

Witch 151

Chapter 151 Negotiations (Part 1)

After taking a look at the steam engine, Roland and Margaret returned to the office in the castle to continue their discussion and clear up all the details concerning the business contract. In case that such negotiation included haggling over the price, it was usual that the fight between both sides would need around one or two days to reach a conclusion.

Furthermore, it was generally the Finance Minister who was responsible for negotiating the contract, the Lord would only get to see the final numbers when he placed his signature. Only that the opposite side had already accepted the price, with this agreement Roland also ended up saving a lot of effort.

"I expect the first batch of saltpeter will come in a month. It will be the amount of three sailboats full, and I will also follow them to Border Town."

After giving the amount, Margaret quickly wrote some numbers on a parchment, "Calculated in gold royals at the actual market price, the value of the saltpeter will be around three hundred and fifteen gold royals."

"Until then Border Town will be able to produce two steam engines," Roland deliberately lowered the quantity, "they will have a total worth of a thousand gold royals. You can decide for yourself whether you want to make up the difference with gold royals, or you can also pay us using other resources."

"What kind of goods do you need?"

"Iron, Copper, Lead, Green Vitriol," Roland said, "those are all common minerals, but the first three goods I don't need them as raw ore, but as already processed ingots. In addition, I need 10 sets of crystal clear glassware. Since they don't need to have any carving on them, it won't matter if they are in the form of a canteen or a wine cup. But they must be the best quality products of King's City Alchemy Workshop. If the price exceeds the difference, I can fill it with gold royals or it can be deducted from the price of the two steam engines delivered the months afterward."

"It seems you want to treat me as your dedicated trader," Margaret said, "though I do not have a mine, I know a few peers who specialize in the ore trade, but I would have never expected with so few nobles living here, you would still consume such an enormous amount of saltpeter. Furthermore, Border Town was established next to the North Slope Mine, yet you still have to buy so many ores. This simply isn't in line with my business sense. Your Highness, your territory is simply too inconceivable."

A major trait to industrialize production is its great hunger for raw materials, in exchange for the fast output of finished products. So, Roland continued, "Later on, Border Town will be in even greater need for more goods, so I think it is for the best if we can reach a long-term trade agreement from now on."

At this moment, Margaret suddenly became startled and was looking with a face full of surprise behind Roland. When he saw her unusual behavior, he subconsciously turned his head and discovered Lightning, who soaked through to the skin by rainwater was pressing herself against the window, while still floating in the air. Her face was pale from fear and she frantically pushed against the glass, trying to come in. Her hair stuck as strands to her forehead, and the water from the rain was continuously flowing over her face. In general, she looked as if she had just stepped out of the river.

Roland quickly stood up to open the window. As soon it was possible, Lightning flew into the room, directly into Roland's arms and her face that was filled with panic soon relaxed, confusing the warm body she felt with memories from her past.

"Nightingale, quickly go and call Nana," Roland ordered anxiously.

"Yes." Came immediately the response out of the empty room besides him.

What happened to her? In the air, she shouldn't have encountered any demonic beasts, or any of the Devils. Or could it be, do they also have the ability to fly? Roland roughly checked Lightnings condition, and after he didn't find any obvious signs of trauma, he finally felt a little relief.

"Your Royal Highness, she... is she the one you have called Lightning?" Margaret spoke with a muzzled voice, slowly coming closer to the Prince, taking a carefully look at this little girl in his arms.

Hearing her question, Roland's heart began to beat faster, damn, how could I have forgotten about her? He ended up loudly shouting, "Sean!"

The guard immediately walked into the office.

"Excuse me, Miss Margaret, there is no other way. You will now have to stay here for a while," the Prince turned to her while still holding Lightning.

"She is a merchant from King's City, so bring her to an empty room on the first floor and take good care of her. Without my command, no one is to let her out of the room."

"As you command!"

"What? No, Your Highness... Please wait," Margaret suddenly realized what was happening, "I have no ill will towards witches, not to mention that she even is the daughter of SirThunder, I would never tell the Church about this."

"It is just a safety measure," Roland interrupted. "Later on, I'll come to see you to verify if you're telling the truth."

...

"Your Highness, she's woken up," Nightingale said, after opening the door to his office.

Roland nodded and followed Nightingale into Lightning's bedroom. There was still steam rising from the bucket beside the big bed, and her drenched clothes hung over the edge of the bucket. The bedside was surrounded by a group of witches, while Wendy was sitting on the bed gently combing the little girl's hair which until now was still not completely dry. But her previously pale face now had got some of its red color back. Her head laid against two pillows, while her quilt was pulled so high that only everything above her mouth wasn't covered and her eyes were staring at Roland since the moment he had entered the room.

"What is the situation?"

“She hadn’t received any injury, her coma was caused by exhausting too much of her magic,” Nightingale replied. “Wendy helped her to clean her body, and when she got into the bed, she didn’t wake up for a long time after.”

Roland went to bed and looked at the girl with a gentle smile, “What happened to you, that you would fly back through the torrential rains in so much panic?”

“I found the ruins,” Lightning lowly muttered, “but the Devil was already there.”

Hearing this, all the expression of the surrounding people immediately change.

“Did you enter it?” Scroll asked.

“No,” Lightning shook her head and continued to tell the story, “The Devil stood in the doorway of the basement, and I could hear people crying for help, but I was too scared, I could do nothing besides escape, I didn’t even try to save her.” Her voice shrunk to a whisper, “Am I not qualified to do the work of an Explorer?”

“No, you handled it well enough,” Roland encouraged her. “Good Explorers know how to read the situation and do not take unnecessary risks. When you couldn’t save her, escaping was definitely the right choice.”

“She had to be a witch,” Wendy thought aloud, “nobody else could reach the depths of the Concealing Forest except for another witch.”

“No, even a witch wouldn’t be able to go there,” Scroll shook her head in disagreement, “That is a ruin from four hundred and fifty years ago. Without a map, which indicates the direction one has to travel, the task of finding the location of the Stone Tower in such a vast sea of trees would be extremely difficult, unless...”

“Unless what?” Roland asked.

“Unless someone had already been living there,” Scroll said slowly.

“You mean that they didn’t come from the kingdom and found the tower, but instead they are already living there from four hundred and fifty years ago. One generation, after another, living a life in seclusion?”

Within his heart, the Prince had already rejected this speculation. Living for the whole time in the Concealing Forest, shouldn’t be possible! Besides a variety of terrible insects and poisonous plants, there was no stable source of food... only in case you were Bear Grylls, it would be possible to live for such a long-term in the forest. Not to mention, in that part of the world, they would have several months of snow every year. Also, with the constant threat of the demonic beasts and Devils about, living in the Concealing Forest was simply suicidal.

He once again turned in the Lightning’s direction. “Were there any signs of smoke in the vicinity of the ruins?”

“No,” the little girl shook her head.

“Maybe there exist more than one map,” Soraya offered, “maybe there are other people like us, who are also looking for the whereabouts of the tower.”

“No matter what it is, we cannot help them,” Leaves concluded in disappointment. “Nobody can so quickly reach the Stone Tower, except for Lightning.”

“I’m afraid we still need to know the real situation,” Roland touch his chin, “In short, we have to find a way to insure that we can come back safe and sound. For today the teaching will be stopped, we are all in need of a good rest. When the time is right, the riddle will naturally solve itself.”

Leaving Lightning’s bedroom, he turned to Nightingale and said, “There is still another problem that we have to solve, next.”

“Just let her take off the God’s Stone of Retaliation,” Nightingale laughed, “Then everything will be made clear to me.”

Chapter 152 Negotiations (Part 2)

At this time the rain outside the window had basically already stopped, the clouds were dispersing, and the sun was already on its way down, tinting the sky red.

Roland opened the door to the guest room on the first floor, seeing Margaret walking in circles in front of the fireplace, seeming quite restless. When Sean, who had been standing at the side of the room, saw that the Prince had just entered the room, he raised his hand to his chest and bowed. Margaret who had also seen the Prince enter, stopped her walking and stepped in front of him, anxiously asking, “Your Highness, how is Lightning?”

Roland became startled, there were several kinds of outcomes he had imagined, from being calm to angry and possibly acting cold, but he had never expected that her first sentence would be this.

“She’s all right... just a little tired.”

“Is that so? That’s good.” Margaret looked relieved.

“You seem to care about her a lot.”

“She looks exactly like her father, especially her narrow eyes and pointed nose... I could immediately see that she was the daughter of Thunder.”

Then with a sigh, she unbuttoned her neckline, lowered her head, and took off a string of gold ornament hanging around her neck. “Only to verify it, previously you said... that you have the ability to judge if I am lying, did you speak about the ability of a witch? If this was what you previous meant and if you wanted to have me prove my sincerity, then could you please let her join in this conversation? I do not like the feeling of being secretly spied on.”

Set into the gold ornament, connected to the gold chain was a hexahedral light blue piece of jewelry, which had to be a high-quality God’s Stone of Retaliation.

Roland had been thinking about what he should say to reduce the other’s resentment and doubts, not thinking that it was actually Margaret who took up the initiative to do so. To be honest, he felt some admiration for the Seafolk woman. Despite being in such an incredibly unfavorable situation, she was

still trying to grasp and hold the leading position in their dialogue. Whether it was her negotiation skills or acting style, everything was consistent with the identity of a successful merchant.

He received the offered God's Stone of Retaliation and put it on a hanger beside the fireplace. Calculating it by the quality of the stone, the estimated suppressive range at which no magic could be used was around one meter. Looking at it from Nightingale's eyes it would look like a black hole around one-meter big. To avoid the effective range of the God's Stone of Retaliation, she had to always keep it away from her.

"Let's go to the reception-room," Roland offered. Since the other side showed their sincerity, he shouldn't act so stingy himself. When the two of them entered the reception-room, Nightingale had already stepped out from her fog and was sitting on the side on a couch, with her chin placed on both her hands and deliberately showing a bored expression as if she had already been waiting there for a long time.

When they had seated themselves, Roland first introduced Nightingale: "The name of the woman at my side is Nightingale, she is able to judge the authenticity of your words."

"Hello, Miss Nightingale," said Margaret, nodding her head, and receiving a greeting in return.

"You previously said, you don't harbor negative feelings for witches, why?" Roland immediately started with his first question, which he most wanted to know, "As far as I am aware, the Fjords also belongs under the influence of the Church."

"But their influence is far weaker than the belief of the Three Gods. Regarding this, the Seafolk and the Sandpeople are quite similar. They both worship the sky, the sea, and the earth. As for me..." she paused, "I had a very important and good friend. In the middle of a fishing trip with my friend, it happened that we were unexpectedly hit by a storm. Fighting for our lives, our sailboat was unfortunately hit by a wave, breaking it into many pieces. During this disaster, she became a witch, getting the ability to breath like a fish. She found me when I had already lost consciousness and was floating on the water, so it was she who dragged me to the shore.

"What happened later?" Nightingale curiosity was picked.

"Soon after I had woken up, she left... perhaps bigger than the wish to be with me, she was more eager to be back in the sea," said Margaret regretfully, "Since then I have never seen her again. People often say that she would appear during foggy days, raising her body out of the water and guiding the fishing boats with her singing. Guiding them successfully around the rocks. No matter what, my friend could never be evil, nor the Devil 's minion."

Roland nodded, witches who had awakened to their power were previously only ordinary people, and in cases where the people already knew the witches before their awakening and had deep contact with and understanding of them, their impression would be hard to change only by the unilateral rhetoric of the church.

"You seem to know a lot about the power of witches. Only with one sentence, you were able to guess that I had more than one witch."

“Honestly, because of the relationship with my childhood friend and partner, I became interested in witches. I had even thought myself about the possibility to host those strange women.”

Margaret smiled, “Unfortunately, King’s City is completely differently than Border Town, in the end, I had to give up on that idea because the risk was too big. Seeing that Lightning had directly moved into your arms, it seems that she is very close to you, plus she’s a witch... So, I thought that you could be the same as me, someone, who doesn’t hate the witches. As a Lord, hiding a few witches shouldn’t be a difficult task for you, especially here in the borderland. But you still have to be very careful, if you are found by the Church, it would be hard for you to save them.”

Speaking of it, until now Nightingale still did not find any sign that the other had lied. With this, she had already rejected the possibility of Margaret informing the Church. Roland also finally came to a conclusion in his heart, so with a slightly apologetic tone he said: “It seems that I was indeed a bit oversensitive, I hope you don’t mind.”

“No, Your Highness, after all, it was also for Lightning and the safety of the other women...” Margaret waved dismissively with her hand, “Au contraire, if you didn’t care, then you would truly be an irresponsible person.”

“Are you familiar with Thunder?” Roland asked. “Your love for Lightning is much greater than the concern of ordinary people for the heroic children.”

In the face of such a question, Margery hesitated for a moment. Roland had said, if she didn’t want to answer a question, she should just act as he had never asked, but she eventually slowly started to speak: “To tell you the truth, later when I left the fishing village, I joined one of the expeditions of Sir Thunder, together with them I explored the sea for a long time. As a young and new team member, Sir Thunder and his wife took extra care of me. On the day that Lightning was born, I was also there.

“She was born on board?”

“Yes, during a storm. Outside of the cabin, the thunder rolled and lightning continually lit up the sky. However, shortly after her birth, Sir Thunder’s wife died because of a sepsis infection, and I... acted as her half-mother. But I couldn’t give her any breast milk, I used to chew wheat porridge and mixed it together with fish eggs and flour, slowly feeding it to her. “Margaret’s voice has become very gentle. “Although Sir Thunder was incomparable sad, he still had to command the flotilla, without him as the backbone, the crew would quickly collapse after only a few months. During that time, I just stayed in the cabin, watching over how Lightning slowly grew. Until Sir Thunder found the Shadow Islands. After the discovery we returned to the Crescent Moon Bay, and the expedition was over. Not much later I left the Fjord and settled down in the Kingdom of Graycastle.”

“So that was what it was,” Roland lamented in his heart, no wonder that when she heard the name of Thunder, her reaction would be so strong. As for why Margaret had decided not to continue to follow Thunder on his adventures, he could roughly guess one or two reasons. Even so, it seemed to be the beginning of a love story, it didn’t mean that the ending would be one, one had hoped for.

Such a coincidence, to meet again after crossing many rivers and walking along windy mountain roads... Now that they had already such a close relationship, wasn’t it possible to get an even bigger discount for

buying and selling? He coughed twice, "Ms. Margaret since we can be counted as acquaintances, about that deal."

"Your Highness, that just won't do," Margaret laughed. "A deal is a deal. This is the businessman's eternal principle."

Chapter 153 Alchemy (Part 1)

Kyle Sichi walked into the Alchemy Workshop.

"Head Instructor," when the apprentices saw him enter they immediately bowed.

He waved his hand, "You may carry on."

The apprentice squatted down again, once again busying themselves with their work.

The outermost part of the workshop was the cleaning and sorting room; it was here that all of the gathered materials from all over the Kingdom of Graycastle was cleaned, sorted, filtered and ground down. The design of the cleaning and sorting room was very ingenious, laid within the stone floor were two rills with water flowing in them which were also parallel to each other. The area in the middle was the path, while the outermost sides of the room were used as cleansing area, and were accessible by wooden bridges.

At first glance, the long and narrow washroom was divided by the two streams into three sections. The light would fall into the room through windows on both sides, shining on the stone floor and streams, sending strips of lights through the long room. The overlap between light and dark resembled the strip of a snake.

Nearly one hundred apprentices leaned against the walls, dealing with the materials assigned to them. If the impurities could be easily cleaned and were lighter than the water, it could be directly thrown into the stream. If it was heavier than water, they would be put into a basket, to be brought out of the washing room and then discarded. The effect of cleaning with running water was several times more effective than cleaning in a cask of stagnant water.

The apprentice had to study here for three to five years. Only when their proficiency in the sorting and cleaning of all kinds of materials were good enough and the corresponding knowledge was known by them, did they get the opportunity to be selected as a disciple under an instructor, and in so doing moving on to the next room.

Kyle marched through the washing room, stepping into the core area of the Alchemy Workshop, the refining room.

When he opened the door, his line of sight suddenly opened to a wide panorama, twelve giant wooden pillars, all of which came out of the Concealing Forest and were delivered by ship, propping up this extremely spacious room. Within the surrounding stone walls, there were many windows, and even the roof was included in the construction and had many windows connected to the patio, making the room very bright.

In the center of the refining room, there were arranged six wide wooden tables. The tables were filled with all kinds of alchemical utensils: round bottomed flasks, glasses, scales, mortars, furnaces,

crucibles... Each instructor was responsible for the management and use of one table, and Kyle, as Redwater City's Head Instructor, naturally had the longest and widest table to himself, with most of the utensils placed on it.

The room was always full of clutter and in disorder, just like the alchemy process in general. Mixing all kinds of raw materials together then heating, carbonizing, watering or burning them. The results were ever changing, and simply fascinating.

In case you were able to find a clear path to follow within all these changes and disorders, it would become written down, turning it into one of the extremely rare alchemy formulas. As long as you were able to create a unique formula, you could be called an alchemist. So far, Kyle has had written down more than a dozen alchemy formulas, and he believed that each of them had been directly sent to him by God and that alchemy could be developing to such a level, that it would even be possible to separate the origin, making it possible to transmute everything.

"Chavez, how far are you with your Snow Powder imitation?" He asked.

Hearing his name, a twenty-year-old young man came over, shaking his head. "These wretched alchemists of King's City definitely still add other raw materials into it. Until now the powder is too fine that it can't even be extracted and used for anything useful."

He was Redwater's Alchemy Workshop's youngest alchemist, and now he wanted to recreate the alchemy recipe for Snow Powder, but it seemed to be impossible without a long accumulation of knowledge, many attempts and sometimes a bit of luck. Many people, for their whole lifetime, only managed to become disciplines, even until their death they were unable to get past the last step. Chavez, however, had a remarkable talent for alchemy, two years ago, he summarized the recipe of dry distillation of green vitriol to receive an acidic liquid. Winning the recognition of five alchemists, owning from now on his own long table.

"Do not worry; it will come slowly." Kyle smiled and patted the young man's shoulder, offering him some comfort. After eight years, as chief instructor, Kyle naturally understood the difficulty of finding the right path through all the disorder and chaos. "However, I ended up making something good yesterday evening, the moment those haughty animals examine it they will lose all their color. Come with me."

He went to his desk, to where he had had two disciplines deliver a storage box of about half a person's height and made completely out of iron. Making it nearly impossible to be stolen nor easy to be destroyed. He pulled out the key and opened the first layer of lattice, within the middle of the lattice there laid a small piece of transparent crystal.

"Did you cut off a piece of a crystal?" Chavez who stood at the side took the crystal carefully into his hand to examine it, holding it in front of the window, "No, this is... Crystal Glass! God, you did it!"

"Yes," Kyle smiled proudly, "I already can't wait to see their expression when those guys discover that their proudest alchemy discovery had been successfully imitated by me, they will end up showing such a wonderful expression."

Chavez who hadn't been able to suppress his exclamation had gathered the attention of all the others alchemists. They all put down their work and came over to take a look for themselves.

“This is the product you’ve worked on until late last night? It really is great.”

“It’s so beautiful, it looks just like a crystal.”

“Congratulations, this will let the place of our Alchemy Workshop within the Duke’s heart greatly increase.”

“How did you do it, can you tell me?”

Kyle nodded, “We all know, that the glass made out of the river sand comes extremely close to it, but in the end when burned, the glass will still contain different colors. This is because the sand still contains some impurities. Now there are two possibilities, first to think of ways to remove the impurities, second to try to get sand which is purer from the beginning. We all tried both methods, I also did the same. The success of the alchemical process largely depends on chances and luck. I selected fine white sand from Willow Town and sandstone from the Fallen Dragon Ridge...”

Everyone around him was quietly listening, no one spoke a word until he had finished his explanation, they even tried to suppress their breath, “So that’s how it’s done, that was very thoughtful of you.”

Crystals were very rare and expensive gems, and the colorless and transparent crystal are even rarer. So only the clearest of translucent glass had the right to be known as Crystal Glass. The haughtiness of the Alchemy Workshop in the King’s City was mostly based on their method for producing Crystal Glass. Always dominating the Redwater City’s Alchemy Workshop. Furthermore, the yearly income of gold royals let the Duke of Redwater City develop a deep feeling of envy.

But after today, this situation would soon change. If Chavez could also figure out the composition of Snow Powder, coupled with the double-stone method to create acid, we will be able to completely overthrow the domineering position of King’s City’s Alchemy Workshop. By then, those who are always used to looking down on other people, I am afraid they will have no choice other than to lower their cocky heads. After picturing this, Kyle Kimmel mood became even better.

As he was preparing himself to screen the raw materials for the second batch of Crystal Glass, a frantic discipline run to his side, “Chief Instructor, a messenger from Border Town from the Western Border want to see you, he brought a letter from Roland Wimbledon with him the 4th Prince.

“4th Prince?” Kyle began to frown, it seemed that there really was such a person in the Royal Family. He knew nearly nothing about nobility, in his impression they were all uneducated and ignorant, always fighting for more power and wealth. “What is he looking for?”

“I do not know, the messenger said that as soon as you read the letter, you will naturally understand the meaning of His Royal Highness.”

“...” The Chief Instructor exposed an extremely impatient look, in all likelihood, the content of the letter will be recruitment offer for only a small sum, if that’s the case, I should show him that alchemy isn’t a cheap trick. However, since the other person is a prince, I still have to maintain a basic state of etiquette, “Take me to see him, so that I can get the letter and send him on his way!”

Chapter 154 Alchemy (Part 2)

When Kyle Sichi returned home, it was already completely dark outside.

After dinner with his family, he returned to his study and recorded the recipe for Crystal Glass together with its required raw materials and his experience of producing it in his own book, "The Door to Alchemy".

In it, he had recorded his journey from the day he had started as an apprentice to his days as Chief Instructor. At the same time, he had also included all of the newly discovered alchemic recipes of the Redwater Alchemy Workshop.

Kyle believed that with the help of this book, he would earn his place in all kinds of history books. Even thousands of years later, alchemists would still have his name deeply engraved in their minds.

Only after the candle was nearly burnt out did Kyle finally put down his pen and made himself ready to sleep.

Suddenly, he remembered that he still had the letter from the Prince, and until now, he hadn't read a word of it. Glancing at the candle, he saw that only a fingernail's worth of candle was left, so he decided to use the last bit of time to read this letter so that he could give a verbal reply to the messenger on the next day. The small remaining bit of candle would only be enough for him to write a few dozens of words, but it would still be enough to read a worthless letter.

After opening the envelope, he saw that it contained three sheets of paper, of which the first page was the common courtesies and introduction of their titles and their territory. Kyle didn't even bother himself to take a look at it; he directly moved on to the second page.

The second page didn't contain the expected recruiting offer or lash-out, making Kyle feel a little surprised. Instead, all that was written were five strange formulas. After taking a careful look, he noticed that each formula was made up out of three compositions.

Oh, that's a little mean, he smiled, in the end, regardless of the which purpose the Prince had, at least he was somewhat tricky in the end.

He swept his gaze over the first line.

"Dry distillation of Saltpeter produces nitric acid."

Saltpeter... dry distillation... nitric acid, these were all terms used in alchemy. Kyle was totally surprised, isn't this the double stone acid method?

"The acidic liquid produced by dry distillation of Saltpeter has to be gathered inside a special container. It looks exactly like ordinary water, so it will be hard to recognize. However, it is very corrosive. Not only does it have the ability to burn away skin, but it can even dissolve some metals."

This... is actually an alchemic formula? Is it possible that Border Town also has an Alchemy Instructor?

He quickly moved his gaze to the next line

If the first sentence was already enough to surprise him, then the second sentence was simply incredible.

It consisted of a bunch of inexplicable symbols, standing side by side, forming an equation. Kyle frowned. He had never seen such strange symbols in his whole life.

Looking further down, it seemed that the third sentence was the interpretation of the second sentence, including the names and meanings of the symbols. To be honest, he was still unable to understand the symbols even with the explanation. The hard to pronounce words were apparently all newly coined words. In order to link the words with the symbols, he had to read them again and again. But even after all this, the sentence meaning was still a much too complex puzzle for him.

At this moment, the flame of the candle shook twice and went out.

Hell! Kyle cursed loudly within his heart, and without any hesitation he took a new candle from the drawer, and began reading once more.

...

When the second candle had already burned halfway, the Chief Instructor's hands that were holding the pages were shaking heavily.

What seemed to be a letter with nearly nothing on it had taken many times longer than the usual time spent reading a neatly written page.

On top of the second page of the letter there were only five formulas. Unexpectedly, they were all alchemy formulas!

If it was only given like this, then they would still be an outstanding master alchemist, but it was still not an impossible accomplishment to sum up five alchemy recipes by oneself. However, these five formulas, in addition to the first method for producing acid, were all correlated well with each other. Certain neologisms appeared repeatedly, giving the appearance that it was a maintained cycle.

"Nitric acid reacts with silver to produce silver nitrate, mixed together with water it becomes nitric oxide."

"Silver nitrate reacts with iron to form ferrous nitrate and silver."

"Silver nitrate reacts with copper to form copper nitrate and silver."

"Copper nitrate reacts with iron to form ferrous nitrate and copper."

Previously, Kyle had already put a silver bar into the acidic liquid. It hadn't taken long before the silver was dissolved. Dissolving something or letting it become invisible were the characteristic of acid, it corroded anything. But now, this unknown alchemist had stated that the silver nitrate had been dissolved in the water and on the surface it seemed to have gone away, but in fact, the silver had only morphed into another kind of existence, instead of being annihilated as previously thought.

How can this be?

No... Kyle shook his head. Apparently, the other side had already guessed my way of thinking, so that meant, these formulas correlating with each other isn't something accidental, he realized. This person wrote these formulas exactly so that I could confirm them, whether it is silver, iron or copper, these are all common minerals. According to the following alchemy recipes, the silver can reappear again, proving that it wasn't annihilated, and still exists within the acid.

Seeing these formulas so neatly arranged on the paper again and again, it became increasingly more difficult for him to breathe. If these alchemy formulas could be proven to be true, their years of accumulated experience, the effort that all of his colleagues had put in and even the writing in his own book "The Door to Alchemy" would be nothing more than a joke!

"You can go to sleep early on with the child; I have to go to the Alchemy Workshop again!"

To the surprise of his wife, he wouldn't attend to her tonight. Instead, Kyle put on his coat and left straight into the night.

Arriving at the Alchemy Square, he immediately called for the three disciples who were still dizzy on their duties, telling them that he now had to conduct an alchemy test and they had to light all the torches and candles, the more they lit, the better. His order was swiftly quickly executed, and soon after his wide table became illuminated by flames. Afterward, his disciples began to shuffling between the materials room and the refining room, preparing all the test materials for the Chief Instructor.

They had already produced several acid liquids out of dry distilled saltpeter, so he could immediately start verifying the second alchemy recipe.

He took some of the acid liquid and poured it into a glass; he then put a silver bar into it. Soon after the reaction started and the bar gradually corroded, creating many small bubbles.

To shorten the anxiety filled waiting process, he turned his attention to the third page of the letter.

But on it were only one short sentence: "This was only a small part of my work, if you want to know more answers, you have to come to Border Town."

Damn it! Writing this sentence is equivalent to writing nothing! If I'm able to verify the formulas, I have no other option other than to go and visit this unknown master. Otherwise, there will only be sleepless nights left to me for the rest of my life.

After waiting until no more bubbles emerged, he removed the incomplete dissolved silver bar and put a small piece of copper into the cup instead.

Immediately an incredible things started to happen on the surface of the copper, a thin white film began to appear, looking like a beetle's shell. The white layer became larger and larger, slowly covering the whole surface of the copper, while the colorless acid slowly turned blue.

It is exactly the same as described in the letter!

"The white precipitate is silver, and the newly produced copper nitrate and silver nitrate can both easily dissolve in water, copper nitrate, and then there is silver nitrate, but its solution is blue."

Looking into the cup, Kyle Sichi saw that it had turned blue, just as stated.

...

Early the next day, when Chavez came to the Alchemic Workshop, he was greeted by the Chief Instructor who looked completely haggard with deep black circles under his eyes, shocking him greatly.

“Didn’t you get any sleep last night?” Chavez asked surprised, “Had you worked the night through to create a second batch of Crystal Glass?”

Kyle just shook his head and signaled that he should follow him to his table. There he tiredly asked: “You are the disciple of which I’m the proudest, so I would like to ask, what do you think alchemy is?”

“Uh... just what you have taught me,” looking at the table Chavez noticed that it was fully loaded with a number of glasses, including a few cups which were filled with solutions of different colors. For example one of them was sky blue and very eye-catching. Could this be the reason that the Chief Instructor did not sleep last night? Although Chavez was full of confusion, he still replied honestly, “I think the same, the essence of alchemy is to find the truth of the world in all the disorder and chaos...”

“No, no, Chavez, I was wrong,” Kyle interrupted. “Everyone was wrong. That isn’t Alchemy.”

Was it...? Chavez felt that the other side acted strangely. First, he worked the whole night through in the Alchemy Workshop, and now he asks such baffling questions. Not able to wait for Chavez next question, the Head Instructor began to explain: “Unlike what you, I and everyone else thought, Alchemy is ordered. It can even be said that it is following the principle of one plus one equals two. No matter what you do, material will never increase nor will it disappear.”

“Will never increase or disappear? What are you talking about? Isn’t that what alchemist usually do? To create new things, we just put some commonly seen raw materials and combine them after filtering and separation,” Chavez answered in bewilderment.

“Yes, ah, I also thought like so, but now after I have read the letter sent by the Lord of Border Town...” Kyle patted his shoulder, opened his mouth and said some surprising words to Chavez, “I will soon leave this city, and go to Border Town to find some answers. You... Do you want to come with me?”

Chapter 155 Visitor

Roland received the first purchase order for the steam engine, and the transaction’s amount was the largest so far.

Each “naked engine” for the price of 500 gold royals, with the first delivery, planned for in two months, followed by an increase of one engine per month until it reached a total of ten engines together. For future technical support, like replacing broken parts or improving equipment a payment of additional gold royals would then be required. Since the natives had never heard of a free warranty service, it meant more money for Roland.

Barov was the one who was most excited about the deal, in his view, every increase in the Town Hall’s revenue no matter whether it was by looting or by trade was worthy of praise. But there were naturally also some who were against it, for example, Carter, Scroll, and Nightingale expressed all their opinion, they felt that it was still too early for them to sell these powerful machines to outsiders, even more so, considering in hindsight, that Border Town didn’t even have enough machines for themselves.

Roland didn’t explain his reason to them because he didn’t look at it only from the view of a Lord. No, he also looked at it from the perspective of a way in which he could promote the speed of the industrial revolution.

It was almost impossible to achieve the task of advancing the process of industrialization alone, even with the knowledge of later generations. After all, the amount Border Town could handle was extremely limited. Even if he produced a lot of industrial products now, there would still be no one there to buy them from him. So, there was only one solution available to him, he must allow more people to join in on the revolution, only by doing this could new power applications sweep across the kingdom like a wave.

What would he get by selling the steam engine?

A sufficient amount of money, a huge number of new jobs, as well as a group of skilled workers, with the latter being the most important part.

This was also the reason for Roland's low production rate.

With Anna's new ability, her former and new production efficiency shouldn't even be mentioned in the same breath. As long as she had enough raw materials, she could now cut out a dozen of steam engines a day.

Such products could also easily be sold, but that would only be simply the "selling" of a machine.

But if he wanted to develop the industry, he had to set up a special team responsible for production, assembly, and the maintenance of the steam engine. In Roland's plan, he would build a factory with all the needed tools, such as a boring machine, planning machine, milling machine, and so forth. The complete steam engine production would only be done by the hands of ordinary workers.

In the beginning, it should be expected that the factory's efficiency would still be low, and the quality of the first products would also be too horrible to look at, but slowly, everything would surely come on to the right track. In addition, with the experience Anna had gathered by creating them step by step on her own, as long as the workers became familiar with the process, it would be guaranteed that the output would start to increase.

The next step would be to use the profits from the sale of machinery to expand the production scale and also to train more workers. While at the same time the already experienced older workers, would gain the ability to manufacture products of higher quality, such as steam trains, steam ships, and so forth.

For Roland, there was no doubt that this would become a virtuous cycle. Those to whom he had sold the steam engine would also indirectly create benefits for Border Town. For example, if they used them for mining, they could reduce the ore prices; if they used them for shipping, it would also promote trade; when used for spinning and weaving, they could make up for their own deficiency.

Roland was already eager to see how the new steam power would spread over the whole nation and all these machines would come from Border Town. And once he was able to unify the entire Kingdom of Graycastle, he could then save a lot of time and work.

He also considered the possibility that buyers could try to imitate the steam engine, but for the new steam engine, he would use new circular cylinder which could only be drilled out by using his boring machine. He had also considered deliberately designed some complex components, which would be hard to reproduce by relying on the current level of technology. Roland didn't believe that they would

be able to produce a qualitatively good steam engine, even if they could count on a witch that was able to provide high temperature.

After being able to negotiate such a big order, and after finding a way to sell his industrial products, Roland should have felt elated, but he couldn't find any trace of happiness within himself at all.

"Everything has cleared up itself, so why are you still showing such a bitter face?" Nightingale lifted her legs and sat by the side of the table, holding a plate of dried fish. "Are you still troubled with the news of the Church?"

When Scroll wasn't around, Nightingale's behavior always became a lot more casual. Sitting on the corner of his desk or laying down on the couch were all her usual places. For other lords, actions such as these would be seen as offensive, but Roland became aware of the fact that he didn't mind it as much as he thought he would, and Nightingale was also clearly also aware of it.

"I always wondered why the Church would support Garcia and me for the fight to the throne, but now I think I'm starting to understand it. If my guess is right, I'm afraid that Timothy also got an invitation from the Church." Roland knit his brow.

In addition to the business deal, Margaret also brought him a lot of new intelligence that she had gathered from the Four Kingdoms. One of the things that Roland was the most surprised about was that the Church had attacked and taken over the Kingdom of Endless Winter. If the merchant was right, they would now also be busy preparing the last steps before they launched an attack on the Wolfsheart Kingdom. This news had hit Roland like a thunderbolt out of the blue, and ever since then he had turned all of this information in his head over and over, slowly forming a picture filled with bad omens.

"Why should they support all three of you at the same time with the fight for the throne?"

"It's not called supporting, it's called consuming." Roland shook his head, "The Church doesn't care if the war spreads throughout the whole country, they'll be happy as long as they see a lot of infighting inside the Kingdom of Graycastle. As for the possibility that the Church's believers might get involved in the war, this didn't actually matter to them. The Kingdom of Graycastle isn't as weak as the Kingdom of Eternal Winter was. With its vast territory and also a large number of population, if they wanted to take it over by force, they would have lost a lot of their military power. But by helping us to kill each other, they only have to pay a small price to take over the kingdom. It doesn't matter how many believers they would have left, after all, the Church wanted to build its own Kingdom. "Those pills... were nothing more than a well-prepared trap."

When Wimbledon III issued the order for the battle of the throne, it was the same as giving the Church the right to dictated the situation. After the Kingdom of Graycastle, the Wolfsheart Kingdom and the Kingdom of Endless Winter have been taken over by them, the Kingdom of Dawn won't be able to stay standing will be soon to fall. The real purpose of the Church is probably the reunification of the Four Kingdoms, taking into account how slow information travels during this era, and the people's indifference to politics, it is quite possible that they will only then be able to see the truth and hear the warnings after its already too late.

This was why he was feeling so anxious.

At the moment, there was no basis for them to establish a united front, and hoping that the nobility of the Kingdom of Graycastle will rush to their rescue if they were to hear his fantastic tale, it was more likely that they would rush to the Church and act as their last line of defense. Thus, if Roland wanted to stop them, he had to rely almost entirely on the troops of the Western Territory.

“But you also have those new weapons and the Army of Judges isn’t much stronger than ordinary knights, I don’t believe that they could win against you.”

Roland could still clearly remember the time when the Church was a horrible monster for Nightingale, a source of endless fear. But that she now had so much confidence in herself, came as a small surprise.

He still managed to show her a reassuring smile, but inwardly he could only sigh. It wouldn’t be difficult for Anna to make Revolvers, but there was still a big difference between producing a prototype and launching a mass production of something. Whether it was the reset of the trigger or the automatically turning of the cylinder, both showed good performance. But as long as he couldn’t solve the problem of how to fire the bullets, there wouldn’t be any real value in these new weapons. In the absence of mercury, or mercuric nitrate, he will have to use some alternative materials as a primer.

Hopefully, the guard I sent to the City of Redwater will bring back good news, Roland thought.

Just at this moment, when he had recovered the enthusiasm of the former day, Lightning who should have been busy carrying out her daily training, came into the office and brought an unexpected message. The flag flowing at the Eastern Side of Border Town, near the woods was replaced by a blue flag.

According to Roland secret information system, the blue flag represented that there was a new witch that had entered Border Town.

Chapter 156 Putting the picture together

Theo ascended a small hill, from here he could vaguely see the edge of Border Town and also the outline of the Lord’s Castle.

Finally, I’m back, he thought, previously in order to reach Silver City he had needed half a month, but the way back they only needed seven days, the longest time of which was spent on the road between Silver City and Redwater City. Although it seemed that Ashes didn’t care for it herself, Theo still chose scarcely used trails to reduce the possibility of being caught by the Church.

Ashes was the name he had gotten from his witch companion, but even after all this time Theo didn’t know if that name was her real one or not. During their travel, she was always dressed in a black robe and a great sword was wrapped in clothes on her back.

Her long black hair was tied into a simple tail, dangling down to her waist. Whether it was during the ride or their travel on a boat, she rarely put her focus on Theo. She always walked alone at the front, taking in the surrounding scenery. Probably for her, this trip to Border Town was just a relaxed and comfortable stroll sort of like a sightseeing tour.

Sometimes Theo would doubt his own judgment, was she really a soldier? She could easily stumble over the robe she wore, to keep such long hair was equivalent to showing plenty of holes in her defenses.

Furthermore, from the beginning of their journey Ashes never seemed to be afraid of presenting her back to him, the part of her body that he saw from her the most, was always her back.

He didn't believe that a witch would be able to trust other people so quickly, only letting him guess that she might be confident enough in her own abilities, that even a God's Stone of Retaliation wouldn't be a threat to her.

Theo circled the hillside, soon finding his goal, a flagpole with a red flag hanging on it. He went to the flagpole and dug a bundle out from the mud. Folded within it was a blue flag which was used as a replacement for the red flag. Afterward, he sat down on the ground and clasped his hands.

"That's all you have to do?" Asked Ashes.

"At least that was what they had said," Theo wiped away the sweat that had appeared on his forehead. "Go to the foot of the hill on the northeast side of the town. There you have to follow the stone trail until you reach a flagpole. When you arrived at the pole, you only need to replace the flying flag with the blue one buried beside the pole. We will see the flag and soon arrive at your location, so from then on you will only need to wait and we will come."

Ashes nodded and then began to look for a relatively clean place to sit, she then reached out her hand in Theo's direction, "Eat."

"Uh...wait a moment!" Theo unlocked his backpack and took a piece of dried meat from inside it. He first tore it in half and threw one piece of it into his own mouth, while throwing the rest of the meat to Ashes.

Theo sighed when he saw the witch put the meat into her small mouth and began to chew. Who could have thought that in addition to her great sword, she did not even have one copper royal on her whole body. Even though she was totally penniless she still dared to swagger so much during their rush back to Border Town. During the whole way, all the accommodation and meals had been paid for by himself. The room's in the inns had to be single bedrooms of the finest quality, and when they ate it could only be meat, dry food and things like portable foods. Furthermore, always had to eat the first half of it by himself before she would eat her part.

Probably with the exception of the time she was on the field, she was a very cautious person. However, wouldn't the most prudent approach to safety be to prepare her own food?

"You always wanted to know where we are going; it is to the opposite part of the channel." After swallowing the meat, Ashes suddenly said, "I am not sure if you've ever heard the rumors about the Fjords, but there are countless islands there. Some of them have a very dangerous environment, so those are always scarcely populated. We are going to settle on one of those islands and build homes on it that only belong to witches."

"..." Theo was stunned, no matter how he had tried to inquire from her before, she had always been silent, so why had she suddenly taken the initiative by herself to bring up this matter?

"Are you surprised, are you asking yourself why I didn't bring up this subject before?"

Ashes began to explain seriously. "There was the possibility that you were a liar, who would pretend to sleep but at night would instead run to the Church. But now the girls should have already reached

halfway to their goal; they should already have entered the merchant ferry to the Fjord. So even if you tell them now, the Church will be unable to stop them. Also, I came here to take the other witches of the Witch Cooperation Association with me, so sooner or later the news will have already reached your ear, thus continuing to hide it has already become meaningless.”

“Even though I’ve already brought you to Border Town, you still cannot rule out the possibility that I’m a liar.”

“Yes, that’s true,” said Ashes, stressing every word, “But in the end, if we are unable to meet another witch, you will die here, together with everyone else who is trying to harm us witches.”

“All right,” Theo took a deep breath. “Can I ask you some other questions?”

Ashes thought for a moment, “Sure, but I can’t guarantee that I will answer.”

“Do you come from the Kingdom of Graycastle? I have never seen such eyes as yours before.” He decided to start to ask her about her origin first. This shouldn’t be any kind of sensitive information and at the same time it should reduce the wariness in her heart.

“I was born in the Kingdom of Endless Winter, but this has nothing to do with the color of my eyes. The moment I became a witch, my eyes turned into this pair of eyes you see now.”

“Kingdom of Endless Winter? That’s a long way between your kingdom and the Kingdom of Graycastle. There are even two other kingdoms between them, so how did you come to Silver City?”

“When I was young I was sold the Church, and then...” She paused. “I’ve been wandering from the monastery in the Old Holy City all the way to the Kingdom of Graycastle. Until I meet her, finally ending my wandering life.”

“She?” Theo asked curiously.

“Tilly Wimbledon,” Ashes answered, suddenly showing a warm expression on her face. “She took me in.”

The guard’s heart beat faster, when he had previously heard her saying the name Tilly, he had never thought that it was any sort of famous person. But now with the Wimbledon family name attached to it, the meaning became entirely different. Tilly Wimbledon was Roland Wimbledon’s sister, the 5th Princess of the Kingdom of Graycastle. So, when he asked her his next question, his voice quivered.

“She, is she your leader?”

“Leader?” Ashes nodded. “To me, she is so much more; she is the most important person to me... someone that no one else could ever replace.”

When the night fell, the two lit up a bonfire.

Ashes took off her sword, raising it a little bit out of its cover, showing that the edge of the weapon was close to the width of her waist and also that it was covered with many marks of previous clashes. The grayish sword didn’t have any edge that was usually seen on a blade, and its weight alone was enough to squash any one person. For most people lifting this sword would already be an impossible task, but in her hands, it seemed to only be as heavy as a light blade.

How many blacksmiths had she robbed, in order to get enough material to forge a sword like that, ah, Theo thought, if the Prince and his witches delay for much longer, it is entirely possible that I will become the next victim of that sword.

"I heard that the Lord of Border Town is also a... Wimbledon," he decided to find something to talk about. Otherwise, the waiting time seemed to be especially hard for him to bear.

"Roland Wimbledon," she muttered, "I have seen him before."

"What?" Theo opened his mouth.

"I was sheltered by Tilly and began to work as her guard in the palace. So there naturally was the opportunity to meet several of her brothers and sisters." Ashes seem to already have a good understanding of the 4th Prince, "incompetent, arrogant, without any learning or skills. It was hard to believe that he was Tilly's brother. Also... in some areas his courage wasn't so small."

To the end of her sentence, her tone had become colder.

Theo could not keep himself from shuddering. He had heard a lot of rumors of the Prince previous behavior. For example, he would always brag, was also fond of using cunning plots and things like molesting someone else's maid. Although he had never used violence or threatened the other side, it was still hard to avoid someone in his position. Surely, he wouldn't...

At this moment, Ashes suddenly stood up, staring into the direction of the road, "Someone has come, and they are more than one."

Theo followed her gaze and he could also slowly see the outline of figures gradually appearing from the night's darkness. The one who took the lead was the witch personally responsible for His Royal Highness' security, Nightingale.

Chapter 157 Ashes (Part 1)

When Ashes saw the people appear, she immediately knew that they were witches. She could feel the magic on their bodies, showing that Theo had not lied. But that wasn't all, she could also roughly determine their strength, especially from the witch leading them. Her magic felt like a sharp knife – just by focusing on her, she could already feel a faint stabbing pain.

"My name is Ashes. I'm so glad to meet you sisters of the Witch Cooperation Association." Ashes put her sword aside and approached the four witches to embrace one after another... No, she thought, there are five of them. Ashes raised her head, looking at the black spot circling above them in the sky, "Doesn't she want to come down?"

"She acts as our lookout," the witch in the lead answered laughingly, "I am Nightingale," then she pointed at the other three witches, "They're Scroll, Leaves, and Echo." Then she pointed upwards, "and the little girl in the sky is Lightning."

When Ashes looked at Scroll, she was startled. The feeling of magic she got from her body was feeble, it seems like her body was constantly hidden behind clouds. Getting such feeling gave her a big surprise, "An extraordinary?"

Hearing her question, Nightingale became curious. "Are you able to see the magic?"

“No, not seeing but feeling,” Ashes explained, “Since their body got changed by magic, extraordinary can detect the form and flow of magic. I think this sister must feel it the same way as I do.”

Scroll nodded and said with a smile, “Indeed, it allowed me to find a lot of companions in the vast sea of people.”

“Do you know how rare such extraordinaries are?” Nightingale said.

Hearing that the other’s concern was about the frequency of extraordinaries, rather than “What are extraordinaries”... Ashes thought to herself, how could it be that the Witch Cooperation Association had already heard about an extraordinary? This term is strictly banned by the Church. After all, their abilities are directly affecting their own body and with this aren’t suppressed by the God’s Stone of Retaliation. Any person who got into contact with an extraordinary was the number one enemy for the Church.

“There will be one extraordinary witch for everyone thousand other witches,” Ashes was still thinking about the previous issue, but her face was still unreadable like always, “So far, with the addition of Scroll, I have seen only three people.” After pausing for a moment, Ashes asked, “By the way, I remember that the name of the leader of the Witch Cooperation Association was Cara. How is she?”

“She is dead,” Nightingale shook her head, “She died during the search for the Holy Mountain.”

“... That’s a real pity,” Ashes expressed her condolences in a small voice, but what she really was concerned about at the moment was that the other side hadn’t shown much sadness when Nightingale had answered her question. “Who is your new leader right now?”

“Let ‘s go back to town first,” Nightingale just smiled, “You will see him soon.”

...

They walked into the town like any ordinary civilian, giving Ashes the feeling that there was something wrong. How could it be that the witches of the Witch Cooperation Association are able to just walk along the streets while holding torches? And what was even more unexpected was that the town wasn’t dead after nightfall. Behind the paper windows of many residences, she could see the outline of weak fires, like candles burning. Listening carefully, she could even hear many children reading aloud.

Candles, although this kind of item can’t be called expensive, shouldn’t be easily affordable with civilians’ limited savings. They wouldn’t be able to buy many of them, so they couldn’t easily be used. Seeing that the town actually had this many residents lighting up candles at night was such an incredible scene to look at. Also, judging by the constant word-for-word reading, are they all trying to teach their children how to read?

However, since the others didn’t mention this strange behavior with a single word, Ashes was too lazy to ask herself. Anyway, here isn’t the place where we will live in the future, the only thing I have to do is to take you away from here as soon as possible.

After many turns along the way, the group was getting closer to the castle area, allowing Ashes to see the walls and the patrolling guards even in the dark night. “Where are we going?” She couldn’t stop herself from asking.

But to her shock the answer she got from Nightingale was, "To Border Town's Castle, it is right in front of us."

"Wait," she slowed down. "That is the place where the Lord lives."

"Well, it is also the home of us witches."

"Were you able to reach an agreement with the Lord?" Ashes frowned. Even if the local forces were vigorous and coordinated, it was still difficult to face the Church with their God's Stone of Retaliation. So, the only possibility for cooperation between a local lord and the witches was when the witches had their own way out, assuring them that they would survive. Unfortunately, when having to deal with such a vulnerable group of witches, most lords were reluctant to sit down and talk fairly about the conditions of the contract. It was more often that they endlessly squeezed them dry and demanded more, so the road to reaching an agreement with local Lords was usually blocked.

"I suppose you could call it that," Nightingale said in a voice without any trace of depression. Rather, it was full of warmth, "Every one of us has signed a contract with His Royal Highness."

Ashes wasn't able to feel happiness for them. Those contracts written with paper and pen were not binding at all. As soon as the Lord became tired of paying them or wanted to terminate their relationship of equality, he only had to knead the contract into a ball and throw it into the fireplace. There would be no one who would fight for the injustice the witches would have to face. Their status was like a small boat alone in a storm, always afraid of getting overturned.

Fortunately, now I'm here, she thought. With me, they can leave from here and go to the other side of the sea. There, us witches have built our own homes and live far away from the Church and any other secular threats.

Sure enough, when they stepped through the castle's gates, the guards just nodded and said hello when they saw the appearance of the witches.

Compared to the king's palace, the Lord's castle in Border Town was undoubtedly much smaller and darker. There were so few solitary torches burning on the walls of the corridor that their swaying lights weren't able to cover the entire stone floor. Walking along the dark corridors, Ashes got a depressing feeling. However, this feeling only lasted until they reached the entrance to the living room. There, the room was suddenly brightly lit up by fires.

Entering the hall, Ashes could see some more witches. It seemed they had all been waiting for her, and the moment she stepped into the room they began to applaud and welcome her. Nightingale, who wanted to give a brief introduction, took two steps forward, but suddenly one of the witches who had previously waited in the room rushed over.

"Wendy!" somebody cried.

Everything that happened was registered by Ashes, but she still decided not to take any counter-measures. After all, she only had the feeling of joy and surprise from the approaching witch, there was no trace of hostility at all. So after a few seconds, she was embraced by a warm body.

"You survived," said an unknown voice, excitedly. "Thank you for saving me."

Ashes became confused, “you are...”

“My name is Wendy,” the voice said, releasing her hands. She took a deep look into Ashes’ eyes. “The little girl in the choir, do you remember me?”

...

On the second floor in one of the bedrooms, only two people were left, Ashes and Wendy.

Ashes had never expected to meet a partner from the monastery here.

So, calling her partner was a very far stretch. With the exception of that night, Ashes had never had any interaction with Wendy. In fact, she hadn’t even paid any attention to the other girls enclosed with her in that underground room. She had not even realized that there were others who had to go through the same horrible acts of people forcing themselves on them. Even more, she had never thought that one of them would also become a witch.

“I was able to flee from the monastery and settle down in the Seawind region,” Wendy began to talk, after a long time of silence she continued, “Then someday I got the news that the monastery was set on fire later that day, and that all the children were missing. Did you do that?”

“The fire?” Ashes shook her head, “It was the Church’s doing. They did it to cover up the whole scandal. I killed some of the managers and the Army of Judges who tried to stop me until... members of the Church’s God Punishment Army arrived. That scar over my eye was left by one of them. If hadn’t chosen to escape by myself and had instead waited until the follow-up – if I had to face more members of the God’s Punishment Army, I am afraid I would have died that day.”

Chapter 158 Ashes (Part 2)

“They are the most excellent warriors of the Church and are used as the top secret weapon against us witches” Ashes explained, “they have the same amount of strength as I, and neither are they any slower than I am, also...” she hesitated. “It seems they don’t have their own conscious. When I was fighting against them, I was able to cut off the right hand of one of the soldiers from the God’s Punishment Army. But he didn’t hesitate for even one second to use his left hand to slash at my eye.

“Even when I turned and fled, his movements weren’t affected in any way by the wound I’d given him. This doesn’t have anything to do with having a strong fighting will. Even if they were able to keep fighting after losing one arm, they would still be affected in the end, for example something like losing their balance, it is simply impossible to adapt to that in such a short period of time.

“I’ve only heard of the Church’s Army of Judges,” Wendy whispered. “Since they have such powerful warriors, why did they never appear during the previous fights against witches?”

“That, I do not know,” Ashes slowly revealed, “Even I only heard the name ‘God’s Punishments Army’ after I later returned to the Old Holy City and inquired about it from some of the city’s inhabitants.”

“You... you went back?” Wendy asked surprised.

“Ah, how could I let those dregs off so easily?”

She stood up and went to the window, “later on I attacked several small churches and camps of the Army of Judges. During one of the raids I caught one of their presiding Judges, previously I had actually thought that they weren’t afraid of death. But having to face torture and death, his performance wasn’t much better than that of any ordinary person, he soon showed a look of fear and began to plead with me for mercy. It was from his mouth, that I heard the name of the God’s Punishment Army for the first time.

“Before their ceremony they were all members of the Army of Judges, only the best of the warriors will get this honor, and their acceptance must be voluntary. It seems there is a strong relationship between the success rate and their willingness. The big difference between the soldiers of the God’s Punishment Army and us are that they do not get their power naturally or because of their natural talents, no, instead they become transformed artificially.”

“...” Hearing this news, Wendy was quite shocked, she became utterly speechless.

“I suppose the reason why they cannot openly use them during wars, like they do with the Army of Judges, is perhaps because of the side effects of their transformation. When they lose their self, then there is no difference between them and the monsters.”

Ashes sighed, “During the time I was carrying out my revenge I would often hide myself within a deep well or sewers during the day, only coming out in the evening to start my attack against the believers. But when the Church began a complete city wide search, I decided that I had to flee from the Old Holy City. On the day of my retreat, the blood on me was tightly sticking to my clothes and my skin, giving me a very grim appearance. Probably, looking at me out of the eyes of an outsider, I wouldn’t have looked any differently than a mindless beast.”

She only stopped her speech when she suddenly felt a hand on her shoulder, “Now, that time doesn’t matter any longer. Here you can live the good life of an ordinary person. Under the Prince, the life of me and my sisters has become very good. After gaining the experience of fighting together during the Months of Demons and later, after repelling the Longsong Strongholds attack, the largest part of the town’s people have already accepted the existence of us witches. This town has turned out to be the Holy Mountain we have always been searching for.”

Ashes leaned against the window and took a deep looked at the woman in front of her. She couldn’t detect any sign of the thin women with dull eyes that she remembered from her life in the monastery. Looking at Wendy it was quite hard for her to imagine that she had ever looked like she did during her childhood. Both in body and appearance, when they were compared with the child of that time, it was completely different. Moreover, the gentle and natural tone of her voice made others feel a peaceful serenity.

However, there were still some words which had to be said, “I won’t be staying here, nor was that the reason that I’ve come to Border Town.” She paused, “I came to this town, to take all of you with me away from here, taking you to a place which is really safe, unlike Border Town which isn’t such a place.”

“You do not want to stay here...” Wendy froze for a moment. “Why?”

“As long as we live on this continent, we will always be threatened by the Church. Because of this, Tilly had gathered the majority of the witches living in the Kingdom of Graycastle and has taken them with her to the Fjords. That is where she intends to build her own country.”

“Doesn’t the Fjord also have Churches?”

“Because of the special topography of the archipelago and its separation into many islands, their influence can only be maintained on some of the bigger islands, and also...” Ashes twisted her mouth, “there aren’t any soldiers of the God’s Punishment Army on these islands either.”

And if they found themselves there, they would soon have to face the wrath of the witches. Going from one island to another, the Church’s forces would be uprooted, just like when they had hunted us witches.

“You and your sisters must also leave, Wendy,” she continued to try persuading her. “It was a mistake to spread those rumors, you should get rid of them as soon as possible. When I could hear them, the Church definitely has also heard of them, and they will never allow the witches to organize themselves. I don’t think that it will be long before the Church’s Army of Judges destroys the Kingdom of Graycastle. When you have to face the God’s Punishment Army, do you really believe that the 4th Prince will protect you? No secular Lord will ever be willing to spend his own life to save a witch’s. Right at this moment, he may still be good to you, but in times of distress, he won’t hesitate for even a second before abandoning you.”

After Ashes’ speech, Wendy kept silent for a long time, before opening her mouth and declaring: “I do not know what the thoughts of my other sisters are, but I won’t leave Border Town!”

“At the moment, you’re standing at the edge of an overhanging cliff,” Ashes frowned, “and with every day you wait it will become even more dangerous.”

“If you want to avoid the impending danger, leaving the town, leaving His Highness, what difference would there be between your approach and when he would leave us? I do not want to be such a person, and...” She took a deep breath, “Furthermore, in the case that His Highness ever had to face against the pressure of the Church, I do not believe that he would ever act as you’ve predicted. Nightingale has already asked him the same question, and His Highness’s then answered, ‘I will make this town a place where every witch can live a life of an ordinary person, even if I have to become the enemy of the Church.’ ”

“...” Ashes was unable to respond, she didn’t know what to say, she had already heard too many promises such as this, and even if the other party really was willing to protect the witches, in the end, what would that even change? In the face of such an overwhelming power, it would only end up increasing the number of sacrifices.

Until now she still had to grasp the situation regarding the Witch Cooperation Association, more accurately the death of the Snake Witch Cara. It seemed that the surviving members of her former group have all been fully integrated into Border Town by the Lord. Spreading the news of a safe heaven up to Silver City wasn’t done by one of the surviving witches, but rather by one of the Lord’s own guards. Although she did not know what cunning plans he had, and how he had managed to make the witches

trust him, but under the threat of her greatsword, his carefully constructed camouflage would all soon fall apart, most likely.

"I want to talk to your Lord, Roland Wimbledon," Ashes finally said.

...

Her appointment to see the Prince was scheduled for the next morning.

By that time, Ashes was brought into the office by Nightingale, now having to face this disgusting man once again.

Although she didn't want to admit it, it was clearly visible to her that Tilly and the Prince both shared the same blood. They both had the same long gray hair with a simple beam in the back of their head that during the sunlight of dawn would have a small touch of silver to it. The symbol of the royal family of the Kingdom of Graycastle. His forehead and nose were also somewhat similar to Tilly's and the more similarities Ashes found, the more she disliked him.

Comparing his previous appearance at the courts with the normal appearance he showed now, she had to say that his dress today was unusually clean. Furthermore, in addition to well-fitting clothes, she could detect almost no signs of wealth, such as jewelry, earrings, necklaces, rings, and bracelets. Even though he was just simply sitting on his chair, Ashes still had the feeling that he was looking down on her.

The aura of a leader.

She couldn't stop this thought from appearing.

Well, if only taking his outwards appearance into consideration, he really seems to have taken a step in the right direction, Ashes thought coldly in her heart. But it won't be much longer that you will be able to maintain such a posture.

"Welcome, I heard your name is Ashes?" The other side took the initiative to start the conversation, "You are a messenger sent by my sister, aren't you?"

"It was my own decision to come to Border Town."

"But you can still be called her messenger, right?"

"..." Ashes frowned, why was he so emphasizing on her role as a messenger? She did not want to be entangled in such insignificant banter, "I could."

"Well, Ashbringer," he said, revealing an unrecognizable smile, "I hear you want to take my witches away?"

Chapter 159 The most powerful persuasion

Before Roland had agreed to the meeting, he had already heard every part of the talk between Wendy and Ashes.

He didn't expect that the long-lost Tilly Wimbledon would suddenly become the leader of another witch organization. Not only that, but she had set all of this up right in front of all of them. No, she had even

gathered most of the witches in the whole kingdom. What was even more intolerable was, that she was now actually wanted to put her claws into his own territory.

According to the information gathered by Nightingale, the witch in front of him was an extraordinary, and her ability most likely belonged to the combat type.

Any witch who belonged to the kind of extraordinary had to be treated with the utmost care. So, when Roland was meeting with Ashes in his office, not only was Nightingale hiding in her fog, no, even Anna was standing by his side. She had placed several tiny black fires around his desk, all of which were completely invisible to the naked eye. Cutting off the area between the two sidewalls. As long as Ashes dared to rush towards him, she would definitely end up cutting herself into many thin pieces.

Even so, Ashes was an extraordinary witch, she still wasn't wearing the God's Stone of Retaliation, but once she put on one of those stones, she would then turn into an unrestricted destructive power. Fortunately, the God's Stone of Retaliation was hated by the majority of witches, and she was most probably also taking this aspect into account. So Ashes didn't carry such a stone when she was trying to win over the witches in Border Town.

"Your witches? Don't be so arrogant, they are all living people, they aren't your personal belongings!" Ashes declared coldly.

Roland got shocked by her unexpected words. This was the first time that he had to feel the feeling of defeat during a battle of words. He had already become used to calling them my people, my subjects and the like, but now he had unexpectedly face democratic criticism, letting him feel extremely embarrassed. Although his words were in accordance with the usual practice of this era, the people or items in the Lord's territory, after all, belonged to the Lord, so calling them his wouldn't bring any problems. But if he was to now stress this point in front of Nightingale and Anna, it would only show that his EQ was low, and he'd just be jumping into an already prepared pit.

So, he coughed twice, and tried to get the flow of the conversation into a positive direction for himself: "I never thought of them like that, they only stay in the town because they want it. But I have to point out, that I myself believe that this place is still the best place for them to live on freely. As for living in the Fjords as you have offered, not to mention that the trip itself would already be very dangerous, crossing over the whole Kingdom – no, the Fjords climate is also unpredictable, always having to fear tsunamis or perineal storms. That is simply not a suitable place for people to live in".

"But there at least, the power of the Church would be at a minimal. Furthermore, the witches can rely on their powers to transform their homes, making them safe against any natural disasters. But there is no way in which you could shield them against the strength of the God's Stone of Retaliation, not to mention the God's Punishment Army." Ashes mercilessly countered, "Do you know how foolish it was for you to do what you have done? Spreading the news of your witches will only lead to a visit from the Church.

"With respect, you have no way to win against the God's Punishment Army. Now, the right choice for you would be to let your witches leave your territory so that you can all avoid the tragedy that your actions is leading you towards."

Roland had already heard her telling Wendy about the God's Punishment Army, so he knew that using force to persuade her would be many times more effective than him using words. Of course, he could also simply ignore Ashes, but in that way, he would already be giving up the fight for the witches that are under Tilly Wimbledon's influence. So, despite only having just a small hope of achieving his goal, he still wanted to give it a shot.

"Are you able to fight against several soldiers of the God's Punishment Army at the same time?" Roland asked.

Ashes facial complexion became clearly puzzled, but in the end, she still stretched out three fingers, "Three soldiers, I'm able to defeat."

"Then let's have a fight," Roland said, sitting straight and becoming seriously. "Let the test tell you if I'm able to win against the God's Punishment Army or not."

"What do you mean?" Ashes became stunned for a moment, her cold face finally showed a different expression than her usually cold face.

"A fair test, a fight one-on-one," Roland said, stressing word for word, "If I'm able to beat you, you have to accept that I have the ability to resist the Church."

"You and I? Or... or do you want one of your witches to take your place?"

"Of course it won't be me, but it won't be a witch either. The soldiers of the God's Punishment Army will all be wearing a God's Stone of Retaliation," Roland smiled, "Your opponent will be an ordinary knight."

Although he regretted it a bit that he would not personally be taking part in it, the other side was a witch with a military strength completely off the charts, from the description he had heard from Wendy, she alone was powerful enough to make her way through a whole monastery, and in the end, was even able to escape from the pursuit of the God's Punishment Army.

Even fighting empty-handed or with only a wooden sword, she would still be extraordinarily lethal. The actual effectiveness of a revolver was still unknown. And for the sake of safety, he had decided to give this great task to Carter. If he had been able to lay his hands on an ak47, then Roland would have tried to take her on by himself.

"Ordinary Knight..." Ashes face once more turned back to her original expression of indifference. "If I win, you will let the witches follow me?"

"Of course not, after all, you cannot offer the same. In the case I would win, you surely wouldn't go back to Tilly and bring all of her witches to Border Town, right?"

"In that case, what would be the significance of your suggested duel?"

"I already said it previously, it's not a duel, it's a test," Roland corrected her, "the significance lies in the fact that you will know, that in the face of the Church's power I'm not without any possibilities to resist. Furthermore, when you later go back to the Fjords you will remember, that outside of the Fjords, there is also the Western Territories, and more precisely Border Town, that can provide a place for witches to live. Of course, if you win, it could be that Wendy will start to persuade the others, which would be many times more efficient than you doing it by yourself."

"I will never lose," Ashes declared. "Now call your knight."

"Not now," Roland waved his hand, "we will hold the test in a week. I have to make the necessary preparations first, until then you can freely live in the castle. Experiencing with the other witches, how it is feels to live in Border Town. And as a witch with a feeling for the town life, perhaps you will even change your opinion without us having to have a fight."

"..." Ashes looked at the Prince coldly for a long time, but then she finally nodded, "You are right, maybe I won't have to wait for seven days, they will change their view even earlier, freely leaving Border Town together with me."

Roland just shrugged his shoulders in answer.

When the other was already at the door, he suddenly called to her once more, "Hold on... Can it be that I already have seen you from somewhere?"

Although he was certain that he had never seen her face before, her stature as he looked at her from behind, he got a strange feeling of familiarity. Roland could also slightly recall something, a sense of familiarity that seemed to be coming from... the time he had been living in the King's Palace.

"Didn't your guard already tell you?" Ashes didn't even look back at him. "If it were not for Tilly who stopped me at that time, I'm afraid you'd now only have one hand left."

The moment the door was closed, Nightingale appeared in front of him, and asked with a frosty voice, "You touched her ass?"

"What?" Roland became startled, "I can't remember to have ever seen such a person in the palace, and what do you mean with 'touched'?"

Nightingale showed a dissatisfied look, there was naturally "Tyre" – to hell with it, although I really have touched the maid's ass, if I answer this question I'm afraid I would be showing some flaws, furthermore what is wrong with feeling something up with your hands! After all, I also don't care about your peeping habits!

"Keke," Anna interrupted their conversation. "Are you sure that Carter will be able to beat her? If he fails, it may affect the others witches confidence in you."

Fortunately, it seemed that Anna was still calm, Roland discovered in relief, "Even though an enhanced witch is not affected by the God's Stone of Retaliation, she still has to fight with their own body. Comparing this with the quick fire of hot weapons, the limitations of the body will always be too big in comparison, I think the odds that we win is at least around 70%."

But for that I will have to finish the development of the ammunition by next week, Roland thought.

Chapter 160 Confrontation

Roland had already corrected designs for the Revolver's bullet a long time ago. After all, circular lead bullets and loose gunpowder were an arrangement that was simply too archaic. Taking Anna's processing capacity into account, it should be feasible for her to directly manufacture the shell for the ammunition. The problem was that there didn't exist a reliable primer, which could light the cartridge of the bullet that was filled with black powder.

The outer shell of the ammunition was generally made out of mercury fulminate which was very sensitive to impacts. When the firing pin was pulled and it hit the base of the bullet, the mercury fulminate would ignite, which would ignite the black powder, ejecting the bullet from the chamber.

It was such a pity that even after breaking his head over it, he still couldn't recall the necessary raw materials he needed for the mercury fulminate. From a literal point of view, he would definitely need nitric acid and mercury. However, if he looked at the result of the chemical equation he had written down, it became apparent that these two substances would only produce nitric acid together.

In addition, knowing the raw materials wasn't equally to having a smooth production of usable products. Roland would still have to discover the right concentration and temperature for the reactive process, and whether he still needed to add another catalyst or not add one, was also a crucial point he had to figure out before finishing the product.

Moreover, because of the sensitive properties of mercury, manufacturing it was considered a very dangerous process and if it exploded one could easily lose some fingers, so Roland was afraid of trying it out personally.

So, Roland had to settle for the second-best option, using a metal ammunition case but keeping the old flintlock ignition, which would require that the spark could enter the interior of the ammunition case to ignite the gunpowder. Therefore, he had to leave a hole at the bottom of the ammunition case, but he still had to find a method which would prevent leakage of black powder.

Obviously, these two points were contradictory to each other: the greater the opening, the faster the leakage of gunpowder. Yet if the opening is too small, it would become too difficult for the spark to ignite the gunpowder.

He needed something that would allow the spark to ignite the powder, while at the same time blocking the hole, to prevent the leakage of gunpowder.

Roland first thought was colloxylin, which was also known as nitrocellulose.

It was also one of the few chemicals which he still remembered and could also be used for weapons because it had such a simple production method: the cotton had just to be soaked in two strong kinds of acids. The two acids it used were the commonly available sulfuric acid and nitric acid, and there would be no danger involved in producing them. Even though he still had wanted to wait for the hopefully soon, arriving alchemist, but now, where he had the deadline of seven days, he decided to roll up his sleeves and get to work.

Taking the quill, Roland began to write down the idea he had already in his head for a long time.

The first ingredient he needed was cotton, and the best cotton yarn were the ones which weren't weaved or dyed and it was exactly this kind that he had brought back with him from his visit to the Duke's castle, and was now also piling up within his castle's warehouses. Cotton yarn needed to be skimmed. Otherwise the grease attached to its surface would prevent the nitrification.

He was already familiar with the stuff required for removing the oil, it was sodium hydroxide, which was also commonly known as caustic soda. At the same time, it was also one of the raw materials needed for making soap: For producing soap, one had to add fat to caustic soda, and then stir it until it became

solid. Afterward it could be used as washing soap. But Roland has been too busy developing the industrial and agricultural technology and with defending Border Town against foreign enemies, that he hadn't found any time to invent any such commodities.

As for how he was meant to produce caustic soda, the simplest method would probably be the electrolysis of salt water. So the Prince discovered, that in order to create the new types of bullets, he first had to develop a DC Generator.

*

Ashes was walking along the Shishui River, feeling somewhat depressed.

Since the other witches knew that she had come to Border Town to bring the witches of the Witch Cooperation Association away, their attitude towards her had cooled down, a lot, and there was no longer any signs left of the warm welcome she had received last night.

Moreover, she had also noted that most of the witches were practicing their ability in the castle backyard, which showed that Roland had also found a way to avoid the suffering from the demonic bite. Originally Ashes had wanted to use this vital piece of intelligence to show her good will to the other witches, but her plan was unexpectedly shattered right from the beginning. So in addition to telling them the disadvantages and advantages of leaving Border Town, she had nearly nothing else left for persuading them to move.

What surprised Ashes the most was, even though Roland Wimbledon's appearance had changed very little since the time she last saw him, every gesture from him now contained an indescribable temperament, completely out of tune with the image he previous held of being a dandy.

How could this be? He had previously definitely belonged to the incompetent class, during business appointments he would always think first about finding a way to escape, never standing up for others, and even if the problem was clearly caused by him, he was also too afraid to take on any responsibility. That time when he had thought about harassing her, she only needed to throw him a hateful look, to make him fall to the ground in panic. But she had later heard from Tilly, that he had claimed that he had fallen by accidently, and that the 5th Princess was at fault for it. After all why would she even find such an ugly woman as a guard?

From that time on, Ashes' view of the 4th Prince had fallen to the lowest possibility ranking.

Previously she had believed that such a type of person would be easy for her to handle, but during today's negotiation she had failed utterly to gain the upper hand. Especially when the other side suggested a one-on-one competition, she had discovered that her threat of using military force didn't work any longer, since the other side hadn't thought about escaping. Instead, it might even have had the complete opposite effect. If she had threatened him at that time personally, in addition to reducing the witch's positive impression of her, it would not have had any other results.

Ashes sighed, if she just could be as smart as Tilly, every problem that appeared before her could have been all smoothly solved. The moment she encountered a situation such as this, she would surely have been able to come up with a solution to this, right?

If she hadn't wanted to help Tilly as much as possible, Ashes really would have taken the next ship heading to Silver City and also leave the Kingdom of Graycastle as soon as possible.

Unconsciously, she had already left the area of the town, she was no longer be able to see those green wheat field on the other side of the river, but instead she was looking at the unclaimed woodland.

When Ashes was already ready to turn back, she suddenly felt the fluctuation of magic behind her, subconsciously turning her head, she could barely see a knife heading towards her cheek, taking advantage of her horizontal movement. The magic fluctuation had transformed into a surging billow, and Ashes suddenly felt a piercing pain coming from her cheek, the other person's systematic and logical moves were clearly nothing like one would expect to come from an ordinary person. Ashes no longer hesitated, completely dumping her passive attitude, to concentrate on avoiding the dagger coming to her from the front, she put all her strength on one foot and catapulted out of the way.

However, the other side just disappeared into thin air, and within a blink of an eye, she had already appeared behind herself, leaving Ashes totally unable to follow her opponent's movement.

She drew her sword and rotated in a circle. Turning so fast that she created a dull whistling sound with the sword, causing a large amount of dust to raise up from the ground. This attack from her had no dead areas and was able to scoop up any kind of threat, but in front of this unknown enemy she was facing, even this tricky attack of her's ended in a complete failure. When her swords swept through the attacker's previous position, there was nothing to be touched.

That's bad, she thought to herself, straining all of the muscle in her body, ready to react to the next round of attacks from the other side, but the shadow just disappeared from in front of her.

The dust settled down slowly, while the person again appeared near Ashes, playing with the dagger she was holding in her hand.

It was Nightingale.

"Should I see this as a warning?" Ashes frowned.

"Of course not," Nightingale said, putting her dagger back to her waist. "I just wanted to see the strength of an extraordinary."

"Are you sure? It was more like..."

"Do you think I would force you into leaving Border Town quickly, or otherwise I would not stay polite with you?" Nightingale interrupted her. "If that was the case, what would be the difference between Cara, and me?"

Cara? Why would she mention the former leader of the Witch Cooperation Association? Ashes asked herself in confusion.

"You can rest assured that I won't hinder you from approaching any of my sisters, and if someone is willing to leave with you, I don't think His Royal Highness will stop you. I certainly would not..." Nightingale paused, "But if you threaten to hurt His Highness, I guarantee you that next time I won't just be stabbing at your side anymore." Here she grinned and then disappeared into thin air, "Enjoy your time in Border Town."

Sure enough, you still warned me off, ah, Ashes shook her head.