

## Witch 231

### Chapter 231 Assassination (Part 2)

A chill spread over Faceless' body. This... how was this possible?

She swallowed the saliva, then lowered her voice, "What kind of joke is this? I'm Vorte."

It shouldn't be possible that they are lucky enough to know each other, there are so many mercenaries within the camp. Don't tell me, that she can remember every one of their names, how can that be??

She never expected to receive the sarcastic answer she got in response, "Is that so? I never knew men could also gather magic in their bodies. So, either you are a witch that had planned to infiltrate the camp, or you are an extremely unlikely wizard. No matter what the truth is, it is impossible that your name is "Vorte" as you have claimed. Within the soldiers of the First Army, there is definitely no one with such a different body type."

Can this person... see the Devil's power? Aphra's heart finally sank to the depths; she now knew how she had been found out. There were more than four witches in the camp, and the woman behind her must be a witch as well. Moreover, she had an ability that was similar to the Eye of Truth. The Church's scriptures about magic had records of such an ability which had several hundred of derivations and all of them were not in conflict with the witch's ability.

Since I haven't seen someone within my surroundings or getting close... does it mean that the other side's prime ability is hide her body?

"Now, kneel down, and put your hands behind your back, maybe I can spare your life then," the woman shouted with a clear voice, "Do as I say!"

The mercenaries in the surrounding were still occupied with fighting, so they didn't notice the scene playing out at the central area, but that wasn't the case for the four witches near the fire though. They became aware of the abnormal situation as they cast their eyes over and asked, "What's the matter, Nightingale? Did something happen?"

This was her last chance, Aphra knew that her own strength was assassination and not related to an open battle, especially in the case where she wasn't wearing a God's Punishment Stones which would have suppressed most witches' fantastic abilities.

In case the witch who can fly is able to run away it won't do any harm. However, the witch who can cure the demonic plague definitely has to die here. Otherwise, she will pose a serious threat to the Church's future plans.

Of course, there was also the possibility, that after killing the other side, she herself wouldn't be able to escape. Thinking of this possibility, she couldn't help herself from getting a tight feeling in her chest, but she soon calmed down again. Recalling that in order for the Church's goal to unify the Four Kingdoms, no effort should be spared to resist the Devils from hell. And there were already many good soldiers who had sacrificed themselves for the greater good, and it would be a proud moment for her to join them.

Furthermore, she believed that Heather would not forget her, Heather would make sure that her name would also be recorded in the sacred scriptures.

“You mustn’t come over,” shouted the witch called Nightingale. “There is—”

At this split second, she suddenly raised her elbow to beat against her enemy’s arm, simultaneously bowing her head to avoid being stabbed with her weapon. “When you are talking, it is impossible to always pay attention. Thus there is the saying of ‘holding one’s breath in concentration,’” was what her drillmaster repeatedly taught her. “Instead, regardless whether you are attacking or are trying to escape, the optimum moment to act is when the other side starts talking.”

Within her sleeve she had concealed a mechanism that activated at the first moment of contact. Spraying a white alchemic powder to the rear, which on contact with water would release a lot of heat. In case the enemy got any of it inside their mouth or eyes, they would immediately lose their fighting strength. Even if they were lucky enough not to breathe any of the fine powder in, they would at least be flustered for a while.

Afterward, Aphra immediately pounced towards the four witches at the fire, the witch with golden hair quickly flew up, while the one witch who seemed to be the oldest disregarded her own safety and stepped in front of the other two. Drawing out her sharp dagger, Aphra immediately stabbed directly toward the first witch. Since they couldn’t escape anyway, and all three of them would die under her hand, it wasn’t necessary to differentiate them according to priority.

Just at the moment when her dagger pierced the other side’s body, Aphra saw an incredible scene.

A white shadow appeared in front of her at a place which was definitely still empty a second ago, with two blazing eyes glaring at her from under its hood.

Is... this Nightingale who stood behind me?

At the eruption of the fine powder she was at close range, so why doesn’t she seem to have been affected? Almost disbelieving her eyes, Faceless saw the other side lift her arm and a flame burst out from the silver weapon. And then her body was firmly pushed backward, resulting in her losing her balance, sending her backward to the ground, looking upwards. That’s not good; there are... still two important people I need to dispose of. Aphra wanted to stand up, wanted to draw her dagger and stab at the next witch, but right now, even raising her hand had already become tough, and her consciousness had already begun to blur.

What a pity... was the last thought flashing through her mind.

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After letting off the shot, Nightingale remained at the same place, watching the soldier who had been hit in the chest fall down. Then the body began to twist and shrink, slowly turning back into the appearance of an unknown woman.

This had been her first time killing another witch.

It was not until Lily anxiously called out to her that Nightingale came back to herself.

Suppressing the surging emotion within her heart, she put away the gun, ran back to Wendy’s side.

“Where is the injury?”

“It’s nothing, I just feel a little pain,” Wendy waved his hand, indicating that they should not panic, “She shouldn’t have been able to pierce through.”

“Does that mean the protective suit worked?”

“I suppose it has,” Undoing the bottoms on her chest, she saw the slender dagger hanging on the side of her clothes, the moment the jacket was opened, the knife fell out of the hole and landed on the ground, with no blood held on its tip. Of the protective clothing, only the outer layer had a small hole in it, while the soft inner layer still remained intact.

“Y-you really scared me,” Lily said, releasing a long breath, and then fell with buttocks on the ground.

“Next time don’t rush to me to help me resist the sword! I don’t need you to do this for m-m-me...”

“Well,” Wendy gently stroked her head, “Am I not alright?”

Lily pulled her head free and buried it in Wendy’s bosom, releasing a muffled cry.

“I was also scared, merely attending to obstruct her by stepping ahead, totally forgetting to use my power” Wendy shook her head. “If I had sent a strong gust of wind against her, she wouldn’t have been able to thrust towards me.”

“It’s because you are rarely fighting with others, so a reaction like that is quite normal,” Nightingale comforted.

“Fortunately you were wearing the protective clothing,” Echo said, still showing a scared look, “Otherwise, this time would have been much more dangerous than it was.”

Before their departure, His Royal Highness had given each of them a special vest, furthermore, he had demanded that they must never take this piece of clothing off at any time. Even though it seemed a little thick, it was still very light to wear. Seemingly made out of many layers, His Highness had explained that each layer had been coated by Soraya, giving it a high degree of flexibility, but also making it hard to pierce through with sharp objects. It offered excellent protection against swords, bows, and crossbows. If it hadn’t helped her to resist the thrust, Wendy would most probably never have survived long enough to reach Nana.

Lightning slowly landed next to the dead witch and asked, “Why did she attack us? Aren’t we... the same?”

Nightingale stared at the lifeless woman, unable to speak for a long time. With the witch’s eyes closed, the long blue hair scattered on the ground and her peaceful expression, the other doesn’t seem to have experienced much pain. But she still couldn’t forget, that when she had stabbed at Wendy, she hadn’t shown any trace of hesitation in her eyes, only the determination that what she was doing was inevitable and righteous. As if she was not killing a person, but rather fulfilling her life’s philosophy. Perhaps in her heart, this had been the right behavior.

“No,” Nightingale softly sighed. “She’s wasn’t one of us... she was just, a lamentable person.”

Chapter 232 Shadow Islands

“The Fjord possess countless islands. Until now, no one had ever passed the beyond the border of all these islands,” a man with a tall stature and a rough and vigorous appearance told them, “The further east you sail, the more unpredictable the climate will become, and the same also applies to the islands. I really do not know, what degree of strangeness they eventually reach.”

“Even you have never reached the end of the islands?” Tilly asked curiously. “They say you are the most outstanding explorer of the Fjord, apart from you, there are only a few who dare cross the Searing Flame Island and continue sailing eastwards.”

“Ha ha ha,” the man began to laugh heartily. “Your praise is too much. In fact, every year there are brave people of the Fjord who sail eastwards in search for new land, but it’s hard for them to find anything new. With the raging hurricanes and the suddenly appearing fog, it eventually becomes impossible for the ships to move even a single step further.

He is Thunder, Ashes remembered, the first explorer to discover the Shadow Islands. But two years ago, within the perils of the sea his whereabouts suddenly became unknown, and by now many people think that he has already died. She had never thought that he would be on Sleeping Island, and even less that the 5th Princess would come to him with an agreement that he would help to open up new sea routes for Sleeping Island, draw a sea map and search for new ruins, while Tilly would send witches to support his explorations. As for the reason for his disappearance during the last two years, she had never heard him mentioning it, and Tilly had also never spoken about it. But she had the feeling that Her Majesty knew the inside story. Otherwise, they would never have reached such a mutual understanding. This point caused Ashes to feel slightly unhappy within her heart.

“Just like yesterday’s hurricane?”

“That’s right. They appear within the blink an eye and disappear just as quickly,” Thunder shook his pipe, and threw the ashes into the sea then refilled it with some grass leaves before igniting his pipe once more, “If it weren’t for the magical ability of your witch”

“Her name is Molly,” Ashes remind him stiffly.

“Ah, that’s right, look at my memory,” Thunder didn’t seem to mind her, he just scratched the back of his head and began to laugh, “If it hadn’t been for Molly, I am afraid the ship would have been overturned, her ability is simply fantastic. I had already often thought, that perhaps the witches were most suitable to be explorers.

“Isn’t that already the case,” Tilly smiled, “... a witch who had already inherited the name of the most outstanding Explorer?”

“Well...” Thunder took a deep breath through the pipe, and afterward send out a long string of smoke, “I wish for it to be so.”

There it was again; Ashes frowned, they once more said something I cannot understand. She bluntly left the bow, instead going to the stern trying to calm her emotions. Her Majesty seemed to be very urgent to explore the ruins, after cleaning the Fjord of the Church, she had immediately made all arrangements to go out to sea. And to her surprise, Her Majesty unexpectedly also said that she wanted to go in person, regardless of how Ashes tried to discourage her, it was all useless.

Arriving in the stern, she saw Molly sitting there controlling her magic servant who in turn was holding a fishing rod, learning how to fish from the sailors. Even though the sailors seemed to oppose it when the witches first got on board, but since yesterday's hurricane, everyone's attitude had turned completely upside down. Molly had summoned her servant and ordered it to rapidly expand, swallowing the middle part of the ship, making it impossible for anything to reach them, whether it was the rain or the wind. Although the ship was hit by one surging wave after another, making it move up and down, the hull still remained as stable as always. Nowadays, each of the sailors treated the witches as their good luck charm, even going so far as saying that in the future they would be too afraid to go to sea if a witch didn't accompany them.

"Elder Sister Ashes, look at the big fish I caught!" Molly pointed to the barrel behind her, inside there laid a scaleless sea fish with long, sharp, and pointed mouth, looking completely different than the river fishes she had seen in Graycastle.

"What is this?"

"Swordfish, they like to follow and travel together with the ships, but sometimes they will attack the hull with their mouth, and break it apart," a sailor replied, "But they are also very delicious to eat, especially the belly meat, after you put it in your mouth, it melts like ice on your tongue." He smacked his lips, "This evening everyone can enjoy the freshly cooked swordfish for themselves."

"It seems as if I've got another fish," Molly shouted.

Ashes merely saw a dark shadow moving under the dark blue water surfaces, but along with the magical servant's movement of the rod, the shadow became bigger and bigger, breaking through the water surface soon.

"Th-this is," the sailor stared blankly, "No, quickly throw away the fishing rod!"

His voice hadn't fallen yet, as already a monstrous creature jumped out of the water, its broad mouth wide open, directly flowing to Molly wanting to swallow her.

In a moment it would have consumed the whole target, but Ashes was even faster than this monster. She picked Molly up with her left hand while drawing her huge sword with her other hand, directly striking it on the head.

The Monster issued a pained scream as it was sent from the air onto the planks. Then quickly began to move its six-foot-long body, trying to flee back into the water, however, Ashes never let it have the opportunity. She put Molly down, grabbed her sword with the reverse grip and nailed the monster directly onto the deck.

For a moment it continued to twitch, then it spat out a string of white bubble from its mouth soon stopping all movement.

"What is this?" At this moment Ashes finally had the opportunity to take a careful look at the monster before her eyes. It somewhat resembled a fish, yet it also had short crab-like legs. The wide open mouth was almost as big as she herself was and was filled with dense rows of sharp teeth. But the most disgusting thing was the pair of hairy arms growing from the side of its mouths, which was even split up into five fingers, just looking like a human hand in general.

“A variation of the sea ghosts!” the still shocked sailor answered, patting his chest, “They often disguise themselves as fish and take the angler’s bite and drag them back into the water. Furthermore, I have also heard, that only after eating a human, will they be able to grow their hands! ”

“Your last part is just an unfounded rumor,” someone said from behind. Turning around, Ashes discovered that Thunder and Tilly had both come over.

“Captain!” the sailor shouted, abashedly stuck out his tongue and quickly stepped aside.

“The more sensational a rumor is, the more inaccurate it is,” Thunder came over and kicked against one of the monster’s legs, “In fact, it also has another name with which you are perhaps more familiar with.”

“Which one?” Ashes asked.

“Demonic Beast,” he stated slowly.

“Sir Thunder, fog ahead!” The lookout suddenly shouted.

“Everyone cheer up!” Then Thunder loudly ordered, “Put the sail down; we are now entering the Shadow Sea!”

Ashes noted, that just moments ago the sunny and cloudless sky had suddenly become all gloomy, turning the blue sea into a dark shade, as if a mass of ink was spreading under the water surface. The entire ship was soon enclosed by a dense fog, standing at the stern of the ship she couldn’t even see the figurehead that was at the bow.

“What’s going on?” Tilly could not help but grab Ashes’ arm.

“It’s the proof that we aren’t sailing in the wrong direction,” Thunder jokingly stated. “When the Shadow Islands emerge from the sea, the sea will create a thick mist. Of course, the correct way to say it would be that the seawater is just at low tide, around ten feet (3.3m) lower than it is normally. The massive decline will produce a large amount of mist and reefs that will appear everywhere. So, if we are even a little careless, we will sink ourselves. Now, I will need your help to ensure that the ship doesn’t smash against something.

After his words, all the people came to the bow, and just like they had done during the hurricane, Molly’s servant expanded as far as it could. Swallowing the bow and even reached into the water, so even if the bow hit against a reef, her magic servant would be the first to feel it.

“In case you didn’t have us witches, what did you do then?” Ashes asked.

“Then we would only be able to rely on our patience and luck,” Thunder sighed, “The fleet would send out a small boat in front of it as a pathfinder, and after receiving confirmation that the path is safe, we would follow after it. But this area of the sea is not peaceful. As you have seen before, the closer you come to the Shadow Islands; the greater the danger becomes. There is the fog, the reefs, and the sea monsters... That is also why, even so though many explorers had already reached this place, only a few of them were able to find the entrance to the ruins.

After sailing like this for about two hours, the fog gradually vanished, allowing Ashes to see more and more from the surrounding islands. But only a scarce bits of vegetation was to be seen, besides some

green moss or algae, there were only many crustaceans that were climbing over the rocks. “Will all these islands sink into the water?”

“That’s right, just like on Sleeping Island, but here the tide and low tide interval are much faster, changing around every half-moon cycle.” Thunder replied, “Moreover its rise and fall speed is incredibly quickly, as if there is a huge hole at the bottom of the sea which swallows all of the surrounding water. I even think that the reason why the sea level in the Fjord change, is related to this place. If you are lucky, we can even see how the main island will raises out of the sea.

#### Chapter 233 Ancient Ruins

The further east they sailed, the thinner the fog became, but the sky still remained gloomy as if the sun was unable to reach this part of the sea.

The surrounding reefs also got higher and higher, gradually turning into sturdy stone pillars, Ashes didn’t know why the ship was still stable, even though the water level was steadily falling. Even the rolling sea waves have lost their power, including the spray, which was now as tranquil as a lake without wind.

“Why don’t you just wait for the seawater to reach the lowest level before you enter the Shadow Sea?” Tilly asked, puzzled, “Then you do not have to be afraid of hitting the rocks, after all, by then all the reefs will be exposed.”

“Because if we wait until the seawater ebbed away, we won’t be able to see the Ghost Red River, which shows us explorers the only channel leading to the ruins,” Thunder explained. “These pillar-like islands you see everywhere aren’t fixed, with each ebb and flow their position will change. And it must be said that the seawater will swallow the majority of these pillars, so they cannot be used to locate the direction.

“Ghost... Red River?” Tilly asked, confused.

“That’s right. Look, there it is—” Thunder whistled and pointed to the bow.

Looking in the direction he pointed, the witches saw the dark blue sea, with a few red figures within – flashing through their view, like a phantom. But soon, another two or three red shadows came drifting along, and this time Ashes could clearly make out their bodies, they were fish, that had completely red scales.

“Are they... fish?”

“They are the unique red scales fish from Shadow Island,” Thunder stroked his chin and laughed, “Later on you will see the actual color of the Ghost Red River.”

Gradually, more and more fish were gathered together, no longer just the small groups of just two or three. Instead, they had gathered together in massive swarms, collectively swimming in the direction the stern was pointing – looking far ahead, Ashes was stunned by the scene she saw. More and more fish had come together to form a powerful current, making it appear as if there was a thick dark red carpet within the sea. The sailing ship visibly sailed forward along this red line, and when the bulge passed through the shoal of fish, from time to time sounds of collisions could be heard.

So, that's the reason. Ashes suddenly recognized that this was the Ghost Red River – a strange nonexistent river! As the ship continued to move forward, the dense shoal of fish expanded to such an extent that the channel could accommodate several ships side by side. Slowly the dark blue water seemed to completely disappear as if the sailing ship was traveling on top of the fish. If they hadn't been moving in opposite directions, Ashes would even believe that the ship was being carried by these fish.

"Why are they doing this?" Tilly asked in surprise.

Ashes also very much wanted to ask this question, she had absolutely never seen such a scene before, in Greycastle or any other Kingdom, – covered in dense fog, under a gloomy sky, the bizarre huge rocks and the red scaled fish forming a "river". For the first time, she was awed by the wonder of the sea.

"It is because of the main island," Thunder said, "It's just like a triangular spire, with a massive cave running through the middle of it where these red-scaled fish like to lay their eggs and give birth to the next generation. Then during the ebb, the cave will emerge out of the water, and the shoal of fish that are staying in that habitat will always be the first to experience the change of water level will begin rushing out. So as long as we just follow the Red River, we will be able to arrive at the main island of the Shadow Islands."

"Captain Thunder, there is a huge obstacle ahead! It looks like a mountain!" the lookout suddenly shouted.

"It seems that we are reaching our goal," Thunder said, shaking his pipe, "Ladies, welcome to the Shadow Islands."

Not long after, Ashes finally saw the main island appear. Just like Thunder had said, it looked as if several pieces of it had come together forming a triangle which was wide at the base and narrow at the top, with a surface which at first glance looked very smooth, not at all resembling a natural creation. But believing that the whole spire had been sculpted by people was a bit too hard to believe. Just the exposed part of the tower already reached the size of half of King's City, while the hole in its middle was large enough to entirely enclose the Tower of Babel the church has built at Hermes.

The sea was still retreating, and water rushed out of the cave just like a waterfall, while the shoal of fish completely covered the parts of the island that were still emerging. As far as Ashes could see, the whole sea had been dyed red, letting her wonder, if perhaps millions of scarlet red fish had been living in the cave.

Waiting until the sky had turned dark, the sea water finally retreated, revealing the bottom of the cave. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Thunder ordered his sailor to stop the ship and connect it with a long, thick hemp rope to a copper stake. Standing at the edge of the gigantic cave, you could see right through it to the mouth at the other side – yet light coming in from both sides could still only illuminate a minuscule area, with the center of the cave being almost pitch black, causing people feel an ineffable oppression.

"Did you left these stakes behind the last time you were here?" Ashes asked.

"No," Thunder shook his head, "When I came here for the first time, they had already been here. It should be the former inhabitants of the ruins who built them."



“The ruins... where are they?”

He smiled and pointed upwards. “Just above us, we’re at the entrance to the ruins.”

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The following part of the journey could only be described with one word, inconceivable. The witches followed Thunder and his sailors and entered the gigantic hole through a stone gate, following the stone steps, along which the water was still flowing down, taking one step at a time, slowly spiralling towards the top. Even though everyone was holding a torch, their flickering flames only allowed an extremely limited view, hiding the end of the staircase in darkness. And making them feel both weak and small.

When they proceeded through the darkness of the abyss, Tilly tightly grabbed Ashes’ arm, no longer showing her usual calm and composed expression.

This is the princess I know all too well, Ashes thought. Even in the palace, she had always followed her own ideas. The 5th Princess who confronted any challenge with confidence, had only one weakness, her fear of darkness. Even in the middle of the night, her room had to always be lit with candles. And after their escape from the palace, whenever it was impossible to do so, she would ask Ashes to accompany her in her sleep.

While walking inside of the damp and dark spire, Ashes’ mood instead became a lot more cheerful.

All along the way they didn’t come across any demonic beast or any mechanism to block intruder – even if they had, after being immersed in the seawater for so long, it would have most likely lost its effectiveness by now. The only problem was the endless climbing which physically exhausted a large part of their group, slowing everyone’s movement more and more. So when the stone steps finally came to an end, the whole team could not help but burst into cheers.

The last barrier was not a stone door, but a door made out of metal, which brightly reflected the torchlight. Stepping forward, Thunder placed his hands on it and pushed, slowly opening the massive door panels with an ear-piercing screeching sound.

Grabbing her sword with one hand, Ashes was the first to enter the room. Only after confirming that there was no danger, were Tilly and the other witches allowed to step into the hall.

After hanging the torches along the walls, a large hall appeared in front of everyone – although wide, the room seemed empty, one glance was enough to have seen the whole room and come to the conclusion that there was nothing worth finding here.

“This is the ruins?” She removed the dirt from a green stone table with the palm of her hand, “Apart from some stone tables and stools, there is nothing else here.”

“Indeed, there is not much left,” nodded Thunder, “The ruins have slept at the bottom of the sea for too long, apart from stone, everything else is hard to conserve. I already told it to Her Highness Tilly beforehand, but she still insisted on seeing it for herself.”

“The red stone, where did you find it?” Tilly opened her mouth and asked. “Where, exactly, did you find it?”

“Right away on the ground, at that time, they were scattered all over the place, there were probably dozens of them.

However, there was now nothing left, when Ashes looked at the ground she saw nothing besides the ground covered in seaweed that also made it slippery. After the ruins were discovered by Thunder, many other explorers had arrived here, one after another had come to plunder this place, so if they were able to find a magic stone, it would be a curious occurrence.

But Tilly was still in high spirits, holding her torch up high, she carefully searched through every corner of the hall, especially in the darker places which was where she would ask the sailors to come over with some more torches. Meanwhile, Molly summoned her magical servant, letting it spread over the ground, turning it into a cushion for everyone to rest on. Ashes instead kept herself constantly at Tilly’s side, and overlooked her feeling the wall to examine it.

“Hey,” the 5th Princess suddenly shouted and stopped, “What is this?”

When Ashes looked down at Tilly’s hand, she merely saw a piece of a wall covered with green algae, but then she discovered a faint reflection of their flames.

Tilly immediately reached out with her hands to tear the algae off, exposing a gem half buried into the wall to their eyes – it had a prism-like shape, and was almost arm thick, and sparkled as brightly in its scarlet color. But it seemed to be inlaid in a golden frame, like a card slot to be fixed inside. Even soaked in seawater for so long and the gold just like the stone was as bright and clean as if it was new.

Tilly tried to pulling out the stone, but the precious gem didn’t move a single bit.

“Let me try it,” Ashes offered.

The 5th Princess shook her head, seemingly thinking about something, she then put her hand on the prism and closed her eyes.

Suddenly, a brilliant light flashed through the center of the prism – when nothing further happened, Ashes already thought that her eyes had played her a trick on her. But then, a rumbling sound could be heard coming from behind the wall, as if a mechanism had suddenly began to move, in no time the sound spread through the entire hall. It seemed as if the rumbling noise was coming from everywhere, followed by the sudden appearance of a soft light on top of the wall, even the ceiling above their head began to light up.

Not knowing what was going on, the Sailor stood up in panic and pulled out their weapons. But as they did not know from which side they should defend themselves they ultimately decided to gather together standing back to back. Molly’s servant once more enclosed them in its magical embrace.

However, no monster appeared or rushed at them.

When the sound finally calmed down, the hall started shining in bright light.

Chapter 234 “Gate”

“This is... how did you do it?” Thunder, not believing his eyes, stared at the walls with his mouth hanging wide open.

On top of the walls, tens of small holes opened up and each of them contained a stone which emitted a pure white light. But not only on the wall, even at the edge of the ceiling these fantastic stones were embedded, surrounding the whole room. In the soft light of the stones, every detail within the hall became visible at a glance.

It was the first time that Ashes saw the explorer show such an expression, and seeing it immediately filled her heart with joy, "Don't you know? By willing magical power into these stones, witches can arouse additional abilities."

"Then what is with these stones, are they also Magic Stones?"

Thunder cautious and solemn took one piece of the light stones and held it within his hands, but even after taking it out of the hole, the light the stone released didn't weaken to the slightest amount.

"I don't know," Tilly shook her head. "These stones may have been here for hundreds of years – in case the ruins have such a long history. Previously they were all hidden behind a slate, therefore not visible to our eyes. And if you want to start the unique mechanism, you can only accomplish it with a witch's ability."

"Wasn't it you who lit them light up?"

"No, the ability to light up comes from the stones themselves," Tilly grabbed another piece of the magic stones and held it in front of her eyes, the pure white light then caressed her beautiful face, "In case they were a device which required magic in the same way that the flame cannot easily leave the candle. From my perspective, besides containing these stones, there is nothing special about the holes in the wall.

"If it really is like you said and they can light on their own, and they continued to light for hundreds of years, then their value is practically unable to be estimated," Thunder clicked his tongue in wonder.

"You must know that the Kingdom of Eternal Winter produces crystals, which have the size of a fist already sell for several hundred of gold royals, but their brightness is even less than half of this."

The moment the sailor heard such an astonishing price, their kind of gaze with which they looked at the stones immediately changed.

"According to our agreement, you can take away half," Tilly non-committally stated as if this was none of her concern. Now that she had sufficient light, she began exploring the hall even more carefully. Unable bear seeing Tilly tear at the seaweed with her own hands, Ashes bluntly lifted her huge sword and swung it, sweeping away the seaweed on the wall as if she was simply mowing grass. A second stone embedded within the wall was quickly uncovered.

In accordance with the previous method, Tilly once more poured her magic into it. Along with a sharp and clear sound of metal clashing, everyone was amazed to see, how a huge stone slab tilted down above Tilly's head. It was connected with taut copper ropes on both sides and in between them there were unexpectedly a neatly chiseled out flight of steps. One side of the stone slab finally stopped on the ground, while the other end led to the ceiling, looking upwards Ashes saw a saw a horizontal metal door blocking the end of the passage.

“Tilly,” Seeing that the 5th Princess didn’t hesitate to climb the stone steps, Ashes couldn’t help and shout out loud, “Let me go first.”

“It does not matter, this time it isn’t the... treasure chamber,” she quickly climbed to the top of the stone staircase, placed her hand on a magic stone beside the door, and as if was answering her, the metal door quickly opened.

Seeing Tilly climbing through the door, disappearing in the ceiling, Ashes had no alternative other than to follow closely while keeping her sword at hand.

The moment Ashes went through a hole in the roof, her eyes went wide, above the ceiling was another room, which was much smaller than the hall below, while the walls were also embedded with illumination stones – but what surprised her the most, was that there were nearly no traces of water here.

Wooden tables, chairs, shelves, cabinets... all the furnishings were still intact, they were only covered with a thick layer of dust, and she could even see some broken spider webs. The shelves were all filled with rows of books that were dyed gray from the dust. In addition to the spread-out book on the table, a cup was also placed together with a kettle, and a pen-holder. From the quill, only a lone pole was remaining and the ink had long since dried up. But even then, this room full with filled with shelves and the hall below was covered with algae seemed to be two completely different worlds.

Thunder, who was the third one to climb the stairs, sucked in a mouth of cold air when he looked around in wonder, “This is...”

“An abandoned dwelling place,” Tilly answered and took up the unfolded book on the table. She gently removed the dust from it and afterward began to look through the pages, “It seems that somebody had lived here for a very long time.”

“What is written in the book?”

“I’m unable to read it,” She shook her head and showed the book to the other two, “The text is written in symbols I have never seen before.”

“It seems that the books on the shelves are the same,” Ashes said, while removing the dust on the spines, revealing a text written in strange wavy lines, leaving her unable for her to grasp its meaning.

“We can take them back with us and study them slowly,” Tilly laughed. “By agreement, all the books and magic stones we discovered belong to us.”

“Of course,” Thunder touched his beard, “But when you have grasped their meaning, I hope you will share their ancient story with me.”

“No problem.”

...

The three people slowly circled the room, carefully searching and touching everything with their hands, this way they quickly came to understand the general situation of this place.

They were unable to find any other stones, but on one side of the room they found a strange device – at first glance, it looked like a thick metal pipe. One end of which was embedded into the stone wall, while the other side constantly became narrower until it was only had the thickness of a wrist, and in its tip was a glass lens embedded.

“What is this?” Ashes knocked against its body, creating a series of clear echoes inside – indicating that the middle of the tube was hollow.

“It resembled a bit the observation mirrors we are using for sailing, maybe the people who previously lived here have used it to observe the outside world,” Then Thunder placed his eye in front of the lens, trying to look through it, but after a moment he said, “Everything is black... I can’t see anything; it seems to be broken.

“Not necessarily,” Tilly pointed at the wall behind the metal tube, “Look here.”

Following the direction of her finger, Ashes merely saw a copper plate with a handle on top of it embedded into the wall and at the bottom of the handle was a small hole, which seemed to be the place to insert a key. The 5th Prince walked over and tried to pull the handle, but the copper plate didn’t move a single jot. “It seems to be locked.”

“I will try it,” Ashes grasped the handle, gathered her power and pulled, the entire copper plate immediately came off the wall.

“Ha, apparently you have guessed correctly,” Thunder applauded loudly, “It is once more a magic stone mechanism.”

Hidden behind the copper plate was a groove that was stuck within a huge magic stone. The difference between the two previous magic stones and this one was its size, it looked much larger, and its color also looked more purple than scarlet.

“Do you want to activate it?” Ashes asked.

“Yes,” Tilly nodded without the slightest hesitation, placing her hand on top of the stone, but this time even after a long moment, nothing seems to happen.

“What’s the problem?”

“It’s... too big,” Tilly slowly said, small beads of sweat already began to appear on her forehead. “It feels like it is unceasingly absorbing my magic power. Apparently, the mechanism it has to fuel is utterly enormous.

“Then forget about it,” Ashes said with a frown. She knew the moment a witch had thoroughly exhausted her magic power; she will most likely immediately fall into a coma. And right now, in this dangerous place, it would definitely not be a good idea to deplete all of one’s magic power here.

“No, it will be fine. I can feel it.” Tilly’s voice had not even fallen, before a loud rumbling sound came from inside the wall that was like unceasingly rolls of thunder, and eventually the whole room began to shake.

“It this... an Earthquake?” Thunder grasped the metal pipe to keep himself from falling. Ashes instead immediately seized Lilly and pulled her into her embrace. The dust began to fall from the books, and the three people began to cough.

This kind of earthquake continued for nearly a quarter of an hour until finally calming down.

When the vibration stopped, Molly came up, stuck her head through the door and asked. “What happened?”

“We activated a new mechanism,” Ashes replied, “Is everything okay below?”

“Everyone was frightened, furthermore many roof plates began to fall, and I had to cover everyone with my servant.” The little girl answered while curiously coming over, “Tilly, what are you looking at?”

Surprisingly, Tilly didn’t give her an answer, instead she had closed one eye and pressed the other in front of the lens, staying quiet for a long time until she exclaimed in amazement, “This simply incredible...”

Ashes becoming curious also stepped in front of the lens, and when the scene in front of her eye became clear, she was left speechless.

At the other end of the “observation mirror” a vast piece of land appeared. The edge of the land looked like an overhanging cliff of which the end couldn’t be seen. But erected within the center of the cliff was a gigantic and incomparable arched stone door which internal seemed deep and dark, as if it was an enormous mouth which was choosing the next person it would be devouring.

#### Chapter 235 A Letter beyond expectation

Roland opened the letter while simultaneously handing a piece of jerky over to Maggie.

“Googoo!” The latter opened her beak and grasped the meat with it and delivered it with two to three swallows into her belly. Then obediently placed her belly on the edge of the table, and embedding her head into her feathers.

“I hope this letter finds you well, my dear older brother, or should I say Your Royal Highness, Roland Wimbledon.

“I have received your letter, I agree with your opinion, and whole heartily approve of it. Even though I do not understand why you have suddenly changed your temper and corrected your previous dandy lifestyle. Even going so far as to be willing to help the witches, but now that you’ve done it, the Church has become our common enemy.

“Maybe you already know this, I have become a witch, this is also the reason why everyone is willing to believe me. However, you, in fact, are a Prince, a noble to the core, and yet you were also able to obtain the trust of numerous witches, it is indeed inconceivable. Ever since I received your message, I often wonder how you managed to do that? If you were simply like the other nobles, who regarded witches as tools and nothing more, then it would have been impossible for you to obtain Ashes’ approval, and she also never would have chosen to let Maggie stay in Border Town.

“Apart from this, Maggie also mentioned a steam engine, as well as the theory that knowledge could boost a witch’s possibility to evolve her magic, which also sounds fascinating to me. Especially the latter, which I would like to have the opportunity to discuss with you in detail.

“As for your invitation, after pondering it over and over again, at present, I have no reason to refuse it. The establishment of an alliance needs trust and gives trust in turn, and in the event that we act both indecisively and cowardly, we would only be helping the Church in the end. So I will attach a list to this letter which contains most of the abilities of the witches’ living on Sleeping Island, like this you can pick those abilities you need the most for yourself and inform me through Maggie about your decision. If everything goes well, they will be able to leave for your territory by next month. But for safety reasons, it is better to only send five at the first time.

“Furthermore, please specify a reliable transfer procedure, and send some people out in advance who will act to protect them. Each witch lost, regardless of whether she lives in Border Town or on Sleeping Island, would be great loss and also cast a shadow over our cooperation. I hope you will take care of them as well as you take care of your own witches. And if you will, please also allow them to participate in the evening basic knowledge lessons. I believe that every witch that is able to evolve her ability will be good news for us.

“As you have said, the Church has already shown their plan to backstab us, and it is only a matter of time until the Four Kingdoms will be annexed. I hope when that day comes, you will be ready to deal with them. But in case you will be unable to resist, Sleeping Island will always act as a safe harbor for you. Of course, I will give you as much help as possible in your fight to repel the Church’s invasion.

“Finally, may we end the Church’s oppression and build a new order – a kingdom in which not merely witches, but rather no one has to suffer under groundless persecution.

“Your sister, Tilly Wimbledon.”

Putting the letter down, he felt an unspeakable pleasure coming from his heart. After he smilingly put the letter away, he took another piece of jerky and held it in front of Maggie.

Who immediately stretched out her head, to peck away the food. “Goo, cuckoo!”

As he gently stroked the smooth feathers at her neck, she narrowed her eyes in satisfaction.

“It must have been tough on you, but currently Lightning has followed the fleet to King’s City, and it will still be a few more days before she comes back,” Roland said with a smile. “However, you can go look for Nana or Leaves to play with, or go to the bathroom to take a bath, or just lie down and sleep.”

“Goo... goo!” Maggie spread out her wings, jumped off the table, and then flew out of the window, soon disappearing.

The cries she had just issued should mean something like ‘I’m not tired, I want to find them and play,’ Roland suddenly discovered, that now, even when she was speaking in her pigeon form he could still understand her general meaning.

Is this the power of habit?

Beside that, he also never imagined, that Tilly would actually agree to his invitation, furthermore even attach a list of their witch's abilities, this was simply a big treasure house, ah! Although the letter never specified how long they would stay for, in case they wanted to attend the complete Primary Education Curriculum, they would at least need to spent half a year in Border Town. Furthermore, if he added additional content to the course, expanding the length to a full year, how much change could the witches bring to Border Town in that time?

Moreover, in case they were able to evolve, his benefits would be much greater than his losses – if they stayed in Border Town, they could help him improve this place further, but even if the witches went back to Sleeping Island, they would still be a living symbol of propaganda for him. With word of mouth to mouth publicity, the number of witches who would want to go to Border Town would only become more, and Tilly wouldn't be able to prevent this development from occurring. Roland believes that compared with coercing them with promises or intimidation, waiting and showing sincerity was the right long-term strategy to use.

General speaking, this reply brought him a nice surprise far greater than anything he had expected. Her open and positive attitude made him feel like she was a perfect teammate sent by destiny. This way, he no longer needed to fight the Church by himself. As for a safe shuttle route, Roland had been thinking about this for a long time – to avoid the Port of Clearwater and the Seawind Region; he had thought of directly crossing through the uninhabited land south of Border Town. After arriving at the mountains, he thought about taking a hot air balloon tour to cross the mountains, gaining direct access to the town's hinterland. That way, he would from the beginning to the end not have to pay any attention to the Church, Timothy or Garcia's forces.

The more Roland thought about it, the more excited he became. He suppressed his urge to immediately skim over the appendix and chose the witches and instead turned his attention to the present urgent matters that needed to be solved – after all, which kind of witches Sleeping Island sent was an issue for next month, but Border Town's currently most significant problem was the housing construction.

Since the First Army had sailed to King's City, an endless stream of refugees had arrived in Border Town. In order to prevent the disease from spreading, Roland had arranged an area west of the city wall all for them – there he had organised for long rows of wooden sheds to be built, providing a temporary place for the refugees to live in. Together with the serfs living on the other side of the Redwater River, their number already surpassed 8'000 people. In case the number of refugees will stay at the level of the last days, this number of people will most likely break through 10'000 in total.

Guaranteeing a supply of food for these people was not a problem. After all, since the end of the Months of Demons, Border Town had continuously imported food without interruption, but the accommodation issue was clearly a big problem. During the summer, it was no problem to live in a wooden shed, and besides shielding them from the sun and rain, it also offered an excellent ventilation, even though their number of mosquito bites might be higher. But once winter arrived, there would nearly be no difference between living in the sheds and under open air, the temperature outside would be the temperature inside of the wooden shed. If he was unable to let them stay in brick houses, Roland was afraid that most of the people wouldn't survive past the long winter. In other words, Border Town had to build houses and dormitories for 10'000 people within the next six months.

Roland spread out a new piece of paper and picked up the pen.



He intended to take a part of the workers currently construction the Kingdom Avenue and put them to work building the houses. After all, it wasn't a big problem if the road construction got delayed by ten days or half a month, but if the people froze to death within his territory, it would leave a stain on his achievements. Even when he had only recently crossed over and had no money, and none of the nobles wanted to help him, he was still able to insure that not one person died during the Months of Demons because from hunger or cold. So, now with the Witch Union and the steam engine, as well as substantial income and workforce, he naturally couldn't allow such a situation to occur.

But at this moment, Carter suddenly walked into the office.

"Your Royal Highness, I have bad news," Carter said with a serious face, "The chemical laboratory just exploded."

#### Chapter 236 Chemical Accident

Roland immediately rushed towards the laboratory next to the Redwater River. Arriving at the scene, Roland discovered that the damage wasn't as severe as he had imagined. At least the main building for refining acid completely lacked any damage, while the windows at the side building had shattered into pieces.

"My Lord, please save our teacher! He is so badly hurt, almost on the point of death."

Seeing that Roland had appeared, the group of disciplines immediately gathered around him but were soon stopped by his personal guards. Roland waved his hand, indicating that they don't need to be so anxious, "Where are the others? Let me have a look at them first." Then he turned Carter and whispered, "Where's Nana?"

"I've already sent someone, so I estimate that she will be here soon."

"Alright."

Roland nodded and then entered the laboratory, under protection of his guards.

Kyle Sichi was lying on the ground, leaving a bloodstain on the ground, which extended from him to the side room, giving the general idea that the accident must have happened in the side room and that he had been dragged to the main room after. His face was only an indistinct mass, with blood and other liquids mixed together, which should have been caused by the strong acid which had splashed on him during the explosion. He was also missing several fingers on his hands, and within the flesh he could see the white finger phalanges.

The apprentices had already provided him with emergency treatment, letting Roland see that they had also met similar situations in Redwater City. Dragging the people away from the danger, binding the wound to stop the bleeding, then seek help... these measures were all done quite well. However, receiving this kind of injury, and only having herbal medicine and the body's own healing ability as treatment, would lead to ten out of ten people dying.

Roland ordered his guards to wait at the door not letting anyone enter. Waiting for Nana's arrival, Carter and he went into the side room, trying to find the alchemist's fingers. Otherwise, even if the little girl healed his injuries, he would no longer be able to carry out his chemical experiments – which definitely would be a great loss for Border Town.

“It looks like a violent wind had swept through here,” Carter said and then pointed at his nose, “Furthermore, there is an unpleasant odor here.”

“That is the smell of nitrogen dioxide.” Roland carefully swept his eyes all over the room. Seeing that all the windows were open, he concluded that the possibility of poisoning wasn’t large, at most, there were merely some leftover fumes which hadn’t yet vanished. On the test stage, one bottle laid broken on the table, its acid had flown over the table’s surface, gathered on the floor and left behind a damp patch.

“Remember as you search through the tools, never to touch them directly with your hands,” the Prince reminded Carter. “There are gloves in the closet.”

Since Soraya’s ability had evolved, he had also sent a dozen pairs of thin and anticorrosive gloves to the laboratory, but looking at the alchemist’s horrible injuries, it was evident that he had been working on the test object without wearing them. In case he had worn the gloves, even if the explosion had blown his fingers away, at least his fingers would still be within the gloves.

When Roland looked through the closet above the test stand, something unusual attracted his attention. After he had taken the unusually formed bottle down and taken a closer look, he was convinced that it was actually the liquor he sold at the convenience market – and the amount left inside showed that a lot of it had already been drunk, leaving only half a bottle behind.

Kyle actually brought white liquor into the laboratory? It is hard to imagine that an experienced alchemist would be drinking during an experiment!

“Your Royal Highness, Miss Nana has arrived,” a guard reported.

“Good, continue to guard the door, don’t let any of the apprentices enter,” leaving Carter behind, who continued to rummage through the chaos to find the fingers, Roland immediately went back to the main room.

“Is it him?” For Nana, treating this sort of level of injury was already nothing out of the ordinary. The little girl who had previously been so scared of seeing blood and fainted whenever she encountered terrible wounds, had already grown up a lot — whether it was in regards to ability, or courage.

“First start with curing the corrosion wounds on his face,” Roland nodded. “Carter is currently looking for his missing fingers, when he finds them, you can connect them again later.”

“That won’t be necessary,” Nana responded proudly, “By now I’m already able to heal such small wounds.”

The startled Roland could only look on as she laid her hands on top of the Alchemist’s chest, closed her eyes, and Kyle’s injuries immediately began healing — his face was soon completely restored, and his disabled fingers unexpectedly began extending, healing at a slower rate. First, the bones regrew, followed by the flesh, and finally nails and hairs. About a quarter of an hour later, his fingers had been completely restored.

At this point, Carter also came back out of the side room, “Your Royal Highness, I was only able to find three of them, the last one might have already been destroyed during the explosion — eh?”

“Since when have you been able to do this?” Roland asked Nan in surprise when she opened her eyes again.

“Roughly a week ago, when the current chicken for my training lost a limb, I discovered that as long as I pour enough magic into it, I can slowly let it regrow.” She stuck out her tongue, “Probably because I recalled what you had said— that every part of the body is composed out of the same cells, which meant that the cutoff area was also only a loss of cells. Since my magic can make up for the damaged parts, why shouldn’t it also be able to make up for the lost parts? And then I tried to do it.”

“Are you able regrow every part?”

“The regrow takes a lot of effort,” Nana said, shaking her head. “Even though this method is very easy, and as long as it is only fingers, it is okay. But if it’s an arm or a leg, I cannot help it. After all, the amount of magic I can hold is far less than that of Sister Anna.”

That’s because you’re still a minor, Roland thought. Moreover, was this new capacity because of the evolution of her magic, or is it just the result of her training, leading to an increase of her magic capacity, allowing her to achieve an effect which had previously been impossible? Currently, Nightingale is not here to determine whether Nana’s magic source had given birth to changes or not. If this change is only because of an increase of her magic, the little girl’s performance after she reaches adulthood is something he looked forward to.

“Your Royal Highness, he woke up,” Carter interrupted.

“I was... what’s wrong?” Kyle frowned, first looked at his intact hands, then touched his face, “Shouldn’t I—”

“Should you have been killed during a chemical accident? Usually yes, but this witch saved your life. This person besides me had undertaken the task of rescuing and giving medical treatment to your people, Miss Nana Pine.” Roland decided to directly reveal Nana’s identity to the chief alchemist. A man who had rushed to Border Town because of an equation for a chemical reaction, shouldn’t be an incorrigibly or stubborn person, even if he thought of witches as disgusting in his heart, it would be unlikely that he would abandon his work and run over to the Church to report. And now since they had Lucia in town, it was only a matter of time until the alchemists and witches had to work together.

“For goodness sake! Do you mean that this witch can cure alchemy — no, the trauma caused by chemical experiments?” Roland hasn’t foreseen that Kyle’s reaction was totally contrary to what he had expected, “Hahaha, this is excellent, Your Royal Highness, this means that I can go through with experiments, without worrying about the dangers!”

“In the end, what happened?” Roland sighed in relieve. “Why did you bring the liquor into the laboratory?”

“No, Your Royal Highness, it is merely a test item,” the alchemist became entirely excited, “The thing I needed to produce for you, I did it!”

“Are you speaking of... Mercuric Acid?”

“That’s right, Your Highness! It turned out that the missing reactant was alcohol!” He said in one breath, “Previously I had already tested dozens of raw materials, but I was unable to make any progress.”

Annoyed I went to the market and bought some liquor, but then I suddenly remembered that the “Elementary Chemistry” mentioned that alcohol is an organic solvent, which is necessary for some raw materials to react. I then distilled and purified the liquor and used it for a new reagent test, and finally, on the sixth it try was a success... Within several tubes, the gray crystal’s precipitation occurred, so I recorded all of their heating time and temperatures. Afterward, I extracted some of the crystal and tested them. The features they showed were the same as what you spoke of — the ash gray needle-shaped crystal powder is extremely sensitive and irritable. Just when I wanted to filter out the rest of crystals in the tubes, the test tube suddenly exploded.”

So, it is done like this, at this moment, Roland also suddenly remembered it, to get mercury fulminate it was necessary to add ethanol to the mercury to excess the nitric acid, or, perhaps it can be produced from the direct reaction of mercury nitrate and ethanol.

“Well done,” Roland said and patted Kyle’s Sichi’s shoulder. “This feat is enough for you to receive Border Town’s highest honor and rewards.”

Thus, with the cartridge problem fixed his centerfire ammunition finally took shape.

#### Chapter 237 Invitation

After returning to his office, Roland immediately began to draw the blueprints for the new machines.

During the days, the First Army and witches had all gone to King’s City, instead of doing nothing, Roland felt that he was busier than ever. Even without Nightingale around, Anna’s and his time spent alone with one another was also very rare. Besides finding a place for the refugees to live that were coming with each ship, he also asked Anna and Lucia to test the composition of smelting products together, as well as constructing a new smelting furnace.

Before, no matter if it was smelting iron or making steel, it had purely been done by experience and feeling, never knowing what the result would be after the refining. But now with Lucia’s help, Roland finally had a precise method for determining the composition of the ingots. With the aid from the material decomposition ability, he could finally obtain the necessary detailed data for smelting metal after repeated comparisons between results. For example, the post-melting stirring time, the exact amount of charcoal added, and whether to add limestone or other additives to remove sulfur and phosphorus, or which other metals and raw materials had to be added to get alloy and so forth...

Based on these data, Roland could summarize a standard process for the smelting industry, which would guarantee the continuous production of iron ingots and steel that had the same quality each time. This would also disperse the dense fog hovering over the material science and engineering field.

The new smelting furnace had also been built for this reason.

It was a square furnace with a length and width of four meters, and a height of two meters, with the bottom tilted towards one end. It’s thick outer shell was made of pig iron, while the internal layer consisted of clay bricks as well as Soraya’s “earth” coating, which all guaranteed excellent heat resistance. The lower end was provided with a movable gate, which was driven by a steam engine. Considering that those high-end heating methods, such as oxygen, electric arc and so on haven’t reached the implementation stage yet, the furnace simply didn’t have any combustion systems installed – And depended entirely on Anna’s black fire for smelting molten steel. After adding the right amount of

raw materials and to smelt the metal in accordance with the finished test, the molten steel was directly discharged from the tailgate.

The furnace could produce 50 ton of steel at once, and with it, Anna would only need a short half hour to complete the smelting. Together with the feeding and tapping time, it would take around one hour to complete, its output could then meet the current need for firearms and artillery production. Nowadays the town' smelting plan was that the group of blast furnaces and shaft furnace were responsible for producing a great amount of pig iron, which was not only be used in the manufacturing of the daily use ironware and steam engines but could also be used as the raw material for further smelting, for example wrought iron or steel.

...

The blueprints Roland was currently drawing, was the set of production equipment used for bullet stamping – with a stable and reliable source of steel, processing and assembling a stamping machine would no longer be hindered by material problems. So, when the trial production of the mercury fulminate succeeded, they could immediately start with mass production of the new bullets. Even though cutting with Anna's black fire was efficient and accurate, but even in the case where a person could complete the whole process, they would still need to spend a long time doing so. However, in the event that a line of stamping machines was put into production, after learning how to operate them, more than 30 ordinary people could at least produce ten thousand bullets per day. Furthermore, the soldiers would also no longer need to manually reload their ammunition.

Even after dinner, he was still busy drawing, only when the sound of the midnight bell came through the window could his set of sketches be considered complete. Of course, this was merely the most initial plan of his concept, he still didn't know if some of the details was feasible, and because of this it needed to be tested before he could finalize his plan.

If it were like usual, Roland would have already yawned again and again, but today he was in high spirits, not feeling even a little sleepy at all.

After putting the more than ten recently drawn draft papers away, Roland took the attached parchment to the 5th Princess letter out of the drawer, spread it over the table, and finally came to the long awaited task – the selection of the visiting witches.

The list held more than 60 auxiliary witches and their abilities, but from Maggie's mouth, Roland had heard that Sleeping Island sheltered between two hundred to three hundred people, which made it obviously that Tilly had not put all of the auxiliary witches on the list at his table. This was also in line with the way a leader should behave — taking the initiative to reach out her hand in friendship, rather than holding on to family bonds. In this way, the opposite party had already expressed enough of their sincerity in wishing to form an alliance. Then Roland put up a new candle and concentrate on going over the witch abilities on the appendix.

He soon had to acknowledge, that this was a tough decision to make, but after a going through the list many times and comparing them from all sides, he finally chose the name of his five visitors.

Roland then spread out a new piece of parchment and began to write his reply.

“My dear sister, I am very glad to have received your letter.

"I am excited and pleased with your decision, with your assistance, I now have a bigger chance of blocking the Church's assault.

"The reason I could obtain the witches' trust and support, is because of this: within the entire Kingdom of Graycastle, only Border Town has completely erased the influence of the Church. Not only do the natives accept the witches, they even fight together, side by side. Beginning from the battle against the demonic beasts up to the confrontation with the Church, my people and witches have come to form an inseparable whole. Nowadays, the figures of witches can be seen everywhere within the town participating in the construction. The steam engine that makes you wonder was also only possible to achieve due to the help of a witch. All this is already a good start, and all I have to do is to extend this situation to the whole of the Western Territory, until it spreads through the entire kingdom.

"Therefore, I have to destroy the entire Church, and turn their statement that the witches are the Devil's messenger into dust. However, rescuing all the people from their ignorance and stupidity will be a long and slow process, for which I will need even more help from you.

"Concerning, what would lead to this decision, what caused me to no longer so indifferent to everything as I was in the past, are trivialities that can slowly be elaborated on when we have the time, but the ability to express oneself in a letter is limited, so I won't say more than is necessary.

"Concerning the witches' visit next month, I'm very much looking forward to it. There is no reason to be anxious about their safety, I have already planned a direct route to Border Town for them, which will also allow you to avoid the eyes and ears of the Church completely and which doesn't need the support of a harbor. The only risk will be the navigation, however, if you let Maggie fly in front of you to show you the way, there will be only be a tiny possibility losing your way. I will attach a map with the specific route to Maggie when I send her to Sleeping Island.

"When these witches arrive at Border Town, they will naturally be able to participate in the lessons of Basic Knowledge – the so-called knowledge which boosts the evolution of the witch's ability. However, I am more inclined to the idea that it actually a deeper understanding of the world itself that leads to their transformation, whether it was regarding nature, magic, not excluding the understanding of their own person. I have not the least doubt that our odds of winning in a fight against the Church increases with every witch able to evolve her ability, on this point your opinion and mine are completely in line.

"Finally, I will now list the five selected witches and I hope to see them as soon as possible.

"Land Shaper – Lotus.

"State Preserver – Candle.

"Winemaker – Evelyn.

"Beast Tamer – Honey.

"As well as Eye of Truth – Sylvie.

"I wish you all the best. Your brother, Roland Wimbledon."

Chapter 238 How could I possibly regret this?

A week later, the expedition of the First Army and witches finally returned to Border Town. From the date of their departure until their return, the mission had almost lasted half a month, five days longer than expected.

The main reason for the delay was that on the day the fleet had set out on the way home, Longsong Stronghold Acting Duke Petrov's messenger arrived in Border Town, reporting the outbreak of an unknown plague in the stronghold.

Due to Roland's previous warning, the moment when Petrov became aware of the disease, he took measures to isolate the patients as well as possible, and completely closed down the city, then immediately send a messenger over to Border Town.

After receiving the report of an outbreak, Roland sent Maggie out, and had her fly with great speed eastwards along the Redwater River, looking for the fleet carrying the First Army, to give them the order to change their route and take the fork to Longsong Stronghold. Later, after the eradication of the demonic plague, once more set out to return home.

On the day of their return, Roland led all the other members of the First Army and the families of the expedition members to the docks to celebrate their smooth return. Accompanied by the sound of the familiar army march, the soldiers excitedly saluted the Prince, while many other people imitated the knighting ceremony and went down on one knee to loudly shout out 'Long live His Highness'. After they had walked down the pier, they fell into the arms of their loved ones and tightly hugged them, accentuated by Echo's timely gun salute. The atmosphere of the scene became so lively that it attracted the refugees and the serfs to soon come join them.

Back in the castle, Iron Axe gave a full report on the mission.

"You mean to say, that the enemy attacking the First Army had a witch within their ranks?" After thinking about it for a moment, Roland continued. "It's unlikely that she was part of the street rats."

"Theo thinks the same thing; he even believes that the rats belong to an other force. Otherwise, those scum would almost never leave their nest and try to operate outside of it. The only forces in King's city that can control the rats and could also possess a witch are the Church and King Timothy." Iron Axe said, "Even those other powerful nobles would be unable to force the largest street rats organization to move at full strength, and leave their nest vulnerable."

"But Timothy is actually in the Eastern Region, and I don't believe that he is daring enough to send a witch out to fight alone, I think that the Church is more suspect." Thinking of Wendy and Ashes' encounters with the Church, it wasn't surprising to Roland that the Church had trained a group of witches in secret. "Are you sure she's dead?"

"Nightingale's shot hit her in the chest, breaking her thoracic cavity into pieces," Iron Axe said while nodding, "we buried her in the wheat field, at the place where we found the remains of our sentry."

At the end of their last day, their team of three hundred people had met an attack of a vast number of rats with the final result of one dead and four injured. The only victim was the soldier who died by the hands of the witch, the other four injured had been hit by lucky crossbow shots from the approaching rats. With their revolver rifles greater firepower, the fight was already over before it even came to the melee combat phase. The wounded soldiers had immediately been properly bandaged and sent back to

Border Town to be treated by Nana – it was due to the presence of Lily that their injuries showed almost no sign of infection. As long as the crossbow arrows did not hit vital organs and they were able to stop the bleeding soon enough, the chance for the injured to survive was very good.

In general, seeing the First Army acquiring this kind of result during their second expedition, made Roland feel very satisfied. As for how to hinder the enemy from successfully attacking the sentries, Roland knew very little about that. The only thing he did know was that they needed to set up the posts so that they could always monitor one another, but how to do it exactly, was a task better left to Iron Axe to handle.

“You have worked hard; I will hold a ceremony at the central square of the town, tomorrow. You should go and notify all members of the First Army about it.”

When Iron Axe finally retired, Roland let out a long breath.

“Well done,” with these words, Roland took a bag of grilled fish from the drawer and put it on the table. “If it hasn’t been for you, I’m afraid they would have been in great danger.”

At his words, Nightingale’s figure appeared at his side and with a smile accepted the dried fish. “Like I said before, I had everything under my control.”

“How was the strength of the other side?”

“She was very agile and acted very determined; I think she should have been in training for several years. If it wasn’t for her trying to resist at the same time as I entered my fog, I can’t say for sure if I would have been able to avoid being hit by her fine powder.” Nightingale just shrugged it off and tried to seem casual during her report of the following events, but he still became aware of her discomfort when she told about the shooting. “but, when I saw the look in her eyes when she stabbed at Wendy, I came to an understanding, that with the exception of death there was nothing that would stop her.”

“...” For a moment Roland was silent. “Do you still remember what you said to me on the way back after the defeat of Timothy’s militia?”

Nightingale thought back, “ ‘This is not your fault’ ?”

“That’s it,” he nodded. “If she were a witch who was raised by the Church from early on, she would always treat you as a traitor, a fallen, even after a few years of coexistence, it would still be tough to cure her of that way of thinking... At least with her death, you were able to save Wendy’s life.”

Nightingale began to laugh “Are you trying to comfort me?”

“Ke...” Roland coughed twice, “Those were my real thoughts.”

“Feel relieved, I won’t feel sad for the enemy, although she was a witch, the path she chose was entirely different from the one I desire to see in the future, this is the same I already said aboard during the journey back.” Nightingale picked up a piece of dried fish and put it into her mouth, “I just knocked the enemy down while protecting my sisters, I only fulfilled my duty, nothing more.”

“It is good if you can think like that,” Roland said happily. It seems that he had still underestimated her, with his thought that she would feel lost and confused after personally killing another witch, never



expecting that she would be able to adjust to it in just a short time. It appears that in both mind and belief, Nightingale was coming close to reaching maturity.

She swallowed the fish, hesitated for a moment and then opened her mouth to say: "But there is one little thing I want to ask you."

"What?"

"What were you and Anna doing during these days?" Even though Nightingale's voice became lower and lower, her eyes kept their focus on the Prince, "...you know what I'm talking about."

Roland almost knocked the cup over in his hands, "Keke, asking this so suddenly, what do you... during these days I have been occupied with finding a place to settle the refugees, there wasn't much chance to be alone with her."

Immediately her eyes began to lit up. "That wasn't a lie."

"Of course not, I was –"

Before another word could escape Roland's lips, Nightingale suddenly vanished into thin air, immediately following which he felt a pair of soft lips on his mouth, after a fleeting touch only leaving behind the light flavor of salty fish. It took him a long while until he realized what had just happened.

"Wait –"

Once more he couldn't finish what he wanted to say. This time, two slender fingers sealed his mouth, even though he couldn't see her, but he knew that Nightingale was still standing at his side.

"I know what you want to say..." she whispered next to his ear, "I do not want to change anything, I don't intend to put myself between you and Anna, I merely hope to be always stay by your side, that's all. Forgive me for not daring to show my figure to you, because right now, I also don't know what kind of expression I should show when facing you. Your Highness, you don't dislike me?"

"..." Roland opened his mouth, but it seemed that saying he disliked Nightingale was impossible. The barrier that kept him from accepting her was not something about like and dislike, but rather ethical, shaped by twenty years of social experience before coming to this world, by now, he could no longer deceive himself.

"That being the case," she whispered, "do not say anything. It's not your fault; I only did what I wanted to after all."

## Chapter 239 Midnight Snack

After eating dinner, Anna carried a large batch of Bird Beak Mushrooms into the kitchen.

At her request, Maggie had collected these spotlessly white mushrooms in the Concealing Forest – they were different from common mushrooms, the Bird Beak Mushrooms commonly grows on top of huge trees, it survives by absorbing the nutrients from the trees, but it was also the favorite food of some birds species. Although it had a very delicious taste, and its fleshy umbrella shaft was as delicate as exquisite meat, with its relatively high growing place which made it hard to discover just by standing on the ground, there weren't many people willing to climb the trees to pick these mushrooms.

Her mother would always gather some for her birthday, sometimes picking more and sometimes less, but always enough to make two mushroom dishes to celebrate her birthday. Compared to the usual moldy and coarse bread and bland porridge, its unique flavor was hard to forget. Although nowadays, she has no longer had to worry about not getting enough food to fill her belly, these days the food was always varied and plentiful, she still wanted to personally make this delicious food which could only be tasted in this small town in the western region and share it with Roland Wimbledon who was recently always so busy.

The flames in kitchen stove had already been extinguished, but to Anna, this didn't pose any problem. She took some firewood from the side and threw it into the oven, and called her black flame, just a few moments later a vigorous fire already burned within its chamber.

At this time, Nightingale suddenly appeared from the wall, "Hey, what are you doing?"

"I want to make something to eat for His Highness, these days he is always staying up late to work. What about you?"

"Ahaha," Nightingale began laughing in embarrassing, and touched the back of her head with her hand. "I just came to look for a snack to eat... I'm a little hungry." After pausing for a moment, she curiously probed, "What are you planning to cook?"

"I want to make something to eat for His Highness, these last few days he is always staying up late to work. What about you?"

"Well... honey baked mushrooms and mushroom soup," Anna opened the bundle, revealing the Bird Beak Mushrooms inside, "They are Border Town's regional specialty, do you want to try some?"

Nightingale nodded and then quickly asked, "Can you teach me how to make them?... I also wish to learn to cook them."

"Yes," Anna laughed, "It's quite easy."

After slicing the mushrooms, she took a lot of the mushrooms and divided them between Nightingale and herself. "First spread a layer of butter on both sides of the mushrooms, then carefully roast them on the fire until they are golden on all sides. Be careful not to roast them for too long, or else they will burn black."

"Okay," Nightingale said, took a piece of the Bird Beak Mushrooms and imitated Anna's style of smearing oil on both sides of the mushroom. "Has His Highness recently always worked until late into the night?"

"That's right, in order to find a place for the refugees, as well as drawing blueprints for new machines, he spends almost everyday after midnight before he goes to bed. There were several times when I've passed by his office, that I could still see the light of the burning candles from under the door." Anna nodded once and then asked, "You were gone for more than half a month, so you began to miss His Highness, right?"

Hearing the unexpected question, Nightingale's hand slightly trembled, dropping the mushroom into the oil, "Uh... actually it was not too bad..."

“It wasn’t limited to only you; it was also the same for Lightning, Lily, Echo, and Wendy. They all were missing His Royal Highness; they said since there was not even a bathing place, they had all wanted to return at an earlier time,” Anna suddenly felt that the other’s expression had become somewhat strange, “Hey, what happened?”

“Nothing,” Nightingale said flustered, shook her head, took another mushroom and then said with an embarrassed smile, “actually it was like that, indeed... I also longed to come back.”

“Is that so?” Anna used her hands to directly pinch the oil coated mushrooms and threw them into the fire of the stove, “If it was me who have to leave His Highness for half a month, no, maybe even just a few days would already be enough that I couldn’t wait to see him again.”

The moment when she had met Roland Wimbledon within the dungeon, was the most incredible moment in her entire life, until today whenever she recalled this moment, her heart would still fill with warmth and gratitude. If not for His Highness, even if she could have somehow lived on, it would only be a life in ignorance and confusion, just like those apathetic townsfolk.

It was His Highness who had taught her how beautiful the world truly was. No matter if it was because of the soy paste covered pepper steaks, or the “Theoretical Foundations of Natural Science”, the moment he had stepped into her live it had filled with all kinds of new stuff, allowing her to finally feel that she no longer was the same as those other people, but rather a unique and unmatched witch.

She was confident that the others sisters also felt the same – as long as they were in contact with His Highness for a long enough, it was impossible for them not to become caught up in his strange but clever ideas and his unique charm, this was what Anna believed without a shred of doubt.

“Oh, did I bake this for too long?” Nightingale raised her iron fork and showed that one side of the mushroom had already become burned.

“A little bit...” Anna couldn’t suppress her laugh, “Bird Beak Mushrooms is very tender, so it isn’t necessary to roast them for a long time, just test it some more and you will grasp it. For now, I will prepare the material for the stew.”

Nightingale instead sprinkled the lightly burned mushroom with honey and salt and threw it into her mouth, “Well, it was still delicious.” Seeing how Anna skillfully mixed all kinds of herbs and other ingredients together, she asked curiously, “Have you done this often before?”

“Ah, marinating food, grinding flour, going to the nobles and ask for a seasonal work, helping to wash and shave the neighbor’s sheep,” Anna said, “Most of the time I was doing those kinds of odd jobs, the only exception was when I went to Teacher Karl’s college.” After pausing for a moment, she continued, “But when my mother had died, my father no longer let me go to the college, or even allowed me to leave the house in general.”

“Sorry...”

“All of that doesn’t matter any longer, it’s in the past now,” Anna’s eyes shined brightly like a sky-blue lake in the moonlight. “Compared with the majority of the other witches, I can already be considered as being very lucky, can’t I?”

Over the flame the thin pieces of in butter coated mushrooms slightly curled up, issuing a crackling sound. After sprinkling some salt grains on top of the mushrooms and roasting them until golden on both side, a fresh and fragrant smell soon began entering their nostrils. The mix out of the milky flavor of the heated butter and the unique flavor of the Bird Beak Mushrooms caused them to salivating. And with their final honey coating, the roasted mushrooms were finally ready. Whether it was the Bird Beak Mushrooms or the honey, both could be collected in the Concealing Forest, but even for the locals, if it turned out that there was a beehive on a cut-down tree, or Bird Beak Mushrooms at its top, it was considered a very lucky day.

When the pot with the stew release white steam, the two also completed their mushroom roasting and seasoning.

“That was a success, or at least it looks good,” Nightingale said, stuffing another piece into her mouth. “As it turns out I also have quite a gift for cooking... Pff! It seems this piece was a bit salty.”

“The time is also just right,” Anna stated after glancing at the night outside of the window, “I presume we should deliver it to His Highness now.”

“Would you please hand mine over to him?” Nightingale asked, clapping her hands together, “Please.”

“Don’t you want to come with me?”

“I can’t,” she laughed. “Because I do not know what kind of expression I should show when I see him now.”

Anna was startled by the unexpected answer, but before she even could open her mouth to further ask about meaning of this sentence, the other had already disappeared into thin air.

Is it important what kind of expression I show? Regardless if I show a smile, am dispirited or wear an expressionless face they are all good, ah. Even when I had just come out of prison, had lost faith in everything, and had all my hope turned to dust, His Highness never became fed up with my, so why does she want to avoid him?

Even after thinking about it for a time, it still felt incomprehensible to her. So, in the end, she only shook her head, picked up the tray with the mushroom dices and the soup by herself and went to the office.

#### Chapter 240 Award and Honor Ceremony

Roland was currently designing the pattern of the medal for tomorrow’s ceremony. It was reasonable to say that he should already have completed this not especially complicated work long ago, but since the beginning of the afternoon, he had felt somewhat ill at ease.

That’s right; it was because of Nightingale’s kiss.

Although there had been some indistinct signs before, since she had never acted on it, he had also never taken the initiative to speak about it either. But now, there was no longer any room for doubt, what would be the right way to respond to her feelings?

This question also let him understand that he didn’t dislike Nightingale at all. Instead, he even somewhat liked her. A beautiful and touching woman with a calm nature, and with whom he was together from morning to night, how could he ever hate her? The reason for Roland’s inability to respond positively

towards her laid in the twenty years of ideology he had inherited, as well as the actual question he would have to face in the future... Anna's opinion. Especially the later point, he couldn't ignore Anna, and only act according to his own preferences.

Perhaps only time could bring him the answer he was looking for.

Suddenly, a knocking sound came over from the other side of the door.

"Come in; it isn't locked," Roland shouted while being surprised at the same time, who would still come to his office at this hour?

Only to see that it was actually Anna who pushed the door open and entered the room, holding a tray with two dishes and an earthenware jar. Before she could even open her mouth to speak, Roland already smelled the alluring aroma.

"Food?"

"Yes," Anna let out a small laugh and placed the tray on the table, then removed the top of the jar and uncovered a milky white soup, "This dish is called honey roasted mushrooms, this plate here was made by me and Nightingale made the other one. And in the jar is mushroom soup, it is seasoned with some commonly seen herbs."

"It looks very delicious," Roland licked his lips, "Come sit down so that we can eat together."

Anna nodded and sat at the opposite side of the table.

"Why didn't Nightingale come along?"

"She said... she didn't know what kind of expression she should show when she sees you," Anna replied. "I do not quite understand why she cares."

"..." So that's the reason, Roland softly sighed within his heart, although she had bold and confidently said that she didn't feel the least bit of regret, even shamelessly boasted "This is not your fault, I just did what I wanted to". However, in truth her ability to summon her courage and leave the cave to explore the outside world wasn't any better than that of a squirrel. Really, in the end, was she daring or timid... "In that case, let's eat first."

When he picked up a piece of mushroom and put it into his mouth, the honey melted and within a flash spread its sweetness within his mouth, soon followed by the mushrooms own juice. In the absence of monosodium glutamate, it was still so rich and tasty that it made him completely speechless... a little salt further enhanced its freshness, and also, the mushroom's own chewy texture, of exquisite tenderness, the taste became simply impeccable.

"These... aren't ordinary mushrooms right?" after swallowing, Roland immediately asked about the aspect of the meal that let it stand out from the masses of other foods. In general, it was already good when the mushrooms could keep their fresh taste when barbecued, but how could they be this juicy? As if they were filled with soup.

"Well, they are a specialty of the Concealing Forest, the town's people call them Bird Beak Mushrooms," Anna smiled and recounted the mushroom's history, "That's why I wanted you to taste them."

Afterward, Roland also tasted the slowly cooked mushroom soup, which was equivalently matchless, the flavor of the juices was even more rich, it was just like eating tangbao in general, furthermore, with every chew a crisp feeling was invoked. Tasting this for a long time he couldn't help but think of the in later generation extremely commonly used, seasoning which was added in vast amounts to all kind of dishes – MSG. In the time before MSG had appeared, chefs could only enhance the flavor of food indirectly, for example by using whole chicken bones, mushrooms and soybeans to create a clear soup stock. Although the preceding generations of cooks preferred once more the authentic flavor to show off their own exquisite culinary talent. However, it was still right to say that even if it was a bad or novice chef, as long as they added MSG, they could increase the dull flavor of their food by more than a level.

Supposing that the Bird Beak Mushrooms was naturally so rich and juicy in flavor, they would be the perfect material for extract MSG. They were just growing on top of the trees, making them hard to pick and thus weren't widespread? For Roland, something like this wasn't a problem at all.

"This type of mushrooms, do you know how many of them are there?"

"I am not sure... but I presume there should be a lot of them," Anna said, taking another small bite. "Maggie said that she only circled along the edge of the forest, but she was still able to help me pick a huge bag full of them."

"That is great to hear," Roland already cleanly finished all the mushrooms Anna had roasted. Thus he stretched out his chopsticks to the second plate, "I was worried that there was nothing besides meat dipped in honey or pepper here, I was almost getting tired of eating – pff."

"What's wrong?"

"No-nothing." His heart burst into tears, for goodness sake, this piece is salted too much, did Nightingale accidentally drop it into the salt jar? Even though this were his thoughts, he still swallowed the mushroom. Afterward, Roland discovered that other mushroom pieces weren't completely pasted or cooked, there were also other which were scorched on one side while the other side was left uncooked. Fortunately, the Bird Beak Mushroom were delicious in itself, in this way it covered up her bad cooking to a large degree.

"I... ate my fill," Roland said putting his chopsticks down, with great difficulty he had finished eating the second plate, and then he even had drunk the complete soup, until his belly already began to bulge up. "Thank you."

"Thanks, but there was also Nightingale," Anna said with a laugh, letting her look so incredibly adorable, that Roland couldn't help but reach out and pinch her nose. The latter whimpered a small cry and then kissed the prince's cheek. "Then I'll now go and wash the dishes, don't forget to go to bed early."

After the witch had left, Roland lightly sighed.

Although I don't want to ignore Anna's thoughts... but there are some matters which aren't easy to speak about. He helplessly thought, probably this has also something to do with my former identity as a mechanical dog, after all, during my entire academic period, I rarely had any dealings with the opposite sex. And even after graduating and successfully entering a large-scale planning institute, and having a considerable salary, my situation still hadn't changed much.

Luckily, there is still a long way to go before the Church is completely destroyed, so I have enough time to slowly consider what I need to do next. As for now, it is better to concentrate on completing the work in front of me.

...

On the next morning, Roland stepped onto a temporary erected wooden platform in the town's square, which was surrounded by a sea of people.

Comparing the current Border Town with the former impoverished and desolated town, it seemed as heaven and earth had been turned upside down, saying that it looked completely new wouldn't be an exaggeration.

The town's sparse old houses had been completely torn down. Instead they had been replaced by construction sites and the already finished brick houses scattered all over the place. Furthermore, the latter were constructed in accordance with the development plan of the whole district, giving it a neat and tidy appearance – although they only occupied one-third of the former town's land, they still offered enough space to accommodate the original two thousand indigenous citizens.

By the time they began building three or four layered houses, as well as opening the follow-up district, the number of people living on the same piece of land would only become more and more. By now still calling it Border Town was no longer consistent with the actual situation, no town had a population of nearly twenty thousand people and a professional army of about six hundred people. However, Roland intended to wait until spring next year before officially promoting Border Town to a real city.

With the support of Echo's ability, Roland's voice quickly quieted the crowd down.

"Today, is the day of Border Town's award and honor ceremony, we will use this time to reward and encourage those people who had made a major contribution to all of us. More than half a year has passed since I have arrived here, since then we have defeated the demonic beasts, beat the Duke, and given this town its current appearance. To achieve all this, many people had to sacrifice a lot, among these, there are several outstanding people, they are not nobles, nor are they wealthy merchants, before they served me they were merely ordinary folk, just like you are!

He let his view wander over the people, and then loudly exclaimed, "But now they will be rewarded handsomely! Including a medal personally crafted by me, one hundred gold royals, and five acres of land!"

This news immediately stirred up the masses, sending waves of cheers through the crowd, not to mention the medal and the land, just the one hundred gold royals, was a sum to cause envy in the others.

"This isn't a one-time ceremony – from now on we will hold this kind of ceremony each year, regardless of your birth, irrespective of your wealth, as long as you have achieved extraordinary merits you can all obtain this highest of honors!"

The moment Roland's voice fell, Echo's imitation of a gun salute suddenly resounded through the whole audience, and within the unceasing explosion, Iron Axe, Kyle Sichi, and Nana Pine arrived, escorted by the First Army, and entered the wooden stage.

