

Witch 121

Chapter 121 Looting

When he had talked to all of the five noble families, Roland felt slightly relieved.

When he leaned back into the chair, Nightingale took the initiative to step behind him, putting both her hands on his shoulders and began to massage them.

From the moment of defeating the Duke, up until he had taken over the Lord's Castle, had needed merely one day.

Things were going much smoother than he had initially thought, the moment after the Duke had died, most of the people had chosen to surrender. For mercenaries, it was more usual to change their sides during the war, so they just kneeled on the ground, saying that they were willing to fight for the prince.

So the mercenaries became responsible for guarding over the surrendered knights and nobles, while the First Army was responsible for guarding the mercenaries. Like this, the big group moved further towards to the east, and in the afternoon at 3 p.m. they finally arrived at Longsong Stronghold. When the guards saw the head of the dead Duke and the other captured nobles, they had immediately opened the gate, letting the 4th Prince into the city.

Roland didn't wait until all the nobles were gathered, giving them the chance to welcome him with great fanfare and to declare him as new City Lord, instead he immediately left for the Lord's Castle.

The castle was placed in the middle of the city and looked like a city within the city. When he entered the castle area a small skirmish broke out, Nightingale had to use an explosion cachet to blow open the entrance to the flower garden. Within the garden, more than twenty guards loyal to the old Duke tried to stop Roland from stepping in, but they all were quickly killed by the First Army. However the guards had still been able to use their hand crossbows, resulting in five injuries of which two had been seriously injured, fortunately Nana had come along with the military operation and had quickly been able to heal them.

In the meantime, ten personal guards used this opportunity to take the rest of the Duke's family to flee through the backdoor, but they were still spotted by Lightning and were captured soon afterwards. The Duke's wife and her two sons hands were tied and were waiting to be judged – even now they were still in the dark, ignorant of the fact that the Duke had been defeated.

When Roland gained control over the Lord's Castle, Border Town's First Army immediately swarmed out and took over the castle district. When comparing the Lord's Castle in Longsong Stronghold with the castle in Border Town, Roland had to admit that the stronghold's castle had a much more magnificent shape. It had a hexagonal outline with six watchtowers on its wall, and a five-story high tower in the middle – during this era it was really rare to build places that were this high. Within the castle grounds, there were also the residences of the castle's inhabitants, warehouses, stables and everything else they needed, the Duke even had his own personal prison under the castle's basement.

He put the valuable prisoners like the Duke's family into this exact prison, the civilians were all freed, while the mercenaries had their weapons confiscated and placed into the castle garden or its free rooms. At the same time he also picked out some leaders and paid them to keep watch themselves – in

Roland's eyes, the Northern Slope Mine would be the best destination for these opportunistic people, but at the moment he still had more important things he had to do.

Until now, he had still to do the most important task after a battle – which was commonly known as looting the corpse.

Roland together with a witch kept looking over everything over and over again inside of the castle, he hadn't even let go of the God's Stone of Retaliation he had found in the vault. After they had searched through everything, the gain was really impressive. Just within two boxes they had discovered in the basement, he found already more than 10.000 gold royals alone. Within a hidden chamber in the bedroom Nightingale discovered several scores of eyeball sized gems. Echo found another chamber hidden behind the fireplace, which wasn't only filled with a variety of gold crafts, such as the scepter, the crown, etc., there were also many pieces of dazzling jewelry, neatly hung on the wall on a wooden frame.

This were all the Duke's personal financial resources!

When Roland saw all this great wealth in front of him and compared it with the five hundred gold royals he had gathered in the last two season, his heart was filled with myriads of regrets. He wasn't prepared for how alluring the feeling of looting was, if he didn't come from a highly developed industrial era, he most probably would have kept everything for himself.

But now he could only sigh with sorrow, he had to think of the greater picture. In the foreseeable future, the working population in the Border Town would increase substantially, and before he could develop his territorial agriculture, he would need to import large amounts of grain from other sources.

So all the treasure was stored into boxes and were lightened by Hummingbird, then under the protection of Iron Axe and several personal guards, they were brought back to his own castle storage in Border Town. With the time included to enchant everything, the delivery would take around three days.

Because of this, after the second day Roland no longer took in gold royals as ransom. Eating the Duke had brought him many benefits, and now he only needed more living people and animals.

"Your Highness, do you really only want to stay here for a week?" Asked Nightingale.

"What?" Roland had closed his eyes, enjoying the tingling burst coming from his shoulders.

"This is the largest city in the West, right?" She whispered, "compared to Border Town, why don't you want to stay in this more prosperous place?"

"The power structure in Longsong Stronghold is tangled and complicated, it isn't suitable for doing what I want to do. And with my plan, we would keep the status quo, what isn't so bad. If I want to change it, the resistance I would encounter would only become larger, and if I would use cruel ways they would lump together trying to sweep me away."

Roland smiled and said, "Of course the most important part is, that the people here in the stronghold are deeply affected by the church, so it would become difficult to get the people to accept you. I have once said, that I hope that the witches will be able to walk freely through the streets, and in Border Town, this is now possible."

“Yeah,” Nightingale said softly, “you have already fulfilled your promise.”

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Early on the third day, Petrov brought in his list in a hurry, and as usual Roland received him in the hall.

“Your Highness, I have made my decision.”

“I will take a look.” Said Roland and received the list from him. And just like he had expected, on top of the list with the biggest amount of needed points were serfs with the value of 2, about 800 people, also 100 cattle and 300 sheep for a total of 900 points, the rest were paid with all kinds of craftsmen.

“Your Royal Highness, is this acceptable?”

“Of course, you only had to scrap 3000 points together,” Roland returned the list to him, “By when will you be able to gather all these people and supplies?”

“Today will be possible, at least in the case of the people and other properties they will stay in the Honeysuckle territory, but Your Highness, if you want to bring them back with you to Border Town, it may take about two weeks’ time.

“It’s up to you to organize the transport to Border Town,” said Roland, tapping the table. “As a merchant, you should have the experience of organizing a caravan.”

“Yes, sir.” Petrov hesitated for a moment, “Then my father...”

“You can take him back with you today,” said the Prince laughingly and handed him a parchment scroll. “If you think there is no problem with it, just sign it and imprint your thumb onto it.”

“This is... the representative’s contract?” Petrov only had read the beginning and then he spoke agitated. “Do you really promise to grant the right to govern over Longsong Stronghold to the Honeysuckle Family? Please wait for a moment.” He spread out the scroll and began to read the contract carefully.

Seeing that Petrov showed caution Roland nodded with satisfaction – as a collaborator, paying attention to the contracts is the most basic requirement.

After a while, Petrov raised his head, “This contract and what you told me yesterday, is basically the same, but there is one thing...” He pointed to the end of the contract, “Your Royal Highness, shouldn’t I write my father’s name here? The Count is after all the representative of my family.

Roland smiled, “Of course not, it was you, not your father, who talked with me about the post as representative, so it’s naturally to write your name at the end of the contract.”

For a moment Petrov became startled, he couldn’t believe what he had heard so he asked: “Your Highness, you don’t mean that – ”

“Yes, you will take over the place of the Duke and rule over the stronghold,” Roland nodded. “If you’re able to fulfill the contract, you can continue to rule over the city even after I became the King.” Here he paused and smiled, “But if you break the contract, you will meet the same end as the Duke – since I was

able to break into Longsong Stronghold once, there is no problem to do it for a second time. Let's work well together, Mr. Ambassador."

Chapter 122 Father and Son

The dungeons of the castle were not so dark and wet as the prison of Border Town, maybe the Duke didn't want to turn his basement into a haunted house, or smell the nauseating stench as soon as he descended the stairs. Generally speaking, the dungeon was still relatively clean. The cells were also differently decorated accordingly to its grade, some were empty, some were not only decorated with a bed, they even had a wardrobe, a desk and chandeliers were also readily available. Probably the cells were also a place for the Duke to keep some of the nobility, so the basic etiquette had to be guaranteed.

Roland also found a special cell in the corner, within it stood a large bed taking more than half the room, there were also chains hanging down from the ceiling, but the chain for the neck and hands were wrapped in layers of sheepskin and on the wall hung a variety of whips. It seems that Duke Ryan had also done conducted research in some areas, he thought, it's a pity that I have to leave in a few days, so I cannot analyze it carefully.

As the most valuable prisoner, Lord Hull was naturally in the best cell. If someone didn't focus on the external iron railings, they could think this was a luxury bedroom. Furthermore, he also had to share the room with Count Maple Leaf, Viscount Wolf, the eldest son of the Wild Rose Family and the second son of the Elk Family, together with the Ryan family these were the six ruling family of the Longsong Stronghold – of course, the Ryan Family had been destroyed by Roland, so his wife and his sons were kept in a cell next door.

When the other people saw that the Prince had appeared in the dungeon, the nobles stood up, not waiting for them to start their questioning, Roland began first: "I will take Count Honeysuckle with me, so you can come out. As for the rest of you, we are still waiting for the ransom, the moment they pay I will let you out."

"Father," shouted Petrov at the moment when he saw him, then he glanced at his friend, and then to Roland, "Your Highness, I didn't see the name of Count Elk on the list, if he died on the battlefield, the eldest son of the Elk Family should be now the head of the family, but at the moment he isn't at home, so there is no one who could take over this job and Rene cannot be redeemed. But if you let him out, he could go home and organize his self-redeeming? I am willing to give a guarantee for him."

"Do you mean the eldest son of the Elk Family, Jacques Medde?" Roland shook his head. "He already came back. Not only did he come back to the stronghold, no he even came to the castle yesterday, but... I don't believe he will pay the ransom."

Hearing this, Rene dashed to the front of the cage, "Why?"

"He said since you didn't protect your father on the battlefield, it was the same as you being his executioner."

"Why did he say this, the one who killed our father –" Rene immediately closed his mouth.

Roland didn't take his outburst seriously "What you wanted to say, that it was obviously me who killed the count, right?" He went in front the cage. "Previously to the Months of the Demons, your father sent

intruders into my castle, trying to burn my food reserves,” said Roland. “And now he followed the Duke onto the battlefield, taking his knights to attack my territory. I merely started a counterattack, to repel the invaders. But now I’m the murderer? Shouldn’t it be Duke Ryan who had ordered your father to act be the one who gets condemned? In addition, if it were not for Hills’s statement that you did not know anything about the attempt to burn my food, you would already be a dead man by now.”

“...” Rene was left speechless.

“Your Royal Highness,” Petrov asked, worried. “If his brother doesn’t pay the ransom for him, will you kill Rene?”

“No that won’t be the case, after all, I’m always kind,” Roland grinned, “Most probably I will take him with me to Border Town, there he will work twenty years in the North Slope Mine to redeem himself.”

“How much is his ransom?”

“As a second son, he has no chance to inherit the title, the price for him is much smaller than for Count Honeysuckle, as long as someone pays a value of 1000 points in materials he can go.” Roland looked at him with interest, “How is it? Do you want to pay the ransom for him?”

“What value, a thousand gold royals?” Count Honeysuckle interrupted their talk.

“Your son will inform you later of what it means,” the Prince gave them the signal to move, “Come on, there is nothing for us to do down here. Since he is the second son of the Elk Family there is no need to rush it for a while yet, so you can go back and then slowly consider it.”

The entire group finally left the prison, when they came to the gate of the castle, the Count suddenly stopped, “Your Royal Highness, I know Duke Ryan acted sinfully and it’s unforgivable, but... His wife and son are innocent.”

“Perhaps,” Roland couldn’t deny his words, “I did not intend to sentence them to be exiled or to hang them and so on. I will just take them with me to Border Town and place them into the prison there.” Until the day I ascend the throne, he thought. Now it is not the time to be benevolent to a woman. Even if they aren’t guilty, he would get no benefits if he was to release them, furthermore, he would only bring another source of problems to himself – after all, the eldest son has had legal right of succession.

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“What did you just say?” asked Shalafi Hull disbelieving and stared with open mouth at Petrov. “His Royal Highness doesn’t intend to live in Longsong Stronghold, and furthermore he even wants you to govern the stronghold for him?”

When they were back to Count Honeysuckle’s castle, Petrov immediately told his father everything that had happened during the last three days, when the other one heard about the representative’s contract, the Count couldn’t bear to wait for another confirmation. He jumped up and walked through the study in circles, obviously feeling a very complicated emotion.

“Father, are you all right?” Asked Perot worriedly.

“So it seems that our opponents are mainly Elk Family. Compared to them, the other three have neither the heritage nor the strength, so they shouldn’t be a problem for us.”

“What?” He couldn’t follow what his father meant.

“You’re such a disappointment,” said the Count, “You really let me down, His Highness gave you such a good chance, but even now you haven’t figured out who your opponents are.”

“Uh, aren’t you surprised?”

“You mean the fact that the Prince insists on going back to Border Town? Of course, I also think it’s strange,” the Count grasped his beard, “But his reasons have nothing to do with us, for us it’s only important that the contract is true.”

This is indeed the case, Petrov thought, I cannot believe that His Highness would go through all this trouble only to make fun of me, as for why he loves to live in Border Town, later I will have enough time to find out the true reasons. But I would never have thought that my father’s ability to accept the new circumstance was this strong.

“Did I hear it right, is that Meede boy your friend?” Shalafi suddenly stood in front of Petrov, “Tomorrow, you will go over and redeem him.”

“You agree that I spend a thousand gold royals to redeem him?” Petrov got startled.

“Think about it, Count Elk died and the eldest son doesn’t want to redeem the second son, and during the battle, with the exception of a few knights, they had almost no losses. Once Jacques Medde took over the title, he will try to hinder your success in the future... No,” said the Count, “Why Jacques did not want didn’t want to redeem Rene is because he is afraid that the other will be a threat him.”

Alright, it turns out this was the true reason, Perot smiled in his heart. But he also knew that his father was correct, Rene had grown up with swords and spears, furthermore, he was much closer to the knights within their territory, unlike Jacques the eldest son, who doesn’t have the body and air of a Lord, instead he preferred the debauched life of a noble.

Although Rene had repeatedly shown that he wanted to be a knight, but that was the time where he had no chance to inherit. But now that the Count was dead, who could guarantee that he wouldn’t ask for the help of the other knights, who could kill the eldest son for him? So why redeem a person who would later become a problem to himself, Jacques’s decision was very simple and ruthless.

“My friend would never do that,” he assured.

“Perhaps, but after you have redeemed him, Jacques will get a headache, whether he has any intention of doing so or not.” Shalafi further explained, “As for the materials worth 1000 points, we can just choose some more craftsmen.”

“When I prepared the ransom for you, I have already transferred some of our craftsmen, and in the case, I will now transfer even more, we won’t have enough craftsmen in our own territory.”

“Do not worry about it, you know that the North has become quite a mess?” explained the Count confidently, “Most of the four Kingdoms forces were killed at Hermes, so everywhere the Lords have forced the people into their armies, there is now a large number of refugees. We can just take this opportunity to eat a little more, like this we can even save some of our monthly payment.”

Hearing all these explanations, Petrov discovered that his father was also an expert businessman – at least his business ability was much stronger than his ability on the battlefield.

Chapter 123 The Invitation of the Church

It was already the fourth day since Roland had taken over the castle, today nearly all nobles in the surrounding areas were gathered inside the castle Grand Hall.

Although most people already knew of the news, Roland still felt that it was necessary to tell them personally that the Western territory now had a new ruler.

After he informed them about his intentions to move back to Border Town and that the eldest son of the Honeysuckle Family would now rule in his stead, everyone had suddenly started to discussing the news. Of course, no one was willing to take the lead at this time to stand up and object to it, after all, the Duke's head was still hanging above the city gate and news that King Timothy had suffered a great loss and couldn't send any external forces was now also known to everyone.

Furthermore, all the knights of the Honeysuckle Family had already been redeemed, while at the same time he hadn't accepted any ransom for the other knights, so that the knights, together with the mercenaries, could all come back with him to Border Town. In Roland's plan, the mercenaries would be sent to the mine, where they could work to earn their freedom, and the knights would get a job offer in case they showed their repentance and had good manner – after all, most knights were literate and could thus also be used as teachers. Of course, for the rest of their life they wouldn't ever be allowed to ever use a weapon again.

If it was handled like this, the Honeysuckle Family should have enough power to hold the other four noble families back, and they should also have enough troops to defend Longsong Stronghold and their own territory as well, Roland thought. As for the invisible stirring undercurrent, it's a problem that Petrov will have to worry about on his own.

In the past few days, he also took the time to send some Border Town residents back who had rebelled during the winter where many people had died out due to hunger and the cold, including the former Finance Minister Ferrero, they would all face trial in Border Town. His only regret was that the mastermind behind the attempt to burn his food and the death of Grayhound, Count Medde had already been killed on the battlefield.

Today, the traffic between the Longsong Stronghold and Border Town has finally been restored, which meant that until the end of next week many ships would sail upstream to Border Town to deliver the gathered supplies. Roland guessed that Barov would be very busy for the few next weeks, he had not only received a lot of looted gold coins, he also had to organize the resettlement of the large number of immigrants. Also it was still unknown whether Karl had built enough wooden sheds.

Thinking of this problems, he could not help but want to return to the Border Town as soon as possible, in addition, the great farming operation also needed to start soon.

After entertaining all the nobles to lunch, Roland intended to take a nap, but then one of his guards announced a special guest.

The High Priest of the Church in Longsong Stronghold.

Hearing this, Roland suddenly had no thought of sleep left.

Longsong Stronghold was completely different from Border Town, here the Church had already been rooted for a long time, they not only had a church, they have even dispatched a High Priest to this place. This was also the Prince's main reason that he had decided to further develop Border Town rather than staying further in Longsong Stronghold – here the people were already under the influence of the church for a long time and any of the civilian could become their eyes. Here his plan to manipulate the people's view would become complicated and the risk that the witches would be discovered would also become much higher. Unless he completely unrooted the Church, his reforms would never get a chance to work.

Paying attention to the replacement of the ruler of Longsong Stronghold is a normal thing for the Church, so Roland wasn't too surprised that they would send him a representative to come into contact with him. However, the identity of the person they send was a bit special, as the High Priest of the Church he belonged to the most influential people of people, the area under his jurisdiction was of a similar size to that of a Duke.

Once more he decided to use the Grand Hall as the meeting place.

The High Priest Tylo seemed to be around 40 years old. He was dressed in the typical church-style with a white underrobe and a blue robe above it, giving him a very neat appearance and a behavior that was just like a courteous aristocracy. If he wasn't a member of the royal family and allied with the witches, Roland believed that holding a conversation with such a person would have been a pleasure.

As the High Priest he had to be in possession of a high-quality God's Stone of Retaliation, so in order to avoid any accidents, Roland specifically told Nightingale before the meeting, that she should stay away from him during it.

After Tylo gave him a salute, Roland invited him to sit at the table and ordered some tea.

No matter what he thought, he had to at least show a welcoming atmosphere on the surface.

"Your Royal Highness, I'm here as a representative of the New Holy City," Tylo said with a smile, "You have become the veritable master of the Western territory, may God bless you."

"Thank you," Roland said in a relaxed tone. "You do not seem to care at all that I've gotten rid of Duke Ryan and taken over Longsong Stronghold."

"We rarely intervene in secular disputes, as long as the people can live a good life, he has to be a good ruler. So in which family he was born, or if he belonged to the royal family, it is not important to the Church. In fact, I think the church is much more open minded in this respect, previously I was only a farmer's son, and now I have become a High Priest," he smiled. "Excuse me, my Lord, but I don't believe that a mere farmer could become a Duke, right?"

If he launched an uprising to overthrow the royal family, he can even become the King. Roland thought, so he never spoke it out, instead, he went straight for the topic, "So why did you come today, was it only to deliver the blessing?"

"The blessing was only part of what I have come for, I also want to offer a cooperation between us."

“Cooperation? What kind of cooperation?”

“We would help you with whatever you need to expand your territory or your forces.”

“Hold on...” Roland frowned. “You just said that the Church rarely intervenes in secular disputes.”

“Rarely intervention doesn’t mean no intervention,” said the High Priest, still casually. “I have said that as long as the people in this world have a smooth and peaceful life, we will not intervene. But the struggle between your brother Timothy and your third sister Garcia has resulted in widespread poverty throughout the south. In the beginning, we thought that Timothy deserved it and would become a respected King, but now we think he isn’t any longer worthy, you are such a man.”

Roland got a thoughtful look, it seems the Church has the desire to help me fight for the throne. He subconsciously asked. “Why?”

“You lead the people of Border Town to resist the demon beasts, and spend the whole Months of the Demons with them in Border Town, this all proves your courage and ability. And from the large amount of food you purchased from Willow Town everyone can see do not want your people to starve, which shows your kindness. With this you have the three grandeur characteristics a noble should have, furthermore, you are even of royal blood. All this are the reason why we chose you.

Roland didn’t believe one word the High Priest said, but at least it proved that, even if Border Town was at the edge of the country and was an independent island-state during the winter, they were still under the close watch of the church.

“How would you help? Would you dispatch an Army of Judges to fight for me?”

“Even though we want to quell the warring state in the south as soon as possible, but if we were to do something like you suggested we would arouse the resentment of most of the nobility. So we can only help you materially,” the High Priest took two pill out of his pocket, one was black the other was red, on both the sigil of the Holy City had been etched, “This is our equivalent to the drugs produced in your Alchemy Square. The red pills will temporarily make your men stronger, while the black pill reduces the feeling of pain and coldness and instead increases their endurance by several times. With these drugs, your army should become unstoppable, and the Church would only charge you the production cost,” for a moment Tylo paused, “One gold royal. These two pills, can be presented to you as a test product to prove that my statement is the truth.”

“What is the reward you are hoping for? Expanding the reach of the Church and building churches in every territory?”

“Of course this would make us happy, but our main intention is to end the war. As long as the people can have a peaceful life, they will naturally come into God’s arms.

Roland accepted the offered pills. “This sounds amazing, but for the time being, I have no intention of competing for the crown of the Kingdom of Graycastle, Both Timothy and Garcia are my close relatives and I do not want to hurt them.”

“I can understand your point,” the High Priest smiled reassuringly, “but sometimes the bonds of family cannot stop the temptation of power, especially when you become only a stumbling stone on the road to power for others. These pills will only be the beginning, there are still many other possibilities of how

we could help you. If you decide to take that step, you can always come to the Church to find me.” Having said all of this, he stood up, bent down in salute, “With this I have already informed you of the Church’s intentions, may God be with you, Your Royal Highness.”

Chapter 124 Return to Border Town

“I have probably never seen you lie as much as you have today,” Nightingale said as she stepped out from her fog right after Tylo has left.

“How was it for the Church’s High Priest,” Roland asked, “could you tell if he was lying?”

“No, my sight was blocked by his God’s Stone of Retaliation, at the place where he was standing, I could only see a mass of darkness.

Unfortunately, he couldn’t treat the High Priest the same way that he has all the other nobles, Roland thought full of regret. He then placed the two pills on the table, “Tell me, do these pills really have some kind of miraculous effects?”

Reducing the pain, the same could be done by morphine, as for increasing the strength, it sounds like it increases the rate at which the adrenal gland releases hormones, the problem is how did they manage to extract these substances and make it into these pills? If the Church had such a high technical level, they should have conquered the world long ago.

Wait a minute... Roland suddenly thought of a possibility, could they have done it with magic?

“You are able to see the flow of magic, right?” He looked at Nightingale, “Can you see any traces of magic in these two pills?”

Nightingale took the pills in her hand and gave them a close observation, but when she gave them back she could only say. “There is no magic to see, but for me, they resemble the God’s Stone of Retaliation a bit.”

“God Stone of Retaliation?” Roland asked in confusion.

“Well,” she nodded. “You were with me in my world of fog. It’s only black and white, but the darkness of the normal black and the darkness of the God’s Stone of Retaliation are different. From the latter, I sense a feeling of emptiness as if it was trying to swallow the world around it. I do not know how to better describe that feeling...” Nightingale hesitated. “Rather than speaking of a black hole, it’s more like there is nothing there at all.”

“Nothingness?”

“That’s right, they give off a feeling of nothingness,” she nodded acknowledging, “The two pills give me also a feeling of nothingness, but only very subtly, and... also it’s not a round hole, but rather a section of flowing thin black threads. ”

“Can this ‘nothingness’ affect your ability?”

Nightingale grabbed the pills once more and suddenly entered the fog, only to reappear soon afterward, “They seem to have no effect on my ability.”

“I think it’s still better to take prisoners with a death sentence and let them eat these pills to try out their effects,” Roland wrapped a piece of paper carefully around the pills, only then did he put them into his pocket.

“I would never have expected that the Church would have such a good impression of you,” Nightingale said after she sat back by the Prince’s side, giving off a depressed feeling.

“If the High Priest didn’t wear his God’s Stone of Retaliation, I bet of the ten sentences he had spoken nine would be lies.” Roland said in disdain, “In the end, the most important point is that what they are offering and what they are asking for, simply don’t add together.”

“Why?”

“Look at what they want: More churches, more believers, a prince or king who only gains power with their support, and will henceforth spread their divine propaganda. A stable country is more conducive to the development of believers and the development of their power. Otherwise under the chaos of war, the church and the monastery would be reduced to refugees and become the target for robbing nobles.

“But can’t they just have taken a fancy for you, because you can bring the people a peaceful life?”

“I don’t think so,” Roland shook his head, “Stability stems from unity or equilibrium, even if the king idles away only seeking pleasure every day, the people would still be better off than those who are living within the countries that are at war. So if they were to support the 2nd Prince it wouldn’t be so surprising, it would also not be strange if they were to decide to support my sister Garcia, but what is strange that they would come to me and offer their support – especially now after Garcia has just won against Timothy.”

If the Church was to now fully support Garcia, I am afraid that the Eastern territories of the Kingdom would be swallowed by her in less than six months. With that around forty percent of the country would fall under the rule of the Queen of Clearwater, and the pressure I would have to face would start to exponentially increase.

Yet they don’t support the strong, but instead they chose the most vulnerable candidate, from their point of view. This situation seemingly has to be advantageous to the Church. Assuming I was to accept their support, the already complicated situation in this country with two Kings would then become even more chaotic. The direct consequence of a three-sided war would be a sharp drop in population, a rapid loss of wealth and since the war would spread over the whole country its unifying it would only be delayed even more.

What advantage is there to the Church in this? Needless to say they won’t get more believers, I’m afraid that even the churches built in all the cities will all be torn down until nothing is left.

“It seems you don’t understand the nobles’ way of thinking, they are always twisting and turning,” Nightingale sighed.

“Well,” Roland replied laughingly, “I don’t belong to them.”

“...” Nightingale narrowed her eyes, staring at the Prince for a long time, “Strange, why wasn’t this a lie?”

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Three days later, Roland had finally cleared out the castle and the stronghold's library and was now sailing back on Little Town while very satisfied.

Along the Shishui River, near Border Town, the river scene has changed its appearance during the last few days. In the areas near Border Town which had been burned open by Anna there were now many people who were very busy – seeing their dresses, they should be the first serfs who had been transported to Border Town. And in the area near the Impassable Mountain Range, there were erected a number of simple wooden sheds. Within the sheds Roland could also faintly see some activity, he thought it should be the serf's family.

These people were tied to the land for generations, their children would also be born as serfs, because of this they couldn't see any hope, ending in living a life filled with numbness. Their motivation to work the land came not from their hearts, instead, it came from the slaver's whips. The resulting low productivity was simply a great waste of human resources.

There was no doubt that slavery was the enemy of industrial production and was a system which had to be abolished. But Roland did not intend to let them all turn into free hands, but he wanted to provide them a road out, so that they could see the hope of promotion to becoming free people – even if such a kind master was to give his slaves the possibility to get rid of their slave status was to be a precedent, this kind of compromise on handling serfs wouldn't arouse much attention even if the news was to circulate. At most, the other nobles would think that he was just a kind person, nothing more.

He only had to wait until the time was ripe in the future, then he would fully abolish slavery, by that time the resistance he would face would be much less.

The area near the pier was crowded with sailboats, making it clear that the small pier was unable to handle all these ships. Fortunately, Little Town was more of a light-craft, so it didn't need a dock to land. It seems that I also have to put the task of developing the pier on the schedule, Roland thought.

When he was finally back at the castle, he couldn't allow himself any time to rest, instead, he immediately went to his office to call Barov, letting him report about Border Town's actual situation and its materials.

The assistant minister has already been prepared for a long time now, so he only had to take out a roll of parchment out of his pocket and spread it out on the large wooden table.

"Your Royal Highness, the amount of materials you sent back to Border Town really scared me," that said, the upturned corner of his mouth still gave away his mood, "twelve of my apprentices needed a whole night to count all the coins, which were more than fourteen thousand gold royals. This is equivalent to the annual income of an ordinary city!"

To accumulate all these gold royals the Duke probably needed more than 20 years, Roland thought, most probably it's come from the plunder and exploitation of the people in the Western territory. I have to turn them into food, steel, and machinery as soon as possible. "Those jewels, how much worth are the jewelry and handicrafts?"

"I haven't had the time to convert them yet, by conservative estimates they are also worth around 10,000 gold royals, if they were auctioned in King's City, their price would be even greater. But for now, they are only stored in the basement of your castle," Barrow paused, "However, this means that the original storage room isn't big enough for all the food, so I suggest that you will increase the castle's area, building further storage warehouses to store other supplies."

Chapter 125 Municipal Development

"What can you tell me about the people they've sent?" Roland asked.

"That's right, please take a look below," the Assistant Minister pointed to the bottom of the parchment, "Until now 1'100 people were sent to Border Town. Most of them belong to the ranks of serfs, in accordance with your request have all been held outside of the town. The thirty-five craftsmen have been placed under Karl's command and their homes are all located in the 'New Civilization District'," Barov spoke these unusual mouthful of the terms, "But Your Royal Highness, is this really okay? I thought that area had specially been prepared for the witches."

"The people I have sent out to spread the news about the safe haven haven't returned yet, their progress is slower than I would've imagined. So, the first houses will be used for the craftsmen and their families, we can still build more afterwards," Roland's plan was to renovate the whole Border Town, the wooden houses and mud cottages would be converted into brick houses, while at the same time leaving enough space for wide streets between the houses, rather than the alleys just wide enough for two people to walk side by side, that they had now.

"Understood," Barov nodded, "Your Highness, I've heard that there will also be cattle and sheep being shipped here?"

"Ah that's true. But not now, I deliberately let them come a few days later, they will come together with the shepherds. They will be sent to the grasslands between the western city wall, the Concealing Forest and the Impassable Mountain Range; that should be a good area to turn into a pasture. We should reopen the destroyed part of the city wall and use it as an exit, after all, the wall is only useful during the Months of the Demons.

For now, they finally had enough people and money to break through the bottleneck and allow Border Town to develop further, so Roland was finally able to use all of his otherworldly knowledge.

He called one of the guards into his office and ordered them: "Go find Karl and tell him to meet me in the executive office, I guess if he isn't at the mine he will certainly be at the new area outside the town.

Half an hour later, Karl walked into the office and bowed in greeting to Roland. "Your Highness."

It has been nearly six months since he had seen the mason for the first time and since he had been recruited into the staff of the Town Hall, he could be regarded as the busiest official in the last half-year. First he had to preside over the construction of the city walls, and then there were the houses in the new district and the temporally wooden sheds for the new inhabitants of Border Town. Now, on his thirty-five-year-old silhouette, he revealed the first few strands of silver and his skin has also started darkening from always being outside. But the spirit Roland had seen burning in him at their first meeting was still burning as strong and hot as ever before.

That a new environment could quickly change a man was true. Only six months ago Karl was still carefully trying to hide himself, clearly busy running away from trouble. But now, as an experienced project commander who had personally been in charge of several people, even his gestures showed some hints of him feeling in power. But what Roland appreciated the most, was that he was always still willing to accept the thoughts of other people.

Roland acknowledged his greeting with a smile, "Please sit, and come take a look at his." He handed him some sketches that he had previously drawn, "You see, I need you to build something new for me."

"This building looks like a warehouse. Well, building it with its base placed on stilts it would be safe against incoming floods," Karl quickly swept over the first sketch and then turned to the second one and after looking for a while he asked, "Is this supposed to be a furnace?"

"Yes, I need you to build more than five of these furnaces near the North Slope Mine, they will be needed to calcine the cement and to burn clay bricks. So, you have to find an empty spot which still has good transport channels and the area should be spacious enough so that we can still later build some more furnaces there."

"I understand." Karl now turned his view to the last sketch and immediately frowned after he saw it, "This... seems to be sewers? No, there is also a roof and walls... and the area behind it looks like a pond. Your Royal Highness, I seem to be unable to make sense of this."

Roland laughed, "This is a toilet, and will also be your construction project of the highest priority."

"A toilet?" Karl thought about it, "Your Highness, where do you plan to build them? For this, you already have chamber pots placed in your castle, and your attendants are responsible for cleaning them on a regular basis. Most of the villagers don't even use them, instead, they are doing it directly outside of their houses," Karl explained. "The same is also true for the serfs, which can directly discharge their filth into the Shishui River, and the river will then take their filth away."

So, that was the strong smell I smelled today at the dock, Roland shook his head, trying to erase these unpleasing thoughts, "If that is the case, we need to change this bad habit as soon as possible."

"Uh... bad habit?" Karl still didn't seem to understand what the Prince's meaning.

For a commoner who was accustomed to urinating at any place, it was naturally hard for them to understand, how beautiful a casual stroll could be without having to fear stepping on a landmine, Roland criticized privately. "Anyway, you only have to follow these sketches, I have already roughly marked their size, so you only have to use this distance. Within the vicinity of the wooden shed district, you should build at least four toilets, always two side by side. In addition, the wall in the middle of the ditch should be built out of brick, while the outside walls and the roof have to be built out of wood, like this you can save a lot of cement."

"Your Highness, you want to build them side by side... that...," said Karl slowly, evidently, he thought that talking about this dirty theme with His Highness was clearly degrading the royalty's dignity. "But what should we do when they don't use them?"

"I will issue orders which they will have to follow. You just have to build them; I will take care of the rest."

“Alright if that’s the case,” Karl said, nodding his head. “There is another matter I want to discuss with you, Your Royal Highness.

“You may speak.”

“The mason’s guild was forced to disband and now there are many people like me, who all chose to leave King’s City. I would like to write a few letters to those masons who already know where I went and try to recruit them to Border Town. They all have their own area of specialization, for example, for the furnace, Lesya would be the best at it. However, Your Highness I do not know... ”

“That’s no problem at all,” Roland said immediately. “ I will recruit all the masons you’re able to attract, and they will be paid according to their experience and skills, and they will also have the possibility to enter the town’s hall.”

“Thank you for your generosity,” Karl bowed once more then he left.

When the mason had stepped out of the hall, Roland began to write down his plan for the managing the serfs and how he wanted to disband the slavery system.

Border Town’s population had already started to rapidly increase with no end in sight, but as long as they had to dependent on importing food, the town would be in jeopardy if a natural disaster was to occur or the road to the other cities was cut off. Therefore, in addition to increasing and developing industry, development in the area of agriculture was an even higher priority. Border Town had to achieve the level of self-sufficiency as soon as possible.

The Prince believed that as soon as he was able to implement his ideas, the serfs could be turned into farmers, and combined with Leaves’ improved seeds, the area around the Shishui River would soon become a golden wheat ocean.

Regarding the high priority of the toilet, it also had to do with the development of the agriculture – with enough people, land and seeds, the last thing he still needed was the right kind of fertilizer.

Roland certainly knew how troublesome it was to produce fertilizer out of human and animals’ excrements, they had to regularly clean the storage pond, but they also had to rely on human manure, in the end, it was clearly inconvenient. But for now he didn’t have any clue of how to produce it on industrial level, so for the present, he had to rely on this pure natural and organic fertilizer – at least human-animal manure had already been used for a long time, even during the twentieth century some of the rural areas were still using this traditional fertilization.

Many people only had very little knowledge about fertilizer, the vast majority of them just thought that a stool was a dirty thing, and that they should never believe that besides of spreading nausea it could ever have any useful effects. Thus, to cultivate the fields each year, the farmers were still using the three-rotation system. For it a piece of arable land would be divided into three parts, taking turns for spring sowing, sowing in autumn and resting phase, all this was done to avoid the depletion of soil fertility due to constant use.

Chapter 126 Wheat Transformation

For villages and small towns, it didn’t matter whether or not they used the rotation farming system. However, for big cities where the surrounding land was scarce, this system wasted a lot of land. For

example, Silver City, Fallen Dragon Ridge, and King's City were such places, so every month they had to import a large amounts of grain from other cities.

The first step in using fertilizer was to collect the manure. This was also the reason why Roland decided to establish the public toilets as soon as possible. With the toilets, he could reduce the spreading of disease and even beautify the living environment; it was such as simple action but it offered so many improvements.

His goal was for the toilets to already be constructed by the time the rest of the new citizens have been shipped over. As for teaching them how to use compost and cultivate the arable land, Roland decided to select a small group of experienced farmers during the next few days and teach them the system first. After all, the land was still in its clean-up phase, and it would still need at least a week before it would be useable.

After finishing all the work at hand, he decided to go meet Leaves at the back garden and take a look at her experiments.

Since Leaves improved all categories of seeds, there could be seen many different kinds of crops in the garden. She has also followed Roland's suggestion and divided her farming area into several small blocks which were all given a number. With this, she could compare the developments of two groups of test crops.

When Roland stepped into the yard, he was stunned by the picture of golden and dazzling wheat swaying in the wind in front of his eyes.

"Your Royal Highness." When Leaves, who was squatting beside one of her fields became aware of the Prince, she immediately stood up and bowed in greeting.

"Are these the results of your improvements?" He waved his hand trying to stop Leaves from going through the ritual greeting went then to pick one of the wheat plants, feeling the caryopsis with his fingers.

Previously he had no idea what the wheat would look like, but in contrast with the wheat fields in the prince's former memories, those were not only smaller than the ones in his hand, they also had a lot fewer grains.

Leaves nodded in acknowledgment, "I let the wheat grow with my magic, then I harvested the ripe seeds and then planted the seeds once more, what you have in your hands is the result I got out of it. However... I repeated this process several times, but after two or three rounds of planting, it became difficult to grow the wheat as long and large as before, and I just can't understand where the problem lies."

Unfortunately, I cannot help you with that, Roland thought. According to his own pitiful junior high school biology knowledge, it was probably because of self-intersection defects? In the southern area there were only rice seeds, which were poles apart from wheat. So in order to raise the output they always had to purchase new seeds. But even with only two generations of planting it still had a practical value, after all, one wheat plant can produce more than 130 seeds, and if he the let Leaves first transform the generation of seeds, and afterward let the farmers uses those seeds, he could still use the seeds for two years.

“Why is this one empty?” Roland asked when he noticed a field with only a few dry straws.

This is the area where I planted first, but perhaps because I had planted here too many cycles,” Leaves was clearly unsure. “I can only let the plants grow when I cast my magic, but when I remove my magic they will wither soon after.

It seems that even when she used her magic to let the plants grow she still used up the land’s supply of nutrition, and without the nutrition, the plants could not survive. Roland went to the last flower bed, there the planted wheat had a very strange shape, on an arm-thick stalk of wheat with several blue grain ears, and the center stalk even had several branches which were with green leaves. So, the volume of grains per plant were very large, but on the whole field, there were only two plants.

This was the area Roland has asked Leaves to create new plants like a ‘wheat tree’.

He had envisioned to turn a wheat plant into something similar to a banana tree, where he could harvest the fruit from the branches, with the possibility of a regular harvest, thus eliminating the need for sowing, and if they could grow even larger, they would get more green leaves, improving the photosynthesis and reducing the land requirements. But at present, the thick and solid wheat stalks together with its branches took a lot of space, furthermore the grain ears would only grow on the top of the stalks and branches which weren’t what he had originally imagined. Perhaps, should I ask Leaves to transform them in the direction of grape vines? Roland thought, after all, Leaves had never seen real banana trees, but grapes were not a rare product within the Kingdom of Graycastle, and as long as she had an image it should be easy for to imitate.

“The seeds of these three wheat plants cannot be used for sowing,” Leaves explained, “I tried already, but the seeds wouldn’t germinate after they were planted. However, they can still be harvested several times, you see the grains are the second batch.”

Can’t germinate means that every plant would be a unique wheat tree and that Leaves would have to personally create every tree, so for the current situation, it doesn’t have any true value.

“You have done a great job. The wheat plant with the big grain ear will be called golden one. I will create a test field for you south of the Shishui River, it will be surrounded by fences and clapboards, to hide it from the view of other people. There I hope we will soon harvest a batch of golden ones. As for the garden, you can continue to use it to improve and create new wheat varieties. I also came up with a lot of new ideas, not only for the wheat crops but also for the grapes,” said Roland.

Unfortunately, Leaves only has a macro level understanding of the characteristics of a crop, so she can only change it to get more fruits, sweeter taste, denser branches and so on... If she could understand it on a micro-level, she wouldn’t only be able to manipulate the genes, wouldn’t she also be able to fine tune it? Such that the plants could even absorb light other than from the visible spectrum – such as ultraviolet, x-rays, and even ionizing radiation for photosynthesis, getting a direct output of starch, glucose, sucrose and other energy storage substances, so that we could directly harvest what is needed.

During the evening, the 4th Prince lit a bonfire near the Shishui River, and let Carter and his guards gather all the serfs together. A huge cauldron with more than 128-liter capacity was brought over and placed on the frame of a new simple mud stove, to cook congee over the fire.

With the fire at his back, the serfs could only see the narrow image of their new Lord, and the moment they became aware of him they would fearfully lower their heads. Only some of them were bold enough to secretly glance at the Prince from time to time.

Roland who stood in front of the bonfire began to announce his new rules to the crowd of more than a thousand people.

"I am Roland Wimbledon, the 4th Prince of the Kingdom of Graycastle, the Lord of Border Town, and the Ruler of the Western territories."

"Today you were all summoned here, the day that you came to my territory was your lucky day! As long as you work hard, you can break away from your current status and place!"

"That is right, I will give you a chance to get rid of your status as slaves, becoming free people!"

Hearing this within the serfs an uproar broke out. The serfs clearly knew what a status as a free person meant, they could no longer be cruelly abused by their owners, without any rest always forced to carry on farming endlessly, and they would no longer have to turn over the crops they produced on their fields to their owners, their sons and daughters would no longer be turned into the next generation of serfs.

Roland waited for a moment to let them calm down then he continued, "From tomorrow onward, each of you will get a fixed field assigned to him, and at the same time someone will guide you in the process to get a better harvest. In the first year, 30% of your harvest will belong to you, while the other 70% will belong to Border Town. The people who get the best harvest results will be promoted to free people!"

"After becoming a freeman, your family will be exempted from slavery, and then you can decide if you want to continue farming or if you want to find another occupation in the town, it will be your own decision. If you choose to continue farming, 20% of your harvest will belong to Border Town as rent, while the other 80% will belong to yourself. Later you can buy the land from the Lord and then you will no longer have to transfer any food to the castle! "

After his last word faded away, only the sound of breathing could be heard, until someone shouted, "Your Royal Highness, was what you said was really the truth?"

"Of course," Roland answered, stressing every word. "As a Lord, I would never deceive my own people."

"His Royal Highness is merciful," some people couldn't help themselves from saying out loud, then the sound quickly became louder, "Long live His Royal Highness the Prince!"

Suddenly the first serf in front of him kneeled down, followed soon by the second person, then the third person...

Until the whole mass of people kneeled in front of him, still calling his name, getting louder and louder. Until the thousands of voices turned into the same rhythm, "His Royal Highness the Prince!" "Long live the Prince!"

Hearing the crowd so clearly understanding his intent, there was no need for him to drag things out for any longer, the Prince thought to himself.

He clapped his hands then said to the bodyguard behind him, "Bring the meal!"

Chapter 127 Wendy

When Roland fell asleep, Nightingale emerged out of the fog, stepped to the side of his bed and gently straightening the quilt, covering an exposed arm. Then for a moment she quietly stood beside the bed watching the sleeping Roland, she then quietly slid through the floor, back to her own room.

“You’re not already asleep?” Seeing Wendy sitting on the bed and reading, Nightingale was slightly surprised.

“I’m afraid you would do something stupid!” Wendy glared at her, “His Royal Highness is not a child, is it really necessary for you to take care of him until he finally fell asleep?” Original and most up to date translations are posted at volaretranslations.com.

“His Royal Highness has sent people to other towns to spread the news that the Witch Cooperation Association is here, so I have to be at his side in the case someone heard the news of the witches and now wants to harm His Highness.”

Nightingale picked up a wet towel and cleaned her face with it. Followed by unlocking the red belt around her hip, taking off the bands of her leather wrist and body armor, then finally slipped out of her white clothes – this dress was His Highness’ newest creation, with a pure white hood coat she wouldn’t gather too much attention and thus it was the right clothes for an assassin, at least it was what he thought.

Nightingale carefully hung up her clothes, she smoothed out every fold. Afterward, she wrapped her sexy and curvy body within a piece of light muslin. On her flat stomach and thighs not even a single trace of fat could be seen.

“There is no possibility an accident could happen,” said Wendy, putting down the book, “There are sisters within the castle and there guards outside patrolling and furthermore, didn’t you yourself put a stone under his pillow? I can never understand how you can touch such a thing.”

“Well, I’m still responsible for ensuring his safety,” Nightingale said while sitting down on the edge of the bed, taking off her boots and revealing her young and slender legs, then laying down and turning in Wendy’s direction.

“Didn’t you listen to what I said last time,” Wendy sighed. “Veronica, we are witches.”

“I know, Wendy,” Nightingale nodded. “Yes, we are Witches.” And His Royal Highness said that he will marry a witch – this came out of his own mouth, and... it wasn’t a lie.

Of course, this information could not be told lightly it could only be used as a last resort, so Nightingale didn’t give it away. Within her heart, she said sorry to Wendy and then changed the subject: “What’s your impression of the church?”

“Why would you suddenly asked this?” hearing this question Wendy clearly became startled.

“When I was at His Highness side in the stronghold’s castle, the High Priest paid him a visit and offered to support him in conquering the throne.”

“How did he answer?” Wendy’s voice became strained. “Or did he order you to leave previously to the start of the conversation?”

Nightingale smiled and shook her head, softly saying. “He just asked me to avoid the range of the other side’s God’s Stone of Retaliation, and His Royal Highness didn’t wear that thing himself. Wendy, His Highness did not agree to the invitation of the church, he refused their offer.”

The latter clearly felt relieved, then she said with a bit melancholy, “Unfortunately, our help to His Highness is limited, unlike the Church, whose forces cover the entire continent. If His Royal Highness took their offer, I’m afraid he would soon be able to sit on the throne...”

“Only God knows... His Highness said the High Priest spoke only a mouthful of baloney, that no one should trust him,” Nightingale paused, “There was another important matter.” Original and most up to date translations are posted at volaretranslations.com.

Taking out the red and black pills, “In the fog, the pills have the same color as the God’s Stone of Retaliation, this is inconceivable. Both of us know that the sisters who were discovered to be witches would swallow the God’s Stone of Retaliation, which is no different from committing suicide. The High Priest said that the pills were produced inside the Prayer Room in the Holy City, and I remember that you used to live there in a monastery. Did you have ever heard of such an organization?”

Wendy had helped Nightingale to leave Silver City and during their run, she had set up traps for the bounty-hungry villains who were following them, at the same time it was also a kind of revenge – one method was to force them to swallow their own God’s Stone of Retaliation. After swallowing the villain would soon die, the whole body would roll up like it was suffering from dehydration, and would look like a fish exposed to the scorching sun.

“I never heard of something like that,” Wendy, closed her eyes and began slowly to tell, “Since the first moment I can remember, I’ve lived in a monastery in the Old Holy City, surrounded by high walls, with no view of the sky beyond. Everything was taught to us with hospitality by the nuns, things like reading and writing or the understanding of maps. I still remember the name of my teacher, Faria. She once gave us a book to read, it was the special introduction about the Old Holy City. There were churches in the city, monasteries, libraries, memorial halls and heroic walls, but I have never heard of a prayer Room in the city. I lived in the monastery for more than 10 years, until the accident happened...”

Wendy had already previously mentioned to Nightingale that the monastery was one day attacked by a witch and many people also died during that attack. Taking advantage of the whole chaos, Wendy was able to get out of the monastery, “Also I don’t know which witch had so much courage to dare to challenge the church alone, but she saved you at least.”

“No, Veronica, the with came from inside the church,” Wendy shook her head, “She was, like me, a member of the monastery.”

“What... do you mean?”

“The girls living in the monastery could be divided into three groups, one group consisted out of people like me, who stayed from early age in the monastery, not knowing their own origins; one were orphans who lived on the streets and were adopted by the local church and afterwards sent to the monastery; and the last group consisted out of girls sold to the church by their own parents. We were all separated by age and placed into different quarters, and even the teaching wasn’t the same. From an early age onward we learned how to recognize the words, from ten to fourteen years old we studied carols and

after fourteen we were schooled in etiquette. The early classes were called the literacy class by the nuns, and the older classes were called the choir class and the ceremony class. Once we became adults we would be sent away from the monastery.

This was the first time that Nightingale heard the other speaking about this – before, Wendy had never elaborated on her experience during her life in the monastery.

“During the first few years, I could often hear other girls screaming during the night – the screams came out of the direction of the choir classes and ceremony classes. I didn’t understand what was going on until I was old enough to get into the choir classes. Then I found out that during the nights higher ranks of the church would visit the dormitory, always dragging a few girls out of their beds, and only at daybreak the next day would they be sent back. But sometimes... not all of the girls would come back again.”

Nightingale clenched her lips, of course, she clearly knew what Wendy meant.

“This kind of thing would happen once or twice a month, frequently even two days successively. Then it was the day that I was selected. It was Faria who pulled me out of the room, whispering all the while into my ear that I should just bear with it, everything would become well. I was dragged by her into the corner of the garden where a room was built halfway underground. The room was brightly lit, at one side I could see how the females of the ceremony class being tortured, there were four to five men...” Her voice slightly shook. “When they came over to me, one of the women suddenly broke out from her shackles, grabbing the man closest to her, grabbed him by the neck and killing him just like he was a chicken, easily twisting his neck.”

“She... had awakened?” Reading anywhere else than volaretranslation, you’re stealing the translator’s livelihood.

“I do not know,” Wendy shook her head, “those men had taken off their clothes, but they still wore their God’s Stone of Retaliation around their necks, but she was still able to kill one after another. One of them she seemed to want to skin alive, tearing one limb off after another, while he was still living. The last words he said before his death were... ‘an extraordinary’. The screams of the men alerted the guards and Faria who stood outside of the room. They immediately opened the iron gate and rushed in, but the scene in front of them rooted them on the spot, while the other woman directly rushed in their direction.”

“Was she a witch?” Asked Nightingale thrilled, “Were the guards also not an opponent for her?”

“The gap was simply too great. I later learned that those guards belonged to the Army of Judges. One of them blew his whistle while the other drew his sword. However, when the first one stopped blowing his whistle, she had already stepped in front of him, and penetrated his chest with her arm. In front of her, their armors were nothing more than a thin piece of paper.”

Chapter 128 Pill Test

“Then, she picked up the Judge’s sword, stabbed Farisa, and split the other Judge into two halves, even cutting the guard’s sword in two. However, the whistle had alerted the whole monastery, many guards carrying oil lamps were on their way to us. She then peeled off Farisa’s clothes and wore them herself, then took another man’s weapon and walked in the direction of the rushing guards by herself.”

"I sat in the room full of a bloody mess for a while before I finally recovered. I discovered that one of the dead men was in charge of the keys to the entrance of the monastery, so I went over and dug out the keys from the scattered clothes. At the same time, I also stripped the stones around their necks. I didn't know what effects they had, I only thought I might be able to sell them for a little money with their crystal clear appearance. The nuns of the monastery, the guards, and the Judges were all attracted by that other woman, and so I could get to the hidden back door without being noticed. There, I had to try several keys before I finally found the right key to open the door and flee from the monastery."

"Later, I was only able to sell one stone because the rest of them were snatched away from me. Thus I had to rely on the ten silver royals I'd gotten for the one stone during my journey. Two years later, I reached the Seawind Region and had to stop; it was also the time of my awakening," Wendy paused for a while. "That's my whole story."

Nightingale just silently held Wendy's hands for a long while, until she asked, "What happened to the other women in the church?"

"Perhaps they all died, or they were able to escape just like me. I had asked around, but I only learned that the Church had said that there was a fire in the monastery and that they had to shut it down. Now one knew it and even more, no one cared what had happened to the girls. They had all just been abandoned."

Nightingale used a soothing voice while holding Wendy in her arms, "Now you have us. Everything will become well, so sleep, Wendy."

After a long time, she finally heard a gentle, "ah..."

*

The next morning, Roland entered his office while yawning, there he saw Nightingale as always sitting by his table, but this time she had a serious expression on her face.

"Well, what happened?"

"Have you ever heard of something called an 'extraordinary'?" She asked.

Seeing the Prince shaking his head, Nightingale repeated the story she had heard yesterday from Wendy. "If she hadn't had her awakening, I can't imagine a young woman who could so easily decapitate a heavily armed Judge."

"A witch who isn't influenced by the God's Stone of Retaliation..." after listening to Roland thought for a while about what she had heard from Wendy, he started thinking about his own categorizing of the witch abilities, "Maybe she belonged to the type of self-enforcing witches?"

"What, type...?"

Roland took out a piece of paper from his drawer and handed it over to her, "I made a basic classification of your abilities based on the way you use your magic. A self-enforcing type witch constantly consumed her magic power and strengthens herself. Although all witches get their physical fitness improved due to their magic, the self-enforcing type witch is much more powerful in this aspect."

If I have it right then Scroll should also belong in the category of extraordinary in the eyes of the Church.”

“Scroll?” Nightingale couldn’t believe it, “But she...”

“She is not good at fighting, true,” Roland finished her sentence amused, “This classification doesn’t judge the personal strength of a witch and also isn’t necessarily correct, they are only my personal thoughts and speculations. As a self-enforcing type witch, she really could cause a lot of trouble to the Church. Without the protection of the God’s Stone of Retaliation, she could easily kill a squad of Judges, or single-handedly destroy the church of a small town. But in the end, a person’s power is still limited, and the ratio of witches awakened to a self-enforcing ability is much smaller than the other two types, otherwise it would be witches who would be hunting the believers of the Church.” Though he had spoken with ease, but when thinking about the red and black pills, he still had a vague feeling of unease.

There were clearly only a few extraordinary class witches, during the last hundreds of years, there can’t be more than a dozen, right? As long as there were two or three self-enhancing types, they could easily cause great chaos for the Church. For example, they could easily take advantage of the annual Months of Demons. During this time the Church would focus all of their energy on defending Hermes, so they could attack the church’s facilities in other cities such as churches, priests, nuns and then kill all of them. So after repeating it for several years, the church’s number of followers would have been greatly reduced.

However, in addition to Wendy encounter with the extraordinary, Roland had never heard of a witch counterattack the church, moreover, the home during Wendy’s childhood was set on fire and the whereabouts of all the nuns and women were unknown.

The Church would never sit still, he thought, perhaps they have already discovered a means against the extraordinary class, and maybe those two pills were part of it.

Now matter what, he had to test those pills first.

Coming to this conclusion, Roland called for one of his guards, sending him to the jails and get one of the prisoners together with Carter.

He placed the test site outside of the city walls.

Just in case, Roland transferred over four members of the First Army, to surround the test site, fully armed and always alerted.

In addition to him and Nightingale, there was also Anna and Nana on station by the wall. As long as the other one didn’t have a God’s Stone of Retaliation, Anna’s wall of green fire would be enough to guarantee their own safety while Nana could provide the most efficient kind of treatment.

“You won’t have any problem, right?” Roland leaning forward over the edge of the wall, asked Carter, who was standing at the bottom of the wall, “Don’t look down on your opponent.”

“Your Highness, my rank as a knight isn’t only for show,” Carter said before placing a helmet on top of his head, “Furthermore my opponent only has a wooden sword, he can’t hurt me at all.”

The test subject was a murder and robbery and for this sentenced to death, even so, Roland didn't like to use him as a test object. So, he bluntly offered the prisoner that in the case that he took part in the test, his family would get five gold royals as remuneration. The other side hesitated for only a moment, before he immediately agreed to the condition.

Carter had hoped that the other side would also put on an armor and would also pick up an iron sword so that he could have a fair contest, but Roland had refused without any hesitation. If the murder had a sharp weapon, the danger would be multiplied, and if he was to cut off Carter's head, even Nana would have no way of saving his life. As for the reason that he wasn't wearing any armor, it was to test if the black pill really enhanced tolerance to pain.

The prisoners swallowed the two pills, and the expression on his face quickly changed, the veins on his forehead and arms all turned blue, while his skin turned a deep red and his breathing started to race. He grabbed the wooden sword, calmly waiting for the knight to react, then suddenly, he dashed forward. His speed was comparable to a running wolf and every time he stepped on the ground, small pits would be dug into the soil.

Seeing this, even Carter was clearly shocked, but he still unhurriedly stepped to the side, while at the same time delivering a cross cut. This move forced his enemy to change his direction, otherwise, his rib cage would be cut open.

However, his opponent was still just a very vicious murderer, he hadn't undergone any combat training. So, he was caught by surprise, getting a deep cut in his chest area, out of which a huge amount of blood started to pour out. Such injuries were enough to affect the activity of half of his body, but he still didn't show any sign that he cared about it, he just turned into the knight's direction. He tried the same tactic as before, yet this time he changed it a little, the moment they passed each other, the prisoner stretched one arm towards the knight's sword hand, in this awkward position he was unable to use much power, but the moment Carter swept out with his sword he could only see the shadow of the murderer, he subconsciously moved the sword into a parrying position, and was immediately hit by a strong force, which pushed him two steps back. The moment the wooden sword crashed into the iron sword, it immediately shattered into many pieces.

"That only took a little more effort of me," Carter shook his numbed hand, "give him another sword so that he can come again."

The prisoner did not take the offered sword, instead, he suddenly turned around, and directly rushing in the direction of the Concealing Forest, in the blink of an eye he was already out of Carter's reach, his speed was comparable with a galloping horse, and he was unable to be caught by an ordinary person. The murderer stretched his arms in front of himself, running directly into the body of a soldier who was prepared to shoot, and pushed him to the side.

The soldier let out a wretched cry and was sent flying. At this moment, the other soldiers were finally able to pull the trigger, the prisoner was clearly hit and also left some blood behind, but his speed was still not reduced in the least, he quickly broke out of the encirclement, and after a few seconds he had already covered a distance of several tens of meters.

"Do not let him run," Carter shouted, "Get me my horse!"

Before Carter had even the chance to jump on his horse, the prisoner suddenly stood still, and stared with an incredulously look at his abdomen, there a horizontal cut had cut his abdominal cavity wide open, and his intestines started falling out.

He slowly turned his gaze to his back, only to see a woman completely in white standing behind him, holding a silver dagger in her hands. He had no idea where she suddenly came out from.

TN: I changed self-strengthening into self-enforcing

Chapter 129 The Evening Course starts again

Nana quickly healed the injured soldier, something like a fracture was easy for her to heal. Afterwards, Roland let the First Army return to the camp, only the Chief Knight, the witches and several guards were still left at the scene.

With a gloomy face, Roland went to the side of the dead murderer, commanding Carter to cut out the bullets.

The wounds he had to cut were half a finger deep and the lead balls he found were fractured, indicating that people taking the pills would suffer the same wounds as ordinary people.

“Carter, what do you think?” Roland asked.

Carter seemed to be a little upset, most probably he had never expected to be outmaneuvered by a person who had never received any training in swordsmanship, “He just became stronger and faster, it doesn’t seem he realized everything that he could do, I could have cut off his head with the first strike.”

“And if your opponent was a knight?”

“This would...” Carter thought. “If it was against the kind of knights the Duke had, I could just barely handle them, but against the King’s elite knights or the knights of the Cold Wind Ridge, I wouldn’t have been able to parry even one of their strikes.”

Roland didn’t comment, but he thought, the great experts always think the one with the better skills will win the fencing duel, and perhaps Carter’s perception was right, but if they had the same equipment the situation would have dramatically changed. Assuming that the prisoner was also wearing heavy armor, with a helmet and a two-handed sword, Carter wouldn’t have necessarily won so easily.

The pills didn’t only bring a large power upgrade, they are much more multi-faceted. They can even carry stronger heavy armors and weapons, can burst out, run faster and have a much longer endurance on the battlefield. Roland felt he had to correct the assumption he had made during his time in Longsong Stronghold, Similar to adrenaline? No, this pill was much more terrifying than adrenaline, hormones only stimulated the body’s own potential, but this red pill had clearly allowed the prisoner to break through his limits. Especially the speed and momentum he showed as he tried to flee, it was almost comparable to that of heavy cavalry.

The black pill was just as effective; his ribcage was nearly cut open but he didn’t show any sign of it hindering him at all. If he was only a normal person, he would have long since lost his will to fight due to the extreme pain.

If a civilian with only a strength upgrade and pain reduction was already this powerful, then what would a group of trained knights using it look like? Roland had a feeling of uneasiness when he thought back to the offer the High Priest had made.

“Your Highness,” exclaimed Nightingale suddenly, “look at his skin.”

The skin of the prisoner’s hand had turned from its former red to ash-colored, while at the same time it had a large number of folds, looking just like a snake after it shed its skin. When Roland poked against it with the handle of his knife, he discovered that the skin was no longer solid like a muscle, it was rather totally empty to his touch. After cutting the skin, he saw that the subcutaneous fat had completely turned into mucus and it followed with the muscle atrophying.

“It looks just the same as when someone swallows a God’s Stone of Retaliation,” Nightingale turned to look at him with a serious expression on her face. “The pill is made from the same components as the stone.”

It’s unlikely that just swallowing a stone would result in such a growth of power,

Roland thought, so how were they able to do that?

It seems that the pills have very strong side effects, and until now it’s unclear if it’s permanent or if it can be restored, Roland himself was more inclined to the former. If it was the latter, this enhanced version of a drug out of morphine and adrenaline could be called the “God of War”, as long as they were able to recover and took it in batches, it wouldn’t be surprising if the world was dominated by the Church.

Even if the pills only lasted for a short time, and even if the pills have side effects, it’s still better to be on the alert, Roland thought. If the Church begins to support Timothy or Garcia with these, I would have to face an army of drugged fighters.

Even more disturbing is that the Church was even willing to take out such kind of drugs, they didn’t seem to care what happens after the reunification of the Kingdom of Graycastle, how should the new King help them after exploiting this kind of pills? Graycastle’s troops would only become cannon fodder, so the New and Old Holy City would have to send out more of their own troops, and with every continuing fight, the Army of Judges would gradually become worn down.

Unless... they have an even stronger card held back and just don’t care if something like this was to happen.

Coming to this conclusion Roland could only sigh. With his attack on the Longsong Stronghold, he had intended to end his problem of population and capital shortage in Border Town. Afterwards, he could start focusing on developing the education level, the production and the farming process, turning Border Town from a town into a city in a very short time. As for him developing new weapon systems, he had planned to put it on hold. But now it seems he couldn’t stop the development of the First Army, expanding the First Army, increasing the flintlock production and developing new weapons was now back on top of his priority list, for example a breech-loading rifle with a new kind of bullet.

The mechanism of a breech-loading rifle was actually quite simple, the cachet for the bullet was also quite easy to produce, he could make it out of paper or a very thin copper case.

Only to find for the right powder mixture, Roland still did not have even a trace of a clue. He only knew that the ingredient was called mercury fulminate, according to its literal meaning, the raw materials must have nitric acid and mercury. As for the need to mix it with other materials, he couldn't remember it. Furthermore, it had a special temperature and humidity requirements, so the chance was relatively high that it would explode in one's finger if handled carelessly. So, he decided that it would be better to spend a lot of money to recruit a number of alchemists and give them their own laboratory in a secluded corner of Border Town, where they could ponder over the right mixture.

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After the dinner, Roland took Anna and Scroll back with him to his office.

Now that Border Town financial situation was like a bulging purse, Roland would soon place more than half of his assets into compulsory education, even if it only yield slow results.

An industrial society needed a base of educated civilians, rather than the brute force of illiterates. Without universal education, the rise in population could only change into a burden for the population.

Taking this in consideration, Roland intended from this day on to take some time each evening to start teaching. Only waiting until Scroll had a basic understanding of natural science, while at the same time the town had almost completed its first batch of literacy tasks.

Since Scroll would become the future education pioneer and all-round teacher, Roland naturally taught her everything he had learned during his whole life. While Anna was just added in because of his own preference.

Even so, Anna wasn't gifted with an extraordinarily retentive memory, but her desire for knowledge and her self-initiative to learn was the strongest of all witches. He could often see her going through the books in his bookcase, six months down, he was afraid that there weren't any books left that she still hasn't read. In addition, her acceptance of new things and her logical way of thinking was also rare in this era.

Taking the primary mathematics and physics textbook from Scroll, Roland began to talk about today's teaching content.

At the beginning when Roland taught addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, to a slightly more complex equation calculation, Anna's ability to understand was significantly better than Scroll's. But when they changed to physic, Scroll showed that she could remember Roland's prior explanations word for word, and now only needed to slowly understand it. And Anna as well would also raise some questions from time to time.

For example, how elementary particle looked like, why the elementary particle that formed all livings things had nothing in common with each other, and so on...

Some of the questions Roland could answer, some of them he couldn't.

For example, in the end what is magic?

He could only tell them his own speculation that he had previously come up with; that magic may be a kind of energy, similar to electrical energy or thermal energy, but which was only be accessible by

witches. But it couldn't be ruled out that after storing this kind of energy it could be even used by ordinary people.

Hearing this Anna had a thoughtful expression.

While teaching women, especially such outstanding type of women, time would always fly by fast. Unconsciously, the candles had already been replaced twice, and the new ones were also nearing their end.

Suddenly, Roland heard a subtle snore, and when he turned into its direction, he could see Nightingale lying unconscious, asleep on the sofa, perhaps this kind of lesson is just like a lullaby to her? No longer sheltered by her fog, her completely inelegant sleeping posture was exposed to the three of them.

The Prince shook his head dumbfounded, decided it was now time to end the class. He took off his coat and gently covered Nightingale, blowing out the candle and with a smile on his face as he led Anna and Scroll out of the room.

Chapter 130 Evolution

After the lesson, Anna returned to her own room. She threw a cluster of green flames into a big bucket filled with water, heating the water to a comfortable temperature.

When the water was finally hot enough, she stripped naked and lowered herself into the bucket.

Every witch that wanted to clean their body would first come to Anna to ask for her help with heating the water. After all, getting hot water from the kitchen up to their rooms was a very troublesome procedure. When His Royal Highness got to know of this arrangement he was quite surprised; it seemed it was difficult for him to accept that they would repeatedly use the same water.

Remembering the expression he made back then, Anna still had to let out a laugh. For the civilian population, it was already very hard to clean their bodies for even once a month, and even then, they would still use the same water several times.

It seems he hadn't even noticed how much our lives have already improved since he accepted us witches and gave us a new home to live in. Anna shook her head, His Royal Highness, Roland Wimbledon seems to be well learned in many areas, but in other areas, he is just... clumsy. From the stories she had read in her books, shouldn't a prince have participated in every kind of banquet, social activity, and walked through a sea of flowers since his childhood? As a prince, he is allowed to be without learning or skills and can be cowardly and timid before a fight, but at least he should be good at his communication.

However, this kind of thought unexpectedly made her feel at ease.

His head seems to be filled with a lot of wondrous knowledge, such as the creation and usage of machines powered by steam, and how to calculate the right size of stone that is able to float on water. There was also today's course, where he taught us that the world was actually composed of numerous tiny balls which are all so small that you would need to magnify them thousands of times before you could see them with the naked eye. Because they are all so small, they are everywhere, whether it is a solid material, gas, liquid, people, flowers, or stones, when decomposed to their smallest state they are all made out of the same material.

That's just incredible, Anna thought, how can it be that His Royal Highness knows of these things?

Instead of wiping her body dry, she just used her own flame to vaporize the water droplets on her body. She then put on her clothes and took a place at her desk.

In the middle of the table there laid a textbook that was written by Roland.

Taking advantage of Scroll's ability to create illusions of books for a period of time, Anna had borrowed a copy of his textbook every night so that she could read a little before she went to bed.

Within it was all kinds of information, it began with the simplest phenomena in life, like a step by step instructional on how to strip an onion, which was in some places even accompanied by some lively and interesting pictures, to the unheard of novelty knowledge at the later parts in the book. So, the moment Anna opened it and read the first page it was nearly impossible for her to stop.

But in front of the content is also more obvious, the further she came to the end of the book the harder it was for her to understand. For example, in one section he had written that even the temperature of objects, in other words whether they were cold or hot was decided by the activity of these small balls he had talked about today. The higher their energy became, the more actively the balls would become and the more heat they would release. If what His Royal Highness had written was right, then it means that my own green flame gets amplified by the motion of these small balls?

Over the time the candles were gradually burned down, then reaching their end, the flame just shook twice before they went out. At the same moment the illusion of the book also reached its time limit, the pages and the writing gradually turned transparent, until they disappeared without a trace.

Suddenly the whole room was engulfed in darkness before a green flame came to life on top of Anna's fingertips, dispersing the surrounding night.

Seeing the empty desktop, a feeling of loss emerged within Anna's heart.

She raised her right hand, looking at her magical green flame, which stood motionless at the top of her fingertips.

Suddenly she felt the urge to try it out, testing whether everything really was formed out of these small balls, if that was the case then could her fire get the same characteristics as those small balls? She closed her eyes, trying to form an image how her flame would look like if it was created by the accumulation of countless small particles.

Slowly the flame in her hand began to change.

It changed from its water-droplet like form into a string, becoming thinner and thinner but at the same time longer and longer until it looked like a long hair.

Anna could feel these changes, but it was still far from enough, she thought, comparing a hair to these balls, it was still much too large. I can still make it finer.

Even though her mind wanted it, it seemed incredibly hard to change the green flame any further, the light of her flame became dim, like a shivering long and slender light ray.

Perhaps not as a cluster, but instead a series of connections... His Royal Highness had said that between the balls that there is a fixed distance between them, perhaps I have to reshape its shape.

The flame in Anna's mind fluttered and she could hear a sound like something becoming broken apart. Afterward the flame particles were no longer closely linked but instead were scattered like the stars. The slender green flame on her hand had also disappeared, but in her consciousness, the flame still existed, but it had no longer its initial appearance – in the boundless darkness, most of the stars had perished, the rest of them slowly reunited, one by one they formed a row of swath, until a filament of many stars was formed.

The temperature is equal to activity, she thought.

The moment she formed this thought, the line began to swing, like someone had pinched into a corner of it, it began to gently flicker. The moment it began to swing, the swinging of filament could no longer be stopped, one ripple followed after another.

It seemed as if she was within a world of ripples, there were no longer any clear outlines between objects, around her everything was excitedly rippling and there was no end in sight. The same could be said about magic, she could even feel it. When she extended her finger, pulling at one of the ripples, it was just like her own magic.

But when she opened her eyes, everything was calm. Her green flame had disappeared, and she needed a while until her eyes could adapt to the dark room, the desk, wardrobe, candlestick... their shapes emerged one after another out the shadow. Light blue moonlight fell through the window on the floor, giving everything a light grayish color. Everything seemed to be the same as always, there was no change.

But in her eyes, the world has become completely different. A black filament appeared in the air in front of her. However, Anna naturally knew that she couldn't really "see" it, that it was only in her own perception.

She took one of the ingots she had always trained with and which laid still on her desk and placed it in front of herself.

The black filament wrapped itself around the ingot in accordance with her will, she then quickly pulled it together. Like a hot knife cutting through butter her filament went through the iron ingot with ease. In Anna's comprehension, the temperature produced by the filament was several times higher than that of her green flame but was limited to a very narrow range. The iron ingot was quickly cut into two parts, and when she took one of it into her hands she saw that the cutline was very smooth, and she could only feel a little heat when placed her finger against the cutline.

She then erected the iron ingot on her desk, placed her black filament on top of the ingot, and let it spread out until it was a completely flat string, perpendicular to each other.

This was the mathematical knowledge taught by His Highness, using a point as the center, and then use a quill connected to a string and then go one time around the center, they will be able to draw a precise circle. The area of the circle is equal to the length of the string multiplied by itself and multiplied by a fixed constant.

Anna controlled her horizontally spread filament and bended it downwards at the ends at a right angle, letting it penetrate through the ingot until it reached the top of the desk. And then she let it gently rotate around the point at the center – compared with her green flame where she could only adjust the temperature and whole body, the black flame composed of many particles could be turned into any shape and the temperature of each part could be controlled separately.

After one revolution, she had cut out the form of a cylinder.

Because the cutting line was so small, Anna needed to use a great effort to get the cylinder out. Like before where she had cut the ingot in two, the entire wall of the cut-out cylinder was also very smooth. In the moonlight, she could even see the reflection of her own face in it.