In Another World with Household Spells 2

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Table of Contents

Cover

The Story Thus Far

Chapter 1: To the Summer Palace

Chapter 2: Summer Break at the Vacation Palace

Chapter 3: We're Making Salt!

Chapter 4: Sewing Lessons

Chapter 5: The End of Summer Break

Chapter 6: Albert and the Goddess of Music

Chapter 7: The Fall Term Has Begun

Chapter 8: The End of the Fall Term

Chapter 9: Winter Break!

Chapter 10: My Cousin Samuel

Side Story: Nassius's Older Sister

Color Illustrations

Bonus Story: Young Lady, Be Ambitious!

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The Story Thus Far

My name is Patience Granger. I awoke one day as the daughter of a poor viscount. I'd previously been an ordinary office worker in Japan, yet for some reason, I'd reincarnated as a noble.

I'd imagined living elegantly as an aristocrat, but that dream was short-lived—the Granger family was impoverished. I'd reincarnated into this world during the freezing cold of the winter, and the fireplaces in our home had been barely lit. Though the Granger family home was an impressive mansion located in Romano, the royal capital of the Kingdom of Lawrence, we were broke because my father had been fired from his job at the royal palace.

It felt to me like the original Patience had died of pneumonia, but she was still around in spirit to help me out with her memories and give me advice, so I'd been able to live in this world without arousing any suspicion.

I also had two adorable younger brothers: Nassius, who was eight, and Henry, who was six. They were truly good boys and absolute angels! Coming to this world had also turned me from an adult into a child; I was now ten years old.

Since coming to this world, I'd also received an evaluation at the church, where I'd learned I was proficient in household magic.

The Kingdom of Lawrence, where we lived, was on the west side of the continent. There was a grand Estenaian church here in the capital city of Romano. My father was perhaps not very religious, since the original Patience only had memories of visiting the church for her mother's funeral.

Going back to household magic, the downside to it was that it was an area of magic many commoners were proficient in—in other words, not noble or special. Because of that, I hadn't felt very proud of my abilities at first. Still, it was the only kind of magic I could use, so I'd steeled my resolve to improve the Granger family's lives using

household magic. I mean, we'd been using chamber pots! That was just unbelievably uncivilized! My foremost priority had been to make sure we could use the toilet.

My next priority was cleaning. Though we were nobles, Mary was the only maid on our staff. She'd been doing her best to handle household tasks, but there was a limit to how much she could do on her own.

"Become clean!"

The first time I'd used household magic, I'd turned the old and dingy wallpaper, rug, and curtains in the boys' room as good as new. It had taken quite a bit of mana to repair so many things, and I'd ended up feeling pretty woozy afterward.

Following that, I'd used my magic to spruce up a hand-me-down uniform for the Royal Academy, then repaired the broken greenhouse in our yard. I was working hard to improve my family's quality of life. I'd put in so much effort because I'd learned that barely a month into my life in this new world, I would have to enroll into the Royal Academy.

Not only would I be starting school, but I would also have to move into the dorms, even though most nobles who lived in Romano commuted! Why, you ask? Well, that was because our family was so poor that we didn't own a horse. Being poor was truly a pain, since it meant I had to live in the dorms and be apart from my adorable angels. Boo-hoo!

The day I'd moved into the dorms of the Royal Academy, the entrance had been backed up with carriages. This was because the children of the royal family, who'd only ever commuted to the academy before—it was right next door to the royal palace, after all—had moved into the dorms and been busy moving their own furniture in. Looking back on it now, this was probably the harbinger of all my future struggles.

I was assigned to First Year Class A, where the second prince, Prince Keith, was my classmate. The content covered in the junior division of the Royal Academy was at a similar level as middle school education during my previous life, so the classes weren't particularly difficult. I'd still had to rely on Patience's knowledge for reading,

writing, and history though.

The Granger family was apparently a household of academics, and Patience had turned out to be quite a brilliant child. During my first week at the Royal Academy, I'd ended up skipping ahead a year. I'd thought that I'd escaped being targeted by Prince Keith as a rival, but he'd ended up passing his exams in several subjects, landing him in some second-year classes alongside me. Having accelerated an entire year had ended up feeling slightly pointless, in terms of avoiding pesky entanglements with royalty.

But wait, there's more! Not only had my efforts been fruitless, but I'd ended up being chosen by the queen herself to serve as lady's maid for her daughter, the junior division third-year student Princess Margaret. To be completely honest, it was a total inconvenience! These duties ate into the time that I'd been hoping to spend doing side jobs for extra money, like mending socks and decorating handkerchiefs with lace trim.

Once I'd become Princess Margaret's lady's maid, one of my duties was to eat meals with her, but I hadn't suspected that she was the complete opposite of a morning person! Every morning I had to laboriously wake her up, do her hair, then get her to breakfast at the dining hall at the dorms. All that was actually not too bad—the *real* problem was lunch in the salon.

Before becoming a lady's maid, I'd been eating at the school cafeteria, which was the dining hall located in the school building one floor below the salon. My classmates, the students of Class A, were all high-ranking nobles, so most of them ate lunch at the salon, a fancier venue that required an extra fee to eat there. However, I was the daughter of the Granger family, who didn't have the money to fritter away on such luxury.

Princess Margaret had either forgotten to or chosen to not tell me this, but I had to eat with her, Prince Richard, and Prince Keith in the salon. We were to sit at the same table and watch over Prince Keith to make sure he finished his vegetables. Prince Keith wasn't a troublemaker necessarily, but he'd often tick off his elder brother, Prince Richard, so Princess Margaret and I would have to redirect his attention to smooth things out. It was exhausting.

Another notable fact about the princess was that she had an incredible love for music, so I'd ended up having to join the music club she was a part of. It was so exclusive that it required an existing member's recommendation to join. This music club was where I'd gotten myself into yet another little bit of trouble.

At the music club, I'd performed a piece composed by a famous composer from my previous life, which had made Albert, the vice president of the club, take notice of me. Now, every time I'd run into Princess Margaret or Vice President Albert, they would ask me if I'd composed a new song yet.

Despite everything that had happened, I'd managed to survive until the end of the spring term.

"I'm going to spend summer break growing lots of vegetables in the garden! I must also work hard at my side jobs! Oh, and I definitely want to play with my little angels as well!"

My grades were excellent! The Royal Academy only allowed students to skip a grade once a year, so I couldn't jump ahead to become a third-year student, but I'd received certificates of completion in math, magic practicum, home economics, music, and magic theory.

I'd been so excited about what I might get up to with my brothers during summer break, only to end up being "invited" to the royal family's summer palace by the queen. I'd seriously wanted to turn down the offer, but I had to do as my father said and accept. He'd been excited about it and mentioned what an honor it was.

After that was decided, Mary and I had become incredibly busy, working hard to refurbish hand-me-down garments from my relatives and ensure they fit me well. By the time that we'd finished preparing for my trip, I'd been so exhausted that all I could feel was sadness about the fact that time meant to be spent with my brothers had been stolen by the need for tailoring.

Chapter 1: To the Summer Palace

It was morning, and our ride had arrived from the royal palace.

"Be well, Nassius, Henry," I said, bidding farewell to my brothers as I waved to them from the carriage. I didn't dare stick my body out of the window, since Mary would scold me, but that meant the angels were quickly out of my view. The lump I felt in my chest made me understand the true meaning of the phrase "having a heavy heart."

"We will be meeting up with the other carriages at the southern gate," Charlotte, the court lady, explained. Though we had a member of the royal staff aboard our carriage, it wasn't as suffocating as having to ride with Queen Victoria or Princess Margaret.

Charlotte had all of her hair neatly tied up without a single strand out of place, and she was properly dressed in her court lady's uniform made of black silk. I'd met Charlotte several times before during my visits to the royal palace with Princess Margaret whenever the queen summoned me, so her presence didn't make me as nervous as a complete stranger's would have.

"I've never left the royal capital before," I remarked. Patience's memories all took place in the royal capital. In fact, she hadn't left the Granger estate until she'd visited the church for her mother's funeral. She'd been quite the sheltered girl.

Charlotte smiled, as that wasn't entirely unusual for a noble from Romano.

"That must mean you've never seen the ocean before, Lady Patience. You must be excited that the summer palace is so close to the beach."

That's right! I am excited! After all, being by the ocean means that there's probably delicious seafood! If I'm going to be separated from my brothers, I'm at least going to have some fun! Otherwise, I

won't survive this trip! Maybe I'll find some pretty shells along the beach to bring home as souvenirs for my brothers.

Just as that thought crossed my mind, we made it out of the nobles' quarter.

"Look, Mary. There are lots of shops!"

The street was lined with countless shops, but none had opened yet, since it was still early in the morning. Some shops had signs indicating they sold clothes and accessories.

"My lady, Romano is home to a plethora of shops. Now please, sit down properly."

All I'd done was bring my face closer to the window, yet Mary had scolded me. Since we were going to be at the summer palace with Queen Victoria, Mary was even stricter than usual when it came to monitoring my behavior. *It's not fair. She'd gotten way more laid-back after becoming my co-conspirator in working side jobs.*

We were now uptown, which was filled with grand buildings that reminded me of Parisian apartments I'd seen during my previous life. The carriage continued to travel along the main streets that connected the Granger home to the southern gate of the royal palace, and the residences grew smaller as the city gradually grew more dense. There weren't many people out on the streets in the nobles' quarter or uptown, but downtown was busy with all sorts of people walking about. To one side was a man carrying a large sword on his back. To the other side, I saw a merchant unloading wares from a carriage. Downtown Romano was full of life.

"Oh, there are some stalls open!" There was an open-air market with stalls that appeared to open early in the morning for those headed to work.

"Those cater to adventurers," Charlotte explained. "After accepting jobs at the adventurer's guild, they stop by these stalls to grab a bite to eat before heading out of town."

An adventurer's guild?! Now that's something you expect to hear of in a fantastical otherworld! I wonder if they have any part-time cleaning jobs. I could totally clean things up easily since I'm skilled in household magic. Mary's pretty strict about me acting like a noble lady, though. She won't even let me go shopping on my own, so

there's no way she'd allow me to have a job like that.

"You know so much, Lady Charlotte," I said admiringly. Patience didn't know much about the world, and all I knew about this world was what I'd learned at the academy.

"Well, I *have* passed the court lady exam," Charlotte remarked.

I didn't know that you have to pass an exam to become a court lady. I should look into that.

In this world, it seemed that job options for women were limited—especially for noblewomen, who would usually get married instead of joining the workforce. The Granger family had no money for a dowry, but a dowry wasn't necessary for me to get married. For example, there were wealthy commoners who married noblewomen for their aristocratic status, and widowers who wanted a woman's help raising their children. But neither Patience nor I wanted to marry under those circumstances!

"Um, I'm thinking of enrolling in the civil service track. Will that provide any sort of advantage for those exams?" *I should use this opportunity to ask questions! I'm riding with an actual court lady, after all!* My questions could have perhaps been answered by my father, but his lack of life skills made him seem unreliable.

"Oh, my! You're choosing the civil service track? I enrolled in the home economics track and took the law and government courses separately. Students graduating from the civil service track usually take the entry-level bureaucrat's exam to work as a government official, but I'm not sure if the same applies for women. Though, I'm sure you'll be able to pass the court lady's exam."

It seemed that female government officials didn't exist. I was disappointed to find that out, so Charlotte began to cheer me up.

"However, there *is* a woman who has become a knight. She's often seen working as a guard to the women of the royal family. There may not be any women working as government officials right now, but please do not give up on the possibility of such a future."

Our conversation had made time fly, and before I knew it, we had arrived at the southern gate. The carriage coming from the royal palace hadn't arrived yet, but there were several knights already lined up at the gate.

"Oh, Lady Eugenia is here. She is the lady knight I was referring to!" Charlotte was always so composed, but I could see why she'd gotten excited. Lady Eugenia was a captivating person. She shone among the other knights like the star actors in the all-female theater troupes I knew during my previous life.

Ever since I'd come to this world, almost all of the women I'd met had long hair. However, Lady Eugenia had shoulder-length hair. The morning sun gave her metallic chestplate a heavenly glow.

"She seems absolutely lovely," I replied.

"Doesn't she? She's also incredibly strong. She even won tournaments while a student in the knight club."

It should have been obvious that Lady Eugenia had enrolled in the knight track, given that she was currently a knight, but I was still surprised. As someone who couldn't even capture an obedient horse that was standing still, I could never imagine becoming a knight.

"Since Lady Eugenia is here, I'm sure Her Majesty and the others will be arriving soon," Charlotte explained. She then instructed us to disembark from the carriage, and we awaited the royal family's arrival.

"The southern gate is quite large," I commented. It was not only tall, but also incredibly thick.

In this world, war broke out over the smallest of things. Fortunately, the Kingdom of Lawrence had only been involved in minor scuffles near the border over the last decade or so. These sturdy gates were perhaps here in the case of any emergencies.

Mary silently tugged at my sleeve and gave me a look that said, *Please stop staring at everything*.

The dress she'd tugged at was a light green, summery garment that we'd just finished preparing yesterday. I'd used household magic to make some white lace, with which I'd decorated the collar, sleeves, and hem. Unlike with handkerchiefs, adding lace trim to a dress took a long time and had been exhausting. I'd been especially worried about being able to finish the trim on the hem, which was particularly long because this dress was to be worn with a petticoat.

My hair was accessorized with a ribbon that Mary had made out of some matching fabric and braided into my hair. Mary had been

firing on all engines this morning to get me dolled up—in other words, I'd been woken up at the crack of dawn. Standing all serious like this was boring and made me sleepy. *We've been waiting for a while. How much longer are they going to be?*

"It seems they were running slightly behind, but I see them now," Charlotte finally announced.

A convoy of carriages escorted by knights arrived. There were so many carriages appearing that I began to wonder if my presence was really necessary at the summer palace. The frontmost carriage stopped, so I curtsied and waited with my head bowed down.

"You've made it, Patience," Queen Victoria greeted. "Well then, let us head out."

Finally, we're leaving! I thought I was free, but Princess Margaret began to plead with the queen.

"I want to ride with Patience," the princess insisted.

What? I want to ride with Charlotte and Mary. I can relax more with them.

"I guess it can't be helped," the queen replied. "If you'd like to ride with your lady's maid, go ahead."

Princess Margaret gracefully exited her carriage and said, "Let's ride together, Patience."

There was no way I could refuse when the queen had already given her permission.

Once the four of us were on the road, Charlotte and Mary fell completely silent. In other words, the princess and I were the only ones talking.

"I really am glad you're here, Patience," Princess Margaret said. "Mother is in a horrible mood. I was going to suffocate if I stayed in the same carriage as her."

Untidy would be an understatement to describe the state that the princess had arrived in. Her hair, which technically was tied with a bow, was still mussed from a case of bed head despite the fact that there were several court ladies and attendants on staff at the royal palace.

"Did you sleep in again, Your Highness?"

"It's not my fault," Princess Margaret said as she undid the bow,

handing it to me as if to insist I do something about her hair. "The maids at the palace don't wake me up the way you do. It's their fault for not getting me up properly, yet I'm the one who gets scolded by mother."

It seemed that I'd spoiled her a bit too much, but now wasn't the time to reflect on how I could do better. First, I had to take care of her hair before we stopped for lunch.

The queen allowed Princess Margaret to ride specifically with her lady's maid. I get why now.

"Do you have a hairbrush, Mary?" I asked my maid.

Mary, who was a model attendant, had a hairbrush in her travel bag. Mary was honestly better than I was at doing hair, but Mary redoing the princess's hair would have been an insult to the palace maids. I even felt Patience giving me permission from within, saying that it was acceptable for the lady's maid to redo the princess's hair.

"Become silky!" I chanted, using my household magic to smooth out her bed head and make her hair lustrous. "I can only do simple hairstyles," I warned before putting half of her hair up into a ponytail and tying it with a bow. Now my hairstyle was flashier than the princess's. *Eh, it's Mary's fault for trying too hard!*

I took the remaining loose locks of her hair, began wrapping them around my fingers, and commanded, "Curl!" Now, her hair was curled like her friend Catherine's. They weren't as prominent as Catherine's ringlets, but they still looked quite nice.

"Do you have a mirror?" Princess Margaret asked. Mary silently handed me a mirror, which I then handed to the princess. It seemed it wasn't proper etiquette for my attendant to directly hand the princess something.

These rules are so *annoying*.

"Oh, wow. It looks lovely! From now on, I'd like you to do this hairstyle."

"I shall if time permits," I replied. *Meaning only if you wake up in a timely fashion.*

"Hey, where are we going to have lunch?" Princess Margaret asked Charlotte. It seemed now she could speak.

"We will be having lunch at the residence of Duke Laforet,"

Charlotte answered.

That's a familiar name...

"Oh, we're having lunch at Albert's home?" Princess Margaret replied. "You must be careful, Patience. Duke Laforet is an even bigger lover of music than his son. You mustn't leave my side under any circumstances."

Mary had gone pale.

"Lord Albert is just incredibly fond of music, to the point that he is the vice president of the music club," I explained to Mary to reassure her.

"I would say what he feels for music even surpasses love," Princess Margaret said. "If you aren't careful, the Laforets might imprison you in their residence. I'm sure you noticed Duke Laforet during our recital—his grand applause made him stand out."

Oh, that's right! There was a parent there who got really excited and stood up. If I'm remembering correctly, he was dressed in an extravagant outfit.

"Very well. I will not leave your side, Your Highness." I prayed that we would arrive before Princess Margaret got hangry from missing breakfast.

"I'm so bored," the princess whined. "I'd feel better if you could play something on a lute for me. Speaking of the lute, we have tutors traveling with us to look over Jane's and Marcus's studies. You're an excellent hanon player, but you can't play the lute. I want you to learn how from their music teacher."

I didn't mind her request, but that wasn't all that she wanted from me.

"You also said you aren't good at dancing. Since you're a talented musician, I'm sure you have a good sense of rhythm. You did well at the Festival of Verdure as well. I'm sure you could get a certificate of completion if you just got a little better."

I was a fool to think that getting a certificate of completion in dance would give me more free time. Of course the princess is going to monopolize all my time.

"I've already gotten a certificate of completion in dance, so if you get one too, we'll be able to spend that time enjoying music."

Please, no more music!

"I must accelerate into the senior division, so I would like to spend that time studying," I explained, but the princess completely ignored my argument.

"What are you talking about? You've already gotten a certificate of completion in math, and you're almost done with all your practical courses. As my lady's maid, you should be able to spend the little time I don't have class enjoying music with me."

It seemed definitive that I would be working on my dance skills.

"That reminds me, Keith mentioned that you couldn't catch a horse. Don't tell me you don't know how to ride a horse either."

Darn you, Prince Keith! Why'd you have to go and blab about that?!

"I have never ridden a horse, nor have I ever desired to do so," I replied, trying to refuse what I knew she was going to suggest. My efforts were fruitless.

"You're going to be in trouble if you get invited on a hunt and can't ride a horse. You'll have to learn over summer break."

I probably wasn't going to be invited to any hunts, nor could I go to such an event because we didn't own a horse—but I couldn't tell the princess all that. *I never even rode a horse during my previous life. I hope I don't die falling off one.*

"What exactly do you go after on these hunts?" I asked.

"We don't actually hunt anything. You can leave that to the knights and mages. The whole point of going on a hunt is to enjoy a long horseback ride."

I only have bad feelings hearing the words "long ride." That probably means riding horseback for hours. Ugh...

As Princess Margaret bullied me, frustrated by her hunger, Charlotte and Mary kept their mouths completely sealed. How did I feel about the princess's bullying? Well, I'd been taking everything with a grain of salt. She was probably going to follow through on making me learn to play the lute and practice dancing, but the riding lessons would probably be kept to a minimum. After all, I could always bribe the music-loving princess by suggesting we play a piece for four hands on the hanon together. *I wonder if I can still play*

Mozart's "Sonata for Two Pianos."

Luckily, we arrived at Duke Laforet's estate before the princess's stomach actually began growling. The Laforet property was ridiculously huge, to the point that it made me laugh just thinking about how long it would take someone to run from the gates to the residence. *Japanese TV used to describe the size of places relative to Tokyo Dome. This place is probably ten times the size of Tokyo Dome.*

"Look, there are fawns!" I exclaimed. They were indeed adorable, but I found myself more surprised by the adult deer watching from behind in the groves. The adult deer were three times bigger than what I remembered to be the size of deer.

"They're probably ornamental animals they let roam around," the princess explained.

I didn't know that was allowed.

"Won't they eat the flowers in the garden?" I asked.

"The custodian takes that into consideration," the princess replied in apparent disbelief at my ignorance. "Also, those aren't monsters. They're just regular deer, so they're likely pretty domesticated."

Deer that aren't *monsters? Does that mean...that there are monster deer as well?*

"How do monsters differ from regular animals?"

Princess Margaret thought for a moment before answering. "They're completely different sizes. Also, monsters have magic stones, and they use magic to attack people. You're so smart, Patience. Do you really not know all this?"

Well sorry! Not even the original Patience knew this stuff, so of course I didn't know!

Before I knew it, we had reached the Laforet residence.

"It's an honor to welcome you here," a man greeted us. It appeared I'd been right, and the enthusiastic parent who had stood out at the recital was indeed Duke Laforet.

Wow, he sure has a lot of people on staff. This is like a scene out of a British TV show where all the servants come out to greet the guests.

Every member of the Laforet family individually greeted the

queen. *I almost forgot that Albert has an older brother.* Charles Laforet, the duke's eldest son, was an energetic young man with short hair. He seemed quite different from his brother, who was taking his turn to properly greet the queen.

The members of the Laforet family then greeted Prince Richard, Princess Margaret, and Prince Keith. *Oh, wait. The king isn't here? That makes me feel a little bit better.* Since Princess Jane and Prince Marcus were under ten years old, they were hurried into the mansion by their tutors and caretakers. *I wish I could just hang out in the kids' room too.*

"This is Patience Granger," Princess Margaret said, introducing me. "She is my lady's maid."

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Your Grace," I said, greeting Duke Laforet in a ladylike manner.

"Have we met before? Where do I recognize you from?" Duke Laforet wondered aloud, his head tilted in confusion.

"Aren't you going to escort me inside, Duke Laforet?" Queen Victoria called out to him.

"My apologies." The duke turned his attention to the queen and escorted her into the mansion.

Prince Richard and Prince Keith struck up conversation with Charles as they all headed inside together. That meant that Albert would be accompanying the princess and me. *I wonder if he's stuck with us because we're all in the music club.*

"I'm thinking of having Patience learn to play the lute," the princess announced.

"The lute is a great instrument to learn," Albert replied. "It'll give her tools to compose a wider range of songs." The two were in complete agreement. Albert then turned to me. "Patience, I'm sure a music tutor will tag along to the summer palace, so do your best in learning to play the lute."

The Grangers couldn't afford even a regular tutor, but it seemed having specialized tutors for topics like music was normal. *I guess I shouldn't be comparing us to the royal family or a duke's household though.*

I wasn't sure if the knights escorting the carriages would be

joining us for lunch. I later learned that they rotated shifts so there would always be someone guarding the carriages while the others took lunch in a separate room prepared for them.

I don't think Duke Laforet has it that easy. He's got to account for all the knights, the court ladies, the maids, the tutors, and the caregivers traveling with us. I wonder how many people there are...

We were each led to our own rooms where we could rest before lunch. The carriages we were traveling in had glass windows, which we'd opened slightly to deal with the summer heat, so despite traveling on stone paths, we'd still gotten some dust on us during the ride here.

Mary grabbed a pitcher of water and poured some out into a washbasin for me. I washed my face and hands and felt refreshed.

The restroom in my room also had a toilet with a working magic stone, and it even flushed. *I wonder how many toilets are in this mansion.* The Granger home had three usable restrooms: one each on the first and second floors, and a third in the semibasement. There was apparently a fourth in my father's actual bedroom.

"Become clean!" I chanted. I'd felt that my dress had gotten slightly dusty as well, so I cleaned it with magic before heading downstairs to the dining room.

Once at the dining room, I quietly ate my lunch, making sure to mind my manners. *This food is delicious.* Though the extravagant meal itself was satisfying, the dessert was unfortunately cloyingly sweet as usual.

As expected of the music-loving duke, there was a live performance while we enjoyed lunch. It was a nice performance that didn't drown out the conversations taking place. *I wonder if they always have a musician on staff. Since this world doesn't have any kinds of music players, the only way to listen to music is through live performances.*

"That was delicious. The music was lovely as well," the queen said, giving her thanks as she stood up. Everyone followed suit, heading back to the carriages.

Just as I was about to board my carriage, Albert opened his mouth to say something completely unneeded.

"You'd better compose lots of new pieces over summer break, Patience."

Unfortunately, his father overheard this.

"You're the student from *that* performance!" Duke Laforet exclaimed. Thankfully, I was safe by then, as the carriage had already started moving.

"Albert really doesn't know when to keep his mouth shut..." Princess Margaret grumbled. "You truly must be careful, Patience."

The princess must *be exaggerating. She's probably just trying to give me a little scare.*

"I can't imagine there is anything to be worried about," I assured her. "The duke lives in such a magnificent home, and he has plenty of staff to take care of everything. He even has a musician on staff."

"You really don't know how the world works, do you, Patience? It seems you have much to learn."

It was true that Patience lacked experience and that I lacked knowledge about this world in general, but that didn't seem to be what the princess was referring to. It felt like there was something she was holding back from saying.

"Did you notice that someone you might have expected to see there today wasn't present?" the princess asked, giving me a hint.

"His Majesty? Is he away somewhere?"

The princess just burst into laughter. It seemed I was completely off the mark.

"My father is going to join us a week late. But no, I meant someone missing from the Laforet family."

I thought back to who had greeted us.

"Wait, was Duchess Laforet unavailable today?"

Princess Margaret seemed sincerely exasperated at this point.

"It is completely unheard of for the *living* lady of the house to not make an appearance when *the queen* is to be having lunch at her residence. Even if she were sick, she would crawl on all fours to greet the queen. *That* is why you must be careful."

For a moment, I had absolutely no idea what the princess was trying to say. Then, it finally hit me.

"Whaaat?! Are you...suggesting that I would become the

widowed duke's second wife? He seems to be even older than my father... That surely would be impossible." *I'm not into older men! Also, I'm only ten years old! How big would that age gap even be? Wait, is a twenty-year age gap acceptable? It doesn't matter! I'm a shotacon, so no way that's happening!*

"If you don't want to become Albert's stepmother, you must under no circumstances allow yourself to be by the duke's side," Princess Margaret insisted.

I absolutely could not let that happen, so I earnestly nodded in agreement. Even Patience was screaming within me: *Absolutely not!*

"You must also be careful of Albert," the princess warned. "The duke might consider making you his daughter-in-law instead of marrying you himself. Well, if he tries, I won't allow that to happen." Princess Margaret smiled, confident that even if Duke Laforet was too formidable of an opponent, she could still take down Albert.

The princess felt terrifying. In that moment, I could see how Princess Margaret was indeed Queen Victoria's daughter, even if she had a tendency to sleep in late and had an over-the-top love of music.

Princess Margaret's psychological attacks had knocked me down, but perhaps thanks to my ten-year-old body, I recovered quite quickly. I'd been noticing that I'd felt younger and younger these days—mentally, that is. I didn't want to be going through puberty for the second time. *I can't help but think of all my adolescent mistakes during my previous life...* Perhaps the wild fluctuations in my emotions were brought on by this stage of life I was in.

So, why was I even thinking about something so ridiculous as my second coming of age? Well, that was of course because Prince Keith had barged into our carriage.

"Margaret! I have no idea why Richard is upset with me, but I can't ride in the same carriage as him anymore!"

That was what Prince Keith had said when he'd forced his way into our carriage during a rest stop. Charlotte switched out to ride with the angered Prince Richard. *I feel really bad for her.*

"I've been meaning to tell you this for a while, Keith," the princess

began. “You have a tendency to say things that upset people. Richard is especially sensitive to your rude statements, so you need to be more careful around him.”

Yeah, that’s right! You tell him! But also, while you’re at it, could you do something about Prince Keith’s bad mood?

The atmosphere in our carriage grew uncomfortable as the second prince pouted in frustration. Princess Margaret wasn’t voicing her displeasure out loud, but it was obvious that she wasn’t happy about that.

In this world where magic was real, other people’s feelings were something you could sense strongly. Some people also had abilities that made them perceive magic more strongly, so they were directly affected by the displeasure around them.

Princess Margaret ended up on the same path as her brother, spreading her aura of dissatisfaction and further straining the atmosphere of our cramped carriage. She glared at me with a look that said, *Do something about this!*

I wish she would stop making these things my *problem.*

“Lady Margaret, I was told that the summer palace is close to the beach. I’ve actually never seen the ocean. Is it actually as people describe it: water as far as the eye can see? Also, is it true that the water in the ocean is salty?” As someone who was mentally twenty-five, it made me cringe to act like an innocent ten-year-old.

“You’ve never seen the ocean before?” Prince Keith asked. “I bet you can’t even swim!” Teasing me seemed to improve his mood, but that behavior was exactly the sort of thing he needed to fix if he didn’t want to keep incurring Prince Richard’s wrath.

“Oh, my. You can’t swim, Patience?” the princess also asked. “That won’t do. Keith, teach her how to swim.” Now that Prince Keith wasn’t upset, Princess Margaret was also back in high spirits.

“Yes, sister!” The prince turned his attention back to me. “You know, even Jane can swim! Also, if you can’t swim, you’ll drown and die if you fall into water.”

I wanted to avoid getting swimming lessons from the excited Prince Keith, but I’d learned how to swim during my previous life, so it would probably be fine.

"Hey, I can smell the ocean!" Prince Keith explained. "Look, Patience! You can see the ocean!"

Mary, please don't scold me if I lean a little out of the carriage. It's Prince Keith's fault for telling me to look.

"Oh, is that the ocean? Isn't it a little small?"

"You're so dumb! It only looks small because it's far away. The closer we get, the bigger it'll be! You're going to be so surprised!"

After going on about how great the ocean was, Prince Keith's good mood seemed fully restored. *Thank god.*

Chapter 2: Summer Break at the Vacation Palace

The carriage traveled along the seaside. The ocean was truly vast. Well, I already knew it would be, but it was my first time seeing it in this world, so I couldn't help but be mesmerized. After all, it was indeed beautiful. The summer sun made the clear blue waters glimmer. *There's gotta be fish in there too!*

"There's no need to stare so much. It's not like the ocean can run away," Princess Margaret assured me. "Look, we're here."

I finally turned my attention from the sea to the summer palace and was absolutely shocked. *It's crazy huge!*

The line of carriages all stopped, and the queen entered the palace. We followed suit while Mary went along with the court ladies and maids to bring our luggage to our rooms. Once again, Princess Jane and Prince Marcus were taken inside by their tutors and caretakers.

We waited in the parlor for our bedrooms to be ready. Naturally, the queen's room was prepared right away, and a court lady led her away. The people remaining in the parlor were an irritated Prince Richard, an excited Prince Keith, and Princess Margaret. *Princess, please. Stop giving me those "do something about this" looks.*

"The ocean really is quite massive," I remarked. "Is all that water actually salty? Oh, that must be why salt is made from the ocean."

The three royals all gave me looks of disbelief. *Oh, was my feigned ignorance too obvious? I was trying to lighten the mood with some innocent thing a ten-year-old might say, but I think I failed.*

"Salt *obviously* comes from rock salt, Patience," Princess Margaret lambasted my ignorance. "My, you really don't know much, do you?"

"What? But you can make salt by boiling seawater, no? I know of rock salt as well, but I've heard that sea salt has a mellow, delicious

flavor."

It seemed I'd piqued Prince Richard's interest.

"Where did you hear that you can get salt from seawater?"

Shoot! Is rock salt the only known form of salt in this world?

"Um, well... I believe I read it somewhere. Was I wrong?"

"Salt comes from the rock salt mines on Mt. Halla," Prince Keith said in a mocking tone. "You may be good at studying, but you're actually pretty clueless."

Oh, is that so? Well, I guess he kind of has a point; I really didn't *know about Mt. Halla.*

"Perhaps the reason rock salt can be mined from Mt. Halla that it used to be underwater," I hypothesized. "I believe the ocean floor rose up and turned into a mountain, and the seawater trapped inside hardened into salt. So it would make sense if you can also make salt directly from seawater." I wasn't sure if I was correct, but I vaguely remembered learning in my previous life that salt mines were found in places that used to be under the sea.

Unlike his siblings, Prince Richard was taking me quite seriously.

"The water in the ocean is indeed salty. And if you were to heat seawater...the water would evaporate and leave behind the salt!"

Oh, so this world really only has rock salt? Sea salt isn't a thing? I messed up!

"Why don't we try experimenting, Patience?"

Though I was glad that Prince Richard was now in a better mood, this wasn't such a simple discussion. I could see where this would lead: The kingdom would probably claim exclusive rights to selling sea salt. That would likely come with monumental profits, but the family of the dismissed Viscount Granger would be barred from getting anywhere near the whole affair. I'd have liked at least a tiny bit of compensation for providing the idea.

Ugh, I want money*. I can't do my side jobs at the summer palace, and I've left all the gardening work to George. Oh, but if I make salt and bring some home, that'll save us some money. We also need salt to preserve food.*

I had small-minded goals compared to Prince Richard, who wanted to produce salt for his kingdom, but I couldn't help it—us

Grangers were poor.

The staff had finished preparing Princess Margaret's room, and eventually the princes took their leave as well. After everyone else had gone, Mary finally came to get me.

"I apologize for having kept you waiting, my lady."

"There was no need to rush. I was having fun looking at the ocean through the windows."

Yes, I was looking out at the sea, which would become my moneymaker—somehow. *At the very least, I'd like to make some salt for my family to use. The only problem is I don't know how I'd bring it home. I wonder how much salt would fit in my travel wardrobe.* My problems were relatively trivial. Here I was in another world, yet I wasn't going on adventures or making a killing. *Maybe that's because I can only use household magic.*

Since I'd ended up last to get my room, Mary rushed me as we walked off.

"Wow, I even have a view of the ocean from my room!" I exclaimed as I stared at the ocean from the open windows, only to be dragged into a bath by Mary. *I was having fun feeling like I was at a resort! Hmph!*

"You must get dressed before dinner. Please hurry, my lady."

That's right. Even the Grangers get dressed up for dinner. It's only natural that I'd have to get dressed up here at the summer palace.

Thanks to my household magic, drying my hair only took a moment—all I had to do was say, "Dry!"

"Please wear this," Mary said, handing me an unfamiliar pink gown. *This must be the dress that the queen prepared for me.*

"It looks quite expensive. Would it not be better to set it aside for a day we're dining with His Majesty?"

Mary rushed me into getting dressed, insisting that it would be fine to just wear it again upon the king's arrival.

"It would be rude to not wear a gifted item," Mary also pointed out.

I hadn't had much experience wearing pink in my previous life. I'd usually stuck to a black-and-white palette with blue sometimes

added for a pop of color.

"It looks wonderful on you," Mary complimented me.

Though my maid's view was definitely biased, I did agree that the dress suited Patience, especially since she had put on some weight since the winter, back when she was rail thin. *You actually look pretty cute.*

I would personally never choose a pink gown, but the color went well with Patience's blonde hair.

Maybe I have to start thinking about dress choices based on how well it suits my hair color. I guess I won't have to worry about it for a while, since I'll just be making whatever old dresses we've got as good as new for now, not shopping for any new ones.

I was glad that I'd put on some weight, but I wanted more muscle at this point, not fat. I was still much too skinny. *I'll do my best swimming. But Princess Margaret, could you* please *forget about horseback riding?*

Mary rushed me to the dining room, but no one else was there. *We're here too early! I wanted to enjoy either the view from my room or that tiny but luxurious bathtub a little longer!*

Just as those complaints ran through my mind, Prince Keith and Prince Richard arrived.

Wow, they look pretty good. I guess they are *princes after all. Wait, why is Prince Keith blushing? Did he notice my gaze of approval?*

"You're not so bad to look at when you're dressed like that, Patience," Prince Keith huffed. Despite his handsome looks, he was still a child on the inside.

Well, I'm a shotacon, so I find that side of him cute too.

"That's rude, Keith," Prince Richard snapped.

"It's all right. I know that Prince Keith was complimenting me," I assured him. I wanted to keep Prince Richard's mood from souring before dinner even began.

Even though I'd had his back, Prince Keith started grumbling under his breath.

It's that kind of behavior that makes you keep upsetting your

beloved older brother.

Princess Margaret appeared with perfect timing. Prince Richard and Prince Keith both stood up to greet her. *See, I knew you could be well-mannered, Prince Keith! If you keep behaving well in front of Prince Richard, you'll upset him less.*

"You look incredibly lovely, Lady Margaret," I gushed.



Princess Margaret had taken a liking to the curls I'd done for her, and she'd had her maid style her hair with them as well. She wore a green gown that matched the shade of her eyes and had a long hem. *Right, she's going to be thirteen.* The princess had been wearing a knee-length dress during the day, but in this gown at night, she already looked like a proper lady.

"Thank you. You look very nice as well, Patience." Princess Margaret was adhering to the rules for women in society: If you received a compliment, you had to give one back.

"I'm glad to hear that," I replied. "This gown is a gift from Her Majesty."

While I was grateful for the gown, what would really have made me happy was getting to spend time with my brothers at home, but that wasn't something I could say out loud.

The queen arrived, and the brothers, Princess Margaret, and I all stood up.

"Come, let us have dinner," the queen announced. Since the king wouldn't be with us tonight, Prince Richard escorted her to her seat while Prince Keith escorted Princess Margaret. I was fine on my own.

Formal dinners make me so nervous, even though I ate lunch every day with Prince Richard, Prince Margaret, and Prince Keith at the salon. Queen Victoria really has an imposing presence when she's all dressed up.

"I've heard from Margaret that you enjoy fish, Patience," the queen remarked.

"Yes, I do. I'm grateful to be invited here to the summer palace, since I don't get many opportunities to enjoy fish in Romano." *I feel like Prince Keith is going to bring up the fact that he doesn't like fish. Though, he* has *been getting a better sense of what might be rude to say.* "I'd like to thank you for this gown, Your Majesty," I said, changing the subject. *Please keep your mouth shut, Prince Keith! I can handle Prince Richard's anger, but please don't upset the queen! At the very least, not while* I'm *in the room!*

"It suits you well, Patience," the queen complimented me.

That was enough conversation for dinner. I was going to focus on

eating for the rest of the night.

The starter was, to my incredible surprise, an aspic with what looked like shrimp and sea urchin. *This is sooo good! This* is *sea urchin, right? I can't find a name for it in Patience's memories. She's probably never had it before.*

The capital city of Romano was landlocked, and though fish could be transported in the winter, it probably came at a hefty price, so seafood was never on the menu for the impoverished Granger family.

"You really do wear your heart on your sleeve when it comes to food," the queen remarked.

I think that's a compliment. I hope she isn't upset with me.

"This is my first time having this dish," I explained. "I never knew something could be so delicious."

"The pink things are caleb shrimp," Prince Keith explained, happy to teach me something. He really loved to act high and mighty.

He really is just a little kid.

"The orange thing shaped like a cloud is horse dung sea urchin. The name is awful, but—" Prince Keith noticed Queen Victoria's sharp glare and shut his mouth.

Did this world just happen to have a species of sea urchin also called "horse dung," like Japan had in my previous life, or had its name been translated into this world by some other reincarnator? Eh, I didn't care about that. I was so excited, because I loved both shrimp and sea urchin. *I wish I could eat Prince Keith's sea urchin that he doesn't want.*

The next courses were a seafood soup and a fish poêlé, both of which were delicious. Both had been on the menu at the salon during the winter, but they had disappeared as the weather grew warmer. That wasn't surprising, since Romano wasn't near any water. Prince Keith didn't finish his soup or his fish. *I can't believe him!*

The meal itself was delicious, but the dessert was mediocre, as expected. Though, there was fruit served as well, so I enjoyed that instead.

"We are supposed to leave the gentlemen here and retire to the

salon, but today we'll all go together," the queen announced.

Wait, isn't there a hanon in the salon? I have a bad feeling about this.

Just as I expected, both the queen and Princess Margaret instructed me to play the hanon. I decided to perform a serenade that felt appropriate for this summer evening.

"Oh, my! A new song!" Princess Margaret exclaimed.

Was it a new song? I'd begun losing track of what pieces I'd played; I needed to start writing them down.

"You have an incredibly abundant talent for music, Patience," the queen complimented me. That was also the signal that I was done playing.

I'd like for you all to have some nice family time now, so can I just go to my room? Despite my wishes, I had to stay.

Time passed as I quietly listened to their conversations, and my early morning caught up with me, making me sleepy.

"You look tired, Patience," the queen pointed out. "Go on and rest."

What? I was trying my best to hide it! Did she notice?

"Thank you very much. It's my first time traveling outside of Romano, so I think my excitement might have tired me out."

I returned to my room, changed into my pajamas, and immediately fell asleep.

"Please wake up, my lady." Mary was waking me up earlier than usual. I opened my eyes and saw an extravagant bed and unfamiliar furniture. *Oh, right, I'm at the summer palace.*

After Mary helped me get ready, I headed out to wake up Princess Margaret, since Queen Victoria had exhorted me last night, "Don't let Margaret be late to breakfast, Patience." *Good grief!*

I had instructed Zofie, Princess Margaret's attendant, to have tea prepared in the morning.

"Please wake up, Princess Margaret," Zofie and Charlotte pleaded. Even with two people working to get her up, the princess was deep asleep.

"Please wake up," I said as I cast household magic, improving her

circulation to encourage her to get up.

"Good morning," Princess Margaret said, finally sitting up. Zofie immediately handed her a cup of the tea she'd prepared. "You really are good at getting me up, Patience. Does anyone know a court lady skilled in household magic?"

After the princess finished her tea, I used another spell on her. "Become clean!" Zofie could take it from here. "I'm going to wait in the dining hall," I announced, only to be caught by Charlotte as I was leaving the room.

"Lady Patience, how did you wake up Princess Margaret just now?"

"I used household magic, since that is all I can use." *Though I guess it is a bit of a strange form of household magic. I may as well explain; I would definitely like to stop being in charge of waking the princess up.*

Charlotte seemed quite desperate to find a solution. She was probably having trouble every weekend waking the princess up.

"I can use household magic as well, but I cannot do anything like that. Please, teach me."

I want to help Charlotte wake Princess Margaret up.

"Madam Jefferson told us that anything is possible with household magic. I believe that you could do anything you put your mind to, Lady Charlotte. Regarding Princess Margaret, I believe she has a hard time getting up in the morning because she has low blood pressure."

Oh, I don't think she understands. Her eyes are darting around like she's confused. I wonder if 'low blood pressure' isn't a thing in this world.

"Um, maybe that's a strange phrase. It's similar to how some women who easily get cold have trouble moving their toes and fingers on chilly days," I added, attempting to explain better. "Blood doesn't circulate as well while we're asleep, making it difficult for some to get up in the morning. That's why I use household magic to help improve her circulation."

"Improve her circulation?" Charlotte repeated, still confused.

"Actually, I suspect you could achieve the same results without

using household magic at all," I said. "I believe using a hot, steamed towel to massage her legs would encourage her to wake up."

Charlotte finally smiled.

"Oh, that *is* something I can prepare! You said we should massage her legs? The attendants often massage ladies' legs after they've danced all night at a ball, so I believe Zofie has some experience with it."

Please try it! I wish you luck! If you all can successfully wake her up, I'll be off the hook!

"Good morning," Princess Margaret said in greeting, having made it to breakfast on time.

The queen flashed a smile of satisfaction.

"Morning!" Prince Keith exclaimed as he walked in with Prince Richard. *Looks like they don't have any trouble getting up.* The queen acknowledged him with a nod.

After breakfast, we were lounging in the parlor when the caretakers brought Princess Jane and Prince Marcus out. *They're so cute!*

Princess Jane looked like a mini Princess Margaret, and Prince Marcus looked like a mini Prince Richard. Princess Jane had the same platinum blonde hair that the queen, Princess Margaret, and Prince Keith had. Prince Marcus had the same golden blond hair as Prince Richard, along with blue eyes. Though they were similar in appearance, he had a gentle aura that was different from Prince Richard's. *He's so adorable! If the caretaker weren't here, I'd scoop him right up!*

"Good morning," they each greeted the queen before taking turns getting a kiss.

"Jane, Marcus, this is Patience. She's Margaret's lady's maid. We're going to be together at the summer palace, so I want you to get along with her."

Gosh, Princess Jane and I are nearly the same height. I'm just barely taller than her.

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Your Highnesses. I am Patience," I greeted them.

The caretakers immediately took the young royals back to the children's room. *That's it? This is the first time I've been glad the Grangers are poor. Well, no, I don't like being poor. I just would be sad if I only got to spend that little time with my brothers.*

"Margaret, Keith," the queen called out to her other children. "I think you should spend the morning studying. Margaret will work on math and sewing, and Keith will work on classical literature."

So strict, even during summer break, I thought, carefree as a random bystander. But no, I was immediately dragged into the fray.

"Patience must study the lute, dancing, horseback riding, and swimming this summer," Princess Margaret announced, planning to take me down with her.

Just then, Prince Richard stepped in.

"Save that for later," the first prince said. "Patience, I'd like to get started right away on that matter we discussed yesterday."

Oh, am I saved?

The queen seemed confused.

"What are you talking about, Richard?" the queen asked. "You know that Patience is Margaret's lady's maid."

It seemed that even the future king was no match for Her Majesty. He had to properly explain himself before she'd let him act.

The prince turned to his sister.

"Margaret, I'd like to try making salt from seawater with Patience. Could I borrow your lady's maid for a bit?"

"All right, you can borrow Patience while I'm studying," Princess Margaret said, deciding to have Prince Richard owe her a favor. "She's still going to have lute lessons at noon."

"Very well," the queen said, nodding in agreement.

Ugh, I wonder which is going to be more exhausting: learning the lute or making salt?

Prince Richard and I discussed what we needed to prepare.

"If this is going to be a simple experiment, we will need something to collect the seawater, and a large pot. We will also need a stove to heat up the pot."

Prince Richard gave a servant precise instructions. I wasn't sure if

there would be a portable stove on hand, but the royal family would sometimes have meals cooked outdoors when they went hunting, so they probably had one we could use.

The beach was close by, but we had a substantial amount of luggage, so we took a carriage to the shore. From there, we walked.

"Let's get started right away!" Prince Richard exclaimed, eager to test things out.

I followed behind him with Mary at my side as we headed for the shore.

"My lady, please use a parasol," Mary insisted.

The tattered parasol we'd found in the attic had been restored to be as good as new. Walking with a parasol in hand sounded graceful, but the sea breeze made it difficult to execute.

"It looks improper to have it leaning on your shoulder like that," Mary pointed out when I tried to make it easier on myself.

She wasn't wrong. It would look better to hold the parasol upright, but the breeze was tiring my hands out.

As Mary and I went back and forth about the parasol, Prince Richard was continuing to give orders to his servants.

"I think this spot should be good," the prince announced.

Is there any point to me being here? Can't Richard do this on his own?

The servants began setting up the portable stove and collecting seawater in a large pot.

"Light the fire," Prince Richard commanded.

Oh, I thought he'd use fire magic like Prince Keith. I guess he's just having his servants do it.

It had been six months since I'd come to this world, and after a term at the Royal Academy, I'd begun to get a feel for what kind of magic people could use.

Prince Keith had shared that he was proficient in fire magic during our self-introductions, and I could also feel fire magic coming off of Prince Richard. Not only could I feel the element, but I also got a prickling sense that he had a lot of mana.

"Looks like it's having trouble lighting!" the prince shouted. Perhaps because of the sea breeze, the servants were having trouble

lighting the fire. *Wouldn't magic work here?* The prince seemed to notice my confusion. "If I were to light the entire thing on fire, then we wouldn't have an experiment," he explained.

Oh, I see. I guess fire magic consists of a lot of attack spells. Prince Richard might just be so strong that he can't hold back.

"I will use my household magic to light the fire," I said. I quickly lit a fire, but the water was taking a while to boil. *Do I need to watch the pot the entire time? Oh, there's a pretty seashell over there!*

"You're good at using household magic, Patience," the prince complimented me. "If you're bored, you can go collect seashells."

Was it that obvious? I'm sorry.

"Mary, I'd like to bring these back as a gift for my brothers. Let's collect some pretty shells." Mary gave me a look as if she were asking whether I was sure I wanted to do this, to which I said, "His Highness has given me permission."

Even in a new situation like this, Mary was a helpful attendant. She found a small pouch within her bag and handed it to me. I filled the pouch with all sorts of shells, including some pretty pink ones and white spiky ones. Just thinking about how happy the angels would look when I gave them the shells made me beyond elated.

I'd finished collecting seashells, so I returned to Prince Richard's side.

"I see a fair bit of the water has boiled off," I remarked.

"Indeed, but we're not done yet. Even if we could make salt doing this, it would cost a lot and require a lot of fuel."

Hmm. I think on Earth they used salt fields or natural evaporation to make salt.

"Is there anything we can do with magic?" I asked.

Prince Richard folded his arms and thought for a moment.

"I think that would require the ability to control one's magic extremely precisely," the prince explained. "Some nobles may be able to do it, but it's quite difficult, and we can't make a professional court mage work in salt production."

The pot was still quite full of water.

"Oh, perhaps there is an issue with the pot," I suggested. "A

flatter pan would make the water evaporate faster, no?"

"You're right!" Prince Richard responded with a smile. "This was a failure, but at noon we'll try again with a flatter pan."

Just as Prince Richard was about to have his servants clean everything up, I stopped him.

"Oh, the seawater in that pot has boiled down quite a bit. I believe things will go quicker if we use that same water later."

"I see!" the prince exclaimed joyously. "I was surprised when Keith told me you were interested in alchemy, but I see now that your interest might be quite useful."

I just want to make some salt for my family. I'll leave the real transmutation work to the mad scientists in the club.

"Yes, I'm sure the members of the club will come up with a way to extract salt from seawater," I replied.

Prince Richard noticed that I was trying to get myself out of helping him. He smiled, making him look exactly like Queen Victoria. *How terrifying!*

"I'd like *your* help, Patience. Also, I'm sure you could imagine what my mother would say if I invited *them* over."

I thought back to the members of the alchemy club I'd met during the Festival of Verdure. *Yeah, I don't think they'd get along with the queen.* Prince Richard wanted me to be here for his experiment after lunch, but...

"I've promised Princess Margaret that I would begin studying the lute at noon," I reminded him. If I was going to be going along with what he wanted, he was going to have to convince Princess Margaret.

"I'll handle that," Prince Richard assured me.

"Very well," I said.

I know I agreed to help him, but did he really have to bring it up during *lunch?!*

"Brother, I believe we agreed that I would lend Patience to you until noon," Princess Margaret said pointedly. "I spent my morning laboring over math and sewing, which are difficult for me. All I had to keep me going was the promise of spending my afternoon

listening to music."

Please, please, please don't argue with your brother during lunch.

The queen set her fork down.

"You three. Be silent and eat."

Prince Keith ended up catching a stray bullet, even though he hadn't been a part of Prince Richard and Princess Margaret's kerfuffle. *You definitely shouldn't leave your fish on your plate today*, I tried to tell him with a look, but Prince Keith wasn't good at picking up signals.

"Keith, being picky will be used as fodder by other nobles to tease you and call you childish," the queen scolded. "This sort of behavior is why Richard and Margaret must watch over you when you're having lunch at the salon at school. I want you to overcome your dislike of fish and vegetables over your summer vacation."

Queen Victoria's mood had completely soured. *This is your fault for not eating your fish, Prince Keith.*

As expected, everyone chose the fruit over the cloyingly sweet cake for dessert.

"That reminds me, you're using Julianne's recipes to make sweets for your brothers, right, Patience?" the queen asked as she looked at the overly sweet cakes on display. "I'd like to try them. After all, Julianne was my friend." The queen seemed satisfied that Prince Richard and Princess Margaret no longer had a reason to fight. She looked at her two children—who couldn't complain about their mother's request for my time—and smiled.

"Of course. I will give the chef the recipe," I replied. "It would be easier to make using household magic, so if I could get your permission to assist, I can assure you that the treats will be successfully made."

I was able to get the queen's permission, but as soon as I stepped out of the dining room, both Prince Richard and Princess Margaret grabbed my arms.

"Lady Margaret, I've come up with a song to be played on two hanons. I'll quickly play it for you, so I'd like you to write out the sheet music." *That should be enough to take care of the princess. She'll spend her afternoon lost in transcription.* I turned to Prince

Richard. “Your Highness, please use a flat pan to boil the seawater we started heating this morning until all of the water has evaporated. We can further revise the method once we’ve actually made some salt.”

After that, I did my best to recall “Sonata for Two Pianos” and played it for the princess.

“My, what a lovely piece,” Princess Margaret gushed. “Now we can play together.”

Prince Keith, who was watching, seemed unimpressed. *Wait, it looks like Queen Victoria is also unimpressed... There’s no way, right?*

I returned to my room and wrote out the recipes for pancakes and cookies, then I had Mary pass them on to the summer palace’s chef. While I waited for the chef to prepare the various ingredients, I did my best to rack my brain for ideas to help Prince Richard with his salt experiment.

I think salt fields were developed during the Edo period. If I remember correctly, the Ako incident happened because Asano Naganori wouldn’t tell Kira Yoshinaka how to make salt, which caused Kira to bully and shame Asano. Modern salt-harvesting has automated a lot of the process with machines. I think I saw a scene in a postwar soap opera where the characters were lacking resources and had to make their own salt. Come on, you can remember!

I’d been watching a rerun of that soap opera at the employee cafeteria while eating lunch, so I’d only been partially paying attention to the story.

The characters got a bunch of steel plates, which led to their decision to make salt. They brought the steel plates to the hot, sandy beach, poured seawater over them to make concentrated salt water, which they boiled.

The method I remembered wouldn’t require firewood, which was a truly important resource. *I never want to go through a freezing winter ever again.*

“My lady, the chef has informed me that everything is ready,”

Mary reported. “I have to say, must you step into the kitchen?”

Mary didn’t like me going into the kitchen back home, but she was even more on edge because we were at the royal family’s vacation home. She believed that a proper lady would only hand off her recipes and leave the actual preparations to the chef.

“I promised Her Majesty that I would prepare my mother’s sweets for her. I want the chef to make them properly.” Mary couldn’t argue back when I brought up the queen.

“You promised Her Majesty...? Still, did the mistress really make such treats in the kitchen?”

“She did,” I replied. “It was only once, but we even made them together.”

“I didn’t know that the mistress had done that,” Mary said with a look of nostalgia.

Now that she wasn’t monitoring my behavior as strictly, I rushed to the kitchen. *I really feel like I’m an outsider here. I mean, it’s a palace chef’s kitchen! I bet the chef has a big ego. He probably doesn’t want to follow an amateur’s recipe.*

“I’ve been instructed by Her Majesty to prepare my mother’s recipes for her. Please, get started.” I was a sheep in wolf’s clothing, masking myself with the queen’s authority. *You need to wield your authority in these sorts of situations. Otherwise, you won’t be listened to.*

“Very well,” the chef replied. *Oh, looks like I won my first round against the chef.*

The pancakes would turn out well as long as the eggs were properly beaten. It was a recipe easy enough for a child to follow, so a chef who could make such delicious food would have no problem following it...I hoped.

“Please, wait!” I exclaimed. “Please use the amount of sugar indicated on the recipe.” I’d looked away for a moment, and the chef had tried to drown the batter in sugar.

“The more sugar that is used, the more premium a dessert is,” the chef explained. “This is for Her Majesty’s consumption after all.”

Oh no, this chef believes that more sugar is always better.

“That may be true, generally speaking, but Her Majesty has

specifically asked to taste the recipes my mother, who was her friend during their youth, shared with me. Please follow the recipe."

Even though he used an egg beater, the eggs weren't being whisked properly by the assistants, and the chef wasn't calling it out. I wasn't going to accuse the entire kitchen staff of trying to sabotage me just yet, but no one seemed particularly motivated to make these recipes.

"That won't do," I said. "It needs to be whisked until there are firmer peaks. Hand me the bowl." *I won't let you slack off*, I thought as I used household magic to whip up the eggs.

"What? Is that household magic?" The chef finally started to take interest.

"Now, just follow the recipe, please. Once they're done, you'll top them with butter and serve them with some whipped cream on the side, along with some honey in a separate bowl. I'll also whip up the cream, so please hand me the bowl."

I added some sugar to the heavy cream and whipped it into soft peaks using household magic. *Okay, the pancakes should be fine now.*

We moved on to the cookies, and I had to stop the chef from adding extra sugar during the creaming stage.

"Please follow the recipe," I cautioned yet again.

I used my household magic to chill the resulting dough and had the chef slice it thin.

"Cookies can be prepared in a variety of ways," I explained. "Mixing almond slices into the dough is delicious, as is topping them with jam."

The delicious aroma of baking cookies filled the kitchen, but the kitchen staff still seemed truly worried that the desserts didn't have enough sugar in them.

"The staff of this kitchen always prepare such delicious meals, but if I may be brazen, your desserts are drowning in so much sugar that no one in the royal family cares for them. Please try my pancakes and cookies, just this once. I also implore you to pay attention to how Her Majesty receives my recipes."

It would be painful to see the kitchen staff waste all of that sugar

all summer long on those cloying desserts. *Please eat my desserts, chef. I'm sure you have a great palate, so I'm confident that you'll find the mellow sweetness of my recipes delicious. Ugh, will he listen to a pip-squeak like me, though?*

At teatime, we were served fragrant cookies and pancakes that came with plenty of butter and whipped cream.

"This is delicious, Patience," Princess Margaret said. She seemed to enjoy it.

"I had no idea that Julianne was making such delicious treats," Queen Victoria said, eating a pancake.

I'm glad to hear that. Now she knows I haven't been wasting the eggs, butter, and sugar she's always giving me.

"Where'd you learn about desserts like this?" Prince Keith said. He'd already finished his pancakes, and he'd begun eating the cookies.

"Patience already said that these are her mother's recipes," Prince Richard snapped. "Weren't you listening? Anyways, this is something even I can eat." The first prince didn't have much of a sweet tooth, but he still finished the pancakes, just leaving behind the whipped cream.

Teatime was a success, but afterward Princess Margaret scolded me.

"Listening once isn't enough to transcribe a song into sheet music," she grumbled.

I ended up having to transcribe the song myself. *How did this happen?*

"The salt is ready!" Prince Richard reported happily. Though he was pleased, he also noted that improvements to the process were necessary.

It seems it's been decided that my job is to come up with said improvements. I'll just write out what I remembered and give that to Prince Richard. I don't want to spend my summer baking on the beaches to harvest salt.

"What you're playing is a little different from what's on the sheet music," Princess Margaret pointed out as I played the new piece

once more. “Let’s continue this after dinner.”

I was finally free (until dinnertime), so I was going to return to my room, but I was stopped by the chef.

“Lady Patience, I must apologize. Everyone enjoyed the desserts with less sugar. I tried them myself, and though I did feel they were slightly lacking in sweetness, I found them delicious. If you have any other recipes, could you please share them?”

If I had the funds to do so, I would’ve loved to open up my own dessert shop, but I had no such money. I would benefit more from sharing my recipes here and having delicious desserts made for me. I wasn’t going to share all of them, but it wouldn’t hurt to give away one or two.

“Yes, of course. I’ll have Mary bring over something.”

I thought about what I’d share as I walked back to my room. Since sugar was a valuable commodity in this world, I understood why the chef had been making those sugar-crusted cakes, but it was important to consider how the people who actually had to eat those desserts felt about them.

My recipe with the least chance of failure was for pound cake. It wasn’t too different from a normal cake, and you could customize it with all sorts of supplementary ingredients, like walnuts or raisins. *I also liked the pound cake with orange zest. Crushed tea leaves would also be delicious.*

A basic pound cake was easy to make because the ingredients were all added in equal parts. I made a note of some variations the chef could make before handing the recipe to Mary, who would pass it along to the chef.

On my third day at the summer palace, it was finally starting to feel like summer break. After breakfast, the caretakers brought Princess Jane and Prince Marcus to the parlor. They exchanged greetings and kisses with their mother, which was the same as yesterday. After that, something different happened.

“Richard, Margaret, and Keith. I’d like all three of you to spend the morning playing with Jane and Marcus at the beach.” Princess Jane and Prince Marcus, who would usually be taken back to their

rooms at this point, seemed happy to hear this.

"I'm so excited!" Princess Jane exclaimed. Perhaps her calm younger brother bored her.

Prince Marcus also wore a joyous smile.

"But mother, I want to make salt... Never mind, I understand." Though Prince Richard wanted to continue his salt-making adventures, he couldn't say no to his excited younger siblings. It wasn't like the salt in the ocean was going anywhere.

"I'll teach you how to swim, Patience," Prince Keith said, eager to start our lessons. *No thank you. I don't need a hot-blooded swimming instructor.*

I wanted to believe I could swim, but perhaps I'd have to work my way up from leaning to kick.

Also, it's difficult to swim in regular clothes. There was one time I had a fire drill during swim class, and I had to wear my gym clothes over my swimsuit, and I fell into the pool like that. I really thought I was going to drown. My bag acted like a flotation device, and I managed to stay above the surface while I kicked my way to the edge of the pool. Oh, it may be easier to float in salt water, though.

Mary dressed me in some old clothes. I also wore a different pair of drawers that were as thick as regular clothing.

"It's time to swim in the ocean! I'm so excited!" I cheered. I headed to the beach, buzzing with excitement.

Along the beach were several large umbrellas with beach chairs underneath in their shade. There was also a tent where maids were standing by to provide drinks and other amenities. This was a beach experience that left nothing to be desired.

"You're here, Patience!" Prince Keith exclaimed. "We're going to do some stretches before we get into the water!"

Prince Keith, Princess Jane, and Prince Marcus were the only ones who seemed to be excited. *This must be a lot of work for the caretakers.*

"I'll be lounging in the shade," Princess Margaret said. "I might get in the water if I get hot. You go swim, Patience." The princess had brought a book with her. *She doesn't want to try at all, huh?*

I wasn't trying to copy Prince Keith, but it was indeed important

to stretch before going swimming. *If your legs cramp, you could end up drowning!* I stretched my arms and legs out before doing foot stretches to extend my Achilles tendon.

"Why are you goofing off?" Prince Keith accused me. *Do people not stretch their feet in this world?* "Whatever. You go with Marcus to a shallow area and get used to being in the water."

Princess Jane turned out to be quite active. She looked like a mini Princess Margaret, but her personality was quite different—more like Prince Keith's.

I'm going to play in the water with the adorable Prince Marcus. He's going to be in the same class as my Henry. I hope they'll get along. Wow, he's pretty quiet.

"Let's slowly get used to the water, okay, Prince Marcus?" a caretaker said, splashing water onto him.

The young prince erupted in giggles, which was adorable. *I'm joining too!* It was fun to splash water on each other. Another caretaker joined, bringing some toys to play in the sand with.

"Why don't we build a sand castle, Prince Marcus?"

The caretaker handed him a small, wooden shovel, which seemed completely safe to use. The accompanying pail was also tiny. I began digging in the sand with my hands, and one caretaker brought over Princess Jane's shovel for me.

"Princess Jane doesn't enjoy playing in the sand very much," she explained as she lent it to me.

That makes sense, I thought as I looked over and saw her swimming with Prince Keith. I was having fun playing in the sand with Prince Marcus. I was really in my element as a shotacon.

I collected some water in the bucket to wet the sand and harden it, shaping it into a hill. *Oops, I accidentally used some household magic without thinking.*

"Wow, it's a castle!" the young prince exclaimed.

I went too far. I ended up finishing it on my own.

"Prince Marcus, why don't we dig a moat around the castle," I suggested.

We dug a moat all the way around the castle, which I solidified with my household magic. After collecting more water in a bucket,

Prince Marcus and I poured it into the moat.

"Look, Richard! It's a moat!" Prince Richard was late joining us, and Prince Marcus showed off our creation upon his brother's arrival. *He's so innocent and cute!*

"This is impressive!" Prince Richard complimented, which seemed to please Prince Marcus.

Just watching makes me so happy.

My time of bliss was quickly over. Prince Keith had spotted Prince Richard and ran over. *He's like an excited puppy. Wait, what about Princess Jane? Did he just leave her? He can't do that!*

"Keith, you can't just leave Jane behind," Prince Richard scolded.

See, you got in trouble. I turned to see that Princess Jane had gotten out of the water and was troubling the court ladies with her pleas to keep swimming.

"Richard! Swim with me!" she began begging after the court ladies told her she couldn't swim on her own.

That energetic princess is going to be in the same grade as my gentle Nassius. Well, they'll probably run in different circles since she's a girl and he's a boy. Still, I might suggest that he skip ahead a grade, just so he can avoid having to deal with her.

"Come on, Patience," Prince Keith called out. "I'm going to teach you how to swim."

We started by practicing putting my face underwater. *Yeah, I'm floating!*

"You're surprisingly good at this," Prince Keith said. Though he was rude, he was good at teaching. "Now that you can float, it's time to practice kicking. Here, hold on to this board and kick your legs."

There were no kickboards in this world, but we used a floating board that seemed to be made out of cork to practice kicking. *Hey, I think I'll be able to swim!*

"Hey, don't let go of the board!" Prince Keith warned. "Wait, you can swim now? You're kidding, right?"

I didn't have a lot of stamina, so I couldn't swim for long, but I was able to do it properly. Also, just as I'd expected, it was difficult to swim in actual clothes. Getting wet made my skirt heavy and stick

to my legs.

"I'm going to take a break," I said. *Patience really has no stamina.* Since my clothes were wet and sticky, I used household magic to clean them. "Become clean!" I then sat beside Princess Margaret in a beach chair.

"Get Patience some juice," Princess Margaret ordered, and a maid brought me out some juice to enjoy. "That magic you used just now is very convenient," the princess remarked. "I actually like swimming in the ocean, but my clothes just get so heavy and uncomfortable when they're wet."

Right?! Aren't there any swimsuits in this world?

"I will clean them with my household magic," I assured the princess. It seemed that the princess had gotten hot even while under the shade of the umbrellas.

"I guess I'll swim just a little. Let's swim together, Patience."

I decided to swim a little more as well. *This is to build up my stamina.*

Princess Margaret visited the summer palace every year, so she was a skilled swimmer with more stamina than I. Princess Jane seemed happy that her older sister had gotten in the water as well.

"We need to get going soon," Princess Margaret eventually announced. She told Princess Jane that they needed to return for lunch and dragged the tantrum-throwing princess back to the palace.

"I wanted to swim a little more since your lady's maid can clean me up!" Princess Jane whined.

"No, you must take a proper bath," Princess Margaret replied. "Those are mother's orders."

Princess Jane also seemed unhappy that the princes were going to swim just a bit longer, but she couldn't disobey her older sister. I joined them and returned to the summer palace, and a caretaker followed behind with Prince Marcus.

"Did you have fun?" the caretaker asked.

"Yeah!" the young prince beamed. "We made a castle! Richard liked it!"

Prince Marcus is so cute!

"That's wonderful," the caretaker smiled. "After lunch, we're going to take a little nap, okay?"

Oh, a nap! I want one too. Swimming is honestly exhausting. I'm glad to know that I can swim, though.

It was another day at the summer palace, and I was spending the morning studying with Princess Margaret and Prince Keith. My lute lessons were reserved for the afternoon, because music would distract Princess Margaret from her math. I spent this time reviewing classical literature and history, since I felt confident that I could pass language arts and magic theory.

"Are you trying to rub it in, Patience?" Prince Keith said. "That's the textbook for senior division classical literature."

No, I'm not trying to rub it in that I'm accelerating, Prince Keith. I was supposed to study this at home with my brothers.

"Do you actually understand what's in there?" the prince continued.

How rude! Why would I bring it to study if I didn't understand it?

"Your Highness, you must take your own studies more seriously," the tutor watching over us scolded him. As expected, a tutor for the royal family was strict.

I'd spent some afternoons making salt with Prince Richard, but most of my afternoons were spent with Princess Margaret and the music tutor. The lute was difficult to play, but I had fun. It was a different shape, but it reminded me of guitars from my previous life.

"It looks like you've learned the scales, so please move on to playing a practice song."

Oh, so it is *all just practicing finger placement.* I practiced a little more before strumming a nursery rhyme from my previous life that I'd already taught my brothers.

"My, what is that song?" the music-loving princess asked, quickly picking up on the unfamiliar tune.

"I made a simple nursery rhyme for my brothers to play when practicing the hanon. I figured they would get bored just doing finger exercises."

Princess Margaret's eyes glimmered. *I have a bad feeling about*

this.

"Jane and Marcus are learning to play the lute and hanon right now. Tomorrow morning, we'll teach them that song." *She's trying to get out of math practice by hiding in the children's room.*

"Come! Now that we finally have two hanons, let's practice your new song," Princess Margaret suggested.

I'd taken an interest in and learned how to play "Sonata for Two Pianos" because the main character in a popular music manga had played it. *It's sad that this world doesn't have manga or anime.*

"It's so fun to play together!" the princess beamed after practice. "Let's do it again tomorrow!"

Well, it seems like she's forgotten about making me practice horse riding, so I'll play the hanon with her.

Unfortunately, she hadn't forgotten about dancing, so I spent some afternoons practicing it. Since Princess Margaret had already received a certificate of completion, she wanted me to follow suit so we would have that period free to delve into music together.

The dance tutor was, as expected, a total professional who was talented both as a dancer and as a teacher. Even so, I still wasn't good enough to receive a certificate of completion. I was able to keep up thanks to the instructor masterfully taking the lead, but all the various dance steps were mixed up in my head.

"Your dancing needs more work," Princess Margaret said.

She's so strict.

If I could be completely honest, the princess wasn't one to talk, since her sewing needed more—in fact, much, much, *much* more—work too. It didn't matter whether noble ladies actually *needed* to be able to sew. It was unacceptable to not be able to do so.

In the not-so-distant past, only the royal family had been allowed to sit on stools in the royal palace. The only exceptions had been the ladies doing embroidery. Additionally, though there were professional tailors nowadays who worked on them, in the past, many gowns had featured detailed embroidery that women had had to do themselves.

There was also the chance that Princess Margaret would marry into the royal family of another kingdom that had somewhat

outdated customs. She needed to practice a lot more to be prepared for that possibility.

The next day, we headed to the children's room in the morning to play the practice song I'd based off a nursery rhyme from my previous life for Princess Jane and Prince Marcus. Princess Jane didn't seem to enjoy playing the hanon very much, but after I taught her the song, she sang along to it with a beautiful voice.

"You're an incredible singer, Jane!" Princess Margaret gushed. It seemed that this was news to her as well.

Since they were four years apart, Princess Jane was only five or six by the time Princess Margaret was old enough to leave the children's room. Even if she knew some things, like the fact that the young princess enjoyed horseback riding, they didn't get to spend a lot of time together just as sisters, so she didn't know too much about her little sister.

"I don't like the hanon very much," Princess Jane admitted. "I actually prefer playing the lute more."

Oh, that's the opposite of me. I used to play piano, so playing the hanon is easy. The limited number of strings makes guitars and stuff feel difficult to me.

"I see. In that case I think it would be fine to focus your music lessons on the lute... I'll try speaking to mother about it."

I thought back to music class, where many female students played the hanon, and many male students played the lute. If Princess Jane were to eventually marry into a foreign kingdom, she would need to be able to follow their customs, including playing the hanon if necessary. Princess Margaret was aware of that, so she made sure to handle things carefully by avoiding saying anything definitive.

"Well, I wouldn't mind playing the hanon if there were fun songs to play..."

Hmm? Curious, we decided to take a look at the songs that the princess was practicing.

"Oh, these wouldn't be very fun," Princess Margaret said, agreeing with her sister's assessment. "They work great as finger

exercises, but... Well, I quickly passed this level and moved on to a collection of short pieces... Very well! Take these practice songs of mine, but you must do these finger exercises as well."

I also hated doing simple finger exercises.

"It looks difficult," Princess Jane hesitated, her expression clouding over after quickly flipping through the songs. Princess Margaret was blessed with musical talent, so she perhaps couldn't understand the difficulties Princess Jane might have.

"In that case, you can practice using the collection of short pieces I've written for my brothers. I'll have them written out for you by tomorrow."

This got Princess Margaret huffing with anger.

"Patience! What's this about a collection of short pieces?! This is the first I'm hearing of it!"

Well, they're just some pieces from my previous life—some sonatinas along with some practice songs by Burgmüller. I actually really loved some of those pieces.

"Princess Margaret!" a tutor boomed as she came into the room. "So this is where you have been?! You are supposed to be studying math and sewing in the morning!"

After being caught, we were taken back to the room where Prince Keith was studying.

"You transcribe your collection of short pieces, Patience!" the princess demanded.

You should be focusing on your math. Otherwise, you're going to have to keep studying after lunch.

"Where is Prince Richard?" I asked, realizing that Prince Richard wasn't in the study room.

"He's out visiting a nearby town!" Prince Keith answered. He seemed upset, as if he'd wanted to tag along.

"Is that so!" *I wish I could've gone too! I've barely gotten to explore Romano.*

"Prince Keith, please resume reading your classical literature textbook," the tutor instructed.

I guess he can't focus either. I should just work on my song collection so they both pay attention to their studies.

I transcribed sheet music for various songs, including "Dolly's Dreaming and Awakening," "L'Arabesque," "La Chevaleresque," "La Candeur," "Ballade," and "La Pastoral." *It's hard to transcribe songs without actually playing the hanon.* I couldn't help but tap the desk as I wrote out the sheet music.

"Princess Margaret!" the tutor called out. "If you do not focus, you will be doing math after lunch as well!"

I'm sorry; it's my finger's fault.

"I'll write this out in my room," I announced. Even if I tapped my fingers on my desk in my room, Mary was the only one who would have to listen to it.

After lunch, I handed the princess some pieces I'd transcribed.

"Wow, they're such simple yet adorable songs!"

Wait, you know that I wrote those for Princess Jane, right? I guess it's fine. I wonder if Nassius and Henry are practicing too. I'm feeling a tiny bit homesick.

Chapter 3: We're Making Salt!

A week had passed, and just as I'd gotten used to my routine at the summer palace, King Alfred arrived. As you might expect, we all stood out front to welcome him. Queen Victoria seemed to be in a good mood, while Prince Richard seemed slightly uneasy.

How was I doing? Why, I was totally nervous, of course! After all, I was terrified of meeting the king that had fired my own father. I was only here because the queen had chosen me to be Princess Margaret's lady's maid, which had led to my invitation to the summer palace. Even if I had a valid reason to be here, I still felt like running for my life.

What if he asks, "What is the daughter of a man dismissed from my court doing here?!" What if he demands that I leave? Oh, but that would mean I might actually get to spend summer break with my brothers. Such silly thoughts ran through my mind as the king's carriage pulled up to the palace.

King Alfred looked like someone had aged up Prince Richard and made him more affable. The king and his son shared the same golden blond hair and blue eyes.

Prince Richard was a competent prince, but he could be immature at times—like how he was so easily upset by every little improper remark Prince Keith made.

Princess Margaret also seemed to be in a good mood today, perhaps because the arrival of her father meant that her mother wasn't going to be so strict with her anymore. It seemed that she was showing improvement in math, but there appeared to be no hope for her sewing skills. The princess had been frustrated with how harsh her mother had been when critiquing her work.

Oh, Lady Eugenia is here. She's as gallant as always.

The king exited his carriage, and the queen greeted him with a smile. That was the last thing I saw before bowing my head. Prince

Richard, Princess Margaret, and Prince Keith all greeted their father.

"This is Margaret's lady's maid, Patience Granger," the queen said, introducing me to the king.

"You can raise your head, Patience," the king said. Surprisingly, his voice was kind.

Why is he being so nice? This is the first time we've met.

"My, you look a lot like Julianne. I've heard that you've been serving Margaret very well."

That was the end of the king's welcome, and he escorted the queen back into the summer palace. The gentle smile he'd spoken to me with made me want to call out, "Why was my father dismissed from his position?" as he walked away, but of course, I couldn't do that. I would sooner ask Wyatt than be so brazen with the king, even though that butler probably wouldn't answer me either.

Queen Victoria had been at the king's side since the moment of his arrival, and that continued after dinner as we all retired to the parlor, where Prince Richard began talking about salt.

"Patience hypothesized that we would be able to harvest salt from seawater, and after experimenting, we were successfully able to do just that. We're currently still testing various processing methods, and at this stage we believe it may still cost more to make sea salt than mine rock salt."

The king listened intently to every last word of the prince's report.

"Since it's unclear how much it will cost to produce, it may end up unfeasible to produce this salt. At the same time, I don't feel comfortable with our kingdom relying solely on rock salt from Mt. Halla. Carry on with your experiments."

Good luck! I was under the impression that Prince Richard would be doing this on his own, since I had written out the methods of producing sea salt I remembered from my previous life and given him that information.

"Let's try all sorts of different things, Patience!" the prince said.

Wait, are you serious? I know we might be able to make money off of this, but I'm not interested in harvesting salt while baking on the hot sand.

"Patience isn't *your* lady's maid, brother," Princess Margaret snapped at him.

Yeah, you tell 'im, Princess! I cheered her on internally.

"I want you to focus on sewing in the mornings, Margaret," the queen demanded in a strict tone, launching into another scolding of the princess. "It seems it might take the entire summer break for you to learn how to sew in a straight line. Your sewing project is going to be on display at the end of the school term. Aren't you embarrassed with your skills? At the very least, you need to be able to pass the class. Until you can sew well enough to pass, you're forbidden from playing any music before lunch."

Princess Margaret glumly conceded and gave me permission to help with Prince Richard's project during the mornings. *Well, it may not be so hot at the beach before noon, so that's good.*

"Patience, I want you to help Richard!" the king explicitly ordered, unsatisfied with his daughter's partial concession of my time.

"As you wish," I responded, since I had no choice but to comply.

"I wonder if there's a way we can harvest the salt more efficiently," Prince Richard wondered aloud. He was taking this very seriously.

I was sitting under a beach umbrella, and next to me was the king, relaxing with a glass of juice in his hand. It was incredibly uncomfortable to be sitting next to the very man who had fired my father from his job. *I wish I could run away without making a scene.*

Since we were working on the hot beach, the palace staff had prepared the beach parasol and a drink tent to keep us hydrated. Because I didn't have much stamina, I'd gotten permission from the prince to take a break and had taken a seat under the umbrella, only for the king to take a seat beside me.

"So, Patience, is William doing well?" the king asked.

You're worried about my father? The man that you fired?

"Yes, he is doing well," I answered. *No thanks to you. Not that I can say that.*

"I see. If I remember correctly, your brothers are the same ages as Jane and Marcus, right?"

"Yes, they are," I replied, keeping my responses short. *I have no idea where this conversation is going.*

"I see... You know, William and I were friends back in school. The experience of studying with others at the Royal Academy is very important. I know you're Margaret's lady's maid, but I hope you'll be a friend to Keith as well."

I really wanted to ask him why he would have fired my father if they had been such friends. The teachers at the academy had mentioned that everyone in education felt grateful for my father. From what I could glean, there had been some sort of issue related to education that my father had taken responsibility for, which had led to his dismissal. It seemed like the king was trying to communicate to me that he didn't bear my father any ill will and wished he hadn't had to fire him. Of course, even if that were true, as a result of my father losing his job, we became poor, my mother perished, and even Patience herself died.

As someone originally from a different world and time, I wanted to scream at the king, but I could hear Patience stopping me: *You mustn't!* It had been six months since I'd arrived in this world, and I was beginning to understand how things worked here. If I were to offend the king in any way, it could negatively affect my brothers as well. I just sat under the umbrella feeling conflicted.

"I'm going to go help His Highness again," I said, excusing myself. It took everything in me to speak calmly and walk away. *Adults are so unfair, keeping things to themselves!* I was also upset with my father, who seemed to still deeply respect the king despite having been fired from his post. *I guess reverting back to a child means I'm going to go through a rebellious phase and puberty again. I can't deal with this!*

"I'm going into town to order some equipment. Would you like to come along, Patience?" Prince Richard asked. I'd just made my way back to him after leaving the king's side, and I'd never expected to hear such a thing.

"I would love to go!" I exclaimed. *That time back in spring at the academy is the only time I've ever explored a town! I don't care if*

it's on saline business—I have to go!

"You seem pretty quiet, but you're surprisingly energetic," the prince said, chuckling. "Actually, it might be more appropriate to say you're full of curiosity." Prince Richard flashed me a jolly smile.

I wonder if we can even get permission to go into town.

After lunch when we gathered in the parlor, Prince Richard asked the king for his permission, which the king easily granted.

"Very well, go ahead," King Alfred said. *I guess I didn't have to worry. Maybe if it were only up to the queen, I wouldn't have been able to tag along.*

Though I was relieved I could go, I now had to deal with a jealous Prince Keith and a glaring Princess Margaret.

"Um, will either of you be joining us?" I hesitantly asked. *This is the best I can come up with to diffuse this situation.*

"I would like to come along as well!" Prince Keith exclaimed.



His response wasn't a surprise, since the second prince loved spending time with his older brother. It was one of his better qualities. Prince Keith didn't appear to have any malicious intent to fight his brother for the throne.

"Patience is *my* lady's maid," Princess Margaret interjected. "I would like to join as well."

Right, Princess Margaret has been spending her mornings focused on math and sewing. Though, it does seem like the queen has been less strict since the king's arrival.

"Can you look after everyone, Richard?" the king asked.

Princess Margaret and Prince Keith both shot their brother pleading looks. As I'd expected, Prince Richard proved to be a kind older brother who wanted to please his siblings.

"Yes, but I must warn you, Margaret, you may not be very interested in where we're going. We're just going to have some metalworking done. I don't think it'll be fun for you either, Keith."

"I still want to go!" Princess Margaret and Prince Keith immediately replied in unison.

It was decided that we would be going into town tomorrow morning. We were going to Velouche, a town neighboring the summer palace.

"Princess Margaret, what is the town of Velouche like?" I asked, excited for our outing. Unfortunately, the princess was also unfamiliar with the town.

"I've never been. Richard visits from time to time, so I don't think it's too far from here. More importantly, I'm going to be free from sewing tomorrow!"

I see. Well, I'm excited! After all, I'm visiting a new town for the first time in this world!

The summer palace was equipped with a library, and there was likely a tutor that taught geography. *Let's do some research!*

"Are you here to look up stuff about Velouche too?" Prince Keith asked.

I'd arrived at the library late since I'd been fulfilling the princess's request to work on music after lunch. The second prince let me read

from the geography book he was looking at.

"It looks like Velouche is a small city in the southern part of Lawrence," Prince Keith explained.

The book didn't offer many details, but I was able to find out how far the town was from the summer palace. It would probably take thirty minutes by carriage to get there.

"It's a city, not just a town, so it's likely to be fairly populated," I remarked. "They probably have all sorts of shops!"

Prince Keith scoffed.

"Richard isn't going to stop for a snack."

"I wouldn't either," I assured him. "I just haven't been to very many places outside of my home. I went to a church once for my proficiency evaluation, and once...that...other time..." I awkwardly trailed off.

Prince Keith seemed to remember that my mother was no longer with us and an uncomfortable look washed over his face. He then began warning me about my behavior.

"Despite everything, you're still a noble, so it's dangerous for you to be walking around on your own. Also, it's improper for a noble lady to go around without an attendant."

Yeah, yeah. I already know all of that. More importantly, are there any books that can tell us more about Velouche? I'm not interested in its geographical features.

"Perhaps we should check historical books," I wondered aloud as I turned my attention to the bookshelves.

"You're not listening to me!" Prince Keith huffed.

"I'm aware of everything you said," I replied. "After that outing, I felt like I had betrayed Mary. I haven't gone out on my own since then."

"I guess you do understand!" Prince Keith said, finally satisfied. "Oh, that's right! We could look up the town's history!"

Hey, I thought of that first!

My idea didn't yield any results, as it seemed that there wasn't anything of note that had happened in the town's history.

"We wasted a bunch of time because of you, Patience," Prince Keith grumbled, having forgotten it was "his" idea.

You're so rude!

Just then, Prince Richard entered the library.

"What are you two doing here? Are you studying together like good pals?" His question was fair, since we were sitting at a table with books on geography and history open in front of us.

"We wanted to research the town we'll be visiting tomorrow," I explained.

"I like the way you two think!" Prince Richard said, praising his brother with a pat on the shoulder. "Though, I believe there isn't much about Velouche written in geography or history books."

Yeah, you're right!

Prince Richard then pulled out a thin book off the shelves and handed it to Prince Keith.

"This is why we're going to Velouche tomorrow," the first prince said. He then grabbed a separate thicker book and left the library.

"Heh heh heh, do you want to see what's in this book?" Prince Keith asked in a taunting manner.

I can't believe I've been left alone with this bratty prince!

"Yes, could you please show me?" Acting humble in this sort of situation always made Prince Keith act quite nice.

"Since you asked, I guess I'll show you!" He was being arrogant, but I didn't mind since I got to look at the book.

"*An Analysis of Suction Pumps*?" The book seemed to be a collection of research papers.

"Is this Vermillion Velouche guy the lord of that area?" Prince Keith mused.

Well, he's definitely the author. If he was the lord, then wouldn't Prince Richard say that we were going to visit the lord of this area?

"I don't think so," I replied.

Prince Keith huffed as he grabbed an incredibly thick book and brought it over. The book landed on the desk with a loud *thud*.

"A peerage?" *Isn't this the kind of book that Sherlock Holmes would often look through?*

"We'll get an answer if we look through this," Prince Keith explained.

I'd had no idea there was such a book here. *I wonder if we have*

one back home. I guess Patience wasn't interested, since I don't have any memories of one, and I don't think I've ever seen it either.

"Vermillion Velouche... It looks like he *isn't* the lord," Prince Keith said. "The town of Velouche is under the domain of Count Lewin Velouche. I wonder if they're related."

The count's spouse and children were all listed in the peerage, but there was no sign of anyone named Vermillion.

"Maybe he's related to someone from several generations ago," I suggested.

We couldn't find out anything about this mystery man, and we tried to read the research papers, but it completely went over our heads. *I mean, it's all really technical stuff.* The one thing I *did* learn was that the author was an alchemist.

"He's an alchemist!" I proudly exclaimed, only to be mocked by the prince.

"Didn't you hear Richard say that we're going to have some metalworking done? Of course we're going to see an alchemist."

Urgh! He's so annoying, but I'm one step ahead of him! I don't understand these papers, but I know that you need to be able to pump and collect seawater to make salt! Heh heh heh!

"What's with that creepy laugh?!" Prince Keith shouted as I giggled to myself.

I'm just going to ignore the noisy prince and do my best to read this confusing research!

"You don't understand it, do you?!" the prince blurted out.

You're right! I don't understand it! But I do know that if we can do what's written here, we'll be able to pump up seawater!

"I'm looking forward to tomorrow," I mused.

Trying to read the papers made me wonder: Was there some sort of rule demanding that research papers be written in such difficult language? I'd also learned that I knew nothing about alchemy or spell circles. *This sort of stuff always had a fantastical charm to it, but maybe it's too difficult for me to learn.*

I returned to my room and began drawing a diagram summarizing how to make sea salt.

Step 1. Using a pump, draw up the cleanest seawater available.
Step 2. Filter the seawater.
Step 3. Pour the filtered seawater onto a tilted steel plate, concentrating the salt.
Step 4. Boil the concentrated seawater in a wide, flat pan.
Step 5. Let the boiled substance dry.

After drawing diagrams and writing out the process on paper, it finally became clear what Prince Richard was trying to have made. He needed a pump, a hose, a filtration device, the tilted plates for the evaporation process, the wide and flat pan, and something to dry the salt.

This looks a lot more detailed than what I put together for the prince.

Visiting the nearby town of Velouche wasn't easy. Because we were traveling with the royal family, we had several knights escorting us on our trip. *I don't think I'm going to be able to leisurely walk around. I'm a little disappointed! On the bright side, Lady Eugenia is here too. Just seeing her from a distance puts me in a good mood.*

Prince Richard, Prince Keith, Princess Margaret, and I were all going to ride in the same carriage together, perhaps because our destination wasn't too far. The attendants were all in a separate carriage. *Maybe they put everyone together so it's easier to protect them.*

"We'll be heading out now," Prince Richard said, bidding his parents goodbye before we took off.

"Weren't you looking something up yesterday, Patience?" Princess Margaret asked. "Did you find what you were looking for?" The princess seemed like she might still be upset that I had ended our precious music time early.

"Yes. Thanks to Prince Richard and Prince Keith, I was able to find some things out."

Not only did I remember details about salt production, but I also learned that the peerage included information like the population and amount of tax collected in each territory. *Should such personal information be accessible like that? Is this world okay? Now that I think about it, the characters in British romance novels investigate the income and assets of potential partners, so maybe it's required for this information to be available.*

Prince Keith tilted his head in confusion at my response.

"All we found out is that Vermillion Velouche is an alchemist," the second prince pointed out.

I could hear Prince Richard trying to stifle a laugh.

"We did find that out, but we also learned that he is an alchemist who can build a pump to draw up seawater. After all, it would be inefficient to collect seawater using buckets."

"As expected, you're quick to understand, Patience," Prince Richard said, clapping his hands in a congratulatory manner. "Well, you were the one to come up with the salt production method, so I shouldn't be surprised."

I enjoyed the praise, but it would end up causing me a headache if Prince Keith got jealous.

"Thanks to Prince Keith, who found the peerage, we were able to learn about the population of Velouche, as well as its notable industries."

"I see! Sounds like you're learning a lot, Keith!"

Prince Keith seemed happy that his brother had complimented his efforts. In contrast, Princess Margaret didn't seem particularly interested in being praised by her older brother.

"Do they produce anything interesting?" Princess Margaret asked me.

Didn't Prince Richard already warn you that there wasn't anything interesting in town?

"There are many sheep in Velouche County, which are sheared for their wool," I explained.

Princess Margaret might have been more interested if the town had produced silk, but she was disappointed to hear it mainly produced wool.

Wool is a popular fabric for coats and other winter garments, right? It's definitely an important textile, but is it necessary on the coast? Do people usually farm sheep near the ocean? I guess they have sheep on the French island of Mont-Saint-Michel. I heard that the meat farmed there is delightfully salty and delicious thanks to the sea breeze blowing on the grass that the sheep eat. Which is fine, I guess, but shouldn't they be doing more with actual seafood, since they're so close to the ocean?

"You didn't look at the map very closely, Patience!" Prince Keith mocked as I sat there visibly confused.

"I believe I looked over the map," I replied.

Prince Richard chuckled. "Velouche is close to the sea, but it's also right by Mt. Kenam. They let the sheep roam and graze on the mountain."

Huh, I learned something new. In my defense, Prince Keith was the one with the geography book. I was just glancing over at it from beside him.

"Don't monsters eat the roaming sheep?" I asked.

Both the princes laughed at me.

"Regular sheep may get eaten, but ovis and aries are domesticated sheep that were originally monsters, so they're pretty strong."

Princess Margaret's eyes suddenly widened with intrigue.

"They have aries?" It was only moments ago that she was disappointed to hear about wool.

"I guess you're interested in luxury wool," Prince Richard said with a chuckle. "We can stop by a shop if we have the time, but we have to be back by lunch."

Princess Margaret seemed happy, even with those stipulations.

"Is the wool from an aries particularly good?" I asked the princess, who looked at me with disbelief.

"It's much smoother to the touch than regular wool. It's also light yet very insulating. Knowing the names of premium textiles is the bare minimum."

I wonder if it's like alpaca wool. Either way, it's a textile that's irrelevant to us poor Grangers.

"Do they farm two breeds? Ovis and aries?" Prince Keith asked. *I guess he's not so knowledgeable himself.*

"They both refer to the same breed of sheep, but the males are called ovis, and the females are called aries. The wool from an ovis can repel magic, so it's used in the capes that knights wear. Aries wool is great at retaining heat, so it's popular in the winter."

I'm learning so much! Our conversation helped pass the time, and soon the town of Velouche came into view. *I can even see Mt. Kenam!*

"I'm surprised that it isn't taller," I remarked. I'd imagined the mountain to have much rougher terrain.

"Goats may be able to handle a steeper mountain, but we're talking about sheep here!" Prince Keith pointed out.

Oh, right. My mistake. The girl of the Alps took care of goats, not sheep.

The town of Velouche was surrounded by walls except on the side facing the ocean.

"Are these walls a protective measure against monsters?" I asked.

Prince Keith seemed happy to answer my question.

"Things are peaceful nowadays, so while they are used against monsters, the walls used to protect the town from all the battles and stuff that happened back in the day. As a general rule, monsters are taken down before they ever get close to town."

That makes sense. I wouldn't want monsters anywhere near me.

The knights had let the town guards know we would be coming, so we were able to easily enter the town of Velouche.

"It's quite small," I said. *I'm a little disappointed! I don't see any shops around.*

"Every town is small in comparison to Romano," Prince Keith replied.

Prince Richard laughed at our conversation. "Well then, let's take care of some business!"

We arrived at Vermillion Velouche's workshop. Prince Richard swiftly exited the carriage and turned around to offer his hand to Princess Margaret. *He's so smooth.* Prince Keith copied his brother

and escorted me into the workshop.

"Welcome, welcome!" an elderly gray-haired man greeted us. *Is this guy Vermillion Velouche?*

"Thank you. I hope it's all right that we have a few more people tagging along. I'd like to place my order right away." Prince Richard was quickly getting things started.

We were led to what appeared to be the drawing room of Vermillion's workshop; piles of books were scattered all across the room. The couch had been cleared off, so there was technically seating, but it seemed as if the room hadn't been cleaned in a while. *Did he really not clean, even though he knew the royal family was coming?*

"Patience, please," Princess Margaret said, signaling to the couch. She wanted to sit, but not on that dusty surface.

"Would it be all right if I tidied things up a bit?" I asked.

Vermillion started to summon a servant, but Prince Richard stopped him.

"Go ahead, Patience," the first prince instructed.

"Become clean!" I chanted after receiving permission. *My, my! Look at what a beautiful drawing room this is!*

"My servants have fretted in the past that we would need to clean if we were to have guests over, but I didn't want them to move all my books and papers. I tried to tidy up some of the books, but..." It seemed that the man had only moved some books off the couch.

We finally sat down, and we began to discuss the prince's request.

"Have you thought of anything else since yesterday, Patience?" Prince Richard asked.

I handed Vermillion the diagram I'd drawn yesterday.

"I see, I see. You use a pump to draw up seawater and filter out any debris. Then, you pour it onto a tilted plate and let it evaporate some under the sun. Then you take that concentrated seawater and boil it in a wide pan, which leaves salt once the water is fully boiled away! It's well thought-out, but wouldn't it be cheaper to just mine rock salt?"

I was impressed that Vermillion immediately understood the

process, but it seemed he wasn't very interested in helping us.

"Rock salt is indeed cheaper, but Mt. Halla is on the border of Lawrence and the Kingdom of Dehn. We must be prepared for every contingency," Prince Richard explained.

I had also looked into the location of Mt. Halla, so I understood the prince's concerns.

"Making salt out of seawater sounds interesting. I'm happy to help you. I actually have a suction pump! How long a hose do you need for it?"

"How long a hose do you think we need, Patience?" Prince Richard asked, redirecting the question to me.

I thought you *were going to answer him. Why is it up to me?*

"It would be best to get the cleanest seawater possible, so the longer the hose, the better. The water nearest the shore likely has a lot of sand mixed into it due to the constant surf."

I quickly sketched out a diagram, proposing that we send out a boat with a hose offshore to collect clear seawater.

"I see, I see. In that case, we will need quite a long hose and a powerful suction pump. I have a filtration device that someone else made, which we can use here. Regarding the drying plates, if we let the water cycle, it can get even more concentrated. The wide pans are going to be easy. The drying area needs to be flat and well ventilated. It also needs a roof—otherwise the salt will turn back into seawater when it rains."

Vermillion continued mumbling to himself as he began sketching a diagram. *Much like father, this guy also seems like he doesn't have very many life skills. On the other hand, he may actually be a skilled alchemist.*

"I'd like everything to be ready as soon as possible," Prince Richard requested.

The prince's errand was done, and we were off. *I just realized that they didn't even serve us tea! Good grief!*

"Since Margaret and Keith decided to join us, I made sure to send a letter to Count Velouche," Prince Richard explained as we headed to the count's mansion.

"Alchemists really are strange," Prince Keith mused. It was a surprisingly tame comment for the second prince. *Maybe he's holding back because that was someone his brother had business with.*

"That may be true, but Vermillion is also very skilled. Though, I do worry about all the work his housekeeper must have to do."

Apparently, Vermillion's staff had had no idea that the royal family would be visiting today. We had overheard their panicked shouting as we were leaving.

Our experience meeting Count Velouche was the complete opposite of visiting Vermillion's workshop. A sea of servants was standing outside to welcome us, and we were led to a beautiful and comfortable parlor. *I leave the conversation with Count Velouche and his wife to Prince Richard.*

In the parlor, we enjoyed some peaceful conversation, delicious tea, and sugar-crusted cake.

"We would like to tour a shop that sells your specialty product of aries wool," Prince Keith said.

Our visit wrapped up and Count Velouche took us to a specialty wool shop. Princess Margaret enjoyed herself as she touched the various wools, but Prince Keith seemed bored.

"Please take this gift with you," Count Velouche said, giving the princess a bolt of aries wool fabric in a beautiful blue shade.

We then left the town of Velouche and headed home.

A week passed by. I had been spending my mornings studying and occasionally swimming, while my afternoons were spent writing and playing music. We finally got word from Vermillion that the prince's requested items such as the pump, filtration device, sun-drying system, and boiling pan were ready. Prince Richard had been back to Velouche several times during the past week.

"Father, the salt-production facility will be ready tomorrow," Prince Richard reported to the king.

I guess he also had the drying area for the final stage built too.

"Is that so! Very well, I will come along!"

The next day, Vermillion was there, greeting the king with a bow.

I had learned that he did indeed have a noble title—he was a chevalier. Why hadn't he shown up in the peerage then, you ask? Well, in my later research, I found out that he was listed—but as a resident of Romano, not Velouche. He had been a professor at the University of Romano. Upon retiring, Vermillion had moved back to his hometown of Velouche and opened a workshop. I was surprised to learn that the title of chevalier wasn't limited to knights.

"I'm grateful for all the help you've given Richard," the king said, thanking Vermillion.

For some reason, Count Velouche was also in attendance. It turned out that Vermillion was indeed a relative of his. *What do you call your parent's cousins? First cousins once removed?*

The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the production facility was about to begin.

"Go ahead, father!" Prince Richard beamed as he handed his father a pair of scissors.

"No, no. You should be the one to cut it." The king wanted this facility to be the prince's accomplishment.



Prince Richard took the scissors and cut the ribbon in front of the salt factory. *Yay, he did it!* I clapped along.

The queen clapped as well before quickly returning to the summer palace with Princess Margaret. The opening was just getting started, and she knew this would take a while.

Prince Keith stuck around, since he wanted to stay with his beloved brother. I decided to stay as well.

The hose for the suction pump was loaded onto a boat, and the boat went out into the water.

"I see. Cleaner water indeed sounds better to use," the king said, nodding along as he listened to Prince Richard and Vermillion explain how the facility worked. "That means the salt won't be ready right away."

After the collected water was filtered and concentrated, and the boiling pans were heated, we all returned to the summer palace. The rest would be taken care of by the workers hired to run the facility. It was time for us to have lunch.

It had been quite hot outside, so I refreshed myself with a quick "Become clean!" I quietly ate my food, and lunch was quickly over.

"I think the salt should be ready soon," Prince Richard announced.

After a long rest in the parlor, we returned to the salt factory. I didn't need to be there while they were boiling stuff in this summer heat.

"It's done already?" the king asked.

Prince Richard had done his research on how long the manufacturing process would take, and he had chosen to produce a small amount so it would finish quickly.

"Yes, I decided to make a small amount since this is the first batch," the prince explained.

At the salt factory, I picked up a plate of the freshly processed salt and dipped my finger into it to taste it.

"So salty!" Prince Keith exclaimed. *You licked too much at once!*

"It's salt, so of course it's salty, but there's also some sweetness to it," Prince Richard remarked.

Right?! Sea salt has more minerals than rock salt, so it has more

umami compounds!

"This may sell for a hefty price," the eldest prince added.

He seems really happy! It's definitely going to be more expensive than rock salt from Mt. Halla, but he can see a demand for it!

"Richard, Vermillion, Patience, thank you all for your hard work," the king said.

I'm finally free from all this salt-making business!

Chapter 4: Sewing Lessons

The king only spent about two weeks at the summer palace. The queen looked a bit sad as we saw him off. It seemed that the king had been busy during his stay, and they hadn't been able to spend much time together. Though it was sad for the queen, I was relieved to have His Majesty return to the capital.

I'd also been told I would be receiving a reward for my help with the salt production. *Yay! I hope it's money.* My constant wishing for more money made me sound greedy, but I couldn't help it—being so poor made it difficult to survive. *That's why Patience and I are different. She would choose to futilely sacrifice herself, but I'm going to drag us out of this hole!*

I'd already been given a large bag of sea salt. *I really hope that isn't my reward.* I wondered what my actual reward would be as we returned from bidding the king farewell, and my ungratefulness resulted in some karmic retribution.

"I'd forgotten until now, but I promised Patience that I would teach her how to ride a horse!" Prince Keith suddenly blurted out.

Why couldn't you have just forgotten about that?! You should be using your memory to fill your head with classical literature instead!

Princess Margaret was also facing her own misfortune. The queen was still in sorrow over the king's departure, and she immediately grabbed the princess to give her some one-on-one sewing lessons.

Prince Keith dragged me to the riding ground. *I'd rather be sewing*, I whined internally.

"I thought you might be okay with getting on a horse right away since you can calm them down, but I think we should instead start with a pony," Prince Keith suggested.

Horses were quite large up close. *I would die if one of these kicked me.* Even if I could calm them down using my household magic, they were still terrifying animals. *I don't know if Nassius*

could ride one of these. Are boys allowed to take home economics instead of PE? Henry would probably actually enjoy riding a horse.

The stablehand brought over Princess Jane's and Prince Marcus's ponies. *Oh, it looks like Princess Jane is going to ride on the horse they brought out for me*, I thought as Princess Jane swiftly climbed onto the horse, riding sidesaddle.

"Oh, we aren't going to straddle the horses?"

"Of course not," Prince Keith scoffed. "You *are* a woman, so you should try to act like one."

I can't believe the prince mocked me like that. I'm going to get him back using classical literature somehow.

Usually a rider would get help when climbing onto a horse by having a stablehand support their legs or by using a mounting stool, but Princess Jane had mounted the horse all on her own. *I knew it! She definitely has some sort of physical enhancement magic.*

"Riding sidesaddle is much more stable than it may seem," Lady Eugenia assured me. She was here to accompany the energetic Princess Jane's long ride.

She's a sight for sore eyes as I suffer through this riding lesson. Lady Eugenia was a truly lovely knight who looked like a beautiful boy with eternal youth. She even looked handsome as she rode away with the princess.

Prince Keith should've joined them, I complained internally while he fussed over my clumsy pony riding. *I'd rather be riding with the adorable Prince Marcus as the stablehand slowly leads our ponies around. I would be happy with that.*

"Hold the reins and try getting the pony to walk," Prince Keith instructed.

I don't need to learn how to do this!

Since the pony belonged to the children of the royal family, it was well-behaved. Since the stablehand was accompanying us, my pony followed behind Prince Marcus's. *I think this is enough for today.*

"Now get the horse to trot," Prince Keith demanded.

Please don't!

Alas, the stablehand just did as he was told.

"Come on! Keep your back straight!" Prince Keith scolded me

after I'd grabbed onto the pony since the increased speed of the trotting scared me. "If you're this bad with a pony, you'll never be able to ride a horse!"

I've already said I don't want to ride a horse! I thought about my previous life where cars dominated the roads and began to tear up. *Back in my old world, people only rode horses for fun.*

"I'm quite tired," I said.

The stablehand led the pony back to the mounting stool, where I was finally able to climb down.

I feel so relieved. I mean, I'd shake up and down with every step the pony took. I could've gotten hurt if I'd fallen off!

"It's no good to only focus on studying, Patience," Prince Keith cautioned. "You need to train your body some more." He wasn't wrong, but his words still irritated me; it didn't feel good when someone pointed out the truth. "Starting tomorrow, we're going to do swimming *and* riding lessons."

Don't I have a say in this? I wished Prince Keith would just go practice sword fighting with Prince Richard, but unfortunately the first prince was absorbed in salt production. He would visit the salt factory, then head to Velouche to discuss points of improvement with Vermillion. *I wish he would take Prince Keith with him.*

"Are you going to be riding tomorrow as well?" Princess Jane asked her older brother.

"Are we riding ponies together?" Prince Marcus asked.

The young royals seemed excited to be spending time with their brother, which made sense because nobles in this world left their children to caretakers until the age of ten. It was, at least from my point of view, a truly surprising practice.

Things might have been different for commoners though. I knew absolutely nothing about their lives. All I'd experienced was the life of a poor noble.

"You know, we shouldn't spend all our time riding when we're out here at the summer palace," Prince Keith said. "We should take advantage of that and go swimming in the ocean."

"Yay!" Prince Marcus cheered. "That means we get to play together again tomorrow!" The youngest prince's smile soothed my

soul.

Prince Keith is only nice on the outside. Inside, he's just like a schoolyard bully.

After Prince Keith had announced we would be swimming tomorrow, I returned to the summer palace filled with disappointment. I found Princess Margaret half dead. *She must* really *hate sewing.* Just as that thought crossed my mind, I got dragged into the princess's torture.

"I'd like you to join our sewing lessons tomorrow," the queen said. "I want you to be an example for Margaret."

Swimming would've been preferable. Sewing is definitely better than riding though. I'll do well even if the queen is watching me like a hawk, since I'm as good as a professional seamstress.

"I just realized that Princess Jane will be attending the academy in two years. I don't believe that girl has any sewing skills. This is the perfect opportunity to have Patience teach her how to sew. She won't get any good with the caretakers and maids spoiling her."

Your Majesty, are you seriously leaving the lessons to me? Oh, I see. It only took one day for you to hate teaching Princess Margaret to sew. How cruel of you to leave it to me.

The next day, Princess Jane, who would normally have been in the children's room with caretakers or tutors, was brought to the parlor. The young princess, who was usually a rambunctious girl, was acting very ladylike. *I guess to Princess Jane, Queen Victoria is her queen first and her mother second.*

"Jane, today you will join Margaret and learn how to sew from Patience," the queen explained. "At the Royal Academy, there will be a sewing class, and your projects will be put on display."

"Yes, mother," both princesses obediently responded.

Am I actually going to be the one teaching them? Can I even do that?

I first started by teaching Princess Jane how to thread a needle, since it was probably her first time even holding a needle.

"You want to get the end of the thread pointy," I explained. "If

you focus on the eye of the needle, the thread will slip right in." This was probably difficult for a beginner. *If I were to make those needle threaders from my previous life, I wonder if they'd sell. Can I even make a piece of wire that thin?*

"I can't," Princess Jane insisted. "The eye of the needle is too small."

Maybe it is too small for a beginner. Let's try with an embroidery needle.

"In that case, please try threading some embroidery floss through *this* needle," I said.

Using embroidery floss meant using several strands of thread at once, but the princess still managed to thread the needle.

"I did it!" Princess Jane exclaimed. *Wow, she passed the first step!*

"You did very well," I said, praising the young princess. "Next, we will tie a knot at the end. If you don't tie a knot, the sewing you've worked so hard on can come undone."

I threaded my own needle and made a tailor's knot at the end of the thread. I became even more convinced that Princess Jane had physical enhancement magic, which she was unconsciously using as she tried to copy what I did.

"Look, I did it!" Princess Jane said.

"Well done," I said. "Next, we're going to pick up the fabric and make a single stitch." I followed the mindset of a quote from my previous life as I taught Princess Jane how to sew: *Show them, tell them, have them do it, then praise them; otherwise, people will do nothing.*

"You were able to sew in a straight line," I said, praising the young princess's work. "At this level, you should be able to pass the first-year assignments." *I think this is basically what they did in the spring term for sewing class. I'm sure Princess Jane will be able to get through it using her physical enhancement.*

"My, you're a great teacher, Patience," the queen said. "Teach Margaret as well."

Princess Margaret's hands weren't uncoordinated. After all, she was able to easily play Albert's highly technical compositions. In

other words, she just had no interest in or motivation for sewing.

In that case, time to dangle a carrot in front of this horse! And no, I didn't come up with this plan just because I went riding yesterday.

"Lady Margaret, I'm sure it can get tiring to keep practicing sewing," I said. "Would you like to make some hair accessories?"

With the queen's permission, I had a court lady bring us some beautiful silk and lace.

"Which color shall I choose?" Princess Margaret murmured to herself. After begrudgingly participating in sewing lessons, she was now excitedly looking through the colorful fabrics.

"Mother, I would like to make an accessory as well," Princess Jane said. It looked like she would be joining us.

"It's quite easy to make a bow," I said. "First, we'll fold the fabric with the back side facing out. Then, we just sew around the edges. Oh, but you must leave the middle open. We will use that opening to turn the ribbon inside out."

I quickly sewed my fabric rectangle together as I explained, then flipped it right side out. I then sewed a strip of fabric around the middle while pinching it together, and my bow was complete.

"My, I didn't realize it would be that easy," Princess Margaret said. She seemed to finally be taking an interest and began sewing.

"Once you've made your bow, we can wear matching ones and play 'Sonata for Two Hanons' together," I said. The carrot I was dangling in front of her got Princess Margaret to make a serious effort at sewing. Thanks to the reward, she completed her accessory.

"We should also match accessories and play together during music club," the princess suggested.

Her love for music really knows no bounds.

"I'm also done," Princess Jane announced. Though she struggled using such a thin needle for the first time, she seemed satisfied to have created something.

"You really are just like Julianne, Patience," the queen remarked. "She was also good at teaching."

I continued spending my mornings giving sewing lessons for the

next several days. I would think of small items that were easy and fun to make and teach the princesses how to sew them.

"This is adorable," Princess Margaret exclaimed, holding up a small bag I'd made.

Yeah, those bags are really nice to keep small items in. The summer palace had a collection of beautiful silk fabric scraps, which I'd used to make patchwork bags that had turned out adorable.

"The aesthetic of the bag completely changes when you use a different color combination!" Princess Margaret continued to rave. Both she and Princess Jane were having fun picking out coordinated fabrics.

It would also look nice to turn two different triangles into a simple square, then sew all those squares together.

Princess Margaret selected fabrics that were bright shades of pink and blue, which would give her bag a feminine look. Princess Jane chose various reds and yellows, which would make her bag feel bright and cheery.

Since I had access to so many materials, I ended up making lots of things. As a poor person, it was in my nature to avoid waste. I decided to next make a summer coverlet using simple patchwork squares. Cutting out the squares took more time than actually sewing.

After piecing the squares together, I laid out my fabric. I'd worried that I would have to redo the layout if there were any clumps of a single color in one area, but it had turned out quite well. The proper method to build a quilt required drafting the layout of the pattern before sewing, but I'd just sewn together a bunch of square pieces of fabric in a random order. *It actually looks pretty cute*.

"My, I've never seen a coverlet like this before!" Princess Margaret exclaimed, catching the attention of the queen, who'd been watching over the sewing lessons while reading in the parlor.

"This is lovely!" the queen said. "I didn't know you could make a coverlet out of fabric scraps."

I'd made the first blanket using scraps of red, yellow, and pink fabrics, so it was going to be for myself. I also made coverlets for my brothers using scraps in various shades of blue, green, and gray.

These will make a great gift!

Instead of silk, I used cotton fabric, and I decided to skip adding any batting. I began quilting the top and backing layers together, following the outline of the various squares of fabric. I borrowed a large embroidery hoop to be able to complete the quilting stitches.

Several days passed, and in the same time that it took me to sew three quilts, Princess Margaret and Princess Jane finished their small bags. Princess Margaret was incredibly slow at sewing—she was so poky that it was downright worrying.

"You've both made such adorable bags," the queen said, praising her daughters. "Though I want you to continue to practice sewing, I believe you've done enough practice for summer break."

After Queen Victoria learned that Princess Margaret wasn't uncoordinated, she finally released us from sewing lessons. All that was left for the princess was to gain experience.

Now that I was free from teaching, I was caught between Prince Keith and Princess Margaret.

"Patience has no stamina," Prince Keith argued. "No matter how hard you work, sister, she won't be able to get a certificate of completion in dance as she is. She must use summer break to become stronger."

Prince Keith's reasoning was sound, and Princess Margaret gave me permission to spend some of my time swimming or riding. *Please don't, I really don't think I need to ride!*

Prince Keith pushed me hard, and I was eventually able to graduate from a pony to a horse. Though I was technically "riding" a horse, my horse was just following the one in front of us.

I was able to enjoy the beach by swimming and by playing in the sand with Prince Marcus. Once I got used to swimming in regular clothes, I worked toward getting a bit more stamina. *Since it's easier to float in the ocean, I'll just swim breaststroke for an extended period of time!*

"That's a weird way to swim!" Prince Keith mocked. In this world, people typically only swam using a front crawl or dog paddle style.

"This method allows me to swim for a long time," I explained to

the prince. *It's not a very fast way to swim, though. Well, actually, a competitive swimmer could pull off a pretty fast breaststroke.*

Whenever I got tired of swimming, I turned around to float on my back and stare at the clouds.

"Patience!" Prince Keith shouted. "Are you all right?!" He swam over in a front crawl, splashing water all over my face.

"I was just floating and relaxing."

"You're so weird!" Prince Keith huffed before splashing wildly and swimming away.

He's so different from Prince Marcus, I thought as I chuckled to myself. After relaxing, I wanted to play with Prince Marcus and build sand castles together, but Prince Keith was now teaching him to swim. *No fair!*

I began building a sand castle on my own, and Princess Jane walked up to me.

"The caretaker said I can't swim on my own, so I'll help you build your castle."

In contrast to her active younger sister, Princess Margaret was reading under a beach umbrella.

"Yes, let's build a giant sand castle!" I enthusiastically replied.

Though I was the one who suggested a large build, what we made ended up much too big. It reminded me of sand art I saw during my previous life. *This is definitely his fault!* I thought, looking at Prince Keith, who'd joined us midway. The castle we'd built was taller than your average person.

"Wow, it's incredible!" Prince Marcus exclaimed with joy.

I guess it's fine, since he's happy. He's so cute! He's the same age as Henry, isn't he? I hope Henry's doing well. I wish I could take him to the beach to go swimming. I turned to look at Princess Jane, who was the same age as Nassius. *Maybe she doesn't remind me of him because they're different genders. Ugh, I miss my angels.*

I spent my afternoons practicing the lute and playing the hanon. I would also occasionally visit the kitchen and make some desserts. Even though I'd passed on the recipe, no one had made a pound cake using tea leaves. They were probably hesitant to add tea leaves

to cake batter.

"Another delicious addition to pound cakes is ground-up tea leaves," I said to the chef. "Oh, but it may not be a flavor young children would enjoy. You could also include diced pieces of fruit from a compote. Oh, and please be careful not to make the compote too sweet."

Teatime was quite luxurious with the delicious dessert and fragrant tea. Despite the lovely spread, my mind was running with all sorts of thoughts. *Are Nassius and Henry being properly cared for? Is George doing all right, taking care of the garden and crops all on his own? I want to do some side work!* Even in this environment, I was too poor to enjoy luxury.

As all those thoughts ran through my mind, Princess Margaret demanded that I write a new song. *Womp womp.*

And just like that, my days at the summer palace went by.

Chapter 5: The End of Summer Break

After a month at the summer palace, I finally returned home. I first scooped my angels into a big hug and took a deep breath, inhaling their scent. *They smell like sunlight and earth. Hmm, were they playing in the dirt or something?*

"Welcome home, sister," Nassius said.

"Welcome home!" Henry exclaimed.

I'm in heaven. I'd like to stay like this, but I want to ask them about what they did while I was gone. Oh, but first, I have stuff to give them.

"I have some gifts for you two," I said before handing them the shells I'd collected. They seemed to like them a lot.

"I'm going to look these up in an encyclopedia," Nassius announced, studious as ever.

He's such a good boy.

"This shell looks so cool." Henry said, running around with a white conch shell covered in spikes.

Be careful not to trip!

"We helped Matthew harvest the tomatoes and eggplants," Nassius reported.

Matthew? Who's that?

I headed into the mansion and was shocked by the change—we had hired another person, Matthew, to help out George. I was immediately worried whether we had the money to pay him. After all, the Grangers were so poor that Mary had to take on side jobs, and Eva had to work elsewhere to get us ham.

I'm going to put my stuff away before giving my brothers their quilts.

But even before heading to my room, I had to find Wyatt. I had a question for him.

"We can trust Matthew, my lady," Wyatt replied to my question. "He is Eva's nephew. Also, there is no need for you to concern yourself with such trivial matters."

He'd skillfully dodged my question about Matthew's pay. I had no choice but to ask Mary instead.

"Matthew looks very young," I said to Mary. "How old is he?" *There's no way he's an adult.*

"I believe he is thirteen," Mary replied. "He's actually a bit old to just be getting a job."

This world didn't seem to have any child labor laws. Most children left their homes to work between the ages of ten and thirteen, but the children of farmers and merchants began helping out at much younger ages. *Moving out at thirteen sounds so fast.*

That was only if you were a commoner. Nobles had to graduate from the Royal Academy. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to get a job or get married.

"That would mean graduating at sixteen," I mumbled to myself. "Girls enroll in the home economics course to learn homemaking skills, then they get married upon graduating."

Boys had a lot more choices, such as enrolling in university, entering the knight's order, becoming a bureaucrat, or helping manage their family estate. However, aside from marriage, girls only seemed to have the option of becoming a court lady. I'd also heard from Lady Charlotte that, though it was extremely rare, some lower-ranking noble ladies in poverty became tutors to higher-ranking noble girls to earn the funds for their own dowries.

I had no intention of waking up Princess Margaret every morning for the rest of my life. Unfortunately, the hot towel massages hadn't worked, so I'd woken her up every morning while we were at the summer palace. It would've been especially bad for her to arrive at breakfast late while the king was there.

Incidentally, through my mornings with the princess, I'd gotten quite close to Lady Charlotte, but not close enough that I could ask her why my father had been fired. It was an awkward issue, which

made it difficult to bring up.

Mary put away the things we'd brought with us to the summer palace. I didn't help, since Mary really loved doing this sort of attendant work. I stood by the windowsill and absentmindedly stared at the blue sky and white clouds.

"The midsummer clouds are gone," I mumbled. "Most of my precious summer break is over since I had to go to the summer palace."

Mary stared as if she couldn't understand how I felt. The summer palace was indeed a beautiful place with delicious food, and the desserts had even gotten better thanks to me. Even so, my brothers weren't there. Sure, the bratty Prince Keith and adorable Prince Marcus had been there, but no one came close to my sweet angels.

My fall term began at the end of August, which meant that I still had two weeks of vacation left. *I shouldn't be mourning the days I lost, but instead enjoying the days I have left with my brothers!*

I left to check in on the greenhouse and garden, which I'd been worried about the whole time I was gone. The tomatoes, eggplants, and cucumbers in the greenhouse were doing well, and the propagated rose cuttings had also grown.

"Grow!" I said, giving the plants a little extra push to grow with magic.

Matthew was out in the garden, harvesting beans. He had brown hair and brown eyes. I could see the family resemblance to Eva.

"You must be Matthew," I called out to him. "I'm Patience."

Matthew took off his straw hat and bowed to me. He seemed to still be getting used to life at the mansion. Since we'd just met, I decided to not use household magic right in front of him. Besides, the summer crops were growing well without my help.

Finally, I checked in on the fruit trees.

"Oh, there's an apple!" It was still small and green, but it was definitely an apple. I checked the other trees and found a small pear forming. These results were great, given that these trees had just been planted this year. *It's probably because of my household magic.*

The cherry trees hadn't grown in time to fruit during the summer, but I was still excited to have them next year!

I picked a couple apples to use for dessert after dinner tonight. "Grow! Become sweet!" I chanted at the apples. I couldn't taste test them, but they were probably sweet.

After handing the apples over to Eva, I headed to our pantry. The shelves held a colorful array of jars filled with bright red tomato sauce, green pickled cucumbers, red strawberry jam, and orange pickled carrots. At the bottom of the shelf was a stack of sacks filled with dried beans and a wooden box piled high with potatoes. On the floor were several neatly organized barrels of salt-pickled cabbage. Several strings of onions that had been tied together by their stems hung from the ceiling. Even the sea salt I'd brought back was in a corner of the pantry. With this salt, we wouldn't have to buy more to preserve our crops.

"We need to make more preserved foods," I said to myself. "We need a pantry full of them."

The memories of going to bed hungry drove me to keep wanting more and more. We could probably have grown our own wheat if we were in the countryside, but our garden space was limited here. *I would love to plant some kind of grain*. *I'll ask George for his opinion.*

"Is there any other grain aside from wheat that we could plant?" I asked George. "Not barley, though."

George had a look on his face that said, *The young lady is asking weird questions again*. He tilted his head as he thought for a moment.

"Would corn count as a grain?" he asked in response.

Corn! Summer is all about grilled and boiled corn! I didn't know it existed in this world. You could even make bread using corn flour! I've never made bread before, but I can have Eva try. I recalled how characters in fantasy stories would use apples to make sourdough starter, which they would use to bake fluffy loaves of bread. *If I remember correctly, you put apple slices in a clean jar and leave it for a week, shaking it sometimes.*

"I have household magic, so it should be easy to both clean the jar and ferment the starter...I think."

I returned to the kitchen and asked Eva to take out a preserve jar.

"I'd like you to dice one small apple and add it to a clean preserve jar," I said. "Then, I'd like you to shake it every day for a week. For today, I'll use some household magic on it. Become sanitized," I chanted. I sanitized the jar using my household magic, then Eva added in the diced apple. "Ferment," I commanded. Before I knew it, we had some sourdough starter.

"Eva, I'd like you to bake some bread using this starter. I believe it'll make some soft bread."

The bread we had at home was hard because it was made with cheap flour. It wasn't the bread served at the Royal Academy or the summer palace, which was made using bright white flour. The flour we were using these days was light brown, but it used to be a much darker shade of brown. If we used the sourdough starter, even whole wheat flour could turn into softer bread.

One day, I'll make more money and have Eva bake us some bread with white flour.

The bread served at dinner that night turned out a bit fluffier than before. *I wonder if this is thanks to the starter.* My father seemed to be enjoying the bread.

I decided not to ask him why the king had dismissed him from his position. I'd thought about it, but Patience had yelled at me: *Absolutely not!* I kept my mouth shut after getting that headache for the first time in a while.

"Are you all right, Patience?" my father asked. *I guess I can't tell him that his real daughter is attacking me and giving me a headache. It's complicated, since I'm in the same body as she is.*

"I think my exhaustion from travel is just catching up with me," I replied.

I'm going to get lots of rest tonight!

Starting the next day, I spent my mornings reviewing my brothers' studies while also doing my own studying since I wanted to

skip another grade. *I want to graduate quickly so I can work! Once I'm working, I can buy Henry the horse and gear he needs to become a knight!*

My father had been looking over the boys' studies while I was gone, so Nassius had progressed far enough to begin working on first-year content from the academy. Henry had also learned a lot.

"You both worked so hard!" I gushed. Without the proper praise, they could lose the motivation to study.

"Yes, we spent our mornings studying," Nassius said. "But for the hanon, we only had the same few practice pieces to use..."

Oh, that's right! Nassius is probably good enough to move on from those.

"I'll prepare some new songs for you, so let's work on those in the afternoon."

I picked out some compositions I'd made for music club and transcribed the ones that seemed easy to play into sheet music. *There's "Für Elise," "Turkish March," "Minute Waltz," "Träumerei," and "Minuet."*

I had Henry continue practicing the short pieces.

"Let's focus on improving your left hand's movements," I told him. "It might be boring, but we should also do finger exercises." *I didn't like them either, but they really help you move better.*

Nassius was playing pieces that were new to him, so he looked at the sheet music while practicing with one hand at a time. *Yeah, that's the normal way to do it!* The members of the music club could immediately play any song upon seeing the sheet music for the first time. I, too, was learning how to sight-read. I still felt there was something abnormal about it though.

The impoverished Grangers didn't usually have tea, but today was different! As a thank-you for the recipes I'd given him, the chef at the summer palace had given me some cookies and a pound cake. The cookies would last for a few days, so we first ate the pound cake.

We invited my father, who was holed up in his study, and used some herbs from the garden to have herbal tea with the pound

cake.

"This is delicious, sister!" Henry beamed, enjoying the cake. *I'm going to make him do some farmwork so he doesn't get a crazy sugar rush.*

Though I was concerned for Henry, the poundcake was sliced so thin that any other child probably wouldn't be affected by so little sugar. *The slices are too thin, Eva!*

Time passes quickly when you're having fun. Mary appeared in my room with my school uniform in her hands.

"I believe you've grown a little over summer break," she said.

In this world, a noble lady's age determined the length of her skirt. A lot of students at the academy wore their skirts longer than was normal for their age to appear more mature. Some girls in my class wore skirts so long that they covered their calves; Princess Margaret did too.

This fall, I was going to turn eleven. I was the youngest of the second-years, and I was short. I put on my uniform for the first time in a while, and it was surprisingly tight. *I should've expected this, since I used to be super skinny.*

"My, this won't do!" Mary exclaimed with joy. "I will bring over a different size." The fact that I'd outgrown my uniform meant that I was growing properly, which made her happy. She'd probably been deeply worried about Patience, since she was as weak as her mother.

"Perhaps I grew thanks to the feasts at the summer palace," I said. "I also got a lot of exercise by swimming, riding, and dancing." *I'm also going through a growth spurt!*

My mother hadn't been a very tall woman, but I was the shortest of my grade, even when I was still a first-year. I wanted to do my best to grow.

Mary brought over the second-smallest hand-me-down uniform, which I made as good as new before tailoring to my size, since it was quite big. My brothers' clothes had also gotten tight. I needed to mend their clothes while also preparing workwear for Matthew. *Phew, I'm busy!* Mary had purchased some used clothes, which I

made as good as new before tailoring them.

"It's summer break, yet all I'm doing is sewing!" *My break is going to be over soon!*

I wanted more time to spend with my brothers, but I had to sew during the day since sewing at night would use up candles. I continued spending my mornings looking over my brother's studies while sewing. *I'm going to play with them after lunch! Just a little bit!*

Despite my wishes, I ended up working in the garden in the afternoon, driven by my desire to fill up our pantry before winter.

"The cabbages are heavy, so I'll leave those for George and Matthew to carry," I mumbled to myself.

Mary helped Eva prepare the cabbages, washing and slicing them. They then covered the sliced cabbage with salt and put it into barrels to pickle, leaving some to be eaten fresh. *I have a feeling we're going to be eating cabbage with every meal.* We had enough vegetables for side dishes, but I wasn't sure if we had enough money to afford meat for our entrées. *I hope Wyatt finds some more broken antiques.*

I wanted to play with my brothers, but I decided to do my side job of painting intricate details onto teacups. I poured my household magic into my work, aiming for high quantity. I'd also received a box full of fabric scraps from the queen, so I cut them up and used them to sew small patchwork bags.

"My, what a lovely little bag," Mary said.

I had her go sell them, and they sold for quite high prices, perhaps because they were made from fine silk.

I don't get to spend a lot of time playing with them, but I'm just happy to be beside my brothers! I mean, I'm getting to see angels up close! Unfortunately, my summer break was coming to an end. I would soon be returning to living in the dorms, and I'd only get to see my brothers on weekends.

Chapter 6: Albert and the Goddess of Music

My name is Albert Laforet. I am the second son of Duke Laforet, which means I get to devote my entire life to music. My older brother, Charles, got the short end of the stick. My father's sole interest was music, so my brother had been busy running our estate even while still in university.

I was now in the senior division of the Royal Academy, which I'd found deplorably lacked an arts track. I'd had to enroll in the civil service track, as there were no better options available. I hoped to quickly get certificates of completion in my mandatory courses so I could devote my time to music.

"Will the music club get any new members?" Caesar asked me. He was a weirdo enrolled in the mage track, as well as being the son of Duke Burns.

His story was quite an unfortunate one. His father had founded the Burns Trading Company and was admired by many, including my brother Charles. Caesar only cared about alchemy, but he was the eldest son, meaning he would eventually have to run the trading company and the Burns estate.

"I'm not sure," I replied. "Students aren't allowed in the music club without a recommendation from a current member. Actually, I believe President Melissa mentioned that Lady Margaret might be recommending a student to join."

Caesar looked at me with uncharacteristic envy.

"We don't get any students from the junior division joining the alchemy club," he lamented. "We haven't had a single new member since Benjamin joined two years ago."

I see why he's worried. Caesar was basically saying that the alchemy club was in danger of being disbanded.

"How many members do you currently have?" I asked.

"Right now there are five students, but two of them are senior division third-years, so I can't really count them as full members in the long run. I'm going to become the club president in the spring term."

According to the rules of the student council, clubs required a minimum of five members to operate. *Well, it's unfortunate, but it has nothing to do with me.*

"Good luck recruiting members," I said before rushing off to the music club. Today was the day that the new student Princess Margaret was recommending would be coming to the club. I didn't have time to listen to Caesar vent.

I arrived at the clubhouse, but Princess Margaret wasn't there yet. *I bet she's wasting time chatting with those friends of hers.* The three friends of Princess Margaret didn't deserve to be in the music club, nor did they have any talent.

Princess Margaret finally arrived with her three schoolmates and the new student.

"Hello, Lady Margaret," President Melissa greeted the princess. "Is this the new member you're recommending to join us?"

"That's right, Melissa," Princess Margaret replied. "It's actually the perfect time to introduce you all. Everyone, this is my lady's maid, Patience Granger. I'd like to recommend her to be our newest member."

President Melissa smiled at the new student and shook her hand. *The most important thing is whether this Patience girl is good enough to be in our music club. It will be troublesome if she's at the same level as the princess's other friends.*

"Welcome to the music club," Melissa greeted Patience. "Here at the club, we pay no mind to status and freely compete with our music. I'm the club president, Melissa Bermond. This is the vice president, Albert Laforet."

Patience was a rail-thin girl of short stature. Since I had been introduced to her, I gave her an acknowledging nod.

"I know we just got here, but I'd like for her to play something," Catherine suddenly said.

"Absolutely. I'd like to hear her play," Hariette agreed.

Princess Margaret's friends were mean-spirited...but I also wanted to hear Patience play, so I kept my mouth shut.

"That sounds good," Princess Margaret replied. "Patience, I'd like for you to play that new song I shared with you yesterday."

To my surprise, Patience played a piece that I had composed. I'd only handed the sheet music for that piece to Princess Margaret very recently.

"Oh my! I shouldn't be surprised, given that Her Majesty chose you to be Lady Margaret's lady's maid." Catherine was complimenting her, but I wasn't satisfied with her performance.

"I wish you played with a little more feeling," I said, jumping into the conversation. "Just following the sheet music makes for a dull performance." I decided to give her some notes for improvement.

Well, she's not too bad. Her performance was just barely acceptable.

"Gosh, she's only played it once before, and that was just last night," Princess Margaret said. "You shouldn't bully her just because it's your song, Albert."

Princess Margaret's words shocked me. *If she can play like* that *on her second try, she's definitely qualified.*

"She still needs to be able to compose," Hariette, a friend of the princess, pointed out. Despite her sweet appearance, at heart she was a wicked girl.

She isn't wrong, though.

"I understand why you'd be excited for a new member to compose a song, but let's give her a chance to settle in first," Melissa said.

President Melissa was always good at keeping the peace.

After Patience's performance, other club members went on to play various instruments, such as the hanon, lute, and flute. I also performed, choosing to play the lute.

After all the other members performed, Princess Margaret instructed Patience to play another song. *All the compositions Princess Margaret has access to have already been played. So have all the most famous pieces. What is Patience going to play?*

I felt bad for her since she was still a child, but this was the music club. Patience needed to be talented to be worthy of being Princess Margaret's lady's maid. I'd also been frustrated with Princess Margaret's friends bringing down the skill level of the entire club, so I ignored the whole affair.

She's probably just going to play some famous piece, I thought. I'd had zero expectations, and I ended up being completely moved by Patience's performance. The song she played was bright and jaunty. It was as if a goddess of music had come down from the heavens and played us a song. Unfortunately, the beautiful goddess was gone in a blink of an eye.

"I apologize. I hit the wrong note several times," Patience said, apologizing to a silent room.

"No, no. A few missed notes are nothing," I said to her. "Your name is Patience, right? You're incredibly talented."

I knelt beside Patience, who was sitting in front of the hanon, and placed a kiss on her hand—the hands that had created that heavenly music. I began rubbing my cheek against her lovely hands. *I want to just bring her straight home with me and bask in the glorious tunes from the goddess of music.*

"I won't allow you to do as you please with my lady's maid, Albert," Princess Margaret said, stopping me.

Fine, I'll hold back for today. One day, I'm going to be living alongside Patience's music.

Following that day, Patience continued composing wonderful pieces. I was deeply frustrated that she was wasting her talents as Princess Margaret's lady's maid, but her position had been decided by Queen Victoria, so I had no choice but to accept it.

The music club had a tradition of performing new songs during the Festival of Verdure. I was currently in the middle of composing a wonderful, technically complex song.

I was hoping Patience would write more and more for the club, since Princess Margaret's sycophants prepared compositions that were nothing more than reworked pieces from the past. If they were to play those, it would bring shame to the entire club. For the club's

sake, those with talent had a duty to share it with those who didn't.

Patience is finally here!

"Is the sheet music for your new song ready, Patience?" I asked her. I couldn't wait a second longer to see the sheet music for her new piece.

"Calm down, Albert," Princess Margaret scolded, getting in my way. *If our roles were reversed, you'd be doing the same thing. I bet she's only calm because she's already heard the piece.*

I could tolerate Princess Margaret's behavior because she loved music from the bottom of her heart, but the three idiots who followed her around were hard to forgive.

"I'm not sure if it's right for Lady Patience to always be the one sharing new compositions," Catherine said.

"Lady Margaret, all this work must be so tiring for Lady Patience," Hariette added.

You girls are unbelievable. I can see right through you to your rotten insides. You're just jealous that Princess Margaret is enamored with Patience's talent, and you want to direct her attention back to you! You sycophants!

"That's absolutely ridiculous," I said to them. "This club is a place to celebrate musical talent. Lady Catherine, Lady Hariette, and Lady Lilina, you're all welcome to submit as many songs as you'd like."

"Your tone is quite harsh, Sir Albert," Hariette responded.

"Despite being a duke's son, your lack of manners toward ladies suggests you didn't receive proper instruction," Catherine said.

"With Duchess Laforet gone, there's no one to teach him manners," Hariette replied to her.

"Yes, that must be it," Lilina chimed in, nodding in agreement as her only contribution to their conversation.

Hariette's words were disgraceful toward my late mother, and I became frustrated.

"You fools!" I roared. "Aren't you embarrassed to be submitting existing pieces that you've barely modified as 'new compositions'?! You all bring shame to the music club!"

"How cruel!" Hariette whined.

"Your violent tone lacks grace, Sir Albert," Catherine argued back.

"Yes, it does indeed," Lilina said in agreement, nodding again.

Everything I'd said was true, but the trio of idiots had no logic-based responses. *Do they not have brains or something?* Even so, I regretted the fact that I'd gotten so heated. I didn't want to be arguing over something so trivial.

"You look bored, Patience," Princess Margaret said, perhaps also fed up with her foolish entourage. "Can you play your new song on the hanon?"

The princess has ordered Patience to play a new song. I can't be wasting my time with those idiots.

I took a seat and prepared myself to listen to Patience's new song. *Her last song was so jaunty and cheerful. It was absolutely wonderful. Will her newest song be similar?* My heart was racing with excitement.

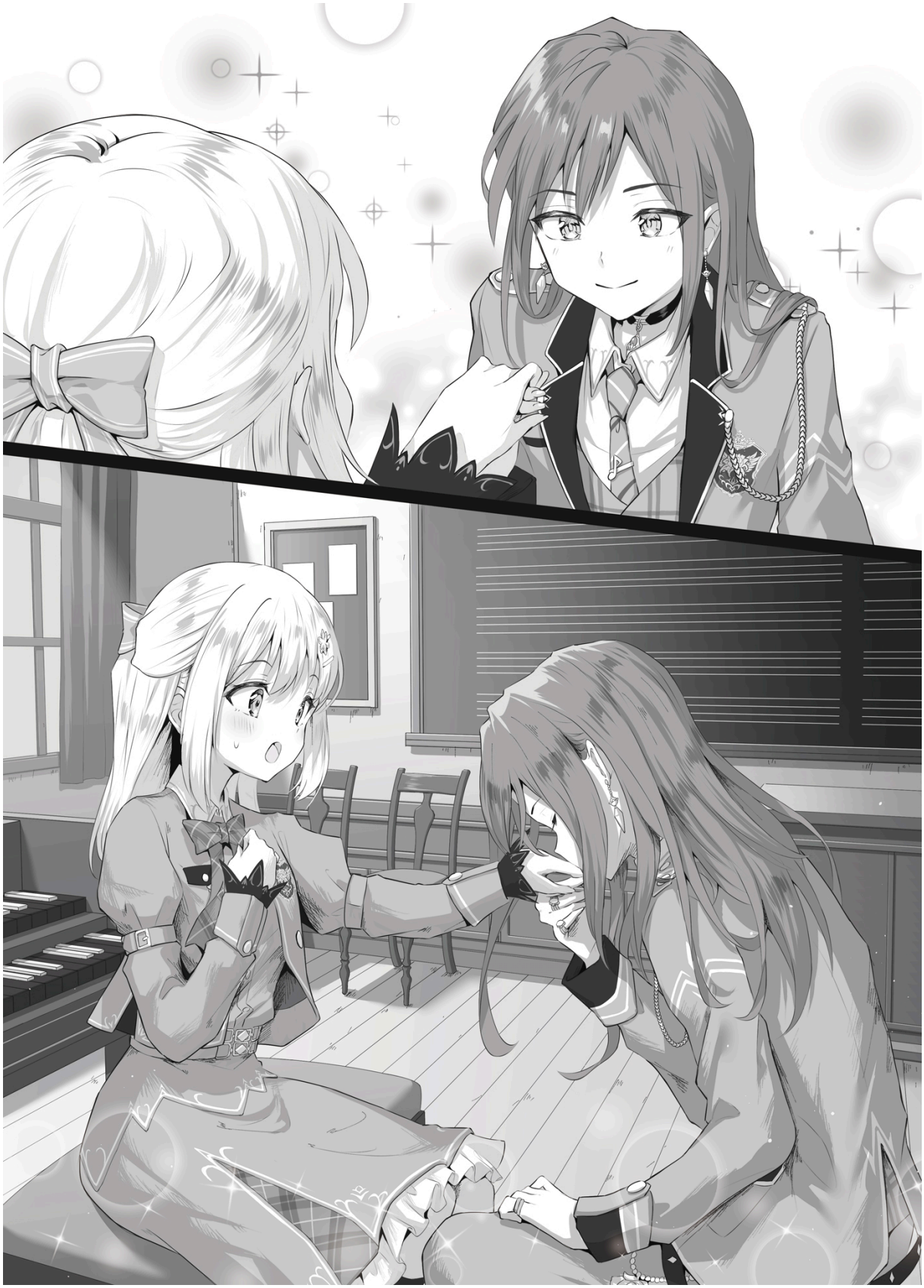
Even the three girls who had been complaining took their seats. *We're ready now, Patience! Play for us!*

As Patience played, all I could think was: *This song came to us directly from the heavens. What a beautiful, glimmering song! Is Patience the embodiment of the goddess of music?*

Her sweet, enchanting music filled my chest, and I continued to be stunned even after she'd finished. *I wish I could spend the rest of my life alongside this wonderful music.*

I knelt in front of Patience and kissed the hands that had played that blindingly beautiful tune.

"Patience, will you marry me?!" I exclaimed, proposing to her. *Now I can live alongside that lovely music!*



Patience was perhaps embarrassed, as her cheeks flushed. *My father would surely take his hat off to Patience's musical talents and allow us to marry.*

"Please don't steal my lady's maid from me, Albert," Princess Margaret interjected, denying me of the music-filled life I dreamed of.

Why are you doing this to me?

The princess then turned to her friends.

"Catherine, Hariette, Lilina, I want you three to compose songs that can stand up to Patience's."

That was something we could agree on. Fortunately, the idiot trio just nodded silently in response.

"Um, would it be all right if I asked for a favor?" Patience suddenly chimed in. "I'm confident in my ability to come up with new phrases, but I'm not so skilled when it comes to polishing those phrases or melodies to turn them into full songs, or transcribing compositions into sheet music."

How could you say such things, Patience?!

"That's a good idea," Princess Margaret replied. "We should give everyone the phrases and melodies you come up with, and then they can use those for inspiration to compose new pieces."

You would just be squandering Patience's talents! Her ideas would be wasted on those fools! Those seeds could blossom into beautiful songs, yet you're just tossing them away like trash!

This was unbelievable. Princess Margaret allowed such a ridiculous thing to happen, stating that she wanted to hear as many new songs as she could. I felt it necessary to watch over those girls and make sure they didn't ruin Patience's songs.

Oh, I've got a brilliant idea! I should invite my father to the Festival of Verdure! I'm sure he will be smitten with Patience's talent. It wouldn't be bad for me to do something nice for my father every now and then. After that, I'll convince my father to become a patron to Patience and help her open a music parlor in Romano.

The music club's performance during the Festival of Verdure was wonderful. This was the best New Composition Recital we'd had

since I'd joined the club.

I'd played my highly technical piece, as well as Patience's pieces "Minuet" and "Eine kleine Nachtmusik." My father had seemed quite moved by my playing and had even screamed, "Bravo!" I'd been slightly embarrassed by his cheering, but I knew that he was only so expressive because of his deep love of music, so I didn't mind it too much.

I still don't understand why Princess Margaret chose those girls to be her schoolmates. The princess's friends had all whined about wanting to go see the knight club's matches and ended up performing in the afternoon time slot. I had no idea what was so entertaining about the knight club, but the girls were probably there to see Percival, who was a member of the club. Unfortunately for them, Percival wasn't the type to spend time with fools.

If they're friends, shouldn't they have spent time with Princess Margaret during the festival? As her lady's maid, Patience stayed by the princess's side. Those idiots could learn a thing or two from her.

There was only one word to describe the choir club's performance: miserable. I couldn't understand how singing such antiquated songs could be any fun. Not only had their performance been terrible, but they had lodged a complaint against the music club to the student council, insisting that the music club's performance had gone over the allotted time. Because of their complaint, some members of the music club were only able to perform a single song.

The members of the choir club aren't true lovers of music. I think one of the members, Marcus Lambert, is in my class. I'm sure he has some complaints about the antiquated choir music. I'm going to try prodding him about it.

We had final exams after the Festival of Verdure. I planned on getting certificates of completion in pointless subjects such as law and government. *I'm going to devote my free time to music.*

Over summer break, Her Majesty, the royal children, and accompanying staff would be visiting the Laforet estate on their way to the summer palace. My father and brother were quite busy with

preparing for their arrival. All I had to do was be available on the day of their visit to welcome them and join them for lunch.

Oh, it looks like Patience is here too, I thought as they arrived. *Right, she must have been invited to the summer palace, since she is Princess Margaret's lady's maid. After all the bullying those idiot girls put her through, I'm sure she could use a vacation.*

My father escorted Queen Victoria into our mansion. My brother was in charge of entertaining Prince Richard and Prince Keith. I was in the music club with Princess Margaret, so I was in charge of receiving her.

"I'm thinking of having Patience learn to play the lute," the princess suddenly announced.

My, what a wonderful idea!

"The lute is a great instrument to learn," I replied. "It'll give her tools to compose a wider range of songs."

Patience was a skilled hanon player, but she couldn't play any other instruments. This issue needed to be fixed right away. She had a duty to help her innate talents grow further.

Our luncheon went smoothly. Since my mother wasn't with us anymore, my father and brother had been worried whether they could properly host the queen. I was also relieved that there hadn't been any issues.

"That was delicious. The music was lovely as well," the queen said, giving her thanks as she got up to leave.

Now I can finally enjoy my summer break. Until today, the Laforet home had been buzzing in preparation for the queen's visit, and I hadn't been able to focus on my music. *I must compose a new song for the Harvest Festival!*

As Patience boarded her carriage, I realized I had something I had to say to her.

"You'd better compose lots of new pieces over summer break, Patience," I said.

"You're the student from that performance!" my father suddenly exclaimed. *Did he not notice until now? I guess my father's blinder than I am to anything that isn't music. He probably can't recognize her if she isn't playing the hanon.*

"Albert, who is that girl?" my father asked me. *Has he already forgotten the introductions from earlier?*

"That is Patience Granger," my brother replied.

I guess I don't have to worry about the Laforet estate, I thought, seeing how reliable my brother was. He would probably take care of everything, including me.

"Did Patience compose those wonderful pieces that were performed during the Festival of Verdure?" my father asked. "Your technically complex song was also incredible, but I'd never heard songs as exciting and jaunty as hers. Listening to 'Minuet' felt like having my heart cleansed."

My father was raving over Patience's talents. He would probably approve of me wanting to wed her. As a viscount's daughter, she was a lower-ranking noble, but that wouldn't be an issue for me since I wasn't our house's heir.

"If you like her that much, would you consider taking her as your second wife?" my brother asked.

I was speechless. I'd thought that my brother was the most sane member of our family. How could he say such a thing?!

"Well, I think we are a bit too far apart in age for that... Oh, I know! What if we hire her as a musician!"

Oh, that would be a good option too. If she becomes our family's musician, I'll get to hear her music all the time.

Perhaps my brother's intentions were to stop my father's infatuation with Patience's talents before they went too far. There was no way my brother would allow someone seven years his junior to become his stepmother.

I wonder if I'll actually be able to wed her. I was probably going to have more difficulty convincing my brother than I would my father. Patience was still a ten-year-old child. *I'll think about it in the future.* Other students at the academy who couldn't understand my love for music often called me a weirdo, but that didn't mean that I was a pervert who would pursue a ten-year-old child. I *had* proposed to her, but that had been with the intention of getting married after she'd graduated.

Chapter 7: The Fall Term Has Begun

Sadly, my summer break was over, and I had to leave behind my brothers and return to the dorms. I wanted to spend as long as I could with them, so I decided to return to campus after lunch.

"I'll be back on the weekends," I assured my brothers. "Take care until then."

"Goodbye, sister," my brothers said, bidding me farewell. Since we'd already been apart for so long while I was at the summer palace, they didn't seem too bothered by my leaving. *This hurts!*

George prepared the carriage, and we were off to the academy. I'd grown slightly taller over the summer, as had my brothers. I was glad to see that they were growing, but that also meant that they wouldn't be as attached to me as they were before, which was sad. We quickly arrived at the Royal Academy, giving me no time to wallow in my sadness. *I really wish I could just commute all the time.*

I still wasn't sure what had driven the king to move his children into the dorms. Prince Richard would only spend a year there, and none of Princess Margaret's schoolmates had joined her in the dorms.

It would be nice if Princess Margaret could move back to the palace and commute once Prince Richard graduates. Then I wouldn't have to be her lady's maid anymore. Such thoughts ran through my mind as I watched Mary put away my belongings.

I'd taken my clothes and textbooks with me for summer break, so they all had to be moved back to my dorm. I'd brought my textbooks home to study and my clothes home to be laundered. Though I kept my clothes clean using household magic, it was nice to actually wash them. It just felt wrong not to.

Though I'd kept the rest of my clothes clean with magic, Mary had still been bringing my undergarments home with her to launder. *I'm not one of those girlfailures who live in squalor.*

"I wish you luck in your efforts as Princess Margaret's lady's maid, my lady," Mary said before leaving, putting a lot of pressure on me.

Princess Margaret would be arriving at the dorms before dinner, which meant I had some time to myself until then. *Should I do some work for my side jobs, or should I go on a walk?*

"I worked hard on my side jobs back home, so I think I shall go for a walk," I murmured to myself. "I'd like to gain some more stamina before the weather gets too cold."

I'd gotten a bit stronger over the summer thanks to all the swimming and horseback riding I'd done at the summer palace, but I still had ways to go before I could claim to be hale and hearty. We had a sizable pile of firewood stocked to keep warm during the winter, but I still wanted to do what I could to avoid catching a cold or getting pneumonia again. *The campus is huge, and there's roses blooming all around. Let's go on a walk and get a little stronger!*

It was now the end of August, and I could feel the faint presence of fall on the breeze. The summers here weren't like they'd been in my previous life. It still got hot, but the temperatures weren't unbearable. In exchange, though, the winters here were much harsher.

"Do I need to walk faster for this to be a proper workout?" I wondered aloud.

Patience wasn't used to walking far, so I'd been going at a slow pace. *I think people walk more briskly when they're trying to exercise.* I'd walked much faster when I was commuting on foot to work during my previous life, but now my body could only handle a slow stroll—perhaps that was because it had been conditioned to only move in a ladylike manner.

Well, I guess a slow walk isn't so bad. I get to see all these roses too. What should've been a graceful and scenic stroll became tainted by my vulgar thoughts of what sort of roses sold for the highest price.

The roses I'd propagated in the greenhouse had started

blooming, but unfortunately they were sturdy varieties that only had red and pink flowers. I was jealous of the daintier and more colorful versions planted on campus.

Would it be bad if I trimmed some stems and brought them home with me? I guess that behavior is far from elegant. I can feel Patience's exasperation toward me.

As always, my first day of the fall term began by waking up Princess Margaret and eating breakfast with her. The princess had made me play a new composition for her on the hanon upon her arrival yesterday, which had also been par for the course.

I wasn't too happy about living in the dorms, but I figured that Princess Margaret hated it even more. *She probably wanted for nothing while growing up in the royal palace.* Just as that thought crossed my mind, the princess said something unexpected.

"I feel at ease when I'm at the dorms," Princess Margaret said.

I nearly choked on the bread I was eating.

"Isn't it a hassle living here without any maids?" I asked.

"It is, but I feel more relaxed. It's funny, because when I first moved in, I thought I wouldn't be able to bear living here. I think things are going so well because you became my lady's maid."

I was glad to hear that, but her words were making me wonder if she was going to stay in the dorms even after Prince Richard graduated. I wanted to be able to commute from home, so I'd expected Princess Margaret to feel the same way.

"Prince Richard is graduating at the end of this term, yes?" I asked.

"That's right. I believe he'll be attending Romano University. I wonder if he'll be moving into the dorms there."

It seemed that Princess Margaret didn't have moving out of the dorms on her mind at all. *Maybe where she can live depends on the king and queen's decision.*

Even if I could earn the money to buy a horse so I could commute from home, as long as Princess Margaret was living in the dorms, I probably would have to keep being her lady's maid and live here with her. In other words, my only way out was for the princess

to hate living in the dorms and beg the queen to move back home. *The queen probably wouldn't allow her to move back that easily, though. It all comes down to what both the king and queen think.*

For a moment, I thought about slacking off on my lady's maid duties so the princess could get a taste of how uncomfortable dorm life was, but going down that path probably meant that I would end up doing even more work trying to appease an upset Princess Margaret.

Also, I didn't really know why the king had moved his children into the dorm. Without knowing why he'd made that decision, I wouldn't know what would get him to move them back home.

My thoughts were just going in circles.

"Princess Margaret, why did His Majesty have you move into the dorms?" I asked. "Also, does he have any intentions of moving you back to the royal palace so you can commute from there?"

"Who knows? I have no clue," Princess Margaret replied. "Richard says it's because our father wants us to become 'independent,' but we were allowed to have our friends move into the dorms with us, which doesn't seem entirely in keeping with such a goal. I argued with my mother that things weren't fair because none of *my* friends had moved into the dorms, but she completely ignored me. Though at least she *did* select you to be my lady's maid. Ultimately, no one knows what my father and mother were thinking when they ordered us to move into the dorms."

If Princess Margaret didn't know the king and queen's reasoning, there was no way I would be able to find out. *I guess I just have to accept my fate.*

Once we entered September, it began to feel like fall. Temperatures dropped and the weather became more comfortable, but I couldn't enjoy it—I couldn't forget the cold of winter. The cold I'd experienced when I had reincarnated into this world was now a traumatic memory.

"Do we have enough firewood?" I mumbled to myself. "Maybe we should preserve more food."

No matter how much I lamented my jobless father and our

family's lack of funds, winter would still be merciless and freezing. I wanted to be properly prepared.

"I don't think we'll be able to grow any more summer vegetables in the garden," I said, thinking out loud. "After we harvest the corn, I'll plant some winter vegetables, like turnips."

Patience's lack of agricultural knowledge was such that I hadn't known that corn existed in this world, so I was going to leave it to George to select the vegetables we would plant.

Most of the corn we harvested would be dried and turned into cornmeal, but we would be using a portion of it in its fresh state. *I want to eat creamy corn soup! I'd love to serve it for Henry's and my birthdays, since we were both born in the fall.*

Perhaps out of gratitude toward me for sharing my recipes with the chef at the summer palace, I'd been sent home from my visits to the palace with two baskets of eggs, sugar, butter, and heavy cream. *Is this my reward for helping with the salt making? It's a little disappointing.*

Sometimes I would use these ingredients for desserts, but I also had Eva use them in preparing our meals. There was still room to improve with our meals.

Patience was no longer gaunt, and it seemed like my brothers were getting taller every time I saw them. My father also had more meat on his bones, as did the other members of our staff. Everyone was still thin, but not excessively so.

I still had memories of my previous life where everyone was well-fed, so I was aware that I needed to be mindful about gaining excessive weight, but that wasn't going to be an issue for the Grangers anytime soon.

Henry's and my birthdays were roughly two weeks apart, but we were dependent on the queen for eggs and butter, so I'd planned to bake a cake based on when we had the ingredients.

Ugh, I need to stop being so greedy with my thoughts. I hope the universe forgives me.

I was on a dangerous path, and I needed to focus. Whether I could bake a cake would depend on other circumstances, but I did want to serve corn soup for our birthdays, along with some meat for

the entrée. I liked fish, but it was hard to come by in landlocked Romano. That had been one good thing about being at the summer palace. *It's too bad that Prince Keith doesn't like fish.*

I asked Wyatt about how much firewood we would need, since my knowledge about this world was limited.

"There's no need for you to worry over such things, my lady," Wyatt replied, shooing me away.

Since Patience had died of pneumonia, I was in fact *quite* worried.

I moved on to ask Eva if we had enough food preserved for the winter. This was particularly an area of concern because we had an extra mouth to feed this year. *Matthew must be a growing boy too.*

"We have enough to get through winter," Eva replied, giving me just a bit of relief.

I'm still going to preserve more food. I want to fill the shelves of our pantry!

In the garden, we planted turnips, potatoes, broccoli, and romano greens. The romano greens were apparently a highly nutritious vegetable, and it looked similar to spinach and Japanese mustard spinach from my previous life. It was boiled and served as a side, turned into a soup, or even mashed into baby food.

I like that it's nutritious! My brothers are still growing, and my recluse of a father needs nutrients too.

Romano greens weren't just nutritious; they also grew fast. After the seeds were sown, they grew with just a touch of household magic.

"It's also nice that we can use the leafy tops of the other vegetables," I remarked.

I gathered my brothers to pull out the leafy green tops of the other vegetables. If we picked too many of them, the vegetables wouldn't grow that big. After picking some turnip greens, we handed them to Matthew to pass on to Eva.

"Today we're going to have cornbread," I announced.

After drying out corn kernels, I used household magic to turn them into cornmeal, which Eva baked into cornbread.

"Is that good?" Henry asked. He seemed to believe that anytime I

had a hand in something, it meant that he would be eating something yummy.

"Yes, it's delicious," I replied. *I want to feed them lots and lots of yummy things! I'm going to give him a kiss.* "We should also have some more apples and pears."

George and Matthew picked some apples and pears for us. I turned a few of them into compotes and jarred them. I didn't use too much sugar, so the compotes might not last until next spring, but we would still be able to eat it during the winter.

"The pears were perfect," Nassius said.

Or perhaps pear-fect? No, no, I'm not going to make that pun.

Nassius had gotten quite fond of pears. He seemed to enjoy the sticky sweetness that western pears had.

"Next time I'll make a dessert using the pears," I replied.

Nassius beamed at me. *He's so cute! I can't just kiss him like I can with Henry, though. Now that he's nine, he doesn't mind good morning and good night kisses, but otherwise he's embarrassed. I'm so sad.*

It was now October, and I had turned eleven. It was Friday, and I was visiting the royal palace. I always felt nervous visiting the queen, but I was a bit happy about this visit because Henry's birthday was coming up.

"Fall is a bustling time for high society," the queen said. "I won't have many chances to see you, but please know that I am aware of your wonderful service to Margaret as her lady's maid."

I'm happy to be praised, but I really want to ask if Princess Margaret is going to keep living in the dorms.

I tried googling within Patience's memories to find out at what age girls made their formal debuts into society. All I found was some vague information that most noble girls became debutantes between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Patience had lost her mother at a young age, and the Granger family was quite poor—perhaps a formal debut was an implausible scenario.

Princess Margaret would be entering the senior division next year, and she would turn fourteen years old. It wasn't impossible for her

to have her formal debut. I had no idea of the scale of the party that would be held for her, nor how many other princesses might be in attendance. Regardless, it would probably be best for her to be living at the palace when that happened. After all, she didn't have all of her ball gowns and accessories at the dorm.

At the end of the day, I was a spineless coward who didn't have the courage to ask the queen about the dorm situation. *I mean, I'm scared! I'm just going to ask Princess Margaret about her societal debut sometime when she's in a good mood. I'm a coward! So what!*

I'd expected to be sent home with my usual two baskets of eggs, sugar, butter, and heavy cream, but there was also a large box loaded onto the carriage. Once we arrived at the Granger home, I exited the carriage empty-handed as usual. Zofie carried the baskets, and the driver brought the large box inside.

A proper lady wasn't to show that she was curious about the contents of a box, even if she actually was. Despite those rules, as soon as Zofie had boarded the carriage and headed back to the royal palace, I had Wyatt open the box.

"My lady, this appears to be meat from some monsters," Wyatt explained. "I believe it is meat from a big boar and a cassowary. The master is fond of them both." Surprisingly, Wyatt had a look of joy on his face. Considering how poor we were, monster meat probably hadn't been served at the Granger home for several years.

I'll have Eva cook these! I was feeling just a bit glad to be Princess Margaret's lady's maid. After all, I was getting the chance to feed my brothers some delicious monster meat. Of course, since my father apparently liked it, he would be getting some too.

And so, we started grilling meat on Saturday morning for a shared birthday party for Henry and me—well, technically, Eva was doing all the grilling. I was also going to have a pear tart prepared, just as I'd promised Nassius. I'd taught the boys about blowing out a birthday candle on Nassius's birthday, so we needed two desserts for Henry and me to both make a wish.

I wrote out the recipe for the pear tart and handed it to Eva. The

base was a tart shell that would be filled with plenty of custard cream and topped with thin slices of pear, all lined up in a pretty circle. Eva was extremely good at making thin slices.

Henry's birthday cake was the same as Nassius's, but this time I'd made a piping bag for the whipped cream, so the decorations were going to be a bit flashier.

I wish I could've made a piping tip too. Maybe if I join the alchemy club, I can have someone who can process metal help me make one. If I can actually skip to the senior division next year, I'll take an alchemy class. After that, I'll decide whether I want to join the club.

Lunch was extravagant—we had creamy corn soup and big boar steaks. The meat had been sliced very thin, so it was more reminiscent of cold cuts than steak. Even so, it was incredibly juicy and delicious. The steak was served alongside a medley of freshly harvested vegetables. This veritable feast was nothing like the servings of bland and watery soup, thin slices of hard bread, and paper-thin scraps of ham that I'd had when I'd first come to this world.

Wyatt and Mary brought out both our birthday desserts.

"Lady Patience, Sir Henry, happy birthday," they congratulated us.

My birthday had actually been two days ago, and Henry's birthday was in ten days.

"Henry, we're going to make wishes and blow out the candles," I explained.

Henry had such a serious look on his face as he blew out his candle that I was curious as to what he'd wished for.

"Here you go, Lady Patience," Mary said, handing me the tart.

I already knew what I would be wishing for. *I wish that the Granger household will not starve or freeze.* I'd never wished for something so earnestly while blowing out candles for my birthday. It was only natural, because my concerns were a matter of life and death.

Our family and staff clapped, and we began cutting into the desserts.

"It's so good!" Henry exclaimed.

Ugh, he's seven years old now. He's so big! I was getting emotional.

"Sister, this pear tart is incredibly delicious," Nassius raved.

Both were cut into thin slices and served. The slices needed to be thin so we still had room for dinner and so there would be enough dessert for everyone, including the staff. *Eva's really good at making clean cuts.*

Nassius seemed to really enjoy the pear tart, while Henry was happy with both. Henry had some whipped cream and custard on his cheek.

"Happy birthday sister, Henry," Nassius congratulated us. He handed me a letter as a gift. *I'm so happy! I'm going to treasure this!*

"I can't believe you're eleven now, Patience," my father said. "Children grow up so quickly." It seemed he was getting emotional as well. *Instead of stewing in your feels, can you get a job?*

At that moment, I only thought that my father was getting emotional about the fact that I was growing up. I had no idea there would be some other meaning behind his words. After all, in my previous life I would've been a sixth-grader, still in elementary school—in other words, just a young child. I knew that the marriage age was younger in this world than my previous one, but I thought that had nothing to do with us impoverished Grangers.

So, I'd turned eleven years old. I was quite satisfied with how things were progressing—my gardening was going well, and I'd gotten used to both my school life and my duties as Princess Margaret's lady's maid.

I knew that I'd been reincarnated into a world with magic, and I was using it every day. We also had magic stones, which, as you might expect, came from monsters that existed in this world. Even so, I'd never actually seen a live monster, so I thought that I didn't have to worry about them. We hadn't even run into monsters when we were traveling to the summer palace.

Any roads that the royal family traveled along would be cleared of monsters prior to their travel. I hadn't known that, nor that we

hadn’t run into monsters because there were knights protecting us.

That was why I was shocked to hear why Prince Richard wasn’t with us in the salon on this particular day in November.

“I wonder if Richard is hunting monsters right now,” Prince Keith said. “I’ve heard that the monsters that appear before winter are pretty strong. I wonder if he’s okay.”

I knew that Prince Richard hadn’t been gone often, but I’d figured that he was just taking care of some business. I’d thought he had been busy preparing for his enrollment in Romano University.

“Brother is fine,” Princess Margaret assured her younger sibling. “He said that knights would be accompanying him.”



Prince Keith and Princess Margaret spoke of their brother as if hunting monsters were nothing surprising. If anything, Prince Keith actually sounded a bit jealous that he hadn't gotten to go too.

"Senior division students in the knight track and volunteers from the mage track join the winter monster hunt," Prince Keith explained. "I can't wait to get to the senior division!"

"Isn't hunting monsters dangerous?" I asked. I still had a look of shock on my face, and Prince Keith was eager to enlighten me.

"There's less food in the winter, and some monsters even hibernate," the prince began to explain. "In preparation for that, they get violent in the fall. Every year, the students in the knight track join in on the hunt! Monster meat is really good! Have you ever had it before, Patience?"

I imagined monsters to be creatures similar to bears and boars. It sounded like actual knights accompanied students in the knight track on the hunt.

"There's no need to worry, Patience," the princess said to me. "My brother will be fine. It's a part of our yearly preparations for the winter. More importantly, have you finished writing a new piece for the Harvest Festival?"

Princess Margaret was just as focused on music as usual. *Winter preparations? Is that like how I'm preserving a bunch of food for our household?*

"We can't lose to *that* choir club," the princess continued. "Though I suppose it's impossible for us to lose to 'performers' of their level."

The Harvest Festival was a bit different from the Festival of Verdure. The latter was more of a school-wide celebration, while the former was a send-off for the graduating students. Because of that, cultural elements were the main focus, and performances would be held in the auditorium. *I see that you're still hostile toward the choir club after our clubs had that squabble during the Festival of Verdure, Princess, but please do not fight with them. President Melissa is going to be graduating, and then we won't have her around to smooth things over!*

Albert, our new club president, probably wouldn't be able to calm

people down. In fact, it seemed likely he would do the opposite and fuel any fires that popped up. Rufus, the new student council president, was definitely going to end up scolding him.

That's right—Prince Richard won't be the student council president anymore, since he's graduating. I might miss him a little.

What are these?! Monsters are way too huge!

It was the next day, and a monster was being brought in on a cart. I was surprised by its massive size. *Was that an elephant-sized boar?!*

I was utterly shocked, but no one around me seemed surprised.

"Huh. The monsters this year are pretty small," one student commented. "It looks like this winter won't get too cold."

"The monsters last year were *huge*," another student responded. "Winter was also harsh. I think we won't have any deaths at the estate this year."

I see. So the winter I arrived in this world was harsh, even by the standards of this kingdom. Not only that, but there were also other deaths besides Patience.

"My brother was the one who dealt the killing blow to the big boar," Prince Keith boasted. "It's actually quite sizable."

"I heard that some of the monsters hunted by the knights' order were also taken to the royal palace," Ralph said. "How big were those monsters? It would be awful to have a winter like we did last year."

Hugo nodded in agreement with Ralph's words.

"Our estate is up north, so harsh winters are a matter of life and death," Hugo added.

I'd already thought that winter in Romano was quite freezing, but it probably got much colder in the north.

"I've heard that both knights and adventurers took down lots of monsters," Prince Keith said. "Not only will there be fewer monsters wandering into towns during the winter, but the citizens in the capital won't have to worry about food when it comes to their winter preparations."

Huh. I didn't know that Prince Keith worried about the lives of

regular citizens.

The massive monster was apparently a big boar, and it appeared that it was going to be eaten by everyone.

"Wait, *that* big boar?" I said to myself.

During my birthday celebration, I'd eaten the big boar meat that the queen had gifted us. I'd had no idea it was such a large monster.

Man, I really have no idea how much goes into winter preparations in this world.

After skipping ahead a grade, I'd thought that I'd gotten settled into this world, but seeing a monster with my own eyes made me realize that I was living in a world I knew nothing about.

"I need to learn more about monsters," I declared to myself.

Both male and female students had been completely calm when seeing that huge monster, while I'd been terrified. Though the other girls always carried themselves like proper noblewomen, perhaps they were used to monsters and saw them back on their estates in the countryside. *I guess I can't just carelessly travel around the world—not that I have the money to do that right now.*

Fortunately, I was exempt from taking math. I still wanted to be cleared from taking other subjects, so I still had studying to do, but I decided to spend some of my hard-earned free time in the library.

I found a promising book: *Compendium of Monsters*. I placed the incredibly heavy tome onto a table.

The first few pages listed creatures that I recognized from my previous life: almirajes, which were one-horned hares; pintades, which were guinea fowls; boars, which were wild pigs; elks, which were deer; and renards, which were foxes. Well, I say that I recognized them, but I'd never seen any horned rabbits in my old world. The familiar-looking beasts all had horns and fangs that looked quite large. I learned that these sorts of monsters were constantly being hunted by adventurers, who would sell their meat, their pelts, and their horns, along with the smaller magic stones they dropped. Those were the type of magic stones purchased for home use.

One of the monsters that had no equivalent in my previous life

was slimes. They dropped very small magic stones and were used for waste and sewage treatment. *I wonder if we could've had cleaner water if they existed in my previous world.*

"Oh, that guinea fowl that the princess eats is also a monster," I said to myself. "Maybe I've eaten it without realizing. Well, monster meat seems to be a premium ingredient, so I don't think I've really gotten to have it."

As I read further, the text began to cover worrying topics—the book noted to be cautious of fire attacks from cassowaries, and that their kicks dealt a lot of damage. Mutton, which were basically sheep, looked fluffy and nice, but in this world, they would kick you with their front legs or attack you with fire. The ovis and aries I'd seen in Velouche during summer break were a domesticated breed of muttons.

"Anguis," I read out loud. "Oh, it's a snake. I hate them. I'm skipping this one." I hated snakes and insects. I prayed I would never run into them and skipped ahead several pages. I didn't even want to look at any illustrations of them.

Singes, which were monkeys, were tricksy monsters, even when acting alone. They often traveled in groups, so it was best to run if you encountered them. *They throw rocks at you? A horde of monkeys throwing rocks at you sounds insane!*

Ursus were bear monsters, and bears were dangerous even in my previous life. These monsters looked incredibly violent. Not only did they seem terrifying, but they could use earth magic, so I really didn't want to ever encounter one. *I don't think playing dead would work with these bears.*

Faucons, which were hawks, not only attacked with wind magic, but they also were massive. They were the natural enemy of grazing livestock. The monsters in this portion of the book dropped medium-sized magic stones.

"Oh, it's a big boar! The largest ones are about the size of a cabin... I see. The one from the other day was only about the size of an elephant. That's why no one was surprised by its size."

I was now halfway through the bestiary. The further into the book I got, the more violent the monsters were.

"Oh, there's tigers and lions. Tigre and leon... Lions are still the king of the beasts here."

Ferocious beasts from my previous life were just as violent as monsters in this world, but they didn't drop magic stones like the monsters here did. As I continued flipping through the pages, I found monsters like wyverns and dragons. *These could do some disaster-level damage.* All the monsters on the following pages were powerful enough to destroy towns and even the kingdom.

I'm surprised there aren't any goblins or orcs in this world. I'm glad, though. They're an enemy of all women with how they use them for reproduction.

The difference between animals and monsters was whether they had mana and magic stones. *Does that mean people who can use magic also have magic stones inside them?*

I rubbed my chest, and it didn't feel like there was a stone anywhere. It was pretty easy to check since that area was quite flat. *It's fine, I'm going to start growing soon! Probably!*

I had no plans of enrolling in the knight track, so maybe the monster knowledge wouldn't be all that relevant to me. I could mount a horse, albeit only with the aid of a mounting stool, but I had no desire to swing a sword around.

Every student who was enrolled in the knight track, as well as volunteers from the mage track, had participated in this year's hunt. The volunteers in the mage track had been mostly students skilled in magic attacks and healing magic. My proficiency was in household magic, so even if I enrolled in the mage track and took alchemy, the annual hunts wouldn't be my concern.

If Henry enrolls in the knight track, is he going to fight those huge monsters? I'm so worried. I wish he would just enroll in the civil service track, but it's up to him.

Even if we were poor, the Grangers still needed an heir. Henry was the second son, so he wouldn't be inheriting the estate. In other words, he had to find a way to make a living for himself. If he felt that becoming a bureaucrat wasn't for him and wished to become a knight, there was nothing I could do.

Fortunately, monsters weren't something that you encountered

very often. My visit to the summer palace was my only excursion outside of the royal capital of Romano, but I hadn't run into any monsters during that trip. I tried to quell my worries by telling myself that monsters only lived deep inside forests, and were only encountered by hunting parties. I'd completely forgotten about what I'd seen on the way to the palace: the sight of adventurers fueling up at food stalls in the early morning.

At the salon, big boar steaks were on the menu.

"I'm going to have the big boar steak," Prince Richard said. He was going to eat the big boar that he'd taken down himself.

"I would also like to have steak from the big boar that Richard defeated," Prince Keith proudly announced. I couldn't help but smile at how much Prince Keith loved his older brother. *This side of him is pretty cute.*

"I think I'll have the big boar steak as well," Princess Margaret said. She never ordered steak. She would usually choose poultry, and even if she chose red meat, it would be a steamed or braised dish.

"I bet you've never had big boar before," Prince Keith said to me. "You should try it."

Patience perhaps had indeed eaten monster meat before, but since I'd come to this world, I'd only had the meat gifted to me by the queen.

"The queen gifted me some recently, which I enjoyed," I replied. "It was very delicious, so I think I will have the steak as well."

The big boar steak looked similar to a pork chop. The steak we'd had back home had been sliced so thin that it was more like a cold cut than a steak.

"It's good," Prince Richard said, closing his eyes as if to savor the meat.

The last time I'd had big boar, I didn't know how massive the monster was. I couldn't help but think of its giant body as I cautiously cut myself a small piece, then I took a bite.

It tastes so sweet! Even though it's meat, the fat tastes so sweet! It tastes more like premium pork than beef—oh, right. It's boar

meat. Still, it's not gamey like you would expect boar to be. The flavor of the meat is much more prominent in a steak like this, rather than in thin slices!

"It's incredibly delicious," I said.

"Isn't it?" Prince Keith said. He nodded with satisfaction as if he'd taken the monster down himself.

Chapter 8: The End of the Fall Term

During the fall term, President Melissa stepped down and Albert became the club president. Since then, we'd spent nearly every day rehearsing for the Harvest Festival.

That schedule had been decided by President Albert alone. Princess Margaret was on board, but I didn't want to lose my free time. There were several other club members who'd also seemed dissatisfied with Albert's decision—especially the princess's three friends, who were always complaining. I found myself intensely missing President Melissa, even though she hadn't graduated yet and was actually still on campus.

"That Rufus just doesn't understand!" President Albert arrived uncharacteristically late to rehearsal, huffing angrily about the new student council president.

"What happened?" Princess Margaret asked.

Albert eagerly shared his smoldering rage over the schedule for the Harvest Festival with the princess.

"The music club is only going to be given the same amount of time as that *ridiculous* choir club. Not only that, but the theater club gets *two whole hours*, even though all they do is go onstage and scream loudly!"

That's not very fair to them. Aside from actually performing their play, the theater club also needed time to set the stage up, then put everything away. As for the music and choir clubs, they were probably allotted the same amount of time to keep things fair. I wasn't going to mention any of that, though, because everyone was so worked up and grumpy.

If we're not going to be practicing, I'd like to go back to my room and get some work done. These days, I'd been making boleros by

reusing thread from unraveled lace, which had been my inspiration. These boleros sold for quite a high price, which was great because they cost nothing to make. Perhaps—just as Madam Jefferson had said—once mastered, household magic really could be used to do anything.

I had that gray blanket at home that had saved me during the cold winter. Mary didn't like me using it, since it wasn't becoming of a viscount's daughter, so I used household magic to unweave both the blanket and some paper-thin clothing made of pale blue silk, which I then wove back together into a grayish blue blanket. The final blanket wasn't as soft as silk, but it was definitely softer than its previous form. Mary allowed me to use the new blanket, and I'd even had some thread left over, which I'd used to make my brothers some vests. They were lightweight but warm.

While I thought about all the things I'd made back at home, the members of the music club had continued their insult contest, bad-mouthing the choir club, the theater club, and President Rufus. *This club is filled with talented people, but they need someone to rein them in. Otherwise, we're never going to get past issues like this.*

The main highlight of the music club's Harvest Festival performance was going to be an ensemble piece. I couldn't play the lute well enough to participate in the ensemble piece, so instead I was going to play "Sonata for Two Hanons" with Princess Margaret.

"The theater club may need time to set the stage up, but the same goes for us, what with all the instruments that need to be set up for the ensemble piece. President Rufus just doesn't understand! All the choir club needs is a single hanon up on the stage." Albert had circled back to his original complaint.

So are we not going to practice today? I exasperatedly thought. Just then, Catherine said something that only further complicated things.

"I'm actually unsure about some things on our current program," Catherine said.

She probably doesn't like that I'm going to be playing a duet with Princess Margaret.

"Why don't we just scrap the ensemble piece?" Hariette said. "It

takes too much time to set up all those different instruments onstage. We can just play the hanon and have it accompanied by a lute or a flute." Hariette could only play the hanon, so she'd suggested something that would be convenient for her.

That's...actually not a bad plan. If we don't do the ensemble piece, we wouldn't have to spend time setting up all kinds of instruments.

"If we're not going to play ensemble pieces, we should call ourselves a hanon association, not a music club," President Albert grumbled.

Oh, right. President Albert was the one who composed the ensemble piece. His feelings seem pretty hurt. Aw, how childish.

"Then why doesn't everyone just participate in the ensemble piece?" Catherine said.

She's so easy to read. All she wants to do is stop me from playing a duet with the princess.

"Patience is still learning how to play the lute," Princess Margaret pointed out, perhaps defending me because she enjoyed playing "Sonata for Two Hanons."

"Having everyone participate may be the only way to play the ensemble," President Albert said. "Patience, I want you to immediately start learning how to play percussion." He didn't want to give up on playing his ensemble piece, so he was now demanding the impossible.

"What?!" I groaned. "Isn't Sir Rupert in charge of the percussion instruments?" *I thought Vice President Rupert was in charge of percussion! Do I have to take over? Can I even do that?*

"Well, I'm in charge of three instruments, so I'll give you the easiest one. I'm sure you can handle this one," he said, handing me something that reminded me of a musical triangle from my previous life.

"With that one, all you have to do is get the timing down," President Albert said.

He makes it sound easy, but wouldn't it completely ruin things if I got the timing wrong?

Originally, Princess Margaret was going to conduct while

President Albert played the hanon, but he decided to swap and let the princess play the hanon instead.

"I wish I could play an easy instrument like Patience," Hariette whined.

Catherine and Lilina ignored her because they'd gotten what they wanted: I wasn't playing a duet with the princess anymore.

I picked up the triangle and tried playing it. President Albert immediately came over to me and began instructing me on how to play it, starting with how to hold it.

"It seems you're completely new to the triangle, Patience," Albert remarked. "You must hit it at the right moment, so hold it up a bit higher. I want you to watch me through the opening while you play."

I'm supposed to stare through the triangle at President Albert's face? I thought as I began to realize that the triangle was quite heavy. It hadn't felt that heavy at first, but my arm began to tremble as I held it up high. *Just how weak am I?*

Thankfully, Rupert, who was in charge of percussion, showed me how to actually play the instrument.

"You need to decide where you want to hit the triangle," Vice President Rupert explained. "I usually like to hit it around the middle of the bottom side, but President Albert can be pretty picky about how he wants his pieces to sound. If he says to play it lower, you may need to make adjustments."

I'm sorry I thought so little of you until now, O triangle. Just as Rupert had explained, the sound it made changed depending on where I hit it. *I feel confident Albert is going to complain about my playing, and I'm* always *right about these sorts of things.*

"Patience, a little higher," Albert ordered, only to turn around and demand, "No, no, lower during *that* part," when I'd strike a spot that made a higher note.

The silver lining was that I wasn't the only one being scolded. Catherine and Lilina were being called out here and there, and Hariette in particular was getting chewed out quite a lot.

Not only was Albert being strict with us, but the song itself was also quite unconventional. There were lots of key changes, which made it difficult to play and distracted everyone from maintaining

the correct tempo. Everyone else was probably complaining in their minds just like I was.

Well, the key changes didn't actually matter to me since I was playing the triangle, but it was strange to be staring at President Albert's face through the opening.

Subjectively speaking, he's lacking a little bit of youthfulness. I'm more interested in the arrogant Prince Keith, the mature-acting Ralph, and the impulsive and reckless Hugo—only for their looks though. Of course, my true ideal type is the little angels back home.

Even on the day of the Harvest Festival, I had to wake up Princess Margaret. She'd said she wanted to do a more complex hairstyle for today, so I'd arrived at her room earlier than usual.

Please give the princess the ability to wake up on her own one day, I prayed to the Estenaian god in my heart, but the princess probably wasn't going to improve while I was serving as her lady's maid.

As usual, I used household magic to wake her up, and I served her tea.

"I really wish you could teach the court ladies and palace maids how to wake me up," Princess Margaret mused.

I had actually taught Lady Charlotte and Zofie, the princess's attendant, what I did to wake Princess Margaret up, but my household spells were a bit peculiar, and they hadn't been able to replicate my methods.

"It will take some time to do your hair, so please get dressed quickly," I said, rushing the princess as she leisurely drank tea in bed.

Once she got dressed, I used some more household magic on the princess.

"Become clean!" With that, the princess's bed head was tamed. *So useful!*

I quickly put half of her hair up, clipping it in place with a hair clip made of black velvet and decorated with small stars. The black hair clip looked lovely on her platinum blonde hair. I then began wrapping small sections of her hair around my finger and curling

them by chanting, "Curl!"

"Your household magic is incredibly useful," Princess Margaret commented. "They have to use a curling rod when they curl my hair at the palace. Sometimes, the rod is too hot and it damages my hair. Catherine also has damaged ends, which she chops off."

Hair conditioners didn't exist in this world, so Catherine's maids likely had to use raw eggs and vinegar as hair treatments. *It's a shame, considering how expensive eggs are.*

We made it to breakfast in time, and I was relieved. The music club's performance was the last of the morning performances, and it would have been a struggle to make it until lunch if we'd missed breakfast. *If my stomach had growled during that* long *ensemble piece, President Albert would probably have killed me.*

Princess Margaret and I slowly headed to the auditorium. If we got there too quickly, we would probably run into the choir club. Fortunately, the choir club was in the middle of their performance. *We'll be fine as long as they're onstage. There's no way to fight when we're all the way over here.*

The Harvest Festival was a send-off for the graduating students, so the first floor of the auditorium was packed with third-year seniors. We returning students had the option to view the performances from the second-floor seats.

"They're all right," Princess Margaret said, as strict of a critic as ever.

I actually did agree with her this time. The choir club was mostly made up of female students. Girls were also the majority in the music club, but I didn't recall there being *this* many girls in the choir club. There were only two boys up on the stage, which made it difficult to produce a balanced sound.

"Hmm? Is the choir club going again?" I asked, confused when they finished their performance and seemingly more members came onstage.

"Oh, you must not know," Princess Margaret replied. "The choir club split up. The group going now is going to become the glee club. I think there's going to be a huge fight over the schedule for next

year's Festival of Verdure."

The second group's performance was more like a musical, and they danced while they sang. It seemed that most of the boys in the choir club had chosen to be in this group.

"They need a lot more practice. I can't watch this," Princess Margaret complained.

Both their dancing and singing were unpolished, but I enjoyed their performance more than the first group's. After all, there were very few forms of entertainment in this world.

"It could be fun if the music club provided them with some new songs..." I mumbled to myself.

"That's a wonderful idea!" President Albert declared, having overheard me. "I've always been frustrated with the choir club. I have no idea what fun there is in singing a bunch of old songs. The glee club isn't doing well, but I respect their desire for change. I'll try bringing up your proposal to them sometime."

"That sounds great," Princess Margaret chimed in; she was also a true lover of music. "We should also get the dance club to help. Their choreography needs work."

The glee club's performance came to an end, its members blissfully unaware that people were making grandiose plans for their club without their input.

The curtains drew closed, and stagehands began setting up the instruments for the music club's performance.

"You need to finish setting up quickly," President Rufus ordered. "Otherwise, we're going to get behind on the schedule." He seemed motivated, given that this was his first event as the student council president.

He should just leave all the small stuff to the members of the student council. He doesn't seem very presidential, working hands-on like this. That said, I can't blame him for being motivated to do well, since his predecessor was Prince Richard.

I don't mean to brag, but the music club's performance was a success. We definitely saw the results of all of the effort we had put into practicing Albert's new piece. I was also able to play the triangle with the right tone and at the right time without any mistakes.

Though it had gone well, I didn't know how to feel about President Albert sending me signals with his eyes. *I actually might like that serious look in his eyes. It makes my heart race a little. Wait, no! Don't think that way about him! He only cares about music!*

After lunch, it was time for the theater club's performance. It was the first play I'd ever seen, so I'd been excited, but it turned out quite boring. The story was based on a classical myth—something that took place in the far past featuring a bunch of gods and divine punishment. It seemed to be a myth from a polytheistic religion that existed before the Church of Estena.

Looks like most of the students are asleep. We're all full from lunch, so it's only natural to get sleepy.

"I wonder why they chose such a boring play to perform," Princess Margaret huffed. "They got an entire two hours and squandered it."

I agreed with the princess.

"They probably wanted to perform a tale that was as dignified as Prince Richard is," Prince Albert replied. "Their shameful motives are as clear as day."

Man, he really doesn't hold back when it comes to other clubs. I guess the hostility has been building, since he's been incessantly complaining about them since the scheduling meeting.

The long play finally came to an end, and Rufus, our new student council president, greeted everyone and gave a short speech. It was decently good, and though his voice slightly cracked, he did well overall.

Good job! I thought as I clapped.

Prince Richard went next, giving a farewell speech filled with gratitude. There was no comparison between the prince and his successor. It seemed like the entire audience felt secure about the kingdom's future with this prince running it. *Now all he needs is to mature and loosen up a little bit so he can forgive his brother for saying dumb stuff.*

While I was busy thinking about such silly things, other female students were drenching their handkerchiefs in their tears.

"Right, he's graduating..." I mumbled to myself.

During my previous life, I'd never been one to cry at events like graduation ceremonies, but unlike me, Patience was easily moved to tears. I took out a handkerchief with lace trim—the kind that I made as a side job—and wiped away my tears.

Even after all of that, the Harvest Festival wasn't over yet. There was still a dance to attend. It was mainly for students in the senior division, but many of the junior division students also participated. Since I was Princess Margaret's lady's maid, I had to attend with the princess and her schoolmates.

"Oh? There are people who aren't in uniforms..." I remarked, which made Catherine laugh at me.

"You really don't know much, do you, Patience?" Catherine said. "Fiancés are also invited to the Harvest Festival dance. Maybe I'll be dancing with a fiancé of my own during next year's festival."

The princess's three friends were imperiously adamant that they would make their societal debut next year, during their first year in the senior division.

"Will you be making your formal debut next year as well, Your Highness?" I asked the princess. It was the perfect opportunity to find out her plans.

"Who knows? It's up to my mother," the princess replied. "Most girls seem to make their debut during their second or third year in the junior division. It appears Catherine and the others are planning to debut during their first year of senior division, but they'll be in trouble if their new social obligations keep them from getting enough credits."

Nobles weren't allowed to get married or get a job if they failed to graduate from the Royal Academy.

"I will be getting plenty of credits during the spring term, so there's no need to be concerned, Lady Margaret!" Catherine boasted. "I'm not sure I can say the same for the others, though!"

Out of the princess's three schoolmates, Catherine was the smartest, but she was also mean. She was a prime example of the truth that getting good grades didn't make you a good person.

Catherine shot Lilina a mean-spirited look. Lilina seemed to not notice, as she was nodding along to what Catherine had said.

"The sooner you make your formal debut, the easier it is to find a good partner," Hariette explained. "Well, I guess Lady Margaret doesn't have to worry about that!" As usual, her tone was sweet, but the meaning behind her words was vile. She was pretending to praise the princess's status while sneakily implying that she'd only get a good partner because it would be a political marriage.

I wonder why Princess Margaret chose these girls to be her friends. They've got beauty that is unmatched by anyone from even my previous life, but they've got the ugliest personalities.

"Oh, it looks like it's finally starting," Princess Margaret said, ignoring Hariette's comment.

Unlike the Festival of Verdure, the dance for the Harvest Festival began with the graduating students entering the ballroom coupled up, signaling the start of the dance. Among the graduating students were girls dancing with their partners who were decked out in formal attire. Many of the third-year seniors were paired up with another third-year, but there were also quite a few couples made up of a graduating boy and a girl from a lower grade.

"It seems Prince Richard was asked to dance by a member of the student council," Catherine disappointedly remarked.

"President Melissa invited her fiancé!" Hariette exclaimed.

President Melissa, who was a beautiful girl with a strong presence, was happily dancing with her fiancé, who was dressed to the nines in formal attire.

The first dance was only for graduating students and their partners. From the second dance on, students from other grade levels would be able to participate.

Princess Margaret and her schoolmates all received invitations to dance, and they headed out to the dance floor.

"You couldn't find a partner, Patience?" Prince Keith said as he came up to me. For some reason, he invited me to dance, so I also made my way to the dance floor. "You've gotten better since the Festival of Verdure."

I guess I'll take that as a compliment.

To my surprise, Prince Richard was the next to ask me for a dance.

"I hope you'll continue to serve Margaret, Patience," Prince Richard said, making our dance feel like a business exchange.

"I think it's time we head back to the dorms," Princess Margaret said.

Her friends all seemed like they wanted to keep dancing, but both the princess and I had danced enough for the night. More importantly, the stars of this dance were the graduating students, not us.

After returning to the dorms, we drank some tea while doing a postmortem on our performance.

"I think the music club did well performing the ensemble piece," Princess Margaret said. Thanks to President Albert's excessively enthusiastic training, we'd successfully performed the piece he'd written.

I'm glad that's over with. We finished reviewing our performance, and I let out a breath of relief before taking a sip of tea. *Expensive tea smells so good!*

"Richard is actually going to graduate," the princess mused. "I don't want to be alone with Keith next year. That boy's pickiness toward vegetables isn't getting any better, no matter how much I scold him."

I also wanted to avoid having lunch with Princess Margaret and Prince Keith in the salon. When it was the four of us, I was always anxious because Prince Keith would upset his brother, but Prince Richard's presence was definitely significant when it came to correcting the second prince's behavior—his older brother was probably the reason Prince Keith didn't fight back when told to eat his vegetables.

It's difficult to handle boys when they're around the age of eleven or twelve. They get so rebellious. It's kind of cute, but I'd rather see it from afar. They're so prickly that it feels like they could jab you if you get too close!

"I'm going to try asking my mother if we can eat separately," the

princess announced. “Though, there’s also Jane to think about. I may have to tough it out for a year with just Keith.”

Eating lunch with the princess’s friends would likely be uncomfortable as well, but I would rather that than lunch with Prince Keith, who was right in the middle of his rebellious phase.

The princess is in a pretty good mood right now. Maybe I can ask her a few things.

“I understand Princess Jane will be enrolling in the academy in two years. Will she also be moving into the dorms?” I asked. It was a cowardly move on my part to use Princess Jane to ask in a roundabout way whether Princess Margaret would be continuing to live in the dorms. *I can’t help it. I’m a weakling.*

“I think Jane will be in the dorms as well. Things aren’t so strict at the dorms, so I’m sure she would enjoy it.”

Huh? Is Princess Margaret not going to leave the dorms? What about her formal debut? I may as well ask about it!

I had no idea how long I would be serving the princess as her lady’s maid, but it seemed to be something I couldn’t quit. I needed to find out her plans for the future so I could stop worrying about mine.

“Will you be formally debuting into noble society, Lady Margaret?”

The princess thought for a moment before responding.

“I’d like to play in concerts, but I don’t really have an interest in high society. I mean, I’m probably just going to get married to whoever my father or mother chooses for me.”

I felt bad that Princess Margaret had given up on love and accepted that she would be married off for political reasons, but at the same time, I wasn’t really in a position to sympathize with her when Patience was so poor that she couldn’t get married because her family couldn’t afford to provide a dowry.

“Your friends Lady Catherine, Lady Hariette, and Lady Lilina mentioned having their formal debuts. Do you think they will actually make their debuts?” Even if Princess Margaret had no interest in high society, perhaps the queen would require her to make a formal debut if her schoolmates did.

“I doubt they’ll do it as senior division first-years. School is much

too busy. I believe their parents will convince them that it would be better to get certificates of completion in all their mandatory classes, along with hands-on subjects like art, before making their societal debuts. Hariette said something about how debuting faster makes it easier to find a good partner, but they're probably all going to marry someone chosen for them by their parents."

I see. The home economics track—which is basically training to become a homemaker—may have a curriculum that's built to make it easier to formally enter society after obtaining certificates of completion in the mandatory subjects.

"They all seem to have a hard time with math. Do you think they'll be all right?" I asked.

Princess Margaret raised an eyebrow, since she was also not very skilled at math.

"I've heard that the math classes in the home economics track are quite easy. You just need to be able to do some domestic bookkeeping in order to pass. There are rarely any girls who get a certificate of completion in math like you did."

That's right. In the senior division, you can choose which classes to take, as long as you get the required units. That means that students who aren't good at math can take a domestic bookkeeping course to get their math credits. The system makes sense, since it would be bad if a bunch of students had a hard time graduating. I guess the minimum requirement is being able to do junior-division math.

"You're asking questions as if all of this has nothing to do with you," Princess Margaret remarked. "Are you thinking about who you might marry?"

Though Princess Margaret had given up on marrying for love herself, she was still a maiden who enjoyed gossiping about romance.

"What? I'm not going to get married," I said. "I must look after my brothers until they become successful adults."

The princess gave me a look of exasperation.

"Your brothers are the same age as Jane and Marcus, right? If you wait for them to grow up, you'll miss your chance to get

married."

I know that already.

"As I said, I won't be getting married. I'm choosing to enroll in the civil service track because I'd like to get a job."

The princess stared at me with a perplexed look on her face.



"In that case, are you going to be my lady's maid for the rest of your life?"

Absolutely not! I thought, but it would be rude to state my feelings so directly. It would also upset the princess.

"If possible, I'd like to become a bureaucrat, but I'm having some trouble because I've heard that there aren't any female bureaucrats."

"That's true. It's different from being a court lady. All the bureaucrats are men. Still, Lady Eugenia was able to become a knight, which opened up the path for ladies to become knights. You may as well try, even if you might fail."

The princess's encouragement made me regret being so against serving her. *She's right. I should give it a shot.*

"More importantly," the princess continued, "are you going to be able to skip ahead to the senior division?"

That's right. Whether I can skip ahead will depend on my final exams. Ideally, I wanted to obtain certificates of completion in language arts, classical literature, history, and magic theory. *God only knows what'll happen next year.*

"I'll need to study hard," I said, which reminded the princess of her own final exams.

"I just need to pass my math exam," the princess said. "Then I can finally say goodbye to those equations that I hate so much."

As final exams drew near, the always refined students of Class A all began wearing serious looks, and the air in the classroom became heavy. The change in mood was because everyone's class placement next year was determined by their grades on these exams. There were probably students who had been pressured by their parents to stay in Class A.

Even Prince Keith, who I'd see in the subjects he was accelerating, seemed to feel his pride would be on the line if he dropped down to Class B. He would probably be fine, considering that he'd accelerated math, language arts, magic theory, music, and dance. Despite his impressive academic performance thus far, the second prince was on edge, and I didn't want to be anywhere near him.

Alas, we still had lunch together. To only make matters worse, Prince Richard was gone—apparently he was taking the entrance exam for Romano University.

All of the graduating students had already passed their final exams. The schedule was set this way so that there wouldn't be students who got a send-off during the Harvest Festival only to find out afterward that they weren't graduating.

There was still some time before the graduation ceremony, so students who lived in the dorm were still on campus, but most senior division third-years were unavailable because they were preparing for their next endeavor or looking for a job. Their absence made the campus feel a bit sad.

It was time for our final exams. I wanted to obtain certificates of completion in language arts, classical literature, history, and magic theory, so I took my exams in a separate room, rather than with the rest of Class A.

I wasn't alone though. There were dozens of students taking the same language arts and magic theory exams as I, and there were even about ten students taking the same classical literature and history exams.

Didn't Princess Margaret say she wanted to obtain certificates of completion for language arts and magic theory during the spring term as a senior division first-year? I guess most people wait to start finishing off classes until they're in the senior division.

How had I done on my exams? Well, I'd probably done fine. After all, I'd spent the whole year taking my studies quite seriously. Since I'd been a working adult in my previous life, it had been quite a while since I'd studied so earnestly—which, to be fair, was normal because I was now a student. It also helped that Patience had an incredible mind. Since I was only eleven, my memorization skills were incredible.

After taking my exams, I went to see the work of the home economics and art students that was on display. Princess Margaret's home economics project this time around was pretty decent and likely good enough that the queen wouldn't scold her. Her art project

made it seem that she was quite close to being able to obtain a certificate of completion.

Our final exam grades weren't publicly posted. It seemed that our grades would be sent directly to parents and guardians by letter. *I wonder if they shared grades for the spring exams to motivate the students who were falling behind? Sharing grades directly with students halfway through the year would also help show why they failed a subject. They can't act surprised about failing a class if they were consistently falling behind in it.*

It's almost been a year since I came to this world, I thought as I sat in front of the fireplace in my dorm room, warming up while recalling how cold it had been when I'd first gotten here. *I hope this year's winter won't be so cold. I wonder if it's true that it won't be so cold since the monsters this year were smaller than last year's. Do we have enough firewood at home?*

Princess Margaret had already returned to the royal palace, and as was proper, I was waiting for Mary to escort me home. I had some time on my hands, so I couldn't help but think about all sorts of things. *I can't even work on stuff for my side jobs, since I'm out of materials.* My family's lack of money made me prone to always thinking about money-related things.

I know I was reincarnated into another world, but I still don't know why. Am I dead back in my previous world? Or am I alive and just unconscious? Can I return to that world? Do I want to return to that world? I guess that world has more conveniences than this one, and my parents are there, so I'd like to return, but I don't know how... Ugh, having time just makes me think about silly things! I should concentrate on ways to make money.

Upon returning home, I first wanted to sell the roses in the greenhouse. There were many social events during this time of the year, so it was possible that roses could sell for a high price to those hosting soirees. *If they make a profit this year, I'll plant more roses next year. I should also plant strawberries. If I use my household magic to grow them quickly, I could probably sell them for a high price!*

"Thinking about making money really cheers me up," I murmured to myself.

Do I feel Patience being totally fed up with me? These days, it seemed that the original Patience's presence had weakened. Perhaps she hadn't been correcting my behavior because I'd learned proper etiquette. I even naturally slept in that strange position of hers. I was happy to not have any more headaches, but I also felt a bit sad. *Is Patience just going to fade away? Would that mean I couldn't return to my old world?*

"No, no! Thinking about things I can't control won't make me any money," I said to myself, shooing those thoughts away.

I'd made sure we had firewood and a full pantry, but the Granger household still needed plenty more things. First, we needed a school uniform for Nassius, who would be enrolling in the Royal Academy in a year. I also wanted to get him a brand-new set of undergarments. And I wanted a horse! But owning a horse meant also buying horse feed on a regular basis.

Can I grow barley in the garden over the summer? I also need that space for vegetables, though. Horses can also eat grass, right? I guess I'm not very familiar with their diet. I'll just ask Wyatt. I think a pony would probably be enough for Nassius. Horses are tall and scary. I'll also have to ask about that!

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, my lady," Mary said.

Now that my maid was finally here, I headed home.

"Welcome home, sister," Nassius greeted me. I'd just seen him the previous week, but he already seemed taller. *You're going to outgrow me soon!*

"Welcome home, sister!" Henry also greeted me. "Let's race while jumping rope!" I probably wasn't going to win against Henry anymore. *I need to get stronger too.*

"I'm glad to be home," I replied. "You two have gotten so big."

Though he was growing up, Nassius still let me give him a kiss when I returned home from school. *I'm so glad!* Henry didn't mind a kiss, no matter the situation. *So cute!*

My brothers and I headed to their room, where we discussed

what had happened while I was away. *I need to make sure they're eating properly! It does seem like they're fine.* My brothers had been rail-thin in the past, but now they were growing and had plump cheeks.

Another good sign was that a fire had been lit in the children's room. It wasn't as warm as my dorm, but that was probably because the room was too spacious, and there wasn't much that could be done about that.

"Are you already studying from the first-year textbooks, Nassius?" I asked.

On Nassius's desk were the junior division first-year textbooks I'd brought home after skipping a grade.

"Yes, father is teaching me the material," Narcissus replied. "Language arts is easy, but math, classical literature, and history are still quite hard."

Wow, Nassius might be a genius!

"That's wonderful to hear. We must thank father for his help."

He may be a skilled teacher, but I still want our dad to get a job.

"I'm also studying a lot!" Henry proudly shared before eloquently reading a book out loud.

"You did incredibly, Henry," I said, praising him.

The members of the Granger family were truly gifted, but despite our academic talents, my father had been dismissed from his position. *Can he just move past that and get another job?*

Patience didn't really know the standard practice surrounding that sort of thing, so I didn't know what to do. *Does this world have government-run employment centers or part-time job listings or anything? Actually, are nobles allowed to get normal jobs?*

It was difficult not having anyone to ask about these sorts of things. *I don't think a viscount could be an adventurer. What about me? Am I allowed to work part-time as a housekeeper, using my household magic? Characters in fantasy books often start off with cleaning jobs. Is a noble lady allowed to do that sort of thing? Probably? Though I'm sure Mary would stop me. I wish I could make money while maintaining my image as a noble lady.*

That night, I was called to my father's study after dinner. I'd figured it would be about my acceleration into the senior division. What my father said instead completely shocked me.

"Someone has asked for your hand. Of course, you're only twelve, so you wouldn't be getting married right away. This marriage would take place after you graduated from the Royal Academy. Though it would be in the future, I thought I should let you know."

Is this world heaven for lolicons or something? I may be a shotacon, but I would never put my hands on anyone underage. Officers, there's a pervert here!

I was visibly displeased by the offer, which my father appeared relieved to see.

"No, no. I can tell you feel it's much too soon for this sort of thing. I thought so too. I'm going to turn them down."

I don't mind that, but who proposed? Who told you about the proposal? I wanted to ask all those questions, but the topic quickly switched to my acceleration into the senior division.

"It's impressive that you've skipped ahead into the senior division. Normally, students only skip ahead one grade a year, but since you received certificates of completion in all of the core subjects, it says here in this letter that you'll be able to start next year as a senior division student. You must have worked incredibly hard, Patience. So, what track are you planning to enroll in?"

I guess he doesn't want to talk about the proposal anymore. I can tell because he's talking nonstop.

"I was planning to enroll in the civil service track. However, Princess Margaret will be enrolling in the home economics track, so I believe I will have to enroll in both."

My father seemed surprised to hear that I would be enrolling in two tracks.

"Well, you've already gotten certificates in your core subjects, magic practicum, art, music, and home economics, so I'm sure you'll be able to handle two tracks. Still, don't push yourself too hard."

After receiving some encouragement from my father, I left his study, still curious about who had made the marriage offer. I also wanted to know who'd delivered the message of this offer. *Wyatt is*

pretty guarded, so I'll have to ask Mary about it.

Chapter 9: Winter Break!

As soon as I'd gotten home for winter break, my father had called me into his study to tell me that he'd received an offer for my hand in marriage. He'd decided to turn down the offer, stating that it was too soon for me to be accepting such a thing, but I wasn't sure if that was truly all right for him to do.

I'd been trying to ask Mary about the marriage offer since last night, but she was quite busy, what with being the only maid in our household, which made it hard to get some time with her. This also wasn't something to be discussed in her quarters, so I decided to wait until she came to my room to get me dressed for dinner.

Now that I had a plan, I was going to spend the rest of my day having lots of fun with my little angels. We began with studying in the morning. My father was helping them with academic subjects, so I was planning on giving them hanon, art, and dance lessons.

"We're going to be practicing the hanon, so could you light the fireplace in the drawing room?" I asked George.

The Grangers weren't comfortable enough to be leaving the fireplaces in unused rooms lit, but things had improved to the point that we could heat the rooms we were using. I had the boys practice sketching in their room while we waited for the drawing room to warm up. I focused on art because dancing would be easier to teach if I could play some music for them to dance to.

"It would be nice if we could also afford paints," I mumbled to myself.

At home, I did a side job painting intricate details onto tea sets. I only had a little bit of paint on hand for that job, and I didn't have enough to spare for the boys to practice with. After all, paints were expensive.

"Sister, are art, music, dance, magic practicum, and physical education all of the practical classes at the academy?" Nassius

asked. He was enrolling at the academy next year and seemed to be interested in the curriculum.

"Yes, that's right," I replied. "In your first year, you just need to be able to do rough sketches to pass art. However, if you'd like to obtain a certificate of completion, you must know how to use paints. If you can successfully play an instrument, you'll be able to pass music. For dance, it may be hard to pass if the lead dancer in the pair isn't very skilled. Physical education requires skills in horseback riding and sword fighting, so it will probably require some effort for you."

Nassius nodded, agreeing that it would be difficult to pass tests in horseback riding and sword fighting. *I'm sorry I'm such a useless sister. I can't afford a horse and tutors for you just yet.*

"In that case, I don't think I will be able to skip ahead a grade," Nassius said, disappointed.

"Actually, magic practicum is the only practical course you need to pass to skip ahead a grade," I explained to Nassius, trying to cheer him up. "In order to practice for that course, we must get your proficiency evaluation done at the church as soon as possible. I will speak to father about it."

My father still seemed as if he wanted to avoid speaking about the marriage offer any further, so he'd quickly finished breakfast and returned to his study—though to be fair, this was pretty normal behavior for him. I'd told Nassius that I would speak to our father, but getting a proficiency evaluation done meant we had to prepare a donation (a gold piece), so it might serve me better to bring this up with Wyatt first instead.

"I think the drawing room should be warmed up by now," I said. "Let's go do some hanon and dance practice."

Maybe it would be best to start with dancing. It would be like a warm-up for their bodies, I thought as the three of us exited the boys' room. It was then that I noticed that the Grangers apparently had a visitor. Mary was in a rush, bringing cut roses from the greenhouse and decorating with them.

"Do we have a guest?" I asked her.

"Yes. My apologies, my lady, but the drawing room is

unavailable," Mary replied.

The drawing room's true purpose was to receive guests, so that couldn't be helped. I headed back to the children's room with the boys.

"I'm surprised that we even get any visitors," I remarked. I'd thought that no one would be visiting the Grangers after my father had been dismissed from his position.

"There have been guests visiting from time to time these days," Nassius explained. "It's been troubling, because father suspends our lessons every time we have a visitor. I can't do math without his instruction, so whenever we have a guest, I study language arts instead."

What a good boy! If I were a small child, I would think I was lucky and go play instead.

"I don't like it when we have guests because father gets upset," Henry grumbled.

"Hey. You mustn't say things like that, Henry," Nassius said, scolding him. "It's impolite to speak badly of guests."

"I'm sorry," Henry immediately apologized. *He's such an angel!*

Though it was impolite of Henry to have mentioned it, I *was* curious about these guests who upset our father.

No one would come to borrow money from a poor family like us, right? Also, Mary's decorating with the roses from the greenhouse. Those are meant to be sold, so the fact that she's using them means the guest must be of pretty high status. Could it be the relatives who gave me the hand-me-down uniforms? Maybe father gets upset because they make snide remarks about him getting fired. I mean, I know how they feel, but apparently in this world, you're not supposed to say disrespectful things to your father, so I've been holding back.

All those thoughts ran through my mind as I played with my younger brothers. I was making small bean bags, similar to those used in the Japanese game of otedama, to play with inside the house. They were easy to make and could be made out of fabric scraps. It would be a waste to fill the bags with actual edible beans, so I filled them with dried rosebuds. We also used those to make

rosehip tea, but we got a lot of rosebuds from the greenhouse, so we had plenty available.

In Japan, otedama was seen as a girls' game, but there were actually a lot of ways to play with the same bean bags. You could juggle them, or spread them out on the floor and pick them up one at a time while juggling them.

"You play like this and increase the number in your hand," I explained, demonstrating how to play with the bean bag.

Nassius stared with eyes wide in amazement as if he were watching a magic trick, which was so adorable. Henry couldn't sit still because of how eager he was to play, which was also incredibly cute.

While I was playing with my brothers, my father seemed to be going through a battle of greetings with our guest. I could hear some buzzing downstairs, so I could tell that the guest had arrived, but my adorable brothers were more important to me.

After all, Nassius was surprisingly skilled at juggling two bean bags, and he was working on juggling with a third. The way his gray eyes were locked onto the bean bags with earnest concentration was so cute.

"Oh no, I failed! Sister, please show me how to do it one more time!" Nassius pleaded.

I would happily show him one hundred more times if he were to ask.

"Even just two is hard," Henry said, having tried to juggle two bean bags. He'd kept failing and trying again. I had a strong suspicion that Henry's proficiency was physical enhancement magic, but it didn't seem like he was able to make use of it. He'd been able to pick up jumping rope quickly, but it was hard to adjust his skills for something that required more nimble movements, such as juggling bean bags.

I'd been able to use household magic after trying to recreate that tingling sensation I'd felt when I'd touched that disk at the church. I wanted to get the boys their proficiency evaluations done as soon as possible so they could also use magic. *I seriously need to talk to*

Wyatt about this!

We could still jump rope during the winter, but I wanted something else that everyone could enjoy.

It might be fun to have bamboo stilts to play with. Though I don't think we have bamboo, so maybe just "wooden stilts." We don't have a horse yet, but stilts could also be used to learn how to balance yourself. I bet I would lose to them right away, since Patience doesn't have much strength.

There was another game I could prepare, which commonly appeared in light novels. If I had a wooden board and round game pieces painted black and white, I could play *that* game: reversi!

Now that's *a game even I could win at. After all, I do know the tricks to winning. Wait, could I use it to make money? Isn't it a common trope for the main character who reincarnated into another world to make a killing off of an invention from their previous world?*

My greedy thoughts didn't go unpunished.

I was trying to spend time with my brothers, but I was interrupted by Mary, who'd come to get me.

"My lady, the master is calling for you. He would like for you to greet Countess Monteluxedo."

I can't believe my father would interrupt playtime with my brothers! Boo! I thought as I made my way down the stairs before asking Mary about Countess Monteluxedo.

"The countess is the master's eldest sister," Mary replied.

She sure kept her answer terse. She must not like the countess very much.

Since Mary had served my mother and followed her here when she'd gotten married, Countess Monteluxedo was her mistress's sister-in-law. Not only that, but this woman was someone who'd ignored us ever since my father had gotten fired. Mary had no reason to like her.

I entered the drawing room, and my father introduced our guest to me.

"Patience, this is Countess Amalia Monteluxedo. She is your aunt. Say hello."

The countess was an older noble woman with brown hair and gray eyes reminiscent of my father's. The way she stared made me feel like she was evaluating my worth, which I didn't like. She started at my feet and worked her way up. *Ugh, how unpleasant.*

"It is a pleasure to meet you. My name is Patience Granger. Welcome to our home." Despite my dislike of the countess, I still greeted her with the proper manners I'd learned from the original Patience. Besides, I'd been meeting with the queen quite often these days, so Aunt Amalia's glare wasn't anything I couldn't handle.

I took a seat beside my father, sitting with my back perfectly straight. *I'll have you know, I spent a month and a half at the summer palace with Her Majesty. You won't be able to find a single thing to complain about when it comes to my manners, lady.*

"I believe this is our first time meeting. As your father said, I'm your aunt. I believe we'll be seeing a lot of each other from now on."

I was completely confused by her last statement, so I looked to my father, who was visibly nervous.

"Amalia, I believe I've already declined the marriage offer you brought," my father said. "It's much too soon for Patience."

Ah, so she's the one who brought the offer to my father. In that case, it should be fine to turn them down. Phew! Here I was, all worried that it came from someone actually important. After all, I don't really trust my father's judgment.

"We're done speaking on that matter," the countess said. "Here I am, going out of my way to help you, but you continue to be blind to the ways society works. At this rate, Patience is going to miss her chance to be wed. On that note, just how long do you intend to stay a widower? If you don't remarry, your children won't be able to receive proper education..." Aunt Amalia plowed on, complaining to my father for over ten minutes.

This must be why my father gets upset when we have a guest. I get it, man.

Countess Monteluxedo finally took a moment to catch her breath, and my father spoke up.

"So, what did you come here for, sister?"

Another five minutes passed as the countess scolded my father

for various reasons, such as how it was rude to ask a guest such a thing and how his behavior was the reason that he'd been fired. After the seemingly endless lecturing, we finally got to the main reason for her visit.

She's the one who came here with business. She must've been having so much fun lecturing my father that she forgot. These kinds of middle-aged ladies are hard for anyone to handle. I bet my father's not great with her either, being her little brother and all.

"I heard a rumor that Patience was chosen to be a lady's maid to Princess Margaret," Aunt Amalia said.

So that's why she's here. Okay, what does she want?

"I'm sure you're aware that my daughter Lucene married Viscount Satisford and gave birth to a girl," Countess Monteluxedo continued. "My granddaughter, Angela, is the same age as Princess Jane."

I was starting to see where this was going, but I wasn't willing to give up information for free. *Oh, right. My uniforms are hand-me-downs from my cousin, Lucene. I should at least thank her for that.*

"I wonder if you should be so involved in what goes on in the household that your daughter married into, sister," my father said.

He wasn't wrong, but his response got him another lecture. *He's not great at navigating social situations, is he?* The only reason this lecture ended quickly was because the countess had more to say.

"It wasn't my own wishes that brought me here," Aunt Amalia explained. "Both Viscount Satisford and Lucene asked for me to come. They would like Angela to be selected as one of Princess Jane's schoolmates."

"I believe Her Majesty will be selecting Princess Jane's schoolmates," my father replied, once again saying the correct but not socially appropriate response.

This is going to take forever if he doesn't just hear her out, which means I won't get to play with my brothers!

"I'm aware of that," Countess Monteluxedo huffed. "Prince Richard, Princess Margaret, and Prince Keith all have schoolmates that are the children of marquesses and counts, but Lord Satisford is a viscount. Lucene is worried that it may be difficult for Angela to be selected. However, Patience was able to be selected as a lady's maid

despite being the daughter of a viscount. That is why...” The countess trailed off.

I had no idea who Prince Richard was friends with, but just as Aunt Amalia had said, I knew that Princess Margaret and Prince Keith were friends with children of marquesses and counts. I had no clue what the criteria was for the queen to choose someone to be her child’s schoolmate, but those who were currently chosen were most definitely of a high status.

“In that case, I don’t believe there is anything that can be done,” my father responded.

There he goes again, saying what is true. Oh no, I think he’s really set her off this time. Her brows are furrowing.

“You must be aware that I didn’t come here to be told the obvious,” the countess snapped. “This is exactly why you suffered the wrath of Marquess Copperfield and were dismissed from your position! Now you continue to stay unemployed and hide away in your study, living as if you’re some sort of hermit. That’s right, you’ve always said that you wanted to be a hermit. In that case, your current life must be exactly what you wished for! You’re already receiving an annuity, so you must not need any more assistance.”

So he got fired because he had an argument with Marquess Copperfield, huh? That’s some new information. I’m surprised at how mad she’s getting. We’re receiving an annuity? I had no idea. Also, this “assistance” is probably just barely enough to keep us from starving, but we definitely need it.

“My dear sister, you call it ‘assistance’ but I believe those funds are simply repayments you’ve been *slowly* making to return the money I lent you back when Monteluxedo County was suffering from a famine,” my father said. “As I have no income due to being dismissed from my position, I would prefer to have you repay the loan in its entirety. Also, my annuity doesn’t even cover the cost of maintaining this household.”

Uh-oh, looks like this is turning into a sibling battle of epic proportions. I guess love, whether romantic or familial, lasts as long as money endures. I’ve never seen my father raise his voice before. He’s usually pretty quiet, but I guess things change if he’s arguing

with a sibling. Usually with families like ours, our land is surrendered to the kingdom in exchange for a royal position, a stipend, and an annuity. Our family is poor because we don't have that stipend.

As those thoughts ran through my mind, the sibling battle continued to escalate.

"I will excuse myself, father," I said. *The best option here is to run! I don't want to see adults shamelessly arguing.* I tried to take my leave, but both my father and my aunt stopped me.

"I'm sorry, Patience," my father apologized. "You shouldn't be hearing about monetary issues."

"It's not proper for nobles to discuss money," Countess Monteluxedo said, also seeming uncomfortable. "You have terrible manners, William."

Hey, aren't you the one who started this by saying you wouldn't help our family out anymore? Also, you're not even providing financial assistance! You're just repaying your debt! Pay us back!

My father seemed dissatisfied with his sister's statement, but responding would only land him in even hotter water, so he bit his lip and stayed silent about her comment. He was well aware of his sister's personality.

"Patience was chosen as Princess Margaret's lady's maid because Her Highness's schoolmates didn't move into the dorms," my father explained. "I'm not sure what Princess Jane's friends will do, but you could have Angela live in the dorms."

The countess seemed troubled by his suggestion. The Satisfords also had a home in Romano, so their daughter would normally commute to school.

"I wonder why the queen would move them into the dorms," Countess Monteluxedo mused. "The princes are one thing, but I'm sure it is quite the inconvenience for the princess. Does she have an attendant with her?"

My father had no answers for his sister, so he just shook his head. Aunt Amalia then turned to me and smiled. *Her smile is terrifying! She looks like she's got her sights set on her prey.*

That said, though her smile was terrifying, it wasn't as scary as Princess Margaret's, and it came nowhere near the fearsomeness of

the queen's. *All right. It's time to negotiate. I want to get a uniform for Nassius and a pony.*

"Patience, do you know why Her Majesty would have not only the princes but even the princess move into *the dorms*?" my aunt asked.

Um, I live in those very dorms you sound so disgusted by, auntie... Well, I wouldn't be living there either if we had a horse.

"I am unsure, but Princess Margaret has mentioned that they are following His Majesty's orders," I replied.

It wasn't proper to carelessly spread information I'd gained through being the princess's lady's maid, but this piece of information was widely known, so it was safe to share. Prince Keith had even loudly complained about it to his friends.

I definitely won't be mentioning that the princess has a habit of getting up late. My lips are sealed on that matter!

"My, is that so? In that case, it wasn't Her Majesty's decision..." It seemed that even this well-known fact was news to my aunt.

In order to successfully negotiate with someone, you needed to know the person you were negotiating with. I knew nothing about Countess Monteluxedo. It was best to let someone tell you about themselves, and fortunately for me, the countess was quite talkative.

"You mentioned that Lady Angela, your granddaughter, is the same age as Princess Jane," I said. "In that case, she will be classmates with Nassius as well. I hope they will get along well."

Oh, her eyes are swimming. Did she completely forget about Nassius? He's the heir to your *family!*

"Yes, of course. After all, he is Lucene's cousin. I believe she will make sure Angela treats him well."

Despite marrying into the Satisford family, Lucene was still close to her mother. *I think I remember there being a lot of mothers and daughters that were unusually close like that during my previous life.*

"Thank you," I replied. "There is actually quite a lot I do not know about your house, the Monteluxedos, or my cousin's family the Satisfords. It would be an honor if you could enlighten me."

Aunt Amalia was incredibly proud of the fact that she'd married into the Monteluxedo family, so she happily chattered away for about thirty minutes. My father started falling asleep in the middle of her

monologuing. I wanted to avoid another lecture session, so I poked him with my elbow and woke him up.

"Monteluxedo County is an expansive territory in the northeast of Romano. It's a scenic and beautiful area. You should definitely visit, Patience. Your cousin Lucius is learning how to run the county, and your cousin Salius is in Romano—he's in the First Cavalry Division of the knights' order. You must come by the estate at least once."

Well, if she has two sons, then I definitely *want to get my hands on some uniforms for Nassius. That'll be my number one priority.*

The Satisford territory was in the southern part of the kingdom and home to many port towns, so they seemed to be quite well-off. That seemed to be why Aunt Amalia had made her daughter marry into the family. *I'm happy to have some rich relatives!*

"Ideally, Lucene would've married a count or a marquess, but unfortunately there weren't any heirs her age, and it would've been pointless for her to marry a second son. Viscount Satisford treats her with respect, but when it comes to my granddaughter becoming friends with Princess Jane, their family is just a little... You understand, don't you?"

Countess, are you forgetting that you're also the daughter of a viscount? I guess she's forgotten all about being a lowly viscount's daughter after marrying a count. All right, it's time to start these negotiations. If I don't settle things soon, my father is going to fall asleep again.

"Oh my, the tea has gotten cold. My apologies." I picked up the bell on the table and rang it. *I'm surprised we didn't sell this bell.* Wyatt entered the room, and I said to him, "Our tea has gotten cold. I'd like some rosehip tea for my aunt and me. I'd also like you to bring some cookies."

Rosehip tea tasted better than our cheap black tea, and it would highlight the sweetness of the cookies (which weren't cloyingly sweet in our house).

While waiting for the tea, we passed the time with some idle chitchat.

"I don't believe I'm familiar with rosehip tea," the countess said.

I guess most nobles don't have to pick flower buds and use them

in tea because they can actually afford expensive tea leaves!

"Oh, you aren't? Rosehip tea can be a bit tart, but it is popular among schoolgirls for the brightening effect it has on one's skin," I explained. The cosmetic properties of the tea piqued her interest—age spots were commonly an issue for women.

"My, you're very knowledgeable, Patience."

I'd ensured that Aunt Amalia wouldn't be able to complain about the sour flavor of the tea. Wyatt eventually brought in the tea and placed it on the table with the cookies.

"I don't think I've seen these treats before," she said.

That's fair. These cookies are nothing like those blocks of sugar masquerading as cake that you usually see.

"These are made using a recipe I received from Her Majesty's head chef at the royal summer palace," I explained. Though that was technically a lie, reversing who had received the recipe from whom, my version made the cookies sound more prestigious.

"My!" the countess gasped. "You were invited to the summer palace? And you even received recipes from the chef?"

Just as I'd suspected, dropping the queen's name heavily influenced my aunt's attitude. She began graciously eating the cookies.

"These are delicious!" Aunt Amalia exclaimed. "William, I can't believe you haven't served me these before." She was endlessly merciless when it came to her own brother, but she quickly left him alone, as she had something else on her mind. "Was Princess Jane also at the summer palace?"

She took the bait! I'm going to get some boys' uniforms for Nassius and a pony! I don't care if it's a rental. If anything, it would be more convenient to rent a pony—then we wouldn't have to buy food for it.

"Why, yes. She was. However, she is a different kind of princess than Princess Margaret." The countess had likely heard that Princess Margaret loved music, and as a result had made sure Angela received plenty of music lessons. It was only natural, since music was the hobby of a refined noble lady.

"A different kind? In that case, she must not be as fond of music."

Yeah, that's right. This is brand-new information, hot off the presses! Though, it's going to be useless once Princess Jane gets friends and word spreads.

"Yes, that's right," I replied. "Princess Jane is a very active princess who is a skilled swimmer and rider. She is especially talented at the latter, and she went on long horseback rides with Lady Eugenia." I name-dropped not only the queen, but also Lady Eugenia. *I don't care if my aunt thinks it's an underhanded move. I'm going to use what I can.*

"With Lady Eugenia?" the countess repeated, stunned. Any woman who caught even a glimpse of Lady Eugenia would instantly admire her. *You can practically see the hearts in Auntie Countess's eyes!*

"I was also advised to go riding, but I'm a bit afraid of horses, so I started by practicing with a pony," I admitted. "Nassius loves studying, but when it comes to other areas of his education..."

My aunt immediately glanced over at my father. She was probably about to bad-mouth him.

"That won't do! William also did well in his studies, but he was completely talentless when it came to physical activity. He may not be a noble with his own land, but he still has a certain standard to uphold. Nassius must partake in the typical hobbies of noblemen."

I felt bad for my father, who was sweating after catching those stray bullets, but it was his fault that we didn't have a horse or tutors to teach subjects such as sword fighting, so I figured he could at least endure his sister's snide comments.

"Yes, but the thing is..." My father tried to defend himself, but he was only going to incur his sister's wrath.

"What is it, William? Are you going to tell me that you *are* teaching Nassius horseback riding and sword fighting?"

"George, the servant, is teaching sword fighting..." my father timidly responded, which only added fuel to the flame.

"If you cannot afford to hire a sword fighting instructor, then you should be teaching them yourself, which you are also not doing. At this rate, Nassius is going to face great shame when he arrives at the Royal Academy, which could even affect Angela's reputation."

"I completely agree," my father and I both said as my aunt continued to lecture angrily.

"I will have Angela's riding instructor come by twice a week. Have your younger son join the lessons as well. I will also have Salius come by to train them in sword fighting when he is off duty. It would bring shame to him as well if his cousins have pathetic swordsmanship."

Thanks to all the scolding we'd endured, the boys would now have lessons in horseback riding and sword fighting. Now all I needed was some uniforms.

"I'm very excited to meet Lord Salius," I said. "You said that he has graduated and joined the First Cavalry Division of the knights' order, correct? You see, we don't have any male school uniforms, nor do we have any armor or wooden swords for the boys to practice sword fighting with."

Countess Monteluxedo's flames of anger had been rekindled.

"William, you really must remarry. I cannot believe you've neglected your children like this! We have plenty of old Royal Academy uniforms. We'll give you those, along with some old wooden swords and children's armor."

Yay! I've gotten everything I wanted!

Out of the corner of my eye, I could see my father shooting me a resentful look, but this was all his fault for being unemployed. *Can't he be an accountant for the wealthy Satisfords or something?*

Not only did I get everything I'd wanted from my aunt, but I'd also learned a part of the reason for my father's firing. He'd apparently had some kind of conflict with Marquess Copperfield. It was probably easy for a high-ranking noble to get rid of a lowly viscount. *I wonder if there's anyone who would know more details of my father's firing.*

Though Countess Monteluxedo had been a bit of a troublesome guest, her visit had ended up being a positive event. We would be getting hand-me-down school uniforms for the boys, and we could also get a pony and a riding instructor twice a week.

Our cousin, who was a knight, would also be teaching the boys

sword fighting—this was the one thing I wasn't going to count on. It was something the countess had agreed to without consulting her son, and even if he was willing, Lord Salius might have had a busy schedule.

I happily endured my father's resentful glare as I ate my lunch. *Man, the Granger family's meals have gotten a lot better!*

Lunch was a pottage with Romano greens and turnips, some brown but soft bread, and a tiny steak served with a plethora of sautéed winter vegetables. Nutritionally, the small portion of steak was all we needed—more vegetables made for a healthier meal!

"I don't think I can finish the steak," I said. I'd been eating extravagant meals at the salon every day, so the sautéed vegetables were enough for me. A tiny steak wasn't enough for two growing boys. Nassius declined the offer of my steak, but Henry's eyes glimmered with anticipation.

"Are you sure, sister?" Henry asked. *Ugh, he's too cute!*

"Yes, I'm sure," I reassured him. "After having the pottage and bread, I'm full. And I still have all of these vegetables to finish eating."

Sharing my serving of protein with the boys was something that Patience had been doing even before I'd reincarnated into this world, but things were different now, because this time I was really and truly full.

After lunch, we used the drawing room for the dance and hanon practice that we'd missed because of our guest.

"You'll only need to know simple steps in your first year, so I believe you'll be able to memorize them right away," I said to Nassius.

I played the hanon while having the boys practice the steps I'd taught them. *I just can't believe how adorable they are. Ah, I'm so happy!*

Next up was hanon practice. Henry had mastered scales, so I had him play some simple children's songs.

"You're doing very well," I complimented him. "Let's also do some songs that are good finger exercises."

Compared to the children's songs I'd prepared for them, the

hanon songs that the original Patience knew were quite boring. Still, they were important, because the boys wouldn't improve if they couldn't move their fingers properly.

"Sister, are there any songs that are more fun?" Nassius asked. He'd mastered all of the simple songs I'd written after summer break, and all that was left for him were the boring songs.

"That is all of them, but why don't we write some new songs during winter break?" I suggested. "Would you be all right with them getting a little more difficult?"

Nassius nodded with excitement. *Just adorable! I'll transcribe as many songs as you want! Maybe some anime songs would be good. Also some practice sonatinas and sonatas would be good. I wonder if I remember them well enough.*

After the dance and hanon lessons, we headed to the greenhouse and planted some strawberry seedlings.

"Now we'll get to eat strawberries!" Henry exclaimed. *Aw, he really does love strawberries.*

"That's right," I said with a smile. "I'm going to use some magic to help them grow big." I used a bit of mana and chanted, "Grow!" The runners of the strawberry plants then shot up.

"Next, we're going to protect these runners using straw, right?" Nassius asked.

"That's right," I said. "I'm impressed you remembered. Strawberries don't like the cold very much, so we're going to keep them warm with a blanket of straw."

I was spending my time studying with my brothers and working in the greenhouse—winter break was such a blissful time! Unfortunately for me, what goes up always comes down. I'd been grateful to my aunt for helping me achieve my goals, but she'd turned out to be the trouble I'd suspected she would be.

"My lady, we have a guest," Mary announced, having come to fetch me.

Boo!

"Who?" I asked. *Who the heck is intruding on my paradise?!*

"Viscountess Maxwell is here. She is the second eldest sister of the master." From her tone, I could tell that Mary wasn't very fond of the viscountess.

Countess Monteluxedo might have only been repaying her debt to my father, but she *was* providing us financial assistance, and she'd even given us old clothes and uniforms for us to wear. In contrast, Viscountess Maxwell had done absolutely nothing for us.

As far as the original Patience knew, my father had no brothers.

"How many sisters does my father have?" I asked. I didn't want any more of them destroying my precious winter break.

"The master has three older sisters: Countess Monteluxedo, Viscountess Maxwell, and Countess Northcourt."

My father was apparently the youngest child in his family, and all of his sisters had married into pretty good families. Though the Grangers didn't own any land, perhaps we'd had a good reputation before my father was dismissed from his position. After all, our mansion was quite impressive and in a first-class part of town.

Since I'd been working with dirt in the greenhouse, I used my household magic to clean myself up before entering the drawing room. I walked in to find my father already looking exhausted. Despite not having seen her in a while, he might have already been chewed out by his second-oldest sister.

"Patience, this is Viscountess Charlotta Maxwell," my father said, introducing me to his sister. "Say hello to your aunt."

Aunt Charlotta had a much harsher glare than Aunt Amalia did. *Is she trying to size me up, or is her resting expression just that mean-looking?*

"My name is Patience. It is a pleasure to meet you," I said, greeting her with proper manners.

"My, you look exactly like Julianne," the viscountess opined. "It seems like you don't have a relationship with the Capecots though. What a shame..."

"That issue is, well..." my father interjected, quickly trying to stop Aunt Charlotta from speaking about my mother's family. "Anyway, what are you doing here, sister? It must be *truly* important, since

you couldn't even manage to attend Julianne's funeral."

Wowzers, my father is actually bad-mouthing someone! The difference in how he received her probably means that Aunt Amalia at least came to mother's funeral, unlike Aunt Charlotta.

"I was back at the viscounty during that time," Aunt Charlotta protested, defending herself. "Also, you know perfectly well that it's just impossible to get here during the winter." Though she was making excuses for missing mother's funeral, it seemed that she might have genuinely regretted failing to attend. "You are, as always, inconsiderate toward others. That's why you haven't gotten a job and stayed unemployed. Amalia was appalled at the state of things in your home. She said that you'd been complacent with your sons' education."

Ah, so she came here after talking to Aunt Amalia. The information was shared through the sister network.

"I heard that Patience is doing brilliantly serving as a lady's maid to Princess Margaret, which worried me that the boys weren't being properly looked after here with only you at home. You're failing as a father by not remarrying."

He needs to get married? I'd rather he get a job. What if this stepmother bullies my brothers?

Though I didn't like what she had to say, Aunt Charlotta surprisingly came bearing gifts and gave me plenty of silk fabric. She'd brought a large wardrobe that was filled to the brim with the fabric.

"The viscounty of Maxwell is a small territory to the east of Romano, but my husband pours his efforts into helping the residents' livelihoods prosper. This silk is also a well-known product of our region. I shouldn't have to say this, but just in case, you mustn't sell this fabric to buy books. This fabric should be used to make a gown for Patience."

Aunt Charlotta constantly complained and seemed to harbor some sort of ill feelings toward my mother's family, the Capecots, but I was genuinely happy to receive the fabric.

"Thank you very much, Aunt Charlotta!" I exclaimed sincerely.

"It's no trouble. I don't have any daughters, so I should've been

looking after you more carefully." She was perhaps not a bad person, but she definitely had brought more trouble with her. "I believe Lilianna will be visiting soon. She might demand the impossible from you, but you should do as she says."

My father grimaced. *What does she mean about demanding the impossible*? I wondered, racking my brain for what my third aunt could want.

"You really do look like Julianne, Patience," Aunt Charlotta said with a chuckle. "If all of that mess hadn't happened, I'm sure Count Capecot would have taken you in."

My father looked even more uncomfortable. *Did he get into some trouble with my mother's family?*

"It can't be helped. After all, Count Capecot serves Marquess Copperfield. Though we do not serve the Copperfields, Maxwell is to the east of the Copperfield marquisate, so we weren't able to publicly interact with you very much."

Is this Aunt Charlotta's way of apologizing? Is it now acceptable for her to visit because I'm Princess Margaret's lady's maid? I don't really understand what the rules are when it comes to this stuff.

While whatever the viscountess was referring to also intrigued me, I was still curious as to what sort of "impossible" demands Countess Lilianna Northcourt would make. *She's not going to ask us for money, is she? Aunt Charlotta said that he should listen to her, which means it is something he* can *do, but it might be troublesome. Whatever it is, I hope they don't interrupt my winter break with my brothers anymore.*

Several days later, hand-me-downs from Aunt Amalia arrived, including boys' uniforms for the Royal Academy and children's armor.

"I now see why we only received the girls' uniforms first..." I muttered to myself.

Since students had to dress in their uniforms every day, the cuffs and hems were worn out and covered in shine marks. Lucene's old uniforms had also been worn out, but these boys' uniforms had the addition of fabric snags and torn seams. Luckily for me, I had household magic, and I made everything as good as new.

"Your household spells are always incredibly useful, my lady," Mary said, praising me. "It also seems that your magic has gotten more powerful."

That was to be expected, since I was using it every morning to wake Princess Margaret up and help her get ready. I'd also been using it for my side jobs. *I sure do use my magic a lot!*

The children's armor came in various sizes, and we were also given small, medium, and large wooden swords. Just to cover our bases, I restored them all.

"Nassius, Henry!" I called out to my brothers. "Come and try on this armor."

I dressed the boys in the armor, which had adjustable leather straps, meaning I didn't have to make any modifications to the armor itself for it to fit.

"Stop that, Henry!" Nassius scolded. "You cannot swing a wooden sword around indoors!"

Henry now felt like a knight and was swinging his wooden sword around wildly.

"Now, now. You can't do that, Henry," I gently said. "These aren't toys."

It's not his fault. Boys just like to play with swords.

I called George over and had him practice sword fighting with the boys in the yard. *I know Henry's motivated, but I hope Nassius also does his best!*

I had some business to discuss with Wyatt while the boys were busy: I needed to get the boys' proficiency evaluations done as soon as possible.

"Do you have a moment, Wyatt?" I asked. As always, he seemed to already know what I was here for.

"I do, my lady. Did you need something from me?" The way he clearly knew yet put on this act of not knowing was what made him a tricksy old fox.

"What are my father's plans for Nassius's and Henry's proficiency evaluations? The boys will have to take a magic practicum course at the Royal Academy, so they'll need to start practicing using magic soon."

This discussion should have involved my father, but he'd only just barely gotten Patience's proficiency evaluation done in time. *I guess that can't be helped, since she was sick on the verge of dying. Wait, no—I think other nobles have their children evaluated much sooner in life. Prince Keith was super confident with his magic, as if he'd been practicing it for a long time.*

"I will let the master know of your thoughts and contact the church."

It hurt to know we'd be giving up two gold pieces, but this was a necessary expense. It was especially necessary for Henry. I had strong suspicions that he had physical enhancement magic, and it would be best for him to be able to use it before he started getting proper sword-fighting lessons.

Just as I'd expected, two gold pieces was a hefty amount for us to give up. Wyatt silently handed me four broken antiques to repair, which I properly restored to as good as new.

You'd better sell those for a good price! Also, why do we even have *so many broken antiques? Is he buying broken pieces at the flea market for cheap or something? You know, if there is a flea market around here, I'd love to check it out.*

The next day, my father headed to the church with my brothers. Apparently, boys didn't need an attendant to accompany them, but Mary did help them with their outfits for going out.

"All right, it's time for a celebration!" I exclaimed. Even last year, when we had been so poor, we'd celebrated my evaluation. There was no way we weren't going to throw a celebration for my adorable angels. "Nassius likes pears, so we'll prepare a pear tart," I said. That was a given. "Henry loves meat, so I would love to splurge and get him a big steak, but..."

Eva sadly shook her head. It seemed a big steak wasn't going to be possible. *It's fine. We can just stretch out the ingredients we have!*

"Eva, I'd like you to chop up the meat into small pieces," I instructed. "Then, I'd like you to dice some onions and sauté them. Next, I want you to tear up some old bread and soak it in some

milk."

That's right, we're making hamburg steaks, which let you stretch out the meat you have with onions and bread!

"After putting all of those ingredients in a bowl and mixing them, you're going to divide them into even portions and shape them into flat ovals. After frying them in a pan, you'll get hamburg steaks! For the sauce, you can reduce the juices that come from frying up the hamburg steaks with some tomato sauce. I'll leave the sides up to you."

I left Eva to do the cooking and headed to the greenhouse to cut some roses. These sold for good money, but we were celebrating today, so I didn't mind using some for decor.

The dining table was covered in a tablecloth, and I made a small arrangement with the roses, which I placed in the middle of the table—it was a table setting that I'd seen before in my previous life. If the flower arrangement was too tall, it would obscure the faces of the other people at the table, and I wanted to have a good view of my brother's faces.

After that, Mary helped me change into a gown. *I have to dress up! It's a celebration!* Now that Patience was getting proper nutrition, her cheeks had filled out and she looked quite cute. She used to be rail thin, which had made her large eyes stand out. Now that she'd put on some weight, though her eyes were still big, they didn't look like they were bulging. *Yeah, she looks pretty good!*

The carriage returned, and I met the boys at the door.

"Welcome home," I greeted my father and the angels. We headed to the dining room together. "Congratulations, Nassius, Henry!"

"It looks beautiful!" Nassius said as he stared at the dining table decorated with roses.

"Is that okay?" Henry asked, worried about the roses since he knew they sold for a lot of money. *I'm so sorry you have to worry about money at such a young age.*

My father also noticed the roses, but he didn't seem to know the price they could fetch. It wasn't a surprise, since he'd grown up wealthy.

"Of course. Today is a celebration for the both of you," I

reassured Henry.

We all took a seat, and my father finally spoke up.

"Today, Nassius was given the gift of wind magic, and Henry was given the gift of physical enhancement magic," he announced. "Congratulations to the both of you."

Though my father wasn't a very religious person, he seemed to be happy that his sons had both received the divine gift of magic. I was also relieved—most nobles could use magic, but there were always exceptions.

"Shall we eat?" I suggested.

The starter was a vegetable pâté, and the soup was creamy turnip. For our main course, we had the hamburg steaks.

"This is delicious, sister!" Henry raved. *Eat up, Henry!*

"This is quite soft and easy to eat," my father remarked. He also seemed to enjoy it.

"Sister, where does this dish come from?" Nassius asked. "Hamburg steak sounds as if it is named after a place." *Darn it, Nassius! Why do you have to be so sharp!*

"I simply copied a dish I had at the salon," I fibbed. The Grangers wouldn't have the money to afford salon lunches for Nassius, so I wouldn't be found out just yet.

For dessert, we had the pear tart, which was topped with a compote of thinly-sliced pear. *Eva really is a true master when it comes to thinly slicing food.*

"Wow, a pear tart!" Nassius exclaimed. "It's delicious, sister!"

It is *your favorite dessert. What kind of sister would I be if I didn't serve it today?*



Henry was eating so fast that I wanted to assure him that no one was going to take his food, while Nassius was slowly savoring his dessert. It was nice that he took his time, since sweet treats were still a luxury in the Granger household.

"I will teach you two how to use magic," my father declared.

Nassius would probably be fine, since he and our father both used wind magic. Henry would also probably be able to at least learn the basics of how to actually use magic. My father was probably being proactive now because his sisters had chewed him out about his involvement in the boys' education; it was a welcome change. *Now, if he could also just get a job...*

It seemed that Aunt Amalia had convinced her daughter to help us, because we received a letter from Lady Lucene stating that Angela's riding instructor would be providing lessons on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. That was all my father told me about the contents of the letter he received, but there had also been another letter from the Satisford household, this one addressed to me. The second letter was an invitation to tea at the Satisford home.

"What should I do, father?" I asked, showing my father the letter to get his opinion.

"Well, they are going to be sending a riding instructor out here for us. I think it would be best if you visited at least once."

Visiting them was going to cut into my time with my brothers, but this was all so that they could get horse-riding lessons. My schedule was wide open thanks to winter break, so I decided to let Lady Lucene choose the date.

"Mary, could you deliver this letter to the Satisfords?" I asked. I wondered if she would know where their home was, but that was an unnecessary concern. Mary quickly delivered the letter and returned with a response.

"I've been invited to tea at the Satisford home the day after tomorrow," I explained to Mary after reading the note. "I'll need to bring a gift with me." I considered bringing cookies, but I needed butter and sugar to make them. *I wonder if roses would be good enough?* "Do you think roses would be a good gift?" I asked Mary.

The Satisfords were wealthy, so they surely could afford their own roses, but anything would do—the act of bringing a gift was more important than the gift itself.

"What if you bring the sheet music to one of your compositions along with the roses, my lady?" Mary suggested. "I heard a hanon being played when I visited their home."

That wasn't a surprise, since Angela's studies had focused mainly on music due to the fact that Princess Margaret loved music. However, Princess Jane, who would be classmates with Angela, was an active young girl who loved horseback riding. *I'd feel bad for Angela if she prefers music and doesn't like riding. I'll scope things out, and if it seems appropriate, I'll ask Lady Lucene for her permission to invite Angela to the music club.*

The only reason I had such thoughts was because I myself wasn't fond of riding horses. All I could do was get the horse to walk slowly—or rather, stay atop the horse as it walked on its own.

The afternoon I was to visit the Satisford home, I put together a rose bouquet and created clean sheet music for one of my simpler new compositions, along with sheet music of some of the songs I'd performed at the music club.

The Satisford home ended up being close enough that we didn't have to rent a horse and use the carriage—they were our neighbors. Though we lived in the same area, their home was smaller than the Granger mansion. *I guess we win in that area*, I thought to myself, but size didn't matter once I entered. Even in the entryway, it was *warm* inside their home.

Viscountess Lucene, who was my cousin, looked exactly like Aunt Amalia—in other words, she looked like a member of the Granger family. *I wonder if growing up rich makes you a calmer person. She's so gentle.*

"I believe it is our first time meeting, Patience. Usually, children wouldn't be joining us for tea, but I was wondering if it would be all right for Angela to join us, since she is close to you in age."

Of course I'm fine with it! We may be cousins, but Lucene's way older than me.

"Yes, of course," I replied. "After all, we're going to be studying at

the Royal Academy together next year."

Angela was a cute girl with blonde hair and gray eyes. She had a gentle personality similar to her mother's.

"Angela, this is Patience Granger," Lucene said, introducing me to her daughter. "She is my cousin, and she is Princess Margaret's lady's maid."

"My name is Angela Satisford," Angela said, gracefully introducing herself. "It is a pleasure to meet you, Lady Patience."

She's definitely going to be at Princess Jane's mercy.

"This is for you, Lady Angela. It's a song I composed. I'm a member of the music club at the academy."

Angela excitedly accepted the sheet music, and I couldn't help but worry whether she'd be able to get along with Princess Jane. Unfortunately, I hadn't yet realized just how far nobles would go to get what they wanted.

"I heard from my mother that you live in the dorms," Lucene said. "Have you faced any difficulties?"

Wait, does she want to put this reserved little girl in the dorms?

"The Grangers are taught to look after ourselves on our own, so I haven't experienced any trouble with living in the dorms. It also helps that I am able to use household magic."

It seemed that my cousin was determined to make Angela Princess Jane's lady's maid.

"Does Princess Margaret face any inconveniences?" Lucene asked.

It's actually the opposite—she's relieved to be out from under the queen's eye, but I can't tell my cousin that.

"I've been told that there are maids who keep the deluxe rooms clean," I explained. *I can't imagine Angela can clean her dorm on her own.*

"My, I didn't know there were deluxe rooms," Lucene replied. "Are you in a deluxe room as well, Patience?"

"No, I'm not. In the Granger family, we value simplicity and frugality, so I am in a standard room. Though, when it comes to Prince Richard's and Prince Keith's schoolmates, they all are in deluxe rooms and brought their own furniture as well."

Which is fine, but I wish they could've done something about the

traffic jam they caused.

"In that case, a viscount's child must also be able to get a deluxe room," Lucene remarked.

Probably? I'm sure Lucene ate lunch at the salon, so I don't think I have to explain that aspect of the school to her.

"Angela, let's work hard on learning to ride," Lucene said to her daughter. I'd thought that she was a laid-back, gentle person, but I could now see that she was indeed her mother's daughter.

"Patience, I hope you'll visit again when Viscount Satisford is available," Lucene said to me as we bid each other farewell. Her husband was apparently busy with managing the viscounty.

I wonder if port towns ever have a slow season, I thought to myself as I left. With that, my visit to the Satisford home came to an end.

Our twice-a-week riding instructor arrived at the Granger home with both a pony and a horse. For some reason, I was also forced to partake in the horse-riding lessons. *Why meeeee?!*

"My lady, you must straighten your back more," the instructor demanded.

The instructor was quite the strict teacher, and I could tell that Lucene was seriously trying to get Angela good enough to join the horseback riding club at the academy.

Nassius successfully rode the pony, and Henry challenged himself to ride the horse, which he did even better than I. *Physical enhancement magic is pretty impressive.*

"Seeing how you all did, I don't think I'll have to bring the pony next time," the instructor announced.

I was worried for Nassius, but he seemed to be up to the challenge. *I guess that's not surprising for a boy. I'm fine with riding only ponies for the rest of my life. I think I've seen medieval tales in which priests and ladies rode donkeys instead. Are there no donkeys I can ride?*

After finishing the riding lessons, I thought I was finally free to spend time with my brothers, only to hear we'd received a letter from Lord Salius Monteluxedo.

"It appears that he is off duty tomorrow, and he will be coming by to give the boys sword-fighting lessons," my father explained.

I probably wouldn't have to participate in the sword-fighting lessons. Since it was Aunt Amalia who'd made the offer, I'd been worried whether Lord Salius would actually agree to come instruct my brothers. *I guess he's coming at least once, but I don't know if he'll keep coming.*

The next day, Lord Salius arrived. He was a nice-looking young man with the sort of energetic attitude and loud voice one would expect from a knight. He was the textbook definition of a "fine young man." He was a little too old for my tastes—since I was a self-proclaimed shotacon—but I could see how most ladies would be fond of him.

After exchanging quick greetings with my father, Lord Salius immediately got started with the lessons. I joined them and watched, since I was worried that my brothers might get hurt, while my father retreated back to his study. Now that he could light the fireplace in his study, he was holing up in there even more than before. *I wish I could get him to exercise a little.*

"Nassius, let's start with how to hold a sword," Lord Salius said. "That's right, you hold it like that." Lord Salius turned out to be a kinder instructor than I'd expected him to be. "I'm used to teaching because I also help out the trainees who are interested in joining the knights' order," he explained to me.

I guess he could tell what I was thinking. I feel relieved knowing that he's used to teaching others.

"You can use physical enhancement magic, right, Henry? In that case, I want you to watch closely." Lord Salius swung a wooden sword, and it slashed through the air making a sound I'd never imagined wood could make, while Henry watched intently. "Go on, you try."

This was completely different from when George was teaching the boys. Henry swung his sword, and it made a small *swish* as it sliced through the air.

"Good job! Keep practicing swinging it, just like that." Next was Nassius's turn. He started by learning how to hold a sword properly,

how to raise a sword, how to swing it down, and how to position his feet.

"You did very well for your first lesson," Lord Salius said, praising Nassius. "You can use wind magic, right? You can strengthen your sword by enveloping it in wind. Before we get to that, though, I want you to practice swinging the sword. We'll see how you're doing the next time I visit."

He's going to come back! I'm so glad to hear that. Lessons from an active knight are way different from George's lessons.

"Thank you very much," the boys said in unison, which made Lord Salius smile.

"Thank you, Lord Salius," I said, also thanking him. "It isn't much, but I'd like to thank you with a cup of tea at the very least."

Today was his day off, and he'd come all the way just to teach the boys. The least I could do was serve him some tea. We didn't have any sweet treats, but I could have some sandwiches prepared.

"There's no need. The knights' order owes Viscount Granger a lot. This is the least I could do."

The knights' order owes my father? For what? What the heck happened?

"Oh, you must not be aware because you were too young at the time," Lord Salius said, picking up on my visible confusion. "A group of noble supremacists, including Marquess Copperfield, proposed that only high-ranking nobles be allowed into the Royal Academy. Viscount Granger opposed them, putting his own position on the line to protect the right of others—low-ranking nobles, children of knights, commoners, and so on—to enroll in the academy. Several members of the First Cavalry Division are the children of knights, and most of the Sixth Cavalry Division is made up of legacy knights. Everyone is grateful for his sacrifice."

What the heck?! My father was totally in the right there! Since King Alfred moved his children into the dorms, he probably isn't a noble supremacist. I guess there were a lot of nobles who agreed with Marquess Copperfield though. So that's *why my father lost his job... It was a noble sacrifice, but it came at a great cost to my mother and the original Patience.*

“I see. I had no idea...” I was plainly shocked by this revelation, which Lord Salius tried to be considerate of by quickly finishing his tea and heading home.

I’d finally learned why my father had been dismissed from his position, but there was nothing that could be done about it. If he had at least been falsely accused of a crime, we could have cleared up the allegations by investigating the issue, but he’d willingly risked his job to make a stand on principle. Judging from the way the king had spoken at the summer palace, it seemed like he wanted to do something about this situation, but all I could do was wait for His Majesty’s decision.

Because of this stunning development, I’d completely forgotten about Countess Lilianna Northcourt and the troublesome demands she was expected to bring with her.

Chapter 10: My Cousin Samuel

Disaster often strikes when you least expect it—this was a sentiment usually reserved for natural disasters, but it would also apply to Aunt Lilianna's request.

As always, I spent my mornings studying with my brothers, and on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, we had riding lessons. For some reason, I was still forced to participate. Every now and then, Lord Salius would visit to give the boys sword-fighting lessons. We always prepared a delicious snack for his visits. I had fun chatting with Lord Salius, especially because I got to hear about the knights' order, which both Patience and I myself knew nothing about. I'd learned that Lady Eugenia was a member of the Royal Guard Division of the knight's order.

She's so cool. It's like seeing a beautiful woman cross-dressing with impeccable style.

Things quickly became too hectic for me to be lost in such thoughts, as my father appeared with a gloomy look on his face and made an announcement.

"Countess Northcourt will be visiting tomorrow." He looked to be suffering even more than when Aunt Amalia had visited. The countess hadn't even arrived yet, and the mood was already bleak.

Lilianna Northcourt was the most beautiful out of my three aunts, which was perhaps an unfair comparison as she was the youngest of the sisters. Her beauty wasn't all she had, though—she also seemed to have a commanding presence without giving the sense that she was inspecting others the way Aunt Amalia and Aunt Charlotta did. She greeted me with a smile. *These kinds of people are the most terrifying.*

"My, Patience. You've grown so much," Aunt Lilianna said. "I've actually met you before, when you were just born."

Her smile is so terrifying. I'm sure I'd remember it if we'd ever met since I was an infant.

"I heard from Amalia that you're quite the reliable young girl, and while it's embarrassing to have to ask, I've come to ask for a favor," the countess explained. *This must be the troublesome request. What's she going to ask for?* "I was hoping you could look over the studies of my fool of a son. Despite being the heir to the family name, that boy is the youngest of my children, and it seems I've spoiled him too much. At this rate, he's going to embarrass himself at the Royal Academy."

You want me *to tutor him? I guess I don't mind...as long as I'm getting paid. Let's hear her out.*

"Um, what is your son's name, and how old is he? Also, I should mention that I won't be able to teach him sword fighting or horseback riding."

Aunt Lilianna flashed me another smile. She looked even younger than my father, who had possibly been aged by hiding away in his study. *I just realized that she isn't talking to him. Is she ignoring him?*

"He is ten years old, and his name is Samuel Northcourt. He will be enrolling in the Royal Academy this year, but at this rate he is going to drop down to Class B next year."

I wonder if my father was the one who came up with the skill-based class assignments. Maybe Aunt Lilianna is ignoring him because she's mad at him for that system.

"Well, I do believe that Count Northcourt would be able to hire a proper tutor with no issues," I pointed out, which made Aunt Lilianna's smile stretch wider. *Right, they can afford all the tutors they want. But they probably already did that and failed, which is why she came to me. Being my cousin Samuel's tutor, huh? Sounds rough.*

"Lilianna, I believe this may be too much of a burden for Patience to handle," my father spoke up.

"Are you suggesting we should expose our family's shame for all to see?!" Aunt Lilianna bellowed.

Whoa! She's so intimidating. I guess if even this woman can't

scare her son into studying, he may actually be an impossible case.

"Dear aunt, I'm not sure if I will be able to succeed, but I am happy to help. All students of high-ranking nobility are afraid of dropping down to Class B."

Thank god. She's back to her normal smile. I was a fool to think that would be it—perhaps a bigger fool than her son.

"I'm so glad to hear that. In that case, you should come to our home right away."

Whaaat?! What about my winter break with my brothers?! I looked to my father for help, but it seemed he wouldn't be able to do anything. He just shook his head at me.

Not only was I being taken away, but Aunt Lilianna seemed to do whatever she wanted since this was her childhood home. She grabbed the silver bell on the table and called Wyatt over.

"Starting today, Patience will be staying at the Northcourt estate," Aunt Lilianna announced. "Have her attendant bring her belongings over later today."

Wait, don't I get to say goodbye to my brothers? All I got was a brief farewell at the entryway. *I want to cry. Isn't this a kidnapping? Is Samuel really so incompetent? Aunt Lilianna* does *seem desperate.*

The Northcourt's carriage was an impressive vehicle, but I had no time to enjoy it—it felt as if we'd arrived as soon as I'd gotten on.

Wow, what a grand mansion. They've been this close all this time, yet they haven't helped out our family? I think I might hate them.

"Come, Patience," Aunt Lilianna said. "I'll introduce you to Samuel." The countess paid no mind to my growing resentment.

Without much of a choice, I followed behind her and headed to the children's room. The Northcourt's mansion was also warm immediately upon entering, while the children's room was lit with such a roaring fire that it was hot. *What a waste!* Perhaps climate change wasn't an issue in this world, but it was still wasteful to use unnecessary heating.

"Samuel, this is your cousin, Patience Granger," Aunt Lilianna said. "You are to study together."

There's the spoiled kid! Samuel had curly blond hair and grayish-

blue eyes. He was also a bit chubby. *I'm a shotacon who doesn't discriminate. I think chubby boys are cute too. What isn't cute is the fact that he's ignoring his mom while she's talking to him and just snacking.*

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Samuel," I greeted him with a smile as I sat down beside him. "My name is Patience."

"Are you my new tutor?" he asked in an annoyed tone. He'd probably faced many strict tutors, which had resulted in a strong dislike of studying.

"Of course not. I'm your cousin, so I've come to visit you. Though, I do have two younger brothers at home, whose studies I look over."

Samuel looked at me with curiosity. *Oh, he must be interested in hearing about boys his age.*

"How old are they?" he asked in a demanding tone. His condescending behavior was irritating, but I could endure it for now.

"My brother Nassius is nine, and my brother Henry is seven."

"Oh, so they're younger," he said, disappointed.

I wasn't going to say this out loud, but Nassius was one hundred times smarter than he was, and he was even doing worse than Henry, who was three years younger than him. In fact, wasn't that the very reason I was here? *Okay, maybe he's not actually doing* that *badly.*

"That's right," I replied. "You're going to be enrolling in the Royal Academy next year, right, Lord Samuel?"

He seemed to not like that question and turned away from me. *Oh, you're actually kind of cute. A pouty, chubby boy is pretty adorable. There's quite a large range for what shotacons appreciate.*

"Patience, I will be leaving Samuel to you," Aunt Lilianna said, completely handing off responsibility for her son to me and leaving the children's room.

It's fine, I guess. I don't fully agree with my aunt's choices, but I do *have a soft spot for young boys. Once Samuel's a little smarter, I hope he'll become friends with Nassius. I declare this "Operation: Get More Shotas."*

I'd initially assumed that the content for junior division first-year

students would be easy enough for Samuel to start with, but unfortunately, I was completely wrong.

"What are you studying, Samuel?" I asked. "Can you show me?"

The children's room was furnished with an impressive desk, chair, and even a separate chair for a tutor.

"I have to memorize these books," Samuel said, pointing to a stack.

I quickly flipped through the books. *This stuff is pretty easy, which means Samuel's in pretty bad shape. I take back what I said before; Henry may* actually *be smarter than him.*

Even just looking at the books seemed to give Samuel displeasure. I could see how this situation had led Countess Northcourt to hire all sorts of tutors, which had probably just made him hate studying even more.

"What is something you're good at doing, Samuel?" I asked. *I'm going to save the studying he hates so much for later. Let's start with something he likes.*

"I like horseback riding," he replied. *I guess our interests don't align. Let's move on.*

"What else?" I asked. Samuel just smiled at me. *He looks a lot like Aunt Lilianna when he smiles.*

"You don't like riding, do you?" he asked. He'd seen right through me. *But don't get ahead of yourself, kid!*

"I am a lady, so there is no issue if I am not particularly fond of horseback riding. More importantly, is there anything else you are good at?"

Samuel continued gleefully smiling.

"Even ladies need to be able to ride horses. What are you going to do if you're invited out hunting? Mother is also a talented rider."

"My family doesn't have a horse, so I won't be invited to any hunts," I explained.

Hearing that we didn't have a horse shocked Samuel.

"Why don't you have a horse? How do you use your carriage without a horse?"

"A horse requires feed, so we do not have one," I said. "When we use our carriage, we simply rent a horse." He seemed to have no

idea what it was like to be a poor noble. He was surprised by my life.

"Huh, so is your family poor?" *Yeah, we are, but it's rude to ask about it so bluntly.*

"Samuel, the Granger family is proud to lead a frugal life, which is why we do not spend resources on unnecessary heating," I said, using a fire poker to push aside the firewood that hadn't burned yet.

"You're interesting," Samuel said. "The tutors never said anything about the heat. I've also thought it was hot."

Samuel didn't like studying, but he didn't seem stupid. *Well, he's Aunt Lilianna's child, so there's no way he could be stupid.*

"So, is there anything aside from riding that you enjoy?" I asked again.

"I like music, but both father and mother keep telling me to just study."

I wasn't surprised to hear that. If he basically had the knowledge of a lower-level elementary schooler, it was only natural for his upper-class noble parents to panic. *I think he's going to be fine. He's not a fool; he just needs to learn how to study.*

The children's room had an array of instruments: a hanon, a lute, and a flute. I decided to focus on playing music together for today.

"I'm going to play a song I wrote," I announced. Samuel paid close attention to my performance, which I then had him play on the lute. "My, you have been gifted with incredible talent, Samuel," I said, praising him.

Are you Mozart or something? I can't believe he was able to play after hearing my piece just once.

Samuel could tell that my compliment was genuine.

"Your song was wonderful. Play more for me," he demanded. It felt that we'd gotten closer.

"I do have a name, you know," I pointed out. "Patience," I reminded him.

"Patience, please play another song for me."

Wow, I'm older than he is, but he's not even calling me "lady." Whatever, it's fine. I played a few more songs for him.

"You're really talented, Patience. Are you in the music club?"

Could it be that he's interested in joining the music club?

"Yes, I'm Princess Margaret's lady's maid, so I am in the club with her."

"That sounds nice. I want to join the music club too, but when I asked mother about it, she said it would be difficult."

That was true—the music club required a recommendation to join. However, I was confident that President Albert would approve of Samuel's skills. Albert was a genuine music lover, so that was all he cared about.

"Samuel, if I were to recommend you to join the music club, would you study with me?"

Just hearing the word "study" seemed to make him recoil. *Just how strict were they with him? This is going to be difficult. At this rate, I'm going to lose the rest of my winter break with my brothers! I need to do something about this!*

Mary came over with my clothes.

"Are you all right, my lady?" she asked. It was only natural for Mary to be concerned—I'd been suddenly taken away to the Northcourt home, and Mary had no reason to feel fond of Aunt Lilianna, considering the Northcourts' lack of support over the years.

"Yes, I'm fine. All I'm doing is helping my cousin Samuel study. So, will you be staying here as well, Mary?" I'd thought maybe she didn't have to, considering how close we were to the Granger home, but it seemed I would indeed need an attendant with me.

"Of course," Mary said.

I actually have a few things I'd like you to bring over... Well, I guess it's close enough for her to walk back and forth.

Samuel's hatred for studying seemed to run deep, so he wouldn't obediently sit down at his desk for me. *I wish Mary could bring Henry over. Not Nassius though—he'd make Samuel feel too inferior, which will only deepen his hatred for studying.*

Even at the Northcourts' home, I had to get dressed up for dinner. Samuel actually looked quite good once he got properly dressed. *I think he'll be quite handsome if he can just get a little more into shape.*

Since Samuel was ten, he was joining us for dinner. *Wait, when*

Nassius turns ten, Henry's going to have to eat in the children's room alone. What do I do about that? With such thoughts running through my mind, dinner quickly came to an end.

Dinner was delicious and plentiful. Count Northcourt was there, and he seemed like a kind gentleman.

"Patience, I hear that you're going to be looking over Samuel's studies," the count said. "Thank you for your help." Though he was thanking me, it didn't seem like he was too happy about having another girl in the house. He didn't seem particularly interested in Samuel, his own heir, either. *Rich nobles seem pretty cold and distant.*

Compared to the Northcourts, the Monteluxedos were a more tight-knit family. After all, Lord Salius was coming all the way to the Granger home to teach the boys sword fighting just because Aunt Amalia told him to.

I'd observed that Samuel had no issues when it came to his table manners—in other words, he was capable of learning and memorizing things. When it came to music, he could even learn a song after hearing it once, so he perhaps had incredible memorization skills. Aunt Lilianna was also a Granger, so she had to be smart.

It's time to get this pouty boy on the right track! Sounds like adorable antics await, but will things actually work out?

The next day, I asked Aunt Lilianna to provide some paints and small pieces of wood.

"I have no idea what you're planning to do, but please make sure that Samuel doesn't drop out of Class A," she pleaded.

Man, things really are different when you're rich. Aunt Lilianna had plenty of paint ready for us.

"Samuel, let's spend the morning painting," I said.

Samuel had expected that we would be studying, so he seemed relieved.

"What are we going to paint?" he asked, dubiously inspecting the small pieces of wood.

At this age, Samuel *should* have been able to read and write, but

his spelling skills were a bit worrying. In order to help develop his skills, we were going to make playing cards based on Japanese karuta and create a game in which we matched pictures to words.

"I'm going to write a word on one side, so we'll paint that object on the other side." After writing out the objects, I quickly began painting the images of each object. It was going to take a while to create a card for every letter of the alphabet. "You can just paint the easy ones."

Samuel quickly caught on to the nature of the game.

"This is a game for children," he complained.

And yet, it's something you can't do, which is why we're going to play this game. I won't say that out loud though, since it'll just hurt his pride.

"You play like this," I said, showing him how the game worked. "The longer the word on the back, the more points you get."

"It's a competition!" Samuel gasped. *Boys sure love to compete.*

"If you win, I'll write you a new song," I said, which made Samuel smile. *I have a bad feeling about that look.*

"If you lose, I'm also going to make you tag along on my riding lesson. I still believe you need to be able to ride a horse."

I definitely can't lose now! I was giving the game my all, which made Samuel also take it seriously—and I won!

After lunch, while Samuel was busy with sword fighting and riding lessons, I created many more cards. This time, I made history-themed cards with a simple illustration of a historical event on one side, then the name and year of the event on the other.

"For math, it looks like he's having trouble with fractions," I mumbled to myself. "I'd love some educational toys." In my previous life, there were all kinds of well-engineered educational toys. I remembered I'd bought some for my older sister's kids.

"If I remember correctly, there was one that was in the shape of a disk, and you could separate it into halves or fourths."

I didn't have a jigsaw, but I *did* have my household magic. I took a wooden plank and drew a circle, which I then cut out. I cut out several more circles, which I split into equal pieces, such as halves

and fourths, then painted them. I was also going to make this a game—it would be a puzzle where we each took one piece at a time, and whoever completed their circle first would be the winner.

The Northcourts had teatime, which I was jealous of. Unfortunately, the treats served with the tea were the standard cloying desserts. *Eating these sugar bombs is what's making you gain weight, Samuel.* Aunt Lilianna wasn't eating the treats. *I guess she wouldn't be able to maintain her figure if she was eating this stuff.*

"What are we doing next, Patience?" Samuel asked. It seemed that he was becoming slightly less resistant to the idea of studying.

"We are going to play a new game. I'm sure I'll win again this time."

"You must really hate horseback riding. Are you going to be all right serving Her Highness?"

It's not like I volunteered for the job...but I hate that he's making a good point.

"My, you cannot ride a horse, Patience?" Aunt Lilianna asked with a wide grin. "That won't do. I've heard from Amalia that William wasn't teaching the boys sword fighting and horseback riding because he doesn't enjoy them. It is unconscionable. You shall take riding lessons with Samuel, Patience."

I'd only had to go riding twice a week at home, but here I was going to have to do it every day. Aunt Lilianna really knew how to kick me while I was down.

Despite my displeasure about riding, taking lessons together helped me grow closer to Samuel. It was only natural for someone to feel inferior when beside someone smarter than them, but seeing how ungraceful I was on horseback seemed to give Samuel's ego some emotional relief.

"Patience, you need to straighten your back more!" Just as Prince Keith had done in the past, Samuel was complaining about my riding. *I'm going to get you back for this.*

Samuel's spelling had improved greatly, and he was now probably set to pass language arts. Thanks to the math puzzle I'd made, he

also seemed to understand fractions now. *I think this is good enough for a first-year student.* He still had room to improve with history, but I'd just gotten him to memorize some basic magic theory by quizzing him using a short textbook. Samuel didn't like losing, and he probably had it in him to accelerate some classes. The main issue now was classical literature.

"I don't understand the point of studying something like this," Samuel grumbled.

"My, Prince Keith feels exactly the same way, however His Highness accelerated in math, language arts, magic theory, music, and dance, so it was acceptable for him to not be fond of classical literature. You are doing fine with language arts, magic theory, music, art, and dance; however, I am worried about math and history. Your academic standing may be precarious if you do not work hard at learning classical literature." It was perhaps harsh of me to say all of that, but it was my honest assessment.

"I see. So even Prince Keith doesn't like classical literature, but he's studying it anyway? In that case, I must do my best as well."

I created more history cards for him to study with, so Samuel was set for his first year. When it came to math, he was actually quite quick at doing calculations. When we were playing games, he was even quicker at counting letters than I was. I was curious as to why he'd hated studying when he was clearly so capable.

"Samuel, why weren't you studying until now?" I asked. "It's clear that you have the ability to do so."

Samuel was bashful about being praised, and the conversation took a serious turn.

"I'm...a replacement for my late brother, Julius. He was incredibly talented, and he passed away due to an accident at nine years old. That meant the Northcourt family had lost its heir. I was born after that. I'm over ten years younger than my sisters. In other words, if Julius had lived, I never would've been born."

Samuel had spent his life being compared to Julius, who had been talented in every area. Not only that, but he was significantly younger than his sisters. In this world, being under ten years old put you in a completely separate world. He'd likely grown up alone,

always with caretakers or tutors. It was unbearably sad to think about.

"You're you, Samuel. My brother Nassius will be joining you at the academy next year. I'm sure he's going to jump ahead in his classes, so you'll eventually be in the same grade."

Samuel gave me an awkward smile.

"I'm not sure if I want *that*, but I don't mind being Nassius's friend. I'll even be little Henry's friend. I am their cousin, after all."

I'd somehow managed to get Samuel to the point that he wouldn't fall behind at the Royal Academy, so I was headed back home. Aunt Lilianna gave me a letter for father.

"Patience, thank you for all of your help. I've known about the Granger family's financial troubles, but as someone who married into another family, I couldn't provide any assistance. However, things are different this time. After all, Samuel is the heir to the Northcourt family." Though she didn't say so to me explicitly—that would be uncouth, after all—it seemed that her letter to my father contained a check to remunerate me, which made this my first actual job.

I was finally back home. I'd planned to spend my winter break having fun with my brothers, but now I only had three days of vacation left. Samuel was cute, but he was no match for the angels back home.

I didn't want to spend a single second of my remaining time away from them, but I ended up being called to the royal palace. *Waaah!* I cried internally.

Does the queen know I returned home from the Northcourts? As I rode the impressive royal carriage to the palace, I thought about the reasons my presence had been requested. *I wonder if the money from the Northcourts is enough for us to get a horse. Perhaps Auntie Lilianna knew that I'd want the money for a horse.*

I kind of wanted to ask Lady Charlotte, who was accompanying me to the palace, what I was being summoned for, but instead I just waited. I would find out soon enough from the queen herself.

We arrived at the palace, and I greeted the queen, still wondering

why I was here.

"Sit here, Patience," the queen instructed. "I heard you're accelerating into the senior division. I've already heard about your talents from Margaret, but I must say, you are truly gifted."

I appreciate the compliments, but I'm not just here to be praised, right? I'm getting nervous.

The queen then handed me a course registration form. Once in the senior division, the graduation requirements were credit-based, so I'd already been thinking about what courses I would take. I'd held off on registering for specific courses until I knew what Princess Margaret would be doing, because I had to match her in certain subjects, and I didn't know the actual senior division course schedule yet.

"Um, is there a problem, Your Majesty?" I asked. The registration form she'd handed me was likely Princess Margaret's, as there were various home economics track courses circled, and music and dance were crossed off—she'd received certificates of completion in those two subjects, so she was exempt from taking them.

"That girl is planning to avoid all the practical courses aside from cooking and sewing, which are mandatory." The courses that Princess Margaret had selected were etiquette, foreign language, child-rearing, nutrition, family medicine, and beauty.

"If I may, I believe etiquette and beauty are practical courses," I said.

The queen smiled. *How terrifying.*

"There is no need for her to learn etiquette at this point. Also, the beauty course goes over simple things such as basic exercises, how to take care of your skin, and how to style your hair."

That makes sense. Etiquette may be a useless course for Margaret when she's probably been learning proper etiquette since a young age.

"I believe everyone is in a similar situation with regard to selecting courses that they might pass easily," I said. "For example, math comes very easily for me, but no one would say that it was unfair for me to obtain an exemption."

The queen thought for a moment before responding.

"You make a fair point. Still, I'm worried about the fact that she was attempting to take the easy route. Unlike Richard, Keith, and Marcus, she will one day leave the nest."

Just as the queen said, unlike princes, princesses eventually left the home when they got married. Queen Victoria was just worried about her daughter struggling in the family she would marry into.

"I personally find courses such as weaving and dyeing intriguing; however, I don't believe Princess Margaret finds them interesting. I also believe that no matter where Her Highness may land, she will not have to weave or dye fabrics." *I think the bigger concern is whether she'll actually be able to get up in the morning, but I'm not going to tell the queen that. I think her attendant that follows her to her future household is going to have a hard time.*

Luckily for the princess, after graduating, noblewomen typically didn't have early mornings. Even Countess Northcourt took her breakfast in bed.

"I agree. I am perhaps worrying too much. She can make decisions about school for herself." *Yes, I agree too. I mean, just the mandatory subjects of sewing and cooking are probably going to be a lot for her.* "I'm sure you would be able to accelerate right away, but I hope you'll continue to look after Margaret."

Oh, so I have to help her out in the mandatory courses. Good grief.

Perhaps my meeting with the queen was a secret to the princess, because I didn't see her during my visit to the palace. I hadn't even played the hanon for Her Majesty, but I was sent home with a basket full of eggs, butter, sugar, and high-quality flour.

"You were enrolled in the home economics track, correct, Lady Charlotte?" I asked on the carriage ride home. "What level of skill are the instructors looking for in the mandatory subjects of sewing and cooking?"

"For sewing, we made dresses and gowns," Lady Charlotte answered. "I'm not very good at cooking, but the credits are easy to obtain as long as you show up to class."

I see, so passing cooking should be easy as long as the princess

doesn't skip. I'll have to make sure she shows up.

When it came to sewing, the princess's skills weren't an issue—she was quite dexterous. *Now, if she just had the drive to actually sew a garment.*

"Is there any subject I should pay particular attention to?" I asked.

Lady Charlotte thought for a moment before responding.

"The home economics track is generally meant to prepare ladies for marriage, so it isn't very difficult. During my time as a student, foreign language was the most difficult class for people. However, the first week of the senior division is orientation week, so if the course seems difficult at that point, you could simply refrain from registering for it. If I'm not mistaken, I also believe it is possible to drop classes during the term. After all, you simply have to make up the credits with another course."

Sounds pretty similar to the way college works. In that case, I can sit in on the alchemy class, and if it seems too difficult, I just won't register.

"Thank you very much. You've been incredibly helpful," I said.

For my own schedule, dance was the only core subject I had left to take, but since I was enrolling in both the home economics and civil service tracks, I would have to take the track-specific mandatory courses as well. Those were going to be unavoidable.

I wasn't going to know what courses were available to me until looking at a course schedule. After securing a spot in my mandatory subjects, I would have to match Princess Margaret's electives, followed by electives for the civil service course. I would probably only be able to select alchemy after all of those courses had been decided. *My head hurts thinking about my senior division schedule.*

At this point, I'd completely forgotten that Lady Charlotte had graduated from the Royal Academy four years ago. I had no idea that the class assignments had changed due to the skill-based system my father had implemented, nor that the home economics course had gone through some slight changes.

On top of all of that, I was lacking in the common sense of this world. I still didn't understand why the queen had been worried

about the princess, or why that anxiety had led to her requesting to see me. Princess Margaret was going to turn fourteen, and she already knew she would be having a political marriage, but I didn't truly understand what that meant, nor did I know that she'd been receiving marriage offers from all over.

Winter break had finally come to an end, and it was time for me to move back into the dorms. I was sad to be saying goodbye to my brothers. Though I was glad that our family was now on better terms with our relatives, I continued lamenting the time I could've spent playing or studying with my angels.

"Sister, the riding instructor is now going to be here on Sundays as well as Tuesdays and Thursdays," Nassius announced. He seemed so pleased to be sharing such horrific news. "Now you'll be able to continue taking lessons with us."

It had come as a surprise, but Nassius turned out to enjoy horseback riding. He wasn't doing as well as Henry when it came to sword fighting, but thanks to Lord Salius's instruction, his skills were rapidly improving. It seemed that he wasn't going to be having any trouble with PE at the Royal Academy.

"I had no idea," I replied. *I really didn't!*

"You'll be able to ride a horse as well, sister!" Henry said with a blinding smile. He had no idea that I hated horseback riding.

"Yes, you're right. We should also have father go riding," I suggested. "I think it would be good exercise for him." *I'm going to drag my father into this. It's not healthy to be holed up in his study all day. I'm proud of the sacrifice he made that led to him being fired, but I still want him to work, and in order for that to happen, I need him to gain some stamina.*

"That sounds wonderful!" Nassius said, picking up on my intentions. "The next time the riding instructor is here, I will invite him to join us." He seemed to agree that our father's lifestyle was unhealthy.

"Yaaay!" Henry cheered. "We're going riding with father!"

I hope you'll stay pure forever, Henry.

I kissed them both goodbye and got aboard the carriage. *Ugh, I*

won't see them for a whole week! I'm so sad.

At the time, I hadn't fully grasped what it would mean for me to skip ahead a grade and become classmates with Princess Margaret. I was also unaware of how fun the credit-based system of the senior division was! Not only that, but I also was going to meet people who would become lifelong friends! Blissfully unaware of what awaited me in the upcoming school year, I simply mourned my separation from my brothers.

Entering the senior division was going to be a significant turning point in my life.

END

Side Story: Nassius's Older Sister

My name is Nassius Granger, and I suppose I am the heir to the Granger family. Why do I sound so unsure, you ask? Well, my family is incredibly poor, and I'm not even sure that we can retain the title of viscount.

My father, Viscount William Granger, used to serve His Majesty at the palace, but I don't really remember what happened... I'm sorry.

I am currently nine years old, and it seems my father was dismissed from his position five years ago. I was only four years old back then, so I didn't know what had happened. Even my mother's passing, which had happened when I was six years old, is a fuzzy memory. I'd been left at home with Henry, who was four, and hadn't attended the funeral.

Ever since then, my sister Patience, who is two years older than me, has looked after my brother and me in place of our mother. Patience is the one who taught Henry and me numbers and letters. This was normal, since my mother had been often unwell even before her passing, so we hadn't seen her very often.

Henry doesn't seem to remember our mother very much, so my sister and I do our best to show him just how kind our mother was. Though, I also don't have as many memories of our mother as Patience does. I keep that a secret from my sister, because I don't want to upset her.

That very sister of mine fell terribly ill a year ago. She always greeted us in the morning with a kiss, but one day she didn't join us for breakfast.

"Where is Patience?" I asked my father.

"It seems she's caught a cold," he answered. That was all he would tell me, and I foolishly believed him.

The next day, and the day after that, Patience continued to be

absent for both breakfast and lunch, and she didn't visit us at bedtime to say good night.

"Brother, where is sister?" Henry asked.

My younger brother was only six years old, so I couldn't let him get worried. I was his older brother—I had a duty to protect him, just as my sister had done for me!

"She's caught a cold," I told him. "She's probably staying away so we don't catch it from her." I didn't believe my own story, and I failed to rid Henry of his worries.

Eventually, a doctor was called over, despite our lack of money. I sneaked a peek from the children's room and saw the back of a doctor dressed in black. For some reason, seeing the doctor reminded me of when my mother passed.

Is Patience going to die?!

I was so worried that I couldn't sleep. I looked over at Henry, who was fast asleep, and thought about how I was going to have to raise him on my own. After all, our father was unreliable when it came to everyday life. Both our mother and sister had said so themselves. Oh, and the fact that I'd overheard them say that was a secret!

Thankfully, my sister recovered. I could tell so from the look of relief on Mary's face. It was thanks to the doctor. *When I grow up, I'm going to become a doctor!*

After her health improved, my sister visited the church and learned she had received the gift of household magic, and she began working to improve our home. Household magic was a truly incredible form of magic. I hoped I would be able to use household magic as well, but according to my father, I likely had the same kind of magic as he did: wind magic.

Though she was making positive changes in our home, my sister also behaved strangely at times. It seemed that being so busy had made her a bit forgetful.

"You might be able to become a court lady at the royal palace," I said to her, thinking that her household magic could help her succeed.

"A court lady?" she repeated with a confused look on her face.

"That was what you wanted, wasn't it?" I asked.

"Oh, er, yes. But I'll decide whether I want to become a court lady after studying at the academy," Patience replied.

She's right! What a fool I am to think that my sister would stop at becoming a court lady! I'm sure she has greater ambitions in mind!

"That seems fair," I said with a smile. *Patience has the capacity to even become the first female minister in the kingdom!*

I visited our home library to research wind magic. There were various attack spells, but wind magic also encompassed healing spells. However, the book I was referencing stated that treating illnesses required the use of light magic, and I became disappointed that I wouldn't be able to become a doctor.

I also looked up information on household magic. I didn't know much about magic, but I'd felt that something was off with my sister's magic. Through all my research, I couldn't find any information on spells that could take old objects and make them good as new. I was also curious as to whether household magic could actually repair a worn-down greenhouse. There weren't any spells for making vegetables grow either. None of that mattered though—my sister would always be my beloved sister.

Patience could be a little forgetful at times, so once I grew up, I was going to have to support her. She'd even forgotten about her enrollment in the Royal Academy.

"You'll be attending the academy starting in January. While I'm happy for you, I'm also going to be sad when you're gone." That was what I'd said to her last December, which had shocked her. I was quite sure that she was genuinely surprised.

"The Royal Academy is in Romano. I should be able to commute, no? There's no need to be sad."

I was stunned. That wasn't what she'd said before.

"You said you'd be living in the dorms, since we can't rent a horse for the carriage every day," I reminded her.

She gasped as if she'd realized her mistake. Her forgetful side was also cute.

"That's right, b-but I'll be back on the days I have off."

Huh? Is she planning on walking home?

"You wouldn't be able to go alone," I pointed out to her. Noble ladies were required to travel with an attendant, but Mary was the only person available in our household.

"I'll figure it out, Nassius," Patience reassured me. "Please trust me." *Of course I do! I believe in you, sister!*

Ever since Patience started growing vegetables in the greenhouse, Henry and I no longer had nights when we were unable to sleep because of our hunger. Winter this year was also tough, but my sister made us a duvet, which kept us warm.

Despite all the improvements at home, it was hard when Patience left for the dorms at the Royal Academy, but Henry and I had made a promise to each other not to cry so we wouldn't worry her.

"I wish you well, sister," I said. I was trying so hard to hold my tears back, and that was all I could manage to say.

"Will you be coming home on the weekends, sister?" Henry asked, worried whether she would actually return. I squeezed his hand tightly.

"Take care, both of you," Patience said, and she boarded the carriage that would take her to the dorms. I wouldn't get to see her for an entire week.

"Is she really going to come back, brother?" Henry asked me, crying. *I'm going to look after him.*

"I'm sure she will," I reassured him.



I held my little brother tightly and comforted him. I thought that I'd be looking after him, both in general and when it came to our studies, but my father actually began giving us lessons.

A week passed, and on the weekend, Patience returned home.

"Sister!" Henry and I exclaimed as we ran down the stairs to greet her.

"Hello, Nassius! Henry! Have you been doing well?" Patience gave us a big hug. My sister was like a mother to me, and it was great to have her home.

Not only had Patience returned, but she had also already skipped ahead to her second year after only a week at school.

"You're so smart, Patience!" I was so proud of her. The Grangers were a family of academics, so I was going to have to work hard as well.

After that, Patience became Princess Margaret's lady's maid. Getting to serve the princess was an incredible honor, but my sister didn't seem too happy about it. *Is there some sort of problem?*

It was around that time that there were changes to the mansion. First was the toilet—I hadn't even known that we had a toilet, and I was incredibly grateful for the change. *Is this Patience's doing?* I wasn't a baby, so it had been embarrassing to still be using a chamber pot.

We even received a hanon from Her Majesty, which Patience taught me to play. Patience also received things like eggs, butter, and sugar from the queen, which she used to make us the same treats that our mother had made for us. To be honest, I had no recollection of the treats our mother used to make. Had they really been this delicious? My father also seemed puzzled by the treats.

We eventually grew strawberries in the greenhouse, which Patience, Henry and I picked together. My sister said we could only have five berries each, which was a shame because they were so delicious.

"I didn't know strawberries were so yummy," Henry raved.

My sister and I were both surprised by his comment. *I guess Henry doesn't have any memories of what things were like when we had money. He even got really excited and loud the last time we had*

sweets.

I didn't have many memories of our wealthier days either, but I still had memories of eating strawberries. *When I grow up, I'm going to become a bureaucrat and feed Henry all sorts of delicious things. I'm also going to buy my sister a beautiful gown.*

Patience was not only smart, but she was also talented at the hanon. She had joined the music club, and she would be performing some new pieces at the Festival of Verdure. I'd gotten quite bored of the practice songs I'd been playing, so she'd even written me some new practice pieces.

I wanted to attend the Festival of Verdure, but children weren't allowed to go. To make up for it, Patience held a small recital at home. She played her wonderful pieces, while Henry and I performed some children's songs. Our father seemed quite pleased by the recital.

On my ninth birthday, my sister baked a lovely cake for me. The cake was completely white and decorated with bright red strawberries, and it had a single candle that was lit. I'd never seen a cake like it before.

"Go on, Nassius. Blow out the candle while making a wish," Patience instructed. I had no idea what she was talking about. "It's a trend among the girls at the Royal Academy," she explained. "Go on, blow it out!"

I see! Well then, I know what I'm going to wish for! I wish for everyone in my family to stay healthy! With that wish in my heart, I blew out the candle.

My sister began clapping, and Henry, our father, Mary, Wyatt, Eva, and George all joined her. *I'm so happy!*

"I've never had a birthday like this before, sister," I said, thanking her with a kiss on the cheek. These days, I'd felt that the kisses were a bit childish, so I'd reserved them for greetings, but this was a moment that deserved a kiss.

Henry and I had both been looking forward to summer break, because it meant that we'd get to spend time with our beloved sister. However, Patience was invited to the summer palace as

Princess Margaret's lady's maid. I was disappointed, but my father said that the invitation was a great honor, so I had to bear her absence.

Mary also left to accompany my sister on her trip, but we actually had a new member of our household staff. Matthew, who was hired as George's apprentice, began taking care of the garden in the backyard, while George continued looking after the greenhouse. The greenhouse was where we grew vegetables that sold at a high price, so Matthew, being only an apprentice, wasn't allowed to enter.

Matthew was young, and he even let Henry and me help him in the garden. We spent our mornings studying with our father, and our afternoons were for sword lessons with George or gardening with Matthew. Keeping busy, I endured Patience's absence.

Patience finally returned from the summer palace, and Nassius and I ran to the front door to greet her.

"Welcome home, sister," I said.

"Welcome home!" Henry exclaimed.

"It's good to be home," Patience said, hugging us. "I have some gifts for you two." She gave us some beautiful shells, which I was happy to see since I'd never seen the ocean.

"I'm going to look these up in an encyclopedia," I announced. *I can't believe there are shells like this scattered on seashores!*

"This shell looks so cool," Henry said, running around with a white shell covered in spikes.

You'd better not trip!

"We helped Matthew harvest the tomatoes and eggplants," I reported to Patience. She hadn't heard about Matthew and seemed surprised. *I'm sure she'll get used to having him around right away.*

We got to spend the rest of her summer break together.

"We get to eat so many yummy things when sister is around," Henry said to me. He was obsessed with the treats and soft breads that Patience had Eva make for us. *He's so cute.*

Henry was still unaware of the problems the Granger family faced. He even believed that our sister just enjoyed painting tea sets

as a hobby.

I was the heir to the family, so I couldn't let my sister do all the hard work on her own, but there wasn't much I could do aside from helping Matthew out in the garden. *I hope I can at least skip grades and start working as soon as possible.*

The fall term began, and Patience returned to the dorms. For some reason, I wasn't as sad about her leaving this time. After all, I wanted to enjoy her studies at the Royal Academy.

Whenever she was home, Patience was busy working hard for our impoverished family, despite only being ten years old herself.

That's right, she's going to turn eleven soon! Henry is also going to be seven. I'd like to do something for them. If only I could use household magic like Patience can. All I can do is write a thoughtful letter.

For their birthdays, we had two cakes. Henry's birthday cake was similar to mine, while Patience's was a pear tart. I loved pears, so she probably had it made for me. *I'm so happy!*

Henry had an incredibly serious look on his face as he blew out his candle. *I wonder what he wished for.* Patience also blew out a candle, but she looked as if she'd already decided on what she would wish for. She probably wished for something for our family.

During the fall, I noticed that Patience began asking Eva and Wyatt questions constantly, asking if we had enough firewood or preserved foods. Last winter had been quite harsh, so she was probably worried. She even prepared some warm vests for Henry and me to wear.

Winter was growing closer, and Patience returned home from the royal palace one Friday. Since she was Princess Margaret's lady's maid, she would visit Her Majesty at the palace once or twice a month. After summer break, she'd begun returning home with two baskets of goodies.

Patience seemed to be wondering whether the increase in gifts was due to her helping Prince Richard make salt. During this visit, she even returned home with a giant wooden box, which turned out to be filled with monster meat. Wyatt, who was usually calm, raved

about how this was one of my father's favorite foods. *Perhaps this is her reward for her help.* The monster meat was incredibly delicious.

It was finally winter, and the weather was much warmer than it had been the previous year. Not only that, but we also had fires lit in the fireplaces. We usually spent our mornings studying with our father, but we were interrupted by a guest. When it came to first-year math, I needed my father's help to be able to solve the problems, so I decided to switch my focus to language arts instead.

Just as I was thinking about how it was unusual for us to have a visitor, they seemed to have left, and my father returned to our room in a slightly bad mood. *I wonder if something happened.*

To my surprise, Matthew filled me in on what had happened the next day. He'd heard from Eva, who was his aunt, that our visitor yesterday had been our father's elder sister. *Is she not kind like Patience is? Maybe she's mad at father for having been fired.*

To everyone's surprise, Patience had skipped ahead into the senior division. In other words, she had completed the entirety of her junior division schooling in a single year. *How incredible!* I was so happy that I would get to spend time with her during her winter break.

"We're going to be practicing the hanon, so could you light the fireplace in the drawing room?" she asked George. "It would be nice if we could also afford paints," she mumbled to herself.

Patience seemed saddened by the fact that we didn't have the money to buy paint. Though she painted tea sets in her room, that was a side job she did with the help of Wyatt, who received the orders from a ceramics studio. *I wonder if father knows about it.*

"Sister, are art, music, dance, magic practicum, and physical education all of the practical classes at the academy?" I asked. I would be enrolling in the academy in a year, so I was interested in the acceleration system. I wanted to skip grades just as she had.

"Yes, that's right," she replied. "In your first year, you just need to be able to do rough sketches to pass art. However, if you'd like to obtain a certificate of completion, you must know how to use paints. If you can successfully play an instrument, you'll be able to pass

music. For dance, it may be hard to pass if the lead dancer in the pair isn't very skilled. Physical education requires skills in horseback riding and sword fighting, so it will probably require some effort for you."

Passing horseback riding and sword fighting sounded like an impossible task for me.

"In that case, I don't think I will be able to skip ahead a grade," I said. *I wanted to skip grades so I could work sooner. It's too bad.*

"Actually, magic practicum is the only practical course you need to pass to skip ahead a grade," she explained. "In order to practice for that course, we must get your proficiency evaluation done at the church as soon as possible. I will speak to father about it."

My father then took Henry and me to the church to have our proficiency evaluations, perhaps because Patience had spoken to him just as she had said she would. I had wind magic, and Henry had physical enhancement magic. That day, Patience prepared a feast to celebrate us.

After that, for some reason, Patience had to go with our aunt to the Northcourts' home. It was unfortunate to lose time with her during her precious winter break. Though I missed her, Lady Lucene sent the Satisfords' riding instructor to give us lessons twice a week, and our cousin Lord Salius would stop by sometimes to give us sword-fighting lessons, under his mother Aunt Amalia's orders.

Henry really seemed to be in his element with horseback riding and sword fighting. I was also doing well enough that I would likely not embarrass myself in PE at the Royal Academy next year.

Does that have something to do with why sister went to the Northcourts' home?

Patience had said she was going there to tell our cousin Samuel what the academy was like, since he would be enrolling next year. Perhaps she had actually gone to tutor him—after all, she was incredibly smart.

Just when she had finally returned from staying with the Northcourts, my sister's winter break was over. *Oh, there've been some changes to the riding lesson schedule while she was away. I*

must let her know!

"Sister, the riding instructor is now going to be here on Sundays as well as Tuesdays and Thursdays," I announced. "Now you'll be able to continue taking lessons with us."

"I had no idea," she replied. *Wait, is she not happy about the news?*

"You'll be able to ride a horse as well, sister!" Henry said with a smile, and Patience smiled back.

"Yes, you're right. We should also have father go riding," she suggested. "I think it would be good exercise for him."

She's right! I've completely neglected our father's health!

"That sounds wonderful!" I replied. "The next time the riding instructor is here, I will invite him to join us."

"Yaaay!" Henry cheered with innocent joy. "We're going riding with father!"

Patience gave us each a kiss before boarding the carriage. As we sent her off, I thought about everything that had happened. It had been a year since my sister had been stuck in bed with a cold, and it had also been a year since she'd received the gift of household magic at the church. I wasn't sure of the exact cause, but it seemed that the Granger family had slowly been changing since then.

Afterword

Thank you very much for picking up *In Another World with Household Spells* volume 2. I am Rika, the author.

We begin this volume six months after the reincarnation of a regular Japanese office worker into another world, where she became the daughter of a poor viscount! Patience has gotten used to both her life at the academy and serving Princess Margaret as her lady's maid, and now she gets to enjoy summer break with her beloved brothers. Unfortunately, she is suddenly whisked away to the summer palace! This second volume covers summer break to winter break.

Patience had initially planned for her summer break to be a time to bond with her beloved brothers, plant summer crops, prepare preserved foods for winter, and do a ton of side jobs to make money, but alas, she cannot go against the queen's orders. Somehow, at that very summer palace, Patience gets herself involved in yet another task: This time, it's making salt from seawater.

Both the first and second volumes were illustrated by HIROKAZU. I'm incredibly grateful for the illustrations that broaden the world of this story. I was especially impressed with the illustration of Lord Albert, who made his first appearance in this volume. He was just so incredible. He may be obsessed with music and have an unfortunate personality, but he is just beautiful! That gap between his personality and appearance is quite funny, though.

Also, Nassius and Henry are just so cute. I don't need to be Patience to find them adorable and want to give them everything.

Big sister Patience is going to keep working hard to improve things for the impoverished Granger family.

Thank you to everyone who has continued to read this story. I hope you will continue to support both Patience and me.

Rika


Patience Granger
Main Character
Age: 11 Height: 148cm
The eldest daughter of Viscount Granger. Can use household magic. She is a gifted girl who loves her brothers. One statement based on her previous life may have landed her in some hot water at the summer palace!
Albert Laforet
Second Son of Duke Laforet
Age: 14 Height: 170cm
A lover of music who reveres Patience as a "goddess."
In Another World with Household Spells 2



Richard Lawrence

First Prince of the Kingdom of Lawrence
Age: 16 **Height:** 178 cm
Formerly the student council president at the Royal Academy, he has since graduated and enrolled in university. He is a grounded young man who cares for his siblings.

Keith Lawrence

Second Prince of the Kingdom of Lawrence
Age: 11 **Height:** 167 cm
A student at the Royal Academy and member of the knight club who dislikes classical literature. He spends his summer with Patience at the summer palace.

Margaret Lawrence

First Princess of the Kingdom of Lawrence
Age: 13 **Height:** 158cm
A member of the music club. She trusts Patience, who serves her as her lady's maid.

Bonus Story: Young Lady, Be Ambitious!

My name is Richard, and I am the first prince of the Kingdom of Lawrence. My father and mother—the king and the queen—get along quite well, and I have many younger siblings: Margaret, Keith, Jane, and Marcus. It is good for a royal family to be blessed with lots of children. If anything were to ever happen to me, Keith or Marcus could take my place.

The Royal Academy is a prominent institution in the Kingdom of Lawrence, and all nobles must attend starting at the age of ten. There are even commoners who've passed the entrance exams who attend this school.

Just as the other nobles did, I enrolled in the academy at the age of ten. During my winter break before I was to enter my third year in the senior division, my father suddenly ordered me to move into the dorms. He ordered the same of Margaret, who was entering her third year in the junior division, and Keith, who was enrolling this year.

"Why am I moving into the dorms *now*?" I wondered aloud. I nearly gave in to the temptation to ask my father that very question, but my father wasn't just my parent—he was also the king, and I couldn't act displeased with him.

My father's decision had left me feeling sorry for Margaret. Both Keith's and my friends were moving into the dorms with us, but not a single one of Margaret's friends would be moving into the dorms with her.

I wasn't particularly surprised, as I had never really liked Margaret's friends. They had pretty faces, but their personalities

were quite awful. Their parents were also noble supremacists. I had no idea why she had chosen such ladies to be her friends.

Even so, I'd always figured it was fine for her to befriend whomever she chose—at least, that was what I thought until they refused to join her in the dorms. *Isn't that missing the point of being schoolmates?*

Margaret seemed to be struggling with life in the dorms. I could tell because her hair was in disarray. I wasn't very familiar with the hairstyles of ladies, but even I could see that her hair was sticking up all over the place.

It needn't be said that our mother also took notice.

A week after we'd moved into the dorms, mother appointed someone to be Margaret's lady's maid. The first time I met Patience Granger, Margaret's new lady's maid, she had seemed familiar.

Of course! That's the petite girl that Keith's friend, Hugo, cut in front of on the day we moved into the dorms. That day, I'd meant to have Keith apologize to the girl, but she had disappeared into thin air. *Perhaps she didn't want to get into a dispute with the royal family. She sure knows how to navigate the world despite being so young. I wonder if her parents taught her those skills.*

Patience Granger was quite grounded for being ten years old, which was the same age as Keith. She was perhaps even more grounded than Margaret, who was two years older than her.

As one might expect of a second son, Keith had been growing up with a lot more freedom than I'd had at his age. There were times I'd been envious of him, but now I believed he needed to work harder.

As for Margaret, she was a lover of music. That in itself wasn't a negative, but it was a problem for it to be her sole focus. *Is that why she chose those girls as her friends? They* are *in the music club together.*

At the end of the day, Margaret's choices weren't a huge issue, since she was a girl. Keith, on the other hand, didn't seem to

understand the weight of being a member of the royal family. If he didn't work to suppress his willfulness, he would end up being taken advantage of when he was older. This willfulness needed to be corrected, even in its seemingly inconsequential forms such as pickiness regarding food.

Now that we were living in the dorms, we were out from under our mother's strict observation, and Keith had stopped eating vegetables and fish. Romano was a landlocked city, so we didn't eat fish very often in the first place. Still, he would surely visit the seaside homes of nobles as an adult, where it would be troublesome for him to dislike fish.

"When you have lunch in the salon, I want you three to all eat together," my mother ordered. "Keith, you must finish your fish and vegetables."

Margaret reluctantly agreed, and I, of course, couldn't refuse either.

"I'd like to eat with Ralph and Hugo," Keith insisted. As usual, he was acting spoiled.

Our mother was the queen first and our mother second—disobeying her wasn't an option.

"Once you can eat fish and vegetables, you can eat lunch with whomever you please," mother said with a deep smile, and even Keith understood that he had to obey her.

Though he had understood our mother's orders, Keith continued to avoid eating his vegetables.

"Keith, you must eat your vegetables as well!" Margaret scolded him.

Margaret had asked her lady's maid Patience to join us as well. She perhaps thought that it would be easier for Keith to suppress his willfulness in front of another person.

Keith began reluctantly eating his vegetables, possibly because he was uncomfortable around Patience, possibly because Margaret had scolded him.

"I'm going to have the fish poêlé," Patience said. It was an

unusual lunch order.

Keith gave her a strange look as she handed her menu to the waiter.

"I can't believe people actually eat fish," Keith remarked.

Good grief! I know he's still a child, but it's improper to comment on a lady's order like that! He may be a member of the royal family, but he needs to mind his manners.

"Are you adhering to a religious observance or something, Patience?" Margaret asked, tilting her head in confusion.

My sister's puzzlement wasn't strange—most students wouldn't choose fish as their entrée. *I know her mother is no longer with us. Perhaps today is the anniversary of her passing.*

"No, I just haven't had fish in quite a while, so I thought it might be nice to have some," Patience explained.

The truth was, I wasn't very fond of fish myself. I was able to eat the seafood dishes at the summer palace because all of the fish was fresh, but I didn't enjoy the fish that had been transported to the royal capital. I wouldn't leave it on my plate like Keith, but I would always pick meat if I had the choice.

Our appetizer today was a vegetable aspic. Keith didn't like vegetables either, so he tried to leave it untouched, which I scolded him for.

"You have to eat your vegetables too. Mother instructed me to eat with you specifically because she worries you're going to be picky."

Perhaps in retaliation for my scolding, Keith drank his soup by noisily clanging his spoon on the bowl and loudly slurping the broth—it was truly childish behavior.

"You should be more like Patience, Keith," Margaret said, warning him.

Keith just huffed in response. *I wish he would grow up already.*

Our entrées were served. Keith and I had both chosen steak, Margaret had chosen the guineafowl poêlé, and Patience had her fish poêlé.

Fish could be a bit challenging to eat with proper etiquette, but Patience was able to gracefully eat it. It appeared that the Granger

family had proper education when it came to etiquette.

"It's delicious!" Patience exclaimed.

"Is it really that good?" Margaret asked.

"Very," Patience replied. She took her second bite, which she seemed to enjoy just as much.

"What a weirdo!" Keith said. He'd been rude once again, but Patience didn't seem to mind as she kept eating.

Hm, she really does make it seem delicious.

"Maybe I'll try the fish tomorrow," Margaret said.

"Perhaps I shall try it," I chimed in. "I can't help but be curious after seeing someone enjoy it so much."

Margaret and I both expressed our openness toward trying the fish, which Keith ruined with an unnecessary comment.

"You mustn't be fooled by her," Keith huffed. "I'm sure Patience would find anything she ate delicious." Keith was mocking Patience for her family's lack of wealth. Such behavior was unbecoming of a member of the royal family.

"Keith!" I exclaimed, about to scold him, but Patience replied before I could.

"Yes, that's true," she said in agreement. "This is several times more delicious than the last piece of fish I had."

Eventually, the waiter came by to take our plates.

"Please tell the chef that the fish was incredibly delicious," Patience said with a smile.

"It was truly that good?" I remarked. "In that case, I shall order the fish tomorrow."

The entire atmosphere at the table had softened. Patience's cleverness made her quite effective at keeping the peace.

Keith had many faults, but he had some cute aspects as well. Still, despite my fondness for him, he often said things that rubbed me the wrong way. The way he would mock those who were below him in status was especially awful—it was unforgivable for a member of the royal family to behave in such a way. We had countless interactions during the spring term during which I was about to scold Keith, only for my anger to be quelled by something Patience

said. Keith was most definitely a child, but it was clear that I still had a lot to learn as well.

One day, I'd ended up sitting with Margaret and Patience for dinner at the dorm dining hall by complete coincidence.

"Patience is aiming to advance into the senior division next year," Margaret announced to me. "We'll be in the same grade."

Patience was a gifted girl who had skipped ahead to being a second-year student after her first week at the academy. Even with the Grangers being a family of academics, it was no easy feat that she'd accomplished.

"Is that so? You really are exceptional, Patience," I praised her.

"Thank you very much," she replied. Patience didn't have much to say, but Margaret continued speaking on her behalf.

"Not only that, but Patience is also planning to get a certificate of completion for math! She's planning on taking both the home economics and civil service courses."

Many female students enrolled in the home economics track. This was one of the problems of the Royal Academy. Despite having the opportunity for education, there were too many female students who thought only about marriage. To be fair, though, that wasn't entirely the students' fault.

"Really? You must have some great aspirations," I said. "I wish you luck." Hearing that Patience was going to enroll in the civil service track was incredibly refreshing.

I was the president of the student council, and my main tasks were to manage the Festival of Verdure and the Harvest Festival. My term as president would be ending with the spring term, which I was looking forward to.

The atmosphere in the salon was quite different on the day of the Festival of Verdure, since there were parents and guardians on campus. Many of them came by to say hello to me, which made it hard to enjoy my lunch.

"Over here, Margaret," I called out to my sister. "We had a partition put up because otherwise all the parents will try to come

greet us."

I'd been prepared for the festival, and the other members of the student council were helping out. My only issue on the day of the event was invariably the parents—it seemed like someone new was coming up to me with every step I took, which was exhausting. *I need to finish my meal quickly and return to the student council office!*

"Steak," I ordered immediately.

"Aren't you busy with student council work?" Margaret asked. It seemed I had worried her.

"No, no. All the preparations we have to make before the festival are much more troublesome," I explained. "As for the day itself... Well, there have been several complaints, but we've managed to handle them." Even conversing with my siblings, which was usually not an issue, felt tiring today.

"The music club's New Composition Recital was truly wonderful," Margaret reported. "How were the matches for the knight club, Keith?"

"Just as predicted, President Eric won," Keith replied in a sulking manner. *Is he upset that he couldn't participate because he's still in the junior division? How annoying!*

"Is it possible for students in the junior division to help the student council?" Patience inquired. I was grateful that she'd asked such a thing.

"That's right. You had your performance in the morning, so you're done with those duties for the day," I replied. "We actually could use your help!"

"Keith is also done with his matches for the knight club," Margaret noted.

Keith, huh? I don't want him to be another burden, I thought, only to see Keith looking quite excited to help. This side of him made it impossible to hate him.

"That's true. We'll always accept more help. Would you assist us, Keith?" I asked.

"Yes, of course!" Keith responded.

"Well then, let's finish our meals quickly and head to the student

council room. There's no need for dessert today!" I had the waiters cancel our dessert and stood up.

As we headed out, Patience spotted Keith's schoolmates and decided to get them involved as well.

"Oh, I believe Sir Ralph and Sir Hugo will be free in the afternoon as well," she said to Keith.

"I see. Let's have them help as well," I said, approving her idea. She was probably going to have them look after Keith, which was good thinking on her part.

The student council office resounded with complaining students and student council members trying to help.

"My fellow students, you're all creating a ruckus!" I bellowed. "You must all talk to each other calmly."

Silence fell, but the quiet only lasted for a moment.

"President Richard!" Jeffery shouted. "We, the members of the ryffle club, have properly gotten permission to use the second field for the entire day. Despite that, a horse belonging to the horse-riding club is eating the grass on the field! I spoke to fellow council members and told them to get the horse off our field, but they won't listen!"

Stop shouting and making noise! Shut up!

"Jeffery, instead of complaining to us, you should be speaking directly to those in the horse-riding club," I said to him, waving him away, but he wouldn't listen.

"Why do I have to speak to the horse-riding club? The student council granted us the right to use the field. Don't you have a duty to make sure we can actually use it?"

Urgh, he's actually got a point.

"Very well. Keith, go to the horse-riding club and have them get their horse off the field," I ordered. "Oh, take Ralph and Hugo with you." *Perhaps it isn't wise to send just the three of them. I don't think the two of them can stop Keith when he's at full speed.* "You go with them too, Patience."

After some time passed, Keith and the others returned.

"Just as President Jeffery said, the horse did belong to the horse-

riding club," Keith reported. "A member of the club got the horse off the second field, but he indicated there might be other horses that also got loose."

Good grief, I see that Jeffery was right.

"Indeed, it seems that several of the horse-riding club's backup horses have escaped," I replied. "We've received complaints from other clubs as well. It was a mistake on the horse-riding club's part to keep their backup horses in the same stables used for visitors. Please help them catch the other horses."

With that, I continued dealing with the other complaints.

By the time Keith, Patience, Ralph, and Hugo returned, most of the issues had been resolved.

"Brother, we've captured all of the escaped horses," Keith announced. "President Daniel will be submitting a letter of apology at a later time."

I guess even Keith can give a proper report.

"Keith, Ralph, Hugo, and Patience. You all were an incredible help," I said to them. "The members of the student council can handle things from here. There isn't much time left, but please go enjoy the Festival of Verdure."

I'd felt sorry for the position I'd put Patience in. I remembered her discussing the play with Margaret. However, the music club and choir club had ended up arguing about their schedules, so it was perhaps for the best that she hadn't been there.

At the Festival of Verdure ball, Margaret was dancing with Percival. He was a skilled student who had been the runner-up in the knight club's competition, despite only being in his first year of the senior division.

Percival was one of Margaret's marriage candidates. The first choice was Duke Laforet's son Charles, but I thought Percival, who was the son of Count Moeran, was also a fine choice. I would welcome any gifted noble who would support my reign once I was crowned king.

"Oh? It looks like Keith is dancing with Patience," I remarked to myself.

Keith is often saying offensive things to her, but I wonder if he actually has feelings for Patience. The daughter of a viscount is a bit too low in status to marry into the royal family, but she could just be adopted by another family. Mother is also fond of her, so I'm sure she would do well in our family.

There was a strong reason I'd concluded that my mother must have been fond of Patience: She was going to invite Patience to vacation at our summer palace. Neither Margaret's nor my own friends had ever been invited to the summer palace.

It was custom for only the members of the royal family to visit the summer palace and relax and unwind from their usual busy life of public service.

It was decided that we would stop by Duke Laforet's home for lunch on the way to the summer palace. Duke Laforet was a music lover, and he'd completely left the management of his territory to his heir, Charles. In turn, Charles was a competent man, and he was regarded as someone worthy to be Margaret's husband.

As for the duke's second son, Albert... While he was a genius in a certain regard, he didn't seem to have any interests outside of music. It was indeed important to further develop the cultural aspects of the kingdom, so that could be Albert's job.

Lunch went smoothly thanks to the Laforets' gracious hospitality. However, I noticed that Duke Laforet was shouting something to Patience while we were boarding our carriages. *I wonder what happened.*

"Did something happen to Duke Laforet?" I wondered out loud.

"Perhaps Patience is to blame," Keith said. "She *is* a weirdo after all."

I didn't agree. I couldn't imagine Patience causing a problem.

"I've been thinking, Keith, that you should stop saying such disparaging things about Patience."

Keith seemed surprised by my admonition. *Has he been unaware of his own words? Regardless, it's wrong to seek the attention of the girl you like by taunting or bullying her.*

"I haven't done any such thing," Keith objected.

His lack of awareness was definitely an issue. This was going to require a long scolding.

Some time after lunch, the carriages stopped for a break, and Keith took the chance to force his way into Margaret's carriage. *Is he trying to run from my scolding, or does he just want to sit with Patience?*

Now without a conversation partner, I began staring at the scenery outside the window. *The ocean is coming into view!* I excitedly thought. *The ocean is always a wonderful sight.*

We arrived at the summer palace and waited in the salon for our rooms to be made ready. My mother's room was prepared right away, and she headed there with a court lady.

"The ocean really is quite massive," Patience remarked. "Is all that water actually salty? Oh, that must be why salt is made from the ocean." It was quite a strange thing to say.

"Salt obviously comes from rock salt, Patience. My, you really don't know much, do you?" Margaret lambasted her.

"What? But you can make salt by boiling seawater, no?" Patience said. "I know of rock salt as well, but I've heard that sea salt has a mellow, delicious flavor."

What? Sea salt? I've never heard of that!

"Where did you hear that you can get salt from seawater?" I asked.

"Um, well... I believe I read it somewhere," Patience replied. "Was I wrong?"

"Salt comes from the rock salt mines on Mt. Halla," Keith scoffed. "You might be good at studying, but you're actually pretty clueless."

"Perhaps the reason rock salt is mined from Mt. Halla that it used to be underwater," Patience hypothesized. "I believe the ocean floor rose up and turned into a mountain, and the salt water trapped inside hardened. That's why you can also make salt from seawater."

Mt. Halla was a mountain on the border of Lawrence and the Kingdom of Dehn. Our kingdom's reliance on the mountain had always been an issue, as our access would be in danger if we were to ever end up warring with Dehn. Patience's suggestion was an

important one.

"The water in the ocean is indeed salty. And if you were to heat seawater...the water would evaporate and leave behind the salt!" I exclaimed. "Why don't we try experimenting, Patience?"

We're already going to be here at the summer palace for our vacation. Why don't we try making salt from seawater!

I noticed a lot of things while alongside Patience at the summer palace. It appeared that she was waking Margaret up in the mornings, which seemed unnecessary when Margaret had both a court lady and an attendant serving her. According to Keith, Margaret really struggled with mornings, which I hadn't noticed at all until now.

Not only that, but Patience also managed to learn how to swim right away. Keith was also surprised by this. I'd assumed that she would spend our beach outings just playing with Marcus in the sand, but it was wrong for me to have judged a book by its cover.

Patience helped me with making salt, and I was eventually able to build a salt production facility. My father praised my efforts, but most of the work had been done by Patience. It seemed that he had some sort of reward for Patience in mind. *I hope she enjoys it.*

When I first met Patience, all I'd thought of her was that she was a female student with a petite frame. However, I now believed that she would become a pillar that would support the future of the Kingdom of Lawrence. Young lady, be ambitious! I believe in you!



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by Rika

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