

Witch 261

Chapter 261 Gifts

After dinner, Nightingale returned to the bedroom while holding the unopened box in her hands. She was followed by Lightning, Maggy, Lily, and Mystery Moon, who also entered after her, keeping their attention focused on the box the entire time.

“How is it?” Wendy couldn’t stop herself from teasing them, “Would you like to take a look at what’s inside?”

Except for Lily, the three others nodded again and again.

“His Highness is totally biased!” Lightning muttered, “First he doesn’t let us taste the wine, and now we don’t even get a gift!”

“He said that it was only for the adult witches, ah,” Lily sighed, “Just wait until you are old enough, if you asked him then, you would also get one. Furthermore, I’m not interested at all about what kind of cloth is inside, so why did you drag me over here?”

“Hey,” Mystery Moon looked amazed, “I merely called you, no one pulled you along, ah.”

“I—“

“Stop, that isn’t the important point!” Lightning shouted, “Mystery Moon is already of age, and Maggie is also an adult, but they both didn’t get it!”

“That’s right, goo!” Maggie pushed the white hair which covered her face to the back and raised her chin in protest, “I also didn’t get it, goo!”

“This... His Royal Highness surely has his own reasons for doing that.” Nightingale also felt that it was a bit strange, previously Roland had never treated anyone differently, so why did he do so this time? “For now, let us just look at what is inside.”

When she opened the box, all she saw was a strange piece of “clothing” – it looked like something made out of a few bands and two pockets. When she touched it, it felt very soft and had evidently been made out of the highest quality silk fabric, but no matter how she looked at it, she couldn’t understand what kind of cloth this should be, it was simply too small.”

“There is a piece of paper under it,” Lightning suddenly shouted.

After spreading out the sheet of paper, Nightingale discovered that it not only contained a description and usage for the gift, but also a diagram describing how it should be used.

“Uh...” Wendy who had opened her own box asked in confusion, “This thing is called a bra?”

“... it can bring relief to the chest area by reducing its weight, it promotes blood circulation, stabilized the posture while simultaneously lessening the discomfort caused by friction to the skin.” Reading the letter Nightingale’s voice became smaller and smaller, while her cheeks suddenly became hot and red. This thing is actually used to hold the chest? She couldn’t stop her eyes from wandering over to Wendy,

only to discover that the other witches' vision had simultaneously moved over to her. They all suddenly showed an understanding expression.

"Pfft," Lily couldn't suppress her laugh any longer, "Now you finally understand why you didn't receive a present, right? Tsk, now I have to correct my words from before, even if Lightning was fully grown up, it might be possible that she still won't receive a gift."

"The same seems to be true for you," Mystery Moon said while she goggled at her.

"I don't want it anyway," the latter turned away and showed a supercilious expression.

"This should be similar to a skintight corset, right?" Only Lightning seemed to be completely unmoved. Rather, she was looking at it with eyes full of curiosity and envy, "Can you wear it so that I can take a look?"

"Of course not!" Wendy suddenly exposed a rarely seen embarrassed appearance then started driving the four of them out, only then was she able to feel relief, "How can it be that His Highness suddenly... present us with this?"

Thinking about it Nightingale also felt a bit embarrassed. If he had given simple personal clothes it would have still been proper. After all, we usually fetched ours from the castle anyway, so no one would feel too embarrassed about it. But these clothes are made with different sizes, which means, that before Roland gave us our gift, he had carefully observed each person's size? The idea of this caused her to blush, and she couldn't help but want to hide in her fog to escape.

By the way, what would Anna do?

"I'm leaving, but I will return quickly," Nightingale said then stepped into the fog, passed through the walls. Hesitating for only a moment when she came over to Anna's bedroom, but she still decided to knock on the door.

Soon the door opened, showing Anna, dressed in a nightgown, looking the same as usual. "Is there anything?"

"Uh, I want to ask..." Nightingale stepped into the room and closed the door, "His Royal Highness also sent a gift to you right... what do you think about it?"

"I'm already wearing mine, it's very convenient."

The other side's answer caught her somewhat off guard, "You already put it on?"

"Um," Anna nodded, "Do you want to see?"

"No, no, that's not necessary," she hurriedly waved her hand to stop Anna, "I just want to ask, do you not think it's strange?"

"Why," Anna became clearly puzzled. "His Royal Highness already said that he wanted to promote it and sell it as a commodity to even more people. So we need to help him by wearing them in advance. And also, they are pretty good," she patted her chest, "It's both, soft and flexible. Also, with the hook at the back, it isn't so easy for others to take it off, so it's much better than wearing many layers of undergarments."

So, that's how it is... Nightingale couldn't refrain from sighing in sorrow, she doesn't care about these minutiae things. Instead, she only focuses on achieving His Highness goal. Perhaps this is what makes her so unique, she was pure and straightforward. Since it was a gift from Roland, Nightingale knew that she would try it in the end, so what reason was there to be so self-conscious about? Previously it has also been the same thing, it was completely unnecessary to wish that he didn't see me. Instead, I should have confidently told him my thoughts right away – if it had been Anna that's definitely what she would have done, right?"

Thinking of this, Nightingale returned to her room, picked up the bra and studied it for a while, then hid in the fog as she put it on, before covering herself with her usual outer clothing, and finally reappearing before Wendy afterward.

"It's a little too big," she tried jumping, "But it is indeed very comfortable to wear. At least it isn't as rough as those boring old clothes, they would always painfully rub my chest. Moreover, they do not affect one's movement, which makes it unnecessary to bind a cloth band around your chest, which is quite convenient... You should also to try it."

"No, I still do not need..." Wendy shook her head.

"How can that be," Nightingale chuckled while pulling the other into the fog. "I always feel it was because of you, that His Highness designed this."

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Sylvie felt that today she had seen more marvelous things than in the past few years put together.

The pipe which released water at the mere pull of a lever. The soap which cleared away dirt and left behind a fragrant odor. And the drink which set the throat a flame – but could it be, that Evelyn had already finished her task by accompanying His Highness to drink the three cups of wine?

Naturally, the most incredible part was the gifts which had been given out after dinner... She knew that the nobility had the practice of sending over corsets when they approached someone, however, others would usually pair it with a cinched waist dress. Who would just gift this outright by itself? And even if they send it as a gift, it would only be sent to people they are very close to... for example, lovers.

But listening to His Highness explanation, he didn't plan on only giving this close-fitting garment to just the witches, but to also spread it even further.

Does he want to spread it through the whole Western Territory? Sylvie could feel goosebumps all over her body, what kind of noble would choose to do this business, or could it be... does he have some kind of unusual interest in the chest and buttocks?

After Nightingale pulled Wendy into the fog, she could only vaguely see two blurs of light and shadow floating near the bedside – since they didn't come out after a long time, it was obviously that under the former's coaxing Wendy had finally decided on accepting the gift. Then, what about the other witches? Do none of them understand the meaning of sending over personal clothes?

Recalling Ashes' warning, Sylvie couldn't help but swallow.

She was right – His Highness is indeed a dangerous person. If I can, it's better to stay even further away from him.

Chapter 262 The bridge across the Redwater River

A week later, Roland officially started the great steel-bridge construction project.

"You mean, I should raise two lands in the middle of the river, which will act as the foothold of the bridge pier?" Lotus looked at the surging river and asked in amazement, "Don't tell me you plan to construct an actual bridge, rather than a pontoon bridge to connect both sides of the river?"

"Yes," Roland spread out the scroll he held in his hand, "Taking into account the impact of the river current, it is necessary for the two pieces of land to have a certain volume. They also need to be constructed in this way to reduce the force of the impact."

"This... looks like a ship," Lotus let her view wander across the blueprint.

"That's right, speaking accurately it's called the spindle type," he nodded, "As long as they are built parallel to the direction of the flow, the impact it receives from the front will be reduced to the smallest amount possible. The problem is that the Redwater River is nearly ten meters deep, will you still be able to make the earth rise?"

"This shouldn't be hard to do, Your Highness," Lotus simply replied, "Just give it to me."

To be safe, the ship responsible for carrying the witch was Little Town, standing on the massive hull of the cement ship floating in the river was like standing on land. It was still Lightning who took over the position of the helmsman, while Wendy was again responsible for providing the wind.

But during the last week, it seemed that the latter had avoided the Prince's line of sight, seemingly feeling a bit uncomfortable. Until this day when Roland saw her walking around with her head held up, looking as if she was back to her usual self again. And finally, when she went past him to board the ship, he even heard her whispering a soft "thank you".

"This is something you can come thank me for," Nightingale whispered into his ear from within her fog.

The Little Town soon left the pier, driving to the center of the wide river. Carter had already pulled a hemp rope across the river, there were two red cloth belts tied to it which marked the location for the piers. After the cement boat arrived at the site of the first pier, Lotus went to the ship's railing and began to put her ability to use.

Looking at the river, its surface suddenly resembled boiling water, sending up one bubble after the other, while slowly forming a "hill". Not long after, gravel together with algae and silt began to rise from within the surging river water, gradually turning all of the water muddy.

So, that's how it works, Roland thought. Her ability could not only transform a solid surface, but also water. Furthermore, it was even easier to lift than loose gravel was. Even though the surging river was immediately washing it away, but by now the river bed had already been lifted up a little.

Not long after, a gray mass of mud appeared on the water surface. It seemed to be very soft, but it also gave off a very unpleasant odor, making it impossible for all those present to not cover their noses.

However, in Roland's eyes, this gray mass was the best kind of fertilizer. The soil contained hundreds of years of fish and other aquatic bones, aquatic plants, as well as the inhabitants of the depths' excrement. If the transport wasn't too inconvenient, Roland would like to gather all of this soil and use it as fertilizer. Unfortunately, at present, it could only be collected by hand through directly entering the river water.

So, after clearing up the fertilizer layers and improving the section, he finally saw the yellow-brown solid earth he had waiting for. The following steps were to repeat the process again and again until the two pieces of land had been fully formed.

Roland expected that this course of event would at least continue for around one week, but even after the soil was lifted up and broke through the water surface, it didn't mean that the land could be used. The flow of the river would unceasingly carry away the silt, and without further protection, even if the piers were formed according to the spindle design, they wouldn't be able to persevere for longer than ten years.

Trying to come to a conclusion, Roland called Karl van Bate to his side, took out a piece of charcoal, and began to paint the steps needed to solidify the ground.

"Is your idea to dig holes into the soil and fill them up with cement?" This newly promoted Minister of Construction asked after analyzing the drawing.

He once more proved why he had once been one of the most exceptional members of King's City's Stonemason Guild, Roland thought in satisfaction. With only a few words of what I was able to remember, and he immediately managed to understand my intentions.

"That's right, but every segment mustn't exceed five meters in length, while it should be around one meter in depth. When you're filling it up with cement, call for Lotus to let her bury it one meter into the earth. By repeating this we will be able to form a cement wall which goes straight from the surface of the river and into the river bed." Roland had come up with this plan after seeing Lotus' ability in action. Since she could control the surface and make it drop, she could presumably also bury a structure that was above the earth into the ground.

"Your idea is indeed extremely ingenious," Carl said with sparkling eyes. "This way, even if the river washed away the outer soil, there will still be the cement wall left to block the water."

Roland nodded, "The crucial point is to control the overall height of the cement blocks. If it is too small, it will lead to the problem where the bottom part will become unstable, while if it's more than needed, besides the waste of cement it will also delay the construction. So, I am laying responsibility for this take on your shoulders."

"Yes, Your Royal Highness," Karl agreed, "Looking at the silt and soft soil coming up, I am guessing that the final height of the cement wall should be around twelve meters."

"Also, after you surround all sides with the cement wall, don't cover the land in the middle with cement, I want to grow several kinds of flowers and grass on top of it afterwards," the Prince warned repeatedly.

"Several kind of... flowers?" Karl looked confused.

After all, these walls were unable to be made watertight, and when the segments had to be repaired, there would always be gaps left behind. If you wished to consolidate the soil, the simplest method was to plant different kinds of grass and flowers – the vegetation would reduce the water within the ground, while also reducing the soil erosion. That would be especially true after Leaves came and used her magic to lengthen the weeds' root system, in that way ensuring that the earth would be firmly knit together.

After a simple explanation on how plants could strengthen the soil, Roland turned to look at the workers who were busy on the river banks, "What is the current state of the bridge's approach construction?"

"We are right in the middle of laying the cement gravel for the road's surface," Karl reported without thinking, "They should be completed by this week."

According to the plan, the approaches on either side of the river would be made by piled up fieldstone and cement, just like they had done with the city walls. As long as the positioning and measurement was correct, the construction itself wouldn't be that complicated. The highest point of the ramp was seven meters above ground, and it connected with the city streets through a long gentle and curving slope. There was also some further height difference between the river's dike compared to the water surface. After finishing the construction of the bridge, the difference between the water surface and the bridge should be around twelve meters. Which ought to be high enough for sailing ships to pass through.

So far only the first step of the bridge itself was completed, and it was currently undergoing a strength test on the shore – due to its small span, the load placed on it would be very small. This way the bridge would still be reliable even though Roland was ignorant about bridge engineering. In the absence of the eight wheel trucks from appearing in later centuries, a thirty-centimeter strong I-beam should guarantee the bridge's stability. Even if the bridge was completely filled with people, it would still be impossible to break the steel beam. Even more so since the process of its construction, from assembling to welding it, had been completely taken care of by Anna, so the probability of a jerry-built construction project was extremely low.

Equally, the installation of the bridge would also be very simple. When the three-span bridge was completed, Hummingbird would use her ability to reduce its weight and would then give it to Lightning so that she could take it to its intended location.

From that point on two wagons in parallel could use the steel bridge to cross the Redwater River at the same, something which truly connected the northern and southern side.

"Even if they were the greatest of mason, it would still be hard for them to imagine such a magnificent bridge," Karl lamented as he looked at the wide river's sparkling surface, "Your Royal Highness, does this steel bridge have a name?"

After thinking about it, Roland announced, "I presume it should be called 'Redwater Bridge'."

Chapter 263 "Ripened Wheat"

Under the hot scorching sun, Sirius Daly, wearing a straw hat, was walking along the river's shore, examining the growth of the wheat.

Now four months after the planting, this day was the day in which the wheat had finally ripened.

As far as the eye could see, there was an unending cornfield surrounding him like a golden ocean. The wheat's ears were thick and full, the amount of fruit had more than doubled, and was even bigger than that of any spring wheat he had seen before. There was no need to wait until the weighing of the harvest, Sirius already knew that this year was bound to be a bumper harvest.

Without a doubt, this was surely because of the witches' contribution.

He had accompanied his father in planting for ten years now, so he naturally knew what common wheat looked like. One wheat plant would have between one to three ears, and each ear could produce twenty to thirty fruits. That the fertility of the soil could actually influence the wheat grain's size was still believable, but could it so straightforwardly double the size of the caryopsis? Besides it being the work of a witch, he could think of no other explanation for this.

It seems that there had been many changes like this one, for instances, the new water towers looming over Border Town – he had once observed those huge monstrosities from close up, and come to the conclusion that it would be impossible to install those steel tubes that were even larger than a residential building by depending on human strength alone; yet they had been built almost overnight. Nowadays, the people living in the new district only seldom needed to carry a bucket and go draw water. As long as they unscrewed the faucet, cool well water would come flowing out from the pipe.

The same was true for the "islands" at the center of the Redwater River, since His Highness had held the Honor and Reward Ceremony, and Miss Nana had been put on the stage, the usage of the witches became more and more known. Raising those islands in the middle of the river, was obviously something that only witches could do.

He had already asked City Hall's Premier Minister Barov about this matter, but the answer he got in return was that he didn't need to understand it, His Highness Roland naturally had his way.

I presume it should be okay... After all, the royal family always loved to meet head-on with the Church, even if the latter sends troops to suppress His Highness, they would have first to beat the First Army, only then would they be qualified to speak. Otherwise, the Western Territory can only ever belong to Roland Wimbledon.

Duke Ryan is only the latest example.

"Sir, you have come," two serfs in the field who noted Sirius Daly, immediately came forward and greeted him, "You see, this piece of wheat field can be harvest now, the-therefore, may I ask you..."

"We wish to ask Sir, if the Lord's previous statements are still valid?"

"That's right, that's right," the other serf agreed while at the same time nervously rubbing his hands, "Can we really be promoted to free people?"

As the head of the Ministry of Agriculture, besides recording the best way to plant and creating a statistic about the harvest, Sirius also had another important responsibility: That was to communicate with the serfs so that they would listen to His Highness as well as the City Hall's policy. Although he didn't like coming in contact with these country bumpkins who all day long spent their life in mud, but his knight's self-discipline still let him fulfill his task.

“Do you see those slogans?” Sirius reached out with his hand and pointed towards the banner at the side of the farmland.

“Sir, I... cannot read...” the serf confessed with an embarrassed smile.

“Labor creates wealth, and work changes destiny,” he stated. “In other words, as long as you try to cultivate, you will have the opportunity to be promoted to become a free person. This is His Highness’ promise, and it will come true.”

“Is, is that so? That’s great!”

“After becoming a free man, you can live in the town center area, get your own brick house, as well as the right to a primary education. After that, you will no longer need to ask me for the meaning of that slogan.” Sirius once more repeated the corresponding propaganda.

“Yes, Sir,” The serf nodded excitedly. “The weather is so hot, do you want to go to my shed and have a cup of cold water?”

“I couldn’t, right now you must be very busy.” He said and waved in the direction of the fields. Understanding his meaning, the two quickly said their thanks and bowed for a long time before finally returning to their areas and busying themselves with their work. This was the most frequently asked question he’d heard in the last month. No matter how often he preached so, they would always take the trouble of coming to ask him again, fearing that His Highness would decide to cancel this policy in the blink of an eye.

Not much further down the road, he was once again encircled by a group of people, “Hello, Sir Sirius, after drying the wheat harvest, do we really only have to pay seven-tenths?”

Hearing the question, Sirius cried within his heart. This question’s frequency was second only to that of the “the free person promotion”.

“During the first year, this is indeed the case, and from then on it will only become less and less. If you’re promoted to become a freed person you will only have to turn over two-tenths, we have already repeatedly stressed this point.”

“As if I will ever be promoted,” a tall man said while touching the back of his head, “That remaining three-tenths of wheat, can we—”

“—Can only be sold to His Highness, or used for your food, or be kept as seeds.” Sirius clapped his hands, bluntly calling all the surrounding serfs to come over, “Everyone listen well, Border Town prohibit anyone from privately selling food. It doesn’t matter whether it is sold to local townspeople, or to foreign businessmen, it is a violation of Border Town’s law. If you do it, not only will your income be confiscated, you can also be imprisoned.

“What should we do if the Lord only offers a very low price?” The tall man muttered.

“It’s only natural that there will be that kind of circumstance. The acquisition of food by His Highness is to stabilize the market price, so no matter if you have a poor harvest or a bumper harvest, it is unlikely to cause a substantial change in the price. Therefore, you don’t have to hold wheat back in fear that you don’t have enough to eat after selling it. You also don’t have to worry about harvesting too much and

being unable to sell, or of only being able to sell at a low price.” Sirius emphasized again, “There is only one place in the whole Border Town where you can sell food, that is the convenience market, and that market falls under the management of our City Hall.”

“In the end, the price will be...?”

“Rest assured, His Royal Highness himself will announce it before he starts the acquisition.”

Looking at the serfs dispersing in groups of twos and threes Sirius licked his dry lips and continued to check on the crops. He did not know how many of them would keep his words in mind, but Sir Barov had made it clear that His Highness would drive a hard-line in case he discovered any people smuggling food, punishing them severely.

At that time, a young serf broke away from the crowd and turned back, “Sir,” he gasped, “I would like to ask you a question.”

“Yes?”

“Do you know where Miss May and Miss Irene have gone?” He hesitated. “Recently there haven’t been any plays performed in the central square, so I wanted... to ask you about their situation, whether or not they fell ill.”

This was a new and exciting question, Sirius couldn’t refrain himself from raising the corner of his mouth. If he hadn’t seen them in the City Hall going through the formalities, he would have been unable to answer it, “They went to Longsong Stronghold.”

“Ah,” the other side showed a disappointed expression, “Don’t tell me that they no longer intend to stay in Border Town?”

“They merely went to the stronghold theater to perform,” he shrugged, “Furthermore, the weather is so hot nowadays, no one would have the heart to see them standing under the sun and drenched in sweat, right? Wait until fall, they will come back and perform a new show in the square.”

“It... It is actually like this... thank you Sir!”

Looking at the back of the perfectly contented young man who was leaving, Sirius couldn’t help but think of himself – from a knight to a captive, then from being a prisoner to a City Hall officer, the experience of the past few months could be described as a series of ups and downs. He no longer wanted to return to his home in the Wolf territory, there he had nothing besides his shabby house and a flaky piece of wheat field. The reason why he had become a Knight was to break away from his father’s lifestyle as a farmer.

Not every Knight was as well regarded as Morning Light, who as the Duke’s personal knight had the best territory and also his own entourage. His yearly salary now was more than he had ever gotten while being a knight, and there was still vast room left for growth. Perhaps it was finally time to bring his parents to Border Town, then marry a girl and start enjoying life.

TN: Ripened wheat

Please help us by answering What’s your favorite quote?

Chapter 264 Bumper Harvest

Border Town's finally welcomed its first day of harvest.

Braving the hot sun, the serfs cut the straw stalks with their sickles and tied the batches of wheat into bundles so that they could move them to the other side of the river at a later time.

Roland knew that freeing the wheat grain from the wheat kernel was a very cumbersome process, and the mechanical farm tools and harvesters also aren't invented yet, so for now they will still have to use their hands to separate, clean, dry, and screen the wheat.

After the stalks of grain had been moved back to the camp, the serfs spread them out on the ground to dry in the sun and gathered several kinds of tools – which more exactly was anything that they could lay their hands on: wooden sticks, stones, or rakes. They used these tools to repeatedly strike the wheat stalks and ears, trying to free the caryopsis from their hull, a process which often lasted for three to four days.

In Roland's memory, the rural areas would often use cows and donkeys to pull a stone roller which pressed the grains out of their shell. Not only did it save a lot of labor, but it also removed the husks more evenly than when striking it.

Roland had no other choice but to accept Border Town's backward standard of agriculture.

After the striking, the serfs again used anything they could to turn over the wheat, even using wooden sticks if they didn't have any forks. Those who had nothing else even used their hands to directly grab the wheat stalks and throw them into the sky, the same as when turning stir-fry over in a pot. After going through the first striking, most of the outer shells of the grains should already be broken, this process should allow the fruits to separate from the ear of wheat.

In fact, after threshing the remaining wheat straw still had plenty of uses. After being crushed, it could be returned to the fields or could be used as bedding for livestock, it could also be made into fodder or used for papermaking. However, Roland didn't have enough time to promote a green industry at the moment. All he could do was look on as the serfs brought those wheat straws to the river-side and burned them. In the days that followed, Border Town's sky was covered with a dusky smoke which was comparable to the time of the former cement powder pollution.

During this time, Redwater Bridge's two spindly type islands had also been finished, with the construction of the concrete walls having also gone according to plan. For the base of the bridge pier they had used the same prefabricated method as for the main bridge – first placing the steel and concrete into trenches to form the columns of reinforced steel, then reduce the weight and lift the walls in place. Finally it was Lotus' turn, she was in charge of sinking the walls into the earth until only a section of the steel plate was still exposed, to which they would later connect the bridge to.

While handling these two projects, Roland spent this whole week traveling between the Redwater Bridge and the fields; which ended up giving him quite the tan.

By the time the straw was cleared away with forks, only layers of grain and their husk was still left in the grain-yard.

The serfs then swept it all together, and piled it into small hills. They then stepped on top of those hills, and used their shovels to throw the grains and husks into the air. Because the husks were so much lighter than the fruit, they were blown away further by the wind. As a result, the grain was still left at the foot of the hills, while the empty shells and debris laid at a distant location – by using this kind of method the serfs were slowly able to gather all of the grains.

Of course, wanting to completely clean up the husks was impossible. Furthermore, this process mixed the grain with the mud and gravel. Thus Roland decided that by next year's harvest, he would need to have prepared a sufficient batch of farm tools in advance – inventing a harvester wouldn't be possible, but the sheller machine should still be easily to realize. He merely had to exchange the stone roller with a millstone, furthermore he could also install a sieve beneath it and use an air blower to separate the grain from the chaff.

When the plump wheat grains were evenly spread over the whole valley, it looked like as if the entire northern shore of the Redwater River was covered by a golden layer. Looking at these golden fruits, Roland's heart was filled with a sense of accomplishment. No matter whether the harvest would be enough to fill the bellies of ten thousand people, at least for Border Town, this counted as a memorable day.

From today on, Border Town's food supply would gradually change from being totally dependent on imports to achieving self-sufficiency.

After drying for three days, the wheat was all stuffed into bags and weighted.

"Your Highness, this was a great harvest!" In the afternoon, Barov excitedly rushed into the office, "According to the preliminary statistics from City Hall, each field's allocated output was at least fourfold more than normal, the highest output even reached six times as much. So this year's harvest will be enough to fill all your subject's belly."

"Is that so?" Roland couldn't help but laugh, "It seems that the new barn in the castle district will no longer be so empty."

"Do you know what this means?" The expression on the City Hall's Premier Minister seemed to be even more excited than Roland's, "Border Town only needs to increase their numbers of farmers by 2000, and we will be able to satisfy the food consumption of 50'000 to 60'000 people! This is simply inconceivable, Border Town can definitely expand to become Graycastle's largest city, no..." He paused, "The most magnificent city in the whole mainland!"

The main reason why the city's population of this era didn't increase was because that the food production capability was just too small. For example, big cities like King's City that had more than 20'000 people needed more than a dozen surrounding villages to provide them with enough food. Each village would once more need almost one thousand or two thousand people, if even just half of them were engaged in farming, it could be estimated that nearly twenty thousand people were needed to support another twenty thousand. In other words, a farmer's food production, in addition to feeding their family and themselves was up to one other city resident's.

This was the so-called invisible restriction of production capability. Roland feared it would be difficult for Barov to imagine, that after the mechanization of farming, just one person's output was enough to

support tens of thousands of people. And that Border Town, in the absence of developing and spreading of agricultural technology, was still able to acquire this kind of bumper harvest, was mainly accredited to Leaves' magically transformed "Golden Ones".

To employ as few farmers as possible for feeding as many people as possible. Liberating the human resources from simply cultivating land to move onto the industrial production was the strategy that Roland had decided on from the beginning. Now after the Ministry of Agriculture had obtained the best planting process, coupled with the iron farming tools and machines to help with the farming coming next year, the per capita production was bound to become higher and higher.

...

In the evening, Roland once again held a bonfire speech at the shore of the Redwater River – it seems to be a return to the time from four months ago, it was evening, there was a roaring fire in the background, the crowd formed a dense mass, and the last rays of twilight fell over everyone's face. The only difference to that day was the expression on each person's face, compared to the beginning of when they had arrived and were feeling both terrified and uneasy, their faces on this day were all brimming with joy at the bumper harvest and couldn't conceal the expectation in their eyes.

Roland stretched out his hand and moved it downwards, the scene around him quieting down immediately. Everyone was holding his breath, waiting for the Prince to fulfill his promise.

"I know what you want to hear," he did not follow his usual practice of first announcing his name, and instead came straight to the matter, "– I can tell you without a doubt, that the previously announced rules of promotion are still valid and will hold!"

Just this sentence was enough to detonate the atmosphere of the scene, not one person there could restrain themselves from shouting out loud, many people fell on their knees and praised the Prince's kindness. "Long live the Lord!" "Long live His Royal Highness!"

"After the end of the grain weighing, the promotion list will be announced," the moment the shouts had subsided a little, Roland continued, "The City Hall will be responsible for your promotion to a freed person. At that time you can choose to either continue farming or come find a new job in Border Town."

"Also, starting from next year, if your harvest next year is the same as those promoted this year, even if the output is not on the forefront, you will still be freed. In other words, as long as you work hard, you will be able to rid yourself of your status as serfs – as I said, 'labor creates wealth, labor changes destiny'." He paused for a moment, looked around and then continued, "I hope that in the coming days, there will be no longer any serfs in Border Town, and everyone will be my real subject."

The moment Roland's voice faded, the people's cheers unceasingly resonated throughout the sky above the Redwater River.

Chapter 265 The Last Enemy

Timothy entered the Lord of the Port of Clear Water's circular room located at the top of the tower.

Different from the more commonly seen castle's, this tower was both higher and narrower. Apart from dealing with government or for observing the outside, he was afraid that even gathering all of his cabinet ministers here to hold a council meeting was already impossible.

None of the furnishings in the room had been moved, it was as if the owner had just left and would soon return. Facing the entrance was a reddish-brown square table, books were neatly and tidily arranged on it. And in the middle were several unfinished manuscripts and a quill that was inserted into an ink bottle; as if just waiting for someone to come and complete the files.

Taking one step at a time, Timothy walked to the table and sat in the large chair. The seat was covered with a cooling mat that was sewn out of bamboo sticks. Something that was quite suitable for easing the sizzling heat of the final month of summer. A bucket of water had been placed next to the chair, it was evidently used to hold ice, also serving to dispel the room's heat and lower the temperature. However, today's weather was a bit gloomy, there were dark clouds over the sea, which lowered the temperature, and made the room appear to be less stiflingly hot.

Timothy leaned forward, placed his face close to the surface of the tabletop and gently smelled it, filling up his nostrils with a faint and sweet scent – this was Garcia's most loved bluish green sunflower fragrance. It was produced at the Cold Wind Mountain Ridge, and when compared with rugosa rose and rosemary it had a more unique and refreshing feeling, as if it contained some of the ice from the north.

Only after using something for a long time, would it take over one's smell. There was no doubt that his sister enjoyed sitting on this chair, her hands on this table, either listening to a report or busy writing a decree.

Thinking about this, Timothy couldn't stop himself from laughing.

"Haha...ha...haha...hahahaha ———" In the end, Timothy simply leaned against the back of the chair, raised his head and started to laugh at the top of his voice.

He had finally won!

Garcia had given up Port of Clear Water, and given up the Southern Territory, that was tantamount to giving up the throne of Graycastle.

After receiving news that the Black Sail Fleet was sailing north, he immediately summoned the troops under his command and drove more than five thousand slaves, rats and criminals to the southern border and attacked Garcia's nest at the Port of Clear Water. The only resistance he encountered came from the Sandpeople from the extreme south. Timothy didn't know what kind promise they had agreed on, but they attacked him one after another, having no fear for their own lives. Moreover, the troublesome point was that they were also in possession of the Berserker Pill.

The battle lasted for nearly half a month, but by exploiting his superior numbers, and repeatedly disrupting his enemy's counterattack, Timothy was able to slowly erode the Sandpeople's defense line. Nearly three thousand of his people had died in this battle of attrition, and if his men hadn't received the support of the pills, Timothy was afraid that his mob wouldn't have dared to set even a single foot on this battlefield. Not to mention ever dare fight against the fierce and barbaric Sandpeople here who had fought to their death.

The final result of the battle was that he had to cross over a layer of corpses to be able to enter Port of Clear Water's Lord Tower.

The title “Queen of Clear Water” was history, the South of Graycastle had finally come back under his control.

“Your Majesty?” Probably from hearing his carefree laughter, the Knight keeping guard outside, pushed open the door and entered the room.

“No harm,” Timothy answered and got up. He pointed to the knight and then over to himself, instructing him to follow, and then went through a side door to step on the balcony.

He was immediately hit by the slightly salty sea breeze, which made his gown flutter. It seemed there was a storm approaching from looking at the dark clouds standing overhead that were growing thicker and thicker.

That’s truly unfortunately, Timothy thought, I was planning to see my third sister’s port, piers, and the Lords Tower all fall victim to the flames, but now it seems this will be impossible.

The last half year he had constantly been on the battlefield alongside his soldiers, there was hardly one month were he had stayed within King’s city. He had entrusted his Imperial Prime Minister to take care of all the government’s affairs – although Marquis Wyke had seemed to be very loyal, but loyalty didn’t mean that the other was able to forever lock their doorway and resist temptation, Gerald Wimbledon being the best example of this.

He needed to return to King’s City as soon as he could to stabilize the undercurrents of political unrest going on over there. The rain in the South would probably go on for several days, days he couldn’t waste with waiting over here.

“I will go back to King’s City early tomorrow morning,” Timothy opened his mouth and declared, “Except for my personal guards and the Knights from King’s City, all the other Knights and mercenaries will be handed over to you. Sir Ed Hawse, please take my place in defending the Southern Border. You must not allow the Sandpeople to even set a single foot within Graycastle’s borders.”

“You... will let me stay here?” The young Knight of the northern Hawse Family asked in surprise, “But I would like to continue to fight at your side, Your Majesty. I –“

“Knight, by defending the borderland you will also fight for me.” Timothy interrupted, “Listen, there are still many things you need to do, so I have to leave the Southern Territory in the hands of loyal and competent people who are able to deal with the aftermath.”

“But...” Ed was still a bit hesitant.

“I know what you are worried about,” the new King smiled understandingly and patted his shoulders. “Rest assured, you won’t stay here forever. When the matter regarding Port of Clear Water is finished, I will immediately recall you back to King’s City. After all, Graycastle is not unified yet, I still need to recover the Western Territory, and for that, I will need even more Knights who can charge in and break through the enemy’s lines. So, how could I ever forget you here?”

Hearing these reassuring words, the young man looked up with shining eyes, knelt down then said, “As you bid, Your Majesty!”

“Get up,” Timothy said while nodding with satisfaction. “There are three things you have to do next. First, you have to take all the remaining inhabitants of Port of Clear Water into custody and escort them back to King’s City.”

“Don’t you want to hang these traitors?” The Knight asked surprised.

“No, they cannot be considered as real traitors. If they had indeed joined Garcia’s side, they would have long left with the Black Sail Fleet. If I kill these people, it would only suit her more.” However, my third sister’s influence is really beyond my expectation, of the more than 10’000 inhabitants of Port of Clear Water, plus the captive slaves from Eagle City, there were actually only 400 people who didn’t want to leave with her. If not for the Sandpeople’s resistance, the Port of Clear Water would have been no different from an abandoned city.

“Your Majesty is benevolent!”

“The second thing you have to do is burn all the docks, shipyards and the Lords Tower, I want to let everyone in the South see that Garcia, the Queen of Clear Water, has ceased to be. Even if she comes fleeing back, only ruins will be left for her to return to.”

“Yes,” the Knight agreed.

“The last thing I ask is that you gather all the refugees for me.” Timothy looked at the horizon over the sea, then calmly said, “Furthermore, any homeless man, rat, bandit, and even the Sandpeople are acceptable. From the battle of Eagle City until today, the dispute in the Southern Territory has never been quietened down, so you should be able to find a large number of refugees living in the surrounding villages and towns. What kinds of methods you use to gather them doesn’t matter, only that before the war against the West begins you will need to provide me with at least 5’000 men.

Garcia’s escape proved the correctness of his strategy, as the ruler of more than half of Graycastle’s population, he should use them to fight against the rebels — under normal circumstances, with a team of 100 Knights leading an army of several thousand commoners, the Knight’s usually wouldn’t even need to participate in the battle. Their only responsibility would be the distribution of the pills and commanding the battle. In front of an enemy who had the advantage of absolute numbers, as long as they unceasingly attacked, the enemy would be unable to resist them. If Garcia had shown an unwavering will and decided to defend Port of Clear Water to the death instead of retreating, she would have been bound to be swallowed up by the masses of people turned mad by the pills.

Now he only had one enemy left, Roland Wimbledon in the western territory.

Chapter 266 Making up their mind

“Your Majesty, do you know why there isn’t any news from my older brother?”

Ed’s question surprised Timothy for a moment, indeed, it had already been two months since he sent Lehman Hawes over to loot the Western Territory. No matter if he traveled further or decided to return, he should already have reported on the situation by now, or returned to King’s City.

Although one of the missions given to Lehmann was “take as much control of the Western Territory as possible”, Timothy thoroughly understood that after the 1500 people took the pills they would become almost entirely useless. Wanting to only rely on them to occupy the Western Territory was a very

unlikely situation, so the main mission was to seize Longsong Stronghold, loot the pills in the church, verify the details about the Duke's battle, then lastly go out to attack Border Town thereby consuming some of Roland's strength.

He had already used this trick to deal with Garcia, so it could be described as a well-tested tactic of his. Even in the case that he was unable to capture the Port of Clear Water, and his militia was wiped out during the attempt to eliminate the enemy, most of his Knights would still be able to return safely. So as long as he assembled a group of useless people afterwards, they would be able to set out on an attack once again.

But why is there absolutely no news about Lehman Hawes and his group of Knights?

Timothy opened his mouth and slowly said, "Maybe his return was delayed because of the attack on Border Town, or he may be on his way back by now." He knew, that his reasoning was clearly quite weak, but he still did not want to tell Lehman's brother the most likely answer.

"Maybe when I get back to King's City, there will be a message from him waiting for me."

"Then Your Majesty, at that time, is it possible that I can ask that you..."

"Tell you the news?" Timothy nodded, "Of course, I will send a messenger to deliver it to you."

"Thank you, Your Majesty!"

The new King leant on the railing, watching the occasionally rays of light which appeared within the black clouds. The sound of thunder came from a far-off place, it wasn't loud, but rather deep and resounding, as if it struck directly into the heart.

Ed's question had caused the joy in Timothy's heart to largely fade away. If it was said that Garcia Wimbledon's rebellion was as it was meant to be, and that Tilly Wimbledon's departure had disappointed him greatly, then the action of Roland Wimbledon was something completely unimaginable to him. He had always thought that it would be absolutely unnecessary for him to spend any of his energy on his incompetent younger brother. As long as he waited for some time, Roland would become fed up with Border Town's impoverished lifestyle and come back to King's City on his own, thus today's very real situation was completely unimaginable.

Staying behind so as to take care of Border Town, safely making it through the Months of Demons, defeating Duke Ryan to seize Longsong Strong, and I have now, even completely lost contact with Lehman and his 1'500 militia. In the end, how is this even possible?

Timothy didn't have a deep understanding regarding his younger brother. In our childhood, no matter if it was Garcia or Gerald, they didn't love playing with him. Even after they became adults, they would only occasionally meet during the palace banquets. However, news related to his naughty and mischievous deeds never stopped, even father wasn't fond of him. Is it possible that he concealed his true nature from the beginning?

As soon as the idea came up, Timothy also rejected it. Even if he is as smart as fifth sister, it would only affect his learning ability and his reactive thinking. During Tilly's childhood, there wasn't any difference between her and an ordinary girl – how can someone be born with the knowledge on how to mask

themselves and deceive others? It is inevitable that something must have happened after he had left for Border Town, which caused these changes.

Timothy shook his head, and threw those distracted thoughts to the back of his mind.

“What’s wrong, Your Majesty?”

“No, it’s nothing.” The new King took a breath, “A storm is coming.”

No matter what had happened to him. The situation is still the same. With Border Town’s population and its position, he is already doomed without somewhere to retreat to – he has no port or fleet. And with only the unreachable barbaric wasteland behind him, he can only defend his small corner to the death, waiting until he is completely swept off by my attacks.

“Do you insist on leaving tomorrow?” the Knight asked in fear.

Timothy turned around, “If you stop after encountering some rain, what would you do when you meet a real storm?”

Sooner or later, Roland Wimbledon will kneel beneath my feet and beg for my forgiveness. I will inevitably put Graycastle’s crown on my head. However, all of this is but a side act of a newly started play. The movements and intentions of the Church are becoming increasingly obvious. One day, the Church and Graycastle are bound to clash, that will be my real challenge.

“Go and attend to your own affairs. The sooner you are able to finish the task I’ve given you, the sooner you will be able to return to King’s City.”

“As you bid, Your Majesty.”

Ed walked two steps away, but then turned back to ask. “I almost forgot, may I ask Your Majesty, how do you wish to deal with those who swallowed the pills and haven’t died on the battlefield? They have already taken the pills for the third time.”

“Have them burn along with Port of Clear Water,” Timothy replied expressionlessly.

After the Knight acknowledged his orders and left, Timothy suddenly felt something cold on the tip of his nose. Lifting his head, he saw raindrops falling from the clouds, first there was only some spare droplets, but it became more and more dense, then setting off ripples over the sea’s surface.

*

The New Holy City at Hermes was at the peak of the Tower of Babel.

“Damn it, truly, f*cking damn it!” Tayfun shouted as he vigorously smashed his fist against the table. “This wh*re of a b*tch! That’s blaspheme! She dares to point her spearhead at the Church!”

This was the first time that Mayne had seen the old bishop lose his self-control, the veins on his forehead had risen in his rage, and his beard was trembling. In general, his sinister appearance looked as if he wanted to swallow his counterpart.

It was quite difficult to imagine that he was the same man as the man who constantly raised complaints regarding Heather, who could not exchange even a few words with her without quarreling the whole

afternoon long. However, the moment he saw the content inside the small jewel box sent from the Queen of Clear Water, the old man had burst into a rage.

There had been no pearl in the small jewel box, it had only contained a single cast iron ring –the Bishop’s emblem that had personally been awarded by His Holiness, and it was still attached to a bloodstained finger..

Mayne sighed then reached out for the jewelry box. “Of course she dares, that’s because we also haven’t received the blessing of God – God... only favors the victorious.”

Hearing this sentence, Tayfun suddenly calmed down, then silently went to sit back in his chair, heavily gasping for air, before he was once more able to stiffly ask, “Then, what do you intend to do?”

This was indeed a situation the Church hadn’t encountered in the last hundred years. No one had thought that Garcia would come the whole way up from Graycastle to the Kingdom of Endless Winter, and even send the Black Sail Fleet towards Hermes after having seized the capital. Although the Wolfsheart Kingdom had been on its last breath before being conquered, Mayne still hadn’t hesitated to order the God’s Punishment Army to come back to the Old Holy City.

This city, even without any walls, was the barrier defending the base under Hermes and they couldn’t afford to lose it no matter the price.

After they repelled their offensive, the Black Sail Fleet didn’t try to go on and instead returned along the river all the way back to King’s City of Endless Winter. The other’s intention was quite obvious, as long as the Church dispatched troops attack the Wolfsheart Kingdom, Garcia would attack the Old Holy City from the river. Furthermore, the nobles who had previously been suppressed by the sudden loss of Endless Winter’s royal power would now begin to stir. Mayne believed that as long as Garcia promised that they could keep their territories and possessions, all those greedy nobles wouldn’t hesitate to support Garcia to become the new Queen of Endless Winter.

Now they had a dilemma which couldn’t be easily settled.

But the Church would not bow just because they were facing a difficult situation. Even before he had become an Archbishop, Mayne had already known that the road before him would be a long and thorny one.

“First, the Holy City needs to announce a new Archbishop, so we will first make a list of possible candidates, the final candidate is to be decided by His Holiness,” Mayne slowly stated.

“And the enemy?” Tayfun snorted from his nostrils.

“I will explain everything to His Holiness, do not worry,” he closed his eyes, “His Excellency will execute a holy judgment on them.”

Chapter 267 The fated ending

Mayne passed through the gloomy corridors before he rode the hanging cage into the depths, arriving at the secret temple inside the gigantic cavity.

His Excellency O’Brien was already waiting at the doorway.

He seemed to have aged since the last time he'd seen him. He had wrinkles spreading out like a spider web from the corners of his inwardly sunken eyes and over his cheeks. However, his smile was still just as soft and filled with concern. Mayne couldn't keep his eyes from becoming wet at the sight. He quickly sunk to his knees, "Your Holiness, we -"

"Rise, child," the Pope's voice was both gentle and calm. "I've heard that you've run into some trouble. Follow me to the hall and we can talk."

Today wasn't the Day of Conversion, so the hall's walls weren't decorated with as many candles as stars in the sky this time. Instead, only a few candles had been placed over in the corner. The Pope returned to his Lord's seat, breathing out in relief after he sat. "Explain, just what happened outside."

Mayne fully realized the heaviness of His Holiness O'Brien's responsibility. It wasn't that His Holiness couldn't find out news from outside of the Holy City, simply that he did not have enough time to pay attention to trivial matter. As a result of this, the three Archbishops were then established, and would coordinate themselves to manage all of the religious affairs. Making sure that they avoid bothering His Holiness with their matter as much as possible, but the current troublesome situation was something he was unable to solve by himself.

Mayne sharply began to narrate the matters at hand, one piece of news at a time from beginning to end.

"Heather is dead..." After listening to everything, O'Brien remained silent for a very long time, then released a long sigh before saying, "She possessed a keen sense of observation and she was both a clever and devout little girl, I've seen her as she slowly grew up..."

"Feel free to grieve, Your Holiness."

"The murderer must be punished," the Pope nodded. "How is the current situation, are Garcia and the Wolfsheart Kingdom mutually helping each other? Isn't the new poison showing any effect?"

"During the attack and capture of the Broken Tooth Castle it already showed its effect. After a month passed, all of the stronghold's defenders had fallen dead, and the Army of Judges could quickly storm the city. They were unable to find almost any living soul within the residential areas. However, for the attack on Wolfsheart City, it seems the poison wasn't able to have the same influence and the enemy still remains tenaciously resistant." Mayne reported.

"You made two mistakes," O'Brien slowly said. "The disease caused by the poison will lead to death within seven to ten days. You should have taken advantage of the illness' first appearance to attack, then quickly rescued and given medical treatment to the residents inside the city. This would've significantly reduced their hostility. Do not forget that what we need the most is to get as much of the population as possible, not a ghost city."

"The second point is that you waited one month until you attacked, although by doing it in this way, you were able to reduce the casualties to a minimum, you also gave the enemy enough time to respond, which allowed them enough time to find a way to cure the disease. The essence of the new poison was the magic to transform demonic beasts. According to what the Canon of Magic says, there are more than 70 kinds of abilities that can restrain the infections, and also more than 30 types which can

exterminate it. In the end, it isn't surprising for there to be such a witch within a city filled with tens of thousands of people."

"You mean, they colluded with witches—"

"In the end, when facing a life and death crisis, no one will care whether they are the Devil's minions or not," the Pope muttered.

"No matter if those witches took the initiative to come out by themselves, or if they were unmasked and forced to treat the plague, both possibilities sound like bad news for the Church. If they really can stop the momentum of our attack, it is inevitable that the witches' reputation is bound to undergo some dramatic changes, even so far... that they could be regarded as heroes."

"This is all my fault," Mayne said while lowering his head.

"It certainly was a mistake, but not a grave one. The reason you used this tactic was to reduce the losses of our Army of Judges and God's Punishment Army," O'Brien used his scepter to knock Mayne on the shoulder, "Furthermore, the fact that Graycastle's 3rd Princess Garcia and the Wolfsheart Kingdom are working together is also an opportunity for us."

"Op...portunity?" the Bishop asked shocked.

"That's right! This way we will have the opportunity to catch everything in one net," O'Brien stood up, "You, come with me."

Escorted by guards, Mayne followed the Pope out of the Pivotal Secret Institution, and they slowly walked further into the depths of the cave. The gloomy rays of light coming from the immense God's Punishment Stones illuminated the path beneath their feet – gradually, becoming darker and darker, until Mayne was no longer able to keep himself from looking back, only to see that the Pivotal Secret Temple and the God's Punishment Stone was already great distance behind them. In the end, it even became necessary for the guards to light up torches to prevent them from stumbling over the rubble that was on the ground.

"We are... going where?"

"We are already there, child," His Holiness O'Brian halted his footsteps, breathing a bit hurriedly, "Sigh... I'm getting old, from just this short journey, I have already expended such a large amount of effort..."

A guard came up to support him, "Your Holiness, please permit me to carry you."

"That's not necessary, a short break will be good enough," after saying this, the Pope stood in place and tried to catch his breath, he then commanded, "Light the brazier."

At this moment the Bishop noticed that there were a few tall towers erected beside the stone road, but if the guards with their torches hadn't stepped close to them, it would have been hard for the average person to find these hidden metal towers within the darkness.

The guards climbed the ladders and lit the oil in the basin at the top. It immediately produced several groups of dazzling flames. Mayne first had to narrowly squint his eyes and slowly adapt to the change in lighting, before he was able to look ahead.

In the flickering light, a dusty canvas appeared in front of everyone, it was tall and bulging, and was apparently covering a something large.

“It was originally planned that we would wait two more years before we took this out to help resist against the then even more fierce demonic beasts’ attacks, but it now seems we have to shift its appearance to an earlier date.” O’Brien waved his hand then commanded, “Remove the cloth.”

“This is...” When the canvas fell, Mayne couldn’t believe his eyes. Before him stood a huge, fierce some four-wheeled iron carriage; just its wheels were already taller than he was. It did not have the appearance of an ordinary carriage either. Rather, it had a ferocious looking horn-shaped metal ramp, the frame was made out of beast bones, and the areas between the frames had been closed with barbed bone shields, with a size of three to four large doors.

There were two perfectly straight iron poles with pointed ends, one on the left and one on the right, which extended through the openings in the shield and pointed forward, as if ready to fire off arrows. Moreover, another dozen of these metal poles were hanging from both sides of the iron carriage, each were as thick as his own thigh, with its dark and metallic luster shining under the brazier light.

“The canon called this, ‘Siege Beast’.” The Pope walked to the side of the carriage and patted the hard iron poles, “It relies on magic power to operate, and needs the power of three to four witches for it to run smoothly. The Siege Beast’s striking distance is far beyond that of a trebuchet or ballista, and for the typical city wall, it is very difficult to resist the destructible power of these iron arrows. The giant trees they use to build ships with are the same as thin pieces of paper in front of this. No matter if it is for destroying the strong city walls of Wolfsheart City or to prevent the Black Sail Fleet from advancing further, would both be very easy if we make use of this.”

“This... is it also a weapon developed by the secret temple?”

“No,” O’Brien shook his head, “You should be able to guess, this comes from our enemies – it is from the Devil’s from hell. This is also why the Church hides the Siege Beast here deep within the cave. Remember, when you use it, be sure to hide your whereabouts as much as possible, don’t let any civilian see it.

“I understand,” Mayne said as he lowered his head.

How it is possible for witches to be able to manipulate the Devil’s weapon? Do they possess the same kind of magic as humans? He forced down all of his doubts and did not continue asking. Obviously, only after he became the new Pope would he be eligible to understand these things.

“Also, to avoid Garcia and the Wolf King from fleeing again, I will be dispatching two Purified Ones to aid you during combat,” the Pope said.

“No one can escape from their grasp... Go forth, bring back the blood of those blasphemers for the sake of Heather’s farewell dinner.”

His Holiness is dispatching the Purified Ones! He was shocked to his core, the witches who were both raised and allowed to survive by the Church were called Purified Ones. But to become His Holiness’ subordinate, only the most powerful out of ten thousand was selected, like those who had abilities not even recorded within the Canon of Magic. Comparing them to the troops under Heather, Tayfun, and

himself, would be like comparing the sky to the earth! With His Holiness now personally stating that they would be unable to escape, the ending of the two was already fated to happen.

“As you bid, Your Holiness,” Mayne answered in excitement.

Chapter 268 The first plenary session (Part 1)

Roland held Border Town’s first high-level plenary session in the castle’s drawing hall.

Compared to the time when he had held it with Barov and his ten apprentices in name only, the City Hall nowadays had expanded to a large group consisting of nearly one hundred people. The group contained nobles, surrendered knights, squires, as well some natives who had completed the primary education and received their diploma.

Thanks to the growth of the population, various departments could be formed in succession, which caused the City Hall to finally reach a size the Prince was satisfied with. No longer was it as before, where he had to do everything on his own, at present in the case of a simple policy or program, as long as he explained the concept to them, the new City Hall was able to distribute it according to the department and manage to complete the task, something which filled Roland with a sense of gratification.

The participants of the first high-level meeting were all the heads of departments, namely there was the Minister of Agriculture, Sirius Daly; Minister of Education, Scroll; the Minister of Chemical Industry, Kyle Sichi (temporary); Minister of Construction, Karl van Bate; the Head of the Army, Iron Axe; and finally, the City Hall Premier Minister, Barov Mons. The Ministry of Industry was still personally managed by Roland. After all, except him, no one else knew what industrialization looked like.

A bucket of ice water was placed next to everyone, releasing bursts of cold air – Candle had placed an enchantment on the ice cubes, which preserved them within the water for at least the whole morning. Even though the sun was shining fiercely outside, the castle hall still maintained its cool and refreshing temperature.

“Then let’s start with each department reporting on its recent situation,” Roland took a kettle from the bucket, and poured himself a cup of ice water, “The first one is the Ministry of Agriculture.”

“Yes, Your Royal Highness,” Sirius answered, he stood up and saluted, then spread out a roll of paper he had prepared in advance. “Currently we have acquired around 17’000 hu of grain, which is already enough to satisfy the townsfolk until next year’s last month of summer. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture has according to your request also purchased the surplus grains in accordance to the market value. However, this amount is far less than the amount we’ve gained, for now, it is only accounts for 4’500 hu.”

The so-called “hu” was a commonly used wheat weighing unit during ancient times, measured by using a deep basket made out of thin bamboo. Therefore, even after he heard these numbers, he still didn’t know how he was supposed to convert them into kilograms or liters. Fortunately, this wasn’t the important point; the crucial point was that they had enough food to feed the all of the townsfolk.

The critical fact laid in the second aspect, if the Ministry of Agriculture took 7/10, it would mean that the serfs had 3/10 which they could sell themselves and accumulated to 7000 hu, but the discrepancy was

much larger than the amount of grain needed to set aside as foodstuff and seeds for the next year. In other words, some serfs had not sold the remaining 30% of the food to the City Hall and instead chosen to hoard it in wooden sheds.

Although he had already anticipated a situation such as this beforehand, seeing it turn out this way still caused him to let out a gentle sigh. Their purpose in hoarding the grain was apparent, they were speculating to resell it at a profit later – for example, if Border Town gave birth to a food shortage, or was struck by a natural disaster. They would be able to sell the food at prices much higher than the market price, an increase of ten times wouldn't be impossible.

This was also the reason why Roland had decided that the City Hall would hold a monopoly over the grain transaction and also why the buyer must first show their identity card. The grain operation was related to Border Town's stability, in case the grain transaction was unable to create a surplus during the early period and the sale wasn't restricted, it would likely lead to speculators acquiring and hoarding the food and in that way artificially increasing the food's price. However, by using a system of limited sales and only selling to people who had an ID, while at the same time stopping any other sales channels, Roland was able to keep the food price at a steady position.

"Your Highness, why don't you force the serfs to sell their grain?" Sirius asked puzzled, "In any case, it's not like the law permits them to give it to other people."

"Because the grain is their property, how they choose to handle it is their choice," Roland replied. "I never set a rule not allowing the serfs to hold on to their own food. You can also understand it as, 'as long as it isn't prohibited, it is allowed'."

On hearing his reply, Sirius looked somewhat puzzled by it, apparently not knowing how he was supposed to interpret this sentence. And he wasn't the only one confused, most of the others were also frowning, the only exception to this was Barov, who was currently showing a thoughtful expression.

"Is there anything else to report?" Roland drank a mouthful of iced water. Only with time would they be able to understand the concept of emphasizing rules and procedure. Or putting it another way, the moment they were able to comprehend it, they could be regarded as a new generation of qualified officials. Of course, this could also easily lead to another extreme, like the emergence of bureaucracy. However, bureaucracy was still better than confusion, disorder, and people behaving unscrupulously.

"Uh... yes," Sirius Daly flung his head back, "Now that the fields have been harvested, I do not know how to organize next year's fallow and plow plan."

"No, the serfs can endlessly cultivate their lands, so we will continue to plant wheat next year," Roland waved his hand, "Those piles of manure to the side of the fields were gathered in preparation of fertilizing the land. In the following days, you will start to instruct the serfs to shovel it into the fields, and fully mix it into the soil, completely clear it and make place for new piles of excrements." With the summer's high temperature and humid weather, it had only needed two months before becoming well-rotted compost, however, during the winter season it will usually take four months. So by the beginning of spring of next year, not only would the soil's quality be increased by the first batch of compost, but Roland would also have readied a second batch of compost which could be used as base fertilizer. Because of this, there was no need for a fallow plan.

Not speaking about high-end fertilizer, just using human's and animal's excrement as fertilizer was already a vast improvement for the agriculture.

"Well, if this is what you order." He touched his head, "Also... Your Highness, I'm afraid that with such large amounts of wheat it, won't be enough to only lean on one or two stone grinding mills. So, I want to apply for the construction of a mill next to the Redwater River, preferably a steam powered one."

"That's pretty good," Roland nodded. This was a new breakthrough – there was finally someone other than himself who wanted to try and use the new power. "First of all, you should forward your plan to Barov, and after obtaining the funding for it, you then have to determine a detailed plan together with the Ministry of Construction."

"All right, Your Highness" Sirius agreed, "The last point is regarding the promotion to freed people. At present, five hundred and sixteen people have obtained the qualification for the promotion. Because the amount of wheat was divided and transferred on the spot, no one has put up any objections. I have already reported the list to Lord Barov." Then he got up and saluted again, "That concludes my report."

"Well done," Roland clapped twice to show his encouragement. It seemed that the former young Knight of the Wolf Family had not only adapted to his new life in Border Town, but also obtained the manners of the City Hall. And so, could be turned into an excellent propaganda model after a little packaging, in that way playing a small role in attracting nobles or knights of Longsong Stronghold in the future.

The second to give their report was Scroll. She had tied her long hair to the back of her head, and wore a clean and tidy white shirt, matched with a simple and decorate free black long skirt, which made her look both mature and capable. Seeing her today, it was hard for him to imagine that half a year ago, she was still a witch living in exile so as to hide away from the Church.

"At present, there are two batches of people who are in the process of completing their Primary Education, a total of eighty-five people. Most of them previously studied at the college run by Mr. Karl." With her ability to have a highly retentive memory, she had no need to prepare any data for the report beforehand, a point which made Roland feel very envious. "Forty-six of them choose to go to work in the City Hall, twenty-one people decided to go to the bicycle factory, thirteen people decided to join the First Army," pausing for a moment she continued, "There are also five applicants for a post at the chemical laboratory."

Five people? Roland could not help but look over towards Kyle Sichi, merely to see the latter's complexion clearly didn't appear to be that good. It seems that the propaganda effect of the Honor and Award Ceremony is far less than I expected. I'm afraid that some parts of the three recently created laboratories are going to have to lie idle in the near future.

Fortunately, the employment rate is at least at one hundred percent; Roland tried to comfort himself.

TN:

Chinese Volume conversion:

1 gě 合 = 10 sháo 勺 (0.1 sheng)

1 shēng 升 = 10 gě 合 Changed to be same as 1 liter or 0.22 gallons

1 dǒu 斗 = 10 shēng 升 (10 sheng)

1 dàn 石 = 10 dǒu 斗 (100 sheng)

Also: 1 hú 斛 = 5 dǒu 斗

Chapter 269 The first plenary session (Part 2)

When it was the Ministry of Chemical Industry's turn, Kyle snorted, "Your Royal Highness, I hope you can find the real head of this department as soon as possible, I do not want to attend this kind of meeting for a second time."

"..." Roland secretly rolled his eyes, after becoming a leader, he had discovered that it was important for him to selectively ignore words sometimes. Is it that easy to find a person who has talent for both alchemy and chemistry? "Do you have any idea how to mass produce the two acids?"

"No," Kyle shrugged his shoulders, "And because of that, I have to spend more energy and staff on researching this topic, so rather than sitting here and wasting my time." After spending such a long time in Border Town, he had also acquired some of Roland's vocabulary, "In case you insist that I should give an account, I can only say that the laboratory is lacking personal, the more people that come to us, the better. In addition, regarding the recently five added people, although they aren't as old, they can still be counted as clever, it seems that the Primary Education you implemented is still somewhat useful."

Well, the person with the most disrespectful way of talking was probably the chief alchemist. However, taking each other's age into account, and the degree of enthusiasm he showed for chemical experiments, Roland did not feel any resentment towards him for this. It was also important to remember that after going through the explosion and after being completely healed by Nana, his first and largest reaction was that he was glad that he could now conduct experiments without the slightest of scruple, and then even planned to taste the different flavors of the acids, who other than he would have such a fanatical enthusiasm to their work?

"All right... you will continue to research, and I'll have Barov think of a method to fill in the staff shortage."

"Oh, by the way, Your Highness," Kyle opened his mouth again. "Were you able to compile your 'Intermediate Chemistry'? If you could give me some details, maybe I can think of a method for the large-scale production earlier."

"I already said at the Honor and Award Ceremony, so long as you train enough apprentices and assistants to fill the new laboratories, I will give you the book," Roland said, spreading his hand out towards him. In fact, at present, he had not written even the first line. Just the Elementary Chemistry had already consumed all his knowledge of chemistry. He already feared, that even if he racked his brain for it, he would still be unable to fill more than a few pages of the Intermediate Chemistry.

The fourth person to report was Karl van Bate, who was from the Ministry of Construction.

"First of all, I want to thank Miss Scroll," Karl said, as he nodded towards Scroll, "I'm really glad to hear that the children I've taught were able to graduate smoothly."

Compared to the chief alchemist, the stonemason's communication skills could be said to be as different as the sky to the earth. Scroll nodded in return before replying with, "I should be the one thanking you."

Then Karl opened the records he was carrying with him and in a methodical manner began to describe: "At present, the town's projects are steadily advancing. The main projects are the Kingdom Avenue, the Redwater Bridge, the new residential area and the new city wall. The amount of people working on the construction of the Kingdom Avenue has already reached four thousand five hundred people, half of them have come from Longsong Stronghold and according to current predictions, they should be finished by spring next year. Regarding the status of the Redwater Bridge, currently they are still carrying out the construction of the underground concrete wall. The residential district is already extending to the old city wall, and there are currently approximately one thousand people busy constructing it. As long as the supply of the cement and bricks are ensured, it should be possible to complete the task of moving all the eastern refugees into town before the arrival of the Months of Demons."

Since Karl usually informed Roland on a daily basis about the recent developments of the projects, his report this time was very simple. He didn't even mention matters such as the expansion of the castle area and the construction of the witch dorm. And after deciding on a good position for the new city wall, it was being constructed by Lotus herself, with a daily progress of approximately one hundred meters.

"You've worked hard," Roland nodded, the Ministry of Construction, regardless of whether it was the staff or the amount of allocated funds, was the department with the largest amounts. Therefore, its achievements were also the greatest. "Those handymen coming from Longsong Stronghold, besides speeding up the construction they are also promoting Border Town's preferential treatment policy. Furthermore, after a year of work, those handymen can be regarded as qualified craftsmen, and so the number of people who want to go back should be kept to as little as possible."

"Yes, Your Royal Highness," Karl agreed.

"Then the next one... is Iron Axe."

It was Iron Axe's first time participating in this kind of meeting, and so he seemed to be a little out of place. He cleared his throat, "Your Royal Highness, the army has two main things it wishes to report. First of all, the Second Army has completed their basic training, and they are now ready to be sent to the Longsong Stronghold. And secondly, in the wake of adding new blood, the First Army now has eight hundred and twenty-five people. Putting aside the three hundred and fifty people of the artillery team, the rest of the soldiers have all been equipped with revolving rifles. That's all I have to say." Then finished his report with a military salute.

"That sounds pretty good. Have the Second Army set out tomorrow and be sure to place reliable people at the important ranks. After reaching the stronghold, they aren't allowed to stop their daily training and ideological education. Furthermore, I expect a weekly report to be sent back to Border Town." Roland instructed.

The last to report was Barov, he first looked at everyone, then slowly saluted Roland before reporting, "Your Royal Highness, ever since the previous payment to Margaret's Chamber of Commerce for the refugee transportation and the money spent on Theo's mission, the City Hall's gold stock has declined very badly. Coupled with the bumper harvest and the Ministry of Agriculture's acquisition of grain

according to the set market price, it has resulted in an inventory of barely 2000 gold royals, this can be considered as a relatively dangerous boundary.”

Two thousand gold royals... compared with last year’s winter it undoubtedly was a huge sum of money, but Roland was also perfectly aware that Border Town’s situation was also no longer the same as it was back then. Even just for the Ministry of Construction, already burdened Border Town with the huge expenditure of paying for the five thousand workers. There was also the high salary for the First Army, factories, chemical laboratory, and City Hall, which also required a large amount of money.

In other words, Border Town might have been earning money quickly, but it was also spending the money just as quickly. Even under the circumstances that large parts of the materials and machinery were self-sufficient.

“I am aware of this, but at the beginning of next month, when Margaret’s caravan arrives in town, we will be able to obtain a huge income through the sale of the steam engines,” Roland responded.

“Furthermore, the purchase of food and the transport of the refugees aren’t daily expenses. I’m sure that during the next six months, the treasury should be able to improve steadily, there is no reason for you to worry too much about it.” He paused. “also, I plan to raise the salary of everyone here.”

“Raise the salary?” Barov got startled and stared blankly at Roland.

“That’s correct, the City Hall is no longer an institution only run by a dozen people, and your workload has increased significantly, so your salary will also naturally rise.” The Prince smiled and then continued to say, “From this month onwards, I will increase your monthly salary to five gold royals, and according to this ratio, the payment for your apprentices and assistants will also go up uniformly. Be at ease, the needed fund doesn’t accumulate too much, it is not more than 20 to 30 gold royals.”

Although a salary of five gold royals for this kind of position in the City Hall couldn’t be counted as generous, but Roland knew, that what Barov enjoyed even more than the salary, was being in charge of Border Town’s revenues and expenditure and providing them with the according statistics. Furthermore, since he had yet to set any regulatory ministries, Barov could get hundred times his current salary. But so far, he had not seen any signs of corruption from Barov.

Of course, apart from relying on the other people’s conscious, Roland could also always count on Nightingale’s ability to maintain the department’s integrity. No one could conceal their bad behavior from her gaze.

“In addition, there is one thing you may already know,” Roland continued. “By the end of the Months of Demons, I plan to officially establish a city here. In other words, Border Town will be upgraded into an official city. The city’s west side will stretch until the barbarian wasteland, the eastern border will be Longsong Stronghold, while the southern end will be the hills and the ocean. With the city walls and the mountains as a natural barrier, the area will be far larger than King’s City or any other city in the Four Kingdoms.

“So you still need to pay particular attention and improve your work, to meet the attitude that is required to establish a city,” Roland paused and then emphasized every word, “I hope that our city, even while in a boundless winter, can stay as warm as during spring.”

Chapter 270 High Pressure Air Bottle

After the meeting concluded, Roland and Barov both stayed behind.

“You also saw it, currently people are crucial to the chemical laboratory and Graycastle Industry, and I also intend on starting the mass production of soap and perfume soon, which will require a lot of additional staff.” The Prince said. “But it will be at least a year before the greater part of the townsfolk pass the primary education examination. Furthermore, even by taking all of them into account, there still won’t be more than 600 to 700 people, that just isn’t enough. I need more people.”

“In case we enlist people from the stronghold...”

“No,” Roland interrupted, “Next year, after Border Town has upgraded to the status of a city, the stronghold and Border Town will be fused into one entity. Therefore, it would be the equivalent of the moving money out from your left pocket into your right pocket; so, I will need more people from outside the Western Territory.”

“This...” Barov looked somewhat troubled and worriedly suggested, “I am afraid that isn’t such good idea to solve it. If you go to others cities to fish for workers, the local Lords would definitely not sit by and idly watch as it happens.”

“Do not go to the cities,” Roland said. Then he stretched his finger toward the cup, dipped it into the iced water and then moved it over the table while saying, “I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but since the end of the Months of Demons, Graycastle has constantly been at war. Including several charges which had been led by Timothy against the Southern Territory, resulting in Eagle City being destroyed from a fire, and leaving the surrounding cities and towns severe damaged. Then there was also the subjugation of the Northern Region, where they stripped the Duke Ise of his title and territory. And lastly the marine attack against the Eastern Region,” he beat two times against the tabletop, leaving a group of water stains, “Which seriously impacted the Sea Wind Region, Valencia, and Shivering Crow Castle, not even mentioning all the small towns in the surroundings. Just by looking at all the people who’ve fled to King’s City you can already see how seriously the impact was on Graycastle’s population.”

“What do you mean...” Barov revealed a thoughtful expression.

“Go out and spread propaganda about the Western Region,” The Prince smoothed out the water then explained in more detail, “During the last six months, only the Western Region remained peaceful. There has been no forced recruitment, nor has it been hit by the flames of war. Especially since Timothy so wantonly uses commoners to attack, he will definitely recruit and even force the civilians of each region. Who can guarantee that next time that fate won’t fall on their head? So you have to propagandize that the only calm and peaceful place completely isolated from the chaos of war is the Western Region.”

“I think I got it,” Barov said after pondering about his next words, “You plan to attract the civilians of other cities by not pressing them into service, or forcing them into labor, and furthermore, by providing them with shelter, food, and stable work?”

“Almost,” Roland said with a smile and nodded. His active thinking and ability to find the key points is one of the Assistant Minister’s strongest points. “However, one of the key points you need to propagandize is the excellent treatment that literate people will enjoy. I think that these places definitely have some Knights and nobles who have no way out and because of this are unwilling to come to the western region to try their luck.”

Whether it was small villages or towns, they were almost all territories of minor nobility. And during peacetime, even if the land was small and barren, and the management poor, supervising a few acres of land would always manage to fill their stomach. But during the time of war, something which severely impacted the population, it was hard for them to survive. At those times, if there was a stable and peaceful destination for them, it would really prove tempting to most of them. Even if there was no one who could safeguard their territory and keep it from being occupied by others, they would only have to endure these days of war. Afterward, they could use their money to recruit some mercenaries and go back to take over their territory once again.

As for how to advertise, Roland believed that Barov would have his ways.

“But Your Highness, by doing it this way and helping the personnel to settle down will be very expensive, furthermore, the acquisition of the grain cannot be interrupted,” Barov hesitantly said, “In case the caravan encounters some accidents, the City Hall’s treasury will quickly dry up.”

“Um... what you’ve said sounds reasonable,” Roland touched his chin, the most important task of new established political powers was to create trust and confidence of it within the people’s hearts. If they were suddenly caught in a situation where they were unable to pay their salary, this current excellent situation would take a sudden turn and rapidly worsen. “Well, in this case, you should head back first and continue with your usual task. We will wait until the caravan has arrived in Border Town and the completion of the transaction next month. When the treasury is filled once more, we will speak about the implementation of the plan again.”

“As you bid, Your Royal Highness,” Barov placed his hand on his chest.

After finishing the mission briefing, Roland returned to his office and began thinking about how to complete Margaret’s balloon order.

With a price of one thousand gold royals for each balloon, its price was even higher than that of the steam engine, while its production cost was actually lower. The airbag was mainly a drawn picture by Soraya while the hemp rope and bamboo basket were bargain-priced goods. In fact, Roland had already created a prototype and tested it in the factory courtyard: A hydrogen balloon which could carry Lighting and Maggie simultaneously and ascend into the sky.

After repeated consideration, he finally decided to abandon the idea of a hot air balloon fueled by coal gas. The needed equipment would use up too much space, and the manufacturing process would also be very troublesome. Moreover, Roland would have to import that coal from other cities, which for a small-scale production would be extremely cost-ineffective, far inferior to hydrogen which was so much easier to facilitate.

He coated the test product with a single-sided water coating, which ensured that even after being burned, nothing would happen to the paper. As a result, the whole air sac had hardly any weight while its flexibility was very outstanding. In the experiment, after inflating the balloon, it would fear neither rain, impact, or fire. Maggie even turned into several kinds of birds to throw vicious attacks against the balloon but it was still unable to leave even a small trace. Only by using an iron needle were they able to pierce through the millimeter-thick coating. And since the construction of the air sac was very lithe, a hydrogen balloon with merely a diameter of about two meters was already enough to carry an adult.

The only difficulty laid in how they would solve the gasification problem of the high-pressure hydrogen bottle.

Selling a DC motor for the electrolysis of water was impossible. A motor connected to a steam engine could inflate all hydrogen balloons, which was obviously not that cost-effective. If he wanted a steady flow of gold royals from the hands of the wealthy and powerful merchants, he would have to find a way of create high-pressure bottles which could be refilled repeatedly.

The air bottle itself was not difficult to build. The usage of secondary material could be made up with the wall's thickness, thus using pig iron and wrought iron was good enough and with Anna personally being the one to manufacture it, processing the bottle accurately also wouldn't be a problem. The critical point was in the fact that the later generations of air bottles had a pressure level of 20mpa or higher, wishing to reach that by relying on a bicycle pump was undoubtedly nothing but a fantasy, even the help of ten Qilins wouldn't change this, he at least had to obtain a high-pressure pump. And having a high enough pressure inside the bottle wasn't enough if there wasn't a way to fill the hydrogen balloon with it later.

The high-pressure air pump was divided into a piston compressor and a turbine compressor, the former belonged to the internal combustion engine technology tree, while the later fell under the scope of turbine engines. No matter what type he would try to research and develop, they would both be time-consuming and laborious projects. Until late in the afternoon, Roland finally came up with a simple solution: A simple self-inflating bottle.

The inspiration for it came from a news article he had seen before: A street vendor had been selling hydrogen balloons and used a modified liquefied gas tank to store the hydrogen, which in the end resulted in an explosion. The cause of this laid in the problem that the peddler had used diluted sulfuric acid and aluminum to create hydrogen inside of the bottle, but hadn't correctly calculated the amount of reaction. Which resulted in the issue that the pressure inside the tank had become too large and had broken the bottle.

Thus, the self-inflating method was to pour diluted sulfuric acid and an active metal into the bottle so as to replace the hydrogen. The commonly used metal in laboratories was zinc, while the one used to create most of the hydrogen was aluminum, both materials were not accessible during this era. So Roland still intended to use Lucy's power to dismantle iron and purify it into high iron. The problem of its slow reaction speed at room temperature could also be improved by using heat and enlarging the contact area (for example using thin iron pieces or iron powder), while an inner coating could resist the corrosion effect of the acid liquid that was inside the bottle.

Thinking until here, he immediately drew a simple sketch on paper. In order to reduce the air leakage, the high-pressure bottle needed to be made as one whole piece, with only a raised threaded hole at the top, which could be screwed into a valve with a gas nozzle.

By tightening up the mouthpiece after injecting the reactant, the continuously generated gas would have nowhere to go, which would result in that the pressure inside the bottle would reach a very impressive level. As long as they unscrewed the valve, the hydrogen would pour out directly into the airbag. And the refill process would also be quite convenient. After removing the gas nozzle and drying

the remaining liquid over a stove, the ferrous sulfate crystals inside could be cleaned out before it could be refilled with new reactant.

Taking into account that diluted sulfuric acid is also an alchemy product, the refill price obviously couldn't be set too low.

With fifty gold royals for one charge, and after buying ten charges get one free, Roland thought.