

Witch 171

Chapter 171 The Gift of Revenge (Part 2)

“Demon!” Alicia drew her two-hand-sword and stepped protectively in front of Mira.

“... Demon?” Her voice was cold, didn’t bare any emotion, “That’s the way, you call those orphans and abandoned babies who are sent to the monastery to get raised, from whom you chose your own witches?”

“What are you talking about?!” The warrioress snapped back, “The church shelters them because of God’s kindness. Without the Church’s mercy, how many of them would be able to survive until their day of adulthood? But the pervasive Devil will always corrupt the weakest of them, leading a very small number of girls astray. But as soon as it is discovered that one of them degenerated into a witch, the Church will immediately treat the fallen ones. You are totally turning the cause and effect upside down!”

Hearing the word “treat”, the golden pupil of the witch dimmed by a lot, raising her large sword with one hand she declared. “I’m not too interested in persuading a dead person anyway. So be it.”

Even before her voice had faded away, the owl spread her wings and flew into the sky, and the witches figure rushed forward. Alicia could still clearly remember how her comrades had tragically tried to defend themselves and had instead been split in two, so she decided, I will never retreat, I have to advance forward.

Facing the right-handed extraordinary, she threw herself to the lower right sight just like she had trained in her fencing lesson. Her instructor had mentioned it more than once, if the enemy is heavily relying on their right hand, the bottom right will be the most difficult position for them to reach. After all, their sword grip is limiting their movement, so if they wanted to change the direction of the blade, they would first need to spend an additional half a breath to change their grip.

Closely avoiding the beheading strike with her leopard like dive, she immediately grasped her own two-handed sword and slashed at her the moment she passed the enemy’s body. But the extraordinary reaction was too fast, with a small jump she easily avoided Alicia’s counter swept, and also simultaneously changed the direction of her greatsword.

Until now, Alicia hasn’t even landed yet.

Within a flash, the sword cut through half of her calf, with it sending blood into the sky. Sending a tearing pain throughout her whole lower body, almost making her lose her consciousness. Instinctively gritting her teeth, she was luckily strong enough not shout out on the spot from the pain.

The gap is too great.

She now understood, how hard had Abrams task been to give them so much time to escape, after all he was able to exchange ten or so moves with the extraordinary.

Alicia struggled to turn around, she was just in time to see how Mira removed a hidden hand crossbow from her back, and see her raise her hand and aim it at the body of the unaware extraordinary witch.

This is my last chance, she realized, perhaps, if I’m able to grab her attention!

But before she could even think about what she could say, a greatsword swept over with the force of a whirlwind. She then only felt her throat became tight, and then her world had turned upside down...

No, perhaps it's I who am flying, and then, she saw how her own body was unable to support itself any longer and fell onto its knees. At the same time, she saw the owl flew over in the direction of Mira. Turning into a girl in midair and severely hitting the official... Afterward, Alicia line of sight quickly began to blur, as she finally hit the ground, falling into a boundless darkness.

...

"That damned stone!" Maggie touched her head while complaining out loud, "You were too careless, if it wasn't for my help just then, you would have been hit by that crossbow's arrow!"

"Rest assured, I had already noticed, I was just intending to end this quickly," using her sword, Ashes quickly dug out a shallow pit. And after plundering their bodies she then immediately threw them into the pit and covered it once more with mud. By putting the plundered God's Stone of Retaliation and gold royals into her own bag, she now had enough money on her to pay for her way to the Port of Clearwater.

On the body of the woman who had worn the robe she had also found a letter, roughly skimming over it, she had discovered that the content of the letter only became relevant if Roland Wimbledon, Lord of the Western Territory, was not collaborating with the witches. In this case they had offered to buy baby girls and orphans from him, exactly as they had done previously with Duke Ryan. As long as the woman were still minors they would buy all of them, and also pay the regular "market" price. Furthermore, they could also help him if he wanted to be paid with pills.

Reading the letter Ashes began to sneer in disgust, placing it over the torch to lit it up, burning it one and all.

"Come on, we have still some other bodies left to bury."

"Goo." Maggie changed into an owl, then guided Ashes back to the site of their first attack.

Digging, carrying, burying the men... Unable to help with this physically strenuous tasks, Maggie wasn't too busy. In addition, seeing the disabled limbs, the cut off arms and smelling the air that was reeking of blood made her all feel a little dizzy. So, she was now sitting on a branch, watching how as Ashes kept herself busy.

"For what reason was it so important for you yourself to do this? Wouldn't it be bad if the Church finds out they are dead?"

"By the time they discover that their messenger group has disappeared, it will already be two or three months later," Ashes explained, still using her sword as shovel,

"When they usually send out an envoy to investigate a witch incident, in the event that the Lord is cooperating with them, the investigation will still last much longer than one month, in addition to the time they will need to return, it would usually take them almost two or three months long."

"But His Royal Highness wouldn't have cooperated with them!"

“As long as you allow the messenger into the Town, the Witch Cooperation Association will be exposed. They don’t need to ask the Prince himself, they can just randomly grab hold of some people from the street and after torturing them they will soon know the answer. So, Roland is only left with two options, either selling off the witches and saying that he has nothing to do with them or kill the envoys by himself. But if the other side was to plan for something like that in advance, as long as even one of them was able to escape. Hermes would soon receive a message about it. After all, they are also carrying messenger pigeons with them.

“Pigeons can’t see the road at night, so I was able to catch all of them,” Maggie said, patting her bulging pockets, “Just wait until tomorrow, we can go roast and eat them.”

Ashes was secretly shaking her head, previously she had never seen Maggie eat a bird, but now, after the first few days in Border Town, she had actually developed a strong interest in them.

“The moment the Church decides to dispatch their army, he will only have one month left, but for now, as long as his luck is not too bad, he will be able to last for three more months... So, this is the gift I promised him, at the same time I also got my revenge on the Church.”

“So that was the reason, really worthy of you, sister Ashes,” Maggie praised.

There was still something Ashes still didn’t say, with her killing them, Ashes had made the decision for the Prince, and when the Church finds out that they had lost contact with the envoys, they would certainly blame Roland Wimbleton for it. With this, he wouldn’t even get a chance to sell off the witches.

When everything had finally been properly put in order, the horizon had already begun to turn white.

“With this, it’s now time for us to part,” Ashes said.

“...” Maggie didn’t understand what she meant, “What?”

Ashes stepped in front of Maggie, squatted down and touched her small head, “You want to live in Border Town, don’t you? Here you have Lightning and Wendy, so you will certainly be very happy.”

“But...” Maggie lowered her head, a look of hesitation written on her face, “I also like you and Lady Tilly.”

“It’s not the case that you will have to be here all the time,” Ashes laughed, “Roland Wimbleton, unlike Tilly, is an ordinary aristocrat, so it’s hard to be sure that he will always be on the side of us witches. So, your mission will be to fly back once a month, telling us everything that has happened in Border Town. Furthermore, you can also bring our messages to the witches of the Witch Cooperation Association, this way our two sides can establish regular contact. If the town is ever in any danger, you can also help them escape from the Kingdom and Graycastle and move to the Fjords.”

“It’s like that, is it!” Maggie blinked unsure of what to say.

“Yes, it is,” Ashes nodded. “I’m convinced that you can accomplish this.”

Seeing Maggie turning into a pigeon and gradually disappearing with the first rays of the morning sun, Ashes turned around, mounted a horse, and advanced in the direction of the Port of Clearwater.

Chapter 172 New Drama

“That’s all for today class dismissed.”

“Good-bye teacher,” the little girls said in unison.

Irene closed the textbooks and watched how the children all walked away from the classroom. The building the class was held in had previously belonged to a former aristocratic residence, but after the Months of Demons it had been seized by the Prince, and it has now been converted into this college. fourth

The walls separating the small rooms upstairs and downstairs had been removed, changing the layout of the building into several larger rooms, which were able to accommodate four to six batches of students at the same time. According to the teaching material these batches were called “classes”. During the day, classes were held for children and at night they would be teaching the adults.

She had at first thought that it would take the City Hall a very long time before they would give an answer to her application for becoming a teacher, never really expecting that the day after Ferlin had submitted her application, she would already have obtained her permit. She had only needed to go to the City Hall to register her position, receive the teaching materials, and obtain a list of her assigned students.

She was responsible for teaching elementary knowledge to the children of the townspeople. She had spent a lot of effort on making sure that this group of little devils would listen to her lecture. Within the teaching materials, there was also a whole chapter dedicated on how to maintain the discipline in the classroom. The tricks that were described were totally eye-opening to her.

In addition to the traditional oral criticism and using rattan for corporal punishment, there were also other excellent options that were discussed. For example, dividing them into small groups, to establishment a class leader and monitor, who would be responsible for controlling them and so on.

The person who wrote the textbook, must certainly be a senior who has spent many years studying on how to teach, in order for him to take such care when describing of all of these problems, right?

Leaving the college, Irene saw her own personal knight Ferlin was waiting for her.

He was no longer dressed in his shiny armor, together with its lion crest embroidered shield and sword, but even without it, he was still a very handsome man. His simple leather clothes brought out his tall and straight figure, coupled with the clear lines of his facial features, even with his empty hands, he was still the Morning Light that she remembered.

After giving him a hug, Irene noted that Ferlin seemed a little worried.

So, she asked, “What’s happened?”

“...” For a moment Ferlin hesitated, “His Royal Highness the Prince invited us this afternoon to enjoy some refreshments in the palace.”

Irene was rooted in place from the shock, “Us?” She could immediately guess what her husband was worried about. She patted his back then shook her head, “His Royal Highness has never seen me before, how could he be the same as the Duke... besides, won’t you also be there?”

“That’s right,” Ferlin firmly nodded. “This time, I’ll protect you.”

That afternoon, Irene who was now dressed, and deliberately wearing a decent dress, with her husband went together to the Lord’s Castle.

They didn’t have to wait for long after a guard led them into the reception hall and a gray-haired man then appeared at the entrance. There was no doubt that he was the Lord of the Western Territories, Lord Roland Wimbledon.

He was accompanied by a Lady who seemed to be around thirty years or just slightly older, who carried a calm and capable attitude but was still full of charm. From her facial features, it was clear that she must have been an outstanding beauty back when she was still younger. Seeing the Prince enter, Irene and Ferlin quickly stood up, bending into a bow.

“Welcome, Mister and Madam Eltek,” Roland sat at the seat of the Lord, “On the table there are only the finest culinary foods of the palace, do not hesitate to enjoy yourself, there is no need for you to be uncomfortable.”

“Thank you for your invitation to come here to enjoy the refreshments, it will be our pleasure,” Ferlin replied in accordance with the noble’s etiquette.

“The name of the lady at my side is Scroll, she is also the head of the Ministry of Education in the City Hall, I believe you should already have met with her previously.”

“Indeed,” he nodded, and then he turned towards Scrolls and nodded thankfully. “Until now I haven’t thanked you, without your permission, Irene would never have become a teacher so quickly.”

So it was all because of her help, Irene thought, casting a grateful smile to her.

After leisurely chatting for a while, Ferlin tentatively asked, “I wonder why His Royal Highness has called us to be here today, may I perhaps know the reason for it?”

“This is related to education,” Roland paused, looking to Eileen. “I heard you used to work in the theater of Longsong Stronghold. Were you a theater actor?”

“Er...” Irene never expected that the Prince would direct the question directly at herself, “Officially I have only performed once.”

“In that case, I am going to have a play at the town square every weekend,” the Prince said directly. “As for the script, the screenwriting, and the conductor, I have already arranged for all of them; I’m only in need of performers. And since you don’t have so many classes and have already played in a drama, I want you to become the star of the performance. Of course, there will be an additional salary for all of your work. I wonder if you would care to join?”

“...” Irene looked at the Prince with big round eyes, unable to believe what she had just heard, without even bothering to ask whether he was making fun of her, she nodded excitedly, “Your Honored Highness, I would really like that!”

Standing on the stage has always been her dream, but after leaving the theater in Longsong Stronghold, she knew that she might never again get the chance to play in a theater. But in front of Ferlin, she had

never expressed this regret. Instead, she had buried her desire deep within her heart. But on this day, she unexpectedly got the chance to return to the stage. What more could she hope for?

“These plays will be performed for the masses to see, so my request from the actors won’t be high, it will be enough as long as they can deliver the story clearly. Maybe you have some friends in the theater of Longsong Stronghold who would also fulfill the conditions, who would want to go on stage, but never had the chance? If you could write a letter to them, telling them that we will have a performance each weekend and that the payment will be the same as for the stronghold’s theater.”

“I know a lot of them,” Irene said happy, “I’ll write to them the moment I go back home, I think they’ll be happy to get the chance to come and perform in Border Town!”

“All right,” Roland handed three books to her, “These are the scripts, they each have a number on their cover. Your performance will start with the first story. The content of it has been revised by Scrolls, and it should be very in line with the life of normal people. You can take these books back with you and read through them carefully. If there is something you do not understand, you can come to Scroll and ask.”

“Yes, Your Highness, thank you!” Irene bowed.

...

“Was that all right?” Scrolls later asked, “Do you think that all of those stories should really appear?”

“What is your concern? Do you believe that in their eyes, the Prince could never write such vulgar stuff.” Roland stretched his body, “And without your last modified polishing, the script could never have been completed in such a short period of time.”

“I do not think the story is too vulgar,” Scrolls shook her head. “Although I do not know why you know so clearly about this, these are topics that concern the people. They are quite touching and thought-provoking, so the show will definitely be very popular.”

Of course, they will be popular, Roland thought, the first two scripts were modified versions of “Cinderella” and “The Rooster Crows at Midnight”, and had already been well-tested by the audience. The former describes a touching love story between a civilian and a member of the royal family, while the latter was about people of the lowest rank and their struggles against the unscrupulous landlord.

Of course, he had adapted them to the local conditions, such as changing the good fairy in Cinderella into a witch, and the landlord in The Rooster Crows at Midnight also become a fierce little aristocrat. Roland intended to achieve a far-reaching and long-lasting impact with his first two plays before he could release his third work, “The Diary of a Witch”, which his true purpose.

This script had been completely written by him. It told the story of three children who all became witches, but each of their lives went in completely different directions. Instead of directly referring to the Church, he focused his attention on the fateful journey of these three girls: one girl had been abandoned by her parents, another girl had become a tool for others, and the last one was lucky and had parents who still loved her, and then gave their own life to protect their daughter.

Eventually, the three women would meet with each other by chance, help each other to prevail over those who want to sentence them to death, and would try to blend in with the ordinary people to find their own happiness.

Roland intended to make the Diary of a Witch into a series, and with the help of the three views, he would reshape how the outside world would look at witches. With the twists and turns of the touching drama, imparting in them the thought that any of their relatives could become a witch, and it had nothing at all to do with the Devil.

TN: Cinderella, The Rooster crows at Midnight

Chapter 173 Irene's wish

When the two of them had returned home, Ferlin shook his head and reluctantly asked, "Couldn't you have told His Highness that you would need a few days to consider the offer and before you could give an answer?"

On the way home, it had seemed that she was dancing rather than just merely walking. I'm afraid to say that the last time I've seen her so happy, was on the day of our wedding.

"That just wouldn't do," Irene stuck out her tongue, "Doing that would make it impossible for me to fall asleep at night."

That was the way she was, her love for the theater was so strong that she could often be seen practicing her lines at the stronghold's theater even during midnight. If it hadn't been for the Duke, she could have already turned from the flower of the theater not only in name but also in reality, into star of the show. theater. Thinking about this, he hugged his wife from behind and whispered into her ear, "I'm sorry, dear."

"..." Irene patted his head comfortingly, "It wasn't your fault, he transferred you to other cities, there was no way you could have stopped him." Softly laughingly she continued, "If you want to waste your time apologizing, you should go into the kitchen and cook something, I would like to take a look at the scripts before anything else."

"That's alright, I'll do it." Ferlin gently kissed her earlobe, "I'm going to make meat porridge, fried eggs, and a sausage to celebrate."

In many ways the new home had been furnished differently compared to their old home. For example, the cooking stoves, in Longsong Stronghold, whether it were the aristocrats or the civilians, would all have an open stove in their main living room, while in their new home, they had a separate room for the oven.

The stove was surrounded by walls on three sides, with the backside of the stove directly connecting to the chimney. The intersection was even provided with a baffle plate which could be shifted horizontally, and when it was not needed anymore could then be closed, preventing the smoke from the other tenants from coming out of their stove.

Ferlin could easily think of several advantages with the new design, for example after closing the door, the living room also wouldn't be affected by the cooking fume or scent, and during the summer the stove also wouldn't increase the indoor temperature any further.

After filling it with firewood and wood chips, the flames soon started to rise, and he could now fully start concentrating on making tonight's dishes.

After having dinner, Irene continued delving into the scripts and she was only able to put the third book aside after the candle had reached its end.

“How are they?” Ferlin couldn’t help himself, he had to know how good the scripts were, after all, she had spent so much of her time reading them. Previous when she had still worked in the theater, she would read ten books just as thick as these in just half a day.

“Honestly... it is hard to describe,” Irene exclaimed in admiration. “All of the books are full of new ideas, I have never read these kinds of stories before. For example, in ‘Cinderella’, the prince isn’t in love with another princess, but instead he falls in love with a beautiful peasant girl. Yet this is not the most surprising part, what is surprising is that he insisted even until the very end to take the peasant girl as his wife.

“I even got to the point where I started to think, maybe the Prince has never read this story himself, if that is not so shouldn’t the incredible odd content of the improbable couple be giving birth to dissatisfaction in his heart? Despite that, the whole story was completely exciting. I could not help wanting to applaud when the Prince finally found Cinderella again, and then slipped the crystal shoe onto her feet.

” ‘The Rooster crows at Midnight’ was also fascinating, but when compared to ‘Cinderella’ I have to say it is a lot simpler. I think two or three scenes will be enough to show the story clearly. Furthermore, reading the paragraph where the serfs found the courage to resist the nobility was marvelous.

“After a long time of cowering, the serfs frame of mind had changed completely from where it was before, where they had to bear with it at all costs to the point of it becoming more than they could carry was all perfectly depicted in the story... the feeling that breaks out after they finally decide to resist and let their passion burst out, seems to be coming directly out of the observer’s heart!”

“Serfs fighting against the nobility?” Ferlin frowned, this was clearly something that the aristocracy would never tolerate. If the serfs of the Eltek Manor were to ever dare to raise their hoes and shovels against the housekeeper, I’m afraid my father would be showcase their heads in front of the manor’s door on the very next day. “Does His Royal Highness really want you to perform a drama like that?”

“You are only asking that, because you haven’t read the script,” Irene threw him a cold look, “after reading it, you will feel the same as I do. That they were meant to stand up and resist, and not allow themselves to be oppressed any longer.

“The small lordling’s bullying has become intolerable, so he now had to face the importance of human life. In the end, they still only put the noble into a bag and beat him up ruthlessly, if you ask me, they were still too restrained. Later on, in the story, when the nobles want to kill all the serfs, they were then saved by a witch that happened to be passing by.

“She then became a well-known local image for the aristocracy, reminding them of what would happen to evil people. Later on, in a debate that was taking place, a foreign lord made a wise and benevolent decision, he bought all the serfs, and then promoted them to free people! I bet the whole crowd will erupt into cheers when we get to that point.”

But, the aristocracy will certainly protest, Ferlin thought disapprovingly, and with that, the theater will then be placed under pressure from the nobility. Which will finally lead to the dissolution of the crew...

Hang on, he suddenly realized that there lived no other noble in Border Town beside Sir Pine and His Royal Highness, while the latter was even the one who formed the crew.

In other words, does His Royal Highness actually intend to only show the dramas to the civilian population? It will be impossible to even earn a few copper royals from their hand, ah. But the actor's payment will also be the same as it was in the Longsong Stronghold, from the start it was given that this business would turn over a loss. Does His Royal Highness plan to show the dramas just for the entertainment?

"But dear," Irene said, not noticing the changes in Ferlin's expression, "Although the first two stories were already totally exciting, compared with the third one 'The Diary of a Witch', those two are nothing! I dare bet that even in Redwater City, King's City or any other of those big cities, if they read this the theaters would start immediately recruiting a crew for it, even with special rehearsal and advance advertising! I have to say, Scrolls really is a genius writer. The book 'The Diary of a Witch', no matter if it is in the story's content or its style of narrating, they are all far more advanced than any of today's dramas."

"Are you sure?" When Ferlin saw her solemn expression he had to fight hard not to laugh, "In Longsong Stronghold even I could often hear Mister Kadin Faso famous name, his "Delicate Rose" and "Prince seeking for Love" are works which were praised by all, even outside of our kingdom's borders. I've even heard that other kingdoms have sent their own troupes to observe and learn from him, do you think that this drama could be better than any of these classic plays?"

"Of course, I'm sure. Or do you doubt my vision, dear!" She began to roughly tell him the story, "Not to mention the plot, even its narrative technique is something you have never seen before. Compared to the dramas of the past, where you listened to the story in the third party, this story focuses firmly on the perspective of the three witches for the whole time. Even though the decisions of the three of them all have a far-reaching impact on each other, they have no knowledge about this.

"But near the middle of the story, their seemingly unrelated strings finally gather together in the same place, and from then on the three witches form one inseparable whole. I have to say, this new narrative style of developing several storylines at the same time will certainly cause a sensation without a doubt. Of course, this won't only be restricted to Border Town, I even wonder how many people can understand what level it had reached."

She excitedly got a pen and paper, to immerse herself into writing the letters, "That's out of the question, I have to quickly call my theater's partner to come over, I really want to see the surprised looks on their faces!"

Ferlin however, stepped forward to grasp her hand, "Hold on, Irene, don't you feel... that the story is too contrary to common sense?"

After listening to his wife's repetition, he also felt that the whole story was very exciting. Showing both the good and the evil side in humanity's nature, that the good and evil, were both overlapping each other, but its description of the witches and the church's interpretation were fully opposed with each other.

Moreover, its content was also too delicate. For example, the third witch due to the concern and care of her family, could release and develop her ability freely, ultimately discover that the story of the demonic bite was nothing more than a lie.

Now with the exception of their ability to control magic there was no longer any difference between the witches and the ordinary people. They also only want to laugh, cry, meet their loved ones and grieve brokenheartedly when their loved ones pass away. Is His Highness, Lord Roland not afraid that news of this will spread, is he not afraid that the Church will come?

“Violate common sense? No ... Ferlin, before they become a witch, they are ordinary girls, right?”

“Well, that’s right.”

“Then what if it was me?” Irene looked with wide open eyes at Ferlin, “If I became a witch, would you think that I am evil?”

“No, of course not,” Ferlin quickly answered. “You’ll always be the good girl I know.”

“Then if we give birth to a daughter, and she became a witch?”

“Of course that would be even more impossible.” He quickly closed his mouth, suddenly understanding in his heart what his wife wanted to say to him. Evaluating an unknown witch, and one relative with whom one has lived together from morning to the night as evil, were completely different.

“Yes,” Irene nodded with satisfaction, “If we really got a witch...”

He knelt down on one knee, taking the position used when swearing allegiance and said: “In that case, I would be just like the father of the third witch within the story, like him, I would do my best to take good care of her.”

“That’s a qualified answer,” She put the quill down and laughingly said. “I think... we can try it now.”

“As you bid, my dear,” he whispered softly into her ear, only to then pick her up and walk directly into the bedroom.

Chapter 174 Industrial Park

Two days after Ashes departed, beyond all expectation Maggie returned to Border Town, once more appearing in front of everyone.

After understanding the reason, her return then turned into a warm welcome for a new member of the Witch Alliance.

She was greatly moved by the banquet which was a celebration in her honor and was also being held in the castle’s back garden. The top of a long iron shelf had been covered with all kind of meat which was free for anyone to take and barbecue.

The range of seasoning was also very rich, there were salt, oil, chilies, peppers, as well as Roland personally created barbecue sauce. Which was made from cooking a stew made out of all kinds of different mushrooms from the Concealing Forest together with a whole chicken. He also added a

mixture out of salt, sugar and wheat flour, which let him forget the non-existent Monosodium Glutamate(MSG). Maggie almost ate to the point of bursting her stomach before she stopped.

On the afternoon of the same day Roland also tested her ability.

According to Nightingale's judgment, her magical capacity when compared with all the other witches could be described as among the medium level. Furthermore, her ability to freely change any kind of bird was only possible on the premise that she had seen it before. Changing her form used up a comparatively large amount of magic, and during one day she could change her form around 4 to 5 times, while maintaining her shape only consumed very small amount of magic. Her ability could be classified as belonging to the summon type and was also suppressed by the God's Stone of Retaliation. Her favorite bird to change into was the pigeon, but Roland noted that she would always be a lot bigger than the regular bird no matter in what kind of bird she changed into. For example, if she turned into a sparrow, in Roland's view, her sized would equivalent to a common pigeon, while if she was to change into a pigeon, she had almost at the same size as a sea eagle.

This point left Roland feeling quite sad that Maggie was incapable of changing into any of the fantasy creatures he had painted for her such as a Phoenix, Griffin, or a Kunpeng.

In addition, to Ashes original intention there was still something else he had to pay attention to, that was the question of, what kind of abilities did the witches gathered by Tilly poses? In case she had many auxiliary witches who could significantly increase the efficiency of farming, he didn't mind to exchange for them with his technology.

For this reason, Roland decided to write a long letter addressed to Tilly. He started with showing her that they were in a natural alliance, and then warned her about the Church's intention to unify the continent, and lastly he handed her an olive branch, expressing his desire that they could help each other and in so doing that they could progress together. Now he only had to wait until Maggie went to the Fjords next month, and permit her to deliver the letter without having to go through an extra effort.

The next day, the Prince was welcomed by another piece of good news.

The factory for the production of the steam engines has finally been completed. It was located on the opposite shore of the Redwater River, on the western side, next to Leaves' experimental field. The entire site was surrounded by a wooden fence, there was also had a smooth and simple road leading to the pontoon bridge. In Roland's plan, this area would in the future be turned into an industrial park.

As a result of his wish to expand the building space to far out as was possible, the factory was built using a comparatively easy to use wood material, covering an area of about 1000 square meters. Anna's self-built machines had also already been shipped in. There were two steam-driven boring machines, two manual milling machines, a manual grinding machine as well as a manual lathe.

Although the machines were quite simple, at least in theory, its workmanship was nonetheless of the best quality. Apart from the pedals and the other similar parts which were made out of wood, all the other parts were made out of wrought iron or cut out of steel. It could be said that it had been processed from the best materials currently in existence and with the highest possible precision.

Roland feared that he currently would only have ten workers that could come to work in the factory. They were the former town blacksmiths and their apprentices who had now been recruited by Roland

with a fixed monthly salary of fifty silver royals so that they could learn how to operate the high-end machines. The blacksmiths, together with their forging tools, would all move into the brick house that stood outside the factory. Yet with the exception of some unimportant parts, the steam engine would soon be produced by using only these machines.

To celebrate the opening of the factory and to strengthen morale, Roland decided to gather all the City Hall officials and held a ribbon-cutting ceremony and together with a short speech in front of the factory building. With Echo's simulation of a gun salute, Graycastle Industrial Company had formally announced its establishment.

During the next few days, as the company's executive Roland came to visit the factory several times. Demonstrating the uses of the machines in person as well as an overall of the steam manufacturing process in general.

The best way Roland could think of to let the illiterate blacksmith grasp the processing and assembling of a steam engine was to map the whole process out. Following the usual process of creating a simple manual, he labeled every part with a name, number and size. Afterward, he used a diagram to show the installation order and the connection pattern. With this task, Soraya had also helped him tremendously in making sure that he could finish this task quickly.

The first few days of production went exactly as he had expected, almost no part that they had made had met the requirements, not even to speak of trying to piece together a whole steam engine.

However, Roland didn't care about the scrapping rate, in the hands of Anna, in just the blink of an eye, these formerly defective products were soon remade into a new plate. And he believed that with repeated practice, it was only a matter of time before these blacksmiths mastered the production methods to be used in the new era.

In addition to the industrial factory, the Prince also changed the backyard at the North Slope Mine into his own military factory and was now mainly using it for the production of revolver rifles and bullets. Since by now, Karl's recommended "furnace expert" Lesya had also arrived at Border Town, a new batch of airbags had been installed, substantially increasing the temperature of the furnaces, even making it possible to independently calcining cement powder, making the former calcination room obsolete.

But limited by the current crafting ability, the revolver rifles and bullets production was still completely in Anna's hands. At this moment, Roland was still busy designing a bullet stamping sheet for a stamping press, although its cutting efficiency wouldn't be as good as Anna's direct forming, it could at least reduce her burden.

And also, to thank Anna for nearly half a month of rushed work, he had decided to send her a gift.

*

"A gift?" Anna put down the recently cut part that was still in her hand and stroked a strand of hair that had slipped in front of her forehead back behind her ear, revealing a brilliant smile, "Well?"

"Don't you want to know what kind of present it is?" Roland teased her.

"En..." she earnestly reflected on it, and after a moment before she said. "I like all the presents that you've given me."

After six months of being nursed back to health, there was now no longer any traces to discover of her time spent in the dungeon. Where she had previously been thin and weak she was now slim, her blue eyes brimming with spirit. Dressed in a white dress she seemed to be fresh and cool, her whole body seemed to be filled with vitality.

This is what an 18-year-old girl should look like.

When he saw Anna, Roland was unable to stop the corner of his mouth from raising, every time he saw her his mood would always become a lot better.

The so-called “gift” was covered in a layer of linen and placed in the castle courtyard to ensure Anna’s surprise. He had gotten this idea when he had seen how Ashbringer had covered her sword. Since he was the Prince, the gift of course also had to be something special. Presenting something like jewelry or other similar finished products showed off much less sincerity, so he had to think for a long time before he came up with an idea.

When Roland pulled away the linen, a basket weaved with rattan appeared before them, to which the end of many ropes had been tied with the other sides and connected by a vast canvas.

“This is... what?” Anna walked closer and begun to circle around it full of curiosity.

“A hot air balloon,” Roland replied with a smile, “It can take you up into the sky, overlooking the earth like a bird in the sky.”

“Flying up to the heaven?” She turned around, her eyes flashing with excitement, “Can it really do that?”

Soaring into the sky has been the dream of mankind since ancient times, from a hang glider to a hot air balloon, from the airship to the aircraft, for the exploration and challenge of this, humanity has already paid a huge price, but mankind has never given up on its pursuit. Even though witches have always existed in this world, flying was still only a right for the minority. The scenery from up high was bound to leave a deep impression in someone.

“Of course, you just have to fill the airbag at the end of the ropes with hot air.”

Roland had arranged for Nightingale, Lightning, and Maggie to work as emergency personnel. In the case of an accident, with the help of Lightning together and Maggie in her large sea eagle form, the two of them would be able to land safely. As for the other witches, he decided to temporarily not inform them of this, especially Wendy and Scrolls, they would certainly have opposed any of his adventures. In their eyes, he should absolutely never come even close to even the slightest mishap.

TN:

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Does anyone know of a better term to use than “revolver rifle”?

Shishui River finally got changed into Redwater River

Kunpeng

Chapter 175 Hot air balloon tour

The principle of a hot-air balloon was very simple. To produce it one only had to make their way through a few difficulties, the first part was the burning device, and the second was the airbag.

The first point, in the absence of pressure vessels that could provide gas fuel, he had to rely on firewood or charcoal to heat the air. However, the efficiency of this was too low and he had to come to accept that he wouldn't be able to fly with it very far with it.

This also meant that the principle of hot air balloon travel had been discovered much earlier than in Roland's original world, but nevertheless, there was a reason why they had only been able to use it in real combat after the development of hydrogen balloons came along. Roland however, could abandon the burning device altogether, and instead let Anna take over for the heating.

The second problem was to make the airbags airtight, but regarding this issue, it was something that Roland could at least use the experience of his predecessors for, and easily solve the problem by using a sandwiched fabric. The outer layer of the balloon was made out of a wear-resistant canvas, the center layer was made out of the intestinal epithelium of cows, and the inner layer was made out of a light gauze. With this, he was able to prevent leakage, while it also meant that he would not have to be afraid of it being pecked at by birds.

Roland propped up the opening at the bottom of the air sac, allowing Anna to raise the inside temperature with the help of her common flame. It started to slowly begin to bulge up, seemingly to be like a melted wax gourd. By taking into account that the hot air balloon would have to carry two people, the maximum diameter of the balloon needed to be at least at five meters, using up the intestinal epithelium of twelve cows, and its sewing lasted almost for a whole week. If it wasn't for the fact that he was the Lord of the town, it would never have been possible for him to make such a big toy.

"Does it fly by using the buoyancy provided from hot air?" Anna asked. "I remember that hot air will always rise up.

"Yes, hot air rises, while cold air sinks, this is a common natural phenomenon. Using the particle theory to explain it, due to the air being hot, the particle's movement will be intensified, increasing its diffusion into the surrounding, and with the expansion of the volume, its density will become smaller. While the density of the surrounding air doesn't change, the air in the balloon becomes lighter in comparison, causing it to rise.

When Roland finished explaining the principle, he discovered that with the exception of Anna who showed a "so that's the reason" expression, the other three witches were at a loss, seeing this he couldn't stop himself from secretly lamenting about the importance of innate talent.

When the balloon was completely inflated, it began to float up and slowly straightened the draglines. Roland took the lead and entered the basket first. Afterward, he helped Anna to climb into it.

"I'm still a bit worried about this," said Nightingale, "maybe it would be better if you let me try it out first."

"Trust me, nothing will happen," Roland smiled soothingly. "And even if we run into something unexpected, there is still Lightning."

"You can rest assured, I will catch them." Lightning patted her chest confidently.

“There’s also me, goo!” Maggie vouched, while imitating Lightning’s appearance.

With a shake, the balloon’s basket took off from the ground, gradually climbing up. Before long, they had crossed the top of the castle, and the whole town started to spread out in front of them.

To Roland, seeing such a scene wasn’t something new, after all, he had looked out of a skyscraper. But in Anna’s view, it was a new experience, it was a perspective that she had never seen before. She leaned over the edge of the gondola and looked out of it, grabbing at Roland’s arm with one of her hands, seeming totally excited while also being nervous at the same time.

This was the first time that Roland had seen her showing such an expression, it’s probably because her two feet have never been far away off of the ground before. So, flying in the sky for the first time, I presume it is naturally that she will have a slight fear of heights.

Soon, the basket which was tied to a hemp rope had also reached its limit finally stopping its rise. The hemp rope was about 50 meters long, in other words, it was around the height of a fifteen to sixteen-story building. Roland let Anna reduce the fire so that the hot air balloon could begin to hover within the air.

Lightning who had stayed close the basket for the whole time, but now where she saw the balloon was safely flying in the air she felt assured and thus she started a game of catch with Maggie around the hot air balloon.

When looking down from this height they could clearly see the castle roof, the constructions taking place all across town, the Redwater River flowing from west to east and the green farmland on the other side of the river.

“How do you feel?” Roland asked with a smile as Anna retracted her hand.

“Thank you for your gift,” she said excitedly. “It turns out that even I could fly so high.”

“You can even fly higher,” Roland sat down next to the side-wall of the rattan basket. “If the following hemp rope was longer, we could fly even ten times higher, but up there the airflow is much more chaotic, and it would become harder for us to still stay safe. Furthermore, this is only the first aircraft, just wait until I invent a piston machine, then even ordinary people can fly faster and higher than even the birds, and then...” He looked up at the blue sky full of hope in his heart, “humanity will one day fly out of this world and into the boundless space.”

“...” Anna held her breath, her eyes were shining and full of expectation for what was to come.

“I cannot guarantee that we will be able to fly out of the world,” Roland became amused by seeing her appearance, “but creating a piston machine, so that even ordinary people can fly around like the birds, the rest of my life should still be enough time to achieve that.”

In fact, with Anna’s capabilities, I won’t have to face any sort of bottlenecks during the processing, but the currently existing materials are so short of the needed quality. Low-quality pig iron is good enough to create steam engines while wrought iron is sufficiently good to produce guns with, and together with Anna’s black fire to create steel producing revolver-rifles is also no problem. But to build an internal combustion engine, I am afraid I need high-quality iron, steel or aluminum for that.

“That Border Town was able to achieve its current appearance, this is all because of your contribution, ‘Miss Anna’.”

After hearing these words, Anna stared blankly into the distance. After a while, she sat down and softly said, “My mother died in a fire, while I wasn’t buried inside of the thick smoke and the raging inferno and contrary to my expectation I instead became a witch. For a long time, I thought it was my awakening that had led to the fire, ending in the situation that I became extremely disgusted with myself for being a witch. Then, when I was imprisoned for being a witch, I thought that this was the way in which I could die in relief, but you saved me and took me out of prison. Teaching me how I could use my ability... I would never have expected that in addition to destroying and bringing pain, my flame could also bring so much usefulness. “Anna paused, “That I was able to meet you, I should already feel very satisfied, but now I have discovered that my way of thinking has already changed. Sometimes my heart feels oppressed, and I feel unwell, hoping for even more.”

She held onto Roland’s shoulder, “Even if it is like this, do you still want to hire me?”

Her lake like blue eyes sparkled in the sunlight and blowing her breath directly into his face, giving him a somewhat itchy feeling. Through their thin clothing, he could feel her soft body and her racing heartbeat. Despite all of this, she did not avoid his view, she was looking straight into his eyes. In the absence of Nightingale, she was full of enthusiasm and now even took on the initiative.

“Out there ...”

Even before Roland was able to finish, Anna had already sealed his lips.

When they separated, he gasped, “I want to hire you, all the way, Miss Anna.

“Ok.”

This time, he took the initiative, lowering his head and closing the distance.

...

“Hey” Maggie who had already been chasing Lightning for a while now, suddenly felt an emergency and stopped in the sky, looking at the empty basket, “They’ve disappeared! Goo!”.

“Ah?” After a short glance back Lightning said, “They just sat down.”

“Don’t they want to see the outside scenery?”

“They can always take in the landscape later, but they don’t get many opportunities like this one.”

“Opportunities?” Maggie shook her wings and landed on Lightning’s shoulder. “I don’t understand goo, should we go and take a look goo?”

“That won’t do,” Lightning said, hugging the pigeon. “It is a sacred ritual that cannot be interrupted.”

“Goo?”

“In short, I can only tell you that you will understand it in the future. Until then it’s better for you not to see it, at least that was what my father, the greatest explorer ever, told me.” Lightning tossed Maggie into the air, “Now it’s your turn to run, and my turn to chase you!”

Chapter 176 The answer at the bottom of one's heart

The hot air balloon stayed in the air for around half an hour. Afterward, it slowly came to land in the castle courtyard.

When the basket of the balloon landed, it attracted the attention of all the other witches who had surrounded the waiting Nightingale one after another, and by now nearly all of the members of the Witch Alliance had gathered together in this place. Scrolls who had recently returned, from the City Hall had even run the whole way back. When she had arrived after taking a worried look up at the sky, as if she was afraid that a huge balloon would drop from it, she immediately requested to be informed about the situation.

The moment the Prince had climbed out of the basket, Scroll and Wendy immediately went over, bursting into a lecture, advising him again to not put his own life into so much risk. The Prince, however, defended his behavior using the novelty of the toy as an excuse and flipping the topic around at them. Nightingale who felt that the situation was actually quite funny and was on her way up to meet them, suddenly felt how her heart turned stiff stopping instantly in her place.

She'd seen the overflowing joy within Anna's eyes when Roland had helped her out of the basket, staining her cheeks with a slight blush. Her flax colored bangs was skewed to one side, with the aid of a small hairpin which reflected the silvery within the sun.

Nightingale recalled how he had polished a piece of silver during the time when he was at the factory, guiding the blacksmith on how to operate those heavy machines.

Had His Highness personally made this hairpin?

Soon the other witches began clamoring that they also wanted to take a tour on the balloon, and like that the balloon began to rise again, this time with Anna and Nana standing on board.

Nightingale, however, stood outside of the crowd, staring at the hot air balloon, seeing it become smaller and smaller.

In her mind there was only one thought, Anna's face, brimming with a gentle smile.

Usually, Anna's face would always show a calm and neutral expression, rarely exposing any other type of expression. During her journey to the Witch Cooperation Association, within those large cities Nightingale had met many people displaying a similar smile.

So, she knew what it meant, it was clear that His Royal Highness and Anna had not only simply taken in the scenery up in the sky. Even though Maggie and Lightning had still been around, making it impossible for them to take it to the last step. But as long as the idea came up even once, it would become difficult for them to suppress it again. She suddenly felt like a piece of her heart had become empty.

Although she had thought that she had made her decision long ago, having to see it turn into reality, Nightingale discovered that she was far less prepared for it than she had ever imagined.

Wanting to be alone she went to a corner and leaned herself against the wall to sit back down, watching everyone with a disturbed look, while her head was a complete blank.

When the hot air balloon had landed once more, and Nana had stepped off of the basket, Leaves immediately seized the opportunity and climbed into the basket.

When Nightingale came back to herself, she discovered that Roland was no longer in the courtyard, he had most probably returned back to the castle, busying himself with his work, maybe lecturing over one of his books. She also had to go back to the office, she needed to always stay at the Prince side, just as she had done in the past. But when Nightingale stood up, she found that she was unable to take the next step. She really didn't know how she should face Roland right now, even in the case that she entered her own space so that he couldn't see her, she still knew, seeing now his face full of happiness would only make her feel all the more uncomfortable.

Wendy came over after the hot air balloon had gone up and down several times, "Why don't you go over and try it for yourself? It's a great experience to see the town from up in the sky."

If right now there was anyone else that she could not face even less than His Highness, it would be Anna. So hearing this suggestion caused Nightingale to jump up in panic and exclaim, "No, I really have to go back to the office."

The moment she finished speaking she entered her fog. But after taking two step she suddenly came to ask herself, why am I using my ability in the yard? Turning around, looking back, she was just in time to see how Wendy looked all over the place with an expression of wonder on her face, gnashing her teeth, she took the next step.

...

After dinner, she immediately returned back to her bedroom, while looking upwards, she fell backward onto the bed.

Today, even until the very end, she had never shown her figure in the office. The times when His Royal Highness had tentatively shouted her name, she had only tapped his back twice with her hand, showing him that she was still there. And even when Roland placed the salty fishes she usually loved so much on top of the table, she still wasn't in the mood to compromise, having none of them.

"What's going on? What happened to you today?" Wendy also came back to the bedroom and closed the door behind her. "While I've seen everyone else riding on the hot air balloon, I only saw you sitting alone at the side."

"It's Nothing," Nightingale said, turning herself away.

"It's obviously that there is something going on," Wendy sat down at the bedside, turning Nightingales' body around. After staring at her for a moment, she continued. "I thought you understood that you can tell me anything."

"..." The latter closed her eyes, only after a long while did she quietly murmur, "it's because of Anna."

"Anna?"

Nightingale did not want to speak about these kinds of disturbing things, after all, this would only make feel even more petty. Since the first witch His Highness had met had been Anna and not her. But on the

other side, if she didn't speak about it, the pain in her heart it would only become stronger, and even harder for her to bear.

Furthermore, Wendy had always given her a lot of help when she had needed it. Whenever she was confused, the first person she always thought of who could help her would be Wendy, she had never let her down. Thinking of this, she gently held on to Wendy's hand and began to talk about her issues.

After listening to Nightingales' story, Wendy sighed, "I knew that Anna didn't understand the importance of that matter, but you also don't get it? The last time I had already reminded you that he cannot be together with a witch. As the King, Roland Wimbledon will need to have children to inherit his kingdom, because of this aspect, he can never choose a witch to be his wife.

"He will."

"What?" Wendy was startled.

"Lord Roland will marry a witch," Nightingale said, opening her eyes, one after another, "He had said so himself!"

She had wanted to keep this message deeply hidden at the bottom of her heart, but now she could now longer bear the feeling of it not being taken seriously.

Wendy seemed to be frightened by the news, after a while, she asked with a frown, "Are you sure of this?"

"Yes," Nightingale confirmed it once more and to make it clear as she repeated Scroll's question on that day. "When it came to the question of 'Are you likely to marry a witch?' He only replied with, 'Why not?' You know my ability, you know that I can tell whether a person is telling the truth or if he is lying, and when he had given his answer, he had not been lying."

Wendy suddenly grabbed Nightingale's arm forcefully. "You're only allowed to remember this, never speak about it again, not even to any of the other sisters of our Witch Alliance."

"Why?"

"Because he is destined to become the King of Graycastle, and what does a King without any descendants mean? Even without the Church, it would already become difficult to get the local aristocracy to support such a King! Therefore, this matter must be kept strictly confidential, you absolutely cannot talk with anyone about it! For now, all you have to do is to protect his safety. Do not forget, if he can become the King of Greycastle, or not, will also decides the fate of us sisters!"

Nightingale nodded her head, showing that she had understood.

"As for the matter that is bothering you," Wendy thought for a moment. "Do you want to take the seat of the Queen or do you just want to stay by his side?"

"Of course, I want to stay with him," Nightingale said without hesitation.

"Then aren't you already staying at his side?" Wendy smiled, "there will indeed only be one Queen, but even if he ascends the throne, he will still need your protection. Do you understand what I mean by this?"

Nightingale just blinked with her eyes, but she didn't reply.

"So, staying together isn't difficult, what's difficult for you is to accept the choice that you have to make," Wendy said, "if you cannot do it, you have to give up your position, or you have to take on the next step... As for this question, what would be the right choice, only you know the answer."

...

On the next morning, when Roland yawningly entered his office and opened the drawer, he discovered that the fishes had disappeared without leaving a trace.

Chapter 177 The Will of the Church

Within the Cathedral at Hermes.

The Pope's position remained vacant.

The three Archbishops sat side by side, and it was once more Archbishop Mayne who opened the discussion, "I heard that some unrest has broken out within the Kingdom of Eternal Winter?"

"Under the leadership of High Priest Coburn, the Judges stationed there are already dealing with that matter," replied Tayfun.

"In the end, what was the reason for the unrest?"

"If it hadn't been for those dregs that had been taken into the Church," Heather whistled, "after the Queen has been beheaded, most of the nobles have joined the Church and were integrated into the upper echelons of the Church because of your plan to compromise, Mayne. They turned a blind eye to the plundering taking place under the guise of arresting witches by the city guards. But, the common people cannot accept this procedure which also naturally birthed resentment."

"Heather, that had not been my plan," Mayne responded in annoyance, "This was a decree ushered in by the Supreme Pontiff. This way we can take over and control the kingdom within the shortest amount of time, rather than having to continue fighting against the nobility. Furthermore, there are also some outstanding talents amongst them, winning them over should be a great help to us. As for those vermin, since their descendants can't inherit their privileges in any case, they should be all eliminated within the next generation."

"Alright, since you were only following the decree of the Supreme Pontiff, I won't say anything about this any longer," Heather shrugged, "but those violators who have corrupted the reputation of the Church must be handed over to me."

Mayne looked at Archbishop Tayfun, who was muttering to himself hesitantly, "I propose that for the time being we do not try to deal with them. When the turmoil has come to an end, it will still be possible for us to place the aristocracy under house arrest, but doing so now, so soon after they have joined the Church, it will only create an unease within their rank."

"No!" Heather pounded on the table. "We can't permit them to go against the fundamental rules of the Church. Any looting taking place in the name of the Church is a felony, and it is me who is the one in control of the rules and arbitration!"

“This time, for the purpose of the overall situation...”

“What I’m saying is in accordance with the big picture.” Heather directly interrupted the words that were about to come from Tayfun, “Do not forget that we have relied on our established image of being both fair and just to conquer the Kingdom of Endless Winter! If at this time we don’t strike a severe blow against those scum, the people of the Kingdom of Endless Winter will lose all of confidence in us! This is the foundation that the Church is relying on and not those group of damned aristocrats. If you do not agree with me on this, I will directly go to the Pope and ask for his ruling!”

The Pope has no time to worry over such matters, nor is the foundation of the Church in the hands of the ordinary people, but rather it’s decided by how powerful we are. Mayne sighed and decided to reach out to her so that she wouldn’t get too excited about this matter. “Then will we ask the High Priest Coburn to escort them back to New Holy City so that they can face trial?”

“That won’t be necessary, I will personally head out,” Heather said, “Recently, I’ve been rushing my matters here to get them finished. Furthermore, I should also be able to come back within two or three months. It is naturally that the more people who see a trial the better it will be, and King’s City of the Kingdom of Endless Winter would be the best place to hold it.”

“Are you sure about that?” Mayne frowned. “Right now, we have no free conductor who can protect you during your stay in the Kingdom of Endless Winter, if you are to encounter an extraordinary witch, you will be in great danger.”

“Where should so many extraordinary witches be coming from?” Heather didn’t accept Mayne’s opinion as being worth considering, “Just give me a team of warriors from the Army of Judge that should be enough.”

“If you insist.” Mayne did not want to quarrel over this subject any longer, “There are still some other bad news I have to tell you. The Church’s army had been unexpected repelled in the Wolfsheart Kingdom near to Broken Castle. We have already lost more than twenty members of the God’s Punishment Army and more than a hundred warriors of the Army of Judges, even with all of these losses we still weren’t able to conquer Broken Castle.”

“Twenty members of the God’s Punishment Army?” Tayfun couldn’t believe what he was hearing, “Who was the conductor?”

“Bell, and she’s already confirmed dead.”

“The conductor was killed? It seems that they actually met with an unexpectedly tough challenge.” Heather interest was piqued, “The loss of so many members of the God’s Punishment Army must really have given Lord O’Brian an intense headache.”

“We cannot blame this on him after all, the Broken Castle is placed in special terrain. Their gate entrance is high up in the middle of the mountain, the distance between the road and the gate is around ten meters. Furthermore, they had also destroyed the wooden bridge using some unknown alchemist solution.” Mayne explained, “According to the reports, they put up wooden ladders, and every time the God’s Punishment Army tries to crawl up them, they would suffer under a strange flame attack. The defender would spout a white solution out of pipes installed above the gate. Soon after they sent it out, it began to vaporize and catch fire, changing into a blazing flame which would cling to a person’s body.”

“No matter what they tried to do, they still couldn’t take it off. It only ended after they were completely burned through. Our troops are now trying to get into contact with our believers of the Church that are within the city, their trying to see if they can start an attack from inside and outside at the same time.”

“I dare say the church in the city has already become a bloodbath,” Heather twitched her mouth “If we want that our attacks to get through, the right move can only be to send out more people. The Alchemist will never be able to produce their solution on masse, sooner or later they will eventually run out of supply.”

“You are talking about our God’s Punishment Army!” Tayfun became so enraged that his beard started to tremble, “Do you know how difficult it is to convert someone into a member of the God’s Punishment Army? Right now, we don’t even possess one thousand of them, and if we have to use force to unify the country we will lose more than half of them, what should we then use to resist the demonic beast attack during the Months of Demons? Not even to mention our fight against the Devils afterward.”

“Do not fight,” Mayne said, “I will tell you this one piece of news, so it will be unnecessary for you to argue over the method of attack. At this moment, the Church needs as many members of the God’s Punishment Army as possible, and now that the Kingdom of Endless Winter is under our control, some things can be done that will be a bit more justifiable. In the past, those “seeds” had been delivered twice each year. But now, I have requested an additional delivery. With the Months of Demons even influencing the spring, its length is no longer as consistent, so from summer onwards, every season a new batch of seeds will be sent to the New Holy City, and the transformation ceremony can also be held correspondingly. The task to handle this matter will be handed over to you, Tayfun.”

“But there aren’t enough orphans and babies to provide the required number, ah,” the old Archbishop stroked his beard. “After all, not everyone will choose to abandon their child and send it to the church.”

“In that case, you had to find another way to provide enough. The Kingdom of Endless Winter is the kingdom in which we have operated for the longest time, because of this, most of the population are already part of our believers. In case that even within this land you’re still unable to provide enough manpower, swallowing the other three kingdoms will take even longer. Don’t forget, if there is ever be any unrest during the reunification process of the continent, we have to rely on the Army of Judges and the God’s Punishment Army to suppress them.”

“It isn’t the case that there aren’t enough people,” Heather explained with a smile, “There are as many children wandering the streets as there are stray cats and wild dogs. I have even heard that there were black street rats who especially went to hire those children. They are then trained into pickpockets, contractors, smugglers or scapegoats.

“Previously the nobility hadn’t gotten rid of them and instead offered them some places to hide, but now, thanks to Mayne’s gift, they’ve all become a part of the Church. As long as we cover the sewers, where can those mice go to hide? The only task left will be to send out the Army of Judges and try to clear up the underground, that way we can catch everything in one net. Doing it like this means you can harvest a lot of children, while the removal of those dregs will still gain us a good impression from the civilians at the same time. If we can also deter those who are beginning to stir up the nobles, we can succeed in three objectives in one go, can’t we?”

This is indeed a good solution, Mayne thought, no matter how extreme her temperament was whenever she was faced with had to face a problem, she would be the fastest person to come up with a countermeasure, so if for this ability he only had to ignore a few words coming from her, he would consider it a small price to pay. "Just carry on with this method. In short, before the fall, it is important that we conquer the territory of Wolfsheart Kingdom. So, that with the exception of the troops we need to maintain order, we can transfer all other warriors of the Army of Judges back to Hermes. During this year's Months of Demons, The enemy will only become even more powerful."

Tayfun, although reluctantly but he still nodded his head, "Also, the Kingdom of Dawn has already noticed the development in their neighboring kingdoms. The aristocracy within many cities are pointing their spearhead at the Church, there were already situations where they have plundered the churches then burned them down. I suggest we think about organizing a temporary evacuation of our believers. It really isn't necessary to waste them in such a conflict."

"No, that won't do, they have to resist," Mayne said, "The more sacrifices we have to make, the more reasons we will have later to retaliate." This is not a waste, but the seed of fire. They already don't have much faith in the Church, if we retreat out of the kingdom now, the Church will only appear to be even weaker.

"Well, I just wanted to mention it, nothing more," Tayfun gave up, "Lastly there is the Kingdom of Graycastle... ah, it is better if you see it yourself," saying this he took out a scroll from his sleeve and threw it in front of Mayne.

Mayne unfolded it and swept his gaze over the letters with his two eyes, the letter had unexpectedly come from the Queen of Clearwater, Garcia Wimbledon. It didn't take long, and his eyebrows wrinkled up.

"Did she even hang her priest?"

"Not only him, she even fed all of our believers to the fishes," Tayfun added, "and the church was then completely broken down even to the last stone. Plus, she should have already discovered the side effects of the pills."

Heather smacked her lips, "I had already told you that it was only a matter of time. Even if they supplement their soldier unceasingly with those toys, with each new pill taken the effect would become smaller, until they die in the end because of weakness. Taking those pills and using them to destroy their armies was a good idea, but when its effect came to the surface, they will immediately discover what kind of game we are playing. The true problem is, if I remember correctly, that our spies had reported that only a small group of her soldiers have taken the pills, right? Instead it were the barbarians from the south who have eaten a lot of them."

"Not more than a thousand, and she said that we will have to pay for them." Mayne put the letter down, "It's ridiculous, without the support of the Church, how could she have ever become the Queen of Clearwater? Where is Timothy Wimbledon right now? He also received our pills so why is he still delaying his attack on the South?"

"He is currently plundering the North, he had set out to handle the attempted rebellion from the Protector of the Northern Border. He has to first stop this rebellion, to prevent any instability later. He

probably wants to first take down several Duke's, and only then he will go face Garcia." Tayfun replied, "I just don't know if the new King, after capturing the North, will really make a beeline to the South or if he first goes to the Western Border, trying and take it back."

Chapter 178 The Mysterious Secret Temple

"Ha ha ha..." Heather laughed out loudly, "It must not be expected that a chess-piece will stay completely obedient the whole time, and as long as it is consistence with our final goal everything will be alright. It doesn't matter where he strikes, as long as the soldiers continue to consume the pills. Anyway, the Kingdom of Graycastle is the last one on our list, so there is still enough time left for them to fight it out. Furthermore, Roland Wimbledon didn't reject our pills last time, right? Maybe when Timothy puts some pressure on the Western Territory, he will be prepared to accept them."

That being said, the matter concerning the Queen of Clearwarter still caused some displeasure to Archbishop Mayne, after all, she was a piece he had personally selected. In case that Timothy, after conquering the rest of the Kingdom of Graycastle still didn't fight a decisive battle with Garcia, and they instead stationed their troops between them to maintain the confrontation, the battle for the throne wouldn't achieve desired outcome. Apparently it is time to adopt some different methods.

"There still isn't any news from the envoy we've sent to the Western Border, so we will meet again after we hear from them," Mayne decided. "Let's end it here for today. Will the two excellencies act accordingly to the plan, I still have some other matters I have to attend to on Hermes.

"Oh, that's right isn't it," Heather seemed to suddenly have remembered something, "Wasn't today, the day of conversion? How many people have decided to participate in the conversion ceremony?"

"That is confidential information." With this Mayne stood up and went straight out of the chamber, not turning around even once.

...

After walking on a seemingly endless stairway that was hanging in mid air leading to the bottom, the Archbishop crossed a mirror-like white millstone and went towards the depths of the Church's core.

Different from its usual quiet, the core was quite lively today, a group of Judges were standing outside of the temple, waiting to be lead in. For most of them, it was their first time entering this place, so they were all busy looking around still full of curiosity. The moment they saw Mayne their hands went straight to their chest and they gave him a salute, "Your Excellency!"

He smiled and nodded in their direction. These Judges were the elite warriors of the church and they were fully devoted to God, sacrificing their life for the chance to be part of the God's Punishment Army Conversion Ceremony, without having any guarantee of success. This was a point that they had to understand clearly before they could apply, but even so, they were still willing to give up their life for this great honor.

The eyes of the warriors were full of reverence as they looked at him. In this way, he passed the third checkpoint and came to the gate of the Central Secret Temple. The Pope's personal guards were already here waiting for him. They bowed to greet him, then pushed open the metal gate behind them.

Mayne followed the guards and stepped in behind them, through the gate. From this point onwards, he has entered the heart of Hermes, it was here that all of the Church's inventions and research took place.

There were no torches within the central secret area, because of this his vision suddenly darkened and only after a moment for him to adapt did he see a narrow passage appear in front of his eyes. The channels roof and walls have been fully covered with cast iron, and both sides of it were inlaid with fluorescent stones. These strange stones were a type of the God's Stone of Retaliation, and after soaking in demonic beast blood they began to emit a green fluorescence.

Reaching the end of the channel a cage appeared in front of him. After entering the cage, the guards activated the mechanism and it started to go downwards. The chain above their heads issued a crunching sound, which seemed to be especially ear-piercing within the narrow channel. Accompanied by this cacophony of sounds, the cage slowly sank into a hole in the ground, then suddenly Mayne's eyes were flooded with light.

An extremely spacious underground area suddenly appeared before his eyes.

No matter how often he had seen this scene, he would always be shocked by it anew, giving birth to a feeling of insignificance from his heart.

In accordance with common sense, buried so deeply underground, the cave should have been dark, pitch-dark. But here, the entire cave was illuminated by the light coming from the God's Stone of Retaliation. The God's Stone of Retaliation were spread over the whole cave, rising from the ground and forming several stalagmites like crystal flowers. Even the smallest stalagmites were so thick that it was nearly impossible for as many as ten grown men to encircle it. While the highest stalagmite almost reached the apex of the cave, even higher than the Hermes' Cathedral's Tower.

Their colors were also all differently having almost nothing in common with each other, the densest stalagmites of God's Stone of Retaliation were lavender, while the ones at the edge had changed from a dark blue to a light green. The smaller ones were even white, while the seemingly only recently emerged stalagmites had a near transparent body. The lavender colored God's Stone of Retaliation were the stones shining the brightest, especially the stalagmite which surpassed even the Cathedral's tower. Its brightness came close to that of the full moon, making it possible to see the end of the cave without the help of a torch, but also allowing one to just faintly be able to see the ground.

Under the influence of such a large concentration of the God's Stone of Retaliation, the inside of the mountains could be regarded as being a magic free area. The God's Stone of Retaliation that were sold by the Church had all been mined from this place.

The space within the cave was large enough to accommodate five or six of Hermes' basilicas, and down here they had indeed built an exact replica of the cathedral that was above ground, called the Pantheon. But the temple looked much older than the one that was on the top of the mountain. From high up in the air, Mayne could see a black iron gate in the mountain wall behind the temple. It led to the entrance standing at the foot of Hermes connecting it with the Old Holy City. So in a sense, this ancient building could be called the actual core of the Church, it has already existed long before the New Holy City had been established.

The cage took a quarter-hour to reach the ground. When Mayne could finally walk out of the cage, he straightened his robes and followed the messenger to the temple.

The conversion ceremony would be held in a hall of the temple.

Stepping into the hall, the light surrounding the Archbishop was no longer a cold blue-lavender but was instead an orange that was created by thousands of burning candles. Overhead there hung a three-tiered tower-like chandelier, and candle holders had been placed all around the hall. Looking at them through devote eyes they seemed like countless shaking stars. Thanks to all of the flames, the chilliness had been completely dispersed from the cave.

The man standing in the middle of the two conversion tables was the Supreme Pontiff of the Church, Pope O'Brien. He wore an eye-catching red-gold robe with gold-colored gemstones on his head and at the moment was carefully checking the conversion equipment, and finishing the last bit of preparations for the ceremony.

"Your Holiness," standing before O'Brien, Mayne immediately kneeled down in worship and kissing the pope's fingers.

"Get up, son." the pope slowly responded with a hoarse voice. "Besides the guards, no one else is here, there is no need for elaborate rituals."

"Right," Mayne stood up, but still couldn't stop himself from becoming shocked. Compared with last time, the Supreme Pontiff now appeared to be much older, he had gotten deep wrinkles all over his face, and his skin now seemed to be an unhealthy shade of white, both loose and dull. Lastly, a lot of dense and eye-catching brown spots had appeared all over his body. Seeing the pope in such condition, the Archbishop's eyes immediately became hot, "You're... suffering."

"This is a trace of time," O'Brien muttered, "no one can fight against time, my life is running low, I'm afraid that I will never see the day when humans can defeat the devil. But, in this way I also don't have to face the pain of the unknown anymore. Be that as it might, you have to keep on fighting until you've finally defeat the enemy or you've been defeated by them."

If we fail again, we will ultimately perish, Mayne nodded, "I will do my duty until even the very last minute."

"Very well," the old man smiled in satisfaction. "You've been doing very well lately, you've even increased the Army of Judges by more than thousand soldiers. Today we have sixty-two applications for the conversion, which can be regarded as the biggest number within recent years."

"Can you tell me how many members of the God's Punishment Army we will need to overthrow the Devils?" Mayne asked, and after hesitating for a moment, he continued. "All the information I know about the Devils comes from the Holy Book. But the record in the book aren't complete, within them, there isn't any information about their origin, quantity or combat style recorded. I know that to know these secret I will have to wait until I become the next Pope, but..."

"You are too anxious, you have to show more patience," O'Brien reminded him, "and it won't be long before you can take over the title of Supreme Pontiff, becoming the next Pope. You will find all the

answers to your questions in a secret library at the top of the Pantheon. For now, I can only tell you this, the more there are, the better it will be.” He sighed.

“Also, I’m not really looking forward to you presiding over the conversion ceremony, but since you’re already here, this session of the conversion, you will try to host it while I will be looking at it from the side. For later, this way you can also accumulate some... Keke... experience.”

Chapter 179 Conversion Ritual

To become the next Pope, it was necessary to grasp all knowledge about the God’s Punishment Army’s Conversion Ceremony. A year ago, after O’Brian had declared that Mayne would be the one to become his successor, he had given him books about the ceremony to read. Only when he had obtained all the knowledge within would he have the qualifications to succeed him.

Because of this, the contents of the book have long since already been memorized.

To create a new soldier for the God’s Punishment Army, it was necessary to sacrifice a witch’s life. A mixture was made out of her blood and out of the God’s Punishment Stones, which was then injected into a warrior of the Army of Judges. During the centuries the pattern of the ceremony had been improved many times, but the essence of it has never changed – while the number of witches decided the upper limit of the possible number of new member for the God’s Punishment Army, it was the devotion and will of the Judges which decided its rate of success.

After reading this book, he finally came to understand why the Church would accommodate so many young women every year. There was no outward sign to indicated that they would turn into a witch, before the moment they started to gather their magic, they were completely the same as any other human. But once they began to converge into their magic power, their body, organs, and blood would all be changed. So, in addition to expanding the scale of the breeding, there was no other way they could raise the number of witches.

This was also the reason why he had approved of Heather’s way of speaking – everything they had ever done was totally evil, the hands of the people within the higher ranks of the Church were all soaked in blood. They had killed more witches than any executioner. But in order to defeat the Devil, to avoid the destruction of humanity, they had no choice but to do so.

Only the victorious would be qualified to obtain God’s favor.

...

There were two Judges placed on the conversion table, and Mayne knew both of them, namely it was Dylan from the first battalion and also Tucker Thor, a Holy City guard, who was still a Presiding Judge.

Even though both of them were smiling and trying to display their faith, but because of their tensed muscles and clenched fist, the Archbishop could still see just how nervous they truly were. So he tried to calm them by stepping up to them and patting their shoulders, “Relax, I believe both of you will succeed.”

“Your Excellency, as long as we endure the pain, will we make it?” Dylan couldn’t prevent himself from asking.

"That's right, you only have to hold on," Mayne laughed. "Your name is Dylan, right?"

"You remembered my name," he became totally excited.

"Of course, you are a member of the First Battalion, which had participated in the war to defend Hermes last year. The captain of your unit is... Alecia, am I right?"

"Yes," Dylan nodded over and over, "During the battle, our unit suffered heavy casualties, half of my comrades died under the claws of the demonic beasts. I thought that if I could get the ability to kill those mixed species like I'd seen the God's Punishment Army do, Your Excellency, I would also want to become a member of the God's Punishment Army!"

"That's a firm belief," Mayne encouraged, and then turned around to look at the other Judge. "So what's about you, Tucker Thor, what is your reason for becoming a member of the God's Punishment Army?"

"I want to defend the New Holy City," said the Presiding Judge. "Furthermore, it seems that each passing year the demonic beasts only keep on growing stronger. They already broke through the wall of the Holy City last year, and if it weren't for the God's Punishment Army, it would have been entirely possible that they cathedral would have had fallen on that day. So now I also want to become a powerful shield against the demonic beasts, and pierce them with my pike."

"Excellent, you are both the pride of the Church," Mayne, just as it was described in the ancient records, tried to resolve their tension and fear through using encouraging words. When he saw that their faith was as strong as possible, he waved his hand to signal that the ceremony could now continue.

A group of guards came up to blindfold their eyes and used iron rings to fix their ankles and hands to the top of the table, making it impossible for them to struggle free during the course of the Conversion Ceremony. Then the witch was also brought in and placed on the table between the two.

As a witch that belonged to the Church, she had spent most of her life in a monastery within the Old Holy City, but after her awakening, she was then sent over to the core area, waiting until it was time for her to become the material needed for the conversion.

One day before she was to be turned into a sacrifice, she was forced to drink a lot of dream water was. The dream water was an herbal medicine made from boiling sleeping ferns and winter flowers, it ensured that regardless of what happened she would not wake up during the ceremony.

"Number, age?"

"One, eighteen," one of the guards replied.

This was just a routine inquiry, only the blood of an adult witch was strong enough to meet their requirements of conversion of Judges into a member of the God's Punishment Army. After Mayne confirmed that the witch did indeed belong to the right roster he announced that the ceremony would now begin.

On his signal, a fine silver syringe was inserted into the witch's arm, and soon after her reddish-brown blood began to flow through the tube which was wrapped around the needle, and gather into a crystal basin. The bottom of the basin was covered by a layer of pale blue God's Stone of Retaliation, gradually becoming covered by the blood until it finally filled the whole basin.

The God's Stone of Retaliation soon gave birth to some changes. Through the side of the crystal basin they could see how the blue stones were being absorbed the witch's blood and about half an hour later the stones started to melt gradually until they had completely disappeared. The turbid blood now became clear, turning from a reddish-brown into sky a blue.

Even though this operation seemed to be quite simple, but only after tens of thousands of tests, were they finally able to come up with such a reliable procedure. For example, what was the best age, evaluating how much blood the witch contained, the right method for the needle and skin tube's production, from which part the blood should be taken and into which part should it be inserted, as well as what quality God's Stone of Retaliation would work for the best and what would be the right amount to use... In addition to using the ancient records, they also wrote down all of their own failed experiment and their thoughts on how they could make it better. But at the same time they were also explaining the general principle behind the conversion process.

After a witch's body was changed by their magic, their blood got the ability to strengthen the organs and tendons, but if the blood was used directly, it would only lead to the recipient dying instantly. Because of this, it was necessary to immerse a God's Stone of Retaliation within the witch's blood and dissolving the "mysterious power" that was still within. After this it could now be injected into the aspirants – but, even with this, the blood would still damage receptionist's consciousness, causing them to gradually lose their emotions and intelligence, ultimately turning them into beings which could only survive by using their instincts and a strong will. If they outlived the ceremony, the God's Stone of Retaliation would give them the additional effect that even without wearing a God's Stone of Retaliation, they would still be able to ban all magic around them.

He had to say, this was really a fascinating combination. The blood of a witch which would usually cause humans to die and the God's Stone of Retaliation which, when swallowed would also put the people to death, when combined, their adverse effects would instead be reduced to a minimum.

When the blue liquid slowly flowed over their skin, and was absorbed by the two Judges, the veins in their arms and neck suddenly rose up, and their expression turned grim, as if they had to endure an enormous pain. Dylan was the first to shout out loudly, he struggled wildly on the table, clenching and opening his hands repeatedly, but he couldn't move his hands or his feet, even though his body soon began to emit a layer of thin sweat.

Tucker, however, wasn't in a much better condition either, he began growling and foam and blood could be seen at the edge of his mouth as his body twitched.

The fluid inside the crystal basin dropped little by little and soon the bottom became visible, by now Dylan's voice had already turned into a sobbing, interrupted by shouts of words carrying an unknown meaning. His skin began dissolving emitting a white smoke from his head to his toes. According to the judgement of the ancient records, this signs indicated that his conversion was on the brink of failure. Mayne hesitated, unsure over whether he should continue observing further, but at this moment the Pope stepped in behind him and placed a hand on his shoulder and said, "That's enough, let him go."

With these words, one of the Pope's personal guards came forward, drew a dagger and stabbed it smoothly and cleanly into Dylan's neck, quickly turning the handle and ending Dylan's suffering. .

After a painfully long wait, Tucker Thor's convulsions finally subsided, and his breathing gradually became smoother, and his former rosy skin turned a shade of light blue. Seeing this, Mayne knew that he had survived the conversion ceremony.

One man succeeded while another man had failed, seeing this result Mayne sighed, within a quarter of an hour the Church has lost a devoted Judge and also wasted half of the witch's blood.

But there were still sixty other Judges waiting for their chance at conversion, so he had to let the ceremony go on.

...

By the time the ceremony finally came to an end, Mayne was almost unable to stand. he staggered along the table, nearly throwing off the instruments that were lying on it, finally he sat on the ground, with his back to the wall.

The Pope slowly came over until he was standing in front of him, "To tell you the truth, I'm surprised by your performance. The first time I presided over the ceremony, I did it much worse than you. At that year I was still Forty-five years old, but the strong smell of the blood made me throw up directly on the conversion table, almost wasting a whole pot of blood. The former Pope even gave me a ruthless beating, but the moment he was finished he had ordered me to go back on stage and continue to preside over the ceremony."

"..." Hearing his tale, Mayne opened his mouth, but in the end, he didn't really know what to say.

"So, if you do not want anything else, you may go back and have a good rest for today."

"Yes, by your will." The Archbishop took a deep breath, then went down on his knees and gave his salute, but he suddenly remembered the purpose of his visit today, "Hold on, today the reason you called me to the Mysterious Central Temple was because..."

"Oh, look at my memory," O'Brien shook his head self-mockingly: "I was looking for you to give you a new poison, which was recently created within the core area."

"Poison?" The core had devoted their energy into studying the God's Stone of Retaliation, creating such things as cold pills, fluorescent stones, wild chemical drug and so on. Afterwards all of their creation would be then sent to the Archbishop. But until now he had never heard that they had involved themselves in the production of poison, in Mayne opinion, that sort of thing should be done by the Alchemists who were good at it.

"According to them, its invention was entirely due to luck." the Pope said unhurriedly. "It only becomes effective after it is sprinkled on rotten corpses and will have an effect on the surrounding population for a long time, compared to ordinary poisons it isn't necessary for the target to ingest it orally. And without the special antidote, it is completely impossible for it to be cured. For the specific circumstances, you can inquire with Master Crow's Eye. But, I thought that it might come in handy in the battle with the Four Kingdoms.

Hearing its description, Mayne immediately thought of the Broken Castle in the Wolfsheart Kingdom, and the unpleasant stalemate situation in the Kingdom of Graycastle. He suppressed his joy and saluted again: "If the poison is as effective as Master Crow's Eye say's it is, this should help me a lot."

Chapter 180 Population Statistics

Recently, Roland would always find himself in a cheerful mood.

Even while he was sitting alone in the office, he would occasionally be humming a ditty or two, immersed in the memories of his fantastic time inside the hot air balloon.

When Anna closed her eyes to kiss him, her appearance was just too cute. Every time he thought about it, he couldn't stop himself from smiling. Furthermore, the most important point had been the meaning behind her words, and how she showed them afterward with her passion and affection.

The only thing he could do was to respond even more passionately to her.

So strongly that when they landed Roland felt like there was a dull pain from his lips.

Probably, I had been kissing her too long, so that she became short of breath and used her teeth in panic?

In any case, I haven't experienced this kind of feelings in a long time.

When he came already near the end of his first quarter of life, those skills he'd learned from television dramas, and manhua finally came in handy, and the best part was that the object of his affection was the beautiful and moving Miss Anna. Roland finally felt that he had taken his first step to becoming a winner in life.

He opened the drawer and grasped blindly around it, wanting to chew some snacks to calm his joy, yet the result was that he only felt empty air – I clearly put the beef jerky in yesterday, ah.

Roland looked back at Nightingale who stood by the window, seeing that the latter was blowing the whistle and pretended to only be casually watching the scenery outside. He had deliberately replaced the dried fish, trying to prevent Nightingale from stealing, but who could have thought that this also wouldn't stop her from taking the dried beef?

At this moment, the sound of footsteps could be heard coming from outside the door.

"Your Highness, Lord Barov requests to see you."

"Let him in."

Nightingale did not fade this time as she had always done before, she only pulled up her hood and took a place on the couch by the wall.

When the Assistant Minister opened the door and saw another person was also in the office he slightly raised his brow but soon resumed his normal appearance.

"Your Highness, this month's demographic statistic has been completed." Saying this he handed over a parchment to Roland.

"So fast?"

"With the Citizen Registration File, it has become much more convenient to count them," the Assistant Minister explained laughingly. "Your previous decision to implement them was really wise."

Oh, now you've turned into a bootlicker... Roland spread the scroll out in front of him; on it, Roland could see how many people inside of Border Town were engaged in which professions. They were sorted in categories so that one glance was enough to know all the relevant information. Compared with his previous reports, which hadn't even been separated into paragraphs, Barov's ability has progressed by a significant margin.

The first line contained the group with the largest population, the serfs. Currently, they included a total of 3628 people (including their family members). The line underneath it read, "Remarks: 1500 serfs are now engaged in farming."

"Your Royal Highness, don't you think that the number of farmers are too small?" Barov pointed to first line and said, "According to Sirius Daly, from the Ministry of Agriculture, if we want to achieve a state where Border Town doesn't need to import food any longer, he fears that we will have to double the amount of the recently added farmland and manpower, only in this way will we be able to satisfy the amount of grain that Border Town needs.

Hearing this name, Roland recalled the impression he had of Sirius, he should be a former knight who belonged to the Wolf Family. The 1500 men who were now engaged in farming were the first serfs who were sent to Border Town, all the subsequent batches Roland had transferred to the mine or to Karl's construction team – but they also gotten the same assurance that as long as they worked hard enough, they would also be promoted to free people.

"I did not intend to produce enough grain to become self-sufficient by this year, and also, we currently have so much wheat stored in the castle warehouses, that it is enough to supply us for two or three months at least. And this year's harvest of the new species of wheat won't be the same as before.

"Not the same?" Barov got shocked by the unexpected revelation.

"When the moment comes, you will understand." Roland smiled. After all, they had planted Leaves' Golden Ones, the yield of each plant was at least three times higher than that of the old wheat plants. When it came time to harvest, it would surely serve as a shock. This was the reason why he didn't want to put too many people into the area of agriculture. With the crops being changed by Leaves magic, in the future they would only need a small number of farmers to feed most of Border Town's population. So with this in mind, as to save valuable human resources, he had placed a lot of the serfs into the industrial-development and the urban-construction fields.

Roland continued to look further down the list.

The second paragraph on the parchment was concerning the construction department, the following notes were divided into several groups, such like masons, bricklayer, mud craftsmen, carpenters, handyman and so forth. The total number that was engaged in this area was more than 1100 people, of which the vast majority were serfs who worked as handyman.

It was precisely because of these newly added people, that he was able to quickly build a batch of residential areas and factories – changing it to template buildings, mass production and routine process where all the important part needed to speed up the construction process. In Roland's eyes, this degree of improvement was still not enough, but for the locals, it was already a completely different world.

The third paragraph was about the mining staff.

Similar to the construction industry above, the amount of Border Town's local inhabitants were reduced to 25 people. They were mainly operating the steam engine, or were there to handle the registration of the ore and supervise the work. The remaining 1600 people were outsiders, it included mercenaries captured during the battle against Longsong Stronghold and all of the serfs sent in the rear.

"Recently there have been a few brawls in the mine," Barov said, "mainly between the mercenaries and serfs, this is a concealed source of danger, Your Royal Highness. They are too many, once they start to make trouble, the twenty-five managers won't be able to control them. I suggest that the First Army becomes responsible for guarding them."

"Well ..." Roland thought about it for a moment, "Alright, do it. For now, we don't have enough manpower to set up a police force. I will speak with Iron Axe soon, fifty men from the firearms team should be sufficient."

"What is a police...?"

"You can think of it as a kind of patroller, but the scope of their area is much larger. Basically, all the internal security will be done by them."

During this era there was no separation between the inner and external force, because of this, they would permit the army to administer law and order. Furthermore, it was unlikely that it would turn into their own dark history. He had no intention of diverting his manpower to form a secondary force, considering he had his own huge enemy, the Church to look out for.

The fourth paragraph contained information about Border Town's First Army.

After the end of the war against Longsong Stronghold, the achievements of the First Army sounded through the whole of the Western Territories, making them famous – three hundred people while only paying a minuscule price had overcome the 1500 man strong force of the Duke. Completely destroying any thought of resistance within the nobility of Longsong Stronghold.

After evaluating their merits and bestowing them with their rewards, Roland had doubled the size of the First Army, increasing it to the size of 600 people. Soon after the recruitment order was made public, the whole town's square became packed with enthusiastically people who wanted to sign up. Roland still followed his old concept to select the member of the First Army. He chose the three hundred indigenous people, who had the best physical condition, and did not have a criminal record and let them join the First Army.

The rest was a summary of all kinds of technical personnel.

For example, the smelting and firing industry had substantially increased in the past month, from the initial no more than 20 people, they had risen to about 400 people. Thanks to the furnaces granted by the "furnace expert" Lesya, the North Slope Furnace Group could not only produce red brick but they could also fire cement and glass. At the same time, they had also erected three shaft furnaces. They were used to smelt the ore which had already piled up in the yard. The produced ingots could afterward also be transported to the required areas.

As for education, chemistry, industry, animal husbandry, the people engaged within amounted to less than 50, so from a demographic point of view, Border Town still had a long way to go. But the fact that

the original population of hunters and miners in Border Town could be changed into this within merely half a year, could be regarded as earth-shaking.

Today, the occupation of hunters had basically disappeared, from hunting for surviving it was now changed into a hobby. Excluding those people who became members of the First Army or joined the smelting industry, the current Border Town still had nearly a thousand individuals who were unemployed. While waiting for the literacy phase of the universal education finished. Roland decided to pull all of these people into the factory, and open up the prelude to the industrial era.