Witch 181

Chapter 181 Soraya's paintings

After Barov left, Roland went to the drawer and put the statistics into it. Looking back at Nightingale, he wanted to ask her what had happened with her but after hesitating for a moment, he ultimately wasn't able to.

He already had a vague answer within his heart, but saying something like that was too embarrassing, and even if he guessed wrong it might even be even more embarrassing. So in the end, Roland swallowed his question and said instead: "Now with this done, let's go to the North Slope Mine."

"Do you want to go and see what changes Soraya's new ability could make?" Although Nightingales behavior has become somewhat strange, her attitude was still the same as before, with a smile, she took off her hood and said, "Let's go."

Perhaps I'm just thinking too much into this, Roland thought, as he looked at the witch who quickly came to his side.

The ride on the hot air balloon on the other day had influenced far more than only one or two people.

He never imagined that Soraya would become the second witch who gave birth to a fundamental change of her ability.

In fact, even she wasn't aware of the change.

Roland had only been present by chance when her talent appeared.

Since the hot air balloon was a gift for Anna, it had been placed in the castle courtyard. Whenever someone wanted to see the landscape from high up, they had to call for Anna and Lightning. But the day before when it began to rain, Roland suddenly remembered that the out of rattan weaved basket would become soft when immersed in water, and even if it later got dried it would still lose its toughness, thinking of this he wanted to take it back into the castle.

He had intended to let the servants do it but he then had second thoughts about doing so, whatever the outcome, the hot air balloon was his present to Anna, and the ropes and airbag were parts that could also be easily damaged, so he decided to personally bring it back to the castle. After he had called Hummingbird over and came to the vestibule, he got surprised by what he saw.

The whole basket had a pattern painted on it – it was covered by a bird's-eye view of the scenery of Border Town. But unlike her previous photo-like paintings, her paintings unexpectedly looked like they would immediately stand up and come to life. And it also seems that the raindrops here couldn't fall on Roland either. When he took a closer look, he discovered that her paintings had for the first time gotten a "thickness" to it.

It wasn't strange that a picture had thickness. Theoretically, every real picture should have had a thickness – because the pigment itself had a thickness. In paintings, this thickness could even be put to use. By using brushes, strokes or scrapers it was possible to create rough textures, and through a variation of layers the realism itself could be increased, enhancing the expressive power of the painting.

But Soraya's paintings were different, her paintings weren't drawn with a brush and paint, but directly by using her magic.

Therefore, that she was able to create this thickness by shaping her magic was especially surprising.

He remembered that when he had softly touched those sticking out woods with his hands, it had really felt like he was scratching over branches and green leaves, it wasn't the case that they were hard and solid, but rather soft like gum. And when he touched the ground, the tactile sensation was very robust, as if he had actually touched a stone.

Simply amazing.

As well as that those raindrops flowing down along the drawn landscape were unable to soak the slightest bit into the rattan.

Back in the castle, he immediately called for Soraya to come over, and then Nightingale also confirmed this point. When she observed Soraya from within her fog, the magic in Soraya's body also wasn't the same as before. Previously it was a golden whirlpool, but now it had condensed into a rotating... ribbon.

...

When they stepped into the military factoring compound, Anna approached and welcomed them laughingly, while giving Roland a big hug.

Since they had deepened their relationship, the intimacy she showed him had become significantly more. Roland rubbed her head in a good mood, and the silver clip stuck to her hair flashed within the sunlight.

But in the corner of the eye, initially Soraya had also intended to come over to greet him, but now she stood at her original place not knowing what to do, in the end, she began to blush and turned away, putting on an, I see nothing appearance.

"Cough," Nightingale took Soraya's hand and pulled her to the table, and asked deliberately, "Did you draw this?"

Roland smiled and shook his head, letting go of Anna and went over with her.

Only seeing that the whole table was covered with the demanded pictures, the paintings were exactly what you could see in the yard, the only difference between the paintings were the thickness, some of them were only about a millimeter higher than the paper, while some came close to three centimeters — this was exactly the training concept Roland had arranged for her this morning, testing how far it was possible for her to thicken her magic "paint".

"Is this the thickest one?" Roland touched with his fingers a nearly three centimeters thick picture. The enchanted blue sky, that part of the picture was soft as if it has no texture in general, but when he slid his finger down to the yard's wall, he immediately felt a sand-like friction.

It seemed to be exactly as he had expected, after the evolution of her magic pen, the pictures drawn by her were not only in line with the shape and color of the original, even the tactile sensation came close to the original object.

"It can also become thicker, but increasing the thickness, even more, the magical consumption becomes very large," Soraya pointed at a brown protrusion on the table, "I wanted to draw the tree trunk outside of the wall, but I had barely drawn the basics of the tree trunk before I had already spent half of my magic power.

"This is your painting?" Roland reached with his hand for a ten centimeters thick painting, "I thought it was really a bark."

That being said, however, its connection to the table was exceptional firm, the Prince used his hand to grab the tree bark and tried to pick it up until his two feet had left the ground, but even with this he was unable to separate the bark from the tree.

Seeing this, Nightingale drew a knife, yet even after a long time she was still only able to cut a small hole at the bottom. "This thing seems to have been embedded into the table."

In the end, it could only be cut by Anna, she changed her black fire into a thin thread and swept it over the table. Afterward, the pigments began to emit white smoke and then it dropped off. The cut was smooth but not glossy. Instead it had several black scorched marks on it. Roland picked the fallen pigments up, and when he held it in his hand he discovered that it was far lighter than he had imagined.

"Why did you suddenly want to change your style... No, I mean, how do you decide to add thickness to your painting?" Roland asked.

"I think it was probably because I had seen this kind of scenery for the first time," Soraya stated her memories. "When I was high up in the air and looking down on the earth, I felt, that the paintings I had made before — which you had said to be almost comparable to the real scene and had called a "photo", was in fact not accurate. Especially when I used the basket to portray the scenery, and also when I had come down I thought even more in this way."

She paused, then continued slowly, "The tops of the trees are pointed, and the wind always blows through them carefreely. The mountains are high and low, resembling the ups and downs of a chest. And the river is embedded in the earth, the ships on top of it are pushing their way through. This was the scenery I had seen and not the extremely thin painting.

So I had wanted that my picture would become more like reality. I wanted it to stand up, just like this magnificent scenery. But even after several tries I failed to succeed... during a moment of frustration, I suddenly remembered what you had said about those balls."

"Balls?" Rolland raised his eyebrows questionably.

"Well," she nodded shyly, "that was at least what you had taught us. I thought that everything was made out of those small balls, then shouldn't the pattern I drew also be the same? I made a few more attempts and imagined that the pattern illustrated by my magic pen were made out of colorful balls, all stacked to each other, and together formed a whole block of color. Then... the screen suddenly wriggled up, the green woods grew upwards, the dark blue river sunk, finally turning into the pattern you normally see. At that time, these changes shocked both Anna and me. If you hadn't mentioned it, I would never have realized that my magic had evolved."

"So, it was like this."

"But compared to Anna's black fire, with the exception that after the evolution my paintings seems to be more vivid, it seems it doesn't have any other useful effect." Soraya spat out.

"No ... why?" Roland shook his head. "In my eyes, they are not just simple paintings."

It would be a waste if she only used this ability for painting. He remembered the scene where the rain had slid over the surface of the basket but was still unable to immerse into one of the scenes – rather than a painting it was a kind of "coating" magic.

Chapter 182 Shaft furnaces

As long as the object's surface was covered and formed a definite contiguous skin, it could be called a coating. The coating itself could be gaseous, liquid or solid, with all sorts of different applications to them. From the initial beautiful decoration, and later enforcing the durability of the object, all of these things could be considered as coatings.

Afterward, Roland launched a series of tests at the substances.

He became extremely pleased by the test results, its concept could be roughly summarized with the phrase: "The more energy her paintings consumed, and the longer she drew, the better they would become." Her previous pictures were already hard to completely erase, as long as their medium wasn't also destroyed, and now, after her ability had evolved, this characteristic would become even stronger in the future.

Firstly, there was the high adhesive force and the light mass of these "pigments". While on top they showed some of the physical characteristics of the object – it could also change its flexibility according to the depicted object. Things such as painted clouds or skies, would be as soft as cotton candy, while still having a high resistance towards stretching and cutting. But when replaced with something made out of iron ingot, glass or material of a similar nature, it then became hard and brittle, and could be directly smashed with a hammer. In other words, due to its limited mass, its performance regarding flexibility was far superior to its display of rigidity, which was consistent with Soraya's understanding of how the pigments worked.

Secondly, regardless of which characteristics were shown, its chemical properties remained very stable. Not only didn't it react with dilute of sulfuric acid or dilute of nitric acid, but it also repelled water and oil.

When Roland filled a coated paper box with water, the thin bottom of the box didn't show any marks of any water seepage. After pouring water into it, the clear liquid beads rolled in the box like dew on a lotus leaf. And when he touched the bottom with his finger he confirmed that even then it still remained dry.

For the high temperature resistance test, Anna went to the paper box and dropped some molten iron into it, the paper as supporter caught fire immediately, the coating itself however, except for stretching a bit didn't change much. Only when Anna used her black flame to directly burn the coating, did it begin to deform and melt, emitting a white smoke until it finally turned into a mass of black jelly.

The fact that the coating also had an insulating effect totally excited Roland. After all, coated copper wires could be used the same way as enameled wire, which he had already proven by building a simple DC motor in the yard.

At this point, Roland had completely understood the capacity of Soraya's new ability.

Unlike Anna's black flame which entirely different from her previous green fire, Soraya's new ability was more like an evolution of her previous painting skill. She could now draw a realistic "oil painting", or she can also just draw her "photo" like the pictures from before. Her abilities could also be used in parallel, it only depended on what she had in mind to make.

Also when she drew a picture and if the thickness of the coating was kept under one centimeter, Soraya could draw several hours without needing to stop. But when she drew with a thickness of at least three centimeters, her magic consumption would also rapidly increase, and at a depth of ten centimeters, she hit a threshold, almost immediately exhausting her magic with only one or two strokes. Of course, from another perspective, this was also the most efficient way in which to counter the demonic bite.

Also, after the evolution, her magic still belonged to the category of summoning, and as long as it came within the suppressive range of a God's Stone of Retaliation, her magical pen would also suddenly disappear, making it impossible for Soraya to draw a new pattern. However, the already drawn coating wasn't affected by a God's Stone of Retaliation. Under Nightingales observation, they had discovered that when Soraya's paintings were drawn, they no longer contained any trace of magic to them – in other words, the material created by her magic pen became a real existence.

As for how to use the coating... there were too many possibilities. Soraya herself had never imagined how much of a change her new ability would bring to the town. For Roland, her new ability meant that he could quickly get some coated water pipes which were totally rust-proof, and large bundles of enameled wire, even bricks would become usable at high temperature. He suddenly saw the light, for his original seemingly three out of reach engineering projects (tap-water system, electricity, and access to roads).

At the same time, this also reminded him of the point made that: Personal experience was far more profound than reading axioms from books.

If he could get the witches to see the world in its sub-atomic state, and get them to accept the particle theory, would it lead to a new round of evolutions? Such as... letting them even observe micro-organism under a microscope.

Roland felt that it was necessary to try it at least try it.

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North Slope, the furnace area.

"Blow! Let the fire burn even hotter!" Lesya shouted.

Although it was impossible to directly see the scene inside of the shaft furnace, with the three carts full of charcoal, the stones should already have turned red from the heat by now.

When he was invited to the town by a letter from van Bate, he thought that the town was only a desolate and barren land, and if it hadn't been written that he could start a new life here as a mason, he would never have run to the kingdom's border to resume his old trade.

By temporarily leaving his family behind and taking only his own luggage, he had already prepared himself for a life lived inside of tents while only have porridge to eat. Having nobody in charge and also not getting any payment, were problems often encountered within the construction business.

Lesya hadn't intended to stay for a very long time inside Border Town, as long as he could see Karl, his longtime friend, and see how he was faring with his life here in exile, he would be satisfied.

But reality was always different than you expected.

When he had reach Border Town by boat, he saw Karl was already waiting for him at the dock. Previously, van Bate had been a distinguished mason in King's City and was even a powerful contender for becoming the next leader of the guild. When he compared him with his former appearance, Lesya saw that his temples had turned white and his face had a few more wrinkles to it, but his body wasn't thin. Instead he was very sturdy, his face even burned full of spirit.

After they had exchanged their greeting, Karl didn't take him to a noisy and messy site, but unexpectedly led him to an apparently new residential building. Where he handed him his keys with the words: "This house is yours. Put your luggage away first and then we can go to the pub and have a drink."

... And then in the pub, out of Karl's mouth Lesya heard a series of incredible stories.

Karl, with his status as a civilian was recruited by Lord into working at the city hall, not only becoming an official with a fixed monthly salary, but also the construction-sector executive!

"If you stay, you will also receive the possibility of entering the city hall!"

"Provided with free housing!"

"After ten years of work, you also get a retirement allowance! Are you asking yourself what the benefit of a retirement allowance is? It means that you will get money without even having to work!"

Lesya had thought that Karl was just drunk and speaking nonsense, so the results afterwards weren't as he had expected... Karl was speaking the truth.

"Open the slag discharge port, clear the slag!"

After the work was done, none of the problems envisioned by Lesya had appeared. On top of that, not only did they immediately get their money from the Lord, but the Lord also reacted exceptionally fast. Whenever they had a request, they would always get their answer on the following day. Plus, this was also the place they produced an alchemical product called cement, with it, he could easily bond bricks, allowing the construction process to advance by leaps and bounds, here he could experienced a kind of unprecedented carefree feeling, like never before.

Just within a month, Lesya had already built five blast furnaces, and three additional shaft furnaces for iron smelting.

The shaft furnace was the result of his hard thinking during the years after the disbandment of the mason guild. It was the product made using all of his gathered experience, he had already thought that he could only pass it on as a blueprint, never would he have dared to believe that he would one day see it erected before his very eyes.

The modified shaft furnace was nearly two meters high and had an internal diameter of about 75 cm. The lower parts of the furnace's body was provided with a number of air nozzles, which could be used for drawing in air by using bellows and ventilation, leaving the bottom for the slag discharging port and the leaving port for the molten iron. Next to the shaft furnace they had erected a ramp made out of sand and gravel, making it convenient for them to feed, and also to observe the situation within the furnace.

Today was the first day where the shaft furnace would be put into use. According to the usual practice, before it was officially opened, it had to undergo a smelting test.

During the trial they had intermittently opened the slag discharging port more than ten times, and had also added new charcoal two times, coming to the conclusion that the furnace had passed its inspection – the molten iron was now flowing into its sink.

The slag mouth opened smoothly, and the temperature had met the high temperature needed for smelting iron, so there was no need to continue wasting charcoal. After all, to reduce loss, during the furnace test they had used the waste ore they had collected in the corner of the yard.

After opening the iron discharging port and letting the molten flow out, Lesya announced the furnace shutdown.

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Two days later, when the furnace chamber was cleaned up by townsfolk they also excavated several pieces of dark stone. Under the high-temperature baking, the other wastes had been discharged several times, only these pieces of ore were left, after they were thrown in they almost hadn't changed at all, only their surface had become more bright, just like black ink.

Lesya could also not determine what this black ore was, he only knew that it was a waste product of the mining process. Yet its shape and appearance were really pleasing to the eye, not resembling anything useless. But if it was useful and they were unable to melt it, how should they create artifacts from it? Unable to come to a conclusion of his own, he straightforward picked out a block of the most preserved ore, covered it with a cloth and sent a man to the castle to give it to Roland Wimbledon, the Lord of Border Town.

Perhaps the well taught Lord will know the answer.

Chapter 183 The Township Construction Plan

"What is this?" Nightingale asked while looking at the black, shiny stone on the table.

"Obsidian." Roland didn't even raise his head a bit, entirely busy concentrating on drawing the blueprint.

"Ob... what kind of stone?"

"No, I was just speaking nonsense." He sighed, slightly looking upwards at the shape and color of the stone, only the ghosts will know what this is, ah. After all, he wasn't a geological engineer, even if he had a pure metal right in front of him, it still wasn't guaranteed that he could distinguish it, even less by what the ore looked like.

The knowledge he had in his head only told him that most of the ores were a complex composition of compounds; different impurities gave them different colors. For example iron ore could be composed out of: hematite, pyrite, and siderite, which when looking only at by using their outer appearance, seemed to be thousands of miles apart.

Especially pyrite, which would sometimes show a light yellow metallic luster, leading to the situation where it is often identified as gold, giving it the nickname, fool's gold.

As for their heat-resistant... the compounds themselves didn't have a fixed melting point, this was related to its impurities and its ingredients, so by using temperature alone, it still wasn't possible to distinguish between all the different varieties. Furthermore, even if the metal elements existed in their ion state, as long as he didn't know its purification method, the smelting would be useless.

"There actually exists something you do not know about?" Nightingale asked in astonishment.

"There are a lot of such things," Roland put down his quill and made himself a cup of black tea, "do you want to drink something?"

"No," she waved her hand to decline. "Ah! That's right, beef jerky isn't as delicious as salted fish, it would be better if you put some salted fish into the drawer later."

"..." For a moment Roland was silent, then he decided it would be for the best if he pretended not to have heard her.

Regarding the stone, he intended to give it to Kyle Sichi and let him deal with it. After all, minerals were radioactive to some extent, so placing them in his office just so they could serve as decoration wasn't a very good choice.

Recently, after Soraya's ability had evolved, he had suddenly discovered that there were a lot of new things he could now create.

The first of which would be a tap water system, which would greatly enhance the standard of living for the residents. Just thinking about what it would be like if he was one of the residents, who came home covered in sweat after a busy day: but when the they wanted to clean their sticky bodies and they happen to discover that the water tank was empty which meant they would have to go to the next well to fetch some water, this kind of feeling had to be bad.

Moreover, Roland was very tired of the process of always having to get a jar of water when he wanted to wash his face or wash his hands. In addition, he always got the feeling that there would be some parasites growing within the water after a few days spent inside the tank; not to mention that water tank was rarely ever cleaned even once each month. And when he took a closer look, over the sediment at the bottom of the water tank he could also see some caterpillars like creatures flowing.

In case they used a water tower for their water supply, there would be no additional technical difficulties. They could just use a steam engine to pump the water from Redwater River directly into the

water tower, and from their they could rely on the siphon principle to let the water flow through the pipelines and into each house, with this they would have formed an infrastructure for an automatic water supply system. The reason why Roland hadn't put it into practice until now was because... of the missing materials.

If they used water supply pipes made out of iron or copper, which didn't have any anti-rust treatment, the pipes would be turned into scrap iron within a few years. Brass pipes were perfect for water supply pipes, they were corrosion-resistant, and their internal walls wouldn't also become encrusted, they were non-toxic, and with their copper ions, they would also be sterile. But from which area should he take the money to produce these pipes? The output of the North Slope Mine was far from being sufficient to be used for luxury products. Even within later generations, high-grade copper water pipes were still considered as products only used within high-end residential areas.

At present Border Town was not only unable to export ore. They were even reliant on external sources to satisfy their demand. So, whether it were iron pipes or copper pipes, Roland was very reluctant to use them for something which didn't give much benefit but was purely for his own enjoyment from getting a water supply system.

But now it was different, with Soraya's coating magic he could make the piping out of thin air. With her magic, they could easily manufacture water pipes, for example by taking an iron pipe as a mold, wrapping it in paper and then have Soraya cover it in her coating. Afterward, they only had to take out the mold and they would get their pipe. Even if these kind of water pipes didn't turn out to be pressure-resistant, it would be sufficient as long as the water pipes were placed in a covered ditch.

Second, would be the creation of a power supply system... He was afraid that there was no way to spread it over the whole town within a short time, but to let the castle shine in full light had always been something that Roland had wanted to achieve. Having to read books using the weak lighting of a candle wasn't only too painful for the eyes, it also caused them great harm. Furthermore, the summer was coming up soon with its hot temperatures even during the nights. If they then also had to put on candles and torches, what kind of atmosphere would it then be?

Nowadays, with generators and wires, the road wasn't too far before the castle could enter the electrical age ahead of its time. As for the filaments for the lamps... Roland vaguely remembered that the usage of tungsten-wire carbonized-bamboo filaments were commonly used to produce incandescent. And bamboo wasn't a rarity, in the forest south of the Redwater River there were a lot to be found.

However, what Border Town currently needed most were smelting facilities. The quantity of their iron production was directly related to the scale of their mechanical production and weapons manufacturing, which were both needed for the survival of the town.

"Are you painting a... tower?" Nightingale sat at the table and asked curiously.

"Almost," Roland nodded, "but it is inside is empty and it can be filled with fuel and ore. It has the same function as a shaft furnace and can be used to smelt iron ore into pig iron.

This was upgraded version of the ancient blast furnace, a vertical shaft furnace.

To learn about Lesya's plan for a shaft furnace Roland had visited the construction site and had taken a look, to tell the truth, with the exception that its capacity was too small, and the temperature it could reach was too low, its structure had been very close to a blast furnace, and if Soraya hadn't evolved her magic, giving the town the possibility to produce fire bricks, Roland had intended to build a dozen of such shaft furnaces.

But now, where they had refractory brick, they naturally should consider a furnace which could reach a higher temperature, and had a higher output than the blast furnace.

The height of the new shaft furnace was nearly eight meters, enough to have as much as four times the capacity than the old shaft furnace. The furnace was tower shaped, and its largest part was three meters wide. In order to prevent the tower from collapsing, he had installed some brackets at the bottom. The furnace walls were relatively thin, with a thickness of half a meter and the innermost layer would be made out of Soraya's heat-resistant firebricks. At the same time, it also had a ventilation hole through which a steam engine would continually provide fresh air.

In order to make full use of the power of the steam engine, Roland had also designed a set of automatic feeding equipment for the blast furnace, which included a climbing rail and a movable door at the bottom of a unique material cart.

With the help of a steam engine the cart would climb to the top of the furnace, there the buckle at the bottom of the car would insert itself into a hook, pulling open the pouring mouth and dumping the fuel or ore into the furnace. For this era, this system could be regarded as the best possible method.

Unlike the old shaft furnaces with their large openings and low heat, his new furnace, once it started production wouldn't stop for a long time. Though they would have to continuously feed it with fuel and ore, its output would be much higher than that of Lesya's shaft furnace. As long as they construction five or six of these furnaces the town's pig iron production would be multiplied.

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When Roland finished drawing all the blueprints, he rubbed his sore wrists and then took a box out of ones of the table's drawers and pushed it to in front of Nightingale.

The startled Nightingale didn't know what to expect, "This is..."

"Ah... I had intended to give it to you at an early time, but engraving the pattern took some time, after all, I'm also not extremely skilled with the machines in the factory," Roland smiled, "You should open it and take a look."

On his words, she stretched out her hand to open the box, and was unable to suppress a gasp of surprise.

Looking inside she saw two revolvers which were completely different from the prototypes used by Carter. The two pistols were made out of shiny silver and polished so much that she could see her own reflection within. Furthermore, its body and grip were engraved with delicate patterns, on top of the barrels he had even engraved Nightingales name: "dedicated to Veronica."

This idea had already been in Roland's mind for a long time. Compared to carrying around those inconvenience flintlocks from before, the newly developed revolver was quite perfect for her. Whether

it was their security or their firing rate, it was all of a high level. And now, after giving such powerful weapons to the hands of an agility type like Nightingale, Roland was already looking forward to the results.

"Thank you," with a big smile on her face she picked up the two pistols, jumped off the table, and directly stepped into the shooting position. "Will you teach me how to use them?"

"Of course," Roland nodded, seeing Nightingale in her white assassin outfit coupled with a gorgeous and dazzling smile, made him instantly understand what it meant to be handsome to the point of having no friends, "Using them isn't difficult, as long as you are able to sneak at the target side, you only have to pull the trigger. Training with them this afternoon should already be sufficient."

Chapter 184 Self

Scroll stood in front of the door, outside of the bedroom, unsure of whether she should enter, however she decided to push the door open and step into the room.

Within the room, she saw Wendy sitting at the table looking miserable while holding a book in her hands. Scroll didn't even need to take a look, she could already guess that it was certainly "The basic theory of natural science".

Scroll couldn't stop herself from chuckling out loud, she had rarely seen Wendy ever display such an expression. Even when they were trapped in the Impassable Mountain Range with the Witch Cooperation Association and the shortage of goods had already reached a critical level, she had still always shown a smile, trying to cheer up every sister, seemingly never worrying about the hardships they had to endure.

I had never expected it would be a book that would trouble her so much.

"I'm unable to understand it at all, is what you think right?" Scroll said, "It was the same for me when I read the book for the first time."

"I thought you were Nightingale," Wendy, who had heard her chuckled and turned her head. "...and now?"

"It's still impossible for me to understand it."

"Fortunately, you and I are alike." Wendy sighed, "Anna would never say that. And I would never have expected that it would be Soraya who would be the second to connect everything and evolve her ability. I feel that if I'm not working hard enough, I will soon be surpassed by the younger generation. I do not understand how His Royal Highness knows so much and that what he says about the invisible world is actually the truth.

"In fact, there are numerous things he isn't aware of," Scroll shrugged. "I'm referring to certain aspects."

"Such as?"

"It's the matter with Nightingale," Scroll said, taking a stool for herself and then sitting next to Wendy. "Don't you also find that her current behavior is very different from how she acted in the past? Previously she had always concealed her body when she was protecting His Highness, even if she merely went out she would still put on her hood, but... she is now even listening earnestly during the evening

lectures. You, who are living with her in the same room, should be even more aware of this than I am, maybe you can tell me what had happened to her in the end?"

"Nothing," Wendy shook her head. "She had just finally made her choice."

Seeing Wendy's disregarding attitude surprised Scroll, "Her choice?"

"Well, it is just as you have guessed," Wendy closed the book and bluntly said, "Without a doubt she had developed feelings towards His Highness Roland Wimbledon, which can clearly be seen without having to guess. If they shelter one of us it is only a matter of time before they win the heart of the witch, during the journey with the Witch Cooperation Association, it wasn't uncommon to hear rumors about things like this."

"Those were just stories made up by others, most of the sisters did not fare well in those circumstances."

"His Highness is not the same as the people in the stories."

Scroll got startled, she did not expect to hear this coming from Wendy, who had held the same view as herself until recently, "You know, us witches are unable to have children, the Prince cannot..."

"The Prince will take a witch for his wife," Wendy didn't even let her finish speaking, "He even told you so personally."

How can it be that she knows about it... was Nightingale present at that time? Then she suddenly understood what the other wanted to say her, "Wendy do you blame me for not telling this to you? I just didn't want to let this matter leak out. This could bring unnecessary problems on His Highness' road to the throne."

"..." Wendy remained silent for a while and then said, "I know, and I'm not blaming you because it is exactly the same thing I previously said to Nightingale. Before I knew His Highness' answer, I thought it would end well if it were to happen to one of our sisters, but since the Prince does not mind it, do we really have to try to change their minds? Previously when Nightingale suppressed her feelings, she always seemed to be depressed. I prefer how she looks now, no matter what the outcome will be, at least she followed the feeling of her heart.

So that's the reason, Scroll thought. Although she agreed to not abandon the practice of not letting the news spread, she still doesn't want to stop the development of the feelings of her sisters. Unexpectedly there is a difference between Cara who never allowed someone to do something on their own wanting to be the only one who decided how to deal with their problems. Where Wendy instead is always looking at it from the perspective of her sisters, even trying to cheer them up during their times of hardship.

"But is His Highness aware of this point?" Scroll suddenly thought of a serious problem, "What if his decision is based on not knowing about the witch's inability to give birth?"

"Oh..." Wendy voice also turned depressed, "How about, you go and ask him?"

*

West of the town, outside the city walls.

Closer to summer now, the sun shone brightly on the grassland. In the near distance flocks of cattle and sheep leisurely eating grass could be seen. It was hard to imagine that only three months ago, the whole landscape had been covered in snow and that there had been nothing outside except for terrorizing demonic beasts.

The shooting training had already lasted for most of the afternoon, Nightingale was able to master the shooting skill even faster than Roland had expected, much faster. Everyone's talent is probably just differently, he thought, some people are just born to fight. By now, her loading, aiming, and firing positions has become completely unlike that of a novice.

"If she had been born in a knighthood, she would be one of the top stars of the Knights in the Kingdom of Graycastle," Carter couldn't help but praise her, "Just like me."

"Luckily she wasn't, I do not want her arms to be as thick as yours," Roland glanced at him, "how was the feeling, being able to achieve a draw with an extraordinary witch?"

"When I got hit, I thought that I had been hit by siege hammer, my whole chest got shattered," Carter said honestly. "To tell the truth, it felt terrible."

"Luckily there should not be a next time," Roland laughed.

Waiting until another round of still-standing shooting was finished, the Prince applauded Nightingale and called her over, "So far you're performed splendidly, because of that, let now do a simulation training."

After putting her pistols into the belt, Nightingale walked towards the Prince and a sweat droplet on the tip of her nose sparkled in the bright sunshine,.

"Do you see those targets?" Roland pointed to the five targets not far away, standing at bust height, "They are hanging above some God's Punishments Stones, so you should be able to see their position very clearly from within your fog. Within the test you should combine your skills and your guns, knocking down those enemies, all while exposing yourself only for the shortest time possible."

Within the fog, the objects and space were changing constantly, making it difficult to ensure that the bullets would fly towards their target. Previously when she had tried shooting directly from inside the fog, the results were that out of ten rounds of bullets, nine changed their line of flight after leaving the fog. They changed their trajectory so much that Roland, who was standing behind Nightingale, was nearly hit.

Therefore, whenever she shot, Nightingale had to step out of the fog, and the shorter amount of time she exposed herself, the more difficult it would become for the enemy to counterattack.

"Understood," she smiled, raised her cloak with one hand, and disappeared into thin air before the two of them.

When the first shot of the revolver could be heard, Roland only saw a white figure quietly emerge and then with an eruption of a flame and gas the target got hit and broke apart. Even before the broken wooden parts had completely landed, Nightingale had already arrived behind the second target, pulling the trigger from a distance of three to four meter from the it.

And then the third, the fourth... for every shot, she had never completely stepped out of the fog, in addition to her silver pistol and a spark of fire, Roland couldn't make out any other details. It was already difficult just to catch her position with his eyes. When Nightingale moved forward within her fog, it was just like those scenes he had seen in movies in the past. Within the blink of an eye, all five targets had been destroyed, and after another blink, Nightingale once more stood at his side.

"How was it?" Nightingale laughingly asked.

"Uhh..." Roland looked at the stunned Carter and asked, "What do you think?"

"I'm afraid no one can catch Miss Nightingale," Chief Knight took a deep breath, "Even if they put on a God's Stone of Retaliation, they still wouldn't be safe."

"So, did I graduate?" She wiped the sweat from her nose and rubbed it on to Roland's body.

"Of... course."

Chapter 185 The Star of the Theater (Part 1)

'The Swan' followed the Redwater River on its course westwards. May was standing on its bow, her eyes looking straight ahead. She wasn't standing here to enjoy the scenery, she just wanted to finally be able to see Border Town's pier.

"How much longer will it take us to reach our destination?" She asked impatiently.

"We will be there soon, Miss May, the sun is shining on you again, it might still be better if you went back to the cabin to rest," Ghent, who was standing directly behind her said. She didn't have to look back to know, that at this moment he would have a pleasant smile across his entire face.

And as she then turned around, she discovered that she had been right, "That is exactly what you've told me before, how can it is still be soon? In the end, have you really ever been to Border Town before?"

"Uh ..." for a long time he only mumbled something unknown, then he scratched his head and embarrassingly said, "The last time I was there, was already ten years ago."

"One year is already long enough to change the Lord of Longsong Stronghold, so what do you think could have happened in a decade?" May asked annoyed, "But there are always exceptions. I only have to look at you, no matter if it was ten years ago or yesterday, from the beginning to the end you've never stood on stage even once."

Seeing that she had finally swept the smile from her counterpart's face, she was finally able to find some comfort in her heart. If it hadn't been for Irene's massage, she really would never have ever wanted to go with this group of fellow performers to perform at Border Town.

As the female star of the theater in Longsong Stronghold, she was quite famous throughout the Western Territory. She had even received an invitation from the owner of the Tower Theater, to come to King's City and perform in "Prince seeking for Love". The show had been a great success, and even the master of drama, Mister Kadin Faso, admired how she had played her role in the Prince seeking for Love. Although she hadn't played the heroine, she had still left an impression that wasn't any less impressive than that of the female lead.

But when she had excitedly come back to the Longsong Stronghold, she had discovered that the stronghold had undergone enormous changes. Duke Ryan had been defeated, and the territory had fallen into the hands of the 4th Prince, Roland Wimbledon, who had handed over the task of governance to Petrov Hill of the Honeysuckle Family... she had left the West for less than a year, but within that short period of time it had become entirely unfamiliar to her.

Fortunately, the turmoil in the political upper ranks only had a small effect over the theater. If only this had been all, but when May had spoken with her sisters about the war during a meal, she had received the news that the First Knight of the Western Territory, Morning Light had also been captured. Hearing this her heart immediately squeezed together.

Afterward, May directly rushed to the theater, looking for Irene to ask her about the situation only to discover that Irene had followed him two weeks ago and went to Border Town, probably to reunite with her husband. Hearing this news May felt a little depressed, but at the same time, there was also a little envy mixed in with it.

They both worked in the same theater, and she really deserved to play the leading figure, while Irene was the yet-to-rise newcomers, the flower of tomorrow, but the title only came from that group of inferiors actors who were flattering each other all the time. In regards to her appearance, May was confident that she would never lose to anyone. On the side of Family background, although she was only from civilian's origin, Irene, however, was only an orphan adopted by the theater, so when comparing themselves, she had a lot stronger standing than Irene did.

However, this hardly gave May any relief. Ferlin Eltek the Morning Light still developed feelings for Irene with her naïve looking face. Later he even married her, even giving up his family inheritance for this.

"Look, there is farmland in front of us," someone shouted, "We can't be too far from Border Town now."

May looked to the left side of the ship, there she saw rows of knee-high wheat swaying in the wind and farmers wearing straw hats were busying themselves in the fields as if they were standing within a green sea. The in the clear river water reflected wheatfields extended westwards, with no end in sight.

"Such a beautiful scenery, Miss May," Rosia walked over, nodding her head in greeting.

"In such a remote place, I never expected that I would see such a vast farmland not inferior to the farmland around Longsong Stronghold.

"That's nothing compared with the farmland around King's City," May disagreed. "There, the wheat fields are so large that they even connect between two cities, along the roads the only thing you can see are wheat fields, so the people soon become bored of it."

"Is that so?" She smiled awkwardly, "I've never been that far away."

Well, this is the response ordinary people should show, May thought, in case it was Irene who had heard these words, I am afraid she will just show an expression of envy and ask myself to tell her more. "Rest assured, you will have the opportunity to get there one day."

"I hope so," Rosia patted her chest, "Thank you for your encouragement."

I mean you only have to spend some silver royals, with that you can take the caravan to King's City, I never meant that you would ever have the chance to go to King's City to perform, May rolled her eyes within her mind. But the other was still only one of Irene's friends, so May didn't want to bother herself to speak those words.

Rosia had joined the theater before herself, and her age also followed closely with her own, but because of her plain appearance and poor memory, she had never gotten the opportunity to officially perform on stage. In addition to Irene, there were only a few people who were willing to deal with her.

"Irene knows that we are coming today?" May asked.

"In my reply to her I informed her of the date, so I'm sure that she will be meeting us at the docks.

"Then it should be all right," she nodded. "I do not want to be alone in a strange town, and have to look for lodging in an inn."

"Can I ask you something, Miss May?" Rosia asked hesitantly, "Why was it important for you to leave together with us for the town, moreover, why did you also want to conceal this from the theater? Irene's said that this was a small opportunity for those who won't be started elsewhere, but you are not someone who lacks such opportunities."

"In case I had told them the truth, do you think the theater would ever let me come to this place?" May curled her lips in disdain, "As to why I want to come here... I merely want to see if my theater comrade is having a good life."

After all, I do not know why I have made this impulse decision myself! the Longsong Stronghold's theater is performing a drama in the next two days. And now that I'm gone, I am afraid that the theater owner really have a headache. Although there are several backups who can play my part, without my name, the aristocracy may not be willing to accept it, they might even send a grave protest to the theater.

Honestly, this wasn't a wise choice, May also knew this, her own reputation relied heavily on the theater in Longsong Stronghold. And if she annoyed the theater owner, he could simply turn it into a cold environment for her and start promoting another actress, if it came to that she would have no way of ever fighting back. It was important that she uncompromising acknowledged her mistake. Otherwise, she would have no choice than to leave right away and go to another theater and try to compete with their stars.

Or...I could also take the next ship back to the stronghold, the moment after I have met up with Ferlin, right? May thought.

"So that's how it was," Rosia nodded in understanding, "Irene will certainly be very surprised to see you."

The scenery along the river bank gradually become richer, the closer they came to the Impassable Mountain Ridge the more tents and wooden houses that appeared. It was close to noon at this time, and the peasant women were all busy cooking porridge stew, covering the residential area with its smell, letting May also occasionally smell the floating over aromatic fragrance of wheat. Children had come together to the river to play, and those who were able to swim shed of their clothes and

surrounded by the cheers of their companions jumped headlong into the river, only to triumphantly climb back ashore afterward.

Then May finally saw the pier.

After the Swan had landed, Ghent and Sam volunteered to handle all of the ladies baggage. And after a pedestrian had just left the ship, Rosia excitedly shouted: "Irene!"

May following the direction of her shout, on the pier she detected a woman wearing a white dress and weaving in their direction. And directly by her side stood a tall man. Even across the great distance, she could still make out his straight and vigorous body that was out of the ordinary.

Ferlin Eltek, the Morning Light.

The figure in May's memory became clear once more.

Chapter 186 The Star of the Theater (Part 2)

The moment May spotted him, she immediately put away all thoughts of returning to the stronghold.

"My God, M-May!" When May came over, Irene exclaimed in disbelief. Irene grabbed her hands and pulled her towards the knight, "Darling, do you know who she is? She is the most famous actress of the Longsong Theater, Miss May! Whenever she performs, the people who want to see her play line-up from the theater's lobby and into the streets!"

Although the phrase "darling" caused May's heart jump, her perennial acting habits allowed her to reflexively smile and give a little nod, "Hello."

"Ah, of course I know about her. You've even told me about her being one of the most famous actress in the West, there aren't any nobles who do not know the name for the star of theater," he sighed, then spoke in an apologetic tone to May, "My wife is a little lacking in her some manners. I'm Ferlin, welcome."

He didn't announce his name or his status, and even concealed his family name. May's heart was filled with sadness, but on the surface she maintained her utmost elegant expression, "I'm familiar with you. Everyone in the West knows of the First Knight of the Western Territory, 'Morning Light', Sir Eltek. I must apologize, because of the stress of theater work, I was unable to attend your and Irene's wedding."

"That's a thing of the past," the knight said with a smile as he shook his head. "Nowadays, I'm just a teacher, and I no longer belong to the Eltek Family, so you really don't have to be so polite to me."

He then waved in the direction of the others and continued. "Let's go back. We can talk later, but first you have to finish your application for temporary residence."

Teacher? May was startled, does that mean he's now a court tutor? The town's Lord is indeed a prince, but the Prince would never lower himself to find a knight to take on such a role, ha. And what's all this about applying for temporary residence? Shouldn't Irene be taking the group of us to a local reliable, and safe inn to stay at?

"I really did not expect you to come here. If you were to play Cinderella, it would certainly cause a sensation!"

"Is that so?" May had some doubt about that. She had never heard the name of that drama, which indicated that it had probably been written by a new playwright. Moreover, it wasn't like she had spare time for rehearsal, she'd only come here... because she wanted to see how Morning Light was doing, and if there was some way she could help him.

After entering town, May realised that there was definitely something wrong in this place. The town was located on the border of the kingdom and the only role it served was to be an outpost for the stronghold, so why did it now look like a newly built city? The road everyone was walking on was covered with dark gray gravel, and there was no mud to be seen anywhere on the whole road. Furthermore, the streets were too wide, practically allowing two carriages to pass each other side to side.

"What kind of road is this?" Sam asked the question that was in her mind aloud. "It looks strangely flat."

"Hehe," Irene smirked, "When I first arrived here it was still made of mud, but now it's become like this. Furthermore, the road still isn't finished yet; the masons have said that this is only the foundation for the actual road."

"Then they've fooled you," Rosia retorted, "Everyone knows, only houses need a foundation. Things that are already lying on the ground can't collapse, so why should they need one ~ah?"

"Really, they mix a kind of fine, grayish powder together with stones and then they spread it out. Afterward, they sprinkle water on it and compress it with a stone roller until the road has become flat and smooth. In the beginning, I also thought this was the new sort of road, but the mason said that this was a practice developed by His Highness, it seems to be called... water whatever layer. In short, this is still only the foundation!" Irene turned around and continued leading the way, allowing her long plait to swing with each step, "In the future when more people and carriages start using it, the ground will be paved with slate. Only then will the true road be finished."

Paved roads? May coldly laughed inside her heart. Other than the inner city of King's City, which other city in this kingdom could cover its roads with slate? Having such a broad and flat road was already good enough. There were still many mud roads in Longsong Stronghold.

Along the way through the town, she saw how many houses on both sides of the road were being demolished, regardless of whether it was a clay-tile roofed house or a wooden house. Although they were clearly not new houses, they still a far cry from being called uninhabitable. "Did the Lord drive them away because they were blocking the road?"

"No, they've all moved to another district."

"District?" May asked.

"It is the new residential area, where everyone gets exactly the same brick house to stay in," Irene explained. "All the original residents had been assigned one, that means there will be no leaking or broken houses in town.

Everyone can be allocated to a brick house? May could not believe her ears, this was even more exaggerated than paved streets. Does she have any idea how much such an idea will cost? But since she was in front of Ferlin, she still had to swallow her words.

There were a lot of other pedestrians on the street, so they would occasionally be stopped by people who wanted to greet Irene or Ferlin. Thanks to this, May found out that Irene was also one of those so-called teachers.

"Aren't you going to perform in the play?" She asked. "Why do the townspeople call you a teacher, Irene?"

"Because that is my job. I will only be performing part-time. After all, Border Town can't have a theater." Afterwards, Irene told the story of how had been summoned by His Highness, "Although it will be an open-air performance and the audience will only consist of civilians, the pay will be still calculated according to that of the stronghold. I think this is a good chance. At least, in this way I can still practice."

"You are right, you are right. As long as I can go on stage I would be satisfied." Ghent and Sam nodded again and again.

And open-air performance for civilians! May simply didn't have the strength to retort. Compared with Irene, she could not understand why the Prince came up with this idea or what his intentions were in the end. Could those people whose purpose every day was only to have enough to eat and stay alive really comprehend the romance and its twist and turns of a drama?

In this manner, they finally came to a stop in front of a two-story building.

"This is the teachers' building, right now Border Town only has nine teachers. Therefore there are still many vacant rooms left. Ferlin had already applied for you to stay inside the house and he'd also got the rights for you to temporarily stay in two rooms. So you will be living here during the show." Irene handed out two keys, "Ghent, Sam, this one is for you. Rosia and Tina will get the other one, eh, Miss May's..."

"I'll stay with you," May suddenly blurted.

"But..."

"I came here to see how the lives of my theater companions were," she said with a smile. "After all, we have already been working together for such a long time, and you probably also will never return to the stronghold, so I want to talk some more with you. Are you going to hold this against me?"

"Of course not!" Irene happily took hold of her hands, "I'm just worried that the room is too small for you to live in. There are also a lot of things I also want to ask you!" Then she turned around to face the other four, "Let's first put away the luggage, then you can come over to my room and we can sit and read the script together."

May climbed up to the second floor and followed Irene and Ferlin into their new home.

Stepping in, her last hope was shattered.

Although she didn't want to admit it, this small room gave off a comfortable and clean feeling. The tablecloths and curtains were obviously new; recently purchased and made of a red and white thin cotton. The floor had been swept spotless, they had a linen carpet in the living room. In it some strange cups had been placed on a low table, which attracted May at her first glance.

Stepping forward, she picked them up to take a closer look, but even after a moment she was still unable to identify its material or why it was so light. It was a bit like wood, but the surface of it was smooth and full of brilliant color; it was nothing like those cheap goods affordable by civilians. Depicted on top of the cup were also two people who were affectionately holding each other.

"It is a charming cup, right?" Irene, said as she leaned over, "They are too expensive. They were sold for five silver royals at the convenience market and the four of them made a set, containing all different postures of people. To celebrate our first payday, Ferlin insisted on buying them for me which in the end resulted in us spending our whole salary. That fool."

"Convenience market?" May deliberately ignored the other part.

"Right!" Irene said, nodding, "The Lord has opened a market at the town's square, where they are selling some very fine daily necessities, but their prices aren't low either. If you want, I can take you there tomorrow and you can have a look."

May had mixed feelings in her heart. The situation was completely different than she had expected it to be. She thought that, as a defeated captive, and a knight for whom no one had been willing to pay ransom, even if the Lord had released him, his life would still have been very difficult. And since Irene didn't perform regularly, she wouldn't have had any savings. Therefore, besides accompanying him during his hardship, she wouldn't be able to help him in any other way.

At that time, Ferlin Eltek would have seen any assistance she gave as sending charcoal during snowy weather. Maybe even one step further, by relying on her influence, she could try to persuade the local Lord to allow to her redeem the First Knight. That way, she would have been able to completely reverse the knight's heart.

But... she found that all her ideas had come to nothing, and not only didn't he not need her help, furthermore he was also leading a good life in Border Town.

Should she go back? But, if she now chose to leave, Ferlin and Border Town would from now on be forgotten forever.

May fell into a swirl of confusion.

Chapter 187 New business organization

As the summer came around, Margaret's river fleet arrived at Border Town.

Roland had intentionally received the female merchant at the pier so that he could incidentally examine the goods she had brought with her.

The most valuable goods were the three boats full of saltpeter. By now, Border Town's gunpowder reserves had basically been exhausted— even the First Army firing exercises had come to a stop. Although they had already started to equip the army with revolver-rifles, they still had to stay in practice with reloading, gun maintenance, and replenishment of their ammunition. Now, with this batch of saltpeter, they could finally resume firing training.

In addition to saltpeter and in accordance with their agreement, she had also brought two ships with ore ingots—these were mainly iron and copper—as well as a portion of green vitriol ore. Just the unloading of these goods already needed two or three days time.

When Roland offered Margaret the opportunity to inspect the two steam engines, he had placed them in an eye-catching position in the yard. Furthermore, he followed his usual practice of covering them in red satin and wrapping them in a fancy pattern. In fact, during nearly the whole month, the West Industrial Company was only able to put one steam engine together while producing hundreds of scrap parts. Because of that, Roland had Anna process the defective parts that didn't deviate too much from the desired product and had her fuse them together into a second steam engine to catch up with the delivery schedule.

To Roland's surprise, Margaret had not come alone this time—she had also brought a group of merchants from King's City with her.

When the delivery of the goods was organized, Margaret and her partner followed Roland back to the castle where they enjoyed a sumptuous lunch in the reception hall.

"Your Highness, this is Hogg, an old friend of mine. He owns one of the largest mining business in King's City." Margaret pointed at them one after another, "This is Gamier and Marlan. They belong to the Crescent-Moon-Bay Caravan. They were very interested in learning more about these steam engines, and since I have known them for many years, I was too embarrassed to sell it to them myself, so I brought them with me so that I could introduce them to you.

"I offer my regards to Your Honored Highness," said Hogg, puffing out his large belly while his face glistened with grease: "Margaret told me that this machine can be used in the place of manpower, and that it can quickly pump water and transport ore out of a mine. Moreover, it doesn't have to take a break and can run throughout the whole day. Would it be possible that I see it with my own eyes?"

"Of course," Roland sipped a mouthful of wine. At first, he had been completely unable to adapt to its sour taste, but he had gradually gotten used to it. "But if you want to make it carry ore, you also have to install the railroad system. After lunch, I can take you to the North Slope Mine, where you can see it for yourself."

"Your Royal Highness, I am also very curious about all the different uses of the steam engine that you've described. Can it really be installed on a sailboat and move it forward without sails?" Marlan began to ask, "In case it is possible, would it be possible for it to resemble a three or four-masted sea-going ship? I'm afraid that it wouldn't be strong enough."

"In that regard, steam engines are just like horses. Some of them have a lot of force while others have less; it depends on the type of model it is. Of course, machines with a greater output are naturally more expensive. And when one isn't strong enough, you can also install more, like maybe two or four of them." Roland answered with a smile.

To use a steamer on board, even if it's the most primitive paddler, it would also need a complex power transmission and handling system. In addition to Border Town, there isn't any other place in the Kingdom of Graycastle that has the technology needed to modify a ship. But the installation cost would certainly be much higher than that of the steam engine itself.

"In that case, the Crescent-Moon-Bay Caravan also wants to order those machines from you." Gamier forked a steam bun that had just left the steam basket and stuffed it into his mouth, but its fresh juices were so hot that he narrowed his eyes.

Sure enough, similar people always group together. The friend of rich people will always also be rich. Even without seeing the actual product, they finalized an order right away, as if thousands of gold royals were nothing in their eyes.

Roland shook his head, "Unfortunately, at the moment, Border Town lacks manpower. With the issue that the steam engine is very complicated to create, I am afraid it will be difficult to produce any additional machines before Margaret's order is completed.

"I can provide you with the needed manpower, Your Honored Highness," Gamier said, patting his chest. "Both carpenters and blacksmiths, even shipbuilders if needed. I have a lot of them stationed at my dock, and they would all come free of charge!"

"And then you'd have them learn the manufacturing method so that you can produce it yourself?" Hogg interrupted.

"Ten years, your Highness," Gamier opened his palms, "I am willing to let them work for you for ten years, and there will be only one requirement— that is that the first steam engine made by them will be offered to the Crescent-Moon-Bay Caravan.

That is an attractive offer, Roland thought, it would be the same sort of technology partnerships later, where our side would only provide the technology and still make a significant profit, while they wouldn't only get the steam engine as soon as possible, but also get a number of skilled workers after a decade. In this way, the workers' salaries would be equivalent to the cost of purchasing the technology.

"I don't think we have to be so urgent to finalize a deal, we can take our time discussing the details after I have shown you the machine," Roland pushed his hands onto the table, "Furthermore, the steam engine isn't the only product we have here that is worth buying. There are some other things you might also be interested in— for example, this." He snapped his fingers, and on his command, a group of guards took some objects out of a wooden box and placed them on the table.

"These are the newest creations of Border Town. No matter which of them you choose, they are all of the best quality but still at a reasonable price. For example, this simple mug," Roland pointed at a colorful cup on the table and said, "It is light, pleasing to the eye, and yet not as fragile as a crystal cup. The pattern above can also be customized. Furthermore it won't get wet, so it is very easy to clean.

"It won't get wet?" Margaret picked up a cup and took a carefully look at it.

"You can try it with some wine," the Prince joked. "And after you've drunk from it, you can pretend to be drunk and throw it on the ground to break it apart.

"It works, gee, this really is very excellent... But, I'm afraid you won't be able to guarantee that every cup will have such a quality, right?" The big bellied Hogg had already poured himself a cup full of wine and threw it back at this time, "Hey, it's really still dry."

Of course, it was still dry, it was essentially just an ordinary wooden cup merely coated with one of Soraya's paintings. The pattern on top of it was of her own design. "It does not conflict with the usage of

crystal cup, those are for more of a formal court banquet while my cups are more suited for the personal chambers of the daughters of wealthy houses." Roland said, "As far as I know, they like bright colors, and can't resist things with such a beautiful appearance."

"I believe it is as you've said," Margaret said while nodding in interest. "You seem to have a lot of experience in this field."

"Keke," the Prince coughed twice, "and now, please fix your eyes on this one. The thickness of the breastplate is entirely uniform, and the back and front are made out of wrought iron. I don't think I even have to mention that it is lighter than a knight's plate armor, and it is possible to put it on without assistance. After it is closed, there doesn't exist even the smallest crack; it is perfectly suitable for the guards escorting caravans. But the most crucial point is that it is cheaper than plate armor..."

...

After the presentation of all the goods, the merchants began whispering to one another. To allow them some privacy, Roland offered them some time for discussion and left the hall, going over to the flower garden at a side corridor to get some fresh air.

"Your Royal Highness, I was only away for a month, and you already have a lot of new things here." Margaret had stood to come follow him.

"Don't you want to exchange your opinions with them?"

"No, the moment I set my eyes on something it's unnecessary for me to try and listen to other people's thoughts. When there is good merchandise to be had, whether other people see its worth or not, it's all the same to me."

She smiled and shook her head, "Our caravan will be staying here for three to four days, so could you... Let me see Lightning again?"

"Although she does not recognize you, at least she didn't express any sentiment of dislike towards you, so I think that there won't be a problem.

"Thank you," Margaret said gratefully.

"If you're going to stay for so long, you might as well come see a play. Three days from now, Border Town will hold its first theatrical performance."

"You were able to build a theater in one month?" Margaret exclaimed, shocked at the idea.

"Of course not, it will be an open-air performance right in the middle of town square. I think it will be different than what you are used to."

"I will do so right away. Deference is no substitute for obedience, Your Highness," Margaret placed her hand on her chest and performed a low bow.

Chapter 188 "On with the show!"

Two days later, after the visit to the North Slope Mine, Roland agreed to a new trade contract with Hogger and the Crescent Moon Bay Caravan.

Hogger's eyeballs had nearly fallen out after he saw the smoothly operating railway-transport mining system. He even put forth an application to build a factory in Border Town, which would specialize in the construction of rail lines and their supplementary equipment, while the profits he obtained would be split in half, but Roland refused his investment offer as it would need even more of his people. After all, right now Border Town wasn't lacking in money, but people.

Hogger, after all, was just a mining businessman. Although he possessed several mines, and managed an open-air silver mine for Count Kanbara at Silver City. The men below him were only miners. Which was on an entirely different scale compared with the strength of an entire island like Crescent Moon Bay.

In the end, he put his name under a contract ordering ten steam engines and a full set for the mine transportation system (including their track and tub), set to be delivered in six months from the date. The first half were to be delivered before the Months of Demons, and the second half around the start of the coming year.

The contract with the Crescent Moon Bay Caravan was of a much larger scale than his previous deals, including even a ten years contract with them. Next time the caravan arrived, it would bring a team of 300 people with it, mainly composed of blacksmiths and carpenters.

These people's salaries would be paid for by the Crescent Moon Bay, while Roland only had to provide for their food and accommodation. The steam engines produced by them would be sold with the highest priority given to Crescent Moon Bay, and then after the ten years, the worker could decide for themselves if they wanted to stay or go back. This was a point that Roland had brought up several times during the negotiation.

Without a doubt, the people sent with the next caravan would be some of their most trustworthy supporters, even for the people shipped in later with the caravans, they were bound to try choosing people with the highest degree of loyalty to the Crescent Moon Bay.

So when it then came for them to making their decision, it was unknown if even half of them would decide to stay. However Roland could never have enough skilled workers, so even if only one of them decided to stay behind, he would still have made a profit. Something he always worried about was that, even though he had the technical advantage, he might not have enough people to bring the technology to reality.

Apart from the steam engine, the second largest order was for the transformation of their vessels.

Along with the three hundred craftsmen, the Crescent Moon Caravan would bring two inland sailing ships in the hope that Border Town would convert them into ships that could be driven by steam engine. Each ship's conversion would come with a fee of one thousand eight hundred gold royals, which meant that the two ships would come up to directly exceed Margaret's steam engine order. In contrast, despite that all three sides ordering the mugs, the total amount of the order was still less than 300 gold royals, even though Roland had already increased the price of the mugs to what it was in his convenience store by ten times. This let him feel the gap in the profit between civilian merchandise and industrial products. If you are unable to mass produce, it would be better to only satisfy the requirements of Border Towns inhabitants.

What surprised the Prince a little was that his iron breastplates, and the iron farming tools were completely disregarded. But later, during dinner, Margaret offered him the answer to his doubts, "Although your breastplates are indeed cheaper, however its yield is too small, if we want to resell it, we have to include the transportation cost together with the tax. So, in the end we would only make a profit of 5 to 6 gold royals. Moreover, your armor is either forged with a hydraulic hammer or by using the steam engine... In either case, with that method, the price of the armor will stay fixed, and the majority of the expense will come from the quality of the material, rather than the quality of its production."

After a short pause she continued, "And buying them for our own usage, is even more unnecessary. On the sea, whether it be the sailors or the guards, they rarely wear heavy armor, which would only make them sink more quickly in the case they were to fall into the water. Most of the time, they see armor as fetters and handcuffs, not as protection."

"It's the same with your farming tools, if you cannot obtain an enormous amount of cheaply-priced iron, they will be cheaper but not by much when compared to similar local goods, which makes it difficult to make a profit off them. While the situation with those colorful cups it completely differently, their price isn't at a fixed number, it can't be said for sure that the nobility will fond of them, but it is still possible to earn several times our initial investment."

"After thinking about it for a while, Roland had to admit that this was indeed the case... the price for the armor and farm tools was stable, and since the material costs accounted for the bulk of the price, it was still difficult to force the price down by forging them with his more efficient steam engine instead of the hydraulic hammer, so, in the end, the difference was too small to attract the interest of a big merchant.

In addition, these plate armors' which had Soraya's anti-stabbing coating on it, was actually a part of the First Army's armament upgrade, so until the iron production didn't go up, it would be impossible to sell in large amounts.

...

Soon, it was time for the anticipated theater premiere.

On this afternoon, even though Roland had demolished the surrounding buildings, which doubled the size of the former central square, the town square was still so tightly packed that not even a drop would be able to trickle through.

To promote the play, Roland had already started informing people about it a week ahead of time. Moreover, he had specially requested the Ministry of Agriculture to send people to the outskirts of the town and mobilize the serfs to come watch the drama.

Roland, as the town's Lord naturally had the best view point. In the direction of the stage, directly facing the show, Karl had erected a temporary wooden platform. It was made up of three rows of wooden benches, which could accommodate about a 100 people, and the place in the middle of the third row was reserved for Roland. On one side, were places for the members of the Witch Union, with Anna sitting next to him, while on the other side the merchant group had taken their place, with Margaret sitting as his direct neighbor.

The first and second rows were mostly filled with City Hall officials and their apprentices.

In order to ensure their safety, the people surrounding the wooden platform were made up of members from the First Army, who could watch the drama while at the same time separated the location of the Prince from the civilian population.

Now, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the sun's burning heat had already faded and together with a fresh breeze from time to time which was produced by Wendy, everyone on the platform could enjoy a VIP level treatment.

Under the applause of the crowd, the actors stepped onto the stage one by one.

To tell the truth, Roland was completely unsure of what kind of result the premiere would achieve in the end. After giving the script to Irene, he no longer interevent in the drama. The recruiting and rehearsal have been fully done by her and Ferlin. Now, in retrospect, how much experience could a theater newcomer, who had only appeared on stage once have gathered? And the friends recruited by her, were those people who had never gotten the chance to perform on stage in Longsong Stronghold, only here in a small town could they become actors.

In other words, this was a newly created team of new actors, who planned to perform a new drama.

Fortunately, Roland didn't mind if it became a failure, after all, this drama wasn't meant to sell tickets and also not there to promote a good script. The only goal of the show was to remold the people's ideology and free them of their prejudices, for this to happen it had to be performed more than once. So even if this time they didn't play out well, they would undoubtedly have improved by the time of the next performance.

"Now, I finally understand why you were so confident in this show," Margaret suddenly exclaimed, "you invited Miss May!"

Roland got startled, "Who?"

"Do not tell me you do not know about it yourself, my God! Before I came here, I've also seen her show in King's City," Margaret smacked her lips, "No matter if it is taking hold of her character or the build up of emotions, she is the best. I do not know how many people she has already moved to tears with her performance in "Prince seeking for love", even Kadin Faso was full of praise for her!"

"Who is Kadin Faso?" Roland went through his memories bus he couldn't find any impression of him within his head.

"...Your Royal Highness, are you really a person from King's City?" Margaret blinked with her eyes. "Please give me the liberty to ask, who is the most famous person in King's City, apart from the people of the court?"

"Yorko 'The Devil's hand' " Roland blurted out, but directly afterward he knew it was the wrong answer.

"Oh," the businesswoman gave him a meaningful glance. "The most famous playboy, I heard that with one hand alone he could get a woman to never forget him... I understand."

"Relies only on one hand?" Anna leaned over, "What for?"

"No-Nothing." Roland slammed himself on the forehead, "We had better earnestly follow along with the drama."

Chapter 189 Stars and Flowers

The play didn't have a theater curtain, nor an introduction, their preparation area was separated from the stage by a board, their stage was simple and crude, and for most of the cast it would be the first formal performance of their lives.

"This story takes place in the capital of a kingdom. Within the outer city, there lived a beautiful and kindhearted girl..."

Accompanied by the sound of the narration, Irene slowly walked onto the stage. Her whole attire was a filthy gray gown, the hair on top of her head was a hideous mess, and her face was covered with dust.

Swinging the broom in her hand, she was carefully cleaning the ground, from time to time even bending down to wipe the difficult to remove dirt using the end of her gown.

After several days of rehearsal, Irene had thoroughly memorized the whole story's process in her heart. The story was quite simple: a civilian girl had lost her mother, and was now constantly being bullied at her home, but because of the girl's kindness she was then rescued by a witch, who used her magic power to give the girl the opportunity to participate in the prince's party, where the prince and she fell in love the first moment they saw each other.

But since the witch's magic was only effective for a limited time, she was forced to leave the ball in a hurry, and in her panic she left behind a crystal shoe. In order to find the beautiful girl, the prince had the whole city be searched. Ultimately, he found her in the outer city, and from then on the two of them lived happily ever after.

The story was simple and easy to understand, yet its plot completely broke away from the former description of a princess and a prince's love, by allowing a common girl, who due to her kind nature gained the assistance of a witch, be able to to win the prince's favor. As the Cinderella of this performance, the part where the character gathered up her courage to resist the oppression she had to face her whole life, would be the actress greatest highlight of the performance.

So Irene had never imagined that May would give the leading position to her.

Irene was already euphoric enough that the star of the Western Territory was willing to share the stage with her. Moreover, as the pillar of the stronghold's theater, May had enough pride and confidence to play the leading role in all kinds of theater stages, yet in "Cinderella" she took the initiative to play the supportive character of the half-sister.

This was somewhat hard to believe for Irene, until the other side repeatedly emphasized that this was a performance of new kind of character, and that Irene had the talent needed to play Cinderella.

In the next rehearsal, she gathered all of her strength, not only to repeatedly practice every scene, but also when lying in her bed, even after the candles had gone out, she would still be going through the acting skills taught to her by May.So as not to fail to live up to the other side's good intentions.

Fortunately, Irene was not without experience, so being on stage while having the eyes of countless people on her, she relaxed her body, and let the repeatedly practiced actions reappear one by one. Until now, she felt that she was in good shape and hadn't made any errors. She even encouraged Rosia, playing the witch, with her eyes when the other had forgotten her lines.

"I split the wheat porridge in half, but do not eat too quickly; it is still very hot."

"Thank you for your kindness, young woman, I will surely repay you."

When Rosia bent her back and crookedly walked backstage, one after another the masses began to applaud – making Irene feel relieved. After all, she knew that, when someone forgot their words during a formal performance at the stronghold's theater it would count as an utterly intolerable error. The nobility would immediately begin to boo and ridicule the actor, rather than trying to encourage the artist with applause.

At this point, it was May's debut.

This part of the story was about the conflict of the mean older sister and Cinderella. Under the bullying and humiliation of the older sister, Cinderella could only hide in the basement and begin to tearing up as she held the portrait of her birth mother in her arms.

But now, as May stood before her, Irene suddenly felt that the atmosphere had completely changed.

She was no longer the quiet and taciturn theater star she had been during the rehearsals. Instead, she had turned into the ruler of the stage. With her lofty manners, her just perfectly executed body movements and unhidden contempt in her eyes, she placed Irene under a strong feeling of oppression.

"Oh, take a look at that, who is this? Under what kind of delusion are you to think you don't have to work in broad daylight?

"You poor wretch shall return without delay and wash my dress!"

"And you'd better be not clumsy, this is a formal banquet dress. You cannot afford to damage it by even a little."

After her words, May ferociously pushed her back, and according to the plot Irene was supposed to pretend to fall, but under the cold look in May's eyes she couldn't stop herself from taking a few steps back, accidently tripping over her own feet and falling to the ground without any buffer- her elbow hit the stage floor and sent a burst of pain through her body.

"Truly just a useless waste..." May's eyes were no longer set on her. Instead, she went to the center of the stage, facing the silent crowd on the square and began her monologue.

"That's worthy of Miss May," Margaret whispered amazed. "Just with a few simple words from her she was able to attract the attention of everyone, her character has already become alive."

"Oh, indeed impressive," Roland nodded, but this person was also way too ferocious and overdid it. The loathe and disdain she showed toward Irene, seems as if it was her real feelings. Even sitting back here, I could feel her ruthlessness. How infectious her emotional appeal was could be seen in the expression of the entire audience... However, she was not the protagonist ah. Irene's relatively good performance had been suddenly completely overshadowed, if this goes on, I'm afraid the leading role will be overtaken by a supporting character.

Irene was stunned.

She knew she had to stand up quickly. May's monologue, which was primarily about her longing for the prince, as well as the court ball, wouldn't last long. So before the end of the scene, she had to leave the stage. But her familiar feeling from the previous rehearsals had already left her, turning the stage into a complete and utter stranger to her.

Are you only on this level?

Only when May finished her act and while passing by weaved her skirt so that its edge slapped against Irene's face, was she able to recover. Even though the other didn't say a word, but by looking into the cold eyes of the star from the West, Irene could understand her meaning. May had wanted to say that Irene should pull herself together. Since their two character's personalities were like fire and water, once May reached out her hand, the play would be ruined! She clenched her lips, spreading an iron taste through her mouth. When she saw May disappeared behind the board, she also wanted to get up and leave. However, Ghent and Same carrying props had already stepped on the stage. When Sam placed a bucket in front of her, he took the chance to say in a small voice, "The next scene is still yours, just stay here while we work. Come on, you can do it!"

Irene knew that this wasn't according to the script, to be truth... she had already missed the opportunity to leave.

Thus the audience saw an unusual change of scenery. Cinderella sat motionless on the stage, while her surrounding scene has been modified from the living room into the basement, changing the beautiful round table and wooden chairs into barrels and rattan baskets. While people who handled the props went back and forth, the girl maintained her position, as if she was frozen in time.

In the next act, Cinderella was trapped in the basement, and the witch came back to rescue her. Not only giving her beautiful clothes, but also summoning a carriage, which sent her directly to the castle.

"Remember, the spell will only last until midnight, so you must leave the palace before the last bell rings, or the clothes and the carriage will disappear."

"A... yes. I've got it. Thank you."

At this moment Irene was still unable to shake off her daze, hiding in the background she secretly watched May's play. She only thought that the other actor seemed to be completely free, in front of more than a thousand viewers she still had a blossoming smile, what a powerful woman she was. Standing on the stage and having to face the bright star, only then did she thoroughly realized how amazing her counterparts acting was.

Is this the distance between stars and flowers?

When Rosia finished her dry lines, it was time for the first drama: the court ball. In order to achieve the effect of a grand ball, the scene needed the whole cast to go on stage – in addition to her, and May, Ghent, Sam, Rosia, and Tina were dressed as other noble dancers that were wearing masks. And dressed as the prince, was her lover, Ferlin.

Chapter 190 Victory and defeat

"The actor playing the prince is quite handsome, yet his facial expressions are very stiff."

"Ah, unexpectedly he is..." Roland was somewhat surprised, "Morning Light, the First Knight in the Western Territories. At present, he holds the position as a teacher in Border Town. He can't be regarded as an actor."

"He isn't an actor?" the businesswoman asked, flabbergasted, "Then how can he go on stage?"

"Because of limited staff." he laughed, "Just take a look, there is no one besides those two who handled the previous change of setting. If the prince were to be played by one of them, it would truly... be unlikely for Cinderella to fall in love at first sight with either of them, based on their appearances."

"...you are right."

While changing into her beautiful dress, Irene stood on the side and had to watch as May walked towards Ferlin's side. Irene saw how May placed her hand on his shoulder and began to dance – no, Ferlin wasn't dancing, he was merely being guided by May's exquisite dancing skills and following along with each of her steps. This dance wasn't part of the rehearsal; Irene was aware that this was May's improvisation.

"Her older sister tried to seduce the prince in every way possible, yet the prince remained unmoved, merely keeping his manners and talking; until Cinderella appeared in front of him. His eyes wandered over and took in the sight of the charming and delicate woman, who had bright eyes and white teeth."

Irene knew that as soon as she walked past him, according to the script, Ferlin was meant to throw May aside, there by staging his and her tale of love at first sight. However, anyone who was able to see would likely ask, for what reason should the prince dump the beautiful and touching woman at his side, for the presently so muddleheaded Irene who completely lacked any allure?

At this moment, she saw Ferlin turn his gaze towards her at last.

In his gaze she saw helplessness, comfort, encouragement, and... she also saw his love.

Irene suddenly felt the stage become quiet. The people's laughter, their voices, and the sound of their arguments was gone, her theater companions were also gone. Only May, Ferlin, and herself was left on the stage.

Sure! My acting skills are a far cry from the Star of the West, so does that mean I should just give up and admit defeat?

No, said a soft voice at the bottom of her heart; no, she wanted to act. To her, this was a rare opportunity, or... more than likely, her last chance. If she were to give up now, she would probably never have the opportunity to stand on the same stage with such an outstanding actress ever again.

She also wanted to become like May, able to lead the audience's emotions with her behavior, gathering everyone's attention on her alone.

I'm sorry, May. She said in her heart.

If the prince was played by just some random theater actor, it would already be difficult enough for her to gather the courage to compete. By relying on her acting skills alone, it would almost be impossible for her to beat the Star of the West.

But he isn't just anyone. He is Morning Light. He is my lover, Irene thought, please, forgive me for being so shameless. It's just that... I never want to lose in front of him.

The stage completely disappeared. Instead, a cornfield appeared in front of Irene's eyes. The heavy ears of wheat were already ripe and hanging heavily, gently swinging in the evening breeze, just waiting to be plucked. In the distance, the sun slowly disappeared behind the horizon, coating the slowly flowing Redwater River in many warm colors. This was the place where they had frequently met up for their tryst. In this red-orange sunset, the 'prince' changed back into the 'knight', turning back into the man with whom she had fallen in love with so many years ago.

As long as it was in front of him, she could always let her most beautiful side bloom, making it impossible for him to move his view away from her... no longer acting, but instead showing off her true self, Irene lifted her robe, tied a knot in it and walked towards Ferlin.

Now when her heart was full of confidence, everything seemed so natural. The moment she reached the knight's side, she smiled to May, and the latter unconsciously loosened the hand resting on his shoulders.

"May I have this dance?" She asked.

Ferlin's natural smiling expression reappeared within his eyes, "Of course you can, my lady."

Although she wasn't as skilled as May, under her guidance, the knight moved more naturally than his former jumping. The two people's tacit understanding in the scene infected the audience, which began to applauding and whistling, followed with their cheers.

All the clamor brought Irene back to the stage. Stepping on her toes, she gently placed a kiss on the Prince's cheek, before she pushed him away, turned around, and quickly ran offstage. At the same time, the deep and resounding sound of the bells rolled over the square and came back as a faint echo from the far off mountains. Not much longer, and it would be the midnight.

Soon, the drama came to its end, but with it also came the end of the play.

On his search, the prince went from house-to-house in the city and he finally came to Cinderella's home, but this time the young lady wore a dirty and gray robe and was holding a broom in her hands while being pushed to the side by her older sister. The sister was still beautiful and she could also put on the crystal shoe.

"Your Highness, why are you still hesitating? I am the person you are looking for."

"No, she is not."

"Y-you shut up!"

Even though right now, May's performance was no less perfect than before, and was even more oppressing, but Irene no longer cringed away from her. Instead, she came out of her corner, slowly arriving at the central stage. There, she looked straight into the eyes of her counterpart with an unyielding look, full of resistance.

Everyone watching this beautiful scene began to clap.

At this moment, the witch suddenly appeared. She reached out with her hands and put the ball's dress on Cinderella once more—

"Your Royal Highness, she is the person you are looking for."

Rosia forcefully tore off the gray robe on Irene, exposing her beautiful dress. Almost at the same time, she stroked through Cinderella's wild hairstyle, smoothing it out, and with this, the Cinderella who had snatched away the prince's heart appeared in front of everyone once again.

The atmosphere of the audience immediately began to overflow.

When the prince embraced Cinderella, everyone stood up, and a timely gun salute could be heard from outside the grounds, pushing the people's mood to the peak. The endless applause and cheering continued until the narration came to its conclusion and the actors bowed and left. Only then did the audience stop.

"This was incredible," Margaret clapped enthusiastically, "I thought that the young woman would be overwhelmed by May. I never expected the result that she would be able to come back. Furthermore, I do not know whether or not it was an illusion, but her interaction with the prince felt even more natural than May's, it was as if... she was meant to be together with the prince.

"It was indeed surprising," Roland nodded. Irene had changed her entire personality at the end; which must have been her inherited acting skills which arisen, as a result giving her the capacity to maintain her self-confidence even under May's overwhelming personality.

In a short time, the prince had changed back into her husband, breaking away from the stocks and chains; this kind of ability was also very outstanding. In the future, in all likelihood, she will become a rising star. Furthermore, the ringing bells and salute created by Echo were equally perfect. Due to not having arranged any practice sessions, Roland had given her freedom at the beginning of the play, but he'd never expecting such a pleasant surprise.

...

I lost, May closed her eyes.

She had spent a lot effort in making sure that Ferlin Eltek would play the role of the prince so that he could see her at the task she was the best at —being on stage— and in this way she could leave a deep impression on him. Ultimately defeating Irene with her acting, she could use this way to show him the gap there was between Irene and herself.

For this, she had nearly stayed a week in the town, even going through rehearsal with people she would at normal times not even look at apart from a quick glance. After being delayed for so long, she was afraid that if she now went back to Longsong Stronghold, the theater boss wouldn't treat her as well as he had before. And the most ridiculous part was that she hadn't even been able to completely defeat Irene on stage. Even though she hadn't lost to her acting skills, she had lost to the other's love.

That being the case, it was time to let go.

May took a deep breath, changed her clothes, and left via the rear face.

When she reached the end of the ladder, she was suddenly greeted by a man.

He was also tall, he stood straight, was handsome, and dressed in shiny silver armor, and was probably one of Border Town's knights – but unlike Morning Light, who always wore a warm smile, he appeared to be arrogant and cold with his raised eyebrow, long and narrow eyes, and thin lips.

"What's the matter?" May asked with a frown.

"Hello, Miss May," the moment the other side opened his mouth, the cold air dispersed without a trace, "I'm His Highness' Chief Knight, Carter Landes. Your performance was so fascinating, may I ask if you would like a drink?"