



Female Warrior Prologue Volume 1: **Light and Shadow**

Original novel in Chinese by: [御我 \(Yu Wo\)](#)

Translated by [Prince Revolution](#)

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Prince Revolution!(or PR! for short)was started in late April in 2009 by Erialis for the purpose of translating and sharing the ½ Prince and The Legend of Sun Knight novels (and now Female Warrior) with other fans (who unfortunately couldn't read Chinese). PR!'s crew has since exploded to include sixteen translators who double as Chinese to English editors and 18 Proofreaders. They also have sister sites translating the novels into Dutch, Spanish, Indonesian, Portuguese and Vietnamese.

## Translators

dahlys (Prologue)  
Doza (Chapter 1)  
raylight (Chapter 2)  
Azakura (Chapter 3, 4, 5,  
6)  
CesiumBlack (Chapter 7)

## Art

50/午零 (Wu  
Ling)

## Proofreaders

Icarus (Prologue)  
CesiumBlack (Chapter 1)  
Arcedemius (Chapter 2)  
EvlNabiki (Chapter 2)  
A.C. (Chapter 3, 4)  
Rryw (Chapter 3, 5, 6, 7)  
Faren (Chapter 4, 5, 6, 7)  
DragonsSing (Chapter 5)

## Chinese/English Proofreaders

Lucathia (Prologue,  
Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4,  
5, 6, 7)  
Amgine (Chapter 1)  
dahlys (Chapter 2)  
raylight (Chapter 3,  
4, 6)  
Azakura (Chapter 7)

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by: 御 我 (Yu Wo)

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## Prologue: In a Flash

If you could return to the day you met, what would the two of you do?

"Ah! Fate is unfathomable like that. Never would anyone be able to guess that such an ordinary encounter could lead to such an extraordinary future. Although our encounter that day contributed to a resplendent future, I sometimes find myself reminiscing about ordinary days. If time could be rewound, would I choose to step foot into that tavern where we met... Ah, no! Even if that tavern had not existed, we would definitely have met anyway, because our encounter was indispensable fate!"

–Bard

"With my blade, I'll cut the tavern, destiny, and this bastard in half all at the same time."

–Red Cloak



Dear Holy King...

May your radiance always shine upon the Kingdom of Holy Light.

Do you remember?

In this world where both light and darkness exist,

The one defending your back,

What was her name again?

When they first met...

The knight smiled a dazzling smile,

The swordsman bravely swung her dual blades,

The cleric gently healed all pains and wounds,  
And the bard sang about their adventures.  
When all your companions had gathered by your side,  
Do you remember?  
That blade that slew your enemies,  
What was her name again?

Ah! Destiny...  
The knight walked the path of a king;  
A road filled with blood and danger.  
When their eyes met, there was no need for speech.  
Without any need for oath or pledge,  
The companions fought countless battles.  
Do you remember?  
She who always followed you faithfully,  
What was her name again?

Please marry me...  
As time passed the knight became king,  
And the companions scattered apart.  
Even then, that woman never changed.  
On the throne, the Holy King and Queen.  
On the red carpet, she who knelt loyally.  
Do you remember?  
After that three word request was asked of her,  
She was named the Warrior Queen!

Dear Holy King...  
May your radiance always shine upon the Kingdom of Holy Light.

The person wearing a red cloak sat quietly at the bar counter of the tavern, a seat specially meant for lonely people who had no acquaintances. Behind him, a wandering bard was singing the story of the Holy King. His voice was rather good, his tone clear and penetrating. His singing skills were also very good, so good that even Red Cloak, a person who had traveled all over the world, didn't dare to say that he had heard a voice more beautiful than this bard's.

However, it was obvious that the travelers in the tavern did not appreciate his singing. It was just one song, so it was fine even if it garnered no applause, but it actually attracted many shushing sounds and glares instead.

"Looks like you chose the wrong song..." muttered Red Cloak in a low and somewhat hoarse voice, making it quite impossible to tell whether the voice belonged to a man or woman.

"Is that so? But this is my favorite song, 'Ballad of the Warrior Queen'!" Red Cloak didn't seem the least bit surprised to hear that clear and penetrating voice from behind him. Under his hood, the corners of Red Cloak's mouth merely turned up a little and he plainly said, "To my knowledge, the 'Ballad of the Warrior Queen' is not sung like this."

As if it were only natural, the bard said after sitting down next to Red Cloak, "The one that I sang is the real 'Ballad of the Warrior Queen,' definitely!"

Smiling, Red Cloak shook his head and softly sang.

The Warrior Queen, that is her title.

With one graceful movement, she glanced at the knight  
And was forever entranced by his greatness and blond hair.  
Following the man she loved, she fought an uphill battle.  
For the man she loved, she brandished her weapon.  
For the beautiful cleric, her good sister, she smiled□as she watched  
the cleric and the knight's lovely union.  
When the Holy King and Queen exchanged their vows,  
The Warrior Queen raised her weapons and protected the  
couple,□until the last of their enemies had retreated.  
Together, the Holy King and Queen ruled their peaceful kingdom.  
The Warrior Queen gazed far into the distance, saying□"My mission  
has been accomplished.  
It is time for me to return to God's side."  
Thus a beautiful silhouette turned into a shooting star,  
And flew into the horizon.

After singing in a low voice, Red Cloak smiled and said, "This is the  
'Ballad of the Warrior Queen' that everyone knows, right?"

Unexpectedly, the bard laughed and said, "Ha! She is indeed a good  
woman. One can send her to war, and then marry another beautiful  
wife, and she doesn't even feel jealous. After one has no more use for  
her, one can just tell her to scam back to heaven. What a perfect  
woman indeed!"

Red Cloak was stunned for a moment. He had only intended to make a  
random comment, so he had not even had a good look at the bard's  
face. However, he was now extremely curious about this bard who had  
dared to say something so outrageous, so he could not help but turn  
to look at him.

Seeing Red Cloak turn to look at him, the bard also turned and smiled charismatically at Red Cloak.

Red Cloak smiled faintly back at him.

The young man in front of Red Cloak looked just like a typical wandering bard. On his back, he carried a lute, the most common instrument for a bard. A fairly pretty bronze bell hung at his waist. The bard himself had a head of beautiful blond hair, which was carelessly draped over his shoulder, and his bright eyes were as blue as the azure sky. Judging by his youthful face, he was at most only slightly over twenty years of age. Also, he gave off the feeling that he was somewhere between a boy and a man. When he smiled, he seemed like a boy who had yet to mature, but if he became serious, even he would probably give off the feeling of a grown man then.

"You are so weird! Aren't cloaks usually green or brown, so that you can use it to cover your tracks?" The blond bard looked at Red Cloak curiously. Although the cloak was not bright red but rather a darker shade of red, it would still stand out like a sore thumb in both forests and on grasslands.

"Perhaps it's because I have no need to cover my tracks," said Red Cloak plainly, without much explanation.

"Weirdo." The bard wasn't really bothered by this, and he simply grinned like a little boy.

After Red Cloak had finished admiring that innocent little boy smile, he

did not speak any further. He just lowered his head and began to eat the food on his plate.

"How about treating me to a drink?" said the bard suddenly, although he did not really expect to get what he wanted. After all, every time he sang the "Ballad of the Warrior Queen," the visitors in the tavern never appreciated it. Never mind throwing him some bronze ducats, if they didn't chase him out of the tavern, it would already be considered an above average day.

This was because the Holy King and Queen's excellent reputation was known far and wide, and many loved them. This "Ballad of the Warrior Queen," with its defamatory nature, was not a song that could be arbitrarily sung. Thus, he only dared to sing it in small taverns located in remote areas. If he actually sang this song in the capital, it wouldn't be strange even if he were killed, right?

Red Cloak raised his head slightly and asked, "Is ale and a bowl of minced meat noodles okay?"

"I wouldn't mind an extra bowl of minced meat noodles." The bard beamed. *Today is my lucky day!*



"With your voice, if you sang some normal ballads, getting enough food to eat wouldn't be a problem," said Red Cloak simply. Although the content of this statement seemed like advice, Red Cloak's tone made it sound like a simple statement of fact.

"I do sing normal ballads." The bard blinked, swallowed the minced

meat noodles in his mouth, and said resolutely, "However, it is my self-imposed rule to sing the 'Ballad of the Warrior Queen' for three days after arriving at a city. Only then can I sing normal ballads."

"If that is the case, then why is getting food to eat a problem?" Red Cloak was extremely puzzled about this. Although he was also curious as to why the bard must first sing the "Ballad of the Warrior Queen" for three days, he did not want to get too close to the bard, so he simply avoided asking about that.

A little embarrassed, the bard twirled a lock of his blond hair around a finger and said, "Well, I haven't entered a large city in a long time, and it just so happened that I ran out of my favorite rose fragrance hair oil, so I decided to buy a little more of that. I spent all my money buying the hair oil, forgetting that I still had to sing the 'Ballad of the Warrior Queen' for three days..."

"After starving for three days, I bet that you would even drink hair oil," replied Red Cloak in an annoyed tone after hearing the bard give such an explanation.

"How about this, if you let me stay with you in your room for three days, and buy me a tankard of ale and a bowl of minced meat noodles a day, I will sing the 'Ballad of the Warrior Queen' for you every single day, okay?" asked the bard, having made the decision to "freeload off this person for three days even if he got scolded for being shameless." *After all, being called shameless is much better than being hungry enough to drink hair oil!*

"Just who wants to listen to the 'Ballad of the Warrior Queen'?" Red

Cloak secretly rolled his eyes.

"You!" As if the answer were obvious, the bard said, "If you didn't like listening to the 'Ballad of the Warrior Queen,' would you have treated me to minced meat noodles?"

On hearing this, Red Cloak fell silent.

"How about this then, I'll sing whatever song you want to hear! Don't you like listening to my voice?" The bard really didn't know what he had said wrong, to have caused Red Cloak to become so quiet. Afraid that he would have to drink hair oil for the next three days, the bard had no choice but to change his offer as a last resort.

"Just when have I said that I liked listening to your voice, huh?" Red Cloak secretly rolled his eyes again. *This bard seems to have a hobby of "guessing other people's thoughts."*

Feeling extremely wounded, the bard said, "But not too long ago, you said, 'With your voice, if you sang some normal ballads, getting enough food to eat wouldn't be a problem.' Doesn't that mean that you like listening to my voice?"

Annoyed, Red Cloak said, "No."

After speaking, and not wanting to get himself further involved with the bard, Red Cloak left enough money to pay for two people's food and beverages and turned to leave... when a corner of his cloak was grabbed.

A little angry, Red Cloak turned and was about to make the bard let go, but instead saw him pathetically tugging on his cloak, his large, watery, blue eyes looking like they were about to burst into tears. The bard begged softly, "Please! You really can't bear to see me become hungry enough to drink hair oil, right? Just take care of me for three days! Pretty please?"

"..."

## Chapter 1: Light and Shadow Part 1

"You really are a good person!"

The wandering bard happily surveyed his room. That's right! It was a room for him alone. He had not expected that the eccentric Red Cloak would not only take him in, but even help him book another room. Initially, he had felt that even sleeping on the floor would be good enough! Sure enough, his luck today was pretty good.

"... Ramble on any more and I'll slaughter you with my blade."

The bard exclaimed in surprise, "Eh? You use blades? Normally everyone wants to use a 'sword' to chop me up!"<sup>1</sup>

*Looks like this fellow has frequently angered other people.* Red Cloak didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

"Since you have treated me so well, I will sing the Ballad of the Warrior Queen to you once more as a lullaby before you go to sleep!"

"No need..."

However, the bard had already opened his mouth and started softly singing the Ballad of the Warrior Queen which had an extremely mellow melody. "The Warrior Queen, is what she's called..."

Since he had already started singing, Red Cloak also stopped protesting. He simply sat on the bedside, quietly listening to that song

that was as tranquil as still water.

*Hee! I knew this person likes the Ballad of the Warrior Queen. Looks like I may have all three meals provided for me for the next three days!* The bard sighed delightedly in his heart.

*Ah! Sure enough, fate is in my favor at the moment.*



There was evidence to confirm that Red Cloak was, as expected, a generous host. Not only did he provide three meals, he didn't mind even when the bard additionally ordered some expensive wine along with his meal. He seemingly did not have much of a notion about money.

A silver ducat for a glass of wine. Even some of the lesser nobility could not afford to drink at these prices. However, when the bard asked if he could add on an order of one glass of wine, Red Cloak merely replied, "Do as you wish."

*He is definitely super rich!* And thus the bard decided to latch on to this person till death.

"You really take a mile when given an inch!" Red Cloak glanced at the wine in the bard's hand, but as usual used an unconcerned tone to say,

"I don't suppose you'll still want dessert after this?"

"Ah!" The bard sighed over the good wine, and replied very politely, "Actually there's no need for that. I'm not interested in dessert."

Red Cloak reclined against the back of the chair and said in a calm tone, "That's quite strange, I had thought you would like dessert a lot."

"Why would you think so?" The bard asked curiously.

"Because the impression you give is like a slice of cake."

The bard smiled sweetly. "Oh, are you saying I'm as sweet and beautiful as a cake?"

Red Cloak let out a quick "Haha" and replied, "You are just like a cake, all show and no substance. Eating an apple is more filling."

"This is a total misunderstanding. I am indeed showy, but also very dependable." The bard strongly protested.

Without a trace of politeness, Red Cloak reprimanded, "A guy who spends all his money on hair oil to the point where he has no money for food has absolutely nothing to do with the word 'dependable'!"

"That..." The bard's face turned pained, the merciless example rendering him absolutely speechless.

With nothing to say in response, all he could do was rub his nose. In any case he couldn't do anything to Red Cloak.

The two of them silently bowed their heads and ate the food on their plates. When Red Cloak had almost finished eating, he looked up to ask, "Are you still going to the tavern to sing the Ballad of the Warrior

Queen? Is today the second day?"

"That's right!" The bard nodded his head, and could not help asking out of curiosity, "How about you? What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to the Adventurers' Guild to see if there are any missions I can accept!" Red Cloak shrugged, saying, "If not, then we might have to starve."

"... Aren't you very rich?" The bard froze. How could it be different from what he had assumed?

Red Cloak casually took out a wallet, turning it upside down and producing just a single clink of ducats.

"One gold ducat and one silver ducat?"

The bard counted again and again. The amount was so straightforward that counting wrongly would really require some talent... Goodness! They hadn't paid for their food yet, and just now he had even ordered a glass of wine worth a silver ducat! Furthermore, they had eaten two plates of minced meat noodles, two bowls of thick soup, two rolls of white bread and a plate of beef. *None of these dishes come cheap, and they probably add up to almost another silver ducat? If that's the case...*

"We are left with only nine silver ducats?" The bard cried out in alarm.

"It is 'I' who am left with only nine silver ducats," Red Cloak emphasized clearly.

"The r-room..." The bard was panicking so much that he stuttered.

"Relax, I paid for a week of the room's fee in advance," Red Cloak replied very understandingly.

The bard heaved a sigh of relief, pleased with the additional wealth as he patted his chest. "Then having nine silver ducats is enough. I'll sing the Ballad of the Warrior Queen for two more days, and then I can start earning money."

He shot a glance at Red Cloak and could not resist commenting, "But then again, you are also too careless about money. Since you only have one gold and one silver ducat left, why did you still let me order that glass of expensive wine? Ahhh! Don't tell me you booked two rooms for the entire week?"

After receiving Red Cloak's nod of confirmation, the bard tossed both hands in the air with a sage-like expression of lamentation on his face. Then he bowed his head and continued mumbling to himself, "There was absolutely no need to book an extra room. It would have been fine for two people to cram together a bit, right? It's really such an excessive waste of money. Now I don't know whether the innkeeper is even willing to give us a refund. Probably not... Did you know, a gold ducat is actually enough for a family to comfortably live for more than half a year? If it is a thrifty family, it could be enough to last even eight or nine months. How can you spend it all just like that? If you were very rich, then it wouldn't matter, but you already have no money, so how can you still be so extravagant?! Even though it is hard to live frugally after being accustomed to luxury, since you're already

out of funds, you still have to learn to be thrifty...”

“Why don’t you order another glass of wine?” Red Cloak calmly asked.

“No way, how can I still drink wine? We’re going to run out of money soon!” The bard was very anxious. There was only a gold ducat and silver ducat left on the table... No, it was actually nine silver ducats!

“Don’t say that. We got acquainted for better or for worse, so it’s a must to give a glass of farewell wine.”

“Farewell?” Stunned, the bard asked blankly, “Ah, but I’m not leaving? Don’t tell me that you are leaving?”

“I know you are not leaving, and I am also not leaving.” Red Cloak finished speaking collectedly, then suddenly grabbed the bard’s collar, and fiercely growled, “But if you start complaining again, then I’m afraid I’ll be unable to resist hacking you to death with one strike of my blade, sending you to the netherworld!”

The bard obediently closed his mouth. “I won’t complain anymore, so let’s eat!”

Red Cloak didn’t respond at all.

“Will you come to listen to the song?” The bard still couldn’t resist asking another question. Having a person who liked to listen to the Ballad of the Warrior Queen sitting in the audience was always better than having the whole place filled with booing, though as a rather cold fellow, Red Cloak probably wouldn’t applaud.

"I'll see if I can go later." Red Cloak looked outside the door, saying, "Besides going to the guild, I still have some other business to take care of."

The bard didn't dare ask Red Cloak what he was going to do, because when Red Cloak had spoken, his voice had dropped several pitches. He thought it definitely couldn't be anything that would make the listener happy.

"Since you aren't leaving, I'm going to go first."

As Red Cloak spoke, he seemed to have shot a glance at the bard's wine. The wine glass was still one-third full, but he had no intention of waiting for the bard to slowly finish it. He pushed away the plate in front of him, left his seat, and headed for the door of the inn.

"See you later!" After loudly bidding Red Cloak goodbye, the bard continued to drink his wine, but when he looked down he saw two shiny ducats on the table. He hastily stood up and yelled, "Wait, you didn't take your money!"

Red Cloak didn't even look back and just replied nonchalantly, "Keep it for your lunch money!"

"Then what... about you?"

The bard's voice grew softer and softer as he spoke, as Red Cloak had already walked out. Even if he were to call out again, Red Cloak wouldn't be able to hear him.

*Why is he being so nice to me? Is it really just for a performance of the Ballad of the Warrior Queen?* The bard pondered over Red Cloak's every action, but still could not reach a verdict.

"Maybe it's not so much that he's being nice to me than the fact that his character is simply rather casual?"

Believing that he had already figured it out, the bard beckoned a waitress over to finish settling the bill and then inquired about taverns in the vicinity where he could perform the Ballad of the Warrior Queen.



The night was dark, and the moon had risen up high. Red Cloak returned quite late and went to his own room unaccompanied, having no intention of greeting the bard in the neighboring room.

While removing his cloak, boots and other things, he looked at the list of missions in his hand. The more he looked the more his head started to ache... It was not contemplating how to complete the missions that made his head ache, but merely thinking about how to reach his destinations.

At first, he had also used the sun, the moon and the stars to guide him in his journeys, but later on there were always people by his side. Since they were always better than him at navigating, this essential adventuring skill was shelved. He had never thought that many years later there would be no one by his side. Not being able to get his bearings had suddenly become the biggest obstacle in his adventuring life!

Not long after, there were a few knocks on the door.

"Who is it?" Red Cloak didn't even lift his head to ask.

"It's me..." Upon saying this, the person outside the door suddenly realized that he himself was apparently not so familiar with the person beyond the door as to be able to use "me" as a substitute, so he quickly clarified, "The bard who sings the Ballad of the Warrior Queen." Red Cloak looked at his cloak, unsure of whether or not to put it on once more, though he felt that it was unnecessary since he didn't have any particular intention of hiding his appearance. He felt rather annoyed as he asked after much thought, "Is something up?"

The other party stammered a bit and inquired, "Do y-you have any medicine to treat wounds?"

"Medicine to treat wounds?" Red Cloak laughed. *It couldn't actually be that because he sang the Ballad of the Warrior Queen, the supporters of the Holy King and Queen beat him up, right?*

Red Cloak pondered for a moment, but still grabbed the cloak and draped it on. While rummaging through his luggage for wound medicine, he shouted, "I have some, come in."

Red Cloak had found the wound medicine right when he heard the sound of the door opening, so he turned around to look...

"What happened to your face?" He blurted out, astonished.

The bard had a bloody nose and a swollen face. Compared to his comely appearance in the morning, he almost seemed like a completely different person. If it wasn't for that head of blond hair and the fact that he was dressed in the same clothes, Red Cloak truly would not have recognized him. *His face already looks this bad. Who knows how severe the injuries hidden beneath his clothes are?*

But then again, no matter how one looked at the bard, he didn't seem like the sort to clash with others. This was apparent from everything ranging from his personality and profession all the way to his equipment that was entirely ill-suited for fighting. There wasn't much of a difference between allowing the bard to fight and letting him die.

*How could a bard, that practically has no fighting strength to speak of, end up with a bloody nose and a swollen face, looking as if he went through a desperate battle? Even singing the Ballad of the Warrior Queen shouldn't have caused people to go as far as to beat him into this state, right?*

"Could you help me apply the medicine?" The bard walked in, saw the wound medicine in Red Cloak's hands and pleaded, "There are also wounds on my back, so I'm unable to apply the medicine myself."

Hearing this, Red Cloak frowned and bluntly shouted, "Come here, take off your shirt and pants and then sit on the bed."

The bard obediently did so. After taking off his shirt, the wounds originally hidden beneath his clothes became apparent. As expected, they were not much different from the wounds on his face, black and blue all over.

Red Cloak felt up the bard's body all over until the latter felt an unnerving sensation from head to toe and retreated several steps to withdraw into the corner of the bed, both his hands crossed over his chest. He asked with a shaky voice, "W-what are you doing... Don't tell me that you have some strange fetish?"

Red Cloak rolled his eyes and grumpily said, "I was just ascertaining whether or not your bones are broken, so don't give me that strange look. Furthermore, you don't look much different from a plate of minced meat noodles right now. No one would have any interest in you! Also, what kind of man tries to cover up his chest? If you want to cover something, then shouldn't you be covering down there?"

The bard instantly lowered his hands and switched to covering his nether regions.

Seeing this, Red Cloak almost threw a punch. However, the bard's face simply did not have any uninjured areas for him to punch, and he was not cruel enough to add injuries to already existing wounds. He could only clench his fists tightly and growl sternly, "Get over here so I can apply the medicine!"

"Okay..."

The bard glanced at the other party's tightly clenched fists. Although Red Cloak's hands were not large, and could even be considered small for a man, his finger joints were thick and rough, proof of his extensive training day in and day out. It was hard to say whether he could beat up a strong man, but at least it was no problem for him to

beat up a bard. So the bard meekly shifted back to Red Cloak's side, and allowed the latter to apply the medicine on him.

Red Cloak did his best to apply the medicine gently, but it was impossible to make it painless for this sort of wound. However, going beyond his expectations, the bard actually didn't yell out in pain... Although there were tears hovering at the edges of his eyes the entire time.

"What happened?" Red Cloak asked as he applied the medicine.

"Got beaten up." The bard answered obediently.

"I'm not blind, I can see that!" Red Cloak glared at him furiously even though the cloak was in the way, and the bard couldn't see his expression either. He coldly asked, "Why did you get beaten up?"

"I sang the Ballad of the Warrior Queen, and was seen by the city patrol..."

"So just because you sang the Ballad of the Warrior Queen, the patrol beat you up until you became like this?" Red Cloak frowned. This was different from what he had thought. Could it be that the patrol just happened to be fanatic worshippers of the Holy King?

"No, they said that within this city, one must pay money to earn money. They even said that because I insulted the Holy King, I had to pay double the amount. But as you know already, I am unable to hand over any money at all, so they beat me up."

Generally speaking, patrols naturally didn't have any authority to extort money at all. It was just that every city's patrol more or less had these sorts of corrupt practices, making up strange rules in order to take money from weak-looking foreigners. These sorts of happenings were not uncommon at all.

Under the rule of the Holy King, these happenings had been eradicated from the vicinity of the capital city. However, this place wasn't near the capital, so unfortunately no matter how wise and capable the Holy King may be, at the end of it all he only had one pair of eyes. Thus, there was no way he could oversee places like this.

"What about the money I gave you?" Red Cloak quietly asked, "Why didn't you give it to them?"

The bard fiercely retorted, "How can I give it away? Had I given it to them, we wouldn't have any food to eat today and tomorrow. It doesn't matter if I don't have any food to eat, but how can I be responsible for you not having anything to eat as well?! It is your money, after all!"

"I still have a lot of rations." Red Cloak replied mildly, his tone already becoming much softer. He was now applying medicine onto a palm. This palm was too appalling to look at, swollen to the likeness of five sausages. This also pained the bard so much that he inhaled sharply. Red Cloak frowned deeply, criticizing, "They have gone too far, dealing blows as heavy as these just because you were unable to pay any money."

However, the bard spoke up on behalf of the patrol, "It wasn't like

that! I wasn't beaten up this badly at first."

"Then what exactly happened? Can't you say it all at once?" Red Cloak was finally starting to fume a little. In his whole lifetime he had never before seen a man that was as wishy-washy as this!

Feeling a bit indignant, the bard said, "It's because they demanded all my money from me, and then laid their dirty paws on a lady dancer... I couldn't just stand by idly and watch! So I went up and helped shield her for a bit, shouting at her to quickly leave. After that I was beaten up until I became like this."

Upon hearing this, Red Cloak grinned with a trace of ridicule. He already knew the answer, yet he still asked, "Did that dancer escape?"

The bard fell silent for a while, then spoke, "No."

Red Cloak mildly chided, "You're really foolish. Is this a world where a woman can walk alone? Most likely that lady dancer came out to sell herself. There would certainly have been men following her, ensuring that money could be collected afterwards. She also has to continue earning money in this city, so she cannot afford to offend the patrol. It looks like she probably went off with the patrol, paying them with her body."

The bard turned silent, and Red Cloak also stopped his interrogation. He knew very clearly that the situation had unfolded just like this. There was no mistake about it.

He wordlessly finished applying the medicine and then patted the

bard's shoulder, saying, "Done."

The bard stumbled from the pat, but more than that, a burning pain passed through his shoulder. He complained, "Can't you be a bit gentler? I'm wounded..."

Red Cloak replied coldly, "Since you know that it's painful, then don't do this sort of stupid thing again! Now return to your room, sleep well for several days, and don't go out at all for a while. If you bump into the patrol, you would get more than your share of pain!"

The bard let out an "Oh." He stood up, gathered his shirt, and then walked towards the door. However, he suddenly stopped in his tracks halfway, hesitated for a while, and finally turned his head to ask, "Do I really look a lot like minced meat noodles at the moment?"

As he spoke, he touched his own face. It stung very painfully, which made him even more worried.

What would happen if he ruined his face? He was a bard whose livelihood depended on his singing voice and good looks.

"It's slightly better than that."

Considering that the bard was beaten up because he wanted to do a good deed, Red Cloak didn't want to continue berating him, although in the end he was still a fool.

"Really? I'm still quite handsome, right?" Upon hearing this, the bard beamed with delight.

"Mmhm."

"How handsome?"

Red Cloak glanced at his face and flatly said, "As handsome as rainbow-colored bread."

"..."

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> **"Eh? You use blades? Normally everyone wants to use a 'sword' to chop me up!":** What the bard means is that normally, people threaten to use double-edged swords on him, while Red Cloak uses single-edged blades. Red Cloak's weapon is essentially a type of dao, but as Female Warrior is more of a European setting, we will not be calling it a dao.

## Chapter 2: Light and Shadow Part 2

The next morning, Red Cloak unhurriedly walked down the flight of stairs. Downstairs, it wasn't very crowded or noisy. The price range of the inn was considered above average, so ordinary adventurers would not stay there. Rather, those staying at this inn were mostly merchants. Compared to adventurers who liked to shout in loud voices, merchants were usually more low-key and wouldn't voluntarily cause trouble. Moreover, they were less likely to pay special attention to someone who liked to wear a red cloak, and they wouldn't stubbornly want to lift that person's cloak to see what was underneath it.

This was precisely the main reason why Red Cloak, although an adventurer, had chosen to stay at this inn.

He sat down in front of an empty table, and as he ate the rations that he had brought downstairs, he pondered over what he should do first. He had already used up what money he had, so it was high time he did some missions to earn money. Otherwise, if he were to travel far in the future, he wouldn't have enough money to buy rations and basic equipment. *On the other hand...*

He suddenly stopped contemplating and eating, instead concentrating on listening to what the people sitting at the table beside him were saying. Three merchants sat there, and they were talking among themselves in hushed tones. Their expressions were extremely similar, as they appeared worried and were all frowning. They soon started exchanging information.

"Isn't the tax for entering this city a bit too high? Last year, we only

needed to pay twenty silver ducats to enter the city with a cart of cargo, right? Now, the cost has actually increased to one gold ducat! Even the tax for entering the capital isn't this expensive. If it were cheaper merchandise, the entire cart of goods could be bought with one gold ducat."

"I think that I won't be coming to this city again. I would rather hasten my journey a little more, and then rest at the next city."

"Quit dreaming. I just came over from the next city, and the tax there has also just increased. For one cart of goods, you need to pay eighty silver ducats."

"What?"

All of the merchants' faces fell, and they exchanged glances. One of them couldn't help but grumble in a low voice, "Looks like the lords of the cities around this area are actually pretty united!"

Another merchant, seemingly the oldest in the group, quickly whispered, "Don't talk about it anymore. Compared to before, at least we can now live our days comfortably. Praise be to the Holy King!"

The other two immediately followed with the chant, "Praise be to the Holy King." However, after saying that, the three merchants continued furrowing their brows. Having lost the mood to continue chatting, they finished eating in a hurry and then left to go about their own business.

At this moment, Red Cloak started eating his rations once more; he was no longer pondering over what he ought to do first, but rather

over this whole country – the Kingdom of Holy Light.

The Holy King... His true name was in fact Lancel Ornister.<sup>1</sup> Logically speaking, he ought to have been called King Lancel or King Ornister. However, in order to express their reverence toward him, the citizens usually addressed him as the Holy King.

King Lancel officially established the country in the first year of his reign during the first year of the Sacred Calendar. However, it was only in the third year of the Sacred Calendar that he finally managed to unify the entire continent. Now, the twelfth year of the Sacred Calendar was not even over, yet there were already corrupt city lords appearing?

Or perhaps it was Red Cloak who was asking for too much?

This place was really very far from the capital. The short nine years of governance may not have been enough to let King Lancel control everything within the country. Not to mention, within those nine years, there had been an invasion from another country, and they fought a war that lasted for one year and eight months.

*After ending a long era of chaos, he has only been in power for nine years and even fought a two-year war within that timeframe. Despite all that, he was still able to let the citizens live comfortably. No matter how you said it, this is a truly incredible feat, and as such the citizens hold the Holy King in high esteem.*

“You... The one wearing the red cloak!”

Hearing that, Red Cloak turned his head. As expected, he saw the bard, who was the only acquaintance of his who was around. The bard was walking down the stairs.

*Eh?* Red Cloak sized up the bard. Yesterday, the bard's face was so swollen that it resembled a piece of bread, but the swelling had gone down by more than half today. What was left was only a large swelling on his forehead and a few bruises here and there.

"Your wounds sure recovered quickly." He was a little astonished.

Hearing these words, the bard proudly said, "Well? I don't look like a piece of bread anymore, right?"

"That is true." Red Cloak said indifferently.

"Do you know why I can recover this quickly? You don't know, right?" The bard started smiling foolishly, as though having a secret that Red Cloak knew nothing about was an unprecedented victory.

However, Red Cloak gave no reply. He only silently chewed on his own rations. He indeed found it strange, but he had no intention of asking about it. Every adventurer had his own secret, and knowing fewer of others' secrets meant that he would be in less danger when adventuring. This was common knowledge that every experienced adventurer knew.

Though the bard looked conflicted, he continued chattering non-stop, "Want me to tell you? This is a secret, but since you treat me so well, not telling you would make me seem like I was being ungrateful to my

benefactor... If you really want to know, then I can tell you! Do you want to know? You want to, right?"

*This guy, would not talking kill him?!* A little vexed, Red Cloak growled at him, "If you want to say it, then say it! Continue spouting rubbish and I'll help you revert back to the way you looked yesterday!"

Despite hearing that, not only was the bard undaunted, he even revealed an extremely satisfied expression. Touched, he said, "I just knew that you really wanted to know this secret!"

*This guy is beyond hope!* Red Cloak used his hand to support his forehead, feeling a migraine coming on. He deeply regretted ever bothering about this fellow. He should have let him live on hair oil, giving himself peace and quiet.

The bard smiled mysteriously and said, "If I say that this is a blessing from God, would you believe it?"

"God?"

Red Cloak's tone showed that he found it extremely strange. Rather than saying that he was surprised because he had heard the word "God" it was more that he was unable to cope with the bard making a random statement like that without giving an explanation. A little impatient, he asked, "When you say God, what exactly do you mean?"

The bard said with absolute certainty, "God is of course that kind of soft and squishy small thing that can be kneaded into different shapes and bounces around everywhere."

Red Cloak fell silent for a while before he indifferently said, "Sounds more like a sort of mushy creature called a slime that crawls around in the forest. Not God."

"Oh!" The bard seemed at a loss and said, "Now that you say that, they really are similar! However, slimes are green, but God is golden colored! Who knows... He might be the God of slimes?"

*Saying it like this, don't tell me you are a slime!*

"Even if your injuries have healed, don't run around aimlessly. If you get seen by the patrols, things will not turn out well for you."

Red Cloak tried his best to suppress the urge to send this idiotic bard flying with a punch, and diverted the topic away from the slime god... If they were to continue talking about it, he really would violently beat the bard to a pulp, even if he didn't like roughing up those without any fighting ability.

Instead, the bard revealed a troubled expression. Sobbing, he said, "Err... Nonetheless, I cannot do as you say! I still have to sing the Ballad of the Warrior Queen for one more day, so I must go out."

Red Cloak furrowed his brows, remembering the strange rule that the bard had previously mentioned, that he had to sing the Ballad of the Warrior Queen for three days every time he arrived at a new place. He didn't ask for the reason, but only asked indifferently, "You can't even miss one day?"

The bard could only helplessly say, "I don't have a choice. My teacher said that if I wanted him to accept me as his disciple, I had to agree to one condition. That is, once I became a proper bard, every time I visit a new place, I would have to sing the Ballad of the Warrior Queen for three days. This rule is very strict, but my teacher he... really is a superb bard!"

*Seems like even if I don't ask him the reason, he will still reveal it on his own...* Seeing the bard's eager eyes filled with anticipation and the "even if you don't say anything, I will still talk about it" look on his face, Red Cloak felt another headache coming on. He could only do as the bard wished and ask him, "Who is your teacher?"

Hearing that, the bard's anticipation-filled eyes immediately vanished. He put on an act of coughing loudly a few times, and then lifted his chin. In an extremely proud manner, he announced the answer, "Lorenzo Louis."

"The bard nicknamed LL?"

Hearing this name, Red Cloak was truly a little surprised. He laughed, and then with a hint of disbelief, said, "LL is the imperial bard employed by the Holy King."

"Used to be. However, when the Warrior Queen married the Holy King, he left the Holy City," added the bard immediately, just to clarify.

There seemed to be a shadow of a smile on Red Cloak's face as he said, "The imperial bard's student has been reduced to a state where he would be beaten up by the city patrol until he looks like a pig head?"

Do you think that I would believe you?"

The bard quietly pulled an insignia from his shirt pocket. The insignia was made from interwoven gold and white threads, and was shaped like a white rose. In the golden portion at the center of the rose, there was a lute. The lute was even specially arranged into an L-shape.

As everyone knew, the white rose was the emblem of the Holy King. All the people who had a white rose insignia were direct subordinates of the Holy King. Also, just looking at the object that was crafted into the center of the rose, one could deduce what the subordinate's profession was.

"Teacher said that he didn't want this object anyway, so he gave it to me. If I was really lacking money during my journey, he said that I could sell it. I had tried to sell it in the past, but once the buyer saw that it was a white rose insignia, they refused to buy it."

*Of course they wouldn't buy it. It's the white rose insignia personally issued by the Holy King. All those who have them are renowned individuals. Who would dare to buy and keep such an insignia?*

However, even though he had this insignia, Red Cloak was not swayed. He said, "This doesn't prove much. He always loses his things."

The bard sat stunned for a moment. Doubtful, he then asked, "What did you say?"

Red Cloak was silent for a while before he said nonchalantly, "I said, people are always losing things, so maybe you just picked it up."

"It's true that my teacher gave it to me!"

The bard was extremely anxious, but he himself also didn't know how to convince Red Cloak... His teacher was indeed very good at losing his things. If anyone holding onto his teacher's items came and told him that he was also LL's student, even the bard himself would suspect that the item had been picked up.

"If you say it's so, then so be it." Red Cloak neither voiced whether he believed him nor whether he recognized him as LL's student. He only made an offhanded remark and then returned to the main topic. "Under this kind of situation, your teacher would forgive you for not singing for one day. I believe that he also wouldn't want to see you get beaten to death."

"No, he wouldn't forgive me."

The bard was unexpectedly calm as he said, "He would only scold me, 'To think that at that time, outside the gate of the Valley of the Crimson Blades and with just five thousand men, the Warrior Queen actually managed to defend the invasion from the demon army of fifty thousand soldiers. She even held them off for no less than three months. You, on the other hand, can't even manage to merely sing the Ballad of the Warrior Queen for three days. Why don't you just simply go hit your head and die under the statue of the Warrior Queen?'"

"Your teacher is wrong." Red Cloak said coolly, "Comparing you to the Warrior Queen is like hitting a rock with a loaf of bread. From the start, it wouldn't be a fair battle."

The bard looked like he was about to cry as he said in grief, "You're even more ruthless than my teacher..."

At this point in time, Red Cloak swallowed the last of his rations. With a swish from his cloak, he stood up and simply said, "Let's go!"

"To where?" The bard lifted his head to look at him, puzzled.

Red Cloak said to him nonchalantly, "Aren't you going to sing? Coincidentally, I also want to listen to a song, so let's go together."

Hearing that, the bard's azure eyes instantly lit up in hope.

*Red Cloak must be really strong!*

This was not intuition, but an inference. A person who wore an eye-catching red cloak everywhere was either a reckless novice at adventuring, or a strong person who could settle any kind of trouble!

Judging from Red Cloak's actions up until now, he was definitely not new to adventuring.

Even before the bard could spit out half a word, Red Cloak immediately cut in, coldly saying, "If you say anything that I feel contains redundant words, I will use a more direct method to make you unable to go out today— I'll beat you up so badly that you can only lie in bed and then you wouldn't need to sing anymore."

"Redundant words?" The bard immediately gave a shout of

astonishment. "How is it possible for me to speak redundant words? I have never said any unnecessary words before. On this, you can relax, for I am a bard! Being excessively particular about wording is my forte. I can guarantee that my every line is as elegant as singing birds and as clear as running water in a brook..."

Hearing this, Red Cloak seized the bard's collar with one fist and then lifted him off the ground, forcibly dragging him from a sitting position to being suspended in mid-air.

The bard shut his mouth and blinked innocently. He didn't dare move a single muscle and was completely in the dark as to why Red Cloak was angry again... *But then again, his strength is really impressive. As expected, he's a strong person!*

With Red Cloak here, he would definitely not be beaten into a piece of bread by the patrol... The prerequisite being that Red Cloak could control his rage and leave him alive to go and sing.

Red Cloak held him there for quite a while. It was unclear whether he was trying to suppress his anger, or was considering which part he should start beating up first. It lasted until several of the inn's waiters walked over. Without waiting for them to speak, Red Cloak had already put down the bard and turned around to tell them, "It's fine."

Turning around, Red Cloak lowered his head. The bard saw his pair of black pupils that radiated killing intent and severity from under the hood of his cloak. Red Cloak growled at the bard word-by-word, "Other than 'yes' and 'no,' all others are redundant words!"

After roaring at the bard, Red Cloak walked out of the inn without even

looking back. Seeing Red Cloak's shadow, the stunned bard mumbled, "Just like burning ebony flames." Afterward, he immediately got to his feet and chased after Red Cloak.

After catching up with Red Cloak, he slowed down to walk beside Red Cloak. Though they were still quite far from the tavern, he had already started to hum softly.

*Seasons change, time flows on  
Gazing into the distance  
The wandering minstrel reminisces about the past...*

*Oh minstrel!  
The corners of your lips are always pulled into a brilliant smile.  
Oh minstrel!  
Your deep and distant eyes gaze beyond the people in front of you  
Oh minstrel!  
You who are so far out of reach  
What exactly are you looking at?*

*Softly, the minstrel sings  
Regardless of the distance  
My eyes remain fixed upon that woman of legend*

*Oh Warrior Queen!  
Have the Holy King and Queen destroyed your capacity for love?  
Oh Warrior Queen!  
Can the ebony flames in your eyes be lit only by battle?  
Oh Warrior Queen  
With your cold and indifferent eyes,*

*What exactly are you looking at?*

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> **“Lancel Ornister”**: Originally named Lancero Ornister by Yu Wo, as stated in the Female Warrior artbook. Both Lancel and Lancero are equally valid names, but we felt Lancel was more suiting a name for a king. Lancero is a type of military course, a type of soldier, and also less frequently used as a name.

## Chapter 3: Light and Shadow Part 3

Red Cloak stared blankly. The Ballad of the Warrior Queen that he had just heard was not the same as the one he had heard before. The bard's attitude was also very strange. Although he had kept his head bowed the whole time and hadn't looked at Red Cloak at all, the constant questions raised by the song seemed almost as if they were being asked of him.

Red Cloak darted a glance at the bard and passed judgment. "This song sounds awful. If you choose to sing this piece today, don't blame me when you get hit by someone."

"Is that so?" The bard rubbed his nose and spoke rather innocently, "But LL told me that I have to ask such questions every time I arrive somewhere new! If the Warrior Queen happens to hear me by some stroke of luck and is willing to give me an answer, LL said that he would exchange the harp that he always carries with him for that answer and also relieve me of his decree that I must always sing the Ballad of the Warrior Queen for at least three days every time I arrive at a new location."

When he finished speaking, the bard looked towards Red Cloak and asked, "What do you think? Why did the Warrior Queen want to leave? Is it because the Holy King did not love her, so staying with a lover that did not even love her was far too painful to bear? Or did the Holy King force her to leave? Or maybe it's because the Holy Queen deliberately made things difficult..."

Red Cloak interrupted the bard's endless delusions and said in a displeased manner, "Traveling bards! You people are simply over-thinking the matter. For all you might know, the Warrior Queen could have just felt that the days passing by were too boring and left of her own accord."

He hadn't expected that Red Cloak would actually answer his questions. The bard mustered his courage and pressed further. "If the reason why she left was really as you said, that it was because her life was too boring, then what exactly was she looking at then?"

Red Cloak coldly replied, "How should I know?"

The bard gave an "oh" and felt quite disappointed, but he dared not ask Red Cloak another question.

The two travelers walked in silence for a while. Suddenly, Red Cloak began to speak. "It may be possible that she was looking at the warrior and cleric, her former companions, but her mind was recalling the memories of the pain and suffering from the war. And then she realized that the happy ending she had envisioned actually turned out to be quite boring."

As the bard listened to Red Cloak's opinion, he was initially surprised, but as he carefully thought over what Red Cloak had said, he could not help but proclaim:

"Some people are born suited for never-ending fights! The happiness of which you speak is not obtained at the end of the war, but from the process of every single battle fought."

Upon hearing this, Red Cloak looked the bard in the eye and remained silent.

The bard stopped in his tracks and began to chuckle. Red Cloak also stopped and questioned him coldly, "What are you laughing at?"

The bard let out a huge smile and said, "I guess I don't need to sing the Ballad of the Warrior Queen anymore. Are you willing to go with me to see him?"

"Who?"

The bard said in a matter-of-fact tone, "Of course, that would be Lorenzo Louis. He's my teacher and also the person that you nicknamed 'LL'..."

"It's you again! To think you would dare remain in this town. Hadn't I told you to get lost yesterday?!"

The bard was stunned. He turned around to see the same patrol team from the day before. The captain of the patrol, who was more than a head taller than the average person, was staring fiercely at the bard. He had also brought along five of his team members, and they were walking straight towards the bard.

As they came closer, the patrol captain got a much clearer picture of the bard's face. He abruptly realized that the injury on the bard's face was already close to being completely healed.

*Were we not ruthless enough yesterday?* He felt a bit doubtful.  
*Just my luck... I can't believe we bumped into the patrol before we even reached a tavern.* The bard came to a better understanding of just how terrible his luck could be.

*Now, however, is not the same as last time! Red Cloak is with me. Nobody would dare lay a single hand on me! Yeah... If I look at it this way, I guess my luck isn't that terrible after all!* Following that thought, the bard once again faced his life with brimming optimism.

"Tch." The patrol captain paused for a moment and then turned to shout at his team. "Seize this delusional bastard and bring him in. We're on our way back to report our mission anyway."

After receiving the order, two members from the team immediately surged forward and effortlessly grabbed a hold of the bard.

In reality, the bard, who did not even have the strength to truss up a raw chicken,<sup>1</sup> did not resist at all. He looked at Red Cloak with wide eyes, eagerly anticipating what kind of attack the latter would use first. *A fist to send two people flying simultaneously? Or will it be cooler to give them a kick?*

As it was too difficult to overlook the fervent gaze of the bard, the patrol captain finally took notice of Red Cloak's presence. He coldly asked, "Are you his companion?"

"Nope, I don't know him," Red Cloak replied indifferently.

*Or maybe it'll be a direct strike with her blade to hack them in two! LL*

*said before that her temper has always been rather short... Hold on!* What did Red Cloak just say?! The look the bard had on his face changed instantly.

"A sensible guy, aren't you! Take this man away." The patrol captain laid out his orders, and the two patrol members immediately dragged the bard away.

While being dragged away, the bard frantically turned back to shout, "Hold on a second! Red Cloak! Why aren't you rescuing me?"

But he only managed to catch a short glimpse of a red-colored cloak as his head was forcefully wrenched back in place by the two who were restraining his movements. That almost sprained his neck and hurt so badly that every part of his face scrunched up in agony.

At this point, the patrol captain was filled with suspicion. He looked up and down at Red Cloak and bluntly commanded, "Remove your hood at once!"

Upon hearing this, a spark of hope was reignited in the bard. *If it really is her, she definitely wouldn't simply abide by what others tell her to do...* However, in the next second, the patrol captain mockingly spat, "Hmph! So you really are a guy. To think I thought you were female, with your tiny figure and red-colored cloak... How boring. Let's go!"

*A man?* The bard froze. *How's that possible? Red Cloak isn't her? Red Cloak isn't...*

### *The Warrior Queen?*

He desperately tried to turn around for a look as if his life depended on it, but the two patrol members vehemently kept his head stuck in place, preventing him from looking around by his own will.

*Just one look would be enough. Just let me have one look... Red Cloak! Are you the Warrior Queen or not?*



*Wields a blade, fond of wearing the unbridled color red, small in size, has a voice so low that it resembles that of a man, fiery black pupils... Every single detail fits exactly with the traits stated by Teacher Louis. Red Cloak is also clearly interested in both the Ballad of the Warrior Queen and the nickname LL. And to top it off, what Red Cloak just said earlier...*

*It should be fair to conclude that Red Cloak is indeed the Warrior Queen!*

No matter how the bard thought about it, Red Cloak simply had to be the Warrior Queen. *But why on earth did the patrol captain say that she is a man?*

"Pardon me but I have a question!" The bard turned to ask the two patrol members who were holding him down. Considering the awkward position he was in, with his feet lifted off the ground, his posture and manner of speech were incredibly polite. He asked, "The Warrior Queen is female, right?"

The two patrol members were stunned. They sounded extremely confused when they replied, "What the heck are you talking about?"

The bard hurriedly said, "That is, the Warrior Queen who is the second wife of the Holy King and commander of the army! She should indeed be female, right? Or would there be some chance that she is male instead?"

The two were so stunned their complexions changed. They snarled, "Y-you dare slander the Holy King?!"

"I haven't slandered him!" The bard was greatly alarmed. He quickly added, "I was only inquiring about the Warrior Queen. I did not speak any ill of the Holy King!"

"You..." One of the patrol members was so shocked that he could not even speak.

The other patrol member responded differently. He directly yelled, "Nonsense! Of course the Warrior Queen is female! Do you honestly think the Holy King would take a man for his wife? What blasphemy!"

*Oh! That makes sense as well.* The bard nodded in realization. "I understand now. Thank you for your explanation. Come to think of it, if the Warrior Queen was male, Teacher would definitely have clarified that with me."

Upon hearing this, one of the patrol members raised his fist. He slugged the bard as he continued scolding, "You still dare to speak! You're just asking for a damned beating! You dare to say that the Holy

King's wife is a man!"

The other patrol member rushed to stop his partner's actions. He painstakingly urged, "Take it easy! This guy most probably has a few loose screws in his head. What's more, bearing in mind what's in store for him later, there's no need to go over the top, right?"

Sure enough, the other lowered his fist in response to his partner's words. "Heh heh, I suppose you're right. Can't damage this face after all. A damaged face is no good to sell on the market."

*No good to sell? The bard was lost in thought. So my face is actually something worth selling? If I'd known that earlier, I would have sold it off whenever my stomach was empty and I had no money. I wonder how much it'd be worth...*

While he was still lost in thought, the two patrol members suddenly threw him forward with a hard push. Fortunately, the bard had gotten used to being thrown around by others long ago. Without further ado, he reflexively spun into the posture that was least likely to receive injuries. After groaning for a while, he promptly got up off the floor, looked around, and was shocked to realize that this place was a jail cell.

The cell contained quite a few people already. These people all had ghastly complexions and held their heads low. Despite the commotion when he was thrown in the cell, none of them had reacted.

The bard found this incredibly strange. He examined the people around him. To his surprise, every single one of them had a brand on their

right arm. *That-that's the... brand of a slave!*

At this moment, the two patrol members shut the door to the jail cell and then locked it tightly.

The bard hurriedly rushed over to the iron bars and shouted. "Wait up! Why did you guys bring me here? I didn't choose to sell my body! I'm not a slave!"

"You'll be one from now on!" The patrol guard took joy in the bard's misfortune while speaking, "Relax! With a face like yours, you'll definitely catch the attention of many rich housewives. After that, who knows, maybe your face will become even prettier than it is now!"

"Congratulations! Ha ha ha!" The two of them simply ignored the protests of the bard and left the jail while roaring with laughter.

"How could it turn out like this?"

The bard was left in a daze. Although he was indeed bullied a lot during his journey, no one had ever gone as far as kidnapping him to sell him off. Long since the establishment of the country, the Holy King had set strict regulations. Slavery was only allowed if that was the will of the person being sold off. Even parents did not have the right to sell their children. Also, regardless of the price the slave was sold at, all contracts would expire in twenty years. After twenty years, the slave could request that he be set free, unless he was willing to sell himself off once again.

"Let me out! I'm not willing to sell my body!" The bard frantically

yelled, "You've got it all wrong! I don't want to sell my body!"

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> **“did not even have the strength to truss up a raw chicken”:**

Trussing a raw chicken means to tie up its legs and wings, typically to leave it to roast in an oven. It is a very easy thing to do, which goes to show how unbelievably weak the bard is.

## Chapter 4: Light and Shadow Part 4

"Save your breath. They'll be back again later to force you into signing a slave contract."

The bard turned to look. The one who had spoken was one of the slaves. He was covered in so much filth and had a thin and weak body that if it weren't because his voice was indeed that of a man's when he had spoken just now, it would have been impossible to tell his gender from appearance alone.

"But how can that be?" The bard stated heavily, "Slaves are only permitted to sign the slave contract on the 'Slave Contract Signing Day' that happens once a year! There must also be someone whose status is at least as high as a city lord present as witness!"

"So where do you think you are right now?" The slave said in a mocking tone, "Aren't you in the city lord's prison?"

Hearing this, the bard stared in a daze for a while before he realized what was going on. He stuttered, "The city lord is v-violating the laws set by the Holy King, privately letting slaves sign their lives away? H-how could he dare to do such a thing?"

The slave spoke unenthusiastically, "If there were no money in this business, people wouldn't do it. However, even if the business was killing others, people would flock to do it so long as there's money involved. Nowadays, even ten gold ducats are not necessarily enough to buy a slave through legal means. But if someone were to kidnap slaves to sell, he would earn ten gold ducats just like that. Could there

be any business easier to do than this?"

Hearing this, the bard became very curious about this slave. His tone and language were hardly like those of a slave. He could not help but ask, "Were you also kidnapped and brought here?"

The slave fell silent for a while. He replied indifferently, "You could say that. One of the slaves escaped yesterday, so you were probably captured as his replacement. After all, the day of the auction is almost here. They probably didn't have enough time to go look for him."

The bard froze. He questioned curiously, "An auction?"

"Yeah, the underground slave auction." The slave continued on unenthusiastically, "It's probably the biggest selling event of the city. There are still two days until the auction. You'd best hurry and make yourself appear dirtier."

"Why?" The bard's eyes widened. He was one who loved being clean to the extreme!

The slave said in a tone much more mocking than before, "Dirty slaves are sent to do manual labor. Slaves that are too beautiful are sent to do work in bed. But I suppose if you would rather lie on a bed, then do preserve your pretty appearance!"

Hearing this, the bard's face flushed red. He quickly scooped up some soil from the ground and spread it over his face. However, the moment he applied it he almost threw up. The soil in this place was really too smelly. It did not only smell of soil but also had the stench of

excrement and rotting food mixed into it.

The bard was so disgusted by this smell that a number of tears had already fallen from his eyes, yet he could not rub the soil off of his face either. He wailed as if he were at a funeral, "Why on earth is such a thing happening? Isn't this supposed to be a time of peace and prosperity? The Holy King definitely does not permit such a thing..."

The slave snorted coldly. "Hmph! Holy King? To lowly people like us, whichever king it is makes no difference. We're not in a position where we're entitled to receive his grace, and he likewise doesn't bother with places like this one."

The bard wanted to rebuke those words, as he had seen plenty of peaceful cities under the rule of the Holy King on his journey, and this was the first time he had ever witnessed such a situation!

But instead, he abruptly closed his mouth and appeared to be deep in thought.

The slave looked quite oddly at the bard and held some curiosity as he asked, "What? You've fallen into despair that quickly?"

The bard shook his head from side to side then said in a rather confused manner, "No. I just suddenly thought of one of my friends. He just abandoned me a moment ago and didn't care for the fact that I was kidnapped."

"And you still call him your friend?" The slave rolled his eyes from under his disheveled hair.

The bard paid no attention to what the slave was saying. Instead, he started talking to himself, "Ooh! On the contrary, having considered all that you said earlier, I feel as if it would be far from a coincidence if she were to appear here. Maybe it was all in wait for the illegal auction. If that's so, I guess I have no need to be troubled anymore..."

*But then again, just now, the patrol leader had said that Red Cloak is a man, but the Warrior Queen is a woman. So if Red Cloak really is a man, then he's definitely not the Warrior Queen... Aaah! To think that I went back to square one!*

"Sob, sob... Never in my entire life have I wanted to see a woman so badly." The bard wanted to cry but had no tears. If Red Cloak really was a man, then not only had he failed to find the Warrior Queen, he might even henceforth become a slave... *Have mercy on me!*

"You're stuck in jail, yet you're still thinking of women?" The slave's face twitched. He really wanted to inflict pain on the idiot spouting reckless words in front of him.

The bard rebutted, "Of course I have to think of a woman! If I don't, then who would come to save us?"

"What?" The slave froze. However, he then thought about how clean and fair the man before him originally was. Perhaps he was even the gigolo of some woman, so naturally, he would wish that this same woman would come to his rescue.

"But I don't know if Red Cloak really is a woman or not... Sob. If I had

known this would happen, I wouldn't have left God in the forest because otherwise, He would probably be able to come to my rescue? After all, He's God! Even if He's the God of Slimes, God is still God!"

"... So you're actually just a mad man?"



"Hey! Wake up! How on earth do you manage to sleep like a pig in a place like this!?"

The bard rubbed his eyes and asked in bewilderment, "Oh... Is the sun up already?"

"You can wait for sunrise if that's what you want, but I'm going to go off first!"

"You're going off?" The bard stared blankly as he asked, "Where to?"

"Obviously to escape from this place!" The slave rolled his eyes. He snapped, "You're still sleeping? Well, I'm not going to wait for you. Bye!"

The bard remained stunned for a moment. He blinked his eyes hard, and then he was finally genuinely awake.

The slaves were all crowded at a corner, but the number of people there was gradually reducing one by one... Only when there were about three or four people left did the bard realize that they had dug a hole and left through that!

He stayed stunned for several seconds. It was only when almost everyone had already made their way out that the bard came to his senses. He breathed a soft whisper, "Wait for me!" and proceeded to squeeze through the hole after them.

When he reached the other side, he took a deep breath of stench-free, fresh air and then proceeded to gaze at the star-filled sky. The bard suddenly understood how precious freedom was. Being able to escape from that destitution truly filled his whole heart with feelings of bliss.

He turned back to look at the hole. Although it was not very large, its size was just enough for a grown man to climb out of it. It seemed nothing like what could be dug with one's bare hands.

"Hey. Hey. Um... You! How did you manage to dig this hole?"

The slave rolled his eyes and said, "Hey? I have a name you know. It's Cale! I was having a meal at the time I was captured, so I hid my soup spoon on me right on the spot. We used that soup spoon to dig."

"Oh, Cale. Nice to meet you. My name is Silvester."

"Such a long and stuffy name... Are you a nobleman? This way." After speaking, perhaps because the bard had also given his name, Cale helpfully tugged the bard to prevent him from being separated from the rest in the dark of night.

"I'm no nobleman. This name was given to me by my teacher."

Silvester stifled a laugh and shook his head to express his denial.

However, he was not entirely sure either. After all, Lorenzo Louis, as the imperial bard, was not only a nobleman but also held one of the highest ranks possible. And since Silvester was Lorenzo's only student and successor, even if he failed to inherit everything from Lorenzo, it was true that he would still be of some status.

"Everyone, stop. Let's hide here for the time being!"

Silvester widened his eyes. *This place is only roughly two streets away from the city lord's residence! And I thought we'd be pulling an all-nighter to escape. I was even scared that I'd be left behind by everyone since I'm so physically weak!*

"Cale, are we not leaving the city?" The other slaves also appeared to be worried.

Cale shook his head and said, "The city gates are not open at night, so we won't be able to leave the city tonight. However, no need to fret, everyone. The city lord would not dare to create too big a ruckus searching for us within the city. After all, privately selling slaves is illegal."

Everyone walked into a house. Cale immediately squatted down and felt the floor with his hand. In the end, he pulled up a secret door. "Go on. There is a basement below."

The slaves jumped down one at a time. The basement was not all that small, and there were even numerous pickled foods laid out on the surrounding shelves. Despite the fact that the jars were covered in dust, to these prisoners who had not had a proper meal in a long time,

they would even eat bread that had been stepped on off the floor, let alone something from a jar covered in dust.

Cale threw over a jar to Silvester. The latter was unable to react right away and scrambled around for a good while before managing to find his balance.

"Eat. Don't worry. I've eaten this before. I admit the taste has gone a little bad, but you won't die from eating it."

Silvester frowned as he looked at the exceedingly dirty jar. Nevertheless, he could only wipe the jar on his pants, and then he proceeded to eat the food inside with no complaints.

Although Silvester loved gourmet foods and was considerably picky about what he ate, after following his teacher around the wilderness for many years, he had since eaten a hideously messy array of food. Not to mention that at the time when he had just met his teacher and had yet to become good at cooking, being able to eat dried rations was the equivalent of fine dining. And if they finished all the dried rations and still could not locate any town whatsoever, then he would have to mentally prepare himself to taste all kinds of things, be it half-cooked, burnt frog meat boiled in weeds or a banquet of slimes.

While eating the pickled food that had gone slightly bad, Silvester began considering his situation.

*I can't help but feel that this escape was too easy. I feel like I'm forgetting something... Ah! That's right. The guards did not try to prevent our escape at all!* He exclaimed, "We're so lucky it so

happened that the guards were away for some reason!"

"Lucky?" Cale laughed coldly and then said, "I observed them for several days. Those guards are incredibly lazy. When they change shift, the earlier shift would leave early and the later shift would come late. The interval where no one is around is half an hour long at the very least."

*Half an hour? The bard was aghast as he realized, There's no more than twelve hours during daylight... These guards are really slacking off to an unbelievable extent!*

Cale gave orders to everyone like a general. "You're free to do whatever you want after you've finished eating, but make sure to keep the noise down. Try not to talk at all if you can, lest you want the search party to notice us."

*What? No one intends to go off by themselves?* Silvester looked in astonishment at the people around him. There were about twenty or so people around, and practically everyone wore an uneasy look. Perhaps no one dared to leave alone and would all rather stay with the group. At the very least, Cale seemed like a guy who knew what he was doing, and he had already succeeded in getting everyone out of jail.

Silvester was also afraid to leave. He had already clashed with the guards twice. If he were to even set foot on the streets, he would definitely be caught right away.

After eating, no one dared to speak a word. Most simply lowered their

heads and slept.

Silvester originally intended to have a chat with Cale, but he was glared at instead and was even reprimanded, "Keep it down." He had nothing to do and was also not particularly feeling sleepy, but he still tried to sleep.

Bit by bit, he drifted into slumber. At first, he could not sleep at all, but when he was half-asleep, he suddenly felt someone push him. Immediately, he jolted awake, and the color red flashed before his eyes...

"Red..." *Cloak?*

## Chapter 5: Light and Shadow Part 5

The moment he spoke, Red Cloak covered his mouth and leaned close to his ear to whisper, "Don't speak. Just nod in reply. Do you trust me?"

Silvester blinked a few times. When he heard Red Cloak's question, he immediately nodded, resembling the action of pounding garlic. But after nodding, he realized that he had absolutely no basis for trusting Red Cloak in the first place. He did not know the other party's real name and had also never even seen their face... Not to mention he wasn't even sure about Red Cloak's gender.

"Follow me."

Red Cloak let go of Silvester, then turned around to climb out of the basement. Silvester hurriedly followed but looked back to scan the rest of the group before he left. Everyone was sleeping like the dead. Even Cale, who was supposed to be on night-watch, had fallen asleep as well. Silvester could not tell if it was because he was actually exhausted or if it was Red Cloak's doing.

*If Red Cloak really is the Warrior Queen, I'll definitely beg her to come back and help you guys.* Silvester vowed to himself.



Loud booms sounded one after another. Cale had immediately woken up at the first blast of sound, but his reaction was still not quick enough. The basement door had been kicked directly to the floor by someone. Cale raised his head only to catch a glimpse of the black

uniform that the patrol team wore. His heart sank as he understood that their escape this time was now a failure.

Yet there were still parts he did not comprehend. *How did the patrol team manage to find this place, and how on earth did they accomplish it in such a short period of time?*

*While the city isn't exactly large, it is still of considerable size. Besides, they can't blatantly conduct the search in public, so how could they have discovered a secret door concealed among the floor boards with such ease and speed?*

He hardly believed that the patrol team, who were so lazy that they left the place unguarded for half an hour while changing shifts, could be experts at searching.

"Get out here, all of you! Any bastard who lags behind will get whipped! Damn you bunch of assholes! You made me get reprimanded by the city lord!"

The color of the slaves' faces was ashen. Some had expressions so defeated it was as if they were facing certain death. They climbed out of the basement one by one, and as they had expected, received a round of beating.

The patrol captain spoke with a foul-mouth. "Damn it, if it wasn't for tomorrow being the day of the auction and the city lord ordering us not to rough you up, I would have beaten all of you to death!"

Despite the city lord's order, the patrol team still raised their hands at

the slaves from time to time. Either way, seeing as the slaves already had a fair amount of injuries, as long as they did not cripple the slaves, they could still satisfy their lord.

"Silvester?"

Cale was shocked to see a face he knew mixed among the guards. He realized right away why the guards had managed to find them so easily...

Silvester had betrayed them!

Cale roared, "I'll kill you," then immediately pounced in Silvester's direction with an expression akin to a mad man's. However, he was soon wrestled to the ground by quite a few guards.

Terrified, Silvester retreated a number of steps. He had an easygoing attitude and usually never provoked any deep animosities; hence, this was the first time he had ever seen a person direct such vicious hatred toward him.

"Captain, we're done restraining!" a guard reported in a loud voice.

The patrol captain laughed maliciously as he reproached his subordinates. "You're done? Nonsense! Don't you know how to get things done? See that gigolo still out here? Tie him up with the rest!" The patrol team laughed in unison and proceeded toward the gigolo their leader spoke of.

Silvester stared at them in shock. He frantically spoke, "Hold on!

Didn't you say that you'd let me go if I told you where the others were hiding?"

The patrol captain laughed coldly. "When did I say that? You'd better not speak such rubbish around here!"

A patrol member twisted Silvester's hands behind his back and tied a rope around them. Silvester did not dare protest. He simply cried out wistfully with unshed tears, "You clearly did say so! How could you go back on your word?"

Cale sneered, "So he went back on his word. What can you do about it? You actually believed him. I guess your head was full of s\*\*\* to begin with!"

Silvester withdrew his head. While he felt deeply wronged, he did not dare refute a single line of it.

"Lock this guy up in a separate jail cell to spare him from getting torn apart by the other inmates. If even one of them dies, the city lord would definitely not let us off!" The patrol captain laughed maliciously, "But don't lock him up too far away. We don't want this gigolo to feel too lonely. Let's lock them up in adjacent cells so that they can chat."



*Waaaa! Red Cloak, you're really gonna get me killed at this rate!*

Silvester shrank into the furthest corner of the adjacent cell. He felt so wronged that he was ready to cry bitterly until he lost his voice.

The curses and condemnations from the neighboring jail cell came without pause. Thankfully, the ones they were cursing were his parents, grandparents, and so forth, whom he had never seen before. No one cursed his teacher, so he had no need to refute them to defend his teacher's reputation.

Cale was the only one among them who did not waste his breath screaming and cursing. He simply stared coldly at Silvester with eyes brimming with deep-seated hatred... *If the bars separating the two jail cells were to suddenly vanish, while the rest of the slaves would probably charge over and beat me to a pulp, wouldn't Cale most definitely kill me?*

Whenever he noticed the hatred in Cale's eyes, Silvester felt a number of cold shivers run down his back. In the end, he could not even bear to look at him and shrank into himself, desperately trying to hypnotize himself into falling asleep quickly.

But with the cursing from twenty people in the adjacent cell no more than three meters away, no matter how thick-skinned a person might be, it would be impossible to fall asleep!

However, the cursing suddenly stopped completely. Silvester felt it strange so he lifted his head to see. The slaves who had originally crowded the side nearest to him were now dispersing to let someone through. Cale walked out from behind. He stopped right before the bars and stared straight at Silvester.

After staring for a long time, Cale finally opened his mouth to speak. "Why did you betray us? I thought about it over and over and it still

doesn't make sense. You aren't the type of person who would betray someone... because you don't have the brains to do so! Someone who had betrayal in mind wouldn't have given his name, would he?"

*Can't you say that it's because I'm actually a good person?* Silvester felt more wronged than ever. He snuck a glance at the patrol members outside. *They are sitting quite far away, maybe because the cursing was overly noisy?*

Only now did Silvester dare to speak. Quickly and softly, he said, "I didn't betray any of you! I really didn't!"

Cale snorted in disdain. It looked like he didn't believe Silvester at all. Silvester wanted to explain himself, but after thinking of a certain person's warning, he could no longer risk speaking. *No matter how frightening Cale is, he's definitely not as scary as THAT person! Well... that person has never attacked me... but I imagine they would definitely be frightening if they did!*

Having thought thus far, he tilted his head slightly downward to avoid Cale's gaze and did not venture to speak a single word of protest.

"Silvester, no matter what plan you've devised, you'd better remember that I'll definitely get revenge on you for selling us out!"

Hearing this, Silvester raised his head, more alarmed than before. He nearly blurted out an entire lengthy explanation. But after considering it might not be too long until the misunderstandings would be cleared up, he restrained himself.

Both sides fell silent. Even the slaves who were endlessly screaming curses stopped, as if Cale had already helped them reach a verdict. In the midst of this uneasy form of tranquility, the sun rose higher and higher in the sky, and it was finally noon.

Although it was “finally” noon, in actuality, when they were brought back to jail, it was already nearly daybreak. They had only been in jail for roughly three hours. Perhaps it was just the fact that he was being stared at with eyes filled with such animosity that Silvester finally understood how it felt to have a day crawl by like a year.

By the time the patrol members rudely dragged him out of his cell, Silvester fought the impulse to thank them. However, the next second, he immediately buried his words of gratitude, as the other slaves were also being escorted out of the neighboring cell. They stood only a few feet away from him. He dreaded that if the patrol team were to loosen their grip, they would charge over to beat him to a pulp.

Thankfully, the current patrol team had a much more serious attitude compared to the previous night's. They seemed to have no intention of lollygagging along the way and so watched over the slaves very firmly throughout the journey. After they stuffed everybody onto two horse-pulled carts as if they were commodities, they started off, the carts swaying and shaking. Only after quite a long period of time did they finally stop.

Everyone was rushed off the carts and made to stand at attention in front of a vacant building that looked close to being in ruins. However, once they entered the building, the interior was neat and tidy, and there were already several people who were either standing or sitting.

These people were dressed in rather exquisite clothing, especially the ones sitting down. The clothes that they were wearing demonstrated that they were definitely of noble background.

Silvester was especially curious and looked around everywhere. He noticed that everyone at the event wore masks, almost as if they were attending a masquerade ball.

One of the masked men walked up to a small podium. His clothes looked pretty luxurious, but even the most magnificent of clothes would not be of any help in improving his figure. His big belly was practically going to make his clothes burst.

The fat man spoke cheerily. "Everyone here's a long-time customer, so explaining the rules yet again would be unnecessary, right?"

His words provoked a burst of soft laughter.

"There are around twenty slaves in total today. The starting price will be five gold."

Displeasure erupted from the floor. "Why are there so few this time around?"

"About that... conditions haven't been favorable recently, so we can't conduct our business brazenly. Please make do, everyone!" The fat man spoke with a smile, not only because the people before him were the ones holding gold soon to be his, but there was also a number of aristocrats in the audience that he could not afford to offend. Hence, he hurriedly continued, "However, the quality of the slaves we've

obtained this time is truly superb. Have a look, everyone! They are all sturdy-bodied. I guarantee they will be useful!"

Discontented grumbles stopped coming from the floor. The fat man furtively wiped the sweat on his face and promptly declared the start of the auction.

The first slave to go up had a normal build and was not "sturdy" as the fat man had described. Despite that, the price still climbed smoothly, with people from the floor bidding fifty more silvers each time they raised their wooden paddles. It was not long before the price broke ten gold. This shocked Silvester in his heart. He had never used anything like a slave before, so he never fathomed that they were worth such a substantial amount of money. *No wonder the city lord took such a desperate risk!*

In the end, the first slave was sold at twenty-five gold. The fat man couldn't even control the smile on his face. The price reached in this auction was even greater than that of the previous one... probably due to the stock shortage this time around.

The slaves were sold one after the other. The price was always at least twenty gold, and a tall and strong slave would even break thirty.

When it was finally Cale's turn, he haughtily raised his chin. His face, which gave off the impression that he was just impossible to tame was obviously not well-received, plus he had a slight and skinny build. The price he was auctioned off at only reached eighteen gold, becoming the lowest price of the day.

Silvester, who was immediately after Cale, went up to the auctioning stage. While he did not have a solid build, he was still taller than a hundred and eighty centimeters, and his facial features were not bad either. He also had a shy expression on his face. In the eyes of the competing aristocrats, this slave was tall and handsome and looked like he would be incredibly obedient. He naturally became the most valued item of the auction.

The fat man on stage clearly knew who was going to be the most valuable slave of the day beforehand, so he made use of the other slaves to hype up the atmosphere earlier. Then only under a situation where hardly any slaves were left and there was an enthusiastic atmosphere would he bring out Silvester to auction. This was all planned in order to fetch a higher price at the auctions.

But contrary to expectations, Silvester's auction price was not escalating particularly quickly, although there were a select few who persistently kept bidding. Upon witnessing the situation, the fat man was not in the least worried and even felt secretly happy. He knew very well how people would compete for a target that they really wanted to get their hands on. The audience would not rush to put out a price but would patiently hold out until the very last minute before raising their hand.

While the price was rising very slowly, it still gradually rose to over thirty gold. Nonetheless, this was nowhere near the price it would finish at. The situation now took a turn as people became much more active than before.

Silvester found this inconceivable. He had never known that he was

worth so much money. Each time a person raised their paddle, he could not resist sneaking a peek at that person's appearance.

Although he could not see their faces since they were masked, he could come up with some rough indications about the person from their manner of dress and their figures. The people who were targeting Silvester were mostly those who were standing. Since they were standing, they were clearly not of nobility and instead held the status of servants or housekeepers, but the clothes they wore were not at all inferior to the seated aristocrats'. It was most likely that the noble families they worked for were even more illustrious than those present. After all, truly prominent noble families would not visit such a place in person.

Compared to the laid back pace earlier, once the price exceeded thirty gold, the bidding increased in a blink of an eye. A man on the left who looked like a housekeeper bid thirty five gold in one go while a lady on the right went as far as to raise it to forty.

*I never knew I was worth so much money...* Silvester extremely regretted not having sold himself off earlier.

At that very moment, a cold voice boomed from the back of the room. "One hundred gold!"

## Chapter 6: Light and Shadow Part 6

*One hundred gold?* Everyone in the room was completely shocked. One by one, they turned to face the one who had shouted. Silvester was no exception. He stared straight at that person and was pleasantly surprised as he shouted, "Red Cloak!"

An extremely bold red cloak appeared at the door. The overly dramatic entrance made everyone in the room momentarily confused about what had happened. Only the host of the auction, the fatty, was slightly alarmed by the situation because he was well acquainted with any and all people who would come to purchase slaves from him. Yet he did not know the fellow wearing the red cloak.

The fatty swept through the room in a circle. There were indeed a few noble families who were absent from the scene, some of them being families that he definitely could not afford to offend. What if he was someone employed by one of those families? He did not dare to provoke the other party even in the slightest, so he continued to speak in a fairly respectful tone.

"Might I ask if you have your invitation, sir?"

Red Cloak stretched out his hand and pulled open the ribbon holding his cloak closed, allowing his cloak to slip off and fall to the floor. His true colors were thus revealed.

He had a tall and slender figure with long legs and a thin waist. His bodily proportions, contrary to what one would expect, resembled those of a woman except that there were no particularly distinct

curves around the chest area, so it very well could have been either a flat-chested woman or a man with some pectoral muscles. However, because of his oval face and features that were smaller and more delicate than those of an average male, an overwhelming majority would probably guess that the person before them was a woman... if not for that pair of eyes.

His pair of black eyes which was burning with a fearful murderous spirit did not resemble the eyes of a woman in the least. On the contrary, they were more akin to those of a veteran army general who had murdered countless men. Once one had met those eyes; size, body proportions, oval face, and delicate facial features were entirely forgotten. That pair of black eyes was sufficient to make people think that he was male.

"Breaking the law by selling slaves in private and even forcefully arresting some of the common folk to sell off, have you no conscience, city lord?"

When he was done speaking in an icy cold tone, the color of everyone's faces had changed, and the fatty... no, he should be addressed as the city lord now. His face was as white as a sheet. He tried to defend himself as vigorously as he could, "W-Who are you? Don't try to influence others with your venomous slander! We're only gathered here to exchange the slaves we already own amongst each other!"

The slaves immediately caused a commotion, one after another refuting the city lord's words.

"Of course not!"

"We were kidnapped and brought here!"

"We are not slaves!"

The city lord promptly exclaimed, "There are many aristocrats present in this room, and I am even the lord of this city. Are you going to believe what we say, or would you actually go so far as to listen to the words of those lowly peons?"

Red Cloak simply paid no attention to him. He pointed towards Silvester and said, "You, tell us what has happened thus far."

Upon witnessing this situation, astonishment flashed through Cale's mind. He had a rough idea of what was going on so his eyes no longer held any animosity when he looked at Silvester. Instead, there was a trace of amusement in his expression... *An undercover agent this useless is truly very rarely seen.*

Silvester spoke, brimming with confidence, "They captured people who were not willing to be sold off as slaves for this auction!"

The look on the city lord's face was so bad that it could not possibly become any worse. However, he still tried hard to squeeze out a smile as he said, "That slave is actually very disobedient which is why his owner wanted to bring him here to exchange for a slightly more obedient one—"

"He is one of mine," Red Cloak coldly interrupted him mid-sentence,

“But he was captured by the likes of you, making me search for him for two whole days!”

The city lord was shocked. He growled, “So this was all just a blatant attempt to take a slave home for free!”

Red Cloak ignored the accusation and instead turned to face Silvester. He said in a commanding tone, “Take out your insignia for them to see!”

*Insignia?* Silvester stared blankly, but since he only had a single insignia on him, he fished it out from an inner pocket in his clothes at once, and that was the imperial bard’s white rose insignia!

Everyone was dumbstruck and could only stare at that rose insignia. For a moment, nobody dared to believe that the Holy King’s white rose insignia would actually appear in a place like this.

The city lord was standing right beside Silvester, so he could see it the clearest. The engravings on the rose insignia were so exquisite and graceful that it looked nothing like a fake.

*Come to think of it, when I was captured earlier, I would have been able to free myself if I had just taken out this insignia, right?* As he watched the emotions in the room turn from astonishment to dread, Silvester suddenly felt that he might be a little stupid.

At this point, the city lord feared that it was impossible to plead his innocence any longer. With shifty eyes, he saw the crowd on the floor looking around in all directions, trying to find an exit, as if they wanted

to run away. After all, if any of them managed to escape, no one would be in power to convict them of any crimes. In the end, only the city lord himself had nowhere to run!

The city lord turned to face the city patrol captain and shouted, "If the Holy King hears of this, we are all dead! He's only one person, so killing him off will solve the problem! Patrol team, attack!"

If the man was killed, everyone present would have no choice but to help conceal the crime. The city lord thought he had the perfect plan—if they were to survive, they would survive together. If they were going down, they were going to go down together.

Purchasing slaves was one thing. Watching without acting when one of the Holy King's men was killed was another thing altogether. As long as the two people involved with the insignia died, no one in the room would be free of guilt!

The patrol captain had his mouth agape and was at his wit's end. Helping capture people and passing them off as slaves to sell did give him a good commission, so he was more than happy to do that. However, he definitely did not have the guts to actually kill the holder of a white rose insignia.

"I said attack!" The city lord's mouth distorted from his rage. He furiously berated the patrol captain, "If they get away from here, we won't be able to live any longer! A death sentence for all!"

*Death sentence...* Upon hearing those two words, the patrol captain immediately mustered up his courage. *If I kill him, I will probably die.*

*If I don't kill him, I also have to die... Might as well risk my life!*

The patrol captain turned to bellow at his subordinates, "Hear that?! Aren't you going to attack? If each person lands a strike, no one would be able to escape!"

At this point, Cale promptly rushed towards Silvester and knocked him off the stage. He then shouted to the slaves, "Quickly, protect the two of them! If they are to die, we will definitely be silenced as well!" Evidently, the slaves were very obedient towards Clay. Once they heard him speak, every one of them gathered around desperately to obstruct Silvester from view. However, as Red Cloak was farther away and the city patrol had long since charged over toward him, everyone could only helplessly watch as sword after sword struck in Red Cloak's direction.

Cale was so worried that he had nearly stopped breathing, but when he turned to look, he noticed Silvester was unexpectedly not worried in the least bit and was wearing an excited expression on his face instead, as if he was looking forward to something that was about to happen... While Cale's entire mind was racing, he could still understand one thing; the man who was wearing a red cloak was perhaps not that easy to do away with.

*Hurry up! Hurry up and charge over! Red Cloak will beat you all into a painful pulp without a doubt!* Silvester was so happy that the city patrol guards were about to be faced with misfortune that he nearly opened his mouth to cheer!

A sword was about to cut the top of Red Cloak's head. However, he did

not even spare it a glance and extended his hand to grab the guard's sword hand. He then proceeded to use his other hand to punch the guard's stomach. It was so fast that the punch was practically invisible, and the other party had already flown back before anyone noticed.

Although there were tens of opponents who were each armed with a sword, Red Cloak looked as if he did not mind it at all. If someone charged at him, he delivered a fist right back and sent them flying away battered, as if doing so was as relaxing as drinking a sip of water.

As Cale watched this, he felt as if his eyeballs were about to pop out.  
*What kind of strength is this?*

"What..."

Cale glanced sideways toward Silvester. He more or less understood what Silvester was going to say. *What tremendous skill, what a miraculous move, what an unimaginable amount of strength, or something along these lines, right?*

"What a boring fighting style!" Silvester said in an extremely disappointed manner.

He thought that he would be able to see Red Cloak's giant strength and godly powers. With his blade quick as lightning, each slash making 'shua shua shua' sounds and sending people flying, and finally an explosion of battle aura so strong that it would shake the room and collapse the entire building... But in the end, Red Cloak did not care for the pride of the guards and settled the fight with his fists, and there was not even any trick to it. He simply grabbed the sword hand and

then sent his enemy flying with a punch. It was boring to the extreme.

“Boring?” Cale found it hard to believe as he said, “Have you got it wrong? His fighting style is simple and effective. It’s basically a killing technique!”

“Killing technique?” Silvester asked curiously.

Cale nodded and said, “If there were weapons in his hands, and he struck with a weapon instead of his fists, every strike by that weapon would be a life lost! That person has to be part of the military, right?”

*Of course! And he also holds the highest rank in the entire military! Red Cloak is the Warrior Queen who led an army to defeat the demon race after all!*

Being the only one who knew Red Cloak’s true identity, Silvester felt an endless amount of pride in his heart. He had long forgotten that Red Cloak never even admitted to being the Warrior Queen.

By the time Red Cloak sent the fifth or sixth guard flying— and this was only over a span of a few seconds— the other guards no longer dared to charge forward. Even the guards attacking the slaves had stopped, as they feared that an assault on any of the slaves would provoke the terrifying guy who had settled each guard with a single punch.

While everyone was silently staring at Red Cloak, and no one dared budge an inch, Red Cloak shouted a line that no one expected.

"Bard, let's go!"

Silvester stared blankly at him. *We're going now? But how can that be so? I was still looking forward to...*



Red Cloak looked furious when he charged over to face the city lord directly and shouted, "I am the Warrior Queen! How audacious of you, actually daring to try and lay a finger on me?"

Upon hearing this, the city lord was so scared that he fell to his knees and cried out, "You... No, Milady, you're the Warrior Queen? The brilliantly famed Warrior Queen who warded off the demon race?"

Red Cloak... No, she should be addressed as the Warrior Queen. She laughed coldly and said, "That's me!"

The city lord shrieked, "I went so far as to launch an attack on the Warrior Queen... My crime can only be paid with ten thousand deaths!" He then fainted and fell to the floor.

The Warrior Queen disdained watching the city lord, so she subsequently turned to face Silvester. The expression on her face was much gentler now, and she even changed to a warm tone when speaking.

"Silvester, it's all thanks to you risking your life to return as an undercover spy that we are able to arrest him on the spot. Otherwise, the city lord may have very well escaped."

"It was no big deal!" Silvester smiled humbly and said in an elegant manner unmatched by anyone else, "Don't mention it, it's such a small matter. If it's a request from the Warrior Queen, I'd brave through the burning flames and rushing currents. I, Silvester, will absolutely never decline any..."



"Aaaaaah! Ouch ouch ouuuccchhh!"

When Silvester had come back to his senses, Red Cloak retracted her two fingers. From her expression and stance, she looked as if she had done nothing at all, as if she hadn't just pinched someone's cheek.

"Why did you pinch me?" Silvester felt so extremely aggrieved that two tears fell from his eyes, and his cheek felt as if it would drop off.

"It's time to go. Someone will come to clear up this mess later." Of course, Red Cloak would not speak of the actual reason, that his expression made her want to hit him. She simply shot a glance at him and said, "You can stay here if you want to."

"N-no! I'm coming with you!" Silvester spoke hurriedly. He was truly afraid that Red Cloak would abandon him and leave. He really did not know how many years it would take to find her again.

*Oh yeah!* Silvester turned his head to face Cale. No matter how much he thought, he could not figure out what to say to the other party. In the end, he simply said, "Goodbye Cale, see you around!"

Cale stared at Silvester. He then abruptly turned around and ran,

slipping away faster than Red Cloak and Silvester.

At this moment, something that sounded like uniform footsteps came from the outside. It did not resemble the footsteps of a bunch of common folk at all.

Red Cloak fished Silvester up in one swoop and then jumped out the window to escape in a flash.

At this point, the remaining people in the room regained their senses and wanted to run away as well, but it was too late for them. The front door was kicked down and...

"The law enforcement division is here to handle this case. No one is allowed to move, and anyone who dares to run away will be killed without question!"

## Chapter 7: Inseparable

The two sprinted for quite a long period of time. It was only upon seeing that Silvester was gasping for breath as if he was on his deathbed that Red Cloak slowed her steps to a walk.

Silvester let out a sigh of relief. After walking for a section of road and recovering his breath, he immediately blurted out, "Warrior Queen, come with me to find my teacher!"

"No!" Red Cloak growled.

Silvester was startled but did not intend to give up just like that. After going through all that trouble to find the Warrior Queen, he could not give up no matter what!

"It's not too far from here, only two days' travel..."

Red Cloak stopped walking, her black pupils boring into Silvester's face. She said indifferently, "I'm not going with you to see LL. You should give up!"

Hearing this, Silvester hung his head and said slightly sadly, "Even if it is a grave, you are still not willing to go?"

Red Cloak was shocked. She looked toward Silvester, using her eyes to wordlessly ask for confirmation. Her companion nodded his head slightly.

It was only after a lengthy pause that Red Cloak forced out a short sentence. "How did he die?"

"Illness," Silvester honestly replied. "Two years ago, Teacher came down with a serious cold and passed away after a month of lying in bed. His body was not well in the first place, and he'd often burst out coughing uncontrollably for some reason..."

"It was internal injuries." Red Cloak calmly explained, "He had previously suffered from extremely serious internal injuries."

Silvester goggled. He had not known of this, always assuming that his teacher had always been sickly. In addition to that, his teacher had never explained this matter to him.

"Before he died, Teacher wanted me to seek you out. He would only let me inherit his harp and be freed from the duty of singing 'The Ballad of the Warrior Queen' for three days if I found you and received an answer." Silvester used a pleading tone of voice to beseech her, "Regardless of whether you'll give me an answer or not, please at least come with me to visit my teacher!"

Red Cloak was unable to refuse this request for her to pay respects to a departed comrade.



While the two were walking through a forest, Red Cloak was originally content to just stay silent and follow Silvester, but the more they walked the more she thought that something was not quite right. She had initially thought that this forest was just a midway point to their

destination, but the two of them had already been walking in this vicinity for quite some time. *Don't tell me this is the destination?*

"You didn't bury LL in a forest, did you?" Red Cloak angrily grabbed Silvester's collar, growling, "If you buried him here, he'll be dug up and devoured by wild animals! If LL's grave is dug up, I'll put you in a grave as well!"

Silvester hurriedly denied, "No, no, I buried Teacher in a very pretty place overlooking the ocean! It's only that I need to find God first, before I go find Teacher! I remember that I put Him on a tree in this forest, but why can't I find that tree..."

Red Cloak's face was expressionless.

Seeing her blank face, Silvester felt that the situation had taken a turn for the worse, so he quickly yelled, "God! Where are You?! I forgot where I left You! Come out quickly!"

"Even if there really was a gold slime, you really think it would wait for you in a tree for this long?"

"He will!" Silvester confidently nodded his head, saying, "Without me, God won't even move one bit!"

*Damn it, I want to beat you up until you're the one who can't even move one bit!* Red Cloak was on the verge of losing her temper. She honestly did not know where LL had gotten such a ridiculous student from.

“Ouch!”

Silvester’s entire body suddenly ended up on the ground. He let out a few grunts of pain, until he heard Red Cloak say, “Still not up yet? Do you need me to give you a kick or two?”

*Normally, shouldn’t one ask if he needed some help getting up?* Feeling aggrieved, Silvester got to his feet. However, he discovered his head now felt rather strange.

“Oh no, my head feels really heavy! I think I might have a concussion!” After he had finished yelling worriedly, he noticed that Red Cloak’s stare was somewhat off. In fact, it seemed that her gaze was not directed at him but rather just above his head... He cried out in surprise and delight, “Ah! God, You came back?”

Red Cloak frowned and looked at the thing on top of Silvester’s head. It looked to be about the same as a regular slime— a translucent, gelatinous glob that somewhat resembled a fruit jelly. It was merely that its color was not a slime’s usual green but a golden color instead. She didn’t expect that there really would be a golden slime... *Wait, does it have eyes?*

Even though they were very small, like two sesame seeds suspended in the body of a fruit jelly, they really did look like eyes. However, slimes should not have eyes. In addition to that, this lump of a thing even had a brightly colored design in its middle, which at first glance looked to be a decorative motif.

Regardless of what it was, there was no way that it could be a god,

even if Silvester was hugging it and repeating over and over: "God, good thing You didn't get lost!", "God, how have you been these past few days?", "Hahaha, stop wiggling, it tickles!"

*If this is a god, then every household would have a god—kept in the doghouse outside!*

"God, this is a new friend! Let's say hi!" Silvester introduced Red Cloak.

"God" wanted to show friendliness, initially looking as if he wanted to jump onto her. However, upon seeing Red Cloak's eyes fill with a warning of, "If you dare get closer I'll make mincemeat out of you," "God" immediately shrank back into Silvester's embrace, even using a tail he had just pulled out to tightly latch onto his arm, refusing to greet the other party even on pain of death.

"Hehe, God's just very shy!" Silvester said laughingly.

"You call him God?" Red Cloak said insipidly, "I'll give it a new name. From here on let's change its name to Ohmygod!"

"Ohmygod?" Silvester nodded his head and said, "This name is pretty good. God is my little God, after all!"

*It's "Ohmygod" from oh my god what on earth is that!*<sup>1</sup> Red Cloak did not explain further, as the only reason she gave Ohmygod a name was to prevent Silvester from repeatedly calling a mutant slime "God" in the middle of a city, so as to avoid the trouble that would bring.

Red Cloak flatly reminded, "It's getting late. We should hurry up."

"Right!"



"We're here, we're here!"

The two reached their destination around evening the next day, much faster than the two days that Silvester had said it would take. This, of course, was due to the two's traveling styles being vastly different. Silvester usually stopped frequently to look at the flowers or the grass, but Red Cloak, who had just gotten the news of a comrade's death, did not have the inclination or patience to do such a thing.

After being kicked a few times, Silvester no longer had the inclination to stop frequently either.

They were at a patch of grass close to the edge of a cliff. The view was superb, allowing one to survey the ocean.

Even though Silvester had said it was at this spot, there was no tombstone. Red Cloak fixed an extremely unfriendly stare onto Silvester.

Silvester immediately pointed out a large stone that was not too far into the distance, saying, "Teacher is buried beside that large stone because he didn't want me to set up a tombstone for him. He also wanted to be directly buried in the dirt, not even wanting to use a coffin. He said that once we die we have to return to the earth, and even if we're put into a coffin and get a gravestone, won't we rot just the same? So there's no point at all."

Red Cloak looked at the stone that was practically half a man's height, while the sounds of Silvester's explanation drifted to her ears. "I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to find his resting place again, so I buried him beside this large stone."

Red Cloak nodded her head, as being interred directly into the earth truly sounded like something LL would prefer. She walked towards the large rock...

"You're already stepping on Teacher," Silvester pointed out.

Red Cloak expressionlessly took two steps back and lowered her head, staring at the ground.

"Um, I think you're still stepping on his feet," Silvester affirmed a bit unwillingly.

"Then let him be stepped on!" Red Cloak suddenly yelled angrily, "He deserves it anyways! Not even telling me that he was dying, that bastard!"

Silvester did not dare make a single sound.

After yelling, Red Cloak quieted down and for a long time did not speak a word. So long, in fact, that Silvester was beginning to feel drowsy. He had truly pushed himself too much during their journey yesterday evening and today and was so tired that he could sit on the ground and fall asleep straightaway...

“Lorenzo, you were wrong.”

The muttered sentence jolted Silvester awake. In fact, it was rather amazing how alert he was now, anxiously staring at Red Cloak’s back.

“When you asked me whether I still loved Lancel, I didn’t answer. Maybe I still loved him, but when holding off the onslaught of the demons, certainly the majority of the time I only prayed that the mountain pass would not be breached, that the soldiers beside me would live to see another day. Never mind receiving news of Lancel’s marriage, even if it had been news of his death, I’m afraid that I’d still have only been able to worry about the rear lines not having enough people to provide support or about how to best protect a mountain pass.

“Honestly, I am not suited to talking about love.”

*Even though the root of all of this was in fact love, in the end, this initial reason was no longer important..* Thinking this, Red Cloak let out a self-depreciating laugh.

“Then, what are you looking at, after all of this?” Silvester asked quietly, deeply afraid of angering Red Cloak who was currently talking with an old friend.

Red Cloak became silent then opened her mouth, “What I am looking at is the sky, freedom; they are my original dreams that I’ve forgotten for too long —the desire to explore every inch of this world.”

Finished speaking, she silently gazed at the large stone, her eyes filled

with grief. She could not help but regret that she did not make her intentions clear at that time, causing a misunderstanding that still had not been cleared up. However, they had already been separated by death...

Silvester knelt on the ground and was digging as if he wanted to dig LL up. This forced Red Cloak to have no choice but to set aside her worries, gritting her teeth while asking, "What are you doing?"

Silvester replied in a happy tone of voice, "Digging up the harp! I finally got an answer after a lot of difficulty, so I can finally inherit Teacher's harp."

*Harp?* Red Cloak did not continue to speak, only watching silently as he dug up a wooden box. When he opened it to look inside, there was indeed a harp, the arc of the musical instrument decorated with gold siding and green jewels.

Red Cloak was very familiar with this harp, as this had been Lorenzo's treasure. It was evident that it had now become someone else's treasure. Silvester gazed upon it like he would gaze upon a lover, and there was so much awe in his eyes that it looked like it was about to overflow. Even when that "God" reached out a golden gelatinous arm to touch, it received a pat from Silvester, not letting Him mess with it. "Since you like this harp so much, why didn't you take it with you right after LL died?"

Silvester naturally replied, "Of course I could not! I had already promised Teacher that I would only take the harp after I'd gotten an answer to the question!"

Red Cloaked smiled and calmly said, "Your teacher was an idiot, but you are an even bigger idiot!"

"Yeah!" Silvester happily said, "My teacher even told me that if I hadn't been idiotic enough, he would never have taken me as a student. He also said that what the Warrior Queen hates the most are clever people! She once told those clever people, 'You can continue to use your cleverness in unimportant things; I won't listen to even a word of your nonsense anyway! Follow my command or experience my blade firsthand, make your own choice!'"

"I'm not the Warrior Queen." Red Cloak unenthusiastically said, "Not anymore."

Hearing the first sentence, Silvester was shocked for a moment but after hearing the latter one... *Not anymore? Since she isn't anymore, then that means that she used to be, right?*

Silvester started smiling, seizing that chance to ask, "Then if you aren't the Warrior Queen, what should I call you?"

Red Cloak became unresponsive for a moment, but still replied, "I have a lot of names. Dancingblade Dragon was the one I used the most, in the past, but I don't want to use it right now. Hmmm...you can just call me Carol."

"Dancing? A dancing blade, like in a dance? And your family name is Dragon? That's a very unusual surname." Silvester was in fact very curious about the name Dancingblade.

Carol shot him a quick look of hidden surprise, saying, "You're actually the first person to get that right, as Dancingblade is in fact a name that the elves gave me. However, everyone upon hearing it would always assume it refers to a blade wielded for battle, so later on I directly used Warriorblade instead."<sup>2</sup>

"You've seen elves?" Silvester was envious to the point that his eyes were nearly bugging out of his head. Those elves, beautiful yet existing only in legend, were assuredly the race that all wandering bards most wanted to see.

"A long time ago." Carol's brief answer made it clear that she did not want to explain.

"Can you..." *Tell me, who was it that gave you the name of Carol?*

"No." Carol cut him off with a single word.

"I didn't even say anything yet!" Silvester immediately protested.

"I said no."

"Not even a single thing?"

"No."

"Then, can I stop following you?"

"No." After Carol had reflexively answered, she stared blankly for a

while and then frowned at the bard.

Silvester let out a smile that was so sickeningly sweet that it was as cavity-inducing as a piece of cake, saying, "So I can't stop following you? Then I have no choice but to follow you! Please give me your guidance, Carol. I am called Silvester Uriah Nate, and I want to become the world's greatest wandering bard!"

After hearing that tongue-twisting name, Carol calmly said, "Oh, so it's Sun (S.U.N.)? Not bad, this name is very easy to remember."

"...You can call me Silvester."

"Sun, it's getting late. We should go now."

"If that's not short enough, you can call me Silvie... Wait! What did you say? We should go now? You mean I can really follow you? Carol, don't walk that fast, wait for me!"

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> **“Ohmygod’s name”:** Before being named, he was referred to as God, 神 (Shén). Carol names him 小什 (Xiǎo Shén), which literally translates to “Little What,” from what the heck is that? It sounds the same as 小神 (Xiǎo Shén), which means “Little God,” so Silvester thought it was a good name. In our attempt to still have his name come across as a pun and to include both the meaning of “god” and “what the heck,” we will be calling him Ohmygod.

<sup>2</sup> **Dancingblade and Warriorblade:** Both Dancingblade and Warriorblade are pronounced the same in Chinese as wǔ dāo but use different written characters. The written character used in Dancingblade means dance while the character used in Warriorblade refers to fighting. When people hear Carol’s name, WuDao, they normally mistake the “Wu” in her name to mean fighting when it means dancing instead. Silvester is the first person who correctly inferred the true meaning behind her name.