

SORCERER'S HANDBOOK

Chapter 6: Sonya Therave

In the capital of the Stars Kingdom, Gales, just outside the Sword and Rose Sorcerer College.

As summer approached, the number of brilliant stars in the sky increased from two in spring to two and a half, and if one looked closely, a tiny new star could be spotted. Consequently, the temperature in Gales rose, and the light was just perfect—taking just a few steps would leave one covered in a fine layer of sweat.

Sonya walked with small, quick steps and upon seeing her mother, Marsha, standing under the blazing stars drenched in sweat, she felt a pang of pity and pulled her into the shade of a nearby tree. “Mom, why stand outside so foolishly? You could’ve come into the school’s shaded paths to escape the sun...”

Marsha chuckled sheepishly, “I was afraid you wouldn’t find me, Linda...”

“How many times have I told you? Call me Sonya, not Linda!”

Sonya suddenly lost her temper, and Marsha nodded apologetically, “Sorry, sorry, I forgot again. Oh, and I brought your favorite egg custard pastry...”

Watching her mother’s eager-to-please expression, Sonya began to feel guilty and took her hand to lead her away, “I won’t have it; I’m trying to lose weight recently and can’t eat something so sweet.”

“You’re already so thin, why lose more weight? Do you want to become as thin as paper? Remember Uncle Elmer? His son has been ill for so long

without getting better, light as a scarecrow in the fields, and you're even thinner than him..."

Marsha had noticed Sonya's figure, which was not much thicker than a tree branch, from a distance, and her heart ached. Having been a farmer's wife in a rural town of the Stars Kingdom all her life, she couldn't appreciate the slender beauty celebrated in the big cities and wished deep down that her daughter would be more robust.

Sonya didn't interrupt her mother's continuous chatter, and only when Marsha paused did she say, "Since it's rare for you to come to Gales, let me take you around the capital..."

"No need, no need!" Marsha quickly waved her hands and shook her head, "Don't waste the money. I saw a park on the way here..."

"You walked here!?" Sonya's voice went up an octave, "Didn't I tell you to take the tram from the train station? The train station is so far from the school—"

"It's okay, it's okay. I arrived early, had plenty of time, so I walked. It's good exercise, and I'm not old yet, walking is fine..."

It was then that Sonya noticed the sweat on Marsha's neck. The sun was strong and the temperature was not low, the students on campus were all dressed in summer attire, but her mother, having traveled by train overnight to Gales, came from a hometown already cool in autumn and had naturally worn several layers. Just the walk had caused sweat to bead on her forehead, and she looked as if she had been pulled out of water.

Sonya wanted to tell her not to save such a small amount of money, but instead, she said, "Let's go buy you some clothes."

Marsha subconsciously shook her head, "We have plenty of clothes at home..."

“Listen to me today!”

Sonya Therave came from a poor village in the Stars Kingdom, so insignificant it couldn't be found on a map. To reach the capital, Gales, by train, she first had to walk for a day through the mountains to the nearest town with a train station.

In the small towns and villages, for nearly twenty years, only Sonya was able to complete the basic education curriculum provided by the Miracle Bracelet gifted by the kingdom for free. And she managed to take the unified online entrance examination for higher education institutions in the Stars before reaching the age Restriction, successfully gaining admission to the Sword and Rose Sorcerer College in Gales, commonly known as Swordflower College.

Her father had drunk himself to death when she was very young. In her memories, he was nothing more than a waste who would become irritable when drunk. It was entirely up to her mother, Marsha, to raise her.

It was for this reason that she was able to temporarily leave labor behind to focus on her studies, instead of working in the factories during the day like other children her age and watching the Meteor Channel in the village at night, confusedly spending a lifetime in that small town.

When she first arrived in Gales, the reflection of clean streets, towering buildings, flowing luxury cars, polite and civilized people, and the giant Holographic Screens constantly playing propaganda clips filled her pupils. She knew then that she would rather die in this city than anywhere else.

Her hometown of more than a decade didn't even qualify as a place for her grave.

She quickly learned how to apply makeup and match clothes, and corrected her accent within a month of starting school.

With her attractive appearance, she obtained several part-time jobs, kept up with her studies, expanded her circle of friends with her scholarship money and part-time earnings, and participated in various activities... Plus, with her repeated role as the host for school events last year, her exposure was more than enough, and many already saw her as the 67th Swordflower of her generation.

If so many people in the world can find happiness, why can't I?

Sonya spent the entire afternoon showing Marsha around Gales. Reluctantly, under Sonya's insistence, Marsha followed her into a clothing store that looked expensive.

Without her daughter, the disdainful smile of the female store clerk would have been enough to make Marsha shrink away and leave.

But as the price for buying clothes, Sonya didn't spend a cent for the rest of the afternoon; Marsha even carried water in a bottle she had filled in advance.

"This is clean water from the train station; I'm fine with this. Don't buy those colorful drinks for me; I'm not used to them," Marsha said.

Even for dinner, Marsha insisted that the bread she brought was not finished and it would be a waste not to eat it. Knowing that taking her mother to those upscale restaurants would just make her suffer, Sonya sat with her mother in the park, eating the bread.

Before 6 p.m., Sonya took Marsha to the train station.

The return ticket had been purchased a long time ago and was bound to Marsha's Bracelet. All she had to do was have the Bracelet scanned at the checkpoint.

As they were approaching the checkpoint, Sonya suddenly said, “Why don’t you stay overnight? I don’t have class tomorrow; I can keep you company for another day.”

Marsha stared at Sonya blankly, her lips moved, but in the end, she shook her head, her eyes squinting into a fine line: “No need, it’s a waste of money to cancel the ticket, and I’m not used to staying here. I don’t understand what people are saying, and I have to go back to feed the chickens at home... Oh, look at my memory, I almost forgot...”

She pulled out a small, tightly packed bag from her bosom, not opening it, and directly stuffed it into Sonya’s hand: “Inside are three Silver Coins...”

“Mom, I—”

“I know you don’t need it, but I can’t use this money at home either.”

Marsha held Sonya’s hand tightly. “I’m not much use, can’t help you with anything. But don’t worry, Linda, your mom won’t be a burden to you. You just live your life here in the capital, I’m doing just fine back home. The neighbors will help me if I need anything. Just remember to write back, but please don’t send money. Keep it for yourself, and who knows, the post office might just take your money...”

This time, Sonya didn’t correct Marsha for calling her by her childhood nickname ‘Linda’; she quietly listened to her mother’s rambling. Suddenly, she understood why her mother hadn’t waited for her at the school. After Marsha finished speaking, Sonya calmly replied, “I will bring you to Gales in the future, to live a wealthy life.”

Marsha smiled and nodded, “I believe you. But remember, no matter what happens, your mom will be at home, cooking and waiting for you. Life in the big city is too complicated, isn’t it nice to live a peaceful life back home...”

Sonya watched her mother's slightly hunched figure walk further and further away until she disappeared into the crowd.

Suddenly, she deftly slid to the right, avoiding a man who was about to bump into her. The man looked surprised, muttered something under his breath, and hurriedly walked away.

"Indeed, the big city is too complicated," Sonya murmured softly. "But I am exactly the kind of person for this complexity."

She turned and left the train station, walking back to the bright and bustling city of Gales with her head held high.