

## Witch 1021

### Chapter 1021: Graycastle Weekly

The moment she sat on the couch, the padding immediately creaked and bent.

"It seems that I have to remind the tavern to reinforce the couch," thought Victor, "Though the bed is right in the corner of the room, sometimes it more interesting to not do it in bed. A new place brings unexpected feelings. Compared with the king's city in the Kingdom of Dawn, the tavern here obviously lacks a profound background."

Before long, Tinkle cleaned the drinks and food on the table and spread the newspapers out in front of him.

"This is..." Victor couldn't help raising his eyebrows. He saw small, dense words on the paper, just like the classics which his family treasured.

He used to think that he had seen the most precious of things in the world and even played with them with his hands. Usually, when a commodity was placed in front of him, he could immediately determine its price. However, it was the first time that he was hesitated to make a judgment about something.

Such neat and delicate words were unlikely to be hand-written. In other words, they were probably printed. Considering the cost of printing, it was generally only used for important and rarely modified archives and classics, for example, the Royal Code.

That was where the problem lied. In order to achieve the best printing effect, the best possible materials would be used for printing such great quality books. The lambskin, which had never been shaved, would be considered as the basic material, and it was not unusual to decorate the page with golden lines and jewelry so as to emphasize extraordinary luxury and to ensure adequate durability.

But the newspaper was different. It was obviously made of rough papyrus, which would melt in water. It had neither a cover nor any protective measures at its corners. Even if he read it carefully, it would start to fall apart after a few reads. In his eyes, it was like putting a precious gemstone in an iron ingot.

Victor recalled what the maid said before. The king intended to use this thing to replace the public announcement board. Did that mean that it would be printed with new content in the future?

He got a positive answer from her.

"Yeah, the announcement said the newspaper would be issued every two weeks, and the amount would increase to ensure most people could read it."

It only costs ten bronze royals for each.

He began to wonder how much wealth had been plundered by King Roland from Hermes. Why would he continue doing this stuff which was doomed to lose money?

The jewelry trader, who previously believed that there might be a business opportunity, gave up his idea immediately.

"Who cares", Victor whispered secretly. "It's not my money anyway, and it's none of my business whether the king earns or loses. I'll focus on the newspaper."

Thinking of that, he moved his eyes to the first page.

On the top was an enlarged, bold title: "Graycastle Weekly".

Below it, a full-page was about the king's enthronement, as well as the news that the Kingdom of Dawn and Graycastle signed a pact against the demons.

He had heard of them before, but he did not know the details.

After reading a few lines, Victor was completely immersed himself in it.

He held his breath while reading it.

For the first time, he read the details of these two events from the perspective of the high officials. It was different from the rumors that spread among the public populace, the reports on the newspapers included accurate times, places, reasoning, process and results. It even demonstrated their causes, especially for the pact with the Kingdom of Dawn. The treachery of the Moya family, the rebellion of the nobles, and the letter for help which came from 1000 kilometers away. All of these factors led to the expedition of the Graycastle army. Then it was a matter, of course, that the new King of Dawn was willing to restore the kingdom's order with the help of Roland Wimbledon.

He knew these descriptions were definitely not authentic, but he still subconsciously wanted to believe them. The content was so complete and logically sound that it was difficult not to believe.

In fact, since they dared to put such things on the table directly, it was already convincing enough.

Victor ignored the presence of Tinkle for a time and could not wait to keep reading.

The second page was related to the demons. The writer wrote a detailed daily record of a battle which narrated the expedition of the First Army to the western wilds and its attack on the demons.

This was the first time he had heard of it.

When Victor last came to Neverwinter, he heard that the Devilbeasts had attacked the border. He had never expected the king to initiate revenge for it. Not only did the First Army march into the forbidden land, which was full of danger, it gave its opponents a heavy blow. This made them no longer dare to show up in the Western Region. If what was reported was true, it could almost be described as a legendary event!

"How did they do it?" was the first thing to pop into Victor's mind.

Whether it was the half-a-month raids over 1,000 kilometers away or the life-and-death confrontation that was merely 10 kilometers away, it was breath-taking.

When reading the army gathering in formation and resisting waves of enemies falling from the sky, he even felt chills down his spine.

As he had been exposed to "Black Money" since he was a child, he was more informed than most that the world was not as simple as people imagined. In the invisible darkness, there were many powers that

did not tire. Therefore, he was not surprised by the emergence of the demons when he heard it in the Kingdom of Dawn. He guessed that the leaders of those Chambers of Commerce were probably of the same mind.

But nothing more.

The nobles and businessmen of the Kingdom of Dawn still focused on their own interests, and not care about the Battle of Divine Will, which was a mere term in their eyes.

Victor never expected that Graycastle had already had a direct confrontation with the demons and had won. This aroused an indescribable feeling in his heart.

He couldn't explain what it was, but it made him feel safe and happy.

This should have nothing to do with him.

After thinking about it, he was probably affected by the word "human" the most, which had appeared many times in the newspaper.

For a moment, Victor felt as if he was standing with the First Army of Graycastle. In front of powerful and terrible enemies, the gap between family and blood seemed to have faded away.

He took a deep breath and licked his slightly dry lips before reading the third page.

The content on this page was much more casual. It was about the trivial things that happened in Neverwinter with quite novel titles such as "Shock! What's Behind the Explosion in the City Last Night? Detective Group Reveals the Secret!", "Water Pipe Cracked, Roads Become Skating Tracks!", "Bird Beak Mushrooms Recipe Every Neverwinterer Should Know", etc...

Victor glanced through the page, and when he turned it over, he was stunned.

A black and white picture occupied half of the page. It was so vivid that it was difficult for him to turn his eyes away.

Two girls, holding hands, stood together peacefully on a snow-covered land. White snow flew in the air, forming a gorgeous scenery. Below the picture was a beautiful line of words.

"An art beyond the times, the gift of His Majesty's enthronement! 'The Wolf Princess', performed by the Star Flower Troupe and the Witches, and written by His Majesty will be staged at the end of this month! Book your tickets now!"

Chapter 1022: Divergence

"What's this?" Victor pointed at the picture and asked, "A new play?"

Twinkle leaned over and looked at the newspaper, "No, sir... This picture should be of the magic movie."

"Magic movie?" It was another term which he had never heard of. It was so fantastic to be living in the future. The jewelry tradesman was eagerly asked, "Can you explain it in detail?"

The maid answered a bit embarrassed, "Well... I don't know too much. The same picture was hung up several days ago in Central Square, but it was colored. I heard the magic movie is a brand-new performance and is only available on a special stage."

"An art... beyond the times. Since he dares to use such words to describe it, the King of Graycastle must be extremely confident about it." Victor rubbed the slightly rough paper and thought, "It seems that this is worth looking forward to."

He noticed that there were a few lines under the titles, which indicated the time and location of the performance and the way to purchase tickets.

Victor's heart jumped at the words.

Wait... The ticket costs 40 gold royals?

How could that be possible? It surpassed the price of the top troupe in the City of Glow!

He could afford this price, but would there be anyone else in the city willing to pay for a magic movie since they didn't even care for jewelry?

No, there was still more... Victor frowned and continued to read. At the same time, he could not help murmuring, "Residents with Neverwinter ID card can get a special discount and a book ticket for 25 silver royals. Note: Tickets purchased at non-discounted prices offers a better viewing experience and reserved seating. Please order now. Tickets purchased at the discounted price do not include food and drinks; outside food and drink is not allowed. Please plan accordingly."

These were really... two totally different prices!

He had seen products with two prices, but never with such a drastic difference. In addition, most of these deals were conducted in private instead of being publicly advertised; otherwise, people who paid more would complain and it might be the last purchase from them. He was shocked by this!

Not only was it directly written in the newspaper, it also added many restrictions. It seemed that people had to rush to get it even if they were willing to pay the higher price.

However, he found that he was one of them...

He had to admit, this selling tactic did have a strange kind of attraction. Those who could afford 40 gold royals must be wealthy merchants or nobles. Admission was a proof of his strength, not to mention he was full of curiosity about the magic movie.

Victor jumped off the soft couch and put on his wolfskin coat.

"Sir?" Twinkle whispered. She was extremely surprised, as she had taken off her clothes and put on a thin veil. She was lying in bed, waiting for Victor to join her. She was unsure of how to respond to this sudden change.

Victor picked up her clothes and threw them to her. "Where can I buy tickets to the magic movie? Take me there, now!"

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The filming of "The Wolf Princess" had entered the final phase.

The final battle of Princess Royal against the demon lord would start in the palace. Roland had emptied the first floor of the castle to make room for the filming.

May, the Star of the Western Region, was currently in charge of the movie. In order for the new drama the best it could be, she even quit acting and devoted herself to directing the film.

"Cut!" May called out when Lorgar kicked in the castle door and rushed into the hall. "Very good. Let's call it a day. Thank you all for your hard work."

"Oh."

"Thank you, master," the crew chorused.

If it were her in the past, she would definitely roll her eyes toward them; however, now she just smiled and nodded.

"This is probably a change brought on by time," May thought.

She really had changed a lot since coming to Neverwinter.

"Mind the broken wood," Carter Lannis, who was standing by, immediately approached. "Should I help you around it?"

"Everyone is watching us. I can walk by myself," May replied, slightly embarrassed. Her husband had a good disposition, but he did not act as a stoic knight. She had no idea why His Majesty would choose him as the Chief Knight.

"Then at least let me walk in front of you," Carter stepped over and swept out a path for her with his feet.

His tall figure immediately obscured the sunshine coming in from the courtyard.

May couldn't help smiling.

However, she knew that she must hide her smile from him. Otherwise, he would be too proud and excited.

"Are you ready for your scene tomorrow? Don't forget the lines when Miss Lorgar hits you."

Speaking of the movie, Carter bitterly said, "Can you please ask her to be a little gentler? During the scene in the snowfield last time, I almost threw up. After she transforms into a wolf, she's nearly as strong as Ashes. Their strength is monstrous."

"Don't you know? Actors should adapt to the play, but not the opposite. Not to mention the magic movie is more realistic than a play." May said, smiling, "So the solution is very simple. Don't eat too much before filming your scene tomorrow."

The Chief Knight did not know whether to laugh or cry. He shook his head and changed a topic, "By the way, guess who I met at the pier today?"

"Well... your old lover?" May shrugged.

"As if!" Carter hurriedly turned around and said, "It was Kajen Fels."

May stopped moving and asked, "Really?"

"Of course, he's a celebrity in King's City. I can't be mistaken." Noticing the change in her eyes, he grinned, "A lot of people got off the ship with him. I guess they're his troupe members. Other people also recognized Sir Kajen and it nearly caused a traffic jam in the pier area. How about it? Is this news worth a kiss?"

"Yes!" May said, without hesitation. "I want to pay him a visit!"

Kajen Fels, his name was almost synonymous with theater. Since he took to the stage, he had dazzled audiences for over 30 years. From the Southern Territory to the Northern Region, any actor who wanted to reach the top one could not avoid being compared with him. Since he was over 50 years old, he no longer performed the stage. He still worked behind the scenes and was a masterful playwright. He still held great influence in the theater.

When May went to King's City, it was in the play "Memoir of a Prince's Search for Love" written by him, that she stood on stage in front of royalty for the first time. Without Kajen Fels's guidance and praise, she would never have become famous so quickly nor be known as the Star of the Western Region.

"I knew you would say that," Carter handed her a note. "I've already checked what hotel he's staying at. I have to supervise the craftsmen who are replacing the door, so I won't be able to accompany you."

"Thank you!" May took the note with joy, "It doesn't matter. I can go with people from the troupe—" Then she looked at the members who were still arranging set pieces and props, and called out to them, "Irene, Tina, Rosia, Gait, Swallow! Come here!"

That's right; Master Kajen must have come for Roland's coronation. When King Wimbledon III was crowned, it was Kajin's continuous performance that pushed the ceremony to the climax. Even if he did not perform on stage anymore, his troupe remained the most outstanding one in Graycastle. In the troupe, for example, Roentgen and Egrepo... were genius performers of different styles. If Irene and other actors could get some lessons or advise from them, it would certainly be a great help for their careers!

As she expected, when they heard that they were going to visit Kajen Fels, they could not help cheering loudly. Gait even stammered excitedly, "Can, can we really meet Sir Kajen?"

"It shouldn't be a problem," May said, shrugging. "But you guys have to work harder in the future so as not to waste this opportunity."

"Yes! I'll definitely work harder and harder!" Tina replied, her eyes lighting up.

"Let's go."

They first stopped at the Convenience Market and bought some gifts. Then they went to the hotel where Master Kajen was staying—the Whistle Inn.

A crowd of people who had heard of the news gathered on the hotel's lobby. Seeing May, they moved out of the way. Apparently, they were all fans of the Star Flower Troupe.

Some people even took out paper and pen and seemed to be prepared to record the first encounter between the two troupes. They undoubtedly were reporters from the Ministry of Public Relations and Communications.

However, to May's surprise, the receptionist returned with a cold face soon after coming back downstairs.

"I'm sorry. Sir Kajen has never heard of the Star Flower Troupe and doesn't want to meet you, either. Please leave."

Chapter 1023: Divergent

For a moment, the noisy tavern fell into silence, and even the patrons seated at the bar counter stopped drinking and turned to look at them.

May was a little shocked. "When I was in the old king's city, I once sought guidance—"

"From Kajen, right? That's exactly why he won't see you." The manager lowered his voice. "Lord Kajen is very disappointed in you, Miss May."

Even though the voice was very quiet, the girls next to May could easily catch every word. May felt her hand be suddenly squeezed by Irene.

Those words struck them harder than any accusation would, especially when it came from a distinguished dramatist. It was fine for him to criticize or encourage his juniors for their sakes, but it was harsh to tell his juniors that they were disappointments. She would be completely discombobulated or even sob on the spot if she heard those words three years ago.

But she didn't think of herself first anymore.

After so many years as the Star of the Western Region, she, the backbone of the Star Flower Troupe, was confident about her acting ability. If the blame had hurt her so much, what about Irene, Tina, and the other members of the troupe? Not to mention Swallow, such a talented girl who only lacked confidence.

Therefore, May found herself unexpectedly calm at the moment.

May let out a soft breath, composed herself, and replied, "Really? I believe there must be a mistake. It'll be better if I'm allowed to explain it to him personally, but if not I can only give him my apologies."

This took the manager by surprise, for he had never expected she would accept it so mildly. He frowned. "You..."

"Anyway, I hope that Mr. Kajen makes more progress in drama and makes a breakthrough in the ceremony. We'll take our leave." She turned and walked towards the door, and then spoke over her shoulder, "By the way, please don't call me Miss May. I'm Mrs. Lannis now."

The weather was still the same on their way back, but May felt like the sky looked more gloomy. No one spoke a word. The joy and excitement they had when they started from their home was all gone.

It was not until they were about to go home separately that Gait asked, "Lady May, did you really fall out with Master Kajen?"

"Idiot. What nonsense!" Rosia shot him a stern glance. "How could Sister May pay a visit to him if they had grudges against each other? That's no better than asking to be ignored! How could he say that he was disappointed in her? I reckon he's jealous."

Everyone gasped and looked at Rosia in disbelief.

"Hey... the man you're talking about is the great dramatist of Graycastle."

Rosia argued indignantly, "I mean, now that Neverwinter has become the new capital and Star Flower is more popular than any other troupes in the Western Region, they're not as appreciated as they used to be. Naturally, they wouldn't be friendly to us. I've been with May since she moved from Longsong to Border Town. She has stopped contacting Kajen Troupe ever since she returned from the old king's city, so their claim that she has disappointed Master Kajen is illogical. To put it plainly, they look down upon us just because of our short history and little reputation among the nobles."

"Is that so?" Irene said, seeming to be enlightened.

Perhaps because of Rosia's bold and confident argument, everyone cheered up a little bit.

"I wondered why the manager was afraid to look Lady May in the eyes. Now it appears that he felt guilty..."

"So, is that the reason why Master Kajen didn't want to see Sister May?"

"Of course not." May could not help rolling her eyes. "How could he, such a famed master, be jealous of me? Almost no one has ever heard of me outside the Western Region, but his name has spread across the entirety Graycastle, and even people in some regions of the Kingdom of Dawn have heard of him. What you're saying is far too wrong."

Everyone cringed at those words.

"Anyway, that's the end of it. Do you understand?" May said and clapped her hands. "Go home, all of you. We have a tight schedule of shooting tomorrow."

That night, Carter asked her about the visit over dinner.

She just ran through the thing with him.

Somehow, May did not want her husband to be involved.

After all, this was just a row in the drama circle.

The shooting ran smoothly over the next few days. May had been concerned that everyone would be frustrated by their encounter with the Kajen Troupe, but, on the contrary, in the final act of the movie that was shot in the palace, all of them seemed to have called upon their strength and contributed an extraordinarily brilliant performance. Even Gait performed better than usual and he also insisted on finishing every action perfectly before he took a rest. The passion had not only motivated the entire Star Flower Troupe but also become a revelation to the new members.

Those newcomers, who did not participate in that visit, guessed it was Master Kajen's guidance that stimulated their seniors to work so hard.

May was slightly relieved.

It seemed that the incident did not have much of an impact on the troupe.

She would have thought that the dust had settled, but something unexpected happened again.

The manager of Kajen Troupe visited her at the end of the day when they had just finished the shooting.

"My lord wanted to see you, Miss May... no, Mrs. Lannis." The man seemed to have been waiting for a long time outside the Castle District as his hat was covered with a thin layer of snow.

Of course, his lord was Kajen Fels, the great dramatist, who had founded the Kajen Troupe.

May was so confused and even wanted to tell him that she would not come with him, since she had been such a disappointment to Kajen Fels, but she found that she did want to see Kajen... for an explanation for his words.

"Can my companions come with me?" May asked.

"No, Lord Kajen only permit you to visit him." The man shook his head.

"May..." Irene sounded concerned.

She gave Irene a comforting glance, and then took a deep breath before she answered. "I see. Please lead the way."

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Here she was, at the same place once again, Whistling Hotel.

May, following the manager, took the stairs up to the second floor and entered a large study, where she saw some familiar friends standing against the bookcase. "Princess" Roentgen, "Minstrel" Egrepo, "Flying Cloud" Bernis... all of them were top-level performers coming from all over the country. She once worked with them rather well in the "Memoir of a Prince's Search for Love". They should have been happy to see her again after so many years apart, but May could only sense contempt and hostility from their cold faces.

This was something she did not expect.

May had not have looked forward to any warm welcome from these people, but she did not understand why they made their dislike of her so obvious, for, as far as she was concerned, actors would never show their actual feeling to the other actors, even those who they did not get along with. For famous actors, hiding their actual feelings was no more than a cinch, so very few of them would turn against other people openly, even against new actors. Unlike the troublemakers in the Longsong Theatre, the actors would be more cautious as their reputation grew. However, now even they refused to hide any feelings in front of her.

May turned her eyes on the old gray-haired man seated behind the desk. Kajen seemed to have aged a lot in the past few years, but no one within the room would ignore him. They all kept quiet and waited for him to begin.

Kajen, seeming to sense her gaze, closed the script in his hands and stood up.

What he was about to say, however, completely stunned her.

"Mrs. Lannis, can you please stop your troupe's next show?"

Chapter 1024: The Dispute over Ideas (I)

"Stop the show? But they have finished shooting the magic movie, and they don't have to perform on stage... No, that's not the point. The question is why he would make such a request."

For a moment, May was completely lost, for she had never expected to hear this from Kajen.

Perhaps sensing that his words were a little abrupt, Kajen added quickly, "I don't mean for you to cancel it, just shelve it temporarily. Make some excuse, such as illness or the need to take some rest. If you postpone the show for about a week, I figure that the officials will allow me to see the king."

"But..." May wanted to argue that the magic movie was totally different from the traditional dramas and the Star Flower Troupe did not need to be responsible for screening it. However, as soon as the "but" was said out, Roentgen broke into a sneer.

It seemed that Roentgen had been holding back her urge to argue for a long time.

"I've told you that it's a waste of effort. How could she stop the show that she has been working on? Master, you've asked the wrong person."

"I thought that you were just led astray and gave up your quest for drama, but I didn't expect you to become so vile," Bernis said regretfully, stamping her feet. "I've spoken up for you on that day... Mrs. Lannis, what do you take drama as? A way to earn your fame?"

"Even if she didn't tell us, we should have known about what she really is, the wife of Chief Knight Carter Lannis. So, it does make sense to see the officials try to please her. Otherwise, I don't believe that King Roland would not even grant Master Kajen, such a famed dramatist, a chance to perform for him."

"Enough!" Kajen Fels snapped, "I don't invite her here for you all to argue with! And I'm sure that May didn't do that. If you don't trust my judgment, please take your leave. Right now, I just want to hear her answer."

"Oh, my God." May was astonished when she finally realized what was going on. "Kajen Troupe wants to perform for His Majesty for his enthronement and has submitted the application in the City Hall in accordance with the rules, but contrary to their expectation, they were rejected. That's why they blame me after they knew that I have married with Chief Knight, thinking that it must be me who made the officials lay aside their application and give them the cold shoulder."

What a big misunderstanding!

If that was the case, then she could understand why they showed open animosity towards her.

In the drama circle, actors had to experience a lot of things, such as rejection, criticism, or the competition for a new role. All of these things happened among actors, so no actor would openly argue for their misfortune. However, if anyone of them used their contacts to hinder other people's performance, that would be regarded as an offense to the actors who loved acting.

She would be more resentful and contemptuous if such things were put on her.

May said slowly, "I didn't talk to anyone about the incident in the hotel except the companions who were with me. I can promise you that."

"I trust you too. That's why I decided to have a talk with you," Kajen said, rubbing his brow. "We've known nothing about this new city, nor have we understood why we were rejected. To ask you stop the show is the last thing I want to do, but I have no choice. Of course, we'll compensate you for your loss afterward."

The other actors frowned and looked away when they heard the word "compensate".

May, meanwhile, did not bother to guess what he would compensate her, for she had known Kajen Fels well enough to understand that he must have had his reasons.

"I'd like to ask you a question before I give you my answer." She pondered for a moment and said, "Your manager told me that I've disappointed you... Why?"

The old man was silent for a long while, and then he waved to the other actors.

"Master..." Roentgen wanted to say something, but she held her words back at the last moment and then walked out of the room.

One after another, they followed her out, leaving May and Kajen alone.

Kajen Fels stared at May, his eyes full of reproach that almost made her retreat.

"How many dramas have you played in the past two years?"

That was a question she did not expect to hear.

"Um... seven or eight?" May was not sure.

"Twelve, actually," Kajen said, counting with his fingers. "'Cinderella', 'The Witches' Story', 'Dawn', 'New City' ... Let's lay aside the quality of the scripts. Do you really think you've played them well?"

May was shocked. "Have you seen... them all?"

"No, that's a stupid question." She realized it right after she blurted the question out. Most of her dramas were played in the Western Region, so he must have heard of them from other people.

As she had expected, Kajen shook his head. "I have students in the four regions of Graycastle, from whom I can easily hear of these dramas." He sighed. "But did it not take you as long as eight months to prepare for the 'Memoir of a Prince's Search for Love'?"

May was speechless, for she had seen behind the old man's words.

It was a law widely acknowledged in the drama circle that a vivid and successful performance was based on tons of preparation. No matter how talented the actors were, they could not be sure that they had memorized every line and every action in a short period of time.

In truth, as there were so many dramas to rehearse, she had made quite a few simple mistakes that she had never made before, such as saying the wrong lines and making the wrong expressions, which might not be noticed by ordinary people but would be particularly abrupt to a knowledgeable audience.

"I don't know why you moved from the Longsong Theatre to Border Town, where you began to perform the dramas of this level," Kajen said seriously. "You might do it under your lord's order, but he wouldn't force you to do it if it was against your will. After all, a play is like an open dance, and no one can dance well when they're shackled." "May," he said. His tone had changed. Instead of addressing her as Mrs. Lannis, he sounded like a teacher teaching his beloved student. "You should've known very well that the audience also helps to improve your acting skill. How could you improve without their high demands and standards stimulating you? It's true that you've pleased most people, but you gave up your aspiration to be a superb actor, and that's why I'm disappointed in you."

May was quiet. She could not even find any words to argue, as she knew that he was telling the truth. In terms of performance, she had indeed become worse recently. She had slashed a lot of her private practice time and also declined her role in the "Wolf Princess". The dramas were arranged in such a tight schedule that it was unlikely for her to have enough time to study every role she was about to play. In addition, maintaining the Star Flower Troupe had also taken a lot of her energy.

It took her a long while to find something to say. "Have you spent a long time preparing for this drama that you're about to play?" she asked.

"It took me two years," Kajen said proudly. "Apart from the time we spent performing the old plays, we've been rehearsing it all the time, even on the boat and in this hotel. By now, we've polished every detail and all we need is a stage where my students can present their perfect work. I must say that it's better than the 'Memoir of a Prince's Search for Love' I performed when I was at the zenith of my fame."

He looked right at May and continued, "Although you've misused the talent God has gifted you, I believe your love for the drama is real. You must be very happy to watch an authentic drama too. Am I right?"

Chapter 1025: The Dispute over Ideas (II)

He was right.

May could tell that Kajen Fels did not change. At least, he still stuck to his pure faith in dramas, the exact faith that made him so frank to her and still stick to his opinion even though he was asking for her help.

In Kajen's opinion, someone who sincerely loved drama was sure to make room for a perfect play.

But she found that she could not easily answer "yes".

Something had stopped her.

May closed her eyes, the girl's voice coming back to her ears.

"Mrs. Lannis, please wait..."

"This is a little token of my gratitude. Please do accept it..."

Then a salted fish was handed over to her.

At that moment, May understood what was stopping her.

She opened her eyes and held the Master Dramatist's gaze.

This time, she would not evade the issue anymore.

There was so much rhetoric she could put in her answer to make it sound both polite and pleasant. First, she could compliment him, and then she might use the "but" to explain the fact that the magic movie was utterly different from the ordinary dramas and was made under an imperial order.

Kajen Fels knew almost nothing about Neverwinter, nor did he have any idea of the peculiarity of Star Flower Troupe and how much His Majesty had valued those dramas she had played. He had made a mistake from the very beginning. If she could make him understand how wrong he was, it might be a good time to clear up any misapprehensions between them and even change Kajen's bad impression of her.

But May knew in her heart that it was just another kind of evading.

"Mr. Kajen, have you prepared the show only for His Majesty?"

"And the nobles, ministers, and lords who will participate in the ceremony," Kajen said, nodding. "A show will lose its meaning without the matching audience, no matter how wonderful it is."

Like gold matching with jewels and fine wine with exquisite cups, only the careful and attentive audience could understand the very meaning of the actors' every expression and action and appreciate the true perfection of the play.

That was true.

"Then I'm sorry that I can't promise you," May said seriously, "because your drama will by no means be perfect."

"Wha-what?" The old man frowned. "What makes you say so? You haven't seen it."

"Because the audience will just enjoy the show however wonderful it is," May said and she felt the strength upwelling from the bottom of her heart. "They'll applaud, praise, and talk about it perhaps when they're enjoying their afternoon tea. But that's all. The play is just one of numerous entertainments, and their life will be just the same whether they see it or not. How could you call a thing perfect if it's dispensable to people?"

Kajen Fels scowled. For a creator, his drama was like a child to him and he would never accept such a remark easily. "I thought your pursuit of fame has blinded you, but I didn't expect that kind of arrogance from you. So, are you telling me that you've seen a perfect drama?"

"I haven't," May said frankly. "But I know what it should be like."

Kajen looked into her eyes, his gaze sharp as knives. Years of experience had given him an imposing aura of authority, which was intimidating to every junior in the drama circle.

He was obviously waiting for her explanation, but May knew that no answer would please him.

She did not retreat.

There was no doubt that what she was about to say would result in her parting most of her fellows in the drama circle and taking a path that none of them had ever seen nor could understand. By then, the criticism on her would be much worse or even lead to breaking off all the relationships between her and those people.

She was going to pay a high price, wasn't she?

She asked herself.

There was a voice answering her.

But it's worth fighting for.

May answered, "A great drama shouldn't be something just for people to enjoy or an entertainment that the nobles would seek only when they're free. It deserves more than that. Sometimes it can even change people's fate."

"'The Witch Diaries' helped people to understand what a witch is so that the witches could clear the stigma they didn't deserve. 'Dawn' encouraged people to work and get rid of poverty and hunger so that many people could start a much better life. 'New City' intuitively showed the new migrants how to comply with the rules of Neverwinter, and rooted out the Rats that had hidden in them. 'The Hero's Life' ..."

She paused and said slowly, "helped a sad girl to get back on her feet and start a new life. I know that there are many people who lost their families in the war. I'm very glad that my drama could give them help, no matter how many people could benefit from it."

"What exactly are you trying to say?" Kajen asked grimly.

"You told me that the most excellent drama was able to let the watchers identify with what the character had experienced in their life, but I want more. I want my drama to help the audience see their own future," May said honestly. "The nobles could always find alternatives to the jewels and exquisite cups if they lack them, while my drama is the food that can feed up a lot of people."

For the first time, her words reduced Kajen to silence.

"I have no doubt that your drama will be very exciting after two years of preparation, but I'm also confident that the upcoming 'Wolf Princess' will be equally mind-blowing. We only spent more than a month on rehearsal and some of us haven't even acted before, but, still, it'll be the best drama I've ever seen." May curtsied and went on, "If you still hold to your original opinion about our drama after you watch it, then I'll recommend your new play to His Majesty for you."

May felt much better after she had left the Whistling Hotel, to the point even her steps became springy.

Just as she stepped out of the alley, she saw Carter Lannis waiting on the street.

"Why are you here?" May was surprised.

"Irene told me that you left with Mr. Kajen's man. I'm a little worried." Carter shrugged. "After all, I'm going to stop by the Convenience Market to buy some food for dinner."

"Really?" May glanced at him. "Have you already known what had happened at the hotel that day?"

"You ate less that night. It was obvious to me." Chief Knight said proudly.

"Hang on..." She stopped abruptly. "Did you ask City Hall to reject Kajen Troupe's application for his performance?"

"Ah?" Carter raised his eyebrow. "What are you talking about? Whose application for performance did I reject?"

May stared at him for a moment before she let out a sigh of relief. "No, nothing..."

"Hey, are you hiding something from me again?"

"It's not important anyway..." She laughed. "You haven't bought the ingredients for dinner, have you?"

"No, what would you like to eat?"

"Um, how about salted fish?"

"Salted fish? I remember you don't like pickled food... It took you many days to finish the fish that the little girl gave to you last time."

"I like it now. What? Do you have an opinion?" May interrupted him and then reached out her right hand to him. "Do you want to come with me or not?"

"Of course." The Knight took her hand without hesitation. "Anything you want."

...

## Chapter 1026: Staging of a New Play

At last, the release date of The Wolf Princess was finally here.

As soon as sunlight began to shine through the window, Victor was awakened by a rustling sound. He opened his eyes only to discover that the other side of the pillow had been vacated, leaving behind only a few long strands of hair and the faint body scent of a young woman.

"Tinkle?" He called out in a slightly dry voice.

"Your Excellency, you're awake?" The person who replied seemed somewhat alarmed. "Was it my being too noisy that disturbed you?"

The jewel merchant sat up and leaned back on the headboard while revealing a slight smile.

The maid was still fumbling with her attire. She looked particularly adorable with only half of her dress worn on as yet, completely exposing her smooth back and only half-concealing her chest.

"Your Excellency... can you stop looking at me like that?" Tinkle asked somewhat embarrassedly.

"This is the kind of feeling that those noble young ladies can never offer." Victor began to chuckle.

"Alrighttt... I shan't look anymore. But, I should let you know that you won't be able to put it on properly without assistance."

"Oh..." The latter seemed a little perplexed.

"Come over and I'll help you." He reached out a hand. "But let me have a cup of water first, I'm so thirsty."

... ..

After helping her to tie up the laces, Victor placed his hand on the maid's waist. "Done. It suits you pretty well. The dress may seem flimsy, but before elastic bands were invented, the servants who were chosen to dress the young ladies had to be big and burly or they wouldn't be able to fasten it properly."

"I see." The young girl stuck out her tongue. "This is the first time I've heard..."

"Many items used by nobles are like that. They look good but are terribly troublesome to use. In short, flashy without substance." He laughed. "Hmm, can't wait to wear it out today, can you?"

"No no... I woke up early just to finish preparation earlier so that I won't hold up your journey..." Tinkle shook her hand. "I shall now go fetch water for you to clean up and also prepare breakfast."

"Wearing this to perform such tasks?" Victor glanced at the visibly-excited maid but decided not to dig deeper. "Okay, go. I just need a fresh omelet toast, and don't forget to make yourself a serving."

"Yes, thank you, Your Excellency." She bowed respectfully before making her way out. "Thanks also for the gift of clothing... and the chance to watch the play."

As the door shut, Victor climbed off the bed and poured a glass of red wine for himself.

"This is another plus of this type of girl - that they show immense gratitude for the simplest of benefaction. Had I gifted the same things to a noble young lady, I mightn't even get a smiling face as a sign of appreciation."

80 gold royals were nothing much to him after all. It was naturally a lot more enjoyable to watch a play together with someone else instead of alone. This was simply a matter of self-interest and had little to do with kindness or adoration.

He was curious about only one thing - how exciting could a magic movie that costs 40 gold royals per ticket be?

... ..

"Teacher, are you really going?" Roentgen peered worriedly at the neatly-dressed Kajen Fels. "May might've said that she would recommend your new play to His Highness, but that could just be a pretense. If she's simply taking advantage of your fame, you'll be falling into her trap by going."

"I feel the same way... she's no longer trustworthy," Egrepo grumbled. "I doubt she can even meet His Highness easily, let alone recommend a play to him."

"But May's husband is, after all, the Chief Knight. Even if she doesn't get to see him, she should be able to pass a message, right?" Bernis added cautiously.

"Speaking up for her yet again?" Roentgen glowered at her. "Don't forget about how she treated us!"

"Uh... didn't Teacher say that she hasn't meddled with the City Hall?"

"Who knows if she's lying or not..."

"Enough!" Kajen snapped. "My intention for going was never because of this supposed recommendation. She may be conceited and all, but we cannot behave like this. I have to take a look even if I don't agree with her." He humphed before continuing, "Can a brood of play fledglings really act out the story perfectly? It takes some nerve to say so! If I don't see it for myself, it'll mean that I've already been frightened by her words. Only by seeing it will I be able to burst her bubble, no?"

He then slapped four finely-printed tickets down on the table. "So, what she has sent aren't admission tickets, but letters of challenge! Whether to go or not will be left up to each of you. But remember, those who don't watch the play shouldn't make uninformed criticisms. For those who accept the challenge, follow me."

... ..

The entrance to the new theater was already brimming with chatter by 10 o'clock in the morning.

Everyone appeared to be in high anticipation of the play which had been long publicized. There were also people present who could not afford the steep prices of the premiere but hoped to catch a glimpse by hook or by crook.

However, these people discovered, to their surprise, that the theater was designed completely different from the others. There was not a single window, and its entire architecture resembled an inverted bowl. It was impossible to hear a sound from inside by planting one's face against the walls, let alone peek through. The volume of the theater was extremely "small and exquisite", approximating only a quarter the size of a central square, less than 15 meters in length and height, and only one story high. Together with the undecorated and gray cement exterior, it was hard to believe that an avant-garde play was about to be staged here.

Victor walked together with Tinkle into the theater while harboring these sorts of suspicions.

Many checkpoints were set up along the single-person walkways, which Victor was only allowed to pass after he had turned in the God's Stone of Retaliation and self-defense dagger he was carrying.

The duo's eyes lit up the moment they pushed open the doors.

"Wow..." Tinkle exclaimed uncontrollably.

Victor was also surprised. The theater was actually illuminated by magic stones!

He had, before this, only seen such valuable things in Black Money.

It was telling of the owner's wealth that he could display these stones in a public place.

Unlike the austerity of the exterior, the theater's interior was as extravagant as could be. Four clusters of Stones of Lightning hung from the arched dome, from where they illuminated the windowless hall. Warm air could be felt gushing out from the floor to maintain the temperature of the hall at a comfortable level. Rows of deck chairs were placed around the center at an arm's length away from each other. As a result, the hall appeared to be extra spacious, and did not feel cramped in any way.

Victor was beginning to understand that this was the probable reason why tickets were expensive. Though the spacious room offered a comfortable viewing experience, this meant that seats were extremely limited. Judging from the number of seats, a single play could only accommodate between 50 to 80 people. This figure was significantly less than that of a typical performance elsewhere. Hence, if ticket prices were not increased, it would not be possible to break even.

But there was another important question.

As he looked around the hall, he could not make out where the stage was.

Apart from a sturdy stone pillar which was erected in the center of the hall and connected directly to the ceiling, there was nothing else but seats. There was no space set aside for the performance.

Unless the Star Flower Troupe danced around the pillar?

Chapter 1027: An Absurd Viewing Experience (Part I)

Suppressing his doubts, Victor followed the seat number on his ticket and sat down at Row 3 No. 10.

"You're that guy from the Lothar family...," someone beside him suddenly exclaimed.

Somewhat surprised, he turned his head towards the voice and discovered that the latter was an elegantly-dressed woman. Unlike Tinkle, she was obviously seasoned in courtship and romance, and could exhibit her most enchanting side at any time. "Victor Lothar. You are?"

"Long heard the name." The woman placed a hand on her chest and smiled. "I'm Denise Payton from the City of Glow. "

"I see, a young lady from the Payton family," Victor replied. "Never thought I would see a merchant from my city in a foreign land."

"Neither did I imagine meeting a legendary businessman here." She then pointed to someone beside her. "Let me introduce you to His Excellency Yoriko, who previously served as the Kingdom of Dawn's messenger. It was he who invited me."

"Nice to meet you."

More pleasantries followed.

While chatting with Yoriko, Victor also got to acquaint with a few elites from Graycastle.

As he had expected, the people attending the premiere were all extremely wealthy and noble. For example, the front row consisted of powerholders from the City Hall. Based on Yorko's explanation, their tickets were gifted to them by His Majesty, and hence they did not fork out a single royal. The middle and back rows consisted instead of wealthy merchants and guests. He even saw, among the audience, figures from King City's troupe.

The price of 40 gold royals had thus served to turn the theater into a mini banquet of notables. If he could build up connections with these people, the price would certainly have been worth it.

When all attendees had arrived, a dozen or so cart-pushing servants entered the hall through a different entrance and placed weird-looking paper packets in the holders next to each chair.

"Is this meant for us?" Tinkle lifted and examined the packet curiously. "Eh, the word written here is p... "popcorn"?"

"There're also french fries and milk - are these all for eating?" Victor noticed that the packet that was labelled "milk" seemed rather peculiar. It looked like a parchment but felt incomparably soft. For a moment, he was unsure of how it was supposed to be opened. Fortunately, a demonstrative illustration was drawn beneath the label. That many guests had never used a packet like this had, indubitably, been taken into consideration.

Following the steps in the illustration, he inserted a transparent straw in the seal at the top of the packet. As he sucked up the milk, he felt an indescribable sense of achievement pouring forth from his heart.

This is way too amazing!

Even the milk, which he would usually find too bland for his liking, tasted sweeter than ever before.

This owed very much to the packet's thoughtful illustration and exquisite design, which were unprecedented. Even if it contained plain water, it would still have sold for a good price!

The person who designed it is surely an outstanding merchant.

Victor also noticed that the design was not simply for novelty's sake. Unlike traditional porcelain and glassware, which came with edges and corners, these two types of packets were not prone to causing injury. This advantage is even more significant after considering the statuses of the guests. Furthermore, the packets fitted perfectly in the holders even if unsealed, and thus there was no worry of spillage.

It was hard to imagine how a perfect fit like this was possible, given that the packets were a brand-new invention.

Just as Victor intended to try out the taste of the popcorn, an ethereal voice was heard in the hall. "A warm welcome to the magic movie theater of Graycastle. The Wolf Princess is about to begin. May everyone kindly return to their seats and listen carefully to the rules which should be observed. If there're any problems during the screening, please act in accordance with the rules in order to prevent accidents from occurring."

There was a brief commotion inside the hall. This was because everyone heard the voice but could not tell where it was coming from.

"First of all, the magic movie's duration is 2 hours and 15 minutes, throughout which there'll be no break. You're not allowed to leave your seat on your own. If you require assistance, simply pull on the string of the bell located under your seat and wait."

"Secondly, this will be an unprecedented viewing experience. Please don't panic no matter what happens, and remember that it's only a very special kind of play, instead of a real event. You'll be held accountable by the Neverwinter Police Department for any harm or loss you cause to a third party."

Victor could not help laughing softly as he heard this. "Whoa, is there really anyone left on Earth who can mistake a play for reality? It's verging on self-praise to use the word 'panic'." He deftly turned his body and took a quick glance behind. As he expected, the guests who were also in the film industry had heavily sarcastic looks on their faces.

However, Tinkle did not seem to feel that the words were any inappropriate. She clutched nervously onto the armrest of her chair.

As if to give the audience some time to digest, the voice only resumed after a rather long pause. "May everyone please enjoy this dreamy moment in time."

"The show shall now begin."

As the words fell, the four clusters of Stones of Lightning gradually ascended and disappeared into the dome, causing the hall to dim temporarily.

"Where's this going? As the widespread popularity of open-air theaters shows, adequate lighting, or its lack thereof, is crucial to the overall effect of the play. How are we to appreciate the details of the play if there isn't any light?" Victor gaped his mouth a little wider. He was increasingly intrigued as to how the play would end up when the introduction was already this mysterious.

However, before he could contain his amusement, he was completely stunned by what happened in the next instant.

A beam of white light flashed by, before turning everything pitch black. This was the blackest black he had ever seen, as if he was now in a deep abyss. He could not even see the chair he was sitting on, let alone his surroundings. The only relief was that he could still feel his butt sitting on the chair, or he probably would have leaped up in horror.

But even more inconceivable things were to follow. Victor noticed that his body had also disappeared into the darkness completely. He could not see his hands if he placed them right in front of his face. He was not able to tell if this was because it was truly too dark, or because he had been robbed of his vision.

The unrest in the hall showed that he was not the only one who was startled. The intermittent screaming and crying made the atmosphere tense.

It turned out that "panic" was not just empty talk.

Had it not been for that warning, there would probably be chaos in the hall by this time.

Just then, a gentle ray of light glimmered from overhead and dispelled the darkness. The hall was once again lit - but instead of calming down, the audience gasped in unison.

"My goodness." Victor's eyes widened. "What's... going on?" The scene in front of him was no longer within the theater, and instead had moved into the sky!

He could hear cold wind blowing beside his ears, and could clearly see snowflakes drifting in the sky. There was nothing beneath his feet; he was a few kilometers off the earth, from where the mountains and jungles appeared to be patches of gray and white, just like the doodles of young children. This experience, the like of which he never had before, caused his body to tremble. He clung as tightly as he could on to the armrest and shrunk his body on to the "invisible" chair which now bore his weight vitally, as if one little mistake would cause him to fall through the sky and turn to dust.

"Our story begins in the capital of a mountainous province in the far north, where two lively and adorable princesses reside..." It was only when he heard this assuring and composed voice that he discerned that he was still watching a play, and had not been projected into the heavens.

"Is there really anyone left on Earth who can mistake a play for reality?"

Victor cried tearlessly. "Who would have imagined that this is what magic movies are like?"

In the next two hours and more, the jewel merchant had the most incredible time of his life.

#### Chapter 1028: An Unusual Theatre Experience (II)

The audience didn't divert their attention from the breathtaking shots as the camera shifted its focus from the sky to the earth.

In fact, the sudden influx of the images made the movie even more fascinating. Victor was overwhelmed by the bustling marketplace and the splendid inner palace in the movie. He fought his urge to stand up and touch the throne, as he didn't want to cause any unintended loss to "the third party",

The audience in the hall sucked in their breaths. Words had completely abandoned them. Every now and then, they uttered short cries of surprise.

They were awestruck by every single change in the scene.

They gave an involuntary exclamation at the first appearance of the princess.

They cried out as the princess transformed into a wolf when she turned 14.

They yelled when the foreign prince visited the country.

When they saw the princess lose control of her power and destroy the palace, the entire hall was stirred.

Completely different from a traditional theatre where the audience was supposed to keep quiet and stay calm, the "movie theatre" exploded with interjections.

Victor knew this had nothing to do with the audience's manner. They simply couldn't contain themselves. The viewers, on one hand, enjoyed the new theatre experience and feared what would happen next on the other. They had no way to channel their emotions but to produce various odd

sounds. Only in this way would they know that they weren't dreaming and that somebody was with them witnessing the wonder!

Roland would probably categorize the audience's reactions as another type of "bullet screens".

While the audience was shouting, the princess transformed herself into a giant wolf and departed for the snow land. When she leaped over his head, Victor felt all his hair stand on its end. He almost wanted to bolt out from the room.

However, a beautiful song calmed him down.

All his uneasiness dissolved into a multitude of feelings: sadness, bitterness, relief, and determination. Victor felt his eyes filling!

At that moment, he seemed to understand the princess. He felt sorrowful for her being wronged but also proud of her bravery.

The scene changed with the flow of the sweet melody and the storyline of the film. Victor was deeply moved by the tune. Looking back on his own experience, he found resonance in the song.

Who had not been wronged or misunderstood before?

Yet most people choose to remain silent!

Victor was not afraid of the wolf girl anymore. He applauded her decision to leave!

Victor seemed to see past the wolf girl to himself, who had also left his native town.

Without a shadow of a doubt, the music was a stroke of genius. It did not steal the focus but was instead in perfect harmony with the movie.

From the loud applause of the audience, he knew the song had moved everybody in the hall. The whole room suddenly erupted into a deafening cheer at this moment.

In a split second, Victor had already formed his opinion on the movie.

Roland's advertisement was not exaggerating at all.

It was definitely a masterpiece ahead of its time!

...

He lost.

The moment the song rang, Kajen knew he had lost to May. It was not about his personal failure. In fact, "The Wolf Princess" defeated his new play in every aspect.

Plays were essentially a form of entertainment.

At first, Kajen had been dumbstruck by the film and wondered how Roland could possibly achieve this. Soon, he became numb to the constant shock. The magic movie simply blew him away. All his knowledge about acting accumulated over the past decades seemed to become incredibly absurd.

The audience in the theatre actually had quite high expectations of new plays. Although they were not as picky as nobles, they did know the difference between a good play and a bad one. In other words, it was hard to fool them. Yet, when watching the new movie, everybody was now flabberghasted like an ignorant and uncivilized country bumpkin.

Kajen did not blame them.

It actually took him a great deal of self-control to maintain his silence as well.

Meanwhile, Kajen knew his new play could definitely not arouse the audience like the magic movie did.

Everybody would think "The Wolf Princess" was undoubtedly much better than his play.

Did they not notice the acting mistakes in the movie?

Of course they did.

Nonetheless, the movie was so good that they could simply overlook those little mistakes.

Kajen knew the amount of information a man could receive within a period of time was limited. As the audience was overwhelmed by the story and images, a few small errors would barely divert their attention.

So was this an unfair competition?

Kajen did not think so.

He knew the development of theatrical plays better than anybody else.

The reason why famous actors and actresses always favored big theatres was that big theatres were financially more capable of providing better costumes, equipment, and settings.

These elements were also the key to the success of a play.

In fact, the success of Kajen's teacher was largely attributed to the usage of large stage backdrops in his plays. Kajen's teacher reached a pinnacle in his career when he had invented a removable wooden house. Ever since then, all other troupes had followed his example. The removable wooden house had thus become a staple in every play. Without good equipment or costumes, no actor or actress could give an excellent performance.

The more lifelike and detailed the setting was, the better theatrical effect.

Star Flower Troupe simply perfected their theatrical scenery.

Kajen felt relieved after he came to this conclusion.

He leaned back on the soft recliner and breathed out a deep sigh.

Finally, he could focus on the brilliant movie.

...

The story was drawing to its end.

The candles were rekindled, and people could once again see the chairs and the stone pillars as the light was restored.

However, not a single person left. Everybody was still savoring the aftertaste of the story, revolving the bitter battle between the wolf prince and the demon lord in their heads.

Kajen Fels was the first to applaud.

The applause jerked the audience out of the trance. Soon, more people joined, and the waves of thunderous applause swept over the entire theater.

"Mr. Kajen..."

Looking at the applauding Kajen, Roetgen and Egrepo almost burst into tears. Bennis' eyes were glistening.

"Don't cry." The old actor's eyes also reddened, although he did not know what he was sad about. These actors and actresses had spent years perfecting their acting skills, but now all their hard work had been for nothing. Nobody who had experienced the new film would ever want to watch traditional plays again. The utter defeat was devastating, but Kajen knew he could not give up. "None of your work is going to be wasted!" said he firmly.

"Mr. Kajen, what do you mean..."

"What's the biggest downside of a play? It's the distance!" Kajen said tremulously. "The distance between the stage and the audience makes it impossible to capture every single change in the actors' expressions, but the magic movie has solved this problem. I'm sure in the future, acting skills will become even more important. Probably one day, just a perfect smile would grab your audience's attention. So, our failure is just temporary. It doesn't mean your hard work has amounted to nothing!"

Kajen paused for a second and then continued, "Don't worry. I assure you that we'll come back once we figure out the mechanism behind the magic movie. We'll soon return to compete with Star Flower Troupe. By that time, people would see for themselves. Now, dry your eyes and stand upright. The movie deserved an applause."

In the tumultuous applause, "The Wolf Princess" soon became the most renowned film in the whole city of Neverwinter.

Chapter 1029: A Person Back Home

Roland had foreseen that the movie would create quite a buzz among the mass.

In fact, he, as the producer and first viewer of the movie, had also been shocked by the epoch-making film when he had watched it in the castle hall on the night of its completion.

Words had completely failed him. The visual impact of the virtual world was phenomenal.

Roland realized that he had not been so impressed when watching the recordings of the meetings and ceremonies through the Sigil back in Reflection Church in the old Holy City. As most of the recordings

were static images, they were not as lifelike as motion pictures, although Roland had to admit they were quite interesting. However, once the images were animated, human brains would be easily deceived, making people believe what they saw was real, even though they knew very well that it was not the case. The best example was the scene of a falling object in the movie.

Even Roland was quite amazed at the movie himself, let alone the general public, whose sole entertainment in this world so far had only been theatrical plays.

The success of the movie was almost certain.

However, there was also something beyond Roland's expectations.

The visual impact of the movie seemed to go beyond what audience could physically bear.

When the movie had been on show for the third and the fifth time, one viewer had panicked out and attempted to leave the theater, whereas another had passed out in the middle of the show. The former almost trampled over other viewers while the latter had been sent to the hospital immediately. Had Nana not been there, the unfortunate incident might have ended in tragedy.

Both incidents had occurred when Echo had started singing.

Apparently, the bird's eye view shot at the beginning and the transformation of the princess posed some safety hazards.

The movie was currently targetting wealthy audience only, so the viewers should be more open to new things than ordinary civilians. Roland projected that when the movie was introduced to the mass a week later, there would probably be more incidents like this.

Due to safety concerns, Roland had no choice but to make some adjustments to the movie theatre.

Initially, he had planned to replace the recliners with benches to accommodate more people and prohibited food and drinks in the theater. However, it now appeared that benches were not a good option because they would be easily tipped over when a stampede occurred. In the end, Roland decided to use iron benches fastened to the ground and require audience to wear seat belts all time during the show to prevent similar accidents.

Additionally, he imposed some restrictions on audience's age and their health conditions. Anyone who was over 45, had a heart disease or acrophobia was not allowed to watch "The Wolf Princess".

Since it was Roland's first time to manage a theater, everything from designing the venue to drafting theater rules and regulations was new to him.

As "The Wolf Princess" became the most popular show in Neverwinter, the movie also attracted many businesses.

Over the past few days, the city hall had received a dozen applications from various merchants, all of whom had expressed their desires to open franchises for selling popcorns and milk bags. However, after hearing Barov's report, Roland turned all of the requests down.

The business of snacks such as popcorns was not very lucrative after all. For one thing, the product was hard to preserve but easy to make, so people could easily steal the related technologies. For another,

corn was not the main agricultural crop in Neverwinter, so Roland did not have much competitiveness in the market. As such, he would rather keep the business to himself for tourism purposes.

As for the milk bags, he had no excess to sell at all.

They were indeed the first product made from the rubber worms.

These worms had pretty much settled down in the Third Border City after one year of adapting. The ancient witches had achieved great progress in their research. After they had found that they could adjust the flexibility of the rubber by changing the ratio of the slimes and the gall of the worm, they had soon settled where their research should head.

The rubber business had thus become a side project for the Taquila survivors. They dedicated themselves to the production of various rubber samples and the testing of the rubber's durability and corrosion resistance ability.

The milk bag and the straw were two products they invented.

Roland did not decide to manufacture these two items on a whim. They actually played a significant role in the logistics. The rubber bag could be used to carry food and disinfectants. Compared to metal or glass containers, rubber bags were much cheaper. Other than worms, the production practically cost nothing.

Although there were a number of worm holes in the Third Border City, with the number of rubber worms increasing from 100 to nearly 1,000, it was still not enough to meet the war requirement. Therefore, the rubber worms would be one of the most important strategic resources in Neverwinter for a very long time.

...

Four days after the release of the movie, Roland learned that Edith, the Pearl of the Northern Region, had returned to Neverwinter with Olivia.

He met the girl whom he had just met once in the castle parlor.

Olivia looked pretty nervous. She did not avert her eyes, but there was almost a Spartan despair hidden underneath her serenity.

Unlike their last encounter, this time, Roland could see her face clearly in the well-lit hall. Her soft facial features and the emaciated frame reminded him of a flower that had just overcome a storm. After a long trip, she looked even more drained and fragile, but she managed to sit upright, which, at the same time, made her look even more beautiful. Roland knew if she had fallen into the hands of some other lords, she would have either been well protected or completely destroyed.

It seemed that she was ready to accept whatever came her way.

Roland broke into a smile. He knew many nobles in this era lived a life of debauchery, but he was not that type of person.

"Don't worry," Roland comforted her. "It's much warmer than Coldwind Ridge here. Nobody will disturb you. You'll soon fall in love with this city."

"Yes... Your Majesty," Olivia said quietly. She hesitated for a moment and lowered her head.

"Take a rest first. Somebody will take you to your room," Roland replied.

After the guard led Olivia out, Edith dipped in a curtsy and asked, "That's all? I thought you would have a chat with her to get familiar with each other."

"You have covered everything. I have nothing to add," Roland said while shrugging. Ignoring the latter half of Edith's statement, he asked, "How was your trip?"

"Pretty good. She quickly made the decision for the sake of her child," Edith replied. "The clean-up took a bit longer than we anticipated, but those people would not cause you trouble anymore."

"Good job," said Roland with a nod. "It was the right choice to put this matter in your hands."

"I'm flattered." The Pearl of the Northern Region said, smiling. "By the way, there's another thing I want to tell you. On our way back, I received a message from the combat engineer unit. Azima didn't find 'the Glory of the Sun' in the Eastern Region, so she has turned to the north."

Roland frowned at the news. "So... the extension line is from the other side of the Swirling Sea?" he wondered. If the mine was outside of Graycastle, it would be a little problematic.

"I see." Roland soon regained his composure and said, "You should also go take a rest now."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

When Edith was about to leave, she suddenly turned around and said, "Your Majesty, it's time for you to go to sleep as well. You must take care of yourself."

"Huh?" Roland looked at her in surprise.

"Because this world would be a lot less interesting without you," Edith replied with a smile and then disappeared from his sight.

#### Chapter 1030: The Coronation Ceremony

"She was... way over the board," said Nightingale grumpily as she revealed herself from the Mist. "What did she mean by that?"

Roland also noticed the subtle change in the attitude of the Pearl of the Northern Region after he told her about how Iron Axe had dealt with the nobles. He had a vague feeling that Edith became completely honest with him, which was actually not a bad thing.

"Well..." Roland thought for a while and asked, "Are you able to tell whether she's lying or not?"

"She was telling the truth," Nightingale replied while twitching her mouth. "She did mean what she said. Otherwise, I would have stopped her and got to the bottom of it."

"Well, in that case, let it go." Roland smiled. "I have neither strength nor time to guess what everybody's thinking about."

Nightingale instantly stopped her complaining after hearing these words. She jerked her head away indifferently and said, "You, you're right... You just need to focus on one or two people and that will do."

It took Roland a great effort to suppress his laughter. He twitched his lips, amused at how bad Nightingale was at concealing her own thoughts. Roland cleared his throat and said, "Then let's go back to the office. I have a lot of work to do."

He has to test out the two newly developed internal combustion engines and figure out how to use them to achieve mass production. Also, he needs to design the parts and other supplementary mechanical equipment. Furthermore, he has to work on the design and the assembly of the armored trains, the manufacture of the biological rubber, as well as the expansion of the plants and the armies.

However, there was one thing that outweighed all of these tasks.

Although it was just a matter of formality, it played a significant role in bringing the people together.

The moment Olivia arrived in Neverwinter, Roland knew it was time for him to officially ascend the throne.

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A week later, the Castle District of Neverwinter was open to the public for the first time. Under the guidance of the police and guards, thousands of civilians, who had gone through a screening process, gathered around in the yard, waiting for the coronation in excitement. The streets festooned with streamers and lights beyond the Castle District were swarmed with people. Apparently, people's enthusiasm was not quenched by the snow.

The Lord's castle was also temporarily altered due to the upcoming ceremony.

The wall of the front yard had been torn down and replaced with fences so that people could see what was going on inside. All the facilities in the yard had been removed, and new patches of grass had been laid. The audience would have a full view of the whole ceremony once they walked up the slope of the Castle District.

Each side of the castle was decorated with a red banner hemmed with black that dropped down from the roof and stretched across the whole building. The bright color of the banner stood out in the vast whiteness, adding a note of solemnity and grandeur to this shabby castle.

The biggest change was on the second floor of the castle.

A balcony facing the gate of the front yard protruded from the second floor. No doubt, the king was going to receive blessings from his subjects here after the coronation.

Only the designer of the balcony, Minister Carl, knew that the temporary alternation had been completed by the witches. Ms. Agatha had first created an ice wall, to which Ms. Soraya applied a "brick coating", making it look like a part of the castle.

In such cold weather, the thick ice wall would last for several days.

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On the other hand, people inside the castle were busy with the preparation work.

"Your Majesty, are you ready?" Wendy's voice popped up outside the bedroom. "All the ministers and guests are now here waiting for you."

"Got it. Just give me one moment," Roland replied. He turned around to the girl in a white dress and asked, "Are you ready?"

"Wait a minute... I'm still a bit nervous." The girl was no one else but Anna. She peered down at the crowd below through the curtain, apparently unnerved by the frenzy down there. "Are you sure you want me to come with you? The ceremonial officer told me no king has done it before."

Roland realized that Anna was not as fearless as he thought. Although she was smiling, she was still worried and lost upon such a big event. Her confidence came from her outstanding academic performance and her desire for new knowledge. When she is dedicated to her work, she is a true genius. Despite her talent, she is essentially a girl in her twenties, born and brought up on the countryside.

Anna is certainly not accustomed to presenting herself in front of thousands of people.

Roland smiled and said softly, "Then I'll set a precedent. Or do you want me to crown myself?"

"No, of course not." Anna shook her head. "I'm just..."

Roland walked up to her, wrapped his arms around her and said, "In that case, I'll put it in another way."

"Another... way?"

"Yes." Roland took a deep breath and asked in a very serious tone, "Miss Anna, I would like to hire you as my wife. Will you accept my offer?"

"Haha." Anna burst into laughter. "No, I'm no longer a prisoner. Also..."

"Also what?"

"It's on such a short notice." She pounded Roland's shoulder with her little fist, then reached out her gloved right hand and said, "Thank you, Roland. Let's go."

Roland grasped her hand tightly and replied, "As you command."

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The couple pushed the door open, walked across the hallway, down the stairs, and into the hall on the ground floor.

The hall instantly fell silent. People automatically made way for the pair while bowing their heads.

Roland glanced at the Neverwinter witches on his left side as he proceeded. He saw Tilly, Ashes, Nightingale, Wendy, Lightning and Agatha... Completely different from what they had looked like three years ago, they blended into the society and became an inseparable part of the kingdom.

On his right side stood the city hall officials and local officers, including Barov, Edith, Iron Axe, Carl, Kyle, Theo, Yoriko and so on. They formed the governmental bodies in the Kingdom of Graycastle. Through the years, they have elevated themselves from common people to the prominent political figures.

The coronation should have been a very complicated procedure. However, since the witches and the officials of Neverwinter had all acknowledged Roland's sovereignty, the process was considerably simplified.

Roland led Anna to the center of the hall, where stood a stone table with two golden crowns on it.

As both King Wimbledon III and the Church of Hermes were gone, Roland dismissed the request of the ceremonial officer to administer the coronation, insisting that the king and the queen should crown each other.

It was the first time in the history of Graycastle to crown a king and a queen at the same time.

The ceremonial officer was certainly opposed to Roland's suggestion, but to no avail. Surprisingly, Barov sided with Roland this time.

Roland bent down and allowed Anna to crown him, and then he gently placed the other crown on her head.

When the pair turned around, everybody knelt down.

"Long live our king!"

In the cheers of the crowd, Roland and Anna walked to the platform at the other end of the room, out of the domed hall onto the balcony.

There was an eruption of noises below!

Without waiting for him to raise his hand to wave, a deafening cheer flooded over him.

"Long live King Roland!"

"Long live the king!"

"Long live the City of Neverwinter!"

The cheers were earth-shattering. The crowd was flooded with euphoria as the king ascended the throne. Streamers and petals drifted down from the balcony and swirled in the cold wind. For a moment, nobody seemed to care about the flurries of snow anymore.

Just as the city bell tolled, the cannons at the encampment of the First Army also produced thunderous roars at a distance. There, on the border of the Barbarian Land and the Western Region, rose the new King of Graycastle.