. The Ferde lord must have been prepared. That's why he could fight against the divine punishment. His background probably isn't that simple either."

"What do you mean?" Molina asked.

"The humassay that he's the God of Light's chosen one"

Molina froze and then shook her head. "I don't think so. My master hasn't seen the glory of the chosen one on him. He never prays to the God of Light or contacts the church either."

"Uh" Glyn didn't know what to say. He obviously wasn't as familiar about religion as the priestess. But he had his own reasons. "How do you explain his last move?"

The huge with a huge figure, the tone of the figure Everything looked as if a god had come to the mortal world.

Glyn had been far away. To him, the fight between the Ferde lord and Molina had seemed more like the representatives of two gods fighting rather than divine punishment.

"No, no, no. That was only a spell," Molina explained. "He just made it fancier. It was around the pinnacle of Level-17 and didn't contain any divine power. I could feel it."

This shocked Glyn even more. "Pinnacle of Level-17? He's already at the pinnacle of Level-17? This"

Reaching Level-17 using divine power and reaching it on your own were two totally different concepts.

The former was like a regular person getting a magic fire gun. They could easily kill a regular person. Even a strong figure might not be their match. But their weakness was obvious too. They couldn't use the spell to the max.

The latter was like a person with stit training who had a magic fire gun. Their combat ability could make someone feel hopeless! A Level-17 Magician was someone who could make others feel despair. Glyn had Level-16 power in the Abyss, but he could only look up to someone at the pinnacle of Level-17. He could only worship those in Level-19, just like how he worshipped Nozama.

If there really was this powerful of a human, there was no point in the war anymore. The Army of Destruction should just disband, the demons returning to the Abyss, Nagas retreating, Dark Elves back to the Dark Hell, and High Elves back to the Isle of Dawn. Everyone should hide and try not to get destroyed, waiting painfully until this Legendary figure died.

Glyn suddenly felt the urge to go back to the Abyss and never come back to Firuman.

Molina shook her head. "No, he isn't that strong. I could feel that he used some divine gear to temporarily reach that strength. It can't be maintained, and he must pay for it somehow. I could feel some unknown chaos enter his body. Of course, he is still a force to be reckoned with."

Glyn was slightly relieved, but he still wasn't sure. "Really?"

Molina nodded lightly. "Yes! God gave me power and also blessed me with superhuman perception. Right now, the Ferde lord should be at the pinnacle of Level-12. That is power, but not undefeatable. There will be a way to deal with him. Even if we can't, Princess Ellie will be able to. She's very strong."

Glyn finally relaxed. He was really mentally scarred from seeing Link's performance against the Saint. After thinking, he said, "But that guy is truly strong. In the windstorm, he could even dodge my sneak attack and attack immediately. He almost killed me. No, my wound is too serious. I must rest for a while."

He had to report the princess' situation to his master. Nozama had been missing Princess Celine; he would love this news. He had to report today's battle too so his master could be prepared.

With that, his body vaporized inoblack fog and disappeared into the mountains. Even Molina didn't know where he went.

Seeing Glyn leave, Molina cursed, "Tricky bastard. You run fast, huh."

She couldn't stay here any longer either. After a short rest to recover a bit, she ran towards the Black Forest. Princess Ellie should learn about the situation.

There was still a lot of divine power within her. After a while, her wounds were mostly healed, and she'd sped up too. Traveling like this, she reached the Skeletal Fort in the north of the Black Forest by noon of the next day.

After finding Princess Ellie, Molina reported the battle in detail.

At this time, Eugene had been reading in the Skeletal Fort. After listening to Molina, his body shook in disbelief. "Even the divine punishment was useless?"

Molina didn't answer. After all, this humiliated the God of Destruction.

Eugene tapped against the bone table and fell silent. A few minutes later, he asked, "You said that Link was hurt?"

"Yes."

"Can he recover soon?"

"Probably not. These injuries pertain to the power of the principles. The Ferde lord isn't that strong."

"Oh." Eugene fell silent. A few minutes later, he asked again, "So can we do a divine punishment again?"

Molina froze, her expression darkening. "Your Highness, please watch your language! We mortasshould be humble before the gods!"

This divine punishment had used up so much divine power, but this person wanted to do it again. Did she think that a god could be used like a tool? This was blasphemy.

If they really did it, Molina would punish her first!

"Okay, okay, we won't talk about that. I'll think of something else," Eugene quickly said. She knew that fervent believers had no logic. They would throw away all logic for their religion.

Squinting her dark eyes, Eugene's thoughts whirred. Finally, her gaze landed on Morpheus, the Shadow Walker in the South.

That guy is an upstart, but he's still powerful. Maybe I can borrow some power from him.

At this time, Eugene didn't know that Link had finished cleaning up the ruins and reached the crack barrier. Link was also thinking something similar.

...

Very good, Army of Destruction. I can't be fooled by you every time. This time, you can taste my power!

With that in mind, Link started contacting Aisenis.

## 573. Take Care Kid

"I take it you have some good news for me?"

Aisenis' appearance was abrupt. No energy fluctuations preceded it. He had appeared as a shadow, which then solidified into a physical body, from which sounded the Yabba man's clear, melodious voice.

As Yabba people were generally short, Aisenis would always appear on an elevated platform so that he would not have to keep his head raised to speak with someone.

At that moment, he had decided to make his entrance on a long table.

Link smiled. Without saying anything, he took out the Jogu pieces and began lining them up one by one on the table.

"Oh, are these Jogus? That's quite a collection. How did you manage to amass this much so quickly?"

Aisenis stared at the rows of Jogus. He stooped down and began inspecting each white stone on the table. After inspecting ten or so pieces, he turned around and looked at Link, "So you've collected 300 pieces of Jogu in total?"

Link nodded, "As per our agreement, 300 pieces of Jogu in exchange for a way to completely seal up the realm crack."

Hearing this, a troubled look crept up Aisenis' face. He rubbed his hands together unconsciously as he stared at the sky outside the window for a long while.

Finally, he spoke, "To tell you the truth, I didn't think you would be able to collect this much Jogus. If I were to give you the means to repair the realm crack, I'd automatically be an enemy of the God of Destruction. I wouldn't be able to stay in this realm for long, as he'd be sending his servants after me soon."

Link frowned. "We had a deal. Don't tell me you're going back on your word now?"

Link's words seemed to have touched a nerve, as Aisenis leaped up and said loudly, "No, of course not! I would never do anything to jeopardize my reputation as arsectable Travel Magician!"

Link shrugged. "Then what are you making such a fuss about? Every transaction always comes with its own risk. Just tell me what I need to hear and consider our business concluded."

Aisenis looked at the pieces of Jogus lined up neatly on the table. He picked one up and began gently stroking it. After a while, he sighed, "Mortal, if you ever have the chance to leave this realm and take a trip to the Sea of Void, you'd understand my misgivings about this. Also, this is a lot of Jogus, even for me... Alright, alright, I'll keep my end of the bargain!"

He handed a brown goatskin scroll over to Link. "It's all in this scroll. The procedure's a bit complicated, but it doesn't require much. You're a lord now. You probably have a lot of subordinates under you. I figure you'll be able to pull it off with your resources."

Aisenis waved a hand, and all the white Jogu stones on the table vanished in an instant. In the next moment, the Travel Magician began to fade away, ready to leave the place.

"Wait, I still have something I would like to talk to you about," said Link in a hurry.

Aisenis reverted to his corporeal form. "I'm listening."

"I still have a couple of Jogus left. I would like to buy a piece of information with them." Link initially had 307 Jogu pieces in total. After giving Aisenis 300 pieces, he still had 7 pieces to spare, which probably would be enough to purchase a small piece of information from the Yabba man.

Looking at the stones in Link's hand, Aisensi hesitated for a moment, then said, "Keep your Jogus. Whatever it is you want to know, just ask. Consider it a parting gift from me, as I don't think we will ever have the chance to see each other again."

Aisenis' face broke into a bitter smile. Curiously enough, Link could sense a hint of sympathy in his eyes as the Travel Magician looked at him.

Is he feeling sorry for me? Or is he just feeling sorry for himself? thought Link, puzzled. What was even stranger was the fact that Aisenis had always expressed a fervent passion for these Jogu stones. What would have made him turn down Link's last remaining Jogu stones?

Link figured the Travel Magician would not tell him his reasons even if he had asked. Putting these questions aside, he decided to take up Aisenis' offer and asked, "There seems to be a new commander in charge of the Army of Destruction. I would like to know more about this mysterious figure. For instance, his habits, his past, important figures under his command. I would like to know them all."

Aisenis shook his head. "That's way too many questions for a freebie from me. I can only tell you this. Yes, the Army of Destruction has a new leader, but you already know him. He's called Eugene."

"The Dark Magician Eugene?!" Link was taken aback. However, after carefully thinking it through, this made a lot of sense. He had interfered with Eugene's affairs not too long ago, and so it would be natural for him to stir trouble up for Link in return.

"Is there another Eugene I don't know about?" Aisenis shrugged. He then began to fade away once more. Just when he was about to disappear completely, his voice rang out, "Argh, I'm such a softie. Young man, I'll give you my last piece of information. It's already written in the last paragraph of the scroll's content. It concerns Firuman's future, or at least, the most likely future I was able to see. What will you do in the face of such a future, I wonder?"

Saying this, a beam of light shot out from Aisenis' fading form and hit the scroll in Link's hand. Finally, he was gone. Link did not have the faintest idea where he could have gone off to, or whether he was still in Firuman.

Recollecting himself, Link unfurled the scroll in his hand and began reading its content.

A magic seal was depicted at the beginning of the scroll. It was extremely sophisticated. More than half of the runes inscribed on it had surpassed Link's comprehension. However, he was still able to make sense of a couple of structures in it. They all seemed to involve gluing the torn edges of space together.

This all seemed legitimate, though Link would need to spend some time studying the magic seal in order to use it properly.

Aisenis' final words had piqued his curiosity. After giving a cursory glance at the magic seal, he moved on to the second paragraph of the scroll.

The paragraph was titled ominously "The Age of Darkness." Below it was an introduction of a few hundred words, which gave a brief account of Firuman's history.

Link continued reading the rest of the paragraph.

A year from now, after the realm reunification, the Aragu realm will be able to subdue all of Firuman with its overwhelming military might.

In the first year after the reunification, the Inferno Archmage will burn the World Tree down. As a result, the Isle of Dawn will sink into the depths of the ocean. Most of its inhabitants will perish, and any survivors will be forced to seek shelter on the continent.

In the third year after the reunification, Shadow Stalker Morpheus will fail at his ascension to godhood. The Southern Free Trade Confederation will be annexed by the Yan empire as a result. As the representative of the entire Norton Kingdom, Ferde will form the Alliance of Light with the Beastmen.

In the fourth year after the reunification, the War of the Green Valley will erupt. The Beastmen will be brought to the brink of extinction as a result of the war, and the alliance will be disbanded. With the God of Light's influence weakened considerably, the lord of Ferde will later be exiled from his domain. Three months later, he will join forces with the Aragu Empire.

In the seventh year after the reunification, the Inferno Archmage will successfully ascend to godhood and later defeat the Aragu empire's protector, the Snow Mountain Archmage. The Yan empire will seize this chance to unite the realm and slaughter all the important personages of the Aragu empire. The former lord of Ferde will perish in battle, while an imprisonment seal will destroy the Black Forest in the North, pushing the Dark Elves to the brink of extinction.

In the eighth year after the reunification, the Yan empire will achieve dominance over all other races.

In the eleventh year after the reunification, the Yan empire will collapse and splitito ten smaller countries, in which all races will be able to achieve independence.

Anything beyond the eleventh year of the reunification is a blur. Nothing of substance could be gleaned from it.

There was a sentence scribbled at the end of the paragraph, which read, "Eleven years of strife. Casualties will amount to five million, which makes up at least 90% of the realm's current population. In the coming eleven years, the world will be plunged into an endless pit of darkness and despair. Take care, kid."

Link's brows furrowed as he read this.

As far as he could tell, Aisenis possessed incredible power rivaling that of a god. Naturally, this meant that he was able to accurately predict the most likely course time would take. Events would unfold as he had described in the scroll for the next eleven years after the realm reunification, ushering the whole world into an age of darkness.

However, Link had seen the future from Aisenis' perspective. Whatever choices Link decided to make from now on with this knowledge in hand could affect the future drastically.

If Link was an ordinary being, his actions would only be able to affect the future to a trivial extent. A few details would be shifted out of alignment here and there, but otherwise, everything would remain largely the same. However, Link was a Level-12 Legendary Magician at the helm of Ferde's army. He was an influential figure in the politics of Norton Kingdom who also had close ties with the dragon race. Simply put, the power he wielded was enormous.

The future had entered a state of flux the moment Aisenis revealed what he knew about it to Link. Someone with Link's influence would definitely be able to change the world's current course in order to prevent such a bleak future from happening.

In other words, he still had a chance to make things right!

Slowly rolling up the scroll, Link walked to the window and admired the scenery outside. He was now inside the barrier around the realm crack, and the scenery outside the window belonged to the Korora Mountain Range.

Mountains stretched into the distance as far as the eye could see. Dragon guards circled the sky above him, while Red Dragon Magicians remained in their positions, closely monitoring the barrier's condition. Not too far away were the Warriors and Magicians of Ferde.

The Magicians of Ferde were either analyzing magical techniques or monitoring the operation of the magic seals with their Red Dragon counterparts, while the Warriors of Ferde dueled with their Red Dragon counterparts, sharpening each other's skills.

Not everyone seemed outwardly happy about this, but the general atmosphere was one of peace and optimism for the future.

These are all elites of Firuman. Once both realms are reunited, most of them will die in battle, thought Link. The few who manage to survive will be forced to submit to the Aragu realm's indomitable might and endure a life of discrimination and scorn from their oppressors for the remainder of their lives with no hope of reliving the glory days. Though Ferde may be enjoying a prosperous existence right now, it will all soon come to an end once the age of darkness descends on all of us. I won't even be able to survive the first seven years after the realm reunification event. When I'm gone, Celine probably won't fare any better than me in the new world as well.

This all hinged on the matter of the realm reunification.

Not too long ago, Link did not think that the realm reunification would pose a huge threat to him and had simply wondered how he would have to adapt to a reunited realm. However, with the threat of an all-out war looming over him right now, Link had begun giving serious thought about stopping the realm reunification process entirely.

This was without a doubt a difficult hurdle to overcome, but in Link's experience, there was no such thing as the impossible in this world.

There's no time to lose; I must act quick!

## 574. Celines Bloodline Talent

This was Link's 18th day at the crack.

Nothing else happened these days, perhaps because the powerful barrier kept the enemies away or perhaps because Link's fight against the divine punishment had been too great. Link could focus on studying a magic seal to heal the Realm Crack.

To increase efficiency, he didn't keep it a secret. He publicized the magic seal to all the Magicians there so they could all participate in the study.

There were hundreds of Magicians within the barrier. The weakest was at Level-7. Through their mutual effort, they successfully created a small experimental magic seal after 18 days.

Now, Link and the Magicians were testing it.

The healing seal was printed on a runestone of more than 20 centimeters long. Five Magicians were feeding their power into it. Link stood to the side, making precise adjustments.

Maybe because the realm took care of them, the experiment was very successful. Half an hour later, cheers erupted from the crowd.

"Success!"

"The Realm Crack will finally disappear!"

"Duke, you saved us!"

All sorts of voices rang out, filled with irrepressible joy. Some dragons were even crying from the excitement. Only the heavens knew how much pressure the crack gave them. A single mishap could cause the crack to expand and swallow the Korora Mountain Range, Dragon Valley, and even the entire realm.

Even without this problem, the crack led directly to the boundless Sea of Void. If another Void Tyrant or even more terrifying creature burst free from it, even a divine-level defense barrier wouldn't be able to protect them for long.

But now, this crisis was over!

Link also sighed in relief. Since the experimental spell had succeeded, the next step was just enlarging the scale of the spell. It wasn't hard.

In other words, this crack that had been threatening Firuman all this time was finally resolved.

He looked around at each Magician and smiled genuinely. "This runestone is the result of everyone's efforts. It also represents the friendship between Ferde and the Dragon Valley. Everyone, let's keep working hard and create a magic seal that can truly mend the crack to prevent any accidents."

This was the truth.

A Red Dragon Elder walked up and declared, "The duke is right. As long as the crack still exists, we can't relax, understand?"

"Understood!" the dragon Magicians replied in unison.

The elder was pleased but kept his emotions checked. The younger dragons didn't care about that. Many waved their fists energetically, ready to do something big. Many more gazed at Link with burning and reverent eyes.

Suddenly, a young dragon Magician asked loudly, "Duke, will you stay here during this time?"

Everyone knew about Link's power and wisdom.

In the past, he'd also created many miracles. He had uncovered the dukes' evil plot, defeated the traitor Isendilan, quickly broke through the Mist Maze, defeated the impossibly terrifying Void Tyrant, and even defeated the God of Destruction's Saint. His Ferde was now one of the most flourishing places on the mainland!

To most young dragons, their duke was the only one who could lead them to victory. As long as they could keep going with him, they would have no fear. Even the queen couldn't give them this sense of security.

Thus, when that dragon asked, the other Magicians also looked to Link. Both young and old all had similar expressions. They hoped Link could remain.

However, the Ferde Magicians were the opposite. Their lord was only the dragon duke in name. It was only an alliance. Their lord was already generous to provide the method to mend the crack. Why did these dragons want the lord to do everything?

Did they want to steal their lord?

If the Magicians didn't know how important the crack was, they would definitely protest now. But even though no one spoke, they all glared at the dragons.

Link scanned the crowd and saw all of their inner thoughts. Thinking, he said, "I will stay for one more month. During this time, I will fortify the barrier and lead the creation of the magic seal's core."

He couldn't stay for longer. After that, he must return to Ferde and plan to attack the Army of Destruction and lower their confidence. He also had to find a way to prevent the fusion of realms.

All these things were important. He couldn't stay at the crack.

Hearing this, the dragons were a bit disappointed, but they couldn't say anything. After all, Link wasn't a true dragon duke. They'd all accept that, but Link also had the powerful Ferde. He might not be impressed by the weakening Dragon Valley.

The dragons weren't as strong anymore and had lost confidence.

The Ferde Magicians couldn't argue either. The crack was too important, and nothing could go wrong. Everyone knew this. There was nothing disputable about Link's actions.

Seeing everyone quiet down, Link clapped and said, "Alright, let's start now."

Since the test succeeded, everything else was basically just physical labor. Neither the Red Dragon Magicians nor Ferde's Sunlight Magicians lacked physical strength. With Link's supervision, their speed was unexpectedly fast.

One day, two days, three days Ten days passed in the blink of an eye. The magic seal was at least 60% complete. The core was completed, and all that remained was the outside.

This was much faster than Link had predicted. However, he said he would stay for a month, so he didn't go back on his words. He just had more free time when his workload lessened.

Of course, Link didn't relax completely. When he was free, he spent most of his time inside his room. There, Celine was studying the Book of Revelations. Link would also struggle with this Legendary Pinnacle book. Both studied Soul magic together.

Celine was serious this time. Her improvements in Soul magic were shocking.

At first, Link was responsible for tutoring while she learned. However, Link was very average in the aspect of Soul magic. A few days later, Celine could start to truly discuss with Link. The two helped each other and learned even faster.

Perhaps the Book of Revelations had activated Celine's blood talent. Her power increased almost twice as fast as before. She would soon enter the Legendary level.

Sensing her improvements, Celine worked even harder. She wasn't far off from how Link had been at Creekwood Village. She was truly invested in it, and Link naturally supported this.

The Mana density around the crack was higher than other places, but it still wasn't high enough. Link specially set up a magic seal around the house to raise the density by 50%. When Celine was tired, Link would sometimes cast a dragon recovery spell for her and give her some delicious food. Occasionally, when Celine was tired of the book, Link would accompany her on walks and talk about light topics.

These actions were all effective. Celine had no worries and improved quickly. If others knew, they would be dumbfounded.

Twenty days after creating the magic seal to mend the crack, it was basically complete. They were in the last steps. Every Magician involved felt like they'd accomplished something historic.

The same day, Celine felt that something had changed when she woke up in the morning. She was filled with endless strength.

After being purified of her Demon Power, Celine's eyes had been dark purple. After leveling up into Legendary, her eyes returned to pure black. They looked like Link's, but there were two balls of dark purple light inside. They pulsed like flames.

Link discovered this change before Celine herself. Pleased, he smiled and asked, "Do you feel anything different?"

Celine had just woken up and was still bleary. After a blank moment, she cocked her head at Link. A few seconds later, she laughed. "I realized that I can see your thoughts."

Link froze and then shook his head in disbelief. "No way. I didn't sense any invasions."

Celine was confused too. She hit her forehead. "Weird. I saw it earlier, but now you're guarded, and I can't see it anymore."

"Okay, I'll relax. Guess what I'm thinking."

With that, Link stared at Celine's juicy red lips without talking.

Celine looked seriously at Link. A few seconds later, her milky cheeks reddened, and she hit Link. "So annoying! Why are you thinking that?"

"You really can see it?" Link was shocked. He'd just thought of their past experiences in bed. Looking at Celine's expression, she must have seen it.

Celine wasn't really angry. She just wanted to hide her embarrassment and quickly recovered. She didn't know why it was like this. After a while, she said, "I think that maybe this is my bloodline talent."

"It probably is." Link looked at Celine and quickly thought of the talent's use. "If you pair this talent with spells like Soul Comfort or Serene Spirit, the target will have no secrets Ah, no. There might be another use."

"What do you mean?" Celine was interested too.

Link climbed out of bed and hurried to the window. He saw a strong Red Dragon Warrior practicing in the distance. Link distorted space so the other's image was projected before Celine. "Look, he doesn't know you're here, so he won't have any guards. What is he thinking?"

Celine looked and said, "I really can see his thoughts, but they're very messy and broken. Most are battle techniques and such. He also has a goal, which is to keep strengthening and become a Legendary figure."

"Oh, that's normal. Another one." Link changed the target to a female Magician from Ferde.

After seeing her, Celine said, "She's thinking of her children in Ferde. Her son is five, and her daughter is only three. She's worried that the servants can't take good care of them. Yes, they're very cute."

"Oh, and this one?" Link changed the target to another Ferde Magician.

"He's thinking of his pretty girlfriend. He's worried she'll like someone else and cheat on him."

"Seems like I should bring them back to Ferde What about this one?" Link changed the target to a young dragon. He knew this guy. He was Piceno and had just become of age. He was talented and was already at the pinnacle of Level-8.

"Thisoh? I can't see anything No, I see darkness. No, it's coming at me. It's a soul trap!"

## 575. A Blue Skinned Intruder

Celine instinctively closed her eyes when the darkness surged towards her. At that moment, Link did exactly three things.

He ended the light distortion spell and erected a spiritual defensive barrier that he had recently acquired around Celine. He then cast a magical brand on the Red Dragon Magician known as Piceno.

The magical brand was almost undetectable and difficult to dispel. It ensured that its caster would be able to track down his or her target anywhere in the world.

When he was done, Link rushed to Celine's side immediately. "How are you feeling?"

Celine shook her head, with one hand held against her forehead. "I'm alright. The darkness disappeared as soon as I closed my eyes. I probably didn't close them fast enough, as my head's throbbing now."

Link looked at Celine's face. Once he was sure that everything was alright and that she was not trying to put on a brave face, he turned around and strode towards the door. "I'll go see who this person is!"

"Be careful. I think there's much more to him than meets the eye!" Celine shouted after Link.

Link nodded. With one hand gripping on the handle of the Ode of a Full Moon sword, he exited the room. Sensing where the magical brand was, he made a dash towards it.

Back in the room, after putting on her clothes, Celine took out her rifle and came out on the veranda. She then propped up her rifle, ready to back Link up in his confrontation.

Seconds later, Link caught sight of the Red Dragon Magician Piceno outside the room. Strangely enough, he seemed to be heading towards the heart of the crack rather than trying to escape into the outside world.

Piceno was fast. He had also chosen to walk on an isolated path. However, it was daytime. Despite his efforts to avoid attention, he still managed to draw it to himself. Everyone was perplexed by the sight of Link and Piceno, the latter seemingly in a hurry to be somewhere.

"Stop him! Stop him this instant!" shouted Link while pointing at Piceno. He still did not have a clue as to who the man was or when he had infiltrated the realm crack, but his presence here troubled Link greatly.

The discovery of his presence had been made by accident. This had caught Piceno by surprise.

Link always hated situations like this, where neither side had come prepared, and there was no telling what would happen at any moment.

It was due to this uncertity that Link kept some distance between himself and his quarry. He then psychically gave an order to a couple of Magicians nearby. "Keep back, don't try to stop him. Let him pass through, but don't let him get too close to the heart of the crack."

Piceno was running straight towards the center of the crack. Maybe he already had a plan in mind, or maybe there was nowhere else he could run off to. In any case, Link decided to open an escape route for him so that he would not be driven into a corner and be forced to do something he would later regret.

The people up ahead stepped aside for Piceno to pass as soon as they heard Link's voice, while Magicians and Warriors moved in on him from all directions. A Sunlight Warrior stood 60 feet away from the Red Dragon Magician, with his back facing the realm crack. If Piceno wanted to reach the center of the crack, he would have to deal with the Warrior in front of him first.

The Sunlight Warrior rushed at Piceno and roared, "Stop, in the name of the lord of Ferde!"

Piceno did not stop. Instead, he quickened his pace.

"Take him down!" shouted Link. One would only be put at a disadvantage by showing mercy to someone as dangerous as Piceno.

At that moment, everyone realized that Piceno was trouble. Hearing Link's order, the Sunlight Warrior roared again, "Die!"

Boom! He slammed one footito the ground and launched himself forward by activating Charge. His entire body emanated a dazzling golden light as he flew through the air like a golden arrow towards Piceno.

The ones Link had brought with him into the crack were all Elites. The Sunlight Warrior was in the early stages of Level-9. He would probably be able to charge into the wall of a small city in Norton Kingdom and leave a huge hole on it if he felt like it.

What happened next stunned everyone. The Warrior staggered all of a sudden in his trajectory, missing Piceno by inches.

What was even stranger was the fact that the Warrior showed no sign of stopping. He shouted, "You're mine!"

He was now roaring and swinging his fists at empty air.

"He's under an illusion spell!" shouted one of the Magicians.

Other Warriors came at Piceno. However, all of them grazed past him as well and was now thrashing against the air, completely ignoring Piceno.

"Magicians, take aim! All Warriors back away now!" Link pulled out his Ode of a Full Moon sword. He then began channeling Mana into it, ready to launch his attack.

The other Magicians followed his suit.

Piceno was now 500 feet away from the crack. As the heart of the crack was also the core of the magic seal keeping the realm crack closed, there would most certainly be trouble if he were to come any closer to it.

At that moment, Piceno cocked his head back and let out a roar.

The roar was deafening. It spread out in all directions like a tidal wave. The Magicians closest to him took a few steps when the sound hit them. Though they were able to activate their defensive amulets in time, all of them clutched at their chests, panting slightly, as if they had been hit by something heavy in the chest and were now sustaining severe internal injuries as a result.

A moment later, Link realized that there was something off about the sonic attack.

This was no mere roar. It seemed to bring with it a powerful spiritual impact. When the roar hit him, Link could feel a violent pain surge through him from his chest, as if he had been struck by a sledgehammer.

At first, Link also took an instinctive step back. However, he realized what the roar really was. It's a soul spell!

Fortunately, he had first-hand experience with the soul spell of the guardian who had protected the Book of Creation's fragment in the far north. Thanks to this, he was able to easily come to this conclusion.

Though Piceno's soul spell was impressive, it was still a few levels below the guardian's. Link was able to sense where the spell's flaw was without even feeling the need to compose himself.

Once the flaw was discovered, the soul spell was immediately rendered ineffective, and Link was able to use his magic once more.

Realizing what had happened, Piceno turned around and glanced at Link.

With just a glance, Link realized that the person in front of him was not a Red Dragon Magician by the name of Piceno. Even the illusion spell he had cast on himself had been dispelled along with his soul spell.

Link was able to see that the man's skin was blue. His pupil-less eyes glowed white. His nose was sharp, and he had a wide forehead, on which mysterious runes swirled.

Though his eyes were devoid of pupils, making it almost impossible to tell what he was feeling through his eyes, Link was able to tell from his face that surprise was what Piceno was feeling at the moment.

Nana had reached the scene just then.

Piceno glared at her as if trying to cast the same spell on her, but Nanasspiritual constitution was different from that of any other human being. As a result, the spell did not have any effect on her.

Link's spell had already taken form in his sword. However, he did not release it at the intruder. For some reason, he felt that the situation was not as bad as he had initially thought.

This might all have been one big misunderstanding.

Letting his spell fizzle out, Link shouted to Nana, "Subdue him!"

When she heard Link's order, Nana, who was about to draw her sword out of her scabbard, strode towards the blue-skinned man and swung her scabbard at him, with her sword still in it.

Thud! The intruder apparently had no experience in the martial arts, as he could not even react to Nana's attack in time and took the full brunt of her scabbard.

Nana's power was originally at the pinnacle of Level-13. After receiving Link's miracle concoction, her power has risen up to Level-14. She now had near perfect mastery of the martial arts and flawless control of her own power. At that moment, her attack was strong enough to send the blue-skinned man flying until he landed a good ten feet in front of Link.

With a dull thud, the blue-skinned man crashed to the ground. Nana caught up to him. She placed a foot on his chest and pressed him down to the ground in order to prevent him from escaping.

Suddenly the unexpected happened. The man struggled for a while, but could not free himself from under Nana's foot. In the end, he raised both his hands up and shouted, "Don't kill me! Don't kill me! I mean you no harm, no harm at all! This is all a misunderstanding!"

## 576. Visitor From The Void

"I really don't mean harm! Really!" The blue-skinned person lay on the ground without. He stared up at Link and batted his lashes. The white light flashed on and off in his eyes, and his lips quivered. He looked really pitiful.

He knew that his life was in the hands of this young black-haired man. He could die with a single world.

By now, the nearby Magicians and Warriors had come over. Everyone stared at the captive with caution, pointing their swords or wands at him. If he had made a single move, countless spells and battle techniques would fall upon him, pulverizing him.

Link raised his hand, gesturing for everyone to relax. He walked up and studied the person. Getting closer, Link saw that there were many magic veins on his blue skin that melded perfectly with the color. They didn't look man-made; rather, he seemed to be have been born with them.

Link hadn't ever seen this race in the game. "Your race doesn't exist in Firuman," he said. "Where are you from?"

The blue-skinned man moved his mouth towards the crack. "I'm from the Sea of Void."

Hearing this, everyone was shocked. Their fear towards the man thickened too. Past experience told them that Void creatures were all dangerous creatures that had ominous desires about Firuman.

For example, the God of Destruction, the Void Tyrant, and the Abyss demons were all frightening things that didn't care about people's lives. This guy was from the Void too. He probably wasn't anything good either.

Link didn't think like this though. The Sea of Void was huge and filled with all sorts of things. Each organism had their own wishes. There were cruel things like the God of Destruction, but there were also trustworthy people like Aisenis.

There were no unfriendly expressions on Link's face. "What's your name?" he continued asking. "When did you arrive? How did you break through the defense barrier?"

The blue-skinned man quickly replied, "I am Piasce Ariado. I came to Firuman a year ago. The defense barrier hadn't been completed yet, so I just snuck inI don't mean any harm. I just came here for survival!"

"Survival?" Link studied the other. He had two arms and two legs and breathed to live. Other than some details, he wasn't that different from the races of Firuman. He indeed couldn't survive in the Sea of Void with this body.

It was believable.

Now, a Red Dragon Elder walked up. "Where is Piceno? Killed by you? If you're here for survival, why do you stay somewhere so dangerous? Why don't you go somewhere safer?"

Link also stared at the blue-skinned man, waiting for him to explain these points.

Piasce chuckled bitterly. "You're all wrong. I'm Piceno. There is no Red Dragon Magician called Piceno in the world. None of you found it strange when Piceno arrived because I used some Soul spells."

"You're lying! I remember clearly that Piceno grew up with me. I remember the pranks we pulled together!" a young dragon cried.

"Yeah, you're speaking nonsense!" A middle-aged dragon walked out from the crowd. "Three years ago, I accepted Piceno as my student. I taught him for three years. I remember everything that happened in those three years. You said that you came one year ago. That doesn't make any sense!"

The other Magicians who'd had interacted with Piceno all spoke up to prove that Piasce was lying!

Link looked at Piasce, wondering how he would explain.

Piasce sighed and looked at Link. "Ferde lord, I heard that your eyes could see through all lies. Do you believe my words?"

Link was expressionless, and no one could figure out his thoughts. After Piasce asked, he said, "Any magic theory needs evidence to support it. If there isn't enough proof, I won't make any judgment. Since you said you're not lying, prove it."

Piasce glanced at the foot on his chest and then at Nana. "Miss, can you step more lightly?" he begged. "I can't breathe."

Nana glanced at him in disdain and decided to remove her foot. However, her hand was still on her sword's hilt. She hadn't unsheathed her sword, but if Piasce did anything abnormal, she would halve him immediately.

Piasce coughed lightly and patted the dust off his clothes. He sat up and first looked to the young Magician from before. "The prank you did with Piasce, was it putting a snake into the washbasin of your prettiest aunt, resulting in her running out without clothes on?"

"Youhow do you know?" The Magician's face reddened.

Piasce shrugged. "Because I put it in your mind secretly when you were sleeping. Oh, your memory Piceno caught the snake. It was a black snake, poisonous, but you two got rid of the fangs, right?"

The young dragon was instantly in a mess because everything Piasce had said was right. But the memory was so fresh as if it had happened yesterday. How could it be fake?

Then Piasce looked to Piceno's tutor. "I'm sorry, Elder. I used a similar tactic on you. In order to not be suspected, a tutor's recognition is very important. Thus, I added very detailed memories into your mind. This took me a lot of effort. The result didn't disappoint me. You still think I'm your student."

Seeing the suspicion on the dragon's face, Piasce continued, "You think I'm lying now, but let me ask you. One day last year, you slept for two dasstraight, right? After you woke up, even you found it strange. You saw Piceno as soon as you opened your eyes, right?"

The middle-aged Magician was shocked. Clearly, Piasce was right again.

Piasce looked to all the dragons that had spoken and filled in the details. He was always correct.

Finally, the dragons couldn't say anything else. Now, they weren't suspecting that Piasce was lying. Instead, they feared his Soul magic.

Without realizing, he made everyone think that there was an extra Magician in the world. No one had suspected it. This was terrifying. If the Ferde lord hadn't revealed him, he might hide within the dragons for his entire life. If he had any evil intentions, the consequences would be unimaginable!

Seeing the dragons' expressions, Piasce smiled wryly and looked to Link. "See, Piceno is an imaginary figure. I haven't done anything against the barrier this entire year."

"If you're here for survival, why do you stay near the dangerous crack?" Link asked.

"I'm very curious about the magic here. More accurately, I'm curious about any foreign magic. Clearly, this barrier represents the best magic in this realm, so I stayed. I wanted to wait until the crack was mended and then quietly sneak away, but"

Here, Piasce shrugged. He looked helplessly at Link. He hadn't thought he would be exposed; this was a pure accident.

Link still didn't rush to a decision. He looked at Piasce sitting on the ground and thought back to what he did after being exposed. Suddenly, he asked, "Why did you run towards the crack after being exposed?"

"I was responsible for creating the core," Piasce explained. "I left a one-time spatial door in a certain location. It leads directly to my Void Ferry. I was going to hide into it for a while. I think that's my only chance for escape, right?"

Indeed, with the power he'd displayed, escaping into the crack was his only chance at escape. But now, it was easy. If they could find the Void Ferry in question, it would prove if he was telling the truth.

Link nodded. "Take me to your Void Ferry."

Piasce shook his head quickly. "I'm afraid I can't. I hung it on the outer surface of Firuman. A bit further and it's the Sea of Void. It's very dangerous."

"Give me the spatial coordinates," Link said. There would be no problems with the coordinates.

"Alright, it's yours" Piasce took out a portal runestone for Link. It contained the specific coordinates.

Link studied it. This thing recorded things a bit differently from Firuman's method. However, it wasn't that complex. Link figured out the specific location of the Void Ferry.

This wasn't all. A Magician who randomly received spatial coordinates and went to check without any preparation would die very easily.

Link put away the runestone and glanced at Piasce. "You said that you put a secret door in the center of the crack. Take me there and point it out. If the door's location is different from the spatial coordinates, I'll have to apologize."

Piasce gulped. He was very clear what "apologize" meant. Composing himself, he said, "Lord, I'm really not lying. The spatial coordinates are real."

Link waved his hand and urged, "Lead the way. I'll see for myself." At the same time, he said to Nana, "Watch him. If he tries to escape, kill him!"

Piasce had no choice other than to lead the way with a pained expression. As he walked, he said, "Lord, I must say something beforehand."

"What?"

"Please don't activate the Void Ferry after you see it. It might attract my enemies, which are dangerous."

## 577. A Completely New Magical System

There was indeed a secret portal in the healing magic seal of the crack, tucked away from prying eyes in a corner. After looking at the spatial portal for ten minutes, Link finally figured out Piasce's trick behind it. The principles underlying the magic portal seemed to differ from those of Firuman. It was operating under a magical system Link had never seen before. However, upon closer inspection, Link was able to appreciate its ingenuity. It was then that Link was struck by inspiration. By bringing this new magical system into Firuman, Piasce had opened up new pathways for Link to arrive at solutions for previously unsolvable magical problems. "Incredible!" exclaimed Link. He looked at it again and realized that the portal's coordinates were the same as those given to him by Piasce. "Looks like you were telling the truth," said Link, glancing at Piasce. The blue-skinned man rubbed his hands, an awkward smile on his face. "I would never dare lie to you, not when my life's at stake here." Link nodded. He then turned to all the Magicians on the scene and said, "Alright, we're done here for today. It would seem that Piasce really doesn't mean us any harm. This was all just a huge misunderstanding. Please continue working on the magic seal when you return to your posts. We still have three days to complete it!" Everyone nodded. They all turned around and resumed their work on the healing magic seal. "Nana, please stay. I want you to keep an eye on Piasce," Link shouted after Nana when he saw that she was about to leave with the rest of the crowd. He still could not completely trust Piasce. Also, Nana was the only one in the barrier other than himself who was completely immune to the blue-skinned man's soul magic. Nana nodded and did as she was told. At that point, Link had fully understood how the spatial portal functioned. Before teleporting himself over to the other side of the portal, he psychically said to Celine, "Celine, hold the fort, would you?" "Alright. What will you be doing?" replied Celine almost immediately. "I'll take a look at our guest's Void Ferry, but I don't really trust him enough to bring him along. You and Nana keep an eye on him. If he tries anything funny with the Void Ferry or does anything out of the ordinary here, you have my permission to shoot him down." "No worries, I've got him in my sights," said Celine with a chuckle. With all the necessary precautions in place, Link was finally at ease and ready to leave the place. He then turned to Piasce and said, "I can tell that you harbor no ill will towards us. Your magic is indeed potent, and truth be told, I've never seen anything like it. I would not want to hurt you over some misunderstanding. Do you understand what I'm saying?" Piasce immediately replied, "I won't try anything when you're on the other side. You have my word. I only ask that you do not under any circumstances activate the Void Ferry. I'm a hunted man. My pursuers are powerful as they are numerous..." "I understand," said Link nodding. There was a white light around him. Seconds later, he was gone from the Firuman realm. According to the coordinates, Piasce's Void Ferry was anchored at the outermost and incidentally deepest layer of the Firuman realm. At first, all Link could see around him in his descent were warped images from the surface of the Firuman realm. Everything looked surreal. However, as he sank deeper, his surroundings darkened until the rest of his body vanished beneath him. Not a sound could be heard. The only sound he could hear was the thumping of his heart. As the place was devoid of air, Link had to draw on his Realm Essence Power to keep himself alive. The entire experience gave him the impression of journeying through a dark tunnel with no end in sight. The distorted images of the Firuman surface had also vanished behind him. As there was nothing around him that he could use as a reference point, Link could not even tell if he was moving at all in the sea of darkness. Any ordinary human being would have been driven mad by the overwhelming silence and darkness. Link could also feel the suffocating pressure around him. However, as this was not his first plunge into the depths of space, he was still able to endure it. An hour later, Link saw a gentle blue glow in front of him. It was different from the Sea of Void's deathly white sheen. Also, the blue glow seemed to be concentrated at one point. From afar, it looked like a lone blue star in a dark night sky. Must be Piasce's Void Ferry. Link drew closer towards the blue point of light. This took about ten minutes. As he got closer, the scene before him became clearer. The point of blue light was gradually shaping into a streamlined object. It was around 15 feet long, tapering to a pointed tip on one end and a rounded tip on the other. It was shaped almost like a teardrop. Its surface was filled with countless magical runes which resembled the runic circuits that were etched on Piasce's skin. These runes were also the source of the blue light that Link saw. The object matched the description that Piasce had given Link. When he was a few feet away from the teardrop, a voice suddenly sounded in his head. Intruder, this is as far as you can go. Please don't come any closer. Otherwise, immediate action will be taken against you! This was the Void Ferry's defense system that Piasce was talking about. Any living being entering its vicinity would receive a psychic warning from it. If the intruder continued moving towards the vessel, it would unleash a Level-10 energy beam on him or her in retaliation. After casting a Level-13 magical shield on himself, he continued drifting towards the Ferry. A blue energy beam streaked out from the Void Ferry and struck Link's shield. Tiny ripples spread out across its surface upon impact before subsiding completely. Link continued moving forward. Though the Ferry's attacks did not let up, its level was just too low, and it posed no real threat to Link. When he reached the Void Ferry, Link began observing its external structure while withstanding its barrage. After ten minutes, Link finally had an inkling of how it worked. Like the secret portal from before, the Ferry's structure seemed to have been conceived in accordance with the new magical system that Piasce had brought with him. The Ferry was also much more advanced in its application of the magical system in question. As soon as he figured this out, Link began his observation of the vessel in order to gain an even more profound understanding of it. After studying it for half an hour, Link realized that though the runic circuits on the Ferry looked foreign, they seemed to adhere to the same basic principles that governed Firuman. So far, there was nothing in them that surpassed his comprehension. Link was already a grandmaster in the world of magic. With his current mastery of the mystic arts, he was able to understand most of the runes inscribed on the Void Ferry with ease. Link was soon lost in his observations. After god knew how long, he finally had a complete grasp of the Void Ferry's design. He then took out his Ode of a Full Moon sword and gently ran it along one of the runic circuits on the Ferry. All of a sudden, the Ferry's attacks stopped. Then, a voice sounded in Link's head again. Warning! Warning! External breach detected. Commence self-destruct protocol. Beginning countdown: 10, 9, 8, 7... The whole vessel had turned red. It was now flashing dangerously. Without a hint of panic, Link continued tracing the magical circuits with the tip of his sword. Finally, he plunged into a triangular rune on the rounded end of the Ferry and began infusing his Realm Essence Power into it. Two seconds later, the red light stopped flashing. Then, Link heard a soft click. He then saw a hole opening up on the surface of the vessel's rounded end. Link entered the vessel through the hole. Once inside, he discovered that its interior was also filled with countless magical runes. However, due to his meddling, some of the runes had been damaged. The inside of the Ferry was cramped. There were no seats. However, there was a bed-like platform strung to the ceiling with a couple of wires. On it were runes that seemed to control the vessel's various functions. Link was able to understand most of these runes. However, there were a few he could not make any sense of. Since the vessel had broken down, he now had no way of experimenting on them. Piasce said not to activate the Ferry. I guess he won't mind me breaking it. On the other hand, some of its parts could still be of some use! Link began looking around the place and soon was able to scrounge up at least ten types of rare magical materials, as well as a few other he had never seen before. There were also a few Astral Meteorites lying around. Link estimated that the value of these materials could easily surpass Ferde's wealth. I've definitely hit the motherlode. Leaving all these here would be such a waste. Exiting the vessel, Link began making his way towards the inner region of the Firuman realm while dragging his loot behind him with the Magician's Hand. Floating back up from the deepest recesses of space was much faster than going down. Half an hour later, there was a hum, and Link reappeared in the realm crack barrier. The Void Ferry he had dragged behind him fell on the ground with a clatter. Piasce was frozen in horror when he saw the state of his Void Ferry. "My lord, why did you break it? It took me 13 years to build it!" "Well, you can fix it back up, can't you?" said Link, not at all sorry for what he had done. He was now looking at Piasce greedily the same way one would look at a recently unearthed treasure. Despite the man's sketchy background, his current power would benefit Link greatly, especially his soul magic mastery. Though he was not as strong as the Soul Dominator, Piasce was unobtedly far more powerful than Link or Celine in this respect. With his help, Link and Celine would be able to proceed with their training in soul magic without a hitch. This person is the real prize! Link's eyes lit up at the blue-skinned man. Piasce felt a shiver down his spine under Link's gaze. He then said, "My lord, why are you looking at me like that?" Link laughed out loud and beckoned at Nana. "Bring him back to my house." He then said to Piasce, "Relax, I'm not going to hurt you. I'm just curious about you. Extremely curious."

## 578. Deceiver

Bringing Piasce back to his residence, Celine walked up as soon as he opened the door. Along the way, Link had already used Telepathy to explain everything, so she'd put away her big fire gun and changed into an indoors dress. She even placed some fruits and drinks for guests on the round table in the living room.

"Welcome, Mr. Piasce," she said, inviting him in with a smile.

Piasce knew Celine's identity and knew she wasn't as simple as she looked. The strong sense of danger earlier was probably because of him.

Smiling tightly, Piasce followed Link into the living room.

Link's home was a vast house. Red Dragon Magicians had designed this duke residency just for him. The living room was open and bright with a vintage circular table in the center.

Link sat down and gestured. "Sit."

After Piasce sat down, Nana casually sat beside him. She looked relaxed, but her hand rested lightly on her sword's hilt. Celine sat to Link's sad, gazing at the blue-skinned creature curiously.

Link didn't waste time. He reached out, and a glass of steaming mango juice slid soundlessly towards Piasce. "Let's talk about your background."

Piasce accepted the drink and took a sip. Then, he composed himself and started thinking back.

Half a minute later, he said, "I come from the Omir Realm. It actually isn't that far from Firuman. There are only some barren realms in between. Because of certain reasons, my race saw me as a traitor and wanted to execute me. At the last moment, one of my students infiltrated the prison and freed me. I gotito my secretly created Void Ferry and escaped from Omir. Right before I escaped, I saw my student get captured with my own eyes. I can still hear his cries of despairOh"

Sighing, Piasce gulped down the juice like it was alcohol. He emptied the cup and Link gave him another one.

Piasce continued. "Fleeing from Omir, I was like a homeless stray dog. I hid and ran through the boundless Void. My people never gave up and still pursued me. I was forced to wander about. Time doesn't flow in the boundless Void, so I don't know how long has passed until I accidentally came to Firuman one year ago."

Here, he looked at Link and chuckled bitterly. "I just wanted to stay a bit to recharge my Void Ferry before continuing, but I was attracted by this world. It's too similar to Omir. The first time I saw this place, I thought I'd returned home. The mountains, trees, grass, and water are all so strangely familiar, so I stayed. I'd planned to stay a few years before leaving."

He drank some more mango juice. This time, he tasted it carefully. After another sip, he smiled at Link. "There's a drink similar to this from my home. It's called O' Flower Wine. I used to hate wine like this. I would only sip it at formal social events, but now Hehe, I find it delicious."

After another sip, he said to Link, "Lord, my story isn't thatiteresting. I just hid and ran like a mouse. Ask whatever questions you have. I'll do my best to reply."

Piasce's story was simple. He was just an escaped criminal running from his pursuers. But things weren't that simple.

Link knocked on the table. "How many realms did you experience?"

"Not that many, only three. They were all barren realms. One was marginally habitable, so I stayed there for about half a year before leaving."

"You said that your people keep pursuing you, so you're forced to wander," Link continued. "But you've been running for quite some time and distance. Isn't the cost too high to keep chasing you in the Sea of Void?"

The cost of chasing someone would never be more than the rewards after killing him. If the people of Omir kept chasing, it meant that Piasce's identity was complex. In the Omir Realm, he must be in the upper tier.

Hearing this question, Piasce fell silent. His hands clutched the crystal glass anxiously. After a long while, he said, "Omir has very advanced inter-realm transportation technology. When I left, it was only a bit behind my Void Ferry. These years, I've been improving my Void Ferry, but Omir is developing quickly too. Their accomplishments shouldn't be any less than mine Of course, the cost of traveling is still great, and they must pay a lot. They're chasing so relentlessly is becausebecause Lord, I think I must explain Omir's situation to answer this question."

"Go on." Link was listening attentively.

Piasce's eyes filled with reminiscence. "My home used to be peaceful. Everyone lived happily; the land was fertile, and everything was plentiful. The world was filled with clean Mana, like Firuman. But unlike Firuman, we didn't develop large-scale destruction spells. We mostly cared about the cultivation of the soul. Those with attainments in Soul magic are known as Soul Roamers."

"Soul Roamers? That sounds interesting."

Piasce nodded. "Amongst the Soul Roamers, there are also those with extremely great achievements who are respected and revered. They can become Soul Tutors. When I was in Omir, there were three Soul Tutors. I was one of them."

"Oh." It dawned on Link. "In other words, you were one of Omir's three leaders."

"Not leaderor you can just say that. If I did anything, many people would follow me." Piasce nodded.

On the side, Celine couldn't contain her curiosity. "I want to know what exactly you did that made people think you're a traitor and keep chasing you."

"I" Piasce had a pained expression. He clenched his fists, relaxed, and then tightened again. Clearly, Celine's words had hit his sore spot.

"If you find it hard to say, you can write it down," Link said. "I know this question is too probing, but we must understand everything because you have people after you. You said before that they're very dangerous. If you're exposed, you won't be the only one affected. Firuman won't be well off either."

Piasce sighed. "You're right, Lord. I indeed may bring catastrophe to Firuman. My race is no longer peaceful like before. They've become puppets of darkness, and this is all my fault!"

By now, Piasce had finished his second drink. As if he was drinking his troubles away, he seemed to have thought things through now. "During soul cultivation, the most important thing is meditation. As a Soul Tutor, I meditated instead of sleeping at night. In meditation, our souls become free. Our Eye of the Soul opens too, allowing us to travel freely within the Sea of Void. Oh, we're free, but it's still very dangerous. The Sea of Void is boundless. If you go too far, your soul may become lost. The law prohibits probing too deeply into the Sea of Void, while that is what I did. During my travel, I found a very powerful existence called Nozama"

"Nozama?" Link froze. Celine was also surprised. She hadn't expected to hear her father's name from this realm traveler.

Piasce smiled bitterly. "Yes, Nozama, Lord of the Deep. I didn't know his identity back then. The things seen by the Eye of the Soul are very limited. In my meditation, I saw that Nozama was an elegant gentleman. His voice was mellow and full. His words were logical and organized. Many of his opinions matched mine. Thus, we became friends."

Here, the magic veins on his blue face scrunched together. He clenched his jaw, and the crystal glass trembled in his hands.

"I" He opened his mouth to speak again, but his voice caught. He coughed lightly and composed himself before continuing. "I didn't think that my actions would bring catastrophe to my race. He lied to me, and I personally brought him into my world, starting the disaster When I escaped, more than half of Omir was under Nozama's control."

Hearing this, Link and Celine exchanged glances. "My fa" Celine murmured. "That demon is that good at disguises?"

Link thought back to the first time he saw Nozama in the game. It had been at the plains outside the Demon Fort. The alliance had been forced into the final battle with the Dark Army when Nozama appeared.

No one had expected him to look like that. He had black hair, a black robe, and a handsome face that even looked a bit warm. His voice was gentle and mellow. If he hadn't been standing with the Dark Army and commanding the demons, no one would have thought that he was such a terrifying figure.

Later, Link realized that it was Nozama's disguise. He didn't reveal his true image until they'd started fighting.

All in all, if Nozama tried to fool someone, it was extremely easy. There was nothing strange about Piasce being tricked by him.

Here, Link looked to Piasce. "What are your future plans?"

## 579. The Mysterious Gear In The Void

"I don't know. I'll probably leave Firuman once I've repaired the Void Ferry." Piasce shrugged and then sighed. In truth, he did not know what he was supposed to do at this point. He was no longer the Soul Tutor he once was. He was simply a stray cast out by his own kin. The only thing on his mind now was survival. Link gently tapped on the table as he sank into deep thought. Suddenly, something occurred to him. "Do your people know you were the reason behind the demons' invasion of Omir?" "Everyone knew. That's why they all hated me. That's why they are all so intent on killing me." Piasce closed his eyes, visibly tormented by the events in Omir. The way everyone looked at him with such visceral hatred still haunted his every waking moment. His students numbered in the tens of thousands, but after the incident, everyone avoided him like the plague. Even the student who had freed him from his prison had looked at him with disgust. The only reason he had come to set Piasce free was that he did not wish to see his former teacher die in a prison. However, like everyone else, his liberator did not think he should remain in Omir any longer. "Traitor!" "Murderer!" "Butcher!" "Blind old fool!" These were but a few of the names that his people had called him. "So do you think that the Omir realm has any chance of resisting the Abyssal Demons?" asked Link. Piasce shook his head. "Though I had hope, reality has always been a cruel thing. My people are not well-versed in the art of combat. As a result, they may have succumbed to the demons easily. A few probably survived, but the Omir realm is probably done for at this point." "I don't understand. If they can't even protect themselves, and there is a high chance they have already been overrun by the demons, why are they still coming after you?" Link sensed that there was still something missing in Piasce's account. Piasce chuckled bitterly. "This isn't too difficult to understand. When the Omir realm was occupied, my people were probably either killed or corrupted by the darkness into mere vessels for the demons. In any event, they still harbor a burning hatred towards me. There were three Soul Tutors back in Omir. When I left, one of them was already corrupted by the darkness. He had slaughtered his own people, and still, he hated me. He would probably torture me until the day I die if he ever found me. "No, no, no." Link shook his head. "You were hated by everyone, I get that. But you've left the Omir realm far behind. Your people would not have gained anything by coming after you all the way here. Mere hatred could not have driven such a pursuit for so long. There must be another reason why they are still chasing you!" Link's eyes were now fixed intently on Piasce. He extended a hand towards him. "You must be carrying something that they wanted or feared. What is it? Show me what you're trying to hide from them, and from me." Celine was also curiously looking at Piasce, wondering how he would react to this. Nana remained motionless. Before, she simply had a hand placed over the pommel of her sword. Now, she was gripping on its handle, ready to pull it out should Piasce try anything funny. Piasce was stunned for a moment. He did not move a muscle as he sat there on his chair. After a while, he sighed. "My lord, I have no intention of keeping this from you. It's just... it's just that I don't think your current power level would be able to withstand the heft of my secret. It may bring you more harm than good if I reveal it to you." "Oh? Don't you think you're a bit too quick to judge my abilities?" Link sat up straight and listened intently to what Piasce had to say now. He sensed that there was something more to his situation and that whatever secret Piasce was withholding from Link would be able to fill the holes in his story. Piasce still seemed unsure about revealing his secret. Celine then said, "Mr. Piasce, you may be our guest, but one could also argue that you're now a prisoner within these walls. I don't think you have a choice in this." Nana sharply drew out an inch of her sword. A clear clang sounded from within its scabbard, making its owner's intent clear to Piasce. A tired smile surfaced on Piasce's face. He looked at Link. "My lord, is this how you treat all your guests?" Link nodded. "Speak then." "Alright then." Piasce took out a notebook with a blue cover. Magical runes were etched on its cover. There were also dazzling gemstones embedded on it. Judging by its resplendent appearance, it seemed to be a magic book of some sort. "This is my training notebook." Piasce handed the notebook over to Link. "As I mentioned just now, Soul Roamers are able to forgo sleep by meditating. Through meditation, a person's soul will be allowed to roam free in the infinite expanse of the Void. Before meeting Nozama, I stumbled across something of considerable value in the Void. I've taken a note of it on page 189." Link took the notebook and turned to page 189. On it was inscribed the diagram of a type of gear. The gear had eight teeth in total around it. Light of various colors radiated from it. Magical runes were etched across the middle of the gear, forming a pattern which resembled an eye. Though it looked alien, for some reason, it seemed familiar to Link. This was strange. Link could not figure out what was familiar about the object in question. He then saw that there was something written below the diagram. "It was enveloped in blinding light when I first came upon it. It was huge. At that moment, I was like a speck of dust in front of a huge ball of fire. It floated there in the emptiness of the Void, continuously spinning at a constant speed. I then approached it. As I drew closer, there was a sudden rhythmic rumbling sound in my ears. It was then that a weird sensation came upon me. For some reason, I sensed that the gear was the core of the Void keeping everything in it in balance. When I got closer towards it, it seemed to have spotted me, as the magical eye in the center of the gear swiveled towards me. The eye gazed at me apathetically, as if I was nothing more than an ant before it. Then, darkness swallowed me up, and I was forced back into my body." The whole account was bizarre. Beyond the appearance of the floating gear, Link was unable to glean anything concrete from it. Link then found a set of coordinates as he continued reading down the page. "Where do these coordinates point to?" asked Link while pointing them out to Piasce. "Ah, that," said Piasce. "After my first encounter, I went back to where the gear was a few more times. It would always float there each time. I would always keep my distance from it in order to avoid being cast out by it like before. It would simply rotate in place at a regular speed. I even managed to calculate how fast it was going. It would make one complete rotation in every 2.06721 seconds, never going too fast or too slow." The object's precision that Piasce had described was uncanny. It seemed to be a part of a really huge machine, where such precision would be vital to its function. Thinking about this for a while, Link asked, "Did you tell Nozama about this?" Piasce smiled bitterly. "I did tell him a bit about this. At the time, I thought he was a friend, so I shared with him the diagram I had drawn of the gear. He was fascinated by it. He then asked for the coordinates of this mysterious gear from me. For some reason, I didn't tell him where it was. He tried asking me a few times later on, and that's when I grew suspicious of him. I think that this may be the reason why Nozama's hunting me down." Hearing this, Link grew even more curious about the gear. He looked at it closely, and the inexplicable sense of deja vu in him intensified. He felt as if he had seen it somewhere before. Celine was staring at it as well. She then said, "Odd, why do I get the feeling that I've seen it somewhere before?" "You too?" Surprised by this, Link then turned to Nana. "Nana, what about you? Have you seen something like this before?" Nana had existed in the realm of Firuman for 800 years and another 100 years in the realm of Aragu. Naturally, she saw and heard more than any one of them in her travels. When Nana looked at the gear's diagram, she paused, as if trying to recall something. A few seconds later, she nodded. "Yes, I've seen it before. It was on the emblem of the Aragu Empire." "Aragu? And on the empire's emblem?" Link could not understand what this all meant. Like himself, Celine seemed to be familiar with the gear, which meant that it had probably existed in Firuman once. However, Nana had seen something like it too in the Aragu realm. And now, through Piasce's notes, they discovered that it had appeared in the middle of the Sea of Void. What exactly was it?

## 580.

"Nana, draw the Aragu Empire's sign for me." Link passed paper and pen to Nana.

"Yes, Master."

Nana took the paper and pen and started drawing. On the side, Piasce also looked curiously. He didn't understand why everyone had seen what he'd seen in the Sea of Void.

The sign wasn't complicated. With a few strokes, Nana accurately recreated the sign on the paper. It was completely realistic and identical to the real thing.

"Here, it's like this. Don't you think it's similar?"

The paper was on the table. Everyone could see it. Link, Celine, and Piasce all looked over.

There was a badge on the paper. It contained one eye with an eight-sided gear around it. Nana had drawn in detail. Looking closely, one could see that the eye was made up by many detailed runes. What was shocking was that the runes were practically the same as what Piasce had drawn.

"This doesn't make sense."

Piasce carefully compared the two images and found it increasingly hard to understand. When he'd seen the gear in the Void, he'd thought that it was an intelligent creature from some realm. He'd circled it but didn't find anything.

Now, an image of the same source appeared in another realm. It had even attracted the interest of Nozama. What exactly was it?

His curiosity was piqued.

In reality, everyone present was the same. Link looked up. "Nana, Aragu should have more than one sign. Is there anything special about this?"

"Yes. This is the sign of God-given Wisdom, the core magic workshop of Aragu. The eye is called Wright's Eye."

"God-given Wisdom? Magic workshop?" Piasce asked hurriedly. "Do you know which god the so-called god-blessed is referring to?"

Nana thought a bit and shook her head. "I'm unsure. Apparently, this magic workshop has been around for many years. It's a name passed down from ancient times. Maybe it had a special meaning in the beginning but was lost. It's probably just called this by habit now."

Link had wanted to ask another question. Hearing Nana's answer, he didn't have much hope, but he still asked. "Who's Wright?"

This was another critical question. All three turned to look at Nana with hopeful eyes. If they knew who Wright was, they could follow it to get another clue.

This time, Nana didn't disappoint. She supplied another piece of information. "Apparently, Wright is the name of an ancient enchanter. Princess Milda had researched this question, so I read some material. According to legends, Wright was one of the creators of God-given Wisdom. He was the most skilled in creating magic puppets. Not only were his puppets extremely realistic, but they were also very smart. In some ways, they were even more intelligent than humans. Later, Wright disappeared. No historical records said where he went."

The three all felt that Nana should've said more. The information was too little and crude. It was basically useless.

Link couldn't help but ask, "Nana, is that all? Think more closely."

Nana "cruelly" shook her head. "Nothing more. These are all ancient legends. Princess Milda could find it because the Aragu Empire split and no one supervised the library. There are more than 100,000 books there. It took Milda a month to find this much. I could see it only because I was her personal bodyguard at the time."

Everyone sighed at this. Too much time had passed. The truth of history was hidden in the passage of time. It was depressing.

Link walked up. He used a print spell to print the Wright's Eye that Nana drew and the eye on Piasce's mysterious gear. He turned them into magic projections and compared them carefully in the air.

This way, he found something new.

"Don't you think that the runes forming the gear's eye are more detailed than Wright's Eye? It seems like the revised version."

Piasce nodded. "Now that you say that, it does seem that way."

Celine looked carefully and nodded too. Pointing at some of the runes, she said, "I also think that. Look at these runes, here, here, and here. The former is clearly a variation of the latter Wait, I remember. I've seen this eye in a book!" Celine suddenly exclaimed.

"Which book?" Link's spirits were lifted. Right now, he really wanted to understand the source of the eye. A voice inside told him that the key for Aisenis' dark prediction was perhaps in this eye!

Celine didn't reply. She ran to her bedroom and ran back after a while with a magic book in her hands. It was the Book of Revelations. Before opening it, she glanced at Piasce. The man was curious too and was staring at the book. Sensing Celine's eyes, he chuckled awkwardly and looked away.

Finally, Celine opened it and flipped to the last few pages. One page had a picture.

"I flipped through while I was bored and saw this picture. Don't you think it's similar?"

Link looked over. The picture described a Soul spell called Eye of Insight. Despite the name, its appearance was extremely similar to the design of the mysterious gear. The runes weren't even that different. It was quite similar to Wright's Eye too.

"That's strange." Link read the spell's description.

The inspiration for this spell is from the remains of an ancient book I found by accident. The author is named Wright Skynar. There isn't much recorded in the book, but using the information, I can conclude that Wright was an excellent Magician. Unfortunately, he has passed. It is such a pity that I could not be in the same era as a Magician like him.

Wright Skynar. Another clue had appeared; new questions also appeared. This was a complicated matter.

Link carefully studied the Eye of Insight on the Book of Revelations. Suddenly, his heart jumped. He finally understood why the mysterious gear had felt familiar at first glance.

"I remember! I remember!" he cried excitedly. He took out a dark gray square rock. Its surface had some strange magic veins.

This was the game system's reward to him for defeating the God of Destruction's Saintthe Astral Whetstone. Link didn't know what its use was. When he first got it, he'd looked at it and tried sharpening the Ode of a Full Moon. It hadn't been too effective, but he was busy these days and put it away without studying it.

But now, he realized the magic veins on the stone were extremely similar to Wright's Eye, the Eye of Insight, and the mysterious gear.

Celine realized it too. "Hey, Link, where did you get that rock? The veins are so familiar."

Link didn't keep it from Piasce.

"The style is completely the same. I think it's made by the same person," he quickly concluded.

Here, Link had formed a vague hypothesis, but there wasn't enough information. He couldn't confirm it. Looking at the coordinates in Piasce's book, he said, "I guess we'll have to go see the gear personally in the Sea of Void."

Piasce immediately said, "How will you go? My Void Ferry? It'll definitely attract Nozama and his Dark Army!"

"No, no, no, not your Void Ferry. It's too shabby. I have a better idea," Link said, smiling.

## 581. Savior Of The Realm

Korora Mountain Range, realm crack barrier "Commence preparations for the magic seal's activation!" ordered Link. He was standing near the crack, observing the magical current within the large-scale healing seal. The Firuman crack was a hundred feet away from where Link stood. Strategically-positioned runestones had cast a 200-foot-wide film of light across the crack. One could vaguely make out the thick purple clouds swirling beneath the film of light. The clouds were in fact clumps of saturated Mana. Mana usually existed as a colorless element in nature. The fact that it had reached such a state spoke to just how saturated it was beneath the film of light. Link estimated that if this concentration of Mana were to be released into the realm of Firuman, the realm's Mana concentration would sharply increase by at least ten percent. Though Mana was usually harmless by itself, an explosion of such a high concentration of Mana would instantly kill everyone in the vicinity. Also, there was a real risk of breaking the seal while trying to seal up the realm crack. If anything went wrong during the procedure, the resulting explosion would blow them all up to kingdom come. In the face of such a risk, Link could not afford to be careless. After giving out his order, Link soon heard sounds of activity coming from every magical node around him. "Everything normal in magical cyclic node Alpha!" "Same goes for the Ptolemic Mana Surge node!" "Nothing unusual going on in the realm's turbulent currents..." The activation of the large-scale healing magic seal was proceeding smoothly. Link looked at the Crack Seal in front of him. He then psychically gave out his next command. "Good. Now, activate the seal!" There were more than 300 Magicians present. Each one of them was higher than Level-8, and they were all working on one of the largest magic seals to ever be conceived in the history of Firuman. As soon as Link gave his command, these Magicians began channeling their power according to the restitions that had been imposed upon them beforehand. Hum... Hum... The large influx of Mana hummed softly. It sounded almost peaceful. However, it belied a raging torrent of Mana now flowing within the magic seal. There was now a visible distortion in the air around the barrier. At that moment, there seemed to be some sort of heat wave emanating from the ground and rising into the air. Huge waves of Mana began radiating from the seal, causing the wildlife in the surrounding forest to flee in terror. Link served as the pivot of the healing magic seal. As the most powerful Magician present, he was responsible for controlling at least 40 percent of the power circulating in the magic seal. This was an extremely demanding task. In all of Firuman, there were no more than five Magicians capable of withstanding such a strain. Even if they were physically sturdy enough to endure it, there was no guarantee that they would be able to seal up the realm crack completely. The Magician at the pivot of the magic seal would also need to endure the pressure for a long time. In short, the success of the entire process hinged on both the Magician's power level and their mental fortitude. At that moment, Link's mental processes were working at top speed. He was distributing the influx of power evenly throughout the magic seal while making sure that power was flowing in uniformly from every Magician. There were more than 300 Magicians present possessing either Dragon Power or Sunlight Power. Their power and spellcasting levels also varied greatly from each other. With their combined powers, they had produced a smorgasbord of different flavors of power circulating within the magic seal. Link currently played the role of a chef, meticulously adjusting the proportion of each flavor of power so that they either merged with each other or canceled each other out. This delicate step was necessary in order to produce a flavorful mix of powers. Link's Realm Essence Power was depleting rapidly. Large amounts of energy had to be spent to sustain the rapid thought processes currently running through his mind. His soul was literally burning up inside him as he pushed himself to his limits in order to control the power flow within the magic seal. His eyes were now glowing with a silver light which grew brighter by the minute. This was the fire within Link's spirit. Before long, Link's entire body was enveloped in the silver glow. Boom! Boom! Boom! A series of rumbling sounds rang out from the Void. Beams of translucent light appeared in the air within the barrier. At first, there was one beam of light, then two, then three... They intersected with each other, forming a luminescent web in the air. The brilliant web of light then descended from the sky, covering the crack completely. During the process, the translucent beams of light grew in number until every gap in the web-like structure was filled in. At this point, Link was burning through his own power at a terrifying speed while handling every aspect of the procedure. He was now spending more than 100 Realm Essence Power points every second. His body was also slowly deteriorating due to the strain. "Arrgh!!!" Link roared out in pain. He feared that his thought processes would be affected if he kept his pain bottled up in him. He absolutely could not afford to make a mistake at this crucial juncture. Outside the web of light, Celine saw what was happening in the magic seal and panicked. She closed her fist, then opened it. She then felt her palm. It was wet with cold sweat. "Something's not right," said Celine to Piasce, who was standing beside her when Link roared out. Piasce was also closely looking at the situation around the realm crack. To him, the sealing of the realm crack was a good thing. It would mean that Nozama would not be able to track him down. The Lord of the Deep would also have a hard time entering Firuman. Piasce would be able to rest easier with the realm crack sealed. Like Celine, he was also looking at the whole process with a concerned look on his face. He then said, "As the pivot of the magic seal, the lord needs to endure most of the magic seal's strain. This is a risk he has to take. Should he make even the slightest mistake, it would set back the entire process and may even cause the Crack Seal to collapse in itself. It would be a catastrophe of the highest order." Piasce had goosebumps just thinking about what Link had to endure. If he was in Link's shoes right now, he would probably have collapsed from exhaustion within minutes. During their brief confrontation, Piasce was able to place Link's power between Level-12 and Level-13. Although Link was much stronger than him, there seemed to be no discernible distinction in the essence of his power. He had no idea how Link was able to hold out for so long. Celine grew even more worried when she heard what Piasce said. As the magic seal's circulation process was extremely delicate and could not be interrupted at any point, Celine could only watch on helplessly from the sidelines. Nana was standing beside Celine at that moment. When she heard what Piasce had said, she said flatly, "Piasce, you're thinking too much. My master will not fail." There was a vague look of condescension on her indifferent face. Piasce shrugged. "Of course, I don't want him to fail. I'm just stating the facts as they are right now." Nana turned to look at the magic seal. "I'm also stating them as they are." Though Piasce possessed Level-11 Pinnacle Magical Power, he was merely a scholar. Someone like him would not fully understand her master's power and resolve. As he was still a bit wary of Nana, Piasce decided to not argue with her any further. Just then, the translucent web of light had fully merged with the Crack Seal. It began to shrink, expelling all the Mana within the Crack Seal out of the Firuman realm. As the pivot of the magic seal, Link was now shining so brightly that no one could look at him directly. From afar, he now resembled a silver sun that had descended to the ground. No one knew how long he would be able to endure the strain of the process. As everyone looked at Link, anxiously worried that he might collapse at any moment, the purple clumps of Mana within the Crack Seal began to shrink. Three minutes later, the Mana clouds vanished completely. Soon, the dark earth on both sides of the seal began pressing towards each other, and the crack grew smaller and smaller. All of a sudden, there was a clear ting from the crack. The sound was so resonant that it seemed to vibrate through every person on the scene. It was then that the crack vanished completely. The healing magic seal emitted a few flashes of light which then died out gradually. At the center of the magic seal, the blinding silver light also began to fade away, slowly revealing Link's form in the center of it all. Link was half-kneeling on the ground, with one hand gripped tight around the handle of the Ode of a Full Moon sword. He was taking in huge gulps of air. His body was drenched in sweat. Despite looking as pale as a corpse, he was wearing a huge, relieved smile on his face. Celine rushed over to his side, immediately helping him up. She asked, "Are you alright?" "I'm alright, but I may need a few days' rest after all this." Link was still staring at where the crack had been moments ago. Though he was physically exhausted, he now felt at ease, as if he had just downed a glass of cold beer during a hot summer's day. Felina and the young Red Dragon Warriors quickly came over. They were all looking at him with awe and reverence. Suddenly, Link could hear a series of disordered footsteps coming towards him. It was the Red Dragon Elders. They hurried over to where the crack had been. After observing its current state, they turned towards Link and asked incredulously in unison, "Duke, is the crack sealed up for good?" Despite what they had seen, the elders still required confirmation from their duke in order to quell their fears once and for all. Link nodded. "Yes, it's sealed up. The space here isn't just repaired; it's also been fortified by the magic seal. Now, not even teleportation spells can be cast here." The Red Dragon Elders were overjoyed! The dragon race had finally rectified the crime committed by the traitor known as Isendilan. With the threat towards the entire dragon race now gone, every dragon present was now able to heave a sigh of relief. No one would ever forget what Link had done for all of them. Though the Red Dragon Elders were not as quick as the younger Red Dragons to express their gratitude, there was a noticeable change in their behavior towards him. They were now humbler and more respectful towards him. Such a change could only be felt personally. Link had a feeling that if he were to declare himself as dragon king at that moment, none of these rigid-minded dragons would have been too averse to the idea. His reputation among the dragon race was not the only thing to have benefited from the sealing of the realm crack. After successfully closing up the realm crack, a message from the game system popped up in his field of sight. Achievement: Savior of the Realm Description: Through the activation of a healing magic seal, Player Link has successfully sealed up the crack in the Firuman realm. Reward: Crystal Essence. Link had no idea what a Crystal Essence was. Thankfully, it came with a description. Crystal Essence Quality: Tier-18 Description: A mysterious type of Astral Meteorite. It is soft like rubber and almost impossible to cut through. Through the application of Legendary Magical Power, it will crystallize to form a 0.2-ton material with near flawless magical resistance without changing any of its innate properties. This allows it to resist all kinds of magic. Not only will it have near perfect magical resistance, but it will also be able to retanal of its original properties. This is indeed a gift sent down from the heavens! thought Link. As a grandmaster of enchantment magic, Link was immediately able to come up with a few ways to put this piece of Astral Meteorite to good use. He would be able to forge perhaps the most powerful magical equipment in all of Firuman with it. Suppressing his joy, he turned to Felina and the other dragons and said, "The realm crack has been repaired. I'll need to rest now. Tomorrow, I'll be leaving for Ferde." With the matter of the realm crack resolved, he was now able to move on to more pressing matters at hand. He still had a lot of business to attend to, such as searching for the mysterious gear in the Sea of Void, preventing the realm reunification, fighting off the Army of Destruction in the North, and so on and so forth. Felina said, "Duke, I'll accompany you back to Ferde." "Me too." "Me too!" "And me." "The queen is still in Ferde. I wish to be by her side while she recuperates." A crowd of young Red Dragons had formed around Link, pestering him to allow them to accompany him back to Ferde. The Red Dragon Elders looked on at this with a tired smile but did not bother stopping any of them. Link nodded. "Alright, go get ready then. We'll be leaving tomorrow." ... The moment the realm crack was sealed up, slight changes rippled across Firuman. Masters inside and outside of the realm were all able to sense a change in the air. In the Skeletal Fort, to the north of the Black Forest, Eugene suddenly jolted. The Mana disturbance has disappeared. What's going on? She stood up and was about to head out and seek an explanation, when suddenly Molina came up to her and said, "Your Highness, my master has informed me that the realm crack near Dragon Valley had been sealed up." "Sealed up? Of course!" Eugene was stunned. She fell silent for a moment. Then she sighed. "Must be the lord of Ferde's doing. He's certainly stronger than me when it comes to matters like this." ...

Abyss There was the sound of breaking glass. Lord of the Deep, Nozama had smashed his wine glass into pieces on the ground. His Succubus servants were all trembling in a corner, fearing that they might end up as the next target of their master's ire. However, Nozama completely ignored them. He growled through gritted teeth, "Link, time and time again, you've obstructed my every move!" With the realm crack mended, entering the Firuman realm just became a lot harder. Not only had this accursed human Magician robbed him of two of his daughters, but he had also repeatedly foiled his plans without fail. Barely restraining his own anger, Nozama now turned his attention towards the realm that he had recently conquered. "Puny one, by all means, let this little victory go to your head. Once I find my prize, I'll let you have a taste of my wrath!"

## 582. Your Majesty What Are You Doing?

Whoosh, whoosh. A strong wind blew around the territory. This time, even the war-hardened Firuman residents couldn't keep calm. At least 50 dragons appeared in the sky.

Dragons weren't gentle birds. Each one could create a bloody storm in a regular city. Their breaths could bake the earth into a fiery hell. If so many dragons flew over from the Grinth Forest and were Ferde's enemies, this would be war.

While the residents were terrified, the dragons circled above the city and then started landing in the suburbs.

Whoosh, whoosh. Under the violent wind, dirt was lifted, and grasshook. After the 50-some Red Dragon Warriors landed, they transformed into their human forms amidst crystal-red flashes.

Every dragon Magician had carried some Warriors and Magicians from Ferde. They jumped down now.

Before, regular humans could never ride a dragon. Those who dared to try would be turned to ashes. Now, the dragons were won over by Link's power. They all wanted to join Ferde while the Ferde Warriors had their airship destroyed. Things were urgent, so they dealt with it.

Dozens of small airships were already waiting. The dragons and Warriors boarded the airships and were taken to their own residences.

The Red Dragon Warriors were taken to the Scorched Ridge, so they flew into the city with Link.

These smaller airships were mostly for civilian use. They weren't fast, but they were enough for use within Ferde. Around ten minutes later, Link, Celine, Nana, Felina, and the Red Dragon Warriors arrived inside Scorched Ridge.

Here, the dragons were shown to their rooms. After everyone was settled, Link prepared to visit the Red Dragon Queen.

He needed to go find the mysterious gear in the Sea of Void. This required a very powerful Void Ferry, and the best Void Ferry in the world had to be the dragon body. He had to find Gretel to undo the seal inside him.

But unfortunately, Evelina and Eliard found him before he could do that.

"Lord, there are two guests," Evelina said softly. She emphasized the last word. Clearly, these two had no good intentions in Ferde.

Link twitched and asked, "What, you couldn't handle it?"

They were just two outsiders with bad intentions. With Ferde's current power, there was nothing to fear.

Eliard shrugged. "We were going to, but you happened to be back, and they're a bit troublesome. We're afraid we can't control the significance of the matter."

Link was curious about their identities. He nodded. "Oh, tell me in detail inside the tower."

They entered the Mage Tower and walked straight to the core hall on the top level. Evelina clapped softly. "Lily, show us the target under heavy supervision."

"Yes, Magician," Lily's voice rang out. After that, powdery light suddenly fell from the center of the room. They quickly changed, forming two extremely realistic magic projections.

They were two young peopleone man and one womanaround 30 years old. They wore plain flaxen clothing. The man was a carriage driver and was traveling into the city. The women looked like an average woman. She was spinning linen in a workshop.

At a glance, they looked like the representation of the busy people in Ferde. But Link realized that they were familiar. After looking closely, he asked Eliard, "Isn't the man the Inferno Warrior we saw in the North?"

"It's him." Eliard nodded and provided more detailed information. "More than a month ago, they infiltrated the city and seemed to be looking for some information. We used the most secretive full perception magic seal to follow their tracks. They don't know that we're watching. The man is called Hamilton, and the woman is Noa. They're at Level-14 and are very troublesome."

They were two Level-14 Warriors. If they attacked secretly, Ferde's Divine Punishment protocol most likely could kill them. But if it failed, it would anger them. If people as strong as they were started killing in the city, it would be a bloodbath. Tens of thousands could die.

Clearly, this couldn't happen to Ferde. Thus, Eliard and the others didn't dare do anything.

Studying the two, Link thought for a while and then chuckled. "It's troublesome for me too, but this time, I brought back a powerful Soul Magician."

"Powerful?" Eliard was instantly interested. There weren't many Magicians in Firuman that Link would say was powerfuland a Soul Magician at that. He'd like to meet them. Evelina thought the same.

Link used Telepathy and said to Piasce who was in his room, "Mr. Piasce, I might need your help."

"Whatever you say, Lord," Piasce replied immediately. Ever since Link mended the crack, Piasce had become even more reverent. He'd revealed his wishes to stay in Ferde. Link obviously wouldn't bar someone so talented.

After receiving the reply, Link located Piasce and used the Transmission spell. An instant later, white light flashed in the hall. After the light faded, the blue-skinned Piasce appeared.

"Lord." Piasce bowed at Link and then looked at Eliard and Evelina. He was very shocked. The two before him were very powerful. They were at the Legendary level and were unexpectedly young. Thinking back, most of the powerful figures he'd seen in Ferde were young.

Seems that I've made the right choice. This place is filled with vigor and potential to grow, he thought.

On the other hand, Link introduced, "This is Magician Evelina. She specializes in plants and dragon magic. This is Magician Eliard, who specializes in elemental magic."

Then he said to Eliard and Evelina, "This is Piasce. He specializes in soul magic."

Everyone present was at the Legendary level. They had strong perceptions and could instantly sense what level everyone was at. They greeted each other politely, calling each other "Master."

After the introductions, Link explained the situation. When he was done, Piasce studied the two Inferno Warriors for around three minutes. Then he smiled.

"These two Warriors are powerful but don't have determined souls. I can easily control them."

Link wasn't surprised. These Warriors were from the Aragu Realm. They'd reached Legendary only thanks to their realm. With their own talent, they could only reach Level-6 in Firuman.

He chuckled. "Then it's up to you."

"Soul magic takes a while to become effective," Piasce said. "The most widely used tactics are hints and metaphors to not raise any alarms. Lord, please give me three days."

Link didn't mind. He chatted with the others for a while and prepared to find Gretel. Just as he turned, he received a message. Lord, Her Majesty is coming down.

Link was surprised. What's wrong? She can just send someone. Why would she come personally?

Just then, the rune of the door already lit up. Gretel's voice came from outside. "Duke, are you there?"

Was she in that much of a hurry?

Link found it strange, but he still said to Lily, "Open the door."

The magic door disappeared, revealing Red Dragon Queen Gretel. She wasn't alone. There were two elders behind herPettalong and Wardaas.

Link didn't follow the Dragon Valley's situation, but he knew that these two were the most powerful elders. Then he looked at Gretel. She wore a very formal gown, her hair was done up, and she'd put on makeup. It was a rare formal look.

The situation was strange.

Gretel looked the side and saw Evelina and Eliard. "Since you two are here, you can witness it."

"Witness? Witness what?" Eliard and Evelina stared at each other. They didn't understand Gretel's motive.

Gretel then looked at Piasce and smiled. "You must be Master Piasce from Omir."

Piasce was still shocked by Gretel's natural elegance and nobility. He quickly bowed deeply and said, "Yes, Your Majesty. I entered from the crack and was quite rude. I'd been looking for a time to visit you and beg for your forgiveness."

Gretel shook her head. "There is no need to ask for my forgiveness. No need."

With that, she walked to Link and suddenly lowered onto one knee. She raised her slender and pale hands. There was a crystal-red bracelet in her palms. Link recognized it. It was the bracelet of the dragon kingthe symbol of the dragon king's identity.

Her actions scared Link. It was too sudden and unexpected. The noble queen of the dragon race was kneeling before him. If the other dragons knew, they wouldn't know what to think.

Link quickly moved to the side. "Your Majesty, what are you doing?"

Evelina, Eliard, and Piasce were shocked too. The scene before them was absurd. They were dumbfounded even as spectators.

Gretel looked up at Link and murmured, "Link, the ancestors' souls at the Dragon Altar already gave the prediction. They've already chosen you as the next dragon king, but because of our arrogance and bias, we stubbornly refused this fact. But now, we must accept it."

The bracelet floated from her hands. It glowed crystal-red and floated towards Link. The light grew brighter as it got closer to Link. At the same time, the color turned to a silvery black, just like the black dragon form Link once had.

"Link, accept it. Become the next dragon king."

## 583. The Past Shapes Us All

Become the Dragon King? Link had never thought of that. In truth, he had thought about bringing the young Red Dragons into the fold, but only as part of Ferde, and only some of them. He had never actually thought about ruling the entire dragon race. Also, if he became Dragon King, where would that put the Red Dragon Queen? As a dragon, she was still young. With royal dragon blood flowing through her veins, she could still live for 2000 years. There had never been any record of a king or queen as young as her retiring at such a young age. Link was stunned for a moment but quickly composed himself. Even though the Dragon King's Bracelet was drifting in the air towards him, he did not take it. Instead, he stepped forward and bent over Gretel, trying to pull her up. "Your Highness, what are you doing? Please get up." He was worried that Gretel might have been coerced by someone into doing this, which seemed possible, considering she still had not regained her full strength. More than a month had passed. Link noticed that Gretel still had the Red Dragon Crystal on her, which meant that she still required external asstance to replenish her power. To his surprise, Gretel did not budge from her half-kneel when Link tried to pull her up. In order to resist his efforts to get her up, she grounded both her knees to the ground. She then looked up at Link, her eyes slightly red. "Duke, I'm more than aware of my current physical condition. I fear... I won't be able to return to my full strength. Right now, I'm both physically and mentally unfit to lead the dragon race. I'm also aware of what the young Red Dragons are thinking now. I do not wish to see the dragon race fall apart because of me..." Link frowned. He channeled his power into Gretel's body through his arm in order to gauge how much she had recovered from her injuries. Link was a bit surprised by what he discovered. It had been close to two months, and Gretel's wounds had indeed healed for the most part. Though her external scarring had vanished completely, the deeper parts of her body showed no signs of recovery, especially her Heart of the Dragon, which remained just as lacerated as it had been two months ago. The damaged Heart of the Dragon was still pumping out Dragon Power. However, this new Dragon Power flowing in her seemed weak and turbulent. It was definitely a far cry from the near flawless Dragon Power she had before. Her current state was a lot worse than Link had anticipated. With his limited understanding of the "Dragon" magic book, Link was unable to help Gretel with her predicament. Even the Red Dragon Queen herself and the Red Dragon Elders, who had a much more profound understanding of Dragon Power, could not think of any way to restore Gretel back to her former glory, so it seemed unlikely that Link would fare any better than any one of them. "See?" Gretel let out a slow breath. "I'm no longer the queen the dragon race deserves." With her Heart of the Dragon in tatters, she was now a mere shadow of her former self. If word of this got out, ambitious Red Dragons would begin circling around her like sharks, scheming to usurp her. In the worst case scenario, Gretel might even be asssinated to make room for a more competent ruler. Gretel was intelligent enough to see the danger she would be putting her life in if she remained on the throne. On account of his many contributions to the dragon race, Link was the only candidate for the position of Dragon King that she recognized at the moment. Finally understanding why she was doing this, Link looked at Red Dragon Elder Pettalong who was standing behind her. The aged Red Dragon wordlessly gave him a nod. He had already accepted the cold hard reality of his queen's condition. Link then looked at Wardaas, another Red Dragon Elder. He was much younger than Pettalong. He also had Level-9 Pinnacle power and was probably close to hitting Legendary. He seemed displeased about this, but when Link's gaze fell on him, he immediately suppressed his dissatisfaction and said with a low voice, "Duke, you are the only person fit to rule us right now." From the looks of things, even though there were differing voices on the subject among the dragons, they seemed to have reached a temporary consensus. If Link was willing, he would be able to transition smoothly to the role of Dragon King. With his current power level and intelligence, he might even be able to rapidly rise up the dragon's ranks and become an actual Dragon King! Should he accept their offer then? Link began weighing the pros and cons of becoming Dragon King. The benefits were clear as day. He would have the loyalty of the entire dragon race. Dragons possessed near unlimited potential. Legendary masters would emerge among them under his guidance, and these masters would in turn provide a huge boost to Ferde's military strength. In the long run, however, this could spell disaster for him! The dragon race had always been fixated on maintaining the balance of the world. Due to their currently weakened state, they had temporarily set aside tradition in order to focus on more important matters. However, maintaining the balance of the world had always been an integral tradition of the dragon race. Since time immemorial, it had been ingrained so deeply within the consciousness of every dragon. Once the dragon race regained their former glory under Link's leadership, their obsession with tradition might flare up once more. If any of Link's actions ever ran contrary to the dragons' tradition, their desire to maintain the balance world might drive them to resist Link's rule. It would be the end for him if he failed to appease them. Link was more than aware of his own character. He had never cared for the balance of the world. He was only ever content with admiring the dragons' guiding principle from a distance. It could be said that a race's current state was but a shadow cast by its own past. The dragons had a long history behind them. They were made by their millennia-long tradition of safeguarding the world's balance. In other words, there might be a clash of interests between Link and the dragon race in the future! The outcome of this conflict could also be foreseen. One faction of dragons would remain loyal to him, while another faction would rise up in revolt against Link's rule. At that point, the dragons had already become an integral part of Ferde's strength. Ferde would be caught in the crossfire of this conflict as a result. An age of darkness loomed menacingly in his future still. Such chaos and internal strife would only push Ferde closer to the edge of destruction. All these thoughts flashed through his mind in the blink of an eye. Finally, he made his choice. He could bring a couple of young progressive-minded Red Dragons into Ferde, which seemed a lot safer than the alternative. However, this would mean that he would not be able to become an actual Dragon King! Link then forcibly pulled the frail Red Dragon Queen up to her feet. With a wave of his hand, he activated a magical Distortion Field, forcibly pulling the two Red Dragon Elders up to their feet as well. Link then took the Dragon King's Bracelet, which was pulsating with a silver-black light. However, he did not put it on. Instead, he put it back around the Red Dragon Queen's snow-white wrist. "Duke?" Gretel was stunned. She did not expect him to refuse her offer. She also could not understand why he had refused it. Link took a step back and bowed deeply before her. He then said seriously, "Your Highness, I am a Duke of the dragon race, and I will forever pledge my loyalty only to you, queen of the dragons. If any of your young dragons wish to further hone their skills, they are more than welcome to come work in Ferde. Should they grow weary of Ferde, they could always return to Dragon Valley. As for your injuries, that won't be a problem. I imagine that the dragon ancestral spirit, who had given me the Heart of the Dragon, will also be able to heal your wounds." Pettalong was now looking at Link in confusion. Back then, he could see the fiery fire of ambition burning in the young man's eyes, which was the reason why he did not object to the Red Dragon Queen suggestion to retire from the throne. Link was the one who had sealed up the realm crack. Such a feat had helped improve his reputation among the dragons. If the queen had held onto the throne, Pettalong feared that Link would resort to more radical means to reach his goal. However, he did not anticipate Link's outright refusal of the throne. He stared at Link incredulously. Have I misjudged him? Evelina and Piasce, who was standing in a corner, also looked at Link in surprise as well. They could not understand why Link would do such a thing. Only Eliard was able to grasp Link's intentions. He looked at his friend and sighed inwardly. I see my old friend could still remain clear-minded even with potential fame and glory dangling before him. He truly is something. At that moment, Eliard felt nothing but pride and respect towards Link. The Red Dragon Queen looked at the Dragon King's Bracelet around her wrist. She then turned to look at Link in the eye. His eyes were still the same shade of black. Both his pupils glistened with a light as clear and penetrating as before. It was as if they were staring straightito her very core. She and Link had researched spatial magic together, had fought the Void Tyrant side by side, and had even traversed the Sea of Void with each other. They had also worked together to formulate a magic seal capable of killing a god. Though they were not related by blood, they had known each other for a long time. Gretel finally understood Link's intentions as she stared into his eyes. Taking a deep breath, Gretel shook her head and smiled bitterly at him. "Duke, the dragon race never had a depowered ruler sitting on its throne. This bracelet may well be the end of me." Link laughed heartily. "Who would dare come at you with me around?" Gretel's eyes glistened moistly when she heard Link's reply. Her red lips moved, as if she wanted to say something. However, the shadow of someone surfaced in her mind, and she decided against it. Gretel sighed. "Many thanks, Duke, for your support." "Your Highness, try to focus on your recovery. I'll also help you look for ways to hasten your recovery process." Gretel nodded and then turned around to leave. When the three Red Dragons left the place, Evelina walked up before Link and asked, "My lord, why did you reject her offer?" Link shook his head. "The past never stays completely dead. It defines who we all are. The dragons are an ancient race whose roots are deeply embedded in their past and tradition. I don't think I would be able to handle such a monolithic race on my own." Piasce was also pondering on this question. He was stunned when he heard what Link said. He realized that he had hugely underestimated this human lord's foresight. Suddenly, Link slapped his forehead. "I forgot to have Gretel unseal my Void Ferry. I'm going to go look for her." Whoosh. Piasce's superiority complex over Link had crumbled altogether. He could not help but chuckle. I guess he's still a youngster at heart. Must be good to be young, though.

## 584. Dragon King Of Light

Before Gretel could sit down after returning to her residence, Link arrived with a Transmission.

"Duke, what's wrong?" Gretel didn't understand. She suspected that Link regretted his decision.

Pettalong and Wardaas were there too. They also looked at Link.

Link chuckled and said, "Your Majesty, I think it's about time to undo the seal on my dragon form."U.p.dated. by NovelFull.Com

Gretel laughed awkwardly. She'd been both disappointed and furious at Link at the Island of Secrets. In anger, she'd sealed Link's dragon form. Thinking back, she didn't have to do that. It had just been a clash of opinions. She didn't have to be so extreme.

Since Link agreed to continue being the dragon duke, the seal should be undone.

Holding the bracelet gently, Gretel fed her power into it to activate it and undo Link's seal Wait, there was a problem. Something was wrong with the bracelet.

Gretel looked down at her own bracelet. According to past experience, it should glow with crystal-red light after adding her power. Then, she could seal or unseal any dragon's form at will.

This was the authority that belonged only to the dragon ruler.

But it was different now. She fed her power into the bracelet, but it was completely unresponsive. It didn't turn from silvery black to crystal-red. It was still silvery black, like a plain metal ring.

Seeing this, Pettalong opened his mouth to speak but stopped. He knew the reason.

Gretel understood quickly as well. She shook her head and smiled wryly. "Duke, I'm afraid I won't be able to unseal it for you."

With that, she took the bracelet off and gave it to Link. "It already recognizes your identity as the dragon king. It doesn't belong to me anymore."

It was strange. When the bracelet approached Link, it flashed with silvery black light again. It was identical to the color of Link's dragon form. When it was three feet from Link's body, it didn't need Gretel to hold onto it anymore. It hovered automatically and floated towards Link.

Link furrowed his brows. He didn't expect this would happen. He didn't wish it either. The bracelet floated over, but he didn't reach out to accept it.

Gretel continued, "Duke, you are the dragon king chosen by the ancestors. No one except you is qualified to wear this braceletnot even me. I am no longer the ruler."

"But" This was beyond Link's expectations.

Pettalong walked up. "Duke, don't hesitate," he urged. "The dragons need a strong leader. The bracelet will only choose its next owner."

"But Your Majesty, you're the one with pure royal dragon blood." Link didn't want this position. It didn't match his future plan.

Wardaas had unhappy because Link had only joined the dragon race halfway through. Link was strong, but he wasn't that legitimate. But seeing the bracelet's situation, he had nothing else to say.

The bracelet wasn't that powerful, but to the dragons, it represented ultimate authority. If it chose a ruler and another dragon wanted to become king or queen, they had to challenge the chosen and win.

But who was Link? He was a Level-13 Legendary Magician and was known throughout the Firuman Realm. It was like suicide challenging him.

In that case, Wardaas didn't have any objections. Seeing that Link was still hesitant, he thought that Link was worried about Gretel. So he said, "Duke, I actually have a good solution."

"Enlighten me."

"Her Majesty has always been looking for a qualified duke," Wardassaid discreetly. "Since she has stepped down from the throne, why don't you two marry? This way, the royal bloodline will not die"

Before he finished, Gretel's porcelain skin turned red. Link's brows furrowed. Why was this elder talking about this again?

Before Link replied, a voice said, "Shut up!"

Link was familiar with this voice. It was Celine. He turned around and saw a dark shadow rush over with extreme speed. A few jumps later, she was inside the hall of the queen's residence.

She strode to Link's side and slapped the bracelet floating towards Link. It fell to the ground with a crisp clang. She glared angrily at Wardaas. "Old man, mind your business. You want to getito our personal matters?"

Wardaas was so angry his whiskers shook, but he didn't speak. He naturally knew about Celine. He could only shrug and keep silent.

The blush on Gretel's face subsided, and her eyes darkened. Right, there's still Celine.

She waved at Wardass. "Wardaas, you can go now."

He was feeling awkward. Now, he bowed to Link and Gretel and scurried away.

Celine looked angrily at Gretel and pointed at Pettalong. "Make him leave too! I have something to say. Just the three of us!"

Gretel didn't know what Celine was planning, but she still nodded at Pettalong. The elder also retreated.

Only three remained in the hall.

Celine cast a Soundless Barrier around them and looked at Link. "Eliard told me about what happened, and I heard of some things too. Link, I just have one question. Do you still have feelings for her? Tell me the truth. Don't lie!"

At this question, Gretel also looked at Link, waiting for his answer.

Link kept quiet. He was asking himself this question too. What exactly was the relationship between him and Gretel? Pure friends? Or something else?

All their interactions flashed past his eyesthe Dragon Valley, Sea of Void, Island of Secrets, and finally, the extreme north. Especially there, he'd asked himself when faced with Halino's threat. At that time, he knew he didn't see Gretel as only friends.

In the past, he'd repressed himself because of Celine so he wouldn't cross the boundary. But now that Celine asked, he couldn't lie.

"I"

"Okay, I know the answer." Celine's eyes were misty. Unshed tears rolled inside. Her face was pale, and she bit her lip.

Link couldn't stand it. He grabbed her hands and said, "Okay, let's go back. I won't care about the dragon king or dragon race. Let's go back."

Unexpectedly, Celine sighed. "Now, I finally understand the pain that my ancestor, Soul Dominator Rosso, had felt."

"What?" Link looked at Celine. He discovered that the purple flames in her eyes were even more obvious. They kept flickering, and she seemed to be able to see into his soul and the entire world.

"Link," Celine murmured. "I knew this day would come long ago. I'd dreamed of it before. I had also dreamed of the terrifying futureand the scroll you hid."

As she spoke, she picked up the glowing dragon king bracelet and put it onto Link's wrist. "I didn't tell you, but I know that you know what the future will be like. But I know more than you. I also know that to change the future, you must become the leader of the dragons. That is only the first step."

She walked to Gretel and took her hand. "You will be his good wife, but I can't. The talent given by the ancestors isn't a blessing. It's a curse. A lonely curse."

Holding Gretel's hand, she placed itito Link's hand. Celine's tears had flowed out, dripping down. "Link, I know you want to keep me here now, but it's no use. I must travel far! I want to find a quiet place and practice the magic left by my ancestors Dummy, this isn't a farewell. Someday in the future, when you need me, I will come back."

Link was heartbroken. "You can't study in Ferde?" he asked, not understanding.

"No. I have the talent of prophecy, but the realm helps me. My talent is too weak, and I must strengthen it. I will walk down the cultivation path of my ancestors. I wanted to do it later, but now is a good time."

Celine looked to Gretel. "Your Majesty, take care of him for me."

Link didn't think this would happen. He'd just wanted to unseal his dragon form and go to the Sea of Void to look at the mysterious gear. When he came to see Gretel, he'd been happy. How did things turn out like this?

He knew that Celine was about to leave, but he didn't know what to say. He understood Celine too well. Since she already said it, it meant that she'd thought it over countless times. It was also the result of a prophecy. No matter what he could say, it would be useless. But he didn't want her to leave.

The longing and anxiety reddened Link's eyes. In a panic, he lost his mind and blurted, "I'll go with you. I won't care about anything. Firuman is so troublesome. We can find a peaceful realm. There are so many realms in the Sea of Void. There's got to be somewhere quiet, right?"

"Dummy!" Crying and laughing at the same time, white light glowed around Celine. She was using the powerful transmission magic equipment that Link made for her.

Her last words came from the white light. "Link, you have to keep living well. Ferde has to keep doing well. Wait for me!"

With that, the white light faded.

Something went missing from Link's heart. Footsteps sounded beside himGretel. "Duke," she said. "She'll come back."

"I know, I know. Your Majesty, I'll go back now. My mind needs a few days to rest." Link hurried away. He didn't use the Transmission spell. His heart was in a mess; he didn't dare.

Stumbling, he returned to his Mage Tower. After he entered his room, he didn't come back out. He didn't care about anything or see anyone.

This went on for seven days.

Seven days later, his bedroom door opened.

Link walked out. In the hall, the first person he saw was Red Dragon Queen Gretel. Then he saw Eliard, Evelina, Vance, many of Ferde's core Magicians, and then the Red Dragon Elders.

He had recovered his calmness. He would strengthen Ferde and use all his might to face the incoming dark era!

Someday, Celine would come back. He wanted to give her a bright future!

Everywhere he went, people bowed.

"Your Majesty." Gretel had already changed the way she addressed him. She could sense that Link had undone the seal, admitting his status as the Black Dragon King.

"Lord." That was Eliard's group.

"Our king!" That was the elders.

Roar. The young dragons in the sky roared brightly.

In the Year 1061 of the Light Ages, the third month of harvest, Ferde Lord, Legendary Magician, the Chosen One of the God of Light, Link Morani was recognized by the dragon king bracelet, becoming the 57th dragon king of the dragon race. He would be known as the Dragon King of Light.

## 585. Is It Real? Or Is It An Illusion?

Hundreds of dragons were circling in the air, whipping up a roaring wind that could be heard miles away.

Celine stood on the edge of Girvent Forest to the west of Ferde silently looking out from high ground at the dazzling magical city in the distance.

Knowing that Link had finally calmed down, she let out a sigh of relief.

After wiping away a tear from the corner of an eye, Celine turned around and began walking towards the forest behind her. Suddenly, a huge green silhouette emerged from the trees, its aura tumultuous and menacing. However, Celine did not move a muscle.

It slowed down as it drew closer. Finally, it materialized into a green-furred tiger before Celine. It then spoke, "Mistress, you finally came."

It was Dorias. Ferde was no longer a place he could reside in, especially as the city became even more prosperous and its population grew every day. Ordinary folk feared him, so Dorias thought it best to live in Girvent Forest, away from civilization.

"Are you waiting for me?" said Celine curiously.

Dorias shook its head furiously. "Of course. The lord has ordered me to. He said that you may need a ride, though I must say this is the most degrading request I've ever received from him. I'm supposed to be a Warrior, not some mule to be ridden on... Then again, orders are orders. Can't really say no to the man himself, can I?"

Celine decided to go along with Link's arrangement. "I don't need a ride right now. I do, however, require a guide. I need to find a quiet place to continue my magical training. You've lived here for a long time now. Surely you must know a couple of places like that?

Dorias pondered on this for a moment. "I do know a few secluded places in the area, but I'm not sure if they're quiet. Should I take you there then?"

"Of course."

"Then get on, and hold on tight."

Celine climbed up onto the tiger's back. In a single bound, it was able to cover 100 feet. Before long, both Celine and the tiger vanished into the forest.

...

Ferde, outside Scorched City, in an ordinary courtyard

While the dragons were circling in the sky, a well-built man was driving a battered-looking horse carriage towards the entrance of an ordinary courtyard. Once there, he undid the horse's reins and led itito the courtyard.

Inside, a woman in a linen dress was busy working a loom, which rattled on endlessly.

"I have no idea what's going on, but somebody needs to do something about these dragons that's been flying in the sky these past few days," the man muttered irritably, looking up at the sky.

"Didn't the lord announce what's going on? The dragons have crowned the lord as their king. They're celebrating his coronation right now," said the woman. Her eyes were still glued to her work. Though they were not exactly living in poverty, most of their furniture was old and shabby. She thought her work might be able to earn them enough money to afford repairs around the house.

"Oh, you sure know a lot, don't you?" said the man with a huff. He led the horse into the stable, gave it a bit of hay in its feeding trough, and then poured a ladleful of water into its water trough. Fearing that it might swallow more than it could handle and end up sick, the man added a bit of straw wine into the water.

As he did all this, the man felt as if he had been doing the same thing for the last ten years... What was he thinking? He had always been a coachman. What else was he supposed to do for the rest of his life, anyway?

The man shook his head. For some reason, he sensed that something was wrong. He should be living like the soldiers out on the street, clad in their brilliant armor and armed with their elegant swords. No, he should have been someone important, maybe even an esteemed master like those Magicians in Ferde's Mage Tower.

He looked down at his own hands. They were covered in dirt and grime. He then sniffed at his sleeve. It smelled of horse urine. Finally, he turned to his wife, who was still busy working her loom... Wait, when did he marry her? Why could he not remember a thing?

"Hamilton, what are you doing there? Still having one of your daydreams? Why don't you come here and make yourself useful? I can't carry all these spindles by myself, you know!" His wife was standing beside the loom. She was staring at him furiously, her hands clasped on her waist.

Hamilton jolted from his reverie and hurried over. "Coming, dear. I'll handle this. Why don't you go cook something? I'm starving."

Hamilton felt a sharp stab of hunger in his stomach. The piece of bread he had this morning was not as filling as he thought it would be.

Suddenly, a dragon's roar reverberated in the sky. Hamilton looked up at the sky.

A dragon was flying especially low in the sky. Hamilton could clearly see the dragon's dark red scales which gleamed with a metallic light. The dragon seemed to be glowing as well. As it flew over, countless specks of light fell like raindrops to the ground.

One of these specks of light landed on Hamilton. In an instant, he felt a sudden warmth flow through his body. All the exhaustion he had accumulated after a whole day's work vanished without a trace, along with the hunger he had worked up.

Noa came running out of the house. She looked up at the sky and happily said, "That's the Dragon's Blessing. How wonderful."

"What's a Dragon's Blessing?" asked Hamilton, perplexed.

Noa hit his arm indignantly. "How ignorant can you really be? The royal messenger has been going around from door to door telling us all about it. There should also be announcements posted at every corner on the street. You could have at least stopped to take a look at some of the posters outside."

Hamilton tried to recall what he had seen and heard as he made his rounds around the city, and realized that he had indeed heard something about the Dragon's Blessing. However, as he had been a bit absent-minded of late, feeling that there was something wrong about his life, he did not pay it much mind.

"Alright, a blessing's nice and all, but I still have dinner to make for tonight." Noa pulled up her sleeves and returned to the kitchen.

Hamilton began piling up the spindles under his arms. Suddenly, there was a knock on the door. A voice sounded behind it. "Is anyone home?"

Her wife shouted from the kitchen, "Hamilton, there's a customer outside our door. I'm busy right now, so go answer the door!"

"Oh, okay."

Hamilton walked towards the entrance and pulled open the shabby door, which whined noisily in its hinges. He was taken aback by what he saw there.

There were two men standing outside the courtyard. One of them was wearing a silver-black battle robe with a sword dangling from his waist. What immediately stood out about the other man was his blue skin. He was clad in a dark blue robe with golden edges, which was usually reserved for high-ranking Magicians in Ferde. What came as a greater shock to the senses were their eyes which glowed with a piercing light. He was now feeling a bit light-headed as his heart thumped incessantly against his chest.

"Who's at our door?" shouted Noa again from the kitchen.

Hamilton swallowed. "No... no idea."

"Useless old fool!" shouted Hamilton's wife. Hurried footsteps sounded behind him. Upon reaching the courtyard's entrance, she gasped in surprise when she saw who their guests were and immediately knelt down before them. "Peace be upon you, my lord."

She then pulled at her husband, trying to get him to kneel down with her on the ground. At first, Hamilton seemed reluctant to do so. After much resisting, he finally gave in and knelt on the ground beside Noa.

Hamilton was just an ordinary commoner, and it was customary for commoners like him to kneel before someone as important as a lord. Still, it did not sit right with him.

Link observed the man and woman who was kneeling before him, somewhat surprised. He then turned to Piasce. "Good job."

Soul magic was simply incredible. Two Level-14 masters had been subdued so easily without shedding a drop of blood. Fooled inobelieving that they were mere commoners, both of them even behaved like actual commoners before the lord of Ferde.

Both Link and Piasce entered the courtyard and closed the door behind them. Link then gave two quick taps on Hamilton and Noa with a hand and cast a spell on them, sealing both their powers in them.

Hamilton and Noa looked at him quizzically, not sure what he had done to them.

"My lord, have we done something wrong?" stammered Noa.

Link smiled. He looked around the courtyard and found a chair to sit on. He then said to the couple still kneeling before him, "Get up, both of you."

The two obediently did as they were told, looking uneasily at each other.

When the two of them got up to their feet, Link said to Piasce, "That's enough, Piasce. It's time to ask them a few questions."

Piasce nodded. He looked at Hamilton and Noa, muttered an incantation and then snapped his fingers.

In an instant, the couple shuddered, and their glazed eyes cleared up. Then, there was a look of surprise on both their faces.

Surprise quickly turned into anger. Hamilton did not take this too well in particular. He was a Level-14 Infernal Warrior and was also a high-ranking member of the Fire Sect. He had every right to be furious at Link for playing such a dirty trick on him!

He growled through gritted teeth, "Well played, Link, well played! I'm gonna kill you!"

Link quickly cast a Distortion spell. A vague ripple appeared in the air with a hum. With their powers sealed inside them, both Hamilton and Noa were forced back down on their knees, unable to resist Link's spell.

"End me if you can! Do it now!" roared Hamilton. He was still struggling to break free from Link's invisible restraints.

However, his efforts were all in vain.

Link raised a hand, lifting Noa's face by her lower jaw. "I can feel the seeds of life sown in you. It's Hamilton's child, isn't it? But aren't all Infernal Warriors supposed to abstain from matters of the flesh? Or have the two of you chosen to forsake your god?"

Piasce was able to uncover this piece of information from the two Infernal Warriors' consciousness before confronting them.

"What?!" Hamilton was stunned. Noa had actually conceived his child. But this was in direct violation with the tenets of his religion. What was he supposed to do now?

## 586. No Choice

It was not only Hamilton. Noa was also dazed.

As a Level-14 Inferno Warrior, she was very familiar with her body. Even if Link didn't say it, she could feel it too. Now that Link exposed her, she instinctively clutched her stomach and looked at Hamilton, the child's father.

In the Fire Sect, all Inferno Warriors had to swear before entering the sect that their life would belong to god. Their entire lives would be dedicated to the god. If a man and woman conceived a child, their pure belief would be tited. This was the greatest blasphemy!

If it happened and they were discovered, not only would their bodies suffer the divine punishment, their souls would also fall into hell and suffer the Tatanrose torture. Afterwards, the tortured would feel a burning thirst inside them. Cool water would be right beside their lips, but once they lowered their heads, the water would retreat, rising when they raised their heads again. This torture would continue until their souls were burned to ashes.

As an Inferno Warrior, Hamilton had been taken by a priest to visit hell. He'd seen the punishment with his own eyes. At that time, he'd felt terrified. He didn't expect this day would come to him too.

Fear seized his heart as he looked to Noa. "No, this child"

He wanted to say that this child shouldn't exist. But halfway through, Noa stepped back. Tears flowed down as she shook her head furiously. The days of being a regular couple were right before her eyes. Thinking back, it had been a deception, but their experiences had all been real. The baby in her was real too. She couldn't give it up.

Hamilton was just panicking too. After the panic subsided, he couldn't do it either. Seeing Noa like that, he sighed and looked to Link. "Ferde lord, you are so cruel What do you want us to do?"

Since things were at this point, there was no way back. He could only surrender.

Link wasn't proud about his dirty trick. Thinking, he said calmly, "I already know why you're here. Go back to the Isle of Dawn and bring some news to those High Elves."

With that, Link handed a scroll to Hamilton, who accepted it and started reading.

"I wrote the information on there, as well as my goal. Afterwards, remain on the island and keep working for the High Elves. Record their actions for me. For these two things, you only have to follow the current for the former. But for the latter, you must work hard."

The High Elves on the Isle of Dawn were too xenophobic. The island's situation was not transparent. Link had to stop the fusion of realms while the World Tree was the most important of all. He might have to personally step onto the Isle of Dawn to deal with it one day.

In that case, news from the Isle of Dawn was extremely important.

Hamilton looked at the scroll and was silent for five full minutes. Then he asked, "What about Noa?"

"Her? She will stay in Ferde. Her power will continue to be sealed, but she will have a manor in Scorched Ridge with servants. She will give birth to your child and raise it. As long as you do well, your woman and child will be fine."

This was a dirty trick, but desperate times called for desperate actions. Link had done even dirtier things before. He wasn't innocent anymore.

Beside him, Piasce couldn't really take it. However, he'd once been a Soul Tutor in another realm and had seen these political tactics before. He didn't like it, but he still kept his expression calm.

Hamilton fell silent. Half a minute later, he said, "Aren't you afraid of me abandoning her?"

One only had to harden their hearts a bit to abandon a wife.

"Yes," Link said honestly. "So I have another protection. Piasce, show him."

Piasce walked up. He put a hand-sized silver mirror before Hamilton's eyes and asked, "Do you see who's inside it?"

Hamilton nodded. He saw his own reflection. The mirror was very smooth, and the image was clear.

Piasce took the mirror away. He took out a needle and stabbed itito the mirror. "Ah!" Hamilton cried. He looked down and saw a hole appear on his leg. Blood poured out.

"What spell is this?" Hamilton was shocked.

"A Soul curse," Piasce explained. "A person doesn't only have one soul. It has many divisions. Some are the core while others are auxiliary. One of your unimportant souls was captured by this silver mirror. No matter how far you go, even if you go to another realm, I can prick this little guy's heart in the mirror, and you'll be dead too. Of course, the lord doesn't wish to kill you so quickly. Instead, he wants you to experience 3000 tortures before dying. That means that I'll carefully prick 3000 holes in you while being careful to not let you die halfway through"

Hamilton was terrified. Before Piasce finished, he was already covered in cold sweat. He quickly said to Link, "Don't worry. I will complete your mission. Please take care of my child and Noa."

Link nodded. He flicked a finger at Hamilton and a ball of light buried into his body. Hamilton shuddered. His power was unsealed. Feeling the power surging inside him, he stood up slowly. He looked at Link not far from him and sensed the man's power. His expression darkened.

This Ferde lord was only Level-13, and the Magician beside him was only Level-11. They were less than six feet away. If he burst forward, he could kill those two and snatch the terrible mirror.

He might even be able to save Noa and his child and live out the rest of their lives, hidden in a quiet place.

This thought kept growing in his mind. He could barely control it. His only worry was that he had no weapons and wasn't confident.

But right then, Link had another trick. The floorboards of the old cabin suddenly cracked open. A cloth bag flew out. It was the magic equipment Hamilton had carefully hidden earlier.

Whoosh. Link tossed the bag before Hamilton. "Take your things too. A Warrior needs a sword."

This was a lifesaver! Hamilton bent over to pick up the bag. A familiar sword hilt peeked out of the opening. It was his Blade of Fire sword.

His weapon was right before his eyes. If he reached out, he would get his sword. Then he could pull it out and strike at the Ferde lord.

This thought flashed past his eyes. Then he did it!

Ignoring the extreme pain in his legs, he grasped the sword hilt. Power surged into it. Boom! Flames wrapped around the sword, fire splashing in all directions and illuminating the small cabin.

He used all his power with this move. He felt that this move was his most perfect attack.

At that moment, his sword was like the moon; the blade was like a tide. The power of fire poured out wildly, enveloping his two enemies instantly. In 0.1 seconds, he could destroy these two lowly bastards.

He really wanted to do that.

The next moment, something changed.

The Ferde lord had been sitting casually on the chair. Hamilton saw him suddenly raise a hand. When the hand moved, it had been covered in human skin. In the blink of an eye, it darkened and was covered in silvery black scales.

Clang! A sword radiating with moonlight suddenly appeared in his hands. The sword stabbed forward with impossible speed, instantly hitting his Blade of Fire.

Cling! There was a clash of metal, neither light nor heavy. Then Hamilton felt strange power surge into his sword. He could feel that the power was condensed and sharp like a needle. His own power was like a bubble full of water. It popped as soon as the needle came.

Whoosh! The surging flames around the Blade of Fire let out a gurgle and then collapsed. The strange power didn't stop. It sped along the sword into his arm. He felt his arm go numb; he couldn't hold the sword anymore.

Clang! The Blade of Fire flew out of his hand, spinning, and crashed onto the ground a few feet away. The sword with moonlight continued forward, going straight to the point between Hamilton's brows. He retreated. While doing so, he discovered that the Ferde lord was still in his seat.

He's that powerful? He just sits there. How can he hit me if I keep retreating?

As soon as this thought appeared, he saw a ring of extremely detailed runes light up around the sword tip. The tip buried into it. Then this ring appeared before him. The next moment, Hamilton felt coldness between his brows.

The feeling was fleeting and disappeared, along with the intricate halo of runes. The Ferde lord was still in his seat. His sword had already returned to its sheath.

Hamilton gulped. Feeling liquid flow from his forehead, he reached up to touch it. It was one drop of bloodno more, no less. The horrible attack was like a dream.

How could such swordsmanship exist in the world? How could such magic exist in the world?

He suddenly thought of the Black Forest. Back then, he'd faced some Magicians from Firuman. He couldn't hit them no matter what. They seemed to all be prepared for his actions. Even though they weren't as powerful as him, they could toy him as if he was a child.

These are all the top figures of Firuman, and the Ferde lord is one of them. No, he's the most terrifying one. Oh, what stupidity did I just commit?

Thinking now, Link had already predicted this and voluntarily gave him his weapon. It was like giving a child a toy. No matter how the child played, he was still a child.

"Why don't you kill me?" Hamilton asked dejectedly.

Link wagged a finger, and the Blade of Fire flew back into Hamilton's hands. "Everyone makes mistakes. I usually give them a chance to change. Go back to the Isle of Dawn, Hamilton. I always keep your word. I will take care of your child and woman."

Hamilton had nothing to say. He nodded at the soulless Noa, picked up the clothes on the ground, put his sword away, and turned.

After Hamilton left, Link said to Noa, "Madam, let's go."

Noassoul was clearly weaker than Hamilton. She'd already surrendered. Hearing Link, she nodded. White light flashed around her, and the three disappeared.

Link didn't rest after settling Noa. He talked to Gretel, assigned tasks to Eliard and the others, and then went to the roof of the Mage Tower alone.

Everything was ready. It was time to enter the Sea of Void and find that mysterious piece of gear.

## 587. Entering The Sea Of Void

Argh!!! A blood-curdling shriek sounded.

It came from an odd-looking blue-white tower. The two demons standing at the tower's entrance sniggered at each other. One of them even licked their lips.

"Master Eilot's having his fun again. Sounds like his toy is enjoying themselves too."

This had been going on for more than three months. Every day, the Dark Tutor, Eilot would bring in an Omirian to torture for ten hours.

The Omirian prisoners had entered the tower physically whole. They had no scars on them. Some were even plump and white. However, after those ten hours of torture, the Omirians were all reduced to piles of minced meat.

The tower was now filled with said piles of Omirian minced meat. The demons seemed to love it for some reason.

Argh!!! Another shriek echoed from behind the tower walls. Following the shriek was a feeble voice, which pleaded, "I'll talk, I'll talk, Eilot, just stop. I'll tell you everything!"

The tower's first floor was a circular hall where the screams had been coming from. An Omirian with dark blue skin gave a brisk wave of his hand, and the demon executioners who had been abusing their victims in front of him immediately left the hall.

The Omirian was Eilot. Three months ago, he was a Soul Tutor respected by all Omirians. Now, he was Nozama's Dark Tutor.

He was now sitting on a black throne. In a corner of the circular hall was a torture rack where a young female Omirian was left to bleed. Blood flowed profusely from her wounds before hitting the floor. The dripping sound it made was enough to make anyone'shi

There was a cage on the other side of the room. Ten Omirians in commoner attire were imprisoned in it. There was a young man kneeling in it, staring at the young Omirian girl on the rack. He pleaded, his eyes bloodshot with tears, "Let her go, Eilot, and I'll tell you anything you want to know!"

Eilot's face remained expressionless. "You're in no position to negotiate."

Saying this, he gripped at the void. A dark blue whip appeared in his hand in an instant. With a violent motion, he whipped at the girl who was hanging from the rack ten feet away from Eilot. Upon being struck, the barely conscious girl let out another blood-curdling shriek.

Whoop! The whip returned to Eilot. Fine steel teeth lined the whip's length. With every stroke, its teeth would fasten themselves to its victim's skin. It would then pull out chunks of flesh and skin from him or her every time it returned to its handler's hand.

The girl on the rack screamed again, but this time, her voice was frail and lifeless. The prisoners in the cage shuddered. Teasstreamed down the young man's face even more as he looked on helplessly at the horrific scene.

Seeing how severe her wounds were and how much blood she had lost, the young man knew that she was beyond saving.

"No! No! Eilot, no!" shouted the young man in the cage, his eyes widened with growing hatred.

Eilot looked at him and then said, "Delin, I'm about to kill your sister. The next one to be hung on the rack will be your father. I'll save your mother for last. Piasce was your tutor, but he is now a wanted man. Now he's escaped, and still, you would give your life up to protect him?"

Delin had undergone rigorous training in Soul Magic. Forcibly extracting any information from his soul would have decimated his mind, and Eilot would not be able to gain anything from him. He would not have gone through this much trouble if there had been an easier way to make Delin speak.

Delin was now kneeling on the ground, emotionally exhausted. He said in a low voice, "I'll tell you everything. I only ask that you give us a painless death. Please don't torture us any more."

"I can live with that," said Eilot, nodding. He had always found the routine of torture tedious anyway.

An hour later, ten Omirian corpses were lifted out of the blue-white tower and thrown out onto the pathway leading to the tower's entrance. A couple of demons rushed over and tore into the corpses, ripping their flesh clean off their bones.

In the tower, Eilot remained seated on his throne without moving a muscle. His eyes were closed. However, he was not asleep. Rather, he had slipped into a meditative state commonly practiced by the Omirians.

Physically, he was still within the realm. However, his soul had entered the Sea of Void.

The Sea of Void was filled with eddies of energy. A naked soul entering the Sea of Void was a risky affair. One would need to possess extraordinary skill in order to traverse the Sea of Void safely. There were only three... no, two people in the Omir realm capable of such a feat.

Eilot's path was thick with white Mana mist, energy vortexes, and negative energy pitfalls. Wily Void creatures lurked in the shadows as well, but Eilot managed to avoid them all. Half an hour later, a red globe appeared before him.

From afar, the object looked like a tiny bubble in the depths of an ocean. However, as he got closer, the red globe grew bigger. After swimming towards it for half an hour, the tiny bubble had expanded into a huge globe, occupying Eilot's line of sight completely.

Eilot made his way expertly through the bubble for half an hour. Soon, a whirlpool appeared up ahead. Without hesitation, he plunged into the eye of the vortex.

Beyond the eye of the vortex was a long tunnel. Dim, red light emanated from its walls, swimming around Eilot as he pressed on. The light wove all kinds of imagery across the walls. At times, it was a laughing skull; at others, it was a roaring beast. There was even one which depicted a giant pulling apart a dwarf limb by limb. All of it seemed surreal to Eilot.

Twenty minutes passed, and Eilot finally reached the end of the tunnel. There was a ball of dark red light up ahead. Eilot began to accelerate and soon burst through the light.

The scene before him shifted. In the next few seconds, the surreal imagery vanished, giving way to an empty hall.

The hall was built on a seemingly endless plain. There were no walls in it. Only four circular pillars were holding it together. Bits of sand were swept up by a bitter wind. The sky was a shade of red, and a lone sun hung from it, casting a weak, red glow over the plain. One could see silhouettes of towering demons lumbering aimlessly in the horizon. The bitter wind also carried with it inhuman screams across the wasteland.

In this dark, empty word, a soft, mellow voice spoke out, "Eilot, I take it that you've come here to bring me some good news?"

Eilot's eyes searched for the source of the voice. They were drawn to a pile of bones shaped like a throne at the end of the empty hall. The bones were pitch-black, and they were mostly skulls. Each of their sockets was glowing with an eerie red light.

Sitting atop the throne was a middle-aged man. Hishi

The man was wearing an elegant robe with golden embroidery. He was looking at Eilot, his hand propping up one side of his face, a faint smile playing around his lips.

It was the Lord of the Deep, Nozama!

He looked completely out of place here in the middle of the barren wasteland. On the surface, he looked like a human master who had been cast outito the depths of the Abyss but had yet to reach rock bottom.

At first sight, no one would have taken him for the notorious Lord of the Deep.

However, Eilot knew who he was dealing with. He immediately bowed deeply before the middle-aged man and then said, "Master, I've interrogated all of Piasce's disciples. Through the bits of information I had gathered from them, I was able to determine the location of that presence you seek. These are their statements. Please take a look."

He then handed over a black orb of light to Nozama.

Nozama took it. After feeling it for a few minutes, his perfect face broke into a smile. "Well done, Eilot."

He then opened his hand, from which emerged a thick haze of light. The haze solidified into strands of darkness and then flew out of the hall and towards the far corners of the wasteland.

A few minutes later, dust rose up in the horizon. Demons of all shapes and sizes were converging towards the hall from every direction at top speed.

The demons' number grew by the minute. Half an hour later, approximately 3000 demons had reached the hall. Eilot could clearly feel just how powerful these demons were. Every one of them had at least Legendary-level power, the strongest among them being Level-15.

Seeing 3000 Legendary demon masters in one place would have made anyone feel despair. Eilot could even feel his spirit form quaking at the sight of them.

After making sure that everyone had answered his call, Nozama spoke with that soft, mellow voice of his.

"Eilot, return to Omir and have Mysin prepare a Void Ferry. My army of demons will seek out this presence."

"Yes, Master," Eilot humbly replied. Mysin was one of the three Soul Magic masters in Omir. His skill in making Void Ferries was second only to Piasce.

Nozama's mind was set on obtaining his prize. His demons moved quickly. Soon, all 3000 demons were all aboard a vast disc-shaped Void Ferry.

Mana surged through the Void Ferry's circuits, and the entire vessel roared into life.

"Let's go!" ordered Nozama.

The Void Ferry plunged into the Sea of Void like a huge whale diving back into the depths of the ocean.

At that moment in the Firuman realm, Link had taken on his black dragon form. His dragon's body was vast, its wingspan close to a hundred feet. Silver-black dragon scales glittered under the sun across the length of his body.

He almost blocked out the sun in the sky when he spread out his wings.

All the Red Dragons in Ferde were looking at their Black Dragon King in awe. In dragon society, size equaled power. It had been 30,000 yeassince a dragon as powerful as Link had appeared in their midst.

After making the necessary adjustments to his dragon body, he was able to propel himself 5000 feetito the sky with one powerful stroke of his wings. His body began to fade in the air until he finally vanished from sight.

He had also entered the Sea of Void.

## 588. Hes Looking For Death

North, Black Forest

Crunch, crunch, crunch. It was the sound of walking in the snow. A Dark Elf was rushing over the snow in the forest.

He ran northward. The further he ran, the sparser the trees and thicker the snow. When he passed a hill, a boundless icy plain appeared. In the distance, there was a fortress made of bones. It was the Skeletal Fort of the Army of Destruction.

The Dark Elf kept sprinting and quickly arrived at the door.

"Report your identity!" Two Nagas crossed their weapons and blocked the Dark Elf.

"I am Pheron, commander of the Death Hand. I have important information for Her Highness!" The Dark Elf showed his emblem and was allowed to pass.

Pheron kept running and soon arrived at the main hall. Here, he slowed down and fixed his clothes. Taking a deep breath, he entered the hall.

There weren't many people here. A finely made skeletal throne was at the head of the room. Dressed in a gauze dress, Princess Ellie sat in the throne and listened to the generals' reports.

Pheron glanced at the princess' flawless features and his heart sped up. He quickly lowered his head, not daring to look further. In reality, he didn't have to come personally. However, he would always come to report important news to see the princess. It was the same for this time.

Dark Elf Princess Ellie Danas was extremely talented and had a strong aura. She was also beautiful and flawless. Many Dark Elves called her the "starlight rose under a moonlit sky." So many youths were in love with her. Many High Elves were infatuated too and even betrayed the Isle of Dawn to join the Army of Destruction to be around her.

Her voice was mellow and smooth but also had a bit of roughness to it. It was very unique. Pheron felt that his fatigue would disappear by just listening to this heavenly voice. If he could kiss No, this was blasphemy.

The princess would definitely become queen in the future. Her husband would be a noble. She would have nothing to do with a commoner like him. He couldn't think too much.

Just as he was thinking nonsense, a voice came from the throne.

"Pheron, I heard that you have important news from the South?"

The voice shocked Pheron out of his thoughts. He immediately went up and lowered onto one knee. He took out a sheepskin scroll.

"Your Highness, this is news from a spy in the South. It's about Ferde."

"Oh, Ferde?" Eugene (Princess Ellie) was instantly interested. She reached out, and the scroll flew to her hands. After scanning it, her face darkened.

The scroll said that the Ferde lord had completely mended the Realm Crack in the Korora Mountain Range. This gave him much prestige. He married the Red Dragon Queen, and soon after, the queen stepped down. Link became king of the dragons, and the dragons joined Ferde. A huge and terrifying black dragon appeared in Ferde, but its identity was still unknown.

Eugene obviously knew who the black dragon was!

In such a short time, his strength and authority increased so much. How can we fight if this keeps going on? Eugene couldn't help but worry.

Before becoming commander of the Army of Destruction, Eugene had been confident. She'd thought that Link and Ferde weren't anything special. But after being in the position and getting familiar with politics, she felt helpless.

Admittedly, the Army of Destruction was powerful. However, its power was already at the peak. They couldn't improve in the near future, especially after the Realm Crack was fixed. The realm would become smooth and flawless. It would be difficult for the Nagas and demons to enter the realm. Under these circumstances, it was already a feat to maintain the army's current scale. It was near impossible to expand.

On the other hand, the humans had a large population of more than 200 million. If the dragons were added, there were millions more dragons and strong fighters. More terrifying was that the human Warriors were quickly strengthening. Ferde's Sunlight Army was already able to fend off the demons.

The longer it drags on for, the worse it'll become. Soon, even the Black Forest might not be able to stop the humans. What should I do? Eugene furrowed her brows.

Now, she was regretting the actions earlier. If she knew this would happen, she wouldn't have ended their relationship with the High Elves.

Unfortunately, regret was useless. Eugene kept thinking but couldn't think of a good way to restrain the humans. Just as she was frustrated, Molina walked over. Judging from her expression, she had something to say.

Eugene understood and said, "Pheron, I see. You've worked hard. Go rest now."

"Yes, Your Highness." Pheron looked up at the princess again. He didn't want to leave.

"You all go now," Eugene said. "I'm tired and need to rest."

"Yes, Your Highness."

Everyone in the room left, leaving Eugene and Molina.

"Saint, what's wrong?" Eugene looked at Molina.

Molina nodded. "There's something important about the Ferde lord."

Eugene shrugged, feeling upset. "What now? Don't tell me he's going to marry some High Elf princess and the Isle of Dawn will join Ferde."

"What? Marry? The Isle of Dawn?" Molina didn't know about the South yet.

Eugene passed the scroll to her. "Look for yourself."

After scanning the content, Molina's brows furrowed too. Things were getting more and more difficult, but she quickly composed herself. Pointing at the scroll, she said, "The black dragon king is Link."

"I know that. I've seen him in the Dragon Valley." Eugene threw her hands up.

"But I also know that he isn't in Ferde now. More accurately, he's not in Firuman!" Molina continued.

"What?" Eugene straightened. This news was too timely. "How do you know? Did your god tell you?"

"Yes." Molina nodded. "My master felt a slight ripple in the realm barrier and came to this conclusion after adding his observations. He is chasing the Ferde lord in the Sea of Void. He will definitely die this time!"

"Great!" Eugene exclaimed. "Link won't stay in the realm and dared to go into the Sea of Void. He's really looking for death!"

"My master also said that the Ferde lord isn't a worry anymore. He sent an oracle. He wants us to use this chance to break into the Orida Fortress and continue southward!"

"No problem!" Eugene cackled. The only one she feared in Firuman was Link. She could still remember that sword. In his entire life, only one person's attack could make her defenseless.

After that, she knew that she wasn't Link's match in a face-to-face fight. But now, Link went on a suicidal mission. Heh, what more was there to worry about?

Seeing Eugene's expression, Molina felt unease. She couldn't help but remind her, "The army at the Orida Fortress isn't easy to deal with. Norton Kingdom's army, Ferde's Sunlight Army, Beastmen, and now the dragonsThere are countless strong fighters. Don't underestimate them."

"Hmph, I don't need you to remind me," Eugene huffed.

She'd traveled throughout Firuman for centuries and only met two true opponentsLight Magician Halino and Link. As for the juniors at Orida, no one could fend off his dark magic.

Eugene was decisive. Since there was a chance, she wouldn't waste even a second. She immediately called the troops.

Three days later, a huge army of 150,000 Dark Elves, demons, and Nagas started advancing southward.

The army made a big commotion. The news was instantly discovered by scouts stationed in the Black Forest. The huge amount of information moved south like snow. The war machine that was the Orida Fortress started turning at full speed, preparing for the final fight.

At this time, Link was deep inside the Sea of Void. He had a clear target, so he went straight going astray at all.

As he got closer, the gut feeling grew stronger. He believed that he would find the way to change the dark era using that gear!

## 589. A Brush With Death

Link let out a breath and then turned around. Behind him was a huge, black disc with a diameter of more than 10,000 miles, bigger than the entire Firuman realm itself.

It was a large-scale energy vortex, and it was spewing out powerful energy flares from within. He estimated that the vortex's energy was more than Level-20. Otherwise, his sense of danger would not be making every hair on his body stand on end.

Though he had reached Level-13 with his dragon body and managed to strengthen his scales with the Crystal Essence the game system had rewarded him with a while back, he would still be slowly ground away into dust by the minute if he allowed himself to be sucked in by a vortex of this magnitude.

He had left the Firuman realm far behind. Behind him, Firuman was now no more than an insignificant dot of light. Though the white mist of Mana surrounding it had thinned considerably, it still managed to obscure most of Firuman.

He looked left and right in front of him. He was surrounded by an empty white fog.

Without any reference point anywhere around him, no matter how fast he flew, Link did not feel as if he was making any progress through the Void.

By Firuman's standards, I should be flying at around 10,000 miles per second right now. I'm still able to go even faster, so at most I'll be able to hit 12,000 miles per second. But nothing's changed around me. Flying in the Sea of Void is almost like traveling through the endless void of space back on earth.

Suddenly, his body shook for a moment. Then, he felt himself being pulled to the left by a powerful force.

At the same time, he could also feel a coldness creeping into his body, sharp like a blade. It felt like an unseen claw trying to pull his very soul out of his dragon body.

Not good, it's a negative energy pitfall! thought Link, panicking.

Negative energy was high-level dark energy that could only be found in the Sea of Void. When large amounts of negative energy came together, they would form a singularity, sucking in everything around it, including energy, matter, and even one's soul. Everything would then be compressed into a single compact point.

The frightening thing about a negative energy pitfall was that it would ambush you when you least expected it to.

The pitfall was incredibly dark. It would not give off any kind of aura, making it almost impossible to detect its presence. Anyone or anything caught by it was as good as dead. Even one's soul would be decimated by the singularity.

In the Sea of Void, a dragon's body continually absorbs residual Void energy around itself as fuel. Link swept his wings back, and cold white light began rushing out from them like a pair of afterburners, propelling Link into the dark, empty void in front of him.

Link immediately received an enormous thrust forward. His body was locked in place as he struggled to break free from the pitfall's clutches. Still, his body inched inexorably towards the left.

The pitfall's pull was just too powerful. No matter how desperately Link struggled against it, he still could not break free from it.

Not good. The pitfall's just too powerful. I won't be able to resist it much longer. I'll need to use something else!

Link was still an amateur when it came to navigating the Void. However, before entering the Sea of Void, Link had read through the notebook that Piasce had maintained during his trips in the Void. Incidentally, Piasce had written in it a way to deal with negative energy pitfalls.

Negative energy pitfalls come in all shapes and sizes, but structurally, they all look the same. A pitfall's outer layer is known as the normal region, while its inner layer is called the irreversible layer. Sandwiched between both layers is a thin membrane known as an event horizon. Once you're pulled past the event horizon, the only thing awaiting you there is death. In the history of Omir, there have been accounts of Omirians bold and foolish enough to defy a negative energy pitfall, but no one has ever gone past the event horizon and lived to tell the tale. The moment you sense its pull, break free from it as fast as you can. If you're unable to pull yourself away, execute the spiral burst maneuver immediately. Remember, act immediately. A moment's hesitation may very well be your end.'

These thoughts raced through Link's mind in an instant. His body had already begun picking up speed instinctively.

This time, he stopped pulling away from it in a straight line. Instead, he began accelerating perpendicularly to the direction of the pitfall's pull. With the pitfall still pulling him back, he was now swinging an arc to his left as he pushed forward.

You need to push against it with everything you have. A negative energy field is like a rubber band. Once it's ensnared you, no matter you fast you're going, this rubber band will simply be stretched taut. However, its gravitational pull won't falter one bit. In fact, it may even intensify. You will need to pull back at this rubber band until it snaps, or else it will drag you down into the depths of oblivion!

Link recalled what Piasce had written in his notebook. This thing resembled a black hole in some respects. However, there were still a few major differences between them.

Link continued to accelerate. Soon, he realized that he was now moving in a circular orbit with a diameter of approximately 5,000 miles in the dark expanse.

At first, his orbit was circular. As he sped up, it grew longer and longer until it transformed into an oval.

The Void energy in his body was depleting rapidly. Though his dragon body was still absorbing the energy in the Sea of Void, it became clear that he was not replenishing his body's Void energy as fast as he was spending it.

By the looks of things, he could still hold out for another ten minutes. If he still could not break free within that time, he would have to accept his fate and be pulled into the negative energy pitfall!

With a deep breath, Link cleared his mind and simply focused on accelerating.

Time slowly passed by. One minute, two minutes, three minutes five, six minutes Soon, Link was flying at more than 15,000 miles per second. However, the dragon body could barely handle the strain of maintaining such a breakneck speed. The trajectory he had carved out in the Void was now a long ellipse around the vortex.

Still, it was not enough!

The rubber band of negative energy still remained unbroken as it stubbornly held on to Link. He was now at his limit. Despite his resolve, Link began to fear for his life.

Will I really die here? thought Link. The energy in his body was all but spent, and he was now beginning to feel out of breath.

No, just a little bit more. I can do this!

Link let out a roar as he gathered every last bit of power in him. When he was farthest from the pitfall in his elliptical trajectory, he swept his wings back once more. Boom! A powerful burst of Void energy gushed out behind him. Link could feel his body being thrust forward. Then, he began to slow down. His wings were now completely spent.

Sensing that he was about to be pulled back by the negative energy pitfall, Link turned around, opened his mouth wide and spewed out dragon breath back at it.

His wings might not be able to push him forward any longer, but he still had some energy left in him in the form of dragon breath, which was usually reserved for offensive measures.

Boom! Link let out a streak of white Dragon Void Breath behind him, giving himself another forward burst of momentum and allowing himself to continue his struggle with the pitfall.

Link had stretched the pitfall's gravitational rubber band until it was now more than 300,000 miles long. Its pull seemed to have weakened as well.

Just a bit more, just a bit more. screamed Link inwardly as he sensed that he was slowing down.

There was a click in his mind. The unseen force pulling at his body suddenly vanished. Its icy claw had slackened its grip on his consciousness as well. Link now felt his body floating gently forward at a speed of ten miles per second.

He had finally freed himself from the negative energy pitfall.

Link let out a breath of relief. His ordeal had finally ended.

After bobbing in the Void for a few seconds, Link began to feel his power slowly coming back to him. He then flapped his wings bit by bit.

That was way too close. Link figured that even a divine master would not be able to survive being dragged past the pitfall's event horizon.

This was not an exaggeration.

Link had read something of the sort in other magic books. For example, the Dragon magic book had made mention of the dangers of traveling in the Void a couple of times. The Soul Dominator had also given detailed accounts of his trips into the Sea of Void in the Book of Revelation. In them, he had mentioned how dangerous negative energy pitfalls could be, though not in as much detail as Link would have liked.

A Level-13 Legendary master like Link would be akin to a toddler who had only just learned how to walk in the perilous wasteland that was the Sea of Void. One wrong move would have sent him hurtling to his doom. On the other hand, a divine master could be likened to a grown-up, being much wiser and more powerful than a Level-13 master. However, they would still be no more impervious to the wasteland's dangers than the latter.

Once he was free from the negative energy pitfall's pull, Link was able to regain his composure. After resting for a bit, he continued flying forward. He made his way through the Void slowly and cautiously, giving himself time to restore his full power.

After flying for a length of time, Link's surroundings began to change somewhat. The faint Void mist around him thinned considerably, increasing his visibility. Suddenly, a cloud-like object appeared in front of him.

The thick, seemingly endless layers of cloud seemed to be emanating a dark green light. It resembled the nebulas back in his home world.

As Link drew closer, they began to expand until they basically filled up his field of vision.

These must be the Seaweed Clusthat Piasce mentioned, thought Link happily.

After allying himself with Ferde, Piasce had kept nothing back from Link. Not only did he give Link the mysterious gear's coordinates, but he had also shared with him his experience in the Void, as well as a detailed account of the scenery around the mysterious object.

The cloud before him was one of the landmarks leading up to the mysterious gear. Once he made his way through the labyrinthine layers of cloud, he would be able to reach the mysterious gear at the end of it.

Link began accelerating towards the clouds.

Soon, he was near the Seaweed Clouds. From afar, the dark green clouds looked compact, almost solid. However, up close, Link realized that the clouds were gaseous and impalpable like smoke. Visibility in them was a mere hundred miles.

The massive cloud wall was perforated with passageways, each with excellent visibility. From afar, the passagewasseemed narrow, but in reality, each one was 100,000 miles wide.

Link did not enter the maze just yet. He recalled what Piasce had written in his notebook. Piasce mentioned that he found a square-shaped cloud formation somewhere among the clouds. He then passed through the center of it in order to reach his destination. Where could it be?

Piasce had already given Link the coordinates of his destination. He could fly straight towards it if he wanted to. However, this would mean leaving a trail behind him in the Seaweed Clouds. Also, there might be Void creatures lurking in the clouds, and Link thought it best not to draw any attention from them to himself.

His safest option right now would be to retrace Piasce's route.

After circling around the clouds for a while, Link still could not find the square-shaped cloud formation that Piasce mentioned. As he was about to resume his search, Link saw something flash by behind him from the corner of his eye.

Compared to someone like Piasce, he was still relatively inexperienced in navigating the Sea of Void. He did not see anything resembling life on his way here. The sight of something moving behind him was enough to unnerve him.

With the 360-degree vision afforded to him by his dragon body, he was able to see whatever was behind him without turning around.

Link was soon able to locate the moving object.

It was a black spot. Straining his eyes, Link could see that it was shaped like a disc. It was also giving off a weak light from its surface. As Link stared at it for a moment, a message from the game system popped up in his field of vision, giving him a rundown of the object's details.

Speed: 8000 miles per second.

Diameter: 400 feet

Estimated power level: Level-17

Current distance: 1,000,000 miles

Judging by its appearance, speed, and energy circulation, the object is man-made and appears to be a Void Ferry of unknown origin.

"Void Ferry?" Link was stunned for a moment. Not knowing whether the object was friend or foe, he turned around and plunged into a nearby Seaweed Cloud.

Each Seaweed Cloud was extremely thick. For instance, the one Link was hiding himself in was 20,000,000 miles thick.

At first, Link was afraid that there might be something lurking in the depths of the cloud and so remained floating near its surface, not daring to venture any deeper into it. However, he sensed that something was wrong.

The object seemed to have noticed him, as it swerved around and headed straight for his hiding spot.

Speed: 13,325 miles per second!

His mind was now screaming at him to get out of there.

The object was tearing straight towards Link. It was as if it had recognized him. The way it hurtled menacingly towards him was more than enough to suggest that the object bore him no goodwill.

Moreover, it was moving at breakneck speed, even faster than the highest speed Link was able to maintain. In no more than two seconds, the object would soon reach Link's hiding place. The Void Ferry was Level-17, making it a lot stronger than Link, who was only Level-13. Even with his magically immune dragon scales, Link would not be able to survive a head-on collision with it.

Setting aside whatever dangers might be lurking within the depths of the Seaweed Clouds, Link immediately released a burst of Void energy from his wings and dove into the deeper regions of the clouds at 12,000 miles per second.

Behind Link, inside the Void Ferry

Nozama said to the Dark Tutor Mysin, who was piloting the Void Ferry, "Did you see that? What was that?"

Mysin shook his head. "I couldn't see what it was. It dove into the depths of the cloud before I had a good look at it. It's dangerous to travel into the clouds. Master, should we pursue?

This was not Nozama's first trip in the Sea of Void. He had a good grasp of the dangers in it. After weighing his options, he said commandingly, "Go after it. It looks really familiar. I'm sure I must have seen it somewhere before!"

Nozama was sure that what he saw was not one of his minions since all of them were no more than his soul puppets. He was also certain that it was an enemy, given how familiar it had seemed to him.

What made Nozama even more suspicious was the fact that the other party had appeared in the vicinity of the mysterious presence. This could only mean that they might be after the same thing as him. It would be remiss of Nozama to let the other party flee without clarifying their intentions.

Upon hearing his master's command, the Dark Tutor Mysin nodded at his co-pilot Eilot, and the two drove the Void Ferry into the Seaweed Clouds in pursuit of the black dot in front of them.

## 590. This Time Ill Fight Personally

Boundless Void

The Void Ferry behind Link was faster than him. At first, they were around one million miles away from each other. Now, the other was 25,000 miles away.

It was hard to see in the Seaweed Cloud. Link looked back but could only see endless murky green. He couldn't see the other's location, but both were flying at extreme speeds. The power waves were very strong, and he could clearly sense the disc-shaped Void Ferry following relentlessly.

This couldn't continue. He had to find somewhere to hide and avoid the attack!

Link looked forward. He was more than one million miles into the Seaweed Cloud. The clouds seemed to get heavier before him. Visibility decreased, and the changes in the clouds became more complicated. Some places were thin, almost like a tunnel; other places had thick blocks of dark green clouds. From afar, they looked a fog-covered Firuman.

There might really be a realm hidden in the thick clouds. Who knew?

Link had read a paragraph in the Book of Revelations.

When a realm is first created, it is only an average ball of energy in the Sea of Void, usually a vortex of energy. As time pass, the energy vortex continuously condenses. The realm grows, evolves, and finally exchanges energy and material with the Sea of Void like a living organism. Gradually, heavy fog forms outside the realm. That is how the fog of the Firuman Realm was formed.

However, the dark blocks of clouds before him were too small. They were less than 30,000 miles wide while the white fog around Firuman was more than 300,000 miles. Even if a realm was hidden inside, it would still be in the early stages. They were too small, and Link couldn't hide in them.

He continued flying.

Time passed, and Link flew 30,000 more miles. The energy waves from the Void Ferry behind him thickened. He still couldn't see the other, but Link was sure that they weren't more than 20,000 miles apart. If the other sped up, he would catch up.

A dark cloud appeared before him. The vapor around it looked thinner. In order to not leave traces in the thick fog, Link moved around it. Just as he was about to speed up, his vision brightened a bit. He looked up and saw a huge patch of light.

The vapor obstructed his vision, but the light was still strong. The light source was huge as well. It looked to be more than 60,000 miles widepractically twice the size of Firuman's cloud!

Light is moving energy. If a huge light appears in the Sea of Void, it's possible that it's a realm. These are usually advanced realms that have already evolved into life. These lights come from the core of the realm (the sun).

Something from Piasce's travel log flashed past Link's mind.

A realm? It also has such heavy fog. It's enough for me to hide in.

Link turned to look. The vapor was still thick, and he couldn't see the other at all. However, the power waves were stronger than before. If not for the vapor obstructing their vision, Link would probably be caught long ago.

He took a deep breath and pumped his wings with full force, rushing towards the majestic light.

It was around 150,000 miles away. After a while, it took up Link's vision. He could only see the dark green light. It was boundless.

The vapor here was abnormally heavy. His range of sight was only around 25 miles. The vapor only got worse as he got close, and his sight decreased rapidly too.

This phenomenon is identical to Firuman. There really might be a realm inside, Link thought. He stopped flapping his wings and pulled them back. Wrapping his wings around his body, he used the inertia to slide towards the realm.

The dragon wings were very strange. Not only were they great at pushing while flying in the Void, but they could also become the best disguise when wrapped around one's body. They could perfectly cover a dragon's energy waves, so the dragon looked just like a regular meteorite in the Sea of Void.

Link did this to stop the pursuer from tracing him and also because the surroundings were complicated. He had to be careful.

The free energy around a realm was very thick. Some souls would run out the realm at times too. These things were delicacies for Void creatures, so it was more likely for them to appear around here too. It wasn't good to alert these Void creatures.

Link floated for a while. Suddenly, a black shadow shot out from the corner of his eye. His heart jumped, and he stopped moving. His eyes followed the black shadow.

He saw that the shadow was shaped like a shuttle. It was more than 200 feet long and had something like fins in the middle. Its tail was really long too. It looked like a fish swimming in the sea.

It didn't notice Link who had weakened his energy. When it passed by Link, it tited powerfully to the side and sped up abruptly. It was probably more than 5000 miles per second and instantly disappeared from Link's side.

Around ten seconds later, Link felt an abnormal commotion not too far behind him.

Buzz, buzz. The two sounds were like the whistle of a ship in the sea. They were very deep. At the same time, Link felt explosive energy ripple over.

Link's heart jumped. It's the power wave from that Void Ferry. It's very powerfulat least Level-15. That "fish" attacked the Void Ferry and was probably killed The other isn't far from me now, but I don't know if they've noticed me.

As soon as this thought flashed through Link's mind, he realized that his surroundings brightened. He refocused his eyes and saw that a huge wall of light appeared before him.

This light wasn't the dark green he'd seen before. Instead, it was a burning white. It was similar to Firuman's, but it was brighter. At the same time, it looked very smooth. Link couldn't see any flaws. It looked like a glowing crystal similar to the surface of the Firuman realm.

It really is a realm. This is so big. Its light is vibrant too. It must be a powerful realm.

While thinking, Link had already floated to the wall of the realm. He reached out a claw and hooked lightly on the wall, stopping firmly. He was like a ship resting against the pier.

Stopping here, he looked back at the Sea of Void. All he could see was heavy dark-green vapor. His line of sight was less than 20 miles.

Link could sense the other Void Ferry was close. It was probably less than 6000 miles away. He didn't dare move now. Link just quietly hung on the realm's wall like a lizard, waiting patiently.

Time passed bit by bit. Passage of time in the Sea of Void was different from in realms. Time in realms usually flowed steadily without any disturbances. However, time in the Sea of Void was warped. It flowed faster in places with more energy and slower in places with less.

If Link had a mortal body without Legendary protection instead of using his dragon form as a Void Ferry, half of his body might become old while the other remained youthful. He wouldn't be able to live in that situation.

The Sea of Void was uninhabitable for mortals. If a non-Legendary person entered, their souls would scatter immediately. This wasn't an exaggeration.

Link didn't know how fast time flowed here, so he obviously didn't know how much time had passed. But after waiting for a long while, he could still sense the Void Ferry's energy waves.

The other is still circling this place. It probably knows my general location but can't pinpoint it If this continues, they'll find me sooner or later. Then I'll be dead.

Thoughts flew past Link's mind as he tried to think of a way to escape. Soon, his eyes fell on the huge realm below him.

If I enter the realm and go to the other end, I should be able to escape safely. But how do I enter?

Flattened against the wall, he could clearly sense the principles and laws of this realm.

According to the feeling under his claws, the realm's wall was very soft, like a layer of old leather. But if he applied force, the feedback from his classtrengthened. There was also a strange power that kept pushing out. It was about to push him off the wall.

It was repelling him.

This realm wasn't Firuman. To Firuman, Link was part of it, so it wouldn't repel him. Going to Firuman was like going back home, while the realm beneath him was someone else's home. It had nothing to do with him. His relationship with this realm was like Nozama against Firuman. He was an invader.

Carefully sensing the force, Link had a general idea of the strength of this realm.

I should be able to forcefully break through this wall, but it will use up a lot of my energy and lead to the realm's violent defense. Even if I enter the realm, my power will be greatly repressed. It'll probably fall to around Level-7. There'll be other restitions too. Even the natives find out, they'll try to kill me. The dangers aren't any lower than the Void Ferry. This isn't wise Let me look for a realm crack.

The realm's surface was smooth, and there couldn't be any cracks, but everything had an exception. Because of some random reasons, there might be some temporary fissures. For example, perhassomething inside the realm was summoning a Void creature, or a Magician was stupidly studying the laws of the realm and created a temporary crack. These were all possible.

A realm had countless organisms. It was quite possible for there to be people who did idiotic things. Just take Firuman as an example. There was never a shortage of stupid people.

Of course, if he couldn't find one, he would have to enter forcefully. The Void Ferry was too powerful. Facing a Level-17 while in Level-13, Link had no confidence at all. But inside the realm, everyone's power would be restited. The difference between them would close too. It would be much easier to escape.

Time is limited. I need to hurry.

Thinking of this, Link composed himself and carefully sensed for the realm wall.

Time kept flowing, and the Void Ferry's energy waves were even more obvious. It was getting closer to him. There were less than 3000 miles between them. The other would soon be able to pinpoint his exact location.

Once they're 1000 miles away, I'll have to break in forcefully and figure out the rest when I getito the realm!

Link was ready to break in at any time, but he still didn't give up on finding a crack. The latter could save him a lot of energy. He would face weaker repulsion inside the realm too.

Suddenly, there was a flash in the corner of his vision. This was the result of the realm's energy spewing out. It meant that the laws in that area were weakened by some force, causing the realm's energy to flow out.

In other words, there was a crack!

Such good luck!

A realm crack usually lasted for a short time. There were many complicated reasonsthe distortion of time, the realm's self-healing abilities, and more. He must hurry.

Thus, Link immediately used all his limbs and wings to scurry across the wall. This caused a much bigger commotion.

In the Sea of Void, Dark Tutor Mysin, who had been searching for Link in the Void Ferry, immediately noticed the abnormality.

A few seconds later, he pointed at the wall of light. "Master, look there! Something's happening!"

Nozama squinted and looked. The light pulsing in his eyes abruptly strengthened. The bloody light that seeped out of his eye sockets were more than three feet long. His gaze passed through the vapor and saw the realm wall clearly.

There was a dragon with silvery black scales rushing towards a speck of light on the wall. Nozama was a master at passing through realms. He instantly realized that it was a realm crack. He also recognized the dragon.

He laughed in anger. "I was wondering who it was. It's the Ferde lord! He thinks he's powerful and dares to enter the Void alone Kill him!"

The Void Ferry had already been rushing towards Link. A few seconds later, Mysin reported, "Master, we're too far away. He's already near the crack. We can't stop him from entering."

"It's alright. He can't escape even if he enters. Deploy the Void Ferry cluster and lock the realm. Glyn, my sub-commander!"

"Yes, Master!" Glyn flinched and walked out.

"Take 100 people and forcefully enter the realm. Chase"

Before he could finish, Mysin yelled, "Master, Master! Another crack appeared in the realm! Someone's using a large-scale summoning spell! I've responded to the summoner!"

"Oh? Great!" Nozama praised. Half a second of thinking later, he turned to his sub-commander. "Glyn, take people into the realm, kill the summoner and quickly build a super-summoning seal. This time, I'm going to act personally!"

He was going to capture that guy and personally tell him the consequences of snatching his daughter and ruining his plans.

"Understood!"

Glyn immediately waved at his trusted men. More than 100 Legendary demons walked out. They jumped out of the Void Ferry and started falling towards the crack in the wall.

Whoosh! Glyn was the first to enter. It was like diving into water.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. Three Level-13 demons followed. After that, the crack's light rippled and flickered like a candle in the wind.

"Master," Mysin yelled. "Too many demons passed the crack. They're too strong, and the crack can't take it. It's going to collapse!"

Before he could finish, the crack started mending and soon disappeared.

"Everyone else, come back." Nozama waved his hand. Glyn and three demons had entered. They should be enough. Now, he would wait for Glyn to reopen the crack. He trusted Glyn not to disappoint him.

## 591. Mortal Are You The One Who Summoned Me?

There was a howling sound. It was the first sound that Link had heard since entering the realm crack. It sounded like a gust of wind blowing through a canyon.

In the next second, Link felt a sudden weightlessness. His body was now no longer under his control; he could not even move a single muscle. He seemed to be falling down a tunnel of sorts. Distorted images swam dizzily across the tunnel's four walls, giving him the impression that he was now falling through a kaleidoscope.

This was the first time he was summoned into a realm. It was an entirely new experience for Link. He was also apprehensive about it, as he had no idea what awaited him at the bottom.

He tumbled on for a few seconds down the tunnel. Suddenly, a blood-red streak of light shot out of nowhere. Link could not make out what it was at first. As it got closer, he strained his eyes to see what it was.

It was a cluster of souls wailing in agony!

The ball of light was more than 50 cubic feet. There were at least 3000 souls in it, and each of them was disfigured beyond recognition. It was as if someone had kneaded them into a misshapen mass of putty. What was even more terrifying was the fact that as soon as the cluster of souls drew closer towards Link, it quickly began to melt away like wax.

Argh Help me Oh god I don't deserve this

Link could hear a cacophony of agonized wailing coming from it, which grew louder as the clump of souls came closer towards Link.

When the ball of light finally came before Link, the souls inside it had melted completely inside it. Its contents were now a goopy blood-red mess. Link could not help but shudder at the sight of it.

The blood-red ball of light hurtled towards Link and finally collided against his dragon scales. Upon impact, Link could feel an icy sensation seeping into his body, all the way to the deeper parts of his body.

Throughout the whole process, Link's body remained motionless. His power was still sealed within his body by an unknown force. He could only watch helplessly as the ball of light invaded his body.

As he panicked, a line of words popped up in his field of sight. Entry of unknown energy detected, now setting up quarantine area for unknown energy Quarantine process successful.

This was the first line of words from the game system. The icy sensation remained still within Link's body. However, it had stopped spreading inside his body.

After a while, a second line of words appeared before him.

Now examining composition of unknown energy Examination complete. Unknown energy is determined to be soul energy, which is commonly used in Realm Summoning Contracts. Summoning technique currently in progress is a sacrificial summoning technique. Upon reaching the realm they are currently being summoned to, the player will be placed under the binding power of a summoning contract and will be prohibited from violating terms of said contract.

Link was now mentally prepared for this. May I know the terms of this contract? thought Link.

Examination in progress examination complete. Player's current contract is a mutually binding agreement. The Summoned will asst the Summoner in completing certain tasks as required from them. Upon completion, the Summoned will be allowed to keep the soul energy of the Sacrificed that was used to carry out the summoning ritual. However, the Summoned will be subject to the Dimensional Rejection's influence once more after fulfilling the terms of its contracts. During the contract's duration, both parties will be prohibited from hurting each other.

Hearing this, Link asked, "Is there any way to break the contract?"

Attempting to dispel contract's binding power Dispelling unsuccessful. Player has two options. First option is to reject the quarantined soul energy in player's body in exchange for his freedom. However, the player will receive the full brunt of the Dimensional Rejection. The player will have his power severely suppressed and will only be able to use Level-7 power as a result. Second option is to maintain current course. Player will remain under the contract's constraints. The Summoner will be forced to bear a portion of Dimensional Rejection the Summoned is subject to. The more powerful the Summoner is, the more Dimensional Rejection the Summoner will be required to take on. In consequence of this trade-off, the Player's power will not be suppressed as much.

After pondering it for a moment, Link decided to choose the second option. He was repulsed by the source of the contract's binding power. However, due to his current situation, he would be a fool to limit his powers any more than he had to.

Let's go with the second option, then.

As soon as he said this, his body trembled slightly. There was that cold sensation in his body again. He then realized that the sacrificed soul power had taken up one percent of his total power, while the remaining 99 percent was still his own.

Only one percent of my power seems to be affected by this magical contract. I'll probably survive whatever punishment it has reserved for me should I decide to violate any of its terms. This was even better than Link had imagined.

Soon, Link realized that he had stopped falling. He could feel his feet hit solid ground. The distorted imagery around him began transforming into a wall of fog, which then dissipated to reveal the scenery of the realm he had been summoned into.

Throughout the whole process, Link felt an irresistible power pressing against him. It was as if he was being compressed beneath the depths of an ocean.

He moved a finger slightly. He could feel an invisible resistance when he tried to cast the Magician's Hand spell. This resistance seemed to be inhibiting his physical strength and the power inside his body by about ten percent.

In other words, his power level was currently within the neighborhood of Level-10, which was a lot more than what the game system had predicted.

This resistance must be the effect of the Dimensional Rejection. It's a lot weaker than I had anticipated. My summoner must be taking on some of it right now. Judging by my current state, they must be quite the Magician.

At that moment, the distorted light show around him had faded away completely. Link now found himself in the middle of a canyon thick with grass and trees. The canyon was approximately 400 feet wide. Its two walls were around 200 feet high.

With his 360-degree vision, Link was able to take in his surroundings without turning his head.

He realized that he was standing in the middle of a 150-foot-wide magic seal which had been etched on the ground with fresh blood. The stench of blood wafted to his nostrils from every line of the magic seal. It was so pungent that Link's face contorted in disgust.

As a Magician, Link's trained eyes were immediately drawn to the structure of this bloody magic seal. He was stunned by what he saw. The seal seemed almost familiar to him. It greatly resembled the magical circuits that were found on the mysterious gear, the Astral Whetstone and the Book of Revelation.

This realm is within the mysterious gear's vicinity. Is there some sort of connection between them? thought Link.

At that moment, a hoarse voice called out to him, interrupting his thoughts.

"Ah, almighty dragon, we are most pleased that you have answered our calls!"

The voice was speaking in a foreign tongue. However, due to the contract in place, whatever it was saying was automatically translated in Link's mind.

Link followed the source of the voice and saw a wizened Magician with hair as white as snow in a black robe standing on one of the nodes of the bloody magic seal. Link was able to determine that the old man was a Level-6 Magician from the energy he was giving off.

He looks human. He also seems to know what I am. How fascinating. Link narrowed his eyes. The old man before him looked like any other human being from the Firuman realm. The only difference was that he had a wide forehead. His eyes were also especially small, and his features were primitive-looking.

The old man was not alone. There were six nodes on the magic seal. On each of them stood a Magician native to the realm. Every one of them looked human as well, barring a few differences such as their primitive facial features and wide foreheads.

The Magiciasstanding on the magic seal were marveling at Link, visibly excited about what they had summoned into their realm. The old Magician was practically on the verge of tears.

He bellowed, "Oh almighty dragon, we require your asstance. The army of Troym is at the gates of our kingdom as we speak. They are the sworn enemy of our great kingdom. We need your help to defeat them."

Troym? Army? Link blinked at him. He somewhat understood what this was all about. He raised his head high up in the air to inspect the magic seal beneath him and saw that the ground was strewn with corpses. There were 4000 bodies lying on the ground, whose lives had been sacrificed to conduct the summoning ritual that had brought him here.

The corpses' attire were different from the robes worn by the Magicians around him. Link figured that the ones who had been sacrificed were all prisoners of war from the Troym army.

In other words, these Magicians had sacrificed their captives in order to summon a powerful extra-dimensional presence like Link and hopefully turn the tide of war against Troym with the aid of said summoned presence.

Once he had made sense of the circumstances of his summoning, Link looked at the old summoner. He could clearly sense what the man was feeling at the moment, which was mostly excitement. He could also tell that his appearance had surpassed the old man's expectations.

They were probably hoping to summon something else when they were carrying out their summoning ritual. I just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. It would also seem that I'm supposed to help them fight back the Troym army as part of the terms of my contract.

Everyone was staring at him with a mix of expectation and caution. Link remained silent. He then saw at least 5000 people outside the bloody magic seal. Most of them seemed to be military. There were also a few in their midst, dressed in resplendent garb. They looked royally important.

These Warriors must be the elites of this realm. However, most of them were only at Level-3, which was no more different than the time Link first entered the Firuman realm. Link would not be able to take on all of them at once if his power had been reduced to Level-7, as the game system had initially predicted before his entry into this new realm. However, with his Level-10 Pinnacle power, he figured he would be able to come out alright from a confrontation with them.

The Warriors looked at him warily, their nerves stretched taut as they waited for a reaction from him. Link could also see some of them trembling uncontrollably.

This was understandable. If Link had encountered a Level-10 Legendary master the first time he entered the Firuman realm, he would also be scared witless.

No mortal here would have any chance of surviving an encounter with a Legendary master.

He slammed his massive tail into the ground a few times. Boom! Boom! Boom! The earth quaked. Everyone in the canyon went pale. The important-looking people surrounded by their guards were completely petrified. Link could also see a few women fainting in their midst.

"Almighty dragon, do you agree to help us?" shouted the old Magician again. His voice was shaky. The circumstances of their summoning ritual were odd, to put it mildly. It had taken a peculiarly long time for them to complete the summoning process, and the thing they had summoned into their realm seemed to be more potent than anything they had ever encountered.

The old Magician had originally intended to summon a Level-8 or 9 presence. However, this creature before him looked exactly like the dragons as described in their legends. More than 100 feet long, it was as big as a small mountain. Its silver-black flawless dragon scales, its glittering eyes and that oppressive aura it was giving off were all telling him that he had summoned something with power beyond his imagination.

He was not sure if their summoning contract would even be able to restrain such a behemoth.

At that moment, Link was weighing his options. Should I accept the conditions of the summoning contract and help them take on an entire army? No, the contract's terms seem lax. I could easily find a loophole and wriggle my way out of this. Also, only a fool would take on an army he had never seen before on his lonesome!

Right now, Link was only a bit stronger than the Red Dragon Duke Isendilan, whom he had defeated with the help of the Beastmen back when he was still a threat. Even if he was confident that he would be able to take on the entire Troym army with his current power level, there was just no guarantee everything would go his way. Also, as soon as Link completed his contract, he would still have to deal with the Dimensional Rejection. At that point, things would become extremely awkward.

What should I do? thought Link. A few seconds later, he finally arrived at a solution.

He lowered his head, slowly swinging it towards the old Magician. When his dragon horn was only 20 feet away from him, the old man could not take it any longer. His legs were trembling so much that he collapsed to the ground on his knees. He then cried out tearily, "Great dragon, please forgive me. I did not mean to offend you. Please forgive all of us!"

When there was a huge difference in power between a summoner and the summoned entity, the binding power exerted on the latter by its summoning contract would be extremely limited, and the contract could backfire on the summoner himself if he was not careful enough.

Seeing the pathetic pile of sobbing mess the old Magician was reduced into, the entire army in the canyon immediately descended into chaos.

Despite not knowing how summoning magic worked, when the Warriors saw the old Magician in such a state, everyone knew that the spell had failed. No one could work up the courage to stand up to the winged monstrosity the Magicians had summoned.

At that moment, Link opened his mouth. Due to his expansive body, his voice came out loud and sonorous. "Mortal, are you the one who summoned me?"

The question was directed at the old Magician.

## 592. Starting Today You Must Serve Me

Valley

Dadara was full of regret now. The summoning was his idea, and he'd done it himself. As the most powerful summoner in Blacklan Kingdom, he'd summoned countless creatures before. Though he'd failed sometimes, it had never been embarrassing.

But today, things were completely beyond his expectations. Blacklan Kingdom was in a crisis, and Troym was already at the city walls. As an important member of Blacklan, he volunteered bravely to use a ritual summoning spell that had been banned.

But it only succeeded halfway!

The summoned creature was very powerfulso powerful it stole their breaths. But they didn't seem to be able to restit the other It was strange.

There was a head the size of a mountain before him. The mouth was wide open, revealing each tooth that was as sharp as a sword. Smoke came out of the thing's nostrils. Dadara could vaguely see dark red flames flickering inside. This reminded him of an active volcano he'd visited with his tutor when he was young.

The other's eyes shone with silver flames. Dadara couldn't see the other's eyes, but they were definitely waiting for his reply. He was forced to brace himself and reply, "Majestic dragon, it is I who summoned you."

Snort. The dragon pushed air out of its nose. The air before its nose distorted visibly and the gust of air rushed out. Dadara, kneeling on the ground, rolled backwards.

Even a slight exhale is this powerful. Oh my god, did I summon the king of dragons? Dadara thought as he fell back.

It wasn't that he'd never summoned a great dragon before. Actually, he'd summoned a demon dragon to fight for Blacklan Kingdom ten years ago. That dragon had been very powerful. It had been Level-7 and had been the ruler of the skies in the Fedaro Continent (what the natives called the realm).

But compared to this black dragon, the demon dragon was like a little chicken.

As the most prestigious master in Blacklan Kingdom, Dadara usually dressed in elegant clothing and used fancy carriages. He never had to do anything and was always high and mighty. It was the first time he was sprawled so pathetically on the ground. But he couldn't care about that. He only wished that the dragon wouldn't put its claw on his back Seeing the claw that was many times stronger than his body, he knew that he would be flattened even if the dragon just placed it down gently.

Just as everyone was in terrified silence, Dadara heard a voice from above him. "You wish for me to defeat Troym's army?"

"Yes" Dadara was overjoyed. The Warriors nearby who were close to breaking down were slightly relieved. It seemed that things could still be negotiated.

"Oh?" Link snorted in dissatisfaction. Air came out of his nose again, making Dadara too fearful to move. Of course, the Magician couldn't protest either.

Link's actions weren't breaking the contract. He was just breathing normally and didn't hurt his summoner at all. The other was only affected because he was too weak. Thus, Link didn't feel any reaction from the contract inside him.

However, his actions had still expressed his intent. He wasn't happy about Dadara's request. Dadara wasn't stupid either. Otherwise, he wouldn't have become a Master Summoner. Now that he had to protect his life, his mind whirred quickly.

Once the current pressing down disappeared, he said, "Majestic dragon king, you misunderstood me. I do hope that you can defeat Troym's army, but I know that's unrealistic. I can't help it though sniff, sniff. I just wish for you to save the kingdom I'm loyal to."

As he spoke, Dadara became emotional. He really didn't want the Blacklan Kingdom to be defeated. His heart felt a twinge, and his tears and snot came out. Sprawled on the ground, he started sobbing.

Behind him, King Morahan of Blacklan Kingdom was also in the army. Seeing Dadara, he couldn't help but think, Ah, I didn't think he was so loyalis my kingdom really going to end?

Thinking of this, he forgot his fear too. On impulse, he walked out from the rings of guards. When he was around 150 feet before Link, he started regretting this. He didn't think the dragon's aura would be so scary.

But it was too late. Gritting his teeth, he knelt on the ground and copied Magician Dadara and cried, "Your Dragon Majesty, I beg you to save my kingdom! The people of Troym are cruel. I cannot let my people live under their rule!"

When he knelt, everyone in the valley also knelt down. It was such a sight.

But were the Troyms cruel? His words were nice. Link scanned the mountainous piles of corpses in the valley and found it ironic. However had the contract been changed to saving the kingdom?

The contract's content was very broad. Loosely, as long as the royal family didn't disappear, it was alright if the so-called Troyms took over the capital temporarily. They could still get it back later.

Even more strangely, this request had no time limit. He could save them in a month, a year, or a decade. The contract could keep going until Link could find a safe way to leave the realm No, there was something else. If possible, he also had to research the origin of magic here. This would help him with understanding the mysterious gear.

These thoughts flashed past Link's mind. He didn't hurry to speak. Instead, he just looked at the mortals kneeling before him.

This went on for more than ten minutes. When the king was covered in sweat, Link finally said, "You mortals are as idiotic and weak as ants. I can help you, but you must listen to my orders!"

Dadara winced. How did things turn into this? They'd summoned creatures to help fight. How come it was like they'd found a conqueror?

However, he understood the situation. King Morahan was clueless about summoning magic and had completely surrendered to Link's power. He was grasping this last bit of hope right now. He couldn't care about the future.

Hearing Link say this, he immediately said, "Your Dragon Majesty, from now on, you are the protector of the Blacklan Kingdom. As the king, I will do my best to satisfy your every need!"

This king was very good, and Link was satisfied. However, he didn't show it. His face was still expressionless. He scanned past everyone in the valley and finally stopped on the unconscious woman from earlier.

Judging from her skin, she was very young. Her features were similar to the king. Compared with the king's age, she was probably his daughter. Judging from how the king brought her with even in crisis, she was probably well-liked. She must be very important to her.

Thinking of this, Link straightened a 15-foot-long dragon finger and pointed at the unconscious woman. "Then from today on, I am Blacklan Kingdom's protector, and she will be my only royal servant."

The king obviously would be generous during these times. Serving such a strong figure was a great thing too. He immediately said, "Protector, I have 13 daughters. If you wish, I can have them all serve you. I also have 16 sons. If you need"

Hmph! Link huffed, and the king was silenced. He pointed at the six summoners beside him. "You six will be my magic servants. Without my permission, none of you are allowed to be one mile away from me. Otherwise"

These six were helping him with the realm's resistance and maintained the contract. If they ran into trouble, he wouldn't have the upper hand.

As he spoke, he waved his claw at the cliff before him and cast the spatial spell Vacuum Blade.

Crack. A 30-foot-wide tunnel opened up in the 600-foot-high cliff. The cut was smooth as a mirror.

Wow

Every mouth in the valley dropped open. Their faces reddened as if someone was strangling them. This power was beyond imagination.

Seeing their reactions, Link knew everything was set.

Just as Link became the protector Blacklan Kingdom, 12 Magicians completed a summoning seal near Troym's camp.

Three demons appeared from the center. The leader was demon Magician Glyn.

Glyn was different from Link. As a demon who just wanted to take over other realms, he was experienced with being summoned. Ten seconds after he entered the realm, he figured out his strength compared to his summoner.

Damn, I shouldn't have had three people enter. This realm is too powerful. With us three, the resistance is too powerful. My strength is repressed too much!

Now, he was only at the beginning of Level-9. The other two demons were Level-7. On the other hand, the summoners were taking too much of the resistance. They all spat out blood and were greatly injured. If only one person came, Glyn estimated that he would be at Level-11. His summoner wouldn't be so hurt either. It would be much better than now.

Even worse, this realm was much stronger than Glyn had predicted. If the natives weren't sharing the resistance, he would probably be even more repressed. It would be a feat if he was just Level-7.

I've miscalculated. I wonder how the Ferde lord is now.

Glyn scanned the 12 exhausted Magicians around him. The most powerful seemed to be at Level-6. Judging from things, they were probably the strongest in this realm. It was easy to deal with these 12. However, the army nearby had more than 150,000 well-fed and equipped soldiers Things were troublesome.

I won't be able to use brute force to complete Master's mission. F\*ck. Glyn's expression darkened. He was pissed.

## 593. Realm Protector

"Master, what should we do? Should we kill them all?"

Beside Glyn stood a Tyros Bladed Demon called Gaulle. The demon's original power was at Level-11, but it was now reduced to Level-7.

However, he was at his full strength, whereas the summoners around him were only Level-6 and had spent most of their energy in summoning them into their realm. To Gaulle, these Magicians were simply lambs to the slaughter right now.

Gaulle's eyes swiveled around ravenously as he spoke. He was swinging a pair of serrated swords in both his hands. As soon as Glyn gave his order, he would have these people slaughtered.

Glyn waved his hand. "There's no rush. We may still need their help."

"From these insects?" said the third demon, a Fine-Scaled Succubus by the name of Ganya. She originally had Level-10 power, but now she was reduced to Level-7, which was still more than enough to steamroll through this lot.

Glyn nodded. He then said coldly, "Restrain yourselves. I'm in charge now, which means I'm the one giving orders here. If any of you so much as sneeze in a way I don't like, I'll cut off your nose!"

Demons had no concept of decorum. Brute strength was usually a more efficient means of getting one's point across among them.

"Understood, Master Glyn," muttered the two demons, crestfallen after being shut down by Glyn.

"Good. From now on, you are not to say another a word unless I say so. I'll talk to these people."

Glyn then strode towards one of the aboriginals who seemed to be in charge and psychically asked him, "Mortal, tell me what it is you desire!"

As a Demon Magician, Glyn was extremely tall, standing at approximately ten feet tall. Magic runes were carved into his hands. A Shadow Gemstone as big as a fist was mounted on the tip of his wand. Concentrated Mana pulsated from it, sending off ripples in the air.

These were all signs of the terrible power he possessed.

Due to the massive Dimensional Rejection he had to take on, the Magician before Glyn began vomiting blood. Despite his efforts to speak, the man could only muster a gurgling sound from his mouth as blood gradually pooled in it. He seemed to be on the brink of death.

Seeing the state the aboriginal Magician was in, Glyn frowned. These summoners could not die on him right now. Otherwise, the full force of the Dimensional Rejection would come down on all three of them like a hammer. Even if they were not expelled from this realm as a result, their power levels would be severely suppressed. It would be a miracle if they were able to leave this realm alive at that point, let alone accomplish the mission that was given to them by their master.

Glyn raised his wand and muttered something under his breath. A moment later, rays of purple light shone out from the wand, hitting every injured Magician on the scene.

This was a Level-8 spell: Shadow Healing.

Upon being struck by a ray of purple light from Glyn's wand, each Magician's body began to emit a faint purple glow. They then shuddered and groaned for around 30 seconds. Gradually, magic runes similar to those on Glyn surfaced on their skins, which had now taken on a shade of violet. Their eyes had also turned blood-red, with purple light flashing out from their pupils.

A few minutes later, the Magician in front of Glyn was first to react. He prostrated himself before the demon and shouted, "Save us, almighty Magicians from the Void!"

"State your business then." Glyn was not all too surprised to receive such a response. The summoning magic seal beneath him seemed primitive and shoddily put together, as if they had been in a hurry to complete it in order to attain power that they sorely lacked at the moment.

The Magician immediately responded, "Our scouts have informed us that the Blacklan Kingdom has gone mad. They've sacrificed all their war prisoners in order to summon a powerful Void creature into the Fedaro realm through a forbidden summoning ritual!"

"Blacklan Kingdom? Sacrifice?"

Glyn looked around him. He saw that broken stone fragments littered the magic seal he was standing in. These fragments looked like crystals. There were still traces of Magical Power left in them. Glyn figured that they must have been magical crystals. There were plenty of these rocks lying beneath him. They must have contained huge amounts of Magical Power before. Looking at the magic seal beneath him, Glyn estimated that it could probably summon a Level-8 Pinnacle creature from the Void.

No wonder my power has been inhibited so much. The three of us were all at once squeezed through a measly Level-8 summoning seal into this realm... Wait a minute, did he say that the Blacklan Kingdom used a sacrificial ritual to summon a Void creature?

Taken aback by what he heard, Glyn stared at the Magician before him and asked, "How many souls did they offer as tribute?"

"At least 4000."

Glyn's blood froze. The Blacklan Kingdom must have been able to summon the lord of Ferde through with the combined energy of 4000 souls. Not only would Link's power not be as inhibited as his, but he might also still have Legendary power in him!

Despite possessing Level-9 power, Glyn still could not hold a candle to even a Legendary master like Link who had just been promoted to Level-10. To make matters worse, the lord of Ferde still had his dragon body, making him a monstrosity with a wingspan of 100 feet!

Glyn really wanted to leave this accursed realm behind him as soon as possible. However, his master had given him his orders. Also, the fact that they were summoned into this realm meant that they had basically signed a contract with the Magicians who had summoned them. Without completing the terms of their contract, Glyn and the others would have an extremely hard time leaving this realm.

Damn it, this could be a problem.

The lord of Ferde was already a difficult person to handle. He was even able to survive the God of Destruction's divine punishment back then. How should he deal with this on his own?

The two demons behind him did not understand much about summoning magic. However, they were quite familiar with sacrificial magic and what it entailed. Hearing that the other party had offered 4000 souls as tribute in their summoning ritual, the two demons' faces underwent a multitude of changes.

The three demons fell silent for a long while. Sensing that something was not right, the Magician who was still on the floor said in a timorous voice, "Almighty Magicians of the Void, is there nothing you can do for us?"

A sudden thought flashed through his mind. Glyn responded, "There is a way, but it comes with a huge cost."

"Say it," said the Magician hopefully.

Glyn's idea was simple. He could not think of a way to deal with Link, but his master could. The latter had also mentioned that he would deal with Link personally. By bringing him into this realm, everything would be much simpler.

"Since the Blacklan Kingdom was able to sacrifice all 4000 souls for their summoning ritual, why can't you? If you're willing to offer even more souls as tribute, you'll be able to bring in even more powerful creatures from the Void to help you defeat your enemy. If you don't know where to start..."

Before he could finish, the Magician on the ground quickly shook his head. "No, it's forbidden magic, something we of the Troym Kingdom would not sully our hands with. Otherwise, a Protector will make an appearance before us."

Glyn was furious at first when he heard what the man said and was of a mind to show him how an actual sacrifice was made. However, upon hearing the last part of his sentence, he frowned. "What's a Protector?"

The Magician replied, "A member of a clandestine council of Magicians. Each member is extremely powerful. It is also said that the strongest of their number possesses extraordinary power. The Blacklan Kingdom's actions have probably drawn the attention of these Protectors. Those people will most likely be punished for what they have done. However, it may take some time. Until then, we should first think of a way to deal with the Void creature that they have summoned."

Glyn's heart skipped a beat at the mention of the words "extraordinary power." This meant that these Protectors must be Legendary masters, and as luck would have had it, he was in no position to take on anyone with Legendary power.

There did not seem to be a way out for Glyn.

Wait a minute, there is still a way. Glyn looked at the magical crystasscattered across the ground.

"I happen to know the name of a powerful Void creature. If you could scrounge up another batch of magical crystals for me..."

The Magician interrupted him tearily, "These are the last of the magical crystals our kingdom had stocked up for the last 100 years. We've even bought up all the crystals from our neighbors."

Glyn was out of options. It would seem that he had finally hit a dead end.

Gaulle and Ganya looked at each other. Hearing what the Magician had said, they could see that things did not look good on their end. Summoning their master into this realm in such a short span of time seemed impossible at this point. To make matters worse, they still had to deal with a lord of Ferde who still possessed Legendary power.

How was any of them supposed to come out of this alive?

As everyone present frantically considered their options, a roar rumbled from the mountains in their vicinity.

Roar!!!

The roar split the ground like thunder, causing every living being in the mountain to flee in fear.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Heavy footsteps then echoed from the mountains, causing the ground to quake beneath them. At that moment, all their hearts were beating hard against their chests, threatening to leap out of their throats at any moment.

The lord of Ferde had arrived.

"Master, the lord of Ferde is here. What should we do?" said Gaulle in a quavering voice. His swords were noisily rattling against each other.

"Master, please think of something, he's already here!" pleaded Ganya. Her body was now shaking violently. If it were not for the fact that Glyn was still standing there, she would have left the place without any hesitation.

"Almighty Magicians of the Void, that Void creature is here. What should we do?" said the aboriginal Magician who was still lying prostrate before Glyn, trembling from head to toe.

Glyn was also at a loss. What was the use of knowing a wide array of powerful spells if he did not even have enough power to use any of them?

Is flight our only option? thought Glyn, reluctant to admit defeat just yet. Back in the void, he had Level-15 power. But now he was being hunted down by this Level-13 runt. He would not be able to face his master if he were to fail in his mission right now.

But what other options did he have left?

At that moment, they heard a voice from the sky. "I see that you've summoned three demons here with incredible power. They will have to do. Franklan, you did well."

The Magician raised his head up and saw a snow-white unicorn glowing with a soft silver light as it hovered 30 feet above him in the air. On the beast's back sat a young boy.

The boy appeared to be around fifteen years old. His features were handsome, complemented by a set of elegant, silver hair. He was wearing a pristine white robe with silver embroidery and a flawless emerald gemstone on his forehead. He was also holding a wand which was glowing with a white light. He did not look at all like a mortal.

"And you are?" asked Franklan, shocked to be addressed so familiarly by someone he had never seen before. He could feel the oppressive aura radiating from the boy on the unicorn.

The boy swept his gaze past Glyn and the others. He then said casually, "Me? My name is Romeon. I'm a Protector."

## 594. Magician I Can Smell The Fear In Your Heart

Boom! Boom!

The sound of pounding footsteps kept getting closer. At the same time, there was a powerful surge of energy waves. Looking towards the mountains from here, one could see that even the air had distorted slightly.

"You know him?" The one who called himself Romeon, the Protector, looked at Glyn. His eyes were serious. When Glyn didn't reply after a few seconds, he added, "I heard your conversation. You called him the 'Ferde lord.'"

Glyn felt troubled now. At first, he thought that with Level-9 power, he would have no opponents in this world other than the Ferde lord. Now, a Legendary Protector suddenly appeared. He could feel from the guy's tone that he only saw Glyn as a slightly powerful summoned. He also knew about demons and didn't trust Glyn.

With someone like him here, it would be impossible to summon Nozama. Glyn really wanted to just leave now.

When he still didn't reply, Protector Romeon frowned slightly. His hands tightened around his wand. "Demon, don't test my patience!"

Glyn was forced to nod. "Indeed. His name is Link. He's a very cruel black dragon. He once personally killed more than 100,000 people in another realm I think that, with your experience, you must know how terrifying a Legendary dragon is, right?"

As soon as he finished, there was another booming footstep. After that, part of a huge black shadow appeared behind a mountain. It was only a part, but they could already see the dragon body clearly.

Romeon naturally saw it too. His brows knitted more tightly.

Right then, commotion arose from a mountain near the magic seal. Listening closely, one could hear screams, clattering hooves, yells, and chaos.

Summoner Franklan's face paled. "The army revolted. Protector, what should we do?"

Troym's army was camped at that side of the mountain. With at least 150,000 people, it was a huge force. But with such a horrible beast before them that could destroy the world, it didn't matter how many people they had. They were only mortals and were definitely terrified now.

If they didn't act quickly, Troym's army would fall apart.

If they could assure the soldiers, take advantage of some catapult, group spell, piercing arrows or other machinery, they could at least distract the dragon. This would greatly lighten their burden.

Everyone present understood this.

Seeing that their opportunity was about to end, Demon Magician Glyn threw all caution to the wind. Turning, he called at Romeon, "Protector, please act before it's too late!"

Only the Protector could fight Link. Everyone else was too weak.

Romeon was hesitant too. Seeing the black dragon's might, he wasn't confident in defeating it. But he was the Protector of the Fedaro Continent. Protecting this world was his lifelong vow when he'd joined this Magician's organization. Now that there was a black dragon invader, he had to take responsibility.

Thinking of this, he inhaled deeply and turned. "Franklan, take your summoned with. It's up to us."

With that, the unicorn started galloping in the air, instantly reaching an extreme speed. It cut a silver-white arc as it flew towards the battlefield ahead.

"Yes, Protector!" At this time, the Legendary Protector was their last hope. After that, Franklan turned to Glyn. "Master"

Glyn waved his hand. "No need. We will follow the summoning contract and help you defeat the black dragon king. Let's go!"

Franklan was overjoyed. He turned and hurried to the frontline.

The two demons behind Glyn hurried over. "Commander, are we really going?" Demon Gamiwa murmured. "That Protector looks young and inexperienced. How can he be the Ferde lord's match?"

The Ferde lord was the god of death. He'd killed so many demons. The demons in the Abyss hated him to bits, but power was power. To them, the Ferde lord was an impassable mountain.

Gaulle also nodded lightly. "How about we escape now?"

Glyn liked that idea, but he quickly shook his head. "Don't forget Master's mission! At least we have a Legendary figure helping now and Troym's army. It's still possible to win. Let's go."

It was risky, but if they could defeat the Ferde lord and control his soul, then Glyn would have accomplished something great. His master would definitely reward him.

The two demons had no objections and could only follow Glyn to the frontline.

Roar! The dragon roared again. Because they were much closer, disturbances visible to the naked eye rippled through the air.

Under the sound waves, big trees shook violently and could snap at any time. The Troym soldiers who were close plugged their ears and rolled on the ground. The weaker ones even started bleeding from their mouths and noses. They were actually injured.

How could they fight against this?

The Troym soldiers were losing their resolve; they were close to breaking down.

"Keep steady! Steady!" the general yelled hysterically.

A few generals had already slain some deserters to keep the situation under control. But this was only temporary. When the dragon got closer, even the generals would probably turn to flee.

In the mountains, King Morahan of the Blacklan Kingdom and the group of summoners looked at Troym's camp from afar. Seeing this, the king gulped. "Master," he murmured to Magician Dadara. "You've really done something great. Not only have you protected Blacklan Kingdom, but you might also even destroy Troym!"

Dadara was more clear-headed. "Your Majesty, it's not definite yet. We've used the sacrifice spell to summon the black dragon king and must have alerted the Protector. The dragon might not be the Protector's match."

"The Protector? He can't be that fast." The king was shocked.

At this time, a soldier beside him yelled, "Look, there's a flying unicorn in the sky!"

Everyone turned to look. There really was a snowy white unicorn flying towards the battlefield at an unimaginable speed. Looking closely, there was a youth dressed as a Magician on the unicorn.

"It's Protector Romeon!" Dadara was shocked. He'd seen the Protector before. The silver hair, snowy-white robe, unicorn, and handsome, youthful features were all of Romeon's characteristics.

He looked young, but he was actually more than 100 years old. He was one of the most powerful Protectors in Fedaro.

Dadara knew that his actions would alert the Protectors, but he didn't think that he would attract the attention of someone so powerful. The black dragon king looked powerful, but Dadara wasn't sure if he could win against the Protector.

The king had only heard of the Protector before. Seeing the unicorn streaking like lightning, he asked anxiously, "Master, that Protector looks so young. He can't be that powerful, right?"

"I don't know. One's body isn't the critical factor in a Legendary battle. Usually, just one spell can decide the victor." Dadara was quite knowledgeable.

The king felt sweat seep from his forehead. From what he knew, the kings who'd gone against the Protectors never had good endings. These things had happened many times before.

Would he and his kingdom have a tragic ending too?

Roar! The black dragon, as big as a hill, walked out from the mountains. He was covered in a layer of air ripples. The specific details of his body were hard to see. After walking out, he stopped around 1500 feet from the camp. With a whoosh, he unfurled his huge dragon wings. The wings were at least 300 feet wide and they seemed to cover the entire sky.

Afterwards, the dragon wings flapped towards the army. A gust of wild wind appeared instantly, and the sky tited violently. From afar, it looked like a tidal wave crashing towards the army.

One would expect that many soldiers would be dead or gravely injured once the wind rushed past the army. Their morale would be destroyed too.

Right then, Protector Romeon's wand flashed in the air. His body was instantly as bright as the sun. An instant later, a pillar of light at least 30 feet thick fell from the sky. It spread into a wall of light, blocking the wild wind.

Whoosh, whoosh.

The wind pounded but couldn't budge the wall of light.

Immediately after, the "sun" in the sky intoned with a voice that resonated through the world, "Black dragon, leave here. Leave this realm, or die!"

There was a Legendary Protector here?

Link squinted at the figure in the sky in some shock. The sacrifice spell isn't accepted by the world and immediately alerted the top force in this realm. This is probably only the first wave of power. If I wreak havoc in this realm without caring, there will probably be many more resistors. I will become a public enemy.

If he really became a public enemy, the entire realm's power would join against him. It was just like how Nozama had invaded Firuman and conducted many massacres. The different races immediately allied with each other. Many mysterious forces were helping too.

For example, Link felt that he was always weirdly lucky when fighting against Nozama. This was probably due to the aid of some unknown forces.

If he went too overboard, he would probably be resisted similarly by this realm. Of course, he was far from that level. He could still control himself.

These thoughts flashed past his mind, and he figured out what to do.

Looking up at the blazing "sun," Link laughed. "Magician, I can smell the fear in your heart."

## 595. Have I Summoned A God?

Link simply stared at Romeon the Protector, not in any rush to make the first move.

Romeon's throat felt dry. He too simply stood there facing Link.

The Magician Franklan and the other summoners had returned to their base camp, with Glyn and the other two demons trailing behind him. Once they were back in their camp, Franklan quickly sought out the army's marshal.

"Marshal, we need to do something!" said Franklan immediately as soon as he found him.

The marshal was a middle-aged Level-6 Pinnacle Warrior. He was surprised to see Franklin in such a state. He then saw the demons behind him and could not help but shudder at the sight of them.

He did not recognize any of them, but these three demons were giving off incredibly dark auras mingled with a thick bloodlust. As someone who had seen countless bloodshed during his tenure as marshal, he was extremely sensitive to auras like theirs. He had a bad feeling about this.

After hesitating for a few seconds, he asked Franklan, "Master, are these three the ones you summoned from the Void?"

Slightly caught off guard by the question, Franklan nodded. "Yes. They are under my control. Protector Romeon knows of their presence here. He needs their power as well."

This sounded reassuring. The marshal pondered this for a few seconds. Finally, he nodded and then, turning to his messenger, he said, "Mobilize every ballista and catapult in camp to launch an attack against the black dragon."

"Yes, Marshal!" said the messenger, who then turned around and left.

"Franklan, I will require your magical asstance!"

"Understood, Marshal. We will head off to the Mage Tower presently," said Franklan. There was indeed a Mage Tower in this realm, which architecturally resembled the one in Firuman.

He then said to Glyn, "Master, follow me."

Glynn did not object to this. Suddenly, as if a thought had just occurred to him, he turned to the marshal and said, "These two are my subordinates. I think you will need these two in your upcoming battle."

The marshal looked at the Bladed Demon, then at the Succubus. He nodded. "You two should be on the frontline then!"

The two demons seemed unsure about this. Being on the frontline essentially meant being first in line to face Link.

At that moment, Glyn's voice rang out in their minds. "Go! Make yourselves useful. We need all the support we can get from these people!"

Left with no other choice, the two demons went off to take their positions on the forefront of the upcoming battle.

With everything settled, all that was left for everyone to do now was fight to the bitter end against the black dragon.

At that moment, Romeon the Protector was still looking warily at Link. He then said in a low voice, "Dragon, you possess extraordinary power. These people are no more than ants before you. What do you hope to gain from their deaths? "

Obviously, he was trying to buy himself time.

Link could see the artillery weapons being lined out one by one in the base camp behind Romeon. Considering my current position and the fact that my scales have been enhanced to resist any magical attacks, these weapons probably won't come close to hurting me, thought Link.

Since that was the case, Link might as well take advantage of Romeon's attempts to stall in order to understand this new world and establish dominance at the same time.

Link remained motionless for a while. He then let out a terrible laugh and gazed coldly at Romeon. "Magician, the opinions of ants do not concern me in the least."

Romeon was speechless. He shot a few panicked glances behind him. He then continued, "Dragon, you must also possess an extraordinary intellect to go with that extraordinary power of yours. Can't you see that I'm just the first person the realm has sent out to stop you? If you continue on this path, you'll soon have to face enemies more powerful than me. The mortals of this realm will also resort to underhanded tactics like poison and asssination in order to rid their world of you. Even if they can't destroy you completely, you will lose all that you cherish along the way. You will lose."

"I suppose you're right," said Link, nodding.

Romeon was pleased by this. The beast did not seem like the unreasonable sort. If it could be reasoned with, there might be a peaceful way to settle things with it without shedding a drop of blood after all.

In one of the mountains behind him, the king of the Blacklan Kingdom began to panic as he listened to their conversation. "What's with the Protector? Is he thinking about backing out now? Dadara, why isn't he doing anything? Troym's army is about to attack at any moment!"

Dadara did not know what was going on as well. He simply shrugged and shook his head. "Your Highness, the Protector's wisdom greatly surpass my understanding. Even I don't know what he's thinking."

The people of Blacklan Kingdom could only stare helplessly at what was happening at this point.

At that moment, Romeon sensed an opportunity. "Dragon, please step down..." he said.

"No," interrupted Link, shaking his dragon head. "I can't violate my summoning contract. If I fulfill the terms of my contract, I will be rewarded with a huge amount of power. In return, I will simply need to perform a task for the Blacklan Kingdom. I am a dragon of my word, after all."

Romeon was at a loss for words again. He could not seem to persuade the dragon out of this.

However, he did not need to exchange words with Link any longer. The army of Troym was now ready to launch an attack against him.

Before opening fire on him, Romeon said, "Dragon, if that's how you want to do this, then expect no mercy from us!"

At that moment, Link was still sitting on his haunches. He then rose up and spread his wings out majestically. "Mortals, are you ready to take me on?"

There was a hint of glee in Link's voice. Romeon's blood froze. He's already seen through everything. Still, he didn't even make a move. Is he really that arrogant as to think that he can take on all of us by himself?

Romeon had a bad feeling about this. However, all the artillery weapons had been primed and was ready to mount an attack on the dragon. There was no backing out of this now.

"Fire!" shouted the marshal of the Troym army.

Whoo! A battle horn was sounded.

Boom! Boom! Boom! went the catapults.

Arrows whizzed out from the rows of ballistas behind Romeon.

All kinds of spells soared out from the Mage Tower, the most potent of them all being Level-9. From balls of electricity to beams of darkness, all of them hurtled relentlessly towards Link.

Romeon had also joined in the attack. The light radiating from his body was now blinding. He then pointed his wand at the sky. "Heavenly Sword!"

A 100-foot-wide golden cloud began to form and spin rapidly in the sky. A 30-foot-wide crack then opened up in the center of it, unleashing countless blades of light upon Link.

It was an elegant and potent Level-10 spell that Romeon prided himself in.

All these attacks were now coming at Link like an avalanche, threatening to swallow him up.

"We're dead! Dead, I say!" cried the king of the Blacklan Kingdom, Morahan. Even a dragon like Link would be reduced to a pile of ash by such a fierce combination of attacks.

Glyn had his eyes glued on Link from the Mage Tower. He ignored everyone else's spells and simply focused on Romeon's, as he was sure that it would deliver the final killing blow to Link.

In the face of such an attack, Link simply spread out his wings and whipped up a gust of wind.

The catapults' rocks, the ballistas' arrows and any spell below Level-7 were blown off course by the sudden wind. All that remained within the volley of spells were those above Level-7, especially the golden blades that were still streaking down from the heavens towards him, unhindered by the wind whatsoever.

Strangely enough, Link stood his ground. He did not even bother setting up any defensive measures against the rest of the incoming spells.

"What's going on?" Romeon, Glyn and everyone else was all perplexed by this.

"Is he trying to kill himself?"

"Has he gone mad?"

At that moment, all kinds of thoughts were running through everyone's mind. Finally, the golden blades reached Link's body. Then, the inexplicable happened.

Composed of highly-concentrated magical energy, these golden blades looked just like any other blade forged by human hands and might even be sturdier than the latter to an extent. However, as soon as they hit the black dragon's scales, they simply went limp.

These 500-foot-long blades went soft like jelly before melting into pools of golden liquid.

The golden liquid then slid off Link's scales and evaporated into a golden mist.

Not one blade was able to pierce through the black dragon's scales.

Romeon's spell was completely ineffective. So were the other spells that had accompanied it.

Looking at the golden mist wafting off of him, the black dragon shook his head. "That all you've got?"

A resounding silence was all that answered him.

"Arghhh!!!" Someone screamed. Then, the whole army of Troym descended into chaos. They were completely outclassed by the black dragon.

Glyn's eyes widened at what he saw. The lord of Ferde was able to shrug off a Level-10 Legendary spell like it was nothing. There was nothing he could do against an opponent like that.

All the Magicians around him were running for their lives. Taking advantage of the ensuing chaos, Glyn managed to knock out Franklan. Hoisting him up on his shoulder, he then turned around to leave.

In the air, Romeon was now panicking as well. He turned around to look at the Troym army, which had scattered like ants beneath him. He then pulled on the reins of his unicorn and bolted like an arrow from the battlefield.

His opponent was just too powerful. Lingering on any longer would just result in his demise. He needed to become even more powerful in order to deal with a threat like Link. Yes, that's right. He was not running away out of fear. He was simply making a tactical retreat. He could not afford to die here now!

"I need to run! I can't die here!" Romeon began picking up speed as he fled for his life.

Back in the base camp, the two demons looked at each other for a moment. Then, they too turned around and fled the place with the others.

However, as they were about to leave, the air began to distort around them and became viscous. Soon, their feet were all trapped in the thick, ropy air.

The two demons looked at each other, then turned around and saw that the black dragon was glaring at them.

The Bladed Demon immediately fell to his knees. "Master, you are my one and only master. Your will is my command!"

The succubus Gamiwa stared at him, her eyes as wide as saucers. "Have you lost your mind? The master will kill us!"

"If we don't surrender now, we'll die too! I still have a lot to live for, you know," said Gaulle from the corner of his mouth. He was now lying prostrate on the ground before Link.

The succubus' knees gave way, and she too knelt down. "Almighty dragon, let me be your humble servant as well!"

Gaulle was right. Survival was the only thing that mattered now.

Glyn had already put a bit of distance between him and the battlefield. From afar, he could see that his two subordinates had surrendered themselves to their enemy. He felt nauseous just watching the two of them grovel before the dragon. However, he could not do a thing about it. He could still feel the dragon's eyes searching for him. If he revealed himself now, he would also be as good as dead!

Link was now looking at the state of the Troym army with an air of satisfaction. He began walking briskly towards the Warriors of Troym, who were now crying and cursing their parents for bringing them into this world with only a pair of legs.

The entire army of Troym had collapsed entirely. After squishing a few Warriors beneath his feet, he then turned around and headed back into the mountains.

The people of the Blacklan Kingdom prostrated themselves before Link when they saw him striding back towards them. King Morahan shouted, "Almighty Protector, you truly are a god!"

The Magician Dadara was left speechless. At that moment, he too thought that he had actually summoned a god into their realm. How else could anyone explain what had just happened?

Link continued walking into the deeper regions of the mountains. Then he thundered, "Only my attendants can stay. The rest of you can go now. From now on, these mountains will be my domain. Trespassers will be killed!"

Silence fell upon the mountains once more when he said those words.

Link then returned to the valley back in the mountains. After a while, the two demons that he had intimidated into submission finally caught up to him. Looking down on the two trembling figures, Link asked, "I want to know everything about Nozama. I'll be asking you two a few questions, one by one."

## 596. Sovereign Of Light?

This is problematic.

Link sprawled on the ground of the valley, thinking of the information he'd gotten from the two demons. The Void Ferry actually had more than 3000 Legendary demons. Nozama wanted to come personally to deal with him. Even more shocking, these guys were still looking for the mysterious gear and had come here.

This place was extremely close to the mysterious gear. If they searched carefully here, they would definitely find it. What would happen if they found the gear?

Link didn't know if they would receive undefeatable power or shocking wisdom. All he knew was that he couldn't let Nozama find it.

But what should I do now? Link had no clue. While wracking his brain, his magic servant Dadara walked over with a thick magic book in his hands. "Master, I've prepared what you've requested."

"Get closer and read for me." Link's eyes rolled and looked down at Dadara. He remained sprawled on the ground.

It wasn't their first meeting, but whenever Dadara had to approach this huge beast, he would still get nervous. He forced himself to around 50 feet from Link and started reading.

"The realm we live in is called Fedara. In ancient times, it was a barren land. There was no water, no air, and no life. One day, a great god arrived. He saw that the world was so quiet and decided to add life to it. He spent seven days in total to create the creatures Master, this is the myth spread all over the continent. I cannot ensure the validity. I personally do not believe it."

Link didn't agree or disagree. He huffed out some air, creating a breeze in the valley. "Keep reading. Don't add your useless nonsense. Your knowledge isn't enough to determine the truth of history."

Dadara felt insulted, but he didn't dare object. Licking his chapped lips, he continued, "After God created life, he stayed in Fedara for countless years. He arranged the order for the world to operate, and spread the written and spoken language. When he left, he pointed at the ancestors of humanity and said, 'From now on, you will rule the world in my place. Magic is the scepter I give you'"

The myth was very rough. There was a handful of myths similar to this in Firuman. Most of the details couldn't be believed, but there were still some traces left behind by history. Here, Link asked, "What was the god called?"

"He never said his true name. However, the ancient people called him the Sovereign of Light. Whenever he appeared, he was covered in endless light. People couldn't see his features clearly either," Dadara said.

"Sovereign of Light?" Link was slightly surprised. The Sovereign of Light was similar to Firuman's God of Light. Piasce had also said that the mysterious gear in the Sea of Void was enveloped by light. Could there be a special relationship between these three?

However, there still wasn't enough information. Link couldn't conclude anything yet. "Continue," he ordered.

"After the god left, the ancestors used the God-given magic and quickly reached the top of the world. In the beginning, many believed that God would return and the ancestors were only temporarily protecting the world order for him. Thus, the world was very peaceful, and everyone lived happily. However, God never returned. Time passed, and the order broke apart. About 9000 years ago, the first magic war erupted in Fedara. Countless powerful Magicians crowned themselves as magic king. They fought each other to snatch the scepter given by the god. The dark ages lasted for 30 years. It was known as the War of the Kings."

"Oh? Is this a legend or history?" Link was interested.

"This is true history," Dadara said.

"Where's the evidence?" Link asked.

Not only was Dadara a Magician, but he was also a learned scholar. He knew everything about Fedara's history.

As soon as Link asked, he replied, "There are many ancient relics on the continent. The most well-known is the Stargazer's Platform in the South. Ancient scholars observed the paths of stars there. There's a famous wall painting called Dawn of the Gods. Beneath it is an epic poem of 5389 ancient words. It recorded the ancient war in detail.

"There are also three eternal magic seals on the Stargazer's Platform and five fossilized bodies. This all proves that the War of the Kings had truly happened around 9000 years ago. According to my research, the specific time should be around 9155 years."

It was a detailed reply. After hearing it, Link felt like he should visit the Stargazer's Platform. Of course, he had to learn as much as he could about this world's magic before that.

Thinking of this, Link said, "Continue the story. After that, I need to know about your magic."

"As you wish, Master." Dadara continued reading.

While Link was focused on learning the specifics of Fedara, Glyn was escaping with Franklan. He ran more than 1000 miles without stopping and finally took a breather after reaching the heart of the Troym Kingdom.

Just as he was about to rest, a voice came from the sky. "Stop, demon."

Glyn looked up. It was Protector Romeon who had been running toward the same direction. He looked a bit pathetic now. His clothes were torn, and his previously flawlesshi

"Protector, I am only someone summoned from another realm. Why can't you let me go?" Glyn was scared. The other was Legendary, after all. If they started fighting, he wouldn't do well.

Romeon shook his head. "No, no, no. I know you have other plans, but I'm not looking for trouble now. I want to know details about the black dragon. His power is too shocking. He surpass all creatures that have appeared in the history of Fedara. Even the ancient magic kings can't reach his level. He can't be a nameless figure. Demon, tell me his background."

With that, Glyn was relieved. If this guy really wanted to find trouble, it would actually be hard for Glyn. This was much better. He couldn't say much about the Ferde lord though. Otherwise, judging from their conversation earlier on the battlefield, who knew what would happen?

Thinking of this, Glyn said, "Protector, I've only heard of his name before. He is truly powerful, but that was my first time fighting him, just like you."

"Oh?" Romeon squinted at Glyn, face full of suspicion.

Glyn had seen this kind of suspicion many times before. He cried out inwardly. That damn Ferde lord had perfectly destroyed the Protector's confidence. The clash hadn't been as intense as he had thought. The Protector had already started doubting Glyn and would try to prove his doubts. Adding the two demon traitors to the fact, they would probably be exposed soon.

At this point, Nozama's mission would be impossible to accomplish. The wisest thing would be to give up on the summoning and return to the Void to restart. It was highly possible that he would be badly punished, but it was still better than failing and dying here.

Glyn was a decisive man. Once he made a decision, he would do it immediately without any delay.

Of course, he had to find the right time to leave this realm. But since he had a decision, he didn't feel torn inside. "Protector," he murmured. "Of all the rumors I've heard of the black dragon, he's a cruel and tricky guy. Perhaps you think he's okay and you can communicate with him. But when he kills more than 100,000 lives in this world, you'll regret it."

"But less than 20 people died because of him in that battle," Romeon said, half trusting and half disbelieving. "Less than 100 were injured. This doesn't match the name of a cruel tyrant."

"Hah, I'm only telling you what I've heard. Whether you believe me or not has nothing to do with me. If you have the guts, you can go to the valley to ask him personally Oh, I don't think I can stay in this realm any longer. After all, I'm just a summoned guest from another realm."

"Oh, then you can go. Thank you for the information. Also, this realm doesn't welcome you. Don't come back. If I meet you again, I will destroy you!"

Glyn shrugged. "I hope we'll never meet."

Romeon didn't think much. The summoning spell had ended, so returning to the Void was normal. Thinking that he wouldn't get more information from the demon, he turned to leave.

Perhaps it's time to go look for that black dragon, Romeon thought. The other hadn't caused great damage and instead went back to the mountains. The fighting could be put aside for now. He should at least figure out the other's motive.

On the other hand, a short while after he left, Glyn grabbed Magician Franklan's neck. "Mortal, I'm sorry, but I don't need you anymore."

"You" Franklan was shocked.

Crack! Bone cracked, and Franklan's neck was turned into mush. He was dead instantly.

He was Glyn's main summoner. Once he died, Glyn felt the realm's resistance against him multiply greatly. His Level-9 strength was now only Level-6.

It didn't matter though. He wasn't going to stay in this realm for any longer. Using the resistance, Glyn cast a realm portal spell.

Buzz. White light flashed. Using this power, Glyn felt himself shoot out of this damn realm. Everything blurred in his vision. A few minutes later, dark green vapor appeared before him. He was back in the Sea of Void.

Nothing was restiting him anymore, and his power returned to Level-15. The Void's power rushed towards him, but he easily stopped it.

After a while, a huge disc appeared around him. There was a flashing spatial coordinate below it. Glyn immediately sent his location. The white light flashed, and he was back inside the Void Ferry.

Nozama's voice came. "Glyn, you've disappointed me greatly."

## 597. God Of Destruction

Glyn turned around and saw that Nozama was looking at him from his black skeletal throne. On both sides of his throne stood ten or so demons. These were all Nozama's most trusted subordinates. Some of them even posed a threat to Glyn's position as Nozamassecond in command.

The crowd of demons was smiling at him nastily.

Glyn's heart was now racing in him. His knees gave way, and he fell to his knees unceremoniously. "Master, I beg you. Please allow me to explain what I had to go through in that realm before you punish me."

"Speak then," said Nozama, nodding. He had always been a reasonable man, and Glyn was also one of his most competent subordinates.

Glyn let out a sigh of relief. He then began recounting the moment he and his two underlings were summoned by the Magicians of Troym into their realm; the Protector's appearance, which was subsequently followed by the Black Dragon Link's appearance; and finally, how the Black Dragon easily brought the Troym army to its knees. He did not leave out anything as he described in detail the power levels of all parties involved and what happened during the battle with the Black Dragon.

When he was finished, Nozama frowned. "You said that he just stood there, completely ignoring the Level-10 spell that was aimed at him. Are you sure he didn't cast a defensive spell on himself beforehand?"

"No, I was closely observing him at the time. I did not sense any magical aura from him. I am sure of what I saw. The spell simply slid off him like rainwater."

Glyn was a Level-15 Magician. Though his power had been heavily suppressed back then, his observational skills were not at all affected. He definitely could not have imagined what he saw with his own eyes.

Things did not look good. The fact that a Level-10 spell had no effect whatsoever on Link suggested that he was now more powerful than anyone had anticipated. Even Nozama could not achieve such a feat.

From Glyn's account, Nozama estimated that his power would be reduced to at most Level-10 if he were to enter that realm without any summoner splitting the burden of the Dimensional Rejection with him. Even he would be decimated by a Level-10 magical attack at that point.

Nozama tapped a restless finger on one of the armrests of his throne. All the other demons were now holding their breaths, fearing that their breathing might distract their master. Glyn remained kneeling on the ground, not even daring to take a breath himself. His heart was now pounding in anticipation of whatever punishment Nozama had in store for him.

Seconds passed agonizingly. Ten minutes later, Nozama spoke once more, "The lord of Ferde never ceases to surprise me. I imagine he still has a few tricks up his sleeve if he thinks he can venture into the Sea of Void on his own. And now he's holed up in this backwater realm. Knowing him, he may even stay there for a hundred more years if he has to. Picking a fight with him there may not be a wise move. If that's the case, we'll just have to return to our previous objective: finding the Seal of Light!"

"Yes, Master." All the demons nodded around him.

Nozama then looked at Glyn again. "As for you, Glyn, you've been a loyal servant of mine, perhaps ten times more loyal than those traitorous imbeciles Gaulle and Gamiwa. You're also a lot more intelligent than those two. You've proven yourself to be an invaluable asset. Stand up; you are not at fault for the failure of this mission."

Glyn was overjoyed. "Many thanks, Master! Many thanks!"

In the past, Nozama would usually conjure some cruel punishment to deal with those who failed him. This was the first time he had forgiven someone for his failure. It would seem that Glyn had made the right choice.

Nozama then turned to look out of one of the portholes on the side of the Void Ferry. A vast realm flickered in the distance outside the Ferry. He smirked. "Another world waiting to be conquered. I'm coming, love."

The Void Ferry let out a soft hum as it turned towards this new realm.

Just then, something happened.

The Dark Tutor Mysin shouted, "Master, something's holding back the Void Ferry! We're completely paralyzed!"

"What? What did you say?" Nozama was stunned. What the Void Ferry lacked in power, it made up for in size. Even he would not be able to restrain such a huge vessel by himself. Who could be powerful enough to bring the entire Void Ferry to a halt?

He immediately gave out his order. "Activate the Dark Inferno. We'll burn whoever it is to a crisp..."

Before he could finish his sentence, a silky voice echoed in the vessel. "Nozama, is this how you treat a friend?"

As Nozama puzzled over who it could be for a while, a dark red image flickered inobeing inside the cabin. The image was blurry at first. Then, it began to solidify into the form of an Agatha Naga. The Naga somewhat resembled the Naga Priestess Molina. Swathed in layers of destructive aura, she had an air of austerity about her that Molina never had.

Looking at her, Nozama drew a sharp breath. He stood up, took a few paces forward and then bowed deeply before the Naga. "Exalted one, I did not expect to find you here."

The Naga in question was the God of Destruction. She had appeared before Nozama in her true form. The faint aura she was giving off was enough to suffocate every demonoboard the Void Ferry. Even Nozama was under the impression that he would be disintegrated at any moment by her.

A mortal in the face of a Legendary was akin to an ant about to be stomped on by an elephant. In the Sea of Void, Nozama was now feeling just as insignificant as said ant in the face of a divine master like the God of Destruction.

"I did not expect to find you floating out here as well," said the Naga, chuckling. She then turned to look at the realm outside the Ferry's porthole. "I assume he's somewhere in there?"

"Yes, yes he is."

Nozama did not even have to guess who she was referring to.

The Naga smiled coldly. "This realm does feel potent. However, it is still young, and most of its rules are far from complete. It's also not under the protection of any god as far as I know. I'll open a portal for you, and all you have to do is go in there and get him out of it."

Nozama was taken aback by her suggestion. "Won't there still be a Dimensional Rejection?"

"There will be, but I'll take on most of it for you. You will have Level-14 power inside that realm as a result. Don't tell me you can't even handle such a simple task?"

If the Naga had come to him sooner with such an arrangement, Nozama would not have hesitated to pluck the lord of Ferde out of the realm he was now hiding in. However, after hearing Glyn's account, he was not sure if he could handle Link even with Level-14 power, especially when he had no idea how powerful the latter had become at this point.

The God of Destruction gazed at him coldly. "Cowardice is a quality most unbecoming of someone with 3000 Legendary demons at his disposal, Nozama."

The demons on board the vessel looked at their master upon hearing this, waiting for an answer from him.

Damn it! Nozama grounded his teeth. However, he was not in any position to resist the will of a divine master. Finally, he nodded. "No, of course there won't be a problem. I'm just thinking what kind of torture I should subject the lord of Ferde to when I get my hands on him."

"No." The God of Destruction strolled towards Nozama's throne and seated herself on it. She then stared down at the Lord of Deep and said, "Your job is to capture the lord of Ferde alive. As for how he should be dealt with, that will be up to me to decide, not you."

## 598. Turn And Run

Fedaro Realm

Today was Link's second day in this realm; he was still familiarizing himself with it. There wasn't much in terms of history, and so, he'd learned most of it. Now, he was learning about Fedaro's magic.

The magic here was unique, but Link was on the way towards the essence of power. Magician Dadara's level was quite low. He was only around Level-8. Link had the advantage of his high level and was naturally fast at grasping low-level spells.

In one afternoon, Link already learned most of the commonly used runes in this realm. Now, he was learning a Level-6 flame spell.

Whoosh. A red fireball the size of a basketball appeared before Link's eyes. Using his thoughts, it disappeared and reappeared a few times. He could now control the spell on his whim.

Beside him, Dadara praised, "Master, you learn so quickly."

"A mere mortal's trick." Link's voice was full of disdain, but it was an act. Inside, he thought this spell was very special.

In Firuman, a fire spell under the Legendary level would create an unstable and high-pressure ball of fire. To make a fireball, one had to use a spiral structure inside. Any relaxation would cause the spell to be cast incorrectly and have horrible consequences.

The structure of this fireball was completely different. It didn't have any spirals inside. The outside was a transparent red sphere, like a crystal. At a glance, it looked like Dragon Power. While casting, it was easier to control than Firuman's fireballs too. It made Link feel that it was a Legendary fireball that involved fire principles.

These magic runes are closer to the principles than Firuman's elemental runes. They aren't simple single-realm principles either and are instead the common principles in the Sea of Void Interesting.

Disregarding the relationship between these spells and the mysterious gear, the characteristics were already enough for him to research deeply.

These were his inner thoughts. Dadara obviously didn't know. Hearing his words, he lowered his head and said humbly, "Master, these are only a mortal's spells. They can't be compared to your supernatural power."

Link didn't deny it. "Continue," he said. "Next spell."

"Yes, Master." Dadara lifted the magic book and flipped to a new page to show Link another spell.

Just then, Link suddenly said, "Wait, something happened."

Dadara was confused. He looked up and saw that the sky was clear blue. Looking around, there were only thick forests. The wind blew past the trees, and occasionally, there would be some bright chirps from birds. Everything seemed normal.

"Master, it looks normal?" Dadara didn't understand.

"Patience, mortal." Link had been lying on the ground, but now he'd half-risen. Cocking his head, he listened. His eyes kept looking around, waiting for changes in the environment.

Dadara still didn't understand, but he knew his power wasn't enough. He could only hold his breath and wait.

The valley was silent and the seconds ticked by. After around ten minutes, the sky changed drastically.

It had been blue like a pure sapphire. Now, it suddenly had dark red clouds. At first, the clouds were sparse but thickened within a few minutes, covering the sun completely.

The clouds kept spinning like a huge vortex. After more than ten minutes, a giant dark red pillar of light suddenly shot out from it. The pillar connected the sky and ground. It was extremely similar to when the God of Destruction's Saint had appeared. Link's heart clenched, and the feeling of danger gripped him.

Just then, two figures sprinted over while yelling, "Master, something happened!"

Link looked over. They were the two demons who had signed the soul contract with him. Their original summoning contracts had been nullified, and the one bearing the realm's resistance had gone. They were only at the beginning of Level-6 now.

Sprinting over, succubus Gamiwa, who was at the front, panted heavily and said, "Master, things are bad. I can feel Nozama's aura. He said before that he'd come to deal with you personally. He's here now."

Bladed Demon Gaulle's eyes were terrified, and his body shook. "Master, what should we do? We're going to die. We're really gonna die!"

Every demon from the Abyss knew very well how horrifying Nozama was. This lord's power was undefeatable, and he knew countless ways of torturing someone. Demons were a mortal's nightmare, but to the demons, Nozama was an eternal nightmare.

Now, they'd betrayed Nozama, but Nozama had come to them. The two demons were close to breaking down.

Nozama has actually come? Link looked at the dark red pillar in the near distance. It's probably not just him. The God of Destruction is also looking from outside the realm. This is bad.

Nozama was at the pinnacle of Level-19, only one step away from the divine level. Now, he dared to come into this realm to find Link. Even if his power was somewhat restited, but he would still be more powerful than Link. If they fought directly, Link barely had any chance.

However, he also had some advantages. As the mastermind behind Firuman's catastrophe, people had researched Nozama's power. He'd displayed many tricks in the game, such as Misfortune Curse, Finger of Death, Eternal Nightmare, and other Legendary techniques. People knew all about them; Link obviously did too.

Nozama was extremely powerful, but he still had flaws. As the Lord of the Deep for so many years, he had many followers and never had to fear anyone. Thus, his skills at escaping, especially spells at running, didn't match his power level.

Seems like I should run now, Link thought. He couldn't escape from the realm because the God of Destruction and Void Ferry were most likely waiting for him outside. He would die if he left. He could only run circles around Nozama in this giant realm.

Thinking of this, Link activated the Transmission spell. A few flashes of white light appeared. The six Magician's who'd summoned Link were brought over.

The two demons immediately realized that Link was preparing to run. Terrified, Gamiwa collapsed and crawled on her knees. Clutching one of Link's dragon toes, she cried, "Master, take me with. Wahtake me with. I'll serve you with my all. I'll do anything you want. Wah"

She transformed while crying. She put away her scales, revealing crystal-white human skin. Her body had all the right curves and was extremely hot. Demons never had bad bodies, especially demons that mesmerized people with their looks. When they used all their power to attract people, they were enough to cause nosebleeds.

When the Bladed Demon saw how shameless the succubus was, he was furious. But as a Bladed Demon who focused on combat ability, he had nothing to show. He could only lament that his parents didn't give him good looks. But he still tried his best. He rushed towards Link's other dragon toe.

"Master, I'm willing to become your sharpest blade. I'll kill anyone you want. If you want me to torture someone, I'll make it so that even his mother can't recognize him. Just take me with you please!"

Link glanced at the two demons. His eyes finally landed on the succubus Gamiwa who was purposely showing off her power. He didn't care about her figureit had no effect on him. He was thinking back to the Mana waves from her transformation.

The waves were obscure, hidden, and strange. It felt oddly familiar to Link. Thinking closely, it was similar to when he transformed into dragon form.

The dragon form is a type of magic form. Could a demon's body be the same? Link was intrigued. He moved his claws and grasped the two demons.

With his current dragon form, these two weighed nothing. They wouldn't affect his speed at all. After escaping and getting temporary peace, he wanted to study the structure of the demon body. Of course, right now, he had to run.

Ignoring the demons' prass, Link spread his wings and flapped. At the same time, he activated the Void Walk. It had been created just for escaping. He shotito the air like an arrow. His speed was extreme.

After reaching Level-13, his maximum speed had lifted. He was also in dragon form now. His streamlined body was born for flight. Pairing these two, he reached about one mile per second.

Under this extreme speed, even Link felt his vision blur. Looking back, he saw the light pillar shrink quickly. It was about to disappear from his line of sight.

Fifteen seconds later, the light was gone. Then an indescribable sense of danger surged in Link's heart. He knew that Nozama was watching him now.

Eyes turning, Link saw a flying black dot around 25 miles from him. Looking closely, he saw a middle-aged man with black hair and red eyes. He was also flying in the air at a speed just a bit slower than Link.

"It's Nozama, it's the Lord of the Deep! He's coming!" Gamiwa yelled.

Link obviously knew it was Nozama. He'd dealt with this guy many times in the game. In the storyline mission, he'd even died thousands of times. Nozama's appearance was carved into his mind.

The two chased each other like this for around three seconds. Then Link realized that if this continued, Nozama would definitely catch up.

The side effects from forcefully activating the time spell were still present; his power recovered too slowly. Flying at this extreme speed used up a lot of energy. Nozama's power recovery rate was very high, and he wouldn't feel any fatigue like this.

Estimating with his current speed, Link could fly at top speed for around ten hours. If he couldn't lose Nozama within that time, it would be bad.

Nozama clearly knew this. He followed behind Link calmly. After three more seconds, the distance between them only widened around 300 feet. Link's vision suddenly flashed. It was a mission.

Activate mission series: Danger: Lord of the Deep

Mission One: Escape

Mission Content: Temporarily escape from Nozama's pursuit and find a safe refuge.

Mission Reward: 1 Energy Crystal

Energy Crystal

Level-18 Energy Core

Effect: It contains indescribably pure power and can help the user break through their current power limit.

Link sorely needed this. Unfortunately, he could only get it after completing the mission. It couldn't help him now. He could only focus on flying.

He was waiting for the distance between them to increase before finding a place to hide.

While flying, the corner of his vision flashed with white light. Shocked, he looked over and saw someone running toward him at high speed. Looking closely, he saw that it was Romeon, the Protector he'd scared away earlier.

Why was he here?

While Link was confused, Romeon had gotten closer. He wasn't as fast as Link, so he used a sound transmitting spell. "Dragon, if you trust me, take me with. I know a place where you can hide from that demon!"

## 599. Have A Taste Of My Abyssal Dish

Link eyed the Protector. There was a look of urgency on his face. He did not sense any hostility from him. After hesitating for a second, Link decided to believe him.

He then flew towards Romeon. When he was close enough, he extended out a claw and caught hold of both the Protector and his unicorn.

"Lead the way!" Beating his wings back powerfully, Link returned to full speed once more in the air.

"We need to go back. The hiding place I was talking about is behind us," said Romeon.

Link tightened his grip on the Protector and said suspiciously, "Are you sure?"

He looked behind him. All that he could see was the hazy red sky. Nozama was nowhere to be found. Judging by the energy fluctuations the Lord of the Deep was giving off, Link estimated that he was now 60 miles away from his pursuer. Even if he was somehow able to avoid Nozama as he turned back, he would still need to expend a large amount of energy. This was no different from hurling oneself directly into the jaws of death.

Romeon could feel Link's claw closing in on him. Fearing that he might be squeezed to death by the dragon, he quickly erected a force field around himself. He then said, "Dragon, I'm the Protector of the Fedaro realm. I have no reason to deceive you and less reason still to help those demons."

Link was reassured somewhat by his words. Still, the question remained: How should they avoid Nozama in order to reach this hiding place that the Protector mentioned?

Not only did they need to circumvent Nozama, but they also needed to do so without spending too much energy or taking a hit along the way.

What should I do? thought Link as he considered his options.

He sensed that Nozama's current power was probably around Level-13. There was no way he was Level-19 right now. If that had been the case, Link would already be dead by now. With Level-13 power, Nozama might not be able to break through his magically-resistant dragon scales with magical attacks. However, he might be able to do so if he came at Link with physical attacks.

One of the more intriguing qualities of Dimensional Rejection was that it only affected the energy output of extra-dimensional beings. It had absolutely no effect on one's physical characteristics.

For instance, Link could only use Level-10 battle techniques and spells at the moment. However, his dragon scales still retained their Level-13 hardness and Level-18 magical resistance. Only an attack with a power which exceeded the level of his scales or underwent an elemental change would be able to pierce through his dragon body's defenses.

The same could be said about Nozama.

However, Nozama's demon body and the weapon he was equipped with was now at an overwhelming Level-19. Link's dragon scales offered no more protection for him than a layer of paper mache would against either one of them.

Since that was the case, Link no longer saw the point in remaining in his dragon form. His dragon body was more of a hindrance to him at this point, as his pursuer would be able to hit such a massive target with ease from a distance.

Link then began to descend towards a more precipitous spot in the mountains, where the trees were also thicker.

When he was 50 feet in the air, Link retracted his dragon form.

Retracting a dragon form with a wingspan of more than 100 feet was a tricky affair which involved a meticulous use of spatial magic. Romeon saw the dragon's scales begin to glow and then fold upon themselves rhythmically as the dragon's body shrank. The entire process was so intricate that none of the Magicians present were able to keep up with its every step without feeling a throbbing headache in his or her head.

Romeon also tried to observe the folding of Link's dragon scales. He was able to last a bit longer than Dadara. According to the ancient legends, dragonification is supposed to be a form of magic. A high-level one at that, apparently. I can't even begin to wrap my head around it, thought Romeon when he finally turned his gaze away.

Five seconds later, Link had retracted most of his dragon form. He was now in his half-dragon form, which was approximately 7 feet tall. Dragon scales still covered his body, giving the impression that he was wearing an exquisite set of armor. Link's transformation had also extended to his Ode of a Full Moon sword. It was now covered in a layer of silver-black dragon scales. Only its sharp edge remained.

When his transformation was complete, the group of people he had been carrying with him landed in the forest beneath him

As soon as he landed, Link raised his sword and was about to cast an invisibility spell over all of them when suddenly Romeon said, "Allow me. My power has been recognized by the Fedaro realm. I can easily camouflage us here."

Link stopped. Romeon stabbed his wand out and muttered, "Earth, sky, tree, open up your loving embrace and grant us protection."

A red, golden and green light issued out from the tip of his wand. Like smoke, it rapidly spread out in the air before settling on everyone around Romeon.

When the radiant mist settled upon them, Link felt as if everyone had evaporated around him. He looked around him and saw that everyone was still visible. He could still see Romeon, the six summoners and his two demon attendants around him, but he could not feel any of their auras. Link soon realized that they were still giving off their auras. Romeon's spell had simply camouflaged them such that they felt no different than the trees, animals, and rocks around them.

Seeing the look of confusion on Link's face, Romeon explained, "This is the power of the elements. In order to receive their aid, one must first obtain their recognition."

"Do they also recognize extra-dimensional beings?" asked Link.

Romeon shook his head. "Maybe. I don't know. It all depends on what the elements are thinking at the moment."

Sensing Romeon's reluctance to say anything more on the subject, Link decided not to press him any further. He then felt for Nozama's aura and was able to determine that he was now 30 miles away from them. He needed to move fast.

Romeon said, "Let's turn back. We shouldn't move too fast, or we'll give our locations away."

Link did not object to this. Romeon was a native of this realm after all. Under his guidance, all of them began retracing their steps. After walking for half a minute, a sound like thunder rang out in the air above them.

It was a sonic boom, a phenomenon which usually happened in the wake of an object flying at top speed through the air. Nozama had arrived.

Link looked up in the air and saw a black dot flying over them 2000 feet in the air. Romeon's elemental invisibility spell was extremely effective. Nozama did not seem to notice their presences on the ground as he sped past them. He then let out a sigh of relief.

However, Link noticed that Nozama had stopped moving forward and was now circling in the sky, just above the spot where Link and the others had landed moments ago.

The two demons had also noticed this. They were now trembling so fiercely that they could not even hold their weapons properly. Had it not been for the fact that Link had forced them to sign an inviolable soul contract with him, the two demons would have already run back to their former master at the drop of a hat in order to beg for his forgiveness.

Dadara and the others darted anxious looks at Link and Romeon from time to time. These two possessed power far greater than any of them. Whether they would be able to escape Nozama's terrible pursuit would be entirely up to them.

"Ignore him. He won't be able to sense us here. Let us move on," said Romeon.

Link nodded. The group trudged on forward. During that time, Link observed Nozama's every move from the corner of his eye as the demon circled in the sky.

He did not dare look at him directly, for fear of making eye contact with Nozama. Still, Link was able to see Nozama clearly from 2000 feet away without needing to strain his eyes, thanks to his dragon vision. Even the slightest shift in Nozama's facial expression did not escape his notice.

Back in the previous game world, Link had confronted Nozama more times than he cared to count. Through his confrontations, he now knew exactly what the demon was thinking and what his next move would be. The game's developers had even made painstaking efforts to give this final boss a more life-like quality. From his observations, Link could tell that this Nozama who was now flying in the sky before him was an exact copy of the Nozama back in the game world. Even their flight patterns were indistinguishable from one another.

Link was able to predict what was going through Nozama's mind and what spell he was going to cast from his every move and every change in his expression.

As they walked on for another half-minute, Link noticed that Nozama had suddenly stopped moving in the air. In the next second, a sonorous voice called out from the sky.

"Link, I know you're hiding in these woods. Since you still insist on playing this game of hide-and-seek with me, I guess I have no choice but to let you have a taste of this dish I've prepared especially for you, straight from the Abyss!"

## 600. Is It Really Over Now?

As soon as he heard Nozama's words, Link was instantly shocked.

Whenever Nozama said this in the game, it meant that he would cast the large-scale attack spell, Storm of Death.

Storm of Death

Level-19 Legendary Spell

Effect: Spell unique to Nozama. It uses the heavily chaotic power of the Abyss to create countless high-speed vortices. The countless vortices then form a giant magic vortex that stretches as far as one can see. Everything inside the vortex is crushed to powder.

(Note: When the windstorm appears, death follows!)

In the foreign Fedaro, this spell was only around Level-13, but it was still a terrifying force. Under this spell, around 5000 miles of forest would be destroyed. Even if they didn't die, they would still have nowhere to hide.

Romeon saw Link's strange expression and hurriedly asked, "What, is he really powerful?"

Link nodded tersely while his mind whirred. By now, Nozama's body had already changed. Black light shone around him. The light surged from all directions and rushed towards his body. They were so fast that these lights seemed to form a whirlpool too.

In the game, it took three seconds to cast the Storm of Death. It didn't give Link much time to react.

A second later, Link knew he couldn't keep hesitating. He had to leave now. Turning towards Romeon, he asked, "Is it north?"

"Yes, that direction." Romeon pointed somewhere northwest.

Link's power surged, and he used a teleportation spell. White light flashed, covering them all. Buzz. The light disappeared, but they were still there.

"What's wrong?" Romeon was shocked. He knew this spell, but it was actually ineffective now.

Link grew serious. "The space is locked There's no time. He's going to cast the spell!"

While speaking, Link's back trembled. A pair of dragon wings more than 30 feet wide opened. They curled around everyone present and covered them, forming a sealed dragon wing shield.

Almost at the same time, Nozama's voice mixed with aggressive aura yelled, "Let death devour all!"

Link looked up. The entire sky was black. It was afternoon, but it seemed to be night. In the dark and sunless sky, Nozama suddenly reached out, pressing downward. Boom. Countless dark purple vortices appeared out of nowhere. They spread, covering Link's vision.

Whoosh, whoosh DeathdestructiondevourThe wind screamed and had countless hoarse roars mixed in. Listening closely, one could hear many chilling wails. It was as if there was a deep abyss before them, filled with countless miserable souls trying to escape. Their freedom was restited by something and could only reach a handout, grappling and dragging the creatures living in the light to the dark abyss to taste the misery together.

In this windstorm, mountains were flattened, trees were crushed, and stones were pulverized. An instant later, the wind pressed down on Link's wings.

That moment, Link felt boundless pressure weighing down on him, trying to crush him. He couldn't do anything or even budge. He could only grit his teeth and bear it.

The crystallized dragon scales were abnormally tough. They were immune to all spells under Level-18. This spell from Nozama was only at Level-14. Because of the large scale, Link felt pressure, but it still couldn't break through the wings' protection.

One second, two seconds, three The windstorm was still raging. Outside the wings, tidal waves crashed, and the storm ravaged the world. Inside the wings, it was quiet and calm like a safe refuge.

The people protected by the wingsmortal Magician Dadara, the demons, and Protector Romeonwere all shocked by Nozama's crazy power. They were also surprised by Link's tough body. Both Nozama and the dragon all had a power unimaginable by mere mortals!

Ten seconds later, the windstorm started weakening. A bit later, the storm subsided. Link opened his wings and looked at its surface. It was covered with all types of dust. He shook his wings, and the dust fell down. The wings were completely undamaged. The surface was only a bit hot.

They'd been surrounded by tall mountains and forests. Looking around, he saw that it had now turned into a huge plain. All that remained was scorched black dirt with dark aura rising up from it.

The only living things were the grass and flowers in the six-foot-wide area around Link. But under the corrosion of the dark aura, they were quickly wilting. With nowhere to hide, Link's group was exposed to Nozama.

Nozama slowly descended. He smiled faintly, but his blood-red eyes were still cold. "You hid well, Ferde lord. My spell couldn't break through your scales. You alwassurprise me."

As he spoke, a black sword appeared in his hands. It was thin and narrowonly five centimeters wide but six feet long. The sword's back was black and didn't reflect any light while the blade was silver. When he brandished the sword, one could only see a silver streak.

Link recognized it. It was the weapon Nozama was proudest ofHeroic Calamity.

Hero Calamity

Level-19 Legendary Weapon

Effect: Incredibly sharp! Incredibly light! Incredibly fast!

(Note: For millenniums, everyone who had died by this sword had once been praised as a hero.)

Seeing this sword, Link felt like he'd truly met a great enemy.

Lord of the Deep Nozama was at the pinnacle of Level-19, but he wasn't the only one in the world. Later in the game, Glorious Warlord Avatar, Half-elf Eliard, and human Kanorse had all reached similar levels. However, of everyone at the Legendary level, Nozama was at the top. He was truly the first of all Legendary figures.

In the game, these three had all fought against Nozama. In the end, the Glorious Warlord had fallen, Kanorse had died, and Eliard had come away badly hurt. These great costs had only injured Nozama instead of killing him.

Nozama had lived for too long. He'd completely grasped the secrets of power. He was an expert in all spells and battle techniques. He could easily use any technique. Anything he had was precious and world-shaking. He also had countless demon followers.

In the realm, he could definitely be known as "invincible." If he insisted on staying inside the realm, even a god couldn't do anything to him.

Now, Link had to personally face this man. Even though he had so much battle experience, he still felt horrible pressure. The pressure came from the other's power.

Link was at Level-10, while Nozama was most likely at Level-14. He was completely defeated in terms of power. He still had some Omni Points to buy higher level spells, but he didn't have enough power to cast them. They were useless.

It was hopeless!

Thud. Nozama landed and looked at the people beside Link. "The six Magicians are probably your summoners, right? They help bear the realm's resistance, so you can have Legendary Pinnacle power. Even so, there's no reason for them to keep living."

With that, the Magicians, including Dadara, collapsed. Not only that, their bodies instantly started decaying. Puss oozed, and maggots came out. They didn't die yet; they could only watch their bodies rot. This was terrifying, and they all wailed.

"Master, save me, save me!"

Link was their last bit of hope, but Link was helpless. He didn't even know how Nozama had cast the spell. Their difference was too large. Regardless of whether it was power itself or Nozama's power, they couldn't be compared.

Looking at Link, Nozama smiled. "Young man, there's no need to feel sad for them. You'll quickly be in the same situationno need to feel humiliated either. When I was your age, I was still a loser in the capital who spent his days drinking and f\*cking. But you're already qualified to stand before me. That's a great honor!"

Capital? Drinking and f\*cking? Those two phrases made Link's heart twitch, but he didn't have time to think now. Once the summoners died, the realm's resistance towards him would multiply tenfold. His power would be greatly restited; he would only be at Level-6.

Faced with Nozama in Level-14, it was like an ant trying to shake a tree. There was no chance.

Nozama didn't hurry. He smiled at the two demons. "Gaulle and Gamiwa, you two didn't disappoint me. Surrendering temporarily for survival is normal. Us demons are always like that. But since you surrendered, you must pay for it. You two"

Plop, plop! Before Nozama could finish, the two demons had already fainted from fear.

"How embarrassing." Nozama shook his head and prepared to act.

"Wait!" another voice said. It was Romeon.

Nozama looked over and chuckled. "The so-called Protector of the realm? You're pretty handsome, much better than when I was young. Sadly, from my youth to now, I've always hated people who look better than me. SoI'm sorry."

He waved his sword carelessly towards Romeon. But halfway through, a sword blocked it with a ding.

It was Link.

He'd used all his power to block this hit. He was pressed onto the ground by the sword's power too. If his body wasn't at Level-13, he would have died on the spot from this force.

Feeling the difference between their power, even the determined Link felt a shred of despair.

Will it really end now?

## 601. I Will Give You A Most Honorable Defeat

Nozama smirked when he saw Link blocking a hit from his sword. He then asked, "Link, you barely knew the man. What's the point in saving him, anyway?"

Link was already prepared to die at this point. Even when he was about to be crushed under the weight of Nozamassword, he still managed to smile as he said, "I've always been there to stop you at every turn since the day I entered the Firuman realm, haven't I? Why stop now?"

Nozama nodded, somewhat stunned. He did not expect such a reply from him, given the circumstances. "Indeed. You are also my daughter's husband, which naturally makes me your father-in-law. If you ask me, you kneeling down before me is something that is long overdue."

He uttered every word calmly, confident that Link would not be able to retaliate from such an awkward position even if he wanted to.

He's not wrong, I guess, thought Link. "A shame really, that I wasn't able to give you a grandchild."

Anger slowly began to rise in Nozama. He pressed his sword down even more, making Link bend over backwards awkwardly beneath him. He then said coldly, "Who knows? Maybe you already have planted your seed. When the time is right, I might bring both mother and child to my palace. Don't worry, I'll make sure to take good care of them."

Link was still able to maintain a calm exterior. "That's not too bad. Regardless of whether they end up good or evil, at least I'll have a descendant. They also won't have to live out their lives as mere commoners when I'm gone. Maybe when they're of age, maybe they'll even replace you as the Lord of the Deep."

"Enough!" Nozama exerted even more pressure on his sword. There was now a manic glint of bloodlust in his eyes. "No one can replace me! No one can defy me! I am the Abyss' eternal king, and soon, I will claim all the realms in existence as my own! As for you..."

The Lord of the Deep lowered his gaze at Link as the latter struggled to hold out against the weight of his sword. He smiled cruelly. "I won't kill you. I will grant you the pleasure of experiencing eternal torment as the God of Destruction's prisoner. I'll even let you watch me subject your wife to every horrendous form of torture I can think of as I march on to glory!"

"You're out of control, Nozama," said Link. He now had difficulty saying his words. The power Nozama was exerting on him through his sword had reached an unbearable point. However, he was still able to remain calm inside. It was as if he had transcended the physical concerns of the living and no longer felt any fear towards Nozama's threats on his life.

Seeing the crazed look on Nozama, Link went on, "During the ancient times of Firuman, masters like you used to be a dime a dozen. A wise man once told me that the physical is simply an extension of the mind. Pain is merely an illusion. A person's rise and fall is as transient as any other experience in one's life. If I fail now, there will be others who will succeed me. There will always be a new Lord of Ferde to replace me when I'm gone. Nozama, you will never win."

Nozama was stunned. His grip slackened considerably around the handle of his sword. Through the silvery glow that Link's eyes were giving off, Nozama could see that his eyes did not waver one bit. Link was not saying all this in an effort to put on a brave face. He actually meant every word.

"'The physical is simply an extension of the mind.' Have you really reached that state of mind? How is that possible?" Nozama was now too surprised to maintain a firm grip on his sword.

He had lived far longer and seen more than the average mortal. Though he had come across countless metaphysical concepts in his lifetime, he had yet to enact even one of them. He simply could not even if he wanted to.

For instance, the state of mind that Link mentioned was something Nozama had been trying to achieve for a long time. Unfortunately, all his attempts had always ended in failure.

As someone who was always quick to resort to violence and aggression, Nozama never could keep his emotions in check. His material desires had made him who he was today. However, they also constituted the greatest obstacle in his quest for enlightenment.

Seeing the tranquility he had long coveted in the eyes of a twenty-year-old man before him took Nozama completely by surprise.

Nozama was able to regain much of his composure at this point. He looked at Link. The glint of bloodlust now flickered uncertainly in his eyes.

"You do have a remarkable gift, I'll give you that. There is a certain limberness to your mind which allows you to stay calm and focused, something my mind can't seem to manage. A shame really, that you have to meet your end here. Otherwise, you would have been the first mortal ever to enter the divine realm. Such a shame..."

Nozama shook his head as if he was actually regretting what he was about to do to Link. "I suppose I shouldn't be too surprised about my daughter choosing you to be her spouse. After all, her bloodline ability allows her to make the best possible decision in any given situation. Oh, what a shame indeed..."

Nozama then took a step back, pulling his sword away from Link. He then looked at the young man before him and said, "Someone like you deserves an honorable defeat. Come, I'll give you a chance to come at me with everything you have!"

Link planted his Ode of a Full Moon sword into the ground, leaning on it as he tried to stay upright. "Nozama, do you know why I'm able to stay this calm?"

"Hhm?" Instinctively, Nozama felt that something was not right.

In the next second, Link suddenly splayed his palm out behind him. A streak of light spread out from it, enveloping the Protector Romeon and the two unconscious demons. Link had cast a teleportation spell on them.

The most surprising thing happened. When the white light subsided, both Romeon and the demons had disappeared. They had been successfully teleported away.

"Impossible! I've sealed up the space here. You shouldn't be able to do that!" said Nozama in disbelief.

"True, I wasn't able to cast any spatial spell just now. But you were prattling on for so long I just didn't have the heart to interrupt you!" There was a look of satisfaction on Link's face. He was now ready to fight it out with Nozama to the bitter end.

"Oh, I see. So that's how it is!" Nozama finally figured out what just happened. "It's that Protector. He took on some of the Dimensional Rejection that had been weighing you down. He's a Legendary master as well as a Protector recognized by this realm. By vouching for you, the realm naturally stopped rejecting you. If that's the case, I assume you are now at your full strength?"

Pristine Realm Essence Power now flowed within Link. It then formed a thin crystalline layer around his body, giving him the appearance of a deified being.

His power had returned to the mid-stages of Level-13, while Nozama's was around the early stages of Level-14. There was still a noticeable power gap between them, but Link was familiar with his opponent's strengths and weaknesses. There was still a chance for him to come out of this victorious.

"So it would seem," replied Link. His voice had taken on a metallic quality as a result of his return to his full strength. "We probably can't cast any spells on each other from where we stand. It all comes down now to whose blade is quickest, mine or yours."

Nozama's face did not show a hint of fear. He gently twirled his Heroic Calamity sword in his hand, tracing out a silver line in the air.

He let out a terrible laugh. "Hahaha, very well. As promised, I will let you experience a most honorable defeat!"

## 602. Youre Great But You Talk Too Much

The barren, dark plains that had been ravaged by a spell earlier

Link and Nozama stood before each other, staring at one another. They were completely focused, but no one acted.

Whoosh, whoosh. Wind blew by. The wind on the plains was dark. When it blew past the earth, it swept up a cloud of dark dust that obstructed their vision.

...

Sea of Void

The God of Destruction watched the situation in the realm. He couldn't help but swear inwardly, That stupid demon! He talks too much!

It could have been done easily, but he just had to cause so many problems. Now, they two sides were practically equal. It was hard to say who could win.

A few miles from the battlefield, there were three flashes of light. When the light subsided, three people appeared. They all collapsed with a plop, including Romeon.

His face was horribly pale, and his lips were bloody. He was bearing the realm's resistance to Link by himself so Link could use his full power. The cost was that he practically had no power himself.

Falling onto the ground, he immediately took out a runestone and added his remaining bit of power to it. The runestone glowed. Soon after, the wind rose around him, and his unicorn flew over.

The two demons beside him were still unconscious. They'd really been scared silly. Both of them were wet underneath and smelled like sulfur. Clearly, they'd both pissed and sh\*t their pants.

They're as brave as rats. So embarrassing. Romeon tied them up with a rope and hung them on the unicorn's back. Finally, he climbed up and patted the unicorn's neck. "Let's go, my old friend."

When they rose into the sky, Romeon glanced at the battlefield behind him. "Dragon," he murmured, "don't disappoint me."

He would only be a burden if he stayed. Right now, he had to hurry back to the Protectors' land. Only there would he be truly safe.

The moment the unicorn sped away, a gale appeared in Link and Nozama's battlefield. Whoosh! It swept up most of the black dust. It instantly covered the sky, blocking their vision.

Almost at the same time, the two acted.

Link was disadvantaged. His soul wasn't as strong as Nozama, but he knew more about Nozama than the man thought. His mind was also calmer. Both of their battle techniques had reached an extreme level.

It could be said that both had their advantages. It was hard to say who would win.

Link narrowed his eyes and lunged. He saw Nozama's blurred image. Listening to the wind around him, he determined Nozamasspecific location from the changes in the wind.

He stabbed his sword with only 70% of his power so he could adjust as needed.

Suddenly, he heard a clang. Narrowing his eyes, he saw a silver light flash, coming at him like lightning splitting the turbidity.

So fast!

Link grew serious. He went to meet it with his longsword. That moment, he realized he wasn't fast enough. With his current speed, he would be stabbed before he could block. Changing plans, the sword's surroundings blurred. He'd activated a low-level force field.

They were fighting physically, but both were still Magicians. These low-level spells were like instincts. They could cast them without too much thinking and create great effects with their battle techniques.

Link's force field had two goals. One was to speed up his sword; the other was to disrupt Nozama.

An instant later, Nozama was affected. His usage of energy was no longer perfect. His sword slowed down a bit while Link's sped up. Moments later, there was a piercing cling. Their weapons had clashed but didn't separate. They'd "stuck" together. Link and Nozama's power clashed within, and their weapons vibrated, creating rings of shockwaves in the air.

When the shockwaves appeared, they lifted the black dust on the ground. The dust in the air thickened; their figures were barely visible.

In the fight, Link was slightly weaker, but his heart was calm. He could multitask without making mistakes. Whenever he wasn't strong enough, he would use some small spells to help himself and disrupt Nozama. So within one second, they'd clashed dozens of times but were at a stalemate.

One second later, Nozama realized he couldn't win and instantly became furious.

He knew the fury would affect his mindset, but he couldn't control himself. When faced with ordinary opponents, these emotions would make him more violent. He could intimidate his opponent and use that to his advantage. In countless fights through the millennium, he'd used his aura to win every time.

But this time, he knew it would be useless.

One's so-called aura was just a mental image. Link was able to see through these psychological things. If Nozama lost his temper, his opponent would be unbothered while his own mind would be affected. If his mind was affected, he wouldn't be able to multitask and use spells like Link.

In a short-range fight, using spells seemed fancy. But if there was a mistake and a spell backlash happened, it would be disastrous. He could get killed instantly!

His murderous intent grew; the bloody light in his eyes grew heavier. Nozama unconsciously let out guttural growls.

But Link was still as calm as ever. He sensed Nozama's changes. The power from the man's sword grew stronger, but they were less condensed. The threat towards Link decreased. He could easily block them with some battle techniques.

They clashed for one second, two seconds, three seconds At eight seconds, they were still tied.

"I'm going to kill you!" Nozama growled like a beast. He brought his sword down to force Link away.

Link used this chance to retreat. At the same time, Nozama also stepped back and put his sword away to cast spells.

He'd lost in terms of battle techniques. He could only defeat Link with spells. Regular spells were ineffective, but he could use a spell to activate a large-scale physical attack. For example, a meteor shower could smash Link to bits!

But then something happened. Something moved in his vision, and a sword appeared. It was Link's attack. He had the same thought as Nozama and had acted earlier!

Nozama had already retracted his sword. His sword was six feet long and couldn't turn easily. Link's sword appeared under his rib and he couldn't block it even if he had a sword. Seeing that he was about to be stabbed in the heart, Nozama growled and grasped the sword tip with his bare hands.

Crack! He successfully grasped the sword, but blood flowed from the cuts on his palm.

"You're looking for death!" Stimulated by the pain, Nozama's emotions went out of control. He forgot all about the God of Destruction's order to capture Link alive. As his hand flashed, a runestone appeared. He added in dark power, and the runestone glowed with a dark, watery halo.

But at that time, he vaguely saw a white light in the dust before him. Then the sword in his hand disappeared.

This discovery shocked Nozama awake. No, he's going to escape!

Looking at the dark runestone in his hand, he immediately gave up on the destructive spell. Picking up his sword, he rushed forward. But 300 feet later, it felt wrong. He didn't think that Link would keep retreating. Three hundred feet was enough for Link to use a transmission spell and escape.

As expected, when he finally rushed to Link, he only saw a shred of white light.

"Nozama, you're strong, and you're great, but you just talk too much."

Crack. Nozama's fury erupted, and he crushed the runestone to powder. After that, he composed himself and checked the spatial ripples left in the air.

Hmph, do you plan on running for your entire life?

Next time Nozama caught up, he planned on using a spell from afar to stop Link. He'd like to see what Link could do then!

## 603. Creators Temple

Link was finally able to catch up to Romeon's unicorn in his dragon form.

Romeon seemed extremely weak. Cold sweat beaded his forehead, which was now as white as a sheet of paper. His snow-white unicorn also seemed to have reached its limits. Carrying Romeon and the two demons on his back must have taken a lot out of it.

Slowing down behind them, Link extended a claw out and gingerly closed his fingers around them.

Finally able to rest a bit on Link's palm, Romeon asked, "Did you defeat him?"

Noticing that Link did not even have a scratch on him, Romeon figured that he must have somehow bested Nozama. However, having witnessed the demon's incredible power personally, he had not the faintest idea how he was able to manage such a feat.

"Not really. However, I was able to figure out some of his weaknesses without taking a hit. That's probably as good as it gets... So, how far are we still from our destination?" asked Link.

"At our current speed, we'll probably reach there in approximately four hours."

Four hours? Link estimated that he still had. It should be enough for now, though he would surely be completely wiped out at the end of their journey.

However, his current power level was now at Level-13, which meant that he was now able to fly even faster than before. However, maintaining top speed in the air would tire him out quickly. For now, he needed only to keep some distance between himself and Nozama.

Settling at a speed he was comfortable with, Link began flying forward.

He was at the moment flying at an altitude of around 30,000 feet in the air. Beneath him, he could see the occasional village and town, as well as a smooth highway which meandered across the landscape. Caravans and lone travelers dotted the road, inching arduously across it like ants. Trees spread out across the land in a lush sheet of green. Though the realm was torn by war, Link could see that it was also a place bursting with life.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" said Romeon.

"It's alright," replied Link, nodding.

Romeon then asked, "I could tell from your reply that you and those demons aren't exactly on the best of terms. They called you the Lord of Ferde. Am I right to assume that Ferde is the dragon valley that you call home?"

"Dragon valley?" Link smiled. Romeon had probably mistaken him for the Black Dragon King of their legends, where any dragon king worth his salt naturally had a dragon valley of his own. "I suppose so. "

"Can you tell me more about it?" asked Romeon.

Link lowered his gaze and saw that Romeon was looking up at him from his palm. The palor on his face was a side-effect of taking on part of the Dimensional Rejection that was intended for Link. At first, Link had wanted to refuse him. However, seeing Romeon in such a state, Link finally gave in. "Since you insist, I'll just tell you what you need to know about the place."

He then gave Romeon a succinct explanation of the dominant powers that ruled the realm of Firuman before going into some of the wars that had happened there in recent years. Finally, he told Romeon what his reasons for entering the Fedaro realm were. Throughout his entire account, Link made no mention whatsoever of the mysterious gear that he had set out to look for in the Sea of Void.

When he was finished, he casually said, "That's the gist of it. It's not something I'm proud to say, but the only reason I entered this realm in the first place was to evade my pursuers."

Romeon did not say a word. There was a mingle of caution and curiosity on his face. He remained silent for a long while. Finally, he spoke, "Quite a coincidence, to stumble across each other despite how far apart our realms are from each other."

Link sensed that Romeon seemed to be insinuating something to him. "It certainly is a coincidence," replied Link without knowing what it was.

Romeon fell silent again. As Link flew on for another 30 minutes, Romeon suddenly asked, "May I know what you plan to do with these two demons? I should warn you. Demons are a crafty and treacherous lot. They are driven only by greed and an insatiable appetite for murder. You had best be prepared for when they turn on you if you still intend on subjugating them."

Link glanced at the two demons in his claw. Thanks to their sturdy constitutions, both of them finally regained consciousness. Not daring to come up with a retort, the two demons dumbly looked at Link, waiting for him to decide their fates.

The soul contract that the two demons had signed with Link meant that he could simply end them with a thought if he wanted to. They now knew the dragon king well enough to know that he was not someone who would be easily moved by mere words. At the moment, their lives hinged on whether they could still prove themselves useful to Link.

Link turned away from the two demons and said, "The demon that we encountered is called Nozama, Lord of the Deep. Did you notice back then that he looked no more different from you and me, at least on the outside?

"Yes, if it weren't for his eyes and aura, I would have assumed he was just an ordinary man," said Romeon with a nod.

"He still has another form. When he loses his temper, he will take on the form of a burning seraphim. His combat capacity will receive a huge boost, and he will even be able to travel between realms. At a price, he may even gain the ability to travel through time. Nozama had once revealed his seraphim form in recorded history, back in my realm. In the aftermath of the battle, he had managed to slaughter almost all of the masters in my realm. Even though he too sustained heavy damage, he was able to travel back to the point before the battle even began, essentially negating all the damage he had taken and making it seem as if nothing had ever happened."

Romeon frowned upon hearing this. "If it had never even happened, how on earth was it recorded in your history books in the first place?"

"I came across a record of the event in a Time Magician's manuscript. Spells that disrupt the flow of time would always trigger some form of ripple effect on the realm, especially time-reversing spells, whose effects are usually of a more acute nature. Through these ripples, the Time Magician was able to witness past catastrophes that had escaped the notice of historians in the past. He then left coded entries of these events in the library of the dragon valley for safekeeping."

In truth, he had received this information back in the previous game world. The Time Magician's manuscript had been key to ending Nozama. With it, the player would be able to seal up all his escape routes through time together with the aid of any accompanying NPCs in order to put a definitive end to the Lord of the Deep's tyranny. Otherwise, he would be able to simply slip back in time, smooth out all the kinks in his plans and storm the Firuman realm once more with renewed effort.

At that moment, Link realized that such a catastrophe might have happened before in Firuman. Maybe, just maybe, the dragons were not the only ones capable of navigating the Sea of Void... Of course, this was all just conjecture. He still needed to prove it somehow.

This had all come as a complete shock to Romeon. He stammered, "Is... is there really someone this powerful? So that's why he's also called the Nightmare Demon..."

"What Nightmare Demon?" asked Link suddenly.

"Ah?" Romeon jolted. He did not expect Link to be able to hear him. Composing himself, he then said, "Oh, I was just thinking to myself that Nozama's power is truly terrifying, like something out of a nightmare."

Link could tell that Romeon was hiding something from him. However, he did not press him for answers.

After a while, Romeon asked, "Dragon, do you think your realm will be able to best this Nozama?"

"I don't know, but I will do everything in my power to defeat him."

"He seems to hate you a lot. I guess you've been a hindrance to his plans for quite some time."

"Nozama's not the only enemy the Firuman realm has. The dark red vortex that transported Nozama into your realm back then, did you see it? That's the work of the God of Destruction. He too sees me as a threat."

Romeon smiled bitterly. "Are you saying that you're being hunted by a god and a Legendary-level Lord of the Deep at the same time? Looks to me you've got a lot on your plate at the moment."

Link laughed out loud. "Well, on the bright side, I'm still alive."

Romeon then fell silent. However, Link could see that he was deep in thought, trying to process everything that he had told him. He also had a feeling that when the time was right, Romeon would speak to him again.

Three hours passed in silence. Suddenly, a massive column of clouds appeared in front of them, stretching as far as the eye could see into the high heavens.

"What's that supposed to be?" Link was stunned by the sight of the cloud wall. His 100-feet-long dragon form was but a speck of dust before it.

The two demons were gaping at it as well, amazed that something so majestic existed in this realm.

Romeon said with a hint of pride, "Don't just look at part of it. Really take in everything. What do you notice?"

Following Romeon's advice, Link tilted his head back in order to get a better look at the entire cloud wall. "Wait, is this..."

A six-toothed gear pattern was impressed upon the cloud wall. Its design echoed every engraving on the surface of the actual thing in the Sea of Void. It looked exactly like the sketch that the Omirian Piasce had provided Link with.

There must be a connection between the two gears existing simultaneously in the Sea of Void and in the Fedaro realm.

Then, Link heard Romeon's voice close to his ear. "Can you see it? Behind the cloud lies the Creator's temple. The marking you see before you is the Creator's Insignia!"

Creator's Temple?

That moment, Link thought of what Magician Dadara had told him about Fedaro's history.

God created the world and taught humans magic so they could manage the world.

Did God really create this world? Link couldn't help but wonder.

Dadara was only a mortal. He could only provide Link with some historical facts while Link didn't agree with any of Dadara's opinions. Romeon was different though. He was practically at the same level as Link, and he was very familiar with the Fedaro Realm.

Link had thought that he would get a definite answer. Unexpectedly, Romeon shook his head. "I don't know. Or rather, I'm not sure."

"What do you mean?" Link slowed down slightly. He felt that the temple before him would solve a great mystery for him but could also throw him into a greater mystery. No matter what, his understanding of the world would probably be upended.

"Ten thousand years is too long. It's impossible to prove the ancient legends. Since I could remember, I've lived in the region outside the Creator's Temple. Everything I've seen told me that the owner of the temple is an unmatchable Magician. You can even say he's a legend. But if you say that he created this realm I can't give you a definite answer with my knowledge."

Evidently, Romeon's knowledge was limited too.

Link could only continue forward. After flying for more than 20 minutes, Link was before the cloud cluster. From here, all he could see was boundless whiteness. Inside the cluster, there was a tunnel of around 900 feet wide.

"Enter the tunnel. There's a maze inside. Listen to my orders and don't make a mistakes. Otherwise, you will be lost until you die," Romeon said seriously.

Link didn't believe it. "This cloud clustercan keep me there until I die?"

Romeon nodded. "The clouds are only a disguise. Inside, it's actually a principle maze. For thousands of years, people have tried to forcefully cross it, but no one has succeeded. There are more than 1000 dried skeletons inside. Each one had once been a genius of Fedaro Okay, go left."

Link obeyed. If Romeon was right, this maze really could help him temporarily escape from Nozama. As for whether Nozama could get lost, Link couldn't be sure. Nozama as the Lord of the Deep. His wisdom and power definitely surpassed anyone in Fedaro. Others couldn't do it, but it didn't mean that he couldn't.

Link just hoped the maze could delay Nozama for a while.

"Go straight for around half a mile. Yes, okay, go right, go straight Go up, right turn"

Romeon kept directing Link. The maze was three-dimensional and unimaginably complex. After flying for ten minutes, Link was unsure about the path he'd gone. If the game system wasn't helping him record, he would definitely get lost here. He had no clue how Romeon memorized it and could determine each move without hesitation.

Seeming to sense Link's thoughts, Romeon explained between directions, "The scariest thing about the maze is that the path keeps changing at least five times per day. There are no patterns at all. I can find the correct path because the Protector's insignia is guiding me."

With that Romeon reached out and lifted his sleeve. Link saw a six-sided gear on his wrist. It glowed with a faint Mana aura.

This way, Link was even more assured. After that, he stopped memorizing his path and just kept flying. Half an hour later, he'd traveled more than 1000 miles when Romeon suddenly said, "Slow down. The exit is up ahead, but it's special. You can't exit it easily. You must passome special tests."

Link followed the instructions. Around half a minute later, he turned a corner, and a long straight path appeared. At the end, there was a six-sided gear glowing with multicolor light.

The gear was semi-transparent and spun slowly. Each tooth of the gear had a different colorindigo, red, blue, purple, black, and white. Every time it moved, the colors would change once. The magic runes on the gear also displayed extremely complicated changes.

"We're here. This is called the Gates of the True Self. When you face it, it will interrogate you about your heart. This may be a very painful process. If you can withstand it, you'll pass through. If not, you'll stay here and hide from the demon. I'll go now. I hope I can see you on the other side."

Riding the unicorn, Romeon left Link's dragon claws. He sped up and crashed against the glowing door. Then he disappeared; even his aura was gone. It was as if he'd evaporated.

Link wasn't in a hurry. Moving his talons, he lifted the two demons. "Did you hear? This is the Gates of the True Self. Go try."

Ignoring the demons' protests, he flicked his finger and sent the two poor fellows towards the glowing door. They fell in instantly.

Three seconds later, there were two horrible screams, and two figures shot out from the door. It was the demons. They didn't have any physical injuries, but their eyes were wild, and they shook violently. They looked scared out of their minds.

Link waited patiently. After more than ten minutes, succubus Gamiwa was the first to recover her senses. She still looked out of her mind, but she could finally talk.

"Tell me what happened inside," Link said.

"I saw my end. A more powerful demon cut off my head, sliced open my stomach, tore off my lower body, and ate me." The succubus started shaking again as she spoke.

"Oh, so that's what you're most afraid of? That's why you destroy your opponents whenever you get the chance?"

Link was surprised. He didn't think a demon's soul would be so weak. Gamiwa was at the Legendary level. She shouldn't be so afraid of being destroyed.

"What about you, Gaulle?" Link asked.

"I was cutito tiny pieces. I could even feel the iciness of the blade. No, this is too scary." Gaulle clutched his head again.

Link shook his head. The soul contract between them told him that the two cowards weren't lying. He wasn't impressed, but he was now sure that the glowing door wouldn't harm his body. Grabbing the demons, he flapped his wings and rushed into the Gates of the True Self.

There was a weak flash of light, and then Link felt his surroundings change. He saw Firuman. From looks of things, it wasn't present day. Rather, it was the Firuman from the game that was close to falling to darkness.

The entire realm was lifeless. The earth corroded by darkness seemed to have ringworms or scabs. There was misery, murder, and fighting everywhere. He saw Celineshe'd lost and was stabbed onto a demon's spear and taken everywhere to show off. She hadn't died completely. Her blood flowed, and her body convulsed. Her features were tited in pain.

Link saw Gladstone City, which he'd once saved. The entire city was on fire; the river was crimson red and filled with bodies. A few Dark Elves were still killing, summoning divine gear There were many similar scenes, all of which he feared the most to see.

Even worse, Link had now forgotten about the Gates of the True Self and how Firuman was now. In his mind, this was happening now, and he was helpless. He could only watch.

This is your fear. How will you face it? a voice rang out in Link's mind.

Yeah, how will I face it? Link asked himself.

Then another voice in his mind said, Let fear burn into anger and burn my enemies!

And another voice, In that case, what difference is there between you and the demons you hate?

Link froze. He quickly answered, I kill for my goal. Demons kill to kill.

What is your goal?

Link didn't reply. He thought back to the innocent times of learning magic in Creekwood Village of Grinth Forest. He thought of the warm afternoon sunlight, the soft chirps from birds in the forest, the villagers' greetings in the morning, and the occasional carriages clattering outside the window.

During that time, Link had been the most focused and the calmest. Thinking of that, Link's mind also became as serene as a morning in the Grinth Forest.

Without needing more words, the scene before him changed. The hallucination faded, and a figure appeared before Link. It was Romeon, Protector of Fedaro. Link glanced at his claws. The two demons were gone.

Link froze. At the same time, a message flashed in his vision.

Mission Complete: Danger: Nozama, Lord of the Deep!

Player Received: 1 Energy Crystal

Unlocked Epic Mission: Ancient Epic

Mission Content: Face the Stone of Creation, understand the ancient epic, and choose the path you wish to walk down.

Mission Reward: Blessing of Immortality (also known as Curse of Immortality)

Do you accept?

On the other side, Romeon looked at Link and sighed. "I was right. You are the outsider who activated the Stone of Creation. Come with me, dragon."

## 604. Creator's Temple

A majestic-looking temple appeared in front of them as they stepped through the Gates of the True Self. Its pillars were a few thousand feet high and a few hundred feet wide, with thick clouds coiling around their upper portions and the temple's ceiling. It was truly an impressive sight.

When they were inside the temple, Link saw that both sides of the temple were lined with countless statues. These massive statues were all frozen in all kinds of postures. One seemed to be roaring at the heavens; another was locked in a striking posture, with a battle-axe held behind his head in his hand. Some of them had serene looks on their faces. The same white columns of cloud wound through the gaps between their arms and bodies, giving them a dignified, almost unearthly air.

Even a Legendary Magician would have a hard time bringing into existence a temple of this scale along with the statues it contained. The entire building seemed to have been given form by hands that had not belonged to any mortal.

The two of them then flew approximately 25 miles through the temple. All of a sudden, a round stone which seemed to be glowing with a blue light appeared in the heavens before them.

The stone had a diameter of around 16 feet. It floated like an insignificant speck of dust in the air, but Romeon suddenly stopped 2000 feet away from it. Not at all familiar with his surroundings, Link too came to a halt alongside Romeon.

Then, Romeon said, "This is the Stone of Creation, the core of the entire temple. Doesn't it look small and almost within arm's reach?"

It did seem to be within 2000 feet away from where they were. Link could probably reach it in a single bound. However, Romeon would not have asked such a question if things were as they seemed.

"Is something the matter?"

Smiling, Romeon replied, "I can't really put it in words. You'll just have to fly towards the stone to know exactly what I'm talking about. Don't worry, it's quite safe, though the journey may tire you out a bit. I've tried many times to reach it before, but I just never had the power to accomplish such a feat.

Setting aside his misgivings, Link began to fly towards the blue stone by himself.

At first, he thought he would be able to reach the stone in a single breath. However, after flying for a while, he sensed that something was not right.

As he flew on, he noticed that the Stone of Creation was gradually expanding until it filled his entire field of sight. He turned around and saw that the temple's pillars and its statues, which had seemed to stretch into the heavens back then, were now mere infinitesimal points on the ground behind him. He then looked at himself and realized that he too had shrunk to the size of a grain of dust.

Strangely enough, despite the fact that Link had flown for almost an hour, he felt that he was no closer to the blue stone in the sky than before. If anything, he sensed that he was pulling further and further away from it as he flew on. Before, he was still around 2000 feet away from the stone. Now, it seemed to be a few hundred thousand feet away from him.

Am I flying away from it? Is this spatial magic? But I didn't feel any ripples in the spatial fabric around me. Link could not wrap his head around what was going on.

If it were not for the fact the blue stone was growing larger and larger before him, Link would have already lost his will to press on towards it a long time ago.

Link flew on under these curious circumstances for more than three hours. At that point, the blue stone had completely filled Link's vision. Behind him, Romeon and the temple were nowhere to be seen on the ground.

Link was now under the impression that he was a mere speck of dust floating across the empty vastness of the Sea of Void, with the massive Stone of Creation looming before him. Whether he would be able to reach it at all was anyone's guess at this point.

As he flew on for what seemed like an age, something happened.

The blue stone before him had vanished. In its place was a mirror. Ripples spread out across its pond-like surface, before subsiding completely to reveal an unperturbed reflection.

With his dragon sight, Link was able to see what was reflected in the mirror. He had the impression that he was looking down at an entire world tens of thousands of miles up in the air.

Link soon realized that an entire world was indeed reflected on the mirror's surface. On this new world, there were continents and oceasstretching into the horizon. Vast cities sprouted across its continents, boasting majestic, yet peculiar-looking buildings. He also noticed that some of these cities were floating in the air like massive floating islands.

Looking closely, Link realized that this world was at the pinnacle of magical innovation, far beyond anything Link could even imagine.

If this was supposed to be what magical modernity would look like in this universe, then the Firuman realm he had been living in all this time was no more different from an era where people still lived in mud huts and hunted animals with hand-made spears. This new realm also seemed to be thrice the size of Firuman!

"What is this place? Could it be the ancient epic that the game's mission was referring to?" Link frowned at this. He was still flying towards the mirror.

Just as he pondered the scene before him, suddenly, another change occurred. This time, a huge meteorite fell from the sky, landing squarely on one of the largest continents in the mirror's reflection.

The meteorite was 300 feet wide. Upon impact, it set off a massive explosion, decimating an entire city within seconds. People from neighboring cities came in from all corners to put out the fire before it could spread any further. Soon, the meteorite's core was discovered in the middle of the crater.

Link strained his eyes at it. The core was an unevenly shaped piece of rock with a diameter of 20 inches. Its material seemed to be of extraterrestrial origin. It was mostly white, like a piece of jade. However, unlike most pieces of jade, it was giving off a black smoke-like aura.

It then fell into the hands of an important-looking Magician with incredible power.

The Magician brought the stone back to his magical laboratory and began researching and experimenting with its properties in order to draw out its full potential.

Finally, a familiar-looking, six-toothed gear was broughtito existence by the Magician's hands.

At this point, something clicked in Link's mind. However, he continued watching the scene in the mirror unfold before him, in order to have all the facts in his hands.

In the reflection, after completing the gear, the Magician began infusing his power into it in order to test out it. The gear continued drawing power from its maker without any sign of stopping. There was no turning back at that point. In order to see his experiment through, the Magician kept on finding new sources of energy for the six-toothed gear to feed on. Finally, tragedy struck.

There was a sudden flash of white light before him. When it subsided, Link saw that the Magician's entire city had evaporated completely, along with the Magician himself.

Light surged out in every direction. It seemed to intensify more and more as it spread out. No one could stop it. Anyone who tried to was simply erased from existence.

As the light spilled forth, Link saw something resembling a dragon escaping into the Void. He then saw a powerful Magician sacrificing himself in order to split open the realm! He also saw demon-like creatures spilling outito the Void.

In this world of infinite light, the six-toothed gear slowly rose up in the light and then vanished into the Sea of Void. Back in the evaporated city, Link could see that not everyone had perished in the catastrophe.

Link saw a young man lying on the ground, unconscious. To his surprise, he realized that the man resembled Nozama. After the gear of light had vanished in the sky, he regained consciousness. His eyes were then glued to the sky for a long time.

Link stared at the young man. He then noticed that he was grasping a black stone in his hand. The stone seemed to be issuing a black aura, which continuously seeped into the young man's body. His eyes gradually turned red throughout the entire process.

Looking closely at the black stone, Link realized that it was a mass of black impurity left behind by the meteorite's core.

Could it be that this is what prehistoric Firuman used to look like? But how on earth did all this end up here in the Creator's Temple in a realm so far away from Firuman? Could it be due to the six-toothed gear? Link grew even more bewildered.

Just then, the reflection of prehistoric Firuman on the mirror suddenly disappeared. A pristine blue background appeared in its place. Three balls of light floated in it. Two of them were white and black respectively. The third one was completely devoid of color.

Link strained his eyes at them. In an instant, the game system tagged each of the balls of light before him with their corresponding labels: the Portal of Light, the Portal of Darkness, and the Portal of Truth.

Beyond their names, no other information about them was given to Link.

A message from the game system then popped up in his field of vision:

Choose the portal that you wish to enter.

## 605. Creators Temple

Usually, Link would never enter a portal without being clear with the situation. But now, strong curiosity had accumulated in his heart. He really wanted to know what was behind the door.

Further, he'd seen the other display extremely high-level skills along the way. Some even surpassed his understanding. If the other wanted to hurt him, it would be easy. None of this was needed.

After seconds of hesitation, Link chose to fly through the Gates of the True Self.

Strangely enough, the moment he made the choice, the other two portals disappeared. The Gates of the True Self took up his entire vision and was immediately before him.

Link had no more hesitation; he dived in.

The sight changed before him. After a while, the light around him became gentle. Link discovered that his dragon form was gone, and he'd returned to human form.

Warm sunlight shone on him, and the smell of books filled his nose. He looked around. He was surrounded by a circle of shelves filled with all types of magic books. There was a Magician beside him too. His features were identical to the one from the epic that created the six-sided gear. Even his clothes were the same.

"Why are you here?" Link gasped. "Aren't you dead? Sorry, but I" When the endless light had burst, he'd seen the Magician evaporate with his own eyes.

The Magician smiled. "I did die, but I came back to life. The God of Light revived me."

"The God of Light? Are you talking about that gear?" Link froze.

The Magician was slightly confused. "The gear? Oh, it does look like it, but it's only the appearance. In reality, he is the God of Light."

Link was even more shocked. "The epic says that you created it. So you're saying that you created a god?"

"Create a god?" The Magician arched an eyebrow. Then he smiled and shook his head. "No, no, no. You didn't see the entire story. What happened is that the God of Light has always existed, but he was hurt. I just helped bring him back to life and accidentally purified the darkness in the god's soul. What you just saw was the process of the God of Light reincarnating."

This made more sense. If someone could create a god, then their wisdom must be so deep. Before someone like that, Link would feel like nothing more than an ant.

After a pause, he looked at the books around him. "I chose the Gates of the True Self. Is the truth in question the different spells in these books?"

The Magician nodded. "When you entered this place of new life, the God of Light felt it. He told me to take care of things, so I had that guy Romeon lead you here. You really did come and chose the Gates of the True Self, just as how I'd expected. It was hard for you to come. To give you a gift, you can choose any of these books and copy it. Remember, only one book. This is what the God of Light wishes too."

Only one book Link looked at the hundreds upon thousands of books around him. It felt like he'd gone into a mountain of treasures but could only return empty-handed. He really wanted to read everything before leaving.

The Magician could tell what he was thinking. He smiled and shook his head. "I'm not being stingy. It's just that these books don't belong to me. I'm just the manager. I can't read these books at will either. The God of Light is the true owner. Each book contains extremely valuable knowledge. A mortal might not comprehend one book even after a century. Giving you one book is already a great blessing."

Hearing that, Link felt that he'd been greedy. "I understand," he said seriously.

"Go choose one." The Magician gestured invitingly.

Link took a deep breath, composing himself, and walked toward the bookshelf reverently. Looking at all the books shimmering with magic light, the titles all tempted him.

The Mystery of Light, Light, and Darkness, Trinity, Spell-casting Techniques of a Super Magician, Sacred Realm, Macro Elements All the books made Link's head spin. Each one was tempting, and he didn't want to miss anyone. Just like a regular person who could only take one gem from Alibaba's treasures, this was impossible to choose.

While he was conflicted, Link was suddenly attracted by one bookSacred Realm. "Sacred" meant "Legendary," so this book would describe spells in the Legendary level. With Link's current level, he would be able to understand it and benefit from it.

The book looked thick too. It was thicker than other books, so it probably had a lot of content too. For books of this level, there wouldn't be a single useless word in it. Every word was important. Since there were more words, there would be more content, and he would get more out of it.

Thinking of this, Link got rid of the disorganized thoughts from being in a true god's archive. He pointed at the Sacred Realm and said, "I will copy this one."

The Magician didn't react when he saw Link's choice. It was as if he wouldn't feel strange no matter what book Link chose.

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure."

The Magician grasped towards the magic book. A shadow appeared from the shelf. When it flew around three feet, it turned solid and flew towards Link.

Link reached out and caught it. He looked to the shelf; the Sacred Realm was still in its original spot. This kind of copying method was almost godly. Link couldn't do it.

"Young man," the Magician said. "You should return to where you came from after receiving the book."

Link was a bit hesitant again. He'd wanted to go search for the mysterious gear that was the God of Light in the Sea of Void. After all, the demon army was still waiting for him in the Sea of Void. The God of Destruction was also looking for him. If he left this realm, he would definitely die.

As if reading his mind, the Magician shook his head. "You've already been welcomed by the God of Light. There's no reason to look for him anymore. As for the enemies in the Sea of Void I only have one thing for you. There are true gods in this world, but it doesn't include the Pale Hunter Fegnoni."

Link froze. "What do you mean?"

The Magician smiled. "You already have the mental image. In that case, it isn't hard to see the truth. As for the truth, you must find it yourself. This is the path you must walk yourself Go now."

As soon as he finished, Link felt himself float. The scenery around him spun quickly. Three seconds later, the scenery stopped, but it had become a dark green fog. Energy vortices would occasionally pass by, pressing down on him with chaotic power.

This was the Sea of Void.

Link quickly changed into his dragon form to fend off the Void Power. At the same time, a message popped up.

Mission Complete: View Ancient Epic

Player Received: Blessing of Immortality

Use now?

"Use," Link chose without hesitation.

There was no true immortality in the world. Even the God of Light had once died. So-called immortality was just immortality in a world without outside force. Since he could have something so good, he wouldn't refuse it.

As soon as he spoke, Link felt his body tremor. An indescribable force flew through him, instantly washing over his entire body. He saw that the silver-black scales on him had changed slightly. Looking closely, he saw that there were ancient magic veins on the surface. They looked similar to the veins on the mysterious gear.

Next, the details appeared in his vision.

Player Received: Blessing of Immortality

Blessing of Immortality

Divine Spell

Effect 1: When blessed, all effects from the realm on the target will be erased.

Effect 2: The target's recovery rate will increase by 100%. This effect will never end.

Excited, Link checked his current status. He saw that his Realm Essence recovery rate had gone back to normal. It was once again 180 points per second.

This is great. Now, I have practically endless power, and my body can recover quickly. I won't have to worry about tiring out even if I use my max speed. Even if Nozama uses the Void Ferry to chase me, I can still escape.

Thinking of Nozama, Link shivered. Fedaro was right behind him while Nozama and the God of Destruction were nearby. He couldn't stay here.

With that in mind, he immediately flapped his dragon wings. Void Power spewed out, and he shot toward Fedaro like a rocket. As he flew, Link also checked the other reward from the mission: the Energy Crystal.

This translucent crystal had 28 sides and contained an energy vortex that kept spinning. It radiated with pure power aura. Link could feel that if he could absorb this power, his power limit would definitely rise. He might even get to Level-14.

He got an idea. When I get to Firuman and settle down, I'll start absorbing.

Just as Link left Fedaro, Nozama who had been pursuing him received a message from the God of Destruction at almost the same time. "Stop chasing and come back. He's in the Sea of Void!"

Nozama was shocked. "When did he leave? Where?"

"I can only vaguely sense his location. We still need to use your Void Ferry to chase him," the God of Destruction replied.

Nozama was still hesitant. He turned around. He could see the huge cloud cluster with the gear's imprint right now. That was the existence he'd been searching. Compared to it, Link was a lesser mission. No, it was more like an accident.

Chase him or continue?

After thinking a few more seconds, Nozama ignored the God of Destruction. He rushed into the white clouds, ducking in without more hesitation.

At that moment, the bloody light had disappeared from his eyes, turning them pitch black. "God of Light, I've searched for you for countless years. So you've been hiding here, huh. This time, you can't run anymore!"

## 606. It's Just Survival Of The Fittest

With a sudden hum, Nozama's path was cut off by an incredible power.

The air in front of him had been violently distorted. It now resembled an ocean's turbulent surface during a storm.

Countless tiny points of golden light swam in front of Nozama almost rhythmically. Every time Nozama tried to move forward, these points of light would come together, pushing him back. When he was forced to take a step back, these points of light would scatter, slackening their resistance against him.

Hrrgh... Can't get through. Nozama took a step back. He then began observing the golden points of light swimming before him so intently that he was completely oblivious to the passage of time itself.

An hour had passed. Without warning, Nozama's body gleamed with a black light. Then, he propelled himself forward towards the left.

Strangely enough, the light points before him did not seem to notice Nozamassudden movement. They continued swirling about in the turbulent sheet of air without making any attempt to stop his advance.

When he was approximately 100 feet inside the distorted space, the golden light points seemed to have sensed his presence. They quickly converged towards him, ready to drive him out once more.

In an instant, Nozama stopped in his tracks.

Curiously enough, as soon as he stopped moving, all the golden light points immediately slackened, before returning to their dispersed state. It was as if they had just lost their target and saw no point in assuming an offensive position.

Nozama patiently waited there. Minutes passed. Half an hour later, he resumed his advance through the distorted space.

This time, he came to a stop once more after having sprinted more than 150 feet forward.

After three days of stopping and then moving forward, the fog before him dissipated, revealing a continuously revolving silhouette in his path.

"The Gates of the True Self?" Nozama smiled faintly. His eyes gleamed with a black sheen that seemed to echo an endless night sky. From a close enough distance, one would be under the impression that they were staring into a pair of bottomless pits, threatening to suck out the souls of anyone foolish enough to stare into them.

"God of Light, my heart is filled with nothing but darkness. I will extinguish every bit of light in every realm. You should know this by now. The Gates of the True Self will not have any effect whatsoever on me."

Saying this, Nozama walked through the Gates without any hesitation. He could feel the distortion of the silhouette around him. Three seconds later, the silhouette vanished. Before him appeared a temple that rose majestically into the heavens.

The black radiance around Nozama's body thickened the moment he laid eyes on the temple. It was now roiling across the surface of his body, flailing about like black tentacles.

"Stay where you are, demon!" A clear voice rang out. There was a hint of anger in it. It was Romeon.

Romeon came hurtling towards Nozama with such speed that his radiant body had transformed into a lightning bolt in mid-flight.

"Insect!" Nozama slowly floated towards the Temple of Light, not at all perturbed by Romeon's appearance. One of his black tentacles lashed out towards Romeon like a cobra.

The black tentacle easily ensnared Romeon, before tightening around his body and holding him high in the air. Without warning, the tentacle's tip drove itself into one of Romeon's nostrils.

Arrrghhh!!! Romeon let out a scream. His face contorted with anguish. Blue veins appeared on his body like earthworms wriggling out from the ground.

Five seconds later, the tentacle let go of Romeon. His appearance had changed drastically. With his horribly distorted features, bloodshot eyes and rotting skin, Romeon now resembled a corpse that had been brought back to life.

His unicorn had undergone a horrible transformation as well. Its eyes were now casting a black glow, while green flames burned beneath its hooves. Its pure white mane had turned horribly black, and there was a tar-like fluid leaking out continuously from the corner of its mouth.

"Master." Romeon stood aside, letting Nozama pass.

Not even bothering to inspect his work, Nozama quickly flew into the Creator's temple. It was not long before he finally found the Stone of Creation.

Nozama stopped his advance when he saw the stone. The black energy was now churning fiercely about his body. From afar, he would have looked like a huge black sphere.

"200,000 years, God of Light, I've been looking for you for 200,000 years, and now I've finally found you... Did you miss me, old friend?"

Countless black tentacles were now flailing about Nozama's body, coiling about every pillar and statue in the temple, corroding everything in their embrace.

Boom! The sound of stone breaking echoed in the temple. The entire building was collapsing rapidly around Nozama.

Hum. Out of thin air, a figure appeared in the collapsing temple. It was a Magician whose hair was just as white as the full-length robe he was clad in. As soon as he appeared, multiple runes appeared in the air within a 100-foot radius around him.

The runes immediately formed a barrier of golden light around the Magician. Any tentacle coming at him simply melted away upon coming into contact with the barrier.

Nozama seemed pleased to see the Magician appear before him. "So you're still alive, High Magus Taric."

In ancient times, "High Magus" was the highest title a Magician could ever hope to attain. High Magus Taric had stood at the pinnacle of the world in his prime. As everyone back then knew who he was, so too did Nozama.

Taric shook his head. "I never would have guessed that that roguish disciple of mine would end up becoming one of the most terrifying demons to ever exist in the Sea of Void."

He too knew who Nozama was. Nozama had gained quite a reputation back then, though mostly for all the wrong reasons.

Nozama smirked. "Yes, it would seem that time has changed both of us. I'm here to extinguish the light. I suppose you're here to stop me?"

"Of course," said Taric softly. With a hum, the barrier of light expanded tenfold around him, melting away more of Nozama's black tentacles.

"You're no match for me, Taric," said Nozama, shaking his head. He then extended a hand. He was holding a black piece of stone in it. The stone's surface was smooth, evidence that he had been playing with it for quite some time.

Taric was stunned when he saw the stone in Nozama's hand. "The Stone of Darkness... You're not Nozama, you're his puppet!"

"Puppet? Well, that good-for-nothing disciple turned out to be quite useful after all. As an empty husk for me to inhabit, that is."

Ignoring High Magus Taric, Nozama gazed up at the Stone of Creation, which was still floating in the air. He shouted, "God of Light, I have returned. Why don't you show yourself?"

As soon as he said those words, a beam of light streaked down from the Stone of Creation, before coalescing into a 200-foot wide sphere of light in front of Taric.

A clear, resounding voice spoke out, "You shouldn't have come back, the darkness in my... soul."

Nozama let out a crazed laugh. "What's the matter? Am I not welcomed here? Don't tell me you've forgotten who you really are, after being worshipped as the God of Light for 200,000 years? Or were those times we spent consuming one realm after another just too horrible to think about?"

The black tentacles around his body were now winding around the ball of light. What happened later came as a shock to Taric.

The God of Light did not even struggle against the tentacles as they began coiling around him.

"My lord, why?" exclaimed Taric.

"I can't stop him. Be it light or darkness, he is still a part of me. Taric, I may have lied to you. Back then, the Firuman realm had been too powerful. There was an accident when I broke through. I was injured. You didn't really bring me back to life. I simply let you exercise the darkness in me.

Taric was stunned. He could feel everything he had ever believed in crumbling away. "What? So everything you've ever told me has been a lie?"

"Not everything. Some of them have come from the light side of my personality."

The dark energy continued flowing into the God of Light's body, which was now growing dimmer and gradually radiating a purple glow. Taric was now panicking. "If light and darkness are polar opposites of each other, why is someone as radiant as you just letting yourself be consumed by darkness?"

As a High Magus, Taric sensed that this union of both light and darkness would bring forth an abomination unlike anything anyone had ever seen in the Sea of Void.

"Light and darkness have always been two sides of the same coin, mortal. My real name is the Ruler of Light and Darkness. The union of light and darkness is my true nature, and they obey my every command."

Taric was now on the brink of despair. "If you're that powerful, why would you still want to destroy the realms?"

"Destroy? No, I consume realms. Let me ask you something, Taric. Let's say you're eating an apple right now. Would you even stop to consider the feelings of the worms living inside it when you're munching down on them? This has nothing to do with good or evil. It's just survival of the fittest, plain and simple."

A shiver ran down Taric's spine. All that he could feel now was utter despair. "Then why would you still bother replying to a question from a worm like myself?"

"Hehehe..."

At that moment, Nozama had vanished completely. The ball of light that had been the God of Light had turned purple. From it, a genderless voice laughed out. "Well, you've been quite the obedient little pet to me for a long time. Of course, you deserve some special treatment from me. Compared to other mortals, you hold a special place in my heart."

"What are you going to do now?" said Taric. His voice rang hollow with despair.

"Now? I'm a bit hungry now. It's been 10,000 since I've eaten anything. I see this apple called Fedaro has already ripened enough. It's looking mighty tasty now."

"No!!! I won't let you!" The aura around Taric converged into a single beam of light, which then pierced through the purple ball of light like a sword.

With a bang, glass-like fragments sprayed out from the purple ball of light. However, Taric was now nowhere to be seen. He had been completely disintegrated into a wisp of smoke.

"Poor Taric, he would rather bite a chunk out of me at the cost of his own life rather than stay on just a bit longer as my pet... That's one way to excite someone's appetite."

## 607. Haha Hes Dead Now

When Fedaro was changing, Link was hurrying through the Sea of Void. No, more accurately, he was running for his life.

Vague power ripples were already reaching him. Link was familiar with the frequency. It was identical to the Void Ferry from earlier. Even more shocking was that destructive aura was mixed in too.

Demons are alright, but there's also the God of Destruction now. I don't know if I can escape this time.

Sensing closely, he could feel that the other's speed was still faster than him. It wasn't much, only closing in bit by bit, but with this current speed, they would catch up before he could reach Fedaro.

I need to escape, Link thought while flying, but he couldn't think of a plan. After a while, his heart jumped, and a message popped up abruptly.

Warning! Warning! System being invaded! Warning System being invaded Unable to stop invasion Self-destruction activated

Not even a second later, Link felt his consciousness shake violently. He was dizzy as if he'd been electrocuted.His entire vision turned bloody-red. The world seemed to be dyed with blood.

What's going on?! Link lost his cool. From the words, the game system had self-destructed due to an invasion. But who was the invader? Who was so powerful that even the system was forced to self-destruct?

Is it the God of Destruction? Link first suspected his most powerful enemy right now. It had to be someone on the divine level. The God of Destruction was his biggest enemy currently Wait, it could be another dark god too, like Lilith who he'd fought against before.

Of course, these were all guesses. Link had no proof. This change was so drastic that Link's heart was jumping erratically. All types of thoughts arose. He looked side to side, trying to find the enemy in the thin white mist of the Sea of Void.

Just then, the bloody scene changed again.

The bloody light that had erupted and filled Link's vision faded quickly. Strange runes appeared. Link studied them and discovered they were magic runes. They looked similar to the veins on the mysterious gear but were slightly different.

At first, they looked like computer codes from earth. They appeared in lines in Link's vision. Around five seconds later, they turned into various magic formations. They appeared much faster than before and kept changing.

Link did his best to memorize the changes. His soul had become powerful now and, he had a somewhat photographic memory. He kept track of the changes and memorized every detail.

Around 30 seconds later, the speed was almost at the limit of Link's reaction speed. He could only watch the foggy light flash before him. The fog was thickening and growing brighter. It almost took up his entire vision.

This scene lasted for around 50 seconds and then it disappeared suddenly. Finally, a line of words that Link could read appeared.

Game system restructuring successful, restarting all functions Beep, beep. Restart complete, generating system log Log complete.

Link was even more confused at this. What happened? he asked himself.

As soon as he thought that, a dark silver ball of light appeared in his vision. Link was extremely familiar with this. When the God of Light had sent him to Firuman, he'd been in this half-dead state.

"The time of the Void was greatly distorted. A new timeline has been created. From now on, I will no longer be myself Hero, this is my last time talking to you."

"God of Light?" Link was shocked.

"No, I am no longer pure light now. Darkness has tited me once again."

Hearing this, Link thought of the invasion message from earlier. Thinking carefully, his heart jumped. He felt a cold tremor. Then the memory from the ancient epic floated up. A possibility rose up in his mind.

He couldn't help but exclaim, "It's Nozama and the horrible ancient darkness on him, right?"

"Yes. Dark and light have regrouped again. A new me has already appeared. Now, I carry the original sin of darkness and see every realm as food. Thousands of years ago, I was known as the Sovereign of Light, but also the Devourer of Worlds. Now, I am devouring Fedaro. Soon, I will go to Firuman"

"What's with you now?" Link was terrified.

"This is only an image I've left behind. When I was the God of Light, I knew this day would come. Thus, I made some preparations. Hero from the mortal world, take care."

As soon as he finished, the dark light disappeared from Link's vision. His heart felt cold. He asked inwardly, Game system, are you still there?

Around a second later, a line appeared in his vision.

Player, how may I help you?

Link was slightly relieved. He quickly asked, "Will the Sovereign of Light go through you and invade my soul?"

No, the game system has already been restructured. It is unique. After the past God of Light created this system, he chose to forget this memory. The Sovereign of Light cannot figure it out.

Link was a bit reassured. "The God of Light is already gone. Then is the mission system still here?"

"Yes, the system's functions won't change. The rewards may be affected though. The Omni Points and spell rewards won't change, but the player is unable to receive material rewards."

Link could accept this. He nodded, feeling assured.

Now, he suddenly discovered that his surroundings were familiar. Looking closely, his heart jumped. This seems to be where I ran into the negative-energy pitfall.

He immediately slowed down to investigate. There were still remnants of the vortex in the white mist up ahead. Around the negative-energy pitfall, the Sea of Void was very calm. Other than looking darker, it wasn't any different from the regular space.

Energy waves from the Void Ferry were even closer, but Link didn't continue forward. He circled the negative-energy pitfall and decided to use it to lose his pursuers.

But how?

Link thought carefully. Three seconds later, his eyes brightened. He'd thought of a plan.

It was a bit risky. Even if he succeeded, he would still suffer great losses. But success was highly possible, and it could create horrible losses for his opponent. He might make the God of Destruction look pathetic too.

Whatever, there isn't much time. Hesitating will only waste time. Let's go! Link was the type that would carry things out as soon as he made a decision. He was still like this now and immediately started following his plan.

While Link was planning an escape route, on the Void Ferry, the God of Destruction suddenly looked towards Fedaro.

"What's wrong?" Demon Magician Glyn asked carefully. Nozama was his master, but this was a god. Nozama wasn't her match at all, and he was stuck in Fedaro right now. Thus, his people naturally had to listen to the God of Destruction.

It wasn't her fault she was stronger than Nozama.

The God of Destruction looked for a long while, brows furrowing. "I can't feel Nozama's power anymore. He disappeared, while at the same time a very strong force appeared. It belongs to a true god."

Glyn was shocked. "Are you saying that Nozama was killed by that true god?"

Thatwas too unexpected.

The God of Destruction's dark red eyes flickered. "I don't know. The situation is strange, but Nozama did this to himself. It has nothing to do with us. Let's continue forward. We're very close to that disgusting cockroach."

Around half an hour of flying later, a demon suddenly yelled, "Look, it's the Ferde lord! He's trapped in the negative-energy pitfall!"

Everyone looked over. Through the thin fog, they could see a dark silver figure circling endlessly in the distance. They couldn't see anything in the darkness, but he seemed to be trapped by something.

This only happened after one fell into a negative-energy pitfall.

"Ha, he's dead now!" Magician Glyn cackled.

## 608. No Pain No Gain

With a dull boom, translucent Void energy began pouring out of the Black Dragon's wings, pushing it forward.

However, the dragon's forward momentum did not last long, as it was then easily pulled from behind by an invisible giant hand.

Hum, hum... A saucer-shaped Void Ferry with a diameter of more than 300 feet slowly drew closer to it. It finally came to a stop 50 miles away from the dragon's massive body. A tall, red hologram then appeared on top of the vessel.

The image stood approximately 10,000 feet tall. The Void Ferry hovered beneath it like an insect hovering in the dark expanse of the Void. After a while, the shimmering image finally solidified into the serpentine form of the God of Destruction.

From the Naga's hologram came a voice which resounded through the white mists dispersed in all directions across the Sea of Void. "Link, you're trapped. Surrender and swear your loyalty to me, and I will help you."

Link's wing thrusters were still at full blast as he desperately tried to pull himself away from the negative-energy pitfall. He replied, "I'd rather die."

"The way I see it, you don't really have a choice," said the God of Destruction with a hint of glee in her voice. She watched as Link struggled against the pitfall's gravitational pull. "In the realm of Firuman, I may not be able to deal with you personally, but here in the Sea of Void, you are no more than an insect before me. You've killed many of my lieutenants. Things have been smooth sailing for you so far back in Firuman. I would like to see you being slowly ground away by despair for a change."

The Void Ferry slowly continued its approach towards the negative-energy pitfall. The God of Destruction silently observed Link's struggle against imminent death from her perch.

Boom! Link swept his wings back in an attempt to put even more distance between him and the pitfall. However, it was all in vain. He was now like a bug trapped in spider's web. Any further attempt to break free from this invisible web was pointless at this point.

Every new burst of Void energy from his wing thrusters simply shaved off a huge chunk of energy in his body, pushing him closer and closer towards his demise.

However, dragons naturally possessed high stamina. Though it could be said with certity that he was now on a one-way path towards certain destruction, the process would be extremely slow. It would take more than four hours before Link would start to show signs of fatigue.

The God of Destruction continued silently observing the dragon's struggle against death. To a deity like herself, the span of four hours was nothing. She would receive a surge of pleasure as the look of desperation on Link's face intensified with each passing moment. It was an experience she would not mind savoring for another eight hours if she had to.

When it looked as if Link was about to fall into the negative-energy pitfall, the God of Destruction languidly held out a hand, which stretched out rapidly until it reached the dragon's body.

"It's been fun... Wait, you're not Link!"

The moment she held onto the dragon's body, the God of Destruction immediately sensed that something was not right. It was merely an empty husk!

The body she was holding still retained its flawless dragon scales, sturdy muscles, and skeleton. From afar, it looked exactly like the real thing. However, upon holding the body in her hand, she immediately realized that it was completely devoid of a soul.

To a god, life's true essence resided in one's soul, whereas one's physical body was merely the result of an amalgamation of various energies. Any god worth their salt would be able to bring into existence a mortal's physical body without breaking a sweat.

"Well played! Ejecting your soul from your physical body and leaving an empty husk behind to fool me, well played indeed! You certainly have spirit, mortal!" All that the God of Destruction was feeling right now was pure, burning anger. Energy now surged into her fingertips in waves. Bang! There was a sudden sound of an explosion. The dragon's body had burstito pieces like a balloon between her fingers!

Link's dragon body might be nigh indestructible to most mortals. However, in the face of a god's power, it was just as fragile as a piece of tofu.

When the dragon body exploded, the God of Destruction's anger subsided somewhat. All that was now left in her was an odd sense of disappointment.

The dragon body that she had decimated was considerably more powerful than most Legendary bodies. Not only did it possess a Level-18 magical resistance, but a highly-refined perpetual spell also seemed to have been cast on it as well. Such a body would have been of incomparable worth to a Level-13 Legendary master like Link. She never would have thought that Link would give it up so easily.

However, Link had managed to deceive her by leaving his dragon form behind. Her more outstanding subordinates had shown the same spirit as displayed by Link moments ago.

If she were to have someone like him working under her, she would already have brought all of Firuman to its knees a long time ago. It was truly a shame to have Link slip through her fingers once more.

He must already have fled the place four hours ago. There won't be any point in chasing him down. The God of Destruction then withdraw her enormous figure from outside the Void Ferry back into the vessel's interior.

"Almighty one, congratulations on finally killing Link." Glyn, the demon Magician, stepped forth to extend his congratulations to his master. He had only seen the dragon's body explode into pieces in the God of Destruction's hand.

Shooting a sideways glance at him, the God of Destruction coldly spoke, "Go, back to Firuman!"

Link had made quite a home for himself in Firuman. To make matters worse, he now had more than 3000 Legendary demons under him. She could do without taking the entire realm for herself. She just could not allow Link to continue existing in this world!

Glyn was confused as to what was going on. However, the God of Destruction did not seem to be in a mood to be pestered by anyone at the moment. For his own life's sake, he decided to keep his mouth shut, lest he say something that might incur her wrath.

Outside, Link was already hurtling through the Sea of Void at top speed. Soon, a hazy ball of light began growing before him. It was the realm of Firuman, his second home.

In order to buy himself some time, Link had abandoned his dragon form, as well as a huge portion of his dragon heart. All that was left was his human form, covered by a layer of magically immune dragon scales which prevented him from taking any damage from the Void energy outside.

He still retained his Level-13 Midstage power level. However, the scale of his power had been reduced by more than 80 percent. His power recovery rate had been halved as well. The loss he had sustained this time was simply unimaginable.

However, the loss of his dragon form was a price that Link was willing to pay if it meant escaping eternal servitude under the God of Destruction.

Time seems to work differently in each realm. I wonder how much time has passed since my departure from Firuman? Are the High Elves still proceeding with their plans for realm reunification? If so, how much progress have they made by now? Has Orida Fortress finally engaged in battle? How's Celine doing right now?

All these questions began popping up in Link's head. However, as he had lost his dragon form, he could only inch bit by bit across the Sea of Void towards Firuman.

Gradually, the realm of Firuman expanded in his field of sight. A warm, irresistible power radiated from it towards him.

As soon as it hit Link's body, something strange happened.

Link felt a sudden surge of warmth enter his body. This current of warmth began circulating in him, intensifying with each round it made inside his body. He could feel even more power swirling in him as he approached Firuman.

"Where am I getting this much power? This is incredible." Link pulled up the game system's interface before him and saw that his power level was increasing by one point every 20 seconds. Moreover, it seemed to be increasing even more as Link came closer and closer towards Firuman.

Hum... Link had hit the outer membrane of the Firuman realm. He then noticed something odd. He did not feel any resistance acting against him as he passed through it. Like a mother welcoming the return of her child back into her embrace, Link was able to easily slip into the Firuman realm. At the same time, huge amounts of energy began flowing into his body. He was now feeling completely at ease as if he was lying on a patch of soft grass beneath the gentle rays of a springtime sun without a care in the world.

His power level was now increasing by one point every ten seconds. At that point, Link felt as if sunshine had now filled his very soul, clearing away the despondency he had felt over the loss of his dragon heart.

The first seeds of self-confidence had sprouted inside him.

"Simply incredible!"

Even though he only still had Level-13 Midstage power, even though his enemies ran rampant still across Firuman and beyond, even though there were still formidable presences in Firuman like the Shadow Stalker Morpheus and the World Tree that could erase him from existence any time they wanted to, Link now believed from the bottom of his heart that no one could defeat him and that he was now capable of taking on anyone who stood in his way.

Link was somewhat surprised by this newfound confidence in his own abilities. Where did all this confidence come from? This is such a strange reaction to have, especially for someone who had just barely escaped the jaws of death.

As he puzzled over what was happening to him at the moment, the Ode of a Full Moon sword who had remained silent all this time suddenly spoke.

Congratulations, Link.

"What are you congratulating me for? I just suffered a terrible loss," said Link, frowning.

Aren't you feeling like you're now the king of the world? asked the spirit of the sword.

"Yeah, just a bit," replied Link.

That means you have received recognition from the Firuman realm itself. You are now truly the Avatar of the Realm, the sword explained. I witnessed something like this back when I was still in the Soul Dominator's possession, so I'm quite familiar with what you're going through now.

"Avatar of the Realm? Why now?" Link was stunned. He closely felt all that was going on in his body. It really did feel like he had just received the realm's blessing.

Maybe it's because you've regained your independence by freeing yourself from the God of Light's control?

This sounded logical. A message from the game system appeared in Link's field of sight as if in response to the sword's answer.

Examining entry of foreign energy inside player's body... Examining energy composition... Examination complete. Player has received the realm's blessing.

The game system's confirmation immediately cleared away all of Link's suspicions concerning the matter at hand. He let out a sigh of relief. This was quite the reward to make up for the terrible loss he had suffered back in the Sea of Void.

Suddenly, there was a flash of light before him. As the light subsided, Link soon realized that he had now appeared in the middle of Girvent Forest.

The sun shone brightly above him. All around him were trees, tall and green. Not far away, Link could also see the remnants of Creekwood Village that had been razed to the ground by the fires of war. Curiously enough, none of the villagers passing by him seemed to have noticed his presence in the forest.

"What's going on?" thought Link, frowning.

Just then, he suddenly noticed a woman standing in the shade of the forest in front of him. She looked to be around 30 years old. Even though she was dressed like a simple village maiden, there was something about her that Link could not put a finger on.

There existed people in this world capable of leaving impressions in one's mind that would last a lifetime. Weak-willed individuals had starved themselves chasing after memories of these people, haunted by them even in their sleep.

The woman was smiling at Link. Her eyes sparkled like constellations in the night sky. There was a beseeching look on her face. Link was about to say something to her, who seemed to be the only person in the village who was able to see him. All of a sudden, the scene before him changed. The villagers had disappeared. So too did the woman. All that was left before him were the empty remains of Creekwood Village in the middle of Girvent Forest.

What he saw just now was merely an illusion.

Now standing near the ruins of the village, Link tried to recall the woman's appearance. She must have been the will of the Firuman realm in human form.

In the previous game world, the Will of the Realm's presence had never been officially acknowledged by the developers, but there had been written records of it scattered throughout the game. Some traveling poets had even named this female personification of the realm's will "Freyar."

According to legends, Freyar had a soft spot for heroes. She would always offer them her blessing when they hit rock bottom, encouraging them to keep fighting the good fight.

He must have seen Freyar herself just now.

Squatting down, Link pinched a bit of soil from the ground. He then smiled. "Are you telling me to save the world? I've been doing this for a long, long time, you know."

## 609. The Second Siege Of Orida Fortress

Orida Fortress

On the high city wall, General Kanorse held a telescope. He was looking carefully at the Black Forest up ahead. Among the thousands of feet of woods, he saw many tents of Dark Elves. These camps stretched on for a few miles, and he could make out many people too.

The telescope was a Yabba creation; it was of high quality. Even from this distance, Kanorse could still see the different races clearly. There were Dark Elves, Nagas, demons, demonized Beastmen, dark dwarves and more. Judging from the scouts' information, this time, the Army of Destruction had around 200,000 people.

A while later, Kanorse handed the telescope to the burly and tall man covered in dark silver armor beside him.

"They say that the Army of Destruction's general is a Dark Elf princess named Ellie Danas. She's a Dark Magician with Level-14 power. We must be careful."

This burly man was none other than Ferde's Jacker. He was the commander of the Sunlight Army. He worked hard every second of every day to improve, and his efforts paid off. He was now Level-10 and was the first Legendary Warrior of Ferde.

With his Legendary power and status as the commander of the Orida Fortress' most well-equipped Sunlight Army, he had great authority here.

The Orida Fortress also contained the Beastmen's army. They were allies, but Kanorse was still biased towards Jacker, a fellow human. This made Jacker the second most powerful figure in the fortress.

He studied the Army of Destruction in the forest. The thick eyebrows on his square face furrowed slightly, looking like a rugged mountain. "The demons this time are truly powerful. They're all high-level demons, and they have those Nagas. I've already seen eight at Level-10. There are many at Level-7 and Level-8. This power is too formidable."

"Yes. Thankfully that princess broke up with the High Elves. If the High Elves were thrown into the mix, we would definitely lose." Kanorse felt fortunate.

Jacker looked for a bit more and put down his telescope. "Even so, we still must be careful about the High Elves. They might be watching in the shadows and come at the end to clean things up."

This made sense. Kanorse nodded. "I'm sure the scouts of MI3 won't disappoint us."

Thud, thud! Heavy footsteps sounded from behind them. The two generals turned around and saw a Beastman with menacing armor and a chain of wolf fangs around his neck.

Seeing him, Kanorse and Jacker both nodded while the other brought a fist to his chest.

"How are things? Are those bastards ready to die?" The Beastman walked to the city wall to look down. He was none other than Avatar, Glorious Warlord and king and leader of the Beastmen.

As he spoke, he looked at the dark Beastmen walking around in the forest. Parmese had brought them to the Black Forest. Now that Parmese was gone, the Beastmen didn't have a high status in the army. He would occasionally see a Naga or a demon yell at or hit one of their Beastmen.

Avatar saw all this and his eyes narrowed, shimmering with blood-light. He was furious. It was all because of that idiotic Parmese!

After a while, his anger subsided. He glanced at Kanorse and Jacker. Worry flashed past his eyes. He couldn't help but lament, "How unfortunate that the Ferde lord isn't here!"

The two human Warriors were talented, but their combat ability wasn't enough. The enemy general was a Level-14 Magician, and there were also many Legendary Nagas with powerful abilities. They weren't at the same level.

Thankfully, they had this fortress as support. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to fight at all.

Speaking of Link, Jacker said, "My master went to the Sea of Void, but the Mage Tower has already sent the summoning. I'm sure he will return soon Plus, the situation is quite good. We're already close to the Army of Destruction's power. This is much better than last time."

Kanorse also nodded. "Jacker's right. To be honest, it's more possible for us to win this time. We may be weaker, but our support is an advantage they can't have. If we can block their first wave of attacks, we will win!"

If they could fend off the first wave, then they could fend off the second and third. The longer it took, the more advantageous it was to them.

This made sense. Avatar nodded.

Taking one last glance at the enemy, he said, "Looking at them now, it seems they'll attack at any time. I'll go check my soldiers again."

"I'll go as well," Jacker said.

The two left while Kanorse patrolled the wall. He cheered up the soldiers while checking the weapons on the wall. In a battle of two large armies, not a single detail could be ignored. Any mishap would help the enemy and bring horrible trouble or even complete defeat.

While the Orida Fortress was getting ready, the Army of Destruction wasn't relaxed either. The priestess walked around, blessing the Warriors. The demons yelled in their language, planning specific ways to attack the fortress. The Dark Elf Magicians and archers were conserving their energy in preparation for the battle.

There was a huge tent under a giant tree. It belonged to Princess Ellie Danas.

Right now, people went in and out of the tent. There was a model of the Orida Fortress in the center. Demons, Dark Elves, and Nagas surrounded the model, discussing specific tactics.

Their discussion was very energetic. It sounded like they were arguing. Eugene, who had become Princess Ellie, sat on the side. She waited patiently for them to come up with a specific plan.

Around half an hour later, Priestess Molina walked up. "Your Highness, today is the coldest day of the month while midnight will be the darkest and coldest time of the day. We will attack at midnight. The army's power will be used to its max while the opponent's power will be repressed the most. We have the biggest chance."

Eugene nodded. "Then let's do that. What about the specific strategy? Show me."

Molina hurriedly brought a scroll over. Eugene checked the various small-scale formations, attack order, plans for accidents, and more. He considered them all carefully. Around ten minutes later, he said, "The Magician Army's appearance is too early. It can attract their attention, and it's too risky. It should be delayed."

"But Your Highness, our casualties will increase greatly that way. At least 10,000 people will die" Molina couldn't accept this.

"I know, so tell the Beastmen to attack first. Do you object?"

The Beastmen were brave, but after Parmese died, they had no leader. Many of them wished to return to the Golden Plains and follow the Beastman king. This was an army that could betray them at any time. They were unstable.

They couldn't rely on the Beastmen to win, so they were best used as cannon fodder. At this, the Dark Elves, Nagas, and demons shut up. They all agreed tacitly.

Then Eugene continued, "Have those who were sent to the Isle of Dawn returned?"

Molina shook her head. "No news of them."

Eugene brought a hand to her head. She was angry, but things were different now. After being a leader for so long, she'd learned to keep calm. "They should have brought the news there long ago and should be back by now. Do the High Elves not accept our compensation and don't even wish to reply?"

No one could answer. Princess Ellie had been the one to end things with the High Elves. Now, she felt that she lacked power and sent someone to ask for an alliance. Last time, she'd almost killed the prince. It was normal that the High Elves would ignore them.

Eugene grew more furious. She tossed down the scroll and said, "Let's just follow this plan. Attack at midnight!"

"Yes, Your Highness!" everyone said.

Eugene didn't want to say anything else and went back to her tent.

While the humans and Army of Destruction were preparing, Link was still hurrying in the Sea of Void. In the Hengduan Mountain Range west of the Black Forest, there was a valley. Thick white fog suddenly appeared in it.

It was too thick for anyone to see what was happening inside the valley.

It was a starless, moonless night.

Whoosh... whoosh... A biting wind was blowing in from the ice plains in the far north. Any ordinary person would have their skin frozen blue if left exposed to the extreme cold for more than half an hour. If their ears were left unprotected in it, they would fall off like pieces of clay as well.

The sound of people drawing in sharp breaths came from outside the walls of Orida Fortress. A few guards were taking shelter in a corner, their bodies trembling uncontrollably like a leaf in the cold.

"Blasted weather, why can't those mongrels lurking outside the fortress walls just freeze to death in it?" muttered one of the guards. The others did not respond. They simply tightened their leather armors even more around them.

They were wearing thick layers of wool beneath their armors. Under normal circumstances, this layer of wool could provide an ample amount of thermal insulation as well as protection against enemy arrows for its wearer. From what the guards heard, they were gifts straight from Ferde. However, tonight, the cold was anything but normal. Like a mouse squeezing back into its hole in the ground, it had burrowed deep into the guard's bones. Their limbs now felt sluggish, as if rust had spread to their joints.

At that moment, there was a whoom from inside Orida Fortress. Then, a golden light shone out from the Mage Tower in the fortress grounds.

Wooo~ The sound of horns being blown echoed within the fortress walls.

"Enemy attack!" Shouts rose up from inside the fortress.

In the next second, a silver dome-shaped light barrier spread out over the fortress in the air. At the same time, far within the Black Forest, countless points of purple light carved out long arcs in the air before descending on the fortress like a meteor shower.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Every purple light point was more than a foot wide. Every explosion it set off had a radius of more than ten feet.

In the span of a few seconds, the silver blanket of light that was shielding the fortress grounds was enveloped completely by this purple inferno, coloring the whole sky in the same shade of purple.

As soon as the attack began, Kanorse made his way towards the command tower behind the second fortress wall. Once there, the tactical analyst immediately gave him a report of the enemy's ongoing siege.

"Marshal, I've activated the Level-16 Light Canopy. The enemy is currently using large-scale catapults against us. They've thrown more than 400 Level-9 Balls of Decay during their first wave of attack in our direction. Our canopy will only be able to take two more hits like that, sir!"

The Light Canopy was a recent addition to Orida fortress's magical defenses. Thought it was a Level-16 barrier, the enemy had launched a huge volley of Level-9 magical attacks against it. It would seem that they had come prepared to take down the fortress in one fell swoop.

They had a tough battle ahead of them tonight!

"Return fire!" said Kanorse calmly.

The tactical analyst immediately gave an order according to a predetermined battle plan for situations like this.

"Ready the sliding explosive ballista. 300 shots, target, the enemy's catapults!"

As soon as he gave his command, the Army of Destruction's second volley of Balls of Decay fell from the sky towards the fortress. Almost at the same time, the sounds of crossbows unloading their charges rang out in quick succession from the fortress wall.

Streaks of red light whizzed out from the top of the wall towards the Black Forest like a swarm of locusts. A moment later, consecutive explosions rocked the Black Forest. Shrieks of agony could even be heard from the chaos.

The sliding explosive ballista was one of the latest magical inventions developed by Ferde's Golden Rune Workshop. It had a range of 13,000 feet and was also capable of firing one volley of arrows every eight seconds. The tips of its arrows possessed high magical resistance, allowing it to pierce through Level-11 magical barriers. Once an arrow had broken through one of these barriers, it would activate a Level-8 explosive spell attached to its shaft, which would then release countless tiny metal pellets from it in all directions, causing maximum destruction in its wake.

Though the Army of Destruction seemed to be packing some serious firepower against them, their defenses were sorely lacking. Casualties abounded the moment these anti-magic arrows broke through them without much difficulty.

During this intense exchange of long-distance attacks between both sides, a series of commands were given out from the command post. All the Warriors in the fortress immediately broke the magic seals they had on them, flooding the fortress's interior with magical light at that moment.

These were all Supplementary Combat spells, granting buffs such as "Giant's Strength," "Steel Body," "Ultimate Protective Barrier" and so on to the Warriors. A Level-1 Warrior would be able to receive from these seals enough power to confront a Level-3 Warrior head-on. Right now, the average power level of all the Warriors in the fortress was Level-5. After casting these supplementary spells on themselves, they had effectively increased their own power levels and were now capable of going toe-to-toe with the Army of Destruction.

The supplementary spells were the first step of their battle plan. At that moment, sounds of alchemical vials being smashed into pieces on the ground echoed from every corner of the fortress. A thick golden mist began rising from the vials' shattered remnants.

The mist was radiating a golden light. Before long, it filled the entire fortress. Every Warrior breathing in this golden mist would receive a huge boost to their strength, endurance, and natural resistance against dark power. Conversely, the golden mist would act as a poison against those who wielded dark or destructive power!

The third volley of Balls of Decay fell from the sky once more when the Warriors were finally done with their defensive preparations. However, the number of Balls of Decay coming down on them now had been vastly reduced after the hit the enemy catapults took from the fortress's explosive ballista.

However, under their constant barrage, the Level-16 Light Canopy seemed to have lost most of its luster as well, as if it had lost all its defensive power.

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Inside the command post

Kanorse's face did not betray a single hint of the panic that he was now feeling inside. "How many catapults does the enemy still have left?"

The Level-9 Balls of Decay had been quite a handful to deal with. If even one of them had gotten through their defenses, it would have caused considerable damage to their forces.

The tactical analyst was still closely observing the current state of the battlefield. He then gave his report to Kanorse. "After taking two hits from us, the enemy now has 50 catapults remaining. We'll be able to bring that number to zero with two more hits from our explosive ballista."

"Good." Kanorse was somewhat relieved by this. Glancing at the dim Light Canopy above him, he then ordered, "Get ready to intercept enemy's frontal assault!"

The order was given out, and every Warrior in the fortress began gathering near the walls. Ferde's Sunlight Warriors were charged with guarding critical points around the fortress, while the rest of the Warriors lined the fortress's less important regions. As Orida Fortress' trump card, the Beastmen Warriors were tasked with delivering the final blow to the enemy forces!

Soon, every Warrior had assumed their positions in the fortress. They now waited patiently in their formations for the big battle with the Army of Destruction.

The walls of Orida Fortress were recently erected with magically resistant clay imported from Ferde. With their huge bulk and powerful magic seals etched across them, these walls were capable of withstanding even Level-18 Legendary spells.

These nigh, impenetrable walls gave a certain sense of security to those behind them. No matter how powerful the Army of Destruction might be, they would not be able to penetrate these sturdier-than-steel walls of the Orida Fortress!

Boom! Boom! Sporadic explosions echoed from the dim Light Canopy above them. The Army of Destruction still had ten catapults standing. When the explosions subsided, the canopy quivered unsteadily in the sky. However, it remained there still.

The canopy was powered by the Mage Tower. As long as it remained unbroken, the Mage Tower could simply channel more power into it, returning it back to full capacity.

Right now, the Light Canopy seemed as flimsy as a bubble. Slowly, it began to thicken, visibly regaining its former firmness.

To the human Warriors in Orida Fortress, this was good news. However, the same could not be said for the Army of Destruction.

A few thousand feet away, Eugene saw the Light Canopy returning back to full strength. She muttered angrily, "Blasted tortoise shell!"

She climbed to higher ground, with a magic wand in her left hand and a dark runestone in her right. The runestone began to glow with a black light, which expanded into a one-foot-wide ball of dark energy around the stone itself.

"Go!"

With a tap of her wand, Eugene conjured a small portal before her in the air. She then threw the runestone into it.

At the same instance, an explosion of purple flames erupted in the sky above Orida Fortress. The flames melted away the last shreds of the Light Canopy upon hitting it. Many Warriors in the fortress were hit as well as a result. Cries of agony from Orida Fortress soon reached the Warriors of the Army of Destruction in the Black Forest.

"An excellent move from Her Highness," said the Holy Priestess Molina.

Waving his hand, Eugene gave out his order, "Storm the fortress!"

The black runestone might not look like much, but it was Eugene's most prized possession. With it, she would not need to waste too much dark power on Legendary spells while dealing with the Legendary masters of Orida Fortress. Exhausting her reserve of dark power recklessly now would mean putting herself in a tough spot that would eventually lead to her death.

Eugene was more than aware of such an outcome.

After casting a Legendary spell with the black runestone and giving out an order to her troops, Eugene returned to her tent and closed her eyes for some much-needed rest.

War drums sounded amid the Army of Destruction. More than 200,000 Warriors began rushing towards Orida Fortress like a fierce torrent, all according to Eugene's plan.

The Dark Beastmen led the charge, followed by the demons, then the Nagas, and finally the Dark Elves. The Dark Elves had spared no expense in donning everyone in full armor. Despite serving as cannon fodder at the front of this ghastly procession, the Dark Beastmen were all equipped with fine sets of armor and weaponry as well.

The Dark Elf Magicians were not simply twiddling their thumbs in the corner during the Warriors' mad charge towards the Fortress. In fact, they played an integral part in breaking apart the fortress walls!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Eighty-foot-tall, earthen golems were summoned by the Magicians one after the other. These magical behemoths began throwing 40-ton stones at the fortress. They did not need to land any of their shots on the fortress's Warriors; the stones' impact against its walls would be enough to disrupt the Warriors' formations behind the walls.

The stones reached the fortress before any of the Army of Destruction's infantry. Forty golems had been summoned in the Black Forest. They began lurching towards the fortress, threatening to demolish its walls with their bare hands.

"Dispel them! Quick!" shouted the commanding officer of the Magicians in Orida fortress. He was well aware of the destruction these golems would be able to wreak if they were allowed to come any closer to the fortress.

Hum... Hum... Hum... Hum... Streaks of dispelling spells shot out towards the golems, disrupting the magical integrity of their bodies.

However, the Dark Elf Magicians did not let up the golem assault. They continued summoning more golems from the ground, replacing those that had fallen under the barrage of dispelling spells. Half a minute later, some of them had even begun burning their souls up to continue the summoning process.

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Inside the Orida Fortress

"Snipers, shoot down the enemy Magicians!" The order was quickly given out to every magical sniper posted across the entire length of the fortress wall.

Streaks of light began flying out from the top of the wall, making a beeline towards the forehead of every Dark Elf Magician.

The magic pistols these snipers were armed with were also forged by Ferde's Golden Rune Workshop. Each of them possessed Level-8 offensive power. Due to its anti-magic properties, the pistol was also known by another name: the Mage Killer!

The Dark Elf Magicians' numbers were now declining at an alarming rate with each shot from the snipers. The earthen golems' numbers were also whittled down as a result.

The golems were the Army of Destruction's principal force in their siege. Though they were not endowed with considerable offensive power, their bodies could still serve as ladders. As long as they were able to reach the base of the fortress, even if their magical integrity was dispelled, the remnants of their bodies would still pile up beneath the wall, facilitating the enemy Warriors' climb over it.

In the end, only one golem was able to reach the wall of Orida Fortress, at the cost of the lives of almost all the Dark Elf Magicians.

Eugene was stunned by this outcome. He had no idea laying siege to Orida Fortress would be this difficult!

Am I going to lose here? thought Eugene. He could see that the Dark Beastmen were now 500 feet away from Orida Fortress. They were also falling at an alarming rate under a shower of arrows unleashed from the top of the wall.

Even the high-ranking pronel of the Army of Destruction had realized that things were not looking too good for them.

Orida Fortress was evidently more formidable than it had ever been. They now feared that they had no chance of penetrating even its walls.

"What should we do, Your Highness?" whispered Molina.

Eugene was extremely conflicted about this. They would most likely lose if they pressed on with their siege. If they retreated now, everything they had worked for would have all been in vain.

None of her subordinates would know what it was like to make difficult decisions for an entire army!

Back when she was still a genius Dark Magician, Eugene was able to spend her days as free as a bird in the world. Thanks to the incredible power she wielded, she could do anything she wanted to. But now, her every action had actual consequences, influencing the fates of those beneath her.

Eugene's body trembled unconsciously. She was now at a loss for words.

Just then, startled exclamations rose up among the Warriors outside her tent.

"What's that?"

"There's something in the sky!"

"It looks like a meteorite!"

Soon, Eugene sensed an all-encompassing magical pressure coming down from the sky. The magical power she felt was at least Level-14.

"I've never felt magical power like this before!" exclaimed Eugene. Both of them quickly rushed out of the tent to look at what was going on in the sky.

Eugene was overjoyed by what she saw.

There was a ball of bluish-white light in the air with a diameter of approximately 30 feet. The entire sky had been lit up by it as if it was now morning. The ball of light seemed to be falling straight towards Orida Fortress at an unimaginable speed!

It's a Level-14 Legendary spell, Doomsday Meteor. No one in Orida Fortress will be able to defend against such a powerful spell. They're done for!

She had no idea who was behind it, but this meteor was enough to turn the tables on Orida Fortress!

Orida Fortress

When a Level-14 meteorite appeared in the sky, Kanorse's face instantly turned ashen.

"General, we couldn't stop him!" The strategy analyst's face was white as a sheet of paper.

If the Light Canopy were still there, they could easily block a Level-14 spell. But now, the canopy was damaged and couldn't be used within a short period. If this spell fell upon them, it would be a feat if one-tenth of the Warriors in the fortress could survive.

That one-tenth would be horribly injured too. How could that number of soldiers with a damaged fortress fend off an army of 200,000?

The Doomsday Meteor was about to land. There was no time to consider or hesitate. Kanorse grabbed his Lion's Fury and rushed out of the command tower.

"General?!" his subordinate yelled.

"From now on, you're the general!" Kanorse yelled back. He trained his eyes on the Doomsday Meteor while rushing towards it. He would stop it, even if it meant paying with his life!

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The Beastman Army on the other side of the fortress

Avatar, the Glorious Warlord and Beastman king, saw Kanorse at once. He looked up at the Doomsday Meteor, hesitated for half a second, and then rushed towards Kanorse.

"Lowly sneak attackers, if I survive, I'm gonna rip you apart!" The Beastman king never spoke with sophisticated vocabulary, but he knew that if the meteorite landed, his Warriors would all die.

These Warriors were the insurance for his race's survival. If they all died, the fate of Beastmen would become miserable. Avatar couldn't let that happen.

On the fortress wall, Jacker, clad in Legendary armor, was also watching the meteorite. From his spot, he could clearly feel that it would fall on the wallright where he was standing.

If he didn't dodge, he would be the first to be killed. He also saw Kanorse and Avatar. He knew what they were thinking because he had the same thoughts.

"Retreat, everyone retreat! Find somewhere to hide!" Jacker radiated with golden Sunlight Power. He tossed his sword away and grasped his heavy shield with both hands.

At the last moment, he saw a young man looking at him from the near distance. He knew this guy. He was Thoreau, a prodigal Warrior. Only 19 years old, he was already at Level-9 and had unlimited potential.

"Live and tell the lord that I died without regret!" Jacker yelled.

Thoreau nodded forcefully, tears rolling down his face.

During this time, the Orida Fortress' Mage Tower had reactivated the shield that covered the entire fortress. But it was only at Level-10. It couldn't stop this Doomsday Meteor at all.

Magicians, archers, and all types of heavy artillery kept attacking the meteor, trying to make it ignite beforehand, but it was all useless.

The structure of the Doomsday Meteor was ten times more stable than the usual Level-14 spell. There was also a special shield around it that was probably around Level-12. This shield blocked all disturbances.

More accurately, this was a Level-14 spell with a Level-12 shield! Someone had worked hard on this Doomsday Meteor to turn the Orida Fortress into a zone of death!

Just now, Kanorse and Avatar reached Jacker. The three didn't talk. They understood each other with a glance.

The three Legendary Warriors looked up and activated their power. Kanorse turned into a flash of silver light, Jacker was gold, and Avatar was bloody red. Their battle auras melded together into a dark red glow of more than 15 feet wide.

At that time, the Doomsday Meteor was around 600 feet from the fortress. For Legendary Warriors, this was enough for them to attack!

The Warriors in the fortress heard a piercing yet muffled thud. The dark red glow lifted from the wall and shot towards the blue-white Doomsday Meteor like a rocket.

An instant later, they collided. There was a blinding flash in the sky. Everyone inside and outside the fortress shut their eyes reflexively, not daring to look.

Under the blinding light, the temperature rose 30 degrees. The North was originally freezing, but it became stifling now. All the snow melted.

Boom. There was a muffled explosion that spread in all directions like thunder. Then, there was another muffled boom. This came from the fortress wall. Something still crashed into it.

Smoke rose up, covering the sky.

When the dust subsided, everyone saw the wall clearly. The sturdy wall now had a huge hole 30 feet deep and 90 feet wide.

There were three burnt bodies in the hole. Judging from their figures and armor, one could vaguely distinguish them. General Kanorse's body wasn't even complete anymore. He was clearly dead. Beastman Avatar and Sunlight Army commander Jacker's bodies were still whole, but they were not moving. No one knew if they were alive.

There were also thousands of bodies around the hole. They were the Warriors who hadn't retreated in time. But these losses were nothing compared to what would have happened if the meteor had smashed down directly.

When this happened, Princess Annie was in a hidden corner of the fortress. She had entered the Legendary level now. When she saw Kanorse's corpse, she covered her mouth, trying not to cry.

The general and war god of the Norton Kingdom, the man who alwassmiled gently at her, was gone.

She saw Warriors rush to the hole and take the three bodies. She heard some yell happily that someone was still alive, but she also heard sobbing. General Kanorse was still dead.

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Outside the Orida Fortress

Dark Magician Eugene was ecstatic!

The human army lost three Legendary Warriors at once. Her threat was gone instantly; she could unleash her power now. The Orida Fortress also lost their general and had such a big hole in the wall. If they still couldn't win, the Army of Destruction could change their name to the Army of Failures.

She stood up and ordered, "All fronts charge and attack with full force! I'll clear the path!"

With that, she transformed into a puff of black smoke and rushed into the sky. Aiming at the hole in the wall, she cast a Level-10 Dissociation Ray.

Boom! The crack widened. After the loose rocks slid down, the bottom of the hole was less than 150 feet from the ground.

"It's so sturdy. So unfortunate!" Eugene couldn't help but praise it. "Since it's so sturdy, I won't look for trouble."

If it was a regular wall, her spell could have destroyed the entire thing. Though she was a Level-14 Magician, she'd only upgraded recently and hadn't learned Level-14 spells yet. She could use Level-13 spells though. Without the threat of Legendary Warriors, one Level-13 spell could kill more than half of the Warriors.

Eugene moved her wand to cast a Level-13 spell.

"Your Highness, wait," Molina said.

"What?" Eugene turned.

"There are more than 40,000 Beastmen inside the fortress. They're all powerful Warriors. We are in a good state and it's a pity to kill them all. What if we persuade them to join us?" Molina asked.

Eugene considered this and nodded, smiling. "Good idea, but we still need to give them a taste. I'll take care to kill those humans but not Beastmen, hehe."

In that case, Molina wouldn't object.

Eugene focused on casting the spell. However, she'd underestimated the army's power and the dangers of the battlefield. There were countless eyes and elites on the battlefield. They wouldn't let her cast spells safely.

Just then, around 500 streaks of fire shot out from the Orida Fortress. Crossbow archers and magic fire gun shooters seemed to have planned to shoot together. They had the same targetEugene, casting a spell in the air, and the range of 60 feet around her.

Eugene was in the middle of spell-casting when the attacks rained down. The weakest spell was Level-8, and there were around 500 of them. She was instantly drenched in cold sweat.

This was an all-encompassing attack. She had nowhere to hide, and regular shields couldn't stop them at all. Eugene didn't even have time to cast a powerful shield.

Oh no, I was too cocky! My stupid habit! Eugene wanted to slap herself. But she was a top fighter of Firuman for centuries and still had life-saving tricks.

She immediately stopped casting spells. At the same time, a rune flashed in her hand like lightning. Activating, it buzzed, and Eugene disappeared in the white light. She re-appeared hundreds of feet away.

She wasn't a spatial Magician and couldn't do transmissions well. Teleporting hundreds of feet was already her limit.

But then something happened!

Before she could even steady herself after appearing, she saw a shadow charge towards her at an incredible speed. The shadow was already 15 feet away from her.

A thought flashed into her mind. Oh no, an Assassin!

It was none other than Princess Annie!

She'd turned her sadness and fury at Kanorse's death into power. Ignoring her own life, she snuck into the Army of Destruction's camp to asssinate their general. This was her responsibility as a Legendary Assassin and the only way to save the Orida Fortress.

Kanorse, I hope you will protect me from heaven. Annie was nine feet away from Eugene.

Any self-respecting Assassin would be able to cross three feet in no time at all!

Right now, Annie was a mere three feet away from Eugene.

In other words, Eugene would have no time whatsoever to react to her ambush. She would be killed in an instant!

Eugene was ecstatic upon seeing the massive meteorite decimate the entire human army in Orida Fortress. However, the ecstasy she was feeling was soon followed by surprise, which then gave way to frustration. After centuries of running rampant throughout the realm, why did things stop going my way only recently?

If this body were to be destroyed, she would have to look for a replacement.

However, no matter how fast her Assassin was, Eugene's situation was not completely hopeless. Rescue came in the form of the Naga Priestess Molina.

A few hundred feet away, Molina had noticed Princess Annie's presence sooner than Eugene did.

Everyone's nerves were stretched taut in the Army of Darkness in anticipation of the battle that was to come. Eyes darted about warily, expecting danger to jump out from every corner. Even a Legendary Assassin would have a hard time infiltrating such a place. With a combination of talent and sheer luck, Princess Annie was able to pull off such a feat.

Just when it seemed as if there was no hope left for Eugene, dark red light shot out from Molina's hands towards Eugene.

"Destructive Vortex!"

Though it sounded like the name of an offensive spell, it could also be used defensively. In an instant, the streak of red light enveloped Eugene's entire body. It then began revolving half a foot away from Eugene like a crimson cyclone.

Princess Annie immediately felt the sheer force of this Destructive spell as soon as it was activated. She could feel herself being lifted up by the swirling wind around the cyclone. At the same time, she could see that cracks were appearing on her leather armor. Her own hair was being shredded away, bit by bit. There was also an intense pain spreading from patches of her bare skin that were exposed to the wind.

From the corner of her eye, Annie saw that the huge rocks lying on the ground were immediately ground to dust by the wind. The bodies of normal Demon Warriors standing in the vicinity met a similar fate, collapsing to the ground before they even realized what had happened.

"Shadow Cocoon!"

Shadow Battle Aura began swirling around Annie's body. In an instant, she had transformed into a mere shadow.

With this battle technique in effect, the Destructive Vortex's effect would be temporarily nullified. Even the wind it was blowing up simply passed through her harmlessly. Annie's body finally regained its movement.

The Shadow Cocoon technique would not be enough on its own to see Annie through this. She needed to defend herself against further interference from anyone else in the Army of Destruction.

As she lunged at Eugene, Annie suddenly raised her left hand up to her side. In an instant, a huge magical pistol materialized in it. From the corner of her eye, she took aim and triggered the pistol's magic seal, firing a couple of shots at Molina without any hesitation.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang! A total of six bullets simultaneously flew out of the pistol's barrel towards Molina's position.

The magical pistol was a Golden Rune Workshop creation, custom-made according to Annie's specifications. She had spent a good bit of money on it. Due to her status as a member of the royal family, a number of Legendary Magicians in Ferde had personally overseen the pistol's creation.

The pistol was also named as "the Flash" for its lightning fast firing rate. It was able to spew out all the bullets in its magazine in an instant, and each bullet's offensive power was as high as Level-9!

As the God of Destruction's priestess, Molina only served as a support to the Army's war efforts. In the face of such an attack, she immediately panicked. She was now forced to defend herself against Annie's attack, even if it meant leaving Eugene vulnerable to Annie's ambush.

This was the first step to Princess Annie's strategy. However, it was still not enough. She was now deep in enemy territory. She could be surrounded by powerful members of the Army of Destruction at any moment.

With a flick of her hand, Annie withdrew the magical pistol in her hand. A crystal ball appeared in its place. It seemed to be filled with a milky-white fluid, while numerous magic runes were engraved across its surface.

Annie lightly touched one of the runes with a finger. The milky-white fluid began to boil in the crystal ball, which then started to glow.

The crystal ball was custom-made as well. The fluid in it was mixed with highly-concentrated Level-10 Sunlight Power. Annie only had three such crystal balls at her disposal.

Annie was now a foot away from Eugene. She could see that Eugene had only just reacted to her presence and was about to cast a spell to defend herself. However, any kind of spellcasting would require time. Unfortunately, time was not something Eugene had in abundance right now. Annie was now so close to Eugene that she simply needed to reach out and drive a dagger into her heart.

Disregarding everything else, Annie threw the crystal ball into the air. She now only had one thing in her mind: ending Eugene's life.

With a dull fwoom, the crystal ball exploded. In an instant, there was a blinding white light in the air. Her eyes already shut tight against it, she continued on her trajectory towards her target, relying only on her acute hearing and previous estimation of her target's position.

"Argh! My eyes!"

"Argh, I can't see anything!"

"What's going on?"

Realizing that Eugene was in danger, every Warrior in the Army of Destruction immediately scrambled to her aid. However, none of them were prepared for this sudden onslaught to their eyes.

Nagas, Demons and Dark Elves were naturally accustomed to dim light and so were extremely sensitive to harsh light. As a result, they were all blinded by the sudden explosion in the air.

In the chaos, Annie felt her anti-magic dagger piercing through a layer of clothing before reaching the layer of skin beneath it.

Her skin feels thin. The fatty layer comes next. It feels thick. Must be the woman's chest. Next comes her ribcage. I'll just give the dagger a tit, plunge it through a gap between her ribs and... there, I've reached her heart.

The process took only a few seconds. Princess Annie had perfected the art of stabbing people in the chest ever since joining MI3's Assassin division. She had quite a stellar body count, which mostly comprised of Dark Elves. She had killed thousands of them with her bare hands.

She was now more than familiar with the sensation of a blade cutting through Dark Elf flesh and any energy feedback it might receive in its path. Even though she had her eyes shut, she could still tell how much damage her target had sustained from her blade.

Her heart's been punctured. It should rupture if I channel a bit of power into it. There, the deed is done. I probably should retreat now!

She would probably be trapped there if she stayed on any longer.

Annie pulled out her dagger and opened her eyes. The crystal ball's blinding light still illuminated the place, its intensity diminishing not one bit. As a human being, Annie only needed to squint in order to withstand the intense light.

Shadow Battle Aura began surfacing from Annie's body, reducing it immediately into an indistinct, mist-like form. As the light subsided, she silently faded away into her surroundings.

Annie decided to linger around the Black Forest for a bit, instead of directly returning to Orida Fortress. It would probably not be safe for her to choose the latter option, as her enemies would probably expect her to do so.

The harsh light in the sky finally subsided when Annie was 300 feet away from the Army of Destruction.

Boom, boom boom!

A number of spells flew out from the Army of Destruction before coming down on the space between the Army itself and Orida Fortress. As the Assassin was nowhere to be seen, area-of-effect spells were cast at that moment in an attempt to smoke her out from the shadows.

However, Annie had already anticipated such a reaction from them. She was now completely out of their reach.

After following a circuitous path through the forest, Annie finally returned to the fortress. Once inside the fortress's command post, she was immediately greeted by a couple of generals.

"Your Highness, how did it go?" asked one of the generals.

The cold, uncompromising air that she had assumed during Eugene's asssination lingered still on Annie's face. "I managed to stab the Dark Elf Princess in the heart. Her heart has ruptured completely. Even if she managed to pull through, she would still sustain severe damage. For now, she won't pose much of a threat to us."

"That's great news!"

"Your Highness, you've saved the fortress!"

Everyone in the command post heaved a sigh of relief. The Dark Elf Princess was far too dangerous to be left alive. They probably would not survive another one of her Legendary spells in their current state. The realm's entire south side would be engulfed in the flames of war if Orida Fortress were to fall now.

At that moment, Annie was unusually calm. She said, "It's too early to celebrate now. Don't forget about that Doomsday Meteor from before. We aren't just dealing with the Army of Destruction here. A more terrifying enemy lurks still in the shadows as we speak."

"Yes, of course." Some of them nodded in agreement.

How should they proceed with things right now? The opposing side had its own share of formidable Magicians. So too did the humans of Orida Fortress, who had at first been quite confident in their ability to fend off the Army of Destruction on their own, and so had chosen not to ask for any magical asstance from Ferde.

"There's been a drastic change in our situation. We should probably bring Ferde into this."

Ferde presently had a total of four Legendary Magicians, who were individually a force to be reckoned with.

Annie simply could not be bothered with this. She made her way towards the stronghold in the middle of Orida Fortress, where Kanorse's corpse lay.

She could see the fortress's medics bustling about in the stronghold's great hall, applying treatment for the injured and fallen. Three bodies were laid out in the middle of the great hall. They had belonged to the Legendary Warriors who had tried to resist the Doomsday Meteor's impact. Kanorse's condition was most severe. Both his arms were badly damaged, and parts of his body were tited out of shape.

Strangely enough, a crowd of medics and piss had formed around Kanorse's body. They seemed to be in the midst of resuscitating it, stitching its wounds up and applying healing magic on it.

Could it be that Kanorse hasn't actually passed on? Annie was overjoyed for a moment. All of a sudden, the world seemed to light up around her. She quickened her pace towards the commotion. She then asked, "How's it looking?"

One of the medics who was busy tending to one of Kanorse's open wounds replied without turning around to face her, "Not good, I'm afraid. However, the Marshal is a well-built man, and there is a chance he might live through this to see another day. It's still too early to say if he will be able to pull through, though.

Annie was ecstatic upon hearing this. She stood to one side, silently watching the medics and piss proceed with Kanorse's operation.

After a while, she sensed that something was wrong. She asked one of the Light Priests standing in a corner, "Why aren't you using your healing magic on him? The Marshal's arms are still bleeding."

The Light Priest smiled weakly. "For some reason, my power seems to be draining away quickly and still hasn't fully recovered."

"When did this happen? Why didn't you say anything?" Annie was taken aback.

"It's been like this ever since the battle started. We aren't quite sure what's going on. The Archbishop is now praying in the prayer room for an answer," said the Light Priest with a helpless look on his face.

Just then, the Archbishop appeared before them. When Annie saw him, she immediately sensed that something had gone horribly wrong.

The Archbishop's face was a deathly grey. He was now walking towards them unsteadily. He also seemed to have aged a lot. One of the younger Priests immediately hurried over to support him.

"Archbishop, what happened?" asked Annie.

There was a troubled look on the elderly man's face. "I couldn't feel the lord's presence. No matter how hard I prayed, all that I could feel was a dark and terrible power. What... how?"

"How is this possible?!" exclaimed Annie.

The Army of Destruction retreated.

Starlight Rose Princess Ellie Danas had been gravely hurt. The army was about to lose its commander, so they had to retreat.

It was a pity because the human army met misfortune too. Other than people like Kanorse being wounded, the army's most important Light Priest suddenly lost power too. This made the army unable to pursue the enemy.

The two sides were at a stalemate again.

The Army of Destruction didn't stop until they reached the Black Forest. Other than the Warriors ordered to stand guard, the other Dark Elf doctors and Destructive Priestesses all gathered in the general's tent to help Princess Ellie.

Hiss.

Hoarse breathing sounded inside the tent like a broken windbag. Then Priestess Molina asked, "Your Highness? Your Highness, can you hear me?"

Three seconds later, there was a raspy and weak voice. "I'm not dead yet, but I'm close. Heal me."

To regular people, a broken heart was fatal, but Eugene was a Legendary Magician. To Magicians, the physical body was only a shell. It was a bit pathetic when the shell was broken, but they wouldn't die.

In the tent, Eugene lay weakly on a bear-hide rug. Her clothing had been taken off, revealing a huge bloody hole on the left of her chest. Through the hole, one could see the mangled heart. The veins under the pale white skin around the hole had turned dark. They were filled with eerie and unnatural Battle Aura. At a glance, the veins looked like a net of death that had trapped Eugene.

Even more terrifying was that the darkness was spreading at an incredible rate. Eugene was a Level-14 Magician, but she was using all her power to keep herself alive after the injury. She couldn't fend off the Assassin's Battle Aura.

If she didn't have outside help, this flesh body would definitely die. In fact, she would watch her body die bit by bit.

Eugene's soul was powerful, and she was completely familiar with flesh bodies, but this process was still like torture.

The Dark Elf doctors were helpless against such a horrible injury. After feeding Eugene some medicine, they could only stare at Molina. As the God of Destruction's Saint, only she had the ability to save their princess.

Molina's expression was strange. She looked at the injury, seeming to study it. After a while, she said, "I should be able to cure it, but I can't be disturbed."

"Everyone, get out," Eugene said.

Soon, only Eugene and Molina were left in the tent. Molina cast a soundproof barrier but didn't hurry with the healing. "Your Highness, to be honest, you're greatly injured, and only I can heal you. I'm the only one in this entire camp who can, butwhy should I?"

Eugene froze. She stared at Molina and saw her faint smile. Molina looked calmly at Eugene, and it suddenly dawned on the princess.

Yes, she was the Dark Elf Princess right now. The Dark Elves were a weak race. They could only be the leaders now because of her. If something happened to her, Molina, as a Naga, would definitely take the chance to get her authority back.

Now, she had two choices. She could give in to Molina and save this body. She would continue to be the Army of Destruction's general, but in reality, she would have to listen to Molina. Or she could give up now. She could abandon this body since she had many backup bodies throughout. But then everything she'd put in would go to waste.

She didn't want to choose either option. A few seconds later, she rasped, "I won't submit to you, but I can promise you something Don't forget, this is the best time to attack the Orida Fortress. If you save me, my magic can easily destroy the fortress."

"Indeed." Molina nodded. "That is why I can save you. However, I'm still not too sure about you. Ambition burns in your eyes."

With that, dark red light flared in Molina's hand. "This is a loyalty pact. Once it is complete, you will become my master's most loyal slave. I think that is the most reliable solution."

"In your dreams!" Eugene roared.

She couldn't lose her freedom. After centuries of being alive, no one had ever restited her. Anyone who wanted to take her freedom had to bear the consequences.

"I'm afraid you don't have a choice, Your Highness." Molina moved her hand, and the dark red light floated towards Eugene.

Fury almost shot out of Eugene's eyes. She glared at Molina, saying coldly, "The God of Destruction? Good, very good. I'll make you pay!"

As she spoke, she gave up on fending off the foreign Battle Aura and allowed it to ravage her body. Her soul shook, preparing to leave this body and go elsewhere. But then she realized something was wrong. A strange power restited her, making it impossible to leave this body.

"Stop struggling, Your Highness." Molina smiled. "Perhaps you fooled my master at the beginning, but it was only temporary. My master already knows everything about you I don't know if you've heard this phrase. Don't test a god; don't pull tricks before a god. To a god, you're just an ant crawling on the ground. Accept this fate."

Molina pressed down lightly and the dark red light buried into the Dark Elf princess' body that Eugene was using. Eugene shook and tensed like a shrimp getting cooked. Her pupils constited and she was in this state for a few seconds. Then her body relaxed suddenly, falling back onto the bearskin hide with a thud.

Eugene's pupils were back to normal. Dark red light curled upon the wound on her chest, driving out the foreign Battle Aura. The flesh around the wound seemed to come to life. It kept quivering and growing. It seemed that Eugene's fatal injury would recover soon.

But she didn't move at all. There was no life in her eyes; she seemed to be dead.

Molina stood beside her and comforted her, "Your Highness, no need to feel sad. Even with this loyalty pact, you're still the general, and I am still your subordinate. Our master won't stand in your way of revenge. If you lead us into the Orida Fortress, he will reward you handsomely too."

Eugene's eyes lolled. When the Dark Elf princess did this, her starry eyes rolled, and her expression looked pitiful.

"A lion is leashed and turned into a dog that has to wag its tail and beg for pity. Should I be happy?"

"But can you get rid of the leash?" Molina didn't hold back. When Eugene didn't reply, she laughed. "No, right? Since things are like this, why keep torturing yourself? Accept it and allow your conspiracy to have greater benefits. Make yourself stronger. Perhaps there will be new changes in the future."

At this, Eugene's eyes brightened.

Molina kept going. "No one knows what the future will be like. Even gods can fall, can't they?"

"Won't the God of Destruction punish you for saying this?" Eugene looked at Molina, confused.

Molina shook her head. "That shows that you still don't understand a god's wisdom. A god will know if I have this thought. I don't have to say it out loud. God didn't punish me in the past and won't now. Of course, I sincerely wish that my master will become stronger and stronger."

This logic made Eugene feel much better. She wasn't the type of person who only knew how to cry. Her heart was stronger than mortals. A while later, she was stillust, but she'd put away these useless emotions.

"How long will it take to recover fully?"

"That's the most realistic question." Molina laughed. "You're heavily injured. The surface wounds will only take one hour, but it will take three days to completely heal and recover 80% of your power."

"Three days isn't long!" Eugene used some power and could sit up from the bed. She draped a cape over her close-to-naked body.

Just then, a timid voice sounded outside. "Your Highness?"

Eugene recognized this voice. It was her trusted scout. Since her injuries were okay now, she answered, "What?"

Receiving a reply, the scout was obviously relieved and reported, "Your Highness, someone wants to see you. A High Elf."

"Oh?" Surprised, Eugene exchanged glances with Molina.

"The Doomsday Meteor from earlier?" Molina whispered.

"I thought that too Those High Elves are truly tricky." Eugene sneered. However, he needed the High Elves now and wouldn't reject them. "Let him in."

A while later, a High Elf in a dark green cape walked in. It wasn't a strangerit was Prince Mordena who had almost been killed.

"Your Highness, I'm very happy to see that you're still alive." Prince Mordena smiled, but his eyes were still cold.

Eugene didn't have any of the arrogance from before. She immediately rose, took a few steps, and plopped down. She actually knelt on the ground and kowtowed, shocking Prince Mordena. Molina was shocked too. She quickly went to help Eugene up while saying, "Your Highness, be careful."

"What are you doing?" Mordena was honestly frightened.

Eugene tried to seem sincere. "I was brash and ignorant before. I beg for your forgiveness and hope we can work together against the humans."

Mordena had been angry, but now, the hatred had faded greatly. He sighed. "Your Highness, that is my wish as well."

While Eugene was meeting secretly with the High Elf, the humans of the fortress were at work too. The urgent magic message was sent to Ferde. Less than half an hour later, an airship filled with powerful Magiciasset off, escorted by dozens of Dragon Warriors.

The airship was extremely fast. Three hours later, the Orida Fortress appeared before them.

"I heard that Princess Ellie is a Level-14 Magician. I'd love to see how her spells are." On the airship, Eliard's extremely handsome face glowed with confidence. Right now, he was already at Level-11, and his power was still rising quickly. With this speed, he could even surpass his good friend Link.

He felt like he could defeat any Magician in the world right now.

There were two other Legendary Magiciasstanding beside him. They were Elovan and Milose, the High Elves Link had taken from the Isle of Dawn. They had once been more powerful than Eliard, but they were still Level-10 now. Eliard had left them in the dust.

They had complicated feelings now, but when they looked at Eliard, they couldn't help but feel reverence. This young half-elf indeed possessed unbelievable talent. He also had an ineffable temperament that easily impressed others.

Inside the Black Forest

"The Magicians of Ferde must have flown here on board that airship."

King Mordena pointed at the vessel in the distance. There was a weird little smile playing on his face.

Eugene was standing beside him. Her ivory skin stood out against her black robe. As she had not completely recovered from her injury, Eugene seemed even more emaciated than before. Her Dark Elf guards had their eyes plastered to her from behind, not daring to look away for even a moment, lest something happen to her again.

Seeing the incoming airship, she frowned. "Will Link be with them as well?"

"Impossible," said Molina, her waist swaying smoothly as she walked up towards them. She then greeted both Mordena and Eugene with a bow.

Mordena raised a brow and asked on Eugene's behalf, "How could you be so sure?"

"My master told me so. He said that even if the lord of Ferde were to return to Firuman, he would not pose a huge threat to us, as he too has suffered a terrible loss in the Sea of Void!"

"Loss? To what extent?" asked Eugene. The memory of being killed by Link in a mere instant was still fresh in her mind. As the saying went, once bitten, twice shy. Eugene had every right to be wary of the Lord of Ferde.

Molina said smilingly, "He's lost two-thirds of his power. His dragon form was also completely decimated."

Mordena chuckled. "Seems like the Lord of Ferde's trip into the Sea of Void did not go as planned."

"Yes, a shame indeed, but we should still not let our guards down, no matter how weak he may be right now," said Eugene. In spite of what she said, her face had slackened considerably. She would never be a match for the lord of Ferde in his full strength. However, things seemed to be in her favor now. If she still could not best Link in his present weakened condition, she would have to renounce her right to call herself a Magician.

All three of them fell silent for a moment. Then, Mordena asked, "Your Highness, how do you intend to deal with Orida Fortress now?"

Eugene chuckled softly. She then glanced at Molina. "The priestess has asked that I keep the fortress intact and spare the Beastmen inside it. But this would require casting a powerful enough spell on my part. In order to kill off most of the human Warriors in the fortress, I've decided to use the Book of Death spell."

Book of Death

Level-13 Hidden Legendary Spell

Description: Conjures a magic book using an extraordinary amount of dark power. By writing a person's name in it, he or she will have his or her soul forcibly extracted from them. It will then be ensnared within its pages.

(Note: Death is just the beginning of a new journey.)

Mordena frowned at this. "This spell seems to have a huge limitation to it. How are we supposed to know all the names of the human Warriors inside the fortress?"

Molina laughed out loud. She then took out a thick notebook. "I've already prepared a name list just for this occasion."

"When will the spell take effect?"

"Within three days. In the meantime, I will need you to stay by my side and keep me safe," said Eugene in a pleading tone, which complemented well with her emaciated state. This should be enough to pull on some of the Elf King's heartstrings.

Mordena inwardly admitted that the Dark Elf Princess truly was one of the more charismatic individuals he had ever encountered. "You have my word, Your Highness. I, and the Magicians I've brought with me, will protect you as best we can."

...

Orida Fortress

Eliard was examining the three Legendary Warriors' injuries. Kanorse's were especially severe. He seemed to be at a loss as to what to do now.

When he was finished with his examination, Princess Annie asked quietly, "Can he still be saved?"

Eliard nodded. "Yes, there is still hope for him. But I'm afraid that I won't be able to restore him to his full strength. I fear that... the Marshal will remain an ordinary person for the rest of his life."

"That's good, that's good. His life is all that matters." Annie was somewhat relieved by this.

Eliard then went to check on the conditions of Jacker and the Beastman King Avatar. Both of them seemed to be doing a lot better, thanks to their naturally strong constitutions and fast recovery rates. Jacker was especially lucky that the shield he was holding managed to absorb most of the meteor's impact. Even though his wounds were severe, Jacker would probably be able to recover fully after two months of recuperation. The same could be said for the Beastman King.

This was one of the few silver linings in their current situation.

When Eliard had finished examining the two Warriors, he then listened to Princess Annie's account of the battle that had just happened. Frowning, he asked, "And you don't even know who's behind the meteor attack? Has MI3 turn up any clues?"

Princess Annie shook her head. "Nothing so far. The enemy managed to unleash such a devastating attack upon us at the most critical moment without leaving a single clue that could lead back to him."

Eliard smiled bitterly. He then turned to Milose, who had just returned from his inspection of the meteor's impact site. "Did you find anything?"

Milose sighed. "I couldn't find anything useful left by the enemy's attack. However, on closer inspection, I detected a familiar aura around the site."

Elovan immediately knew what it was. "Is it from the Isle of Dawn?"

"Yes, unfortunately," said Milose. There was an awkward look on his face. He was after all a former inhabitant of the Isle of Dawn. The High Elves used to be allies in the continent's resistance against the Army of Destruction. Now, the Isle of Dawn had switched sides, going so far as to help the Army of Destruction breach Orida Fortress. Milose felt ashamed for how things had turned out between the Isle of Dawn and Ferde.

Eliard heaved a sigh. "I guess I shouldn't be too surprised. The High Elves are the only ones in the continent of Firuman capable of such a devastating magical attack. Once, they were allies. Now, they've turned on us. There's nothing inherently good or evil about this war. Everyone's just fighting for their own self-interests."

He then continued, "The Army of Destruction still has the God of Destruction's support, and I imagine a punctured heart would not keep the Dark Elf Princess down for long. I figure she will need at least a few days to regain her full strength. When that happens, we'll be facing a Level-14 Legendary Magician and maybe even some of the Isle of Dawn's own Magicians. This is certainly going to be an uphill battle for all of us!"

A single Dark Elf Princess was already more than they could handle. With the involvement of the High Elves, things just became a lot more complicated. Eliard was now starting to wonder if he could actually fend off another attack from the combined forces of the High Elves and the Army of Destruction.

However, he soon shook off all his self-doubt. What am I thinking? Link has entrusted me with protecting everyone before leaving Firuman. I'll just need to do everything I can to see everyone through this, whatever the outcome may be!

He then turned to Princess Annie and said, "Your Highness, we need to have an exact idea of the enemy's current power level. Do you have any idea how we can do this?"

As the highest-ranking commander in Orida Fortress' MI3, Princess Annie was naturally an expert spymaster whose talent for gathering information was second to none.

Princess Annie pondered on this for a few minutes. She then replied, "Give me one night. I'll have the information you need ready by tomorrow."

"Do you need our help?" asked Eliard.

Annie nodded. After thinking about this for a moment, she said, "You could try to disrupt the enemy's formation for me with another attack."

Eliard, Elovan, and Milose looked at each other. Then, Eliard smiled. "What a coincidence. We've just brought with us a powerful new magic cannon for such an occasion. I'll bet the enemy won't know what hit them."

With everything settled, Princess Annie immediately leaped into action after checking on Kanorse's condition. Soon, she slipped out quietly from Orida Fortress alongside more than a hundred elite scouts.

Not a sound came from Orida Fortress for twenty minutes. Twenty minutes later, a boom echoed from the top of the fortress's wall. A white ball of fire then appeared in the middle of the Dark Elves' campground 10,000 feet away from the fortress. The resulting shockwave hit the Army of Destruction's entire base camp in an instant.

When the ball of fire dissipated, all that was left behind it were the corpses of hundreds of demons scattered across the ground. The attack was at most Level-8. However, what made it even more terrifying was its range!

The Army of Destruction was severely hit by the attack. A few seconds later, when the third ball of fire exploded in their midst, a horn was sounded, signaling everyone to retreat.

"Retreat! Everyone retreat!" They would all be sitting ducks if they stayed there any longer. With their commander still injured, the entire army was not in a position to mount a counterattack against the fortress. For now, they could only retreat deeper into the Black Forest.

From the shadows, the MI3 scouts could see that the Army of Destruction was now in a state of chaos. Some of them even had their telescopes out to observe the situation even more closely.

Two hours later, Princess Annie delivered the information she was able to gather to Eliard. "The reconnaissance mission went smoothly. Things seem to be looking better than I thought it would."

Eliard unfurled the scroll Annie had given him. His brows furrowed as he read her report. When he was done, he handed the scroll over to Milose. "It's worse than I had anticipated. More than 100 High Elf Magicians have joined the fray. There are at least five Legendary Magicians in their midst. It would seem that King Mordena has decided to oversee this battle personally as well."

Everyone around him drew a sharp breath upon hearing the news.

"What should we do? We don't even have that many Magicians with us right now."

Eliard thought about this for a moment. He then said, "I will arrange for more Magicians to be transferred here from Ferde. This way, we won't be completely outnumbered. As for the enemy Legendary Magicians, the three of us could still put up a fight against them with some Legendary magical equipment sent in from Ferde."

These sets of Legendary magical equipment were forged using the souls of Ethereals they had captured, allowing even ordinary Magicians to wield Legendary-level power. Ferde was stocked up with such an arsenal for exactly the kind of battle that they were about to face.

Everyone on the scene was now put somewhat at ease after hearing Eliard's strategy.

A general then spoke out, "I heard that the Beastmen have another Warlord who's still in the Golden Plains. Maybe we could bring him in as well."

"Not a bad idea. However, we will still need to ask for the Beastmen's opinion on the matter," replied Eliard, nodding.

Annie then said, "I'll assign squadrons of Elite Assassins outside the fortress. These Assassins are all equipped with powerful anti-magic weapons. As soon as the battle begins, we'll eliminate every Magician on the enemy side from the shadows!"

Eliard nodded. "Excellent idea."

The enemy must now be extremely defensive against another ambush after having just taken a hit from Orida Fortress out of nowhere. However, no defense was complete without its flaws. Another surprise attack might just be what they needed to turn the tides of battle in their favor once more.

The Red Dragon Warrior Felina was there with them as well. It should be worth mentioning that she was now so close to reaching the Legendary level.

"We can also circle the skies and drop a couple of powerful Magical scrolls and explosives on the enemy when they least expect it," Felina added.

There were too few Red Dragons available in Orida Fortress at the moment to be of any use on the battlefield. However, they could still provide aerial support for the fortress's forces.

"I'll prepare some for you," said Elovan, nodding.

Soon, a more or less perfect battle plan was formed in this fervent exchange of ideas between everyone on the scene.

Eliard clapped his hands and said, "Alright, everyone, this battle will decide the fates of all the races of the light. Let's put on our game faces, shall we?"

Everyone immediately scattered off to make all the necessary preparations for the upcoming battle.

And so, for the next three days, both sides began preparing for the second exchange of attacks between each other. On the morning of the third day, a thick layer of snow had piled up on the ground. A sheet of white stretched out across the Black Forest towards the horizon.

In the bleak, biting wind, Eliard, who had only just gotten up from bed, suddenly sensed an indescribable magical fluctuation.

"Magic attack, incoming!"

Powerful Mana waves rippled again. The peaceful snowflakes were thrown into a flurry! In the Mage Tower, Eliard's heart jumped. "They're coming," he said to the Magicians beside him. "Get ready!"

They were in the circular room at the top of the Mage Tower. There was a star-shaped magic seal on the ground. Eliard stood in the center. A powerful Magician stood at each point.

There was also a 45-foot-wide ring of runes around the star. Every three feet, there was a rune node with a Magician standing there.

When Eliard uttered the command, all the Magicians tensed. Mana surged in their bodies and the runes under their feet lit up. Mana kept flowing through the runes and then towards Eliard in the center.

This magic seal was a focus magic seal formation. It had two uses. The first was to group the power of more than 100 Magicians for the core Magician to use. This allowed the Magician to greatly surpass their limit temporarily. The second was for all Magicians present to share the core Magician's magic backlash. This lowered the risk of the core Magician to cast high-level spells.

For example, Level-11 Magician Eliard could now easily manipulate Level-12 spells. If he wanted to push his limit, he could even cast a Level-14 super-spell. His Mana could reach that level, but he wouldn't be able to grasp complex spells.

The Mana waves from the Black Forest grew stronger. Looking out from the Mage Tower's window, one could see that the air above the forest was slightly distorted.

The Mana waves are so powerful and carry a thick dark aura. They must be preparing a super-powerful dark spell. We can't allow that.

This thought flashed through Eliard's mind, and he immediately acted.

Taking out a runestone, he added some Mana, and it hovered before him. Eliard didn't stop. He kept drawing runes in the air. They flew into the runestone and ripples started pulsing out of the stone. It looked like waves in the sea.

The ripples kept expanding and expanding until they rushed out of the Mage Tower, covering the entire Orida Fortress.

This wasn't all.

The ripples still kept expanding. A few seconds later, it was more than 1.5 miles in diameter. Strangely enough, the Magicians within it couldn't feel the powerful Mana waves.

This was called Crystal Waves.

Crystal Waves

Level-12 Ethereal Spell

Effect: Activate using the Ethereal techniques from the Ethereal Crystal. No spells within the Crystal Waves can form. Structures of all spells under Level-12 will be crushed immediately. All spells under Level-14 will be weakened by 70%. It is ineffective against spells above Level-16.

(Note: An Ethereal talent.)

Because this was activated by the Ethereal Crystal, Eliard only had to feed Mana into the runestone while maintaining the flow of Mana. He didn't need to try very hard. After that, he didn't have to worry about the powerful dark magic to directly fall upon his soldiers.

This was only a defense technique. With it, the Orida Fortress could keep standing in the battle. After that, Eliard took out another runestone to prepare for an attack.

Black Forest

When the crystal-like ripples appeared in the air, Eugene, who was preparing the Book of Death, felt something was wrong. She didn't recognize this spell, but she still understood its use.

She had deep knowledge of spells and rich battle experience. After a few glances, she said to Prince Mordena who was protecting her, "This is the enemy's defense spell. If we don't undo it, the Book of Death will be ineffective!"

"Leave it to me." Prince Mordena nodded. Then he said to the many High Elf Magicians beside him, "Another Doomsday Meteor!"

They had already prepared the magic seal. Hearing the command, they started adding in Mana. In that moment, runes flew in the air and transformed dramatically. Around one minute later, the blue-white ball of light, over 15 feet wide, shot up from the sky. It cut an arc in the sky and crashed into the Crystal Waves around the Orida Fortress.

Boom! With a huge boom after the Doomsday Meteor landed, it was affected by the chaotic force fields within. The spell quickly fell apart and exploded. While dismantling, it also ate up the Crystal Waves' energy.

The Doomsday Meteor kept going forward and kept dismantling. When the meteor was 300 feet away from the fortress, it was completely broken up. In comparison, the Crystal Waves that had been more than 1.5 miles wide had shrunk to less than 600 feet.

Crack, crack. The Ethereal Crystal runestone hovering before Eliard cracked, becoming fragile. If there was another similar attack, it would fail.

But by now, Eliard's attack spell was ready.

"It's time for you to taste Ferde's power! Ultimate Disassociation Ray!"

Ultimate Disassociation Ray

Level-13 Ethereal Spell

Effect: Use the Ethereal Crystal to create a high-level ray with high destructive power and range.

(Note: Not even an inch of grass in its path can survive!)

Eliard's runestone flashed and disappeared in a puff of light. Almost at the same time, the Warriors preparing in the fortress saw an endless ray at the tip of the Mage Tower.

When it first appeared, it was dark red. Half a second later, it suddenly brightened, burning white. Then blue deepened quickly and it was dark purple in the blink of an eye.

It also thickened quickly. It had been a thin dark red beam but instantly turned into a dark purple ray over ten feet wide.

Like a sword of divine punishment, it shot towards the Dark Elves' camp.

Whoosh, whoosh. All dirt, trees, tents, and Army of Destruction soldiers within 60 feet of the ray's path evaporated. It cut a steaming path of lava on the ground.

The beam was instantly before Eugene.

Boom! A dark gold shield popped up, blocking the ray for an instant. During that instant, a tall Golden Tree Spirit appeared behind the shield. After it appeared, golden vines flew out, forming a net within half a second. Just at that moment, the dark gold shield shattered. The ray broke through and crashed into the Golden Tree Spirit.

Sizzles sounded. Rays of light flashed and scattered Mana turned into countless bubbles that floated disorderly within the Army of Destruction. This clash lasted for three full seconds.

After that, the ray extinguished; the Golden Tree Spirit collapsed onto the ground.

"Your Highness, now!" Mordena yelled. The opponent had just attacked and was exhausted now. The defense spell was undone too. It was time to use the Book of Death.

Eugene had finished preparing. She opened his arms, and the image of an open book arose in the air. A feather quill pen appeared in her hands.

She quickly started writing names in the book.

First, she wrote the names of the mid-level officers of the enemy's army. These were the core of the human army. Without them, their combat ability would be halved. Their magic defense abilities were much lower than the high-level generals too. They would die as soon as their names were written!

Tom Johansson. When that name was written, a rune shot out from the Book of Death and disappeared in the air. Almost at the same time, a young Warrior in the Orida Fortress collapsed. He clutched his chest and gasped for breath, his life draining out. He would die soon.

Allen Trunden. Another officer died.

Eugene wrote quickly; the soldiers within the Orida Fortress died quickly too.

In the Mage Tower, Eliard quickly realized when the third officer died for no reason. "It's the Book of Death. They're using the Book of Death!"

He had to stop them!

Eliard was now preparing the third spell. It was a defense spell. It couldn't fully stop the Book of Death, but it could at least save the Warriors from the horrible dark curse.

At the same time, the dragons in the sky started fighting too. They threw down soccer ball-sized potions. After they exploded, golden fog appeared in the sky. The soldiers of the Army of Destruction started wailing.

"Stupid little trick! Gale spell!" Mordena smiled. A Level-8 spell created a gust of wind that blew through the camp, easily blowing away the toxic smoke. Then Mordena quickly propped up a defense shield, blocking the disturbances. "Your Highness, these dragons are annoying. Too bad we don't know their true names."

True dragon names were long and complicated. Their full names usually contained more than 100 runes and were extremely hard to pronounce. Not only were they hard to remember, dragons never told people their true names.

Molina smiled. "I know some. Your Highness, listen." She supplied an extremely obscure name.

Eugene wrote it. Immediately, there was a wail in the sky. A few seconds later, a dragon crashed down from the air. He was already close to dying.

Shocked, Felina said, "Go back. Go back to the fortress' defense barrier!"

They couldn't stay here. Even if they were still alive after the curse, falling from the sky was still damaging. They would also fall into the Army of Destruction's camp with nowhere to escape.

This kind of death was meaningless, so Felina decided to retreat.

Army of Destruction camp

"Prince, they're using another defense shield," Eugene said while writing.

Prince Mordena smiled. He waved, and another Doomsday Meteor rose up. It crashed towards the Orida Fortress, shattering the shield that Eliard had just put up.

The entire fortress was exposed again.

Inside the fortress, Eliard was already sweating. After casting three high-level spells consecutively, the other Magicians were running out of Mana too. Even more critically, their spells were ineffective.

The Orida Fortress would lose if this continued!

"Master, what do we do?" Milose asked.

Eliard took a deep breath. Gritting his teeth, he took out an Ethereal Crystal. "This crystal can activate a Level-14 attack spell, but the cost is high. With our current status, everyone present, except me, will die."

The Mage Tower fell silent.

Everyone knew that sacrifices were necessary in battle, but very few were brave enough to give up their own life. Even if this was the only solution, the Magicians present still couldn't reply.

In this world, most people were mundane. Even in the battlefield, they were there to make a name for themselves and get rich. If they died, it would be meaningless.

Even Legendary Magicians Elovan and Milose were silent.

Seeing this, Eliard sighed and put the crystal away. Without the Magicians' cooperation, he couldn't use it.

"Then we only have one last option. Cast defense spells for all soldiers and send them out for the final battle!"

All the Magicians agreed to this.

During this time, more than 20 officers in the fortress had died. Terror spread throughout. When the attack signal sounded, many of the soldiers were confused because their leaders had died. They didn't know what had happened.

Eliard saw this clearly from the Mage Tower, and his blood ran cold. If the soldiers charge now, it's no different than sending them to their deaths.

Sighing lightly, he took out the Ethereal Crystal again.

There was another way to use thisignite his own soul. By sacrificing himself, he could cast a Level-14 spell that would turn the tides.

Time was tight. If he hesitated, the situation would be impossible to change. Eliard clutched the crystal tightly. Familiar faces flashed past his mindLink, Evelina, and the opponents who'd died under his hand. Finally, he sighed again.

"Farewell, Firuman!"

Outside the window, soldiers died meaninglessly. Under the mysterious dark spell's attack, the army was falling apart. He couldn't hesitate anymore.

But just as he was about to activate the crystal, he felt an extremely familiar Mana aura rising out of the air. He knew this aura like the back of his hand.

It's He was ecstatic!

Army of Destruction camp

Prince Mordena smiled, pleased. "Human spells are just child's play. They're out of ideas so quickly."

Actually, he couldn't really keep going after so many consecutive Doomsday Meteors. If they had to cast it again, his Magicians might make mistakes. Thankfully, the opponent was a bit weaker and collapsed before them.

Eugene glanced at him and didn't speak. She kept writing down names, but for some reason, she felt some unease. A voice told her that she had to end the battle quickly.

This time, her instincts wer right.

When she wrote the 63rd name, the Book of Death sent another rune into the air like before. Then something odd happened.

The rune turned back and crashed into the Book of Death. The Mana inside was deeply affected. It trembled violently and was about to fall apart!

## 610. What Is He Up To?

Eugene desperately tried to keep the Book of Death intact.

For some reason, the Book of Death trembled even more violently until finally, it was too much for her to handle. The book instantly dissolved into countless specks of light.

Eugene could feel sudden nausea rising in her chest. The magical energy in her body was all clogged up as if it was now stuck in a mire of some sort.

She could no longer use any of her power.

"What's wrong?" Mordena was stunned. Even though they were enemies, he was familiar with the Dark Elf Princess' grasp of the mystic arts. She could not have made such a low-level mistake like that.

"Someone's disrupting my spellcasting!" said Eugene, her heart now pounding against her chest rapidly. She never even sensed her enemy's presence as the Book of Death crumbled. That was the most terrifying part.

Imagine, for a moment, that you were facing an enemy that you could not even see. Maybe you were lucky enough to dodge their first attack, but what about the next ten attacks?

As Eugene remained dazed by what had just occurred, King Mordena suddenly looked toward Orida Fortress. "It would seem that another airship has just arrived bringing backup from Ferde to the Magicians in the fortress."

"Could this be the work of one of the newcomers? But there's no way any Magician in Ferde is capable of such magic!" said Eugene. The brows on the Dark Elf Princess's elegant face furrowed, and her eyes widened in disbelief.

Suddenly, Molina spoke out, "It's the lord of Ferde. He's come to the fortress's aid."

"What?" shouted Eugene and King Mordena in unison.

The High Elf Magicians around them began whispering among themselves in hushed tones. They looked at each other nervously, clearly troubled by what they had just heard.

The lord of Ferde had gained quite a reputation across the continent, not just for his sheer power, but for his wisdom as well.

In just a few short years, he had managed to transform an impoverished Ferde into one of the most prosperous cities in the Firuman continent. Ferde's Mage Tower threatened to usurp the High Elves from their 10,000-year place as the leading race in magical innovation. The mystical wisdom the lord of Ferde had accumulated over the years had far surpassed the comprehension of ordinary Magicians. Anyone who had seen his magic first-hand would immediately lose all will to fight him. Weak-willed individuals who knew him only through his reputation would not even dare pick a fight with him.

And now he had arrived at the battlefield. Without even letting his presence be known, the first thing he did was dispel the Level-14 Dark Elf Princess' Book of Death.

Such a move was enough to strike fear into anyone.

Eugene looked at Molina. "Molina, didn't you say that he had just lost his dragon form, that he had lost most of his power? Why do I get the feeling that he's even more powerful than before?" she asked in an accusing tone.

Molina shrugged. "Maybe something happened to him after that. In any case, everything I told you was the truth."

King Mordena was now a lot more composed than before. There was even a faint smile on his face. "It's just one person. Even if the lord of Ferde had a miraculous encounter on his trip back to Firuman which restored his power back to Pinnacle level, he's still just a Level-13 master. His presence here is troubling indeed, but it doesn't mean we'll lose."

To his surprise, he was immediately shot down by a scathing remark from Eugene. "Hmph, shows how much you know!"

Eugene had thrown all decorum that was to be expected from a Dark Elf Princess out of the window. She began pacing with her hands behind her back. She then noticed the offended look on King Mordena's face. "Do you know Halino the Light Magician?"

"Halino? Yes, I've heard of him." Though Mordena was fuming inside, he still maintained a semblance of courtesy before the princess.

"Halino, a Level-13 Light Magician, roamed the continent for centuries. I've never met the person myself, but I heard that he was killed in the northern ice plains by Link, even when he had the upper hand by holding the Red Dragon Queen hostage. One swift stroke from his blade is all it would take him to kill you as soon as he sees you. How do you intend to defeat someone like that, especially when he's back at the Legendary level?"

Eugene did not actually witness the event with his own eyes. However, knowing Halino, Eugene was able to guess what happened to him that day. She deliberately omitted herself from her account of the event, lest Mordena or anyone else manage to figure out who she was.

Mordena was not satisfied by mere hearsay. He might not be able to go toe to toe with other more reputable masters in head-on combat, but he just could not believe that anyone would be able to kill him with just a single blow.

In the end, he simply let out a discontented huff.

Eugene knew what Mordena was thinking at the moment. Ignoring him, she turned towards Molina and said, "Priestess, the only reason we mobilized the entire army was because the lord of Ferde had left Firuman. Now that he's entered the battlefield personally, there's no way we'll win this fight! There's no point in prolonging a losing war, so I say we retreat for now."

The High Elves and Dark Elves all frowned at this. She only had her magic undone by the lord of Ferde. Was it really necessary for her to be so unnerved by this? Her sudden display of cowardice certainly was at odds with the unyielding resolve she had shown in the past.

Frowning, Molina said, "The entire army is ready to see this fight through to the bitter end. All our arrows are already nocked on our bowstrings. We can't just pull back now!"

Eugene was stunned for a moment by Molina's words. She then heaved a long sigh.

Indeed, she was now the commander of an army. If she were to order a retreat now, she would have to take into account the men's morale, remaining reserves, whether the enemy would give chase, and many other considerations.

If they pulled back now, the Warriors of Orida Fortress would certainly come after them from behind, and that would be the end of them. If that was the case, they might as well see this war through to the bitter end. They still had a chance to come out victorious in this war, however slim it might seem.

Eugene sighed inwardly. "Alright then. We'll proceed with the war as planned."

Suddenly, someone pointed at the fortress wall. "Look, there's a magical illusion above the wall."

Everyone turned towards it and saw that a ten-foot-tall image of a black-haired young man had appeared above the fortress wall. He was wearing a silver-black battle robe and had a sword dangling from his waist.

Everyone knew exactly who he was. It was the lord of Ferde.

"He looks like he's about to say something," said King Mordena, frowning.

In the next second, the illusion spoke out, "Ellie Danas, I have something to say to you."

At that moment, Eugene was seething with hatred at the sight of Link. Right now, she wanted nothing more than to sink her teeth into his flesh and grind his bones to dust. However, since he had asked so politely, Eugene figured that there probably would not be any harm in hearing out the man at the very least. Magically amplifying her voice, she spoke out, "If it's about surrendering yourself to me, I'm all ears."

The image of Link above the fortress's wall smiled faintly. "I would like to ask if Mordena, King of the High Elves, is beside you right now?"

King Mordena nodded to Eugene, who replied, "He's here."

"The Doomsday Meteor from three days ago, was he the one behind it?" asked Link.

Eugene did not know why Link would ask her such a thing. However, she was beginning to sense that something was wrong. Unable to figure out what had gone wrong, she simply remained silent.

What is this guy up to? thought Eugene. She really could not understand what Link's game was.

## 611. The Prophecy Becomes True

Under the Orida Fortress

Mordena thought Eugene was scared again. Upset, he answered himself. "Humans are the biggest enemy of my race. Ferde has stolen the Isle of Dawn's various resources multiple times. My race will never soften against enemies like you."

He couldn't weaken at all in a stalemate. Mordena knew this. Thus, his tone was adamant.

"You've done well." While speaking, the face on the wall smiled. But the moment it finished speaking, the smile disappeared. The face turned cold. "Let's see if you can bear the consequences!"

The next moment, Eugene cried, "Prince, be careful!"

Before she could finish, a figure appeared beside Prince Mordena. It looked like Link, who had been speaking from the fortress wall. But now, his face was as white as frost, and his sword gleamed. He was less than three feet from Mordena.

Everything had happened too quickly; they could barely even react. The surrounding High Elves gaped, unable to believe it.

They couldn't understand how the Ferde lord had creptito the heart of the army. Were all 200,000 soldiers blind? Even if they couldn't see him, could they not hear or smell him? Weren't demons the most sensitive to foreign auras?

This was incredible.

Molina reacted somewhat quickly, but she still needed time to cast a divine spell. Faced with Link's incoming sword, she couldn't reach it in time.

Eugene was the only one who understood. Link had used the other spell to distract everyone while his true self snuck into the army to get close. This was nothing to a spatial expert like Link.

Eugene could have stopped Link, but she'd just experienced magic backlash. Her power hadn't recovered fully. Link must be taking advantage of this chance for the risk.

Plus, she was a Magician. Faced with a swordsman that was faster than Assassins, she couldn't do anything even if she processed things.

Because of all these reasons, she could only watch.

This guy is so tricky. He'd planned this all, and each step is filled with fatality Mordena is dead this time!

From interrupting her spell-casting and making her temporarily lose power from the backlash to immediately using a hallucination to distract everyone while sneaking into the army, Eugene had figured out all these details. That was why she was terrified.

She was decisive. As soon as she realized she couldn't do anything, she retreated and cast a powerful defense spell in case Link attacked her.

Prince Mordena reacted quite quickly too. He'd been a Magician in his youth and was a wandering vigilante too. He had trained in battle techniques before. Now, he retreated while white transmission light flashed. He wanted to move away from Link.

Right now, Link was in the Army of Destruction. If he won a few seconds for himself, Link would be submerged in attacks. Then the sneak attack would be an idiotic joke.

However, no one in Firuman could use a spatial spell to escape from Link because he was the most powerful spatial Magician here!

When the light flashed, Mordena completed the transmission and disappeared. However, he didn't see that Link's sword had disappeared too. An instant later, Mordena re-appeared hundreds of feet away. He walked hurriedly and turned towards Link. Then he stopped.

It wasn't that he wanted to stop; he was forced to. Boundless darkness surged like a tide, swallowing him.

Other people only saw a thin red line appear on his neck. Then blood spurted out, and his head rolled off his neck.

Blood sprayed from his headless body.

Link remained in the distance. He didn't hurry back to the Orida Fortress or even move from his spot. All the High Elves were dazed. They didn't see how Link had acted at all. The prince that they revered couldn't block even one of the Ferde lord's attacks.

Before, Eugene had said that Mordena would be killed instantly. They didn't expect that the prediction would become true.

Molina's eyes narrowed into slits, her heart shaking. She didn't dare to act.

Link looked over. All the Warriors under his gaze retreated instinctively. There wasn't a single being who dared to meet his eyes, let alone attack him.

Link huffed. Taking this rare chance, his sword flashed jarringly. With a squelch, Molina's head flew off too and rolled on the ground.

The two powerful figures of the Army of Destruction had been killed like dogs before the countless soldiers. It was unbelievable!

Eugene's heart jumped. Link's guts were incredible. Instead of leaving after killing someone, he decided to kill Molina too. Just incredible!

The battlefield was silent for another second. Then a voice finally rang out, "He's only one person. Kill him!"

It was Eugene.

With that, the mass were finally awakened from their shock and started attacking. In an instant, hundreds of attacks flew towards him, drowning him.

But they were useless.

"Instant Flash!" This was the transmission spell Link had created in the Aragu Realm. It was multiple times faster than regular ones and had barely any delay. Even in a Legendary-level fight, he didn't have to worry about the opponent finding a flaw.

After that, Link abruptly appeared hundreds of feet away. Because it was so fast, it seemed as if he'd teleported.

Of course, all the attacks missed.

Standing amongst the thousands of soldiers, Link looked through the crowd to the retreating Dark Elf Princess. His eyes were filled with murderous intent.

Unfortunately, there wasn't enough time. The opponents had already reacted and were attacking him. Otherwise, his third kill would have been the princess. It was alright though. Killing Mordena and Molina was enough.

He flashed again, using the Instant Flash. A few times later, Link was safely back in the Orida Fortress. Looking around, he saw surprised, respectful, and reverent eyes.

Link was used to this and didn't feel anything special. Looking at the Black Forest, he said indifferently, "The Army of Destruction is going to retreat."

Awooga. A bleak horn rang out from that direction. The Army of Destruction had indeed started retreating. Finally, they disappeared into the Black Forest.

Eugene's courage was completely gone. The entire army had been humiliated by Link and morale was at the lowest point. They couldn't fight anymore.

After retreating many miles into the Black Forest, Eugene climbed a hill. She gazed at the Orida Fortress, grinding his teeth. "You won now but just wait. When the realms fuse, and there will be countless strong figures; you won't be so arrogant for much longer!"

She was filled with hatred, but that couldn't hide the truth of how she'd surrendered to Link.

## 612. An Unexpected Visitor

Orida Fortress

Snowflakes drifted down like cotton from the heavens. Link stood on top of the fortress's wall, looking out pensively over the Black Forest.

The High Elves' persistence to merge the two realms would soon bring about an age of darkness. The God of Light was no more. He had transformed into the ravenous Ruler of Light and Darkness. Though he was still in the Fedaro realm, it would soon only be a matter of time before he set his eyes on Firuman. And the human race still had the Army of Destruction in the Black Forest to worry about.

The path set before the human race was fraught with countless obstacles. One false move could mean the extinction of the entire race.

How should they proceed now?

Should they go after the Army of Destruction? No, the Black Forest was just too dangerous. The fortress simply did not have enough manpower right now to confront the Army of Destruction on equal footing. The High Elves would also not stand idly on the sidelines. Whether they chose to continue assting the Army of Destruction in their war efforts or turn around and attack Ferde themselves at this point, the humans would still suffer.

In any case, there was nothing good to be gained from going after them at the moment.

Should they attack the Isle of Dawn directly? No, that would be folly. The Isle of Dawn was surrounded by precipitous cliffs as well as countless defensive magic seals. It was even protected by the World Tree itself. Any attempts to storm that place would be suicide.

Link knew that the human armies currently did not have the strength to bring the fight to their enemies. Their only option for now was to bolster their own strength while being on the defensive and patiently looking out for any new developments in the situation.

However, the humans' enemies would also be building up their own strength as they stayed on the defensive. They simply could not let the Army of Destruction or the High Elves do as they pleased.

They needed to disrupt their enemies' plassomehow.

But how should they go about it? Having only just returned from the Sea of Void and still not having a good grasp on the situation at hand, Link did not have the slightest idea what his next move should be.

"My Lord." Eliard had come over. In a formal setting like this, he would never casually call out Link's name as he would when it was just the two of them. He was now looking at Link with utmost reverence. "Should we go after them?"

Link shook his head. "No. It would be too dangerous. For now, we should just take advantage of the fact that the Army of Destruction currently do not have the power to carry out a follow-up attack, and continue chipping away at the enemy's forces while we maintain our defenses here."

This was the safest option he could think of.

Eliard immediately understood Link's reasoning. Standing beside Link, he noticed that his brows were furrowed. He asked, "Is something troubling you?"

Link nodded. Realizing that the officers around them were now looking at the two of them, he said, "Yes, there is. However, it's nothing too urgent. Let's go to the stronghold. I need to see how Kanorse is doing now."

Eliard did not raise any objection to this. The two of them then headed towards the stronghold in the middle of Orida Fortress.

Inside the stronghold, Milose, Elovan, the Red Dragon Warrior Felina, Princess Annie and everyone else all came over to greet him. Link nodded at each of them. He was then guided by Princess Annie to Kanorse's room.

Kanorse was sleeping soundly on his bed.

After resting for three days, and under the watchful eye of Eliard and the others, Kanorse's condition was finally improving. Though he still had not woken up, his breathing and pulse were now stable. For now, his life was out of the danger zone.

But Kanorse was a Warrior. A Warrior without both his arms was as good as a dead one.

Princess Annie broke the grave silence in the room by exclaiming, "We should be thankful that he is still in the world of the living."

Link walked forward and closely inspected Kanorse's wounds. He then looked at Eliard. "How much combat power do you think Kanorse will be able to regain if we build him another pair of arms using the Flesh Puppet technique?"

Eliard shook his head. "I've thought of it as well, but it would be extremely difficult to pull off. Kanorse is already quite powerful. His strength is currently at Level-11. We could use the Flesh Puppet technique to reconstitute new arms for him, but to use it in a fight... I'm afraid that his new arm might not be able to handle the strain of having Battle Aura channeled into it."

He recalled the time the High Elf Magician Milose had his arm ruined by the Beastman King Avatar. Link had used the Flesh Puppet technique to fashion him a new arm. The only difference was that as a Magician, Milose was not a physically strong or agile person and so never saw the need to wield highly concentrated power in his body in his everyday life. Thanks to this, Link was able to effectively use the Flesh Puppet technique on the High Elf.

On the other hand, Kanorse was a Warrior. His body was a weapon. In combat, high concentrated levels of power would be circulating throughout his body every second. A Warrior as competent as Kanorse would need to be able to deftly manipulate this flow of power in his body in a split second. The task of building a new arm for someone as formidable as him might not have been possible for Link before his trip into the Sea of Void.

Right now, though it seemed difficult, Link was confident that he could help Kanorse regain his two arms. He would still need to carry out a bit of research to formulate a way to go about this.

Seeing Link standing there without a word, Princess Annie simply assumed that he too thought that Kanorse's situation was hopeless. She sighed inwardly and decided to put the matter aside. She then walked forward, tucked Kanorse even more snugly under his bedsheet and sat down beside his bed silently.

At that moment, a general plan had taken shape in Link's mind. He then said, "There may be a way. But I'll need some help to pull this off. Eliard, let's go back to the Mage Tower. We'll hammer out the details there."

"Is there really hope for Kanorse?" Princess Annie was overjoyed. Though she was ready to accept the reality of Kanorse losing both his arms, she could not be more pleased if there was still a chance for him to be made whole again, however slim it might be.

Link replied consolingly, "I can't make any promises just yet. However, you have my word; I will do everything I can."

Princess Annie's face broke into a smile. Hearing this from the lord of Ferde assured her that he would succeed. He was, after all, a man capable of miracles.

Without further delay, after casting a Rejuvenation spell on Kanorse, he and Kanorse went back to the Mage Tower.

Once there, Eliard could no longer suppress his curiosity. "Link, did you learn some new form of magic?"

He too was a Master Magician. To the best of his knowledge, there was no spell in Firuman capable of giving Kanorse back his arms.

"Guilty as charged," said Link with a smile. He then took out his magic notebook and turned it to the last few pages. On them, he had scrawled all of the magical wisdom he had gathered from the realm of Fedaro. "Look at this."

As if he was being given the holy grail, Eliard gingerly took the book from Link and examined what Link had written in it. He then exclaimed, "It's a completely different magical system from ours, but it's also extremely refined."

"Indeed. By combining the Flesh Puppet technique with these new concepts, we may be able to build a new pair of arms for Kanorse. Of course, it will be an extremely arduous task. The two of us will not be enough. We may need Milose and Elovan for this."

"They should be honored to be a part of this experiment," said Eliard, laughing.

After summoning the two High Elf Magicians into the Mage Tower and explaining the plan to them, Milose and Elovan nodded ecstatically at this. "My Lord, we are yours to command."

Soon, all four Legendary Magicians began pouring everything they had into their research. Link was the main conductor of their experiment, while Eliard and the others simply provided their asstance. The four of them experimented on every possibility without showing any sign of fatigue.

Magical research had always been an arduous process which required concentration above all else. The Magiciassoon lost track of time as they delved deeper into their work.

Seeing the lord of Ferde appearing out of nowhere and beating back the Army of Destruction, only to disappear once more for days on end inside the Mage Tower, had left the Warriors of Orida Fortress completely mystified.

This intrigued most people at first. However, half a month later, Kanorse finally regained consciousness. When news of this got out, everyone stopped caring about the lord of Ferde's whereabouts and decided to congratulate Kanorse on his recovery.

When Kanorse woke up, he was completely despondent over the loss of his two arms. If Princess Annie had not told him that the lord of Ferde was still looking for a way to restore his arms, he would have probably started drinking his days away to drown out his grief.

While Kanorse waited with bated breath for Link to emerge from his work and give him the good news, one day, Orida Fortress received a visit from a strange visitor.

The visitor was at least 40 years old. His features were simple. He was clad in an elegant, golden robe. It was far different from anything the human race had ever conceived, and certainly not something worn by any High Elf, Dark Elf or Naga.

His attire suggested that he was a Magician. His features also seemed human. He had entered the fortress alone, and his face did not betray the slightest hint of worry even as he found himself surrounded by the fortress's Warriors. There was a disparaging look on his face as he looked around. It was as if he were being surrounded by a couple of ants that could be easily stomped on.

The Warriors brought the man to Kanorse. When the man saw Kanorse, his gaze immediately fell on the two stumps on his shoulders. He then said with a smile, "Looks like you've just lost both your arms in a battle."

Kanorse frowned slightly. He did not like the man at first sight. He seemed too arrogant. Though the visitor looked human, he had the bearings of a High Elf.

"State your purpose, Magician."

The man's smile did not leave his face. "I heardthat the lord of Ferde is the most powerful Magician in this realm. I've come all the way here to see if it's true."

Malice dripped from his words. The man had obviously come here to challenge the lord of Ferde to a duel. Kanorse's brows furrowed even deeper on his forehead. Most of the Warriors around the strange visitor already had their hands resting on the pommels of their swords in case a fight broke out.

## 613. Target: Shadow Divine Fragment

Kanorse was careful but dared to take risks to. He was a natural leader. Faced with this stranger with weird clothing and odd features, he didn't lose his temper despite the man's words. A few seconds later, Kanorse said, "The Ferde lord is busy. I'm afraid he doesn't have time to see you."

"I know." The person nodded and smiled. "He's busy making a magic arm for you."

This made Kanorse furrow his brows. Not many knew what Link was doing. It was practically a secret. Thus, it put him on edge that a stranger said it like that.

"Who are you?!" Kanorse raised his voice. The Warriors beside him unsheathed their swords. If this mysterious guy answered incorrectly, they would behead him immediately.

The army wasn't a place for jokes.

This guy probably knew he was pushing it. Wiping away his smile, he said seriously, "I am Magician Dylosen from the Aragu Empire. As for what I know It isn't hard for a Legendary Magician to find out these things."

When the man reported his background, the Warriors were all confused, especially at the word Aragu. However, Kanorse knew confidential matters. Heart jumping, he immediately ordered, "Leave us!"

"General, what about your safety?" One Warrior was worried.

Kanorse looked very clear headed. "Dylosen is a guest and means no harm. Plus, even if he did, you wouldn't be able to stop him."

"Very wise," Dylosen praised. The belittlement in his eyes faded a bit.

When the soldiers all left and only Kanorse and Dylosen were left, Kanorse finally said, "Master Link is very busy. As a fellow Magician, you should know that Magicians hate being disturbed the most when they're fully focused on something."

Dylosen smiled. "You're right. That's why I chose to come now."

"What do you mean?" This raised alarms in Kanorse's mind. He interpreted it as the other coming to take advantage of loopholes. Then he felt a commotion from the Mage Tower's direction. Link seemed to have come out.

Dylosen seemed to know everything. "Congratulations, young general." He smiled. "Your arm is here."

Less than ten seconds after he spoke, Link appeared at the entrance. He looked as he always did. Hishi

Link didn't come alone. Eliard and Princess Annie followed him. After entering, Link froze when he saw Dylosen, but joy flashed past his eyes afterward.

However, he ignored this foreign Magician for now. He tossed up two thumb-sized metallic balls. They floated and flew to either side of Kanorse. At the same time, Link advised, "General, it may hurt, but don't fight back. Try not to move your body."

Kanorse obviously trusted Link. Hearing this, he sat in his chair without moving. The two balls flew to where his arm had been cut off and sped up, digging into the damaged flesh.

It was obviously very painful, but Kanorse just grunted and didn't move. After the spheres entered him, they expanded, grew, and transformed. The process was impossibly precise. After a while, two steel-gray arms actually grew out of Kanorse's shoulder. They were the exact size of Kanorse's original arms.

"Try moving them," Link said.

Kanorse tried moving his arms, but he discovered that he couldn't control them. He could only feel that his shoulder was cold. "I can't control it."

"No, your finger just twitched. It means that it succeeded," Link said, smiling.

"Succeeded? So?" Kanorse smiled bitterly. This was only a bit better than before. At least he didn't look as pathetic anymore.

Smiling without speaking, Link looked to the foreign Magician.

Dylosen had been watching from aside. Now, he'd mostly figured it out. When Link looked over, he understood and explained, "General, the most powerful part about these arms is that it will grow according to your wishes. You can only control it a bit because it hasn't been long enough. If you don't give up and keep using them, they'll become stronger and more agile. They might even become stronger than your original arms!"

Kanorse understood now, but he still didn't dare believe it. He looked to Link for confirmation.

Link nodded. "Indeed. If you work hard, they will completely belong to you."

He didn't create prosthetics that could be used immediately because those were too stiff and would greatly restit Kanorse's room for improvement. These arms now used magic knowledge ten times more advanced than the other kind. He'd put in 100 times more effort too and it paid off. The effect was shockingly perfect.

Just as Dylosen said, the most critical thing was that it would grow like a flesh arm. It could keep strengthening and adjust to Kanorse's needs.

Kanorse laughed heartily. "I only need to work hard. That's easy!" To him, having arms again was the same as being reborn. Standing up from his chair, he bowed deeply to Link. "Thank you, master."

Link accepted the gratitude and said, "You deserve it and it was my duty Alright. General, shouldn't you introduce this gentleman?"

He could feel deep and obscure Mana surge within the Magician. He was Level-14 and was definitely a powerful figure.

Kanorse nodded. "His name is Dylosen. He says he's from Aragu."

"Oh." Link grew more excited. If he was from Aragu, he must be related to the Fire Sect of the Aragu Realm. Judging from his attitude, he wasn't a foe.

There was nothing better than finding a powerful ally right now.

By now, the disdain in Dylosen's eyes was gone. He smiled. "I heard countless stories about you along the way. I thought I had an idea about your magic, but seeing those arms, I realized I was wrong. Your accomplishments in enchantments, at least, are far beyond my imagination."

Link already viewed this Magician as a future ally. Since he was praising him, Link returned the gesture. "We all have our specialties. For example, I don't understand your wand at all. It must be a masterpiece."

"Oh no, no, no. Haha." Dylosen had made this wand himself and it was his proudest work. Link's words hit his sweet spot.

The exchange made the atmosphere very comfortable.

Having gotten new arms, Kanorse held hope for the future again and was in a great mood. "Your Highness," he said to Princess Annie, "The masters have things to discuss. I don't understand magic, so how about we go patrol the fortress?"

Annie had no objections. She smiled and nodded.

After they left, only the three Legendary Magicians remained.

Link composed himself and cast a soundproof barrier. Then he asked, "Did the Aragu Empire run into trouble?"

Dylosen had learned about Link and knew some things about Link's past with Milda, Holy Maiden of the Fire Sect. When Link asked this, he realized that Link already knew the basic situation of Aragu. Skipping the nonsense, he said, "It isn't trouble. It's that we're at the last juncture between life and death!"

Link was shocked. "It's that bad? What about the Snow Mountain Archmage?"

"He is old. Now, he is already 596 years old and can only live around 20 to 50 more years. Even if we use a Secret spell, it can only be pushed to ten years. He can't use spells easily either. If he dies, the Aragu Empire will collapse. By then" Speaking of Aragu's situation, Dylosen's expression was serious.

"Why doesn't the Snow Mountain Archmage become a god?" Link asked.

Dylosen chuckled bitterly. "It's not that easy. The Fire Archmage became a god because he received the Divine Fragment from an ancient fire god when he was young and strong. Throughout history, one has always needed an outside force to become a god. No Archmage has done it alone. No one."

From the side, Eliard said, "Since the Fire Archmage can't be defeated, it's useless to ask us for help too."

Archmages were at Level-19 and this was an Archmage with a Divine Fragment. That made him a demi-god. Going against someone like that was suicide.

"It's obviously impossible with only you, but Firuman has what we need. To be honest" Dylosen looked at Link, hesitating whether he should speak or not. In the end, he said it. "Firuman is a very old realm and had an era of gods in the ancient times. Countless gods had died here. There are obviously many Divine Fragments too. If we find one and give it to the Snow Mountain Archmage, we will turn the tides."

"So you have a target?" Link asked directly.

"There's a Shadow Stalker in the South," Dylosen answered simply.

"Shadow Stalker Morpheus is Level-19 and a demi-godlike figure. What did you prepare? How do we benefit?" Link was more straightforward.

"I have Level-19 attack equipment from the Snow Mountain Archmage. If you help me defeat the Shadow Stalker and get the fragment, the Snow Mountain Archmage will do his best to stop the realms from fusing. You will also receive three pieces of Level-19 magic equipment."

The reward was hearty. Link and Eliard met eyes. Eliard nodded in agreement, but Link still had doubts. "One last question. Why would the Snow Mountain Archmage give such an important mission to a Level-14 Magician?"

"Ha." Dylosen chuckled wryly. "Because I'm the only one who was fortunate enough to escape from the Fire Archmage and his Magicians. Those stronger than me were all killed. I must thank them for attracting all the attention."

Looking at the subtle marks on Dylosen's wand, Link decided to believe this explanation. "Alright. Let's sign the contract."

He would trust Dylosen now. As for the truth, it would naturally be exposed while they worked together.

## 614. Lava Knight

A day in Firuman was equivalent to a year in Aragu. In other words, the Snow Mountain Archmage would only be able to extend his life for another 100 days even with the aid of a secret spell. If the Archmage were to perish, both Aragu and Firuman would be doomed as well. Link and the others had little time to spare at this point.

After signing a soul contract with the Magician Dylosen in order to avoid being betrayed by the latter, Link and Eliard set off for the South with their new companion. They left Milose and Elovan behind to watch over Orida Fortress in case the Army of Destruction mounted another attack against the place in their absence.

Link was not too concerned that the two High Elves would betray him. Both their hands were stained with the blood of High Elf royalty. They had also completely adapted to life in Ferde. There was no turning back for either of them.

The less people who knew about their mission to retrieve the divine fragments, the better. If Morpheus caught wind of it, he would probably have his guard up even more, making the mission a lot more difficult for them.

And so, after returning to Ferde, the three Magicians quickly made a few preparations and disguised themselves before continuing their journey down south. The three of them were masters of the mystical arts. No one would be able to track them down if they really did not want to be found. Even a demi-god would have a hard time sensing their presences.

As the three of them headed towards the South, in the Isle of Dawn's largest port, Monoson, the High Elf Queen and her elderly entourage were seeing off a High Elf Warrior as he boarded a Silver Storm Sparrow warship

From a distance, this High Elf Warrior seemed like any other ordinary High Elf, save for a few differences, such as the fact that he was a bit shorter and that his clothing was of a different style. However, one would discern a lot more differences from up close.

Though the High Elf was a male Warrior, he was a lot shorter than the female High Elves of the Isle of Dawn. His skin was coarse, and his rugged features were in stark contrast with the daintiness of the typical High Elf on the island. He was wearing a battle robe of gold and red, which was inlaid with various crystals. Its style was visibly different from the Isle of Dawn's.

The mostitriguing thing about the Warrior was his sword. Numerous magical circuits were etched on the blade's surface. These circuits were gleaming with a blood-red light. At a glance, the entire sword looked as if it was dripping with boiling lava!

As soon as he was on board the Silver Storm Sparrow vessel, the Warrior gave the High Elf Queen a slight bow. He said impassively, "Your Highness, you can expect good news from me."

He then walked towards the ship's cabin without turning back.

Wooo... The Storm Silver Sparrow ship sounded its horn as it slowly left the Monoson port.

Back on the docks, some of the elders around the High Elf Queen looked somewhat displeased. One of them let out a huff. "He's just a Warrior. Does he really think he can get away with such insolence?"

The High Elf Queen shot him a warning look. "Hush now. To be able to attain this much power deserves some respect, even as a Warrior!"

The High Elf was a Level-15 Inferno Warrior, one of the six high-ranking Lava Knights in the Fire Sect of Aragu and second only to the queen's daughter Milda. Naturally, a master of his caliber could afford to show some degree of arrogance.

Another elder seemed concerned about something. He then said to the queen, "Princess Ellie said that the lord of Ferde's power has reached Level-14. He now possesses incredible combat power, he's capable of flawlessly combining magic and battle techniques in combat. Even the king did not survive his blade. Will this Warrior really be a match for him?"

The High Elf Queen replied calmly. "Of course, he will be. The lord of Ferde's skill is trivial compared to what a Level-15 master is capable of, especially considering the fact that anyone who has reached Level-15 would begin accumulating Law Power."

At that point, the Silver Storm Sparrow ship had shrunk into a small point on the horizon. The High Elf Queen let out a sigh. "Let's go back. All that we can do now is wait."

With Mordena gone, there was but an empty void in the queen's heart.

...

In the South, Golle Kingdom

Link, Eliard and Dylosen were each riding a horse down the road.

The three of them were dressed as ordinary traveling merchants. They had even hung from their saddles leather pouches which were typically used by traveling merchants in order to complete their disguise. With their magical auras suppressed, the party of three made their way south, their faces covered by dust in the wind.

No one would have known that these three seemingly ordinary travelers possessed power capable of sundering the earth and rending the heavens.

In this day and age, journeying out in the South was risky business. Security was lousy on the road, where a gang of highwaymen could just pop out of a corner and rob you blind. As not many people could afford trips outside civilization, the road was practically deserted at that moment, and so the three of them did not need to worry about being bothered by anyone else.

The three Magicians chatted with each other leisurely as they rode their horses. They would either begin discussing a magical problem among themselves or make a few adjustments to their battle plan in accordance with any rumors they heard on the road.

"I heard that the Syndicate's members are quite passionate about inciting political turmoil from the shadows. That demi-god upstart seems to have control over every other southern kingdom except the Southmoon Kingdom. His worshippers have reached more than 3 million as well. I fear that he's not too far away from becoming an actual god," said Dylosen

Any time they were about to mention Morpheus, they would usually substitute his name with the pronoun "he" or simply the word "upstart." Saying his name out in the open would draw Morpheus' attention to them, and that was the last thing any of them wanted right now.

Link smiled faintly. The chances of him achieving godhood are just too low. I've dueled with him before. Back then, I was just a Magician's Apprentice... Look at me now. Still in the pink of health."

"He really is an upstart," muttered Dylosen. Whatever the reason might be, if this demi-god could not even deal with a Magician's Apprentice, maybe he was just not cut out to be a god.

Eliard suddenly asked, "Dylosen, you said that you had just escaped the Fire Archmage and his underlings back in Aragu. Does this mean someone will be coming after you soon?"

Link now looked at Dylosen, waiting to hear his answer.

"Perhaps. If I'm not wrong, my pursuer will be a Lava Knight from the Fire Sect," said Dylosen matter-of-factly.

"Lava Knight?" Link raised a brow. The name sounded impressive. The two Inferno Warriors he had captured back then never mentioned this to him. Link figured that a Lava Knight's existence was kept secret even from low-ranking members of the Fire Sect.

"There are, in total, six Lava Knights in the Fire Sect. Each of them is a genius in their own right and were chosen personally by the Fire Sect's Holy Maiden. They were all molded into Pinnacle Warriors above Level-15. The leader of the Lava Knights is a Level-16 master whose combat power surpass even the Holy Maiden herself. Though they are all known as Lava Knights, they each have their own codenames, techniques, and equipment. All of these were given to them by the Holy Maiden."

"They all sound formidable. How many did you say will be coming after you?" asked Eliard. There was not a hint of concern on his face, even after hearing Dylosen's account.

Dylosen replied warningly, "These Lava Knights are extremely powerful. You would be wise not to underestimate any of them. Only the Frost Warriors of the Aragu Empire are capable of fighting them head-on. Due to the high cost of trans-realm teleportation, the Fire Sect could only send over one Lava Knight. Still, one is enough. Truth be told, I would probably be killed by him with just three strokes of his sword in direct combat. Even if I were to ambush him with magic, I would only be delaying the inevitable. Also, half of the Magicians who managed to break through the enemy's encirclement were all killed by the Lava Knights."

Link and Eliard were stunned by this.

As they traveled on, both Link and Eliard were able to estimate just how strong Dyleson was through their discussions on magic. Eliard was certainly not a match for Dyleson. However, Link figured that he had a pretty good chance of coming out on top in a fair fight with him. However, there was still a chance he could lose if he were not too careful.

After hearing from Dyleson just how powerful a Lava Knight was, Link now wondered if he could even take on someone like that by himself.

"What if we work together?" asked Link. Dyleson grunted as if mentally trying to weigh their combined powers against one Lava Knight. Half a minute later, he said, "It's worth a shot, but we should still be prepared for the worst. Our mission right now isn't to take on him, so I think that our best option now is to just run if the Lava Knight catches up to us. My Lord, you are a spatial Magician. With you by our side, he will never reach us."

Link nodded in agreement. "Then let's hope we don't meet him too soon."

The sky had darkened considerably. For safety reasons, they decided not to use their powers, as they were still within the Syndicate's area of influence in this empty wasteland. They got down from their horses and soon found on the roadside a huge tree to rest under.

Dyleson found some dry grass, on which he lit up a fire with a flint. Link took out a metal pot from his leather pouch, scooped up some water from a nearby stream, and fixed up a metal stand for the pot. Eliard was in charge of feeding their horses.

Soon, Link began cooking a meal in the pot above the fire that Dyleson had started. They then lay out their sheets on a flat surface and prepared themselves for dinner.

Thanks to the South's warm climate and their sturdy physiques, the three of them were not too bothered about having to spend the night out in the wilderness.

Before long, the aromatic smell of meat wafted from the pot. They quickly ladled some of the soup into their bowls and began greedily slurping it down while continuing their conversations from earlier.

At that moment, the three of them looked just like a couple of traveling merchants who were now having dinner with each other after a long day's journey. No one would know who they really were.

As they ate, Link's ears pricked up at a sudden swoosh in the air. Thanks to his abundant combat experience, he immediately recognized it as the sound of an arrow flying through the air towards them from a blowpipe.

As soon as he heard it, he gave his companions meaningful looks. He seemed pleased by this. "Get ready; it's coming!"

The blowpipe was a weapon most commonly used by the Syndicate's thieves. They would usually lace the tips of their arrows with snake venom. Once hit, even a well-built man would succumb to it in a matter of seconds. He would then be sold off by the Syndicate as a slave.

Link and the others had come all the way here to let themselves be taken as slaves. This was the first step of their plan!

## 615. Temptation Of The Celestial Stone

Blow darts had very short tips. They were like needles and weren't very strong. In fact, they barely had any fatality. At most, they would break through one's skin. Their biggest power came from the anesthetic poison the tips were dipped in.

Naturally, Link's group was all hit. Each one got shot in the neck and collapsed onto the ground, unconscious.

Around ten seconds later, three guys in dark gray leather armor ducked out of the bushes. The guy at the front was still holding his metal crossbow. It was aimed at Link with an arrow in place just in case.

"Go get their weapons!" The person said to the other two while his crossbow was still aimed at Link's trio.

The two thieves sprinted over and stripped the three of their stuff. They found three daggers, a regular steel sword, a crossbow, and some valuable little things like silver rings and jade necklaces.

"Boss, this is all," one thief said.

The boss cocked his head at the things on the ground and studied the unconscious trio. He smiled. "They're young and muscular. We can sell them as Warriors. We hit the jackpot. Go search their bags."

"Gotcha," the two thieves answered. Happy, they jogged to the horses and opened up the bags. The three were clearly traveling merchants. They would definitely have a bunch of good things.

While searching, one thief yelped. The boss jumped and almost shot his arrow. Shocked, he asked quickly, "What's wrong?"

"Boss, look, look! Something good!"

The skinny thief turned around, holding a stallion statue in his hands. More accurately, it was half a statue. It had been sliced by something sharp, and the cut was smooth.

The most attractive thing was the statue's material. It was semi-translucent and shone gently like crystal. It made one get the urge to clutch the statue and caress it forever.

All three thieves gaped at the statue and gulped, swallowing heavily. They just stared like idiots. How could there be such a pretty thing in the world? It must be priceless.

After a full five minutes, the head darted over and grabbed the bag on the horse, covering the statue. Finally, he let out a breath.

"This must be valuable. It must be priceless!" one thief mumbled while staring at the bag. He couldn't see the statue anymore, but just looking at the bag reassured him.

"Boss, what should we do?" the other thief asked. His eyes flashed for an unspoken reason.

The boss was familiar with that light. Usually, when they chanced upon something valuable, they would secretly take it and exchange it for money. Then the three brothers would splurge happily.

If they sold this statue, they could live wealthily without doing anything.

But this time, the boss didn't say anything. He kept silent. Deep down, he obviously wanted the treasure for himself. However, another voice told him that it was too valuable and dangerous. If people found out, they might die.

Their lives were still more important than money Any logical man would know what to do.

After debating for a full fifteen minutes, the boss gritted his teeth and said, "We can't take this. We might not be alive to spend the money. Hand it over. Leader will reward us greatly."

The other two thieves weren't happy, but thinking of the Syndicate's cruel punishments, they shuddered.

"Boss, we'll listen to you."

With that, the head thief's thoughts ran more smoothly. "Take these three back too. There's only half of the statue. They must know where the other half is."

"Whatever you say."

The three started acting immediately. They dragged the three unconscious men onto the horse and tied them up nicely. Seeing that there was stew left in the pot, they sat down and drank it all. Then they started walking the horse down the small path beside the road, going deep into the forest.

As they walked, the trees grew denser. After more than ten miles, the trees grew sparser again. A river valley appeared before them. In the distance, one could see a castle.

This was one of the Syndicate's strongholds.

The three thieves led the horse towards the castle. At the entrance of the river valley, the bush moved, and a young and agile man in black leather walked out. Looking at the three unconscious men on the horse, he furrowed his brows. "Why did you bring outsiders in?"

Only Syndicate thieves knew about this secret stronghold. Usually, they would sell slaves outside instead of bringing them into the stronghold. If that happened, the location would be exposed. The Syndicate didn't like to be out in the open.

The head thief nodded submissively. "Yamu, we found something really good to give to the leader."

"Oh, something good?" The thief wasn't impressed. These three weren't powerful. Their Battle Aura was only Level-2, and they could only capture lone merchants to sell as slaves. What good things could they find?

The head thief walked forward with the bag. He opened it slightly, revealing the statue inside.

Yamu gasped as soon as he saw it. When he looked back at the thieves, his eyes were different. "That really is good. I'll bring you to the leader!"

He'd never seen a stone like this, but he could feel the power aura coming from it. It didn't look bad either. It was definitely extraordinary; the leader would definitely like it.

He turned to lead the way. As he walked, he said, "You three really got lucky to get something that good. You'll definitely be rewarded well."

"Hehe, Brother Yamu, I won't forget about you." The head thief quickly smiled. He had to. Here, he wasn't as powerful or important as Yamu. He had to bow down to the man.

"You're very thoughtful, haha." Yamu was pleased.

The group led the horse into the castle walls. In the courtyard, people dragged the still-unconscious trio off the horse and into the dungeon. Yamu brought the three thieves into the castle's main hall.

The hall was vast. In the front, there was a huge statue of a muscular middle-aged man. His face was covered and there was a dagger on either side of his thighs. The statue was hidden in the shadows, and every detail was on point. From afar, it looked as if a thief was really hiding in the darkness and could jump out at any time.

This was the Shadow Stalker Morpheus.

Before the statue, a figure shrouded in dark aura stood in the shadows. His face was hidden, but his eyes glowed faintly with red light. When he looked at the four entering the hall, they felt like a viper was watching them and shuddered in unison.

"What good news did you bring?" the man spoke. His voice was raspy. When it rang throughout the hall, it sounded like a snake's hiss. It gave one goosebumps.

"Leader, these three captured three merchants and found this." Yamu took the bag. He walked up and offered it up.

The leader took the back. When he opened it, his eyes instantly brightened. The dark room seemed to brighten too as if a star had fallen onto earth.

"This statuethis stoneit's a Celestial Stone!" the leader couldn't help but exclaim, his breath quickening. He knew what this was!

Celestial Stone

Level-16 Astral Meteorite

Effect: It dazzles like a star on the outside. If one grinds itito fine gold, the weapons created are formless and traceless. It won't let out a bit of aura while being almost perfectly anti-magic. It is an Assassin's top choice.

(Note: There is only one star in the world. The others are destined to fall.)

While appreciating the beauty, the leader suddenly said, "Why is it only half? Where's the other half?"

For priceless treasures like this, one would never worry about having too much. Even if there was only a shred of a chance to get more, he would snatch it up!

Judging from the breakage point, someone had chopped it off with a sword. It was a fresh cut too and should have been recent. If he had a clue, he could definitely find the other half.

"It was found in the merchant's belongings," Yamu quickly replied. "There was only half. Leader, should we bring them over?"

Before the leader replied, there was a soft buzz behind him. They all looked over and saw that Morpheus' statue's eyes lit up. Bloody light shot out while boundless pressure weighed down.

The four thieves immediately fell to their knees. They didn't even dare to breathe.

Morpheus kept surveillance of his high-level believers' minds. Once there were dramatic abnormalities, he would sense it. Now, the leader was suddenly ecstatic, so Morpheus' focus projected from the statue to see what was happening.

And thus, he saw the Celestial Stone.

Recently, Morpheus had been feeling off. There was a vague sense of danger. To protect himself, he wanted to create a powerful weapon for himself. Unfortunately, he didn't have enough materials to fulfill that goal.

The Celestial Stone's appearance was like a traveler in a desert seeing an oasis. Morpheus was immediately excited. With this stone, he could definitely produce the most advanced divine gear for thieves!

A voice rang out in the minds of all the thieves present. Take this Celestial Stone and the three mortals to be. I will interrogate them personally! Hurry! Now!

The leader was shocked. "Yes, Master," he hurriedly said. "I will do it now!"

## 616. Theres Been A Change In Plans

Wooden wheels rumbled down the road with a wooden cage set on top of them. Clad in threadbare prisoner garb, Link, Eliard, and Dyleson leaned despondently against the bars of their prison.

After being questioned by the Shadow Stalker himself, their lives would come to an end. These thieves certainly would not have anything good in store for them.

Of course, to these thieves, these three were no more than ordinary merchants who might have known a thing or two about self-defense. Being completely disarmed, these merchants did not seem to pose a threat to their captors and so were left unsupervised in their cage.

This gave Link some leeway to discuss matters with the others.

As masters of unequaled power, they were able to converse with each other without even opening their mouths. Instead of silently mouthing out words or playing charades, they could communicate with each other via a series of subtle movements that they had decided beforehand, such as a twitch of a finger or an eyebrow.

On the surface, other than adjusting their postures slightly inside their cage, these three remained almost completely still. However, the three of them were already in the midst of a "conversation."

"Hey, you got it ready yet? We're about to meet Morpheus," said Eliard to Dyleson. They were now rolling along a small path through a thick forest. From the looks of it, they should soon arrive at Morpheus' lair. Their plan to defeat Morpheus now hinged on the Level-19 sacred gear that Dyleson had brought with him.

"Relax. Before leaving, the Snow Mountain Archmage did his research on the demi-god. This divine gear is forged especially for him. He will die for sure." Dyleson contorted his lips slightly. There was not a hint of concern in his eyes.

Link did not say a "word." He had kept his eyes glued to his surroundings throughout their journey while feeling the wind speed and the thieves' breaths in the air in order to determine where they were now.

By estimating their current coordinates and comparing it with the Shadow Fortress' location as he had remembered it back in the game, he would be able to determine if they were indeed heading towards Morpheus' lair.

The game had not been as detailed as this world Link now lived in, but everything was where it should be in this world. For instance, the bandits' fortress from before existed even in the game. It was known as Horde Fortress. It was one of the Syndicate's main strongholds and served as a base for one of the Syndicate's smaller divisions. The thief Yamu and the bandit leader were the fortress' bosses.

Back in the game, Link had brought a party of his own into the fortress and was able to find some clues concerning the location of Morpheus's Shadow Fortress after killing the bandit leader.

According to the game's description, the Shadow Fortress should be more than 80 miles southwest of Horde Fortress in the depths of the forest. Poison mist traps had been set up in its vicinity. Any trespassers who blundered into any of them would surely die as soon as they came into contact with the ensuing poison mist if they had not been properly vaccinated against it beforehand.

They had already traveled 40 miles through the forest. According to the game's description, they should soon reach one of said poison mist traps. If these thieves intended to let Morpheus interrogate them, they should at least give them the antidote for the poison in order to keep them alive. To Link's surprise, none of them seemed too concerned about their prisoners' well-being at the moment as they kept driving on.

No traps were triggered.

Slowly, Link realized that they were now taking a path that seemed to diverge slightly from the one that Link remembered taking back in the game. Right now, he could not determine if such a divergence had always existed, or if the thieves had simply decided to take a different route.

However, Dylosen seemed a bit too optimistic about this. This was not the right attitude to assume when one was about to go up against a demi-god.

Link then said, "He may be an upstart, but he's still a demi-god who had the fragment for a hundred years. Such a presence would most likely have something up his sleeve, so let's try to be careful, shall we?"

"Of course," said Dylosen, nodding slightly.

The prison wagon rumbled on down the road for another two hours. Suddenly, the path before them grew wide and flat; the wagon's jolting diminished somewhat. There were now fewer trees around them. Before them gaped a 50-foot-wide valley which seemed to be filled with a faint layer of mist.

As soon as the valley came into view, Link suddenly felt that something was amiss.

"Alright, stop the wagon," said the bandit leader, who had been walking at the front of the party. He then raised his hand, and everyone came to a halt. "Let them out."

One of the thieves approached the cage. He then opened its doors with a click and shouted, "Get out, all of you."

"What now?" Eliard shot a questioning look at his companions.

Dyleson frowned. He too did not seem sure what they should do next. Link raised a brow. "Just do as he says for now."

Their plan had gone off course. Still, this was normal. The information they were able to gather was incomplete after all, so how should one expect any plan to go smoothly on the basis of incomplete information?

The three of them got off the wagon. One of the thieves then pointed a dagger at their backs. "Walk, now."

The three of them were then forced to walk up to the bandit leader, who looked at them with a cold smirk. He then threw a bundle at Link. "Take the statue with you and go straight down into the valley. Don't even think about running; our lord is waiting for you in the valley!"

Link and the others looked at each other in confusion. Their bodies began to tremble. None of them seemed willing to take another step forward.

"Hurry along now, will you!" The bandit leader took out his crossbow and pulled back its bowstring with a click. So did the other bandits. At that moment, the tips of ten or so arrows which glinted with a cold metallic light were pointing menacingly at the three of them.

If they remained cowering there, they would surely be killed. At least they could live a bit longer if they followed the path before them into the valley. The three of them began walking forward tremblingly, especially Link, who was shaking so furiously he nearly dropped the statue from his hands. Evidently, he was more shaken up than the other two.

The thieves behind them howled with laughter as they watched Link and the other two enter the valley.

The three walked on and on until they finally entered the valley. The bandits were now completely obscured by the white mist behind them.

Morpheus was still nowhere to be seen. This was not part of their plan. However, the three of them had no choice but to walk on.

After walking for at least ten minutes, a voice suddenly rang out in the white mist. "Mortal, you seem familiar."

There was a stir in the white mist before them. The mist then coalesced into a humanoid form, which floated straight towards them. Link could feel its gaze on him.

This must be one of Morpheus' clones. Where was his real body? Without knowing where it was, Dylosen could not use the sacred gear on the demi-god even if he wanted to. He began to panic.

Link had once dueled with Morpheus in the past. In order to avoid being recognized by him immediately, Link had altered his own features, his own magical aura and even assumed a jittery disposition in order to transform into a completely different person. Still, even after taking these precautions, he was unable to completely fool the demi-god's unusually acute senses.

Link fell to the ground. Sweat was now streaming down from his forehead. He raised the bundle that was hiding the statue above his head in trembling hands. He then pleaded, "Almighty one, I'm just a simple merchant trying to make an honest living. Please spare me."

No one would have guessed that this trembling merchant was the peerless lord of Ferde. Though Eliard and Dylosen looked petrified on the outside, deep down, they now had nothing but admiration for Link's performance.

The human figure in the mist seemed to have dispelled his suspicions concerning Link's identity. Its attention was now drawn to the bundle in Link's hands. The bundle unraveled by itself all of a sudden, revealing the dazzling Celestial Stone statue inside it.

"Incredible, just incredible. Such a shame that you've brought me only half of the real thing." The figure in the white mist extended a hand to touch the statue's broken surface. "Where did you get this from?"

At that moment, Link's back was now wet with sweat. He was now sweating nervously for real. He had a feeling that if he gave Morpheus the answer that he had prepared before entering the valley, the demi-god would immediately make his move against them.

And once Morpheus made his move, the three of them would be forced to give themselves away. Morpheus' lair was nearby. As soon as he knew who they were, he would soon come out to greet them personally.

They had initially planned to catch Morpheus by surprise. Only through ambush would they have any chance at all of defeating him. All three of them would simply be stomped to death like mice by the demi-god in direct confrontation.

They were now standing on the crossroads of life and death!

The problem was, what should they do now?

Eliard and Dylosen were smart enough to know that things had taken a dangerous turn. However, the two of them were unable to do anything at this point. Their hearts pounded furiously against their chests as cold sweat oozed out from their pores.

## 617. Time To Risk Lives

Valley

After Morpheus' white fog projection finished asking, he watched Link quietly, waiting for his reply.

Link's mind whirred crazily, trying to find a way to solve this. On the other hand, Morpheus waited a few seconds. When he didn't get a reply, he said, "Oh? You don't dare to answer?"

Eliard and Dylosen had stopped breathing, and they were ready to act. They didn't hope to defeat Morpheus; they only wanted to escape successfully.

But then Link suddenly yelled, "Those thieves said you're an unbeatable god. Is that right?"

"Can it be wrong?" Morpheus huffed. He was only a demi-god, but before mortals, he always called himself a god. He never interacted with mortals either to further maintain his mysteriousness.

"God, I beg you, let me become your believer." Link prostrated himself on the ground.

This interruption got rid of Morpheus' anger. Link probably only wanted to save his life by becoming a believer, but no demi-god who wanted to become a god would drive away a potential believer. Morpheus was the same.

However, he wouldn't accept just anyone who said he wanted to convert. He had to learn about this person's past and personality Of course, this wasn't important. The most important thing was where the other half of the Celestial Stone was.

"If you wish to become my believer, you must serve me and be completely loyal. Now tell me, how did the statue get halved?" Morpheus asked. His voice was much softer now. If he could get the other half, he could let these people live. Of course, they had to join his cult.

Link's thoughts whirred, and he thought of what to say. Pretending to recall his memory, he said, "Mighty God, this statue was very difficult to get. We risked our lives in the Grinth Forest near Ferde to get it."

Morpheus was instantly interested. "Oh? Tell me in detail."

He didn't test Link's soul to see if he was speaking the truth. It wasn't that he didn't want to; he was just a thief originally. He didn't know anything about Soul magic. After receiving the divine fragment, his power increased, and he grasped some of the knowledge for becoming a god. He still wasn't familiar with Soul magic though. If Link was his believer, he could use the belief to read Link's soul. Since he wasn't, he could only judge from Link's expression.

The man looked fidgety and extremely scared. His body was drenched in cold sweat. A regular merchant wouldn't dare to lie.

Morpheus was quite confident about that.

Link cursed inwardly. He didn't know anything. Beside him, Eliard and Dylosen were still sweating. They looked at Link, waiting for him to make something up. They hoped the story would be beautiful and Morpheus wouldn't be able to find flaws.

Of course, they were also busy during this time.

As a Level-14 Magician with a Level-19 divine gear, Dylosen took advantage of when Morpheus was distracted by Link and secretly searched for where Morpheus truly was.

This divine gear was the Snow Mountain Archmage's proudest work. It was called the Eye of Reality and operated secretly. If the other was also an Archmage, they would be able to discover it. Morpheus wasn't though. He was just someone who didn't know any Soul magic and just hit a fortune.

He didn't know what Dylosen was doing at all.

Link saw it, of course. Now, he had to make time for Dylosen. His mind spun and suddenly got an idea. "Mighty God, we are from Norton, and we live in the Grinth Forest. We were strong as children, so we learned some martial arts techniques"

Morpheus cut him off with a wave. For some reason, he felt anxious and restless inside. This annoyed him. "Cut the nonsense and say how you found it!"

"Yes, yes, Mighty God!" Link wiped his sweat and swallowed heavily. Then he took some deep breaths, seeming to try to make himself calm down.

Morpheus couldn't do anything except wait patiently.

After many seconds, Link finally continued, "It's like this. Me, Liard and Dylo are good friends. We went hunting in the forest. You know, the Grinth Forest had a lot of battles. The farms are all destroyed and we don't have enough food, so we had to hunt to add to our food."

"And then?!" Morpheus just wanted to strangle this wordy guy. It's been so long, and he just can't get what he wanted.

"And then we found a deer. I shot it and hit its hind leg. It was a bit off though. Not only did it not die, but it also ran too. It kept running, and we followed its bloody trail. I didn't think that lame fella could run so fast. It disappeared just like that. If it wasn't for the blood, we couldn't track it at all"

"Cut the nonsense!" Morpheus' image waved his hand and Link immediately flew backward, rolling many times before stopping. If Morpheus hadn't restrained himself and used more strength, he would have exposed himself now.

As for why Morpheus was so nice was because Link had said he wanted to become a believer. Morpheus couldn't kill him.

After rolling to a stop, Link immediately started screaming like a dying pig, "Mighty God, mighty god! I'll tell you! Don't kill me!"

Morpheus huffed. "No more nonsense. I usually don't give second chances!"

Link subtly looked at Dylosen. Seeing that he was still focused, Link knew he hadn't found Morpheus. Link couldn't find him either.

In the game, he found Morpheus mostly thanks to the Ethereals. The Ethereal Warriors had mutinied and forced Morpheus into the Shadow Fortress. But here, because of Ferde's capturing, the Ethereals were almost extinct. Morpheus naturally didn't have pressure from them. As for where he was now, Link had no clue.

Seeing that Morpheus' patience was at the limit, Link spoke faster. "We still lost the deer in the end, but we happened to see a Warrior chasing a Magician deep in the woods."

He was completely BS-ing. He only had one goal: drag things out.

"Warrior? Magician?" Morpheus' brows furrowed. "Tell me what they look like. If they could have the Celestial Stone, they must be powerful. The Warrior was probably a Legendary Warrior. The Magician must be a master too."

Link recalled in detail. "The Warrior wore a gold and red robe. It looked weird. I can't explain it. He was so fast too, just like lightning. He just flashed by. We heard the Magician say, 'Here you go, all for you.' And then he tossed something down, but the Warrior didn't want it. He cut it with his sword and then started chasing the Magician again. They disappeared so fast. We waited a long time before we dared to go look. After looking around, we found half of the statue, but couldn't find the other half."

Eliard followed up. "The statue is so pretty. After we got it, we were scared the Warrior would look for trouble. We obviously couldn't stay in Grinth anymore. We wanted to sell it in the Southern black market. And then and then we got captured and got brought here."

Hearing this, Morpheus fell silent. If it was a Warrior with a gold and red battle robe and chased a Magician with a Celestial Stone all over the place More importantly, he could cut the Celestial Stone with one move and make the cut so smooth. Just from that, he was sure the Warrior was at least Level-15.

These three were honestly so lucky to get this half. But according to their description, the other half should be in the Grinth Forest. They were just too scared to find it. They probably didn't dare to spend too much time looking.

Thinking of this, Morpheus said, "Do you still remember where you found it?"

"Yes, yes," Link hurriedly replied. "We grew up in the Grinth Forest. We can find our way withoreyes closed. Liard, Dylo, right?"

"Oh, good." Morpheus suddenly looked to Link. "You said that you want to convert?"

Link froze. Glancing at Dylosen from the corner of his eyes and seeing that the man was still silent, he panicked a bit. What was with Dylosen? Did he still not find Morpheus? It was getting serious. Though he was panicking inside, Link nodded hurriedly. "Yes, yes. Mighty god, it would be my biggest honor to become your believer."

"Oh, then I will perform the ritual now" Morpheus' image raised a hand. An emblem with dark light appeared in his palm. He was about to press it down onto Link's forehead.

Just then, Dylosen's hands twitched. The gesture meant that he'd found Morpheus.

Link's eyes flashed. This meant that the divine gear could be activated and they could act. Now, Morpheus' hand was about to land, but Link obviously wouldn't allow it. He suddenly raised a hand. A shred of moonlight flashed and dissipated the projection!

Link couldn't defeat Morpheus' true self, but this was just a projection. It was nothing.

As soon as the projection was gone, Dylosen acted.

Fiery-red light radiated from his left arm. It grew brighter, and half a second later, his entire arm flew off. It curled into a silver-red disc. This was the divine gear he'd brought: Chaotic Moon.

Chaotic Moon

Level-19 Legendary Pinnacle Divine Gear

Effect: It took the Snow Mountain Archmage three years to create. After activating, it will use the chaotic Void power and force the opponent to Level-5. It can last from 10 seconds to one hour.

(Note: Knowledge is power!)

"Go!" Dylosen yelled. The air around them shook and rippled. The silver disc spun and whooshed, disappearing into the sky.

Half a second later, a roar boomed from around ten miles away. "Die! Everyone must die!"

The voice was aggressive and furious, but to Link's group, it sounded weak.

"The divine gear is activated!" Dylosen yelled. "We have ten seconds!"

Within ten seconds, they either get the Divine Fragment, or they die. It was time to risk their lives!

## 618. Kill The God

If they were to ready gamble with their lives right now, they should have gone in fully equipped with their armor and weapons.

This was the problem. The three of them were completely stripped of those things when they were captured by the bandits. How were they supposed to fight under such conditions? This was where Link's spatial magic would come in handy.

Without further delay, after dispersing Morpheus' white mist clone, Link plunged a hand that was now gleaming with a silver lightito the space in front of him. When he pulled it back out, there were now three spatial rings on his palm.

"Catch!" Everything they needed was in those three rings.

Link put on one of the rings. He then willed out some equipmentito existence from the spatial ring. In the span of a mere second, these pieces of equipment sat themselves on Link's body on their own.

Turning around, Link saw that both Eliard and Dylosen were already fully equipped as well.

They still had nine seconds.

"Let's move out!" Activating the Void Walk spell, Link sprinted toward the leftmost cliff face of the valley. Eliard and Dylosen followed close behind him.

As soon as they reached the cliff face, Link turned around and saw that the bandit leader and his merry band were still waiting there at the entrance of the valley. They looked at Link in confusion.

The bandit leader had Level-8 power. He could still be a problem.

Glancing at the bandit leader, Link swung the Ode of a Full Moon sword behind him. In an instant, he unleashed a crescent-shaped 30-foot-long arc in the air, which silently flew 3000 feet across the valley towards the bandit leader.

Whir... whir... whir... The bandits at the valley's entrance, whose bodies were still intact a moment ago, were cleaved apart cleanly by an invisible force before they even knew what hit them.

Turning around again, Link saw that a few thousand feet away, black smoke was rising into the air. Then, a black cloud began forming above them, gradually blocking out all light from the sky until the valley was as dark as night.

"He's activating a shadow realm with a law spell. Be careful, this is a Level-15 technique! He still has Level-15 power!" shouted Dylosen.

The Chaotic Moon was able to suppress Level-5 power. If that was the case, Morpheus should only have Level-14 power right now. However, he was still in possession of the divine fragment, allowing him to attenuate some of the Chaotic Moon's effect.

This was not good!

Link had been reading the book titled Sacred Realm that he had gotten from the God of Light's library whenever he had time to spare. He now had a deeper understanding of the Legendary realm and the spells that could be acquired at every level in it.

In the Legendary realm, every level had an entry threshold. The first threshold to cross over was the one between Level-14 and Level-15.

In the Sacred Realm, Legendary masters at Level-14 and below were akin to newborn babies. Higher-level babies would be more powerful than those at lower levels. However, the essences of their powers would still remain unchanged.

With his rapid spellcasting and his lethal battle techniques, Link might stand a chance against a higher-level opponent. However, as soon as a Legendary master reached Level-15, the power he had spent a lifetime accumulating would undergo its first transformation.

A master with Legendary power at this stage would have full control of the essence of their power. In other words, they would be able to tit the laws of nature to their advantage. Low-level Legendary masters might be able to muster a small portion of that power. However, once they hit Level-15, they would see a drastic increase in their control over said laws.

A "realm" would be formed through the mixing and matching of these laws with those governing the Firuman realm.

The shadows were the Shadow Stalker Morpheus' domain. He had an ability similar to this even back in the game.

In the game, incredibly powerful masters like Nozama, Morpheus, Level-19 Eliard, Kanorse, and the Beastman Warlord all reigned supreme in their own realms.

As soon as they activated this ability, the world around them would begin to warp into an environment that would be conducive to their powers while inhibiting the powers of their enemies in the vicinity.

Under such circumstances, a Legendary master would have their combat power amplified considerably.

Seeing the encroaching darkness behind them, Link immediately said to Eliard, "Defend yourself! Just focus on keeping yourself alive for now!"

Morpheus was a demi-god Assassin. He was at his strongest in the shadows. A full-blown attack by him from the darkness would instantly kill Eliard, whose power was still at Level-11, making him the party's weakest link.

Eliard nodded. He first cast a Level-11 Legendary spell, "Ultimate Defense," on himself. He then produced three Void crystals and activated them. Layers of light began settling on his body, forming a one-foot-thick crystalline sheen around him.

At the same time, Link and Dylosen set up their own defenses as well. The three of them were now floating in mid-air, 100 feet away from each other in a triangular formation. This way, if one of them were about to be in danger, the other two would be able to come to his aid in time.

At this point, the sky had completely darkened above them. The only light in this world of darkness came from the magical defenses that Link and the other had set up around themselves.

Still, no matter how anxiously they waited in the darkness, Morpheus had yet to reveal himself!

If he decided to spend the next ten seconds in hiding, he would soon return to full strength. At that point, if Link and the others still had not managed to escape the shadow realm, they would be forced to contend with a Level-19 demi-god. Death was the only possible outcome in such a confrontation.

"Dylosen, where is he?!" shouted Link. Dylosen was the only one who could seek out Morpheus in the darkness using the Level-19 Pinnacle sacred gear.

Dylosen's heart was now racing. Seconds passed, and he was still no closer to pinpointing Morpheus' exact location with the Chaotic Moon.

He began channeling his full power into the Chaotic Moon. His hands now sweating profusely, he muttered, "I'm still trying to find him. His realm is really muddling up my senses!"

Link's nerves were tautened in anticipation of the enemy's ambush from the darkness. One second, two seconds, three seconds... Seconds passed, but Dylosen still did not have the faintest idea where their enemy could be.

None of them had ever encountered anyone as menacing as Morpheus. Their current situation was not unlike being thrown into a fiery pit with nowhere to run.

Link knew that they could not go on like this. Waiting for Dylosen to track down Morpheus was not an idea he found appealing right now. He needed to find a way out of this, but how? Should they run for their lives? No, they still had six seconds left. There was still a chance. The only thing they needed to concern themselves with now was to find Morpheus in the darkness before he found them!

Suddenly, something clicked in Link's mind. He recalled using a certain spell to dispel Morpheus' shadow realm back in the game. Unfortunately, it was a Level-18 spell. With his current power level, there was no way he would be able to use it.

However, the memory of this spell was like a key which automatically unlocked certain parts of Link's memory that had been locked away in his mind for a long time. No, there was still another spell, another technique that could get us out of this... Yes, I've got it!

In the game, few players were able to use magic to dispel Morpheus' shadow realm. However, as they still needed to defeat him, some Magicians had come up with a particularly effective way to bypass his shadow realm.

Though it was an ingenious technique, one still needed to have Level-14 Magical Power in order to use it. Link would also have to burn through all of his power to cast it.

But Link did not mind exhausting all his power for this, for he still had an extremely power magic stone at his disposal: the Energy Crystal that would replenish his power once activated!

At that moment, Eliard saw that Dylosen was still wrestling with the Chaotic Moon. He knew that the man had come to his wit's end.

"Link, should we retreat?" shouted Eliard.

Link shook his head. "No, we still have a chance. Witness my magic!"

While saying this, Link was perusing the spell menu that had appeared in his field of vision. He soon selected a spell named "Sunlight."

Sunlight

Level-14 Legendary spell

Cost: 28,000 Realm Essence points.

Description: Convert a huge amount of power into pure sunlight. If cast at full power, the resulting illumination may even be as bright as sunlight.

(Note: Light unlike anything you've ever seen!)

The Sunlight spell might not be enough to pierce through the darkness around them. Even though Morpheus' power had been inhibited by them, he was still a Level-15 master with his own realm.

There existed a wide chasm between Level-14 and Level-15. Morpheus would just ignore the Sunlight spell like it was nothing.

Therefore, Link still needed to try another technique.

To an ordinary Magician, this technique might prove difficult to pull off. However, to a spatial Magician like Link, it would be child's play. He currently had 190 Omni Points. After buying this Level-14 spell, he still had 50 points remaining, which he then used to give himself a power boost

Though he was only able to raise his power by 50 points, this 50-point power boost might just spell the difference between life and death for Link.

After acquiring the spell, a shiver ran through his body. He then raised his Ode of the Full Moon sword without hesitation. At the same time, he took out the Energy Crystal in his left hand.

He began activating the Sunlight spell in his right hand while drawing power from the Energy Crystal in his left!

In an instant, a speck of light appeared on the tip of his sword like the light from a firefly's abdomen. Then, the speck of light exploded!

Hum... Like the Big Bang, an explosion of light flooded the entire valley. It spread out in every direction, crashing against the surrounding darkness like a tidal wave.

However, Link knew that this Level-14 spell would not be able to disperse the darkness completely. The light would soon be swallowed by the darkness.

A violent spatial distortion appeared around the light at the same time. The light struck the distorted space and began filling it up for a fraction of a second until it finally burst out from an outlet in it.

In a corner, Eliard saw that the Ode of a Full Moon was growing bigger and bigger in Link's hand until it was approximately a few thousand feet long and a few hundred feet wide. The entire blade seemed to be made entirely out of light, which at times gleamed like snow and at times burned like fire.

"Ahh!" Link roared. He then swung this sword of light in various directions. In a blink of an eye, he managed to swing the sword around at least a hundred times. At a glance, rays of light seemed to be radiating from his body. At the same time, the light now spread far and wide across the valley, which barely made a dent on the darkness around them.

This was the difference between Level-14 and Level-15. The combination of a Level-14 spell as well as a few other techniques from Link left barely a scratch on Morpheus' shadow realm.

At first, the shadow realm had been an impenetrable sheet of darkness. However, as Link danced about with his enlarged sword, the darkness now seemed to thin considerably. At this point, anyone with Legendary eyesight would have been able to perceive the vague outlines of objects in the distance.

In the face of this all-encompassing darkness, Link's power alone would not have sufficed. As soon as the explosion of light subsided, he would immediately be consumed by the shadows. However, he was not alone.

With the aid of the few rays of light that managed to pierce through the darkness, Dyleson again tried to seek out Morpheus.

"I found him, I found him! He's right... Link, look out!" shouted Dyleson.

Through the dim light, Dyleson could make out a vague black form hurtling towards Link at unimaginable speed. The shadow was moving so fast his eyes could not even keep up with it. He would not be able to cast any spell to block the Shadow Stalker's attack in time!

In the shadow realm, Morpheus' power was at its peak. Even if he were to be spotted in his domain, no one would be able to block his lightning-fast attacks. This was true in Dyleson's case.

As soon as Dyleson finished his sentence, he suddenly felt his own body being swayed left and right by an unseen force. No matter how much he struggled against it, it was all in vain.

He shouted in bewilderment, "The space is vibrating around us!"

He then turned around to locate the source of this spatial tremor and saw a scene he would never forget for as long as he lived.

The dark sky

There were two figuresone light and one darkentangling with each other at an unimaginable speed. Their weapons clashed with an impossible frequency. Every time they collided, the air would shake. The air felt like the seassurface during a storm.

This violent battle had no sound. Other than the air shaking, there were occasional flashes too.

"Help!" Eliard yelled. He could see more clearly than Dylosen. Link could block Morpheus' attacks, but the demi-god had the upper hand. Link was dancing at the edge of death right now!

He also knew that the attack hadn't been aimed at Link. The original target was Dylosen, but Link had changed the direction and blocked Morpheus.

Among the three, only Link who was a master in both magic and martial arts could block Morpheus. If Eliard or Dylosen got close to Morpheus, they would get killed immediately!

Right now, Link was holding Morpheus up. It was the best chance for them to defeat Morpheusand the only chance!

While yelling, Eliard had already started acting without hesitation.

A dark golden wand appeared in his right hand. It was a Legendary magic tool from the Golden Rune Workshop, called Broken-Winged Angel. He'd designed it himself and had used up all his allotted resources. He'd even used his credit too and had Evelina and Link's help. Now, this wand wasn't complete yet, but it was already at Level-12.

Fragments of light lit up at his left hand. Two runestones appeared. One was an Ethereal Crystal while the other was a pure magic stone. Link had made it just for this trip.

"Soul Lasso!" In the blink of an eye, the runestone flashed. A feathery golden beam of light came out and snaked towards Morpheus.

Soul Lasso

Level-14 Soul Spell

Cost: 29000 (Currently in energy storage mode)

Effect: After activation, the mysterious power will wrap around the target's soul and restit its movement. The specific symptoms will be that the soul is unable to escape, the target will react slowly, their memory will deteriorate, and they will become dazed.

(Note: It will trap your soul.)

When the Soul Lasso appeared, Morpheus was using all his power to restit Link. In reality, he wanted to kill Link, but after two seconds, he realized that he actually couldn't.

He was faster and stronger, but Link's battle techniques and endurance were better. Link's sword was more like a dragon. The blocks, stabs, slices, cuts, and sweeps were all the most basic moves and were clear too. But when put together, they formed many incredible sequences.

Some moves dismantled his power, making Morpheus feel that his dagger had stabbed a ball of cotton. Others were used to set things up, making Morpheus feel that he'd entered a jungle of traps. A poisonous viper could strike out at any time. He didn't dare get distracted.

If Link was his only enemy, he could still survive until ten seconds later when his power recovered even if he couldn't defeat Link quickly. By then, he could kill Link with brute force.

But he had three enemies!

Golden light suddenly appeared behind Morpheus. Without realizing, it wrapped around him. He felt his mind tremor and then it was as if there was a cotton ball stuffed inside. His movements slowed too. It became harder to block Link's attacks. Danger rose.

And he was a demi-god. If he was a regular Level-15 Assassin, he would definitely be dead when attacked by Link now.

Damn Magician! He obviously knew what had happened. He wanted to kill the Magician who'd attacked him secretly, but then Link attacked with renewed strength. He couldn't escape.

But Morpheus had other tricks.

"Mist!" Black light pulsed around him. At the same time, black mist rose up in the air, swirling towards him. They connected and snapped the golden beam around him!

At that moment, alarms raised in Morpheus. Using his rich battle experience, he dodged to the side, head turning. At almost the same time, sharp silver light scraped past his face, bringing with it dark golden blood that shone with a black light. It was Link's sword!

This move was extremely dangerous. If he was an instant slower, his head would be somewhere else now.

Before this subsided, another wave came.

"Restraint Force Field!" This was Eliard with another Ethereal spell.

"Soul Rend!" This was Dylosen. He used a Soul spell. It was clear nowif they could disturb Morpheus' mind, Link would be able to kill them. Thus, attacks on the soul were the best thing right now.

The two Legendary spells acted upon Morpheus' inside and outside together.

He shook violently. His movements slowed again. It was only for around one-tenth of a second, but when faced with Link, it was basically a date with death.

The result was set!

Buzz. A sword buzzed softly. The Ode of a Full Moon lit up with cold light. A shred of "moonlight" circled Morpheus. After that, Link crossed behind Morpheus and then turned around, facing Morpheus' back.

Morpheus couldn't move now. Faint silver light snaked around him. From afar, it looked like a crack in a mirror. After two seconds, he slowly turned towards Link and finally spoke. His voice was hoarse and weak.

"When I first laid my eyes on you, I felt danger, but I didn't think I would die at your hands."

Clang! Link sheathed the Ode of a Full Moon. That move had cut off all hope for Morpheus to live. He could only speak now because it was just a reflection.

"I only feared your Divine Fragment. I never saw you as an opponent." Link just saw Morpheus as someone who'd gotten lucky, and this opinion had never changed. Morpheus wasn't the Divine Fragment's masterhe was the slave!

Morpheus sighed. It sounded like a cry and laugh. "When I received the Shadow Divine Fragment, I thought it was a blessing. After 100 years, I realized it's a curse. Whoever gets it will live miserably. I didn't believe it when I first heard that. I thought I would be special and break through destiny's shackles. Ha. Mortals, I wish you luck."

With that, a strange smile appeared on his face. The spidery silver cracks on his body expanded. With a boom, the power within him lost control, and he exploded.

Shadow Stalker Morpheus who had terrorized the land for hundreds of years died just like that.

Once his flesh body was destroyed, his territory disappeared too. The omnipresent shadows vanished, and the sun peaked out.

Under the sun, Link, Eliard, and Dylosen hovered in the air. They were all relieved.

That battle had only been around six seconds, but it was possible for them to die at any second. It had been like a danse macabrea dance of death.

"Is he really dead?" Eliard was in disbelief.

"He should be," Dylosen confirmed. "The Chaotic Moon says that the target has disappeared."

"Look, the Divine Fragment should be there." Link pointed at the end of the valley.

Because of the battle, the fog had scattered. A wall with a castle builtito it appeared at the end of the valley. That was Morpheus' lair: the Shadow Fortress.

## 619. The First Curse Of The Divine Fragment

"Come on, let's go take a look," said Dylosen with a smile.

Due to the soul contract they had signed before, he did not have to worry about Link and Eliard betraying him. With the death of Morpheus, he was finally able to complete the mission that the Snow Mountain Archmage had entrusted him with.

Once he returned to the Aragu realm, he would most certainly be compensated by the Archmage himself for his efforts.

Link and Eliard never had any intention to abscond with the Shadow Divine Fragment in the first place. Though their soul contract with Dylosen played a chief factor in their disinterest towards it, they also knew that the fragment's power was not something that should be trifled with. Anyone capable of wielding it would be able to ascend to godhood. Those who were unable to would be overwhelmed by it and perish as Morpheus did back then.

However, there was no way Link and Eliard would pass up a chance to study something so rare and mysterious up close. Link and Eliard began following Dylosen just to make sure nothing happened to him.

Soon, the three of them arrived at the Shadow Fortress. There was a broken humanoid statue in the great hall. From what was left of it, they were able to deduce that it had been shaped in the likeness of Morpheus himself. The points of breakage on it seemed fresh. The entire building too seemed to be in ruins. Most of its walls had crumbled. This must have been the after-effects of their battle with Morpheus not too long ago.

Once inside the hall, everyone split up to search for the fragment. In truth, Link already knew where it was. However, he had no intention of finding the accursed thing first, so he simply made a show of looking for it in a corner.

Suddenly, Dylosen came back hurriedly into the hall. "Found it, it's right here!"

Link and Eliard turned around and saw that Dylosen was standing beside Morpheus' fallen statue, holding a black crystal skull in his hand.

The skull was completely black. It somewhat resembled the crystal skulls back on earth. However, it seemed to be missing its lower jaw and a huge chunk on its back. There were also numerous scars on it as well. Curiously enough, a pair of black spectral light flickered in its sockets.

"The skull seems to be made of something not of this world. I've never seen anything like it before," breathed Eliard. This had certainly been an eye-opening discovery for him.

Link had seen it before in the game. However, the real thing seemed even more impressive than he had anticipated. The two black flickering light in its sockets were like entrances into an impossibly dark abyss. Upon making eye contact with the skull, he could hear a low whispering voice inside one's mind. He also suddenly began to covet it, wanting to make the skull his own.

Link immediately averted his eyes and suppressed this sudden impulse to snatch it from Dylosen's hands. He then looked at Eliard. There was a strange look on his face. He too seemed to be affected by it.

As Dylosen had a deeper understanding of the skull than his two companions, he naturally knew better than to look directly into its eyes. "Careful, don't let this thing enthrall you."

Link nodded. "Alright, Dylosen, we've completed your mission. I think it's time you give us what we're due."

"Of course, it has been a pleasure working with the two of you. My lord, you've certainly been a tremendous help. The Snow Mountain Archmage and I owe you a great deal," said Dylosen with a smile. He took out a custom-made box and placed the black crystal skull inside it. He then used a piece of rope to tie it up and hung the box from his waist. Strangely enough, the box seemed to have erased the skull's presence from this world.

Then, Dylosen handed the Chaotic Moon over to Link. "The Moon can only be used once per month. We've already used it once just now, so you'll only be able to use it again in a month's time. You've seen what it can do. I'm sure it will serve you well."

"It is certainly an incredible item," said Link with a nod, ready to receive it in his hand.

This had been a beautiful partnership between them. However, things had never been this easy for them.

"Look out!"

Link suddenly pulled out his sword and stabbed itito a Despair Ball that had materialized in front of him. The sword's tip then protruded from behind Dylosen.

A figure in a red-gold battle robe had jumped out from behind Morpheus' statue, swinging his sword down on Dylosen.

Judging by his outfit, the figure must be an Inferno Warrior No, his battle robe seemed even more garish than the ones worn by the two Inferno Warriors that Link had brought to Ferde not too long ago. The power fluctuations in his body felt even more powerful as well. This must be one of the high-ranking Lava Knights that Dyleson had told them about.

Link figured that the Lava Knight must have been drawn to the commotion in the valley just now and so waited in the shadows for an opportunity to strike all this time.

The Lava Knight parried Link's sword with a resounding clang. The impact sent a powerful shockwave down Link's arm, paralyzing it in an instant and temporarily neutralizing Link's ability to wield his sword effectively. The Lava Knight was evidently a lot stronger than him.

However, Link was not just a Warrior. He was also a Magician.

Though the Ode of a Full Moon sword was parried, it was able to buy its wielder time to cast a spell. With a reverberating hum, a thick Space Barrier materialized between Dylosen and the Lava Knight.

"Hmmph!" The Lava Knight swung his sword down once more. All of a sudden, the two-handed sword, which seemed to be dripping with streams of lava, exploded. It then coalesced into a 50-foot-long blade made entirely out of fire and lava.

The sword effortlessly cut through the Space Barrier that Link hastily set up behind Dylosen like butter.

Then, the sword's flames surged towards Dylosen at incredible speed.

This had all happened in a split second. Aside from Link, neither Eliard and Dyleson even had time to react to the Knight's ambush.

Dylosen was soon enveloped by the flames. Sounds of explosions came from his body, as the defensive magical gear he had with him all failed at that moment.

Evidently, the flames were some sort of realm-type attack. Dylosen simply had no way of defending himself against such power.

This was the result of an ambush conducted by a Warrior-type class on a Magician. The Lava Knight was clearly more powerful than any other Magician. There was no way his magic-wielding quarries would be able to survive any of his attacks.

Just when it seemed as if the flames were about to roast Dyleson alive, white light began to glow from his body. Hum. Hum. Hum. It was Link's teleportation spell.

When the white light faded, all three of them had disappeared from the Shadow Fortress. The Lava Knight did not give chase. He simply went over to where they had been and picked up the wooden box. He then opened it and found the divine fragment quietly lying in it.

Dylosen was not his target. His target had always been the divine fragment. With it now in his possession, the Snow Mountain Archmage would no longer be a threat to his master, the Inferno Archmage.

"The lord of Ferde is certainly something," The Lava Knight closed the box. He had no intention of going after Link. Instead, his plan now was to head back to the Isle of Dawn.

His main mission was to retrieve the divine fragment and sabotage the Snow Mountain Archmage's plans. Killing Dylosen and the lord of Ferde would have simply been an act of convenience. Their deaths mattered little to him at that point.

However, the lord of Ferde's little trick had caught him completely by surprise. Though the Lava Knight was not at all afraid of him, there was no need to bother with him for now, lest he trip up in his pursuit.

## 620. The Aggressive Power Of Lava

Buzz! With a soft sound, Link, Eliard, and Dylosen appeared miles away.

The southern forest surrounded them. It was extremely dense and covered almost all the space. There was swampy patch below with grass growing on it.

The three appeared a few feet above the ground. When they appeared, Link and Eliard adjusted how they stood and landed steadily. Dylosen had more trouble. His body was black and smoking. When he appeared, he dropped down like dead weight.

Link's heart jumped. He knew that the situation was bad and Dylosen would most likely die this time. Using his mind, he cast a low-level force field and caught the falling man.

He and Eliard quickly steadied themselves. Eliard went up to check Dylosen's state. "It's bad," he muttered. "He's practically baked!"

Link had stopped the sneak attack midway, but Dylosen still couldn't dodge it. He was hit so badly that he was awaiting death. The Level-15 Lava Knight was clearly powerful.

Link also went up to check Dylosen.

From three feet away, he could smell the pungent fragrance of baked meat His injuries seemed grave. Getting closer, Link saw that Dylosen's robe was practically all gone. Only a shred still stuck to his flesh. His body was charred, and almost all his skin was gone.

He put his hand to Dylosen's nose but could barely feel any breathing. His pulse was just as weak. Everything showed that Dylosen was at the brink of death and could die at any time.

Link immediately cast the Dragon Essence Vitality at Dylosen. A few seconds after the Mana surged into Dylosen, he suddenly opened his mouth and let out a gust of scalding air. Then his breathing strengthened.

A while later, he opened his eyes. His first sentence was, "They took the Divine Fragment!"

Link had noticed, but they'd been in a hurry, and the transmission didn't work on the Divine Fragment. He had to give it up to save Dylosen. They could worry about it later.

"You almost died, and you still worry about that?" Eliard said.

"No, no, it's okay if I die. The Divine Fragment has to get to the Snow Mountain Archmage or else everything will be over. Hurry, Ferde Lord, you must get it back!"

Dylosen's burnt face cracked open, making him look horrifying. He was panicking and his features tited. He looked like a demon. Regular people would probably get scared to death, but Link and Eliard weren't regular men. Their hearts were heavy. To Dylosen, the fragment was more important than they'd imagined. Without it, everything would be over.

However, the Lava Knight's power was also unimaginable. Judging by the sneak attack, that guy wasn't stupid either. Now that Dylosen was hurt like this, Link and Eliard weren't his match alone. It would be suicide if they went to steal the fragment.

Dylosen realized this too, of course. He breathed and said with difficulty, "I know that Lava Knight. His name is Mozur. He's known as the Explosive Duke. His fire power is really domineering and has explosive strength. Less than ten people in all of Aragu can block his sudden attacks. He has weaknesses too though.

"The first is that his explosive power is hard to maintain. He needs at least two seconds to re-accumulate power. Second, he loves the Fire Sect Holy Maiden and doesn't let anyone insult her. You can use it to easily anger him."

Knowing that his explosive strength couldn't last was important. Link could create a tactic to escape from a full-on hit. As for the second point, this was an even more fatal flaw to an advanced Warrior. This meant his emotions could be swayed and utilized by the outside world. Emotions were representations of the ripples of one's soul. Mozur's weakness was basically a flaw in his soul.

A Soul Magician could easily influence his soul after knowing this weakness. Even if he wouldn't die, his combat ability would be greatly reduced.

Coincidentally, Link had made great strides in the Soul field after studying the Book of Revelation. He was now a good Soul Magician.

After hearing this, Eliard looked at Link. He thought that they might have a chance to defeat the Lava Knight and get the fragment back. To be honest, this was important to Ferde too.

The realms were fusing, and the Holy Maiden of the Yan Empire was Princess Milda of the High Elves. They would obviously be on the Isle of Dawn's side. That gave Ferde an unimaginable enemy. If they didn't have the Snow Mountain Archmage's help, there was no way for Ferde to face a Level-19 Archmage who was about to become a god!

There was a way to turn the tides now. They could risk their lives.

Link didn't hurry to decide. He continued asking, "Does Mozur have other famous tricks?"

"Yes, I was about to tell you!" Dylosen took a deep breath. "He already used his scariest one. It's the sword that cut your spatial barrier, called Lava Fire. It can destroy practically any defense spell under Level-16. If you add his powerful burst, even a Level-16 spell can be destroyed. He also has the Lava Double."

"Lava Double?" Eliard asked. "To die in his place?"

"Yes" Dylosen broke off to gasp for breath. His state was really bad now. His exhales were all hot steam. Firelight flickered within his burnt and cracked flesh. He looked scary.

"How are you?" Link cast Essence Vitality for him again.

With the dragon recovery spell, Dylosen recovered a bit and continued, "There's no time His sword is called Boiling Lava. The so-called Lava Double is that the sword could die in place of him. Sogasp, you have to killgasp, kill him twice!"

The Essence Vitality effect only lasted a few seconds. Dylosen started panting again, breathing out hot steam. A bad feeling rose up inside Link. Lava Knight Mozur's fire was abnormally powerful. He actually couldn't repress it. It seemed that Dylosen had to die.

His breaths were now basically fire. It was as if his flesh and internal organs were burning now. He was like an active volcano.

"I... I'm going to die. My thingstake them. Whwhen you see the Snow Mountain Archmage, tell himI tried my best" Whoosh.

Fire spewed out from Dylosen's mouth. Lava-like fluid poured out of the cracks all over his body. The fluid bubbled and evaporated. Dylosen's body burned away in the blink of an eye. All that remained on the ground was a man-shaped scorch mark and a spatial ring. This was Dylosen's legacy.

"Such powerful fire!" Link sighed. If he'd been hit, he would probably die too. Bending down, he picked up Dylosen's ring and checked it. It contained some spell-casting material, a magic notebook, and the Chaotic Moon divine gear.

Even though Dylosen gave them three Level-19 divine gear, the other two were only auxiliary items. For example, the Battle Horn could raise soldier morale and even make them go crazy. It could affect up to one million people and was a great weapon in a battle between two armies, but it was useless in an advanced fight.

The Chaotic Moon was nice, but they could only use it one month from now.

In other words, if they wanted to defeat the Lava Knight and get the fragment, Eliard and Link could only depend on themselves.

Eliard chuckled wryly. "It'll be more dangerous than our fight against Morpheus."

They could still escape if they couldn't have defeated Morpheus. But if they couldn't defeat Mozur, they would end up like Dylosen.

"There's no other solution. The enemy might have a territory, but he's only a Warrior. We might not lose!" Link smiled faintly, but his eyes were abnormally cold.

Seeing him like this, Eliard knew that his old friend was ready to risk it all. Composing himself, he murmured, "For Ferde!"

## 621.

"He's heading northeast. He must be going to the Isle of Dawn."

Not too far away from the Shadow Fortress, Eliard was able to come to such a conclusion after observing the fortress' surroundings through a Mirror spell.

Link stood up with his sword in his hand. Looking in the general direction of the Isle of Dawn, he said, "The High Elves must have used some sort of technique to summon him such that his power wasn't even affected by the realm itself. He must be in a hurry to go back to Aragu through the Isle of Dawn."

The wind was howling bleakly through the mountains at that moment. Though the climate in the South was warm and the forest grew thick here, the battle they had with Morpheus had all but caused the trees around the fortress to shrivel up. Most of their yellowed leaves were blown loose by the bitter wind.

Eliard walked up to his side and looked in the Isle of Dawn's general direction. "Do you think we'll be able to stop him?"

Link shook his head. "I don't think we can... Still, it's worth a shot."

Their enemy was as uncompromising as a force of nature. The only way they could proceed now was to have a head-on confrontation with the Lava Knight. Only one side was allowed to come out of this alive.

Since that was the case, the only thing they could do right now was to take the Lava Knight down with everything they had.

As one of Link's best friends, Eliard was immediately able to make out the resolve in his voice. He smiled weakly. "This is the first time I've encountered such a dangerous opponent. This should be fun!"

Ever since Eliard began studying magic under Link's wing, he rarely had the chance to take charge of things on his own. However, with his current power level, he was now able to fight side-by-side with Link. This had always been something he wanted. Naturally, he welcomed such an opportunity with open arms.

As a Legendary master himself, Eliard had already mastered Link's Void Walk technique. Together, the two of them leaped into the air, transformed into two streaks of light and hurtled through the sky.

A Warrior would never be a match for a Magician in terms of speed. The Lava Knight Mozur was already a Level-15 Legendary master. Though both Link and Eliard were vastly outclassed by him in terms of power, the fact remained that a Warrior would not be able to use that power as dexterously as a Magician.

A Warrior below Level-17 would not be able to fly in the air without the help of some special equipment or battle technique. His movements would only be restited to the ground. He might even be faster than any other Magician on land, but the uneven geography of his path would definitely hinder his movements.

Link and Eliard only had to follow a straight-line path in the air towards the Isle of Dawn. After flying more than 100 miles in the air, Link finally sensed something.

"Did you feel that?" whispered Link.

Eliard felt for anything out of the ordinary in the area without losing speed. Half a minute later, he replied in a low voice, "It's Infernal Power, and it's moving really fast. It must be Mozur!"

Link nodded. Right now, the Infernal Power felt weak. There was also no sign of Mozur in the vicinity. However, he figured that the Lava Knight must be no more than 20 miles away from them.

After determining where the Infernal Power was coming from, Link and Eliard quickly changed course and headed straight towards where Mozur was.

Three minutes later, Eliard suddenly said, "I can't feel him anymore. It's as if he just vanished into thin air."

Link felt the same thing. Now hovering in the air, he gazed at the forest of stone protrusions beneath them. There were stones of various shapes and sizes sticking out of the ground. The biggest stones down there were hundreds of feet tall, while there were smaller ones which were only three to four feet tall. Blind spots abounded in this stone forest.

"He must have noticed our presences. He must also know that he would not be able to match our speed. He's probably hiding behind any of these rocks, waiting for a chance to ambush us."

Dylosen had told them that the Lava Knight Mozur possessed incredible explosive power and a talent for sneak attacks. If they were not careful enough, he would be able to kill them in a mere second.

Eliard understood what was going on. He then said, "If we can't even go down there to find out where he's hiding without having our heads lopped off, then I guess we should just level the whole stone forest!"

Since their enemy was still set on ambushing them, their safest option now would be to use a huge area-of-effect spell and remove all possible hiding spots down there that he could avail himself of. This was where a Magician worth his salt excelled at.

However, such a feat would come at a heavy price. Eliard would need to expend a huge amount of power in order to cast such a large-scale spell. He would not be able to be of much help in the upcoming battle with the Lava Knight. In other words, after smoking out Mozur from hiding, Link would be forced to take him on by himself.

Link was not too optimistic about his chances of surviving a direct confrontation with a Level-15 master.

After ruminating on Eliard's suggestion for a few seconds, Link finally nodded. "Do it!"

He would make his move the moment the Lava Knight was forced out from his hiding place by Eliard. Though their enemy was a lot stronger than any of them, if Link could get the drop on him, he would probably be able to increase his chances of victory.

Eliard took a deep breath. Then, power began circulating in his body until light radiated from his entire body. A few seconds later, he took out his magic wand and pointed at the stone forest below him. "Radiant Storm!"

Radiant Storm

Level-11 Sunlight spell

Description: Whip up a powerful storm capable of decimating everything in its path by agitating the air with a high concentration of Sunlight Power.

(Note: No blade of grass or stone will be left standing in the storm's wake!)

A blinding light shone out from Eliard's wand and expanded into a tenfoot-wide ball of light which seemed almost palpable. Then, the ball of light came off the wand's tip and fell to the ground. It was not unlike watching the sun fall out of the sky.

As the ball's altitude fell rapidly, its volume expanded at a frightening speed. The ball of light then began spinning, agitating the air around it until a golden cyclone, which stretched from the ground to the heavens, appeared in its place.

Whoo. Whoo. The fierce wind was not cool like most winds. Rather, it was giving off unimaginable levels of heat. This was the effect of the Sunlight Power.

The cyclone began moving inexorably forward, melting every huge rock in its path.

No blade of grass or stone was left standing in its wake. The only evidence of its passage was a trail of red molten mess behind it.

As the storm rampaged on, Link waited patiently in the air, gripping his sword in his hand. As soon as Mozur showed his face from behind a rock, he would immediately lash out at him with everything he had!

As the storm's rampage went on, the stone forest's area gradually shrunk, leaving Mozur with fewer hiding places. Link's power was now boiling inside his body, which began radiating light as gentle as the moon's. Though the light seemed inconspicuous, the power it was giving off felt oppressive.

Ten seconds later, a point of golden-red light flashed out from the ground.

A 100-foot-long flaming blade extended from the point of light towards the advancing Radiant Storm.

Boom!

With a deafening explosion, the flaming blade pierced through the cyclone in an instant. Like a dragon that was stabbed in the heart, the cyclone let out a mournful wail before evaporating into countless specks of golden light in the air.

Eliard instantly felt the effects of having his spell forcibly dispelled by the Lava Knight. His face had turned pale, and his body was now shaking uncontrollably. The knight's retaliation had also left the internal circulation of his power in complete disarray. Seconds later, Eliard spewed out blood from his mouth.

Though his injuries were visibly severe, Link could not afford to tend to them right now. At that moment, the Lava Knight was all that mattered to him.

With a burst of power, Link immediately conjured a silver-white moon in the sky. The moon basically blocked out the whole sky at that moment.

An instant later, light poured out profusely from the Ode of a Full Moon sword in his hand. Its blade had taken on the quality of a transparent crystal. Countless runes were now flickering around the sword's tip.

Link then swiftly plunged the sword into the Void. However, there was no sign of a Despair Ball being used, as Link had seamlessly integrated the Despair Ball into his sword technique.

At the same time, the Ode of a Full Moon sword reappeared on the ground, moments away from piercing through Mozur's forehead.

Link's attack seemed almost perfect. It gave the impression that Link was bringing all the power in the heavens down on the Lava Knight in a single attack with the aid of the ethereal light around him.

"Incredible!" Mozur felt his very soul being weighed down by Link's power. If he had faced such an attack three years ago, he would have surely died on the spot.

However, he had mastered his blazing realm technique. After dispelling the Radiant Storm, he had already anticipated Link's follow-up attack.

"Lava Fire!"

Mozur let fly the power of his blazing realm into the air with a powerful swing of his sword. In an instant, flames surged up into the sky at incredible speed.

At that moment, it was as if a geyser of lava had erupted through a hole on the ground, threatening to paint the sky red and crack open the moon that Link had conjured in it.

Before long, the two Legendary powers collided with one another.

Hum. A high-pitched, nigh undetectable whine sounded in the air. Ripples spread out violently across the space from the point of impact. Spatial fragments had also appeared near places where the ripples were mostitense.

Both sides were then struck by the resulting shockwave of the impact.

Waves of pain washed over Link's body as he was buffeted by the shockwave in the air. Mozur seemed to have been hit badly by it as well. Though his attack seemed impressive, it was in fact hastily executed with only 60 percent of his full power. Due to insufficient preparation, his body went completely numb when the shockwave hit him. Being unable to withstand his power, the ground gave way beneath him, and both his legs sank into the stone as a result.

However, as a Level-15 master, Mozur was physically stronger than Link. His recovery rate was also a lot faster than the latter. After smoothing out the circulation of his power in his body, he channeled his power to his feet, blowing up the stone around them to pieces. He then lightly jumped out of the crater.

Laughing out loud, he leaped into the air, making a beeline for Link. He needed to end this quick!

However, he seemed to have forgotten that Link was also a spatial Magician.

Though his physical body had taken on the full brunt of the shockwave, his mind remained unperturbed. As Mozur came towards them, a white light engulfed the two Magicians' bodies. In an instant, both Link and Eliard were teleported away.

They were left with no other choice. Seeing how the Knight was able to easily shrug off their attacks, their only option was to escape and come at him again with a better offensive strategy.

With the disappearance of his targets, Mozur had no choice but to let himself fall from the sky.

Looking at the empty sky, he frowned. "I don't like this one bit."

He was up against two Magicians. Anxiety began creeping into his heart. He would not be able to outrun the two Magicians, and they did not seem willing to leave him alone throughout the remainder of his journey. At this point, he could only hope to intercept their subsequent ambushes without tripping himself up.

"No, I can't let this go on. I need to think of something."

## 622. Link Youve Gone On The Road Of No Return

"How are you?" Link looked at Eliard with his pale face and cast Essence Vitality into him.

Eliard leaned against a big tree and took some deep breaths. He felt around his organs. "I'm okay. I've already recovered a lot, but I'll need more than one hour to recover my spell-casting ability."

This was the advantage of Sunlight Power's great recovery ability. A regular Magician wouldn't be able to move for a few days if they suffered this hit.

But one hour was still too long.

Judging from the previous situation, Lava Knight Mozur's power was unbelievable. If they fought hard on, Link wasn't his match at all. He could get killed with one mishap. He needed Eliard's help.

But with Mozur's power, if he chased with all his might, he could travel thousands of miles within an hour. He might not run to the Isle of Dawn, but no one knew what could happen along the way. For example, it was highly possible for the High Elves to provide reinforcement.

If Mozur had an additional helpereven if it was a Level-9 MagicianLink, who was already at a disadvantage, would truly have no chance of defeating him and getting the Divine Fragment back.

He couldn't wait. He had to act now, and he had to do it alone.

After thinking quickly for a few seconds, balancing the odds, Link came to a final decision. He had to do everything to stop Mozur. He wasn't Mozur's opponent in a direct fight, but there were thousands of ways to defeat someone. Tricks and sneak attacks all worked.

Thinking of this, Link murmured, "Then you rest here. I'll go stop him."

Eliard knew how important this was. It affected the countless creatures on the Firuman Realm and Ferde's future. He knew it was highly possible for Link to die, but they had no other choice.

"Be careful! I'll go find you as soon as I can cast spells!" That was the only thing he could say.

Link nodded. White light already rose around him. An instant later, he disappeared and reappeared miles away. This repeated many times as he chased towards the Lava Knight Mozur with impossible speed.

Five transmissions later, Link found Mozur's traces once again.

The other's aura was very secretive and hazy. Link couldn't pinpoint the specific location. Even if he completely focused, he could only narrow it down to a ten-mile range.

This range was too large, and he couldn't determine where Mozur was hiding. This meant Link couldn't attack secretively. Mozur was also a Level-15 fighter with sharp senses. Link couldn't hide either.

Right now, Mozur must know Link was close. He might even be looking for a chance to attack.

To stay safe, Link kept his elevation at around 1000 miles and activated the Eagle Eye spell to observe the ground.

Different from before, this was a forest. The trees weren't too dense, and there were scattered villages with small hills in between. Winding trails connected the villages. It was one or two in the afternoon now, and so many people hurried down the trails and in the fields.

Link could tell that this was the Whistling Hills in the northeast of the original Delonga Kingdom. It was mountainous, but the earth was fertile, and there were quite a lot of people. It was easy to hide here. In order to not hurt the innocent, Link couldn't use a powerful spell to force Mozur out either.

Seeing this, Link sank into deep thought.

Ferde is up ahead. There's the Divine Punishment protocol, so this guy won't dare to go in. Then he can only go eastito the sea. He's only a Warrior and will need a ship There must be High Elves at the coast.

Both Link and Eliard together had been defeated by Mozur alone. If he met with High Elves, then Link would have no chance by himself. If he was discovered, he could die.

Thus, he couldn't let Mozur get to the coast. Then how should he force Mozur out of hiding?

Link thought back to how Dylosen had characterized Mozur. This guy was a genius and liked sneak attacks. He had explosive power and only cared about the Holy Maiden Milda. This could be used to easily anger the Warrior.

Milda, Milda, Link repeated in his mind. He thought of their experiences together in the Aragu Realm.

That night in the tree hole, the farewell before returning to Firuman, and the smiles and glances were right before his eyes. Sadly, hundreds of years had passed in the Aragu Realm. Milda was no longer the young and innocent High Elf princess from before. She was now the priestess of a cult and Link's mortal enemy.

The changes in life were unpredictable. Right now, Link felt regret rather than anger.

Looking back at the ground, Link's eyes had become emotionless. Since we're enemies, then there are no taboos. Since Milda is your weakness, then I'll use her against you!

After thinking carefully and confirming his battle strategy, Link cast a large-scale Soul spell: Soul Echo.

Soul Echo

Level-8 Secret Spell

Effect: Activate the soul's power and create large-scale soul telepathy with no limit on the target.

The theory behind this spell was simple. It was Level-8 only because it had a wide range. It could stretch more than 20 miles, which was more than enough to cover where Mozur was hiding.

Focusing, Link looked down and sent an image with the Soul Echo. The image contained two peopleone man and one womanstanding beside a tree. The man was Link; the woman was obviously Milda. Under the faint morning light, the beautiful High Elf Princess stood beside Link. She tilted her head to look at Link's side profile, eyes filled with love and respect. She seemed to be talking. Her eyes never left Link.

To be honest, this was a very plain image. It was just a man and a woman talking on a forest path. At most, it would make people think of a couple dating. It was no big deal.

After this image suddenly appeared in the minds of the regular farmers, most were dazed. They found it strange that this image would jump out in their minds. Some guys had no reaction at all. They were exhausted from working in the fields. Who cared what they were thinking.

But to a certain person, this was a punch to the gut!

As soon as the Soul Echo ended, a fiery figure rushed out from the forest. Then a ground-shaking roar traveled into the sky. "Link, you've gone down the road of no return!"

The man had a gold-red battle robe and a Lava sword. Because of his fury, bloody rays of light shot out from his eyes. Flames flickered around his body. It was Mozur.

He'd voluntarily given up his chance at a sneak attack, but Link still wasn't confident in defeating him. This didn't sway him though. After coming to Firuman, he'd had countless battles. Ones that he was confident in winning were actually the minority.

Hovering thousands of feet above the air, he looked down coldly at the furious Lava Knight. "I've never gone down a path that I can return from," he said indifferently.

## 623.

Whoo, Whoo. The wind howled past Link's ear.

All of a sudden, there was a soft whoom in the wind. At the same time, Link noticed that tiny grain-like points of red light had appeared out of thin air beside him. With a closer look, he quickly realized that these were balls of fire burning quietly in the air.

Whoom. Whoom. Whoom. The sounds came one after another at increasing frequency. With each whoom, a new dot of light appeared. These specks of light soon filled the air, forming a fiery red mist in it.

This red mist stretched from the earth to the high heavens. Floating a few thousand feet in the air, Link looked down and saw what appeared to be a sea of red. The crimson sea was giving off an intense heat. Everything in its area of effect, which had a radius of more than ten miles, was burned to a crisp by it.

At a glance, it was as if the whole world had been transformed into a hell on earth where the Lava Knight Mozur reigned supreme.

"So this is a Level-15 master's realm..." breathed Link. Despite the realm's simplicity, the knight's realm was able to slaughter countless innocent lives in an instant with it. However, Link could do absolutely nothing about it. The only thing he could do right now was to continue keeping himself alive as long as possible.

Suddenly, the sound of ice breaking rang out around him. The space around him had transformed into ice. The layers of "ice" and the infinite reflective surfaces in it now seemed like the inside of a processed diamond.

Link had activated a spatial defensive barrier known as the "Multidimensional Barrier."

Multidimensional Barrier

Level-14 spatial spell (personal creation)

Description: Space is folded and curved by the spell around the user in a unique pattern to form a dynamically stable spatial cocoon with extraordinary defensive power. It is especially effective against energy-based attacks.

(Note: No matter how fiercely the storm rages on, I will not budge.)

After years of intensive research on spatial magic, Link's understanding of space had finally reached a high point. Not only had he gained a lot of experience in the area through his prolonged use of Spatial Power, but Link had also acquired the magic book "Sacred Realm" and an entirely new magical system from the Fedaro realm. Through the confluence of all the magical wisdom he had accumulated over the years, Link had given birth to a new breed of spells never before seen in Firuman.

The Multidimensional Barrier was one such spell.

Stitly speaking, Mozur's flaming realm was an energy-based attack of sorts. Even though it was a powerful technique, to a Level-15 Legendary master, a realm served as a support spell. Its offensive capabilities were just one of its side-benefits.

That was the reason why the realm's unbearable heat instantly vanished as soon as he cast the Multidimensional Barrier around himself. The tiny balls of fire that had appeared around him just now were also ejected from within Link's barrier.

"Lord of Ferde, you can't hide from me forever! Have a taste of my Lava Fire technique!" roared Mozur in the midst of the sea of fire.

A realm was the result of a Legendary master who had attained so much power his mere presence was enough to tit the laws of nature around him. In his realm, a Legendary master would receive a lot of benefits. Not only would the scale of his power see a huge boost, but a wide variety of never-before-seen battle techniques would also be open to him as well.

Mozur had opened up his own lava realm around him. Link had absolutely no idea how the Lava Knight would be able to attack him from thousands of feet away.

The only thing he should be doing right now was to stay out of Mozur's realm and avoid a direct confrontation with him in his element as that would only lead to his demise. His wisest course of action now was to observe the situation at hand and patiently wait for an opportunity to retaliate.

Link did not respond to Mozur's words. Gradually, the Multidimensional Barrier began expanding around him. Space had taken on a diamond-like quality as the barrier spread out more than a hundred feet in all directions.

Finally, Mozur made his first move.

With a boom, the ground beneath his feet turned red hot. Without warning, Mozur was launched into the air by a geyser of white lava that had erupted beneath him.

It was as if a huge hand made of lava had hurled Mozur into the air at incredible speed.

He would probably be able to reach Link within ten seconds.

However, this was not enough. Link was no fool. He would naturally try to avoid the Lava Knight that was coming at him fast. In the air, a Warrior would never be able to keep up with any unrestrained Magician who knew what he was doing.

However, Mozur still had another trick up his sleeve.

As Mozur closed in on his quarry, he drew out his sword and swung at Link. "Die!"

Battle aura surged out from his sword like a raging river, summoning all the floating balls of fire in the air to it. In an instant, the balls crashed into Link in a fiery wave.

At the same time, more balls of fire appeared, trapping Link in a thick crimson mist.

Link tried to move but soon realized that a mysterious force was inhibiting his movements. Right now, he could only move at a tenth of his original speed. This was way too slow. He would not be able to evade Mozur's onslaught.

This was not all Mozur had to show Link.

Before the first wave of Battle Aura could reach Link, Mozur swung his sword a second time. The two waves of Battle Aura merged with one another to form a powerful flame strike, which glowed just as bright as the sun as it surged against Link's Multidimensional Barrier.

From afar, one could see a huge pillar of fire rising from the ground. At the tip of this fiery pillar was a large ball of blue light, which managed to outshine even the sun.

At the same time, Link could feel the realm's power restiting his movements more and more until he could no longer move a muscle.

In the air, Link noticed that the space around him was about to crumble under the concentrated force of Mozur's flame strike. Cracks had appeared in it, and violent ripples were spreading out from the point of impact in the fabric of space.

His Multidimensional Barrier would not be able to hold out for long. Due to the disturbance of the spatial ripples, Link could not even cast an ordinary Legendary spell to save himself. He was now trapped in his enemy's realm. At this point, he had no other choice but to confront the Lava Knight head-on.

Despite being enemies, Link could not help but admire Mozur's awesome power. I think the only one in all of Firuman who could withstand his attacks may have been Morpheus himself.

"Hahaha, Link, enjoy being burned alive!" shouted Mozur gleefully. His eyes were now bloodshot, like those of a demon who had just gotten out of hell.

Link remained mute. He had not moved an inch even as he felt the realm's hold on him.

Aside from the Multidimensional Barrier, he did not set up any other magical defenses around himself. At that point, he could only unsheathe the Ode of a Full Moon sword and pointed it at Mozur. The sword's tip gleamed with light as soft as moonlight. He simply floated there without making any attempt to flee, as if he was now ready to intercept Mozur's next attack.

"You overestimate your abilities, little man!"

Mozur was now 1500 feet away from Link. He unleashed his third attack, bolstering his previous two attacks against the spatial barrier. The din grew louder, and more spatial fragments appeared as if the Lava Knight's onslaught was about to pierce through the realm of Firuman itself.

Mozur had used up all of his power with this third attack. This was his most powerful technique. None of his opponents had ever survived such an attack from him in the past.

He had once even used this technique to obliterate an entire city in the Aragu Empire.

The steady rush of power was inching closer and closer towards Link, threatening to swallow him up.

Just then, Link, who had remained motionless all this time in the air, suddenly moved. He swiftly swung the Ode of a Full Moon sword in an arc across the air before him.

When the sword's tip touched the air, the latter parted like a curtain to reveal a portal in front of Link.

Link immediately stepped into the portal. In an instant, he was gone.

Despite managing to paralyze Link with the power of his realm, Mozur was unable to completely seal off Link's spatial magic. At the last possible second, Link managed to elude Mozur's grasp.

## 624. Endless Curse

The next moment, there was a boom. Endless flames crushed towards Link but hit air. Link had already used a spatial spell to escape.

Indeed, space became unstable under the aggressive lava. It was also affected by the unique fire zone. Even Link couldn't easily use a portal to escape. However, no zone was flawless.

Link had personally witnessed the God of Light's power and had experienced countless Legendary Pinnacle battles in his previous life. He wasn't ignorant. Faced with Mozur's attack, he immediately saw through the fire zone.

If Link was a Legendary Warrior, he could face this attack head-on. But he was a Magician.

A zone was the composition of principles, and a Magician was the best at discovering and utilizing principles. It took ten seconds for the attack to go from Mozur to Link's side. It was enough time for Link to find loopholes in the fire zone.

Using this loophole, Link could escape from Mozur's fatal attack.

Boom. Link, who had just escaped, reappeared at Mozur's side. His sword was already stabbed towards Mozur. A Despair Ball appeared halfway. The sword tip buried into it and came out at Mozur's heart.

Mozur was dazed. He'd used all his power, but his attack had come to nothing. When one punched forcefully but hit air, it would take a while to rebuild power. Faced with the sudden attack, all he could do was raise his sword to block it.

With his Level-15 power and skills, he could definitely block Link's attack, despite it being so abrupt. But when he unsheathed his sword, his action had been too fast. The wooden box with the Divine Fragment at his waist shook. His sword hilt brushed past the box, and it cracked. The force didn't affect Mozur's actions, but sadly, the Divine Fragment's aura seeped out.

Mozur froze. Countless thoughts flashed past his mind.

Will the fragment fall out?

Will the tricky Magician steal it?

No, I can't lose this treasure

How could one get distracted when faced with death? Mozur knew that, but he was easily affected by the Divine Fragment. The result was obvious.

Squelch. Link's sword stabbed into Mozur's body. It passed through while Realm Essence also surged into him.

Huh? Mozur looked down at his chest. His power was quickly flowing out. Then he looked up at Link to see the black-haired Ferde lord was still emotionless. His all-out attack from before seemed to have been a joke to Link.

"You" Mozur couldn't speak, partly due to the fatal injury, partly because he couldn't understand why he'd been distracted at this critical moment.

Link had already sheathed his sword. His expression was calm, but he found it strange too. To be honest, he didn't think his attack would have succeeded so easily. Judging from the previous battle, Mozur honestly wasn't a bad opponent. This should have been a bitter fight.

The result was beyond expectation.

Ding. The box at Mozur's waist fell down with a soft sound. Already damaged, it opened by itself. A crystal-black skull rolled out. It was the Shadow Divine Fragment.

Seeing this, Link suddenly thought of Morpheus' words, and it dawned on him. "Mozur, it doesn't belong to you. You can't control it."

Mozur had already lost control of his internal control, and he fell from the sky. His eyes were also on the crystal-black skull. He looked regretful, eyes filled with clear obsession. Even if he was dying, his hands were still flapping, trying to grab the skull falling away from him.

In the end, he couldn't catch it, and he'd completely lost control. He exploded with a boom, transforming into a giant fireball that plummeted to the ground. The Shadow Divine Fragment floated down, radiating shocking light. It attracted Link's eyes.

For a moment, Link thought that he was facing the world he'd dreamed of.

According to Dylosen's last words, he had to take this fragment to the Snow Mountain Archmage. But now, he didn't want to.

This beautiful thing is in my hands so it should be mine. Why should I give it away? This thought popped up in Link's mind, scaring him.

His logical mind appeared. No, this is the incarnation of bad luck. Morpheus is dead, Dylosen is dead, and Mozur is dead because of it too. My level is right between them. If I get it, I'll probably die too.

Once this thought appeared, Link's outstretched hand turned and grabbed the box. He caught the skull with the box and quickly closed it. The box was broken, but the blocking effect still worked. Link wasn't as affected.

This was a hot potato. The longer it was in his hands, the more dangerous he would be. He had to send it away.

While Link was trying to figure out how to deal with it, a High Elf sprawled in the dense woods not too far away. He witnessed the entire fight.

Taking out a magic tool, he added in Mana and reported the situation. Mozur lost. The Ferde lord received the Shadow Divine Fragment.

This message traveled to a Silver Storm Sparrow in an isolated bay. It was quickly sent to the Isle of Dawn. After a short pause, it passed into the Void to the Aragu Realm.

In that realm, a woman was looking into a telescope from the majestic divine pavilion. She wore a beautiful gold-red dress. Her face was veiled, and her features were unclear, but her figure was alluring.

After receiving the news, she froze. Turning to look at the vast space outside the pavilion, she sighed after a long while. "It took me more than a century to reach this point, but he'd gotten here in a few short years. This man"

She was Milda who had remained in the Aragu Realm to stop Saroviny long ago. Unfortunately, time had passed, and things had changed.

Sighing lightly, she raised a hand and rotated the ring on her hand. A short while later, the shadows behind her moved. Someone appeared out of thin air.

This person was shrouded in dark purple flames. His features were covered, but he seemed to be middle-aged. After appearing, he said in a low voice, "Saint, what are your orders?"

"Razer, Mozur is dead," Milda said softly.

Razer was the head of the Lava Knights. He was known as Hellfire. He hadn't attacked many times, but everyone who he'd attacked was dead.

"Impossible!" The middle-aged man was shocked.

"It has already happened. I need you to go to Firuman personally. Kill the Ferde lord and take away the Divine Fragment."

"Yes, Saint." Razer nodded. A few seconds later, he asked, "Does Saroviny know?"

"Of course, but don't mind her. She won't dare to object."

"Understood." The dark flames around Razer flared, and he vanished. He was a Level-16 Lava Knight and the third strongest in the Fire Sect. His only fear was Saroviny. As long as she didn'titerfere, he had absolute confidence in completing this mission.

## 625. Moving In From All Directions

In a dark underground palace.

Blue flames danced about in the darkness.

From time to time, a blood-curdling shriek echoed in the air.

In the dim light, a beautiful woman clad in black scaled armor was sitting on a throne made of white human bones. A man in a black battle robe was standing without a word below the throne, a sword dangling from his waist.

Five minutes went by in silence. Finally, the woman spoke out, "With Mozur dead, knowing Milda, she would probably send Razer next."

"Yes, Mistress. My informant told me that he had seen Razer enter the Teleportation Temple. He should be in Firuman by now."

The Teleportation Temple was a place specially built to facilitate the trans-realm journeys of any core member of the Fire Sect. It would not take a genius to know where Razer had teleported off to after Mozur's defeat.

Saroviny smiled. She was extremely beautiful. There was now an almost palpable air of darkness swirling around her after centuries of refining it. Though the edges of her lips were curved up in a smile, her black eyes exuded nothing but malice as they gleamed with a cold, piercing light.

The black-robed attendant sank into a deeper bow before her. He knew just how terrible the Queen of Darkness' fury was. An unspeakable fate awaited those who dared slight her in any way. The deaths of his predecessors were a testament to that fact.

Ten minutes later, Saroviny's smile faded. She then said, "I think it's time we take things into our own hands. We can't just stay on the sidelines forever and let Milda hog all the glory now, can we?"

"But Mistress, none of us are a match for Razer. He's just too strong."

"Which is why I'm prepared to go there myself!" said Saroviny with a smile.

The attendant was stunned. "Mistress, you would be publicly standing against Milda if you do so. I don't think the lord would be pleased about this"

Before he could even finish his sentence, he realized that Saroviny was coldly glaring at him. Her eyes were now flashing dangerously. He quickly rephrased his words.

"Of course, Mistress, your wish is my command. If you still insist on doing this, I will make the necessary arrangements for you as soon as possible."

"Quick thinking. I would hate to have to replace you so soon." Saroviny laid back in her ivory throne. She then said lazily, "You don't need to do anything. Just go about your business as usual. I don't want anyone to know that I have left the temple. You better keep all this to yourself."

"Of course, Mistress," the attendant said, nodding furiously. From his perspective, this was his mistress' way of showing that she still preferred not to go against their lord's will. The consequences of her own actions concerned her still, and she would never go so far as to violate the pact that had been honored by both parties for so long.

This way, their lord would not lose his temper, and the attendant would not be part of the collateral damage of his mistress' actions. He sighed in relief at this.

The black-robed attendant then said with a low voice, "Mistress, I also heard that they are now up against the lord of Ferde, who had come to the Aragu realm once with Milda a few centuries ago. Not only did the man kill Mozur, but he is also now in possession of a divine fragment. I don't think it would be easy to deal with him right now."

Saroviny waved an impatient hand at him. "I already know about that. Alright, you can leave now. Close the door behind you. And make sure no one comes knocking on it for the next two months!"

The temporal difference between Aragu and Firuman had begun shrinking as the two realms grew closer and closer. In the past, two months in Aragu was the equivalent of half a day in Firuman, However, right now, two months in Aragu now equaled four days in Firuman. This was more than enough time for Saroviny to prepare herself.

Without another word, the attendant hurriedly left the palace. Once outside, he closed the doors behind him as instructed, cutting off the dark palace from the outside world entirely.

When the attendant was gone, Saroviny said under her breath with a cold smirk, "What an obedient little puppy."

Though he was officially Saroviny's retainer, the attendant also served as an extra pair of eyes for the Inferno Archmage, observing her every move and making sure she did not step out of line.

In the past, Saroviny would never dare challenge the Inferno Archmage's authority. However, things had changed.

She stood up from her ivory throne. Then, a magic seal glowed on the wall beside her. A door appeared on it. Behind the door was a secret room.

Once inside the secret room, the wall sealed itself shut behind her. There was no trace of the magical door on it. The secret room was a bit small; it was at least ten square feet wide. A seven-foot-tall statue stood in the middle of the room. A peculiar light seemed to be radiating from it as it alternated between light and darkness, reality and illusion. Anyone could tell that there was nothing ordinary about the statue.

Saroviny walked up to the statue and then knelt before it. She muttered, "Father, your daughter has returned."

The statue glowed for a moment. Then, Saroviny could hear a clear masculine voice echo in her mind. "Oh, I already know what you're going to tell me. The Shadow Divine Fragment that is now in Link's possession would definitely suit you. It belongs to you, my child."

Saroviny was overjoyed to hear this. With the divine fragment, she would be able to light up the Sacred Fire, ascend to godhood herself and extricate herself from under the Inferno Archmage's thumb. She would soon be able to stand on equal footing with him. No, she could do even better than that, since her father was the one and only Ruler of Light and Darkness!

Saroviny then asked, "Father, how should I deal with Link? Should I obliterate him? Or should I sacrifice his soul in your name?"

"Give him to me. I'm forging the leader of my Battle Seraphim right now. His soul would make a fine ingredient." He then added, "Do not underestimate him. He is a giftedfighter."

"I understand, Father," said Saroviny. A hundred years ago, she would not have been happy to hear this from him. She usually had a competitive streak when it came to matters concerning Link. However, the only thing she cared about right now was attaining godhood and freedom from the Inferno Archmage. She could not be bothered with anything else.

Saroviny had heard much about Link over the last hundred years. She had also dueled with him once in the past. She knew from experience that he was a man not to be trifled with.

"Good. You can go now," said the clear, resounding voice in her head.

Ripples soon formed around Saroviny until her surroundings grew blurry. The blur around her persisted for three seconds. Then, the ripples subsided, and her surroundings cleared. She soon realized that she had left the underground room beneath the Fire Sect's Temple and was now standing in the middle of a dark forest.

There was something familiar about the forest she was now in. Realization then dawned on her. "The Black Forest. What a wonderful place to teleport me into."

A black light flashed from the surface of her body. When it faded, she was now wearing a black battle robe. After finding her bearings, she quickly sped off in the direction of the Skeletal Fortress.

Saroviny was no longer someone given to making rash decisions. As she was not at all familiar with the state of Firuman, her safest option now was to hide in the shadows and find someone to act as her proxy.

As a Level-16 master, she was now moving so fast towards her destination that she appeared only as a streak of light in the forest.

The Snow Mountain Archmage of the Aragu Empire naturally would not sit idly by as the people of the Fire Sect swarmed around Firuman like sharks that had just gotten a whiff of blood in the water. Around the same time as Razer's arrival in Firuman, a bolt of lightning struck an isolated corner of Girvent Forest out of nowhere.

The bolt of lightning set the forest ablaze when it appeared. An old man with greying white harsepped out of the inferno, leaning against a long magic wand as he walked.

The old man's cheeks were hollow. The power he was exuding from his body was no more than Level-10. The only intriguing thing about him was his eyes, which were a pristine blue. At times, they glittered with a light which was as white as snow.

Panting slightly, the old man then began his journey towards Ferde in the southeast.

Three days ago, every timeline the old man had been able to foresee led up only to his own death. However, something had changed. He managed to discover a timeline which did not end in his demise.

The key to his continued existence lied in Ferde, in the Firuman realm. More accurately, his life now rested in the hands of the lord of Ferde.

This was his chance to make his final stand against death! He needed to seize it, whatever the cost might be!

## 626. Archmage Tutor

By using the Divine Fragment's curse to kill Mozur, Link had created a huge disturbance, but he didn't know about these changes in the background.

While the outside world was changing dramatically, he and Eliard had just arrived at the border of Ferde.

"Eliard, wake up!" Link raised his voice at Eliard.

"Huh? Oh, sorry, that thing is too tempting." Eliard whacked his forehead and then shook his head, forcing his eyes away from the wooden box hanging from Link's waist.

The box contained the Divine Fragment. For some reason, it radiated with a tempting aura. It made Eliard feel that it contained a world-class delicacy while he was a vagrant who hadn't eaten for three whole days.

He also felt that if he possessed the box, he would immediately have all the good in the world. He would be the happiest person in the world and never have any regrets.

This feeling was 100 times better than his first time sleeping with his first love Ailina and his current love Evelina. He didn't know how to resist.

Tearing his gaze away, Eliard could clearly feel a voice telling him, Just look again. It's alright. Link won't yell at me Why can Link hold it? Why can't I? Yeah, it's better if I hold it It's better ifif it's mineonly mine

The voice was littered with pass and had an indescribable persuasiveness. Eliard wanted to stop, but he couldn't. He was embarsed by his thoughts, but it didn't stop him from thinking them.

Link will never agree to let me have that treasure. How can he? Look, he's going to scold me again. If I ask him, he'll even use the lord's authority to punish me How should I get it then?

Under the nameless desire's urging, a thought that scared him finally popped out. What if I find a chance tomake Link disappear?

Once this thought appeared, his pallor changed. He gulped and quickly looked up. When he saw Link's back, he lowered his head. His eyes stared at the ground, darkening.

The thought only lasted for an instant. Horrible guilt seized Eliard's heart. No! How can I think that? I wouldn't be where I am now without Link. I have my beautiful lover, Evelina, and prestigious status. Link never shows off his lord's authority. He is my best friend and my comrade. We're fighting together to create a human paradise. How can I think like that?

All the questions dissipated the shadows in Eliard's heart. His eyes brightened again. But it only lasted a few seconds before another thought popped up. Will Link take the Divine Fragment for himself and use it to become a god?

He couldn't repress this thought. It was like a seed underground that had gotten watered. It broke through the soil bravely. Eliard's logical and ethical mind ripped it out, but more and more kept growing.

Suddenly, Link stopped walking and said, "Eliard, this can't continue."

"Huh, what?" Eliard's mind cleared up. He realized that those chaotic thoughts still existed, but they didn't affect him as much. After all, people needed company.

Ding. Link tapped the air and the space before Eliard solidified into a clear mirror. He saw his reflection in the mirror.

There was a familiar yet strange face. The contours were familiar, but the expression was not. His brows were tightly knitted, and his eyes were dark. The facial muscles were tense, and the corners of his lips were tight. It was a menacing and evil face.

Eliard was completely shocked. He felt his face in disbelief. "How is this possible?"

"The face is the reflection of one's soul. The Divine Fragment is tempting you right now." Link studied his good friend's eyes, but Eliard's gaze shied away. This would have never happened in the past.

Link was shockednot at Eliard but at the Divine Fragment's power. To be honest, he'd been affected deeply too. However, he'd seen Morpheus, Dylosen, and especially Mozur die with his own eyes. His heart could always warn him, so he didn't fall in too deep. It seemed that Eliard had completely fallen.

"Eliard, this Divine Fragment is a curse. It will bring bad luck to you and I and Ferde. You've seen how powerful it is at tempting people. The more people there are, the stronger it gets. If we bring it to Ferde, who knows what will happen?"

By then, Ferde may fall into internal chaos due to it. It might even collapse.

Eliard was frightened, but the voice rose up again. See, see. He said he wouldn't bring it back to Ferde. He must want it for himself. That must be it.

As soon as that idea was planted, Link yelled, "Eliard, bastard!"

With that, Link suddenly reached out and slapped Eliard crisply. It dazed Eliard.

As the saying went, you could hit someone but not slap their face. Even an unbothered person would forever remember a heavy slap. It was even more so for Eliard. As best friends, other than that fight at Tutor Herrera's door, they'd never even gotten angry with each other, let alone slap each other.

Elard didn't even know how to react. He just clutched his face and glared at Link in angry shock.

Unexpectedly, Link's fury disappeared after the slap. "Okay, are you awake now?"

"Awake?" Eliard was confused, but he soon felt the change. The dark thoughts weakened a lot. They still remained, but they'd become fleeting clouds. They no longer affected his mind. When he thought back to those terrifying ideas, he found them incredible.

"Link, I" Eliard felt strange and embarsed.

Link waved his hand. "Don't, I understand. When I first got the fragment, I had the same thoughts. Now, we have to get rid of the fragment."

He was a powerful Soul Magician now. He didn't slap Eliard just to slap him. He used this insulting action to sway Eliard's heart. When a flaw appeared in his soul, Link yelled further to create an advanced defense barrier in Eliard's soul.

The entire process was traceless but effective. It successfully helped Eliard escape from the fragment's influence. Of course, this was only temporary. As long as the Divine Fragment was still beside them, Eliard could fall back into it. They had to get rid of it as soon as possible.

After he recovered his senses, Eliard felt belated fear. He didn't dare look at the wooden box again. "You're right. We can't let this into Ferde Link, are you preparing to go to the Aragu Realm now?"

"That's the plan." Link's expression was strange. He looked to the Grinth Forest in the northwest. "But for some reason, a voice keeps telling me that the forest is the right direction."

"Soul Premonition?" Eliard was a powerful Magician too. He knew that all strong Magicians had this ability. Link also had studied Secret spells before.

Link was a bit hesitant. "I think so, but to be honest, the Divine Fragment is too powerful. The enemies watching it are also impossibly powerful. I don't know if the premonition is mine or if some creature is affecting me."

The premonition was a good thing in lower-level battles. But at this level, most Magicians had touched on this field before. The so-called Soul Premonition wasn't as trustworthy anymore. If he relied on it for directions, he could walk rightito a trap.

Eliard had no solutions. "Which path do you choose? If you want to go with logic, it's Aragu. If you want to follow your gut, let's visit the forest. I'll go with you either way."

It was hard to choose.

Every physical appearance was a reflection of the heart. Right now, he was in a mess, so he decided to tidy it bit by bit. He looked carefully at the root and tip of each train of thought.

A few seconds later, Link opened his eyes. They were clear as water.

In that instant, Eliard was shocked by the clarity of Link's eyes. They were as pure as a child's eyes and as clean as a pool of water. But they also carried such wisdom. It was impossible to describe. He'd never seen this look on another man.

He believed that Link had the answer.

"To Grinth. There should be an elder waiting for us there," Link murmured dreamily.

"Elder? Do you know who it is?"

"We'll know when we see him. He shouldn't be an enemy." Link walked towards the forest; Eliard hurried after him.

The two were very fast. Around fifteen minutes later, they were at the edge of the forest. There was a clear creek with a flat stone beside it. An elder with a snowy robe leaned on his wand and sat there, smiling at the two.

When Link and Eliard approached, the elder said, "Ferde lord, you didn't disappoint me."

Eliard doubted the elder's identity, but Link understood. He bowed and said, "Archmage, it is my honor to see you."

With that, Link handed over the wooden box with the Shadow Divine Fragment. He didn't want to hold it a second longer.

Unexpectedly, the Snow Mountain Archmage didn't accept it. He shook his head. "Fate has told me that now is not the time yet."

"What?" Link wanted to throw the thing down and leave.

"A powerful enemy is hurrying over. You and your companion need more strength. There isn't enough time. Let us start."

With that, a magic book appeared in the Archmage's hands. He flipped to a page and pointed at a magic seal that was too complicated to be ever replicated. "Level-17 magic seal: World of Ice and Snow. Learn it in three days!"

Ever since he came to this world, Link had managed to master all sorts of powerful spells.

He was of the opinion that there was no spell in this world that he could not master without a bit of hard work. He grew even more confident of this after having mastered all the intricacies spatial magic.

However, he was not so sure about this anymore.

The reason was this: the Level-17 spell, "World of Ice and Snow," that the Snow Mountain Archmage had taught him seemed almost impossible for him to master. Originally a Level-19 spell, the Archmage had simplified it considerably in order to facilitate Link's learning process.

Even so, this less powerful version of the spell still resisted Link's efforts to understand it.

After spending half a day trying to master the spell at a riverbank near the edge of Girvent Forest, Link sighed, cradling his head in dismay. "Your Majesty, I fear I may not have the capacity to comprehend this power of yours."

Eliard, who had tagged along after Link to listen to the Archmage's teachings, already had a glazed look on his face. This did not mean that he had no intention of learning from the man. Eliard simply could not keep up with the Snow Mountain Archmage's train of thought. Every time he tried to force himself to listen to the Archmage's every word, he would always end up having a throbbing headache.

When Link had said his piece, silence fell upon the forest once more. The only sound they could hear now was the sound of water flowing down the river.

Finally, the Snow Mountain Archmage heaved a long sigh. "Maybe I'm expecting too much from you."

The enemies they had to go up against this time were incredibly powerful. Every one of them was a Level-16 master. In order to defeat them, Level-16 power would not suffice. Only Level-17 power and above would ensure their victory.

However, Link only had Level-14 power at the moment. Though his knowledge of the mystic arts was considerably more profound than the average Level-14 master, it was still not enough for him to make a three-level jump from his current power level.

When the Snow Mountain Archmage was done, the three of them once more sank into silence.

They all knew that if none of them were able to acquire Level-17 power right now, they would most likely be slaughtered by their enemies. The Archmage might be able to live just a little bit longer. However, he would lose the Shadow Divine Fragment in the process. It would only be a matter of time until death caught up to him.

The future ahead of them seemed so bleak and hopeless right now, it was almost suffocating.

"I'm just going to take a walk around here for a bit," said Link suddenly, breaking the silence in the forest.

The Archmage nodded. "Alright then. Try to clear your head a bit. We still have a few days left, so I really do hope you don't give up just yet."

The old man sounded almost optimistic.

Link nodded back at the Archmage without another word. Patting a despondent-looking Eliard's shoulder, he got up to his feet and began walking along the river.

The clear water flowed rapidly down the river with a tinkling sound. Oval stones polished by the flow of the river filled the riverbed. Green-feathered wrens flew about from treetop to treetop, warbling sweetly at the top of their lungs. It was springtime, and all manner of flowers were in full bloom to the celebrate the occasion.

The scene before Link was indescribably beautiful.

However, Link was not in a mood to appreciate the beauty of nature at the moment. The Archmage's magical teachings were still buzzing in his head as he strolled along the river absently like a zombie.

He had not yet given up. As he only had a few days left to master this absurdly difficult spell, the only thing he could do right now was to wrestle with it until he figured it out completely.

As he walked on, lost in his thoughts, all of a sudden, Link's ears pricked up to the sound of splashing water ahead of him. In a corner, he saw a 16-foot-high waterfall gushing down a slope. Beneath the sunlight, a small rainbow had appeared in the white mist which steamed from the foot of the waterfall.

Link came to a halt in front of such beautiful scenery, completely entranced by it.

Suddenly, a thought sprang up in his mind. "The Delas Space-Time Lock... the transformation of snow to ice... the Lafarsen Magical Conversion... the formation of a glacial realm Hold on, I've got it!"

Inspiration struck him like lightning. The tightly knotted-up magical problems he had been wrestling with all this time finally seemed to loosen up a bit. He could now see the first glimmer of an actual solution for them.

Sitting down on a rock near the small waterfall, Link excitedly took out his magical notebook and began writing out his calculations.

Link soon lost track of time as he scribbled out his calculations. Every time he came across a hurdle or two, he could hear a disembodied voice whispering instructions in his mind. The voice served as a key to unlock the subsequent stages of his solution. Link was able to make further progress in his work by following its instructions.

The light around him gradually dimmed until night fell. Then, his surroundings brightened, and the sun appeared once more in the sky. It then set yet again, bringing the darkness of night back into the forest. Just as the birds in the forest titered restlessly to greet a new dawn, Link finally set his pencil down with a long sigh.

He had diligently made his calculations in accordance with the concepts behind the Level-17 magic seal, "World of Ice and Snow." Though he still could not wrap his head around the spell, this did not mean that his efforts were all for nothing. In fact, he had invented an entirely new spell with immense power.

Behind him, a voice spoke out, "This Level-16 Pinnacle spell is incredibly powerful. However, it is not a spell that you'll be able to cast by yourself."

Link turned around and saw the Snow Mountain Archmage standing behind him with an intrigued look on his face.

The Archmage was amazed that a Level-14 Magician was able to decipher a Level-16 Pinnacle spell. Even though he had given Link a few pointers halfway through, the hurdles Link encountered were not that difficult to overcome. If given a bit more time, the Archmage was sure that Link would be able to solve them eventually. He had rarely come across such an affinity for the mystic arts in anyone, even back in his own realm.

It was such a shame that there were so many things going on in the realm right now. No one would be able to stand in Link's way if he were allowed to spend the next ten years honing his magical skills.

Unfortunately, to a Level-14 Magician like Link, this Level-16 spell was just beyond his grasp.

However, Link did not seem disappointed. He looked at the Snow Mountain Archmage and said, "You said that you couldn't bring back the divine fragment to Aragu in your current form... You need my help to do so, don't you?"

The Snow Mountain Archmage nodded. His main opponent was the Inferno Archmage. In order to prevent the Snow Mountain Archmage from laying his hands on the divine fragment, the Inferno Archmage had laid out a lot of traps in his path. The Snow Mountain Archmage could break through the barrier between realms with his current Level-10 form without drawing attention to himself. However, there was no way he would be able to bring the divine fragment with him on his way back.

"If that's the case, I don't think teaching me one Level-17 spell would be enough to compensate me for the risks I'm taking to help you," said Link with a faint smile. There was an inscrutable expression on his face. However, what he said was right. This was a matter of life and death. The Archmage would have to offer something of equal value in exchange for Link's help.

The Archmage remained silent. A few seconds later, he asked, "Do you really think I can help you increase your power level?"

"You should be able to help me reach Level-16... This shouldn't be a problem for a Level-19 Archmage like you, should it?" said Link, smiling.

He was not making such a demand on baseless assumptions, but rather according to what he knew about the Fire Sect. There were presently three Level-16 masters in the Fire Sect. Even Milda and Saroviny were still at Level-16. As far as he knew, there were no Level-17 masters in the Sect. This could not be a coincidence.

The Snow Mountain Archmage nodded with a sigh. He then shook his head. "The Inferno Archmage may be able to do such a thing, but I can't."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't have a divine fragment with me to store the power of belief from my followers. If I were to help you increase your power level, I would require this power."

"The power of belief?" repeated Link, stunned. He suddenly remembered something about the Shadow Stalker Morpheus back in the game world.

After successfully killing Morpheus, the Shadow Fortress would drop at a certain rate a couple of mysterious black crystals for players to collect. These crystals were known as Shadow Crystals.

These Shadow Crystals were mission items. They served absolutely no use to the player and had no descriptions about their properties. However, the Legendary Magician Eliard who was already at Level-17 at that point would begin offering high-value rewards for any player who managed to gather these crystals for him. There was no limit to how many crystals you could give Eliard. The more crystals a player could give him, the better his reward would be.

Strangely enough, after giving out this quest to the player, Eliard's power began to increase steadily. Every time the game released a new expansion, Eliard's power would increase by a huge margin. When Nozama entered the scene, Eliard was already on his way to godhood.

Thinking about this now, Link suspected that the Shadow Crystals must contain the power of belief that Morpheus managed to accumulate in his lifetime. The Legendary Magician Eliard must have figured out a way to convert these crystals into power.

Link then asked, "If I provide you with an alternative source of this power of belief, do you think you'll be able to help me?"

The Snow Mountain Archmage raised a brow. "Yes, I may be able to give you the power you seek with the aid of the Shadow Divine Fragment."

Link was pleased to hear this. "Come with me. There's a place I need to show you."

This time, Link traveled with the Snow Mountain Archmage alone. Eliard returned to Ferde. He was needed to organize everything and prepare against the upcoming enemy.

Link was now as fast as lightning. Less than 20 minutes later, he brought the Snow Mountain Archmage to the destroyed Shadow Fortress.

When they reached the ruins, the Snow Mountain Archmage's expression changed before Link could even speak. "This place really has the Belief Crystal!"

He sped to the ruins and waved his wand. The fallen rocks all flew back from the force field. Soon, the Archmage cleared all the broken rocks in the ruins, revealing the smooth and flat land.

The ground seemed to be made of lapis lazuli. The zone was around 90 feet long and 150 feet wide. One couldn't see anywhere a secret door could be hidden. The Archmage walked over and circled the lapis lazuli and smiled thinly.

"It's hidden well, but the method is too low. It can only fool amateurs."

As soon as he finished, faint gold light shone from his wand. The light was like a probe that scanned the lazuli. A few seconds later, it stopped somewhere, and the light grew brighter.

Standing to the side, Link could clearly see many faint black veins under the light. Even though the Archmage had pointed it out, the veins were still unclear. They just looked like regular veins while the lazuli was still a sheet of metal. There were no flaws.

Link wouldn't think that there were any problems here. He couldn't tell. This meant that Morpheus' methods had surpassed his knowledge.

"Open!" the Snow Mountain Archmage exclaimed softly. The dark gold light coming out of the wand instantly condensed into a white-gold beam. Like a living worm, it wriggled into one of the veins. Then something miraculous happened.

The faint veins had been hidden, but when the light dug into it, they floated up like blood vessels under skin. Then they started glowing. Under the glow, the lazuli started melting, dissolving, and retreating. Finally, the originally complete piece of lazuli turned into a cellar of more than ten feet wide. It was shrouded in black mist that obstructed Link's vision but not the Archmage.

"Wow, so many things. This Shadow Stalker really did hit it rich." The Archmage's voice was filled with joy. This was the first time Link saw him with emotion.

He pointed his wand at the cellar. Whoosh. Something jumped out. Beside him, Link looked over and saw a dark dagger-shaped crystal in the Archmage's hand. At a glance, the crystal was translucent and colorless. But after a few seconds of being in that area, it became shrouded in shadows. As time went on, the shadows thickened until it turned into heavy mist. The crystal hid inside and disappeared from sight.

"The Shadow Crystal is formed by the believers' belief in the Shadow Stalker Morpheus. There are so many here. It must be because Morpheus only takes and rarely blesses his believers with divine spells. A god and mortal must have a mutually beneficial relationship. No wonder he died." The Snow Mountain Archmage had a face of disdain. If he'd accumulated so many Belief Crystals, he would have become a true god long ago. Not only was Morpheus unable to become a god, but he was also even killed by three juniors, the most powerful at Level-14. It was hilarious.

With that, the Snow Mountain Archmage looked to either side and suddenly sighed. "Dylosen was a pity. I hadn't expected much from him, but he became my last hope."

Sighing again, he turned to Link. "There are many Shadow Crystals here. Each one contains miscellaneous Shadow Power. I didn't meld with the Shadow Divine Fragment, so I can't turn them into pure power. It's a pity. You could've used them to enter Level-18, but you can only enter mid-Level-16 now."

"Mid-Level-16? That's enough!" Link's eyes brightened. His opponent was also Level-16. If he had this power, he would be at the same level. He wouldn't get creamed.

As long as he was at the same level, he would be confident in winning. This confidence came from all his past victories.

The Snow Mountain Archmage nodded. "There isn't much time. I can feel their power approaching. We must hurry! Give me the Divine Fragment, and you start preparing!"

Link did as told.

After the Snow Mountain Archmage received the Divine Fragment, he clutched it with his left hand while holding his wand in his right. His wand danced; crystals kept jumping out of the cellar.

Immediately after, the black-crystal skull shone with dark watery light. They wrapped around the crystals like tentacles. Whenever light got to a crystal, it would glow. The glow was dark purple at first. Slowly, the light divided into different levels. The outer level became as clean and gentle as moonlight while the inner level became pure black.

"The power is coming. Catch!" the Archmage called.

Link focused and guarded his mind. He stood there without moving. An instant later, the pure moonlight flowed towards him. When it got close to his heart, it buried in and disappeared.

That moment, Link felt his chest heat up. His heart started pounding as loudly as thunder. If Link's body wasn't as powerful as it was, his heart would probably burst now.

But if his heart didn't burst and could bear the pressure, this was the best way to quickly meld with outer power.

The heart was a person's core. Whether it was actual blood or power, they both converged in the heart to be cycled through the body. When the power entered Link's heart, it melted into his blood. Link's blood instantly started bubbling. If the outside world could see inside him, it would be a terrifying scene of boiling lava.

Under the powerful pressure of the heart, the boiling "lava" surged through Link's blood vessels. During this, pure energy kept shooting out from the vessels, nurturing the organs along the way, even including Link's brain.

With this nourishment, Link's body started strengthening with his high recovery speed. The strengthening process sounded nice, but it also meant that his body was changing dramatically. During this process, his various nerves were stimulated, making Link feel all sorts of things.

For example, Link felt indescribable things from inside his body. Numbness, itchiness, pain, stuffiness It was impossible to describe everything.

Faced with this, Link could only grit his teeth and remind himself that the outside was a reflection of the inside. He stood without moving, letting the Archmage pour power into him, letting his body change.

The Snow Mountain Archmage didn't change; Shadow Crystals kept getting used up. Most of the power was actually wasted while only a bit was transformed and added to Link's body. But because there were so many crystals all at Level-19, only 10% of the power was unimaginable to Link.

When half of the crystals were used, Link felt his brain shake. Something seemed to have broken free. His soul suddenly became extremely free. His mind was abnormally transparent. He could practically do whatever he wanted.

This feeling was amazing.

He didn't know why it was like this and didn't think too much into the change because power was still flying into him.

After a while, he suddenly felt his heart heat up. It was as if his heart had become a red-hot piece of steel. But even though it was hot, Link didn't feel pain for some reason. Instead, he felt so comfortable. There was also an indescribable feeling of power. He felt that he could topple a mountain just by blowing.

He didn't know what was happening, but the Snow Mountain Archmage saw everything clearly.

Right now, Link was covered in a layer of fiery light. At first, it had been as serene as moonlight. Gradually, it turned golden like sunlight. The range expanded until spinning images appeared in the air.

The images were unclear at first. The specifics weren't visible. As more power was added, they cleared up. Now, there were huge golden dragons flying and roaring in the sky.

At this time, the light around Link grew thicker. There were more dragons as well. In the end, there were dragons within ten miles. It was like a land of dragons.

The Snow Mountain Archmage knew this was Link's territory. He stood inside, calming observing the characteristics.

Five times more Dragon Power, Level-17 spell immunity, Instant Flash at will, ultimate dragon form Ooh, nice. The Firuman Realm really blesses this man. He must be blessed to reach this level.

The characteristics of the territory were basically all the lifesaving-tricks Link used before. Now, they'd become solidified as parts of his territory.

There were weaker and stronger territories. It depended on the owner and also the environment. The reason was simple. The territory was the result of the fight between the owner and the realm's principles. It couldn't only depend on one side.

The Snow Mountain Archmage knew countless people and had seen countless territories. He'd never seen one as powerful as Link's. If he wasn't blessed by the realm, he wouldn't reach this level.

Ding. The last Shadow Crystal was used up, and the power input stopped. Link kept standing there quietly. Around ten seconds later, he closed his eyes.

He'd just received the power and couldn't control it yet. Golden light poured out of his eyes as soon as they opened, stretching on for three feet. The dragons in the sky started roaring too. They were soundless, but the mightiness seemed able to destroy the world.

A long while later, Link started collecting his power. The territory and phenomenon disappeared one by one. Finally, only golden veins remained in his eyes.

"Archmage, thank you for your help," Link said.

The Snow Mountain Archmage nodded lightly and handed the Divine Fragment back to Link. "It's up to you to bring this back to my true self."

"I will do my best."

Link took the fragment. Now, he could easily resist the fragment's temptation. This meant his soul had become stronger and more perfect.

Putting the fragment away, Link's ears twitched. He chuckled. "They're almost here."

"Indeed." The Snow Mountain Archmage nodded. "Are you ready?"

Link unsheathed the Ode of a Full Moon and caressed the blade with his left hand. Golden veins snaked around the blade, turning the plain thing into a dazzling sword.

"My sword and I are ready."

## 627. The Final Battle Dragged On For A Century

On a Storm Silver Sparrow ship out on the ocean

The leader of the Lava Knights Razer was standing on the deck with a sword in his hand, gazing off into the distance with a slight frown.

A while ago, he had sensed an incredible surge of power being set off 1000 miles away in the distance. There was a sudden pang of panic in his heart. He could feel that whoever this power belonged to might just be as powerful as he was.

Who could it be? thought Razer. The appearance of such a powerful player had raised the stakes in the Lava Knight's plan to assault Ferde.

Despite how dangerous the situation now seemed, the fact remained that the divine fragment must not be allowed to fall into the Snow Mountain Archmage's hands. The High Elves had also worked tirelessly on setting up countermeasures against the defenses of Ferde's Mage Tower in order to ensure the success of this operation. There was no going back at this point.

We'll just have to finish this as quickly as possible! Razer tightened his grip around the handle of his sword. He then turned towards the ship's cabin and shouted, "Full speed ahead!"

With a soft hum, the magic seals on the ship glowed, and the ship sped off across the ocean's surface in a blur.

At the same time, a battle airship was flying towards the South.

This airship resembled those of Ferde physically. However, as opposed to its blue-white Ferde counterpart, this vessel was painted black. With a closer look, one would also notice that its design was not as refined as the typical Ferde airship. It also seemed to be flying unsteadily in the air, as if it was about to drop out of the sky at any moment.

Eugene, Molina, and Saroviny were currently inside the airship's main cabin, along with the Yabba pilot responsible for flying the airship.

Eugene and Molina were the allies Saroviny had sought out in the Black Forest. As followers of the God of Destruction and enemies of Ferde, none of them were too fond of Link. On the basis of having a common enemy, an alliance was naturally struck between them.

"Mistress, Ferde's Scorched City is just 1500 miles up ahead," reported the Yabba pilot. Just then, sudden turbulence hit the airship. The whole vessel began shaking uncontrollably, and everyone swayed about unsteadily in it.

"I would have traded this bloody airship for a broken down horse carriage in a heartbeat," spat Saroviny. If it were not for the fact that this airship was capable of getting them to Ferde quickly, she would not have gotten on board in the first place. She swore that this would be her last time flying on this accursed flying contraption.

Eugene did not say a word. Ever since she was tricked by Molina, she had become reserved. Molina began apologizing to Saroviny. "My apologies, mistress. We are currently lacking in competent Yabba engineers to provide you with a more comfortable ride."

"Forget it. It's a good thing we don't have to work with each other that often," said Saroviny, waving her hand. She was about to continue what she was saying, but then she pursed her lips. Her face suddenly grew serious.

"Is something the matter, mistress?" Eugene sensed that something was amiss. However, she could not tell exactly what it was.

Throughout their journey, Saroviny had been maintained a haughty air about her. Just then, the haughty look on her face had given way to a grave expression. Ignoring Eugene, she stepped out of the cabin and climbed onto the deck, where the wind roared wildly.

Saroviny was able to pick up more information from the wind outside the cabin. I could feel an abnormal elemental disturbance in the air. The ambient power in it has gone down by 0.5 percent. Has someone in this realm actually acquired their own realm?

The number of masters a realm was able to support was extremely limited. A noticeable drop would occur in the realm's power concentration in response to the appearance of a Level-16 master. This was due to the high levels of power they would be able to store in their body.

In theory, a realm could produce at least a thousand Level-16 masters with its natural power concentration. However, in reality, a realm would only be able to hold no more than 20 such masters in it.

As the number of masters increased, a realm's Mana concentration would decrease, making it even more difficult for others to level up until no one else would be able to do so.

Still shaken by this, Saroviny then felt a power fluctuation in the air, which instantly confirmed all her suspicions. Someone has definitely reached Level-16 in the South. Considering that their power reeks of the light element, this person must be an enemy of mine!

She had only planned to observe the upcoming battle in Ferde from afar and, if possible, steal the divine fragment amid the chaos.

However, after sensing this powerful master's presence, Saroviny hesitated for a few seconds on the deck of the airship. Finally, she returned to the cabin and said, "Change course for the Golle Kingdom. I want to meet this newly promoted master personally. It would be best if we could end him then and there. I can't allow such a dangerous person to interfere with my plans in the future."

Eugene and Molina looked at each other. Since Saroviny had given out her order, they had no choice but to comply. Molina said to the airship's pilot, "You heard the mistress, fly around Ferde and head for the Golle Kingdom."

The airship immediately changed its direction and began flying southward. After a while, Saroviny barked, "Pick up the pace, full speed ahead!"

The airship's pilot glanced at Molina, who nodded. He then began channeling even more Mana into the airship.

Hum Ksssch The airship trembled as its speed began to increase by 50 percent. Soon, it was flying at 1300 miles per hour towards the South, leaving a long black arc behind it in the sky.

Forty minutes later, the airship had reached the Golle Kingdom's domain. A thick forest appeared in front of them. From the airship, everyone on the airship could see a valley open up in the forest, at the far end of which stood the crumbling remains of a building.

With her extraordinary eyesight, Saroviny spotted two humanoid shapes standing near the ruins. Straining her eyes, she could make out a black-haired youth and a white-haired old man standing side by side on the ground. The two of them were looking back at her as well with a faint smile on their faces.

At the sight of the black-haired youth, the painful memory of tasting defeat for the first time sprang out from the depths of Saroviny's mind. Even though more than a century had passed, she was still able to recall it vividly, as if it had only just happened yesterday. This was because the young man in the valley was the person responsible for her first ever defeat.

Saroviny growled through gritted teeth, "I can't believe it's you, Link!"

Since her defeat in his hands, she had imagined herself subjecting Link to all kinds of humiliation and torture she could think of and watching him beg for mercy on the ground. Alas, she never had the chance to act on those sadistic impulses until today, for the real Link had appeared before her.

If she managed to defeat him this time, she would be able to trample on him for real as she had fantasized herself doing over and over again for the last 100 years.

Eugene and Molina had also noticed the two figures in the valley. Eugene said in a low voice, "Mistress, that's the lord of Ferde. Do be careful."

Molina did not say a word. She immediately activated the Blessing of Destruction spell.

Saroviny smiled coldly. Purple-black destructive light began burning around her body. It then spread out rapidly, covering a 20-square-mile area around her.

Light had vanished without a trace in Saroviny's domain. Black magical flames had completely enveloped the ground, while the sky seemed to have been razed by a black flaming vortex. A silhouette was now zipping about in the air menacingly. At that moment, the whole world had turned into a horrid hellscape.

"Eugene, Molina, you two deal with the old fool. Link is mine!" ordered Saroviny. Without waiting for an answer, she leaped out of the airship and began descending towards Link at lightning speed.

Before she even reached her mark, her voice reverberated across the heavens.

"Link, today you die!"

Saroviny used to like using the whip. But after coming to Aragu, she changed to the sword to forever remember the opponent who'd blocked her from success.

Right now, she charged at Link with a sword. Her territory contained sword techniques. Hundreds of feet later, she disappeared. She transformed into a dark 300-foot-long sword going straight to Link!

With her current speed, she could pass through the dozens of miles within four seconds.

Her territory was called Dark Throne. After coming to the Firuman Realm, its power was reduced, but she was still three times faster. It also gave her attacks a horrible corrosive nature.

To strong fighters like them, what kind of corrosiveness could be described as horrible? One would know after looking at the situation surrounding the Saroviny's dark sword.

Wherever the sword passed by, there would be countless black threasstretching to all directions. At a glance, they looked blood vessels under a person's skin. At closer inspection, one would realize that these were actually spatial cracks.

Even space couldn't withstand this corrosiveness and broke down. The creatures inside the space would naturally be unable to withstand it either.

In Aragu, Saroviny had used her territory and sword techniques to become the best Warrior below the Archmages. Even Milda wasn't her match in a direct fight.

The huge sword flew forward. But Link, its target, seemed unbothered. He kept standing there without moving. He didn't seem to make any defenses either. He even mentally contacted the Snow Mountain Archmage beside him.

Saroviny is like an old friend. I can't believe she's reached this level. Her talent is quite nice. Link was using the Spiritual Transmission spell.

The Snow Mountain Archmage was a bit more "proper" than him. Her combat ability is quite powerful. Don't underestimate her. She has a trick called the Finger of Death. In Aragu, only that old Fire guy and I can bear it.

Not bad, quite powerful. Link nodded. Saroviny's attack indeed seemed scary.

The Snow Mountain Archmage only said that much. After that, he looked to the people behind Saroviny. Oh, one is a Saint of the God of Destruction. The other is a Soul Snatcher. He's quite precise with his actions.

Link smiled faintly. They're probably planning to give you trouble. Can your incarnation deal with it?

The Snow Mountain Archmage scoffed. It's a little troublesome, but I can deal with it. Just remember to bring the Divine Fragment to Aragu.

As soon as he finished, the Archmage transformed into a patch of broken light. The light instantly turned into an icy white-gold beam. With a whoosh, it shot towards the Dark Elf Princess and God of Destruction's Saint with unstoppable speed.

The beam's speed was already fast. It was also formed with the Snow Mountain Archmage by sacrificing his incarnation. Not only was it fast, but it could also adjust its angle. This made it impossible for people to escape or react.

With two puffs, the Dark Elf Princess and Naga Molina were hit in unison, their bodies getting pierced at once. An instant later, they turned into a block of ice and plummeted like a stone from the high elevation. Link didn't have to look to imagine how they would end upa mess of broken bones.

It had been an Archmage's incarnation, after all. Even though it was only Level-10, it had a wealth of knowledge. The spell method caught people by surprise. Eugene and Molina were very famous figures in Firuman, but faced with someone so strong, they were killed before they could even react.

This was nothing to today's battlefield though. The real battle would be between Link and Saroviny.

Eugene and Molina were killed, but the Snow Mountain Archmage's incarnation was dead too. Saroviny took a glance and then refocused onto her opponent, Link.

"Link, you've run for 136 years. Let me see what you've learned!"

"You'll see very soon."

Link had already started controlling his power while talking and expanded his territory, the Golden Dragon Kingdom. Whoosh. Within a ten-mile range, everything seemed to be filled with sunlight. The gray clouds were chased away, and countless golden dragons roared in the sky.

The territory kept expanding, soon clashing with Saroviny's Dark Throne territory. However, neither territory retreated. They were at a stalemate. Neither was more powerful.

Saroviny was shocked inwardly. The moment she saw the Snow Mountain Archmage, she knew that he'd helped Link rise to Level-16. However, she still attacked, hoping that Link was still unfamiliar with his territory. She'd entered this level decades ago, and her experience should be an advantage.

But in this clash, she actually couldn't push Link back. This shocked her. The bit of disdain disappeared instantly.

One hundred years ago, this man hadn't entered the Legendary level yet, but he could already cause such trouble. Now that they were at the same level, it would be even worse.

She'd really underestimated him!

These thoughts flashed past her mind. The result was that she'd planned on casting the Finger of Death with full force, but now she refrained from using all her strength. The next moment, she saw Link had also raised his sword, pointing in her direction. She immediately saw that the dragons circling in the sky seemed to have received some order, grouping towards Link.

Half a second later, these dragons arrived beside Link and melted into his body. Then Saroviny saw a glassy golden shadow appear before Link. This shadow expanded quickly, instantly turning into a 900-foot-tall giant.

This giant was covered in dragon-like armor. His single sword had only been three feet long, but it had now become a 300-foot-long golden sword. This was Link's territory's killer move: Ultimate Dragon Form.

The sword stabbed directly towards Saroviny's Finger of Death.

This change happened too quickly. Everything had been ready and was imminent. Saroviny was shocked at Link's power, but all she could do now was focus on attacking.

The next moment, the dark sword and the dragon giant's golden sword clashed. Both Saroviny and Link were at the top level. Both their power and techniques were at the peak. In that instant, the two 300-foot-long swords managed to seem agile. They interlocked, pulling and fighting like two dancing butterflies.

This kind of technical fight lasted for a full half second. During this, both sides kept changing their techniques. The only goal was to find the other's flaw and loser their own costs as much as possible.

But Saroviny's swordsmanship had been refined for more than a century while Link's swordsmanship was perfect. They kept changing tactics, but neither sword gave way.

Just then, all glamorous techniques melted away. Only the basic essence of a clash of power remained.

Boom! The swords were too large. The clangs grew heavy instead of being crisp. After the swords hit, both parties' power started clashing intensely.

This was a fight of swordsmanship, while also being a competition between their knowledge of power and their territories, energy, Mana, and minds, as well as their understanding of principles. These were all expressed in their swordsmanship.

The Ultimate Dragon Power gave Link unimaginable power. He was also standing on the ground and had the earth's support. He had the absolute advantage in strength. Saroviny's Dark Throne gave her incredible speed. Since she was fast, her attacks would obviously be strong too. Thus, she could meet Link's power for now.

But the power brought by speed couldn't be maintained. Her speed dropped, and her strength plummeted too. If she couldn't defeat her opponent and entered a stalemate, it would be really awkward.

Saroviny was in that awkward state. She'd used almost all her power in that hit, but Link had blocked it. Now, she discovered that things were bad.

After a while, her dark sword could no longer block the golden sword. Then Link's power started advancing wildly like a tidal wave crashing down!

I'm not his match in a direct fight! Saroviny immediately realized this. She wasn't happy, but she knew that if this continued, she would definitely lose.

Her advantage was in speed. Fighting like this wasn't smart!

Saroviny instantly started retreating. Now, she was glad that she'd saved some power. Otherwise, she might not be able to escape safely now. With the retreat, she teleported to thousands of feet away. Then she turned and sped up, approaching Link from another direction. Her sword reappeared, stabbing towards the giant's side.

The golden giant that Link had transformed into turned slightly and stabbed without any extra movements.

This clash was basically the previous one's copy. After they used all their strength, the swords hit against each other again. Saroviny realized she couldn't take Link's brute force, so she retreated and attacked again.

Her sword was indeed fast while Link's seemed a bit cumbersome. However, his swordsmanship was just a bit better than hers. It was practically flawless. Link wasn't as fast, but in this small area, he actually had the advantage.

Because of all these reasons, Link became a seemingly clumsy tortoise with a sturdy shell. Saroviny was like an agile bird in the sky. Her attacks were sharp, but she just couldn't hurt the big tortoise on the ground. If she wasn't careful, she could get eaten by the "tortoise" too.

In this situation, Saroviny's most logical solution was to retreat. Then she would either find help or think of another strategy to defeat Link. If this stalemate continued, any mistake could kill her.

Link could make a mistake too, but she was the active attacker and relied on her speed. The other's strategy was defense. It was much more likely for Saroviny to make a mistake.

She wasn't willing though. If she returned and people asked about the fight, she would be so embarsed. Her father was watching this fight too. She couldn't lose.

Because of all this, she decided to try again.

One more time! If this attack still doesn't work, I'll retreat!

Link had to admit that Saroviny was a formidable opponent.

He had spent a lot of power intercepting three consecutive Fingers of Death from her and was starting to feel a bit tired. However, this was a duel to the death. The victor would be allowed to live on, while the vanquished would simply perish. Naturally, Link had no intention of revealing his current state to his opponent.

On the surface, Link looked as if he still had a lot of power to spare.

This was not all he had to hide. Link still had a trump card up his sleevethe new Level-16 Legendary spell he had mastered under the guidance of the Snow Mountain Archmage.

However, he still had not given this new spell a fitting name. He had not even given it a proper test-run. Right now, he was looking for a chance to use it against Saroviny.

Just as these thoughts popped up in Link's head, Saroviny unleashed another attack at Link.

Despite its size, the massive green-black sword came at Link rapidly as if it was as light as feather.

Composing himself, Link lifted up the golden sword in his hand to intercept the attack.

Saroviny was an excellent swordswoman. It was almost impossible to anticipate which direction her sword would lash out. Anyone else standing in Link's shoes at that moment would have been slain by her in a second.

Link had been parrying her attacks with everything he had. He could feel an incredible weight pressing down on him when he received her first attack. When the second attack came, he could feel that the sword's weight lightened considerably. However, his nerves remained taut in anticipation of her subsequent attacks.

When the fourth attack came, Link had already seen through Saroviny's attack pattern. When Saroviny swung her sword at him for the sixth time, Link was confident that he could now predict where her attacks would come from and counter them accordingly.

Ting! Tch! Tang! Both sides were beginning to come to an impasse as their swords clashed and clanged against each other. Shockwaves rippled out from the point of impact in all directions. As the duel went on, spatial cracks burst open and sealed themselves up almost at the same time, while spatial fragments swayed precariously around them. Most of the forest in their vicinity were long reduced to ash during the course of their duel.

In the midst of their fierce altercation, Saroviny suddenly felt a dip in Link's power. This dip was almost imperceptible, but she was able to pick it up thanks to her unusually keen senses. The sudden drop in his power had left a tiny gap in Link's defenses.

I see you're finally getting tired! she thought gleefully.

Time was a precious commodity in death duels like theirs. Saroviny was not foolish enough to let slip such an opportunity to end the fight as soon as possible.

As soon as the thought surfaced in her mind, she stabbed out her sword at the gap that she had detected.

Tch! The sword struck the gap. Link's defenses began to undergo a drastic change at that moment. It now seemed to be on the verge of breaking apart.

Moments ago, Saroviny felt that she had been clashing against a metal wall. When this sturdy wall began to crumble, she now began to feel a bit more hopeful about her chances of killing Link right then and there.

Truth be told, even though she had harbored a burning hatred towards Link for more than a century, deep down, she still feared the human Magician. She had half a mind to run away just now when she saw Link block her signature move with little to no effort.

However, she finally managed to turn the tables on Link. In her excitement, she began brandishing her sword at her opponent even more frantically. With Link's defeat, she would be able to complete the mission that her father had entrusted her with and resolve her own inner demons once and for all.

Amid the clangs and booms that rang out from the clash of their swords, Link's golden giant form finally began to waver as it took a small step back. The golden sword in his hand also seemed to quiver, as if it was about to shatter.

"Hahaha, you lose, Link!" shouted Saroviny with a maniacal laugh. She then unleashed another flurry of attacks with renewed intensity.

She could feel that Link's defenses were now on the verge of falling apart completely.

Boom! The golden giant was forced back once more. Its attacks had become even more erratic and less powerful than before.

Saroviny easily deflected the giant's attacks. She was now so close to victory she could almost taste it. Her attacks slackened somewhat when she sensed that her opponent was beginning to flag.

Even so, her defenses remained almost impenetrable. If Link's power had really dropped to such an extent, he would definitely not be able to break through her Web of Death spell. However, this was all a feint.

In truth, though Link had spent much of his power trying to defend himself against Saroviny's attacks, his power was still in its Legendary state. His actual condition was a lot better than what he was letting on. Link did not put on this facade for no reason.

Link had deliberately done so to fool Saroviny into thinking that she had already won this fight. Once her defenses were sufficiently lowered, he would move in for the kill immediately.

"Die!" screamed Saroviny. Confident that nothing now stood in the way of her victory, she lunged at the golden giant, her sword poised to pierce through its body.

She had put everything she had into this one attack. The momentum of her attack was so great that she would not be able to change her current trajectory midway even if she wanted to.

Boom! A loud explosion rocked the earth. Link's sword managed to effortlessly deflect Saroviny's attack.

At that moment, Saroviny sensed an incredible power running through her sword. The green-black sheen on the blade's surface began to dissipate. Then, the sword began trembling so violently that keeping a firm grip on its handle seemed almost impossible.

"Where did this power come from... No, you tricked me!" Saroviny immediately figured out what was happening.

She had fallen for Link's feint. There was almost no chance of recovering from such a fatal mistake in a duel of this level.

Saroviny's instinct to flee the place kicked in. Though she had no intention of going down without putting up a fight, she began retreating away from Link, focusing all her attention now on avoiding his follow-up attacks.

However, this was all in vain.

Link chased after her as she tried to retreat.

He was able to close the gap between them easily with one single stride. Light began pouring out of the giant golden blade in his hand that the Ode of a Full Moon sword had transformed into.

The golden sword grew bigger and bigger by the minute, hanging over Saroviny menacingly like a grim reaper's scythe. As soon as it reached her, her life would be extinguished like a candle.

Saroviny now grew desperate. She could see that Link's sword was moments away from cleaving her in two. Finally, she broke down.

Still retreating, she screamed, "Father! Father, save me!"

Saroviny knew that there was nothing she could do now to save herself. In another second or two, she would be killed by Link.

Death would only be a breath away.

Just as Link's sword was about to come down on her, Saroviny's body suddenly began to glow. When the light subsided, she was gone.

This was not a teleportation spell, nor was it an invisibility spell. It was a divine spell. Taken aback, Link immediately pulled back his sword.

The all-powerful Ruler of Light and Darkness had intervened in their duel. He was sure of it. Right now, Link was still a mortal. There was no way he would be able to survive a direct confrontation with a deity.

Link drew a deep breath and muttered to himself, "Great, she escaped. I suppose I could go back to Ferde and take care of things there."

Saroviny was a lot more gullible than Link had previously thought. She was already down before he could even use his new spell on her. Nonetheless, he could now return to Ferde without wasting precious time waiting for his power to recover.

## 628. Ferdes Calamity

Ferde, Scorched City

While Link and Saroviny were fighting to the death in the South, Scorched City was also facing its own strong enemy.

Boom! At least eight Silver Storm Sparrows appeared in the bay. The magic seals on the High Elf warships started wildly attacking the magic defense above Scorched City.

Their cannons were abnormally intense. Each attack reached Level-8, and the attacks were consecutive and endless. The defense barrier over Scorched City shook without stop. The Mage Tower had to use a great amount of energy to maintain stability.

"Sir, it's getting there. The Ferde Mage Tower Mana output is already at its limit. Now, they need to activate auxiliary Mage Towers to activate the Divine Punishment magic seal. It will take two minutes!"

Lava Knight Razer nodded. He knew because these two minutes was the time he could operate safely. If he surpassed that time and faced the Divine Punishment's attack, he would be in extreme danger. He might even die.

Jumping from the deck of the Silver Storm Sparrow, he walked in the water, steps as light as a breeze. Less than three seconds later, he'd crossed thousands of feet. Outside Scorched City's magic shield, he unsheathed his sword and lightly scratched the shield. A six-foot-wide hole appeared in the thick wall-like shield.

The power around this hole vibrated. It tried to close the hole, but faint black flames burned quietly inside it, swallowing the magic power that converged here.

Due to the black flames, the hole was still shrinking, but the time allowed Razer to easily cross through.

Jumping in, Razer entered the business area of Scorched City. It was the wealthiest part of the city and developed alongside the pier. Due to the High Elves' sudden attack, all the residents were hiding. The streets were empty.

This area had its own independent Mage Tower. When battles occurred, it also had its own small-scale shield. This shield was special. It was unlike the dome shield that covered the entire city. Instead, it stuck closely to the buildings.

Due to this shield, all the buildings in the city shone with shimmering light. It looked plain at a glance, but at closer inspection, one could see countless runes forming a sea of stars on the walls.

Not only was it beautiful, but it was also very powerful. With its protection, no spells below the Legendary level could damage the buildings at all. Even if it were Legendary power, they could defend against the shockwaves too.

This shield ensured that the residents of Scorched City wouldn't get affected by the shockwaves of a large scale war.

Razer entered the area. Seeing the clean streets and dense but organized buildings, forming a scene multiple times fancier than the High Elf royal capital, he couldn't help but praise it in his mind. I heard this city started off as a wilderness and reached this point within seven years. The Ferde lord is quite skilled.

Of course, this didn't stop him from acting mercilessly. He was Hellfire. He would grind his enemy into powder without hesitation!

Time was tight; he obviously wasn't in the mood to appreciate the scenery. After scanning the streets, he rushed towards the core Mage Tower in the distance.

He didn't fly. It wasn't that he couldn't. It was just too dangerous.

He could feel countless eyes locking onto his location. They could attack him at any time. If he flew, he would definitely be blasted by countless attacks. Even if he could fend them off, he would still look pathetic. Running on the ground, he could adjust flexibly and make the enemy hesitate in activating a large scale attack.

On the street, his body was like a ball of shadows. His agility stole one's breath; his speed chilled one's blood.

In the core Mage Tower at the heart of Scorched City, Eliard, Evelina, Milose, and Elovan were each in charge of one part of the tower. They all discovered Razer. They watched his every move and were all terrified!

"He's very fast. Judging from his aura, he must be at the peak of Level-16!" Eliard had fought with Level-15 Lava Knight Mozur before. The intruder's power waves were stronger than Mozur's, so he must be over Level-15. The High Elves had brought this nameless man, so he must be from Aragu. Eliard knew that in Aragu, the most powerful mortals were at Level-16, so this man must be at that level.

With that, the other three were all shocked. Of the four, Eliard was the strongest at the pinnacle of Level-11. Next was Evelina at the beginning of Level-11. Milose and Elovan were at the pinnacle of Level-10.

They were the peak of Firuman, but if they were to face a Level-16 figure, it would be like an ant against an elephant. They didn't even dare to think about it.

Eliard felt their emotions and immediately said, "Don't worry. We still have the Mage Tower. Our Divine Punishment protocol can send Level-19 attacks. He won't be able to take it!"

"The Divine Punishment protocol still needs one minute and 37 seconds," Lily reported.

Evelina gasped. "The attacks from the Silver Storm Sparrows outside the bay are at least three times stronger than usual!" she yelped. "They must've been modified. Now, there are eight ships attacking the shield at once, forcing us to strengthen our shield This is a well-planned attack. The High Elves know everything about our power."

After she said this, everyone understood that this minute would be the most dangerous moment of the battle. If they couldn't grasp it, Scorched City would literally be scorched. The top human magic city created by so many people's blood, sweat, and tears would be demolished!

But if they didn't have the Divine Punishment protocol, how could they block a Level-16 enemy?

"Let's give up the outer barrier," Milose suddenly said. "Then we can instantly finish recharging the Divine Punishment protocol!"

This time, the Divine Punishment protocol became flawed because the High Elves used an attack that surpassed the city's defense limit. Under this extreme situation, they were forced to activate the Mana storage to strengthen the shield. This contained the reserve for the Divine Punishment protocol.

In addition, they were spread too thin. Scorched City now spread more than ten miles in diameter. A shield that covered this area needed an unimaginable amount of power. If they gave up a portion, they would instantly receive a lot of Mana.

This suggestion made the other three Legendary Magiciassink into silence.

If they gave up on the outer city and activated the ultimate defense, they should be able to defeat the Level-16 enemy. However, the outer city would be flattened by the Silver Storm Sparrows. The tens of thousands of residents there would be dead too.

If they did this, all the years of effort would be gone. All of Scorched City's prosperity would be over. No one would dare to live here again after this disaster.

But if they didn't do this, their core Mage Tower would be destroyed by the enemy. Ferde would be even more completely destroyed.

Logic told them to give up on the outer city. Like a lizard breaking off its tail, it was a great loss, but there was still hope for recovery. If the core Mage Tower was destroyed, all the Magicians inside would die. The books accumulated over the years would be lost. Hope for the rise of humans would vanish as well.

Thus, giving up was the best choice.

But they would kill tens of thousands of people Eliard, Evelina, and Elovan all sank into silence. This choice was too heavy and asphyxiating.

In the magic mirror, the Level-16 enemy was already two miles from the core Mage Tower. Sunlight Warriors performed suicidal attacks, and all the auxiliary Mage Towers were putting their all into stopping him.

These attacks were unable to hurt the Warrior at all. They were able to slightly delay him though But it wasn't enough to delay him for one minute.

They must act now!

Three seconds later, Evelina said, "Eliard"

She couldn't continue. It felt like something was in her throat, choking her. Her eyes felt hot; tears were about to fall down.

She'd stayed in Ferde for almost three years. She had given all her enthusiasm to this city, watching it develop, strengthen, and prosper bit by bit. Here, she'd found her true love. This was her soul's home now.

How could she destroy it with her own hands?

Milose and Elovan didn't have as deep of feelings, but they didn't feel well either. Compared to the rigid Isle of Dawn, they lived comfortably in Ferde.

Right now, they were Master Magicians. Even Link couldn't force them to do anything; he respected them instead. Their one word could decide the fates of countless people in the city. The atmosphere here was extremely relaxed. They would be compensated as long as they invested.

In other words, this city was their heaven.

They were silent.

Two seconds passed in silence. The strong enemy traveled another half a mile. There was only around one mile left. They couldn't waste any more time.

Eliard finally spoke. "Give up the outer city and transfer the power. Recharge the Divine Punishment protocol!"

His voice shook. After deciding, he was in a daze. Only one thought was in his mind. How can I tell Link?

Link had given him the responsibility for this city, and yet he'd chosen to destroy it

But then, Evelina's voice rang out. "Lily, Master Magician S Authority, stop the order!"

The Mana transfer that had just started now stopped abruptly. "Eve?!" Eliard accused loudly in shock. He almost suspected Evelina was the High Elf spy!

"Look, the man stopped!" Evelina exclaimed. "It's Nana!"

In the mirror, magic puppet Nana stood at the top of a bell tower. She only stood there, yet the Level-16 Warrior came to a halt.

## 629. A Peerless Swordswoman

Nana had mostly kept to herself ever since her return to Ferde.

Other than carrying out the occasional missions she received from Link, Nana had kept such a low profile that almost everyone had forgotten she even existed.

However, she was first to step up one of Ferde's defenders when the city was once again under threat. She always had a habit of making an appearance at the most critical moment, just like the time Link had his back against the wall back in the Black Forest.

Razer stopped in his tracks at the sight of Nana.

He did not stop before her out of any lingering respect he still had for her as a former guard of their saint. Rather, it was her power that he feared. As the leader of the Fire Sect's Lava Knights, he was privy to all the well-guarded secrets in the sect. However, only one person had remained largely shrouded in mystery. Due to how little he knew about said person, he could not help but feel a certain wariness towards her.

And now, that person was standing before him.

"Nana, you betrayed the sect!" shouted Razer. He was gripping his sword tightly in his hand. Every muscle fiber of his body was now vibrating rhythmically as he began optimizing his current physical state for combat.

Though he had a schedule to keep, Razer knew that blindly rushing in would not be the wisest course of action.

Throughout the centuries of strife between the Aragu Empire and the Yan Empire, countless Level-17 and Level-18 masters had existed. However, someone had begun picking off these masters one by one. In the mist of history, each time one of these masters mysteriously perished, there had always been evidence of Nana's involvement.

On the surface, Nana's power level was only Level-13. No, she was now close to reaching Level-15. Razer did not know what Nana had encountered in Ferde. However, he was certain that Nana was now an even more formidable figure than before.

Nana stood before Razer, clad in black leather armor. She was holding the single-handed sword that Link had forged for her, the Last Nightmare sword. Upon her return to Ferde, it was on the verge of breaking apart. However, Link had fixed it up for her and even revamped it. The sword was now a shade of blue. Around its four-foot-long blade swirled a mysterious blue aura.

Seeing Razer, Nana gave him a faint smile. "It's been a while, Razer. I see that you're now leading the Lava Knights. Not bad. However, you've made a huge mistake today."

As she spoke, the blue aura now crept across Nana's entire body. From time to time, blue-white points of light flashed out in it. Beyond that, Nana remained as inconspicuous as ever before Razer.

However, upon seeing this, Razer immediately activated his realm as if he was in the face of a powerful enemy. Black fire broke out in the heavens, and a horrible wail filled the air as if the souls of hell had been unleashed into this world. The sky gradually darkened with the encroachment of dark fog.

Night had fallen upon Ferde!

Razer's realm instantly reached Nana, who did not make any attempt to resist it. Curiously enough, the blue haze around her did not dim in the slightest amid the darkness.

Back then, in the Black Forest, Nana had also displayed this same blue-white power. With it, she was even able to break through the Dark Serpent's defenses and kill the Divine Gear's user.

Even as a Level-8 master back then, she was already capable of accomplishing this much. Now, she was a Level-14 pinnacle master whose power had become even more refined after having undergone countless changes and improvements.

On the outside, it did not seem as impressive as Razer's realm. However, what Nana's power lacked in range, it made up for in its purity.

"Razer, I'm coming for you!" announced Nana. Even though her surroundings had transformed into a literal hellscape, she still retained a casual tone in her voice.

Without even thinking, Razer rushed towards Nana with his sword pointed straight at her!

The attack came with the fanfare of wind and lightning in the background. The black fog began swirling around Razer until it settled into the form of a giant snake. The snake then lunged Nana at a frightening speed, threatening to swallow her whole.

However, no matter how fast the giant fog snake was, Nana was even faster.

The snake finally reached the bell tower where Nana had been standing and took a bite out of the building, reducing itito fine dust. However, amid the confusion, Nana had disappeared without a trace.

In the Mage Tower, Eliard and the others were all spectating the ongoing battle in a mingle of horror and surprise.

"Where's Nana? I can't see her."

"Don't tell me she's already dead?"

"I don't think she would be able to survive a Level-16 master's attack!"

All of them had completely lost track of Nana.

Razer was the only one who had only managed to catch a glimpse of Nana's blue-white aura.

Just when the snake bitito the bell tower, he saw an indistinct blue silhouette leaping out of it at an unimaginable speed. A shiver ran through him.

Sensing that his life was now in danger, he immediately switched to a defensive posture and swung his sword to his side.

His sword came in just in time. He suddenly sensed an overwhelmingly sharp power running through the length of the blade. A sharp ting echoed in the air. The sound was so piercing that Razer had half a mind to cover his ears against it.

His eyes could barely track the blue-white silhouette that glimmered around him like a phantom. Consecutive attacks came at him without any sign of letting up.

Ting, ting, ting, ting... Razer could not afford to waste any time planning out a counter strategy. Any delay in his reaction time would cost him his life. He was now defending himself against Nana's attacks by instinct.

This was the first time he had experienced such a life-and-death situation ever since he became a Lava Knight. He had always known that Nana was a formidable figure in the Fire Sect who had chosen not to reveal the true extent of her power to the world, but he had no idea she would be this powerful.

The saint definitely did not know about this. Otherwise, she would not have sent him here on his own.

Ting, ting, ting... In just three seconds, Razer managed to block 70 blows from Nanassword. A numbness was now spreading across his arm. He then realized that his ears were no longer functioning properly. His cheeks felt warm, and he could feel a bit of blood flowing out of his ears. His eardrums were completely ruined by the piercing sound of Nanassword striking repeatedly against his.

Razer now felt cornered like a wild beast being hunted by a seasoned hunter.

If said hunter could not bring down his quarry with a single strike, he would simply need to resort to other methods, methodically forcing itito a trap that he had already set up in advance.

Right now, Razer felt as if he was about to step into a death trap of Nana's design. Worse still, despite knowing the existence of this trap, he could not see a way out of it.

She's too strong! If this goes on any longer, I'm going to be killed by her for sure! This thought ran through his head like a jolt of electricity. He had to do something. Otherwise, he would soon be dead.

The only advantage he had over Nana now was the overwhelming power he wielded!

Razer let out a roar. At that moment, power began to boil in his body. Hellfire flowed out of his body in waves, covering a 15-foot-wide area around him.

This was his maximum range.

In an instant, Razer's hellfire burned everything to a crisp in its path. The incredible heat even managed to burn a hole in the space around him.

At that moment, Razer felt the flurry of attacks around him beginning to slow down. He immediately searched his surroundings for Nana's blue-white form and saw that it had begun making its retreat. Though the hellfire was rapidly spreading out, it was still not fast enough to reach the blue-white figure, which managed to keep a 0.1-foot gap between itself and the encroaching flames.

This 0.1-foot gap was the only thing standing between Nana's life and certain death.

Razer sighed inwardly, knowing that there was little to no chance he would be able to kill Nana now. He decided that there was no reason to linger on in Ferde any longer.

He had failed in his mission to asssinate the lord of Ferde. However, this was fine. He was still alive. There would still be another time.

All this time, he was still under the impression that the lord of Ferde was hiding somewhere in the Mage Tower.

Like a bolt of lightning, he fled the scene and soon arrived at Scorched City's barrier. From there, he continued on his trajectory across the sea until he finally reached the Silver Storm Sparrow battleship.

Half a second later, he was already on board the Silver Storm Sparrow ship. Drawing a long breath, he said, "Let's go back to the Isle of... Dawn."

Suddenly, his foot gave way beneath him, and he fell to the ground on his knee. Then, he felt a sudden pain gripping his chest.

Groaning, he lowered his gaze and was dumbstruck by what he saw.

The black-gold scaled armor that he was wearing was Level-17 equipment of the highest quality. It was forged by the Inferno Archmage especially for him, the leader of the Lava Knights. However, Nana's attacks had left a thumb-sized hole on the left side of its chest area. Blood was now flowing profusely out of it.

A few High Elves leaped to his aid. "Master, you're hurt!"

A High Elf doctor immediately inspected his wound. A few minutes later, he frowned. "Master, one of your ribs are broken, and your heart has been punctured. I could also sense a mysterious power lingering around your heart. It may take a while to dispel it completely, I'm afraid."

"Just tell me everything!" barked Razer.There was not a hint of panic in his voice. Injuries were to be expected in any duel between two masters. Razer was lucky to still be alive. I've never seen swordsmanship like hers, he thought to himself.

He realized that there was no way his own swordsmanship would be able to rival Nana's. He would need to use his area-of-effect techniques in order to deal with someone like her who obviously specialized in close quarter combat. Today, he underestimated his opponent. This defeat was well-deserved.

Immediately succumbing to Razer's imposing air, the High Elf doctor fell to the ground and stammered, "Master, I'm afraid that you will not be able to fight at your full strength for a month."

"A month?" Though he did not trust the doctor's diagnosis, he was well aware of his current physical condition. He decided that the only thing he needed to do now was to focus on his recovery.

"Forget it, let's head back to the Isle of Dawn!" This was all they could do for now.

Just then, a High Elf pointed at the southern sky and shouted, "Look, there's a golden cloud in the sky."

Razer turned around. In an instant, his face went pale.

## 630. Crushed

Razer was a Level-16 Territory fighter. His power gave him a more advanced vision than the others.

As soon as he saw the burning gold cloud, he knew immediately that it was someone's territory. It probably was around his level too. But who was it?

It must be the one who'd just leveled up. An indescribable feeling of panic gripped Razer. He knew the comer was a foe rather than a friend.

Before attacking Ferde, he'd already felt power similar to this golden cloud. It was probably from the same man.

This man has recently entered Level-16. I can defeat him if I'm not hurt, but now Razer looked down at the wound on his left chest and then at the Silver Storm Sparrows speeding across the sea. Helplessness flashed past his eyes.

The High Elves' Silver Storm Sparrows were only mortal power. He had to face the unbeatable force that could crush the entire Firuman. The moment he arrived, the wounded Razer would already be defeated.

"Sir, what should we do now?" A young hardened High Elf walked over. He was the main commander of the Silver Storm Sparrow fleet and was at Level-11. He had a strange nameDwacheon Juan. He was 45 years old, which was the golden period for High Elves.

He was young and in a high position. He also had Legendary power, allowing him to look arrogantly at Firuman. This made him extremely confident. Even when facing the Hellfire Razer, he was still calm and composed. He didn't seem humbled and submissive like the other High Elves.

Razer had seen many people. He was more than 60 years old and didn't have a serene life like the High Elves on the Isle of Dawn. His life had been chaotic. To him, Dwacheon was a rookie who'd just entered the cruel world.

His exuberance was good. In a good situation, it could help him get accustomed to the world quickly. But right now, they were in a dire state. This exuberance would only make him die faster.

Since he was an extraordinary figure from the saint's mother race and they'd interacted well this entire journey, Razer said, "The comer is of the same level as I. The situation is very dangerous. Give up on the Silver Storm Sparrows and retreat. Go back as far as you can."

Dwacheon froze. The Isle of Dawn had 27 Silver Storm Sparrows, and they were strategic forces. Now, Razer told them to abandon eight ships without any resistance. No commander could accept it.

More importantly, this was Dwacheon's first time commanding a fleet. If he lost, this would forever tit his reputation.

A few seconds of silence later, he said in a low voice, "Sir, there are a total of 200 high-level Magicians on a Silver Storm Sparrow. The eight ships are enough to create a Level-17 defensive and offensive magic seal. Even if the comer is at your level, we might not lose."

This was the fleet's last card. Once they used it, the ships would be destroyed regardless of whether they could successfully force back the opponent. No amount of repairs would work. The ships could only be turned into waste material and recycled.

The cost was too high. The High Elves wouldn't use this tactic unless there was no choice at all.

"Oh?" Razer was slightly surprised. He hadn't thought much of the Isle of Dawn and hadn't taken the time to familiarize himself with this temporary ally's power. Hearing that they could construct a Level-17 magic seal, he was quite shocked.

He carefully inspected the magic seal. A few seconds later, he shook his head. "No, it's useless. There isn't enough Mana stored on the fleet, and it's not resistant enough. The ship isn't sturdy enough either. The magic seal is far from true Level-17 power. It's too crude and can't stop anything. Don't hesitate and go!"

The only similarity between this Level-17 magic seal and a true Level-17 spell was the condensation of power. As for spatial locking, territorial destruction, and other true Level-17 characteristics, it didn't have any.

In other words, the Silver Storm Sparrow fleet's magic seal had great offensive ability. But no matter how great its offensive ability, it was only useful if it could hit the target. Using such crude power against a Level-16 enemy was like using a magic cannon to hit a mosquito outside the cannon's range. It was basically impossible.

But Dwacheon still wouldn't give up. Shaking his head, he said, "No fleet in the world retreats without a fight. If there is, I'm sure they aren't High Elves!"

With that, he returned to the cabin, ignoring Razer's warnings.

"Prepare to fight!"

"Construct the Doomsday Storm magic seal!"

Boom, boom, boom. Blueish-white light flashed from each ship. The lights quickly solidified inoblue-white belts. They extended and tied all the ships together.

Click, clack, click. Guided by the belts, the Silver Storm Sparrows gotito position. Finally, the eight ships fanned outito a stable flower shape with the heads facing in and tails out.

Soon after, the Mana pools on each ship operated intensely. Blue-white light poured out and formed a circular shield. It enveloped the eight ships without a single pore. From afar, it looked like the eight ships had become a huge blue sphere.

"Oh?" It seemed interesting and hope grew in Razer's heart. Without saying anything else, he sat cross-legged on the deck. He took out a bottle of fiery-red recovery potion and focused on controlling the Mana inside him to heal his wound.

This potion was specifically for Lava Knights and was shockingly effective. Razer was often injured in battles and was experienced in healing. Focusing now, the potion and Mana worked together. He instantly felt warmth in his chest; it was a comfortable feeling.

But it didn't last long before he felt something wrong.

Some force is stopping me from recovering. Nana left it. This is bad.

It wasn't much, but it was very troublesome. He tried a bit, and he could repel it, but it would take a while. He wouldn't be able to fight for three days.

Ah, the Dark Nightmare is indeed terrifying! Razer sighed. The Dark Nightmare was one of Nana's nicknames. She'd earned it after killing a Level-18 Magician in the Aragu Empire.

Razer stopped thinking. No matter what, all he could do now was to focus on healing his wound.

By then, the golden halo in the sky was already close. Razer had sharp senses. He could feel the enemy approaching at 1.5 miles per second. He was less than 30 miles away and could arrive within half a minute.

Around 15 seconds later, there was a huge explosion.

Boom, boom. The sound was muffled yet magnificent like rolling thunder. This was the sound created when the other tore through the air at an extreme speed.

By now, the power of his territory had stretched over. The sky above the sea had turned light gold. Countless dragons flew through this golden sky. They roared soundlessly; it was frightening.

"Steady! Steady!" Dwacheon's voice sounded. He was yelling with all his might. Clearly, the enemy's force gave him great pressure.

"Target locked! Target locked! Able to attack at any time!" a Legendary Magician called. His expression was one of excitement.

The enemy was Level-16. Their Level-17 Doomsday Storm magic seal had locked onto him and could release a fatal attack at any time. Killing a Level-16 Magician would be such a glory. It would be passed down the generations!

"Prepare!" Dwacheon was excited too. Level-16? Abandon ship and escape? Despair and hopelessness? No, they had enough power to kill the enemy. Level-16 was only mediocre.

Boom! Boom! The magic seal was operating at its limit now. The air around the fleet started bubbling, ready to follow the magic seal's order.

But then something terrifying happened.

"No, the target is using Instant Flash! Continuously! Target lost! Unable to lock onto target!"

"No!"

In the distant sky, the dark spot no longer flew smoothly. He would vanish and then reappear at an unpredictable spot. He was also approaching the Silver Storm Fleet at a shocking speed.

This was Link's Golden Dragon Kingdom territory. He could teleport freely within it, especially since there wasn't someone at the same level that obstructed him. For example, he didn't dare use transmissions when facing Saroviny because that was useless. Saroviny could overlook the spatial obstacles and attack him. But now, he could crush his opponents!

If the Silver Storm Sparrow fleet was unable to destroy this territory, it didn't matter how powerful they were. They couldn't harm Link at all.

Amidst all the shocked cries of despair, there was a soft scrape. Golden light brushed past the Silver Storm Sparrow fleet's magic seal. Like cutting bread, it sliced the fleet in half.

At a glance, it seemed that Link had just taken out his sword. But Hellfire Razer knew that in that instant, faced with the Level-17 Doomsday Storm magic seal, Link had actually made 36 moves. He had used up all of the magic seal's energy before cutting it in half.

A true Level-16 Magician crushing a group of low-level Warriors was how it should be. Razer didn't feel any surprise.

After cutting the fleet apart, the figure flashed, and someone appeared before Razer. It was Link. Sword light flashed, and Razer felt something cold between his brows.

"Why won't you kill me?" Razer looked up. Link's sword was one millimeter away from his forehead. The deck shook, but his sword didn't move at all. It was as steady as a mountain.

"You're still useful." Link smiled thinly.

## 631. The Lonely Dragon Queen

Razer was sitting cross-legged on the ground in a basement prison cell beneath Ferde's Mage Tower.

The cell was specially designed by Link himself. Its Level-19 magical defenses were directly powered by the Mage Tower's central Mana pool. Link had personally installed most of them, including the magical circuits for spatial lockdown, temporal imprisonment, and Mana scrambling.

Simply put, even at his peak condition, Razer would not be able to break out of this place.

One side of the cell was transparent. There, Link was sitting on a jade chair which he had molded for himself using earthen magic. He was now drinking a cup of tea in front of Razer. Nana was there with him as well. She stood silently behind Link, blending herself completely into the darkness. The only evidence of her presence in the room was the cold glint of her Last Nightmare sword.

At that moment, Razer had been stripped of all his magical equipment. Clad in prison garb, his wrists and ankles were fettered with custom-made shackles. The wounds on his body completed the man's wretched look.

If anyone from the Fire Sect's higher echelons were here right now, he or she would not have thought that this stubbly old man was the same fearsome Hellfire Knight of the Fire Sect.

Ting! Link snapped the lid shut on his cup before putting it aside. Then, he asked, "How is Saint Milda doing?"

"Hmph!" Razer turned away from Link. A few seconds later, he spat out, "She is none of your concern."

Link smiled. "I'm usually quite averse to torturing my prisoners, especially when they happen to be big-shots like you. However, I could be persuaded to resort to such an unsavory tactic if push comes to shove."

The Shadow Divine Fragment was still in his possession. Even though the Snow Mountain Archmage had neutralized its ability to influence people's minds, it would still be able to draw the attention of countless other masters. Keeping it here with him was not a good idea. He needed to deliver the fragment to the Snow Mountain Archmage as soon as possible.

The problem now was that the Snow Mountain Archmage was in the Aragu realm, which was sealed off by the Inferno Archmage and barricaded by the Fire Sect. Blundering into the Aragu realm without having the lay of the land beforehand would be equivalent to suicide.

Link then continued, "I would like to ask you a few questions. If you could answer each of them honestly, you have my word that I will let you go unscathed with all your weapons and equipment. I'll even open up a portal for you to let you go back to Aragu. What do you think?"

For a moment, Razer was stunned into silence. "How gullible do you think I am?"

"If my word isn't good enough for you, then perhaps a soul contract would be enough to convince you of my sincerity," said Link with a smile.

Razer remained silent for a moment, his brows furrowed deeply. Then he said, "I know you're planning to give the Snow Mountain Archmage the divine fragment. I should warn you, it will not be easy. If you let me go, rest assured it will be the last mistake you'll ever make."

"We'll see. So... do you accept my terms?"

Razer narrowed his eyes at Link. "You can only ask at most three questions. Anything about our saint or our lord is off limits.

"Heh, aren't you awfully picky? Very well, I accept your conditions," said Link, nodding.

"Ask away, then." Razer's mood had improved considerably, knowing that it would only be a matter of time until the lord of Ferde released him from his prison as promised.

"Firstly, I need a detailed map of the Aragu Realm. Try not to leave out anything important in it."

Razer shook his head. "I'm not that familiar with the realm's entire geography..."

Before he could even finish, Link interrupted him, "Actually, you are. I know for a fact that a detailed map of Aragu is distributed to every high-ranking member in the Fire Sect, and that you are all required to commit everything on it to memory. Don't fret about how I came to know about this. I have my methods. Just focus on drawing me that map."

A normal map of Aragu was not difficult to obtain. However, what Link really wanted was a military-grade map. With it, he would have a more accurate picture of Aragu's geography.

Despite knowing that such a map would be of great value to Link, he had no choice but to comply with his demand. This was the price he had to pay for his freedom, after all.

Sighing, Razer finally nodded. "You'll get your map. However, as the information it holds is just too valuable, I can only allow you to ask one more question. If you don't agree to this, then we're done here."

"Very well." Link did not object to this. Any attempts to coerce a man like Razer would only prove fruitless and might even end up backfiring on him.

He then continued, "I would also like to learn more about Aragu's history for the last 100 years, especially about events that have been influential to the course of history, as well as a few other confidential matters that you've been entrusted to keep secret. Of course, you could choose to leave out any sensitive information pertaining to your saint or your Lord."

"What do you hope to do with such information?" asked Razer, puzzled.

"I have my reasons. So, what do you say?"

"Alright." Razer nodded firmly. He was only required to give Link a lesson on Aragu's history. He also had no problem divulging any classified information he had come across over the years. He did not think it would have a huge impact on the grand scheme of things.

When all was said and done, after signing a soul contract with Razer, Link gave him a pile of goat-skin scrolls and a set of cartographic tools for him to sketch out a map of Aragu.

In the meantime, he decided to visit the Red Dragon Queen Gretel.

Officially, Gretel was the lord of Ferde's wife. However, Link had been living on his own even after their marriage. Given how hectic his life had been these days, he just could not find the time to be with his lawfully-wedded spouse.

However, there was now a lull in his schedule. He could use the time to drop by her place. He had more or less gotten over his breakup with Celine, anyway.

He hadamnsion in the Scorched Ridge. It had a garden, a fountain, and a small lake. The scenery there was beautiful. However, as Link spent most of his time cooped up in the Mage Tower, he almost never had the chance to go back to it.

Rather than magically teleport himself there, Link decided to travel on horseback through the Scorched Ridge towards the mansion.

Link's features were deeply embedded in the hearts of the people in the Scorched Ridge. However, everyone was visibly surprised to see him out in the open, as he was rarely seen outside the Mage Tower. All of them hurriedly bowed before him as his horse trotted on down the road.

Link gave them a slight nod in return. As there were just too many of them out on the street, he could only make eye contact with some of them. Those whose bows were returned swooned. To them, there was no greater honor than receiving any form of recognition from the lord of Ferde. It was probably the kind of thing they would brag to their friends and family over the dinner table for days to come.

Link did not bother fathoming what these people were thinking. He continued down the road, admiring the city that he had built from the ground up with his own hands.

As Link leisurely made his way towards his mansion, news of his imminent arrival had already reached the place.

The guards assigned to the mansion were all Dragon Warriors. Even the attendants there had dragon blood flowing in their veins. Ever since their queen officially became the lord of Ferde's wife, the fact that the lord himself had never once returned to his mansion had left all of them in an awkward spot.

Though the queen had lost most of her power, her beauty still remained untouched. Even so, it was still not enough to pull the lord away from his magical research. As a result, the dragon queen was left to spend most of her days on her own. The royal dragon bloodline might come to an end sooner than they had feared.

With such a powerful lord at its helm and its Mage Tower growing even more influential by the day, Ferde no longer stood on equal footing with the dragon race. Naturally, this meant that every time Ferde's survival came under threat, matters concerning the dragon race were all swept aside.

Elder Pettalong, who had been tasked with the oversight of the Scorched Ridge, sprang up excitedly when he heard that Link was currently on his way to the mansion. He then asked, "Are you sure about this?"

"Yes, I'm sure. There was no way I would have mistaken the Lord of Ferde for anyone else," replied the attendant who had given Pettalong the good news.

It sounded like he was telling the truth. Despite his mundane features, Link was an easily recognizable person. Even his inscrutable air was not something most people would be able to mimic. Even a blind man would be able to recognize him from his footsteps.

Pettalong paced around the room, pounding his right fistito his left palm. He then said, "Go and tell the queen immediately about this. I'll wait for him."

"Alright." The attendant quickly slipped out of the room to carry out his order. Pettalong then marched off towards the mansion's gates to welcome Link's arrival.

Soon, news of Link's return to the mansion had reached the Red Dragon Queen Gretel.

Gretel was watering her flowers when she heard it. She had planted some in the garden in order to pass the time.

After her marriage with Link, Gretel had endeavored to fulfill her obligations as the wife of the Lord of Ferde as best she could. At times, she was even required to receive important guests from other kingdoms in the mansion.

However, whenever she was alone, she would always find herself either daydreaming about days long past or else praying for Link's safe return. In some nights, she would quietly cry herself to sleep in the darkness of her room.

Ever since losing her power, she had become even more emotionally sensitive.

When the attendant brought the news to her, she let out a soft "ah" and dropped the watering can in her hand. Stunned, she then turned to a maid who was standing in a corner and said, "Let's go back to my room. I'll need to change my clothes. My hair is a mess as well."

The maid quickly followed Gretel back to her bedroom and even stumbled over in her haste. However, she immediately picked herself up, dusted herself off and tried to keep up with the queen.

However, the Red Dragon Queen suddenly stopped before her. The maid then saw a black-haired man leaning against the side of the garden's circular entrance. The man was looking at them with a smile.

The maid immediately blushed. Her thoughts were now in turmoil. Her feet swayed beneath her as she wondered why the Lord of Ferde was smiling at her. Then she realized that the lord's smile must be intended for the queen herself.

The maid immediately realized that this was her cue to leave the scene. She then quietly left the garden with a slight air of dejection.

## 632. Lead The Hero To Bow

Lord of Ferde's residence, in the lord's bedroom

Gretel's face was like the pure moon, but today, the moon had two circles of red. Her eyes were like clear water as she gently helped Link with his clothes.

"Be careful when going to Aragu this time," she reminded softly.

"I will." Link nodded and looked down, away from the gentleness in Gretel's eyes that he could drown in. She'd turned into this after they'd shared a night.

Of course, they couldn't only sleep since they were in the same bedroom. Basically, they'd become much closer.

A few seconds of silence later, Link said, "I checked your body carefully. The Heart of the Dragon has stabilized and grew. If you don't get outside help, you'll be able to have power again after 100 years."

The dragon royal bloodline's Heart of the Dragon was more miraculous and stronger than one could imagine. Even after a destructive attack, it could still recover bit by bit with enough time.

Link couldn't check Gretel's body so closely before. He also didn't know enough about the Heart of the Dragon, so he didn't discover this. Last night was different though. Now at mid-Level-16, his vision was many times better than before. He could instantly see this.

"Oh, that's good." Gretel was happy, but the feeling wasn't very strong. The recovery time was too slow. She couldn't help Link at all. Further, she didn't desire power as much anymore.

She was sometimes frustrated in Ferde, but after shedding her responsibilities as queen, her life had become much more relaxed. But this freedom of the soul made her see Link's situation more clearly. Before, she only had to be responsible for the dragons. Now, Link had to support the entire human race.

In the past, Gretel had been terrified of making mistakes. Link wasn't any better now. Thinking of this, Gretel felt pity. Her anger towards Link vanished too.

After fixing Link's clothes, she rested in his arms. "I just want you alive," she murmured. "No matter what happens, even if you fall into darkness, I'll follow you."

She was no longer the dragon queen, and her restraints were gone. She didn't care about the responsibilities, the difference between light and dark, the debates between justice and evil anymore. She could ignore them all.

Link didn't think Gretel would say these things. People all said that women were more emotional. Rather than using logic, one should just make them happy. He'd thought that the Red Dragon Queen was different, but it seemed that her emotional side was just hidden deeper.

Grasping Gretel's waistthin yet still with feelingLink felt a bit hot. He smiled. "I'll live well. Alright, let me adjust your Heart of the Dragon before leaving."

He'd just checked it last night, and then Link thought about it the entire night. He'd already figured out the basic method to support the Heart of the Dragon Those were only excuses.

Gretel's cheeks reddened deeper, and she nodded.

Link used some power and scooped Gretel up. He walked to the bed in the chamber. After all, they needed a good environment to adjust the Heart of the Dragon.

"Ah," Gretel gasped. "Your clothes will get messy again."

"Then you can tidy it again." It was rare for Link's voice to be so gentle.

After a flurry and a storm, Gretel's eyes brightened greatly. Her eyes were always pretty, but they'd darkened after she lost her power. Now, one could make out a dancing flame inside. It couldn't be compared to the past, but the flame was still growing.

"I feel power again." Her voice was lazy.

"I've recovered your Heart of the Dragon's main structure. After this, you'll only need to perfect the details. It should be fine within three years." Link rubbed the Red Dragon Queen's chest. That was where the Heart of the Dragon was.

He was very serious when speaking, making Gretel giggle. It was instantly like hundreds of flowers blooming. She was indescribably beautiful. Without saying anything, Link flipped her over and began picking the flowers again.

These things had to end at some point. Link stayed for another day before finally climbing out of Gretel's gentleness. When he left the lord's residence, he composed himself and sighed inwardly.

It was rumored quietly throughout the dragon race that the Red Dragon Queen was a natural charmer. All the dukes died early. After experiencing it personally, Link believed it. If not for his strong determination to leave, he would have been trapped by the beauty forever.

And the queen is wounded. If she's at her full strength, I'll be done for. Cold sweat beaded on Link's forehead.

Returning to the core Mage Tower, he saw Hellfire Razer. Razer had already prepared the map and record of all important events from the Aragu Realm. Link took the scroll and checked it. When he had questions, he would ask on the spot. He asked quickly and urged Razer to answer without giving him time to think.

Razer was a Warrior. His mind couldn't match a Legendary Magician. At first, he wanted to hold things back, but the interrogation made his head hurt. He just answered instinctively.

"What use does Milda's wand have?" Link suddenly asked.

"Her wand is prophetic Ah, you're tricking me to talk!" Razer suddenly realized.

Link smiled. "This isn't in the contract, and I'm not forcing you to answer. You answered yourself. Okay, thank you for your information."

Razer was speechless. It was his fault that he reacted too slowly. Sighing, he asked, "When will you let me go?"

"Now." Link smiled and undid Razer's shackles. He returned Razer's armor and sword too, putting the equipment on him.

Razer had wanted to attack, but he knew Link's power. Nana was also behind Link. He hadn't recovered fully either. If he attacked now, he would be dead, so he acted obediently.

When Razer finished putting the armor on, Link asked, "Are you ready?"

"Yes." Razer nodded.

Link pressed a rune on the cell's wall. The cell lit up blindingly, and Mana poured out, spinning quickly. Razer instinctively wanted to block it. He'd been repelling the foreign power these days and healing his wounded heart. About half of his power was back. As soon as he started using force, Link hurriedly called, "I'm opening a portal door. Don't fight it or else it'll collapse!"

Razer was shocked. Now, he felt that the wild power wasn't hurting him. Instead, the space inside the cell started rippling. It was indeed the signs of a portal door.

He could only restit his urge and let the energy within the cell go wild. The energy spun and spun, faster and faster. Finally, the speed made Razer's heart pound. It was so powerful that it could crush him.

Boom. Suddenly, there was a soft boom. Razer felt an attractive force come from the vortex, sucking him in.

He wanted to fight back again, but then Link said, "Razer, I'm only responsible for sending you away, but we're enemies. Do you really think that I'll send you away nicely?"

Razer froze. Indeed, the contract was still effective, so Link couldn't hurt him. But they were still enemies. It was understandable to send an enemy away roughly. While he was dazed, he was sucked into the vortex. Under the force, he started spinning.

If he wasn't a Level-16 Warrior with a strong body, he would've fallen apart from the spinning. Even still, Razer felt dizzy and wanted to throw up.

Poof, poof, poof, pop! The vortex was still spinning quickly. Then there was a sound like a bottle opening, and then Razer was gone from inside the vortex.

He wasn't dead, of course. After a great amount of power from the vortex entered his body, he shot out the Firuman Realm at a horrifying speed.

Right then, a dazzling beam shot through the Sea of Void. It was going in a foreign direction rather than the Aragu Realm.

The speed was too fast. All Razer could do was protect himself. With his shallow knowledge of the Sea of Void's principles, he didn't know how to slow down. He could only wait for the Sea of Void's resistance to slow him down.

But the resistance was so weak. It would take forever for him to stop.

By now, Razer obviously knew what Link had done. Indeed, Link didn't harm him, but if he couldn't go back to the Aragu Realm, he obviously wouldn't be an enemy anymore.

Dammitahhh, meteorite! Razer turned quickly and brushed past a meteorite the size of his head. A dent appeared in his armor.

With his extreme speed, he would die no matter what he touched. Razer was pissed, but he couldn't get distracted. He had to focus on speeding through the Sea of Void.

On the other side, Link smiled at Nana. "Ferde's safety is up to you."

"Master, don't worry."

With that, Link was reassured. He opened the realm portal and disappeared.

He didn't have to worry about getting stopped halfway through. The Sea of Void was boundless while Aragu was close to Firuman. He was also experienced in crossing the Sea of Void. He quickly found a small path and reached the outer layer of the Aragu Realm.

His plan was simple. He would find the coordinates of the Aragu Empire from the outside and teleport in. He should be safe inside the empire. Then he could easily find the Snow Mountain Archmage.

However, he'd underestimated the Inferno Archmage. While looking for the coordinates, a fiery-red figure flashed in the corner of vision. He turned and saw a six-winged angel with burning fire rush over from a distance. Judging from his force, he obviously wasn't a friend.

Something from Razer's scroll popped up in Link's mind. Six-winged Burning Angel? This is a high-level magic puppet Warrior of the Inferno Archmage. Each one is at Level-15. The principles were copied from Nana. They were made from divine power and were consumables with shocking combat ability. There were more than 20, and they liked operating in teams of three.

Teams of three? Link looked and instantly saw the other two Burning Angels. The three were coming from three directions and were about to surround Link.

F\*ck. Link didn't dare fight in the Sea of Void. It would be troublesome if the Inferno Archmage was notified. Giving up on determining the coordinates, he found the general direction and dove into the Aragu Realm.

## 633. A Memory That Stood The Test Of Time

Boom! Link crashed heavily into the ground.

After taking a hit from the Six-Winged Burning Angels, such an unceremonious entry into another realm was unavoidable. Though he was not hurt, the angels' explosive attack had caused him to lose balance.

Link had left a human-shaped crater on the purple stone ground.

Link let out a breath. Climbing out of the crater, he dusted himself off and began surveying his surroundings.

Due to the Six-Winged Angels' sudden appearance, Link had no choice but to plunge headfirstito the realm. He figured that he must be somewhere on the border between the Aragu and Yan empires. As for exactly where he was, that would require further observation of his surroundings.

The landscape around him was a desolate wasteland which stretched out as far as the eye could see into the distance. Straining his eyes, Link could make out a few small hills on the horizon.

Purple rocks jutted out from the wide expanse of yellowing grass around Link. The scenery immediately put him in mind of a yellow cloth embroidered with purple gemstones.

Purple rocks on the border between the Aragu and Yan empires... This must be the Slanda Plains, thought Link. He was finally able to confirm his position using the information that Razer had given him.

There existed only one continent in the Aragu realm. On the left side of this spindle-shaped continent was the Yan empire, which covered two-thirds of the continent's total land mass, whereas on its right side was the Aragu empire. Not only had the latter's land area shrunk considerably, but it also seemed to have lost much of its influence.

A year ago, both sides had clashed against each other on the Slanda Plains in a large-scale war that the Yan empire had called "The Infernal Crusade."

Approximately 300,000 people had fought this war for four days and four nights. More than 200,000 had taken their eternal rest here. So much blood was shed during this war that a blood-red lake was formed in the middle of the plains. In the spring of the following year, blood-red flowers bloomed across the plains.

Smoothing his clothes, Link began walking away from the crater. He continued observing the geography of his current whereabouts.

At the same time, Link tried to recall every detail of the Infernal Crusade.

After the Infernal Crusade, both Aragu and Yan had taken heavy damage. However, due to their steadfast beliefs, the soldiers of the Yan empire proved to be even more resilient than Aragu's forces as they fought on until their very last breath. Unable to hold out against the forces of Yan, the Aragu empire's soldiers were forced to retreat.

Having lost a considerable portion of its military forces, the Aragu empire could no longer continue this war with the Yan empire. On the other hand, having exhausted much of its resources going after Aragu's remaining forces, the Yan empire decided it best to abandon their pursuit and rebuild their strength in order to launch one final attack at their enemy. At that point, the Yan empire only needed to give Aragu a push and the latter would be done for!

In other words, if everything were to go as planned, the Aragu empire's days were numbered. It would not be long before the Yan empire decided to strike again.

Link was now walking across the battlefield where the Infernal Crusade had taken place.

Numerous dirt mounds protruded from the ground. The grass and trees sprouting from these mounds seemed unusually lush. Broken pieces of bone were scattered around them as well. Link figured that these dirt mounds must be the resting places of those who had fallen during the Crusade, and that the bone fragments must have been dug out by the wasteland's animal inhabitants.

Every one of these dirt mounds was five to six feet tall and around 20 feet wide. There seemed to be around fifty of these slipshod graves scattered across the wasteland.

There were also broken pieces of armor and weapons lying on the ground. They were all stained with dried blood. Wooo... A couple of wild dogs suddenly leaped out of a clump of tall grass nearby, their eyes glinting hungrily at Link. After living off of the corpses that were left to rot across the wasteland in the Crusade's aftermath, they must have developed an appetite for human flesh, dead or alive.

However, Link simply ignored them and continued eastward towards the Aragu Empire.

The Crusade had taken place in the east of the Sland Plains. The Raging Dragon River is just 200 miles away in the east as well. The forces of Aragu must have used the river to their advantage to shake off its Yan pursuers. If I follow the trail that they had left behind during the war, I should soon be able to reach the Raging Dragon Fortress that the Aragu empire had set up along the bank of the Raging Dragon River.

Link quickened his pace towards the east.

Thankfully, the traces that the great war had left behind was as clear as day. Link was able to race across the wasteland without spending too much time trying to spot them on the ground. With the aid of a Dimensional Jump spell, he would probably be able to clear 200 miles in less than a minute.

Figuring that the sooner he reached the Aragu empire, the safer he would be, Link decided to activate Dimensional Jump to shorten his travel time.

Countless runes appeared around his body with a hum. With a flash of light, his body popped up 20 miles away. The same runes materialized once more around him, and with another flash of light, he was teleported across another 20 miles. All of a sudden, something happened!

Just as Link was about to perform a third Dimensional Jump, an overwhelming sense of danger tautened his every nerve.

A thought ran through his mind in an instant. A fluctuation in the space had appeared 1000 feet away behind me. Something's coming... Not just one, there are three of them. It must be the Six-Winged Burning Angels!

Link's body immediately reacted.

His Ode of a Full Moon sword was out of its scabbard. At that moment, nine golden rune circles appeared across its blade parallel to each other. Then, its upper portion vanished into thin air.

This technique was an improved version of the Despair Ball. Link had combined it with elements of other techniques such as the Time Sword and the realm technique, such that it now enabled its user to lock down both time and space.

In other words, Link could kill off any opponent below Level-16 with this new and improved version of the Despair Ball.

When the tip of his sword slipped into the fabric of space, Link immediately felt his sword piercing through something, which seemed to pop like a bubble.

An instant later, the distorted space returned to normal before him.

"Must have killed one of them."

Though he had killed one of them, two of his pursuers managed to emerge into the Aragu realm. Their slender bodies were swathed by wreathes of firethree pairs of wings of uneven sizes sprouted from their backs. Their faces were completely obscured by a dazzling light. There was no doubt in Link's mind that they were the Six-Winged Burning Angels who had been chasing after him in the Sea of Void.

"Can't they just leave me alone?" muttered Link. He was not afraid of these Level-15 Burning Angels. He was simply worried that their pursuit would draw the attention of the Inferno Archmage and his Fire Sect to him.

"Mortal, kneel and beg for forgiveness from the Infernal God!" said the two winged beings in unison from the sky.

Link did not respond. He decided it best to end them here and now.

He then stabbed his sword out at one of the Burning Angels.

As soon as he saw what Link was doing, one of the Burning Angels realized immediately that it was the same technique that had taken down one of his compatits. The light obscuring his face began to intensify. Without a moment's hesitation, the angel assumed a more defensive stance in anticipation of Link's attack.

Seeing the opportunity, the other burning angel lunged at Link at breakneck speed with one stroke of his wings.

Both angels were acting in sync with each other.

Link would have a more difficult time dealing with them if he had not taken down the third angel.

The Ode of a Full Moon sword was still winding its way through space towards the defending angel in the distance. In the face of the incoming Burning Angel, Link extended his left hand, summoning a number of intersecting rune circles in his palm. He then pushed his hand out. In an instant, a golden dragon rushed out from the runes on his palm, roaring at the incoming Burning Angel.

Link's magic had reached such a level that he was now capable of casting powerful spells at a moment's notice.

For instance, the Level-15 Six-Winged Burning Angel that was coming after Link needed only less than a tenth of a second to traverse the 1000-feet distance between him and his target.

However, in that same span of time, Link was able to cast a powerful Level-15 spell to intercept the Burning Angel's attack.

An instant later, Link's sword finally pierced its mark. There was no way the Level-15 Burning Angel would be able to defend itself against a Level-16 attack.

In the next second, Link's magical dragon collided with Link's magical dragon, sending off ripples through the space. Both sides seemed to be equally matched in terms of power.

As soon as the ripples subsided, before the Burning Angel even had time to regain his senses, Link's sword had already pierced his body.

With his Mana circulatory system severed by Link's attack, the Burning Angel immediately lost control of its Mana. He then exploded into a puff of smoke in the air with a loud bang.

Link did not bother inspecting his own handiwork. Runes appeared once more around his body, and he was gone from sight.

Three minutes later, consecutive flashes of white light appeared in the middle of the wasteland, where around ten humanoid figures had appeared out of nowhere. The leader of this party was none other than the Fire Sect's Holy Maiden and princess of the High Elves, Milda.

She was dressed in a golden red robe. After walking a few paces across the wasteland, she came to a halt before a gemstone which was glowing with a dim red light on the ground.

She then picked it up for a closer look. Her brows furrowed. This is a fragment of a Six-Winged Burning Angel's heart. I could sense an unfamiliar realm power on it... We may be dealing with an extremely powerful intruder here, capable of taking down three Burning Angels in an instant.

Just then, an Inferno Priest approached her with a Memory Crystal in his hand. "Holy Maiden, I've collected traces of the battle that had occurred here into the Memory Crystal. However, the spatial fabric had been severely disturbed by a powerful presence. I don't think we'll be able to produce a clear visual on the intruder."

This was one of the Fire Sect's divine spells, which enabled its user to collect traces of an event and reproduced it as faithfully as possible in the form of a hologram.

"Good work." Milda received the crystal from the Priest. From the blurry image, she could only make out an indistinct form, whose techniques were so fast and clean that none of the Burning Angels even stood a chance against him.

Milda was stunned by what she saw.

She thought she had long put him behind her. She thought she would no longer be influenced by him in any way. However, she did not think she would be this affected by just a blurry image of him.

"He's really here?"

## 634. The Dark Omen That Destroys The Sun And Stars

After defeating three six-winged Burning Angels, Link quickly left the scene. Half a minute later, he arrived at the new intersection between the Yan Empire and Aragu Empire: Raging Dragon River.

Crash, whoosh. The river's crashing waves were thunderous like thousands of galloping horses. Standing on the riverbank, he could feel the ground trembling.

Upriver and downriver of the Raging Dragon River were vastly different. There were many cliffs and water was abundant, thus creating this scene as it tumbled down.

The river wasn't just fast, but it was also very wide. From what Link could see, the surface was at least half a mile wide. Steam rose up from the surface, hiding the river.

Link sensed carefully and got a basic idea of the Raging Dragon River's secret. He couldn't help but sigh. There are signs of Mana operation. This is a perfect fusion of magic and natural principles. What a great representation of man and nature as one.

As soon as he thought this, he felt a slight energy surge from the near distance. It wasn't malevolent though. He had an idea of the comer's identity.

Link stood by the river and waited.

A few seconds later, dark blue light pierced through the heavy mist and landed by the river. It was a Warrior in dark blue crystal armor. Seeing Link, he saluted in the Araguan way and smiled. "Master, you have great vision."

His smile wasn't submissive. His crystal-blue eyes sparkled with confidence.

Seeing the man's appearance, Link already knew his identity. Since the man called him "Master," he guessed that the man also knew him. They hadn't met before, so the Snow Mountain Archmage must have told him.

This meant that the Archmage already knew of his arrival. Similarly, the Inferno Archmage must know too. Neither had appeared yet, so this could only mean that the Snow Mountain Archmage was fighting the Inferno Archmage so he couldn't come.

Thinking of this, Link knew that he should be safe now.

With his current power, other than people above the Archmage level, he didn't fear any Aragu Warriors. Even if many people surrounded him and he couldn't beat them all, he could use spatial magic and escape easily.

He returned the Frost Warrior's salute. "I heard that there are six powerful Frost Warriors in the Aragu Empire. Each one has top skills in the realm. May I know your name?"

The Aragu Empire and Yan Empire were opposites. The Yan Empire had Lava Knights while Aragu had Frost Knights. They were at the same level.

Hearing Link's words, the Frost Warrior puffed up his chest even more and said seriously, "I am Therodeau Heather, the Absolute Zero. The Snow Mountain Archmage, Grandmaster Iyr told me about your arrival and guided me here. You came much sooner than I'd expected."

"Grandmaster" was another name for Archmages because once someone reached Level-19, they would start a clan and have many students.

"Oh, you're Therodeau. I brought the thing. Do I give it to you or hand it to the Archmage?" Link asked. The Divine Fragment was difficult. If he could, he would definitely toss it to the Frost Knight and get out of there.

But reality disappointed him. Therodeau shook his head. "The Grandmaster told me that you must give it to him personally. Our responsibility is to escort you there safely."

This made Link furrow his brows. "Is the journey dangerous?"

If they were regular people, the Yan Empire might send someone powerful into the Aragu Empire to attack them. However, they were at the top level, and the Aragu Realm was their turf. How could anything happen?

Therodeau shook his head. "I don't see any danger, but Grandmaster said that he feels a surge of darkness is corroding the realm. This darkness will cover the sky and earth, destroying the sun and stars. Unfortunately, he's caught up with the Inferno Archmage. Otherwise, he would definitely come welcome you personally."

This deepened Link's brows. "Surge of darkness? Cover the sky and earth, destroying the sun and stars? Is there more information?"

Therodeau didn't reply immediately. Looking at the Slanda Plains behind Link, he said, "Master, it's not safe here. How about we cross the river first? I will explain to you on the road."

"Sure."

Therodeau whistled. The Raging Dragon River instantly calmed a lot. The mist that had covered the surface now showed a clear passageway.

"Follow me. Be careful not to touch the mist. The Grandmaster created it personally, and it's extremely cold. It can freeze anything, even space. That's why transmissions are forbidden." With that, Therodeau activated his power and started walking through the water.

Every time he stepped, the water underfoot would turn to ice. With hard ground under him, he could jump forward. The ice would then get swallowed by the rapid current. On the other hand, Link used Void Walk to float behind. His expression was calm, but his heart was in tumult nownot because of the Raging Dragon River but because of the Snow Mountain Archmage's words.

Archmages had extremely powerful souls. Their knowledge of spatial and chronological principles was far beyond Link's grasp. The Snow Mountain Archmage had seen the darkness and described it as destroying the sun and stars. In other words, the realm would be destroyed.

Even more incredible was that the Inferno Archmage didn't feel anything about the darkness and still wanted to fight. Didn't he care that after the realm was destroyed, he wouldn't become a god anymore?

Also, what kind of darkness could destroy a realm?

Many possibilities instantly flashed through Link's mind.

The first was the Sovereign of Light from the Fedaro Realm. He was the only true god Link knew. He had the motivation and the ability.

The second was a magic accident. An accident had happened in Firuman that had split the realm into two. There was also the World Tree that could fuse the realms. If the tree made a mistake, it could also spell disaster.

The third the third was a bit less certain. The Sea of Void was boundless. No one could say it wasn't possible for some terrifying god to jump out somewhere.

Deep in thought, Link arrived at the other side of the river with Therodeau.

Rather than Raging Dragon Fortress, it was a remote place. The fortress was a few miles away, and Link could see it easily.

"This is a secret mission," Therodeau explained. "There's no need to let the mortals know. If they know, more trouble will appear."

Link agreed. "Then where are we going?" he asked.

Therodeau whistled again. A while later, a figure appeared. They were also clad in blue crystal armor, but their figure was more graceful. They had long silver hair too. Getting closer, Link discovered that it was a female Warrior. She was around five feet and had a slim body for a Warrior. The huge sword on her back looked jarring in comparison.

Other than the long silver hair in the ponytail, this female Warrior also had dark blue eyes. They were deeper than Therodeau's, and her gaze was more composed. As for her looksshe was better than the average, but she couldn't be compared to the Red Dragon Queen or Celine.

"This is Lily, the Ice Queen and general of the Frost Knights. She is my commander."

Link was a bit shocked. He didn't think that this slim woman with the same name as his Tower Spirit would be the general of the Frost Knights. She didn't look like it at all.

Lily smiled. Her features expanded, reminding one of a snowy plain under the sunlight. "Ferde Lord, it is my honor to meet you. I've heard many legendary stories about you."

Her voice was clear like a breeze that brushed past the snowy plain. It boosted Link's energy and left a deep impression.

Link nodded inwardly. With such a powerful psychological contagion, she must be at the pinnacle of Level-16. Her combat ability must be shocking too. No wonder she led the Frost Knights.

"They're all insignificant experiences. Should we go now?" Link didn't want to waste a second.

"Of course. Therodeau and I will accompany you. Please follow me." Lily led Link while Therodeau stayed in the back. The three instantly started traveling.

On the road, Lily explained, "Master Iyr is at the Fortress of Eternal Winter in the northeast. He is around 2000 miles from us. If we travel at full speed, it will take around three hours."

"I see." Link nodded. Two thousand miles wasn't far.

After that, they traveled in silence. An hour passed and the three were on the Verdant Plains in the heart of Aragu. There were no abnormal signs.

Because it was the heart of the empire, the three were slightly relaxed. But then Lily stopped abruptly at the front.

"What That is"

Link looked over and saw someone familiar.

## 635. An Unwavering Spirit

The Verdant Plain

Before the three of them stood the petite figure of a fifteen-year-old girl. Link and the two Frost Warriors frowned at the sight of her.

It was none other than the daughter of Nozama, Saroviny.

It was not too long ago that she had barely escaped with her life from Firuman. She also seemed to have grown a lot more powerful since then.

Saroviny was standing before them in silence, with her black battle robe billowing about her. At a glance, the embroidery seemed to be squirming in the robe's fabric, as if it hadamnd of its own. However, upon closer inspection, one would notice that there were actual human souls titing and turning in it.

Her garment was like a dark abyss, inside which were trapped countless spirits writhing about in agony. No matter how much they struggled, none of them were able to flee from their imprisonment.

Link and the other two shivered at the sight of what was going on with Saroviny's battle robe.

Gazing at Link, Saroviny asked, "Do you like my new outfit? My father gave it to me. I really like it."

Link seemed troubled by this. He had seen a battle robe like hers back in the game world.

The only difference was that Nozama was its wearer back in the game world. Here, it would seem that he had passed it on to his daughter, Saroviny.

After merging with the God of Light to become the all-powerful Ruler of Light and Darkness, Nozama had certainly become quite generous with his belongings.

In the game world, the battle robe was called "the Abyss of Despair." It could only be equipped by players who had completed their class. As a Level-19 Legendary Pinnacle Equipment, it was also notorious for being extremely difficult to obtain.

During his time playing the game, Link had only ever seen it on Nozama himself.

In order to obtain this battle robe, a player would need to gather 300 Abyssal Fragments from Nozama by defeating him again and again, as he would only drop one to two pieces of these fragments every time he was vanquished.

It should be noted that Link and his party were the first players to ever defeat Nozama throughout the whole server.

Link remembered the first time the game announced the robe's attributes. Just then, the game system pulled up a list of the Abyss of Despair battle robe's properties in front of him.

The Abyss of Despair

Quality: Level-19

Special effect 1: Abyssal Power

Its user will have their power increased by 100 percent and their power recovery rate increased by 50 percent.

Special effect 2: Abyssal Corrosive Armor

When this effect is activated, the battle robe will provide its wearer with protection that can only be broken through by attacks above Level-15. Attacks which manage to bypass this effect will have its damage reduced by 90 percent.

Special effect 3: Foresight

The user will be able to open their third eye and see one second into the future.

Special effect 4: Abyss of Despair

Every time the robe's wearer kills someone, their victim's soul will be slowly ingested by the battle robe's fabric in order to nourish its wearer's power.

Link's blood froze as he read through the robe's special effects. How were they supposed to defeat a Level-16 Pinnacle master who was now equipped with Level-19 sacred gear?

The Snow Mountain Archmage had also given Link three Level-19 pieces of equipment as compensation for his troubles. However, the Abyss of Despair battle robe was in an entirely different level.

Link would have chosen to flee if he had to fight this fight on his own. Thankfully, he was not alone.

There were two Frost Warriors with him right now: Frost Queen Lily, who was currently a Level-16 midstage Warrior, and Absolute Zero Therodeau, a Frost Warrior in the early stages of Level-16. With their powers combined, all three of them might stand a chance against a Level-16 Pinnacle master like Saroviny.

However, it soon became apparent to Link that he was their weakest link.

After receiving the realm's blessing, not only did Link have a faster power recovery rate, he was also endowed with a powerful realm in Firuman. This was the reason why he managed defeat Saroviny back then and decimate an entire fleet of Silver Storm Sparrow battleships not long after.

However, here in the Aragu realm, he was completely stripped of those benefits.

After his encounter with the Six-Winged Burning Angels, Link realized that his power recovery rate had dropped by half. Though he could still use his realm technique, its power had been reduced by 30 percent.

In other words, even if Saroviny was not wearing the Abyss of Despair battle robe, Link still would not be a match for her.

Her power and stamina had seen a drastic increase since their last encounter. Even without using any of the battle robe's special effects, Saroviny could end Link's life in an instant.

Even the trump card that he had conceived not too long ago with the Snow Mountain Archmage's help would probably not do much damage to her, let alone kill her.

The two Frost Warriors had sensed the incredibly oppressive power that Saroviny was giving off. Frost Queen Lily stepped forward in front of Link. She then reached for the huge sword on her back as she said, "Maiden of Darkness, you dare trespass in the Kingdom of Aragu? Aren't you worried you might get frostbite?"

Saroviny's mouth tited into a mocking smile. "Oh, are you one of those all-powerful Frost Warriors I keep hearing about? I'm shivering in my boots right now."

If Lily was not too careful, she could have herself killed by Saroviny before she even knew it. Link quickly whispered behind her, "Lily, be careful of her battle robe. It once belonged to the Level-19 Lord of the Deep, Nozama. Not only is he Saroviny's father, but he has also claimed godhood by becoming the Ruler of Light and Darkness."

Both Lily and Therodeau were taken aback by this piece of information.

Saroviny was already more powerful than any of them individually. The fact that she was the child of a god who had also gifted her with a powerful battle robe did not exactly fill Link's party with optimism.

Saroviny looked at Link, who had shrunk away behind Lily. "Lord of Ferde, you seem to know a lot. However, I'm afraid there's not much you can do with such information."

She then began to stroll towards the three of them. "To tell you the truth, the Inferno Archmage knows just how powerful my father is now. He's already chosen to side with him. Once the Archmage lights the Sacred Fire and ascends to godhood, he will become a god second only to my father. With my father's help, the Snow Mountain Archmage Iyr will not stand a chance. Tell me, Frost Warriors, is the Snow Mountain Archmage still worthy of your loyalty?"

Link and the others were at a loss for words.

Lily muttered to herself, "No, this can't be! This can't be!"

Therodeau was standing behind the other two with a blank expression on his face, gripping the Frost Sword tightly in his hand.

Link's brows were deeply furrowed, evidently searching for a way out of this.

Still languidly gazing at them, Saroviny continued, "You can't think your way out of this, lord of Ferde. You're a smart guy. Surely you must know that there's no way to stop a god. Why bother resisting us? Come serve my father, and together we will rule the whole Sea of Void. Eternal glory will be yours to have."

Link remained speechless.

Saroviny then turned towards Lily. "Lily, you're a talented Warrior with royal blood running through your veins. Why should a noble queen like yourself stoop to sacrificing your own life for peasant scum like Iyr?"

Lily let out a long breath and shook her head. She then said, "Save your breath, Saroviny. Master Iyr was my teacher. He was a kind, generous man. You, on the other hand, are a psychopathic butcher who has killed thousands of people over the last hundred years, and I'm guessing your father isn't that different from you. Otherwise, he wouldn't have made you such a despicable battle robe! I'd rather die in battle than live to serve the likes of you!"

Lily drew out her huge sword and held it in both her hands, ready for battle.

"Oh, what a disappointment," said Saroviny with a sigh. She then looked at Therodeau. "What say you, handsome one?"

Therodeau's features were indeed handsome. This much was undeniable. If he had been born on earth, he might have been able to make a name for himself as a male supermodel. However, looks served little to no purpose here in this war-torn world.

After a moment's deliberation, Therodeau finally made his decision. He began walking towards Saroviny. "I pledge my loyalty to your god!"

Even though she had not yet made her move, the aura she was giving off was enough to send a shiver down everyone's spines. The fact that she was able to stay so calm even in the Aragu empire's domain meant that she was confident she could deal with any of their attacks.

Therodeau had switched sides out of a sense of self-preservation. Blind allegiance had no place in this world.

Giggling at this, Saroviny pointed a long, white finger at Link and asked, "Link, I'm still waiting for your reply."

Link still remained silent. He had come up with a solution for his current predicament. However, he would need to pay a huge price for it to work. He was now deciding whether he should go through with it.

Saroviny waited patiently for him to speak.

She was ordered by her father to capture Link alive. Being the obedient daughter that she was, she would try not to kill him unless she absolutely had to.

Lily suddenly spoke, "Master, I've chosen my path. You're free to do whatever you want. If you choose to leave now, I'll try to buy some time for you to escape. If you choose to side with this Ruler of Light and Darkness, I hope you won't attack me from behind and at least give me the pleasure of fighting you in direct combat."

Link could not help but let out a soft sigh. Obviously, the queen did not become the leader of the Frost Knights for nothing.

Drawing a deep breath, Link stepped out from behind Lily and looked straight at Saroviny. "We all could learn a thing or two from you about having an unwavering spirit like yours, Lily."

Saroviny's brows shot up in anger. The sky suddenly went dark. In an instant, the air was filled with the wails of despairing spirits.

"Not a smart move, Link, not smart at all. My father was wrong about you! Now you die!"

## 636. Unwilling To Be A Slave

Whoosh, whoosh.

Wind rose up on the Verdant Plains, and the clouds rolled. The sky darkened as a show of betrayal and loyalty was performed at once. Evil and justice, chaos and order were at a stalemate.

Buzzing slightly, Saroviny's sword shook. Countless bolts of purple-black lightning flowed out of it while the tip pointed straight at Link. "This is the last chance. Life or death?!"

Link looked down but didn't reply. This conflicted Saroviny. Her father wanted her to catch him alive. She also didn't want to kill her old enemy so easily. It would be great if she could capture Link and make him her subordinate.

In this mindset, she didn't move when Link didn't reply. She still had the tiny hope that Link would turn back.

Clearly, this was impossible.

Taking advantage of this rare chance, Link's thoughts whirred. In his vision, the game system showed him various spell cards while a mission popped.

Activate Ultimate Mission: Choice (After this mission, the Light System will be completely unlocked)

Mission Content: Choose your own path

Mission Reward: 1000 Omni Points (Can be given beforehand)

In the past, 1000 Omni Points could instantly boost Link's power. But now, they could only raise his upper limit a bit.

In truth, he could use these points to buy Level-19 spells. However, they would be too inflexible, and he wouldn't even have time to cast them. Even if he could, his current power wasn't enough. Even burning his soul wouldn't provide enough power.

Nozama was the incarnation of the God of Light's darkness. He was also Saroviny's father. Saroviny most likely knew Link had this system and also knew its weaknesses.

Indeed, after a few seconds of silence, Saroviny said, "It's useless. Link, don't struggle anymore. The God of Light's blessing has ended. It can't save you at all."

Link sighed too. Saroviny was right, but she'd judged him incorrectly. She'd also missed a spell from the game systema dark spell.

Link had bought this with a high price from an auction to learn just so he could have an unexpected hidden card.

Bright cards flew past his eyes. Soon, it stopped on a dark blue card. Its surroundings had blue flames rather than dazzling light. The flames kept changing, sometimes forming a howling skull, sometimes sketching a struggling figure. Its evil was obvious.

Level-18 spell: Flame of the Soul

Flame of the Soul

Cost: 0 points

Effect: Choose a target and ignite their soul. The light and heat from burning the soul will transform into the spellcaster's own strength. This spell's efficiency at converting power is above 80%. If the target cooperates, it can reach 95%.

Side Effect: After using this spell, the player's Mana will completely turn into Dark Mana, and the player will be branded with the Dark Camp. The player's mind will forever be affected by darkness.

(Note: Strong power must come at a high cost. Young man, are you ready?)

Link took a deep breath and chose to learn this without hesitation. The card in his vision dissipated, scattering into countless will-o'-wisps that floated into Link's body.

He shuddered. When he raised his head again, black and silver flames were dancing in his pupils. He looked just like a Necromancer who could turn himself into a warlock.

Seeing him like this, Saroviny burstito laughter. "Good, good. You finally chose the dark path. Link, this is a wise choice. You won't regret it!"

Earlier when Ice Queen Lily heard Link say that he wouldn't change his heart, she'd thought that this Magician was pretty good. She didn't expect that he would turn straightito darkness.

The world is filled with mist. I hope we will not change our hearts. She realized now that this phrase hadn't been a vow but rather a helpless lament.

Lily's eyes were dark, but her determination was stronger. "There's nothing else to say. Just do it!"

Saroviny pursed her lips. She was ready to kill this stubborn woman, but before she could act, Link called out, "Let me do it."

Saroviny instantly smiled. "That works too. Go for it."

Link looked at Lily. "I know a spell that can burn one's soul," he said. "It will bring about endless pain, and I want to try it today."

While speaking, he also used the Telepathy spell. There's no way I can defeat Saroviny with my own strength. I was forced to choose the dark path.

At the same time, Link sent an image that clearly showed his plan.

The plan was good, but it also had a cruel part. It was the critical step and also the darkest oneigniting Lily's soul to turn into power for Link to use. This was the only way for Link to counter Saroviny and give the Divine Fragment to the Snow Mountain Archmage.

The image was straightforward; Lily quickly understood. She stared at Link, and Link met her eyes confidently. The black and silver flames danced, but his eyes were as resolute as ever.

Clang. Lily tossed her sword onto the ground and closed her eyes, not saying a word. She chose to believe Link and sacrificed her soul without hesitation.

Link walked over and hoisted up the Ode of a Full Moon. He pierced Lily's chest and activated the spell. Lily's soul was ignited instantly, burning with frosty white flames.

Even the strongest person would lose their calm when their soul was suffering. Lily was the same. She grasped Link's sword and cried out chillingly. Her body writhed uncontrollably, instinctively trying to escape from Link's control.

Unfortunately, the spell was activated. Everything was over.

While the frosty white soul fire burned, pure dark silver power flowed across the Ode of a Full Moon and surged into Link's body. It quickly bolstered his strength.

A Level-16 figure like Lily had extremely powerful souls containing incredible power. As the white flames died down, Link felt unprecedented power.

He checked his stats.

Link Morani (Ferde Lord, Dark Dragon King, Avatar of the Realm)

Level-16 Pinnacle Master Magician, Level-16 Pinnacle Assassin

Energy Type: Dark Realm Essence

Energy Limit: 52380 Points

He'd been at mid-Level-16, but now he was at the pinnacle with only a step away from Level-17. His power had increased by 30%!

By now, Saroviny finally felt something wrong. Furrowing her brows, she looked at Link. "You"

Link indeed possessed dark power and even did something as cruel as devouring a soul. Only a Dark Magician would do that. But something felt wrong Yes, the Ice Queen never protested!

Now, only a bit of Lily's soul remained. Link stopped the spell and using his thoughts, the soul's remnant entered his sword.

A determined thought from the soul entered Link's mind. Darkness has fallen. I hope you do not change your heart.

I won't, Link replied.

Looking up at Saroviny, the flames in his eyes stopped dancing. Instead, they became steady light. "Even if I join the darkness, I will be the ruler!"

Slave? No, he wouldn't even become the slave of the God of Light!

Link's voice contained unchangeable determination; his tone was indescribably ambitious. The dark power in him condensed and settled like the darkest night.

Faced with such resolute will, Saroviny stepped back involuntarily. In a fight of will, she was defeated.

Afterward, she lost her cool. Realizing that she'd been played, anger seized her. "Link, you're dead!"

Boom! The dark territory instantly expanded to its max. Black lightning cracked endlessly in the sky, and a heavy fog rolled out from the Abyss of Despair battle robe. Saroviny disappeared from her spot. She charged towards Link, sword pointed between his eyes.

Clang. With a huge sound, Link blocked Saroviny's sword. Rather than clashing directly, he'd cut in from the side, shaving off Saroviny's strength.

Scrape, scrape. Sparks flew under the grating noise. The two sides entered an intense fight.

Therodeau, having just joined the darkness, couldn't participate in the chaos at all. He was Level-16, but he was only in the lower level. Both his skills and his will were far from the two fighting. He could only avoid the clash from afar.

In the chaos, no one noticed that the Divine Fragment hanging at Link's waist suddenly rippled abnormally. A shred of light shone from the wooden box.

## 637. I Now Proclaim You Ruler Over All

Saroviny's power and speed had improved dramatically thanks to the Abyss of Despair battle robe. With its Foresight ability, her offense and defense were now impeccable.

She was now the perfect Warrior!

On the other hand, Link had also received a great deal of power after absorbing Frost Queen Lily's soul energy. However, he was still slightly weaker than Saroviny with her Abyss of Despair battle robe. Fortunately, his nigh flawless swordsmanship, complemented by various support spells that he had cast on himself, was enough to compensate for this difference in power level between them.

They had been going at each other for ten seconds, and still, their duel was no closer to a conclusion.

In the span of ten seconds, both sides had exchanged 325 blows with each other, setting off ripples of power which spread out in all directions. The ground undulated beneath them like the surface of a stormy sea. It was a truly horrific scene.

In the realm of Aragu, most duels between two Level-16 masters would not last for more than two seconds. As a rule, one blow was all it would take to end the other. This was due to the fact that Level-16 masters had access to various methods of execution, which most of them were usually not in the habit of advertising to the world. Any misjudgment on their opponent's power level would prove fatal for them.

The outcome of a duel also hinged on the stamina of its participants.

For instance, with just five powerful swings of his sword, Frost Warrior Therodeau's power reserves would be depleted completely.

Only combat masters of unmatched skill and power were capable of trading blows with each other for ten seconds!

Link and Saroviny were two such masters. One of them had the body of a dragon, while the other was a demon from the depths of the Abyss. One had full mastery of the essence of his own power, while the other was in possession of Legendary Pinnacle equipment. Both sides seemed to have come to an impasse right now.

Frost Warrior Therodeau had wanted to join the battle. However, the power released by both sides was so intense that he was pushed back 40 miles away from the action.

He watched as the duel raged on before him, a look of astonishment on his face. Both Warriors had attained power levels beyond his wildest imagination.

Therodeau had no trouble understanding how Saroviny came to become this powerful. She was the child of a god, after all. However, Link was a different matter entirely. On the surface, he simply looked like an ordinary-looking, if somewhat well-built Magician. The ferocity that he had displayed in his attacks had caught Therodeau completely off guard.

Still, waters ran deep indeed.

Three seconds passed. The duel before Therodeau seemed to have come out of its standstill. Link now had the upper hand, forcing Saroviny to assume a defensive stance. She lashed out a few times in retaliation but was ultimately pushed back by Link.

Heavy, sonorous clangs rang out from their swords every time they collided against each other, due to the huge amounts of power flowing inside them.

Every time Link stabbed his sword out, numerous black rune circles would appear around its blade, causing severe distortion to the space around it. The spatial distortion was the result of an invisible forcefield that Link had conjured around his sword.

As a result, every blow from Link's sword was driven by the sword's own power and the forcefield that had formed around it. Every time Saroviny swung her sword, her power was greatly weakened by said forcefield. Despite the power boost the Abyss of Despair battle robe had given her, Saroviny now found herself being driven into a corner by Link.

Thankfully, her combat abilities were not terribly affected by this sudden drop in her power. However, Saroviny soon realized that the battle robe's Foresight ability was not as effective as she hoped it would be.

Foresight: During battle, its user would be able to see one second into the future.

If Saroviny's opponent had been a Warrior or a typical Elemental Magician, with such an ability activated, she would be able to finish him or her off with a single blow. No matter how powerful her opponent was, she would be able to triumph over them with ease.

However, even though the ability was still in effect, the predictions she had received from it during their fight had become less accurate.

What made this ability so powerful was the precision of its predictions. If she could no longer predict her opponent's movements accurately in such a tense battle, what was the point of having it activated at all?

Link's swordsmanship was indeed flawless, but his accomplishments in the field of magic were what made him such a formidable opponent. Though he had yet to master time magic, he had learned enough of it to be capable of disrupting the flow of time and consequently rendering Saroviny's Foresight ability useless.

Saroviny began gasping for breath as Link continued his assault, seamlessly combining his combat techniques with his magic.

She now felt as if she was stuck in a mire. The more she tried to struggle, the deeper she felt herself being dragged down into an invisible pit. Anger began rising in her until finally, she snapped!

"Argh!!!" screamed Saroviny. "Die!"

Taking advantage of the Abyss of Despair battle robe's damage reduction effect, she decided to charge at Link with everything she had.

Reckless as it might seem, this technique was also extremely effective!

Link's sword pierced Saroviny's arm. The sword's tip sank into the battle robe's fabric, which managed to absorb much of its impact. Link felt as if the sword had plunged into a layer of thick, viscous mud.

Link's sword had left a deep cut on Saroviny's arm. To Saroviny, however, this was no more than a flesh wound. She could still fight. Her retaliation would be a hundred times more terrible than what she had received.

Ignoring her injury, Saroviny thrust her sword out towards Link's heart. Link would definitely die on the spot if he were to take this hit.

Link immediately avoided the attack. However, this allowed Saroviny to turn the tables on him. Realizing that her self-harming tactic had paid off, she decided to continue with it until one of them finally collapsed.

For the next few seconds, Link managed to land a few hits on Saroviny. However, he was now in a precarious position himself as well. The moment he slipped up, it would be the end of him.

Five seconds later, Link had left 18 cuts on Saroviny's body, which was now completely covered in blood. His sword had also left a hole through her abdomen.

Link was no better himself. Despite his efforts to dodge her attacks, her blade managed to land a few hits on his arms, thighs, and back. His flesh flapped loosely around his wounds. Blood flowed out of them profusely. He could also feel Saroviny's Abyssal power lingering on his injuries, hindering his body's ability to heal itself up.

His injuries were evidently more severe than Saroviny's.

Her Abyss of Despair battle robe had managed to offset the difference between their combat powers.

The duel went on for another five seconds. Both sides had depleted much of their power reserves. Their attacks also became more erratic.

However, Link seemed even more ragged than Saroviny. The latter had decided to focus more on her offense, knowing that her battle robe would be able to reduce the damage she would receive from Link's attacks.

Two seconds later, the sound of tearing flesh rang out in the air as Saroviny and Link flashed past one another.

When she finally came to a stop, Saroviny's feet gave way beneath her, and she collapsed to the ground. Her body was riddled with cuts. Link's sword had left a particularly deep wound through her stomach. Portions of her intestine had been torn apart by it. The pain that now assaulted her entire body was more than even a demon with a sturdy physique like hers could handle.

However, the look on her face was one of ecstasy as she turned around to look at Link.

Link was still standing on his feet. However, he remained motionless like a statue. Seconds later, blood spurted out of his chest. It then flowed down his body, staining his battle robe along the way until it reached the soil beneath his feet.

Link fell to a half-kneel on the ground, with one hand pressed firmly against his chest and one hand holding onto the Ode of a Full Moon sword. His head was limply drooping over his chest.

He was unable to avoid Saroviny's final attack. Her sword had pierced through his chest and sliced his heart in two. The fact that he was able to remain standing for so long was due to his own sturdy constitution.

"Hehehehe..." Saroviny was now laughing on the ground. Her laughter was punctuated by coughing fits which sprayed out blood from her blood. Though her injuries were severe, it did not change the fact that she had won this fight.

Finally, Saroviny had finally defeated Link, who had been the bogeyman in her dreams for so long.

"I've defeated you, Link! Your soul will be enslaved by my father for eternity! Hahaha... cough..." Saroviny coughed up even more blood.

Link remained kneeling on the ground. He did not hear what Saroviny was saying to him.

He was now looking back at everything that had ever happened in his life, from his time on earth to all that he had accomplished during his time in Firuman. Faces of those closest to him in this world flashed before his eyes: Celine, Herrera, Rylai, Gretel, Eliard, Vance, Nana, and even Ferde. Finally, every other face faded into oblivion, leaving only Celine's before him.

His sight was beginning to blur. He could now feel his spirit leaving his body.

"Goodbye," whispered Link. There was not a hint of regret in his voice. He was about to die a hero's death on the battlefield. This was more than enough for him. He was simply passing on into the afterlife before everyone else in this bleak and empty world. As for his soul, he had no intention of handing it over to anyone. He had a plan in place to snuff his own soul out before anyone could lay their hands on it.

Link's body relaxed, ready for the cold embrace of death.

At that moment, nobody seemed to have noticed the wooden box hanging from Link's waist. It had been holding the Shadow Divine Fragment all this time. Due to the intensity of Link's duel with Saroviny, a small crack had appeared on the box.

Link's blood had seeped into the box through the crack and was now dripping on the Shadow Divine Fragment.

The black crystal skull's eye sockets started to glow with a black light as it was gradually being soaked in Link's blood.

At first, a few weak rays of this black light radiated from the skull's sockets. Then, the light expanded across the entire black crystal skull. It then trembled for a moment. Without warning, the entire fragment evaporated into a column of silver-black smoke which burst out of its wooden container and dove into Link's body.

In an instant, a jolt of electricity exploded in his head. The fog in his mind lifted, and he was once again back in the world of the living.

An ancient voice boomed out in Link's mind moments later. "You who would rather die than be someone else's slave, you whose veins are filled with the blood of a hero, shed off your mortal skin for I now proclaim you ruler over all!"

## 638. Darkness Does Not Rule I Rule Darkness

Boom!

Link felt great power burst within him. It swept through him like a wild flood, quickly healing his injuries. The wound on his heart started mending at a speed visible to the naked eye.

At the same time, a hymn-like voice rang out in his mind.

Darkness, our lord, is boundless. With shadows as his flag, murder as his sword, he destroys the weak and rules the Void!

This sound was as ancient and magnificent as before. It was as if millions of people were chanting at once. Under this prayer, Link saw the sky darken. The golden sunlight turned dark yellow, then red and dark red, until it finally extinguished.

After the sun extinguished, countless stars appeared in the sky. But it didn't end. The stars faded and disappeared too. Finally, the entire world was pitch black, devoid of any light. Only the hymn from before remained. As time passed, the voice grew stronger and stronger. It felt like the hymn was getting closer to Link.

He felt instinctively that something was about to happen. Pushing down his shock, he waited patiently.

After who knew how long, when the hymn was booming around him, the pure darkness before his eyes suddenly formed an image.

Thy sky had already been dark before. But after this black image appeared, the sky seemed to have a shred of light in comparison.

Link felt that there was nothing blacker than this in the world. It devoured all light, almost devouring even Link's mind and soul. Thankfully, Link's soul was now strong enough. He felt the lure, but he could still anchor himself down. He wouldn't get sucked in.

Then the figure spoke. "Mortal, I shall crown you!"

Link wasn't sure what was happening. He didn't get flustered by that sentence either. He remembered Morpheus' words: the Shadow Divine Fragment wasn't a blessing. It was a cursea curse of misfortune.

He was still guarded against the Divine Fragment.

"Who are you? Tell me your background!"

"Ha, do you have any choice now?" the black shadow asked in reply. At the same time, a few shreds of light shone from behind him, illuminating the area around Link.

In that area, Link saw himself. He was still half-kneeling on the ground, supported by his sword. But he was surrounded by thick darkness. The space around it was highly distorted. Because of the chaos, rapid air currents kept appearing. It looked like a web of dense silver-black lightning.

Not too far from Link, Saroviny had sat up on the ground. She was badly hurt and couldn't move. At the moment, she was screaming at Frost Knight Therodeau who had hidden away. He was now thousands of feet away and was flying towards Link.

With his speed, he could cross that distance in less than a second.

Under these circumstances, Link would get killed by Therodeau if he didn't agree. He had no choice.

Link was very practical; he quickly calculated the costs and benefits. He would either get killed or choose this mysterious road. The former was a dead end. The latter had risks but also a sliver of hope.

It was obvious.

"I accept," Link agreed.

As soon as he spoke, the black shadow laughed heartily. Then it quickly transformed, solidifying into a circular thing. Looking closely, Link saw a crown.

It floated towards Link's head. That moment, the game system actually reacted and showed the specific stats of this crown.

Crown of Eternal Night

Level-19 (Can be upgraded to Level-29)

Effect 1: Boundless Darkness. The wearer's max power will be increased by 200%, magic resistance increased by 80%, and physical resistance increased by 30%.

Effect 2: Dark Thoughts. The wearer's mind will speed up, and their spiritual energy will increase. They can easily sink the enemy into panic and chaos.

Effect 3: Eternal Night Divine Authority. With the ancient dark contract as a witness, the wearer can easily control all dark creatures below their level.

Effect 4: Ultimate Incarnation of Darkness. After activating the power contained in the crown, the wearer will transform into the sovereign of Eternal Night for a short period (less than five seconds). In this state, the user will be immune to any spell and spirit attacks. Their power recovery rate will be increased by 300% and physical defense by 90%. This effect can be used once per day.

Side effect: Dark power will flow through the body, corroding the user's mind. Finally, the user will become the representative of the Sea of Void's origin of darkness and be ruled by darkness.

(Note: Ash to ash, dust to dust. All originate from darkness and will return to darkness.)

Seeing the dark attributes, Link sighed inwardly. He knew this was the Crown of Eternal Night's use, but he still had no other choice.

Bowing his head, the crownseemingly made of black glass and with an ancient yet majestic stylelowered slowly on Link's head. In that instant, he felt something icy and cool settle in his soul.

This power's invasion was unstoppable. After it entered his soul, Link instantly felt his thoughts turn indifferent. Everything that he'd treasured and loved seemed unimportant now. He could sacrifice them at any time.

This was the cost of choosing darkness.

Strangely enough, Link didn't feel fear. His soul seemed to have splitito two now. One of the souls became the bystander. He floated in the air, watching calmly as darkness invaded his soul. He could even see the process clearly.

The watching soul was the Link from before. Everything he cared for was preserved well. They weren't affected at all.

The situation was strange, but it happened naturally. Link didn't know how he did it either.

But the system gave him the answer.

This is Soul Dominator Thoreau's blessing.

"Blessing? What blessing?" Link froze.

Thus, the game system displayed the blessing's specific uses.

Soul Dominator's Blessing

Unrated Soul Spell (Souls can be small or big, powerful or weak. It depends on a thought.)

Effect: This spell is for the one who received the Soul Dominator's gift. With this blessing, the blessed soul will not be affected by any outer force.

(Note: Ask your original heart.)

For some reason, when Link saw this blessing, the dark hymn suddenly rang out in his mind.

Darkness, our lord, is boundless. With shadows as his flag, murder as his sword, he destroys the weak and rules the Void!

In this hymn, darkness was above all existences. It was the source of all, and it ruled the Void. But Link suddenly discovered that the ancient Soul Dominator seemed to have found a special soul cultivation method that could make the soul rule all.

In other words, Link, who had studied the Book of Revelations before, had somehow inherited the Soul Dominator's truth. Whether a soul was strong or weak depended on a single thought. This was the special thing about a soul.

The hymn should change its first sentence for Link: I rule darkness.

Thinking of this, he couldn't help but be impressed by the Soul Dominator's boundless wisdom. He thought of the sovereign he'd seen in the ice cave. There had been endless wars. Even undefeatable strength had been useless. Only the soul could rule all and find refuge in the chaos, leaving quietly. That was true wisdom.

By then, Therodeau was close to Link, but he didn't dare approach. Three hundred feet away, he raised his sword. Ice and frost gathered on the blade, and it instantly turned hundreds of feet long. Then he brought it down towards Link's head.

Crack. The sword came down hard, but it couldn't hack Link into pieces.

Under the frost sword, Link raised the Ode of a Full Moon horizontally. Silver-dark light flowed through the sword. It was subtle, but it easily blocked the shockingly powerful frost sword.

Crack, crack, crack. It was the sound of ice cracking. Threads of dark power whizzed through Therodeau's sword, quickly undoing it.

Pieces of ice fell down. Therodeau maintained it with all his might, but it was useless. He felt irresistible strength come from his sword. He couldn't block it at all.

On the other hand, Link rose from his kneeling posture. He easily lifted the huge frost sword as if it was a feather. When he'd stood up straight, his sword shook and there was a huge explosion. Therodeau's frost sword instantly shattered. The pieces evaporated and disappeared in the air.

The unstoppable power forced Therodeau back. He also had very rich battle experience. While retreating, he immediately activated his frost territory.

Crackle, crackle, crackle. Instantly, everything inside the territory froze and crumbled into white powder. White mist rose up in the air. This was the strange phenomenon of space being frozen. Absolute Zero was quite powerful.

This power would be troublesome for someone at Level-16, but Link was way stronger than him.

When the cold swept past Link, he just ignored it. What was the coldest in the world? It was darkness, rather than ice. With the Crown of Eternal Night, Link had become the candidate for the ruler of darkness. He didn't care about the cold at all.

He grabbed towards Therodeau and cast the dark spell, Flame of the Soul.

Therodeau screamed. White flames burst from his eye sockets, nose, and ears. After the flames reached the air, they turned into strands of white current that flew into Link's body, transforming into dark Mana.

Therodeau's soul was instantly gone whereas Link's power increased again. He was only a sliver away from Level-17. Here, Link suddenly heard something. Turning around, he saw that the injured Saroviny was disappearing into the air.

Seeing that things were going wrong, she ran again.

Link frowned. He suddenly felt strong danger. His instincts told him that he must leave the Aragu Realm, or else something bad would happen.

He immediately prepared a portal, but then he discovered something wrong. It wouldn't open.

He tried again and realized some force was obstructing him. This force seemed to smell of fire.

Thinking, Link immediately understood.

The Inferno Archmage locked the Aragu Realm, but he didn't come personally. The Snow Mountain Archmage must be delaying him, but I can't leave. I'm sure many will come to kill me soon.

Since he couldn't escape, he could only get surrounded. This was dangerous.

Thinking more, Link realized he only had one choicefind the Snow Mountain Archmage. That was his only ally and the only force that could save him in Aragu.

With this in mind, he rushed towards the Isle of Eternal Winter in the northeast where the Snow Mountain Archmage lived.

While Link was looking for his ally, the Fire Sect also entered full battle mode. This time, they received the god's oracle. They only had one targetthe Legendary Magician, the lord of Ferde from the Firuman Realm.

The oracle said that the Ferde lord was close to Level-17 and had incredible combat ability. Thus, practically the entire Fire Sect was sent out.

Within five minutes, the five powerful fighters with territories (Saint Milda, Saroviny who'd just run back and finished recovering, the three remaining Lava Knights of the Fire Sect) set off. With the help of the Inferno Archmage, they opened a portal and entered the Verdant Plains.

When Saroviny didn't see anyone, she sniffed the air and smelled Link's aura. Deducing, she immediately said, "He's gone to the Isle of Eternal Winter! Go!"

## 639. You're My Only Hope

Whoo... A cold, bitter wind howled from the North.

A young man was striding urgently across the frozen ground. He was clad in a black battle robe with a crystal crown on his head. It was Link.

The clouds in the sky above the Isle of Eternal Winter churned like the surface of a stormy sea. Snowflakes fell from the heavens like feathers. These hexagonal snowflakes were a hazard in and of itself. Not only were they colder than ice, but their edges were also so sharp that they could wedge themselves into one's flesh. At any moment, these snowflakes could come tumbling down from the sky like shurikens.

The waves on the surface of the sea around the island were all frozen in place.

In any case, the island was unimaginably cold.

However, thanks to the Crown of Eternal Night, his power had been converted into Dark Power, and he now had a high resistance to such freezing temperatures. No matter how the wind howled at him, Link did not feel the slightest bit cold.

The spatial fabric in the island had been completely frozen, preventing anyone from using teleportation magic within its confines. Link had no choice but to make his way through the snow on foot.

The entire island was a 300 square-foot-wide circular disc. In the middle of it stood the Snow Mountain Archmage's Frozen Palace. After striding for half a minute through the snow, Link finally saw the magnificent palace in the distance.

The Frozen Palace was made of huge blocks of ice, each of which seemed to be of a different color. The entire building stood out garishly against the snow-white backdrop.

Link was about to resume his path towards the palace when suddenly he noticed a wizened man standing before him in a white robe which matched his equally white hair and beard. Link knew who he was. It was the Snow Mountain Archmage who had sent his double to Firuman. He was also known as Iyr, and here in Aragu, he was widely recognized as the grandmaster of the mystic arts.

As soon as he saw the old man, Link suddenly felt a pang of guilt. He had intended to deliver the divine fragment to the Archmage as promised. Instead, he was the one who ended up using it. Though he did not really have a choice on the matter itself, Link still felt somewhat guilty for not being able to keep his promise.

Upon seeing the remorseful look on Link's face, Archmage Iyr said with a wistful smile, "Lord of Ferde, do not beat yourself up over it. I already know what happened. The divine fragment wasn't even mine to begin with. It wasn't your fault that the fates have deemed you worthy of it. The fates have also informed me that my life is about to come to an end, and that destruction will come upon the Sea of Void soon."

"Are you talking about the Ruler of Light and Darkness?" asked Link. Even though he had already been mentally prepared for such an eventuality for some time, his body trembled still, somewhat unnerved to hear it straight from the Archmage's mouth.

Iyr nodded. "At first, all I saw was darkness. I did not know why. However, you have revealed the truth to me during your duel with Saroviny on the Verdant Plains. The Inferno Archmage has chosen submission. An unprecedented catastrophe will soon beset the Aragu realm... I thought all hope was lost for all of us until the day I met you."

Iyr turned towards Link with a grave look on his face. His dark blue eyes were fixed on him. "The light of hope burns bright in you, Link. You will soon gain power which rivals even that of the Ruler of Light and Darkness. Only you will be able to stop his genocidal campaign against all life in every realm. You must not die. Leave the Aragu realm now. Return to Firuman and become strong enough to vanquish the Ruler of Light and Darkness once and for all!"

Just then, Link felt a sudden warmth in the air. Then, he noticed a red glimmer spreading out from the horizon as if the sun had finally sunk into the ocean and left the last rays of its light in the sky.

Before Link could even make a remark, the Snow Mountain Archmage muttered, "The Inferno Archmage, Sastor, he's coming!"

This was the first time Link had heard the Inferno Archmage's real name being spoken out loud. With his thought processes accelerated by the Crown's Dark Thoughts special effect, he was able to quickly predict what was about to happen soon.

He's probably after me. Saroviny had said that her father wants to make a slave out of me. She's also said that the Inferno Archmage has chosen to side with the Ruler of Light and Darkness. From the looks of things, the entire Fire Sect must be coming after me in full force. With the Aragu realm completely sealed shut, escape may be all but impossible...

Even with the Crown of Eternal Night and his supposed potential for further growth, the fact remained that Link's power was still at Level-16 and that the only ally he had right now was the Snow Mountain Archmage. With the enemy coming in fast, Link might not be able to make it out of the Aragu realm alive.

Archmage Iyr waved a hand, conjuring countless Frost runes around it. The runes sparkled for a few seconds in the air. All of a sudden, they fizzled out. "Sastor has sealed off the entire realm with the power of his followers' belief. As long as his spell is in effect, even I will not be able to break out of this realm. We'll just have to fight our way out of this!"

He began walking towards the Frozen Palace. "Come with me, Lord of Ferde. Time is of the essence. The Aragu army will not be able to come to our aid in time... Even if they do, they would not be of much help. Our only course of action right now is to help you attain more power."

The old man was walking so fast that Link had to jog after him.

The two were soon inside the Frozen Palace. The Archmage's footsteps did not stop. Once they reached the middle of the palace's main hall, the Archmage waved a hand. As if in response, the rune circle beneath their feet glowed, revealing a secret storage space.

"Rise!" The Snow Mountain Archmage waved his hand again. An ice pillar began rising from the middle of the storage space with a sound of ice breaking. A crystal box was set on the pillar.

The Archmage opened the box with another wave of his hand. A colorless crystal as big as a pigeon's egg floated out of the box. As soon as it came into contact with the air in the outside world, it was immediately surrounded by a milky white mist. The temperature in the hall instantly dropped to negative 30 degrees. Link could not help but shiver in the sudden cold.

"Swallow this, quick!" The Snow Mountain Archmage quickly gave Link the crystal. The cold was so intense that it was as if there were hundreds of cold needles piercing his face right now.

Link could not imagine how his stomach would react to being forced such an ominous-looking thing. He had no idea what the Snow Mountain Archmage was making him eat.

Game system, do you know what this is? thought Link. He knew the Archmage would not try to harm him. He just wanted to know a bit more about the crystal before he put it in his mouth.

Scanning... Scan complete. It's a Flawless Frozen Essence.

Flawless Frozen Essence

Quality: Level-19

Effect: The Essence is made of pure concentrated Frost Power. Anyone who takes it will experience an intense cold. If they manage to survive it, their power level will be increased by one level. Otherwise, their body and soul will be frozen solid.

(Note: Great power comes at a great cost!)

After reading through the crystal's effects, there was no doubt in Link's mind what he was supposed to do right now. These were dangerous times. Link had to take a leap of faith. He opened his mouth and bitito the Flawless Frozen Essence. Ignoring the growing numbness in his mouth, he let the crystal slide down his throat and into his stomach.

Link's thoughts flashed through his mind so quickly that the Snow Mountain Archmage did not even detect Link's initial misgiving about swallowing the crystal.

He did not think that Link would take it so willingly. He then laughed out loud. "Good man, Good man! Seeing how much faith you have in me, you have my word that I will do whatever it takes to get you out of Aragu alive!"

Link could barely hear what the Archmage was saying. The only thing he was feeling right now was the indescribable pain in his stomach. It was as if hundreds of knives were now cutting up his intestines into ribbons. The coldness had also spread to every corner of his body, threatening to turn him into a human-sized popsicle.

The pain was excruciating. However, Link's mind still remained somewhat lucid. Heh, I could still feel pain, which means that the crystal's coldness hasn't completely ruined my body yet.

If his body were to go completely numb, he would have to activate the Crown of Eternal Night's Ultimate Darkness Form in order to boost his own magical resistances and mitigate the damage done to his body. However, the situation seemed a lot better than he had expected.

Link was now in so much pain that he could barely stand up. He plopped down on the ground, fighting off the biting cold in his body.

The Snow Mountain Archmage was silently watching over him in a corner.

At that point, the red glimmer in the sky had intensified. The snow and clouds in the sky outside the Frozen Palace had somewhat cleared.

Half a minute later, a terrible voice exploded like lightning in the air. "Iyr, hand over the intruder and pledge your allegiance to the Ruler of Light and Darkness or die!"

The Inferno Archmage, Sastor had arrived.

## 640. Nemesis After Hundred Years

Inferno Archmage Sastor was the god of the Fire Sect, the mastermind behind the Yan Empire, and an undefeatable figure at the pinnacle of Level-19.

Nozama was at the pinnacle of Level-19 too. In the game, he'd almost upended the Firuman Realm. The World Tree of the High Elves was a magic item at Level-19. It was powerful enough to fuse two separate realms.

In this realm, the pinnacle of Level-19 was a synonym of "incredible."

The pinnacle of Level-19 was also the highest level a realm could contain. Any further and one would enter the divine state. Anyone in that state would either get repelled by the realm, or they would cause the realm to burst.

Of course, there hadn't been any god who'd forcefully burst a realm yet. Even the frightening Ruler of Light and Darkness couldn't.

To someone at Level-19, anyone below their leveleven someone at the pinnacle of Level-18could be killed with just a bit of strength.

This was why people at the pinnacle of Level-19 had "arch" before their title. Warriors were Archwarriors while Magicians were Archmages.

After Sastor arrived at the Isle of Eternal Winter, Snow Mountain Archmage Iyr did two things. One was to activate a defense spell, sealing his palace. The second was to leave the palace and fight Sastor thousands of feet in the air.

Sastor hadn't come alone. Some of his men had come, but they were at Level-16. To Iyr, they were as insignificant as flies.

Of course, they were flies now. But if he kept fighting Sastor and used up a lot of energy, these "flies" could still influence the game.

That was alright though. Iyr didn't care about life or death now. He had one simple goal, which was to send Link to the Firuman Realm so he had enough time to mature and counter the Ruler of Light and Darkness!

"Sastor, I used to respect you because you were the most talented Magician I've met. But now, I'm disappointed. No matter how talented or lucky you are, you're just a dog."

Iyr was calm as he spoke. Rather than insulting Sastor, he seemed to be stating an obvious fact.

To the proud Sastor, Iyr's words were like an arrow to his heart. He felt his face heat up, but he just couldn't utter any refutation. The fire simmered in his heart, and it felt so uncomfortable.

After many seconds, he finally gritted out, "Iyr, you don't know what you're facing at all. You"

Iyr waved, cutting him off. "Cut the nonsense. Let's start!"

Before he finished, beams of light already flashed around Iyr. The dozens of arrow-like crystal cones appeared out of thin air. They spun around Iyr in a complicated yet precise way. The iciness in the air thickened.

Sastor's expression grew serious. "Retreat from the isle!" he called to his believers.

This was the battlefield for the Archmages. Everyone else would be swept up by the storm and be crushed easily. This time, even Saroviny didn't delay. She was the first to turn and escape. Milda and the three Lava Knights quickly retreated too.

They'd been far behind the Inferno Archmage. After getting the command, they ran at full speed and quickly exited the Isle of Eternal Winter.

When the last Lava Knight retreated, deafening cracks came from the 200-mile-wide island behind them. The island and the frozen sea around it were instantly covered in a web of cracks.

The cracks deepened and widened. Less than ten seconds later, the entire island disappeared from the sea surface. The frozen sea also turned into warm water. In the distant horizon, there was a red and white ball of light. They entangled and collided, setting off ripples of shockwaves.

Under the colliding power, the members of the Fire Sect could feel the ground shaking despite being hundreds of miles away. The sea had started roaring too. Mountainous waves crashed towards all directions, creating tsunamis going towards land.

The furious waves forced the people back further.

This kind of power made one speechless. Milda and the Lava Knights had lost their words. Even Saroviny who called herself the daughter of a god was floored. She couldn't believe a mortal could reach this level.

The battle went on for 16 seconds. At 17 seconds, the ball of white light at the horizon was scattered by the red light. However, the red light also paid greatly. His light was much dimmer than before.

If his light had been comparable to the sun before, he was now like a star at night that glowed a bit brighter than the others.

Inferno Archmage Sastor was extremely talented, but Iyr was a grandmaster too. Their skills were at the same level. The main reason why Sastor won was because he had the Divine Fragment and the support from his believers.

The fight between the two Archmages had ended. Sastor quickly turned and ran from the battlefield. At the same time, a voice rang out in the minds of his believers. Iyr is dead while the Ferde lord is still unharmed. I will continue to lock the realm so he can't escape. You all work together to kill him!

By the time he finished, the Inferno Archmage had already vanished.

Milda and the others all had reverent expressions. Only Saroviny looked in the direction Sastor went in deep thought. "He ran so quickly. He must have been hurt badly and is too scared to face the Ferde lord now."

Iyr may have died, but the Inferno Archmage had paid greatly for it.

"Let's go," Milda said. "Let us go meet that Ferde lord Saroviny, are you okay?"

Saroviny's injuries were healed by a divine spell, but it had been a serious wound. It would still affect her combat ability. Milda didn't want something to happen at this critical time.

Saroviny never liked this High Elf. If Milda wasn't here, Saroviny would be the most powerful in the Fire Sect and be worshipped by the thousands of believers. After Milda came, she took all this glory away. No wonder Saroviny hated Milda.

She scoffed. "Worry about yourself, Milda. I heard that the Ferde lord's your old lover. Don't get soft and cause trouble!"

Milda smiled thinly. "Since you're arguing with me, I guess you're fine. Let's go."

This annoyed Saroviny. She wanted to tear apart this pretty and clever High Elf, but she still knew her place. She was much more powerful than Milda, but the three Lava Knights were all on her side. Milda's Prophecy Staff was powerful too. Saroviny might not be a match if they gotito a fight. She would get reprimanded by her father too.

She never did things with no benefits.

Huffing, Saroviny opened her territory and rushed towards the palace in the heart of the island. Milda and the others followed.

The Isle of Eternal Winter had completely sunk. All they could see was the blue sea surface. After flying for more than 100 miles, they finally saw something different.

There was a lonely stone pillar in the middle of the sea. The pillar had the damaged palace. At the entrance, there was an elder holding a staff with both hands. He stood there quietly. It was Iyr, the Snow Mountain Archmage.

"Ah, Iyr isn't dead!" a Lava Knight yelled.

"Oh my god, what do we do?"

At the front, Saroviny's pupils constited. Her heart skipped a beat too. She'd just witnessed an Archmage's power. No matter how brave she was, she didn't dare fight an Archmage. That was suicide!

But she quickly realized that even though Iyr was standing, he had no power aura. His body was completely frozen too. This was a lifeless corpse.

"Don't freak out. He's dead!" Saroviny called.

Everyone looked carefully and was relieved when they realized it was true.

"This damn old guy. He's scaring us even when he's dead," a Lava Knight cursed.

As soon as he spoke, footsteps sounded from the ruins of the palace. Clack, clack. A few seconds later, a young man with black hair, black eyes, the Crown of Eternal Night, a silver-black battle robe, and a long sword walked out.

He stopped at the door and bowed to the Snow Mountain Archmage Iyr rooted there. Then he raised his head and looked at the Lava Knight who'd spoken. "Everyone will die. Some die without any meaning. Others should be respected, even in death. Knight, kneel and apologize."

The Lava Knight shuddered under Link's gaze. Then he realized the opponent was alone while his side had five people. It boosted his courage. "I am the Blazing Fire Lauste. I'll say what I want!"

Link wasn't looking at him anymore. The sentence before was announcing the other's end. There was no need to say more to a dead person.

He turned to Milda.

A century had passed, but as the Fire Sect's Saint, she had top skills and maintained her beauty well. In fact, she looked more graceful and elegant now. If Milda had been like a lily growing beside a creek before, she was now like a blooming rose being cared for in a royal garden.

Thinking back, the past had become smoke. The smoke now transformed into a faint smile. "After so many years, we've become rivals. We'll meet with our weapons later. I can only say sorry."

Milda opened her mouth. She wanted to speak but found herself speechless. Now that she actually faced Link, her calm disappeared. All that remained were complicated feelings.

Seeing this, Saroviny pulled out her sword. "Link, you won't defeat me even if we fight again! Come at me!"

## 641. What A Shame

Saroviny's goals had always been to go out of her way to please her father by becoming stronger and winning her battles. This had made her the sole recipient of her father's affection.

She could not care less about the constant struggle between light and darkness, good and evil.

The only thing on her mind right now was defeating Link!

In an instant, the sky went dark as her realm unfolded around her. Her movements had become so fast her body was a blur.

A moment ago, Saroviny was a mile away from Link. The next second, she reappeared right in front of Link, her sword aimed directly at Link's forehead.

Ever since she received the Abyss of Despair battle robe from her father, she had become so powerful that no one in the Aragu realm would be able to survive a direct hit from her, not even Milda. The two Archmages were the exception to this rule.

Saroviny's sword was now a foot away from Link. The disturbed air in its trajectory managed to stir a few strands of hishi

Something's wrong... not good, it's a magical decoy! she thought.

Saroviny finally realized what was going on at the last possible second. She immediately swung her sword to her side.

In the next second, an intense cold washed over her. She then felt her sword coming into contact with immense, concentrated power.

Upon impact, Saroviny could feel the needle-like power flow through her blade and into her hand, causing it to go numb.

The current of power continued working its way across the entire length of her arm. There was now a sharp pain in her forearm.

The Abyss of Despair battle robe immediately reacted to this intrusion by blunting the penetrating, needle-like force.

Bang! Saroviny's body flew off three miles in the opposite direction, as if something had slammed into her hard.

There was a dazed look on her face. This is Level-17 power!

If she was not already a Level-16 pinnacle master and if she did not have the Abyss of Despair battle robe on her, Link's attack would have killed her instantly.

She turned around, frantically searching for Link. Suddenly, a terrible cry pierced the air. It had come from Lauste, whose chest had been stabbed by Link.

Dark, cold power flowed from the Ode of a Full Moon sword into Lauste's body. Despite being given the title "Flaming Sky," the man only had Level-15 pinnacle power. The power flowing out of Link's sword would have easily put out any fire he was able to summon.

Kaccha... Kaccha... Black crystalline frost began spreading across his body until he was frozen solid.

"Kneel!" Link activated an area-of-effect spell with a swing of his sword, forcing Lauste to kneel down. He then sent Lauste's frozen body flying through the air until it landed on its knees before the Snow Mountain Archmage's ice statue.

A shiver ran down everyone's spine when they saw what just happened.

However, as seasoned fighters, everyone soon recovered from their shock and immediately leaped into action.

Milda was the first to attack.

She pointed her Prophecy Staff at Link and muttered, "The lord has decreed that your legs be ensnared in mud, your body become so weak that you would not be able to hold your sword upright for the rest of your life, and your mind be thrown into the pits of madness!"

Restition of movement, emaciation, and delirium were the three effects that Milda had prophesied for Link.

Ordinarily, these effects could be induced by normal spells. Unfortunately, they could also be resisted by anyone with a high enough magical resistance. On the other hand, prophecy spells could rarely be dispelled. They also tended not to leave any trace. Its target would have to endure its effects for as long as the spell was in effect.

Hum... Hum... Black waves of power radiated from Mildasstaff and into the Void. In the next second, Link began feeling the effects of her spell. His strength was fading, his feet felt as if they were stuck in a mire, and countless thoughts had filled up every inch of his cranium, threatening to drive him mad!

If Link was just a Warrior, even with his Level-17 power, he would not have been able to deal with such a powerful prophecy spell while being surrounded by his enemies.

Fortunately, he was an accomplished Magician who had dabbled in all sorts of magic, including elemental, spatial, time, and even soul magic. He managed to brace himself mentally for Milda's attack in time.

Let the heart be still as the moon in the raging ocean of one's consciousness, let it focus the spirit. This was a soul spell from the Book of Revelation. It read like a passage from a martial arts manual.

Before, even though Link understood what each word in it meant, he never could put the spell into practice. Having reached Level-17 power now, the spell's usage came to him naturally.

Wisdom and power had always been closely connected to each other in this world. Some things could only be understood from a high enough point of view.

With the soul spell activated, his mind was now able to withstand the onslaught of thoughts that raged on still inside his head. Regaining composure, Link then activated the Crown of Eternal Night's Dark Thoughts effect and began using time magic.

Time magic was not one of Link's strongest suit. However, this was alright. Prophecy spells usually had to follow a set path until they reached their targets. By disrupting the spell's path, he would be able to neutralize it completely.

Link's eyes began to glow with a silver-black light. He could now clearly see the flow of time in front of him.

Link then brandished his sword about, leaving silver arcs of light in the air.

Link's movements had seemed completely random to Saroviny and the two Lava Knights. However, Milda's eyes widened with surprise as soon as she realized what Link had done. Her Prophecy Staff had cracked, and her spell had been neutralized.

Her opponent had managed to counter her most powerful technique.

Just how strong have you become, Link? Milda was now looking at Link in fear. A hundred years ago, they had entered the Aragu realm, still wet behind the ears. A hundred years later, she had become the Fire Sect's Holy Maiden. She had always believed that she had far surpassed Link in terms of power. Little did she know that he had become even more powerful than her in such a short time frame.

Even though her spell had been broken by Link, it had lowered Link's defenses enough for Saroviny and the two Lava Knights to move in for the kill.

Three blurs of light came at Link from all sides. All three of them knew that they could not hope to beat Link individually. Only by attacking him simultaneously did they have any chance of defeating him.

This was their last chance to strike Link down!

After beating back Saroviny, killing Flaming Sky Lauste and dispelling Milda's prophecy spell, Link's mind was now clearer than ever. There was not a single shred of fear in him as he watched his assailants closing in on him. If anything, he was even more fired up right now.

With the Dark thoughts effect activated, his thoughts were now zipping through his mind so quickly that all three of them seemed to be in slow motion.

He was able to counter Saroviny's Abyss of Despair battle robe and defeat her before by severing the flow of time.

The crown's Ultimate Darkness Form effect was activated. Countless black crystals began spreading across his body until they formed a black crystalline battle robe around him. His body was now enveloped in silver-black flames.

At that moment, all three of Link's attackers were moments away from plunging their swords into his body.

Link's right hand was now brandishing his sword in a blur, while rune circles appeared around his empty left hand, summoning a net of black vine-like shapes into existence. Not only did these "vines" serve as a shield for Link, but they had also conjured a long blade for him as additional offensive power.

This was the scene that had unfolded before Milda: Before any of them could reach Link, black shapes burst forth from where he stood. In an instant, the two Lava Knights were sent flying off in the opposite direction at breakneck speed. Saroviny only managed to hold out against Link's attack for half a second before she was beaten back as well. Seeing no point in fighting a losing battle, Saroviny decided to turn around and run for her life.

Link then activated the Flame of the Soul technique.

The two Lava Knights were now glowing with a red light. The light then left their bodies and rushed into Link's body.

Bang! Bang! The two Lava Knights hit the seawater beneath them. Straining her eyes, Milda saw their bodies mangled beyond recognition by the impact. Both of them were gone.

The two Lava Knights were killed, while Saroviny had managed to escape with her life. Only Link remained standing without a scratch on him.

Wind howled past. Link was now standing before Milda. He knocked her staff out of her hands with a flick of his sword and rested its tip beneath her chin.

With her most powerful spell easily countered by Link, Milda now stood powerless before him.

"Are you going to kill me?" asked Milda.

"Is it too late for you to renounce the Fire Sect?" asked Link.

"Yes, I'm afraid so," replied Milda, shaking her head. She had devoted a hundred years of her life to the Fire Sect. There was no way she could turn her back on it now.

"That's unfortunate."

In one clean motion, Link swung his sword through Milda's neck, sending her head flying into the air. He then caught it in mid-flight and immediately activated the Flame of the Soul technique.

Like the two Lava Knights before her, the red light of Mildassoul flew out of her head and then entered Link's body. After converting the souls of Milda and the two Lava Knights into Dark Power, his power level had reached Level-17 Midstage.

Milda's headless body began to fall out of the sky. With a few strokes of his sword, Link was able to reduce itito fine dust from a distance.

He let out a sigh. After floating in the air for a few seconds in contemplative silence, he tried to open a realm portal. However, nothing happened.

Link frowned. Sastor still has the realm under lockdown. Once he regains his full power, I may be in deep trouble... What should I do?

All of a sudden, a mad idea popped up in his head. Since you're still dead set on keeping me here, you leave me no choice!

The plan he had was indeed mad. However, the line between madness and greatness had always been blurred.

I still haven't had the chance to use my new Level-16 spell... From the looks of it, there's still room for improvement. I could make some improvements to it along the way, thought Link as he flew towards the Yan empire. Who knows, an opportunity to use it might present itself while I wipe out all of Sastor's followers!

## 642. Endless Bloodshed

What did Sastor use to lock the realm? He used the strength of his believers accumulated through the years.

This move used up much of his stored Belief Power. If not for the Ruler of Light and Darkness' orders, he definitely wouldn't do something so crazy.

He was badly injured from the final battle with the Snow Mountain Archmage Iyr and was forced to go rest in the Yan Empire. However, an Archmage's body was abnormally strong. Once hurt, it required a great amount of energy to heal.

Where did this energy come from? From the millions of believers in the Yan Empire. The Belief Power from regular believers was weak and impure. The purification process took a lot of time. Thus, to quickly replenish his power, he had to rely on the hardcore believers.

This time, Sastor was truly hurt. He lived in the Fire God Palace, which was built in the mortal temple of the Isomeric Realm. Sastor went to the center and lay directly onto the ground. A fiery crystal hovered quietly around ten feet above him.

Threads formed by countless runes stretched from the crystal. Like smoke or fog, they extended out and disappeared in the air. These threads weren't still. They would vibrate occasionally, and tiny balls would rush out of the air, entering the fiery crystal.

It looked like countless water pipes reaching out from the air, connecting to a pool in the endthe fiery crystal. "Clear water" flowed in without stop, but the crystal never became full. Its light just grew brighter.

Drip, drop. Suddenly, a drop of fiery liquid dripped from the crystal. Inferno Archmage Sastor opened his mouth to catch it. He instantly felt warmth go from his throat to his organs, warming his icy body.

This fiery crystal was his Divine Fragment. It absorbed the Belief Power and converted itito pure Infernal Power for Sastor, strengthening him. Of course, it was also the thing helping him recover quickly now.

If no accidents happened, he would receive 5,000,000 drops of pure Infernal Power aroundamnth later. This should help him recover to his top state.

One month is still too long. Sastor was a bit anxious. If he was in his best state, he could definitely use a Divination spell to find the source of the anxiety. He couldn't do it now. He just wished time could pass a bit faster.

God? God? Are you there? A thought suddenly rang out in Sastor's mind. It was a prayer from a believer in the mortal world. His voice was hurried, and it trembled. It contained great fear.

Sastor froze. The bad feeling in him grew stronger. His power was limited now, but he still replied.

In an Infernal Church in the mortal world, the eyes of Sastor's statue lit up with faint red light. This meant that God's consciousness had arrived. He was ready to listen to his believers.

A horrible demon is blaspheming you. He is very powerful and cruel. He keeps killing your children and absorbing their souls after destroying their bodies. Ah, no, he's coming! Ahh

Instantly, the prayer turned into cries of terror.

A portion of Sastor's mind was still on that mortal statue. In that moment, he saw a black-haired man with a black crystal crown rush into the temple. It was indeed the Lord of Ferde. He grabbed the praying believer.

Sastor recognized the believer as the archbishop of this church. The poor mortal was raised in the air, and he struggled like a rabbit caught by a lion. He cast various divine spells on the Ferde lord, but these were just like scratches to a lion. Other than nice lighting effects, they were useless.

Amidst the useless struggling, the Ferde lord suddenly applied pressure. Wriggling fiery-red light was pulled out of the archbishop's body. It entered the Ferde lord while the body in his hands turned into a lump of dead meat.

Plop. The Ferde lord tossed the archbishop's corpse onto the ground. He looked up at the statue and suddenly brought his sword down. In the last moment, Sastor felt sharp murderous intent rush towards him, shaking his heart. Then the statue was destroyed, and he lost connection with the church in the mortal world.

Sastor was still an Archmage. Though physically weak, his mind was still strong. He wouldn't get scared by an upper Level-17 Legendary Magician. After the shock, anger rushed out from his heart. It was like a volcano spewing furious lava.

"Ant! Maggot! You're taking advantage of my crisis! I shall crush your soul!" Sastor gritted out. But the anger only lasted an instant. Afterward, his physical weakness reminded him cruelly that he could only face ordinary fighters now. Level-14 was his max. The Ferde lord was in upper Level-17 with a Level-19 pinnacle magic tool. Sastor wasn't his match at all.

In other words, he couldn't do anything now.

He's killing my believers. This is destroying my source of power. I must stop him, or else everything will be over!

He'd managed the Fire Sect for 100 years. He'd established the Yan Empire and received thousands upon thousands of converters. This was the foundation for lighting the divine fire and becoming a god. It was also his source of power. If this foundation was destroyed, his speed of recovery would slow drastically. He might even die.

Who knew that the damn Ferde lord would reach Level-19 after absorbing so many souls? If he really did, the Yan Empire would be over.

But the Lava Knights have all died, as well as Milda. Saroviny escaped with serious injuries, and I don't know where she is. How do I stop him? Do I ask the Ruler of Light and Darkness for help?

Thinking of this, Sastor realized it was his only option.

The Ferde lord's speed of killing was shocking. The rate that Infernal Power dripped from the fiery crystal already slowed by three seconds. This meant that his recovery would take much longer No, he wouldn't have the chance to recover if the Ferde lord kept killing.

There was no time. He must ask for help!

Ruler of Light and Darkness, majestic true god of the Void, I beg you to save me. If you help me through this crisis, our contract from before will be voided. Your thought will be my order. I will serve you for eternity, fighting for you until the end of time!

There was no reply from the Void, but Sastor didn't give up. He kept repeating it. After the fifth time, he suddenly felt the space in the palace shake. Then he felt a horribly powerful consciousness descend into his palace.

A voice soon rang out in his mind. Your loyalty isn't enough. If you want me to save you, you must catch the Ferde lord. I want him alive. You can destroy his physical body, but his soul must not be harmed at all.

"Why?" Even crushing Link into dust could only slightly alleviate his anger.

Because he is thousands of times more valuable than you! To me, you are dirt. I won't do something as idiotic as losing a pearl to receive dirt. The Ruler of Light and Darkness was very straightforward. He straightforwardly ignored Sastor's dignity. With his strength, he didn't have to care about Sastor's feelings anyway.

Sastor felt like he would explode from anger. After the fury, he felt jealousy and finally, helplessness. He couldn't refute it.

The threads from the fiery crystal reduced. The Infernal Power flowing from it slowed down too. Forced by the situation, Sastor had no choice but to submit. "Your wishes are my commands. As long as you can save me, I won't disappoint you."

I like dealing with Magicians. They're all so wise. The Ruler of Light and Darkness laughed. An instant later, a silver-white beam of light appeared. It shone on Sastor's body and then entered it.

This phenomenon lasted for around ten minutes. Then the beam disappeared. Sastor climbed up from the ground and bowed. "My master, I will bring him to you."

Go now, but don't be careless. He's growing much faster than you can imagine. With that, the Ruler of Light and Darkness' consciousness exited the palace.

Sastor scoffed. So what if he was fast? Only around ten minutes had passed, and Sastor's power was back to his optimal state. How powerful could Link be?

With this in mind, he glanced into the mortal world. His pupils constited instantly. Earlier, Link had only been at upper Level-17. Now, he'd already destroyed more than 20 large temples, killing all the believers in them and taking their souls. This wasn't all. He'd killed every living thing along the way and absorbed their souls. Everywhere he passed had turned into zones of death.

In around ten minutes, more than 20 temples had been destroyed, and five large cities had been wiped out. At least one million souls had been ignited and absorbed.

Crazy! Crazy! This guy has gone mad. He's turned into a complete demon!

There were strong figures among those one million souls. This meant that the Ferde lord was now at the pinnacle of Level-18 and would soon reach Level-19. Once he did so, he could fight with Sastor. Then it would be hard to say who would win.

Seeing that the Ferde lord was still massacring, Sastor didn't dare dally. He rushed over immediately.

...

Mortal world

Link reached another city. This was a mid-sized city with 100,000 people. There was also a mid-sized temple. If he could absorb all the souls here No, he only needed half to reach Level-19.

It was cruel, but he had no other choice. He would either become the Ruler of Light and Darkness' puppet and destroy countless realms, or he would choose his own road of darkness.

Rest in peace, mortals. Link jumped towards the temple in the city center. Along the way, thousands of souls flew into his body, turning into power.

Just as he was about to reach the temple, it suddenly lit up. Horrible power forced Link away, and a resounding voice rang out. "Demon, halt!"

Inferno Archmage Sastor had arrived.

## 643. Fall Of An Archmage

The Inferno Archmage Sastor had appeared before Link in person, stopping him in his murderous tracks at that moment.

His appearance had left everyone in the temple in a frenzy.

"Our almighty master has graced us with his presence once again!"

"You are the sun that warms my soul, almighty one!"

"Demon, you're in big trouble now!"

Some of them immediately knelt before Sastor, their mouths filled with praise for him. Others, emboldened by their master's arrival, began cursing at Link, as if Sastor's presence had lent them his invincibility.

Naturally, Link ignored them. The words of insects meant nothing to him. The power that he had absorbed from his victims was now overflowing out of him in the form of churning black smoke. Flashes of electricity appeared in it from time to time, giving him the appearance of a powerful demon from the pits of hell.

There was not a hint of fear in him when Sastor appeared before him. He had attained Level-18 pinnacle power and was moments away from reaching Level-19 himself. Despite being somewhat inferior to the Level-19 Inferno Archmage in terms of power, Link still had a few tricks up his sleeve!

There was a chance Link could come out of this victorious.

"Sastor, you've allied yourself with the devourer of realms. There will come a day when you yourself will be devoured by him, along with the entire Aragu realm. Your cowardice has spelled the end of this world!"

Link's voice rang out loud and clear throughout the whole city. His words were immediately met by outrage from all of Sastor's followers.

Sastor was standing at the entrance of the temple with a grave expression on his face. He then retorted, "Demon, you bring with you nothing but lies, destruction, and chaos! No one here will believe a word from your mouth!"

"Hahaha!" Link let out a hollow laugh. He then held out a hand, setting ten more souls ablaze and converting them into power for himself. "Isn't your Dark Knight, Saroviny the same kind of demon that you're describing? That's a bit hypocritical, condemning the very people that you've associated yourself with, don't you think?"

His words had left everyone speechless.

Saroviny's notoriety had spread across the entire realm. Though she had only ever targeted the empire of the Light, her methods were known to be extremely cruel. Her order of Dark Knights were something of a taboo among the inhabitants of the Aragu realm.

Saroviny had earned the moniker of "demon" even among the followers of the Fire Sect. None of them could come up with a proper retort to Link's words at that moment. Even those who had been quick to boo and hissed at Link were at a loss for words before the uncomfortable truth of their alliance with a demon like Saroviny.

Sastor's face contorted in annoyance. "Save your breath, demon. Today is the day you die!"

Link chuckled at this. "Haha, hypocrite, you plan on attacking me here? Aren't you worried everyone in this city might be caught in the crossfire? Mortals, take a good look at who you're really worshipping! See just how black and tited his soul really is!"

Sastor narrowed his eyes at Link. In the corner of his eyes, he could see that all of his followers were now gazing at him hopefully, hoping that he would be able to protect them all from Link. However, they were all mistaken.

His opponent was a Level-18 pinnacle master. Even though the Archmage believed he could easily take him down at his current power level, he also knew that he could not afford to be distracted by anything in the middle of a duel of this scale. There was nothing he could do for his followers. Collateral damage was almost always inevitable when two titans danced.

Sastor let out a deep sigh. "Some sacrifices have to be made. I wish there was more I could do for you, my loyal subjects."

At that moment, Link knew that the Archmage was about to make the first move. Activating the Dark Thoughts effect, he immediately leaped into action, beating his opponent to the punch.

"Die, hypocrite!"

Silver-black rings of light had appeared around the Ode of a Full Moon sword. In an instant, copies of the sword materialized in the air and hurtled towards Sastor like a tsunami.

This was the technique that Link had come up with back in Girvent Forest. It had originally been a Level-16 spell. Since then, he had made continuous improvements on it with the aid of the Dark Thoughts effect. Only God knew just how powerful this spell had become at this point.

Link had named this technique "Infinite Blades of Time."

Infinite Blades of Time

Level-18 Pinnacle Spell.

Description: Summons an array of swords from an infinite number of parallel universes.

(Unblockable!)

At the same time, Link diverted the Mana overflowing from his body into the Crown of Eternal Night.

Stitly speaking, this overflowing power was not a part of his Level-18 power reserve. In theory, the thousands of souls that Link had absorbed could push him up to the pinnacle stage of Level-19. However, the diversity of powers swirling inside him right now had prevented him from using them efficiently in such short notice.

At that moment, Link had decided to redirectito the Crown of Eternal Night all this excess power, which had far exceeded the proportion of power that Link could use.

Unlike Link's body, the Crown of Eternal Night was not too picky about what kind of power it was fed with. In fact, it sucked up all the power overflowing from Link's body even more readily than a sponge would water.

In the blink of an eye, it managed to absorb all the excess power from Link. Not only was its power replenished, but it had also leveled up.

Crown of the Eternal Night

Level-20 Divine Gear (Maximum level it can reach is Level-29)

New special effect, Authority of Darkness: Its user's attacks will have Level-20 Dark Power splash damage.

(Note: The crown's wearer will be forced to shoulder the Realm Rejection that the crown itself will be subjected to due to its high level.)

The crown had gained a new special effect. Its rather simplistic description belied its devastating effect, which would allow Link to damage anyone below Level-20.

The downside to such a powerful effect was the Realm Rejection he had to bear. As soon as the crown leveled up, Link immediately detected a sudden drop in his power recovery rate.

In other words, he no longer had the ability to replenish his power reserve naturally. If he wanted to return to full power, he would have to use the Flame of the Soul technique and absorb the souls of others.

The Inferno Archmage did not seem overly concerned about Link's Time Swords when they first appeared. He simply cast a Level-19 multidimensional Inferno Shield around him, confident that it would be able to hold out against his opponent's attack.

However, as soon as Link's attack reached the Archmage's Inferno Barrier, the Crown of Eternal Night leveled up just in time, giving each of his Time Swords Level-20 Dark Power splash damage.

Link had intentionally delayed the crown's level-up in order to lull the Inferno Archmage into a false sense of security.

At first, every Time Sword was a shade of silver-black. After the crown's level-up, there was now a pristine black gleam on each of them.

Upon receiving divine power from his crown, Link's Time Swords were now able to easily break through the Inferno Barrier!

The tsunami of blades blasted past the Archmage's barrier at a frightening speed as if it were a piece of paper. Before he realized what had happened, it was already too late.

The Time Swords rained down on Sastor's body. Before impact, each of them seemed insubstantial. However, as soon as the blades reached their mark, they immediately solidified, causing the Archmage considerable damage.

Sastor was completely defenseless in the face of such a barrage. He simply stood there as Link's Time Swords penetrated his body. Three seconds passed. The Ode of a Full Moon sword's illusions vanished. Sastor remained standing at the temple's entrance, his body completely perforated by Link's attack.

He was still alive, his eyes fixed firmly on Link.

"I never would have thought that I would die at your hands. I have always thought I would be killed by Iyr in battle someday. He was after all the only being in this realm whom I truly feared. You have never been anything more to me than an insect waiting to be squashed... until today."

The fight had ended in an instant. Not much damage was done to the city. Most of Sastor's followers were still alive. However, they were all stunned into silence by such an outcome.

The demon named Link had vanquished their god. This was truly the end of days.

Cries of despair pierced the air in the temple at that moment.

Ignoring the chaos that was unfolding around them, he asked, "Any last words?"

"I've battled against Iyr for most of my life. I only wish that my remains be buried alongside his." There were no signs of grief on his face. Rather, it seemed as if a heavy weight had been lifted off his mind.

"I will."

"The Void will soon descend into darkness, where only one ruler will reign supreme. Perhaps death isn't such a bad thing after all, hehe."

When he finished, Sastor collapsed to the ground.

Just as Sastor drew his last breath, a thunderous roar rang out from the Temple of Creation in the Fedaro realm.

"Lord of Ferde, our fated battle is upon us!"

With a boom, a huge shape burst out of the Fedaro realm, scattering the dark green mists outside the realm behind it. Soon after its departure, the realm began to collapse and break apart until it dissolved completely into the dark green mists.

It was the Ruler of Light and Darkness. He had consumed all of Fedaro's Realm Essence.

## 644. Realm Fusion

Aragu Realm

Link didn't leave immediately after killing the Inferno Archmage.

The Ruler of Light and Darkness was known as a realm devourer. The strong figures of this realm had basically all died. If he left now, the Aragu Realm would be destroyed as soon as the Ruler of Light and Darkness arrived.

He didn't care about the Aragu Realm itself. What was worse was that it would bolster the Ruler of Light and Darkness' power. By then, Firuman would probably be unable to resist him even if they made all the preparations.

Standing beside the Inferno Archmage, there was a crowd of trembling mortals. Link fell into deep thought.

In ancient times, the Firuman Realm was very strong. Even the Ruler of Light and Darkness couldn't swallow it. But now, it has gone through many catastrophes and was even splitito two. It has weakened greatly. Not sure about the Ruler of Light and Darkness' power, but he swallowed Fedaro. If he also gets Aragu, then Firuman won't be a match Anyway, Firuman must be as strong as possible!

How could he strengthen Firuman?

Following this train of thought, Link's heart jumped. Something flashed past his mind. The High Elves of the Isle of Dawn have been trying to fuse the realms. They'd wanted it to disrupt Firuman, but it seems like a chance to strengthen the realm now!

With this thought, Link felt like he'd found the golden key to solving the problems. The situation could be solved now.

In Firuman, the High Elves are in charge of the fusion. But in Aragu, Milda has always been in charge. There must be the respective magic seal here, and it's highly likely to be in the Fire Sect's land. I'll just go look!

Thinking this, Link walked up with the Inferno Archmage's body. Power surged within him, and the space around him rippled like water. Then Link faded and finally disappeared.

The demon had left voluntarily. Everyone in the city breathed in relief. They stared at each other, feeling the fortune of being alive.

A while later, a priest in the temple suddenly said, "God was defeated. What do we do now?"

"Will the demon come back?" The person asked looked terrified. The people who heard him all trembled subconsciously.

This dark demon who sucked souls for power was even stronger than an Archmage. Just thinking about him made one feel despair.

"What is the Ruler of Light and Darkness that the demon mentioned?" someone else in the crowd asked weakly. Earlier, Sastor and the demon had spoken really loudly. Practically the entire city could hear.

When the demon had been here, the mortals were all terrified out of their minds. Now that he was gone, the smarter ones realized that things weren't as simple as they thought.

Of course, ordinary mortals had restited visions because of their low power. Even if they were smart, they still couldn't figure out the entire truth.

It was like how an ant crawling on the ground might see an elephant's leg. But because it was so low, the ant can try to lift its head, but it'll never see the elephant's entire body.

This had nothing to do with Link for now. Two seconds after using the transmission spell, he appeared above the Isle of Eternal Winter. Link was a master at spatial magic, and he was now at the pinnacle of Level-18. Long-range transmissions were as simple as ordinary Instant Flashes now.

Link tossed the Inferno Archmage's body onto a damaged stone pillar. It landed before the palace, standing right next to the Snow Mountain Archmage.

Since he'd fulfilled Sastor's dying wish, Link didn't waste any time. He used another transmission and appeared at the Fire Sect's largest temple five seconds later.

Boom, boom, boom.

Link could hear rumbles of Mana in the air from the far distance. It was very low and belonged to the infrasound wave range. Because it was below the range of hearing for ordinary people, they didn't feel the Mana movement at all.

Link's senses had improved greatly now. If he used some auxiliary spells, he could even see the flow of time. Thus, he could easily see abnormal Mana phenomena too.

Looking up at the temple, he saw a pillar of white-gold light rush up from the temple's center. It was close to 300 feet wide. Despite being miles away, Link could still clearly feel the horrible power within.

Sensing closely, Link discovered more details.

Strange, this pillar is created by countless tiny threads of power. A portion of the threasshoots out from the core of the Aragu Realm. The other part is from the Sea of Void No, judging from the aura, it should be from the Firuman Realm.

Under the efforts of the High Elves and Fire Sect, the cores of the two realms were connected. Link could feel the connection getting stronger. Even without outside help, the two cores would become one after some time.

But if they just used the natural gravitational pull without any help, it would take at least 1000 years.

After observing for around ten minutes from a distance, Link had a general idea of the situation. But because the space around the temple was locked, Link couldn't transmitito it. He just walked towards it.

At the entrance, he found 200 Inferno Warriors waiting seriously. When they faced Link, their expressions were filled with tragic heroism and despair.

Their god had died. The fervent believers were the first to sense this. Link hadn't completely collected his dark power either. When he neared the temple, chaotic dark power waves appeared in the air instantly. Heavy silver-dark light flowed around him.

He looked completely like a demon!

"Demon, stand back! This is sacred land! Blasphemers will be punished by God!" the lead Inferno Warrior yelled. He was at the pinnacle of Level-14 and should be the head.

There were many piss behind the Warriors too. At this time, they were casting divine spells in preparation without caring about energy consumption. Clearly, they knew that words wouldn't drive this demon away.

Seeing these fervent believers, Link sighed softly. "Sadly, your god is dead!"

He stepped forward and swept the Ode of a Full Moon across. A ring of silver-black light swept through. The spells in its path burst like bubbles. The Warriors' shields seemed as soft as paper, their swords as thin as grass. Their bodies seemed like prepared dominoes that fell over one after another.

With their physical bodies destroyed, their souls weren't spared either.

Using his mind, Link activated the Flame of the Soul. The burning souls cried out while flying towards Link, becoming part of his power.

This pushed Link straight to Level-19. Now, he had no opponents left. If he faced regular civilians, he definitely wouldn't use the Flame of the Soul, but he couldn't leave these fervent believers alive.

They'd all lost their minds. The Ruler of Light and Darkness was about to come, and the realm must gather all power to fight against this Realm Devourer. The realm's inside couldn't have any instability.

The fastest solution was naturally to destroy all these believers.

Destroying all resistance in the temple with one sweep, Link ignored the piles of corpses and walked towards the realm fusion magic seal.

A few hundred feet later, he saw another group of people. These were the piss who couldn't fight. Most were servants while some were kids. They were to be trained into Warriors or piss according to their talents.

These people hid in the corner. Seeing Link, they cried out in despair. As they hurriedly retreated, some fell over and continued running after climbing up. Some kids sat on the ground, sobbing in fear. The others were in a terrified daze and just stared woodenly.

When Link walked over, he passed by a girl crying pitifully. He leaned over slightly and patted the girl's head, casting a calming spell. Then he continued walking towards his destination.

With the calming spell, the girl felt her fear subside. She stopped crying too. Turning, she saw that the demon had left. He didn't swallow her like the adults said he would. The girl's big eyes were filled with confusion. Had the adults lied to her?

On the other hand, Link was already standing before the realm fusion magic seal. He circled this magic seal a few times and had a general understanding of it.

It's a Level-19 magic seal with careful fusion. With this speed, the realms will be fused around one year later But one year is too much. Let me give it a push.

Isle of Dawn

For the last 3000 years, the Isle of Dawn had been a paradise far removed from all strife and war on the Firuman continent.

The humans on the continent had always regarded the island as a place akin to heaven. However, the High Elves there had descended into turmoil.

Not too long ago, the Isle of Dawn had sent eight Silver Storm Sparrow battleships to launch an assault on Ferde, with a Level-16 Legendary master as backup. However, the entire fleet was wiped out, and the Legendary master was even captured by the enemy.

Every High Elf back on the island were all taken aback by this.

Everyone reacted differently to the defeat of their Silver Storm Sparrow fleet.

Some of the older High Elves immediately looked towards the World Tree and exclaimed, "Thank god we still have the World Tree to protect us!"

On the other hand, the younger, wiser High Elves seemed deeply concerned about this.

"I can't believe the people of Ferde have become this powerful, especially the Lord of Ferde. He was able to dispel the entire fleet's Doomsday Meteor attack with one stroke of his sword. There's no way any one of us could possibly hope to defeat someone with that kind of power!"

"The continent now belongs to the human race. Must we really continue keeping to ourselves on this tiny island?"

"The Lord of Ferde managed to withstand the Doomsday Meteor attack. Will our World Tree even stand a chance against him?"

For the last thousand years, a top-tier educational system had been in place on the Isle of Dawn. Despite being plagued by internal strife among the various High Elf households living on it, most of the island's inhabitants were still more educated than the average human being.

Though not able to guarantee excellence all the time, the island's educational system was at least able to make sure that its inhabitants did not turn out to be complete idiots.

At that moment, the entire island was surrounded by an air of unease.

Amid the unrest, a High Elf merchant vessel had entered a small port on the northwestern corner of the Isle of Dawn. It had just returned from the Black Forest.

A couple of sailors were bustling about on the ship's deck. Ten minutes later, the ship's purple sail was furled securely on top of the mast.

"We've reached land! Drop anchor!" said the ship's first mate while waving his hand at the sailors. A thick metal chain slid down from the deck and into the sea water. Once the ship was properly moored, the sailors began unloading the ship's cargo.

While the sailors bustled about, a High Elf Warrior clad in a dark green leather armor leaped down from the ship and landed on the dock below. He then waved a hand at the ship's first mate to bid him farewell and began walking towards a wyrm nest near the harbor.

Thanks to their green dragon blood, the wyrms living in these nests were automatically acknowledged by the World Tree as natives of the island alongside the High Elves and so were given free rein in the island's airspace. On the Isle of Dawn, these creatures were commonly reared as modes of transportation.

Due to their rarity, they were also rather expensive. One trip usually cost around three gold pieces. Even in a place as prosperous as the Isle of Dawn, an ordinary High Elf would have second thoughts about paying such an extravagant price just to fly on one of these things.

However, this did not seem to bother the High Elf Warrior in the least. Upon exchanging a few words with the wyrm breeder inside the nest and paying him the requisite number of gold pieces, the High Elf was finally given a dragon whistle.

A few minutes later, the young Warrior flew straight towards the center of the Isle of Dawn on the back of a wyrm, leaving the port far behind him.

The Isle of Dawn was approximately 400 square miles wide. A wyrm would be able to fly across the entire island at full speed in two hours. However, this was prohibited. Due to safety concerns, any airborne object flying more than 60 miles per hour in the island's airspace would be immediately seen as a threat by the World Tree and shot down by it.

Right now, the Warrior's wyrm was flying just shy of 55 miles per hour. Considering how slow the wyrm was flying, one might have assumed that the High Elf was simply taking it out for a leisurely flight.

After flying for more than two hours, St. Doze City finally appeared before them. The High Elf blew his whistle a few times. Gradually, the wyrm began lowering its altitude until it landed outside a wyrm nest on the outskirts of the city.

The nest was connected to the city via the main road. A while later, the High Elf Warrior was riding a horse down the main road towards St. Doze City.

St. Doze City's population was second only to Andwar's. Still, the city was no less busy than the latter. Occasionally, the High Elf would come across a High Elf or two on the road that he was on. Their presence was testament to just how prosperous the city was.

Soon, the young High Elf finally reached the city's entrance. As they had lived in unbroken harmony for the past 3000 years, the inhabitants of the Isle of Dawn never saw the need to build proper walls around their cities. The entrance to St. Doze City had simply been erected for show. Two guards were standing on both its sides at that moment.

The guards immediately stopped the High Elf Warrior in his tracks.

"State your name and origin, young one," said one of the guards curtly.

"Theodore Morgenstern. I have just gotten back from the Black Forest," replied the young High Elf. He then produced a couple of purple fruits from his pouch. "Souvenirs from the Black Forest. Go on, try some."

The two guards immediately let their guards down at the sight of such a friendly face.

After taking the young High Elf's fruits, one of the guards waved a hand at him and said, "Go on ahead. Try to stay out of trouble."

"Don't worry, I will," replied the young High Elf with a smile. He then rode his horse into the city and began wandering through its streets until he reached the city's northern corner.

The young High Elf had come to a halt in front of an inn. After leading his horse into a nearby stable, he approached the innkeeper who was standing behind the counter.

St. Doze City had an area of approximately ten square miles. However, it only had 200,000 High Elves living in it. As it was currently a few minutes after two in the afternoon, the inn was almost deserted.

"Do you wish to stay here for the night, young man?" The innkeeper was no older than 40 years old. However, given how long High Elves tended to live, the woman was still quite a sight to behold. She was wearing a black dress, and her skin was white as snow. Her eyes were slightly drooping, due to the soporific effect of the afternoon heat.

Making sure that the other guests could not see what he was doing from the lounge, the young High Elf dipped his finger into the innkeeper's cup of tea on the counter. Before the latter even had time to react, he quickly traced out the shape of a dragon on the table with his finger.

When he was done, the young man looked up at the innkeeper.

The woman was now wide awake. She then looked at her guests in the lounge. None of them seemed to have noticed what just happened. The innkeeper quickly said to the young High Elf, "Come with me. It just so happens that we currently have an empty room upstairs."

She then rose up and began leading the way. The innkeeper's figure was a tantalizing sight. Her slender hips undulated sensually with every step she took. Even her male guests could not resist stealing a glance at her from time to time.

The young High Elf Warrior followed the innkeeper to the third floor of the building. The innkeeper then opened a door at the end of a corridor and quickly stepped into the room behind it.

The young High Elf followed her into the room.

With a bang, the wooden door closed shut behind him, plunging the room into darkness. Suddenly, the High Elf felt something cool and sharp near his throat. It was a dagger. A cold, female voice then rang out in the darkness. "Who are you? How did you know the dragon's code?"

The voice belonged to the innkeeper. However, it was now devoid of the warmth that she had greeted the young High Elf with at the counter. There was no doubt in the young High Elf's mind that she would not have hesitated to slit open his throat if she did not like what he had to say.

The High Elf Warrior's face remained calm. Without even making an attempt to resist the ambush, he muttered, "The dragons are a flight in the sunlit sky. The lord's patience has reached its end!"

The innkeeper's trembled. The dagger that she was holding to his throat fell with a clatter. She then spoke in a low voice, "We still haven't gotten a detailed layout of the royal capital. We're still searching for the World Tree's weak points."

"Which is why I'm here," replied the young High Elf Warrior. Through the dim light, one could still see that his eyes were a deep shade of black rather than green, which was the typical eye color of most male High Elves in the Isle of Dawn.

However, the innkeeper was so shaken up by what he had said that she had failed to spot this irregularity.

"Prepare a new identity for me in two days. I have some business to attend to in the capital," said the young High Elf imperiously. For some reason, the innkeeper's dagger was now in his hand. Without warning, it evaporated into a puff of smoke in it.

The High Elf was none other than Link himself. He planned on speeding up the realm fusion process. This was going to be an extremely delicate operation. Preparations had been completed on Aragu's end. Link only needed to prepare Firuman now for the realm fusion.

As soon as everything was prepared, both realms would be able to fuse with each other without any additional side-effects.

However, he had killed Milda and King Mordena. He was now the High Elves' public enemy. In order to prevent the High Elves from doing anything stupid, Link decided to proceed with a subtler approach.

The innkeeper was one of Ferde's many spies Link had planted on the island. All this time, the High Elves had planted their own spies across the continent. Naturally, Ferde thought it fair to return the favor and managed to set up a network of spies in the Isle of Dawn to track the High Elves' activities, at a price of course.

Now, Link's hard work had finally paid off.

The innkeeper was startled to find that she had lost all will to bargain with the mysterious High Elf. She caught herself saying, "Yes, my lord, as you wish."

Only after she finished her sentence did she realize she just how horrifying the man was. When she exited the room, her feet were trembling slightly, and her back was slick with sweat.

Oh, God of Light, what kind of monster have I brought in this time? thought the innkeeper.

St. Doze City

"This is your identity, Theodore Morgenstern."

A day later, the owner handed a set of equipment necessary for a High Elf noble and the family information to Link. Amongst the High Elves, a family's ranking was easily seen from the name.

For example, the one Link used before was Morgenleaf, which just meant "leaf." There were leaves all over the Isle of Dawn, so it was clearly a commoner's surname.

Now, he was a Morgenstern. He'd gone from a leaf in the mortal world to a star in the sky. This was clearly nobler. The families named from celestial objects, like the sun, moon, or stars were all nobles. Amongst them, the sun was the highest ranked. They were the royalty. After that was the moon for the core families or descendants of heroes. The stars were regular nobles who had had some achievements.

Because of the Mana disaster more than 3000 years ago, the royalty had all died. There were no sun families in the Isle of Dawn. The noblest name now was the Silver Moon. It was the same as the Dark Elf royalty in the Black Forest. Judging from the names, the two elven races of Firuman came from the same source.

But that was a bit off topic.

Link scanned the material. He learned that the Morgenstern family was a fallen noble family that no one really paid attention too. They hadn't had any talents in generations and had been pushed aside on the Isle of Dawn.

However, this family was quite populous, especially the current patriarch. He had more than 20 sons and around 30 daughters. Elves usually had a low fertility rate. He was honestly a weirdo!

Even the patriarch couldn't keep track of all his kids, let alone outsiders. In the Isle of Dawn, he was secretly known as the "wild boar of Twilight Valley."

Theodore Morgenstern did indeed exist. He was the 16th son and was around the same age as Link. A year ago, he wanted to accomplish something in the Black Forest, but unfortunately, he ran into Eugene who was disguised as the Dark Elf princess. Then he just died somehow.

Of course, no High Elves had seen this. On official records, Theodore Morgenstern had just gone missing. Link could easily take his place.

The owner also took out a magic image of Theodore Morgenstern from around a year ago.

"He's a very young guy and looked energetic. I see ambition in his eyes." Link studied the image inside the magic crystal. Due to the High Elves' advanced technology, the image was very clear. There were basically no differences from reality.

The owner nodded. "Indeed. Amongst all his brothers, he was the most hardworking. While the others are all busy partying and wasting their lives, he studied magic and swordsmanship. The old man knew about this and paid attention to this son. He'd put in a lot of effort for his son to go to the Black Forest. He just wanted to rebuild the family. Unfortunately"

Life was unpredictable.

Link frowned. "He was noticed by the old patriarch That's not a good candidate."

Since he wanted a disguise, the plainer, the better. If people paid attention, it would be many times easier to get exposed. More importantly, he could feel danger getting closer quickly.

Now that he was at Level-19, his gut instincts were even sharper. He could practically prophesize accurately. Especially for something as large as a realm's destruction; it was as if he could see it before him. For example, right now, he could sense that darkness would befall Firuman in two months. This meant that if the realms hadn't fused in two months, everything would be over.

He only had two months. He had to start moving as soon as he figured everything out. He had no time to act!

"No, sir. This is the best option in our situation," the owner said seriously.

"What do you mean?" Link stared at her.

The female elf instantly felt great pressure. She took a deep breath and composed herself. "Theodore's father placed hope on him, but he was also a playboy when he was young," she explained. "His personality hadn't changed much either. He didn't actually pay much attention to this son. It was mostly the old housekeeper's idea to use some resources and send Theodore into the Black Forest. But because of Theodore's death, the old housekeeper died from depression half a month ago. Think, Theodore was respected and could get resources. His reputation isn't bad either and won't be discriminated for being a Morgenstern. This can help you enter the nobles' circle, won't it?"

The explanation was quite persuasive. Link actually knew this already, but he asked to test the owner's reaction. He wanted to ensure that she wouldn't pull any tricks.

On the surface, he nodded in agreement. "Indeed, you are right."

With that, he started changing his appearance according to the magic crystal. The real Theodore was 35 years old, which was young for a High Elf. He was thin and palertypical for a High Elf Magician. However, he'd practiced swordsmanship, so he wasn't frail like Magicians. Instead, he was quite spirited.

Link was now a complete expert at spells. A regular Magician had to rely on hallucinations to change their appearance, but Link could directly modify his body! Mana surged under his skin, and his body changed like clay. Instead of changing directly into Theodore, he just made some small adjustments.

A High Elf who had been on the run in the Black Forest for more than one year would never maintain his figure from his carefree life on the Isle of Dawn.

Around ten minutes later, "Theodore" appeared before the inn's owner. Compared to the image, this Theodore had a faint scar on his cheek. His skin was tanner, and his features looked more tired. His originally silky dark green hair had dried, and the sides were graying. He'd become more muscular though. There were many scars on the back of his hand while there were calluses on his palm. His hands almost felt too rough to be a High Elf Magician's hand.

The biggest change was in his eyes. The High Elf in the image had ambition in his eyes, but they were also filled with vitality and hope. He believed that all his hard work would pay off. He would definitely rebuild his family. But now, Link's version of Theodore had the same colored eyes, but they looked dead. Rather than hope, people would feel death and solitude.

Only someone who had experienced true darkness and cruelty and struggled free from it would have those eyes. Link barely had to pretend. He could use his own experiences.

Even more miraculous was that even with all these changes, anyone who saw him would still think it was Theodorejust a Theodore who had gone through many difficulties.

The owner carefully compared the two and sighed, impressed. "Completely flawless. I bet even Theodore's mother wouldn't find any flaws if she's still alive."

Link shook his head. "No, the physical body is just the skin for a soul. The true flaws would appear in the soul and power Whatever, you don't understand. I'll go now. Find a chance to leave the Isle of Dawn. It will change drastically soon."

"Ah? Yes, sir," she quickly replied and turned to leave.The owner's heart trembled.

When she left, Link took a deep breath and began the last step of the disguise. Before arriving at the Isle of Dawn, Link had started to put away his Dark Power. He also transformed the surface to the Natural Power of the High Elves.

However, his power was too large. He also had the Crown of Eternal Night. It would take a while to put away all his power. Even if Ferde Magicians helped, it would still take time.

Link didn't have much time and left before that. He wouldn't be discovered in the outer fringe of the Isle of Dawn, but he was going to the capital now. His disguise must be perfect.

Using his thoughts, he mind sank into his body. From the point of view of his soul, he saw that his body was filled with greenness. It looked full of life.

My Natural Power is around the pinnacle of Level-10, and it has basically filled my entire outer body. The Dark Power has mostly retreated. There's only shred left. It'll take around two days I might not have to wait. I can say that it's invasive aura from the Black Forest.

This excuse could save a few days for Link. It was great. A High Elf who reached the pinnacle of Level-10 at his young age would definitely be valued in the capital. He might even reach the upper levels.

He continued observing. Looking past the outer layer of green power, he reached the depths of his soul. Here, it was filled with darkness. It looked as tiny as the tip of a needle, but size couldn't be used to measure strength.

The Dark Power in this needle reached Level-18. It was close to 300 times stronger than the Level-10 Natural Power on the outside.

The Level-20 Crown of Eternal Darkness rotated slowly inside the needle tip. Link could put it on whenever needed. Of course, it wasn't time yet.

It's still divine gear and has surpassed the limit of the realm. Even if Freyar, the consciousness of the realm, recognizes me, I still can't use it freely.

In Firuman, the resistance he would feel from using divine gear would be less than in Aragu. His recovery speed would be reduced to half rather than zero. This was already good enough.

Link made a final check. After ensuring that his power was flawless, he started changing the appearance of the Ode of a Full Moon. Instead of changing it to Theodore's sword, he changed itito an ordinary thin elven sword.

Afterward, he left the inn and hurried towards the royal capital. His first destination was the Morgenstern manor in the suburbs. In order to enter the capital without raising alarms, he had to use the Morgenstern family's power.

The High Elves' royal capital city, Andwar.

A day later, Link had arrived at the city's outskirts. He could already see the World Tree in the distance from there.

Standing at least 1000 feet tall in the distance, the tree's thick canopy seemed to extend over all of Andwar. Pure, natural Mana flowed down from its leaves and branches like waterfalls, before evaporating mid-air into a green Mana haze. It turned the entire city into something straight out of a fairy tale.

Ordinary folk would be immediately impressed by the sheer beauty of this magnificent tree.

Link, however, was able to see the ocean of Mana that the tree exuded.

The trees' roots have embedded themselves deep within the Firuman realm's core. The amount of Level-19 power currently flowing through it surpass even mine by a huge margin. There's no way I would be able to go up against it, thought Link.

The High Elves were truly blessed to be able to live in peace under its shade for more than 3000 years.

Putting his thoughts aside, Link quickly made his way towards a manor in the outskirts of Andwar.

He began following a small path through a forest until he came upon a clear stream in the mountains. A mountain valley filled with the scents of wild flowers in full bloom was on the other side of the stream. Once he cleared the valley, he began following another trail to the merry chirping of birds in the forest. Finally, a moon strawberry plantation came into view. His destination lay in the deeper regions of the plantation.

A thorny fence was erected around the plantation. A small building stood near the entrance of the plantation. This was where the manor's guard lived.

A middle-aged guard was chopping firewood near the entrance as Link approached. Hearing his footsteps, the guard lifted his gaze and saw Link with a stunned expression.

The High Elf Warrior before him seemed somewhat familiar. He had a striking resemblance to Master Theodore, with the only differences being his weathered features and his well-built physique. He also had a sword hanging from his waist. Its scabbard was covered with dark brown spots. The guard immediately recognized them as dried-up bloodstains, which suggested that the High Elf's sword was not there simply for show.

"Uncle Darsey, I'm back," said the young man. His voice sounded deep and hoarse as if he had just recovered from an injury to his throat. Still, there was something familiar about his voice.

As if he finally remembered who he was, the guard's eyes lit up. "Master Theodore?" he asked uncertainly.

"Yes, it's me," answered Link with a smile. The guard had easily recognized him as Theodore. It would seem that this young High Elf had quite arsectable position in the Morgenstern household.

The guard looked overjoyed. He quickly let his axe fall to the ground and shouted behind him, "Aya, Aya, Master Theodore isn't dead. He's come home!"

A middle-aged High Elf woman burst out of the wooden cottage behind the guard. When she saw Link, her jaw dropped. She then shouted, "Thank the God of Light, it really is Master Theodore! I'll go tell everyone else!"

She then gathered the hem of her dress and hurried towards the manor on the far end of the plantation.

Darsey, the guard, hurriedly opened the plantation's gates for Link. He swept his gaze over Link. A pained expression came over his face when he saw the scars on his cheeks and the backs of his hands. "Master, you've been through a lot."

When news of the High Elf envoys' massacre at the port near the Black Forest reached him, the old patriarch had simply let out a despondent sigh and decided to drown himself in wine and all manner of merrymaking to ease the pain of losing his son. The old High Elf had aged a great deal in a matter of days.

Darsey had no idea how the other masters and mistresses of the Morgenstern household had reacted to the news of their brother's death, but he knew that the servants did not take it too well. Not only was Master Theodore the household's beacon of hope, but he was also the Morgensterns' most respectable master of his generation.

He was a kind young High Elf who would never bully any of the household's servants. If death had not taken him away, he would have become the master of the Morgenstern household by now. The servants' lives would have been a lot easier if he had taken the helm of the household.

All their hopes and dreams had come to an abrupt end with the supposed death of Master Theodore.

Theodore's death had affected Darsey as well. He had watched him grow up. He still remembered back when the young master was still a child; he had trampled a couple of saplings along with his siblings as they were playing in the plantation. When Darsey got there, none of the other young masters and mistresses seemed the least bit sorry for what they had done. Master Theodore was the only one who had come forward to apologize for his actions. He was such an adorable little fellow back then.

Shaking his head out of his reverie, Darsey pulled Link into his wooden cottage and poured him a glass of wine made from the plantation's moon strawberries, knowing just how much Master Theodore loved drinking Aya's homebrewed moon strawberry wine.

"Master, you must be tired from your journey. You can rest here for a while. Aya has gone off to inform everyone else of your return. A horse carriage should soon arrive to pick you up," said Darsey.

"Thanks, Uncle," said Link. He then took the glass of wine from the middle-aged High Elf and began sipping its content.

The wine had a rich, velvety texture. There was even a hint of sweetness in it. It was perhaps one of the most delicious wines Link had ever tasted. He soon finished the whole thing in one gulp.

Darsey was gazing tenderly at Link as if he were his own child.

Link felt the middle-aged High Elf's gaze on him. I've picked the right High Elf to disguise myself as. I may just be able to proceed with my mission without a hitch, thought Link as he also remembered how the guard's wife Aya had reacted when she saw him.

Suddenly, there was a commotion outside the wooden cottage. A few seconds later, a gentle voice sounded behind the door.

"Where's my brother, Theodore? Don't tell me he's again drinking wine in the guard's cottage?"

As soon as he heard the voice, Darsey's face fell. He muttered, "Master Theodore, it's Master Lumien."

Oh, so this is Lumien, thought Link.

Link quickly raked through his brain for information on Lumien. The High Elf in question was the oldest of the Morgensterns' new generation. He was a vain, 45-year-old Level-4 Magician who always loved going to parties. He was also recently addicted to Milmilu, which was a type of beverage in the Isle of Dawn known for its aphrodisiac and hallucinatory effects.

Lumien had originally been the least promising candidate for the position of master of the house. However, with Theodore gone, as the oldest of the Morgenstern children and being a few levels higher than the rest of his siblings in terms of magical ability, the position was naturally given to him.

He had every reason to feel nervous about Theodore's miraculous return.

Link put down his glass on a table and walked out of the cottage. Outside the building stood ten or so people. Most of them seemed to be servants. Three in particular were clad in elegant clothing. The male High Elf standing closest to him had skin so white Link assumed he must have powdered himself beforehand. He must be Lumien. The High Elf's dull eyes swept across Link's body from head to toe. He frowned as if not impressed by what he saw.

Behind Lumien stoodamn and a woman. The man had a nasty scowl on his face. Clearly, he was not a friend of Theodore's.

This must be the third master of the Morgenstern household, Dylin, thought Link. According to the information Link had on him, Dylin was in charge of taking care of Lumien's messes.

The High Elf woman behind Lumien looked to be about as old as Theodore. There was gentle warmth in her eyes as she gazed at him.

Oh, this must be Lamiel, Theodore's older sister. It seems that they were both born to the same mother, thought Link. The old patriarch could not have spawned so many heirs and heiresses with the help of just one spouse. In reality, he had married more than 20 women during his lifetime.

"It really is you, brother, though I have to say, that long scar on your face isn't a good look for you," said Lumien with a smile. Then, he took out a white handkerchief and waved it in front of his nose. "Oh, Theodore, how long have you not taken a proper shower? You're beginning to smell like the servants."

Link frowned. He was not easily upset by the words of weaklings like Lumien. However, he could not help but feel a twinge of annoyance at the man's annoying demeanor. His fingers twitched as he tried to suppress an urge to pull out his sword and plunge itito his chest repeatedly.

Seeing that Lumien was about to come over, Link immediately spoke, "Shut your face, Lumien. I have no time for the likes of you, so you had best not provoke me."

"Brother, you really should watch your temper..."

Before he even finished, he flew off in the opposite direction, as if an unseen force had slammed into him. His body did a few rolls through the air before it came to a crashing halt on the ground. The impact had left a long bloody wound across his cheek.

Link sheathed back his Ode of a Full Moon sword, which he had disguised as an ordinary Elven sword. Nobody even knew when he pulled it out.

"Lumien, the only thing I don't miss about this place is your prattle. For your sake, I hope you keep your mouth shut in my presence. Got it?" said Link coldly. He then turned his gaze from Lumien, who was trembling on the ground, to Dylin.

Dylin instinctively assumed a defensive stance. He then saw the look of disdain on Link's face. He too was not worth Link's time.

Link then turned to Theodore's sister, Lamiel and asked, "Sister, do you know where Father is? I would like to see him."

"Ah... Oh. Follow me then. I'll take you to him." Lamiel quickly pulled Link away from the scene. She walked past Lumien without so much as a glance at him.

When the two left, a servant hurried over to help Lumien up from the ground.

"Get lost!" roared Lumien. "Help me up, quick, I need to see Father too. He needs to see what Theodore did to me. Ow, ow, my face!"

Dylin quickly helped Lumien up, and the two of them began walking back towards the manor, fuming. The servants looked gleefully at each other when the two High Elves were out of earshot.

Someone said worriedly, "Do you think the old master will punish Theodore for what he did?"

"Not a chance. He probably would be too happy about his return to care about any of that."

"Theodore seems even more powerful than before. Did you see how fast he pulled out his sword?"

"I guess there's still hope for the Morgenstern household after all."

The servants were all deeply impressed by Link's show of skill at that moment. Not far away, the High Elf Queen had received a guest.

The queen's guest was not of this realm. She was clad in a black battle robe. Her skin was white like snow, and there was a calm, distant expression on her face. It was Saroviny. "Your Highness, something has happened in the Aragu realm," she said, moments after meeting the High Elf queen.

Saroviny's words shocked the High Elf Queen.

She looked up at the World Tree. Some weird things had indeed happened recently. The biggest change was that the realm's fusion had doubled in speed.

Using the Eye of the Void on the World Tree, she could see the image of Aragu. After a while, she could even see the image get bigger. This meant that the Aragu Realm was quickly approaching Firuman.

The two realms were about to fuse.

This would have been a good thing, but this demon who said she was a knight of the Fire Sect told her that something horrible had happened to Aragu. Even more shocking was that this demon was standing beneath the World Tree, but the World Tree didn't attack her!

Sensing the horrible power rippling faintly from the other's body, the High Elf Queen didn't dare do anything brashly. After a few seconds of silence, she said, "I haven't contacted Milda these days. Did something happen to her?"

"No, it's worse." As Saroviny spoke, her hand twitched. Some strands of dark Mana poured out, forming a ball of smoke in the air.

The smoke gradually turned into models of Link, Milda, the Inferno Archmage, and the Lava Knights. Then it replayed what had happened in Aragu.

"Link brought the Divine Fragmentito Aragu. Due to an accident, he fused with it and received the horrible spell to suck souls for his own power. Then he killed Milda and absorbed her soul's power."

The black smoke showed how Link placed his sword on Milda's neck. In the image, Link unsheathed his sword and sliced Milda's throat. Then he grabbed her head and sucked out her soul.

The entire process was evil, creepy, and unbelievable. The Lord of Ferde had always fought against darkness. He was even known for being chosen by light. How could he do that?

The High Elf Queen was rivals with the Ferde lord, but she wasn't stupid. She wouldn't believe a demon so easily.

After the image, she looked coldly at Saroviny. "Demon, do you think I'm an idiot?"

Saroviny waved her hand. "Of course not. Please listen."

Since she said that, the High Elf Queen could only listen patiently. Her mind whirred as she pondered how to drive this powerful demon out of the capital with the lowest cost.

Saroviny continued reenacting the image while explaining. "After killing Milda, Link took advantage of how the Inferno Archmage was at his weakest after the fight with the Snow Mountain Archmage. He entered the Yan Empire and massacred the citizens. He killed more than one million people within three hours! He absorbed millions of souls!"

In the image, the shadow flew in the air. Countless wailing souls flew up from the city below him, melding into the shadow.

The High Elf Queen frowned at this. "It looks like what you demons would do. Are you using him as a scapegoat?"

"Patience, Your Majesty!" Saroviny continued explaining. "Countless temples were destroyed; countless civilians were killed. The wounded Inferno Archmage was forced to fight him. In the last moment, he received help from the Ruler of Light and Darkness and recovered much of his power. This would have been a good thing, but the Ferde lord was too calculative and powerful. The Inferno Archmage was still slain."

"Wait!" The High Elf Queen found this too fantastical. "Who is the Ruler of Light and Darkness? And the Inferno Archmage is at the pinnacle of Level-19, but I remember that Link is only Level-14. How can he kill the Archmage? Demon, speaking without evidence is a bad habit. Give me proof!"

Saroviny wasn't angry. She put away the dark image and smiled at the High Elf Queen. "Indeed, so let me show you."

As she spoke, she reached out and grabbed the High Elf Queen's arm. Before she could react, what she saw started changing. She discovered she was rising quickly. The World Tree was below her, and it kept getting smaller. Soon, it became a tiny green dot, and then it vanished too. All the queen could see was white mist.

After soaring through the mist, the scenery changed again. Once again, she saw mountains, forests, and rivers. These images enlarged and then a ruined temple appeared before her.

It quickly zoomed in. With a whoosh, she was standing before the temple. Saroviny was still beside her, a smile on her face.

"We're in Aragu?" The High Elf Queen was quite knowledgeable. She knew that she'd just traveled through the realms. This was very troublesome on the Isle of Dawn. They had to build a huge transmission seal, but this demon could do it with her own power. Her method was miraculous and had surpassed the queen's knowledge.

She started to believe Saroviny's words. Such a powerful person had no need to lie to her.

Saroviny kicked aside a rock and picked up a broken statue. She brought it to the queen. "More accurately, this is the temple that the Inferno Archmage built in the mortal world to land in. This statue is what he looks like."

The queen took the statue and then looked around. She saw the broken walls and a shattered statue in the distance. It looked similar to the one in her hands. Even further, there was a huge white-gold pillar that shotito the sky. It went up as far as she could see.

"What is that?" The queen had an idea, but she wasn't sure.

"That is the beam of light for realm fusion. It connects the origin of Aragu to the World Tree in Firuman. Five days ago, it was only 150 feet in diameter. Now, it's twice as wide."

"Who did it? My daughter or him?" The High Elf Queen's voice trembled. The truth was right before her eyes even if she refused to believe it.

"Your daughter was killed by Link. Not even her soul was left behind. Look, here's the evidence," Saroviny said, pointing somewhere.

The High Elf Queen looked over and saw a mostly completely temple. People walked in and out of it. Most wore gold-red robes. The queen had seen it beforeit was the robe of the Fire Sect's clergy.

There were many stone coffins in the temple. The High Elf Queen used the Eagle Eye spell and saw clearly that one of the coffins had her daughter's name. Milda Silvermoon, Saint, slain by the Soul Devourer's hand.

The High Elf Queen felt dizzy. She swayed and almost fell over. Saroviny caught her just in time.

After a long while, the High Elf Queen said, "Why does Link want to quicken the realm fusion?"

"He has the Divine Fragment and can absorb the Fire of the Soul. He's risen to Level-19. No one in Aragu or Firuman can stop himnot even the World Tree. He has a smooth path to becoming a god. A vast and populated realm is the best for him."

"Level-19? He wants to become a god?" The High Elf Queen's heart shuddered. She didn't think the Ferde lord could reach this level. Within a decade, he'd gone from an insignificant Magician to a demi-god. And he was a rival of the Isle of Dawn. This was terrifying!

No, he couldn't become a god. She had to stop him and stop the fusion of the realms. She couldn't let the Ferde lord succeed so easily But she wasn't powerful enough to stop all this. What should she do?

A name suddenly jumped out of her chaotic thoughts: the Ruler of Light and Darkness!

"The Ruler of Light and Darkness?" she asked. "Who is that?"

Saroviny smiled as she'd expected this. "The Ruler of Light and Darkness used to be the God of Light. He comprehended the mystery of darkness and now controls both. He has escaped from the difference between light and darkness. Now, he is the only true god in the Sea of Void and is the only existence that can help us against Link."

"The God of Light?" This familiar name calmed the queen. After thinking, she turned to Saroviny. "What should we do now? Destroy this fusion seal?"

"No, we can't. Link used the Inferno Archmage's Divine Fragment to create a supernatural defensive magic seal. No power can destroy it. The only way to end the realm fusion is in the Isle of Dawn."

"I understand. Take me back, and I'll stop it immediately. I will never let Link become a god!"

By now, the High Elf Queen didn't actually hate Link. As a High Elf royalty, she didn't really care about relationships. Her daughter and husband had died by Link's hands, but they had to die for the Isle of Dawn's interests.

Right now, she was only thinking about the Isle of Dawn. And what she could see clearly was that if Link grasped this unbeatable power, the Isle of Dawn wouldn't exist anymore. It would be a disaster for the High Elves too.

In this case, she must stop Link!

These were the thoughts of an old politician who'd manipulated Firuman's balance of power for years. But unfortunately, Saroviny was a Warrior. She didn't know much about politics or the High Elf Queen. She couldn't entirely comprehend what the High Elf Queen meant.

What she thought was that the High Elf Queen's daughter and husband had both been killed by Link. She would definitely fight Link to the end, which was what Saroviny needed.

As long as the queen would delay the fusion until her father arrived, everything would be set.

"Link, your end is coming." Saroviny smiled.

Raymond Morgenstern was Theodore's father, a High Elf hero of ancient times.

Few had bothered to remember that name these days. Most simply called him "Fatmond" due to his portly proportions and womanizing ways.

Of course, they would only use such a name behind his back. As the patriarch of the Morgenstern household, Raymond Morgenstern also held a seat in the council of High Elf Elders. Despite his notoriety, the Morgenstern family name had earned the old man a place in High Elf politics.

The old patriarch Raymond was overjoyed at Theodore's return, who was in fact Link in disguise. He decided to hold a huge banquet for his son, sending out invitation letters to every noble family in Andwar.

That night, everyone turned up at the Morgensterns' manor. The banquet had a lively start at first. However, it took on a different tone when Raymond began hitting on his female guests.

Link did not join him. He simply watched on coldly in a corner.

Eight High Elf elders had turned up for the banquet. They all held important positions in Andwar. However, their behaviors were no less disgraceful than Raymond himself that night. They each had a hand wrapped around the waist of a High Elf maiden on both sides. It would seem that decorum had gone out of the window for all of them.

A lot of young High Elves had also shown up for the event. Most of them had completely shaken off the facade of propriety that they had to maintain in front of the ordinary folk during the day. Some of them writhed and spasmed in a wild dance. Some sang at the top of their lungs till their voices went hoarse. Some had already drunken themselves into a stupor. The place had descended into utter chaos.

The last 3000 years of prosperity and calcification of the High Elf's hierarchy had been a fertile ground for decadence in the upper class of High Elf society, even back in the game world. Link was slightly surprised to see all of this in person.

That night, Raymond the old patriarch had even arranged for two beautiful High Elf maidens to be Link's dates. Seeing that it would be bad form for him to leave the party before everyone else, Link decided to sit in a corner and quietly study the High Elf Elders' every move while nursing his drink.

Soon enough, a foul smell filled the hall. Link's nostrils were assaulted by a nauseating mix of vomit, urine and body odor that had wafted from the crowd of partying High Elves.

Link quickly rose from his seat and strode towards a nearby windowsill for some fresh air.

It is true that excellence can still be found among High Elf nobility. Otherwise, they wouldn't have been able to maintain their superiority over the other races in Firuman for so long, thought Link. However, peace and prosperity have made these people fat and indolent. The High Elf commoners are no better themselves. They have lived under the shelter of the World Tree for far too long, completely ignorant to the cruel realities of the outside world. Such a prosperous existence is obviously not without its faults. One might even argue that the world would be better off without the Isle of Dawn.

Link quietly sipped his wine. Originally, he had intended to minimize the effects of the realm fusion process. However, after seeing how low the High Elves had sunk, he decided to make the seamless fusion of the two realms his topmost priority. He could not care any less about the High Elves' survival at this point.

Just then, a voice sounded behind him. "Mr. Theodore, you don't seem to like it here."

Link turned around and saw a female High Elf Magician. Judging from the Mana flow around her body, the Magician seemed to have Level-9 power. As a 40-year-old High Elf, this was quite an accomplishment.

After picking through the information that he had received from the innkeeper, Link soon found the female Magician's information. Her name was Seve Feathermoon, a magical prodigy of the Feathermoon household and a favorite daughter of the household's patriarch. She was also next in line to be the matriarch of the Feathermoon household.

"A pleasure to make your acquaintance, Miss Seve," said Link with a small bow. He then gazed at the High Elf orgy currently going on in the middle of the hall. He said with a faint smile, "I find all this quite ironic. The Dark Elves of the Black Forest, the humans of Ferde, the Beastmen of the Golden Plains and even the Yabba people are all striving to forge a better future for themselves on the continent, while we High Elves seem to be going in the opposite direction."

Seve retorted, "That's because we have been blessed with the World Tree. As a race loved by the realm, we are naturally accorded with special privileges."

"Are you sure this is a blessing and not a 3000-year-old curse that has made us weak and flabby?" asked Link.

Seve frowned slightly. She had none of the arrogance of the other High Elves. As a Level-9 Magician, she was extremely intelligent and observant. A few seconds later, she asked, "Mr. Theodore, you've wandered about the continent for more than a year. You must have seen a lot during your travels. You are obviously more powerful, more experienced than me. Do you think there will be a shift in the status quo on the continent?"

"Uhm?" Link was somewhat surprised by her question. He had assumed that Seve was just like every other High Elf he had come across. However, his perception of her had changed completely. He could see that this female High Elf Magician's magical education was not completely wasted on her.

He then said quietly, "I heard that the Lord of Ferde recently got his hands on a divine fragment and has become a Level-19 master with it not too long ago."

Seve's wine glasslipped out of her hands, which were now trembling violently. Her eyes were wide with horror. The faint purple light in her eyes quivered slightly as she muttered, "The dragon lord now has Level-19 power... This is horrible! The Isle of Dawn is done for!"

For a long while now, the High Elves had mixed feelings about the Lord of Ferde.

He was hated by some. The High Elves always found that they ended up worse than the humans of Ferde every time they came into conflict with each other. Ferde's erosion of the High Elves' monopoly over the magical gear business had also left them in an economically dire position.

He was respected by some. The High Elves definitely would not have held him in high esteem at all if he had just been a Warrior. However, he was also a top-tier Magician. Someone who had beaten them at their game deserved at least some modicum of respect from them.

He was also feared by the High Elves. Ferde had grown more powerful with each passing day. There was no telling when Ferde would attain enough power to uproot the World Tree itself.

Ferde now had a Level-19 Magician capable of going toe-to-toe with the World Tree. How was a High Elf supposed to stay calm after hearing about this?

Seve was completely shaken by what she had just heard. She began pacing around, her footsteps unsteady. Then, she looked at Link and asked, "Mr. Theodore, are you sure about this?"

Link shrugged, "I don't see how I could be wrong about this. I didn't want to come back to the Isle of Dawn. Everyone's grown too soft here. However, one day, I was in the vicinity of Ferde when I saw a figure appear out of thin air a few thousand feet in the sky. When the Lord of Ferde appeared, the sky suddenly went dark. All the Mana in his surroundings were completely absorbed by him in an instant. I think he saw me back then. However, I could feel that I was nothing more than an insect beneath him. He probably thought I wasn't even worth his time. I take it you've read "The Heart of the Strong"? You must know what this all meant."

"The Heart of the Strong" was an introductory guide on the power and psychological state of a master at each level. It was a must-read for every High Elf Magician in the Isle of Dawn. Link had come across this piece of information back in the game world.

Seve was stunned by this. She then began to mumble, "What should we do? What should we do? What should we do?"

After mumbling to herself for a while, she suddenly looked at Link, "Mr. Theodore, you decided to come back to the Isle of Dawn even after everything you saw. Does that mean you have a plan?"

Link smiled bitterly. "Not really. I only came back out of a sense of duty..."

Seeing Seve's despondent face, Link continued, "There is still a way out of this. If resistance is out of the question, the only thing we can do now is negotiate for peace with the Lord of Ferde."

"Negotiate? Is that even possible? We're still enemies," said Seve in a low voice.

"Haven't you heard? Enemies don't stay enemies forever," said Link with a smile.

Seve was now in deep thought. A while later, she said to Link in a troubled tone, "This is serious. I need to discuss this with my father."

"As will I," said Link. He then added, "The High Elf Queen might have already been made aware of this development. She probably did not take it too well."

"What makes you say that?" asked Seve, stopping in her tracks.

"I could feel an unknown dark energy flowing out of the royal palace... God knows what's going on in there right now."

Link decided not to say anything further. The first seeds of suspicion had been planted in her.

Link now felt a bit better after seeing Seve hurry off. He had at firstitended to observe the High Elves for a while before making his move. He did not expect to come across such an influential figure so soon.

Naturally, there was no way he would let such a perfect opportunity slip through his fingers.

Link decided not to linger around the hall any longer. Once outside the manor, he began making his way towards Andwar.

Due to the presence of the World Tree, the city of Andwar had quite a thriving nightlife. Even though it was already nightfall, the streets still bustled with life.

Link decided to take the opportunity to observe the World Tree up close. He finally stopped at the courtyard of a small inn called "the Light of the Lunar God" and began feeling the World Tree's power.

In spite of the breadth of its power, the World Tree was still a magical construct. This was his chance to see how powerful it really was for himself.

The Morgenstern family resumed its peaceful days after the ball.

After his initial joy, the old patriarch Raymond went back to his wastefully lavish lifestyle. Lumier, the eldest, quickly forgot the conflict with Link because she was completely immersed in Milmilu's beautiful hallucination.

The other kids weren't any better. They just played around every day. Even Theodore's true sister Lamiel wasn't an exception.

Link had wanted to help Lamiel, but he soon learned that this sister had five different boy toys and lived a nice life. He quickly gave up on that idea.

Reality was cruel. To grow up in the dirt without being sullied was only a legend. It was practically impossible to not fall when growing up in such a rotten family.

The only one who was different was probably Theodore, whom Link was disguised as. He entered the royal capital almost every day. Instead of looking for fun like his siblings, he would wander around. When he was tired, he would find a random place to rest.

This lasted for three days.

Three days later, when Link went to rest beside the street in the city, he saw Magician Seve walk over.

Link sat there without moving or changing his expression. He waited for the Magician to speak first.

Seve soon arrived before Link. Looking at him for a few seconds, she said, "My servant told me she saw you walk around the city these days. You aren't a bored person and wouldn't do this normally. Can you tell me the reason?"

Link smiled faintly. "I went through days of danger outside the Isle of Dawn. These hard times made me stronger but also made me fatigued. Now that I've finally returned to this peaceful place, I must enjoy the serenity."

Seve lived in the Isle of Dawn since birth. She couldn't imagine the danger that Link spoke of and so didn't feel much. She could see that Link was genuine though, and he looked content. She couldn't disturb him, so she fell silent.

After a long while, she suddenly said, "Her Majesty will hold an urgent meeting with the Elder Council this afternoon."

Link was intrigued. With his last visit to Aragu, he'd practically upended the Fire Sect. Of all the powerful figures, only Saroviny had escaped. It was about time that Saroviny told the High Elf Queen of what had happened.

Saroviny also represented the Ruler of Light and Darkness. He must not wish for the realms to be fused. Thus, Link guessed that this urgent meeting was definitely about the fusion. The High Elf Queen would most likely try to stop it.

Thinking of this, Link made himself put on an interested smile. "The Elder Council meets once a year, usually when the moon is waning. But it's a full moon now. It's too early. Did something happen?"

Seve looked around, and then her wand flashed softly. Faint green light enveloped the two; the bustling of the street faded. Seve's expression was grave.

Link knew that she had something important to say, so he didn't say anything. He sat on the ground, waiting patiently.

"Mr. Theodore, as you guessed, Our Majesty found a demon in the palace. According to our eyes in the palace, the demon wore a horrifying battle robe, and she uses two swords. She is beautiful but cold and cruel inside. Nothing bad has happened to the palace, but everyone who has seen her can easily feel the evilness in her."

Link wasn't surprised that Saroviny had come. His face didn't betray anything. Arching an eyebrow, he said, "The World Tree repels any dark aura. The palace is especially pure and holy. How can something so evil be there?"

Seve guessed that this must be some powerful existence. When her father and the other elders knew about this, they were all thrown into panic.

They had worked with the demons of the Black Forest before, but that was to fight against the humans. The elves still hated the dark side ever since the ancient times. Now the High Elf Queen was allowing this demon to stay in the pure royal court. Not only was it bizarre, but it also tited the wisdom that the ancient sages had given them.

The Elder Council could hold a meeting to dethrone the queen just because of this!

Link's question concerned the problem's essence too. Why didn't the World Tree do anything? This was a terrifying question.

"Perhaps this demon's power is beyond our imagination. I personally believe that it's not that the queen wants to work with the demon. She just can't drive it away, so she was forced to cooperate," Seve said. This was a horrible guess. If it was true, it meant that the High Elves on the entire Isle of Dawn would be forced by a demon from another realm. The High Elves were facing a catastrophe!

Link agreed with Seve. The World Tree was powerful, but it was still a dead object. Saroviny wasn't at Level-19, but her father was a true god. His advice could easily help her avoid the World Tree. Link did the same, after all.

Thinking of this, Link tapped his sword's hilt. "It seems like we have reason to believe that Her Majesty is being controlled by the demon. Tomorrow's meeting is critical. If something happens, the elders may be killed by the demon. The Isle of Dawn may become the demon's lair We must prevent this!"

He'd just put his hand on his sword, but Seve felt his aura change. Cold murderous intent rose from her heart, piercing her skin. She felt extremely uncomfortable as if she would be beheaded if she moved.

As a Level-9 Magician, she'd seen many things. She shuddered after sensing this aura. The Heart of the Strong had said that the true strong didn't only have great power. They also had the courage to go against any difficulties. The book also said that true Warriors all had condensed murderous aura. When it was activated, everyone around them would feelusttled. The more serious ones might even faint Theodore had become a truly strong figure after his year in the Black Forest. But sadly, he was still too weak. How could he fight against the scary demon?

Thinking of this, Seve urged, "Mr. Theodore, many elders have thought of this, but the demon is honestly too powerful. We suspect that she's at least Level-17. This isn't something either of us or the entire Isle of Dawn can face."

Link's brows twitched, and he glanced at Seve. "Can't face? But you don't look too scared. Do you have an idea?"

"Yes." Seve nodded. "My father and his close friends discussed it last night. They prepare to ask the Ferde lord for help."

Link was surprised. He didn't think things would go so smoothly, but it was still a good thing. He nodded. "That's a good idea and the only solution. But you must not have come to me to say this. Tell me, what can I do?"

"I need you at the Elder Council tomorrow. Use your experience in the Black Forest to delay things. If you can help the queen see through the demon's trick, it'll be even better."

"I see. I will try my best. It's also my wish." Link agreed without hesitation.

When Seve left, Link was still sitting on the stone bench.

He was not in a rush to inform Raymond Morgenstein of the Elder Council meeting back in the Morgenstern manor. After days of careful observation and reflection, he had finally figured out the secret behind the World Tree's power.

The World Tree had Level-19 Pinnacle power, while Link was currently at the early stages of Level-19. In terms of power, Link was on equal footing with the World Tree. Also, the World Tree was just a really powerful magical construct. With the aid of the game system, Link could easily bring down the entire tree if he put his mind into it.

Otherwise, the Travel Magician would not have foreseen the Inferno Archmage uprooting the World Tree in his prophecy.

Link quietly sat there as concentrated Nature Power flowed from the leaves and branches of the World Tree. It then evaporated into a green mist in mid-air, before spreading out over the Isle of Dawn in all directions.

The World Tree's Nature Power would linger for a while beneath its canopy before spreading out over the island. As a result, the concentration of Nature Power in the royal palace of Andwar was higher than the rest of the island by 50%, making it the High Elves' sacred ground.

The question remained: Where did all this Nature Power come from?

After days of painstaking observation, he had finally come to a conclusion: the World Tree's power came directly from the realm's core.

More specifically, the World Tree was a power converter. It absorbed the realm's Realm Essence power through its roots, before converting itito Nature Power. Whenever a High Elf died, their body's essence would return to the earth and back into the realm's core after going through a series of conversions.

This was an extremely elaborate cycle of life and death.

Throughout the cycle, the Realm Essence power would simply be converted into other forms of energy. Life in the Firuman realm was just a part of this process of energy conversion.

Link now had a deeper understanding of the World Tree. The realm itself is a living being that exists on a higher plane of existence!

Naturally, such a life form would partake in a constant exchange of energies with its natural habitat in order to sustain itself. In the case of Firuman, the realm itself was continuously being nourished by the Sea of Void.

However, this exchange of energies between the realm and the Sea of Void was extremely delicate. Introducing an immense power into a realm would wreak as much havoc to it as ingesting a nail would to a human body.

When the realization that the realm was a living being dawned on him, Link felt as if he had just understood some fundamental truth of the world. The light of enlightenment had cleared away the fog on his consciousness.

The realm was alive. Naturally, this meant that it had a will of its own. It even had a name: Freyar. Like all life forms living in it, the realm had a complex body.

However, a highly destructive power could easily disrupt its nigh irreproducible internal structure.

The realm would also need a constant input of Void power in order to grow. However, due to its destructive nature, Void Power would have to be processed beforehand before it could be safely consumed by the realm.

Like the realm one resided in, a mortal needed energy to live as well. Despite being rich in energy, substances like charcoal might not agree with them. They would have to obtain the nutrients necessary to their survival from edible substances such as rice, meat, and eggs.

So how would a realm go about converting highly destructive Void Power into consumable energy?

Link immediately arrived at an answer. The realm processes Void Power through all life living in it. All of us act as its Void Power converters! Intelligent life forms have the highest conversion rate, but they are also the riskiest.

Intelligent life in the Firuman realm possessed an infinite potential for growth. For instance, dragons who had reached Legendary would be able to absorb Void Energy directly and use it as they saw fit. Their high conversion rate of Void Energy had been a boon to the realm itself.

However, the existence of intelligent life in Firuman also came with a downside.

Throughout Firuman's history, the mortals of the realm had been the reason behind numerous catastrophes that had nearly destroyed the realm. Intelligent life had existed as a double-edged sword in Firuman, ensuring the realm's continued existence and growth on one hand, while threatening to lead it to ruin on the other.

Link sighed inwardly. It's a miracle that the Firuman realm has been able to survive for this long.

He then looked back at the World Tree. Suddenly, a realization dawned on him.

The World Tree is a detriment to the entire realm! It draws energy from the realm's core and redistributes it to the High Elves, enabling them to build a civilization around it. It is a parasitic existence that should have been excised from the realm a long time ago!

However, something did not make any sense.

Why would the Firuman realm still allow such an abhorrent thing to continue existing?

Link had been reading up on the High Elves' history over the last few days. The World Tree had existed for more than 100,000 years. No one had dared to challenge its power in all that time. The ancient High Elves had settled beneath its shade the moment they realized what it was capable of. They did not even mind adapting themselves physically to the tree's Nature Power. Since then, they had fought tooth and nail to safeguard the World Tree from their enemies.

However, if Link was right in thinking that the realm was a living being, it should have begun planting the seeds of rebellion in the High Elves' minds a long time ago, inspiring them to revolt and uproot the World Tree. However, it did not seem to have done so.

Link gazed at the World Tree absently as he searched for an answer.

The royal capital bustled with people. A couple of pedestrians raised a brow at Link, wondering why this young High Elf was sitting there on the stone bench.

He was even approached by a few female High Elves. It should be known that the High Elves of the Isle of Dawn were always on the lookout for a bit of fun with the opposite gender. Given the rampant effeminacy among the High Elf nobility on the Isle of Dawn, Link's masculinity was a breath of fresh air for these women.

However, Link ignored all of them.

Just then, a beautiful High Elf maiden approached him. She was holding a fan over the lower half of her face. She seated herself beside Link and asked smilingly, "Master Theodore, why are you sitting here by your lonesome? I'm holding a party this afternoon at my place. Why don't you join us?"

Link had disguised himself as Theodore Morgenstern, a young, noble High Elf with Level-10 Pinnacle power. One would be hard-pressed to find someone as remarkable as him elsewhere in the Isle of Dawn. Naturally, everyone in the royal capital knew who he was, including the female High Elf who had decided to sit beside him.

Link had been so deep in thought that he was not even aware of the beautiful maiden's presence. Only when a sweet-smelling aroma wafted past his nostrils did he snap back to reality. However, there was still a dazed look on his face. He then turned to the High Elf maiden and asked, "Can I help you with something?"

He was still puzzling over why the Firuman realm had not yet compelled anyone to excise the World Tree from the Isle of Dawn.

The maiden chuckled softly. She then began tracing one of Link's scars on his face with her finger and said softly, "There's a human saying that goes, 'Scars are what make a man." I didn't believe this at first, not until I finally had a good look at you. You have a certain pull, something the other young masters lack on this island."

The maiden exuded decorum. Her fingers were soft and smooth. Her beauty was impeccable. The soft light from her purple eyes would have instantly melted anyone into a puddle. Suddenly, Link felt an itch on his face as the female Elf continued stroking his scar. The gentle rubbing of her finger against his skin suddenly set off an electric tingle in his brain.

Men and women are drawn to each other since birth. Only through the union of two bodies can we compensate for each other's inadequacies and achieve perfection. So is there something the Firuman realm currently lacks? Of course, it does. The wise men of old had split Firuman in two. After a catastrophe, the Firuman realm would naturally seek to make up for its losses, and what better way to do so than with the help of the World Tree? That's it! The High Elf Queen was under the influence of the Will of the Realm this whole time. That's why she wanted to fuse the two realms in the first place!

Link's mood brightened considerably when he finally found his answer.

Still ignoring the High Elf maiden, he gazed up at the World Tree and laughed out loud. "I've figured it out! I've figured it out! Hahahaha..."

At that moment, Link felt as if a weight had been lifted off his shoulders.

Freyar, if that is what you have been trying to do all this time, then allow me the honor of seeing it through in your name!

Link rose up and laughed again as he strode out of Andwar.

Everyone on the street looked at him strangely, wondering if Link had completely lost his mind. This soon became the talk of the city.

Only the High Elf maiden remained seated on the stone bench as she watched Link's figure shrink into the distance with a smile, her fan still pressed lightly against her lips.

When Link reached the entrance, the guard Darsey informed him, "Young Master, the master wants you to go see him when you return."

"I see. Thank you." Link nodded politely and walked towards the manor.

Walking down a small path in the woods, he crossed a stone bridge and went around a field of blooming flowers. Finally, a manor appeared. Raymond, the patriarch of the Morgenstern family, lived in the most finely-made wooden building in the manor.

After Link entered the manor, all the servants he passed by bowed and moved to the side. They didn't continue walking until Link was dozens of feet away.

Etiquette was extremely important to the High Elf nobles. A stit or harsh noble could punish a servant to death for the tiniest mistake. This was a bad habit typical of ancient races who valued tradition.

There was a beautiful servant waiting outside the wooden building. When she saw Link, she said softly, "Young Master Theodore, the lord is busy. Please wait."

Link could hear the noise coming from inside the building, and he knew what was happening. Raymond had received a beautiful girl recently, and he spoiled her. He would love her whenever he was in the mood, and it seemed that he was in the mood now.

After waiting by the door for more than ten minutes, footsteps sounded inside the building. Then the door opened, revealing a young girl with a face like a flower, lustful eyes, and a willowy figure. "Young Master, come in," she said gently. "Master is waiting for you inside."

With that, she turned to lead the way.

Link didn't look around. Lowering his head, he followed this sexy elf and walked into the main hall. He saw Theodore's father, Raymond, at the head of the hall. This male elf was slightly fat but not overly so. His pallor was a bit pale, and hishi

Seeing Link with his head bowed, he chuckled and pointed at the elf who'd led the way. "Theodore, don't be so stiff. I don't mind. If you like her, she can be yours from now. I'm old and don't have that much energy. Having such a pretty girl before me might kill me."

Unable to reply, Link changed the topic. "Father, why did you summon me?"

Getting to the point, Raymond stopped speaking nonsense. His expression turned slightly serious. "You know about the Elder Council, right?"

Link nodded.

"Only elders can participate in the Elder Council, but each elder can also bring their descendants to listen. Tomorrow, come with me to the meeting."

"Yes, Father." Link nodded. He wasn't surprised at this at all. He hadn't displayed any special abilities, but he didn't hide it either. There were many observant High Elves who could tell he'd entered the Legendary plane.

The most powerful descendant of the Morgenstern family was only Level-6. Now, there was suddenly one in the Legendary Level. He would obviously be favored.

Raymond seemed ridiculous, but he still wanted his family to rise again. After learning of this, he was naturally proud and often bragged about Theodore when he chatted with his old friends. Now that he could bring his children to the meeting, he wouldn't forget about Theodore.

Link wouldn't act too proud to avoid trouble. He quickly stood up and bowed to Raymond. "Thank you, Father."

His modesty made Raymond like him more. He had so many children, but in his opinion, the only one who'd really inherited his genes was Theodore. The others were all shit-eating pigs.

He smiled gently. "You're my son. No need to thank me. Go get ready and make the Morgenstern family proud at the Elder Council. Here, don't be shy about the girl either. Take her. She's a fine one. You'll see after you get a taste."

Link was even more speechless. Raymond was a good guy. He went full-out to treat people well, albeit in an odd way.

Link obviously wouldn't accept it. He hurriedly brought his energy into his face to make himself blush. Then he bowed to Raymond and then turned to leave, acting as if he was escaping.

Raymond obviously wouldn't be angry. He laughed heartily, but after a while, he suddenly sighed. Looking out the window at the World Tree, he mumbled to himself, "Who knows how long these good days will last?"

After Link "escaped" to his place, it was already getting late. He started with the last preparations. Saroviny would be at the Elder Council. There would definitely be blood!

Instead of casting spells and practicing swordsmanship, he gotito bed and closed his eyes. He relaxed his mind, letting his body rest completely.

In this complete silence, he could hear his Heart of Darkness beating softly deep inside. He could feel the blood containing great power flowing through. As he breathed, he could even feel his body exchanging energy with the outside world. It abandoned waste material and saved the essential.

If people looked at him, they would see that he was actually covered in a layer of green light. The Natural Power had converged around him. They fought to enter his body and fuse into his blood.

As time flowed and he was completely relaxed, Link's body instinctively adjusted to the most perfect state.

After a while, bright chirps sounded outside the window. Sunlight peeked in from the cracks in the window, splashing onto the floor. Link opened his eyes.

Right now, he was in an unprecedented perfect state. Sensing carefully, he discovered with shock that the Natural Power on the outside had increased!

Before, his Natural Power disguise had been at Level-10. In one night, it actually reached the pinnacle of Level-16. Looking at his dark heart, he saw it had strengthened a bit too. It was about 5% stronger.

This was incredible!

However, Link thought carefully and thought this was understandable. Yesterday, he'd seen the true form of the realm and understood Firuman's millennia-long desire. His spiritual mind had entered a whole new plane.

At that time, both his mind and body had felt better than ever before. This meant he'd chosen the right path and the realm's consciousness supported his idea.

Since Firuman needed him to fulfill its wish, it would naturally try to strengthen him as much as possible. He was also under the World Tree which connected to the realm's core. He was in the right place at the right place. His power naturally would surge.

Understanding this, Link's emotions calmed. He got up and formed a mirror on the wall. The High Elf in the reflection still looked worn, but his skin was bright, and his eyes were pure green. He looked full of energy. Seeing him, one would think of morning light.

The book Heart of the Strong described Level-16 Natural Magicians like this: Eyes brilliant like the stars, body strong like a huge tree, aura as anchored as the forests and sea. Everywhere they go, flowers bloom, leaves open, illnesses are cured, and a Natural heaven is formed!

Link could feel his Natural territory. He reached out to the vine on the window and slightly released his territory. A yellow flower grew quickly from the vine. It matured and bloomed, filling the room with fragrance.

Blessed by the realm, he'd become a master in the Natural magic overnight.

Straightening hishi

There were some servants waiting outside. When they saw Link, they looked at him with reverence. They looked close to worshipping him on their knees.

"Uh, what happened last night?" Link was confused.

The lead servant was Lilia. Seeing that Link's attitude was gentle, she gathered the courage to say, "Young Master Theodore, a pillar of green light came from your roof last night. It connected with the World Tree's treetop. Everyone says that you're blessed by the World Tree."

So that's what happened. Link looked up and saw many people peering into his yard. Reverence and awe were written all over their faces. Many people didn't even know why they were so impressed. It just happened and faded after Link walked away.

Link ignored the servants. He went straight to Raymond.

When Raymond saw Link, he was shocked too. "Theodore, my son, they all said that you were blessed by the World Tree last night. I didn't believe it, but now I see that something huge has changed in you. And it's a good change too."

"Yes, Father. My power has increased quite a bit," Link said, smiling. Right now, the stronger he was, the bigger his voice. He didn't mind showing his power.

The old man was happy. This was definitely good news. "Oh, so what level are you at now?"

"I can sense that demon in the queen's palace. I can also sense that she isn't my match anymore!"

"Ah! You're at that point already?" Raymond was shocked.

There was a demon in the queen's palace. Everyone in the capital knew about this. Raymond was bizarre, but he still paid attention to this. Not only did he know about the demon, but he also knew that the demon was frighteningly powerful. Even the World Tree couldn't do anything about it. Now, his son said that he could defeat the demon. How powerful had he become?

Raymond couldn't imagine it. He stood blankly for a long while. Then he burstito laughter. "Good, great! I didn't think the savior of the Isle of Dawn would be a Morgenstern and be my son. Hahaha, amazing!"

His laugh was a bit hysterical. After finally controlling himself, he patted Link's shoulder firmly. "Alright, son, let's go. Let's show those old guys who look down on me. The Morgensterns are either failures or heroes!"

The two got onto the carriage and drove towards the Elder's building beside the palace.

At the same time, the queen's palace was in an uproar too, mostly because of the phenomenon last night. The light had landed directly in a garden outside the city, and the power had shaken people's hearts.

The queen naturally had her sources of information. She already knew the details about what had happened in the suburbs. A Morgenstern named Theodore had been blessed by the World Tree, and his power had shot up. According to the spy, he seemed to have a territory already.

Only the strongest had a Natural territory. Furthermore, he was a High Elf who had survived the hardships of the Black Forest. Apparently, he'd returned to the Isle of Dawn because he'd seen it was in trouble.

The High Elf Queen was conflicted. One side was a demona foreign race. The other side was a genius within her race.

What will happen if Theodore can fight Saroviny? She wasn't sure.

Just then, Saroviny's voice rang in her ear. It was a scoff. "Ha, Your Majesty, no one in the Isle of Dawn can defeat me, not even the World Tree. Stop overthinking and let's go finish everything to stop the fusion of the realms!"

Andwar, the House of Elders

There was a steady stream of horse carriages outside the building. The High Elves in them were all clad in resplendent clothing, their faces dignified. When they got out their carriages, a couple of young attendants rushed forward to receive them. The High Elf Elders were then led to their respective seats in the House of Elders by them.

A High Elf Elder would usually bring along one or two of their most favored children to these meetings. In this case, the patriarch of the Feathermoon household had brought along his granddaughter, the Level-9 Magician Seve, while the Coldstar patriarch was escorted by two of his most exemplary children.

Soon, there was a din in the House of Elders. The elders greeted each other, while the young High Elves exchanged furtive words behind them.

Suddenly, an elder muttered, "Look, Raymond's arrived."

Despite the din, his voice rang out clearly in the building. At that moment, everyone turned around to look at Raymond.

Their eyes fell for a moment on Raymond. Then, they turned their gaze to the young modest-looking High Elf behind him.

Silence fell over the entire room the moment its occupants saw the young High Elf.

The young man was dressed in a modest fashion. Even his weapon of choice was a simple sword hanging from his waist. However, he exuded an indescribable aura. At that moment, everyone's eyes were all glued on him.

He had become the center of their universe without even meaning to.

With the exception of Raymond, most of the High Elf Elders were models of excellence. Their presence had enabled the High Elves to stand on the pinnacle of the world's racial hierarchy for so long. This meant that they too were endowed with an eye for excellence.

An uproar broke out in the House of Elders once more. The elders gave each other meaningful glances. All of them had come to the same conclusion. The World Tree must have brought Theodore Morgenstern to us as a means of retaliation against the demon!

The Feathermoon patriarch came over to greet Raymond. "Old friend, it's been a while. Do you still remember the time we spent hunting in the hunting grounds up north?"

As one of the core noble houses in the Isle of Dawn, the Feathermoon household had never bothered with minor players like Morgenstern family. Raymond was surprised by this show of friendliness. He quickly inclined his head and said with a smile, "I didn't think you would still remember that. I only remember making quite a fool of myself back then, hehe."

At first, he assumed a more courteous tone when he spoke. However, as the conversation progressed, he began to speak more freely. The reason was simple. He knew that the only reason the Feathermoon patriarch had approached him was because of Theodore. His son had become quite a personality among the High Elves. Naturally, that made Raymond by extension someone worth talking to.

The other elders had also come over to greet him.

"Quite a remarkable son you have there, brother. A real chip off the old block, eh?"

"It's all up to you now, old friend."

"There's no one here as accomplished as you, brother!"

Raymond had received so much praise from the elders that he was beginning to feel a bit uncomfortable. He then laughed out loud. "Praise be the World Tree! I'm afraid I can't do this on my own. We will still need to work together if we hope to see this one out."

The other elders nodded in agreement.

Just then, the High Elves' anthem "Praise be Mother Nature" began playing outside the building's entrance. In an instant, the room fell silent. All the elders stood up, their heads bent slightly. Sensing the grave undercurrents in today's meeting, the younger High Elves followed suit, not daring to even let out a breath.

At that moment, the atmosphere in the room had become so oppressive that even the Level-9 Magician Seve found it hard to breathe.

Link had retreated to a corner, watching the building's entrance from the corner of his eyes.

Footsteps sounded from outside the entrance. A few seconds later, the palace guards entered the House of Elders in green-gold uniforms. These Warriors had an average power level of Level-9. There were 30 of them in total. Five of them were Legendary masters. The most powerful among them had Level-11 pinnacle power.

Such power would have been more than sufficient to defend the island against any existing threats in Firuman.

However, times had changed. They would soon be reduced to a piece of foil for powerful presences like Saroviny and Link himself.

A minute later, two familiar figures appeared in the doorway. One belonged to the High Elf Queen, the other to Saroviny.

Link had seen the High Elf Queen once a couple of years ago in Ferde. Though she had aged considerably, she still retained her grace and vigor. In the game world, lots of players would circle around her like excitable toddlers. They were always the first to complete any missions given out by the queen.

However, the years had not been kind to the queen. Wrinkles had appeared on her forehead. The hair on her temples had grown white. Her elegant garb did little to mask the general air of lethargy around her.

Her machinations had been hampered by Link at every turn. The loss of her husband and daughter only exacerbated the emotional toll she had to endure.

Saroviny was standing beside the High Elf Queen. She was still wearing the Abyss of Despair battle robe, with a pair of Dark Power swords hanging from her waist. She had a grave expression on her face. Her brows were slightly furrowed. She looked completely different from the first time Link saw her.

After years of rigorous training, she had become a true Warrior.

However, Saroviny still had an arrogant air about her. Despite knowing that demons weren't viewed in a positive light by most High Elves in the Isle of Dawn, she did not even seem to bother suppressing her demonic aura. Every time one of the High Elf Elders threw her a disapproving look, she would glare back at him, reminding him who was in charge here.

She was after all a Level-16 pinnacle master, while the most powerful High Elf Elder in the building only had Level-9 power. All of them were cowed into submission instantly by one look from the demon.

Finally, Saroviny's gaze fell on Link.

There were around 300 people in the building. None of them could withstand her gaze. Only Link was able to maintain eye contact with her longer than anyone else.

Saroviny raised a hand, stopping the High Elf Queen in her tracks. She pointed at Link and said, "Your Highness, is this Theodore Morgenstern, the young man rumored to have received the World Tree's blessing?"

The High Elf Queen had noticed Theodore. She had mixed feelings about his presence here. On one hand, she hoped that Theodore would have the power to go up against Saroviny right now. On the other, she knew that their current situation did not look too promising. Her safest bet now was to yield to the demon's demands and protect this young man for as long as she could until he was ready to rise up against Saroviny.

She did not expect Saroviny to notice the young High Elf so soon.

Left without a choice, the queen nodded. "Yes, that's Theodore Morgenstern. He's only a young High Elf with a few accomplishments under his belt. I don't think he would be someone worth your time."

Saroviny shook her head. "Just a few? I don't think so. I think there's much more to this young man than meets the eye."

She then looked at the elders in the room and said loudly, "I'm guessing this young man is your trump card against me?"

There was not a sound in the room. None of the elders dared breathe a word at that moment.

Raymond was now clutching Theodore's hand tightly. He muttered, "My son, this demon is even more terrifying than I thought. Are you sure you can handle her? You don't need to push yourself."

Link patted the back of Raymond's hand reassuringly. He then stepped out of the crowd and sank into a deep bow before the High Elf Queen. "Your Highness."

Upon seeing the young man, the queen instantly knew that Theodore indeed possessed extraordinary power. However, she was still not sure if he would be able to prevail over Saroviny, who was powerful enough to travel between realms. The way she saw it, the only person capable of defeating this demon was the Lord of Ferde himself.

She was no longer able to change this young man's fate. She raised her hand and said, "At ease."

Before Saroviny could say anything, the queen muttered, "He poses no threat to you. Our top priority today is to stop the two realms from fusing. In order to do so, we will need the help of every High Elf Elder in this room. We don't have much time left."

"No." Saroviny shook her head. She stepped forward, her eyes fixed on Link. "I can't let this young man live!"

She then pulled out her swords. "Your Highness, set up a defensive barrier. Things might get a bit... violent here."

The High Elf Queen frowned. "You..."

Before she could even finish her sentence, Saroviny swung one of her swords to her throat. The cold metal made the queen'shi

"Less talk, more action now, your Highness, or would you prefer I kill everyone here right now?"

If it were not for the fact that she still needed the elders' help in stopping the fusion of the two realms, she would not have bothered to join this wretched meeting in the first place and simply slaughtered every High Elf on this island!

The High Elf Queen bit her lip. "Open up a defensive barrier."

At this point, she could only hope that Theodore was truly blessed by the World Tree.

"Your Highness, you can't give up on my son so easily!" Raymond shouted. He had only just gotten Theodore back. How could he possibly let him be killed here?

"Die, you old fool!" Saroviny brandished her sword, sending a spatial ripple flying towards Raymond's heart.

She was confident that no one would be able to block her attack. Though the young High Elf was just as powerful as her, she highly doubted that someone who had just received Level-16 power overnight from the World Tree would be able to master it immediately.

However, she thought wrong.

Link's arm blurred. A green arc sailed across the air and disrupted the demon's attack in an instant.

Saroviny was stunned. "It would seem that I have underestimated you, young man!"

Boom! Dark Power began swirling around Saroviny. Black flames now burned around her body. She was about to unleash her full power against Link!

Buzz, buzz, buzz. Various green magic shields lit up one after another, protecting the elders.

The energy for these shields came from the World Tree and reached the pinnacle of Level-19. Protected by the shields, even if Link and Saroviny made a hole in the space here, the building would still be undamaged. The shockwaves wouldn't harm the capital either.

"Young man, you don't know what kind of power you're facing right now!" Dark Mana rumbled. Saroviny's voice was like a tiger or a dragon's roar. It made one's heart tremble.

Even though they were protected, the High Elf elders still paled from the voice. It wasn't that they were hurt. Instead, their minds were attacked. In other words, they were scared!

The High Elves further back were better off. After the initial shock, they composed themselves and stared at Link in concern.

Demon Saroviny's wild dark power filled the space outside the magic shield. The space tited completely. People could even make out black shards of space. Compared to it, Theodore's range of influence was much smaller. It only reached three feet away from him.

From the look of things, Theodore was completely at a disadvantage.

Since the situation was like this, there was no room for compromises. The High Elf Queen took a deep breath and said to the five Legendary guards beside her, "This battle pertains to the fate of our race. Go help! Don't let Theodore be alone!"

The High Elf Queen wasn't powerful enough, but she saw things clearly. Earlier, she saw Theodore block Saroviny's sudden attack. He was disadvantaged against Saroviny's wild tide of power, but he could still resist.

This meant that Saroviny actually wasn't much weaker. It was still possible for him to win. If he also had the full help of the Legendary royal guards, the possibility would increase. She didn't need Saroviny killed on the spot. If she was gravely hurt, she might reveal a fatal flaw. After all, they were in the royal capital. They were right under the World Tree!

The High Elf Queen had the boldness of a ruler. Now that there was a chance to turn the tides, she would immediately gamble everything. Even if all the Legendary guards died, even if she would face Saroviny's anger if they were defeated, she had to take this chance for her race!

The Legendary guards also sensed this chance. They all had tragically heroic expressions as they bowed to the queen, then rose to join the fight.

But unexpectedly, Theodore's voice sounded after they took some steps. "Don't come over. I can deal with her! She's just putting on a show!"

"Idiocy!" Saroviny roared. But strangely enough, other than showing off her wild power, she didn't attack. She obviously wasn't scared of her enemy. She was just looking for a flaw to kill him at once and create the biggest effect.

The High Elf Queen also urged, "Theodore, it's not the time to pretend to be strong."

"Your Majesty, no matter how many guards you send, they're useless in a fight of this level. Don't let these talents die meaninglessly." Link looked at Saroviny with a cool gaze. He clearly had the lower hand, but he gave off the feeling that he was the stronger one.

This attitude made Saroviny a bit unsure. She stared at Link's body and sensed his aura closely. She felt that he was full of flaws, but when she prepared to attack, the flaws would vanish.

The situation was strange. She couldn't be sure, so she still didn't attack.

She didn't move, but Link suddenly did. He took a step forward and sneered. "Demon, I recognize you. You were the general of the demon army when we were at the human Orida Fortress. It's so sad that you have Legendary power, but you were trapped in Aragu by the Ferde lord and finally escaped after a century. But even though you're back, your courage is still in Aragu. You're too scared to find the Ferde lord for revenge, so you come to show off in the Isle of Dawn You're just a scaredy cat!"

At the end, Link peered down at Saroviny as if out of disdain. His words were even more insulting. Each one pierced Saroviny's heart.

Her biggest enemy was Link, but she couldn't defeat him. Every time that she tried, she would get humiliated instead.

Now that Link said all this, she felt her vision go black. Gritting her teeth loudly, a voice as cold as the iciest swamp in the Abyss was squeezed from between her teeth, "Young elf, you talk too much!"

Before she finished, she already stabbed her sword forward. It contained her hatred. In its path, space was destroyed and the orderly time turned chaotic. Wild Void energy shot from deep inside space to this realm. The entire battlefield warped in that instant.

In this zone, neither time nor space held meaning anymore. Only two things existed: pure power and a strong soul!

A mortal couldn't even glance at this wild zone without being shaken up, let alone stand inside it. They might even be scared straight to death. It was like an innocent child suddenly seeing the bloody scene of a tiger eating a human in the forest. They would obviously be freaked out!

The High Elf Elders all retreated involuntarily. Some less courageous ones even yelped like children. The World Tree shield could protect their bodies but could not give them strong souls.

Even the Legendary guards trembled at Saroviny's attack. They couldn't believe such aggressive power could exist in this world.

Can Theodore block it? the Legendary guards all thought.

"Go die, lucky elf! Go die, blessed child of the World Tree!" Amidst the chaotic currents, Saroviny's voice was as lofty as a god's. It was horrible and omnipresent.

But in the next moment, a beam of green light shot from the wild current of energy. This light was like an agile dragon in the roaring tide. No matter how the waves crashed, the dragon was still unaffected.

The "dragon" snaked through the waves, dodging energy peaks one after another. Suddenly, it turned and charged towards one giant wave.

Boom! The sound shook everyone's hearts. Silence followed the explosion.

The first moment, the energy tide scared everyone out of their minds. The next moment, everything vanished. White powder flew out in the empty space at the center of the building. When the dust settled, two figures were revealed.

Link was still standing in place. The halo of green light remained around him. There were no changes; he didn't even seem to have budged.

Fifteen feet away stood Saroviny. She was in a much more pathetic state. Her hair was messy, and her Abyss of Despair robe was covered in dust. The sharpness of her eyes had dimmed too. She stood while holding her sword, staring at Link incredulously.

In the exchange earlier, she'd felt a very familiar soul. It was none other than her biggest nemesisthe Ferde lord!

In addition, only he had this kind of swordsmanship and spells. Only he could make her feel like such a failure!

She stared at Link and sneered. She wanted to reveal his identity and completely destroy his plan of fusing the realms!

She thought this, and so she did it. "Ferde lord, it's you! I was wondering how such a powerful elf could pop up in the Isle of Dawn. This is your disguise!"

As she spoke, she focused on defending herself. Rather than trying to defeat Link, she did it to protect her last chance of escape.

But when she was done, she saw that Link remained unmoved. He didn't plan on stopping her at all. Finding it strange, Saroviny thought seriously and felt her blood run cold. Is he preparing to kill all the High Elves on the island and suck their souls?

The High Elves present weren't stupid. The fight had been intense, and no victor was clear, but Saroviny looked like she'd lost. This was great news. But then Saroviny's words shocked them all.

The Ferde lord was the Isle of Dawn's greatest enemy. Ever since he started rising, the island's space of survival kept getting restited. Both their status amongst the races and their annual profits had been decreasing dramatically. If not for the protection of the World Tree, they would be at the level of the Dark Elves now.

Someone this strong had snuck into the Isle of Dawn, and no one discovered him. This was terrifying!

After the High Elves heard this, they were first shocked and then horrified. The High Elf Queen, the elders, the young, the guards and everyone stared at Link, waiting for his reply.

Link stood in place. His expression didn't change as if Saroviny's words had nothing to do with him. "What, you can't defeat me, so you're trying to destroy our trust?"

"Link, you can't fool me! I can recognize you even if you turn to dust! Stop hiding. A true hero shows himself!" Saroviny cackled. She felt some hope now.

Yes, Link was in Level-19 and was much stronger than her, but this was the Isle of Dawn. It had the strong World Tree too. Even Link had to avoid it. Disguising himself as a High Elf was proof. If he was exposed and attacked by the World Tree, he wouldn't be able to retreat unharmed But then Saroviny felt like she'd missed an important detail.

What was it?

They'd gone through a big battle, and Saroviny's mind was in a mess. She couldn't remember.

Just as she furrowed her brows, deep in thought, Link suddenly said, "Oh, I received the World Tree's blessing last night. Do you think the World Tree would mistake people like you?"

Ah?! Saroviny froze, feeling icy-cold instantly.

She'd thought very deeply. The most terrifying one was that Link found out the World Tree's secret. Not only could he not be found by the World Tree, but he could also use its power! If he really could do that, she probably wouldn't survive today. Even her father might not be able to save her.

The High Elves were excited again. Their suspicion decreased dramatically. Since he could be blessed by the World Tree, Theodore must be a pureblood High Elf noble. The demon must have tried this trick because she knew she would lose!

Link smiled. He looked around at the High Elves. "Your Majesty, elders, my brethren, I, Theodore Morgenstern, was not only blessed by the World Tree last night. I also received its warning. Would you like to know?"

"Please speak, Theodore." The queen's eyes were very gentle. Right now, Theodore was the hope of the Isle of Dawn. In the future, he might even be able to fight against the Ferde lord.

The other High Elves all listened, holding their breaths.

When everyone's attention was on him, Link pointed his sword at Saroviny. "The World Tree told me that a Realm Devourer appeared in the Sea of Void," he announced. "Its name is the Ruler of Light and Darkness. This ruler's daughter is Saroviny. She wants to stop the fusion of the realms to prevent Firuman from strengthening and having the power to resist the Realm Devourer!"

Here, Link turned to Saroviny. "Demon, your Abyss of Despair robe must be your father's gift, right? Everyone, look at her robe. Let me ask you, can the owner of such an evil battle robe be a kind god?"

The High Elves began discussing anxiously. Everyone stared at the Abyss of Despair robe.

It was honestly too sinister. Not only did it radiate dark aura, but it also contained countless painful shadows. Each shadow was in a wailing state. There were countless of them in countless types of pain. A common man would get dizzy by looking at it. If they kept staring, their souls would even get pulled out.

Seeing the fearful expressions, Saroviny knew that her advantage was gone. She knew that the enemy was Link, but no one would believe her. The High Elves were too weak, too slow, and they were all mortals.

A Level-19 man could use some small tricks to fool everyone. Nothing she said would work.

Link continued. "The World Tree also told me that the Ruler of Light and Darkness is coming for Firuman. To stop this horrible god, the realm's time sped up. This means we have less than two months to prepare to fight against the god. If we want to defend ourselves, our only solution is to fuse the realms!"

"See, he's the Ferde lord! He's doing everything to trick you into fusing the realms!" Saroviny yelled.

But no one listened to her. The High Elves were arrogant xenophobes. They only believed their own race. Right now, there was someone of their race who had been blessed by the World Tree and was telling them the World Tree's warning. How could they not believe him?

"The World Tree told me that it's not our first time fighting against the Ruler of Light and Darkness," Link continued. "Two hundred thousand years ago, this ruler descended upon the ancient Firuman Realm. It caused the realm to crack apart. Now, he's coming again, and Firuman at last has the power to resist"

"Two hundred thousand years is so long ago. How can anyone be sure it's true?" Saroviny felt that she'd found a flaw.

"The tenth page of the Book of Moses records, 'Meteorites descended from the sky, bringing catastrophe to the world.' I'm sure the scholars of history must have read this sentence, right?"

The High Elves were proudest of their history. At this, an elder with white hair walked out with his cane. "There indeed is this sentence. I had thought it was just a myth, but now that Theodore mentioned it, it suddenly dawned on me."

This elder was the patriarch of the Duskmoon family. He was well-educated and respected in the history field. He was also serious about learning. Since he supported Link, the other elves all trusted him, even the High Elf Queen.

Since things were at this point, it was very clear. Saroviny couldn't say anything. Gritting her teeth, her expression turned menacing. "I will die today, but you won't be well-off either. Link, I will expose you!"

Before she finished, she'd already rushed out, stabbing towards Link again.

This sword truly contained all her hatred and it was many times more powerful than before. If Link really was only a High Elf blessed by the World Tree and didn't have much experience in using the power, he might be defeated by this. Unfortunately, he wasn't.

His Natural territory flowed around him with a green light. Countless leaf-like images danced around him like butterflies before wrapping around the thin High Elf sword in his hands. Finally, he stabbed.

Natural power was usually gentle, but when nature was angry, it could destroy the world too. The techniques could be extremely miraculous too.

Link met Saroviny's dark sword with his sword wrapped in countless leaves. Both touched Saroviny's sword at the same time and kept entangling, squeezing, and clashing. Some leaves started sprouting on Saroviny's sword, quickly sucking out the dark power and turning itito Natural Mana.

Converting energy was the Natural territories strongest skill.

In that instant, Link's Natural Mana wasn't stronger than Saroviny, but after a few clashes, Link's Mana started rising while Saroviny's plummeted. After a while, Link had the upper hand.

Clang, clang, clang! After many consecutive clashes, Link's sword broke through Saroviny's defenses and stabbed between her brows.

His power exploded and destroyed the demon's soul. Saroviny shook.

With a clatter, her sword fell to the ground. She lost her vitality at that moment too and just hung limply against Link's sword.

Snick. Link pulled back his sword. Turning, he announced to the High Elf Queen, "Your Majesty, I've defeated the demon. We High Elves have the World Tree. It's time to take up the heavy responsibility of protecting the realm!"

The High Elf Queen looked at Saroviny's corpse and let out a sigh. She thought back to what she saw when Saroviny took her around Aragu. Looking at Theodore now, she suddenly kind of believed Saroviny's words earlier.

Suspicion grew in her.

Instead of replying immediately, she looked to Theodore. A few seconds later, she said, "Theodore, you are our race's hero. I will announce your reward before the royal tombs. Time is running short. Let's go now."

Link furrowed his brows slightly. He wasn't sure what the High Elf Queen would do, but he didn't want to ruin things, so he just agreed.

"It is my honor, Your Majesty."

"Theodore, come with me." The High Elf Queen waved a hand at Link. She was looking at him warmly, as a mother would at her son who had made quite a name for himself.

The real Theodore would have felt immensely honored to be able to walk side by side with the queen. However, Link was never one to let such a thing go to his head. From the way the queen had acted, he imagined that the queen must have grown suspicious of his identity and was now trying to confirm her own suspicions.

Link gave her a small bow. "Many thanks, Your Highness."

Ignoring the looks of admiration from the other High Elves, he took a step forward and was instantly teleported ten feet forward to the queen's side.

"Leave us, all of you. I would like to have a word with Theodore in private," said the High Elf Queen.

The High Elves looked at each other, unsure why their queen would issue such an order. They all looked hesitant to comply, especially the palace guards, who seemed reluctant about leaving their posts.

"Leave us!" repeated the High Elf Queen even more assertively.

This was the first time any of the High Elves had heard the queen raise her voice at them. Instinctively, they backed away.

The only High Elves remaining on the path to the High Elves' royal tomb were Link and the High Elf Queen.

After casting a soundproof barrier, the queen's face relaxed somewhat. She smiled weakly at Link and said, "Come, Theodore, we have much to talk about."

"After you," said Link with a small bow.

The High Elf Queen began walking forward, with Link following after her.

The sun cast its gentle glow on them from the sky. A breeze blew past them from time to time. A sweet smell wafted from the purple-leaved trees that lined their path. The queen ambled down the path in ruminative silence as if trying to think of what to say next to Link.

Link patiently waited for the queen to speak.

Soon, the tomb's entrance appeared before them. Two 20-foot-tall statues stood solemnly on both sides, forever keeping watch over the place.

"Both these statues were built 2935 years ago. They each possessed Level-9 pinnacle power and were once the most powerful entities to ever exist in the realm. However, 3000 years had passed, and they have both been reduced to nothing more than ornamentation."

Link said with a smile, "Nothing can withstand the erosion of time. The world is continually changing. Without anyone taking steps to revamp their functions, these magical statues would surely lag behind everything else."

"Yes, your words couldn't be truer," said the High Elf Queen with a sigh. She then fell silent for a few seconds. Suddenly, she turned to look at Link and said, "This has gone unnoticed by present-day High Elves since these statues were never the basis of High Elf civilization. If the World Tree were to meet such a fate, it would certainly cause a huge stir among those living in its shade. Theodore, you have attained power unequaled by anyone else on this island. Do you think that the World Tree will one day become obsolete?"

Link narrowed his eyes. The question sounded loaded. After thinking about it for a while, he said, "Even if such a day were to come, I'm sure we High Elves would still have a place in this world."

"I'm not so sure about that now," said the High Elf Queen again with a sigh. "The High Elves have enjoyed 3000 years of peace and prosperity. This has been both a blessing and a curse from the World Tree. It is true that the High Elves of today have become decadent. Their arrogance has also incurred the resentment of the other races on the continent. If the World Tree were to disappear one day, I fear that we would not be able to survive a backlash from everyone else."

"Your Highness, why would you say something so pessimistic?" said Link. He was not at all surprised that the High Elf Queen was able to foresee such an outcome. Every decision she had made in the past had attested to her incredible foresight.

In order to avoid such an outcome, she had done everything in her power to quell any signs of uprising from the other races on the continent. She had managed to carry out her machinations without a hitch for the last 3000 years. It was not until the appearance of Link that her failures began to multiply.

"As a leader, I have to consider all possible outcomes," said the High Elf Queen. She was now smiling her kind, motherly smile as she looked at Link. She continued, "Theodore, you are a remarkable young man. Your diligence, modesty, and trustworthiness have stood out amid the decadence in the Isle of Dawn. You have survived the Dark Elf Queen's slaughter in the Black Forest, and just recently, you managed to take down Saroviny and save the Isle of Dawn from certain destruction. The World Tree was right to bless you with its power, it would seem."

Link had been showered with so much praise ever since he first appeared in Firuman, it was now beginning to wear on him. If he wanted to, he could just take a stroll along the streets of Ferde, where he would immediately be accosted by the city's inhabitants and be forced to listen to their incessant adulations.

His face remained expressionless. He quietly waited for the High Elf Queen to continue.

Both of them had arrived at the feet of the tomb's magical statues. The High Elf Queen turned to Link and said, "Past these two statues is the royal tomb. See this silver line on the ground?"

Link looked down and saw that a 4-inch-thick silver line had been drawn between the feet of the two statues. Upon closer inspection, he realized that the line was, in fact, a row of magical runes packed tightly together. He could also feel mysterious magical energy coming from it.

"A Sacred Blood Barrier?" asked Link.

"Yes," replied the High Elf Queen, nodding. She had stepped over the silver line. "The Sacred Blood Barrier represents the pinnacle of High Elf innovation in the mystic arts. Don't worry, it's just a detection seal. The two statues will be activated if any non-High Elf intruder crosses this silver line. Do come in, Theodore."

Link, however, stood rooted to the ground. He looked at the High Elf Queen and saw that she was still wearing the same warm smile as before. However, as seconds passed, the warmth in her smile began to fade while the look in her eyes grew cold.

"Theodore, what are you waiting for?" she asked.

The barrier's magic was too complicated to be overcome by Link in such short notice. Without thinking too much about it, he stepped over the silver line.

He felt confident that he would be able to take on the two magical statues if he were to trigger the Sacred Blood Barrier. He had finally understood what the Firuman realm wanted. However, the realm fusion process was not without its risks. If he wanted to help Firuman achieve fusion with the Aragu realm, he would have to brace himself for a few hiccups here and there.

When Link lifted a foot over the silver line, the runes in it instantly turned red. Rays of red light shot out from the ground, threatening to bring the two magical statues to life.

Suddenly, the High Elf Queen lifted her foot, which glowed with the soft green light of her Nature Power and set it down on the silver line.

Paccha... The sound of breaking glass resounded in the air. The red light given off by the runes on the ground vanished in an instant. The two statues remained standing inertly on both sides of the tomb's entrance.

Link was now standing on the other side of the barrier. He had successfully crossed the silver line on the ground.

"What? How?" Link looked at the High Elf Queen in slight shock.

The queen smiled coldly. "Can the barrier stop you, Lord of Ferde?" She called out Link's identity like that.

Link shook his head. This thing could only identify him, but so what if he was exposed?

Ever since he saw the true nature of Firuman, he had no more suspicions. Even if his identity was exposed here, he could still forcefully fuse the realms. It would just be a bit harder and cause greater consequences.

"Right, it can't. It can only confirm my doubts." The High Elf Queen smiled coldly, but she bowed slightly to Link. "Come, Ferde lord. Let's continue walking."

This reaction was a bit unexpected for Link, but he wasn't scared. He walked up to continue beside the queen.

"Fate is full of mockery. My husband and daughter both died by your hands. As a wife and mother, I should have tried to kill you with all my might after I saw you. I thought that if I could take revenge for my husband and daughter, even being torn apart would be okay. But what happened? We're strolling down the royal tombs and chatting like old friends. My desire for revenge isn't as strong as I'd thought."

Her expression was icy as she spoke, but her eyes contained deep helplessness. Things were different now. The young man beside her had terrifying Level-19 power and the blessing of the World Tree.

Of course, this wasn't the most important part. The critical thing was that the High Elf Queen had understood something deeper. This was thanks to the High Elves' rich history. One book, the Past of the Realm, contained questions and inferences that could upend a common man's worldviews.

Such as the existence of Freyar, the realm's consciousness, the source of the World Tree, the deeper meaning of the World Tree's existencewhy would there be a supernatural figure who could destroy the balance of power of the world?

Commoners would never think deeply about these questions. But once they did, they would be able to find the deeper rhythm of the realm's operation.

The High Elves had a long history and never lacked in wise people. The Past of the Realm recorded the stories of five ultimate figures throughout the history of Firuman. By comparing their biographies and the situation of the realm at that time, one could find many similarities.

Firstly, they were all born in times of chaos. They were catastrophes where the entire realm's order could be destroyed. The High Elves concluded that the bigger the catastrophe, the stronger the hero!

The most recent one was Legendary figure Bryant from more than 100 years ago. The catastrophe at that time was the demon Tarviss who'd ravaged the realm.

Secondly, these figures wouldn't have a smooth start. Most started off as regular people. No one could have predicted their future glory. For example, the human Warrior who'd saved the mainland from the Mana disaster 3000 years ago was born as a lowly civilian.

But due to coincidences or heroic actions that matched the realm's interests, the hero would be favored by the realm, and their growth would become more and more successful. Once the hero faced an unbeatable obstacle, he would immediately be blessed by the realm and suddenly possess amazing might.

That king born as a lowly civilian 3000 years ago was called Arthur. Using only his sword, he broke through a ring of nine powerful elf Magicians, freeing the human race from being slaves and helping them onto the road to richness.

Now, Link had faced various strong obstacles such as the World Tree, Shadow Walker Morpheus, and the Dark Serpent divine gear. His rate of growth was incomparable too.

In the Past of the Realm, people like him were known as the Avatar of the Realm. They were ordinary in birth, but they grew to be extraordinary. They were blessed by the realm, received amazing power, and saved the realm.

Because of this, the Avatar of the Realm was also known as the savior of the world.

Since a world savior appeared, it meant that the realm faced a threat. Deducing from this, the stronger the savior was, the bigger the threat they faced was. Of all recorded history, Link's current accomplishments were the most shocking. This meant that Firuman was facing an unprecedented disaster.

If the realm was in trouble, the High Elves wouldn't be unaffected. This was why she could hold back her own hatred and interact with Link peacefully. Connecting everything she knew, she had reason to believe that the Ruler of Light and Darkness was a horribly evil god!

"The Ruler of Light and Darkness really is the Realm Devourer?" The High Elf Queen looked at Link.

Link nodded. In the game, the queen was a very wise ruler. But in this world, Link had risen out of nowhere and was so fast that that made her panic. Now that he was unstoppable, the High Elf Queen actually recovered her calmness.

Now, the High Elf Queen was a very good partner. Link could tell from her earlier actions, so he asked, "Would you like to know his background?"

The High Elf Queen arched an eyebrow. "I am very interested."

Link told her everything he knew, from the failure of the ancient Ruler of Light and Darkness to take Firuman, to the birth of the God of Light, to the appearance of Nozama, and the reunion of light and darkness. While he spoke, he also used magic images so anyone could understand easily.

When Link was done, the High Elf Queen's icy hatred had disappeared. All that remained was shock. "Are you saying that the ancient Realm Devourer is coming for our realm?"

Subconsciously, her voice quavered. A horrible god from ancient times who been watching the realm for thousands of years made her heart tremble.

Link nodded. "I received a revelation from Freyar. If no accidents happen, we still have 45 days."

"Is the fusion of the realms the only way to stop him?"

Link nodded. "We've already succeeded in ancient times, and we should be able to succeed this time too. Of course, it's only a possibility."

It suddenly dawned on the High Elf Queen. "No wonder Saroviny, daughter of Nozama, would become this god's servant. No wonder she wanted to stop the fusion of the realms. I was blinded by hatred and was almost tricked by her."

Here, she suddenly looked to Link. "My last question is why you killed my daughter. You could have kept her life."

Link fell silent for three seconds. Then he said, "She messed with my heart, and her soul already belonged to the Realm Devourer!"

A messed up heart would become a weakness in the soul. He couldn't let the Ruler of Light and Darkness take advantage of it.

The High Elf Queen looked to the tombstone on the side and sighed. "Oh, let her go I can help you with the realm fusion, but there's a condition."

"Tell me."

"You must promise that the Isle of Dawn will still belong to the High Elves for the next 100 hundred years. No other races can invade!"

"Okay." This condition wasn't difficult or greedy. It was only giving the High Elves a way out after losing the World Tree.

"Then you can begin the realm fusion under the identity of Theodore. My race will help as much as possible!" The High Elf Queen gazed at Link.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

That night, after Link and the High Elf Queen had come to an agreement, the Isle of Dawn was suddenly rocked by a massive explosion. The ground shook, while the sea around the island grew turbulent. Circles of green light rippled across the sky and rumbled with the occasional crack of lightning.

It was truly a horrific sight to behold!

A minute later, every inhabitant on the Isle of Dawn were all woken up by the calamitous din. They were all taken aback by what they saw in the sky. Some of them had broken down into tears, believing that the end of days was upon them. Some began frantically looking for shelter. Some had even taken advantage of the ensuing pandemonium and started looting their neighbors' homes.

In an instant, the entire island had descended into chaos. Apparently, the High Elves were just as susceptible to panic as the human race.

However, the chaos only lasted for around ten minutes. It was then that the High Elf guards had appeared in every city to maintain order.

There had not been enough time to inform every High Elf on the island about the realm fusion. However, the mayor of every High Elf city had been informed of the situation. Preparations had been made in anticipation of the resulting pandemonium.

Everyone was immediately calmed down, thanks in no small part to the intervention of the city guards. The High Elves were all forced to go back to their homes, where they anxiously waited for the crisis to pass.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The earthquake intensified. Due to their frail constitutions, dizziness had gripped the women and children on the island. Some had even fainted. The rumbling beneath their feet showed no signs of stopping, threatening to sink the entire island into the ocean.

However, the tremors everyone was experiencing paled in comparison to what the World Tree was going through at the moment.

Tiny huts dotted the World Tree's trunk. These buildings were known as meditation huts. They were built for the purpose of providing exemplary High Elves with a place to undergo further training. There were at least 1000 of these huts on the World Tree.

At that moment, every hut was occupied by a High Elf Elder, whose bodies were now radiating a soft green glow. They had become one with the World Tree. With the combined power of the elders, the World Tree too began glowing with a blinding green light.

The World Tree was now drawing huge levels of power from the realm's core, shining brighter and brighter until its green light completely illuminated the night sky.

Hum! Hum! Waves of power rose up the World Tree from the realm's core before being released into the air in the form of steam through its canopy.

The High Elf Queen was the one controlling the magical seal above the tree's canopy.

She was presently floating above the World Tree in the middle of the 6000-foot-wide magic seal, which had enveloped the tree's canopy completely in order to make sure that every single bit of Nature Power was channeled into its user.

The High Elf Queen would not have been able to maintain such a large-scale magic seal alone. She had equipped herself with the Scepter of Nature's Blessing, the Crown of the Berserker King and the Robe of the Hermit in order to manage such a feat.

The three sacred gears had been passed down the royal family line for generations.

All three items were pieces of Level-19 High Elf sacred gear. Together, they represented a High Elf King's authority. The gear themselves did not have any offensive power. Their only function was to help the High Elf King establish communion with the World Tree and effectively wield its power in times of need.

Of course, even with the aid of the three pieces of sacred gear, the High Elf King's mastery of the World Tree's power would still be extremely limited. This was because the World Tree tended not to grant the king full authority over its power. Also, most of the High Elf Kings in the past had never been powerful enough to completely master the tree's Level-19 pinnacle power.

The World Tree's Nature Power was evaporating at a frightening rate. After passing through the queen's magic seal, the light green steam began coalescing into a 100-foot-tall pillar of green light.

The pillar of light contained incredibly concentrated Nature Power, which was redirected by the High Elf Queen into a black spot high up in the sky.

The black spot was Link. Circles of runes had materialized around his body.

These rune circles contained every bit of Link's magical wisdom. Each of them had a diameter of more than 200 feet. There were nine of them presently revolving around Link's body at an incredibly high speed.

Before long, the pillar of green light reached him.

Boom!!! Both heaven and earth shook. Ripples of power burst out in all directions from the point of impact. Bolts of lightning flashed across the sky at that moment. The rune circles around Link were now spinning at top speed.

At that moment, Link's body shook. This was also his first time handling such power. For a moment, it seemed as if he was about to lose control of it.

Suddenly, something glittered on his forehead. The Crown of Eternal Night had appeared.

Despite knowing that putting the crown on would subject him to the effects of Realm Rejection, he also knew that without it, he would not be able to fuse the two realms completely.

Link felt a sudden stir in his consciousness as soon as the crown was in place. He activated the Dark Thoughts effect, which drastically accelerated his thought processes in an instant. The great weight on his mind had lessened considerably as a result.

This was only the first of his transformations. His body had received a small portion of the power that had flowed through him. He was still able to keep most of the World Tree's Nature Power under control. However, he had no choice but to channel into the Crown of Eternal Night most of the Nature Power which had exceeded his control, while the rest was diverted to the Ode of a Full Moon sword hanging from his waist.

The sword began to whir. An intense white light began radiating from it. Magical runes continuously appeared around its blade, which had begun evolving into a better, more powerful version of itself.

On the other hand, the Crown of Eternal Night had turned as black as night. Three sharp spikes had sprouted from it as well with a star-like jewel hanging from the tip of the second spike.

Link's power was now climbing at an incredible speed. His Nature Power managed to reach Level-17 in the span of two seconds and Level-18 in ten seconds. Now, it seemed as if it was about to reach Level-19.

Fortunately, Link already had much experience in handling Level-19 power. Even as his power level rose, he was still able to maintain his composure. At that moment, there was not a hint of turbulence in the flow of power in his body.

Twenty seconds later, Link finally attained Level-19 Nature Power.

It's time! thought Link, as he unleashed all the Nature Power in his body with a resounding boom.

A bolt of lightning streaked across the sky above the Isle of Dawn, lighting the whole place up until it was as bright as day. To everyone's horror, the bolt of lightning began spreading out until it filled the entire sky.

There was now a huge crack in the sky!

The crack began widening rapidly until it reached the far horizons of the sky. Electricity lined the edge of the gap, while the Sea of Void filled its center. Void power began violently rushing through itito the Firuman realm.

At that moment, every living being in the realm had lifted their gazes in unison to witness the terrifying scene currently unfolding in the heavens.

White mist began rolling through the dark, empty hole in the sky and was about to enter the Firuman realm when suddenly a giant humanoid figure appeared in the air.

The figure was now standing on the ground. Its 60-mile-tall body shimmered with a dark, green light. Strands of dark hair flapped around its head wildly in the wind. It also seemed to be wearing a crown made entirely of starlight.

The ethereal giant was now holding up the sky and the invading white mist in one hand while holding its sword in the other!

At that moment, every mortal in Firuman had fallen to their knees in worship.

Even the Legendary masters in the realm could not help but feel a mix of awe and reverence for this extraordinary being.

Such power could only belong to a god!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The darkness in the crack began giving way to the reflection of another realm.

The reflection gradually grew clearer. Everyone could tell that this new world was on a collision course with the Firuman realm.

"Arrrgh!" shouted the High Elf Elders, who were still inside the meditation huts on the World Tree.

So much power had gushed out of the realm's core that all of them were now on the verge of breaking down.

"Ah!!!" The High Elf Queen let out a blood-curdling shriek. Blood was now flowing profusely from every corner of her body.

There was just too much Nature Power for her to handle!

Even so, the queen soldiered on. In spite of her condition, she still endeavored to maintain the constant stream of Nature Power flowing between the World Tree and Link.

At that moment, the Aragu Realm was about to collide with the Firuman realm. This was the most critical moment. If Link did not do something about it soon, the two realms would crash into each other.

It would result in a calamity of epic proportions. No more than 100 people would be able to survive such an event.

The Aragu realm was now rapidly approaching the Firuman realm. While the stream of Nature Power Link had received from the realm's core was putting his body under great stress, it had also endowed him with unimaginable power!

Just when the two realms were on the verge of colliding with one another, Link let out all the power he had stored inside his body.

A loud roar filled the sky. At that moment, the inhabitants of both realms saw what had happened.

The giant, who was still holding up the Aragu realm with its bare hands, powerfully flipped over the entire realm and set it on the realm crack which had been left in Firuman since ancient times!

Boom! The ground trembled slightly as both realms began bringing themselves into alignment with each other.

The Aragu realm was able to fitito the realm crack like a glove. Both realms had perfectly fused with each other.

Everyone had taken up their pens to write of this moment. However, the most authoritative record of this event would come from one of the historians of the Isle of Dawn.

The High Elf historian had always kept meticulous records of historically significant events, treating each word like gold.

He began writing with golden ink, "In the year 1268, on the ninth day of the third withering moon, at 11.35 p.m., the High Elf hero, Theodore Morgenstern had successfully fused the two realms together with the help of the High Elf Queen and the High Elf Elders."

The historian had turned every other High Elf who had played a part in the realm fusion process into a foil for Link. Even the High Elf Queen was reduced to a background character. Theodore Morgenstern had become the High Elf hero who had managed to bring the two realms together.

The historical record of this occasion with any ounce of truth to it, however, would come from Ferde. Its author would be none other than the Legendary Magician Eliard.

He had written in his magical notebook, "He's done it. My good friend has left an indelible mark on the face of the Firuman realm. His name would surely shine brighter than any other for centuries to come. It has been a privilege to watch him grow."

## 645. The Last Enemy

Boom! Crack, crack. A bunch of noises sounded one after another.

The realm had already fused, but the two had been separated for too long. They still needed time to meld against each other for them to be perfectly seamless. In the new Firuman Realm, these commotions would happen for quite some time.

After the realms fused, Link floated down from the sky and landed in the Isle of Dawn.

Before, he'd practically controlled all of the realm's power. He successfully fused the realms by manipulating this mighty strength. Now, he was exhausted, his energy spent.

Thud. Link landed unsteadily and actually fell over. He was very weak now.

At this time, the royal capital was in a mess too. It had practically become a pile of rubble. The World Tree seemed to be whole now, but it had dimmed. The shining faint green leaves had all withered and turned yellow.

After standing for a while, Link discovered that leaves were falling. He reached and caught it. It was a leaf from the World Tree that had dried out. It had lost all vitality. He applied some pressure and crumbled it.

Whoosh, whoosh. As a breeze blew by, the leaves fell down like snow. Many dried twigs were revealed in the blink of an eye.

Amongst the falling leaves, Link saw many bodies fall down too. These were the High Elf Elders. At the last moment of the realm fusion, they couldn't withstand the horrifying energy current. They all died in a horrible state. Their skin had cracked, their eyeballs had exploded, and their bones had decayed. This was caused by energy bursting from their bodies.

Another bloody body fell from the sky. In the air, it still glowed faintly with a green light. It also slowed down a bit. They were probably still alive.

At this time, Link had also rested a bit, and his energy recovered a little. He swiped his hand, and a small circle of runes appeared to guide the bloody body to him.

When it got closer, Link could see that it was actually the High Elf Queen. She was soon guided to Link's side by the spell. She was all bloody, but she was still conscious. The three divine gears had blocked most of the energy surge at the most critical moment.

"Are the realms fused?" Her voice was weak and breathy.

"Yes." Link nodded. He lightly patted the High Elf Queen's back, casting a blessing cure for her.

When he finished, he furrowed his brows. When he'd touched the queen's back, he'd felt her soul. The huge Natural Mana wave had not only destroyed her body. It also riddled her soul with holes. It was a miracle that she was still alive!

After the blessing, the queen became more clear-headed and recovered some strength. She stared at Link with bloodshot eyes. In her eyes, Link still looked like the High Elf Theodore Morgenstern.

"I can't go on. Don't forget about the 100-year promise," she murmured.

Link nodded. "As long as I'm alive, no one will have their eyes on the Isle of Dawn for 100 years."

"No, that's not enough." The queen's hand twitched, and her scepter floated up, flying to Link. "After I die, take the three divine gears. I want you to become the High Elf King as Theodore Morgenstern and cultivate a good heir for the Isle of Dawn."

Link frowned slightly, but the queen was already close to death. This task wasn't that hard either. A few seconds later, he nodded. "Okay."

Hearing that, the queen's knitted brows smoothed and she smiled slightly. "Link, I believe your character. You will fulfill all your promises. Now that you agreed, I am satisfied. The Silvermoon family can't end with me. I have another daughter, Cynthia. She's only 24 years old. If you wish, marry her. If you don't, find someone for her ah"

At the end, the queen let out a soft breath, and her hand fell down. She'd died.

Link gently placed the queen's body onto the ground. Looking up, he realized that the leaves on the World Tree had all fallen down. The trunk had started cracking too. It was actually falling apart.

From now on, the protector of the Isle of Dawn would no longer exist. Without its protection, the High Elves would fall to the mortal world from heaven.

Link rose and stood in place for a while before footsteps sounded by him. He looked around and saw that the High Elves of the city had come.

The leader was an Elder who'd survived. He was from the Silvermoon family and evidently knew about the queen's wishes. When he reached Link, he knelt and said respectfully, "Your Majesty."

Because he was the leader and the realms had just been fused, the other High Elves all bowed as well, greeting him as the king.

Link had received the High Elf King's throne without any dispute. In reality, he didn't feel any glory. Instead, it was a burden. If the queen and elders hadn't given their lives for the fusion, he wouldn't have agreed. But since he did, he wouldn't regret it. Faced with the bowing elves, he raised his scepter in reply.

The old ruler had died, and the new ruler had arrived. Next was the High Elf Queen's funeral. Link busied over this for the night and finally finished at dawn. Instead of resting, he had to attend the coronation ceremony.

This was even more pompous. Link wanted to do it simply, but the High Elves had a rich tradition. There were countless complicated details. It still took three days before Link became the legitimate king.

After these three days, the palace had been renovated too. Link moved in naturally while the original Silvermoon royal family moved out. This was the rule. Even if Link allowed them to stay, the other High Elves would be upset.

After moving in, Link issued some orders about resting and isolated himself. He focused on organizing the knowledge and experience received from the realm fusion. The experience was very precious and pertained to the deepest secrets of the realm. Link didn't step out of the room and completely immersed in it. He even forgot about the passage of time.

Ten days passed like this. During the late night of the tenth day, Link was studying a magic seal in his room. Suddenly, he heard a tap from the door. Looking up, he saw a High Elf woman he'd never seen before.

There was nothing extraordinary about the appearance of the High Elf maiden in the doorway. She was wearing a simple-looking maid uniform. Link could not feel any aura from her. She looked on all counts like any other High Elf maid working in the royal palace.

Has something happened? thought Link.

The maid simply stared at Link from the doorway with a troubled look on her face. Suddenly, she said, "Your Highness, do you honestly think that the realm fusion will solve everything? No, this is only the beginning!"

Link frowned. "And you are...?"

She did not reply. Link turned to look at the doorway. There was no sign of the maid. He then turned back to his work and saw that he had unconsciously written something on his magical notebook: The Ruler of Light and Darkness.

Link's heart began racing. The Ruler of Light and Darkness was about to come soon. The newly fused realm was still in the process of settling down. It still had a lot of kinks to work out. How was he supposed to defend it properly from this all-powerful realm devourer under these circumstances?

He then tried to recall what he saw earlier. Link quickly realized that the realm's will must have appeared before him to warn him of the impending danger.

A problem soon presented itself to Link. In order to weather the imminent storm, he had two choices. His first option was to stop the realm devourer with everything he had. This was out of the question. There was no one in this world capable of doing such a thing at the moment. The second option was to stall him until the two realms fused perfectly with each other. Only then would the new and improved version of Firuman be in a better position to defend itself against the Ruler's attempts to devour it.

A new problem arose at this point. Who would be the one to slow the Ruler down?

Link rested his forehead against his hand as he pondered on a solution. Minutes passed, and still, he remained motionless in his seat.

The problem had resisted all of Link's attempts to solve it.

The Ruler of Light and Darkness was an actual god. According to records of ancient times, he had at one time possessed power above Level-25. He might have been weakened after splitting himself inobeings of light and darkness, but it would not be ridiculous to assume that his power level was currently in the neighborhood of Level-24.

A Level-24 god would certainly have power and wisdom beyond compare. Even if he had attained Level-19 power, Link was still a mortal. He would simply be the strongest ant of his lot.

An ant was still an ant. In the face of overwhelming power, he would be instantly killed.

After thinking for a long while, Link still could not come up with a solution. He had stood up from his seat and walked to the window, staring out of it at Andwar city in hopes that it might inspire some fresh ideas in him.

A god's power is certainly beyond compare. I've experienced it once back in the Fedaro realm. However, it had belonged to a friend. This time...

Link sighed. He then disappeared in a flash of white light. An instant later, he reappeared in Ferde's Mage Tower. His appearance had changed drastically. He had transformed back into the black-robed Lord of Ferde.

Link had spent most of his time behind the Mage Tower's walls. This was the only place in the world where he could feel at ease. He began walking up to the top of the tower. Once there, he stared outito the distance.

Half a minute later, the wooden door swiveled open. Eliard was standing in the doorway.

"Seems like you have a lot on your mind now, Link." Eliard could easily tell something was troubling his long-time friend.

Link smiled weakly at him. Then, he said, "The realm fusion may not be enough to avert the crisis, I'm afraid. I just received a warning from the realm's will. When the Ruler of Light and Darkness reaches us, all of Firuman will be wiped out, including me."

Eliard was taken aback by this. He was one of the few people in the world who knew what was going on. As soon as he heard what Link said, he too knew that there was simply nothing he could do at this point.

Only despair awaited them now.

"The situation couldn't get any worse than this. Link, what do you plan on doing now?" asked Eliard. They need not confront the realm devourer head-on. They already possessed the technology to travel through the Void. They could still flee into the Sea of Void before the realm devourer reached Firuman.

Of course, they would only resort to this if the worst came to pass. None of them had any intention of seeing all their accomplishments go to waste.

Link chuckled. As if he had read what Eliard was thinking, he said, "Truth be told, I really want to flee from this place. Not just myself, of course. I would bring along every Magician in Ferde with me into the Sea of Void and try to look for a place to hide from the Ruler of Light and Darkness, where we could all live out the rest of our lives."

"Not a bad idea. However, I don't think you would do such a thing," said Eliard. The smile on his face was the byproduct of all the tension leaving his body in the face of an impending disaster.

Link fell silent. He would have really fled if push came to shove. However, the worst had yet to come... Wait a minute; maybe there was still a way out of this after all!

Link's eyes lit up as if struck by inspiration.

This inspiration had come from the divine fragment which had fused with Link's body.

The fragment was a Level-20 divine artifact whose existence was enough to disrupt the realm's power. Logically speaking, it was not something that was supposed to exist in this world.

However, the strangest thing happened. Not only did it still continue to exist in Firuman, but word of Morpheus's mastery over it had also spread to every corner of the realm.

In the past, Link would have simply dismissed such a thing as the stuff of legends. However, upon coming to terms with the true nature of the Firuman realm, Link was now able to delve further into this.

The realm had allowed something capable of disrupting its balance to exist in it, long before Morpheus stumbled upon it. Morpheus did not come across the divine fragment by chance. The realm had allowed him to find it.

So why had the realm kept it all this time?

The realm's power transcended both time and space. It must have figured that the divine fragment would play a huge role in resolving a future crisis and so decided to keep it hidden away in itself.

So why did it let Morpheus have the fragment, and why did it let everyone know about it?

This was also not difficult to figure out. Sensing that the end of the world was upon it, the realm decided to let the fragment's presence be known throughout the world by letting it fall into Morpheus's possession. Every master would then be forced to fight it out among themselves until only one remained. The champion would then be allowed the honor of using the fragment to save the realm from certain destruction.

At this point, Link's mood brightened. A faint smile had appeared on his face.

Seeing this, Eliard immediately knew that his friend had come up with a plan. He quietly left the place, not wanting to disrupt Link's thought process.

At that moment, Link had willed the Crown of Eternal Nightito existence. There were now three black spikes protruding from the crown, with a star-like jewel set on the tip of the center spike.

Suddenly, the scene before him changed.

When the crown appeared on his forehead, Link realized that the Mage Tower had vanished beneath him, along with Ferde. He was now completely enveloped in darkness. Countless points of light glittered around him. Upon closer inspection, he realized that they belonged to the constellations of a night sky.

In the darkness, a gentle voice sounded in Link's ear. "Mortal, what is a god?"

The voice sounded just like the High Elf maid from before. However, it now had an otherworldly quality to it. Link figured that Freyar, the embodiment of the realm's will, must be speaking to him right now.

Simple as it might sound, the question she had posed pertained to one of the fundamental truths of the world. Ordinary folk would probably scoff at this, thinking that the asker had nothing better to do than contemplate on the finer points of life. However, those who understood the true weight of the question would hold the asker in high regard and might even go so far as to spend a lifetime in search of an answer.

What is a god?

Ordinary people and even some accomplished Magicians might not find such a question meaningful in the least. However, this was not just a question for Link; it was the key to unlock a higher plane of thinking.

In an instant, his mind was filled with all sorts of answers. However, he quickly realized that they were all based on the typical mortal's understanding of godhood and so had no intrinsic value to them.

Link spent a whole hour contemplating on Freyar's question with the aid of the Crown of Eternal Night. Finally, he shook his head and replied, "I don't know."

At that moment, he suddenly remembered a saying on earth: Test not the lord thy God. This was indeed a thought-provoking quote.

The gentle voice asked once more, "Mortal, what is darkness?"

It was another existential question. However, it was a lot simpler than the previous one. The concept of darkness was easier to grasp than that of a god. Link had used Dark Power himself before. He also had considerable experience dealing with demons and Dark Elves proficient in the usage of Dark Power.

He began feeling the flow of Dark Power inside his body. He then tried to recall the times he had gone up against demons like Nozama, reliving their attacks in hopes that they might reveal the true meaning of darkness.

Soon, Link realized that something was amiss.

He realized that the Dark Power in every Dark Power user differed in some small way from one other.

Varying forms of Dark Power existed among the Dark Elves, demons and Dark Magicians of the human race. Even Nozama and his daughter Saroviny wielded vastly different forms of Dark Power.

No form of Dark Power was truly alike in this world! Was a generalization even possible?

In the end, Link simply replied, "I don't know."

"Yes, an answer to such a question is beyond even my grasp. The only thing we know for sure in this world is ourselves. The only thing we have any control over is ourselves. Link, you are one step away from ascending to godhood. You have to take this last step on your own. Everything else is nothing more than a hindrance to your journey," said the gentle voice patiently, every word resonating with Link profoundly.

Link let out a deep sigh. "I understand."

"So what do you intend to do now?"

"Attain godhood!"

"Hehe..." Link heard a soft chuckle. Then, the voice said, "Go then, King of the Eternal Night!"

## 646. The Critical Step To Lighting The Divine Fire

The next day, Link disappeared from everyone's sight. Both the High Elf King on the Isle of Dawn and the Lord of Ferde had vanished without a trace.

The High Elves almost went crazy. How could they not have their king's protection after losing the World Tree? They almost hysterically sent scouts all over the mainland to search for their king. They knew chances were slim, but they still had to do something.

Ferde was a bit better off, but some of the top-level Magicians were stillusttled because there was a terrifying rumor. It was rumored that a horrible god would soon descend upon Firuman and the lord sensed it, so he escaped.

As someone in Level-19, he definitely had the ability.

Right now, the only calm one was Eliard. He had a note from Link that had only one line. Look after Ferde. I'm searching for a true god that can defeat the Ruler of Light and Darkness.

Eliard didn't know if Link could find a true god or what kind of sacrifices Link would have to make for the god to agree to fight. However, he believed that Link would succeed. Just as he led Ferde to glory, he would also help Firuman survive this catastrophe.

With Eliard there, Ferde was still well-managed. The regular civilians didn't even know their lord was missing.

So where was Link?

He was right in Ferde. More specifically, he was on the border between Ferde and the Girvent Forest, walking down a small path in the forest. He didn't use any power. He just walked with his physical body like the most common man on Firuman.

He himself didn't know where he was going or why he wanted to do this.

He was just following the weak guidance in his heart and making each step. He didn't think about who or what he would run into. He just walked forward naturally.

The waning moon had passed two days ago, and now the waxing moon had officially started. Two days ago, there was even a thunderstorm that was filled with vitality. The trees on either side of the forest path were covered in green now. When the breeze blew past, the air was chilly with the scent of petrichor. It made one feel comfortable and awake.

Scrape, scrape. Link stepped on the damp ground, feeling the steam due to the rising temperature. He felt vitality budding inside him too.

Strangely enough, Link felt the Natural Mana within him start flowing with an odd rhythm under this budding vitality. It felt like lava underground waiting for the right time to spew out.

Link couldn't influence his Natural Mana. He just watched it quietly like a bystander, but he also comprehended something. Nature affects the heart while the heart affects power. It is the source. The form of power within me is connected to the natural environment too.

He continued walking.

Along the way, he also met some travelers, but they were all wearing regular clothes. They studied each other and then went on their own way.

As he walked further, dozens of paths converged. The road became wider, and there were more and more travelers. Around ten miles later, the path within the forest actually became lively. It seemed to be as flourishing as Creekwood Village way back when.

Around 20 miles later, Link reached the ruins of Creekwood. He discovered that it was still in ruins, but a new village was in the midst of being built too.

People on the path kept talking. Link stood beside a big tree and listened quietly.

"The Magicians of East Cove are so powerful. That night, I saw lightning crack above the village. When I went out in the morning, the zombies that had caused trouble everywhere were all gone. The robbers were driven away too. Look, those zombies are all burnt."

"I heard that His Majesty allocated 10,000 gold coins to rebuild Creekwood. Just like I said, such a great place can't just be left ruined."

"Isn't it because the Ferde lord is holding down the South? Otherwise, who would come here? Hey, look. See that female Magician? I heard she's the Ferde lord's student!"

"Oh, where? Wow, pretty. If only she could be my woman."

"Shush! You want to die?"

Link looked over and saw Rylai.

The little girl from before was now a beautiful lady. She wore a white magic robe with silver designs and a silver belt at her waist. She held a white wand, and watery light glistened around her. She looked indescribably magical.

Level-6 before she's even 18. Not bad. Link was very happy.

He didn't stay for long. It was enough to know that Rylai was well-off. He had extreme power now, but he also had an enemy to match. Going to meet this little girl would hurt her.

I'll just help her secretly. Link stepped back and raised a hand. He tapped in Rylai's direction. A faint green ball flew out, quietly sinking into her body. It wouldn't increase her power or help her understand spells. It was just a defense spell that seemed unimportant but was actually very powerful. If Rylai encountered an undefeatable enemy, a Level-19 shield would automatically be activated. Rylai would also be transmitted to Link's side.

Rylai seemed to feel something. She looked in Link's direction but only saw a stranger. (Changing his appearance was easy for Link.)

After that, Link put Rylai down in his heart. He continued down the forest path.

Around ten minutes later, he suddenly stopped because he saw a familiar woman in an icy blue dress. At first glance, she looked like a common beauty, but her features became more exquisite as one studied her. After a few seconds, one would have the urge to just drown in her beauty.

It was none other than Herrera, the Angel of Light. She also had Legendary power now, and Link hadn't concealed his power, so she easily sensed his arrival.

"How come you're here?"

"Because I wanted to come. My heart told me that if I came here, I'd see you." Link smiled. He had a feeling that this was the right path to find closure.

How could he find closure? He had to put down what he must, forget what he must, and keep what he must until there were no more regrets.

Herrera understood Link. Becoming a bit sad, she said softly, "After being in the mortal world for so long, I've also become a mortal. The God of Light has fallen, and you're leaving, but I can't follow Stay with me for a few days?"

Link nodded and walked over. He lifted Herrera's porcelain-like chin and kissed her softly. He'd wanted to do this since he was at the East Cove Magic Academy, but there were too many restitions before, thus leaving this regret.

It was time to resolve it now.

The next few days, Link accompanied Herrera and traveled through the forest. They recounted their past in the forest and would use magic to build a house at night. They would either rest or make love in the house. There were no restitions.

Three days passed. On the third night, Link rose quietly. He kissed Herrera's cheek, kissing away the tear that slid down from her eyes, and then left.

By the time he left the cottage, he'd already put Herrera down. His body and soul felt clearer, and energy was still flowing through. The two clashing powersDark and Naturalhad started melding slowly. It was indescribable.

Link ignored it, allowing it to meld as he continued walking.

As he walked, he suddenly felt something. Looking up, he saw the moon in the sky. It shone down with cool light, illuminating him. A watery halo had appeared around him at some point. It exchanged light with the moon.

Right now, Link's emotions were as pure as the moonlight and as serene as the forest at night. Within this serenity, vitality was still blooming.

Like a seed planted in the fertile land, it seemed calm but was filled with the power of life.

There is darkness after light, but the darkness still contains new hope.

Link continued walking. His heart had reached his own Realm of God. It was about to bloom just like the seed in the earth. As for what kind of Realm of God he would enter, he had no clue. He could only wait.

Following the weak guidance in his heart, he continued.

Sea of Void

A horrible existence was whizzing through the Sea of Voidthe Ruler of Light and Darkness. Carrying incomparable power, his speed was indescribable. Energy roared wherever he went. He could even smash the dark energy traps.

He crashed down the path.

The Ruler of Light and Darkness immediately sensed it when Link's Divine Attribute of Fire started budding. Boom. He opened his eyes. His left eye shone with blinding white light while his right eye was dark as an abyss.

Is the small thing growing up? He blinked.

To him, anyone under Level-20 was a small thing that could be crushed easily. But when someone started lighting the divine fire, they would have an unlimited future.

The Divine Realm was different from the Sacred Realm. Rising into the Sacred Realm needed a strong enough soul and time for the power to rise. But once a soul reached a certain extent for the Divine Realm, the power would instantly catch up. This was because the Sea of Void was filled with boundless energy that could be used.

Thus, only the strength of one's soul determined the limit of someone in the Divine Realm. A soul was mysterious. Its strength depended on belief rather than time.

The stronger and more majestic one's belief, the stronger their soul would be. After Link lit the divine fire, he could have average Level-20 strength, or he could instantly become more powerful than the Ruler of Light and Darkness.

The true territory of a god was filled with unlimited possibilities.

For example, he devoured realms not because of the realms' power but to realize his own belief!

Feeling danger, the Ruler of Light and Darkness instantly sent his mind to someone on the outside of the faraway Firuman Realm.

"Pale Hunter, listen to my orders!"

This was the God of Destruction. She saw the drastic changes of the Firuman Realm but couldn't do anything. She didn't want to leave either, so she paced outside it and was noticed by the Ruler of Light and Darkness.

The Pale Hunter was known as the God of Destruction, but she was just a demi-god who'd luckily received a Divine Fragment. She was much stronger than Morpheus, but she was nothing compared to a true god who'd lit the divine fire!

She wanted to resist the Ruler of Light and Darkness' consciousness, but this thought was extinguished as soon as it appeared. It had vanished naturally, and she could only submit to him.

She knew immediately that he was a true god and didn't dare have any other thoughts. "Ultimate sovereign," she said quickly. "What are your orders?"

"I have a daughter named Celine Flandre. She was left in Firuman and fell in love with a mortal. Go kill her!"

If Link wanted to find closure, he must put down Celine. If this critical step was destroyed, Link wouldn't be able to light his divine fire.

"Sovereign, the Firuman Realm is too powerful. I can't go in," the God of Destruction said.

"If I say you can go, then you can. Go!"

Boom. The God of Destruction charged towards Firuman uncontrollably and fell in.

## 647. Magician Old Blindie

Golden Plains

Link had followed a couple of Agatha Nagas all the way here. He was not too sure why he had followed them in the first place. He was now simply letting pure instinct guide his footsteps as he searched for a way to fill the hole in his soul.

At first, he had thought about capturing one of the Nagas and peeking into her soul using soul magic to see if she knew anything he did not. However, he quickly dismissed the idea, fearing that it might alert the Nagas to his presence.

And so Link chose not to lay a hand on any of the Nagas and continued tailing them across the plains.

The moon of full bloom had risen. Though most of the grass and trees had withered away in the plains, new buds had already begun sprouting in their place. The Nagas slithered through the tall withered grass at top speed.

A few days before, the Nagas movements seemed erratic, as if in search of something. However, they must have found some new clue as to their quarry's position, as their movements had now become more organized.

Each of these Nagas had at least Level-8 power. Their furtive movements made it almost impossible for ordinary folk to keep up with them.

Of course, Link had no trouble tailing them. His pursuit of the Nagas had been a stroll in the park.

The procession of Nagas soon arrived at a huge canyon. Not a blade of grassprouted from the bare red earth. However, the place was not entirely without life. From a distance, one could see a couple of primitive-looking buildings built of animal skin, bones and straw along the canyon.

These looked to be standard Beastman architecture. Judging from the building density, Link figured that this must be a mid-sized Beastman city containing at least 10,000 Beastmen.

The Nagas hid in the withered grass along the path they had taken. Half an hour later, a group of traveling merchants emerged from the grass. Some of the merchants were pushing along one-wheeled carts loaded with an assortment of goods such as salt, tea leaves, cotton fabric and such, all of which were essential to the everyday life of a typical Beastman.

Thanks to their limber bodies, the Nagas were able to disguise themselves expertly using mere makeup.

Their disguise was practically flawless. The middle-aged man in the lead was in fact a Level-11 Legendary Naga in disguise. She had managed to reproduce every wrinkle and spot on her skin with such skill that no one would be any the wiser about who she really was.

The merchants continued pushing their carts along the road towards the Beastman city.

After thinking for a while, Link too entered the tall withered grass. Half a minute later, a powerfully built Beastman came out of it, with a black wolf skin cape draped over his back. The upper portion of his body was left bare. A black axe dangled from his waist. Beneath his waist was a pair of leather pants and plain-looking straw slippers. He was dressed exactly like a Beastman wanderer.

Wanderers of the Beastman variety usually made their money as mercenaries. Beastman mercenaries were notorious for their cheap prices. Under normal circumstances, any of them would be willing to walk barefoot through hell if they were promised good food, clothing, and top-quality equipment.

However, most of them were extraordinarily dim and prone to resolving their problems with their fists. In this respect, they were usually more trouble than they were worth.

Disguised as a Beastman mercenary, Link began striding towards the Beastman city in the canyon.

He soon caught up with the traveling merchants up ahead. Shooting a sideways glance at the feeble-looking Nagas, Link let out a snort and strode past them.

Suddenly, the leader of the merchants shouted behind him, "Hey, you big blockhead, I've got a job for you. You interested?"

Link stopped in his tracks and looked sideways at him. "I don't take sissy jobs."

"No, no, nothing like that. In fact, I need a real manly Warrior to do something for me. Of course, you'll be well compensated for your troubles."

The Naga leader began sizing up Link's Beastman form. "You look young and strong, but your weapon could use an upgrade. May I interest you in this fine battleaxe?"

The Naga leader pulled a huge battle axe out of her cart. However, Link knew that this was all a facade. She had simply pulled it out of her spatial bracelet. She had done it so quickly in order to make sure that the Beastman standing before her would not be able to pick up on her sleight of hand.

It was a long-handled battle axe. Its polished surface would gleam with a blood red light from time to time. Link immediately recognized the Level-5 Bloodthirst enchantment on it, which would give its user a 20% boost to his or her power.

He had disguised himself as a Level-4 Beastman mercenary who would probably do anything for such a fine piece of equipment.

"As long as I don't have to challenge the Warlord himself, I'll gladly do anything for you," breathed Link as he stared greedily at the battleaxe in the Naga's hands.

"I won't be sending you to your death. It's like this. We've received word that there is a human Magician who goes by the name of Old Blindie living in the deepest recesses of this Beastman city. He's a traitor of the human race who had once asssinated a princess in Golle Kingdom. Such a crime is unpardonable. We would like to bring him back to the Golle Kingdom so that he may be tried for his actions, but, as you already know, the Beastmen have always been wary of us humans. We would like your help in this matter."

The Naga leader had spun quite a tale for Link. Any other Beastman Warrior would have immediately provided his services on the spot. The Beastmen always had an inflated sense of self-righteousness and a deep loathing for treason and conspiracy in general.

This human Magician must be the answer that Link was looking for. Since the Nagas came to him first, Link had no reason to refuse them his services. After listening to the Nagasstory, he thumped his chest with indignation. "Say no more. All traitors deserve to be punished. I'll drag him out of his hiding spot for you."

The Naga leader quickly added, "Warrior, be careful of his magic."

"I'll chop his head off before he even has time to work his magic. Now give me the axe!" said Link with a snort as he reached for the battleaxe in the Naga leader's hands.

After grabbing the battleaxe from the Naga leader, Link began marching towards the canyon city.

Once she was sure that Link was out of earshot, one of the Nagas stepped forward and asked, "This Beastman won't cause us any trouble now, will he?"

"Of course not. The Magician has hidden himself deep in the alleys of the city. The Beastman will serve as a great distraction. Let us move on. We can't let Old Blindie escape!"

Like most Beastmen cities, the streets of this canyon city were all smelly and disgusting.

The Great Plains lacked water, so the Beastmen didn't have the habit of bathing. There weren't any underground sewage systems either, so waste piled up in the corners. Feces from oxen, goats, and donkeys were everywhere on the streets. Any human city was far cleaner than here.

The canyon walls were high, blocking the sun. This made the alleys all dark and shadowy. In the entire canyon, only the main avenue saw sunlight. The others were all in darkness.

Secrets could hide easily in this darkness. Link walked deep into the canyon and sensed bloody magic aura from some of the streets. Some even contained messy divine waves.

These were probably the believers of demon gods in the Sea of Void sent to convert people. These gods were powerful to mortals but were nothing compared to true gods. Any Legendary figure protected by the realm could drive these demon gods away.

They were like small scabies on the realm. Instead of being threatening, they were just annoying.

Link ignored the lowly darkness and continued forging on. He'd asked some Beastmen earlier and learned that the Black Lane was in the depths of the canyon. It was also the darkest part that contained the most dangerous organisms. Even the natives of the canyon feared it.

The canyon was very long. As Link kept walking, it became narrower and darker. Because people had dug below the canyon, it began to resemble a huge cave.

Around ten minutes later, the two walls were almost closed up, and the inside was all dark. The only sources of light came from the torches on either side. It was clear they weren't well-maintained and were scattered sparsely. Occasionally, wind would blow, and the flames would waver. Eerie shadows flickered through the canyon.

Here, Link's heart jumped. He could clearly feel energy waves from Naga warriors behind him. They'd concealed themselves, but they were like children playing with fire to Link. No amount of hiding would work.

"You want me to alarm them? Heh, I won't let you get what you want." Link could clearly see what the Naga was planning. For example, his battle ax wasn't only a weapon. It also contained a positioning spell for the Nagas to track people.

Link grew more interested in the Nagas' target. Looking at the geography around him, he chose a path and advanced without hesitation. Stooping, he snuck down the Black Lane's shadows. His actions were at the same level as the best scout.

The Black Lane kept going down and reached in all directions. It looked like a maze. Shadows would occasionally appear in the alley, but they either crept forward like Link or were covered up seamlessly, not showing anything.

Sometimes, weird noises would travel down the street. Some were like moans, some were painful cries, while others were completely indescribable. The people on the street seemed to be used to the sounds. No one reacted to them.

As he continued, the torches lessened, and the light darkened. In places unreachable by firelight, one could barely see their hands before them. Of course, it didn't affect Link at all. Everything was as bright as day in his eyes. He could see every corner in this place.

In his perceptions, the Nagas behind him slowed down considerably. The extreme darkness and strange sounds raised their guards.

Link was still fearless. Like a spirit, he was soundless and quick. After walking for almost ten minutes, he paused and grabbed someone in a black hooded cape.

This person had Level-4 dark Mana waves. He was a Magician, while Old Blindie was a Magician too. As fellow Magicians, Link could probably get information from him.

Link's hands twitched. A long battle ax floated up like a leaf. The icy blade pressed against the man's neck. "Do you want to live or die?"

"Live." The Magician's reply was definite, and his voice was stable without a bit of unsteadiness. Clearly, he was used to this.

He didn't try to fight back either. Link didn't show his Mana, but he'd showed powerful battle techniques with the ax. The Magician was sensitive to danger. He knew that he couldn't defeat this man.

Link was satisfied that this man knew his place. "I want to know about Old Blindie."

"Old Blindie? Why?" The Magician's voice was a bit strange.

Link immediately pressed the ax in. There was a sharp scritch, and the Magician's collar was ripped. The blade pressed against his skin. "I ask, you answer. My patience is limited."

The Magician shuddered involuntarily. He knew that he'd run into someone truly dangerous. He could die today from a slight mishap. Not daring to think of anything else, he could only try to cooperate. "If Old Blindie is in the Black Lane, he'll definitely be in the Bloody Tavern."

"Is he in the Black Lane now?" Link stared at the Magician's eyes while asking. He also felt for the other's soul. He could immediately tell if the man lied. Nowadays, no secrets in Firuman could escape from him!

"You're lucky. He's there today." The Magician didn't dare look Link in the eye. He had to avert his gaze a few seconds later. It wasn't that he felt guilty. He couldn't resist Link's pressure.

Link pried the Magician's head back, forcing him to stare at himself. "How is Old Blindie usually?"

"He he's mysterious. No one knows where he is exactly. He's strong too. He once showed a Level-7 spell. He he's low-key and never cass trouble. When he's in the Bloody Tavern, he drinks alone in the corner and rarely talks to anyone." The Magician's voice trembled in fear.

"Last question. Why is he called Old Blindie?"

"He's blind. He's missing two eyes. He put two white crystal balls in his eye sockets, and he looks scary. This is all I know. Really, nothing more."

"Patience. I need to know where the Bloody Tavern is."

"Go down this road to the end. You'll see a door with a black torch. That's the entrance." The Magician's voice was hurried and quivered. He clearly thought that Link was ready to silence him with death.

Link chuckled, making the Magician shudder. He instinctively tried to attack. His wand already lit up.

"Okay, I believe you. Go now." Link waved casually, extinguishing the magic forming on the wand. He grabbed the Magician and tossed him back while he flew forward, disappearing in the darkness in the blink of an eye.

Plop. The Magician landed safely on the ground. When he looked up, the Beastman Warrior was gone. What had happened seemed like a fantasy, but when he touched his throat, he could still feel the ax's coldness. His collar was also ripped. It proved that it had actually happened.

This Warrior is so strong. Old Blindie's rival is probably looking for him. I can't stay in Black Lane anymore. I gotta go!

He turned and started for the exit without stopping.

On the other hand, Link sped up. Three minutes later, he reached the end of the street. There was indeed a door there. A torch with black flames hung from it, illuminating blood-red words, Bloody Night of Joy.

Loud noises came from the doorscreams and strange music. This must be the Bloody Tavern. Link walked up and opened the door lightly.

He was immediately hit by a bloody smell, making him dizzy. Focusing, he saw redness everywhere. His battle experience told him that the wine here was all blood. The ecstatically partying men and women were all involved in dark magic. About one-third had blood-sucking demon lineage.

He also saw Old Blindie in the corner. Just as the Magician had said, he sat quietly and drank a cup of fresh blood. When Link appeared, he immediately turned and went blank.

When Link saw him, his brows also furrowed. He knew this Magician!

Bloody Tavern

All powerful Magicians worth their salt possessed acute observational skills. Old Blindie was not an exception to this rule.

It was true that he was blind. However, he had a far keener Eye of the Soul than other Magicians.

Link was presently under the guise of a Beastman mercenary. However, he did not give off the wild, savage air of a typical Beastman. His body was much too clean to belong to an actual Beastman.

Unlike the Nagas, Old Blindie was able to instantly see through his disguise.

"I know you're looking for me. Speak then, stranger. What is it you want from me?" asked the Magician telepathically. His voice had pierced through the tavern's din like an arrow and struck Link's eardrums like a gong.

Link had already figured out the Magician's identity. "He replied telepathically, "Darris, I did not expect to find you here."

Darris was the traitorous disciple of Magician Bale back in the East Cove Magic Academy. He had studied magic alongside Link in the same Mage Tower. He had tried to commit mass murder back then but was ultimately stopped by Link. He was later sent to Creekwood Village to be tried for his actions. However, somehow he managed to flee before justice could be properly served.

A few Magicians had tried to look for him. The only thing they were able to turn up was the fact that the Dark Elves had helped him escape. No one knew where he had fled off to, or what he had been up to all this time.

Link did not imagine that he would once again see this despicable Magician in the flesh. His appearance had changed drastically. However, appearances no longer mattered to a Magician like Link. He immediately recognized who Old Blindie was by the essence of his soul.

Darris now had Level-9 Dark Power. He had surpassed his master Bale a long time ago.

Darris was taken aback by how easily his identity had been figured out. He had not used that name for a long time. It was his most well-kept secret. The shock of hearing someone utter his name after all this time had struck him like a thunderbolt.

"Who the hell are you?" Darris stood up suddenly. Thick Dark Power began spreading out from him. All light in the tavern was extinguished in an instant. There was now a growing sense of dread in everyone. All of a sudden, a high-pitched scream pierced the darkness, and everyone fled the place like frightened animals.

No one in this backwater city was a match for Level-9 Magician like Darris. His Soul Strike spell affected everyone in the tavern in an instant.

The place had descended into chaos.

Darris had hoped to make his getaway in the pandemonium. He knew that only a few in this world were capable of figuring out his true identity. He also knew that none of them were people to be trifled with.

One of them was an enemy of his from his days in the Magic Academy. Darris might be the king of his kingdom in this dark alleyway with his Level-9 power, but he knew that he was nothing more than an ant in the face of that person.

All of a sudden, he realized that he could not move a muscle.

A pair of cold Beastman eyes glinted menacingly from the tavern's entrance. A Beastman was staring straight at him. The commotion in the tavern did not affect him one bit. A half-demon tried to push him aside. The Beastman simply cleaved him in two like paper with a swing of his battle-axe.

At that moment, the torrent of bodies surged against of the Beastman's body, only to be ground into an unrecognizable paste of flesh and bone in his wake.

Darris gulped. He knew that he was not a match for the Beastman.

He was no longer the same person he was before in the Magic Academy. He had come across masters more powerful than him during his years on the run. Long humbled by his encounters, his only purpose in life now was to live as long as he could.

Realizing that there was no way he would be able to defeat the Beastman, Darris immediately stopped struggling. The Beastman had chosen to restrain him instead of killing him on the spot. This meant that he must still be of some use to him.

"Stand beside me, don't move!" Link strode over, seized Darris's shoulder and pulled him to a dark corner in the tavern. Both of them instantly vanished into the shadows.

Link had activated his Concealment spell. They were still inside the tavern. However, they no longer needed to worry about being noticed or eavesdropped by anyone.

Link threw his axe on the ground in the middle of the tavern. Everyone in the building was too busy fleeing for their lives to pay Link, Darris or the 200-pound battle axe on the ground any mind.

In the darkness, Link continued telepathically speaking to Darris, "You're being targeted by a group of Nagas. I want to know why."

Darris was unable to make any sense of the Concealment spell that Link had activated. He knew then that the Beastman's power was far superior to his own. When he heard what Link said, he frowned. "Are you talking about the piss of the God of Destruction in the Black Forest? I don't think I've done anything to upset any of them."

"Try to remember," said Link. Those Nagas would definitely not have set their sights on Darris for no reason.

Darris then asked, "You know who I am. But I don't recall ever knowing any Beastman. Who the hell are you? How did you know my true identity?"

"I'm Link," said Link, confident that Darris would not be able to use his identity against him even if he wanted to.

Upon hearing the name, Darris's body began trembling violently. He still remembered the time he was defeated by Link back in Girvent Forest. He had thought about exacting his revenge upon him, but Link had surpassed his power at such an incredible speed. His legendary exploits had spread far and wide across the continent. Even the little Beastman children knew that somewhere in the Far East lay a prosperous human city presided over by a powerful human lord.

He had completely given up vengeance three years ago. He only hoped that Link had forgotten about his existence. Darris had endeavored to stay out of trouble and kept to himself as much as possible in order to make sure that his name remained in oblivion.

He never thought that Link would still be able to recognize after all this time.

At that moment, a sense of hopelessness had filled Darris.

"I..." He was about to say something, only to be interrupted by Link.

"Answer me!"

"I really don't know." Darris shrugged helplessly. He had no reason to lie to the all-powerful Lord of Ferde. For the last two years, he had remained in the Golden Plains. He had never come into contact with any of the Nagas in the Black Forest. Suddenly, Darris's eyes lit up.

"Wait," he said. He immediately sank into deep thought as if he had just recalled something.

Link patiently waited for an answer from him.

A few minutes later, Darris spoke, "This may have something to do with someone I came across a month ago. He looked young, maybe fifteen to sixteen years old, but I could tell that he was even more powerful than me. I didn't have a chance to speak to him, but he left behind a valuable spellcasting gemstone like it was something that could be found anywhere. The gemstone was then picked up by a vampire. Only recently did it end up in my possession."

Darris pulled out a blue-white spellcasting gemstone from his spatial ring. The gemstone seemed capable of storing high volumes of magical power. Any Magician would have been impressed by what they saw.

Link frowned at the gemstone. "Something's wrong with it. There's a soul magic seal on it. It's giving off strange magical fluctuations... Strange, they remind me of someone."

Link was soon lost in his own thoughts. Ignoring Darris's bewildered look, Link began closely observing the blue-white gemstone in his hand. His eyes now gleamed with a gentle light, which seemed rather incongruous with the rest of his Beastman features.

Just then, a voice rang out from outside the Bloody Tavern. "In here. There's a lot of blood on the ground. Must have been quite a bloodbath."

The Nagas had caught up to them!

## 648. Searching For Celine

A while later, a Naga disguised as a human merchant appeared in the tavern. She carried two machetes and snuck in. Looking around, she called outside, "Leader, it's safe, but I don't see Old Blindie. I don't see the Beastman either."

Figures flashed at the door. Then about a dozen of Nagas entered. The leader was someone at the pinnacle of Level-11. She'd been disguised as a man and took care of her actions outside the city. Here, she didn't care anymore. Twisting her waist, she circled the tavern. She checked the various marks left here and re-checked the corpse pieces on the ground. Finally, she picked up the long battle ax in the center of the tavern. Looking at it, she fell into deep thought.

The other Nagas surrounded her, waiting for her next order.

About five or six minutes later, the leader came to a conclusion. "The Beastman stood at the entrance while Old Blindie was probably sitting here. He felt threatened, so he used a Dark Soul spell. The tavern instantly fell into chaos."

She perused the tavern's ground. She was explaining the situation to her underlings while also organizing her thoughts.

"People ran towards the door, but they were all halved by the Beastman's ax This Beastman has aggressive power. After killing five people in a row, he pounced towards Old Blindie The marks disappeared here. They just vanished Wait, I can feel slight distortions of the space. They must have transmitted away!"

"Leader, what do we do now?" a Naga asked.

"Old Blindie is very foxy while the transmission distance was quite far. That Beastman is probably killed already. There isn't a corpse so all trails are cut off. It's practically impossible to find him now."

The Naga leader paced across the room. A few minutes later, she said, "This has surpassed our abilities. Let's go back to tell the master."

The others had no objections. They all nodded and cleared away quickly.

During this, Link and Darris were hiding in a corner, watching quietly. After the Nagas left, Darris looked at Link. "Are you going to kill me now?"

They were enemies while Link now had top power. Link just had to move a finger to kill him. He was basically waiting for death to come now.

Link didn't agree or disagree. Instead, he asked in return, "What do you think about Dark Mana?"

"It's powerful, but it can easily affect one's mind. If you don't use it carefully, you'll most likely get controlled by the Mana and become darkness' slave. You'll destroy yourself while destroying others."

Darris didn't know why Link was asking, but he felt deeply while speaking. He was no longer that proud but ignorant young man from the East Cove Magic Academy. He'd experienced so many hardships to understand the cruel truth of the world.

After hearing his understanding of Dark Mana, Link smiled and patted his shoulder. "Dark power is a double-sided sword. It's sharp, but not many people can use it well. It's valuable that you can have these thoughts. As for our past conflicts, just let them pass."

"Sir, are you forgiving me?" Darris was overjoyed. No one liked living in secret and fear.

Link nodded. He grabbed in the air and dark power appeared out of thin air again. It solidified into a black leather-bound book.

"Take this dark magic book. It contains some of my experience while using dark power. It can also protect your soul from not getting tited."

He'd practically created something out of nothing. Darris stared in respect. When he got the book, he knelt down in excitement, almost crying from joy. "Thank you for your mercy."

Link patted his shoulder. "There are many demons controlled by darkness in the world. It's rare for you to break free from the darkness."

As for the rivalry from before, Link had moved on long ago. Right now, he was looking down from the top.

As soon as he finished, Link disappeared from the Bloody Tavern. The next instant, he re-appeared at the edge of the canyon, still in Beastman form. However, instead of a traveler, he was now a merchant selling on the side of the road.

About half a minute later, the group of Nagas hurriedly came out from the depths of the canyon. They passed Link by without noticing. Link didn't do anything special either. He just looked up and then continued hawking.

When the Nagas were far away and almost disappeared from his line of sight, Link quickly got up to follow. The Nagas had mentioned a master. This must be the mastermind behind everything. He could go meet them.

The Nagas seemed very cautious. They looked around as they walked. When they exited the canyon and entered the withered grass, they put on invisible capes and disappeared.

Sadly, these capes only worked against normal people. To Link, these weak effects were like nothing.

Link followed for around one hour, traveling more than 100 miles, before a hill of rocks appeared. The Nagas circled a huge stone a few times and then just vanished. This time, Link realized that he'd lost them. The other's tactics were at his level!

This is at the pinnacle of this realm too. The master must be at the pinnacle of Level-19! Link furrowed his brows, finding things a bit troublesome now. Thankfully, he'd been careful along the way. Otherwise, he would have alerted them.

Instead of rushing into the stones to look for them, he hid in the withered grass and waited patiently. He had a feeling that another opportunity would arise.

He also did something else. He tossed the valuable magic stone from Darris to somewhere 300 feet away. The Legendary Mana waves from the stone should make the other miscalculate.

Time passed bit by bit. Nothing abnormal happened. The wind blew and small animals would come by occasionally, but the Nagas still didn't appear. Link remained in place and slowed down his breathing and heartbeat until they barely happened. His gut feeling didn't change. He believed something would happen soon.

This was his confidence in his own power, as well as trust in Firuman. The other was inside Firuman now. Nothing can escape from the realm's perception while Link was blessed by the realm. If the realm knew, he would know too.

He waited for three hours.

Three hours later, abnormal power waves suddenly came from the hill. Half a second later, a Naga in a dark red dress appeared from the stones. She looked really similar to Molina No, more accurately, Molina looked like her. Her aura was chaotic and violent but she looked calm. She was like a sea with hidden currents.

It's the God of Destruction! Link was even more grateful he hadn't done anything brash.

After she appeared, she jumped to the top of a white boulder. Looking down at the withered grass, she sneered. "Come out. I see you."

Link's heart jumped, thinking that he was discovered, but he quickly calmed down. He still didn't move. The other might not have seen him. She might have just discovered the magic stone he'd tossed.

A few seconds later, the God of Destruction scoffed. "You think you can escape from my eyes, Ferde lord?"

She looked forward while speaking, not looking either at the magic stone or in Link's direction. This made it difficult to discern if she was speaking the truth.

Thinking for half a second, Link decided to just wait. As long as she didn't point him out, he would just act like he didn't hear anything.

After waiting for a few seconds without getting a reply, the God of Destruction furrowed her brows. She waved and a Naga appeared behind her. She rushed towards the magic stone.

A while later, the Naga found the magic stone and brought it back to the God of Destruction.

Her brows furrowed even more. Suddenly, she looked towards the grass and announced, "Ferde lord, I know you're nearby and can hear me. Since you have this stone, you must know who I'm looking for. Let me tell you, I will definitely find her before you and I will destroy her. This is the wish of the Ruler of Light and Darkness. No one can resist!"

Link listened quietly. The God of Destruction seemed to be threatening him, but in reality, she was explaining the situation. She didn't want to find Celine. It was the Ruler of Light and Darkness who forced her to.

But so what?

The God of Destruction couldn't resist the Ruler of Light and Darkness, so she had to become Link's enemy. When necessary, they would fight to the death.

The more important question was: where was Celine?

It was strange that Link was now at this level, but he still couldn't sense Celine at all. She seemed to not even exist in the world.

This could only mean that Celine received the truth from the Book of Revelations. She received the true heritage of the Level-19 Soul Sovereign Rosso.

But fortunately, if he couldn't find Celine, then the God of Destruction couldn't either. Otherwise, she wouldn't get fooled by a magic stone. However, she was still better off than Link. Her actions must have given Celine some pressure, forcing her to use this stone to distract her.

These thoughts flashed past Link's mind. After he understood it all, he came up with a plan. He would secretly follow the God of Destruction to wherever she went. When she finally found Celine, he would do his best to save her.

On the other hand, the God of Destruction waited patiently for a while. When there was still no reply, she was angered. It was already difficult to find Celine, but now the Ferde lord was here too. It was like adding salt to her wounds.

"Master, what do we do now?" a Naga asked cautiously.

"What else can we do? Keep looking. It's the wish of the Ruler of Light and Darkness!" The God of Destruction felt like she shouldn't have come to Firuman. Nothing went right after she came. Now, she'd even become a tool in the battle between two powerful figures. What the hell?!

Three days later, the God of Destruction had located Celine.

They had left the Golden Plains behind them and were now in the southern marshlands of Firuman.

Rivers crisscrossed the region like cobwebs. The landscape was pockmarked by bottomless pits of mud, most of which were covered by leaves and turned into natural deathtraps.

Dangerous Magical Beasts lurked among the vegetation, which had grown rampant thanks to the area's high water content.

For instance, a green boa could release a lethal dose of venom capable of stopping the hearts of 100 ordinary men. Its fangs were also endowed with the ability to pierce most magical barriers with ease. Even a Naga master would not be able to survive its bite.

The Nagas began making their way across the marshland with caution. The fact that they did not have Celine's exact location did not help matters at all.

The God of Destruction too did not dare let her guard down. She could not care less about the creatures that lurked in the area. The only person she was afraid of at this very moment was Link, who, for all she knew, might be lurking in the shadows, waiting for his chance to strike. She knew that the moment she let her guard down, Link would not hesitate to move in and end her on the spot.

A woodpecker cooed as it fled into the dense forest. The other animals in the marshland followed after it.

"Argh!" shouted one of the Nagas. The others turned around and saw that a palm-sized spider had crawled up her neck. The markings on the back of the purple-black spider were reminiscent of a specter's violent red eyes.

The Naga tried to pull it off her neck, but the spider had sunk its fangs deep into its prey. She finally managed to rip it out, but in doing so, the spider had taken a chunk of flesh with it from her neck. Black veins began spiderwebbing the area around her neck at a frightening speed.as blood poured out of her wound like black ink.

In a split second, the Naga's entire face turned black. Her gait had also become unsteady, as if she might collapse at any moment.

The other Nagas hurried over and flattened the spider under their feet. They then tried to cure their companion of the boa's poison with an antidote that they had brought with them.

The antidote did little to curb the poison's spread across the Naga's body. Blood was now coming out of her mouth, eyes and nostrils. It would seem that the Naga did not have much longer to live.

"Mistress..." said one of the Nagas pleadingly.

The God of Destruction bit her lip. With a powerful enemy waiting to ambush her, she could not afford to waste any of her power right now. However, the Nagas had been more than loyal to her. To let one of them perish would be a waste as well. After weighing her options, she flicked her fingers at the poisoned Naga, sending a Detoxification technique her way.

Her Detoxification technique immediately took effect. The poisoned Naga let out a sigh of relief. Her face had regained its vigour. She had also stopped bleeding. However, she was still weak from a severe loss of blood. She would need at least two hours' rest in order to regain her full strength.

Seeing this, the God of Destruction said, "It's too dangerous here. All of you stay back, I'll go on ahead by myself."

None of them were familiar with the geography of the marshland and so were extremely vulnerable to the creatures that lurked there. They would only weigh their mistress down if she had to cure them every time they got themselves hurt or poisoned.

"Be careful, mistress," said a Legendary Naga.

The God of Destruction nodded. She then turned around and headed towards the depths of the marshland.

As she proceeded deeper into the forest, a thick yellow mist thickened before her.

A breeze blew one of the sickly yellow smoke towards the God of Destruction. When she reached out to feel it, a sharp pain pierced her fingertips. She quickly withdrew her hand back and saw that the skin on her fingers was burned black.

She had a feeling that if she were exposed to the mist any longer, her body would probably be eaten away by it.

"Never knew that such a place exists in Firuman," muttered the God of Destruction. Realizing that the yellow mist had enveloped only a small section of the forest, she decided to walk around it.

Though she could walk through the yellow mist by casting a magical barrier around herself, it would put a considerable strain on her energy reserves. Flying over it also did not seem like a safe option. Her only way forward right now was by walking around the yellow toxic mist.

The yellow mist swirled ceaselessly in the forest, shifting its domain from time to time. Half an hour later, the God of Destruction had traversed 100 miles forward through the forest.

After a while, a huge body of water appeared before her. The corrosive yellow mist hung low over the water's surface.

Her path was now completely blocked by this body of water.

Looks like a huge lake. It's completely shrouded by this yellow mist... Celine Flandre should be up ahead. She was able to sense Celine's aura beyond the mist.

However, she now faced a new problem. The yellow mist floating above the surface of the lake had made it almost impossible to pinpoint Celine's exact location.

She now had two options. Her first option was to penetrate the corrosive mist and directly confront Celine in the middle of the lake. This seemed like a less risky option. However, she would be forced to use up a lot of her power. Also, she ran the risk of being caught in a pincer attack by both Celine and the lord of Ferde on both sides. She would have a hard time extricating herself from such a position.

Though her mission was to kill Celine, she would rather go about it without being killed for her troubles. Only a fool would sacrifice her life for the Ruler of Light and Darkness.

Her second option was to evaporate the entire lake with a Level-19 Legendary area-of-effect spell, which would instantly seal Celine's fate.

However, she would still be exposed to an ambush from the lord of Ferde during the spellcasting process.

The second option seemed even riskier than the first. After weighing the two options, the God of Destruction decided to proceed with the first option. She plunged into the yellow mist with a dark red magical shield around her body.

She could feel Celine's presence even more acutely in the mist. This must mean that her quarry was nearby.

In her excitement, she began to accelerate. However, at that moment, a sharp ripple of power entered her field of consciousness.

The ripple of power had appeared from the other side of the lake. It seemed to be making its way towards the middle of the lake, where Celine was.

The God of Destruction's blood went cold. I've been expecting you, lord of Ferde. However, it would seem that your power is still inferior to mine!

Like an arrow, she streaked across the lake's surface towards Celine's supposed location.

The God of Destruction emerged from the other end of the mist in a matter of seconds. There, her eyes fell on a small island.

Not a shred of the toxic yellow mist could be found on the island, whose area was no more than 300 square feet. Trees grew lushly around the island. A wooden cottage stood in the middle of a small clearing. A blue-haired woman was watering her flowers in front of the building.

"I've finally found you!" exclaimed the God of Destruction. She immediately lunged at her target, ready to spill her blood on the island.

However, she suddenly stopped in her tracks. Someone else had appeared on the other side of the island.

The person was clad in a silver-black battle robe. A crystal crown sat on top of his dark hair, dazzling like starlight. It was the lord of Ferde himself.

Link raised the Ode of a Full Moon sword in the air. No sooner had the sword vanished into the runes swirling around it than it appeared a foot away from the God of the Destruction.

If the God of Destruction had not reacted quickly enough, the sword would have penetrated her head. Even if she had nine lives, all of them would be blown away by the explosion of power from the sword.

She stared coldly at Link. "I'm here to kill Celine. Don't try to stop me!"

Even though both of them were equally powerful, there was no way Link would be able to defend Celine from the God of Destruction's attacks. The fact remained that murder was a less inhibited act than trying to protect someone's life.

However, Link suddenly smiled and pointed at the island. "Pale Hunter, you've been chasing after an illusion this whole time."

## 649. The Last Trial

Soul Sovereign Rosso's soul illusion in the extreme north had fooled the entire group of strong figures, including Link.

This type of seemingly real, seemingly unreal spell was the strongest illusion in the world. It affected the soul directly. If one's spell wasn't strong enough or if one wasn't observant enough, they would never be able to break free.

Link had once fallen for it, so he now understood this type of spell.

This time, he immediately discovered what was abnormal. In reality, starting with the yellow-green fog, the river, the island, and the woman on the island were all illusions! However, it was the God of Destruction's first time experiencing this kind of spell. Even after all this time, she still didn't notice anything wrong.

After Link mentioned it, she froze and then stared closely at the island for three full minutes. She sighed. "I can't believe such an illusion exists in the world. I didn't even notice."

This way, she had no trump cards. None of her underlings had followed over either. This meant that she was facing Link all alone. No matter if she won or lost, she would pay heavily for it. Deep inside, she didn't have the confidence to win at all.

She turned to look at Link. "You appeared voluntarily. Are you prepared to fight to the death with me?"

"What else could it be?" He tapped the Ode of a Full Moon, making crisp dings. Celine hadn't appeared, but she'd arranged his illusion to create the best battle environment. Nothing was holding him back now. It was the best time for a final fight!

Unexpectedly, the God of Destruction suddenly shook her head. "No, no, no, not so fast. I still have something to say."

"Oh?" Link didn't act. He wanted to see what the other could do.

The God of Destruction's weapon was a dark gold spear. Right now, she decided to put it away. "I think that the conflicts between us can be resolved. It isn't my wish to chase after Celine Flandre. I was forced by the Ruler of Light and Darkness. If you can help me defeat him, we can become temporary allies."

Link didn't really believe the God of Destruction's words.

"I have a reason for this. Listen closely." She even decided to cancel the magic shield on her surface. If Link attacked suddenly, she would be in a horrible situation. With Link's incomprehensible style of attacking, she would be dead within seconds.

But Link didn't move. He was attracted by the word "ally." He was definitely at a disadvantage against the Ruler of Light and Darkness. He needed as many allies as possible.

He still held his sword, but the tip was pointed down now.

"I'm sure you know about my background. Travel Magician Aisenis has many connections and he's a businessman. He must have sold my information to you, right?"

Link nodded.

The God of Destruction shrugged. "Then it's easy. I came to Firuman because there was a giant crack in the realm. I wanted to take advantage of it. But now, things are different. Not only has the crack disappeared, Firuman has become stronger too. I'm not able to harm this realm at all with my current power, right?"

"Indeed. The only true god in the Sea of Void is the Ruler of Light and Darkness. I've experienced his strength before. You're nothing in comparison."

"That is insulting, but it's the truth. Firuman has now become a battlefield for the true gods. I'm stuck in the middle like an ant that can be crushed at any time. I'm not stupid. Why should I work for the Ruler of Light and Darkness? So if you help me through this, I'll leave immediately. Before leaving, I promise I'll help you fight the Ruler of Light and Darkness together. After I leave, I won't return as long as you're here!"

Admittedly, this was a tempting suggestion. Link was confident he could defeat the God of Destruction, but everything had an "if." And even if he won, he would've used up a lot of power and energy.

Thinking of this, he said, "Tell me what I can do for you."

The God of Destruction sighed in relief and looked happy. "In the Sea of Void, I'd faced the Ruler of Light and Darkness' consciousness. He'd sealed most of my power and signed a contract with my soul. If I betray him, I'll immediately face his punishment."

Pain appeared in her expression as she spoke. At the same time, Link felt a heavy consciousness descend. He didn't feel any pressure, but the surrounding illusions all vanished.

The fog, river, and island all disappeared, revealing a vast swamp. Link had an idea about what happened.

"Can you handle it?"

Dark red light flowed through the God of Destruction. Her eyes shone while her brows furrowed tightly. She was clearly shouldering great pressure. "Thankfully, the realm is blocking it. With my Divine Fragment, I can manage to resist his consciousness, but this won't last long. The closer he is, the bigger the pressure. When he reaches the outer surface, my soul will collapse. I can't resist him alone. I need your help!"

This was a true god's might. Even his consciousness could destroy a Level-19 demi-god's soul!

Seeing her expression grow more painful, Link immediately casted a Level-19 spell: Soul Barrier.

Countless dark purple runes appeared. They looped over the God of Destruction, practically wrapping around her completely. The barrier wentito effect quickly. Her pained expression lessened.

"It's effective but not enough. The Ruler of Light and Darkness reaches every pore. A Level-19 spell is too low. I need the power of a true god!"

Power of a true god?

Link froze. The highest power inside a realm was the pinnacle of Level-19. The divine levelit had to be a divine gear! Link happened to have one. After being filled with the World Tree's power, his Crown of Eternal Night reached Level-21. It was the strongest thing inside Firuman.

But there was a problem. If he wanted to use it to help the God of Destruction against the Ruler of Light and Darkness, he had to let the God of Destruction have the crown. If she had it, her power would immediately shoot up. If she was lucky, she could kill Link with a few moves.

Link wasn't stupid. Why would he risk it?

"Link, if you don't help, I only have one solution." The God of Destruction took out her spear again. "I can only follow the Ruler of Light and Darkness' intentions and fight you!"

They were back to the start. This conflict seemed to be unresolvable.

Link's hand subconsciously touched his crown as he fell into deep thought. He could feel clearly that this was the last trial before lighting his Divine Fire. It was also the most dangerous.

What should he do?

## 650. There's No Such Thing As A God In This World

Silence had fallen over the marshland.

It seemed as if every living being in the area had stopped breathing as they waited for Link to make a decision.

The God of Destruction's brows furrowed. The pressure exerted on her by the Ruler of Light and Darkness was growing by the minute. The moment she reached her limit, she would be forced to fight to the death with the lord of Ferde.

This was the first time Link had to make such a difficult decision since his first day in Firuman.

There was a very real possibility that the God of Destruction might turn on him if he handed over the Crown of Eternal Night to her. However, if he chose not to do so, both of them would have to fight to the death. Even if he emerged victorious, he would still have to deal with the Ruler of Light and Darkness on his own.

His only option now was to hope that once freed from the Ruler's influence, the God of Destruction would choose to fight against her former master alongside Link.

"Could you hurry it up? I don't think I can take it much longer!" hissed the God of Destruction. Her face was visibly contorted in anguish.

Link was unmoved by this. Suddenly, he remembered the time the Crown of Eternal Night first appeared before him in the Aragu realm.

He had been pushed to the brink of death back then. Still, he refused to succumb to his injuries. Despite Saroviny's threats to pull his soul out for her father, he still chose to fight to his last breath.

It was then that the Crown of Eternal Night chose him to be its wearer.

The Shadow Divine Fragment chose me because the road we walk on are one and the same. If I hope to light the torch of my own godhood, I'll have to persevere on the path I have taken. What path have I chosen to walk? Is it darkness?

Link looked back at all of his past exploits in Firuman, starting from his time in the Magic Academy of Fleming, then in Creekwood Village, followed by East Cove Magic Academy, and finally Ferde.

There was no longer any teacher or Magical Academy in this world that he could learn from. He had walked to the furthest corner of the civilized world, beyond which lay only the unknown.

No one else could help him resolve his current conundrum. He could only forge ahead by illuminating a path into the unknown with the light of all the wisdom he had gathered so far.

What had kept me going all this time? It was a question he could only ask himself.

Was it magic?

Link pondered over the question for a few seconds. He then shook his head. Magic has always been the sharpest tool in my toolbox, but it has never been essential to my existence. I could still devote myself to areas other than magic in order to achieve my goals.

Was it friendship?

Link immediately thought of Eliard. He was without a doubt his best friend in Firuman. Though Link had initially approached Eliard for selfish reasons, as days went by, true friendship finally blossomed between the two of them.

Having a friend like Eliard had certainly brightened his world. Would Link have made it this far without him?

An answer finally came to him. Without Eliard, the path before him might have seemed bleaker. However, for as long as he could remember, he had always acted on his own. Eliard was only there at times to provide backup for his machinations.

Friendship had only been one of the a sunnier parts of his life.

What about love?

Link thought of Celine, the Red Dragon Queen Gretel, Herrera and even Milda. He then shook his head.

Love might have played a huge part in his life at first. However, he soon realized that like friendship, love was no more than a beautiful scenery one would sometimes get lost in along the road called life.

Link continued picking apart every superficial element in his life, until finally he came upon a single word: freedom.

Darkness had alwassought to descend upon Firuman. The fact of the matter is that even if darkness were to descend upon Firuman, the realm would still continue to exist. However, it would be transformed into an abyss, where everyone would be mutated into demons in the thrall of the Lord of the Deep. The only thing they would lose in the process would be their freedom. I too would lose my own freedom. In order to prevent that from happening, I've chosen to stand up against the darkness.

So what is freedom? Link asked himself again.

He soon found his answer. Freedom does not mean ridding oneself of one's inhibitions, nor does it equate to plain chaos.It is the right to choose! Every life in this world has the right to choose its own path. This is true freedom!

I've chosen to pursue magical wisdom and the ultimate truth of the world. The darkness still schemes to interfere with my life. The Ruler of Light and Darkness still schemes to consume the realm. Such barbarism threatens to take away my freedom to continue my pursuit for knowledge. I've built Ferde from the ground up and accumulated this much power, all so that I can resist against the tyranny of my oppressors!

An indescribable light had illuminated the depths of his soul.

The light was pristine like water and hot like fire. However, it was neither blinding nor scorching. One could not help but be humbled before such a sensation.

A soft wind moaned across the marshland. It was the world's way of welcoming the birth of a deity.

Link's body floated into the air. He was not doing it of his own volition. The Firuman realm had lifted him up.

The pristine light had enveloped Link's entire body. A black crystalline crown emerged from the light and drifted through the air until it landed gently on the God of Destruction's head.

The anguish on the God of Destruction's face vanished instantly. However, she remained kneeling before Link.

A divine light was now shining upon the world, broadcasting the newly ascended deity's message in every direction.

The God of Destruction was closest to Link. She was the first to receive his message.

If she had received such a message before entering Ferde, she would have simply scoffed at it. However, since coming here, her plans had been foiled by Link time and time again. All of her most capable subordinates had been slaughtered by him. She was even enslaved by the Ruler of Light and Darkness. All of this had made her susceptible to Link's divine message.

Though she was powerful to change just a small part of her world, there were others out there more powerful than her and capable of changing her very being.

When Link's message of freedom reached her, she humbly said, "Almighty one, I offer you my life in the name of protecting everyone's right to choose their own path."

She was about to prostrate herself before Link when suddenly a gentle power stopped her. A warm voice echoed in her ear.

"No need to grovel. You have chosen to follow me. I am honored. If you're willing, stand up and join me in my fight against the realm devourer."

The God of Destruction shook her head and remained kneeling on the ground. She said, "Almighty one, this is my choice and mine alone. I will be your spear of destruction that safeguards the freedom of all life in this world!"

Link decided not to talk her out of this.

He could feel the Firuman realm's Realm Essence power flowing into his body. His power level was climbing at an incredible rate. Level-20, Level-21, Level-22, Level-23... It showed no sign of stopping.

Despite the sudden increase in power, Link's spirit did not waver. To him, this newfound power was but a tool to protect the freedom of everyone in the realm. He would need every bit of this power to defeat the Ruler of Light and Darkness.

All this power would have finally served its purpose once his enemy was vanquished.

The realm was soon about to face a terrifying presence capable of swallowing it whole. It had responded to Link's epiphany by entrusting him with its power so that he may be able to fight off the realm devourer.

Link's newfound Sacred Fire was a symbol of the realm's trust in him. If he failed to defeat the Ruler of Light and Darkness and return the power that the realm had loaned him, his divinity would be stained, and his Sacred Fire would be extinguished.

A few moments ago, Link understood what he was supposed to do: give the Crown of Eternal Night to the God of Destruction so that she could resist the Ruler's influence. Moments later, the Firuman realm had entrusted him with its power!

As his power continued to increase, the incarnation of realm's will Freyar appeared before Link, the new God of Freedom.

She asked with a smile, "What is darkness?"

"It is one of the tools at my disposal," replied Link.

"What is a god?" she asked again.

Link shook his head. "All life is divine. There is no such thing as a god in this world."

Freyar beamed at Link. She then bowed before him. "It's all up to you now."

Link nodded. He could now see through the veil of the realm and into the Sea of Void. There, he saw the Ruler of Light and Darkness heading his way.

He immediately saw through this terrifying being. To the Ruler of Light and Darkness, both light and darkness were mere tools to be used in his rampage. However, unlike Link, he sought to devour everything in his path and rob all life of its freedom, all so he could sate his own hunger.

He was indeed a being of many contradictions.

Their fated fight was finally upon them!

The fate of the world hinged on the outcome of this battle!

## 651. Ultimate True God The Pioneer Of The Era Of Gods

When Link saw the Ruler of Light and Darkness, the other saw him as well.

That instant, their gazes crossed the boundless distance of time and space and collided. Their minds also crashed at high speed.

"It seems that I've underestimated you, Lord of Ferde."

"I still have to thank you for your guidance. In this aspect, I should call you my tutor." Link was talking about the God of Light and the game system's help.

"That was the stupidest thing I've done in my life, but it has helped me too. I at least know about your power."

"And I, you. I also learned about you through the system." Link smiled. He'd indeed used the game system's help, but when he left Fedaro, he'd cut ties with the God of Light. At that time, he was only Level-14. His understanding of the world and himself now was incomparable to back then.

"Hahaha, you're still too young, and you developed too quickly. Your manipulation of power is too far from me. This requires time to settle in, but that's what you lack most. If you fight me, you'll definitely lose!"

They had a huge distance between them, but the fight of thoughts had already started. The Ruler of Light and Darkness used sharp words to crush Link's confidence. If Link's soul faltered at all, he would definitely lose in the later battle.

At their level, any flaw could lead to defeat.

Link saw through this all. He knew that when their minds had collided, the final battle had already started. Everything the Ruler of Light and Darkness had said earlier was the truth too.

He now had the same power, but his ability to use the power was far from this ancient god who'd lived for thousands of years. If they fought alone, he was destined to lose. But no one had said they had to fight alone!

"You think I'm alone?" Link burstito laughter.

"Huh? You're not alone?" The Ruler of Light and Darkness was shocked. He'd slowed down, and his mind scanned the Sea of Void around Firuman and the other realms, afraid that another true god would be hiding somewhere.

He was absolutely confident in killing Link, but if there was another one, he would just turn and run without saying anything. But he didn't find any sign of another true god.

A true god was a mighty existence. They would definitely cause a commotion if they appeared. For example, Link had lit the Divine Fire in a remote swamp. But once he did and entered the Realm of Gods, the entire Firuman could see him.

At that moment, no matter if it was in the ancient Firuman Continent, the Aragu Continent that had just been added in, or the Isle of Dawn, everyone could see a white sun rise up in the horizon.

That was Link.

The Ruler of Light and Darkness didn't see a third sun now or before. However, he was still worried. He kept scanning the Firuman Realm.

"You can't find him now." Link laughed. "But he really does exist, and it's not only one. This is the biggest difference between us!"

Hearing this, the Ruler of Light and Darkness froze. After a few seconds, he suddenly stopped and stared at Link in suspicion. "The mystery of time is obscure and unpredictable. Perhaps you can see the future, but you cannot use future strength!"

"I obviously can't use the illusory future, but I know the definite future!"

As he spoke, Link brought the Ruler of Light and Darkness' mind and moved to Ferde at the coast of the Firuman Continent. Their vision zoomed in and in until it stopped on a young man studying magic by the window. He was handsome and slender. His eyes shone with wisdom. It was the half-elf Eliard.

"Can you see his future?" Link asked.

Time was indeed difficult to predict, but if one just observed rather than actually time-traveling, it was much easier. Both Link and the Ruler of Light and Darkness could see easily.

The two both looked and saw Eliard's actions speed up 100,000 times. A day passed in a second; a year passed in five minutes. In this illusion, Eliard kept strengthening, his reputation and status rising.

Around ten years later, he reached the pinnacle of Level-19. After another year, he shone with majestic light. After that, the prediction cut off.

All prediction spells in the world only worked on mortals.

Seeing this, the Ruler of Light and Darkness was silent for a minute. He obviously knew that Link and Eliard were good friends. Eleven years later, Eliard would also light the Divine Fire. Judging from the light, he wasn't as strong as Link, but he was still a god. If he joined the fight, the Ruler's chances of winning would be reduced to almost nothing.

"And look here." Link took the Ruler of Light and Darkness to the other end of Firuman. There was a Beastman. He'd been practicing in the yard, but he looked up at the sky when the new sun rose.

After just one glance, the Ruler of Light and Darkness said, "This Beastman also has a mighty glow. It seems that he will also become a god in the future."

It was Avatar, the Glorious Warlord.

The divine light showed his nature. The Ruler of Light and Darkness knew that if this Beastman became a god, he would definitely be Link's ally. If he faced three true gods, he would be lucky if he could even escape.

"And look at this one." Link didn't stop. He took the Ruler's mind to a woman with dark blue hair.

When the new sun rose, she wasn't surprised at all. She just looked up and smiled as if she'd predicted this. Then she disappeared and continued playing with her blue magic fire gun. A few magic tigers were playing in the forest not so far away.

It was Celine Flandre.

The Ruler of Light and Darkness looked and sighed. "I've been trying to bring this daughter back, but I never succeeded My daughter is your ally too."

She should've been his biggest help, but she'd ended up as his enemy's biggest ally. This was unbelievable.

Here, he'd almost given up on approaching Firuman. What he was thinking now was where he should hide to avoid all these gods.

"Don't go so fast. It's not over." Link laughed. He could sense the ruler's thoughts. A big opening had appeared in his will.

Even if he didn't have these future allies, he still had a chance to defeat the Ruler of Light and Darkness.

The Ruler had already started retreating. "I've given up. Goodbye, Lord of Ferde. I hope your allies won't become your enemy Oh, wait!"

He realized he'd skipped something critical. "Wait, even if you can have these true gods help you in the future, their power is still power. It won't come out of nowhere. The Firuman Realm can't withstand so many gods. It will collapse! Even if they come to the Sea of Void to absorb power, it'll still take time. You can't make it in time!"

The Ruler of Light and Darkness laughed heartily. "Link, you almost got me. Indeed, if I'd left, these mortals would become gods in the future. But if I defeat you, their light will extinguish! You are the pioneer of the Era of Gods. If I kill you, I will end it before it begins."

He started speeding towards Firuman again.

Link also laughed. "Yes, you're right. I will start the Era of Gods. Every existence in the world has a chance to become a god. They can't become gods at the same time, but their knowledge and experience can all be used by me! Ruler of Light and Darkness, you've lived for countless years and have seen countless things, but you only have yourself. On the other hand, I will have the knowledge of countless gods."

As he spoke, countless images appeared around him. They were the people who would become true gods in the future. They appeared and stood behind him in the hundreds.

These hundreds of images all bowed to Link. This was their respect for the pioneer as well as anticipation. They would give their knowledge, experience, and techniques to Link so he could defeat this horrible enemy and start a new era.

Link also bowed to them. Then these images buried into his body.

When Link finally straightened, his glow started dimming. It wasn't that he was weakening. Instead, his control over the power was increasing.

Finally, Link collected all the light. At a glance, he was no different from a mortal. The only uniqueness was in his eyes. The black pupil was gone. Instead, he had two spinning galaxies that contained boundless wisdom.

Then Link gripped his sword, pouring his power in.

Clang. The Ode of a Full Moon sang brightly and then went silent. The only strangeness was that slivers of light streamed out of the cracks in the sheath.

Now, Link's power was at an indescribable level.

Now, his sword was ready to kill a god!

He gazed at the Ruler of Light and Darkness, looking down as if he was the judge from the heavens.

"Do you choose life or death?"

## 652. End Ultimate True God The Pioneer Of The Era Of Gods Ending

The Ruler of Light and Darkness suddenly came to a halt in the roaring Sea of Void.

The boy who had been brandishing his sword before him a moment ago now had the air of a master who had triumphed over countless enemies in his lifetime.

An oppressive aura was now weighing down on him. This was an opponent he could not afford to be careless with.

Link was standing in an entirely different plane at that moment. He looked down pitifully at the ruler, waiting for him to repent for his sins.

Fear had creptito the heart of the Ruler of Light and Darkness. He even had a sudden impulse to kneel before Link. However, this was only a moment's weakness. The ruler soon managed to recover from it. Rage now filled every fiber of his being.

"No one can judge me! No one can punish me! I am the undisputed Ruler of Light and Darkness! I am the realm devourer! I preside over the fates of millions of lives! I'm the one who decides who gets to live and who gets to die! I can choose to either honor all life, or grind it to a pulp beneath my heel! Including you, Lord of Ferde!"

At that moment, the Ruler of Light and Darkness had revealed the most despicable side of his godhood.

He was the one who ruled over all existence, or so he proclaimed.

Link's alignment was in direct conflict with the ruler's. He was the first God of Freedom to ever exist. His existence ensured the right of all life to choose their own paths.

Seeing that he could not force the Ruler of Light and Darkness to step down, Link let out a sigh. Maybe I was just too naive to believe that I could actually get him to surrender. Bloodshed is inevitable at this point.

In the next second, he had left the realm of Firuman and entered the Sea of Void, hurtling towards the Ruler of Light and Darkness at top speed.

"Come at me! Show me what you've got!" roared the ruler as he lunged at Link.

Though a huge distance still separated both of them, their wills were already clashing against each other. From afar, both of them looked like two knights in the middle of a joust.

Both sides had attained godlike power levels. Power surged forth from them in waves. The white mist in the Sea of Void parted in their wakes. The negative-energy pitfalls, Void vortexes and other dangerous phenomena were all ripped apart by the turbulent energy both sides gave off. The sinister creatures that lurked in the Sea of Void had peeked out of their hiding places, looking to take a bite out of the two gods, only to be ground to dust by the waves of energy emanating from them.

At that moment, Link and the Ruler of Light and Darkness were the most powerful beings in the Sea of Void!

From afar, it seemed as if two huge swords had carved two wide arcs across the Sea of Void and were about to hit each other.

After what seemed like an eternity, the two swords finally struck each other.

A shockwave exploded across all time and space at that moment. The white energy fog around the two gods was completely dispersed, leaving only absolute nothingness in its place.

Time, space and matter no longer existed. Only the two divine beings remained.

No one knew what lay in this corner of absolute nothingness. Everything inside it was now in a state of "unknowingness."

The only frightening thing about all this was the ever-expanding ripples across the white mist of the Void. The ripples had swept away everything in its path like a fishing trawler pulling its haul to god knows where.

Other realms in the distance soon felt the effects of the ripples, including Firuman.

Storms and cyclones had appeared everywhere in the realm. A couple of regions were rocked by earthquakes, others by volcanic eruptions, which spewed clouds of dustito the sky and blocked out all light.

It was as if the world was about to come to an end.

Everyone in the realm, regardless of race, began to pray, hoping that all this would come to an end soon.

However, their prayers had gone unanswered. The calamities continued. Cracks had appeared across the realm as torrents of Void energy washed across it. The Void creatures had also taken refuge inside the realm while the turbulence in the Sea of Void raged on.

The Firuman realm had descended into chaos.

The Magicians of Ferde had set up a huge magical barrier around the ports to prevent the city from being swept away by the freak tidal waves. The Earth Elemental Magicians were also struggling to contain the volcanic eruptions by slowly releasing the pent-up pressure beneath the ground.

It soon became clear that the Magicians and Ferde's Mage Tower were rapidly losing power as they tried to contain the natural disasters, which showed no signs of stopping.

The council of Ferde was now discussing the possibility of evacuating the entire city.

What mattered above all else now was the safety of everyone in the city. They needed to evacuate everyone as soon as possible before Ferde's magical defense system failed.

...

The Isle of Dawn

The island had lost the World Tree's protection. The High Elf King had mysteriously disappeared. Most of the members of the High Elf Elder council were either injured or killed by the strain of carrying out the Realm Fusion process. The Isle of Dawn was now without a leader. Earthquakes and tidal wives rocked the entire island, causing huge cracks to appear on the ground.

The Isle of Dawn had transformed into a literal hellscape. Half of the High Elf populace had perished. This once-proud race was now on the brink of extinction.

There was talk of leaving the island. However, the island was completely surrounded by the unceasing tidal waves. A Silver Storm Sparrow would not even stand a chance against such a terrifying scene.

The only thing the High Elves could do now was to wait for their inevitable demise.

The same thing was happening in other regions like the Golden Plains and the Aragu continent. The entire realm was now on the verge of collapse.

Existing superpowers had collapsed in the turbulence, while new ones were brought to a complete standstill. All semblance of order in the realm had crumbled completely.

The shockwave of the two gods' duel had profoundly affected the entire realm.

Scholars had scribbled down detailed accounts of the event. This most turbulent moment in history would later be known by many names, such as "the Tide of Destruction," "the Tyrant's whip," "Beginning of a New Era" and even "Ragnarok."

The calamitous event persisted for three years.

Three years later, 80% of the realm's population was completely decimated. Whole races had gone extinct. Countries were completely wiped out. Only a few organizations managed to survive the ordeal. Ferde's council of Magicians was one of them.

Three years later, the sky had cleared up. Golden rays of sunlight were finally able to pierce through the thick clouds in the sky and bring light and warmth back to the mortal plane. In the middle of Girvent forest, Eliard was now staring outito the distance from the top of the Mage Tower.

In the distance, a hole opened up in the clouds. Sunlight gushed out of it like a waterfall. At that moment, peace and tranquility reigned over the land.

Eliard gazed at this fantastical scene in silence. Almighty one, have you actually done it?

Though he did not expect to receive an answer, one came to him all the same. A woman in a dark red robe had appeared before him. She was wearing a black crystal crown on her head.

Powerful Destructive aura wafted from the woman's body. However, her face was serene. The golden sunlight reflected off her eyes, while starlight glinted from the depths of her pupils. "My master had defeated the ancient Nightmare Demon."

"Are you the God of Destruction?" asked Eliard as he curiously looked over the woman before him.

"That used to be my name. I am now the Almighty One's most loyal follower," replied the woman, who then smiled at Eliard. "My master has sent me to inform you that the Ruler of Light and Darkness has been defeated. However, the ruler is a god. His Sacred Fire can never be extinguished. It can only be dispersed. As of now, his Sacred Fire has scattered to all corners of the Sea of Void. Only by spreading my master's divine message of freedom to the other realms will the Ruler of Light and Darkness be prevented from coming back to life."

Eliard was happy to hear that Link had won the fight. However, he was also worried that his friend might not be able to handle such a daunting task.

After a few seconds of silence, he asked, "Will I be able to see the Almighty One?"

The woman smiled. "He has vanquished his greatest enemy. His power has spread to all corners of the Sea of Void alongside his message. Look at the sun above you. Look at the world around us. He is everywhere. You'll know where to find him when you light your own Sacred Fire."

Eliard let out a sigh. He was slightly disappointed by her response. However, optimism now swelled in him. "I understand."

As soon as his words left his mouth, the woman before him vanished into thin air.

Just then, there was a knock on the door. It was one of his disciples. He had brought with him a message for Eliard. "Eliard, Her Highness is gone. She's left a letter for you."

The only one who could be referred to as "Her Highness" among Ferde's council was none other than the Lord of Ferde's wife, the Red Dragon Queen Gretel herself.

Eliard took the letter from him. After glancing over it, he nodded. "Tell the dragon elders to leave her be."

The queen had decided to follow Link. This was her choice. Neither he nor the dragon race had any right to interfere.

"Understood, advisor."

When his disciple left him, Eliard muttered, "We'll meet again someday, old friend."

...

North of the Golden Plains, at the edge of the Hengduan Mountain Range.

A man was riding his horse along a narrow mountain pass. After a while, he came upon a dead end. The man rode his horse directly into the mountain wall in front of him.

The mountain wall disappeared. Beyond it lay a valley filled with the song of birds and trees. A cottage stood on one side of a stream in the valley. Two women were sitting on a smooth rock near the stream, smiling at the man as he approached.

The woman on the left was Celine Flandre, while the woman on the right was the Red Dragon Queen Gretel. The man was Link, who had given up all his power after defeating his enemy.

After losing his power, his only wish now was to lead a normal life. If the need ever arose, he could simply ask for it back from the realm.

Link smiled at the two women. "I'm back."

"Welcome home."

(End of story)