

Stay At home 251

Chapter 251: Food Competition

“First of all, I’m not your friend, and secondly, I’ll never work with you,” replied Urien firmly. He walked on, but then stopped suddenly. “Fine, just this one time.”

“Additionally, we’ll have to ask Novan to help us. His space magic is the most powerful,” Krassu said, catching up with him. Now, they were walking side by side.

Other magic casters’ jaws would drop if they saw this.

“Do you think they can do it, Father?” Amy asked.

“Don’t worry. They are the two most powerful magic casters,” Mag said as he watched them walk into Urien’s shop. Even he had become a little expectant.

“Mobai’s forge is not open today?” Mag muttered. “No wonder I didn’t see him.”

The crowd outside was gone, but not the gossip about Mag’s restaurant. The stories might differ from one another, but the theme was the same: never look for trouble in Mamy Restaurant.

“These are some great quality tables and chairs, Boss. Not even one has been damaged. Only the door is gone. Do you want me to find a carpenter for you?” Yabemiya asked.

By then, Sally had cleaned up the whole restaurant.

“No, that won’t be necessary. You and Aisha can go home now. Come back tomorrow at 7 am. Sorry you had to witness that.”

“It’s all right. You caught the bad guys. You and Amy just did what you had to do. I wish I were strong,” said Yabemiya.

“But you’re strong, Miya,” Sally said, “and nimble. If you start practicing swordplay now, I’m sure you’ll be pretty good in a half year or so.”

“Really?” Yabemiya asked, excited.

Skinny as she might be, she was strong enough to wield a heavy sword, and she could become even stronger when her tail came out.

Sally nodded. “Yes.”

“But no one would teach me even if I wanted to learn, and I like to work here. If I had to choose between learning swordplay and working here, I would surely pick the latter.”

“I would do the same if I were you,” said Sally.

Mag was very happy to hear that.

Yabemiya glanced around to make sure everything was in place and tidy. Then, she and Sally waved goodbye to Mag and Amy.

Amy waved back. "Bye, Sister Miya, Sister Aisha. We'll dance 'spring is here' tomorrow!"

Mag watched them leave, and then looked at Ugly Duckling that was staring at him with a sad face. "Are you hungry?"

"Meow, meow," it responded excitedly.

"I think it has had enough to eat," Amy said in a sleepy voice.

"Meow!" Ugly Duckling shook its head vigorously.

"Give it a couple more dried fish, Amy. It needs enough food to grow."

"Okay, Father, but it has to run five more laps tonight."

"Meow," the kitten cried, dropping to the ground in dismay.

Mag fed the kitten, took them upstairs, and put them to bed.

He went back downstairs and walked out to make sure no one was around. "You can install the door now, system."

"Installation fee: 1 gold coin."

Mag lifted an eyebrow. "Installation fee?! Are you seriously stooping so low as to charge installation fee?"

After a little haggling and bargaining, he managed to get the system to install the door for 10 copper coins.

When Mag was about to lock the door after checking it, two men in red vests appeared.

"Good afternoon," one of them said. "We're with the Aden Square Catering Association. This month's food competition is starting soon. Do you want to sign up?"

Chapter 252: Then I'll Buy 2000 Ballots

"Food competition? Sorry, I'm not interested," Mag said, and closed the door.

Arvin and Rood exchanged a surprised glance. Normally, a freshly opened restaurant would never turn down a chance to get popular, no matter how slim it might be.

"Let's go, Rood. This guy is pretty smart. He knows he won't be able to make it into the top 100. We won't be able to make any money from him," Arvin said unhappily.

"Look at the size of this crystal glass!" Rood said, pointing. "This guy must be very wealthy."

Mag was indeed not interested in the food competition, because more often than not, not the best foods won the competition; some of the nicest restaurants might be lying in corners, waiting for keen-eyed customers.

Besides, his restaurant was already busy enough for him to work his a*s off every day, so there was no point for him to compete in the competition.

“New mission,” the system called out suddenly. “At least one of your dishes has to make it into the top 30 in this month’s Aden Square food competition. Completing the mission will get you the recipe for Haagen-Dazs ice creams. You’ll be fined 10,000 gold coins if you fail.”

Mag stopped, rooted to the spot. “Only you can come up with such a dirty way to make money!” He quickly pulled the door open again. “Hey, please hold on a moment. I think I’ll sign up,” he said, abashed.

Arvin and Rood turned around.

“You want to sign up for the competition, sir?” Rood asked.

Mag nodded. “Yes. What do I have to do?” *I don’t want to; the damned system made me.*

He found the Haagen-Dazs ice creams appealing, though. *Amy will like them; she’ll look even cuter eating them.*

Mag was very confident. He didn’t believe anyone in the Aden Square was a better cook than him. *The top 3 spots would be all mine if they considered the taste alone.*

Arvin and Rood were around 40, of average build with love handles. Mag saw a wok and a ladle embroidered on their fronts, and on their backs the words: Aden Square Catering Association.

“Five gold coins get you in. The voting starts tomorrow and lasts for 10 days,” Arvin said, writing down the restaurant’s name in his notebook. Then he held out a hand, asking for money.

“A name will cost me five gold coins?” Mag asked, wary.

Rood smiled. “Yes.”

Mag hesitated a moment, pulled five gold coins out of his pocket, and handed them to Arvin. *The revenue from registration fees alone is handsome. And they do this every month!*

“Thank you. These are the ballots,” Rood said, pulling out two stacks of paper ballots—each one five centimeter wide and 10 centimeter long—from his bag. “With anti-counterfeiting magic marks. One stack has 100 ballots, and one ballot is one copper coin. How many ballots do you need?”

Mag’s eyebrow rose in surprise. *The people here sure know how to make money. If anyone wants to make it into the top 10, they’ll have to spend tens of thousands of copper coins on ballots first.*

“If I want to enter the top 30, how many ballots do I need?” Mag asked.

Rood was surprised. *The restaurants that have made the top 30 are all at least three years old. They are larger, and most of them are members of the Chamber of Commerce. No way this newly opened restaurant is going to enter the top 30.* “If your dishes are expensive, you may need two or three thousand. If they are as cheap as green onion bing, which is five copper coins each, you may need at least ten thousand to make the top 100.”

“Then I’ll buy 2000 ballots,” Mag said after thinking for a moment.

Chapter 253: I Just Want To Cook

Rood was taken by surprise. “2,000 ballots?” *It’s too many for a newly opened restaurant.*

Mag nodded. “Yes.” *2,000 ballots can last only a few days.* He was even more confident now that he had learned the prices were also a factor; he believed his dishes were the most expensive.

A couple thousand copper coins for the Haagen-Dazs ice creams’ recipe. That’s a great deal. I like Haagen-Dazs ice creams too, Mag thought.

“You cannot return them once you buy them, just so you know,” Rood said seriously. “And the anti-counterfeiting magic mark will only work for 15 days. You can buy more ballots at a polling station.”

Mag nodded. “Come on in. I’ll get the money for you.”

“He may be wealthy, but he’s stupid,” Arvin said once he was sure Mag couldn’t hear them.

“Not so loud. He might hear you. I’m just glad that today’s job is done,” Rood said in a low voice, excited.

When they walked inside, they were amazed.

Everything about this restaurant was just extraordinary—the crystal chandeliers, log tables and chairs, and paintings on the wall.

Many restaurants though they had been to, they had never seen one like this—fancy yet comfortable. They liked it more than those luxurious, large ones.

They believed it would become popular in no time.

Mag handed the money to Rood. “There you go. Two dragon coins.”

“Thank you,” said Rood, and took the money. “I need you to give me the names of five of your dishes. Customers can rate the five dishes in one ballot.”

“Five?” Mag looked hesitant.

“Yeah, only five. Your five best-selling dishes,” said Arvin.

“Add braised chicken and rice to the menu, system. 800 copper coins each. The rice is 50 copper coins each,” Mag said to the system.

“That will be 20 copper coins,” the system replied. “And it’s done.”

Mag picked up the menu on a table, opened it, and handed it to Rood. “You’ll find the names in this menu. The sweet tofu pudding and savory tofu pudding are two dishes.”

“Only five dishes?!” Rood blurted out in surprise.

“The prices are wrong, I think,” Arvin said, wide-eyed. *Even Dukas Restaurant’s whole roast lamb—the first on the list—is only 2,500 copper coins each. These prices are ridiculous.*

Now, they thought the restaurant would never be popular.

“No. They’re not,” Mag said.

“Okay,” Rood said, and started writing down the names and prices in his notebook. “The sweet tofu pudding and savory tofu pudding are one dish.”

“No, I can assure you they’re two,” Mag replied.

“As you say, sir.” When he was finished, Rood gave the ballots to Mag and left with his partner.

After they walked out, Arvin glanced back at the restaurant. “He is either stupid or overconfident,” he said softly.

Rood nodded. “Agreed. I think he only needs 10 ballots.”

With Sally working here, we should be able to serve several hundreds of customers each day, Mag thought. These ballots will only last three or four days.

I will be more productive when I get stronger, and then I may need to enlarge the restaurant.

“System, what’s the purpose of this mission?” Mag asked. “We’re already busy enough.”

“For a man of the world, you’re strangely short-sighted. Get ambitious and conquer this continent!”

Mag rolled his eyes in disapproval. “Conquer this continent? Are you crazy? I just want to cook.”

Chapter 254: I’m Too Old To Dream Big

“Lord Yngwie, I believe Lady Sally is working as a waitress in that restaurant, but she’s still working and staying here,” said a young elf in a black robe in an alley near Geya Hotel.

Yngwie nodded, reflective. After a moment, he said, “Tell me about the hotel and the restaurant.”

“The hotel has been owned by a woman for a dozen years. Her husband went missing on a quest 10 years ago, and was presumed dead. The restaurant has been open for less than a month. The owner is a human male. He has two waitresses—one is Lady Sally, and the other is a half-dragon. Also, he has a half-elf daughter, who has become the disciple of two powerful magic casters. I heard she has great talent for magic.”

Yngwie lifted an eyebrow and turned to face the young elf. “Do you know the names of the two magic casters?”

“The Lord of Ice and the Lord of Fire,” he answered.

Yngwie’s eyes went wide. He was hundreds of years older than Krassu and Urien, but he was only a 7th-tier magic caster. *They fought for nearly a century, and now they’re teaching the same student?*

The two old men have keen eyes. I remember they wanted to make Princess Irina their disciple, and she became a 10th-tier magic caster at the young age of 26. This half-elf girl must be really talented for them to be willing to teach her together.

“Where is this restaurant?” Yngwie asked.

The young elf had never seen Yngwie looking like this before. “In the western corner of the Aden Square,” he answered quickly.

“You keep watching Lady Sally and keep her safe,” Yngwie said earnestly. “Do not let her see you. If she sees you, leave and do not approach.”

The young elf nodded. “Yes, my lord!” He drew a circle around him with his magic wand, and then a green light rose around him. He disappeared suddenly.

Bloore will be here in a few days... Yngwie took another glance at the hotel and left.

...

“I could conquer this continent’s stomach if it had one,” Mag said, “but how can I ever conquer such a huge continent? It’s not like the people here are mentally retarded. You’ll have to lower their IQs first.”

“I’m not allowed to do that even if I could. The world would be paralyzed; it would cause disastrous consequences.”

“Then why do you think I can conquer this world?” Mag asked with a twist of his mouth.

“People live to eat. They will look up to you as their god once you conquer their stomachs.”

Mag laughed. “Yeah, they would if they were as stupid as you.”

“Anyway, dream big, young man. Anything is possible!”

“I’m too old to dream big,” Mag said, and locked the door. *But I’m not too old to have some fun. It may be interesting to watch dragons, trolls, goblins, orcs, and elves eat together.*

Mag went into the kitchen and poured himself a glass of water. *The reward is the recipe for Haagen-Dazs ice creams, but I don’t remember criticizing ice creams.*

When Mag was about to go upstairs to take a nap, there came a knock on his door.

“We are not open today,” Mag said.

“It’s Hydle, the dean of the mechanical school in the Chaos School. Sorry to bother you, but can I talk to you for a minute?”

Mag opened the door and recognized the balding man with a briefcase under his arm. *He studied my bike the other day.*

“I saw your bike a couple days ago, and it has really intrigued me,” Hydle said with a smile. “You see, we’re trying to use steam to power machinery, but we hit a bottleneck.”

Mag was surprised. *Steam engine? The invention of steam engine will bring about an industrial revolution.*

“Come on in,” Mag said, smiling. *Maybe I could witness the birth of a new era.*

Chapter 255: Commerce Is Developing Fast

Hydle walked in, and was amazed by the decorations. But, his mind was on something else right now. He turned to Mag. "Thank you."

"Please take a seat. I'm also quite interested in this kind of stuff." Mag went into the kitchen, poured a glass of water for him, and sat opposite him.

Mag was very familiar with steam engine. His bachelor's thesis had been about the improvement on two-stroke engines. He had proven in theory that the improvement would be able to raise the engine efficiency by 3%. Although it had been impossible in practice, his thesis had resulted in him becoming one of the Outstanding Graduates.

It had been the only thing that he had put his heart and soul into during the four years in university. He had carefully studied the steam engine, the internal combustion engine, and the steam turbine. Of course, he couldn't make one himself, but he was still able to draw a detailed engine diagram—in other words, he could make one with the help of a masterful blacksmith.

He would surely go down in history if he made one, but he didn't want to be remembered. He was curious about the mechanical level in this world, though.

Hydle opened his briefcase, took out several pieces of paper, and put them on the table. "After years of experimenting, we have finally managed to convert the thermal energy of steam into kinetic energy. The produced kinetic energy is not stable, but we have some ideas to stabilize it. The only problem right now is how to use this energy."

Mag took a look at the diagrams on the pieces of paper. "Impressive," he said, looking at Hydle with respect. Mag really admired scientists, and believed they were the ones who were accelerating the pace of technological development. This man before him was unmistakably one of them.

The one-cylinder engine on these pieces of paper was crude, but it was theoretically doable. They had really managed to convert the thermal energy of steam into kinetic energy, but they still had a long way to go before using the engine in everyday life. Nonetheless, it was impressive in this world of sword and magic.

"Thank you," Hydle said. Few people appreciated their effort. Most criticized them while envying their high salaries. No one knew the pressure hanging over them. No one knew some of them were even using their own money to do experiments. Hydle and his wife were still living in the free housing provided by the Chaos School. He walked to school every day to save on carriage fares.

His wife could understand him, but not his two children, who came home only once a year.

"But why are you doing this?" Mag asked.

"After a hundred years of peace, commerce is developing fast. Although businessmen can hire magic casters to do hard labor, they're very expensive. There's an urgent demand for machinery to take the place of manual workers."

Mag nodded. "I see." *Steam engines will surely change this world. But, judging from his drawings, a proper steam engine won't be invented anytime soon.*

Mag's eyes lit up as a thought occurred to him. "Can I sell him a steam engine diagram, system?"

Chapter 256: Capitalist Pigs

"Absolutely not!" the system answered. "You would change this world's course dramatically! It will result in many unpredictable consequences, so immediately cease and desist!"

"I know you want to sell it to me too," Mag said calmly.

"No! I would never do anything that may throw this world into chaos."

"An industrial revolution is inevitable even if we do nothing. If I gave the diagram to him, I'd save them a lot of time and trouble."

"What would you know? Ever heard of the butterfly effect?"

"If I sold it at 50,000 gold coins, I'd upgrade the restaurant right away!"

The system fell silent.

"No," it said after a while.

"If you don't let me sell it, I'll never update the restaurant!"

"The only way I will let you sell it is if we split the money 80/20. Me 80. I'll provide the diagram."

Mag's mouth twisted in disapproval. "I can draw a detailed diagram from my memory. I don't need yours. Why would I split the money with you?"

The system gave out noise in anger abruptly.

"I want you to join us," Hydle said earnestly, "and help us out with the energy transmitting problem."

Mag held back his urge to draw a steam engine diagram. *It would be too mean of me to draw a diagram that would make their years of effort look like a joke.* He shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't join you. I'm just a cook, and a busy one."

At the last minute, Mag decided not to give him the diagram, even if he might have paid him tens of thousands of gold coins, because it was worth a lot more than that.

He liked Hydle, but he liked money better—he needed it to buy strength.

I'm a businessman, Mag told himself, a capitalist pig that only cares about profit!

I'd be better off if I sold it to the Lord of Chaos City or the Lord of the Gray Temple; they would be far more generous than Hydle.

"Okay," Hydle said, disappointed, but soon wore a look of excitement as he looked at Mag and asked, "Can you please give me some advice on the energy transmitting problem?"

Mag looked at his imploring eyes, hesitated a moment, and said, "Straight motions that go back and forth typically cannot be used in production. Perhaps by adding gears and relying on their rotations for

transmissions, it can reduce the expenditure wastage. Through a combination of different types of gears, it can turn a uniform back and forth operation into various kinds of motions. It will be able to meet the requirements for production.”

Chapter 257: I Want To Protect Her Smile

“Gears?” Hyde said. “Yeah, gears may do the job. Thank you, Mag. You should try to invent a steam engine yourself, we’ll provide you with any data you need. We don’t want any of the credit if you succeed. We just want to see it as soon as possible; we need it to prove we were right all along.”

“I will try when I have time,” Mag said, suddenly ashamed of his greedy self.

If I told the Lord of Chaos City I invented the steam engine myself, it would be suspicious. But if I said I worked with Hyde, that would be believable enough.

Mag showed Hyde out. When he walked back inside, out of the corner of his eye, he saw a white-bearded old elf standing at a distance. He thought he was watching him.

Maybe he’s gazing at my restaurant, Mag thought, and locked the door. When he peeked through the shades, the old elf was gone. Mag didn’t take this weird matter to heart. I don’t think anyone would believe that Mag Alex has become the owner of a restaurant.

Mag put the steam engine on the back burner. He walked into the kitchen, and opened the fridge. The fire chicken I captured will last me and Amy several more days, but it’s taking up too much space.

Then he closed the fridge, and went upstairs to take a nap.

He made braised chicken and rice for dinner too, just as Amy asked. He gave the kitten some boneless chicken and some rice with soup, and it liked the food very much.

There was still some braised chicken and rice left when they had finished eating.

“Can you give the rest to me, Father?” Amy asked.

Mag smiled. “But you’ve already eaten two bowls of rice. You’ve had enough to eat.”

“It’s not for me. I want to give it to Jessica. She always saves her food for her mother.” Amy paused a moment. “And I want to give some to Charles and Derick and other friends...”

Mag smiled and stroked her hair. “You’re so kind, Amy. How many friends do you have? I’ll cook one braised chicken and rice for each of them and two for Jessica. But only this one time.”

Amy nodded and kissed Mag on the cheek. “Thank you, Father! I have 20 friends!”

“Okay. Go play with Ugly Duckling. It will take a while.” Mag found himself feeling a little regretful as he walked to the fridge, but he could never turn Amy down. I want to protect her kindness and smile .

He could make a lot of money every day, but the strength he wanted to buy was very expensive. He never thought of himself as a philanthropist; he only cared about Amy.

Mag cooked 22 braised chickens. He boxed the chicken and rice up, and put them in two large bags.

“Let’s go, Amy,” Mag said, holding one bag in each hand.

“Can you wait a moment, Father? I want to change my clothes.”

Mag nodded. “Okay.” Maybe she wants to dress beautifully before her friends.

Amy ran upstairs on her short legs. After a while, she came back down in a plain yellow-flowered dress.

Mag was surprised. “Why don’t you wear the purple one? It’s your favorite.”

“Jessica likes yellow dresses, so I think she’ll like to see me wearing this.”

I haven’t seen such a beautiful and pure friendship in years! Mag thought.

They locked the door and walked towards the center of the Aden Square—Mag holding two bags, Amy holding Ugly Duckling. After a dozen minutes, they arrived at a place with several benches. Many kids were sitting there, checking the things they had scavenged.

“Amy!” a girl exclaimed in surprise, getting quickly to her feet.

Chapter 258: Your Father Is Amazing!

She was an adorable girl around five, her face clean, her black eyes clear and sparkling, and her hair short. She was half a head taller than Amy. It looked like her mother had altered her dress to fit her daughter; it was covered with patches.

She was very happy to see Amy, and started running towards her.

“Jessica!” Amy called, and ran to meet her.

But the girl stopped before she could throw her arms around Amy. She looked at Amy’s dress with surprise.

“Why didn’t you give me a hug, Jessica?” Amy asked.

“Because you’re wearing a beautiful dress today; I don’t want to dirty it.” She grinned, her central incisors still unerupted. Then she saw the kitten, and her eyes went wide. “Such a cute orange cat!”

“It’s actually a duck; it came out of an egg.”

“It did? But it doesn’t look like a duck,” Jessica said, confused. “Anyway, can I hold it?”

“Meow!” Ugly Duckling cried, raising a paw as if saying no.

Amy nodded. “Sure.” Then she looked down at the kitten. “This is my friend Jessica, Ugly Duckling. Behave, or you’ll have to run five more laps tonight.”

“Meow.” It was resigned, and let Jessica hold it with its head down in sadness.

“It’s so cute!” Jessica said as she petted it.

By then, other children had seen Amy as well.

“Amy!”

“Amy!”

They greeted her, and some trotted curiously to Jessica to look at the cat.

Amy greeted them back, calling each by their nickname.

Mag’s lips curved in a smile. She’s pretty popular among them, and she’s really into nicknaming people. The kids’ ages seemed to vary from four to nine. Their clothes were ragged, like the ones Amy had worn when he first saw her. The girl who was named Jessica looked very mature for her age and was the closest to Amy.

“Amy said you’re all her friends, so we brought something for you to eat,” Mag said with a smile. “Now, who’s hungry?”

“Me!” they cried together, excited.

“This is my father, Jessica. He made you each a braised chicken and rice,” Amy whispered to her. “And he made one for your mother too.”

“Your... father?” Jessica glanced up at Mag, envious. Then she turned to Amy and smiled. “Thank you, Amy. You’re always good to me.”

Mag smiled and went up to the benches. “Come on, kids.” He took out the food, put them on the benches, and opened the lids.

The delectable smell poured out and made the kids’ mouths water. They didn’t approach the food, though.

Mag counted 19 kids; there were three boxes of braised chicken and three boxes of rice left. “Go on, eat,” he said to them, smiling.

They glanced at each other, and no one moved.

Amy took Jessica by the hand, led her to a braised chicken, and took the kitten from her. “Try it, Jessica. I’m sure you’ll like it.”

Jessica looked up at Mag. “Thank you, sir.” She picked up a piece of chicken and took a bite. Her eyes lit up.

It’s so good! She didn’t know how to describe this taste, but she had never had anything half as delicious as this before.

Jessica swallowed, trying to hold back her happy tears. She took another bite.

“What’s wrong, Jessica? Don’t cry,” Amy said, wiping her tears away.

“I can’t help it; the food makes me cry,” she said, tears streaming down her cheeks.

Odd kid. Mag smiled and took her crying as a compliment.

The other kids stopped hesitating, walked over to the food, and started eating.

“It’s really good!”

“Your father is amazing, Amy!”

“It’s so good it makes me want to cry too...”

“Add some soup into the moonlight rice, Jessica, and it will become even tastier,” Amy whispered.

Jessica’s eyes went wide when she looked at the rice. “There’re little moons in the rice grains!”

The kids’ blissful faces brought a smile to Mag’s lips. Maybe I should do this more often when I have much more money to spare.

“Is that Mag?” Luna whispered from a distance, with a big bag in her hand.

Chapter 259: Women Are Nothing But Accessories To Men

Moreton Manor was located in the northwestern corner of Chaos City. It was large, with luxurious yet somehow grim gray-and-white buildings.

The lamps had just been lit. Servants were coming and going with soft footfalls expressionlessly, never as much as exchanging glances.

In a grand hall, a dozen well-dressed people sat at a large rosewood table. There were a plate of steak and a plate of caviar in front of them each. They kept their hands on their laps. No one spoke; the atmosphere was oppressive.

A crystal oil lamp lit up the whole hall. Several servants were standing grimly there, awaiting orders.

Jeffree was sitting at the head of the table. He looked past his wife, Dennes Marquis, and at his second son, Cyril, whose head was a little lowered. Then he looked past Cyril’s wife, and at his first son, Lance, who was sitting straight.

Even his willful firstborn didn’t dare to meet his eyes. Jeffree frowned. He looked past his grandson, Mickey, and at the girl sitting far from him in a veil. “Take that off. We Moretons are no cowards.”

They all looked to the girl.

“Maybe she doesn’t like us staring at her pretty face,” Herty said derisively. She was a pretty girl of around 16, wearing heavy make-up.

“Yeah. She’s so beautiful,” agreed Herty’s twin sister, Hernie, staring at Gloria. They looked almost identical.

“I heard she would become one of the most beautiful girls in the city,” Aurora said, her mouth twisting in a disdainful smile. Her red lipstick made her thickly powdered face even paler. She had too many wrinkles for a woman of 30.

Gloria curled her hands into fists wordlessly.

The benign-looking woman sitting next to her looked anxious. Her mouth opened, and then closed slowly.

“Father, you should let her do as she wants,” Lance said defiantly, raising his eyes to Jeffree.

“Let her do as she wants?” Jeffree snorted. He leaned forward and raised his voice. “I let you do as you wanted, and look how that turned out! A f*cking teacher! You brought disgrace on our family!” He paused a moment. “Women should always do as men want. They’re men’s accessories. If they can find someone to marry, that is.”

Cyril took a look at Lance, sneered, and bowed his head again like a biddable child.

Aurora, Herty, and Hernie looked at Gloria gloatingly as if she were the only woman in the room.

Lance rose to his feet. “There’s nothing disgraceful about my job. I love teaching. I chose to become a teacher of my own accord.” Then he took a glance at Gloria, and raised his voice. “Women are not men’s accessories. They can do what we can do. I may be a fool to you, but it is fools like me that will change the world!”

Gloria looked up at her father, who had renounced his title as the heir of Jeffree, and suddenly found him admirable.

Jeffree laughed. “You must be out of your mind.” He leaned back in his chair, staring at his firstborn, whom he had once put all his faith in, in disappointment. “You couldn’t have changed the state of your daughter’s illness if you hadn’t been born into Moreton Family.”

“You’re making Father mad, Lance,” Cyril said disapprovingly.

“I...” Lance gritted his teeth, and bit back his words. He stood there for a moment, and then sat back down weakly.

Gloria’s hands were shaking. She looked as if she would stand up any minute now.

Mickey held her hand and shook his head. Although aged just 10, he could tell his grandpa was very angry. He didn’t want to see Gloria scolded.

Jeffree dropped his gaze to his food, and picked up the knife and fork. “The world will never change. The wealthy will stay wealthy, and women will stay useless,” he said, his voice low but filled with certainty.

The others’ faces lightened with relief; they picked up their knife and fork as well.

Suddenly, Gloria rose to her feet. “I agree with Father, Grandpa. Women are not useless. I’ll prove it to you someday,” she said in a determined voice.

The others froze, shocked. They had never thought such a meek girl would dare to stand up to Jeffree.

Lance turned to look at Gloria as if he were seeing her for the first time.

“If you’ll excuse me. I’m not hungry,” Gloria said, and left quickly.

Chapter 260: What Do I Do Then?

The hall fell deathly quiet. Mickey watched Gloria leave and wanted to follow her, but the benign-looking woman held him down and shook her head. She looked both worried and relieved.

The looks on the others' faces were diverse, but most of them were gloating. They couldn't wait to see severe punishment befall Lance and his family.

Jeffree looked surprised, yet was strangely not angry. He looked at the Gloria's seat, and then started cutting his steak. "Eat."

"Father, Gloria is—" Aurora started.

"I'd feel more comfortable if you wore a veil over your hideous face instead of applying a thick layer of face powder," Jeffree said coldly. He forked a piece of medium steak into his mouth. "If I ever catch you using those magic drugs again, I'll disown you. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Father," Aurora answered quickly, and lowered her head.

Women will never amount to anything, Jeffree thought, eating. Only an old fool like Ian would let a woman head his family business. It's the first time Gloria has defied me; she looks so much like her father.

In the garden in Moreton Manor, Gloria was crouching by the pond, watching fish swim. "If I keep on eating that tofu pudding, I think my freckles will heal. But what do I do then?" she whispered.

...

What is Mag doing here? Luna wondered, looking at his back. She walked a little closer, and saw the children eating with blissful smiles.

Mag brought something for them to eat? Then she noticed Amy, and suddenly understood. *It must have been her idea; she's always so kind.*

Considering the prices, Mag is so generous, Luna thought.

Amy turned around and saw Luna. "Teacher Luna!" she called, waving her hand.

The other children stopped eating, and stood up quickly to greet Luna.

Mag turned around and was surprised to see her here, but when he saw the big bag, he understood. "Good afternoon, Luna."

She helped Amy a lot, so it's perfectly normal for her to help other kids, Mag thought.

Luna smiled at the kids and waved her hand. "Good afternoon, Mag." Then she walked over to them.

She was wearing a deep green flowered dress and that white silky scarf of hers. Her smile was kind and gentle. "You brought supper for the kids?" Mag asked.

Luna nodded. "Yes, but apparently they have already got something better to eat." She took a sniff. "It smells good, but I don't think I can place the smell. Is it a new dish?"

Mag nodded. "Yes. There are two more. You should try it," he said, taking a box of braised chicken out of the bag.

Luna waved her hand. "Thank you, but I've already eaten." Her eyes swept over the kids. "Where is Colin?"

“He has been adopted. The Gray Temple has found him a family. Now he gets to eat tasty rice every day.” a kid said with envy.

“Rice is nothing compared to this. This is my first time eating chicken, and somehow I feel so warm,” another kid said happily.

Luna smiled. “I’m glad he’s got adopted.” *Although these kids are so innocent and adorable, many people prefer to adopt babies.*

“Please eat it, Teacher Luna. You always eat with us every time you come here; you couldn’t have eaten,” Amy implored, looking up at Luna. “It’s called braised chicken and rice, and I’m sure you’ll like it.”

“It’s really very delicious, Teacher Luna,” Jessica agreed, her face streaked by tears.

Other children begged Luna to eat too. They decided it would be a shame to miss such a delicious dish.

Mag smiled and handed two boxes to her. “Please eat it, for the children.”

Luna hesitated for a moment as she looked at the kids’ expectant faces and Mag’s smile. Then she took the boxes and smiled. “Thank you.” Then she turned to the kids. “Let’s eat together.”

The children grinned, and went back to their food.

Luna opened the lids, and a delicious smell floated out right away. *It might be even more expensive than Yangzhou fried rice,* Luna thought as she looked at the browned chicken.